

ExxonMobil

**DISCOVERY
SERIES**



Disney's The Little Mermaid from Theatre Under The Stars



Photo by Melissa Taylor

**THEATRE
UNDER
THE STARS**

THE
**HOBBY
CENTER**
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

**2026-2027 Season
5th Grade Curriculum Guide**

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About the Performance

Theatre Under The Stars

Theatre Under The Stars is Houston's home for musical theatre. Founded in 1968, the nonprofit brings artistry, education, and community together through extraordinary musical storytelling. Known for its Broadway-caliber productions—including the 1993 world premiere of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*—TUTS has captivated audiences with acclaimed productions such as Disney's *Frozen*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Mamma Mia!*, and a groundbreaking *Oklahoma!* featuring more than 20 dancers from Houston Ballet.

Education is at the heart of Theatre Under The Stars. Through the TUTS Musical Theatre Academy, Disney Musicals in Schools, the Tommy Tune Awards, and more, TUTS nurtures creativity, confidence, and artistry in performers of all ages and abilities—from their first steps on stage to their shining moments in the spotlight. These programs extend beyond the stage to support educators, build community, and expand access to the joy of musical theatre across Houston. For adults, the TUTS Spotlight Series offers opportunities to connect more deeply with the art form and the artists who bring it to life.

Theatre Under The Stars is proud to be a cornerstone of Houston's performing arts community and a leader in musical theatre education and inclusion.

Follow Theatre Under The Stars on social media at @tutshouston and @tutseducation.

THEATRE UNDER THE STARS



The Little Mermaid

Disney's *The Little Mermaid* makes a splash in this brand-new production created right here in Houston by Theatre Under The Stars. Based on the beloved Hans Christian Andersen tale and the classic Disney animated film, this dazzling musical adventure follows Ariel, a curious young mermaid who dreams of life beyond the sea.

Featuring unforgettable music by eight-time Academy Award® winner Alan Menken with lyrics by Howard Ashman and Glenn Slater, the show includes favorite songs like "Under the Sea," "Part of Your World," and "Kiss the Girl." With spectacular staging, vibrant characters, and heartwarming storytelling, audiences of all ages will be swept away by Ariel's journey of courage, friendship, and finding where you belong. Don't miss this magical theatrical experience!



About the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts

The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts opened to the public in 2002 in downtown Houston, at the edge of the city's renowned Theater District. The district is home to several major performing arts organizations, including Houston Grand Opera, Houston Ballet, Houston Symphony, Performing Arts Houston, Theatre Under The Stars, DaCamera, and Alley Theatre. Located beside Tranquility Park and one block from Houston City Hall, the Hobby Center was named in honor of former Texas lieutenant governor and Houston businessman William P. Hobby Jr. after his family foundation made a significant contribution to the project. The Hobby Center was built on the site formerly occupied by the Houston Music Hall and Sam Houston Coliseum, both of which were demolished in 1998. Today, the Hobby Center includes three performance spaces designed specifically for theater, music, and live performance experiences:

- **Sarofim Hall** is a 2,650-seat proscenium theater designed to accommodate large-scale touring Broadway productions and major live performances. Resident companies include Theatre Under The Stars and Broadway Across America. The hall's design combines grandeur with theatrical elegance. Golden latticework frames the space, while multi-storied gold-leaf columns stand in contrast to deep midnight-blue walls. Overhead, the Joe and Lee Jamail Celestial Dome Ceiling features twinkling fiber-optic stars arranged to mirror the Texas night sky.
- **Zilkha Hall** is an intimate 500-seat "jewel-box" theater, a term used to describe smaller performance spaces designed with rich detail, warmth, and close audience connection. Home to many of Houston's local arts organizations, the hall features excellent acoustics, deep-rose tones, and walnut wood accents across two seating levels.
- **The Founders Club** is an intimate live music venue with cabaret-style seating. Guests may purchase tables of four or be seated with others, creating a social and relaxed atmosphere. The series features both local performers and nationally recognized artists in a format not commonly found in Houston. Concerts span a variety of genres, including Broadway songbook, jazz, and world music.

