

Tuck Everlasting

An adaptation for the stage of
Natalie Babbitt's award winning novel
Written by Mark Frattaroli



TEACHER'S NOTES

The following material focuses on
Mark Frattaroli's adaptation of *Tuck Everlasting*.

It has been designed for use by the classroom teacher and
contains the following information:

biography of the author,
adapting the story and biography of the playwright,
plot, setting and characters in the play,
preparing your students for their first visit to the theatre.



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About the Author



Natalie Babbitt was born in 1932 in Dayton, Ohio. She spent most of her childhood drawing and reading fairy tales and myths. Later she studied at Laurel School in Cleveland and at Smith College. Having married Samuel Fisher Babbit, and raised her three children, in 1966 Natalie and her husband collaborated on a children's book, *The Forty-Ninth Magician*. She wrote the book, while her husband illustrated it. The publisher, Farrar, Straus & Giroux were so impressed, they encouraged the production of more children's books from the husband-wife duo. Babbitt has been writing ever since, and is now an award-winning author of children's books.

Source: Scholastic.com

About the Playwright

Mark Frattaroli is not the first playwright to try to adapt *Tuck Everlasting*. When he approached Natalie Babbitt (his mother-in-law) about a new adaptation she was reluctant at first. Eventually they agreed on a version true to the original.

Tuck Everlasting was first presented at Louisville Children's Theatre as a workshop in 1991. He has also adapted Babbitt's novel *The Search for Delicious*. Frattaroli attended Connecticut College, and later did graduate studies at Brown University.

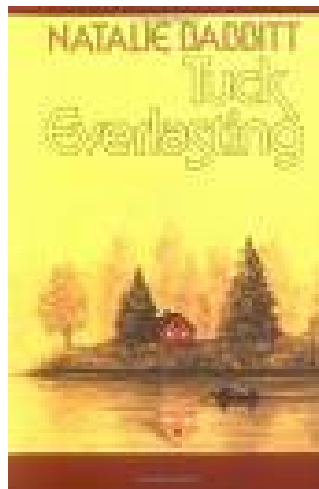
Source: Chicago Playworks production guide to *Tuck Everlasting*

About the Play

Tuck Everlasting is the story of Winnie Foster, a girl who is bored of being surrounded by adults, and who sets out for an adventure with a toad for company. She leaves her hometown, Treegap, and soon runs into seventeen-year-old Jesse Tuck. He introduces her to his family, his parents, Angus and Mae, and his brother Miles. They panic when they see her and, as we realize they have a secret that they're scared of making public, they take Winnie to their home.

It turns out that eighty-seven years ago, the Tuck family drank from an ordinary spring. But the water was not so ordinary. In fact it gave them immortality! Soon we learn Jesse isn't actually seventeen at all, but a hundred and four years old! With the secret finally out, the Tucks and Winnie become friends.

But who's the Stranger in the Yellow Suit? And why does he keep bothering Winnie's Grandma? And will Winnie ever decide to return to her worried Grandma? *Tuck Everlasting* takes place over seventy years from 1880 to 1950, and touches upon the concept of the cycle of life, and what happens when we disrupt it.



About the Book

Tuck Everlasting was first published in 1975 and is now a modern classic. The play is an adaptation of the novel. In other words, places, chronology and names might have been changed to suit the playwright's vision of the novel for the theatre.

In 1981, Babbitt was the U.S. nominee for the Hans Christian Andersen Medal, the highest international recognition given to an author of children's books.

Character Breakdown



Winnie Foster

She is around ten years old when we first meet her. Longs for company her own age. Wants to run away and experience a new adventure.

Mae Tuck

Mom of the Tuck family. Practical and kind.

Angus Tuck

Dad of the Tuck family. When we meet him, he just wants to dream and sleep.

Miles Tuck

Eldest of the Tuck children. Saddened by his immortality. His wife left him as she couldn't cope with him being the same age forever.

Jesse Tuck

The youngest of the Tuck family. A beautiful seventeen year old boy.

The Stranger in the Yellow Suit

Mysterious, but in a bad way.

The Constable

Friendly but slightly slow.

