

# InsideOUT

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## dusty AND THE BIG BAD WORLD



By Cusi Cram  
Directed by Kent Thompson  
**Jan 23 - Feb 28**  
The Space Theatre

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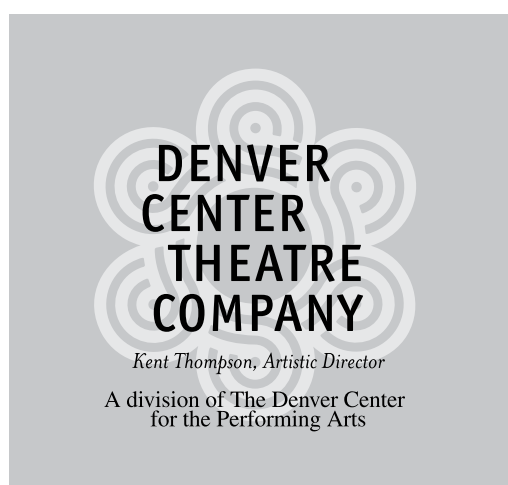
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# InsideOUT

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## Synopsis

*LIZZIE: I guess Dusty is this dust ball and he's made up of a little of everything and everyone and on each show he pulls a little of himself off and is magically transported – to wherever that particular particle is from.*

– Dusty and the Big Bad World

Dusty and his animated friends hold a competition to find a model family based on letters written by children. The winning family will receive a visit from Dusty and will be filmed for TV viewing. Out of the 15,000 letters received, the producers pick Lizzie's family: her parents are exemplary role models – and they are two men. When word of that selection and the forthcoming episode reaches Marianne, Secretary of Education, she exercises her authority with a sledgehammer. She decides that the program should not be aired on public television because of its possible influence on children. She terms the episode "special interest TV" that caters to people with alternative lifestyles. Her decision is a blow to Jessica and Nathan, the producers/writers of the show and to Karen, Marianne's secretary, who admires her boss and her tenacity in overcoming a self-destructive past, but feels her decision to cancel the episode is definitely wrong. It is that self-destructive past that Karen reveals surreptitiously to Nathan that almost brings Marianne down, but not quite. Based on an actual incident that happened in 2005, *Dusty and the Big Bad World* is a very funny, no-holds-barred yet even-handed look at PBS, government bias, gay marriage, the right to privacy, children's allergies and the ability to survive in a small, small-minded world.

*KAREN: Everyone's convictions and the history they bring to their convictions and the smallness that really lies behind the big ideas they profess to believe – I find that smallness exhausting.*

– Dusty and the Big Bad World

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# The Playwright

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Cusi Cram's plays have been produced and developed at the O'Neill Playwrights Conference, the Williamstown Theatre Festival, The Public Theater, South Coast Repertory, Manhattan Class Company, The New Group, New York Theatre Workshop, The Humana Festival, New Georges, The Miranda Theatre, PS 122 and the Dag Hammarskjöld Theatre at the United Nations. Her play *Fuente* is the recipient of the 2004 Herrick Theatre Foundation New Play Prize and was produced at Barrington Stage Company. *All the Bad Things* was part of the LAByrnth Theater Company's 2005-6 season at the Public Theater. In addition, *Lucy and the Conquest* was produced on the Nikos Stage at the Williamstown Theatre Festival in 2006. This past spring Cusi performed in LAByrnth's production of *Pretty Chin Up*, also at the Public. *Dusty and the Big Bad World* was workshopped at Juilliard in September of 2007 and at the Denver Center's Colorado New Play Summit in 2008.

In addition to her theatre work, Cusi also has received three Emmy award nominations and a Humanitas Award nomination for her work on the animated children's program "Arthur" and currently writes for that show. Her latest episode will feature Philip Seymour Hoffman as a guest voice. She also writes for several other animated programs aired on PBS including "Postcards from Buster," "Curious George" and "Between the Lions." She is currently at work on a project with Pixel Farm in Minneapolis called "Yoga Zoo" based on a popular line of stuffed animals. She is a graduate of Brown University and the Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program at Juilliard. She is a member of LAByrnth Theatre Company, the MCC Playwrights Coalition, the Laura Streisin New American Writers Group at Primary Stages and sits on New Georges' Artist Council. She lives between Woodstock, NY and Greenwich Village with her husband Peter Hirsch.

