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Winner of the 2011 Macy's New Play Prize

**Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park
2011-2012 Outreach Tour**

Made possible through a grant from
The Macy's Foundation



Before the Show

Characters

Greg	A boy who has just been cast as Romeo in the school play. Wakes up to discover he has been transformed into a cockroach.
Mom	Greg's mother, very devoted to her son.
Darius	Greg's best friend.
Sophie	Greg's other best friend. She has been cast as Juliet in the school play.
Dr. Bob	An emergency room doctor.
Dr. Theodora	A surgeon with poor eyesight.
Dr. Kunkel	A professor at the University of Massachusetts who is an expert on bugs.



Synopsis

Greg Samsa wakes up one morning to a shocking discovery: he has turned into a giant cockroach! His mother rushes him into the hospital but there is nothing they can do. Greg still wants to go to school but his mother insists that he stays home. Greg is hungry for all sorts of gross things, including raw hamburgers, old French fries and snot! Darius, Greg's best friend, sneaks into his house for a visit. Darius is shocked to see Greg's new cockroach body, but promises to come visit him everyday until he "recovers." Greg's friend Sophie does not handle the shocking news so well. She is terrified of bugs and can't stand to look at Greg. Sophie and Greg try to rehearse for their school play, *Romeo and Juliet*, but Sophie gets too nauseous and has to leave. Darius and Greg find the phone number for Dr. Kunkel, an insect specialist and send her a text message explaining Greg's unique situation. Dr. Kunkel comes as soon as she hears the news of Greg's metamorphosis. She convinces Greg to come to the University of Massachusetts where he is not only accepted but receives extra special treatment. However, he finds out that Dr. Kunkel's intentions are to sell him to a cooking show. Greg has to find a way to escape before he becomes a Chinese delicacy.

Live Theatre

When young people attend a live theatrical performance they may not realize how different it is from watching a movie or television show. Because the actors and audience are together in the same room, they are creating the event together. A live presentation has not been pre-recorded, with the mistakes edited out. This makes it riskier for the actors and more exciting for the audience. It also means that the audience has a real contribution to make to the overall experience. Each audience member affects those around them as well as the actors. The more the audience gives to the actors, the more they can give to the audience.

Remind students

- Use the restroom before the show begins so you don't miss the best parts of the show.
- Listen! Theatre is about words.
- Theatre is live. The actors can see and hear you. They want you to react, to laugh, to respond. If you respect them, they will give you the best possible show.

We ask that teachers model this behavior for their students. If students see adults talking or reading during the show, they will get the wrong message about respect and focus.

Background Information



Franz Kafka

Who is Franz Kafka? What does he have to do with the play?

Franz Kafka was a German novelist who is regarded as one of the best writers of the 20th century. His stories were about individuals who suffered within a cruel and pointless society. Most of Kafka's writing did not get published while he was alive. He left instructions that his writings should be burned after his death. However his friend and fellow author Max Boyd edited and published Kafka's writings in the 1930s including *The Trial*, *The Castle* and *Metamorphosis*.

Ever felt like you just didn't want to get out of bed in the morning?

In his novel, *Metamorphosis*, Gregor wakes up one morning as a giant insect. Despite his discovery, he still thinks he can go to work. However, he finds it difficult to do simple tasks like opening the door and getting out of bed. His family has a hard time accepting his metamorphosis. Rather than coping with his new species, Gregor's family hides him from the world. He can't even leave his room! In the end, Gregor decides that he is causing his family too much pain and trouble and sacrifices his own life.

What's Buggin' Greg is loosely based on Kafka's *Metamorphosis*.

Romeo and Juliet

In the play, Greg has been cast in his school play, *Romeo and Juliet*. It was written by William Shakespeare in the mid 1500's. It is one of his most famous plays. The play tells the story of Romeo and Juliet, teenage lovers whose families hate each other bitterly. They try to reunite their two families in peace through their marriage. However, their families cannot overcome their history. The play ends tragically with death of both Romeo and Juliet. *What's Buggin' Greg* not only uses parts of *Romeo and Juliet* as part of its story, but uses some of its themes, particularly love between people who are different or who come from different backgrounds. This theme has been used by many plays and movies, including *West Side Story*.



William

Shakespeare

Ewwwwwwww.....Eating Bugs Around the World.....

Lots of people eat bugs! The ancient Greeks and Roman ate bugs! As a matter of fact, 80% of the world eats bugs! Insects provide lots of nutrients including protein. Crickets are popular in tacos and chocolate chip cookies. Termites can be roasted. Ants can be covered in chocolate. Beetles can be deep fried. Some people say larvae tastes like bacon. The world record for eating cockroaches is 24 roaches in 60 seconds!



Self-Esteem and Body Image

Greg wakes up and everything about him has changed. His entire body feels and looks different. All he wants is to feel normal again and to look like all the other kids. Many of us wish that we could change something about ourselves. Some of us want to be taller, other want to have straighter hair, or curlier hair, a smaller nose, or bigger muscles. Almost everyone has something they wish they could change.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is how much you value yourself. Having positive self-esteem is important to your happiness and overall well-being. How much you value yourself effects how you act around others. A person with high self-esteem can begin and maintain relationships with others easier. Self-esteem helps people make better personal decisions.