Granny Foster

Lived in Treemap for her entire life. Winnie's grandmother. Worries about her granddaughter, and occasionally nags her. A survivor and feisty.



The Setting

Treegap is clearly a small town that is pre-industrialized. In other words, you do not hear of large-scale factories, of huge workforces, nor of cramped living conditions. It's a small community, where the presence of the Stranger arouses everyone's suspicions. The Foster family, like the Tuck family, is a small, close-knit unit that does not rely on others to take care of them. Theirs is a fairly simple life.

But in these small communities, it is easy for everyone to know each other's business. That is why, when the townsfolk realize that the Tucks are not aging, they are then forced to leave the community. In the late nineteenth century, seemingly inexplicable things were not necessarily always explored through scientific fact. People believed in witches, magic and the supernatural, and wanted to punish anybody who seemed different. In fact, in the late nineteenth century traveling "freak" shows were all the rage. People would line up to see dwarves, conjoined twins, the tallest man in the world, and those who could perform various tricks. Of course, today we know there is a medical explanation behind all of these conditions. Things were very different back then, and this is why the Tucks must leave their home. Without the support of the people of Treegap they cannot survive in that community.

The Life-Cycle

Every organism, whether it is a fly, a flower, a dog, or a person, follows the same pattern in terms of their life stages.

These are:

Birth

Maturity

Reproduction

Death

For example:

1. An adult butterfly lays an egg.
2. This egg becomes a caterpillar.
3. This caterpillar only gets bigger and bigger.
4. They then attach themselves to a twig and form a hard outer shell.
5. Out of this shell emerges a beautiful, colorful butterfly.
6. And so the cycle will repeat itself all again.

This is known as the **Life Cycle**. It is sometimes also known as the Circle of Life. This system has been the way in which life has been structured since the world came into being. We all share the same life process: we were all born, we will all get older, we will all die, and new life will begin again.

This is why immortality, as explored in *Tuck Everlasting*, is considered disadvantageous. The Tucks will never know what it is to grow old, to experience new life, and to leave this world. In other words, they will never share the same experiences as the rest of the human race.

ACTIVITY

Listen to Elton John's song "The Circle of Life" from *The Lion King* and analyze its words.

How does the song make you feel?

Do the feelings from the music match the meaning or theme from the words?

The Fountain of Youth

In *Tuck Everlasting* the Tucks drink from a spring that makes them live forever.

The **Fountain of Youth** is a very old myth. Today we might talk about it in a figurative sense: those endless ads for facial creams that promise to stop aging, those diets that say you'll regain your youthful figure, the magic potion to make you young again!

But at some points in history people really looked for the water that would freeze the aging process.



The Spanish explorer, Juan Ponce de Leon, was a man of great curiosity. Born in 1460 in Spain, he would become an explorer. At that time many countries of the world were unexplored, and travelers from Europe desperately wanted to find them. His career started off nicely, as he sailed with Christopher Columbus during his second expedition.

In the early 1500s he set off for a small island, and established one of the earliest colonies there. Today this island is known as **Puerto Rico**. There, he heard from the natives rumors of a Fountain of Youth. This Fountain was allegedly positioned on the island of Bimini in the Bahamas. Partly curious, partly inspired by the

promise that the water from this Fountain could freeze a man's aging, so that he might retain his youth, (or maybe he wanted to market and sell the water like the Stranger in a Yellow Suit?) he set off for the Fountain.

In 1513 he led the first European expedition to the Fountain, and thanks to him, we now have Florida! Yes, Florida is the location of the "Fountain of Youth." He named the land "Pascua Florida" meaning place of flowers. And while Ponce de Leon might not have found what he was looking for literally, he did discover a beautiful spring in the state of Florida.

Here's a route of the voyage of Juan Ponce de Leon



*source: William Floyd Middle School Library
Information Center, NY*

Ponce de Leon and his crew sailed from Puerto Rico and landed on the east coast of Florida. They sailed down the coast, around the tip of Florida, and up part of Florida's west coast. They then went back to Puerto Rico via the northern tip of Cuba.

