



The Greedy Triangle

story by Marilyn Burns

play adapted by Linda Gilmartin Weeks

Last spring, I received an invitation from Linda Gilmartin Weeks and her second graders in Merrimac, Massachusetts, to attend a play they were performing. The play was based on The Greedy Triangle, a children's book I wrote in 1994 for the Brainy Day Books series. I didn't attend the performance—making the trip from California wasn't possible for me—but Linda sent photos and letters from the children. The children seemed completely engaged in and pleased with their experience, and with Linda's permission, we've included the script with this issue of our newsletter. Enjoy!

~ Marilyn Burns

Cast of Characters:

3 Narrators

1 Triangle (Quadrilateral, Pentagon, Hexagon, Dodecahedron)

3 Friends: Half Circle, Rhombus, Circle

4 Polygon People: Heptagon, Octagon, Nonagon, Decagon

1 Shapeshifter

Shapes:

10 Triangles: 2 sailboats, 2 for roof on house, 2 orchestra people,
2 slices of pie, 2 sandwich halves

10 Quadrilaterals: 2 TVs, 1 window, 1 checkerboard, 2 frames,
1 first base, 1 second base, 1 third base, 1 baby block

10 Pentagons: 2 home plates, 3 soccer balls with sections highlighted,
3 five-pointed stars, 2 school crossing signs

10 Hexagons: 2 floor tiles, 2 trays of fancy crackers, 2 hexagonal nuts
and bolts, 2 box wrenches, 2 bees

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Scene 1 A Busy Harbor

Curtain opens (Friends stage left. Polygon People sit stage right. Shapes in their places.).

Narrator: This is a story about being selfish and wanting more than you really need. It is about forgetting the characteristics that make you very special and unique.

Once there was a triangle that was, as most triangles are, always busy. *(Triangle walks around busily to the bridge and greets each shape.)*

The triangle spent its time supporting bridges, visiting landmarks around the world and much, much more. *(Triangle center stage. Each shape walks up to her.)*

Roofs: We hold up the roof on a house.

Triangle: Strong!

Sailboats: We catch the wind for sailboats.

Triangle: Windy!

Pie: We love being slices of apple pie with whipped cream and ice cream.

Triangle: Yummy.

Sandwiches: We are halves of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

Triangle: Sticky!

Orchestra People *(Play triangles):* We make music in a symphony orchestra.

Triangle: Beautiful.

Triangle: But my favorite thing to do is to slip into place when people put their hands on their hips. This way I always hear the latest news, which I can tell my friends. *(All place hands on hips. Triangle peeks through spaces and listens.)*

Orchestra People: We just love playing the songs by Mozart and Beethoven. Don't you think that triangles make the sweetest sound in the orchestra? *(Triangle walks over and sits with friends.)*

Triangle: Beethoven and Mozart are my favorite composers. Some people think that triangles make the sweetest sounds of all the musical instruments.

Half Circle: There are so many different composers. I really like triangles too, especially the sounds made by the ones with the small acute angles.

Rhombus: They only have 3 sides. Some are long. Some are short, and sometimes the sides are all the same length, just like you. *(Points to triangle.)*

Circle: I have seen some with right angles or obtuse angles. Do they make sweet sounds too?

Friends *(Look at the triangle):* Triangles are really unique in so many ways!

(Triangle waves good-bye to friends.)

Scene 2 Shifting Shapes

Narrator: One day, the triangle began to feel dissatisfied being who she was. *(Triangle walks sadly away from friends.)*

Triangle: I'm tired of doing the same old things. There must be more to life.

Oh, who can help me?

Polygon People (*People walk up steps stage right*):

If you are tired of doing the same old things,
If you really need a change,
To find someone who'll spice up your life,
Just follow us to the one and only shapeshifter!

Narrator: So the triangle followed the polygons to see the local shapeshifter. (*Walk across stage, down the stairs, across floor and up stage right. Triangle knocks on the door. Shapeshifter walks to her.*)

Shapeshifter: How may I help you?

Triangle: I'm tired of doing the same old things. There must be more to life. I think if I had just one more angle and one more side, my life would be more interesting.

