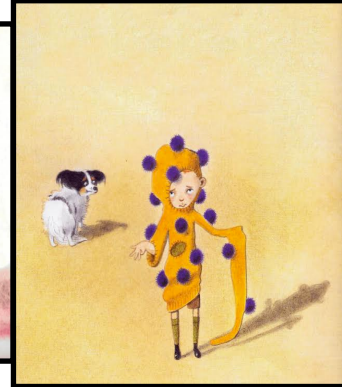




# KidSeries Season 2015-16



## EDUCATOR STUDY GUIDE

Mr. Popper's Penguins (Fall 2015)

Sparky! (Winter 2016)

Lester's Dreadful Sweaters (Spring 2016)

**Lifeline Theatre \* 6912 North Glenwood \* Chicago, Illinois 60626 \* 773-761-4477**

© 2016 by Lifeline Theatre and Julie Ganey. This study guide is only to be used in conjunction with performances at Lifeline Theatre in Chicago, Illinois. Any other use is strictly forbidden.

# Lester's Dreadful Sweaters



Based on the book by K.G. Campbell

Script by Aly Renee Amidei

Lyrics by Aly Renee Amidei, Julie Tallarida and Scott Tallarida

Music by Scott Tallarida

Directed by Heather Currie

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 Introduction to the Student Matinee Program
  - How to Prepare for your Field Trip
  - Traditional Plays vs. Literary Adaptations
  - Jobs in the Theatre
- 6 Synopsis of the Play
- 7 –10 Activity Pages
  - List Scramble
  - Time For Recess!
  - Cousin Clara's Maze
  - A Truly Dreadful Sweater
- 11 Further Adventures: Drama Games relating to *Lester's Dreadful Sweaters*
- 12 Student Review Sheet
- 13 Teacher Comment Form

# Introduction to the Student Matinee Program

Lifeline Theatre's award-winning adaptations of children's literature inspire a love of reading that will activate your students' imaginations and stay with them throughout their lives. Every year, Lifeline Theatre's KidSeries Student Matinee Program serves over 3,000 students, 35 schools, 120 classrooms, and 185 teachers with school-day performances of our season productions.

We encourage you to use this study guide to enrich your students' experience of *Lester's Dreadful Sweaters* and enhance the educational value of the production. Please let us know what parts are helpful to you and where you would like additional materials. There is a teacher feedback form and student survey to copy for your class, and we hope you will take the time to let us know what you thought of both the show and the study guide. We do this work for you and your students, and we want to make it beneficial and user friendly!

---

## PREPARING FOR YOUR FIELD TRIP

### Before the Play: Discuss Appropriate Behavior

Have a discussion with your students about proper theatre etiquette. For example, it's okay to clap and laugh, but it's not okay to talk to your neighbor. Have students compare and contrast the difference between watching a movie and watching a play. Ask if students have been to a play before. If so, what play? What was the experience like? Talk about the concentration that performing in a play requires, and ask the students what they find distracting when they are trying to accomplish a task in front of people. How can they help the actors succeed and do a good job? Let students know that in plays, actors sometimes play several different characters, and change roles by simply swapping out costume pieces and altering their voices and bodies.

### After the Play: Reflect on the Experience

Ask students if they enjoyed the play. Based on this experience, would they like to see other plays? If they've seen plays before, how did this play compare? What happened that they weren't expecting? How was seeing a play a different experience than seeing a movie?

Have the students write a review of the play. Use the attached form or have them write a paragraph or two on their own. Encourage the students to be specific about why they enjoyed a certain part of the play. If they liked a scene because it was funny, have them explain *why* it was funny, what the characters *did* or *said* that was funny, etc. Have the students draw a picture or make a collage of their favorite scene or character. Have them show their picture to the class and explain why that scene or character was their favorite. We invite you to send the reviews and pictures to Lifeline – we enjoy reading them and learning from student feedback.

## TRADITIONAL PLAYS VS. LITERARY ADAPTATIONS

Lifeline Theatre's KidSeries productions are often musical adaptations of picture books and short stories for children. We encourage you to discuss the elements of each version and compare/contrast the two both before and after you see the play.

