Middle Tennessee State University Theatre Department Presents:

WALKING IN SUNLIGHT:
THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF UNCLE
DAVE MACON

Written By
Claudia Barnett, Ren Creasy and DeVante Scott,
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Subject Key Areas
These icons show what subject areas each activity addresses.
Standards for all activities are on pages 8-9.

Health  English Language Arts  History/Social Studies  Music  Theater Arts

The information and activities in this guide were compiled, devised, and edited by Cayla Solsberg.
About the Play

The plot of this play consists of seven high school students struggling with life decisions. As the story is told they unexpectedly find answers from the life and music of Uncle Dave Macon.

The Life of Uncle Dave Macon

- Dave Macon was born the ninth child of Captain John Macon and Martha Ann Ramsey in October 7, 1870, in the community of Smartt Station in Warren County, Tennessee. His family moved to Nashville in 1884 where his parents entered into the hotel business where they ran the Broadway House Hotel. In the 1880’s Nashville was a rich vaudeville and theater scene. Many of the touring performers (jugglers to animal acts) stayed at the Broadway House Hotel and held rehearsal in a space in the basement of the hotel. Young Dave began to work as a clerk at the hotel after school and became fascinated with the old vaudeville style and spirit of the performers. He would watch with great attention as they rehearsed their music and songs, their jokes, their slapstick tricks, and their comedy lines. It was an age of showmanship. When showmanship of a performer could make or break their act.

- In 1885 a circus ran by a man named Sam McFlinn featured the comedy and banjo playing of Joel Davidson who was "noted" as a banjoist and comedian. Davidson became the single most important influence on young Dave. "He proved to be the spirit that touched the mainspring of the talent that inspired Uncle Dave to make his wishes known to his dear old mother and she gave him the money to purchase his first banjo."

- In 1886 Macon’s father was killed in a money dispute and just a year later his mother decided to move the family to Readyville, TN where they lived in a home that stood on the county line of Rutherford and Cannon counties where often stagecoaches would pass through. He started working a mil where one of his close friends became an African American man by the name of Tom Davis. He became especially interested in African-American music in the region; fascinated with the odd tunings and different picking styles he saw local blacks using. Davis will have ended up teaching him what would become one of his most famous songs, "Keep My Skillet Good and Greasy."

- In 1899 Macon married Matilda Richardson where they lived on a farm and raised six sons. To support his family Uncle Dave founded the Macon Mule and Wagon Transportation Company. There were four grocery stores on the square of Murfreesboro. Uncle Dave did deliveries to each one of them. As he would make his delivery to each one, he would sing out what he was delivering to each one of the merchants. Macon kept a banjo under the seat of his wagon and on his way home every day, he would go back down Main Street, pull out the banjo and sing at the top of his voice. The children would come out and watch him and the gentlemen would tip their hats to him. He sang about common day things. People liked to hear about local topics, current events, and about people they knew.
About the Play Continued

- After the flood in 1902, Uncle Dave found himself as one of the first to get through to flooded town of Woodbury to help people which inspired the song “All I've got is Gone” which went on to be his first hit. Soon after his mother died in 1906 and his brothers moved away, Macon began to suffer from emotional problems that would bother him for the rest of his life.

- In 1920 when cars and trucks put his freight line out of business, Macon began performing regularly. After his first paid gig in 1922 the manager of Loew’s Birmingham Theater heard Macon perform at a Shriner’s meeting and offered him several hundred dollars a week to perform there. The people of Birmingham loved him.

- The very first song he committed to wax was "Keep My Skillet Good and Greasy," followed by "Hill Billie Blues." Both were among his most popular pieces; "Hill Billie Blues" was the first song to use the term "hillbilly," what was later applied for years to the entire genre of music we now call country.

The Grand Ole Opry

It began on the night of Nov. 28, 1925, when an announce on Nashville radio station WSM introduced fiddle player Uncle Jimmy Thompson as the first performer on a new show called “The WSM Barn Dance.” Now, nearly 90 years later, the show Hay started is still going strong. Along the way, it has landed countless country music careers and led the way for Nashville to become Music City. It is the longest running radio show in US history with the slogan “The Show That Made Country Music Famous.

- Hay made the formal announcement about starting what would be the first scheduled Opry show, on December 28, 1925, the two featured stars were old-time fiddler Uncle Jimmy Thompson and Uncle Dave Macon.

- Uncle Dave was good friends with harmonica player Deford Bailey, the first black man to appear on the Grand Ole Opry. Macon and Bailey played and traveled together in the South when a white man and black couldn't easily travel together due to Jim Crow laws.

