

A note from playwright Eileen Moushey

We had a big family vacation last summer. It was wonderful spending time with our granddaughters, ages 7 and 9. They both have that wonderful ability to turn everything into a toy. One morning I watched, fascinated, as they played with their facial orifices for at least 10 minutes, hooting with laughter, until their mother put a stop to it. (Oh, like SHE didn't play the "See How Far Your Finger Fits Up Your Nose Game" when she was little.)

Just last week I was reminded of this by a TV public service announcement about things to teach your kids so they can avoid the flu, especially the H1N1 virus. (Hey, CDC, if you think 'swine flu' sounds bad, you might want to consider something that doesn't read like "Hiney.") Great attention was paid to warning kids not to touch "the T Zone" the top crossbar formed by the eyes and the vertical formed by the nose. No mention of the mouth. Shouldn't that be a biggie? I mean, shouldn't it be the "I Zone"? I figure if I don't get it, neither will the kids who use spit to make cool swirly patterns on their desktops.

And thus "The Nasty Flu Bugs Go DOWN!" was born. The playlet/skit zooms in on the two behaviors that have a reasonable chance of being modified - covering the mouth when sneezing/coughing, and hand-washing. This play is not approved or sanctioned by the CDC or any national, state, or local health authority. But it does have the advantage of being a) kinda cute without being totally cheezy especially compared to one I found online in which the lead character was a giant hand and no, I am not making that up and b) free.

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3. You must give proper credit by including the info below on any printed materials - newsletters, invitations, programs, etc..
4. If you like this little playlet/skit, visit my website and see what other theatrical gems we have available. You can even read preview scripts before deciding to produce!
5. We hope you give the play to others but, please give this page as well!

This play is presented through a special arrangement with

Eileen Moushey

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Notes for Teachers and Directors

The script lists 11 characters, including the Narrator, but any number can be used. If you add characters be sure they are given names and characteristics - to make them individual. You can re-assign lines to these new characters, or add some. If you want a smaller cast, you can combine characters and lines. Just be sure to keep them within one character's personality!

The play is meant to encourage discussion and follow-up activities. Suggested questions:

What if you don't have a tissue or the sneeze comes on fast? (A good way to introduce the use of sanitizer.)

Should you use your hand to cover your mouth? (The 'new' way is to cough into the crook of your elbow.)

If you do use your hands, what should you do right after that?

What are the times when you should always wash your hands?

If your friend gets the flu and is lonely, should you go and visit them? Why or why not? What are other things you can do? (Make a drawing, call them on the phone, etc..)

Does wiping off a cup or straw 'clean it' enough to share it with a friend?

Instead of using my song for handwashing (Old McDonald) you can have the kids hum though Happy Birthday twice. Whatever you use, after the play is over, the actors can lead the kids in that song as they mime washing their hands. Another follow-up activity can be to time certain nursery rhymes or songs to see which are approximately 20 seconds long.

I had no tune in mind for the rhyme at the end - I would definitely leave it up to the kids to come up with a beat and/or tune to use.

The script includes references to Stage Left and Stage Right which I added in order to describe the 'traffic flow.' (For theatrical newbies, these refer to your left and right as you face the audience.) You can certainly use alternate staging.

THE NASTY FLU BUGS GO DOWN!

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SETTING

There is no real set - unless you want to create one! Locations and surroundings are introduced by the Narrator and 'suggested' by actions and dialogue. You can certainly add pieces or backgrounds if you like. Similarly, the skit may be performed totally without sound or special lighting, but would be enhanced by the addition of these technical elements.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

NARRATOR - girl or boy. This part can be read or memorized, with the latter preferable.

THE NASTY FLU BUG GANG

The Nasty Flu Bug Gang is also known as NFB. All wear hooded sweatshirts with hoods tied so that only faces show. On the back of the sweatshirts are large letters - NFB. The NFBs almost always move together as a unit, for protection and for intimidation. PLEASE gauge your audience - the NFBs are supposed to be comic villains, and not really scary.

FLO - leader of the gang. Wears something over the hood - a hat, crown, helmet, etc., - that indicates her position. Verry evil, with a wicked laugh, which the gang will copy.

FLARRY - the nervous NFB. In fact, she is actually a bit of a hypochondriac.

FLECIA (*pronounced like a scrunched-together Felicia*) - the diva. She thinks It's All About Her.

FLIPE (*pronounced like a scrunched-together Felipe*) - the tough guy. FLO's right-hand germ.

FLONIUS (*pronounced like a scrunched-together Felonious*) - fast-talker, shifty.

THE KIDS

The Kids dress normally, and what they wear reflects their personalities. They should have small 'pieces' (hats, jackets, sunglasses) that can be changed to help differentiate the past and now.

