



SHREK

THE MUSICAL

A Study Guide

Sensory-Friendly Performance: June 4, 2026
22 Elm Street Brunswick

Mainstage Performance: June 8, 2026
The Pickard Theatre, 1 Bath Road, Brunswick

Book & Lyrics by
David Lindsay-Abaire

Music by
Jeanine Tesori

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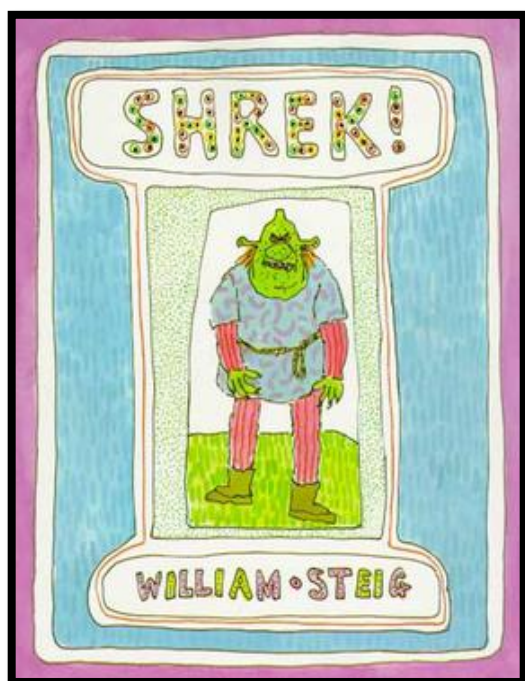
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THE SOURCE MATERIAL

THE BOOK BY WILLIAM STEIG

Shrek! is a humorous children's book published in 1990 by American book writer and cartoonist [William Steig](#), about a repugnant, monstrous green creature who leaves home to see the world and ends up saving a princess. The name "Shrek" derives from the German *Schreck* and meaning "fear" or "fright."

The book served as the basis for the first Shrek movie and the popular *Shrek* film series over a decade after its publication.

Synopsis of Steig's Story

Shrek is a repugnant, green-skinned, fire-breathing, seemingly indestructible monster who enjoys causing misery with his repulsiveness. After his parents decide that he has come of age, he is (literally) kicked out of their swamp. Shrek soon encounters a witch, who, in exchange for his rare specimens of lice, reads his fortune: using the magic words "Apple Strudel", he will meet a donkey who will take him to a castle, where he will battle a knight and marry a princess who is even uglier than he is.

THE ANIMATED FILM



Shrek is a 2001 American computer-animated comedy film loosely based on the 1990 fairytale picture book by William Steig. Directed by Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson, making their directorial debuts, it stars Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz, and John Lithgow as the voices of the lead characters.

In the story, an ogre called Shrek (Myers) finds his swamp overrun by fairytale creatures who have been banished by the corrupt Lord Farquaad (Lithgow) who aspires to be king. Shrek makes a deal with Farquaad to regain control of his swamp in return for rescuing Princess Fiona (Diaz), whom Farquaad intends to marry. With the help of Donkey (Murphy), Shrek embarks on his quest, but soon falls in love with the princess, who is secretly also an ogre by night. When they discover their mutual ugliness and love, they marry.

THE LINDSAY-ABAIRE - TESORI MUSICAL VERSION



SYNOPSIS

The TYA version begins with a pre-show where Shrek introduces himself to the youngsters.

The curtain opens on a trio of Storytellers sharing the tale of a little ogre named Shrek. Papa and Mama Ogre sit Shrek down and have a coming-of-age talk with their son, telling him that since he is now seven years old, it is time for him to make his own place in the world, and he must leave home ("Big, Bright, Beautiful World"). As the years pass, Shrek transforms into an adult and finds contentment living alone in a swamp on the edge of the kingdom of Duloc.

Suddenly, the Captain of the Guards appears, leading a large group of Fairytale Creatures into the swamp, including Pinocchio, the Big Bad Wolf, the Three Little Pigs, the Wicked Witch, Peter Pan, the Ugly Duckling, and the Three Bears. The characters have been exiled from the kingdom of Duloc and banished to live in the swamp ("Story Of My Life"). Shrek returns home to find his once private swamp now teeming with the new inhabitants and angrily sets off to confront the leader of Duloc about the injustice.

