



Educator Guide

Why Won't Zee QUACK?



A World Premiere
by Wayne Keller

TABLE OF CONTENTS

• About the Play.....	2
• Meet the Cast.....	3
• Vocabulary.....	4
• Synopsis.....	4
• Discussion & Writing Prompts.....	5
• Theatre Activities.....	6
• Be a Theatre Critic.....	7
• Activity: The Mighty Duck.....	8
• What does Nonverbal Mean?.....	9
• Activity: The Silent Game.....	10
• Activity: Help Find Dee!.....	11
• Activity: Coloring Page.....	12
• ANSWERS: The Mighty Duck	

This programming is
generously supported by:



CONTACT US

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

We sincerely hope you will use what you can, and that your students will enjoy our production of *Why Won't Zee Quack* and explore the themes within the show including:

- What does it mean to communicate?
- How can stories teach lessons?
- How can you connect with someone who is different from yourself?
- What does it mean to be ourselves?
- How important is it how others perceive us?

OUR MISSION

Spark exists to celebrate the power of young people through professional theatre, igniting the desire for children to create their own stories both onstage and off.



About the Play

Why Won't Zee Quack is a WORLD PREMIERE! That means you are among the very first people to ever see this show. It is the story of a young duckling, Zee, who interacts with the world differently than his siblings.

The character of Zee, although a duck, is based on the playwright's actual real-life son! Zee is nonverbal, which means he isn't using words to communicate (at least not yet) like the other ducklings do. Everyone was once nonverbal and some people may still be- but they can find other ways to communicate! See if you can tell what Zee is thinking, even when he isn't using words!

**Scan the QR code here to
listen to the story of Zee
on Youtube!**



About the Playwright

Wayne Keller has worn a myriad of hats in life, but his favorite one to wear is the role of a father. His youngest son, Zander (affectionately known as Zee), is a constant inspiration for him. Zee faces daily challenges as he was diagnosed at an early age for autism. At this time, Wayne has written five other stories focusing on Zee and his family being introduced to other characters with unique challenges. These interactions (positive and negative) highlight our needs for compassion for others as well as inclusion for all.

Meet the Cast!



Andrea Belser (Mama Duck) is a Performing and Teaching Artist from Cleveland with a BA in Theater Studies emphasizing in Dance and Applied Voice from Wright State University. Currently, she teaches various dance and theater acting to all ages with theaters and companies around Northeastern Ohio. She has also worked behind the scenes as a choreographer, stage manager, and dresser. You may have last seen her in as Harriet Tubman in Spark's production, *Harriet Tubman: An American Moses. Freaky Friday* at Lakeland Civic Theater, *Little Shop of Horrors* at French Creek Theater, or *The Casual Tree Ward* at Convergence-Continuum. Andrea's awards include 2008 Best Actress in Cleveland and a nomination for the same in 2012.



Mike Frye (Narrator/Owliver Owl) is an actor from Oberlin, OH and has performed at theaters all over Lorain county and Cleveland, including Workshop Players, Olde Town Hall, Blank Canvas, convergence-continuum, Talespinner, Dobama, and the Oberlin Summer Theater Festival. When he's not busy elsewhere, he can be seen monthly in *Hot Goss: the Improvised Musical* at Imposters Theater. He is delighted and honored to have been performing with Spark since 2019.



Seth Jerabek (Zee) is an actor who seeks to utilize radical empathy in his artistic endeavors. His hope is that through the show today, you will be able to understand your fellow humans in a deeper way. Seth's journey in theatre has taken him to stages across Ohio and Pennsylvania, and he holds a BFA in Musical Theatre from Lancaster Bible College. He hopes you enjoy the show and that you don't forget to "QUACK" every once in a while. Psalm 34:14.



Will Potts (Dee) is absolutely thrilled to make his Debut at Spark Theater! He took a break from acting, but is back bigger than ever, and has such a passion for children's theater! You may have seen him on the Talespinner stage in: *Chicken Story Time* (Librarian), *Hook and Smee* (Pirate and Tinker Bell), and much more! He would like to thank his family and his partner, Katherine, for all their support!