ExxonMobil DISCOVERY SERIES

The ExxonMobil Discovery Series is the Hobby Center's flagship education program, welcoming 5th grade students from across Houston to experience live performances by local and touring artists. Aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the series brings dance, music, and theater to life in ways that connect directly to what students are learning in the classroom. Every performance is free—including transportation—and includes curriculum materials and artist Q&As that deepen the experience.

For the 2026-27 school year, the Hobby Center is thrilled to be partnering with 22+ school districts to serve nearly 50,000 5th graders.

Special thanks to lead underwriter ExxonMobil and generous supporters: Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts, Elkins Foundation, George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation, Albert and Ethel Herzstein Charitable Foundation, Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, The John M. O'Quinn Foundation, Texas Commission on the Arts, H-E-B, Vivian L. Smith Foundation, and Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion

Theater Etiquette

Before you come to the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, Please take some time to talk with your students about what to expect. Going to a live performance is a group experience unlike any other, and many students are more familiar with going to the movies or sporting events. Please help them prepare for what they'll see and how they should act. Other things to Keep in Mind: Make sure your students use the restroom before they leave school or at the theater before the show. If you get up during the performance, you may miss the best part! The performance runs approximately one hour long with no intermission. In entering or exiting the theater, safety is the primary concern. Please follow instructions from the house managers and ushers in taking your seats.

Going to a performance is different than going to a movie:

- This production is performed live. The performers can see, hear and react to the audience!
- Audience members can show the performers when they appreciate their performance! If something is funny, you can laugh! If the performers are doing a great job, then you can clap!
- Sometimes, the performers will ask you to participate by singing or clapping; please do not talk unless the performers ask you to!
- At the end of the show, the performers will bow. This is called a curtain call. If you really loved the show, you can give them a standing ovation to show that you appreciate their hard work!
- School clothes are appropriate, but some people like to dress up to go to the theater. Just make sure you are comfortable.

Going to a performance is the same as going to a movie:

- The lights dim before the performance begins and the theater stays dark during the show.
- Audience members are expected to stay quiet in their seats during the performance.
- Audience members may NOT take any pictures or video during the performance. (This is distracting to the performers and other audience members and this show contains copyrighted artistic material.)
- All cell phones and other electronic devices should be powered OFF or put on SILENT as soon as you enter the theater.

**VISIT RESTROOM
BEFORE - NOT DURING.**

ARRIVE EARLY.

**QUIET & SEATED
DURING SHOW.**

**NO PHOTOS OR VIDEOS
DURING SHOW.**

PHONES OFF/SILENCED.

**RESPECT THE SPACE &
OTHERS.**

LISTEN & ENGAGE.

**APPLAUD
APPROPRIATELY.**

Vocabulary

- **Adaptation** – A new version of a story created for a different audience or format.
- **Amphibious** – Able to live or move both in water and on land.
- **Character** – A person, animal, or imaginary being in a story.
- **Choreography** – The planned movements and dances performed on stage.
- **Composer** – A person who writes music.
- **Conductor** – The musician who leads the orchestra during a performance.
- **Coral Reef** – An underwater habitat built by tiny sea animals called corals.
- **Costume** – Clothing worn by actors to portray a character.
- **Curiosity** – A desire to learn, explore, or discover something new.
- **Dialogue** – The spoken conversation between characters.
- **Ecosystem** – A community of living things interacting with their environment.
- **Ensemble** – A group of performers who work together in a production.
- **Habitat** – The natural home of a plant or animal.
- **Identity** – The qualities, beliefs, and experiences that make a person unique.
- **Legend** – A traditional story passed down through generations, often historical events or people.
- **Libretto** – The written script and lyrics of a musical.
- **Marine** – Related to the ocean or sea.
- **Melody** – A sequence of musical notes that forms a tune.
- **Mermaid** – A mythical creature with the upper body of a human and the tail of a fish.
- **Myth** – A traditional story that explains nature, culture, or beliefs.
- **Narrator** – A person or character who tells a story.
- **Orchestra** – A group of musicians who perform together using a variety of instruments.
- **Orchestrator** – A musician who arranges music for the instruments of an orchestra.
- **Props** – Objects actors use during a performance.
- **Scene** – A section of a play or musical that takes place in one setting.
- **Set Design** – The creation of scenery that helps show where a story takes place.
- **Stagecraft** – The technical elements used to produce a theatrical performance.
- **Theme** – The central message or lesson of a story.
- **Transformation** – A significant change in appearance, form, or character.

