

The Psychology of Art, Fiction, and Imagination

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Who spends time in fictional worlds?

Who spends time in artistic worlds?



5 hrs/day



\$14.6 Billion



\$10.7 Billion



1,248 Performances

1,319 seats

1,646,112 Lucky People

7 Million people





A photograph of a winding asphalt road with double yellow lines, bordered by a stone wall and autumn-colored trees. The road curves to the right, and the trees on the left are in full autumn foliage, with yellow and orange leaves. The sky is not visible.

Where did fiction come from?

Why do we like fiction and art?

Why do we react to fiction and art?

Do we react differently to fiction and nonfiction?

Acting and pretend play

Unanswered questions and your questions





Why do we like fiction and art?



Kramer vs. Kramer



Columbia Pictures Presents A Stanley Jaffe Production

Dustin Hoffman
in
Kramer vs. Kramer

Meryl Streep Jane Alexander

Directed by **Nestor Almendros** Based Upon the Screen by **Avery Corman**

Produced by **Stanley R. Jaffe** Written by **Robert Benton** and **Robert Benton**

© 1979 Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc.

Size of Best Selling Single Paperbacks



Retell Exercise

Mental states?

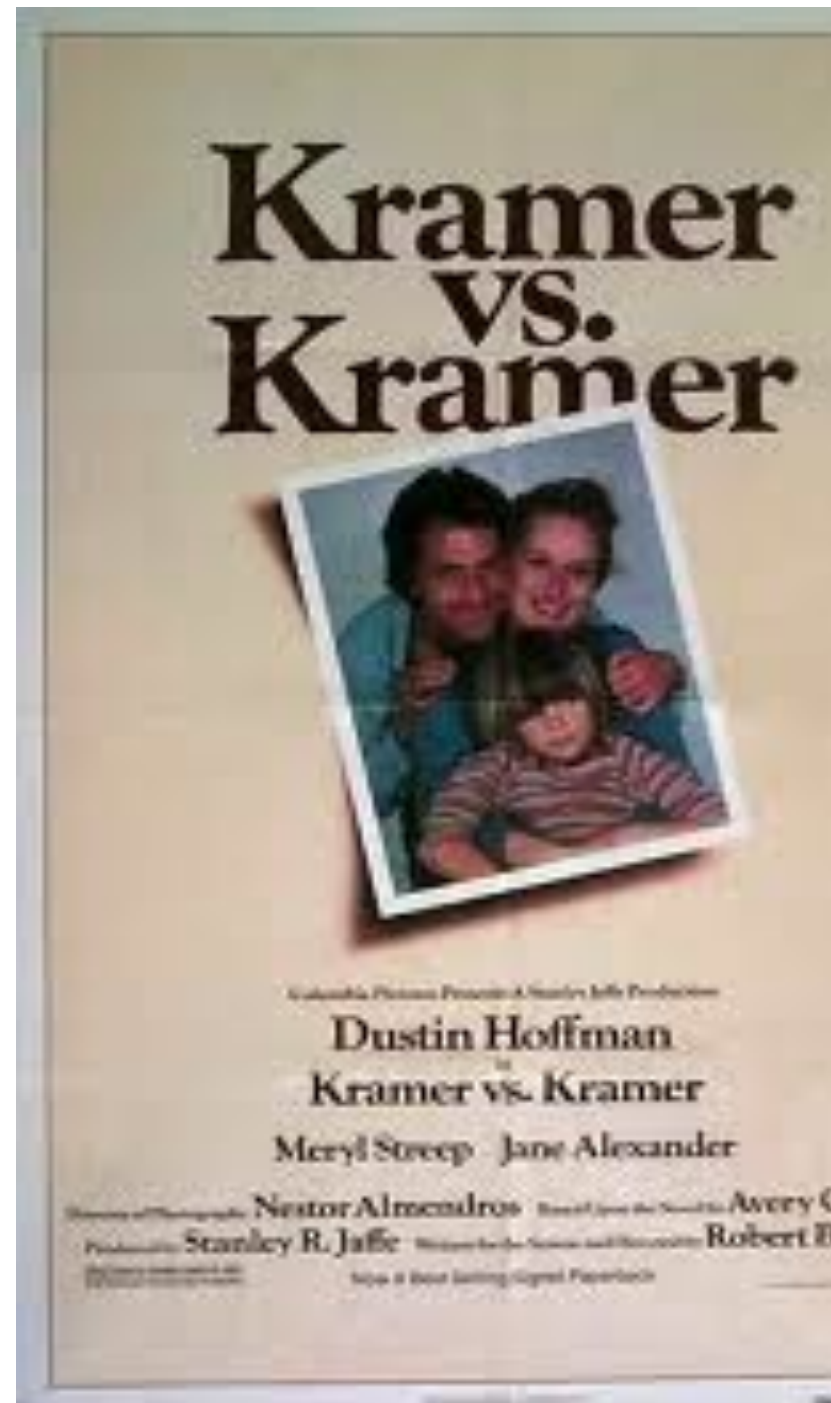
Scenery?

Character dress?

Background?

Facial/ bodily expressions?

