

# BACKWARDS **IN** HIGH HEELS

THE GINGER MUSICAL



THE CLEVELAND  
**PLAY  
HOUSE**  
AT 85TH & EUCLID



Rainbow Babies  
& Children's Hospital

## StudyGuide

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# Synopsis

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## GINGER GETS HER START

Young Virginia (Ginger) Rogers was raised by Lela, her single mom, ever since her drunkard father abandoned the family. At fifteen, Ginger enters a Charleston competition against her mother's wishes.

She wins a tour on the Orpheum Circuit and begins her journey to stardom. Lela tags along as Ginger rises from the Orpheum Circuit to Broadway, and eventually, to the silver screen. Along the way Ginger makes a series of mistakes about the men in her life, but all of her mistakes turn her into a no-nonsense, tough, and motivated performer, who advocates for her needs.



## GINGER AND FRED

Ginger is paired with a dancer named Fred Astaire and their chemistry is magnetic. Crowds love them and they make a number of highly successful pictures together. Even though her mother, agent, and all of her fans believe she should continue to work with Fred, Ginger feels ready for a greater challenge. Rogers breaks away from the dancing partnership that has come to define her film career, and the world soon learns that this dancing beauty has more surprises up her sleeve. *Backwards in High Heels: The Ginger Musical* gives audiences insight into the real woman behind the famed dancing duo.



# Who's Who?

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## THE MAJOR PLAYERS IN BACKWARDS IN HIGH HEELS

### Virginia (Ginger) Rogers

A dancer, singer and actress who works her way through the vaudeville circuit, Broadway, and Hollywood. She is smart, hardworking, and passionate. She knows what she wants, and she goes after it. Despite the many men in her life, Ginger's heart is always with her mother.

### Lela Rogers

Ginger's mother. Lela's first husband was a drinker, so she divorced him and took baby Virginia with her. Lela is a playwright, journalist, and screenwriter who uses her experience in "the business" to control Ginger as she navigates through her career. She is strong, independent, and accepting.

### Fred Astaire

Ginger's dancing partner in several films. He is an all around "nice guy" and puts up with Ginger's no-nonsense attitude.

### Louise

Ginger's dresser and personal assistant. She watches out for Ginger and never complains about her own poverty.

### Ethel Merman

A singing sensation on Broadway who does not look kindly on Ginger's dancing ability since it threatens Ethel's stardom in a production of *Girl Crazy*.

### Hermes Pan

A well-known choreographer who works with Fred and Ginger on many films.

### Bill McMath

Lela's first husband and Ginger's father. He has a drinking problem and when Lela leaves him, he kidnaps baby Ginger for a short time.

### Jack Culpepper

Ginger's first husband. He is an aging chorus boy on the vaudeville circuit with a drinking problem.

### Lew Ayres

Ginger's second husband. He is a handsome actor with a drinking problem.

# Meet the Authors

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## LYNETTE BARKLEY

Barkley is a director and choreographer who has worked extensively with Florida Stage. She has also conceived a musical based on the songwriting team Rodgers and Hart, entitled *Beguiled Again*. Barkley has worked as a director, assistant director, and choreographer on Broadway and off-Broadway, as well as staging the world premiere of *Backwards in High Heels*.



## CHRISTOPHER MCGOVERN

McGovern co-wrote the book for *Backwards in High Heels*, as well as the original songs that appear in the musical. In addition to writing the songs, he was responsible for all of the musical arrangements. McGovern wrote the libretto and score for *Lizzie*

*Borden*, *Crash Club*, *A Visit to Roswell*, and *Holiday for Hope*, among others. He currently lives in New York City.

# Fred and Ginger: The Real Life Figures

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*Backwards in High Heels* is based on the real life of Ginger Rogers, who is most frequently remembered for her dancing partnership with Fred Astaire.