Shapeshifter: That's easy to do. Just follow me. (*Triangle follows the shapeshifter to center stage.*)

Abracadabra, polygon pie (*Two Polygon People to center with Poof sign, wait until all shapes change*).

Give this shape just one more side.

Now one more angle for her to try!

And Poof. (*Triangle changes behind Poof sign, and all shapes change into quadrilaterals.*)

A quadrilateral oh my! (*Shapeshifter walks stage right near house. Quadrilateral skips around to new shapes and backdrop. Friends hold a book.*)

Scene 3 Square Pals

Narrator: Life changed in a wonderful way. The quadrilateral was happy with all the new things she could do. The quadrilateral could be a baseball diamond, visit libraries and much, much more. (*Quadrilateral center stage. Each shape walks up to her, then back to place.*)

Three Bases: I am first base. I am second base. I am third base.

Go Red Sox!

Quadrilateral: Safe!

Checkerboard: I am a square on a checkerboard. Go ahead, make your move!

Quadrilateral: King me!

Two Televisions: Just look at us, we are new plasma TV screens, for all you couch potatoes!

Quadrilateral: Has anyone seen the remote?

Window: Even this snowman likes looking through my windowpanes.

Quadrilateral: Hey, that's my snowman!

Two Frames: We could be the frame for a very large picture. Click. This is a Kodak moment!

Baby Block: Babies just love building tall towers with my friends and me.

Quadrilateral (*Holding Goldilocks and the Three Bears big book*): But my favorite thing is to be the pages of a book. I learn so many interesting stories that way, which I can tell my friends. (*Sits with friends.*)

Narrator: The quadrilateral's friends liked hearing the stories . . . fables, fairy tales, legends and myths, and lots and lots of folk tales.

Quadrilateral: Once upon a time there were three little bears . . .

Half Circle: A polar bear, a grizzly bear, Pooh Bear?

I know the mama, the papa, and the baby bear.

Quadrilateral: They lived . . .

Rhombus: In a house on Sesame Street, in a castle, or was it a little house in the woods?

Quadrilateral: One day the three bears went for a walk and someone came knocking at their door.

Circle: Was it Cinderella, or Little Red Riding Hood? I forget.

Friends (*All say together*): It was Goldilocks!

Narrator: One day, the quadrilateral began to feel dissatisfied being who she was.
(*Quadrilateral walks away from friends sadly.*)

Quadrilateral: I'm tired of doing the same old things.

There must be more to life.

Oh, who can help me?

Polygon People (*People walk up the steps stage right*):

If you are tired of doing the same old things,

If you really need a change,

To find someone who'll spice up your life,

Just follow us to the one and only shapeshifter!

Narrator: So the quadrilateral followed the polygons to see the local shapeshifter. (*Walk across stage, down the stairs, across floor and up stage right. Quadrilateral knocks on the door. Shapeshifter comes out.*)

Shapeshifter: How may I help you now?

Quadrilateral: I'm tired of doing the same old things. There must be more to life. I think if I had just one more side and one more angle, my life would be more interesting.

Shapeshifter: That's easy to do, just follow me. *(Quadrilateral follows him to center stage.)*

Abacadabra, polygon pie *(Two Polygon People enter with Poof sign, wait until all shapes change).*

Give this shape just one more side.

Now one more angle for her to try!

And Poof. *(Quadrilateral changes behind Poof sign, and all shapes change into pentagons.)*

A pentagon oh my! *(Shapeshifter walks stage right and then skips around the new shapes. Shapes are in their places.)*

Scene 4 Keeper of Secrets

Narrator: Life changed in a wonderful way. The pentagon was happy with all the new things she could do. She loved hanging out near the capitol, the Washington Monument, watching the Baltimore Orioles, and much, much more. *(Pentagon center stage. Each shape walks up to her, then back to place.)*

Two Home Plates: Everyone loves to run over us. We are home plates.

Pentagon: You're out!

Three Soccer Balls: I am a section on a soccer ball. I am a section on a soccer ball. I am a section on a soccer ball. We just love being kicked around!

Pentagon: Score!