- Macon was a highlight of the 1940 film Grand Ole Opry, in which he sang and danced around his banjo to “Take Me Back to My Carolina Home.”

- He was still playing on the Grand Old Opry when his final illness struck him on March 1, 1952. After the curtain at the old Ryman came down, he sat still in his old ladder back chair he performed in, and said quietly, "Boys, you'll have to carry me off." A throat ailment caused an emergency operation. He finally died on March 22.

- He was one of the most colorful personalities in the history of music and was inducted posthumously into the County Music Hall of Fame in 1966.
**Some examples of Old Time Music!**

**Old Time Songs**

Banjo Song

The Banjo Song
Traditional American

D    A7
I u-la-lused to play-la-lay on my-la-lie ban-jo-la-lo.
A7    D   A7  D
But my-la-lie ban-jo-la-lo got bro-la-lo-lo--loke.
D    A7
I too-la-looke it to-la-lo the me-le-lender's sho-la-lop,
A7    D   A7  D
But the me-le-lender's sho-la-lop was shu-la-la-la--lut.

Keep My Skillet Good and Greasy

C
I’m going down town, gonna get me sack of flour
G
Gonna cook it every hour, keep my skillet good and greasy
C
All the time, time, time
F    G
Keep my skillet good and greasy all the time
C
Got chickens in my sack, bloodhounds on my back
F    G   C
Keep my skillet good and greasy all the time
Well if you say so, I’ll never work no more
G    C
I’ll lay around your Chevy All the time, time, time
C
Well if you say so, I’ll never work no more
G    C
I’ll lay around your Chevy All the time, time, time
Motivation and Inspiration

As people, we start as children and as we grow we encounter others who influence and shape us into the adults we become. Some people or places inspire more than others but it is those moments that influence our decisions that ultimately result in the person we become to be. Inspiration and motivation is a powerful thing.

Inspiration to You

Write a paragraph about a person that inspires you. Give reasons as to why you have chosen this person and how they motivate you to be the best version of yourself.

Making Music

Make your own banjo!

What you need:
- A glass or jar
- Pen or pencil for marking
- Shoebox
- Scissors
- mailing tube
- large rubber bands
- two pencils

1. Use a glass or jar to trace a circle onto the lid of a shoebox; use scissors to cut the circle. Ask your teacher if you need help.
2. Trace another circle around a mailing tube onto one end of the shoe box; cut just inside the tracing, and push the tube through the hole for the banjo's neck (it's really just a handle).
3. The strings are fat, large rubber bands stretched all the way around the shoebox.
4. Create a bridge by placing two pencils on top of the shoebox, one at each end, under the rubber bands.

Make your own harmonica!

What you need:
- 2 Popsicle Sticks (Wide ones)
- 2 Rubber Bands (You could also use string)
- A strip of paper the same size as the Popsicle Stick
- 2 toothpicks cut the width or just wider than the Popsicle Stick

1. Sandwich the paper strip in between the two popsicle sticks
2. Wrap a rubber band around one end until it is snug.
3. Slide a toothpick to the inside of the rubber band.
4. Sandwich the last toothpick at the other end of the Popsicle sticks, and wrap with a rubber band.
“Resilience is the human capacity to face, overcome and be strengthened by or even transformed by the adversities of life. Everyone faces adversities; no one is exempt…”

A Guide to Promoting Resilience in Children: Strengthening the Human Spirit

How do we teach children to enjoy learning and really love school? How do we as parents and educators instill good self-esteem in our young people? What kind of world would we have if we raised our children to believe in themselves as learners and really like themselves?

The answer to these questions is actually quite simple: we teach our infants, toddlers, preschoolers, elementary and secondary school children to be resilient and have a growth mindset. We provide them with kid-friendly strategies for success. Resilience is defined as a person’s ability to snap back in response to adversity. It is the ability to keep on working on hard tasks and constructively deal with setbacks and problems. It is working to solve the situation instead of staying down for the count being thoroughly discouraged.

In this production of Uncle Dave Macon’s life you will see how he used resilience and music to help him through trying times. You will also see how Uncle Dave Macon influenced others to do the same through his own performances.

As an educator you will find there are many ways you can teach resilience to your students. Some examples of activities are listed and described below.

Five to ten minute investment a day

Parents and teachers can spend five to ten minutes a day on teaching these social skills and stress management techniques. Getting your children to discuss these concepts associated with good mental health and success will enhance their self-esteem and make family relationships more loving.

In this lesson we will learn:

- that there are a range of coping strategies that we can use
- to understand that everyone experiences problems from time to time
- that resilience is about working through challenging times.

Give your students some blank cards and call them their “coping cards.”

