Agatha’s Feather Bed

Materials needed:
*Agatha’s Feather Bed*, by Carmen Agra Deedy
Yarn
Red cloth
At least two other types of cloth (preferably samples of wool and linen)
Basket to store the cloth and yarn (optional)
Comb
Hat

Characters:
Agatha--1
Boy--1
Cats--2
Sidney the goose (if there are enough children, more geese can be added)—1-3
Teacher can be the narrator

Instructions:
Recruit players and give out props (yarn to cats, comb and hat to Agatha, red cloth to boy). Have everyone come to the front. Designate one side as the shop. Tell the cats that their job is to meow with appreciation whenever they hear a joke, pun or idiom (have a couple of older kids be cats).

Ask players to introduce themselves and their roles to the class, and then explain the cats’ role to meow when someone tells a pun, idiom or joke.

[Agatha is pretending to spin, cats are playing with yarn on the floor]

Narrator: [points] Do you see that little shop sandwiched between two skyscrapers? The shop belongs to my friend Agatha. She spins yarn and weaves cloth which she sells. The patterns she weaves are too amazing and the colors so beautiful that people come from all over Manhattan to buy her wares.

Agatha loves to talk, and she tells wonderful stories. In fact, you could say Agatha can spin a yarn [cats meow] better than anyone I know. Here’s one she told me the other day, and I know it must be true, because even Agatha couldn’t have made this one up: One afternoon a little boy was shopping with his mother in Agatha’s fabric shop. He was very bored and began playing with a scrap of red cloth [boy dangles it in front of the cats who bat at it]

Agatha: That’s silk. Do you know where it comes from?

Boy: No [shakes his head]

Agatha: It comes from worms

Boy: Worms!

Boy: Wow . . . What kind of worm does this come from [holds up yarn]

Agatha: That’s a very good question. That’s cotton. And it doesn’t come from a worm at all. It comes from a cotton boll that grows right out of the ground.

Boy: What about the rest of this stuff? Does it come from cool places, too? [points to some cloth]

Agatha: Oh, yes. This is wool, and it comes from –

Boy: Sheep – that’s easy

Agatha: You’re right. Now this cloth [holds up cloth] is linen. Feel how stiff it is. I’ll bet you can’t guess where it comes from.

Boy: [pauses, thinking] Well, where does it come from?

Agatha: A plant called flax. Let me tell you something I tell all my customers, especially children:

Everything comes from something,
Nothing comes from nothing.
Just like paper comes from trees,
And glass comes from sand,
An answer comes from a question.
All you have to do is ask

[Boy smiles]

Narrator: That evening after everyone had gone home, Agatha went upstairs to her apartment. Several months earlier, she had ordered a new feather bed from her favorite catalog, B. B. Lean . . .

Cats: Me-ow

Narrator: It had just arrived that very day. Her old mattress was so lumpy and bumpy it was like sleeping on coal lumps and cherry pits. Quickly she changed into her nightgown and brushed and flossed her teeth. She took out the tortoiseshell pins, and her long white hair fell, [Agatha can pretend to be doing these actions] And fell . . .

And fell . . . until it lay in swirls around her feet. [Narrator stops here to show picture of her hair, pg. 10. Cats show interest and look, too]

Agatha dreamed that her room was filled with strange sounds: hushed whispers and the pitter patter of little feet. Suddenly she awoke with a start as she heard her window close with a thud. She turned slowly and saw that, standing across her windowsill were . . . six naked geese. They were shivering in the cold and covered with goose bumps.

Cats: Me-ow

Narrator: She caught them just as they had ducked out.
Cats: Merowwwеее . . . . [Cover ears with paws, as if the puns are getting too silly]

Narrator: The smallest goose, Sidney, stepped into the room. He pointed his pink little wing at Agatha’s bed and said,

Sidney: We want our feathers back!

Agatha: What?

Sidney: Feathers, Agatha, feathers. You know, we’ve been listening . . .

Everything comes from something,
Nothing comes from nothing.
Just like paper comes from trees,
And glass comes from sand.

The feathers in a feather bed don’t grow on trees, my dear. Where did you think the feathers in the feather bed came from?

Narrator: Agatha looked at the bed and she looked at the geese, and she looked at the bed, and she looked at the geese. Something in her sensed that her goose was cooked . . .

Cats: [protest, too many puns] Phssssssss . . . [hissing]

Narrator: We’re going to stop our story for a minute, and I want to ask you what do you think happens? What does Agatha decide to do? What should she do? [children share different ideas]

Narrator continues: So something in her sensed that her goose was cooked.

Cats: [put hands over ears] Not again!

Sidney: I have to tell you we mean business, Agatha. I wouldn’t mess with a gaggle of angry, naked geese. We’re not just a bunch of quacks. This could get ugly.

Cats: [snarl] Rrrowww!

Narrator: Agatha thought and thought. She had worked hard to earn the money to buy that feather bed. And yet, she thought, what about those poor plucky little guys out there in the cold?

Agatha: [unhappily] I’ll tell you what. Get back to me in three days. Trust me.

Narrator: And she gave them her credit card so they could book up at the Down Town Motel.

Cats: [schreeching] Meeeeorrrrrrrr . . .

Narrator: Taking this as a sign of good will, they left quietly. They hoped she wasn’t sending them on a wild goose chase.
Cats: [rolling around on the floor] eeeeeekkk

Narrator: Agatha didn’t waste a minute. She went downstairs to her sewing room, snatched her scissors, and got to work. And for three days, she didn’t open her shop or speak to anyone. [Agatha puts on a hat] On the third night, just as they’d agreed, the geese came tapping at her window. This time Agatha was expecting them. She had left the window open, and she smiled to herself as they popped in.

Sidney: We’re back, Agatha. We had a great time with that credit card. They kept wanting to give us a bill, but we just said, ‘no thanks, the last thing we need is another bill’...

Cats: [point to audience] We’re tired of meowing. It’s your turn! [Audience meows]

Narrator: As Sidney looked across the room, he saw hanging on Agatha’s wall were six white, fleecy coats. Agatha had spun and woven and sewn each one. The geese were extremely grateful and thanked her kindly. Each goose slipped into his new coat and took a gander in the mirror.

Cats: [point to audience again]

Sidney: You know, Agatha, these are really magnificent coats. Whatever did you make them from?

[Agatha pulls off her hat]

Agatha: [smiling] Everything comes from something. I have your feathers, you have my hair. What’s good for the goose is good for the gander, eh, Sidney?

Cats: [point to the audience]

Sidney: Oh, Agatha, you keep us in stitches.

Cats: [point to the audience]

Sidney: By the way, Agatha. Your hair looks just ducky. And lucky for you and me, hair grows back . . . just like feathers.

Cats: [point to audience again]

Narrator: Since then, Agatha says she’s never heard another honk from her fine feathered friends. However, someone’s been leaving fresh goose eggs on her doorstep every morning.

Cats: Everyone, together now! [Audience and players meow]