PREPARING YOUR STUDENTS FOR THEIR TRIP TO THE CLEVELAND PLAY HOUSE

This might be the first time that some of your students are attending the theatre. Here is some information about The Cleveland Play House and the production that will help you and your students prepare for your role as audience members.



I. Expected Behavior

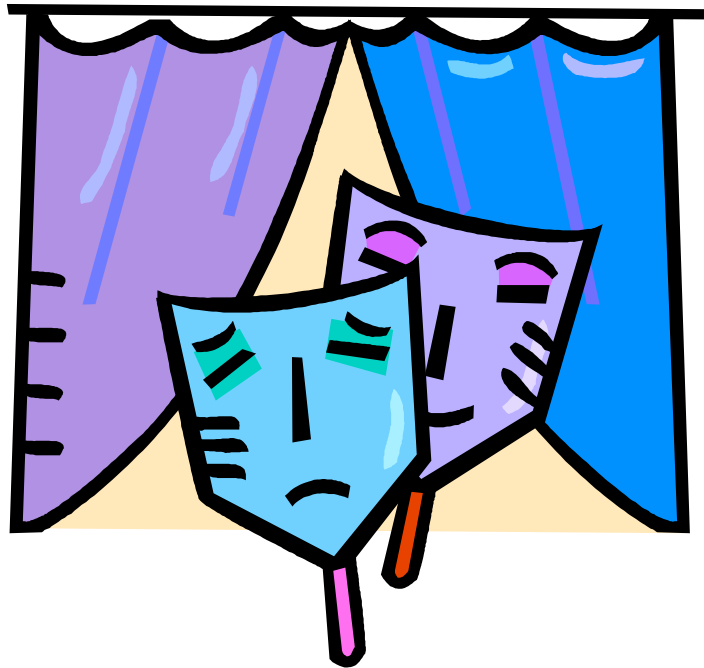
For many children, this production will be their first experience with live theatre, therefore it is important to discuss with them the expected behavior of the audience.

The Cleveland Play House asks that prior to the performance, students are made aware of the following:

- Do not go on stage at any time. The stage will be a proscenium, which is a form of staging in which an arch frames the stage. The stage is at one end of a room and the audience sits in front of it, watching the play through an arch which frames the action.
- It is important that you ask your students not to disturb the action on stage nor try to communicate to audience members sitting around them.
- All aisles must be kept clear throughout the performance.
- Visit the washroom before the show. It is hard to leave once the performance begins.
- Do not bring food or drinks into the theatre. Theatre is not a place for popcorn and rustling candy wrappers.
- Try not to talk throughout the performance – even whispering voices can be distracting.
- Don't leave your seat unless instructed by the teacher or theatre staff.
- Turn off your cell phone, if you have brought one, and don't use a camera or video recorder.

II Relationship to the Theatre

- There is an implicit understanding between audience and performer to “suspend disbelief.” Here, both audience and performer pretend that the action is real and is happening for the first time.
- The characters in the play will not look exactly like the drawings provided. They will wear an item that will help us know who the character is.
- Sometimes actors, costumed in neutral colors, who move scenery and props, are considered “invisible” by other performers and the audience.
- Some performers may play many characters.
- Nontraditional casting in which actors play roles regardless of their gender and/or race.
- Characters sometimes speak their thoughts aloud (soliloquy) so that the audience knows what the characters are thinking.



III. The Production

There are many people who work together to put on a play. The whole process takes about one year from deciding to produce the play to the play's opening night. Each team consists of the following people:

- **Playwright:** a person who writes plays is called a playwright. A playwright writes lines (dialogue) for the actors.