As Shrek makes his way through a dense forest, he encounters a screaming Donkey under pursuit by more Guards from Duloc. Shrek scares off the guards, and, having lost his way, reluctantly agrees to let Donkey be his guide, despite his better judgment. Meanwhile, in Duloc, the Guards sing of the "gentrification" of the kingdom ("What's Up, Duloc? - Part 1"). Lord Farquaad appears, questioning the captive Gingy as to the whereabouts of an available princess that Farquaad could marry in order to become king and justly gain control of all of Duloc. Threatened with torture, Gingy relinquishes the information - there is a princess in a tower guarded by a dragon and surrounded by boiling-hot lava lake. Just as Farquaad and the residents of Duloc begin to celebrate their future queen ("What's Up, Duloc? - Part 2"), Shrek and Donkey arrive. Shrek demands the swamp be rightfully returned to him, and seizing an opportunity, Farquaad agrees to find a new home for the Fairytale Creatures if Shrek retrieves the princess for him.

High in her tower, Young Fiona dreams of being rescued by a handsome prince and living the idyllic fairytale dream ("I Know It's Today"). The years pass, and Fiona grows more anxious day after day, nervous that the stories she's read have misled her. Despite her frustrations, she remains hopeful.

Meanwhile, Donkey passes time on the long journey by singing ("Travel Song"). Shrek and Donkey arrive at the castle, and, donning a knight's helmet he finds in the castle, Shrek tells

Donkey to wait while he rescues the princess. Shrek climbs Fiona's tower while she excitedly prepares for the arrival of her prince. The meeting doesn't go quite as Fiona had planned, and she mistakes Shrek for a brave knight due to his helmet. Shrek doesn't have time to correct this oversight, as Donkey is now being pursued by the Dragon. Cornered in the dungeon, four imprisoned Knights warn Donkey that he may wind up like them. The Dragon, frustrated that no one ever pursues her, sings of her loneliness ("Forever"). Falling madly in love with Donkey, the Dragon spares his life, but attacks Shrek when she sees he's freed Fiona. The two battle, and Fiona finally gets her storybook adventure ("This Is How A Dream Comes True").

Having escaped the dragon, the group sets off for Duloc. Shrek reveals to Fiona that he is actually an ogre and has rescued her for Lord Farquaad. As the sun sets, Fiona demands to set up camp and disappears into a cave for the duration of the night. The Storytellers reveal that Fiona has been placed under a curse causing her to live "by day one way, by night another" until rescued by true love's kiss.

The next morning, Fiona is chipper and highly caffeinated ("Morning Person"). She greets the woodland creatures, including the Pied Piper and his disorderly Rats, with cheerful optimism. The group continues their journey, and Shrek and Fiona bond over their horrible lives thus far ("I Think I Got You Beat"). The song ends in a gassy display of bravado, and the two become friends. Donkey is convinced that their relationship is actually a budding romance ("Make A Move").

Having reached Duloc, Fiona postpones meeting Lord Farquaad for one more night, and retires to a nearby barn to sleep as the sun sets. That night, Donkey stumbles into the barn and discovers Fiona's secret - she has transformed into an ogress. Fiona explains that she has been cursed to live by day as a human and by night as an ogress, and sees Lord Farquaad as her only chance for happiness because no one could ever love an ugly ogre. Shrek, who has worked up the courage to tell Fiona how he feels about her, overhears only the last part of Fiona's conversation with Donkey from outside the barn, and thinks she is talking about him.

The next morning, Shrek admits to Fiona that he heard everything she said. Fiona now thinks that he knows her secret and is unable to love her because of it. Just then, Lord Farquaad arrives to claim Fiona. He hands over the deed to Shrek's swamp, and makes plans to marry Fiona that night. Hurt, Fiona accepts and leaves with him. The Fairytale Creatures drudge on, having been evicted from the swamp. Donkey pleads with Shrek to try to win back Fiona, and the Fairytale Creatures agree that he must be proud of who he is rather than ashamed by it ("Freak Flag"). With a sense of empowerment and a plan of action, the group decides to return to Duloc.

Just as the Bishop is about to marry Fiona and Lord Farquaad, Shrek and the Fairytale Creatures burst in. Shrek professes his love for Fiona ("Big, Bright, Beautiful World - Reprise"), and the Fairytale Creatures reveal Lord Farquaad's father – Grumpy, the Dwarf. The discovery

that Farquaad is actually a "freak" like the Fairytale Creatures he condemned shocks and surprises everyone. Meanwhile, the sun has gone down and Fiona has transformed into an ogress. Disgusted, Lord Farquaad claims that the marriage is binding - he is now king and shall lock Fiona back in the tower forever and rule Duloc himself. Just then, the Dragon crashes through the castle wall and heaves a fiery breath at Farquaad. Afterward, all that's left of him is his scorched crown. Shrek and Fiona finally share "true love's kiss," and although the spell is broken, Fiona doesn't turn back into a human. Shrek convinces her that she is beautiful just as she is, and everyone celebrates his/her individuality (Finale).





