Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day
Adapted from Judith Viorst’s book
Book and Lyrics by Judith Viorst, music by Shelly Markham
*Especially for Grades K-6

By the Barter Players, Gilliam Stage at Barter Theatre, Spring 2017

(NOte: standards listed below are for both reading the book Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day, seeing a performance of the play, and completing the study guide.)

Virginia SOLs
English – K.1, K.5, K.8, K.9, K.12, 1.1, 1.5, 1.8, 1.9, 1.13, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 2.12, 3.4, 3.5, 3.9, 3.11, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7, 4.9, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.7, 5.9, 6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5, 6.7, 6.9
Theatre – 6.1, 6.5, 6.7, 6.18, 6.20
Music – K.11, 1.12, 1.16, 2.8, 2.9, 2.11, 3.9, 3.10, 4.8, 4.9, 4.11, 5.8, 5.9, 5.14,

Tennessee/North Carolina Common Core State Standards
English/Language Arts - Reading Literacy: K.1, K.3, K.5, K.7, K.9, 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.9, 1.10, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.10, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.9, 3.10, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.7, 4.9, 4.10, 5.1, 5.3, 5.4, 5.9, 5.10
English Language Arts – Writing: K.1, K.5, K.7, K.8, 1.1, 1.3, 1.5, 1.8, 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 2.8, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.7, 3.8, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 6.9

Tennessee Fine Arts Curriculum Standards
Theatre – K.1, K.3, K.4, K.5, K.6, 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 4.3, 4.6, 4.7, 5.1, 5.3, 5.6, 5.7, 6-8.1, 6-8.6, 6-8.7
Music – K.7, K.8, 1.7, 1.8, 2.7, 2.8, 3.7, 3.8, 4.7, 4.8, 5.7, 5.8, 6-8.7, 6-8.8

North Carolina Essential Standards
Theatre Arts – K.A.1, K.AE.1, 1.A.1, 1.AE.1, 1.CU.2, 2.C.2, 2.A.1, 2.AE.1, 3.C.1, 3.C.2, 3.A.1, 3.CU.1, 3.CU.2, 4.C.1, 4.A.1, 4.AE.1, 5.C.1, 5.A.1, 5.AE.1, 5.CU.2, 6.A.1, 6.AE.1, 6.CU.2
Music – K.CR.1, 1.CR.1, 2.CR.1, 3.CR.1, 4.CR.1, 5.MR.1, 5.CR.1, 6.CR.1

Setting
Various locations in the world of six-year-old Alexander including his home, his school, the dentist’s office, a shoe store and his father’s office.
Characters

*Alexander* – a six-year-old boy with a finely honed sense of injustice
*Nick* – Alexander’s brother, nine years old
*Anthony* – Alexander’s brother, eleven years old
*Mother* – Alexander’s mother
*Father* – Alexander’s father
*Albert Mayo* – a classmate
*Becky* – a classmate
*Audrey* – a classmate
*Philip Parker* – a classmate
*Paul* – a classmate
*Mrs. Dickens* – Alexander’s teacher
*Dr. Fields* – a dentist
*Shoe Salesman* – works at the shoe store

Note: Cast Size and Doubling of Actors

In this production of *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, we will be using only six actors, with some actors playing more than one role. Doubling of actors requires distinction between characters. In this production, characters will be distinguished by costume, voice and other physical character traits.

Synopsis

Alexander is having a bad day. A terrible day. A terrible, horrible day. To be quite honest, it’s a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day. Not only does Alexander wake up with gum in his hair, but his mother forgets to pack him dessert, and his best friend decides he’s not his best friend anymore. And if that’s not bad enough, Alexander’s brothers don’t have any cavities but – he does! And just when it can’t get any worse, there are lima beans for supper and – yuck! – kissing on TV. It is enough to make anyone want to go to Australia. Alexander’s struggles with life’s daily dramas will not only entertain but educate young audiences as they identify with Alexander and the obstacles he encounters – because bad days happen to everyone. Even in Australia…