Fred and Ginger were the most famous “non-couple” of the 1930s--they worked so well on screen together that audiences assumed they must be in love. In reality, Fred was happily married to his wife, Phyllis, and Ginger was (at least for part of their career together) married to actor Lew Ayres. Although Fred and Ginger’s names are almost always paired, they had illustrious careers independently. The following section explores who these famous dancers really were:

## GINGER ROGERS

### Childhood



Virginia McMath was born in 1911 in Independence, Missouri to Lela Owens McMath. Lela had just recently left her alcoholic husband, William Eddins McMath. When Virginia was still a baby, her father kidnapped her. After a bit of searching, Lela recovered her missing infant. Lela later moved to New York and Hollywood to pursue her career as a writer, leaving young Virginia with her grandparents. It was during this time that Virginia received the nickname that would follow

her throughout her life: her cousin Helen couldn’t pronounce Virginia, and instead would say “Gin-jah”. The name stuck. Later, Lela married John Rogers, who became Ginger’s beloved “Daddy John” and the family relocated to Fort Worth, Texas. Although Lela separated from John years later, Ginger still considered him the only father figure she had ever known.



### Early Career on Vaudeville

After winning a dancing competition in Texas, Ginger joined the vaudeville circuit. She performed with a group her mother named “Ginger and the Redheads,” often doing six shows a day. The schedule was grueling, but Ginger learned many of the tools that would prove invaluable to her later career. She would dance, sing, and perform in comedy routines. During her time on the vaudeville circuit, she married Jack Culpepper.

### Ginger Hits the Great White Way

Ginger’s first major role on Broadway was in a musical called *Top Speed* in 1929. Her second Broadway role went down in history for many reasons: it was the 1929 production of *Girl Crazy*, a musical by George and Ira Gershwin. *Girl Crazy* marked the Broadway debut of Ethel Merman, a singer who would go on to become one of Broadway’s greatest performers. Fred Astaire was called in to help with some of the choreography, leading to the first time Fred and Ginger danced together.

### Ginger on Hollywood

Ginger’s first studio contract was with Paramount for seven years, which she signed soon after the production of *Girl Crazy*. She was able to film these movies from New York, but she soon broke that contract and moved to Hollywood. Once in Hollywood, Rogers worked on several unsuccessful films before appearing in *42nd Street* with Warner Brothers in 1933. She then signed a contract with RKO, where she began partnering with Fred Astaire.

# Fred and Ginger: The Real Life Figures (Continued)

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## Ginger's Many Marriages

Ginger famously married and divorced five different men throughout her life, and never had any children. Her first marriage to Jack Culpepper, which is documented in *Backwards in High Heels*, was a disaster. Jack was a former boyfriend of Ginger's aunt Jean, and she had a crush on him from a young age. When they finally married, however, Ginger was quickly disillusioned. Roger's second marriage to Lew Ayres, star of the 1930 film *All Quiet on the Western Front*, lasted 7 years, and ended with an amicable divorce. Her other husbands were Jack Briggs, Jacques Bergerac, and William Marshall. Four of her husbands were heavy drinkers which led Ginger, who did not drink, to divorce them. She also dated a great number of men who were madly in love with her. Two of her well known suitors were Howard Hughes (pictured below), who presented her with a 5-carat emerald-cut diamond engagement ring, and George Gershwin.



## Religion

Ginger's mother, Lela, became a devout Christian Scientist when her ex-husband kidnapped baby Virginia. As reported in Ginger's autobiography, Lela accidentally discovered a Christian Science practitioner when she was searching for her missing child, and this person helped her pray for the baby's safety. Once Ginger was found, Lela was a firm believer in the religion. As a result, Ginger was raised to believe in the tenets of Christian Science and remained committed to her praying routine throughout her life. Whenever Rogers became ill, she would call upon a practitioner to pray for her. Ginger refused

to drink alcohol and occasionally insisted that profane dialogue in her films be rewritten. Many of her costars remarked that Ginger was always in excellent health and rarely missed a day of work.