JENN - very nice, believes the best of everyone. A peace maker.

MIKE - nice guy but, well, a whiner. Whatever everybody wants to do, he won't.

HAILEY - super-organized and leader type.

TYLER: - Hailey's little brother. Impulsive, acts without thinking.

BRANDI - a super-smart kid.

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The NARRATOR comes onstage. She stays onstage the entire time, positioned to the far Stage Right of the action. She will fade upstage when there is action going on, and come downstage to do her lines.

NARRATOR: Once upon a school playground, one year ago, there was a group of kids who liked to hang out together after school, before walking home.

All the KIDS, except BRANDI, enter from Stage Left, led by TYLER who is a bundle of energy. He ends up Stage Right. The KIDS laugh and ad-lib about school and what they had for lunch and homework. After all of them are onstage, BRANDI straggles onstage from Stage Left carrying a basketball. She is followed by the NFBs, who are closely clustered together, silently. They position themselves upstage of BRANDI and follow her moves.

BRANDI: *(Sniffing and coughing - but not loudly)* Hey, guys, what's up?

MIKE: Not much. *(points at the ball)* Oh, gee, I don't wanna play basketball. I always lose.

TYLER: I'll play! I'll play! I love basketball!

JENN: Mike, you do not 'always lose.' You play just fine!

HAILEY: We could just play dodgeball instead.

MIKE: Oh, great. Then I could get hit by the ball. The great ideas just keep coming.

TYLER: Ooooh, I can dodge! Gimme the ball, gimme the ball!

HAILEY: You might as well give him the ball, Brandi. He's going to drive us nuts until he gets it.

BRANDI: *(She is getting ready to sneeze, holds up her hand towards them).* . .ah, ah, ah. . .

JENN: What's wrong, Brandi?

MIKE: I think she's gonna sneeze.

BRANDI: *(Getting louder)* Ah, ah, ah. . .

HAILEY: Wow, it's gonna be a big one!

TYLER: I can sneeze too! Wanna hear me???

ALL but BRANDI: No!

BRANDI: *(Very loudly)* CHOO! *(After recovering, she takes a big sniff, and wipes her nose with the back of her hand.)* Wow.

The NFBs slowly begin to dance around behind the kids, and weaving in between them. Simultaneously ALL THE KIDS BUT BRANDI say 'bless you' and 'gesundheit' and various other things, overlapping each other.

BRANDI: Gee thanks, guys. *(The NFBs are now spread out behind the KIDS wagging their fingers next to the kids' heads.)* Here, Tyler.

She passes the ball to the kid next to her, and it goes down the line, kid-to-kid until it reaches TYLER. The KIDS ad-lib remarks as they do. MIKE complains some more. TYLER is threatening to hit them all with the ball. BRANDI continues to sniff. As the ball moves down the line, the NFBs move quickly and aggressively around and in between the kids, following the ball. After TYLER gets the ball, there is a pause, during which everyone is silent. Then. . .

TYLER: AH - CHOO!

THE NFBs "high five" each other and exit Stage Right, laughing wildly. TYLER holds up the ball like he's going to throw it.

TYLER: You guys better watch out!

The KIDS run off stage, followed by TYLER.

NARRATOR: The kids had a lot of fun that day. But a few days later. . .

All the KIDS cough and wheeze and sneeze loudly, from offstage.

NARRATOR: Poor kids! They were all pretty sick with the flu. But that was a year ago. And they're all better now. Or are they?

The KIDS enter from Stage Left, except for BRANDI. They've changed costume pieces so they look different than the last scene.

TYLER: I'm sure glad school is over. Second grade is hard! Who wants to play tag? *(He answers his own question and jumps up and down with his hand raised.)* ME! ME! ME!

JENN: That's fine with me.

MIKE: As long as I don't have to be 'it'. I hate to be 'it.' You guys always make me 'it.'

TYLER: *(Still jumping.)* I'll be it! ME! ME! ME! I'll be 'it!' Puhleeeeeeze!

HAILEY: Wow, Tyler, calm down. You can be 'it', little brother, but you have to chill, okay?.

TYLER: YAY, I'm 'it'. ME. Okay, okay. So you have to run away from me. *(Pauses)* Go ahead. RUN!

MIKE: Uh, yeah, Tyler. We will. We will.

JENN: Wait a minute. Shouldn't we wait for Brandi?

HAILEY: Yeah, where is she?

All talk over each other. TYLER wants to play tag now, MIKE says he doesn't want to wait, he hates waiting. JENN doesn't remember seeing Brandi in school.

MIKE: *(Quieting them)* Guys! If Brandi wasn't in school today, that could mean. . . *(each one finishes the sentence)*

JENN: Oh, no, it couldn't be. . .