Vocabulary: Define the following words and use each in a sentence

- skateboard
- scold
- kangaroo
- mistake
- machine
- koala
- carpool
- copier
- eucalyptus
- carsick
- marble
- wallaby
- invisible
- allergy
- terrified
- tack
- barber
- promise
- dentist
- comedian
- nourish
- cavity
- duet
- cherish
- elevator
- swollen
- delight
Biography of the Author/Playwright
Judith Viorst was born and raised in New Jersey and has lived in Washington, DC since her marriage to political writer Milton Viorst in 1960. The have three sons whose names are the same as the brothers in her play *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*. A graduate of Rutgers University and the Washington Psychoanalytic Institute, Viorst is the author of numerous books of poetry and prose for both children and adults. Among her 14 children’s books are two other Alexander stories and two collections of poems – *If I Were in Charge of the World and Other Worries* and *Sad Underwear and Other Complications*. Her 12 adult books include *Necessary Losses*, *Imperfect Control*, a comic novel, and six collections of poetry. She has also collaborated with Shelly Markham on an adult musical, *Love and Shrimp*, which has been performed around the country.

Biography of the Composer
Shelly Markham trained at the Chicago Musical College, then moved to New York City where he began studying with Lehnman Engel at the BMI Musical Theatre Workshop. He was chosen to study in the ASCAP-Disney Workshop with a revue called *Too Old for the Chorus*, which opened to critical acclaim at the Celebration Theatre in Los Angeles and the Berkshire Theatre Festival in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. In addition to the two shows he has collaborated on with Judith Viorst (*Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* and *Love and Shrimp*), he has scored the PBS production of *Charley’s Aunt*, composed shows based on family classics (including *Tom Sawyer* and *The Prince and the Pauper*) for producers Fran and Barry Weissler, written for *Captain Kangaroo* for CBS, and composed a musical based on the book *Flavia and the Dream Maker* for the Access Theatre in Santa Barbara, California.
A Brief History

Barter Theatre was founded during the Great Depression by Robert Porterfield, an enterprising young actor. He and his fellow actors found themselves out of work and hungry in New York City. Porterfield contrasted that to the abundance of food, but lack of live theatre, around his home region in Southwest Virginia. He returned to Washington County with an extraordinary proposition: bartering produce from the farms and gardens of the area to gain admission to see a play.

Barter Theatre opened its doors on June 10, 1933 proclaiming, “With vegetables you cannot sell, you can buy a good laugh.” The price of admission was 40 cents or the equivalent in produce, the concept of trading “ham for Hamlet” caught on quickly. At the end of the first season, the Barter Company cleared $4.35 in cash, two barrels of jelly and enjoyed a collective weight gain of over 300 pounds.

Playwrights including Noel Coward, Tennessee Williams and Thornton Wilder accepted Virginia ham as payment for royalties. An exception was George Bernard Shaw, a vegetarian, who bartered the rights to his plays for spinach.

Today, Barter Theatre has a reputation as a theatre where many actors performed before going on to achieve fame and fortune. The most recognized of these alumni include Gregory Peck, Patricia Neal, Ernest Borgnine, Hume Cronyn, Ned Beatty, Gary Collins, Larry Linville and Frances Fisher. The list also included James Burrows, creator of Cheers, Barry Corbin, and the late Jim Varney.

Robert Porterfield passed away in 1971. His successor, Rex Partington, had been at Barter in the 1950s as an actor and in the 1970s as stage manager. Rex returned as chief administrator from 1972 until his retirement in 1992. In March 2006, he passed away.

Richard Rose was named the producing artistic director in October 1992. In that time, attendance has grown from 42,000 annual patrons to more than 163,000 annual patrons. Significant capital improvements have also been made. Including maintenance to both theatres, and in 2006, the addition of The Barter Café at Stage II and dramatic improvements to Porterfield Square.