### *Before the Play: Get to Know the Original Story*

Read the story to your students, or have them read the book themselves, before the production. After reading the book, discuss it with your students, using these questions as launch pads:

- Who are the characters in the story?
- What happens in the beginning of the story? The middle? The end?
- Is there a character in the story you don't like? What makes you dislike this character? How do you think he/she might be portrayed in the stage version?
- What do you think you will see on stage as the actors tell this story?
- How might the play be different from the story? How might it be the same?

### *Beginning, Middle and End*

To encourage sequential thinking, have students act out the beginning, middle and end of the story. Split the students into three groups (or more, depending on the number of students in your class) and have one group enact the beginning, another group enact the middle, and the final group the end. Have the students watching the performances help the group to remember any parts they may have left out. Give the groups the chance to redo their performances, including any elements suggested by their classmates.

### *After the Play: Compare/Contrast the Story to the Play*

- How were the book and the play different?
- How were the book and the play the same?
- What elements of the play surprised you, based on your knowledge of the book?
- Which did you enjoy more, reading the book or watching the play?
- What was your favorite part of the play? Was that your favorite part of the book too?
- Were there any characters in the book that were not in the play, or vice versa?
- Why do you think the playwright added or subtracted certain parts?

## **JOBS IN THE THEATRE: BEHIND THE SCENES**

### *Before the Play: Prepare Your Students to Observe All Aspects of the Production*

When we create a play at Lifeline, we have a community of artists working together to make a complete production. Ask students to be particularly observant during the performance for the parts of the show that are done by the various people listed below:

Playwright/Adaptor/Author – writes the play

Composer – writes the music for the show

Lyricist – writes the words (or “lyrics”) for the songs in the play

Director – directs the play - makes decisions about costumes, lights, sets, and what the actors do onstage

Choreographer – creates and teaches the actors the dances in the show

Lighting Designer – designs and hangs the lights for the show; designs lighting effects

Set Designer – designs and builds the scenery and props for the show

Sound Designer – designs and records the sound effects for the show

Costume Designer – designs and finds or makes the costumes for the show

Stage Manager – helps the director during rehearsals; sets props and scenery before each performance; runs the sound and lights during the performance

Actors – perform the play

### *After the Play: Discuss the Students’ Observations*

Ask the students what they noticed about the “behind-the-scenes” jobs:

- How did the costume designer make the actors look like the characters they were playing?
- What about their costumes helped you to know what kind of people or animals they were?
- Did you have a favorite costume in the show? Which one? Why was it your favorite?
- If there were animal costumes, how did the costume designer create them so that they would look more like animals than people?
- What are some of the locations the play took place in?
- How did the set designer make the settings look realistic?
- What sound effects did you hear in the play? How did those sound effects help you to know what was happening in the play?
- Why do you think the composer chose the styles of music he did? What sorts of music would not make sense with the story?

### ***Lester's Dreadful Sweaters Synopsis***

Lester is a very tidy boy. Every day he sets off to school with his perfect part and neatly tied bow tie. He likes things to be predictable and avoids playing with the other children. He might get hurt, or even worse, DIRTY! When he's home from school some of his favorite tasks include sorting laundry and categorizing things into lists.

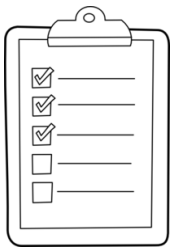
Lester is perfectly content to carry on in his life's predictable manner, until his family receives a very strange phone call from Cousin Clara, whose cottage has been consumed by a crocodile. Lester's mother assures Cousin Clara that she can come stay with them. But who *is* Cousin Clara? Lester's mother sharply replies, "She is clearly someone's cousin and she is in need." Lester must accept the news and roll with the changes, wandering off to add Clara and crocodiles to his list of *Suspicious Stuff Starting with C*.

When Cousin Clara arrives she is little, frilly, and keeps herself constantly busy knitting garments of bizarre colors and patterns at a furious pace. In no time at all she has knit Lester an outlandish sweater - a dreadful present that it would be impolite to refuse. Lester begrudgingly wears his new sweater to school and the other students stare in amazement. Lester is normally so tidy! Enid Measles even requests that he not wear the sweater to her birthday party since it "clearly clashes."