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## Margaret Spelling vs. Buster

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*MARIANNE: What children watch on television when they are young is highly influential. – Dusty and the Big Bad World*

In January 2005, only days after becoming the Secretary of Education in the George W. Bush Administration, Margaret Spellings sent a letter to the head of PBS condemning an episode of the children's show "Postcards from Buster" that featured Buster the Bunny visiting Vermont to see a special farm. Titled "Sugartime!," the episode focused on the production of maple sugar—however, the parents of one featured child were lesbians.

"Postcards from Buster" featured an animated rabbit and his father who visited different people to introduce children to various locales and different cultures around the United States. Their itinerary had included Mormons in Utah, the Hmong in Wisconsin, the Gullah culture in South Carolina,

Orthodox Jewish families and a Pentecostal Christian family.

The fact that the family structure was not the focus of the show did not deter Mrs. Spelling. She wrote another letter to PBS demanding the government funding spent on this episode be refunded. The money came from the Federal Ready-to-Learn program, aimed at helping young children learn through television; Spellings said this episode did not fulfill the intent Congress had in mind. "Congress and the Department's purpose in funding this programming certainly was not to introduce this kind of subject matter to children," insisted Mrs. Spellings.<sup>1</sup>

As a result, PBS decided not to air the episode after all. The Boston Public TV station that produced the show, WGBH, made the episode available to individual stations, a few of which decided to air it. The incident produced a strong reaction from one member of Congress. "You have

said that families should not have to deal with the reality of the existence of same sex couples, and the strong implication that this is something from which young children should be shielded. Your comments are degrading,” wrote openly gay U.S. Representative Barney Frank, Democrat from Massachusetts.<sup>2</sup>

1. [penusa.org](http://penusa.org)

2. [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

[penusa.org/go/news/comments/169](http://penusa.org/go/news/comments/169)

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret\\_Spellings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Spellings)

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## Names, Places, Terms in the Play

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**Gloria Steinem** – American feminist icon, journalist, women’s right advocate. Founded Ms. Magazine in 1972.

**Sponge Bob Square Pants** – An animated TV character who is a sea sponge living in a pineapple under the sea in a city called Bikini Bottom. It is the most watched show on the Nickelodeon network.

**“Gilmore Girls”** – Comedy/drama on WB. It follows a single mother and her daughter who live in a close knit small town full of many quirky characters.

**Agnostic Buddhism** – a religion rejecting karma and reincarnation but promoting living a good life and personal self-discovery.

**Au Bon Pain** – French for “At the good bread.” A fast casual bakery/café chain founded in Boston in 1978.

**Kappa Delta** – national sorority with over 200,000 members.

**Story boarding** – a series of illustrations displayed in sequence for the purpose of pre-visualizing a motion picture or animation feature.

**Emmy** – a television production award that does for TV entertainment what the Oscars do for film.

**POV** – a cinema term for “point of view.” It is the name of public television’s showcase for independent non-fiction films.

**“Frontline”** – investigative journalism series on PBS. Only regularly scheduled long-form documentary series on American TV.

**Monica Lewinsky** – the American woman with whom President Bill Clinton had an inappropriate sexual relationship while she worked at the White House in 1995-96. This affair led to his impeachment.

**Piazza Navona** – a square in Rome, Italy with sculptural and architectural creations by Borromini, Bernini and Rainaldi.

**Campo de Fiori** – a rectangular piazza near the Piazza Navona, which is a focus for commercial and street culture.

**Peabody Award** – awards in radio and TV that are given to broadcast journalism, documentary film, educational and children’s programming.

**ACT UP** – a diverse non-partisan group of individuals committed to end the AIDS crisis. Acronym for AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power.

**Humanitas Prize** – an award given to television and movie writers for scenarios that promote human dignity, peace and freedom.