Ask them to write down something they like to do so when they feel frustrated, angry, or a certain emotion then can take out these cards, do or say the activity that is on the card to help them get through the negative feelings they are experiencing. These cards can be used not only school, but at home as well. An example of what could be on the cards can be found here → http://www.samaritans.org/sites/default/files/kfinder/files/deal/coping-strategies/05-building-resilience/Handout%20-%20Coping%20cards.pdf
WRITING TO CLEAR UNWANTED FEELINGS

Objective: Releasing feelings by writing about them.

Dialogue: We all have problems; it is what we do with them that count. Feelings about a problem come up to get you to pay attention to them. Anger may mean that someone has hurt your feelings. Sadness may mean that you have lost something important and are trying to deal with it. Talk to your stuck feeling. Listen to what it has to say. Is there hurt or sadness hiding underneath the anger?

Activity: Sometimes feelings get blocked. Stuck feelings want to move. Writing about angry feelings can help get the problem out of your mind and down on the computer screen or paper in black and white. Writing about your feelings helps you see things more clearly as it forces you to see what you are doing. Writing things down helps clarify and release feelings.

1. “My Feelings Wants to be Written Down!” Use a dark crayon or a big, bold font when writing this about your anger and be as mad as you want. Note how anger takes over your body and mind. Do some deep breathing to make yourself feel better. Keep your writing short. Stick to your feelings: “I felt angry when _____. I felt hurt when _____."

2. “The I’m Getting Clearer!” Write again about your same feelings. No matter what happened, you are responsible for what happens to you now and you want to move on. You want to make your mind clear.

3. “Words from the Heart.” Focus on your angry, hurt or sad feeling. Drop into your heart. Now breathe into it and think about your future. Do you want to continue with these unhappy feelings? What does your heart want to happen? It wants peace for you. Think about peace while you breathe deeply and let your anger go.

Helper Words
Why am I angry about this? How have I been hurt or threatened?
I look under my anger to see if hurt or sadness are hiding there.
Unhappy feelings can be released when I write about them.
Feelings want to move. They come and go. I let unhappy feelings go.

Most people will find that writing down their feelings is great way to release the negativity. Others are also like Uncle Dave Macon who found release of any negativity through music. Help your students find the best way to build resilience by using the coping cards and this writing assignment.
Another fun activity for your students to build and understand resilience might be “Coping Bingo,” like the example here

![Coping Skills BINGO](image)

**Grade 3-6 Writing Standards**

*Text Types and Purposes*

1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.
   a. Introduce the topic or text they are writing about, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure the lists reasons.
   b. Provide reasons that support the opinion.
   c. Use linking words and phrases to connect opinion and reasons.
   d. Provide a concluding statement or section.

*Production and Distribution of Writing*

4. With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

**Grade 3-6 Speaking and Listening Standards**

*Comprehension and Collaboration*

1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
   a. Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
   b. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions
   c. Ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others.
   d. Explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.
Health/Pe/ Wellness Standards (3-6)

Standard 1: The student will demonstrate the ability to implement decision making and goal setting skills to promote his/her personal health and wellness, thereby enhancing quality of life for himself/herself and those around him/her.

Family Life
Domain Description: The dynamic process of growth and development encompasses physical, mental, emotional, and social maturation. Positive personal and family relationships provide a foundation that promotes healthy development. (Refer to TCA 49-6-1303 with regard to children excused from family life instruction by parent or guardian).

Standard 6: The student will understand the contributions of family relationships to healthy living.

Emotional, Social, and Mental Health
Domain Description: Emotional, social, and mental health is dependent upon a healthy self-concept and communicating needs, wants, and feelings in a healthy manner. Learning to manage conflict, anger and stress promotes healthy living.

Standard 8: The student will understand the importance of positive self-concept and interpersonal relationships for healthy living.

3-6 Grade Music standards

Standard 6.0 Listening and Analyzing
Students will listen to, analyze and describe music.

Standard 7.0 Evaluating
Students will evaluate music and music performances.

Standard 8.0 Interdisciplinary Connections
Students will understand relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.

Standard 9.0 Historical and Cultural Relationships
Students will understand music in relation to history and culture.

*A more descriptive version of each grade level standard can be found at https://www.tn.gov/education/topic/academic-standards

Sources: Country Music Hall of Fame, Rutherford County historian Charles Wolf and Evan Hatch, folklorist at the Arts Center of Cannon; “Lesson Plans for Teaching Resilience to Children” By Lynne Namka; www.opry.com
A GLANCE BEHIND THE SCENES

Every performance you see is a result of many people’s hard work. You see the **ACTORS** on stage, but there are many people you do not see that help before, during, and after each production.