Personal reaction to the clip



Do we react?

Startle responses

Emotion regulation

External v. internal “feeling”

Perspective taking and story knowledge

Kramer vs. Kramer



Columbia Pictures Presents A Stanley Jaffe Production

Dustin Hoffman

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Directed by **Nestor Almendros** Based Upon the Screenplay by **Avery C**

Produced by **Stanley R. Jaffe** Written for the Screen and Directed by **Robert B**

The Screenplay by

is a Best Selling Novel by

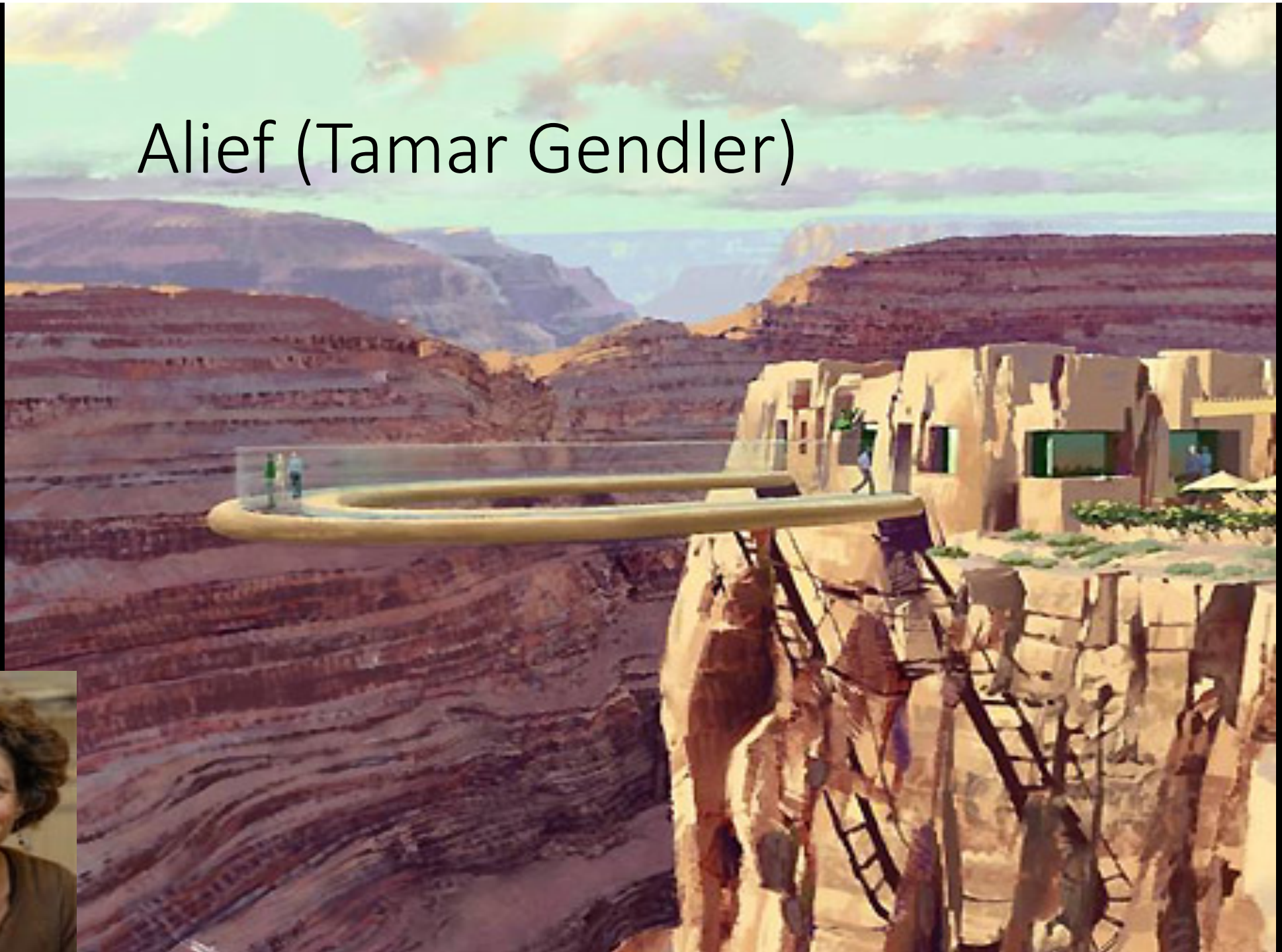
How do we react?

Same emotion, different level?

Fridja's law: feel the emotion at the necessary intensity through the fictional world it exists in?

Put aside "realness" and process normally, unless too extreme?