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# American Public Television

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*If PBS doesn't do it, who will?*

– PBS motto

**T**he Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) was created from the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967. It is a nonprofit private corporation that serves as an umbrella organization for public television (PBS) and radio broadcasting (National Public Radio). Though not a government agency, its nine-member board of directors is appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate; it is required to make reports to Congress and submit to audits. The CPB's principal function is to receive and distribute government contributions to fund national programs and to support qualified local stations. By law, the Corporation "must exercise minimum control of program content or other activities of local stations."<sup>1</sup> The fundamental purpose of public telecommunications is "to provide programs and services which inform, enlighten and enrich the public."<sup>2</sup> It also has the responsibility to encourage programming that takes creative risks and addresses the needs of underserved audiences, particularly children and minorities.

Funding for the Public Broadcasting System comes partially from the federal government. In 2003, 15.6% of the system's total income (\$2.3 billion) came from federal sources. That government appropriation was used in financing four categories: "grants to stations, grants for programming, system support and administrative operations."<sup>3</sup>

The greatest source of money for PBS is donations from viewers. Since 1999, the PBS underwriting guidelines have required this announcement: "This program was made possible by contributions to your PBS station from viewers like you. Thank you."<sup>4</sup> Another source are foundations and trusts, which give hefty contributions to PBS. These include the Pew Charitable Trust and the Fan Fox and Leslie R Samuels Foundation. Other organizations support programs of specific interest to them. For example, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation finances TV programs about science and nature while the William and Flora Hewlett Fund subsidizes programs from independent producers. "Live from Lincoln Center" is underwritten by MetLife and the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts ("Live from the Met") by the Toll Brothers.

In their report on public television the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fund declares, "Public television is, without doubt, one of the great 'enablers' of the educational system in this country – a massive resource that is probably underused and certainly undervalued."<sup>5</sup> Its programming enhances the teaching and learning of a curriculum while its commitment can be shown by briefly describing a few of the areas it touches.

Instructional television (ITV) for K-12 students is the most extensive and most important part of the commitment. Some classes view the educational programs as they are broadcast on the local PBS station, while others receive the programs in the form of a block pool. Preprogrammed VCRs record the entire block so that teachers can pick and choose individual programs on video to be shown at a time most convenient to them. A few titles demonstrate the wealth of the service. "3-2-1 Contact" is a daily science program for middle and upper elementary grades produced by the Children's Television Workshop. "Russian I and II" and "Japanese I and II" come from the Satellite Education Resource Consortium. "Futures" for grades 7 through 12 is a series featuring Jaime Escalante that demonstrates how math relates to careers and jobs.

Programming for teachers is another aspect of PBS's goal. With funds from Texaco, WNET in New York runs a summer institute that gives teachers hands-on training in the use of instructional TV. Another program is the Learning Link and Curriculum Connection which gives teachers quick access to information about classroom resources.

Adult Education programming is the focus of ALS (Adult Learning Service), a joint effort of PBS and the Annenberg School of Communication. It transmits programs via satellite directly to colleges and universities.

PBS' evening schedule contains a diversity of programs. The Fine Arts are represented by "Great Performances," "Live from the Met," drama by "Masterpiece Theatre" and "Mystery Masterpiece;" science by "Nova" and "Nature;" history by "American Experience" and the Ken Burns' series; and public affairs by "The Newshour," "Frontline" and "Washington Week in Review" among others.

PBS Kids was founded in 1999 and became PBS Kids Sprout in 2005, a partnership of PBS and Comcast. The most well known PBS children's programs are "Sesame Street" (1969) and "The Electric Company" (1971). In 2004, PBS launched programming blocks that appealed to different ages. The first was titled PBS Kids Go which featured such shows as "Arthur," "Cyberchase," "Maya and Miguel" and "Wishbone," among others. In September 2006, PBS introduced PBS Kids Preschool Destination, which airs weekday mornings. Its shows include "Curious George," "Clifford the Big Red Dog," "Dragon Tales" and "SuperWhy." Other programs of note are "Between the Lions," "Boohbah" and "Reading Rainbow."

The producers of PBS programs come from diverse sources: 42.1% are public television stations; 19.4% are independent producers such as Serius Thinking Ltd. or the Lyons Partnership; 16.1% come from the Children's Television Workshop and 14% from foreign producers such as the British Broadcasting Corporation or BBC. The most significant station producers are WNET (New York), WGBH (Boston), WETA (Washington, D.C.), MPT (Maryland Public Television), WTTW (Chicago) and KCET (Los Angeles).