## FRED ASTAIRE

Fred Astaire was born in 1899 as Frederick Austerlitz in Omaha, Nebraska. He began dancing at a young age with his older sister, Adele. The family moved to New York to develop an act for the two children. Quickly, the children began performing on the vaudeville circuit. By the 1920s, Fred and Adele were performing frequently on Broadway in musicals written by the Gershwin brothers. Eventually Adele married and gave up her career, but Fred continued dancing.

## Fred and Ginger

Fred was first paired with Ginger Rogers in a film made for RKO called *Flying Down to Rio*, in which they played two smaller roles. The dancing duo stole attention from the two



main characters, and audiences loved the charisma between Ginger and Fred. Their most famous number from that film was the *Carioca*, a sultry rumba that they performed with their foreheads pressed together. Despite the popularity of the couple onscreen, Fred was reluctant to become attached to yet another



# Fred and Ginger: The Real Life Figures (Continued)

partner after having danced with his sister for so many years. He feared this team would begin to define him. Nevertheless, he agreed to this partnership and went on to make ten films with Ginger with the help of Hermes Pan's choreography. Throughout his career, he made over thirty musical films, and was acclaimed to be the greatest dancer of his time. Cole Porter's song "You're the Top" from the musical *Anything Goes* contains the line, "You're the nimble tread / of the feet of Fred / Astaire." After his film career ended, Fred opened his own dance studio where he trained generations of young dancers. Astaire died in 1987 from pneumonia.

## FUN FACT

### WERE FRED AND GINGER EVER AN ITEM?

In the play, when Fred and Ginger first meet on the set for their first film together, Ginger coyly suggests that they once had a relationship. In Ginger Rogers's personal memoirs, she elaborates on the mystery. Fred and Ginger first met when he was called in to choreograph a number in *Girl Crazy* on Broadway in 1929. Around that time, Fred asked Ginger out on a date and they spent an evening dancing in New York City. Ginger's report of the end of the night is as follows: "Inside the car, Fred had me in his arms, and the kiss that we shared in that five minutes would never have passed the Hays Office code!" (See *Off-Book* for a discussion of the Hays Code) Nothing ever came of this relationship because shortly afterwards, Ginger moved to Hollywood to pursue her film career. When they reunited several years later for their first film, Fred was a happily married man.

### FRED AND GINGER'S FILMS



Below is a list of the ten films Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers made together:

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <i>Flying Down to Rio</i> (1933) | <i>Shall We Dance</i> (1937)                       |
| <i>The Gay Divorcee</i> (1934)   | <i>Carefree</i> (1938)                             |
| <i>Roberta</i> (1935)            | <i>The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle</i> (1939) |
| <i>Top Hat</i> (1935)            | <i>The Barkleys of Broadway</i> (1949)             |
| <i>Follow the Fleet</i> (1936)   |  |
| <i>Swing Time</i> (1936)         |  |

# Ballroom Dancing

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Ballroom dancing began as an aristocratic form of social dancing. Traditionally peasants would participate in livelier folk dances, but the nobility and members of court would engage in a slower, and more sophisticated form of dance.

The waltz in its modern form was introduced in the early 19th century; it was the first dance to utilize a closed-hold for an extended period of time. This shift towards “couples” dance paved the way for ballroom dance in the twentieth century. The twentieth century saw a trend towards dances in which couples moved independently across the dance floor, instead of moving in a clearly mapped sequence of steps.

## MUSIC

Trends in music have historically been crucial to the evolution of ballroom dance. As musical styles changed, so did the dance that accompanied it. For example, during the rise in popularity of ragtime music, the foxtrot emerged as the first American ballroom dance. As music grew faster and livelier, dancers found ways to keep up by developing new dances. The twentieth century brought new kinds of music into the American mainstream: ragtime, jazz, and Latin-inspired music all contributed to the evolution of ballroom dance.

