INTRODUCTION
The British author, Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), was born in Bombay at a time when India was still part of the British Empire. He lived there until he was five years old. His parents sent him to Great Britain to go to school, but he returned to India as a teenager to write for a newspaper. He established his reputation as a writer with his works based on his experiences as an Englishman living in Asia, but Kipling’s most popular work is his literature for younger readers.

When his children were still young, Kipling took his family to South Africa for the winter, and each day of the long ship voyage, he gathered the young children on deck to tell them stories. It was during these story hours that he invented tales about how animals, many of them from Africa, got their special characteristics. His daughter, Elsie, insisted that the stories be told the same way each time, with nothing left out, or ‘just so,’ and the author titled the collection Just So Stories in honor of her wish.

ABOUT THE PLAY
Theatreworks’ musical adaptation of Just So Stories contains elements from the following stories in Kipling’s collection:

- HOW THE WHALE GOT HIS THROAT -- the ‘Stute Fish
- HOW THE CAMEL GOT HIS HUMP -- the Camel
- HOW THE RHINOCEROS GOT HIS SKIN -- the Rhinoceros
  and the Genie who eats only cake (from the “Parsee” in the original story)
- HOW THE LEOPARD GOT HIS SPOTS -- the Leopard
- THE ELEPHANT’S CHILD -- the young curious Elephant and his family,
  which includes Aunt Ostrich, Uncle Giraffe, Aunt Hippopotamus, and the Crocodile

Instead of telling each tale by itself as in the book, in the musical, Just So Stories, the stories are interwoven with each other. For example, the Elephant’s Uncle Giraffe becomes the same giraffe in the Leopard’s story; the Leopard meets up with the Camel in the Howling Desert; and the ‘Stute Fish helps a Genie who wants to take a vacation by acting as a “substitute Genie” for a day, encountering all of the different animals and helping them by using the Genie’s magic bag.

As the Genie says, the action takes place in “a constantly changing world,” and throughout the musical, the animals change in a number of different ways, some of which vary from the original stories – the Elephant gets a long nose (after the crocodile stretches it, as in the story), the Leopard’s yellow coat gets spotted (in a new twist, the leopard gets her spots because of an allergic reaction to something she eats!), the Rhinoceros’ skin gets stretched out (thanks to the Genie), and the Camel gets a real hump (instead of just saying “Humph!”). Although all of the animals change unexpectedly, they soon discover that they can make the best of their new qualities.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION
The production design for Just So Stories is reminiscent of the famous cut-outs of the artist Henri Matisse. The show’s director, David Schechter, was inspired as he was leafing through one of Matisse’s cut-out books, Jazz, and came across a piece entitled “The Dream of the White Elephant.” He thought that the boldness of the colors and shapes in the make-believeworlds created by Matisse would be perfect for Just So Stories. The fact that the same person would be designing both the costumes and the sets, Louisa Thompson helped to unify this idea of a bold, colorful atmosphere, with “morphing” characters within an ever-changing world, keeping with the theme of Just So Stories. And because the costumes and sets are designed with the same vision, says the director, “the characters look like they’re popping out of the set!”
BEFORE SEEING THE PERFORMANCE

1. Show children photographs or realistic drawings of leopards, elephants, crocodiles, camels, and rhinoceroses. Where do these animals live? Have they ever seen any of them in a zoo? If you have read any of the stories in Kipling’s *Just So Stories*, ask them how the story’s characters are different from real animals (for instance, they can speak!). What other stories do they know in which animal characters can talk and do other “human” things?

2. Different animals in the musical live in different places, like the deep jungle, the grassy plains, or in the desert. How are these places different? What would help an animal to stay safe in each place? Talk about how being the same color as its surroundings would help an animal to hide from a predator.

3. If time permits, read one or two of the *Just So Stories* mentioned above. Watch the play to see what parts are different from the stories and what parts are the same, and follow up after the performance.

AFTER SEEING THE PERFORMANCE

1. As soon as possible after seeing the play, discuss it with your class. Who was their favorite character and why? Did they notice which actors played more than one part? How did the costumes help to make the actors look like animals? How did the actors’ movements and voices make you think they were animals?

2. If applicable, talk about what was the same and what was different in the original stories you read before seeing the performance. Can you think of other ways that the stones could be told? (How else could a Leopard get spots, or could an Elephant get a long nose, etc.?)

3. In the story about the Elephant getting a long nose, the young Elephant is very curious. Talk about how curiosity can be good (to help you learn new things) but sometimes dangerous (the Elephant almost got eaten by the crocodile!).

4. In *Just So Stories*, the animals go through a lot of changes that they don't expect. Discuss each change and whether it turned out to be a good one or a bad one for the animal (for example, the Elephant’s new long nose could help him to reach food high up in a tree). Have you ever had something unexpectedly change, and it turned out to be a change for the better?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

"JUST SO" Story Circle: Have students stand in a circle. Have the first child begin a new story about how an animal got a certain characteristic (maybe a new one, like how did the giraffe get a long neck?). Limit each storyteller to a certain number of seconds or minutes, with the teacher (or a teacher’s helper) timing them with a stop-watch or an egg timer. When time is up, the story is "passed along" to the next child, who continues with the plot. Continue the process until everyone gets a turn (remember, as the story gets to the last person, they must think up a way to end it). If possible, preserve the story on a tape recorder, and then write it down.

Animal Characters: Get your students up out of their seats, clearing away chairs and tables (or, if possible, use gym or other open area). Ask them to imitate the body movements of different animals. After they have mastered their animal movements, have them add sounds -- the classroom should sound like a jungle! What happens when two or more of the "animals" meet each other? You can take this exercise further by creating masks to further enhance the animal characters.
Animal Mural: Using large poster paper (the type which comes in one continuous roll works best) and crayons or paints, have class work together to create a mural to transform your classroom into a world full of animals. Make sure every child gets a chance to contribute to the mural, and be sure to include lots of animals — both before and after their changes.

"Just So" Storybook: Buy, or make, a "blank book" with enough pages for each member of the class. Ask each child to make up a story about how an animal got their spots, stripes, long noses, long necks, etc. Pass the book around, maybe over a period of weeks, and allow each child enough time to create his or her own page on which they describe their animal using drawings, photographs from magazines, writing, or a combination. Encourage students to come up with their own ideas and make sure everyone signs their page. When the book is completed, display it in the classroom so that students have a chance to view each other's contributions.

MATCHING WORKSHEET — see attached sheet for a simple matching exercise for younger children.

FOR MORE INFORMATION


Rudyard Kipling's Books for Children:

The Jungle Book (1894) The Second Jungle Book (1895)
Captains Courageous (1897) Stalky & Co. (1899)
Kim (1901) Just So Stories (1902)
Puck of Pook's Hill (1906) Rewards and Fairies (1910)

On the Internet:
The Kipling Society. A good resource for teachers, with information on the author and his works and links to other sources on the web. http://www.kipling.org.uk/index.htm

Just So Stories, originally published in 1902, is available in its entirety on the world wide web from many different sources. An "etext" created by Janice Bucala can be found at: http://www.boop.org/jan/justso/justso.txt

We'd love to hear from you — please let us know what you thought of JUST SO STORIES. Send comments and suggestions to: Theatreworks/USA, 151 West 26th Street, New York NY 10001
Just So Stories MATCHING GAME

Draw a line to match the animal with the new thing it got in the musical, Just So Stories.

RHINOCEROS

LEOPARD

ELEPHANT

CAMEL

SPOTS

HUMP

WRINKLED SKIN

TRUNK