Soon it is time for recess and, blinded by his sweater, Lester trips over another student and falls face first in the mud. He realizes with great joy that he will never be able to get the mud out of his sweater and finally has a reason to enjoy playing with the other children. When he returns home he gleefully informs Cousin Clara that his sweater has been ruined. But Cousin Clara tells him not to worry. She thought this might happen and has made him another!

Miserable in each of Clara's garish creations, Lester finds new and mischievous ways to dispose of each one, but Clara is always ready with a replacement. Unsettled, Lester tosses and turns in his sleep having horrible nightmares of ghastly sweaters. His fears become a reality when suddenly he awakes to find a mountain of eccentric creations waiting for him. Lester realizes today is Enid Measles' birthday party and loses his temper. He wildly destroys all the sweaters with an enormous pair of scissors, only to notice, too late, his parents and Cousin Clara watching in horror. Ashamed of what he has done, Lester apologizes to Clara and willingly accepts when she offers him yet another sweater.

Lester dons his new sweater and makes his way to Enid's party, resisting all temptations to destroy it along the way. Horribly embarrassed, he enters Enid's house only to discover the entertainment is a suspicious set of clowns. However, they are immediately taken with Lester's curious sweater! Getting an idea, Lester asks Enid if he can borrow her clowns and leads them all to Cousin Clara, who has already knit another bulging pile of sweaters. Lester finally admits to Clara that he doesn't particularly like wearing her creations. Clara accepts his confession and reminds him that everyone is different, and sometimes embracing the unexpected is a good thing. Meanwhile, the clowns have become completely smitten with the sweaters and ask Clara to join their caravan as Clown Troupe Costumer! Going wherever her knitting is needed, she accepts and wishes Lester a final farewell. Lester decides to keep one of her sweaters and catalogs a left behind clown nose, just in case he ever becomes a clown. Because after all, anything is possible!



# List Scramble!

Lester loves making lists, but they've gotten all scrambled! Can you cross out the items that don't belong, and write them where **you** would put them? Can you add some of your own ideas to the lists?

## Delicious Desserts

- Ice Cream
- Crocodiles
- Cookies
- Skis
- Milkshakes
- Pudding
- Bad Breath
- Rice Krispy Treats

---

---

---

## Suspicious Things Starting With C

- Caterpillars
- Clowns
- Cooked Cabbage
- Creepy Crawly Critters
- Cake
- Cauliflower
- Crusty Food
- Craft Projects

---

---

---

## Things That Come in Pairs

- Socks
- Salt and Pepper Shakers
- Knitting Needles
- Earplugs
- Mittens
- Gloves
- Twins
- Ice Skates

---

---

---

## Stinky Things Beginning With B

- Blue Cheese
- Cyclones
- Blueberry Pie
- Baby Diapers
- Banana Split
- Bad Breath
- Bleach
- Burning Tires

---

---

---

# Time For Recess!

Recess is an important part of the day! Fresh air is good for your body, and playing with friends gives your mind a break from all the hard work you do in school. What is your favorite thing to play at recess? How do you play it?