Career-Focused Vocabulary

- **Director** – The person who guides the actors and creative team and shapes how the story is presented onstage.
- **Lighting Designer** – Plans how light, color, and shadows will create mood and focus attention.
- **Scenic Designer** – A theatre artist who designs the scenery and visual environment where the story takes place.
- **Sound Designer** – Plans the sound effects and recorded audio used during a production.
- **Stage Manager** – Organizes rehearsals and coordinates performers, scenery, lighting, and sound during the show.

PRE-SHOW

DISCUSSION

Finding Your Voice

- What does it mean to "find your voice"?
- How can people express themselves without using words?
- When have you tried something new because it was important to you?

Stories That Last

- Why do you think people continue to retell fairy tales?
- How might a story change when it becomes a musical?
- What makes a story memorable across generations?

Exploring New Worlds

- What do you think life is like beneath the ocean's surface?
- What adaptations help ocean animals survive in their habitats?
- What details will you look for to help you believe the actors are underwater?

Magic of Musical Theatre

- How can music, movement, and scenery help tell a story?
- What jobs do you think are needed to create a live musical?
- What are you most excited to watch or listen for during the performance?



PRE-SHOW

ACTIVITIES



Photos by Melissa Taylor

Ocean Explorer

Observe photos or videos of marine habitats. Record three adaptations that help ocean animals survive beneath the sea.

Story Detective

Compare two versions of a familiar fairy tale. Identify what stayed the same, what changed, and why an author or playwright might adapt a story for a new audience.

Stage Magic

Work with a partner to brainstorm how actors, costumes, lighting, music, and scenery could transform a stage into an underwater world.

Character Clues

Choose one character from the program. Based on their name or illustration, predict their role, personality, and the challenges they may face during the story.

Career: Theatre Designer

Imagine you are a scenic, costume, or lighting designer. Sketch or describe one idea that would help audiences believe they are exploring life beneath the sea.

PRE-SHOW

PRINTABLE ACTIVITY

Worksheet - My Voice, My Story

Name: _____

Date: _____

1 EVERYONE HAS A VOICE

Your voice is more than just the sound you make. It can be your words, your actions, your choices, and your ideas.

How does your voice help you?
Write or draw in each box.



EXPRESS
MY IDEAS



HELP
OTHERS



LEARN
SOMETHING
NEW



STAND UP
FOR WHAT
IS RIGHT

2 SOMEONE I ADMIRE

Think of someone you admire who uses their voice to make a difference.

How do they use their voice?
What change do they inspire?



3 MY VOICE MATTERS

Finish the sentence.

One way I want to use
my voice this year is...



4 PROUD TO BE ME

Draw a picture of yourself doing something that uses your voice and makes you proud.

5 ONE MORE THOUGHT

What is one question you have about using your voice that you hope the show will help you think about?