Alief (Tamar Gendler)





Theory of Mind/ Social
Reasoning
(Lisa Zunshine)

Counterfactual thinking and
emotional decision making





Language

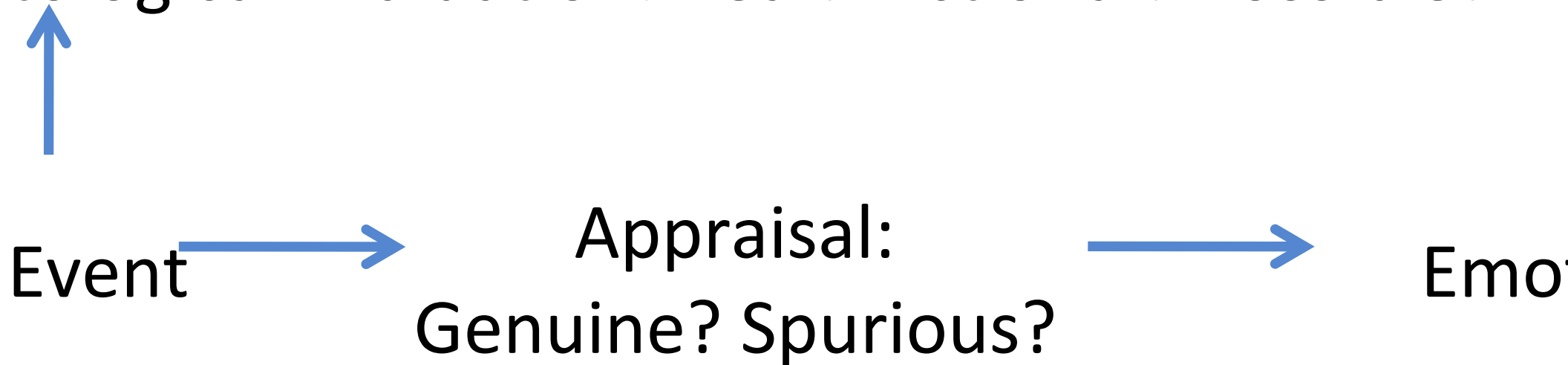




Fiction v. NonFiction

praisal system (Harris, 2000)

ontological Evaluation: Real? Fictional? Possible?



Purposeful emotion manipulation



Fiction compresses, simplifies emotional world
(Mar & Oatley, 2008)



No obligations!

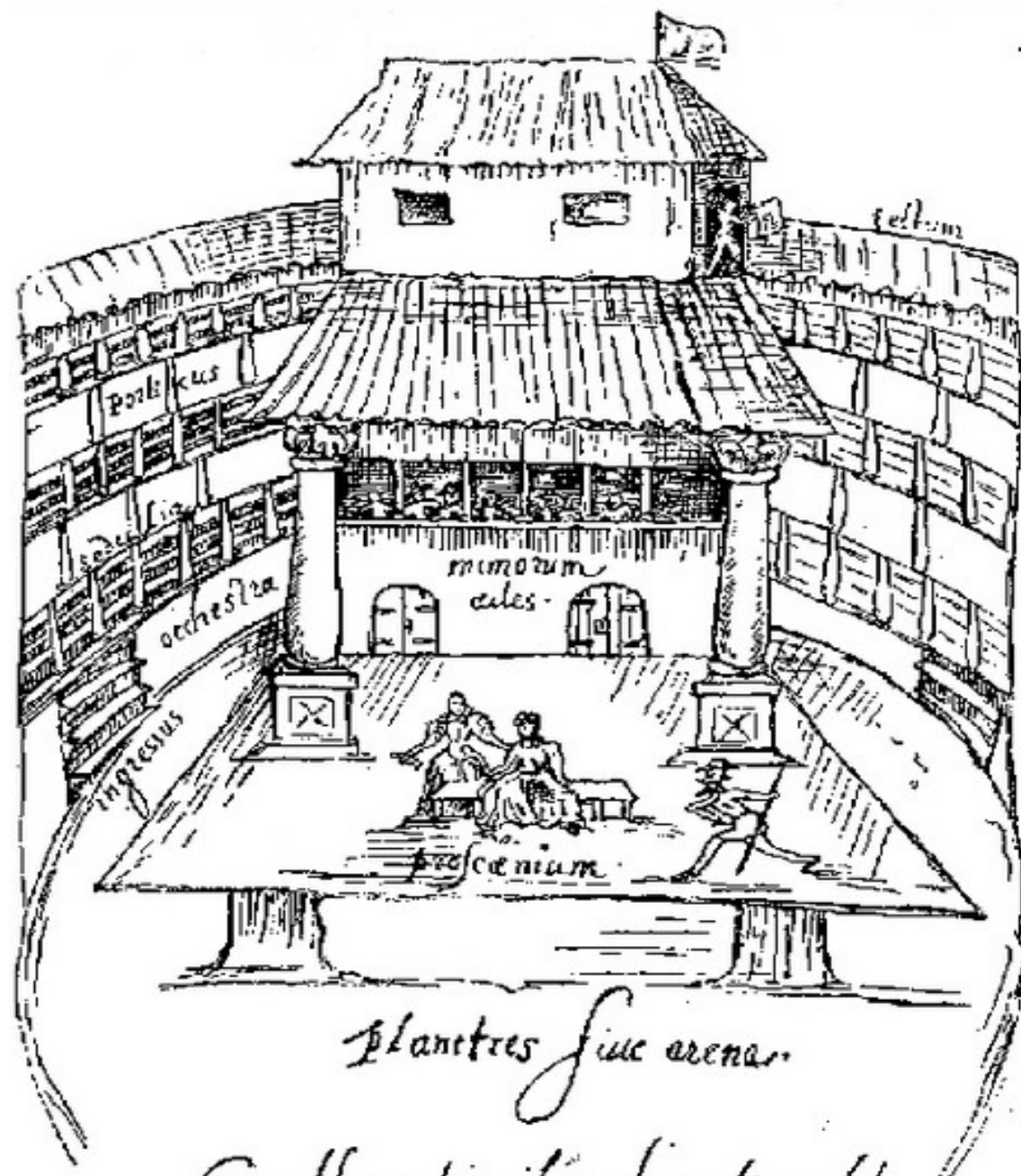


Why do we like negative fiction and art?