**PLAYWRIGHTS** take the stories that you read and adapt them off the page in order to bring them to life on the stage.

**DIRECTORS** develop a concept, decide who the characters are, what the setting will be, help the actors bring the characters to life, and communicate the message to you.

**DESIGNERS** create the scenery, costumes, lighting, and props that you look at on the stage

**STAGE MANAGERS** run the performances and tell actors when to go on stage and tell the **TECHNICIANS** when their cues are

**COSTUME** and **MAKE-UP DESIGNERS** turn the actors on stage into the characters that you read in the stories.

Did the costumes catch your eye?

Did they fit the time period?

Did they help the characters come to life?

Write how you might feel to be one of the actors and wear a cool costume.

Every performance is a collaborative effort that also requires you —the Audience! Attending a play is like an exciting adventure that actors, designers, directors, and technicians take you through and provide you with a unique opportunity to participate in a story as it “happens.”

*What theatre job would you like to try? Directing? Designing? Stage managing? Playwriting? What kind of special skills might you need to participate in these roles?*
Pre-show Discussion

• What does it mean to be resilient?
• Have you ever tried to complete a difficult task?
• How did you feel when you finished the task?
• Have you ever wanted to give up or stop trying, but you kept going anyway? Tell us about it.
• Why do you keep trying even when it’s hard?
• What do you do to keep yourself motivated?
• How do you feel when you hear happy music?
• Do you like to sing or play an instrument?
• Some people overcome sadness by singing, playing an instrument or just listening to music. Do you remember a time when music helped you feel better?
• As you watch the show count the number of difficult things that Dave Macon had to deal with in his life. Why do you think he never gave up?
• The students in the show are also dealing with difficulty situations. As you watch the show try to determine their struggles.

Post-show Discussion

• Who was your favorite character? Why?
• What problems do you feel the students were experiencing in their own lives?
• How did acting out Dave’s life help the students with their own problems?
• What songs in the show were your favorites? Why?
• Do you have something you feel excited and passionate about? What?
• Do you have goals you’d like to achieve like Dave wanted to play the banjo and perform? What are some of your goals?
• What things stand in your way? What are your obstacles or struggles?
• What can you do to overcome the obstacles and pursue your passion?
**WALKING IN SUNLIGHT**

**WORD SEARCH**

(how many words can you find?)

| S | U | N | L | I | G | H | T | X | W | T | I | M | A | G | I | N | A | T | I | O | N | T |
| R | P | F | Q | S | T | N | D | E | F | O | R | D | B | A | I | L | E | Y | I | V | E | R |
| C | A | P | T | A | I | N | J | O | H | N | W | I | D | B | A | N | J | O | E | R | F | A |
| O | J | J | I | B | R | I | Q | S | A | D | A | C | I | M | F | H | K | Z | U | F | B | G |
| W | C | O | S | R | T | E | U | N | T | Y | H | O | W | B | O | Y | Y | E | S | P | W | E |
| O | S | H | L | E | B | C | A | L | R | W | O | O | B | S | K | I | L | L | E | T | D | D |
| O | E | N | U | X | E | H | I | S | O | G | P | L | S | K | P | S | F | O | R | E | A | Y |
| B | O | Y | F | M | A | I | T | W | N | I | Z | D | A | L | I | X | V | N | R | K | T | R |
| U | Y | A | O | D | A | V | I | D | H | A | R | R | I | S | O | N | M | A | C | O | N | E |
| Y | C | P | T | B | H | M | D | K | E | F | I | N | K | G | I | O | E | N | A | Y | Y | I |
| W | O | L | S | U | L | A | Y | R | O | B | A | T | E | R | Y | H | O | W | L | B | T | L |
| T | I | E | U | R | O | S | B | H | G | W | I | E | T | E | Y | N | M | H | L | E | E | I |
| S | B | S | E | B | H | O | S | T | S | I | H | A | R | M | O | N | I | C | A | T | A | L |
| X | E | E | C | I | R | I | B | B | I | T | I | L | G | I | R | E | F | P | P | A | I | L | N |
| G | R | A | N | D | O | L | E | O | P | R | Y | U | L | L | E | U | V | E | L | N | I | C |
| O | R | P | H | E | U | S | N | D | S | R | E | H | T | I | H | N | G | U | E | O | N | E |

SUNLIGHT
SUNLIGHT
DAVID HARRISON MACON
SKILLET
BANJO
ORPHEUS
TILDY
DEFORD BAILEY
GRAND OLE OPRY
WOODBURY
TRAGEDY
RESILIENCE
CAPTAIN JOHN
HOPE
HARMONICA