Trueth Alice Taylor (Stuffy) is a proud citizen of Lorain, Ohio who has been performing since she could speak. She's a singer, poet, musician, actress and dancer. Truth has previously stage managed *Ms. Courageous* and *The Girl Who Forgot to Sing Badly* for Spark, and has played "Anansi" in *Anansi and the Middle Passage*, and roles in *Cinderella Confidential*, *My Robot*, *The Emperor's New Clothes* and *James & the Giant Peach*. She wants everyone to enjoy the show and feel inspired by this experience.



Abby Wall (Shiny) is thrilled to be working with Spark on her first tour! She has participated with Spark before, playing Cinderella in the LCCC/Spark collaboration of *Cinderella Confidential*, and she was a camp counselor at the summer camp this past year. She also works with LCCC Theatre, where she is currently starring as Xena in their fall production of *Medusa Undone*, and Olde Towne Hall Theatre, where she played Patty Simcox in their summer production of *Grease*. Abby is a second year student at LCCC, where she will obtain her Associate of Arts this spring! After graduation, she plans to attend Kent State University, where she will major in Theatre Studies with a focus in Performance and minor in Communication Studies. When she's not on stage, Abby loves to go on adventures with her friends, spend time with family, and sing and dance. She would like to thank her friends and family for being so incredibly supportive of her with this new opportunity, as well as everything else she does in her life. She hopes you enjoy the show!



Stephanie Wilbert (Mama Duck Understudy) is an Actor, Director, and Adjunct Faculty Theater Instructor at Lorain County Community College. She received her MFA in Theater: Contemporary Performance from Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado where she primarily focused on ensemble-based performance and devised theater techniques. Naropa University performance credits include: *Sirens Fury Playlist, Now!* (For Something Completely Different (Directed by Stephen Wangh), and *7/21* (Directed by member of The Tectonic Theater Project, Greg Pierotti). Stephanie is an Actors Equity Membership Candidate (EMC) and received her BA in Theater Arts from Cleveland State University. In Northeastern Ohio, Stephanie worked as the Interim Artistic Director for The Illusion Factory and has performed with The Ohio City Theatre Project, Ensemble Theatre, Talespinner Children's Theatre, Cleveland Public Theatre, The Cleveland Ingenuity Festival, Stratosphere, and Ohio Capoeira Brasil.

Vocabulary

- **Avocado** – A pear-shaped fruit with a rough green or blackish skin, smooth oily flesh, and a large seed in the center; often eaten raw in salads or spreads.
- **Danger** – The possibility of harm, injury, or loss; something that can cause risk or threat.
- **Exception** – Something or someone that does not follow a rule or pattern; a case that is different from the others.
- **Forage** – To search for food or supplies.
- **Glistened** – Shined with a sparkling or reflected light; appeared wet or glossy.
- **Indigestion** – Discomfort or pain in the stomach area caused by difficulty in digesting food.
- **Moral** – A lesson about right and wrong behavior; the principle or message about how people should act, often found in a story or experience.
- **Predator** – An animal that hunts, kills, and eats other animals for food.
- **Quack** – The sound a duck makes.



Synopsis

In a world where every duckling is expected to quack, Zee, dares to be different. Mama Duck is trying to teach her young ducklings all kinds of valuable lessons, but one day while they are out foraging food- one of her ducklings, Dee (who likes to seek danger) goes missing! Mama Duck and all her young go searching for him, but it's Zee's unique way of seeing the world—and his silent courage—that saves the day. This charming play celebrates the power of individuality, the strength in differences, and the truth that every voice matters... even the ones we can't hear.

Characters

Mama Duck- a grown up duck who is trying to teach her brood of ducklings all kinds of valuable lessons and keep them safe.

Dee- the oldest of the duckling siblings, who's adventurous and likes to venture off to forage alone; he has a habit of finding danger.

Stuffy- a very smart duckling who likes to show off and to eat snacks!

Shiny- a kind duckling who is usually smiling, loves to help, and only like to eat plants and vegetables.

Zee- the youngest of all the ducklings, Zee doesn't quack yet. Instead, Zee likes to point or grunt to communicate with his Mama and siblings.

Owliver Owl- a sneaky owl who is looking for a meal...a duckling meal.

Discussion Questions

To encourage classroom dialogue after seeing the play.