Public television has been the target of criticism and controversy in the last few years. When created in 1967, there were only three privately owned national networks as opposed to today's private cable or satellite delivery systems with a multitude of channels. Some debate exists as to whether or not PBS has outlived its need. Many viewers object to the fundraising pledge drives or telethons that

disrupt regular programming. Many conservatives perceive PBS as having a liberal bias and criticize its government revenue. This argument surfaced when Kenneth Tomlinson became chairman of the CPB in 2003. Tomlinson, a friend of Karl Rove's, was accused of using CPB resources to "go after" the so-called liberals. Among these was Bill Moyers, host of the PBS program NOW. Moyers resigned in 2005 citing political pressure to alter the content of his programs. Tomlinson later resigned and Moyers returned to PBS to host "Bill Moyers' Journal," another Friday night show.

No matter what the viewpoint, the importance of PBS cannot be underestimated. Eric Boehlert, a senior fellow at Media Matters, a nonprofit media watchdog group, says: "PBS is a success story for the government, ranking up there with national parks. Any cuts would hurt the millions of people who can't or won't pay for cable."<sup>6</sup>

1. Ickes, p. 3.
2. Ickes, p. 13.
3. Ickes, p. 5.
4. wikipedia, PBS, p. 3.
5. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fund, p. 114.
6. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fund, p. 122.

Ickes, L. R., ed. *Public Broadcasting in America*. New York: Novinka Books, 2006.

20<sup>th</sup> Century Fund. *Quality Time: the Report of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fund Task Force on Public Television*. New York: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fund Press. 1993.

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PBS](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PBS)

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## Merchandising to Kids

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*We're not selling anything but learning.*  
– PBS website<sup>1</sup>

The days of "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood" are gone. The revered pedagogue of pre-schoolers wrote his own scripts and songs and did not sell merchandise to finance his show. Today, more than 20 programs draw on his legacy to educate the children he welcomed into his neighborhood, but with one big difference. G. Jeffrey MacDonald writes in "The Big Money Guys" in the *Christian Science Monitor* that "unless kids buy the goods, their favorite shows and characters will disappear."<sup>2</sup>

The Public Broadcasting System has no commercials. Furthermore, its compensation to production studios is extremely low. Shows for young children are relatively expensive to make because computer generated animation costs as much as \$16,000 per minute. Therefore, producers must look for revenue elsewhere.

As all TV networks reach out to children, PBS must compete along with them. Because profits in this market are driven largely by merchandising, "the commercial and creative sides of children's television are fusing in a way that sometimes makes them indistinguishable from one another."<sup>3</sup> To illustrate this point, we can look

at two respected TV children's shows. "Sesame Street" is produced by the Sesame Workshop. The purpose of the show is to teach social and cognitive skills by the use of live characters and Muppets. The product spin-off from the show includes books, puzzles, videos, CD ROMs, apparel, home and school accessories and plush toys. The annual production cost of the show is \$15 million; the revenue from merchandising sales and licensing is \$7.5 million. Another example is the show "Arthur." Produced by WGBH in Boston, it began in 1997. The educational value of the show is that it offers encouragement and coping skills for everyday situations. The products from the show include books, videos and two character dolls that bring in \$1.4 million in revenue. The program's annual production cost is \$4 million.

PBS News in its July 6, 2008 edition writes: "Public service media are often noncommercial, but not anti-commerce."<sup>4</sup> The message to producers is that educational necessity comes first "before merchandising potential in commissioning development or acquisition of multi-media content."<sup>5</sup> Thus, if a marketing tie-in coincides with the show's mission, it's not such an unseemly way to finance it.

Though some caution that TV is creating little consumers, producers of educational TV programs beg to differ. They believe that well-chosen and well-made merchandise can enhance a child's learning experience while providing the finances to meet their bottom line realities.

1. PBS.org
2. csmonitor.com,
3. commercialalert.org
4. PBS.org.
5. PBS.org,

csmonitor.com/2003/0408/

pbs.org/aboutpbs/news

Singer, Dorothy G. and Singer, Jerome L., Eds. *Handbook of Children and the Media*. London: Sage Publications, 2001.

