

What to Expect When You See a Play

A *play* is a performance where *actors* show and tell what happens in a story. The actors are real people pretending they are *characters* in the story. Actors can pretend to be people, or animals, or even imaginary creatures. The actors usually wear *costumes* to help you know which characters they are pretending to be. A *musical* is a play that includes singing and dancing.

Actors can perform a play anywhere, really – outdoors, or in a classroom, or a gym. But a play is often performed on a

stage in a *theater*.

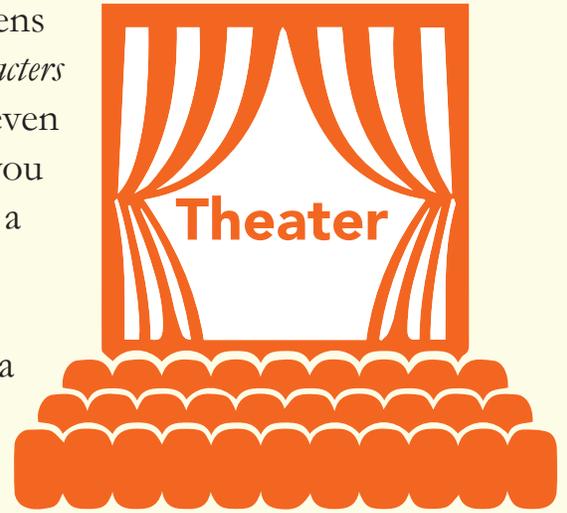
Lights above and

around the stage shine on the actors faces so we can see their expressions. If an area on the stage is lit up, that's where you will want to direct your attention! Sometimes the lights become brighter or darker or change color during different parts of the play. Changes in lighting help us understand how the characters in the play are feeling, or the time of day in the story, or even what the weather is like.

The stage also has *scenery*, such as rooms with windows and doors and furniture, where the actors perform. The scenery usually includes *props* – objects that the actors pick up and use, such as cups or

pillows or telephones. The scenery helps us understand where the story is taking place. Watch for changes in lighting and scenery during the play.

When you see a play, the actors want you to pretend along with them. They want you, the audience, to make believe they are really the characters in the story. They want you to pretend the scenery is real. And they want you to listen carefully to what they are saying, and pay attention to how they look and to how they move around the stage, so that you can understand the story and enjoy the play.





A theater is a special building designed to help people watch and hear a play or another kind of *performance*. When you enter the theater, an *usher* will greet you and help you find your seat. You may sit and talk quietly until the lights in the theater dim. This is a signal that the performance is about to begin. You might also hear some music begin to play. Listen to the music. How does it make you feel? What does the music tell you about the play you are about to see?

Going to the theater to see a live performance is exciting! A *matinee* performance is a show presented during the day. You might have been to a movie theater to see a movie, but being a member of the audience for a live performance is different from watching a movie. The actors, dancers or musicians on the stage are performing right in front of you – live! They have practiced a lot to put on a great performance for you. The performers are counting on you, as a member of the audience, to listen and and watch carefully. When something is funny, the performers like it when you laugh. You can even cry if something is sad.

At the end of the performance, the actors, singers, dancers or musicians will bow to the audience.

This is called a curtain call. This is your chance to thank the performers with applause. Clap your hands together to show the actors and other performers how much you liked the play. After the actors leave the stage, stay in your seat until the lights in the theater become bright again, then walk slowly out of the theater.

Seeing a play is fun! You can talk about the play afterward with other members of the audience. And maybe you'll even want to read more about the story, write your own story, or be an actor in a play!



Photos from *THE CAT IN THE HAT*
Cardinal Stage Company, 2013
Director: Christine O'Grady
Set Design: Mark Peters

Costume Design: Angie Malone
Lighting Design: Natalie Carpucci
Puppetry Design/Construction: Natasha Heines
Properties Design/Construction: Julia Whalen



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