TYLER: Maybe she ran away from home.

MIKE: Hey, I know. I bet she hadn't done her homework so she just stayed. . .

JENN: Maybe she had an appointment or something.

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HAILEY: Actually, that's just what I heard, Jenn - she had an appointment. At the . . . doctor's. Maybe. . .she's. . . *(Dramatic pause.)* SICK.

ALL: Oh, no.

JENN: Wow. I hope she isn't sick.

MIKE: Do you remember the last time she got sick?

TYLER: She gave it to me! ME! I felt really, REALLY bad. I coughed and sneezed.

HAILEY: You weren't the only one, Tyler. We all felt awful.

JENN: I hated it. My temperature went up to 100 degrees. Stupid flu. Yuck.

TYLER: Blech!

MIKE: I don't want her to give me the flu again!

HAILEY: Hey, you guys! She didn't give us the flu. Well, not on purpose, anyway.

JENN: Hailey's right. It's not like she wanted to give us the flu.

MIKE: Then how did we get it?

The KIDS go upstage, ad-libbing, and then freeze in place.

NARRATOR: How'd they get the flu? You're about to find out.

If possible the lights are dimmed. FLO enters from Stage Right, followed by the rest of the NFBs.. They play this scene in front of the kids, who should still remain 'frozen.'

FLO: Bwaahahahahaha!

ALL THE NFBs: *(echoing)* Bwahahahahaha!

FLO: *(Mocking)* They wonder how they got the flu from Brandi. . .

FLIPE: *(Also mocking.)* Hey, me too. I mean, I wonder, too, y'know!

FLONIUS: I think it musta been something in the air. Yeah, the air.

FLARRY: *(Looking around, scared)* Something in the air? Do you think it's still out there?

FLECIA: Oh, Flarry, look around. I mean, really, grow up.

FLARRY: *(Really scared now)* Look around? Where??

FLO: Flarry, honey. . .WE are the something in the air.

FLONIUS: WE're the reason they got the flu.

FLIPE: We're Nasty Flu Bugs. Remember? *(All but FLARRY turn around, showing the letters)*

FLARRY: *(Relieved)* Oh, wow. I keep forgetting that.

FLECIA: Remember the very day when we gave them all the flu. . .

FLONIUS: Ahh, memories.

FLIPE: That was a good one alright.

FLECIA: I think I infected at least three of them.

FLARRY: I'm glad we can't give ourselves the flu.

FLO: Oh, Flarry, sometimes you are so cute. Oooh, look who's coming!

FLARRY: It's Brandi!

FLONIUS: With a little luck, we can get 'em sick again!

FLECIA: I call dibs on Tyler. That kid is so annoying.

FLIPE: Yeah. *(He's 'setting up' his joke.)* He really. . .bugs me!

FLO: Bwahahaha.

ALL THE NFBs copy the laugh and fade upstage as the KIDS "thaw" and fade downstage, ad-libbing as they go. When they have reversed positions, BRANDI enters from Stage Left. At first the KIDS don't see BRANDI.

BRANDI: Hi, guys.

The KIDS all move away from her in a group.

BRANDI: Heyyyy, what's wrong?

MIKE: I don't want you to give me the flu!

TYLER: I hate the flu!

BRANDI: So do I, Tyler.

JENN: We heard you went to the doctor today!

HAILEY: We're afraid you might be coming down with the flu.

MIKE: And give it to us. *(The others all ad-lib, talking over each other. "I mean it, I don't want to get sick." "I threw up 4 times!" "Maybe we should go home.")*

BRANDI: Oh, that. I did go to the doctor, but the appointment wasn't for me. It was for my little sister. She caught her hand in the car door and had to get stitches. She's okay now. Oh, and so am I. I'm fine. Honest.

Everyone moves back toward her, except MIKE.

MIKE: You aren't gonna sneeze on us or anything, are you, Brandi?

BRANDI: *(Laughing)* No, Mike, I don't think so. But if I do, this time I have some tissues. *(She takes a package out of her pocket. The NFB nearest her stretches out as if to steal it, but can't reach it.)* In fact, I have some for all of you. *(She passes them out.)*

MIKE: Gee, thanks. Hey, we should practice what we're gonna do if we have to sneeze or cough.

BRANDI: Yeah, Dr. Drugan said you should always cover your mouth when you cough and sneeze. It stops the germs from getting out in the air where other people can catch them.

All the kids cough and sneeze into their tissues. The NFBs try to move up close but are stopped cold, as if by an invisible glass wall. They are not happy and make mad faces and shake their fists.

TYLER: Hailey. . .can we go inside the school?

HAILEY: Why, Tyler? I thought you wanted to play *(He comes closer and whispers in her ear.)* Oh, okay. Hey, Mike, can you take Tyler to the boys' room?