- Can you think of another story where all the characters are animals?
- Zee's siblings sometimes give him a hard time and make fun of him. How do you think that makes Zee feel?
- Zee doesn't quack (yet) but he does communicate. What are some ways you can communicate without using words?



Writing Prompts

To encourage creative writing after seeing the play

- Has someone ever told you something that hurt your feelings? What did you do to feel better about it?
- What did you enjoy most about the play?
- How would you change the story?
- The ducklings each have a unique personality (Dee is adventurous, Stuffy is outgoing, Shiny is kind, and Zee is brave). What are some words you would use to describe yourself?
- What parts of this play did you expect to happen? What parts were unexpected?

Theatre Activities



- **Mirror Exercise** - Partners stand in two lines, facing each other, about 3 feet apart. One is the leader, the other, the “mirror.” Moving only from the waist up, the leader begins to make simple gestures or movements. The “mirror” duplicates the leader's movements exactly—just as a mirror would.
- **One Word Story** - In a circle, the story is started, with each person in turn adding one word. It usually starts with ‘Once – upon – a – time’. The idea is to keep your thoughts free flowing, so that you don’t try to guess what is coming or force the story in a particular direction. It is not always easy to maintain a logical flow for the story, although it is always amusing. If the group is too large, break into smaller groups. Another variation is to throw or roll a ball around the circle in any order. Add your word as you pass the ball to the next person. This ensures that people are more attentive; although you should make sure everyone is included. Try playing the game in pairs, where both participants act the story out as it is told. In this case, tell the story in the present tense and as ‘we’. For example, ‘We – are – climbing – a – mountain. – Look – a – giant -spider – coming – towards – us. Quick – run!’ This version can create an exciting adventure story that unfolds as it is spoken!
- **Counting as an Ensemble** - This is one of the simplest, yet most challenging drama games. Sit or stand in a circle. The idea is for the group to count to twenty, one person saying one number at a time. Anybody can start the count. Then a different person says the next number – but if two or more people happen to speak at the same time, counting must start again from the beginning. It is possible to get to twenty if everybody really concentrates – but try and be relaxed as well. Try doing it with and without eye contact. Other variations you can try include members of the group facing outwards and closing their eyes (difficult!) or counting back from twenty to one.
- **Walk Together** - A great exercise for encouraging group sensitivity. Everybody finds a space in the room. On a given signal, everyone starts walking, using all the space in the room. On a second signal, everybody stops. Now, that was easy! Do this a couple of times, then without talking, everybody must decide to start walking at the same time – and then to stop as a group at the same time. This obviously will require some practice! With listening and awareness, it can be done.

Be a Theatre Critic!



We'd love to hear your thoughts about the assembly. Let us know your favorite parts! If you want to share them with the cast, you can send your review to us at sparktheatre4youth@gmail.com or mail it to Spark Theatre Company, PO Box 981, Elyria, OH 44036.

My favorite part of the show was:

Something I thought was interesting was:

Something I learned from this show was:

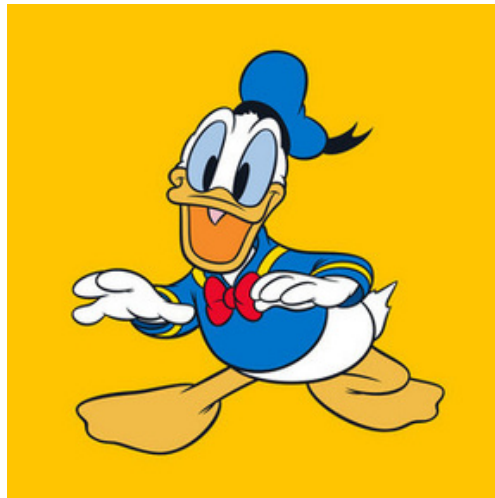
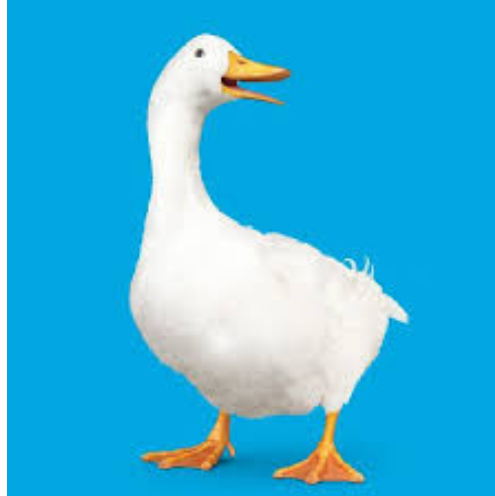
In the future, I would like to see a play about:



The Mighty Duck!



