

The Box With Magical Power

Linda Gordon

One day between classes, a new third grade student named Hunter told me about a game he played at his previous school using a box.

I hastily replied, "Hunter, you bring the box and we'll play the game." A few days later his mother arrived saying she had the box. I held the door as a large refrigerator box was placed in the music room. The bottom of the box had been removed, a large door cut in one side, twine tied through two holes making a handle and a breathing hole was cut in another side.

That box caused more excitement than you can imagine! Using the song, *Who's That Knocking at the Door?*, we reenacted the game as described by Hunter.

Who's That Knocking at the Door

American Folk Song

Who's that tap - ping at the win - dow?
I am tap - ping at the win - dow.

Who's that knock - ing at the door?
I am knock - ing at the door.

Game #1: (Hunter's Game): One student went into the box and closed the door. A secret student stood outside the box, tapped on one side where a window would be, and then knocked on the door. The person inside the box sang the first verse and the student outside the box sang the response. The student inside the box guessed the name of the secret singer.

Although it took a bit of time to play the game that many times, each person needed to know what it was like to be inside the box.

Game #2: As the game progressed, we combined the *Who's That Knocking at the Door?* game with the Penny Song.

Penny Song

M. H. Richards

There's a pen - ny in my hand. It will tra - vel through the land. — Is it
here? Is it there? It will tra - vel e - 'ry - where.

We sang the *Penny Song* as students passed a penny from hand-to-hand around a seated circle. The person holding the coin on the last word of the song was given the opportunity to go into the box and listen for and guess the secret voice. If the student chose to not go into the box, he or she could pick another person to go instead.

When a person was inside the box, the next person in the circle chose the secret singer by making eye contact and pointing. Hunter's *Who's that Knocking at the Door?* game was then played between the person inside the box and the secret singer. The person inside the box had three turns to guess the singer. If the person did not guess in three turns, he or she came out of the box and chose a friend from the circle to hold the penny. Then the games started over with the penny game.

I think the additional step of using the *Penny Song* made all the children feel a part of the game because they had a turn to hold the penny and had an active role in choosing the secret voice. It also provided additional vocal practice.

Game #3: The box was also used while we played the penny game as described below.

One student went into the box. The song was sung as the children passed a penny from hand-to-hand around a seated circle. As the last word was sung, the person holding the penny kept it and all the children pretended to be hiding the penny. To invite the child out of the box, the class sang,

We are - read - y so you may come!

The student then came out of the box, approached the circle, and inquired as to who had the penny by singing,

Sara, do you have my pen - ny?

The Box with Magical Power (concluded)

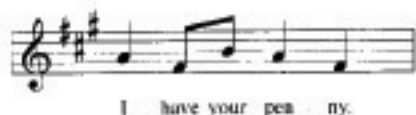
If Sara did not have the penny, she sang,



and the class echoed, to the same melody, "No she doesn't have your penny." The child guessing had up to three turns to find who had the penny. If by the third guess, the child did not make a correct guess, he or she returned to the box as the class sang,



Then, the 'Secret Penny Person' spoke or sang in a disguised voice,



Returning from the box to the circle, the child had one more guess. If he or she did not guess correctly, that turn was over, and the game began again with a new person entering the box. Kindergarten through third grade students have loved this way of playing with the box.

Game #4: The box was used with kindergarten through second grade children for sound experiences with non-pitched instruments. Each child sat with a non-pitched instrument in front of him or her. One child went into the box, and someone pointed to a person who then played his or her instrument. The child in the box guessed the name of the instrument. This gave each child an opportunity to play an instrument and to be in the box.

The box seemed to have a magical power. Eyes would light up, body language would exude the power of secrecy as they entered

the box. Children who had difficulty singing by themselves in class sang with enthusiasm when they were inside the box. As children guessed someone's voice the whole class clapped and celebrated each successful guess.

So what was the power of the box? I came to realize that it was providing a music-play experience that is missing in our organized society. The children seemed to be fascinated by the shape and size of the box. Each one could fit in it and they all wanted a turn to go inside! I deliberately did not paint or decorate the box but allowed the box to stand unadorned in the corner of the classroom. The children let me know when they wanted to play the game and the lesson evolved around the box. Yesterday, they were chanting, "The box...The box.... The box!!!!"

Source: Richards, M.H. (1985). *Let's Do It Again*. Portola Valley, CA, Richards Institute of Music Education and Research, p.71.

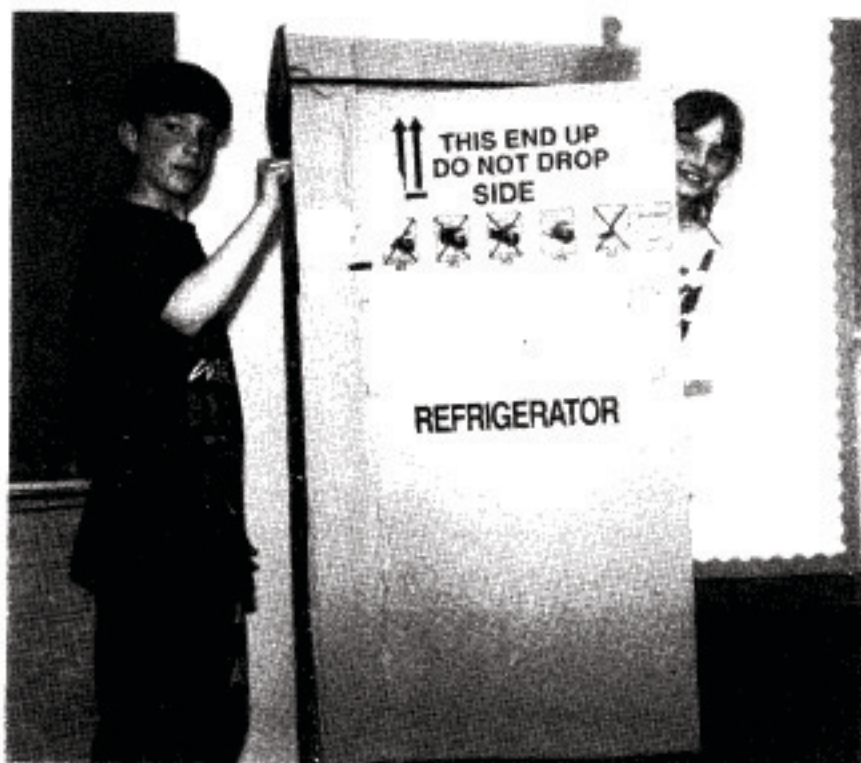


*Invermere students with The Magical Box
Linda Gordon Photo*



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Invermere students involved with "The Magical Box" Linda Gordon photo