Planetes sine arena.

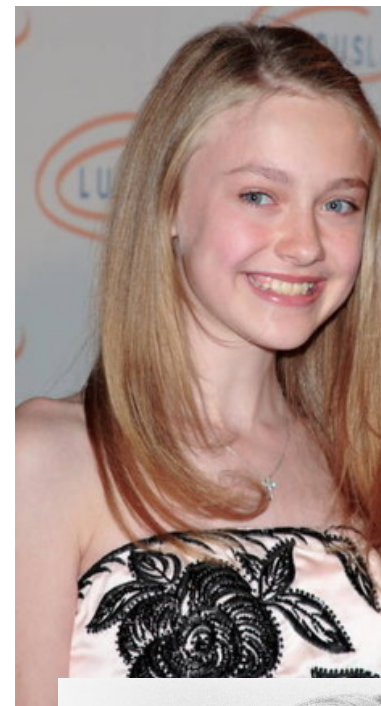
Ex observationibus Londinensibus
Johannis De Witt



I'm not a doctor...



...but I play one on TV





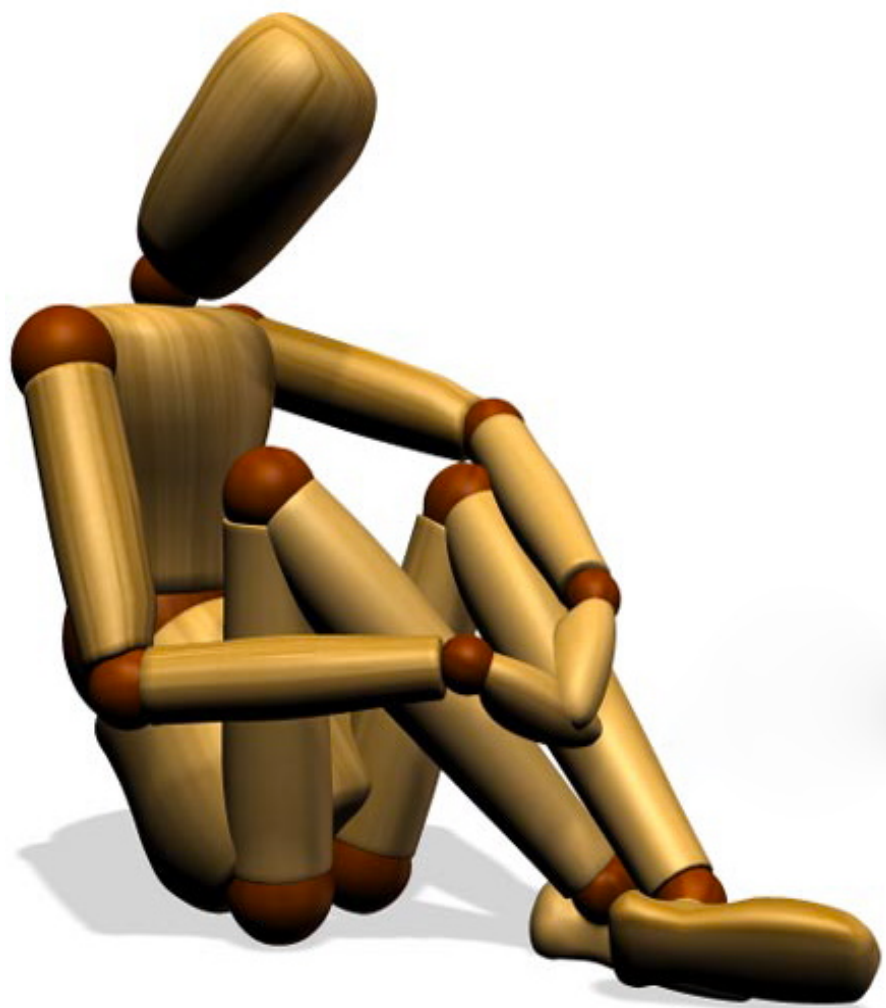
How does acting affect actors?

How do we understand acting?