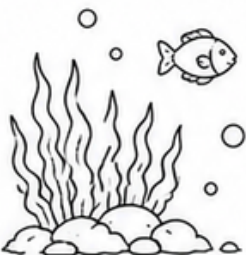


PRINTABLE ACTIVITY

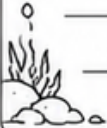
Worksheet - Exploring Two Worlds

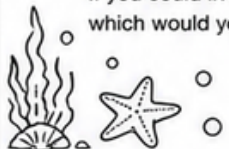
Name: _____

Date: _____

1 TWO WORLDS TO EXPLORE		UNDER THE SEA 	ABOVE THE SEA 
We live in a world above the sea. There is another world below the sea. What do you think these two worlds are like? Fill in the chart using your five senses. 	 SEE		
	 HEAR		
	 SMELL		
	 FEEL		
	 TASTE		

2 MAKE A CONNECTION		SAME	DIFFERENT
How are these two worlds the same? How are they different? List at least three ways. 	• _____	• _____	
	• _____	• _____	
	• _____	• _____	
	• _____	• _____	

3 WHAT LIVES THERE?		4 CHALLENGES IN EACH WORLD	
List or draw animals or living things you think you might find under the sea. 		What challenges might living in these two worlds have?	
		UNDER THE SEA _____ _____ _____ 	ABOVE THE SEA _____ _____ _____ 

5 YOUR CHOICE	
If you could live in one of these worlds, which would you choose? Why? 	_____ _____ _____ _____

FIFTH GRADE

TEKS Alignment

ELAR & READING- §110.7

TEKS: 5.6(A), 5.7(E), 5.9(E)

Student Learning Connection:

Students analyze how characters, dialogue, music, and stage action develop theme, conflict, and point of view while comparing how a classic fairy tale is adapted into a live musical performance.

Science -§112.16

TEKS: 5.1(A), 5.1(B), 5.5(A)

Student Learning Connection:

Students investigate marine habitats, ecosystems, and animal adaptations while exploring how living things survive in ocean environments through observation, questioning, and scientific reasoning.

Mathematics - §111.7

TEKS: 5.1(A), 5.1(E), 5.7(A)

Student Learning Connection:

Students recognize mathematical patterns, symmetry, spatial relationships, and sequencing while observing choreography, stage movement, scenic design, and repeated musical patterns.

Social Studies - §113.16

TEKS: 5.14(A), 5.14(B), 5.16(A)

Student Learning Connection:

Students explore how stories, traditions, and works of literature are preserved and adapted across cultures while examining the lasting influence of Hans Christian Andersen's classic fairy tale.

Health - §115.17

TEKS: 5.1 (B), 5.2(A), 5.3(A)

Student Learning Connection:

Students examine how communication, empathy, responsible decision-making, and self-expression contribute to healthy relationships, personal well-being, and positive interactions with others.

Fine Arts -§117.114

TEKS: (a1), (a2), (a3)

Student Learning Connection:

Students analyze how acting, music, dance, costumes, lighting, scenery, and technical theatre work together to communicate character, setting, mood, and story in a live musical production.

FIFTH GRADE

STAAR Alignment



RLA

STAAR Reporting Category:

*Reading Comprehension,
Vocabulary, Author's Craft,
Composition, Inquiry & Research*

Student Learning Connection

Analyze how characters, dialogue, music, movement, and staging develop theme, conflict, and point of view. Compare how a classic fairy tale is adapted into a live musical while making inferences, analyzing character development, and evaluating the author's purpose.

Mathematics

STAAR Reporting Category:

*Pattern, Relationships, Data
Analysis, and Mathematical
Processes*

Student Learning Connection

Recognize patterns, symmetry, sequencing, rhythm, and spatial relationships through choreography, scenic design, stage movement, and repeated musical motifs. Apply mathematical reasoning by observing how patterns and structure contribute to the overall performance.

Science

STAAR Reporting Category:

*Matter and Energy; Scientific
Investigation and Reasoning;
Organisms and Environments*

Student Learning Connection

Investigate ocean ecosystems, marine habitats, and the adaptations that help living things survive beneath the sea. Use scientific observation, questioning, and evidence-based reasoning to explore relationships between organisms and their environments.

FIFTH GRADE

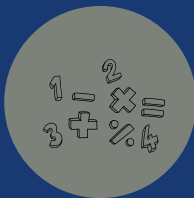
Curriculum Connections



English Language Arts

In The Classroom

Explore how stories can be transformed from books to the stage through dialogue, music, movement, and visual storytelling. Students analyze theme, character development, point of view, and author's craft while comparing different versions of a classic fairy tale.