- **Director:** the person who interprets the play. S/He works with the designers to establish the concept of the play. After several meetings s/he will agree on the production elements to be used for the show including sets, costumes, props, lights and sounds. The director also chooses the actors to play the different parts in the show. Once rehearsals begin the director conveys his ideas to the actors by giving them directions on their character development and blocking their movements. Once the play opens for the public, the majority of the director's job is over.
- **Actors:** actors pretend to be the characters in a play. Sometimes, a grown-up plays the part of a child. They might also play old people or animals. Sometimes, one actor plays many different characters. Watch the ways in which actors change their voices, movements, or costumes to become different characters.
- **Set Designer:** the person who designs the set. S/He creates the world that is seen when you enter the theatre. S/He decides whether there will be real or pretend furniture (such as cubes or chairs). S/He also decides where all the different locations will be on stage. The designer drafts diagrams so the carpenter can build the set and then the designer, or scenic painter, will return to paint everything.
- **Costume Designer:** the person who chooses what clothes the actors will wear. The costume designer decides how each actor should look to represent the character and time period. The designer will sometimes shop for clothing or may create some costumes from scratch.
- **Props Designer:** the person who provides all of the objects used during the play. This person either buys or creates everything that the actors might need to convey the story.
- **Sound Designer:** the person that creates all of the sound effects and music for the play. The sound designer creates the noises that are heard when someone rings a doorbell or a telephone rings.
- **Lighting Designer:** the person that provides the lighting for the play. The designer will decide what color the lights should be to complement the sets and costumes.

Recommended Reading From the Cleveland Public Library

A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle

Meg's father mysteriously disappears after experimenting with the fifth dimension of time travel. Determined to rescue him, Meg and her friends must outwit the forces of evil on a heart-stopping journey through space and time.

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry

In 1943, during the German occupation of Denmark, ten-year-old Annemarie learns how to be brave and courageous when she helps shelter her Jewish friend from the Nazis.

Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O'Dell

Left alone on a beautiful but isolated island off the coast of California, Karana, a young Indian girl spends eighteen years, not only merely surviving through her enormous courage and self-reliance, but also finding a measure of happiness in her solitary life.

The Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson

The life of a ten-year-old boy in rural Virginia expands when he becomes friends with a newcomer who subsequently meets an untimely death trying to reach their hideaway, Terabithia, during a storm.

Holes by Louis Sachar

As further evidence of his family's bad fortune which they attribute to a curse on a distant relative, Stanley Yelnats is sent to a hellish correctional camp in the Texas desert where he finds his first real friend, a treasure, and a new sense of himself.

Reading Standards

Reading Applications: Literary Text

Kindergarten-3

- B. Use supporting details to identify and describe main ideas, characters, and setting.
- C. Recognize the defining characteristics and features of different types of literary forms and genres.
- E. Identify the theme of a literary text.

Grades 3-5

- A. Describe and analyze the elements of character development.
- B. Analyze the importance of setting.
- C. Identify the elements of plot and establish a connection between an element and a future event.
- D. Differentiate between the points of view in narrative text.

Communication: Oral & Visual

Kindergarten-2

- A. Use active listening strategies to identify the main idea and to gain information from oral presentations.
- B. Connect prior experiences, insights and ideas to those of a speaker.

Grades 3-4

- A. Demonstrate active listening strategies by asking clarifying questions and responding to questions with appropriate elaboration.
- B. Respond to presentations and media messages by stating the purpose and summarizing main ideas.

Social Studies Standards

Social Studies: People in Societies

Kindergarten-2

- A. Identify practices and products of diverse cultures.

Social Studies: Economics

Kindergarten-2

- A. Explain how the scarcity of resources requires people to make choices to satisfy their wants.

Social Studies: Citizenship Rights & Responsibilities

Kindergarten-2

- A. Describe the results of cooperation in group settings and demonstrate the necessary skills.
- B. Demonstrate personal accountability including making choices and taking responsibility for personal actions.

Grades 3-5

- A. Explain how citizens take part in civic life in order to promote the common good.

Fine Arts Standards: Drama/Theatre
Kindergarten-Grade 4

Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts

Benchmark A

Recognize and demonstrate audience/viewer behavior appropriate for the context and style of the art form.

Analyzing and Responding

Benchmark A

Use dramatic/theatrical vocabulary and concepts in responding to dramatic/theatrical experiences.

Benchmark B

Explain the impact of choices made by artists (playwrights, actors, directors, designers) in dramatic/theatrical works or experiences.

Benchmark C

Apply criteria for evaluating theatrical work.

Valuing Drama/Theatre/Aesthetic Reflection

Benchmark A

Apply personal criteria for evaluating drama/theatre works or experiences.

Benchmark B

Represent the diversity of personal opinions expressed in response to a drama/theatre work or experience.