

Discussion Questions

- In 1860's Holland, the characters often ice skate to travel. If you could travel in any way, what way would you choose?
- The Brinker family faces many challenges: poverty, classism, bullying, and access to healthcare. What are some challenges your community faces?
- In the play, Hans and Gretel help their family by carving necklaces and competing in a skating competition. What are some ways you help your family?
- Why does Heidi offer to buy a necklace from Hans, instead of giving him money?
- Asking for help can be difficult at times. Have you ever had to ask someone for help? What was that experience like?
- Hans and Gretel have to solve three mysteries throughout the play. Have you ever solved a mystery? How did you do it?
- In Holland, people exchange gifts on St. Nicholas Day. What traditions are part of your heritage?
- Hans and Gretel search for the missing bag of their family's savings and dream about what they would buy. If you came into some unexpected money, how would you spend it?
- Why does Hans give his skate strap to Peter before the big race?
- This story takes place in 1860's Holland. What issues or themes did you notice that are the same, in real life or in fiction, today in the United States?



3311 Washington Ave.
St. Louis, Missouri 63103
P: 314.932.7414 F: 314.932.7434

metroplays.org



MISSION

Inspired by the intelligence and emotional wisdom of young people, we create professional theater, foster inclusive community and nurture meaningful learning through the arts.



© METRO THEATER COMPANY 2017

Content for this Guide was compiled and written by Michael Perkins,
Karen Weberman, John Wolbers. Graphic Design by Britni Eggers.

Hans Brinker and the Silver Skates

by **Laura Eason**
Adapted from the novel by
Mary Mapes Dodge

PRESENTED BY



45TH ANNIVERSARY



**TAKE A LOOK
AT WHAT'S INSIDE
THE GUIDE:**

SYNOPSIS

**INFORMATION ABOUT
THE AUTHOR AND
THE HISTORY OF SKATING**

DUTCH WORDS FROM THE PLAY

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES
(With Common Core, Missouri GLE,
and National Core Arts Standards)

Synopsis

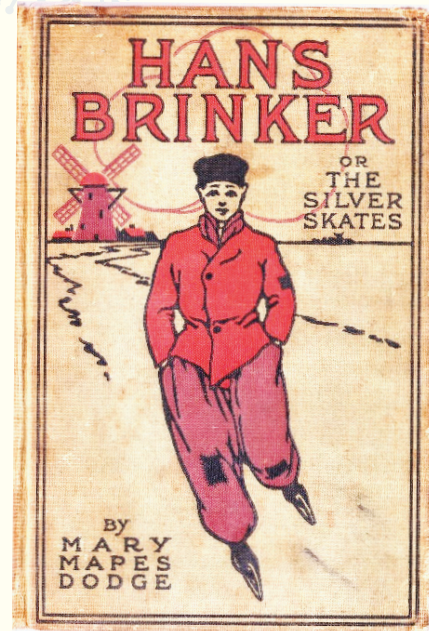
IN A SMALL DUTCH TOWN NEAR AMSTERDAM, industrious teenager Hans Brinker and his younger sister Gretel yearn to participate in December's great ice skating race on the canal, despite them owning only wooden skates.

The siblings must work to support their family while their mother cares for their father, Raff, who has been bedridden for 10 years after a fall from a dike. The Brinkers can't afford school and must all work to support the family; they're looked down upon, especially by the wealthy Katrinka Vos and Carl Voost, because of their low status.

But Hans has a chance meeting with a famous (though mysteriously gruff) surgeon named Dr. Boekman and persuades him to examine the Brinkers' father. He diagnoses pressure on the brain, which can be cured by a risky and expensive operation.

Hans offers his own money to pay for his father's operation. Touched by this gesture, Dr. Boekman provides the surgery for free. Hans overcomes his pride and accepts help from his friends Heidi and Peter: they loan steel skates for Gretel and himself to use in the race Gretel wins the girls' race, but Hans lets Peter — who needs it more — win the Silver Skates in the boys' race.