## CHARLESTON

Named for the South Carolina city, the Charleston was introduced in the 1920s and spread quickly through the country. It is a fast-paced, athletic dance that can be performed with partners or alone. Some of the dance

steps include fast foot patterns, a series of kicks to the front, back and side, as well as lively, swinging arm-motions. The Charleston was associated with the flappers—liberal-minded women who bobbed their hair, wore makeup, and embraced jazz. The Charleston was often performed during Prohibition, as a way to mock those who did not drink alcohol. This is ironic, considering that Ginger Rogers, who was never a drinker, rose to fame after winning a Charleston competition.

## FOXTROT

The foxtrot became a popular ballroom dance around the start of World War One, and it is called the first American ballroom dance. It developed as a dance to ragtime music, and was known for its fast-paced, lively rhythm. Vernon and Irene Castle (see Off-Book) began to incorporate the foxtrot into their performances, and they quickly popularized the form. The foxtrot has become so popular because its basic step is fairly simple.

## SWING

Swing dancing, one of the most exuberant forms of ballroom dance, became popular in the 1930s as a result of developments in jazz music. It is a partner dance that contains a strong rhythm with jazzy syncopation. The triple steps of swing result in a more relaxed, carefree movement style than the strict rhythm of the waltz or the foxtrot. The Lindy Hop and the Jitterbug are both forms of swing. More serious swing dancers, and those who participate in competitions, will perform acrobatic lifts and tricks with partners.



# The Legacy of Fred and Ginger

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If Vernon and Irene Castle spread ballroom dance across America and made the general public aware of the form, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers made it accessible to the American public.

Prior to Fred and Ginger, ballroom dance was something for the refined, upper classes. It was stiff, formal, and elegant. Fred and Ginger taught the world that ballroom dance is not merely for the wealthy—anyone could achieve the kind of elegance they depicted onscreen.

## CHEMISTRY

The pairing of the dapper Fred Astaire with the sassy Ginger Rogers made ballroom dancing a deep source of delight, fun, and entertainment. The two performers were fundamentally different—he was handsome, thin, and floated across the dance floor; she was bold, sensual, and full of smiles as she danced. As Katharine Hepburn observed: “He gave her class, she gave him sex appeal.” Their onscreen chemistry made viewers across the world fall in love with them, and therefore, fall in love with ballroom dance.



## DANCE AS A STORYTELLER

Fred and Ginger were the first to bring ballroom dance to Hollywood films in a significant way. Their dances were creative, elaborately crafted, and cleverly conceived. For example, *Shall We Dance* contains a number performed entirely on roller-skates. Their ingenuity with ballroom dance choreography pioneered new ways that dance could tell a story. In musical comedies, when words are no longer enough to capture a character’s thoughts, the character sings. When songs are no longer enough, the character dances. Fred and Ginger’s films made the dances an essential part of the story.

## THE MUSIC

*Backwards in High Heels* features an impressive score by some of the greatest songwriting teams of the 1920s and 1930s. Most of the music in the production was written by the Gershwin brothers, and the songwriting team of Dorothy Fields and Jerome Kern. Both of these songwriting duos helped create a sound that was particularly representative of the eras in which they lived and their music can still be heard today.

# The Gershwins

George Gershwin (b. 1898) and his brother Ira (b. 1896) were quite possibly the most celebrated songwriting team of their time.

George wrote the music and Ira wrote the lyrics. George used unconventional rhythms and his style straddled opera, jazz, classical, and popular music. Ira used slangy, modern lyrics that suited George's unique sound. Together, they created fresh, upbeat, entertaining, and clever songs. Their musical, *Of Thee I Sing*, which poked fun at politics in America, was the first musical to ever win a Pulitzer Prize for Drama, proving that musical theatre could make a significant contribution to the theatrical art form. Their folk opera, *Porgy and Bess*, featured an all-black cast during a time when many theatres refused to hire people of color. Their 1929 musical *Girl Crazy*, which featured Ginger Rogers and Ethel Merman, was remade into a wildly successful Broadway musical titled *Crazy for You* in 1992. The Gershwins were ahead of their time, in terms of their songs, ideas, and hopes for what musicals could be. George died unexpectedly of a brain tumor at the age of 38, while Ira died at the age of 86.



