



## Learning Guide: *The Little Bread Hen*

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### General Performance Information

**Show Length:** 45-minutes plus optional question and answer session

**Types of Puppets:** Rod puppets, hand puppets, mouth puppets and object puppetry.

*The Little "Bread" Hen* tells the story of a certain Red Hen...but with a twist! Children have always enjoyed the story of the Little Hen who worked to make bread...but nobody would help her. And countless children have asked, "Why wouldn't the other animals help?" In *The Little "Bread" Hen*, you'll hear a new version of the story of *The Little Red Hen*. This story stars Millie, the chicken. You will find out where she first learned to bake bread, and you'll discover why the other animals on the farm would not help her. Several familiar tales will be intertwined into this tale (if only by brief reference): *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss, *The Brementown Musicians* by The Brothers Grimm, *Stone Soup*, *The Fox and The Hen* and, of course, *The Little Red Hen*. If these stories can be covered in advance, students will have another "layer" of understanding of the performance.

This show is an original work by *Barefoot Puppet Theatre*. In this show, you will see a wide variety of types of puppets: hand puppets, rod puppets and object puppets. Heidi Rugg designs and creates all of the puppets in the Barefoot Puppets studio.

### A Bit about Bread

Did you eat **bread** today? If so, you aren't alone. Every day, billions of people around the world eat bread of all kinds. Bread can be fried, baked or covered with tomato sauce and cheese – yum!

In many ways, **the story of bread is also the story of mankind**. Many thousands of years ago, people gathered grains and seeds from the wild, crushed them between rocks, mixed them with water, and baked or boiled them over the fire. About six thousand years ago, in ancient Mesopotamia, **civilization** began when people first began to grow grains on purpose instead of just cooking whatever they could find.

*Where would your lunchbox  
be without SANDWICHES?*

You can thank John Montague, the British Earl of Sandwich, for this clever way to serve food. According to stories, the Earl was too busy playing card games in London to stop and eat. He asked the servants to bring him meat between two slices of bread, so he could munch with one hand and play cards with the other!

The earliest breads were baked on rocks heated in a fire. They were **unleavened**—that is, they were flat like crackers or tortillas, because they had nothing in them to make them rise and become fluffy and chewy. It was the Egyptians who discovered that adding **yeast** to bread dough would make it rise. They didn't know that yeast is a microscopic plant that “eats” sugar and gives off a gas that causes little bubbles to form throughout the dough—but they knew that bread made with yeast tasted good and was fun to chew.

Today, we can buy **yeast** at the store in packages. For most of history, however, people had to get their yeast in others ways. One method was to put ale or beer in the dough (beer contains yeast). Another way was to use a starter – a piece of dough that is left out to attract the yeast that floats around naturally in our air. A starter or “sponge” is the secret behind sourdough bread.

### TASTE TEST

Try some unleavened breads, like matzos, pita bread, or corn tortillas. Then taste leavened breads (corn bread, sandwich bread, sourdough bread, etc.) How are they different? The same? Can you see the tiny bubbles in the leavened bread?

Many of the world's great **inventions and discoveries** came about because people were looking for better ways to make bread. The Egyptians devised new ways to harvest grain. The ancient Romans invented mills to grind it that were powered by wind or water, and they also came up with the first ovens. Many centuries later, French bakers figured out that they could charge more for bread by adding chocolate and sugar. Their cakes became the ultimate luxuries for wealthy people.

## Fun Bread Facts

**PRETZELS** were invented over a thousand years ago. One legend is that a priest wanted to do something fun for the children he knew. He rolled his bread dough into thin ropes and twisted them into the shape of a pair of praying hands. This soft, chewy “prayer bread” came to be called “pretzels!”

The English words **LORD** and **LADY** originally had to do with bread. In Old English ( a language spoken hundreds of years ago, that eventually became our modern English) *hlaforð* meant “bread keeper”. Over time, this word was shortened into “lord”. *Hlaeffdigge*, meaning “bread mixer” or “bread kneader”, was simplified into “lady”.