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## The Problem of Privacy and Public Officials

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*MARIANNE: Some things in life are private. Deeply so. There is a realm of pain, a sphere of human suffering that belongs to the person who has experienced it.* – Dusty and the Big Bad World

Privacy, unlike libel, is a fairly new legal issue. State courts have begun to accept the notion that there is a right to privacy, but the interpretation varies greatly. Nationally, the Privacy Act of 1974 recognized a person's "right to be left alone and prohibited the federal government from indiscriminate snooping."<sup>1</sup> However, that act was hastily overturned by the Patriot Act of 2001. In 1890, Louis D. Brandeis (later a Justice of the Supreme Court) and Samuel D. Warren contended that there should be a right to privacy and wrote: "The press is overstepping in every direction the obvious bounds of propriety and decency. Gossip is no longer the resource of the idle and the vicious, but has become a trade, which is pursued with industry as well as effrontery."<sup>2</sup>

The story concerning Marianne falls under

the category of "disclosure of embarrassing private facts."<sup>3</sup> This differs from libel in that the facts revealed are true, which Marianne admits, but considers the revelation indecent as Justice Brandeis would. However, some lawyers and professors contend, "accountability for virtually all personal and intimate behavior is the rule rather than the exception in the United States."<sup>4</sup> The critical question within government is what practices and behavior can make government officials and employees answerable to citizens—including what happens in ordinary daily life.

A study done by the *Newspaper Research Journal* examined "what are the proper bounds of journalistic inquiry into the private lives [of politicians] on matters not clearly related to their past or future performances as public servants."<sup>5</sup> Such issues as infidelity, personal illness, crime records, abortion and drug use rank high as information to be covered; cheating in college, sexual harassment allegations and mental depression should not be so readily reported.

In 1999 the Pew Research Center reported that citizens were being turned off by the incessant coverage of private subjects. The public doesn't like the obsession with the intimate and the personal; many newspaper editors acknowledge that "as distasteful as it is, such reporting is likely to stay."<sup>6</sup> Yet, out of the slime of her scandal, Marianne emerges triumphant; as she says: "I am currently one of the most popular women in politics."

1. Croteau and Worcester, p. 417,
2. Croteau and Worcester, p. 415.
3. Croteau and Worcester, p. 416.
4. Allen, p. 3.
5. Splichal, p. 1.
6. Splichal, p. 6.

Allen, Anita L. *Why Privacy Isn't Everything*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003.

Croteau, Maureen and Worcester, Wayne. *The Essential Researcher*. New York: Harper Collins, 1994.

Splichal, Sigman. "News Editors Show Concern for Privacy of Public Officials." *Newspaper Research Journal*. <http://findarticles.com/>

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## Gay Marriage: Pro & Con

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*LIZZIE: People say the dumbest stuff, like its really weird you have two Dads and the Bible says this and that about gay people. And mostly I don't care about the Bible or what other people say because we are agnostic Buddhists, anyway.*

– Dusty and the Big Bad World

Opponents of gay marriage argue that equating same-sex and opposite-sex marriage changes the meanings and traditions of marriage.<sup>1</sup> Those who oppose gay marriage often quote the passage from Leviticus that states that a man should only lie with a woman and that marriage should only happen between a man and a woman. If that pattern is not maintained, conservative social scientists warn against "fractured families" in which every child will have several moms and dads, numerous grandparents and dozens of siblings. In this situation, children will be shuffled around in various living arrangements without a stable environment.

According to the most recent polls, a majority of Americans (55%) oppose gay marriage. Those who defend same sex marriage point to the more than 1,000 laws extended to married heterosexual couples that are denied to same sex couples. These include access to "a spouse's medical, life and disability insurance; hospital visitation and medical decision-making privileges, and workers' compensation among others."<sup>2</sup> Proponents of gay marriage argue that there is no constitutional basis for denying gay couples marriage. Nowhere in the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution, they point out, is the preservation of tradition cited

as a power or intention of our government.