Mathematics

In The Classroom

Investigate mathematical patterns through rhythm, sequencing, symmetry, spatial reasoning, and stage design. Students explore how choreography, formations, and repeated musical patterns demonstrate mathematical thinking in performance.



Science

In The Classroom

Discover how marine habitats support diverse plants and animals by exploring ocean ecosystems, food webs, and adaptations. Students use observation, questioning, and evidence to investigate how living things survive beneath the sea.



Social Studies

In The Classroom

Explore how stories, myths, and fairy tales are passed from one generation to the next and adapted across cultures. Students examine the enduring influence of Hans Christian Andersen's work while making connections between storytelling, traditions, and cultural heritage.



Health / SEL

In The Classroom

Explore how communication, empathy, responsible decision-making, and self-expression strengthen relationships and build confidence. Students reflect on the importance of using their voice, respecting different perspectives, and making thoughtful choices.

Discussion



Finding Your Voice

- How did the characters communicate their thoughts, feelings, and goals in different ways?
- When is it important to speak up, and when can actions communicate just as powerfully as words?
- What did the story teach you about being true to yourself?

Two Different Worlds

- What similarities did you notice between life under the sea and life on land?
- How did the setting influence the characters' choices and experiences?
- If you could spend one day in either world, which would you choose and why?



Ocean to the Stage



- Which costumes, scenery, lighting, or special effects helped create the underwater world?
- How did the music and choreography help tell the story?
- Which moment made you forget you were watching actors on a stage? Why?

Choices That Shape the Story

- Which character changed the most during the performance? What helped them grow?
- What important choices did the characters make, and how did those choices affect others?
- What lesson or message do you think audiences should remember after seeing Disney's The Little Mermaid?



POST-SHOW Activities

Reflective Writing

- **A World Through Someone Else's Eyes**

Choose one character from Disney's *The Little Mermaid*. Write a journal entry describing an important event from that character's point of view. Include their thoughts, feelings, and what they learned from the experience.



Create & Perform

- **Bring a Scene to Life**

Working with a partner or small group, choose a favorite scene from the musical. Create a short tableau or pantomime that tells the story using only movement, facial expressions, and body language, no speaking! Discuss how movement can communicate emotions and ideas.

Science Investigation

- **Design a Marine Habitat**

Research an ocean animal featured in or inspired by the musical. Create a habitat that includes food, shelter, and other living things the animal depends on. Label how each part of the ecosystem helps it survive.



Ocean Connections

- **Protect Our Oceans**

Create a poster, brochure, or public service announcement encouraging others to protect marine habitats. Include at least three ways people can help keep oceans clean and healthy.

Career Spotlight

- **Behind the Magic**

Choose one theatre career that helped bring Disney's *The Little Mermaid* to life, such as scenic designer, costume designer, puppeteer, lighting designer, sound designer, choreographer, or stage manager. Research the career and create a trading card or one-page profile describing:

- What the person does
- Skills they need
- How their work helped create the underwater world



PRINTABLE ACTIVITY

Worksheet - Behind the Broadway Magic

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. CHOOSE YOUR THEATRE CAREER

☐ SCENIC DESIGNER



I design the sets and create the place where the story happens.

☐ COSTUME DESIGNER



I design the costumes that help show who the characters are.

☐ LIGHTING DESIGNER



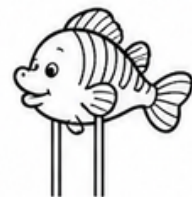
I use lights and colors to set the mood and focus the audience.

☐ SOUND DESIGNER



I choose the music and sound effects that bring the show to life.

☐ PUPPETEER



I bring characters and creatures to life using puppets and movement.

2. MY ROLE



What does this person do during the show?

3. BIGGEST CHALLENGE



What would be the most challenging thing about this job for *The Little Mermaid*?