Three Stars: Whenever someone draws a five-pointed star, you can find us.

Two School Crossing Signs: Look both ways. Then it is safe to cross the street, where you see us.

Pentagon: Go slowly!

Pentagon: But my favorite thing to do is to be the headquarters of the United States military near Washington, D.C. I hear all the top secrets that way. It is too bad I can't tell them to my friends. *(Pentagon stays away from friends.)*

Narrator: The pentagon's friends couldn't help feeling left out. They were very sad and tried hard not to get angry because their friend seemed to be ignoring them.

Half Circle: Why is Pentagon not talking to us? She hardly ever comes over to give us the news or to tell us stories. I need to stay calm and think happy thoughts.

Rhombus: She's always keeping secrets. Let's all take three deep breaths. *(All take three breaths.)*

Circle: I know we are getting mad, but let's try to understand. I am sure Pentagon is sorry. Talking to myself really helps. Let's count backwards.

Friends *(All say together):* Five, four, three, two, one.

Half Circle: Good thing we learned how to have empathy . . .

Rhombus: Control our impulses . . .

Circle: And manage our anger.

Narrator: Pentagon's friends wished they could have their old friend back the way she was in the good old days. After a while, time seemed to pass slowly for the pentagon and she became dissatisfied. *(Pentagon walks sadly to each shape, then to center stage.)*

Pentagon: I'm tired of doing the same old things.

There must be more to life.

Oh, who can help me?

Polygon People (*People walk up the steps stage right*):

If you are tired of doing the same old things,
If you really need a change,
To find someone who'll spice up your life,
Just follow us to the one and only shapeshifter!

Narrator: So the pentagon followed the polygons to see the local shapeshifter. (*All walk to the house stage right. Pentagon knocks on the door. Shapeshifter comes out through the right side of the curtain.*)

Shapeshifter: So you are here again, just follow me. (*Pentagon follows him to center stage.*)

Abacadabra, polygon pie (*Two Polygon People enter with Poof sign, wait until all shapes change*).

Give this shape just one more side.

Now one more angle for her to try!

And Poof (*Pentagon changes behind Poof sign, and all shapes change into hexagons*).

A hexagon oh my! (*Shapeshifter walks stage right near house.*)

(*Hexagon skips around the new shapes. Shapes are in their places. Friends are seated.*)

Scene 5 Buzzing Bees

Narrator: Life changed in a wonderful way. The hexagon was happy with all the new things it could do. The hexagon spent lots of time in her workshop, and watching bees flying in and out of the beehive, and much, much more. (*Shapes walk to hexagon, then back to their places.*)

Two Bees: Buzz, buzz (*around the hexagon*).

Two Nuts and Bolts: We love being hexagonal nuts and bolts.

Two Wrenches: Box wrenches are the greatest tools for tightening these bolts. (*Hexagon tightens bolts and the bolts turn and shrink down.*)

Bees: Buzz, buzz (*around the hexagon*).

Two Floor Tiles: You can find all kinds of tiles in houses. And we can make patios have lots of pizzazz!

Bees: Buzz, buzz (*around the hexagon*).

Two Fancy Crackers: But you haven't seen anything until you have been invited to a picnic on the big hill. Being a fancy cracker can be just the thing to get you invited to all kinds of parties.

Bees: Buzz, buzz.

Hexagon: But my favorite thing to do is to be a cell in a beehive. I love watching the bees as they buzz in and out.

Bees: Buzz, buzz.

Narrator: The hexagon spent so much time in the beehive, it was too busy to talk to its friends. The friends missed the hexagon and couldn't help feeling ignored.

Again and again, the shape became restless, dissatisfied, and unhappy with its life. Again and again, it returned to the shapeshifter for more sides and more angles.

The shapeshifter agreed to turn it into one shape after another.

(Hexagon stays by shapeshifter's house, changes into dodecahedron. Each of the Polygon People walks across the stage, shapeshifter says Poof.)

(All four shapes cross stage.)

Shapeshifter: Poof!

Polygon People: She was a heptagon with 7 sides and 7 angles.

Shapeshifter: Poof!

Polygon People: She was an octagon with 8 sides and 8 angles.