Defenders of gay marriage also point out that most children these days do not live in a traditional family with a stay at home mother and a father who works from 9 to 5. Today many children are born out of wedlock to single mothers; half of all marriages end in divorce, and "married couples with children now make up only 26% of United States households."<sup>3</sup> Gay marriage advocates argue that children reared in an environment of love and commitment where their needs are met likely will thrive, no matter the gender of both parents raising them.

Gay marriage is already recognized in Canada, Belgium, Norway, South Africa, Spain and the Netherlands. At this time the following states sanction same sex marriage or civil unions: Massachusetts, New Jersey, Vermont, Connecticut and New Hampshire. The California Supreme Court ruled that same sex couples have the right to marry, but California residents voted on a measure to oppose it and it passed, unleashing widespread protests. The issue is almost certain to be tested again soon.

In 1973, the American Home Economic Association defined a family as: "Two or more people who share resources, share responsibility for decisions, share values and goals and have commitments to one another over time. The family is that climate that one 'comes home to' and it is this network of sharing and commitment that most accurately describes the family unit, regardless of blood, legal ties, adoption or marriage."<sup>4</sup>

1. wikipedia.org
  2. angelfire.com,
  3. Ibid
  4. Polikoff, p. 33.
- [bidstrup.com/marriage](http://bidstrup.com/marriage)  
[angelfire.com/home/leah/index](http://angelfire.com/home/leah/index)  
[wikipedia.org/wiki/same-sex\\_marriage](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/same-sex_marriage)  
[National Conference of State Legislatures.org/programs/same\\_sex](http://NationalConferenceofStateLegislatures.org/programs/same_sex)  
 Phy-Olsen, Allene. *Same-Sex Marriage*. London: Greenwood Press, 2006.  
 Polikoff, Nancy D. *Beyond (Straight and Gay) Marriage*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2008.

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## Can TV Teach Kids to be Good?

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JESSICA: [My show] teaches kids to be good human beings, do you know how rare that is? Are you against that, Marianne? Because it's nearly impossible for kids to learn how to be human in this whacked out time we are living in.

– Dusty and the Big Bad World

How can one turn pre-schoolers into children who are pro-social, caring, tolerant, collaborative and willing to give? The child's home environment is considered the most critical. Yet a few studies point to four shows that have had a profound impact on very young children: "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood," "Sesame Street," "Barney and Friends" and "Dragon Tales."

On "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood," the sweet, sweated host has been quoted as saying: "It's very easy to make the bad or the evil attractive. It's very different to make goodness attractive and that needs to be our goal as broadcasters."<sup>1</sup> Studies show the viewers of his program developed persistence, self-control and patience.<sup>2</sup>

"Sesame Street" is known for teaching children material related to language, reading and mathematics. With repeated long-term exposure to the program, however, children can learn how to get along with one another by dramatizing how conflicts can be resolved in a positive manner. In creating multi-cultural characters on the programs, children can become more tolerant of differences in people.<sup>3</sup>

"Barney," the plushy, purple dinosaur who

became a huge retail success, has surprised most people by children's response to him. Adults don't understand why "Barney and Friends" is a big hit. "It is not through gimmicks, but through episodes that are thoughtfully planned to reflect the world and needs of a pre-school viewer."<sup>4</sup> Barney "thinks like them and celebrates the child and childhood."<sup>5</sup>

"Dragon Tales" tells the story of two children, ages four and six, who enter Dragon Land to talk with dragon friends about the challenges they face. The show's mission is to help children learn self-control and become positive thinkers. After five weeks of study by Langbourne W. Rust, an independent researcher, the children who watched "Dragon Tales" showed gains in organizing play with other children, taking on challenging tasks, sharing with others and accepting second choices.<sup>6</sup>

1. Singer and Singer, p. 530.
2. Guernsey, p. 183.
3. Guernsey, p. 182.
4. Singer and Singer, p. 517.
5. Ibid.
6. Guernsey, p. 179.

Guernsey, Lisa. *Into the Minds of Babes*. New York: Basic Books, 2007.

Singer, Dorothy G. and Singer, Jerome L, Eds. *Handbook of Children and the Media*. London: Sage Publications, 2001.