## Activities

**Be a Puppeteer:** Rod puppets are one of the kinds of puppets Heidi Rugg created for *The Little Bread Hen*. It's easy to **make your own rod puppets**. Just draw an animal or person on a piece of stiff paper (paper plates work well). Decorate any wild way you want—with markers, glitter, feathers, or unexpected things you find around the house. Finally, cut out the figure and tape or glue it to a pencil, ruler, or Popsicle stick. Now **put on a puppet play** for your friends!

**Have a Bread Feast:** What kinds of bread does your family eat? Make a list. Does anyone in your family bake bread? What kind? Who taught them? What is used to make each kind of bread? What do you eat with it? Are there special breads for special times? Draw a picture of your and you family with the bread you like best!

Bring your family's favorite bread to class—enough for everyone to taste some. Have a taste test and share recipes – you could even create a class cookbook!

**A Little Bit of Butter:** Before people could buy butter in stores, they made it themselves. "Churning" butter out of cream was a simple chore that was often given to kids to do.

To make butter yourself, you'll need 1 cup (8 oz) of heavy whipping cream (room temperature), 1 jar with a tight-fitting lid, and 3-4 clean marbles. Put the marbles in the jar, pour in the cream, and put the lid on tightly. Now, SHAKE!!! Give everyone a chance. What do you see happening?

After about 20 minutes, you'll have about ¼ cup of butter (about ½ stick) in the bottom of the jar. Pour off the buttermilk (save it to give everyone a taste!). Remove the marbles and spread it on the bread of your choice. ENJOY!

## Vocabulary

**Bread** – a food usually baked whose main ingredient is flour or meal.

**Civilization** – a relatively high level of culture: and technological development.

**Yeast** – a one-celled fungus that "eats" sugar and gives off carbon monoxide gas.

**Leaven or leavening** – a substance (like yeast, sourdough, baking powder, etc.) that causes bread to rise by producing gas or fermentation.

## Suggested Activities:

\*Share favorite family dishes, special recipes.

\*Check out the science experiments in "Loaves of Fun." See resources below.

\*Cook up different kinds of bread (see some of the books below).

\*Think of your own fairy tales to change to make a new story!

## Recommended Reading

**Loaves of Fun: A History of Bread With Activities and Recipes from Around the World** by Elizabeth M. Harbison, John Harbison (Illustrator) This book shares the extraordinary history of bread-making starting back in 73,000 B.C. and the histories of many civilizations. It is complete with science experiments, wonderful timelines and funny anecdotes. A great book for the classroom!

**Bread, Bread, Bread** by Ann Morris (Author), Ken Heyman (Illustrator) Great book for showing bread from all over the world in all its various shapes, sizes and colors. For preschoolers.

**Everybody Bakes Bread** by Norah Dooley, Peter J. Thornton (Illustrator) A great story about all the different kinds of bread in an ethnically diverse neighborhood...with recipes! (Ages 4-8)

**Puppetry in Early Childhood Education** by Tamara Hunt and Nancy Renfro. Austin: Nancy Renfro Studios, 1979. A treasure for the classroom teacher who wants to incorporate puppets into the learning experience.

**A Show Of Hands, Using Puppets with Young Children** by Ingrid M. Crepeau and Ann M. Richards (Red Leaf Press, 2003; [www.redleafpress.org](http://www.redleafpress.org)). Great puppet-making and puppet-show ideas from another favorite Discovery Theater puppeteer, Ingrid Crepeau of Dinorock.

**Puppeteer** by Kathryn Lasky. The story of Master Puppeteer Paul Vincent Davis: a great book for elementary readers who want to know what it takes to be a professional puppeteer.

[www.sagecraft.com/puppetry](http://www.sagecraft.com/puppetry) and <http://www.puppet.org/>. The best websites for puppetry information for teachers.

**I Wonder How Bread is Made**, by Neil Curtis and Peter Greenland. Photos illustrate the bread making process, from wheat field to bakery. Ages 4-8.

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