(Goldstein & Winner, 2010-2011;
Goldstein, Wu & Winner, 2009-2010; Nettle, 2006)



Quasi-Experimental Intervention

Two Ages: 9 year olds/ 14 year olds

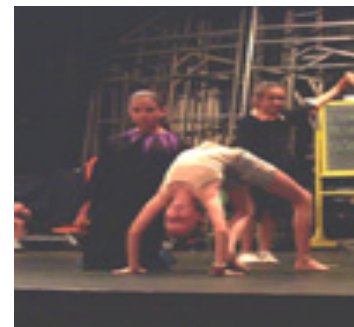
Two Schools: Low SES/ High SES

Comparison Groups: Music/ Art







Control: Age, SES, Sex, Verbal IQ, Experience, Characteristics

Outcomes: Theory of Mind, Empathy, Emotion Regulation

Pretest ----- 10 months ----- Post test



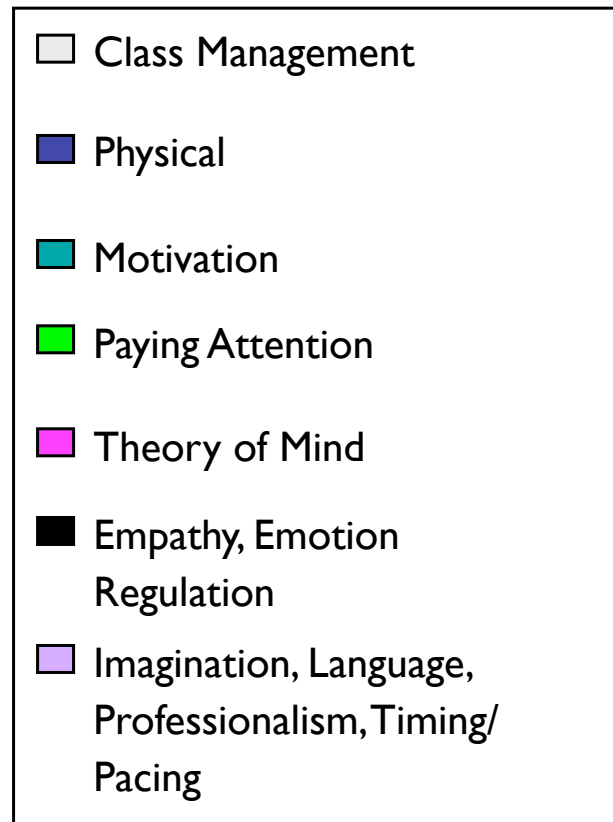
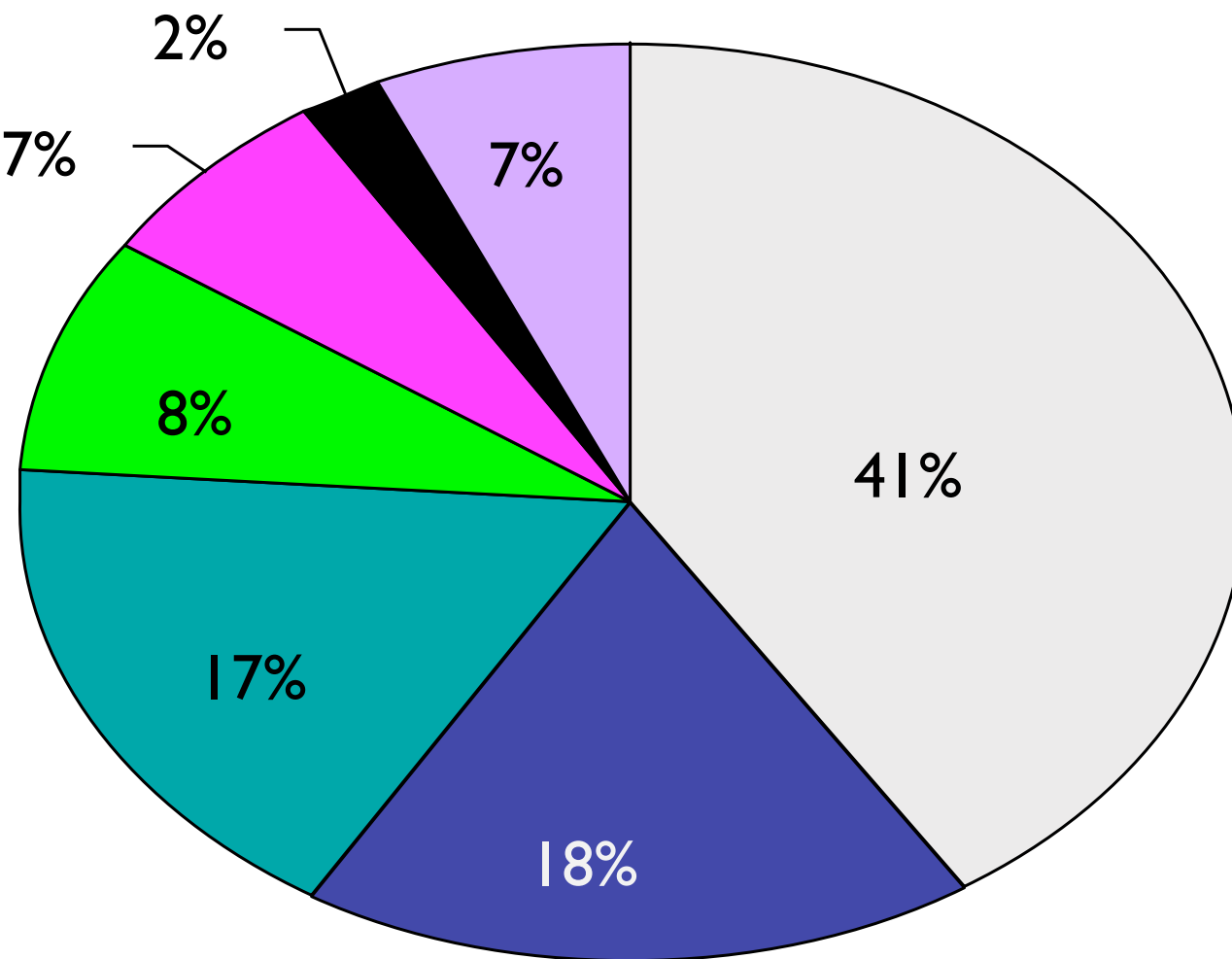
Quasi-Experimental Intervention