Barter represents three distinct venues of live theatre: the Gilliam Stage at Barter Theatre (formerly known as Main Stage), Barter Theatre Stage II and The Barter Players. The Gilliam Stage with over 500 seats, features traditional theatre in a luxurious setting. Barter Stage II, across the street from the Gilliam Stage and beyond Porterfield Square, offers seating for 167 around a thrust stage in an intimate setting and is perfect for more adventurous productions. The Barter Players is a talented ensemble of actors, producing plays for young audiences throughout the year.

History is always in the making at Barter Theatre, building on legends of the past; Barter looks forward to the challenge of growth in the future.
Australia Fun Facts!

In this play, Alexander talks about moving to Australia. Here are some things he should know before he packs his bags…

There are 1500 species of Australian spiders!

There are over 6000 species of flies, approximately 4000 species of ants, and about 350 species of termites!

Australia has the world's largest population of wild camels with one hump!
The Tasmanian Devil *does* exist, and it has the jaw strength of a crocodile!

The rainwater in Tasmania is some of the purest in the world. Tasmania is also considered to have the best air in the world.

There are more than 150 million sheep in Australia and only some 20 million people.

Other animals found in Australia

- Platypus
- Kangaroo
- Koala
- Emu
Because Australia is located so far south of the equator, its nickname is “The Land Down Under.” It is also known as “The Island Continent” and is the only continent that is also a nation!

**Australian Lingo**

English is the language most commonly spoken in Australia, but the Aussies have some words all their own…

- “Barbie”
- “Fairy Floss”
- “Chips”
- “Crisps”
- “Lollie”
- “Bloke”
- “Sheila”
- “Billy”
Color the Koala!
Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

WORD SEARCH

Find the following words below: Alexander, dentist, gum, Anthony, skateboard, lima beans, Nick, white sneakers, Australia, no good, cavity, terrible, kissing, very bad, horrible, wet sweater, Philip Parker, eucalyptus, best friend, copier machine, night light, Albert Moyo, dessert, breakfast cereal, briefcase
Criss-Cross: Use the clues below to fill in the puzzle!

Across
1. Australia’s nickname
4. Philip Parker’s dessert
8. Animal in Australia
10. What Alexander drew
14. Down the drain
17. He uses a drill
18. Have a railroad-train design
19. Alexander and the ______, Horrible, etc.
20. What Alexander found in his cereal box
21. Cool ones have stripes

Down
2. Koala bears eat this
3. Don’t put this in your hair!
5. Dropped in sink
6. Xerox is a brand name
7. A hole found in a tooth
9. Too hot!
11. Dad carries this to work
12. Alexander takes a trip on this
13. Alexander’s former best friend
15. What Alexander ate for dinner
16. Burnt out
17. What Mother forgot to pack
22. Alexander saw this on TV
True and False

Write T if the statement is True and F if the statement is False.

1. ____ Alexander is the youngest brother in a family of three boys.
2. ____ Alexander woke up with jelly in his hair.
3. ____ Nick found a Junior Undercover code ring in his cereal box.
4. ____ Paul drew a picture of an invisible castle.
5. ____ Alexander wants to move to France.
6. ____ Alexander’s father is a dentist.
7. ____ Alexander’s sweater fell in the sink.
8. ____ Alexander’s mom forgot to pack his dessert.
9. ____ Lima beans are Alexander’s favorite meal.
10. ____ Alexander has a Mickey Mouse lunchbox.
11. ____ Anthony, Nick and Alexander got new sneakers.
12. ____ Paul’s new best friend is Philip Parker.
13. ____ Alexander called Australia on his father’s work phone.
14. ____ Alexander’s bath was too cold.

Matching

Match the person or place in the first column with the corresponding description in the second.

1. Nick  a. Paul’s dessert
2. Alexander b. Alexander’s teacher
3. Corvette Stingray car kit c. Home of the copier machine
4. Jelly roll d. Alexander found this in his hair
5. Anthony e. Hates lima beans
6. Dad’s office f. Paul’s second best friend
7. Mrs. Dickens g. Wants red sneakers with white stripes
8. Gum h. What Anthony found in his cereal box
9. Albert Moyo i. Alexander’s oldest brother
Alexander woke up predicting a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day. Do you think Alexander's day might have been better if he had stopped saying how awful it was? How does our outlook affect our day-to-day living?