## GERSHWIN SONGS

**MUSIC:** GEORGE GERSHWIN

**LYRICS:** IRA GERSHWIN

"I Got Rhythm"

"Someone to Watch Over Me"

"But Not For Me"

"Fascinatin' Rhythm"

"They Can't Take That Away  
From Me"

"They All Laughed"

"Let's Call the Whole Thing Off"

"Shall We Dance?"

# Dorothy Fields & Jerome Kern

# On the Boards

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## DOROTHY FIELDS (1905-1974)



Dorothy Fields was one of the few female lyricists to have a successful career in show business during the early part of the 20th century. She collaborated with composers like Cy Coleman and Jerome Kern, and she wrote lyrics for musical films

and Broadway shows. Fields had an incredibly prolific 45-year career as a lyricist during a time when show business was not welcoming to women. She wrote lyrics to well-known songs like “The Way You Look Tonight,” “Hey Big Spender,” and “A Fine Romance.”

- *Backwards in High Heels* premiered at Florida Stage in 2007.
- It has been produced by the Fullerton Civic Light Opera, International City Theatre, and the Asolo Repertory Theatre.
- Besides the Cleveland Play House, the other theaters producing the musical in the 2010-2011 season include San Jose Repertory Theatre and the Arizona Theatre Company

## JEROME KERN (1885-1945)



Jerome Kern was an American composer whose 1927 musical, *Showboat*, earned him the unofficial nickname, “The Father of American Musical Theatre.” Kern was a classically trained musician, and his collaborators included Dorothy Fields, Oscar Hammerstein, and

Ira Gershwin. He wrote the music for several classic songs, including “Ol’ Man River,” and “The Way You Look Tonight,” which won an Academy Award for Best Song in 1936. *Showboat* is often revived today in theatres across the country.

# Themes of the Play

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*Backwards in High Heels* is an entertaining musical, but it simultaneously brings up several issues that are worthy of discussion. See where you can find traces of these themes in the production at Cleveland Play House:

## INDEPENDENT WOMEN

The first half of the twentieth century was a challenging time for women. The traditional roles of women revolved around the domestic sphere: they were expected to get married, cook and clean for their husbands, and produce children. But what happens when a woman defies the expectations that surround her? When a woman fails to conform to the roles imposed on her by society, is she celebrated as an independent thinker, or is she shunned as a deviant?

## MAKING YOUR OWN MISTAKES

No matter how often others may warn you that you are making the wrong choice for yourself, you never truly learn until you make a mistake on your own. Experience speaks louder than words, and you sometimes have to make bad choices in order to realize what the right choices are.

## RISING UP THE LADDER OF SUCCESS

Some of us are thirsty for the spotlight of the stage; some of us dream of a career as a high-powered attorney; some of us long to travel the world. Often, once we reach our dreams, there is still one more thing that we long for--one more rung on the ladder we must climb.

## THE LINK BETWEEN SHOW BUSINESS AND PARENTING

As Ginger and Lela point out, show business and parenting are scary enterprises. You work as hard as you can, you toil away until your feet ache, but you keep a smile on your face. In the end, however, you have little control over how things turn out.

## ALCOHOLISM

Although alcohol is considered part of the "show business lifestyle," Ginger never drank, and never served alcohol at her own parties. Only in the twentieth century did doctors consider alcoholism as a legitimate disease. The examples of alcoholics in the play serve as an important reminder of the ways in which the disease interferes with everyday life, and the tolls an addictive disorder can take on relationships.