THE CHARACTERS

Shrek – a big, scary green ogre, who becomes the hero of the story

Princess Fiona (+ Young Fiona, Teen Fiona) – by day a fairytale princess; by night an ogress

Lord Farquaad – a conceited, very short young man intent on becoming king

Donkey – an exuberant, talkative, loveable, and loyal companion to Shrek

Dragon – a fire-breathing monster who falls in love with Donkey

Mama & Papa Ogre – Shrek's parents, who send him out into the world at age seven

Pinocchio – the wooden boy who ends the story becoming a leader of the rebellion

Gingy – the gingerbread man who rallies the Fairytale Characters

Three Little Pigs from the fairytale, given here a German twist

Three Bears – Mama, Papa, and Baby Bear

Wicked Witch – part of the Fairytale Characters, she feels persecuted

Big Bad Wolf – a rather tame wolf who wears Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother's dress

Ugly Duckling – bitter about his unfortunate appearance, but ultimately is befriended by the others

Peter Pan – the classic boy who never grew up

Captain of the Guard – the authoritative head of Farquaad's soldiers

Knights – now the Dragon's backup singers, they had all tried at one point to rescue Fiona and were imprisoned by the Dragon

Grumpy, the Dwarf – the character from *Snow White*, who turns out to be Farquaad's father

Ensemble – other Fairytale Characters like Puss in Boots, Three Blind Mice, Rats, Woodland Creatures and Birds, Duloc Singers, Guards, Bishop

THE SONGS

Big, Bright, Beautiful World

Mama, Papa, Little Ogre, Shrek, & Ensemble

Story of My Life

Fairytale Characters

What's Up Duloc? Part 1

Duloc Performers

What's Up Duloc? Part 2

Lord Farquaad, Performers, Townsfolk

What's Up Duloc? Reprise

All Above

I Know It's Today

Young Fiona, Teen Fiona, Adult Fiona

Travel Song

Shrek, Donkey

Forever

Dragon, Knights, Donkey

"This Is How a Dream Comes True

Fiona

Morning Person

Fiona, Pied Piper, Rats, Woodland Creatures

Make a Move

Shrek, Fiona

Morning Person (Reprise)

Fiona

Freak Flag

Gingy, Fairytale Creatures, Ensemble

Big, Bright, Beautiful World (Reprise)

Fiona, Shrek, Donkey

Finale: I'm a Believer

Full Cast

THE THEMES



Shrek promotes the notion that beauty is not merely physical loveliness, but is a quality that goes far deeper. The musical champions unlikely couples and friendships, and celebrates the diversity, quirkiness, and inclusiveness of its characters. The anthem “Freak Flag” proclaims the power of individuality and the beauty of being oneself.

THE CREATORS



David Lindsay Abair wrote the book and lyrics, and Jeanine Tesori wrote the music for *Shrek, The Musical*. They based their work on a children's storybook by William Steig and on the Dreamworks animated film. Lindsay-Abair is a noted playwright who won the Pulitzer Prize in Drama for *Rabbit Hole* and is the author of numerous dramas, screenplays and works for musical theatre. Jeanine Tesori is one of the most prolific and celebrated female theatrical composers. She is the award-winning composer of five Broadway musicals, among them *Fun Home* and *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, and numerous other compositions.

OTHER WORKS

DAVID LINDSAY-ABAIER

A Devil Inside

Fuddy Meers

Snow Angel

Kimberly Akimbo

Wonder of the World

Rabbit Hole

High Fidelity

Good People

Ripcord

JEANINE TESORI

Fun Home

Caroline or Change

Thoroughly Modern Millie

Mulan II

Violet



LINKS

If you want to learn more about *Shrek* in its original version and other theatrical forms, here is a list of reading and internet resources you can check out:

ON THE WEB

About the William Steig Book

<https://www.seattletimes.com/entertainment/the-man-behind-shrek/> An article from the *Seattle Times* about the author

<https://archive.org/details/shrek00will> Free 14-day download borrowing of the children's book

<https://www.thriftbooks.com/a/william-steig/208862/> An illustrated bibliography of other books by Steig

About David Lindsay-Abaire & Jeanine Tesori

<https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/david-lindsay-abaire> Pulitzer Prize announcement for *Rabbit Hole*

<https://broadwaymusicalhome.com/people/tesori.htm> Page on Broadway Musical site devoted to Tesori's works

Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNAXY5ukn-E> Buy or rent Dreamworks animated movie on You Tube

<https://www.netflix.com/title/70253398> The Broadway musical available for download/viewing on Netflix

ACTIVITIES

TELL THE PERFORMERS WHAT YOU THINK

THE SHOW

1. What makes the stage musical different from the animated film?
2. Who is your favorite character and why?
3. What is your favorite scene or song?