8-10 yr old	13-15 yr old
 Theory of Mind	 Theory of Mind
 Empathy	 Empathy
 Emotion Regulation	 Emotion Regulation

Content Analysis of Acting Instruction

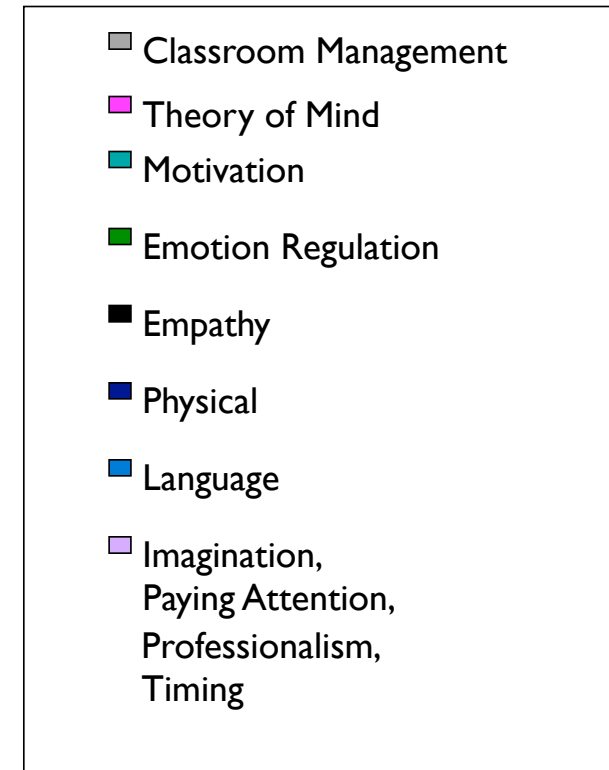
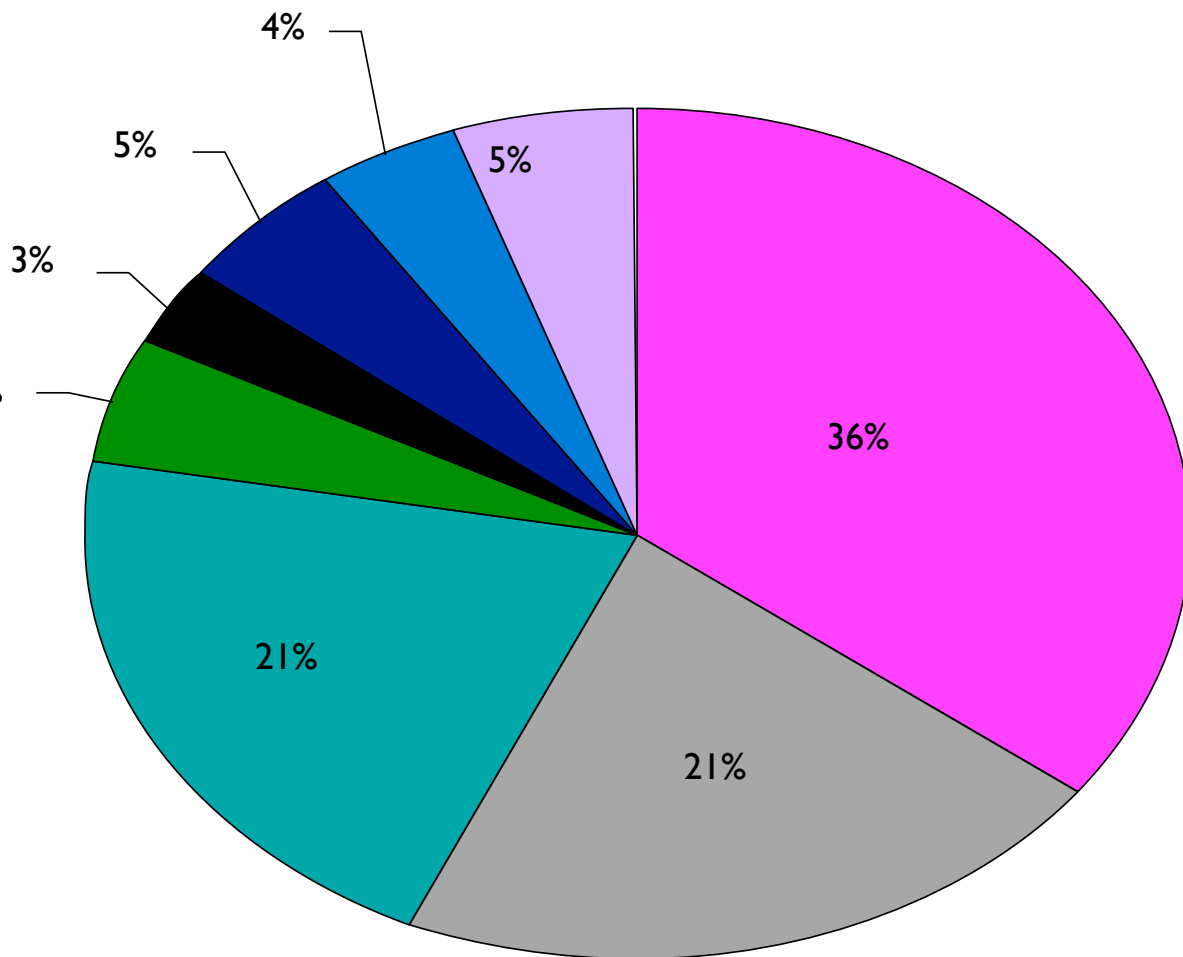