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# Children and Allergies

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*NATHAN: Everyone on this show is allergic to something.*

*JESSICA: Because allergies are a huge kid issue. – Dusty and the Big Bad World*

In the last five to ten years more children are being diagnosed with food allergies than ever before. “It is now estimated that as many as 8% of children under the age of three have some sort of food allergy, and 11 million Americans are thought to be allergic to some sort of food product.”<sup>1</sup> The reasons are unknown, but more doctors and health care providers have become aware of food allergies and therefore, able to diagnose them quickly.

Some scientists believe that the way we process the foods we eat may result in us having more allergies than the rest of the world. There is a theory known as “hygiene hypothesis that suggests our world is so very clean that the role of certain types of infections are not seen in children as often.”<sup>2</sup>

Another theory is that clean water, antibiotics and vaccines have eliminated most of the toxins the immune system is designed to fight against such as viruses, parasites and bacteria. Therefore, the immune system finds something else to battle such as eggs, wheat or milk.

To head off allergies, “it may be important to expose a child early on to a sufficient quantity of allergy-causing substances to train the immune system that (these products) are not a threat.”<sup>3</sup> Instead of treating allergies, scientists hope to outwit them by this method.

As a *USA Today* headline announced: “To head off allergies, expose your kids to pets and dirt. Really!”<sup>4</sup>

1. news-medical.net

2. abc.news.go.com

3. usatoday.com

4. usatoday.com

abcnews.go.com/Health/AllergiesOverview/storyhd

usatoday.com/news/health/2006-03-19/allergies\_cover

news-medical.net/id=31959

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## Questions

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- 1) What is the purpose of public television and who should oversee the programming? Should the government be able to censor what is shown on Public Television?
- 2) How does public television differ from network television?
- 3) How does the relationship between Marianne and Karen change through the play?
- 4) How would you describe the relationship between Jessica and Nathan?
- 5) What reasons does Marianne give for pulling the funding for “Dusty”?
- 6) Why was Lizzie picked to be on “Dusty” and why does Nathan fight to keep her family on the episode?
- 7) How would you argue for and against keeping the show on the air?
- 8) What are the themes of the production? Explain which theme you think is the most important?
- 9) Define the typical American family or “traditional” family. How would you define Lizzie’s family? List ways in which your family is and isn’t “traditional.”
- 10) Who would be on your “cool list” and why would they be on the list?

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# Activities

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**F**irst divide the class into three groups. Using a well-known fairy tale give each group a role, for example: “The Three Little Pigs.” One group is the pigs, another group is the wolf and the third group is the mother. Have each group tell the story from their character’s point of view.

Divide the group into three groups—a newspaper reporter, the prosecuting attorney, and the defense attorney. As a group they will come up with the “story” that best benefits their needs using the facts they were presented. The groups then read their story to the class and discuss. Can each side be defended? Can one side sway the class more than another? Are any of the sides really wrong?

After seeing *Dusty and the Big Bad World*, each group will become the writing staff of a television show. Each group will be responsible to pitch a storyline to the producers from the perspective of a character from the play. Before the groups begin deciding on the best storyline, they will each pick one person who will play the producers. The producers will decide the criteria that will result in selection for production. The writing group will decide on the storyline that best fits their character and will present their storyline in one or two sentences (a pitch) to the producers. The producers may ask the writers why their story should be produced. After the pitches and defenses are given, the producers will select one storyline to produce. Discuss why the storyline was selected. Explain why this story was more compelling than the others?

**Reading and Writing 4: Students apply thinking to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.**

**Reading and Writing 6: Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.**

## “Traditional” Families

Begin by compiling a list of traits a family has; you may use your own family as an example or what you wish your family could aspire to be. Compare your definition of what family is with another person. Which traits, if any, are similar? Which traits, if any, are different? Are there qualities that you wish your family had? Are there qualities that you wish your family did not have? Write a letter to the producers of “Dusty.” How would you describe your family to them in hope of being on the show?

From what you know about Lizzie’s family from the production, how would Lizzie’s family compare to yours? What are the similarities and differences? If you were to defend Lizzie and her episode of “Dusty,” how would you frame your argument?

**Reading and Writing 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.**

**Reading and Writing 4: Students apply thinking to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.**