# Women's Rights

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During Ginger Rogers's career, she experienced deep prejudice in Hollywood because she was a woman. She worked just as hard as Fred Astaire, and rehearsed for just as many hours, but she was paid far less. The following section explores some of the conditions that have affected American women in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

## SUFFRAGE

Throughout much of history, women have been denied suffrage, or the right to vote. New Zealand was the first country to grant women the right to vote in 1893. American women were not able to vote until 1920, when the 19th Amendment was passed. Susan B. Anthony, an early activist, campaigned in the 19th century for the right of women to vote, though she died before women were granted suffrage.

## WAGE INEQUALITY

When women began to enter the workforce, they faced wage inequality; men would be compensated at a much higher rate for the same amount of work. The Equal Pay Act was passed in 1963 to address discrimination in women's wages. Despite this legislation, women are still paid less than men for the same jobs. As of 2009, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, women who were employed full-time earned an average of \$657 per week, while men who were employed full-time earned an average of \$819 per week.

## WOMEN IN POLITICAL OFFICE

Women were granted the right to vote in 1920, but it was not until the second half of the twentieth century that women began to appear in prominent roles in American politics. Sandra Day O'Connor was appointed as the first woman on the United States Supreme Court in 1981. Geraldine Ferraro was the first woman to run for Vice President with a major party in 1984. Janet Reno was appointed as the first woman Attorney General in 1993. Madeleine Albright became the first woman Secretary of State in 1997. Nancy Pelosi was elected the first woman Speaker of the House of Representatives in 2007. To this date, there has never been a female President of the United States.

## WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Women have traditionally been denied the right to work outside the home, but the twentieth century saw many changes in that trend. In 1930, women constituted about 2% of the lawyers and judges in America. By 1989, that percentage had risen to 22%. According to the United States Department of Labor, most working women in America were employed in 2009 as secretaries or administrative assistants, followed by nurses and elementary/middle school teachers.

# Vaudeville

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Vaudeville was the most popular type of entertainment in the United States from 1880-1910. Vaudeville is a kind of variety entertainment, which means that it featured many different kinds of performance including comic skits, specialty acts, juggling, singing, dancing, and acrobatics.

A show would include a series of unrelated acts, and the fast-paced nature of these performances ensured that audiences were never bored. Vaudeville was eclectic, inexpensive,



and it always guaranteed audiences something new. It reflected the desire for progress and change that was abuzz in the major cities of the United States at the turn of the century. Eventually, as motion pictures grew in popularity, vaudeville died out as an art form.

## ORIGINS

A man named Tony Pastor brought the vaudeville show to a more respectable level when he banned smoking and drinking in his theatres in 1881. He turned vaudeville into a lighthearted, family performance that was filled with surprises. More importantly, vaudeville appealed to the immigrant population, because one did not necessarily need to understand English to be delighted by the fast-paced and physically demanding performances.

## VAUDEVILLE ACTORS

Vaudeville provided many performers with a valuable training ground, but it was an overly demanding lifestyle. A typical Vaudeville show would include six to ten different acts, and the show would be repeated throughout the day for different audiences. Actors would perfect their act and repeat it several times a day, sometimes performing six or seven shows a day. Some vaudeville actors later went on to star on Broadway or in motion pictures.

## THE ORPHEUM CIRCUIT



Many vaudeville theatres were part of a circuit, a chain of theatres owned by the same company. This made it easier to book vaudeville acts on a national tour. The Orpheum Circuit was founded in 1919 and included 45 different vaudeville theatres in 36 cities across the United States and Canada.

In 1928, the Orpheum Circuit merged with another chain of theatres and eventually became a new organization, called Radio-Keith-Orpheum (RKO). RKO later turned into a motion picture studio where Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire would eventually film all of their pictures together.



# Broadway Musicals

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The Broadway musical, as we know it today, has only been around for about a century. In the early 20th century while vaudeville was the most popular form of entertainment, songwriters were trying to find a new way to showcase their work.