There are a lot of famous duck characters out there, each with their own personalities, much like the ducklings in the play- and YOU! Can you match the names of these famous ducks with their pictures?



-
- A. Donald Duck**
 - B. The Ugly Duckling**
 - C. The Aflac Duck**

-
- D. Daisy Duck**
 - E. Mrs. Mallard & her ducklings**
 - F. Daffy Duck**

What Does It Mean to Be

NONVERBAL

Some people talk with their voices, and some people don't.

When someone is nonverbal, it means they don't use words with their mouth to talk — but they still have lots to say!



They MIGHT Use:

- Pictures or symbols to show what they want
- Sign language or gestures
- A tablet or device that talks for them
- Facial expressions or body language

How to Be Kind and a Good Friend

- 🐣 Be patient — Give them time to share what they want to say.
- 🐣 Pay attention — Watch their face, hands, or device when they're communicating.
- 🐣 Include them — Invite them to play, sit with you, or work on a project.
- 🐣 Don't talk about them — talk to them!
- 🐣 Learn how they communicate — maybe you can use a few of their signs or picture symbols!

Being nonverbal doesn't mean someone doesn't understand — it just means they communicate in a different way.

Just like ducklings in a pond, we might all move a little differently, but we're all part of the same team.

ACTIVITY:

The Silent Game

- Tell the class: “We’re going to try to talk without using our voices!”
- Show one of the picture prompts below (e.g., “I’m hungry,” “I want to play,” “I’m tired”) to one child.
- That child must communicate the message without words — using gestures, faces, or pictures — and others guess what they’re saying.
- Rotate so everyone gets a turn.



“I’m nervous.”



“I’m sad.”



“I’m hungry.”



“It’s too loud.”



“I’m tired.”



“I want to play!”



“I need to wash my hands.”

Help Find Dee!

Solve the Maze below to find Dee and save him from Oliver Owl!



Coloring Page



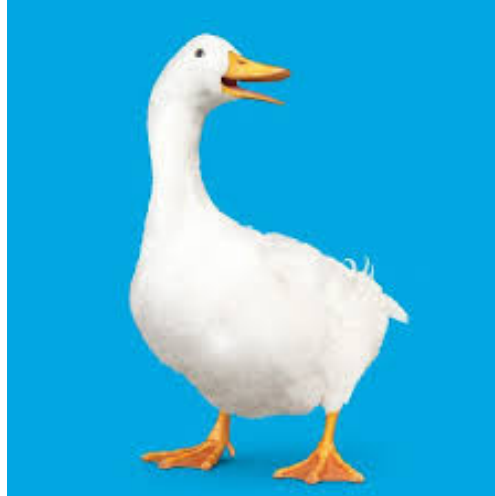
TheMighty Duck! (ANSWERS)



There are a lot of famous duck characters out there, each with their own personalities, much like the ducklings in the play- and YOU! Can you match the names of these famous ducks with their pictures?



F



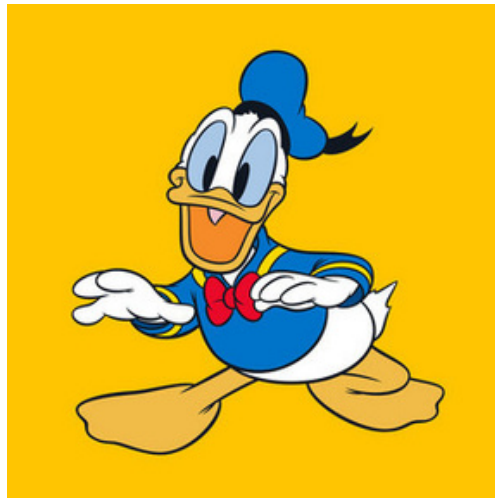
C



D



E



A



B

A. Donald Duck

B. The Ugly Duckling

C. The Aflac Duck

D. Daisy Duck

E. Mrs. Mallard & her ducklings

F. Daffy Duck