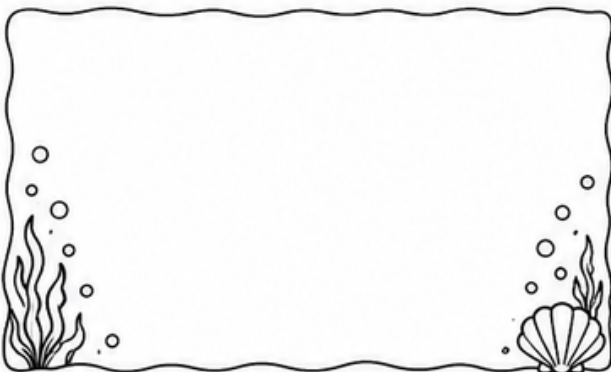
4. SOLUTION



How would you solve that challenge?

5. DESIGN & CREATE

Sketch or draw something you would design or create for *The Little Mermaid*.



6. SKILLS SPOTLIGHT

What skills and strengths would help you be successful in this career? List three.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



7. WHY IT MATTERS

How does this job help tell the story and create the magic on stage?



TEAMWORK MAKES THE MAGIC!

Every role is important. Every person makes the story possible.

DID YOU KNOW?

It takes many different people working together behind the scenes to create a live performance!



POST-SHOW

PRINTABLE ACTIVITY

Worksheet - If The Story Continued...

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 ONE YEAR LATER...

Choose one character from the show.
What do you think their life is like
one year after the musical ends?

2 A NEW ADVENTURE

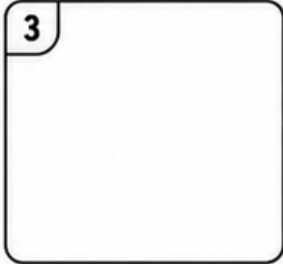
What challenge or problem
do they face next?

3 YOUR SOLUTION

How would they solve this challenge, and what lesson from the musical would help them?

4 STORYBOARD: SHOW THE NEXT CHAPTER

Draw a 4-panel comic that shows what happens next.
Be sure to show the challenge, the solution, and how the character grows.

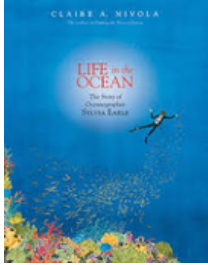
1 	→	2 	→	3 	→	4 

REFLECTION

What lesson or message from Disney's *The Little Mermaid* will you take with you
as you imagine the future for your character?

FIFTH GRADE RESOURCES

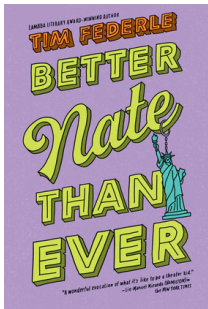
Books



"Life in the Ocean: The Story of Oceanographer Sylvia Earle"

by Claire A. Nivola

Follow oceanographer Sylvia Earle's journey from a curious child exploring the Gulf of Mexico to a pioneering scientist and advocate for protecting our oceans.



"Better Nate Than Ever" by Tim Federle

Follows a young theater fan as he chases his dream of performing on Broadway, celebrating creativity, perseverance, and being yourself



"The Brilliant Deep: Rebuilding the World's Coral Reefs"

by Kate Messner

Tells the story of efforts to restore coral reefs, showing how science, conservation, and individual action can help protect the ocean.

Websites

NOAA Ocean Explorer



Brings ocean exploration to life through lessons, videos, and activities that help students learn about marine science and the underwater world.

Link: [NOAA Ocean Explorer](#)

Broadway Career Mapping



Illustrates the many career pathways involved in bringing a Broadway production to life, both onstage and behind the scenes.

Link: [Career Mapping](#)

CONNECT WITH US

thehobbycenter.org/education

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**Let us know what you think.
Please take our survey!**



**[Post-Show
Student Survey](#)**



**[Post-Show
Teacher Survey](#)**