My favorite thing to play at recess is

---

---

---

---

I play it with \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

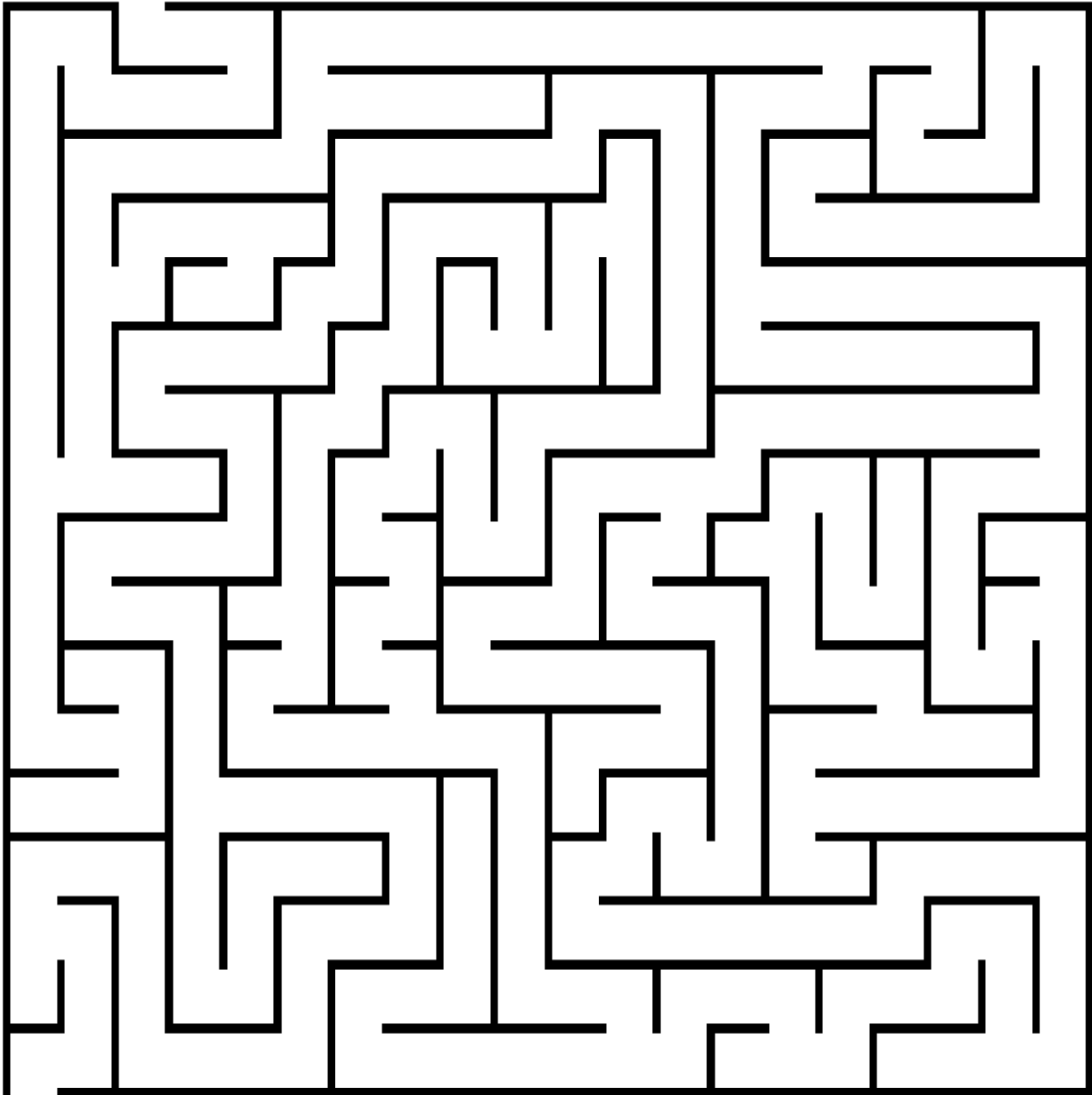
It's fun because \_\_\_\_\_

---

---



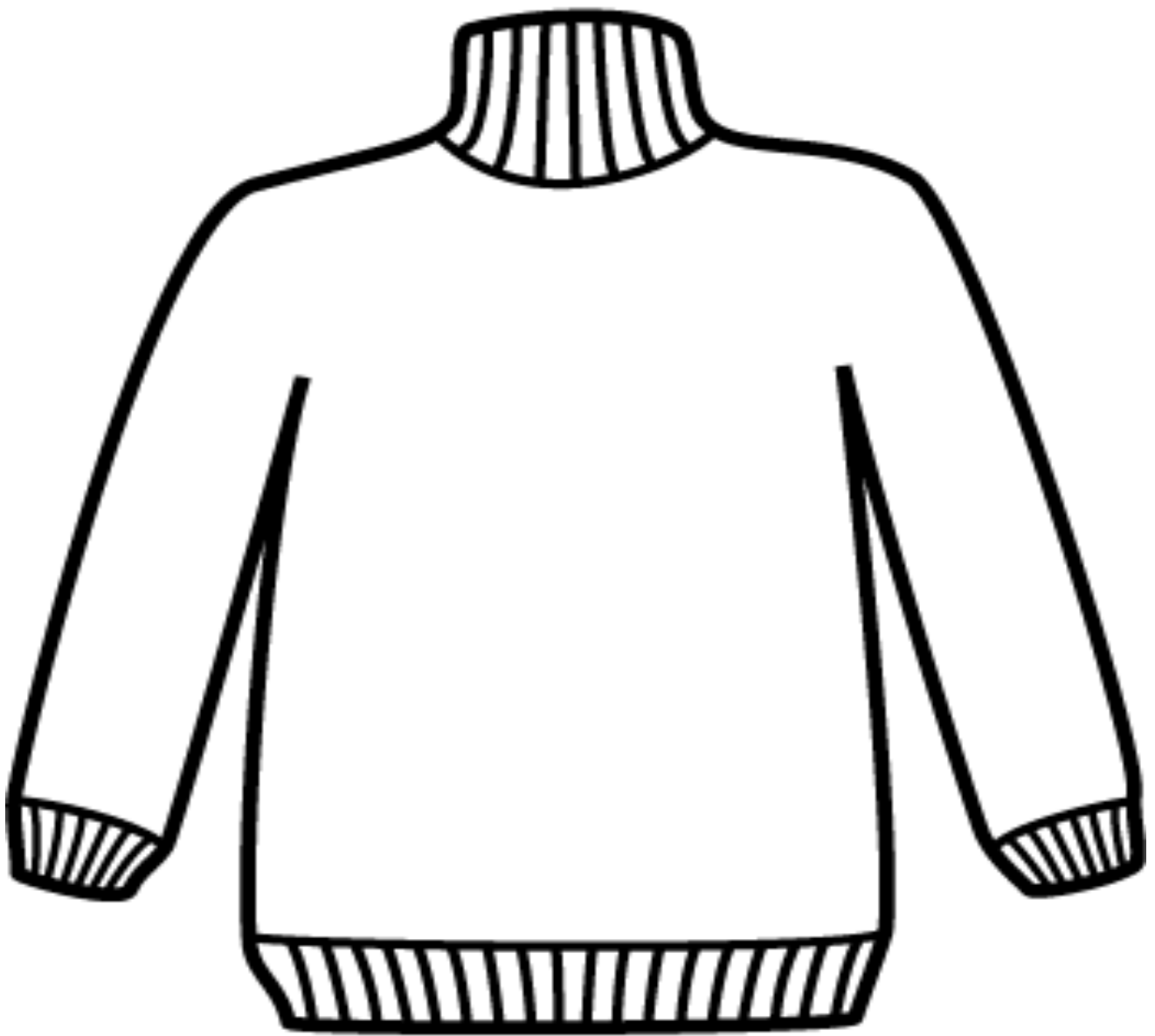
Cousin Clara's ball of yarn has come unwound and rolled away! Can you help her find it?



Great job! You did it!

# A Truly Dreadful Sweater

Knitting let's you play with all kinds of patterns, colors, and styles. Design your own "dreadful" sweater below! You can add upside down pockets, extra sleeves, and enormous buttons, like Cousin Clara, or come up with your own horrible styling!



## FURTHER CLASSROOM ADVENTURES

### Drama Games relating to *Lester's Dreadful Sweaters*

*In our Lifeline residencies, we use theatre games to not only teach the basics of performance, but also to explore themes in the student matinees. Below are some games you can play with your class that touch upon some of the concepts conveyed in the production.*

#### **Making A Hurricane** (a soundscape exercise)

Ages: K and Up

**How to Play:** In *Lester's Dreadful Sweaters*, Mr. Twist, Lester's teacher, talks about natural disasters and how unpredictable they can be. Students should sit in a circle. Everyone must be silent in order for this to work effectively. Standing in the center of the circle, explain that you are going to start an action and move it around the circle. When you look at each student (or when you are standing in front of them) they can join in the particular action, and continue doing it until you come around and give them a different action. The people in the circle mimic the action only after the leader passes in front of them with the action. To make a hurricane, first, there is the sound of wind in the trees – rub your hands together and move this action all the way around the circle. Then the rain starts – snapping fingers. This action is moved all the way around the circle, each student still rubbing hands as the wind until you pass in front of them. The rain gets heavier – pat legs with hands. The wind becomes very strong – add in vocal wind sounds. Rain becomes stronger – stomp feet on ground. Then the storm will subside. Stomping on the floor becomes patting legs, then snapping. The just soft winds – rubbing hands – and silence.