JENN: Um, I need to use the girls' room, too.

HAILEY: Let's meet back here in a few minutes, okay?

They exit, divided by gender going in different directions. The girls exiting Stage Left and the boys Stage Right. The NFBs come downstage.

FLO: Okay, guys, now's our chance.

FLIPE: Yeah, the bathroom is my home away from home, hahaha!

FLARRY: Oh, I don't know. I think bathrooms are kind of nasty.

FLECIA: So are we, Flarry, so are we!

FLO: Bwahahahaha.

All join in her evil laughter.

The NFBs divide by gender and exit in the same direction as their KID counterparts.

NARRATOR: And so the girls went to the girls' bathroom and the boys went to the boys'. What they didn't know was that the Nasty Flu Bugs were going there, too. And they meant business!

The KIDS come on from the sides in which they exited. Each group mimes opening a door. They are in their respective washrooms. The dialogue will switch back and forth.

The NFBs, also split up by gender, sneak into the bathrooms behind them. The KIDS need to act like they are looking in a mirror, adjusting hair, etc., so that it is clear that they are standing in front of the sinks. TYLER starts to leave.

TYLER: C'mon, Mike, I wanna go play. Wanna play tag!

MIKE: Hold up there, guy, aren't you forgetting something?

HAILEY: Oh, gee, I forgot to remind Tyler to wash his hands.

JENN: Mike will tell him.

MIKE: You have to wash your hands, Tyler.

BRANDI: I hope so. 'Cause washing your hands is the best way to kill germs.

TYLER:: Oh, right, to kill the germs.

The NFBs gasp in horror, look suitably scared and huddle together in fear, in their respective groups.

HAILEY: Hand washing doesn't just kill bathroom germs. It kills ANY germs. *(The NFBs behind her whimper.)*

MIKE: That's right, Ty. It kills germs. Including the germs that can make you sick with the flu.

TYLER:: Ooooh, I am really gonna kill those germs! *(NFBs behind them whimper.)*

Simultaneously, the girls and the boys mime turning on the water.

HAILEY: *(Laughing)* Well, if there's one thing I know, Tyler is using soap. He LOVES the bubbles.

Simultaneously, all mime getting soap from a dispenser.

MIKE: That's right, Ty. Hey, do you know how long you should wash your hands?

TYLER:: About an hour, I bet! Right, Mike?

MIKE: *(Laughing)* Not quite that long. You need to wash your hands long enough to sing this song.

Old McDonald washed his hands
EE-II-EE-I- SPLASH
And when he washed them he used soap
EE-II-EE-I-SPLASH
With a rub-dub here and rub-dub there
In between fingers and everywhere.
Old McDonald washed his hands
EE-II-EE-II-SPLASH!

MIKE starts to sing it the song, loudly, and Tyler, quickly joins in. The GIRLS hear it, as if through the wall, and join in, too. At right about "rub-dub there" the NFBs slowly begin to drag, limp, stagger, and then slowly fall to the floor behind the kids and 'die.'

At the end of the song, ALL THE KIDS mime drying their hands. The girls exit the way they came on, leaving the 'dead' germs, lying on stage.

TYLER:: *(looking at his hands)* I think they're all dead. Hey, guess what, Mike!

MIKE: What, Tyler?

TYLER:: You're 'it!' *He tags MIKE and runs off Stage Right.*

MIKE: Why, you little, you little, you little. . .GERM! *(He runs after him.)*

END OF PLAY

The germs stand up and remove their sweatshirts as the kids come in again from both sides. There will be applause and then all will join in rhyme on the following page, which is started by the NARRATOR. This can be done, simply as a rhyme, or with a rap/hiphop beat. Dividing it, and using individual actors for individual lines really works well.

After that, they lead the audience in singing the Old McDonald Hand Washing song, miming as they do.

Every year's got a season, where flu is diseasin'
 and it's always repreezin', no pills guaranteezin'
 That you won't get the wheezin' or ah-chooing-type sneezin'; and I
 say it ain't pleasin''
 No, it ain't pleasin'
 Those flu bugs, they ain't pleasin'.
 They're nasty!

But you can keep 'em away, and keep 'em at bay.
 Just don't sneeze out a spray - that's like a germie buffet.
 A hankie today will slay, not convey, and keep flu bugs contained, in
 school and at play.
 Contained. Uh-huh
 At school. Play.
 They're nasty!

And to keep in the sync, here's what you should think.
 Water's not just for drinkin', or to keep ya from stinkin'
 Wash your hands in the sink, to stay in the pink and kill germs in a
 blink.
 Wash hands!
 Kill germs!
 They're nasty!

END OF PLAY