Mr. Brinker's operation is successful, and he is able to remember where he's hidden a bag of guilders to help the family, as well as the circumstances surrounding a pocket watch that belonged to Dr. Boekman's son. This discovery helps the doctor start to reconcile with his son, and the Brinker family goes on to live a long and happy life.



About the Author



MARY MAPES DODGE (1831-1905) was born in New York on January 26, 1831 and had an unusual background: she did not go to school with everyone else. She was taught at home by tutors and governesses. There she studied French, Latin, music, drawing, and literature. At 20, she married a lawyer with whom she had two children. After her husband's death seven years later, Dodge began her writing career to support her sons.

Dodge's most famous novel, *Hans Brinker or The Silver Skates* (1865), was inspired by historian John Lothrop Motley's *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* and *The History of the United Netherlands*. Also, she spoke with friends from Holland for additional literary inspiration. It won an award from the French Academy and brought Dodge lasting popular attention.

Dodge also worked as an associate editor for *Hearth and Home* magazine alongside Harriet Beecher Stowe, and was the first editor of the children's magazine *St. Nicholas*, which included contributors Louisa May Alcott, Rudyard Kipling, Mark Twain, and Frances Hodgson Burnett.

Classroom Activities

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

The characters in the play are from the country of Holland. Have students research their family's country of origin – even if they arrived in the U.S. many generations ago. Create a travel brochure about that country that includes lots of descriptive detail.

MISSOURI COMMUNICATION ARTS GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

WP3A K-8 Tell and/or write stories about familiar experiences and events using words/pictures/symbols/objects/actions.

MISSOURI SOCIAL STUDIES GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

SS5C 2-8 Identify physical and human characteristics, such as climate, topography, language, diversity, economies, and religions

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

W.3.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

COME ON OVER

Heidi and Peter become closer friends with Hans and Gretel the more they get to know them. Get to know your classmates even better. Ask students to join you in the center of the room. Split off from the group and say, "Come on over if..." and finish the sentence with some statement that is true about you. If it is true for your students, they stand next to you. If not, they remain where they are. One at a time, have the students step out and say their "Come on over if..." statement. Have them notice who moves and who stays during the activity. Afterwards, ask, "What surprised you? What did you learn about your classmates?"

MISSOURI COMMUNICATION ARTS GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

LS1B K-8 Demonstrate listening behaviors

LS2A K-8 Share ideas or experiences verbally or using communication systems

COMMON CORE STANDARD

SL.3.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions

EXPLORE YOUR OWN BACKYARD

In Holland, canals take the place of many streets and roads. A canal is a man-made waterway used for travel, shipping, or irrigation. Have students draw a map of their neighborhoods where all the roads are replaced by canals and imagine the best way to get around.

MISSOURI SCIENCE GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

8.1.C.K-12 Identify how the effects of inventions or technological advances may be helpful, harmful, or both

NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

ANCHOR STANDARD #10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

THE TRIANGLE OF OPPRESSION

Hans and Gretel are bullied repeatedly by Katrinka and Carl. In small groups, have students come up with a frozen image or tableau of an example of oppression they've seen at their school. Have students assume the roles of Perpetrator, Target, Bystander, and Collaborator. Remind them to keep it real and based on what they have witnessed. Share the images and discuss them.



MISSOURI PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

PS1C K-8 Citizenship and contribution within a diverse community

NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

ANCHOR STANDARD #1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

ANCHOR STANDARD #5. Develop and refine artistic work for presentation.

IT'S A MYSTERY

Hans and Gretel solve three different mysteries by the end of the play. Write your own short story involving a mystery. What are the characters trying to figure out? What are their clues? How does the mystery get solved?

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

RL.2.K-12 Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

W.2.K-12 Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.

NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

ANCHOR STANDARD #1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.