Year old Acting Class Analysis



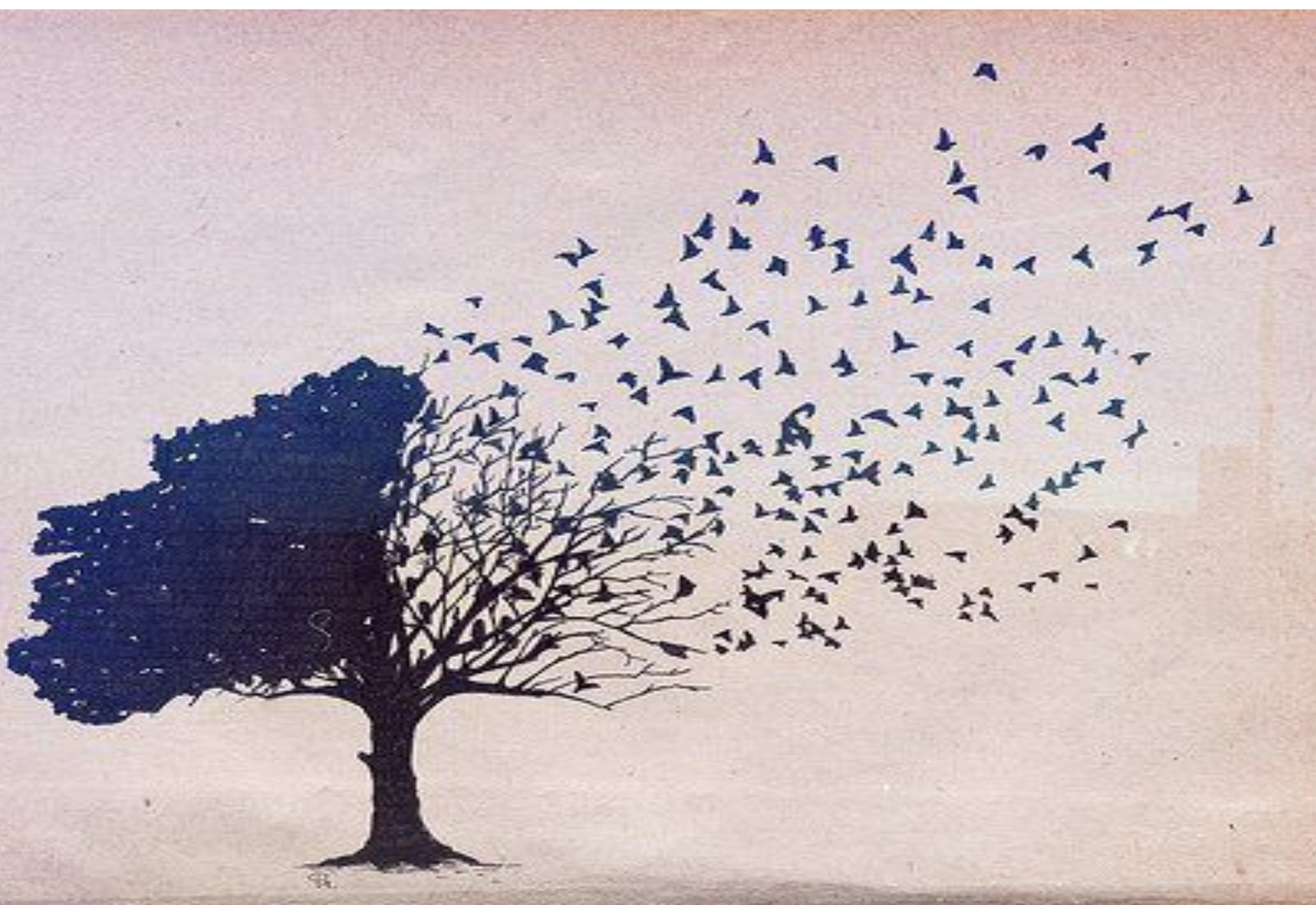
Goldstein & Winner, 2012

Year old Acting Class Analysis



Goldstein & Winner, 2012







guitars etc.

guitars
etc. 