THE THEMES

4. What does Shrek teach us about the meaning of true beauty?
5. What lesson do the Fairytale Creatures teach in their anthem "Freak Flag"?
6. Many of the familiar Fairytale characters in *Shrek* play against type. What makes the Dragon or Princess Fiona not your typical storybook character?
7. What do you think about Lord Farquaad's ending? Is it justified?
8. Several of the major characters like Shrek, Fiona, and even Farquaad have had unhappy childhoods. How has that negatively influenced their lives?
9. What does Donkey teach Shrek about friendship and self-esteem?
10. At the finale, the ensemble sings, "What makes us special makes us strong." Give some examples of how this is true in real life.



LET'S PLAY MAD LIBS

The leader asks the group to call out specific kinds of words – **nouns** (names of people, places, things), **adjectives** (descriptive words), **verbs** (action words), **adverbs** (words that tell us how, when or why), **exclamation** (short emotional expression). The leader fills in the blanks in the story with these new words and then reads it back to the group. The results are usually very funny! Enjoy the game!

STORY OF SHREK

When a green _____(**noun**) called Shrek discovers his swamp has been taken with all sorts of fairytale creatures by the _____(**adjective**) Lord Farquaad, Shrek sets out, with a very loud donkey by his side, to tell Farquaad to give his _____(**noun**) back. Instead, a deal is made. Farquaad, who wants to become the _____(**noun**), sends Shrek to rescue Princess Fiona, who is waiting for her one true _____(**noun**). But once they head back with Fiona, it starts to become apparent that not only does Shrek _____(**verb**) Fiona, but Fiona is keeping something _____(**adjective**). Shrek is a big ogre who lives alone in the woods, feared by all the people in the land of Duloc. When Lord Farquaad, the ruler of Duloc, exiles all the Fairytale Characters to the _____(**noun**), Shrek loses his peaceful life and his home becomes a refugee camp. So he sets out to find Lord Farquaad and convince him to take the fairytale beings back where they belong, and leave him alone. Lord Farquaad accepts, under one condition. Shrek must first go and find the _____(**adjective**) young princess Fiona, who will become Farquaad's _____(**noun**). But Shrek comes and saves her with donkey and dragon.

LET'S DRAW AND WRITE

1. The story of *Shrek* is a kind of fable, that is, a story which teaches a lesson. **Write your own fable** in which a character or characters have an adventure from which they learn.
2. **Draw a picture of one of the Fairytale Characters**, as you imagine him or her to look.
3. **Color the drawing from Shrek**, which you will find on the last page of this booklet. You can make it as fantastical as you like.

We want to see what you create, so send us your stories and artwork. We will post some of the pictures and writing on MSMT's Facebook page.

Here's how to send:

- Mail them to **Olivia Wenner at Maine State Music Theatre, 22 Elm St., Brunswick, ME 04011** or
- Email your writing or a picture of your drawing to Olivia at promotions@msmt.org

SEND US YOUR COMMENTS

Let us know what you thought of this program by filling out the survey below and returning it to **Olivia Wenner at Maine State Music Theatre, 22 Elm St., Brunswick, ME 04011** or by replying in an email to Olivia at promotions@msmt.org. We hope to be able to continue to bring you similar programs, so your thoughts and comments are very important to us! Thanks for taking the time!

FOR CHILDREN

1. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being highest), how entertaining did you find *SHREK, JR. THE MUSICAL*?
2. What did you like best about the presentation?
3. Who was your favorite character?
4. What was your favorite song?
5. What is the most important lesson you took away from the story and this program?
6. Did the program make you want to be in a play yourself?

FOR ADULTS

1. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being highest), how entertaining and educational did you find *SHREK, JR. THE MUSICAL*?
2. What did you like best about the presentation?
3. What is the most important lesson your child took away from this musical?
4. Did the program make you want to bring your child(ren) the Young Audiences productions this summer?
5. What other children's stories and musicals would you like to explore in future programs?
6. How useful were the printed materials for your child?
7. Please offer us any other suggestions or thoughts you may have.

NAME:

AGE: (optional)

CONTACT INFORMATION (optional)

