

Roseneath Theatre



DANNY

KING OF THE BASEMENT

By David S. Craig

CLASSROOM GUIDE

Danny King of the Basement tells the story of Danny 'Delco' Carter, the 'king of moving'. In two years, he and his mom, Louise, have moved eight times because there's never enough money to pay the rent. Far from losing hope, Danny makes friends by inspiring the kids around him to turn every challenge into a game. When Danny moves into a basement apartment on upscale Clinton Street, he finds his new friends may have more material things than he does, but that they too have problems of their own: Penelope's parents are separated and only talk to her on one of her two cell phones and Angelo's Dad is as scary as a dinosaur when he's mad – which is most of the time. But Danny's imagination creates a sense of community that allows his friends to cope with their problems and ultimately to help Danny when he needs them the most!

CHARACTERS

in Danny King of the Basement

Danny has lived in eight homes in two years. He's creative and makes friends easily. Danny lives with his mom, Louise, and he is responsible for managing the money in his family. While he and his mom don't have much money, they are proud and don't want anyone to feel sorry for them. Danny is good at helping people to get along better but has a difficult time with reading.



Penelope



Penelope is good at ballet and likes having nice clothes and pretty hair. Her parents are both very busy and talk to her mostly on one of her two cell-phones. Penny can be mean when she doesn't know someone very well, but she is honest and always keeps her promises. Penelope is very observant about people which makes her a good friend to have.

Angelo loves hockey, and while he's a good player, he freezes up when it comes to scoring goals. While he likes to meet new people, Angelo isn't always that good at making new friends. He is afraid of making mistakes and sometimes this prevents him from having fun. Angelo is frightened of his dad, who looks and sounds like a dinosaur



Louise



Louise is Danny's mom and she loves him very much! She dreams of becoming a web-designer, but is also a very good waitress. She's not always very good with money though, and sometimes she's not as responsible as she needs to be. But she's always there for Danny when he needs her most and teaches him to be creative and to dream big.

CHILDHOOD POVERTY in Canada & the United States

Like many children growing up in North America today, Danny is faced with not having enough money to make ends meet. At times, he and his mother struggle to pay for even basic necessities, let alone keep up with the rent. They have to be careful about how they spend the money they do have, and this can make life challenging for Danny, especially considering the fact that his friends and classmates do have money and nice things. Below are some thoughts from other school-age kids about what poverty has meant in their lives.

Poverty Is...

- ...Not being able to go to McDonald's
- ...Getting a basket from the Santa Fund
- ...Feeling ashamed when my dad can't get a job
- ...Not buying books at the book fair
- ...Not getting to go to birthday parties
- ...Hearing my mom and dad fight over money
- ...Not ever getting a pet because it costs too much
- ...Wishing you had a nice house
- ...Not being able to go camping
- ...Not getting a hot dog on hot dog day
- ...Not getting pizza on pizza day
- ...Not being able to have your friends sleep over
- ...Pretending that you forgot your lunch
- ...Being afraid to tell your mom that you need gym shoes
- ...Not having breakfast sometimes
- ...Not being able to play hockey
- ...Sometimes really hard because my mom gets scared and she cries
- ...Not being able to go to Cubs or play soccer
- ...Not being able to take swimming lessons
- ...Not being able to afford a holiday
- ...Not having pretty barrettes for your hair
- ...Not having your own private backyard
- ...Being teased for the way you are dressed
- ...Not getting to go on school trips.*

* Responses from Grade 4 & 5 students in North Bay, Ontario, quoted in *Our Neighbours' Voices: Will We Listen?*, The Interfaith Social Assistance Reform

VOCABULARY

Here are some things you might hear during the performance. Take some time in the computer lab to research these terms before you watch the show.

Welfare cheque:

First and last month's rent:

Landlady/Landlord:

Human Resources/Unemployment:

Breakfast Program:



TALKING THEATRE

There are many people responsible for bringing a show to life. While it may be clear that actors are important, you may not have realized how many people work “behind the scenes”. Here are just a few of the people who worked on this show:



Playwright

The playwright is the person who writes the story. Just like a book, a play is written by one person before the actors are even hired, so this is a very important job in the theatre. Without the playwright, there would be no play! The person who wrote our play, *Danny King of the Basement*, is David S. Craig.

Director

The director is the first person who reads the play to decide how it should be brought to life. This person makes all kinds of decisions, like which actors should be hired and how all the different pieces will come together. All of the other creative people in a play report to the director because he or she knows how the play will look and feel when it's done. A man named Richard Greenblatt directed this play.



Set Designer

The set designer also reads the play and then talks to the director about it. They have to figure out how to make the stage work to suit the story and the director's needs. Because our show had to travel, Andjelija Djuric also needed to figure out how to make the set fit into our tiny truck! How do you think she did it?

Stage Manager

The stage manager—in a way—has two jobs. During rehearsals, he or she will listen to the director and watch the actors, to make notes about everything that happens. Once the play goes on tour, the stage manager takes on all responsibility for the show, and for making sure everyone stays true to what the director created. You'll meet our stage manager at your school or theatre on the day of the show!

Post-Performance DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. After seeing the play, have your impressions of poverty and homelessness changed at all? How so?
2. In what sense would you say that Danny is "homeless"? How do you think Danny feels about his situation?
3. Danny is a child. Why do you think he has been given the responsibility of managing his family's money? Do you think he is doing a good job?
4. As a class, outline the "characteristics of a good friend". Decide what makes Danny a good friend. What about Angelo? Penelope?
5. What are some of the things Danny does to help him make new friends? How do you think he learned how to do this?
6. How does Danny get Penelope and Angelo to be friends with each other, when they have been enemies for so long?
7. Why do you think Danny and his mom have moved so many times? Do you think they will have to move again? Why or why not?
8. There are 15 characters in the play *Danny King of the Basement*, but only four actors in our production. What do you think of the director's decision to stage the play this way?
9. If you had the opportunity to meet Danny, what would you want to ask him? What would you ask his mother, Louise?
10. What was your favourite part of *Danny King of the Basement*?