#### **What Belongs Where?** (to explore environments)

Ages: K and Up

**How to Play:** Discuss how in the story, Lester didn't care for Cousin Clara's sweaters, but they were very appreciated by the clowns in the circus. Sometimes things that are strange or don't fit in one place are just right somewhere else. Then ask for a suggestion of a place or environment, or perhaps just suggest yourself, "A knitting shop, where Aunt Clara might buy her knitting supplies." Ask, "What would we find in a knitting shop?" As kids suggest "knitting needles," "yarn," "a cash register," bring students up to make each of the items with their bodies, until the knitting shop looks complete. Then place an actual object that *would not* belong in a knitting shop in the midst of the created store: a spatula, or a watering can, a can of beans, or some juggling balls. Ask students where that item would belong (a kitchen, a garden, a grocery store, a circus) and start building that place, student by student. When complete, remove the original item and replace it with another that doesn't belong, using it as a prompt for the next environment.

#### **Lester Mad Libs** (to explore unpredictability!)

Ages: 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and Up

**How to Play:** Divide class into 3 or 4 groups. Give each group a piece of paper that says: List 2 verbs, 2 articles of clothing, 2 nouns, 1 emotion or feeling, 2 foods, 1 animal, 1 famous person, 1 type of weather, and a song everyone would know. Each group should fill out the paper to the best of their abilities. Make sure to have them put their names on it, then collect the papers. Bring the group back together, and read them this passage: "Early one winter morning, Lester got out of bed in an anxious mood. He put on his socks and bow tie. He read over his favorite list, and moved around a few items in his collection of lost and found items. He walked into the kitchen, ate his breakfast of toast and orange juice, and walked off to school. On his way there, he started singing, but the cloudy weather made him tired, and he soon sounded like a whining puppy. But he kept singing anyway, until he saw his friend, Enid. She gave him an invitation to her birthday party, and they went into school for their first class." Point out to the students that Lester hates unpredictability, but sometimes life is unpredictable. Have one group volunteer to go up front and pantomime the story you are about to read, using the words that another group came up with. You can read the first one slowly so that they can go through the physical movement clearly and specifically. "Early one winter morning, Lester \_\_\_\_\_ (verb) out of bed in a \_\_\_\_\_ (emotion) mood. He put on his \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (articles of clothing). He read over his favorite list, and moved around a few items in his collection of \_\_\_\_\_ (nouns). He \_\_\_\_\_ (verb) into the kitchen, ate his breakfast of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (foods) and \_\_\_\_\_ (verb) off to school. On his way there, he started singing \_\_\_\_\_ (a song everyone can sing), but the \_\_\_\_\_ (type of weather) weather made him tired, and he soon sounded like a \_\_\_\_\_ (animal). But he kept singing anyway, until he saw his friend, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of famous person). She gave him a \_\_\_\_\_ (noun), and they went into school for their first class." A variation is to give each group another groups list of words, and have them rehearse their piece before presenting.

# Student Review of *Lester's Dreadful Sweaters*

By: \_\_\_\_\_

I give this play a (circle the number of stars): ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

My favorite part of the play was \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My favorite character was \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If I had to choose what I liked best, I would choose (circle one)

the story      the characters      the music      the costumes      the scenery

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **KidSeries Teacher Comment Form**

We'd love to hear from you! Please fill out this comment form, and get it back to us one of two ways: Either mail it to Julie Ganey, Education Director, Lifeline Theatre, 6912 North Glenwood Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60626, or email it back to us at [julie@lifelinetheatre.com](mailto:julie@lifelinetheatre.com). If your students have completed review sheets, we'd love to see those too!

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level: \_\_\_\_ Number of Students: \_\_\_\_\_

Show your class saw: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you attended a Lifeline KidSeries show before? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

If yes, which one(s) have you seen?

\_\_\_\_\_

Did you read your class the book before coming to see the show? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

What was the strongest part of the show for you, or what did you like best?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What was the weakest part of the show for you, or what did you like least?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Would you bring your students to another performance at Lifeline? \_\_Yes \_\_No

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Which activities in the study guide were most beneficial to your students?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please tell us about any other books you would like to see Lifeline adapt:

\_\_\_\_\_

(optional) Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_