748-1111

PLAYING MUSIC MAKES
YOU SMARTER





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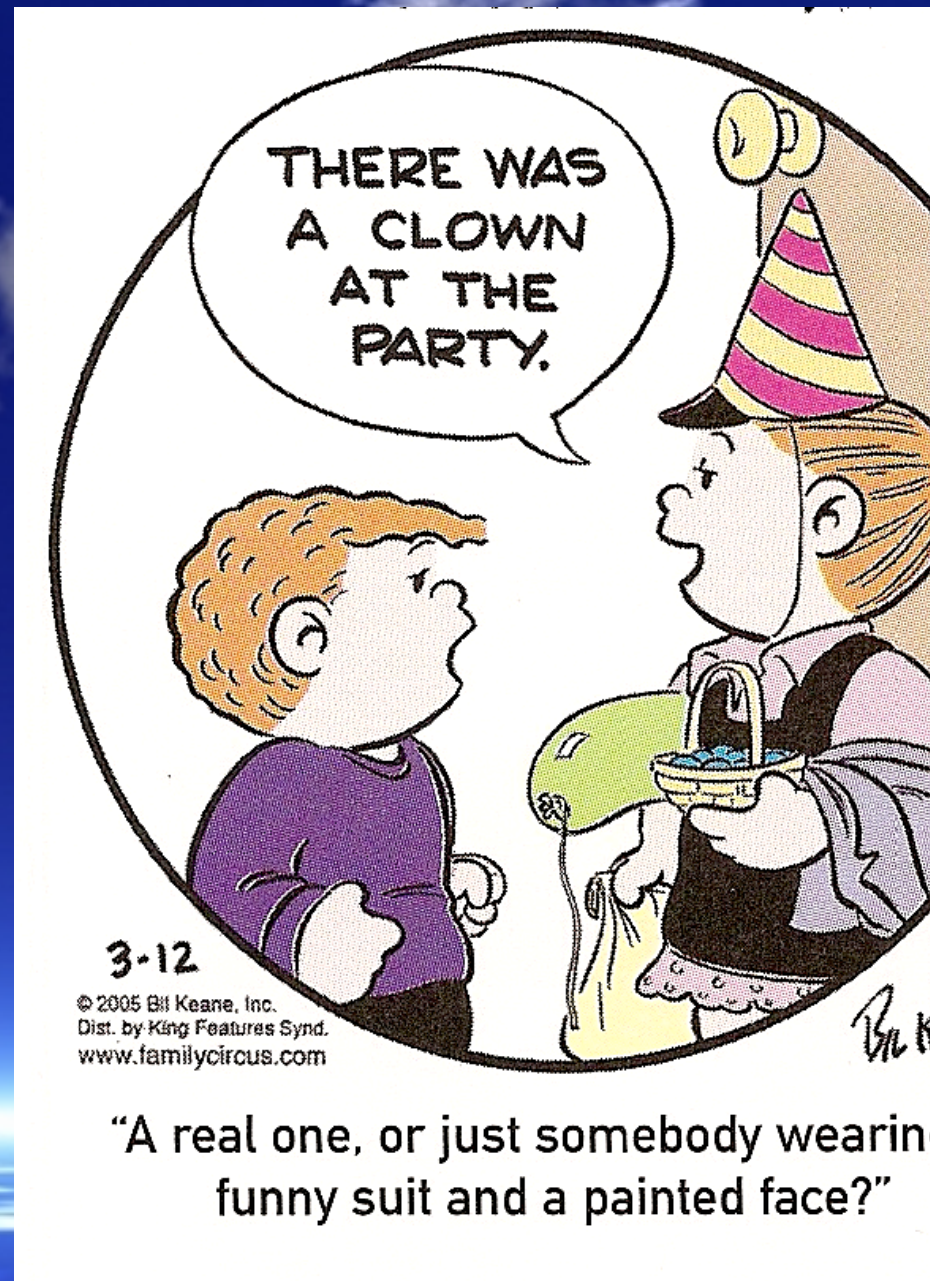


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Unanswered questions

Why do some people like scary movies, but they are overwhelming for other people?

What types of theatre activities work best for what types of kids?



Thank you

Social Skills, Imagination,
and Theatre Lab

George Mason University

Brittany Thompson
Tiffany Morina



Social Cognition and
Imagination Lab
Pace University

Allison Boyle
Aura-Maria Garcia

14 testers
9 group leaders



Arts and Mind Lab
Boston College

Ellen Winner

Maya Tamir
25+ Research
Assistants



Mind and
Development Lab
Yale University

Paul Bloom

Lily Lamb-Atkinson
Rebecca Yasskin



Children, Parents, and Schools



JOHN TEMPLETON
FOUNDATION



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