**LIST IT!**

Make a list of the “bad” things that happened to Alexander. Then make a list of the “good” things. Keep in mind a “good” thing may be nothing more than the lack of a bad consequence. For example: Alexander may have tripped on his skateboard (bad thing) BUT he did not break his leg (good thing)! See how many “good” things you can put on your list!

When Alexander complains that he's having a bad day, he is ignored. How does it make you feel when you are ignored? What would you like someone to do for you when you are having a bad day?

Alexander woke up predicting a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day. Do you think Alexander’s day might have been better if he had stopped saying how awful it was? How does our outlook affect our day-to-day living?

Why did Alexander want to go to Australia? Locate Australia on a globe. How far away is it from your hometown? Using the internet, research airline flights from your hometown to Sydney, Australia. How many times would you have to change planes? In what cities? How long would the overall journey take? How much would it cost? Do you think Alexander could realistically run away to Australia?

Which place would you like to visit when you’re having a bad day? Why?

**ACTIVITY**

Look at a travel brochure for Australia. Now using a similar format (pictures, descriptions, slogans, etc.), create your own brochure for that place you’d like to visit. Keep in mind that you are trying to entice other people to visit as well!
Questions/Activities - After the Play

This play was adapted from the book *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*. In what ways are the play and the book similar? How are they different? Why are they different?

How many characters are in this play? How many actors? What do the actors change, besides their costumes, to become new characters? Were the costumes realistic? Effective?

Locations onstage are called “settings.” What are the various settings of this play? How could you tell when the characters were in a different setting? What changed? How were sound and lights used in establishing the setting? Were they effective? How much scenery was used?

This play was performed as a musical. Do you think the music added anything to the story? Why or why not?

**ACTIVITY**

Using a familiar tune, write a song, from Alexander’s point-of-view, about the invisible castle he drew in school. Make sure your lyrics absolutely convince your teacher that you saw this castle in your imagination – and then explain why it is invisible. Present your song to your class.
WRITE IT!

What was your favorite part in the play? Write a paragraph retelling that part in your own words.

Write a letter to the actors from this production. Tell them what you liked about the play, their performance, etc. Mail your letters to:

The Barter Players
c/o Barter Theatre
P.O. Box 867
Abingdon, VA  24212-0867
ATTN: ALEXANDER

Pick your favorite segment from the book and write your own script for this scene. Keep in mind that, in theatre, the story should be told in dialogue (conversation between two or more characters) and action (what the characters do). Try to avoid the use of a Narrator. Make sure that each one of your characters in the scene has a reason (a motivation) for being in the scene.

Working with other students, rehearse the scene you have scripted and perform it for your class. Was the adapting process easier or harder than you thought it would be?

“Back story” refers to the events in a character’s life that took place before we meet the character in the story. Write a back story for Alexander’s teacher, Mrs. Dickens. What is her first name? Who is her husband? What does he do for a living? What kind of house do they live in? Why did she decide to become a teacher? How long has she been teaching? What happened to her that morning before she came to school? Come up with as many questions as you can about Mrs. Dickens’ life – then make up the answers. As long as they are consistent with Mrs. Dickens’ character in the book, the sky’s the limit!
Suggested Further Reading

Other children’s books by Judith Viorst

Sunday Morning
I’ll Fix Anthony
Try It Again, Sam
The Tenth Good Thing About Barney
Rosie and Michael
Alexander, Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday
If I Were In Charge of the World and Other Worries
The Good-bye Book
Earrings!
The Alphabet from Z to A
Sad Underwear and Other Complications
Alexander, Who’s Not (Do You Hear Me? I Mean It!) Going to Move
Absolutely, Positively Alexander