Body Image


How you view your body has a great effect on your self-esteem. It's easy and tempting to compare yourself with others. The media is flooded with unrealistic images of what the "perfect" body looks like. Yet, as fashions change, the so-called "perfect body" changes. Take a look at paintings and pictures from other times. There are many ways to be beautiful. It is useless and impossible to compare one's self with others. Everyone is different. That's one of the amazing things about humanity.


Disability and Self-Esteem


Greg suddenly has different abilities than he had before. He can do some things better and other things worse. Many people who have a disability or illness may feel similar to Greg. Their bodies or minds function differently than others. The media does not show images of people like them. It can make a person feel inadequate when they cannot live up to an impossible standard of "perfect" set by society and the media. People with disabilities are often bullied by others.


How can body image and self-esteem be improved?


Improving body image and self-esteem take s time. Here are few steps:

 Accept your body just the way it is. Don't compare it to others. When you catch yourself in a negative comment or thought, stop yourself. Remind yourself that everyone is different.

 Take a moment to think of all of the amazing things your body can do: reading, laughing, thinking, smiling. Your body does incredible things every single day!

 Remind yourself that there are some things you can't change about yourself. Those things probably don't matter nearly as much to others as they do to you.

 Don't hesitate to ask for help. If you are feeling down about yourself, talk to someone you trust like a teacher, family member or friend. Chances are they have been through similar struggles and can help find different ways to cope with or solve the problem.

 Have fun! Spend time doing the things you love with your family and friends!



Vocabulary

The play uses some words that may be unfamiliar to your students. It is not essential that students know these words to comprehend the play, but understanding the words can enhance the experience for them. Have students work on their vocabulary skills by using each of these words in a sentence.

Insect Vocabulary

Microscopic	So small you need a microscope to see it.
Metamorphosis	A change in physical form and appearance. Can also be a significant change in a group of people, organization or society.
Mutation	A change in form or function; in biology it refers to the permanent physical change in the DNA sequence of a gene.
Proboscis	A straw-like mouth.
Molt	To shed an outer covering.
Exoskeleton	A hard outer shell that provides protection.
<i>Blaberus Giganteus</i>	One of the world's largest species of cockroach.
Antennae	Moveable appendages on insects that help them sense objects around them.

Theatre Vocabulary

Rehearsal	Practice to perform for a play or other performance.
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	A play written by William Shakespeare in the mid 1500s.
Lead	The main character in a play.
Onstage	The part of the stage visible to the audience.
Offstage	The stage that is not visible to the audience.
Character	A person in a story that an actor creates on stage in a play.
Enter	To come onstage.
Exit	To leave the stage or go offstage.
Improvising	Making up actions or words in the moment.
Director	The person who oversees the entire process of a play.

Thematic Vocabulary

Contagious	Able to be passed on to other people, like a disease
Smorgasbord	A buffet offering a large variety of food.
Delicacy	A rare food that is considered delicious.
Prosthetics	A man-made device to replace a missing or damaged part of the body.
Amputation	The removal of a part of the body.
Surgeon	A doctor who specializes in surgery.
Reconstruct	To rebuild or remodel.



After the Show

Story

- Why do you think Greg still wanted to be in the school play even after turning into a cockroach?
- Why does Greg's appetite change?
- Why does Greg's mom try to hide his "condition?"
- How does Darius react to Greg's new body? Why?
- Why does the bird, GI Joe, first take an interest in Greg?
- Why does Sophie run away from Greg when she first sees him?
- Why is Dr. Kunkel so fascinated by Greg? Is this good or bad?
- Why do Greg and his mother decide that he should go to Amherst with Dr. Kunkel?
- How does Greg's mother and friends know that he needs help?
- How do Greg's other classmates and teachers react when he first walks into school again?
- Who is your favorite character in the play? Why?
- What did each character learn in the play? Who do you think learned the most?

Production

- What did you think when Greg pulled the covers off and revealed that he was a cockroach? Did you know what he was?
- One actor plays several characters. How do you know when she has switched characters? What does the actor do to show you which character she is playing?
- Did you like the style that the director and designers used for the play? Why or why not? Would a different style have worked better? Why or why not?
- Think about the costumes. What do they tell you about each character? How do they help you form an opinion about each character?
- How does the set help tell the story? What does it tell you about the location of the play? How do the actors use the set?

Themes

- What are the conflicts in the play? How were the conflicts resolved? What are some alternative ways the conflicts could be resolved?
- Did Greg's new body affect his personality? Was he still the same Greg?
- How does Greg's "change" affect his self-esteem?
- How does Greg's changed body image affect his relationship with the people around him?
- How would you react if someone's appearance or abilities changed drastically? Would it change how you treated them? Why or why not?
- How do Darius and Sophie help Greg feel more comfortable and included? What can you do to help people that are different feel included? Why is this important?

Have questions or comments about the show?

Want to write to the actors?

Want to write a letter to your favorite character?

We'd love to hear from you! E-mail us at Greg@cincyplay.com!