Shapeshifter: Poof!

Polygon People: She was a nonagon with 9 sides and 9 angles.

Shapeshifter: Poof!

Polygon People: She was a decagon with 10 sides and 10 angles.

Narrator: The shapeshifter went on and on until finally, the shape had many, many sides and many, many angles. Its sides were so small that it had trouble keeping its balance. (*Dodecahedron walks across stage and tries to balance itself and walks by friends who ignore it.*)

Its friends couldn't tell which side it was on and began to avoid the shape.

(*Friends walk off stage left. Fence and tree, bicyclists, and walkers stand across the stage. Dodecahedron stumbles by each one.*)

Scene 6 In Shape Again

Narrator: One day, when the shape was going down a hill, it began to roll. Faster and faster it went, screeching around corners, crashing into fences and trees, colliding with bicycles, and terrifying walkers.

(*Friends walk off stage left and put their shapes back on.*)

At last, the shape came to a stop. It felt tired and dizzy, lonely and sad.

Dodecahedron: Enough! I don't know which side is up. I can't keep my balance. My friends don't want me around.

Narrator: The shape could no longer remember why it had been unhappy as a triangle. Very carefully, it made its way back to the shapeshifter.

Shapeshifter: Aren't you happy yet?

Dodecahedron: I want to be a triangle again.

Shapeshifter: I'm not surprised.

Abacadabra, polygon pie,

Give this shape just three sides.

And only three angles for her to retry!

And Poof. *(Two Polygon People cross stage to center. Dodecahedron changes behind Poof sign, and all shapes change back into triangles.)*

Narrator: The shapeshifter turned the shape back into a triangle.

Shapeshifter *(Runs beside triangle and cries):* I am so happy you are back!

(Everyone cheers!)

Narrator *(Triangle goes to each shape and they sit at the front of the stage):*

The triangle was delighted to have its old shape back again and kept itself very busy. Once again, it supported bridges, it held up roofs, caught the wind for sailboats, became slices of pie, and halves of sandwiches, made music in a symphony orchestra, and much, much more.

The shapeshifter retired, but once in a while the triangle would visit just to talk about all its adventures with angles and sides. *(Narrators sit on stage.)*

Triangle: But my very favorite thing in the whole wide world to do is to slip into place when people put their hands on their hips. *(All cast put their hands on their hips.)*

That way I always hear the latest news, which I can tell my friends. *(Friends walk out and sit beside the triangle.)*

Friends *(Clapping):* We love hearing all the news.

Half Circle: We are glad you are back in shape again.

Rhombus: Triangles are really unique.

Circle: We like you just the way you are.

Narrators: The End

The Greedy Triangle: Costumes, Props, Scenery

COSTUMES—CARDBOARD

1 half circle

1 rhombus

1 circle

1 heptagon

1 octagon

1 nonagon

1 decagon

1 dodecahedron

1 tree with fence

TRIANGLES

1 equilateral triangle

2 house roofs

2 sailboats

2 apple pie pieces

(whipped cream & ice cream)

2 sandwich halves

(peanut butter & jelly)

PROPS

2 musical triangles

QUADRILATERALS

2 plasma TV screens

1 baby block

PROPS

1 window

2 picture frames

1 checkerboard

3 bases

1 big book—*Goldilocks and the Three Bears*

PENTAGONS

1 U.S. Pentagon

3 five-pointed stars (center highlighted)

2 school crossing signs

PROPS

2 home plates

3 soccer balls (sections highlighted)

HEXAGONS

1 beehive with 1 cell highlighted

2 nuts & bolts

2 box wrenches

2 floor tiles

2 fancy crackers on trays

COSTUMES

Polygon People

Shapeshifter

Bees

PROPS

1 bicycle

6 scene signs (number plus name of scene)

SCENERY

Large mural of Scenes 1 and 6, 3, 4, 5

1 and 6—busy harbor bridge, pyramids, Eiffel Tower, pagodas

3—baseball field, library

4—hill, White House, Washington Monument

5—beehive/kitchen/workshop

left wall—table, books

right wall—Shapeshifter's house