They began writing musical comedies; performances that used song, dance, and dialogue to tell a cohesive story. One of the earliest creators of the musical comedy was George M. Cohan. Cohan's 1904 musical *Little Johnny Jones* included simple songs like "I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy" and "Give my Regards to Broadway."

Musicals have grown much more complex since *Little Johnny Jones*, and today tourists in New York City make it a priority to experience a musical on Broadway.



## THE GREAT WHITE WAY

Broadway is technically a street in New York City that runs through the theatre district and Times Square. It is sometimes referred to as "The Great White Way," in reference to the bright lights from the theatre marquis and billboards at night. It seems to be no accident that Broadway has gotten this nickname, however. In the early twentieth century while Broadway was quickly becoming a theatrical haven, most of the artists involved in creating the musicals that shaped Broadway were white, and often they were men. There was very little room in Broadway musicals for women, people of color, or non-traditional lifestyles. Roles for women were limited to young, innocent girls or old, foolish women. Actors of color were usually not allowed to perform onstage, white actors would often wear blackface to play colored characters. Homosexuality, or any form of deviance from "the norm," was rarely depicted in a Broadway musical. Although this changed in the latter half of the 20th century, the name has stuck, serving as an important reminder of the past.

# Hollywood Studio System

# Hays Code

The decade of the 1930s, when Fred and Ginger made most of their musical films, is sometimes called The Golden Age of Hollywood. The film industry was quite different from today, however, because of the basic structure. From the 1920s to the 1950s, Hollywood operated on a studio system.



This meant that the studios, such as RKO, MGM, Paramount, Fox, and Warner Brothers, had full control over the entire film, from

production to distribution, and sometimes even exhibition. The studios aimed to maximize their profits and they found many ways to do so. Actors would be contracted to do a certain number of films with the studio. Sometimes, the studios would “loan” their actors out to competing studios as long as it did not interfere with profits. The films were made on the studio’s private lot and almost all artistic and design staff would be contracted for several films. Studios would control distribution by requiring cinemas to purchase a whole block of films, rather than a single picture. In some cases, the studio owned movie theatres in major cities and could therefore reap all of the profits from showing its films.

## THE DECLINE OF THE STUDIO SYSTEM

Eventually, the studio system came to an end when many of their practices were deemed overly manipulative. The studios gradually had to give up total control of the industry in order to make room for independent filmmakers and smaller companies. Today although many of the major film studios of the 1930s still exist, there is more room in the market for small, independent films.

From the 1930s to the 1960s in Hollywood, a set of guidelines outlined what could and could not appear in a film.

These guidelines were part of the Motion Picture Production Code (or the Hays Code, named for the man who created it). These guidelines were a form of censorship, and forced filmmakers to avoid the following subjects in film:

- Homosexuality
- Nudity
- Illegal drugs
- Adultery
- Miscegenation (inter-racial marriage)
- Lengthy kissing scenes (3-second limit to kissing)

# Life in the 1930s

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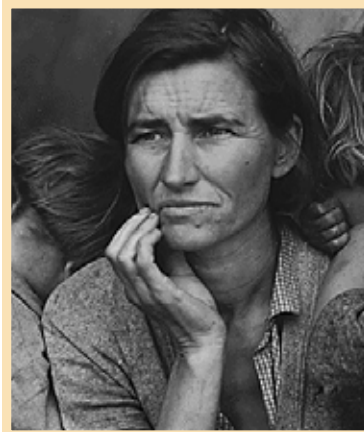
Fred and Ginger made most of their films together in the 1930s. Their films depicted a world of elegance, decadence, and luxury. The real America in the 1930s, however, was far from luxurious. Many people attended Hollywood films as a way to escape the grim reality of the times. In fact, this era is sometimes referred to as “The Dirty Thirties.”

## STOCK MARKET CRASH

On October 29, 1929, the stock market crashed. In the years leading up to the crash, more and more Americans had begun investing in the stock market. Many Americans lost everything; their savings, homes, and jobs. This stock market crash set the tone of the decade that would follow. The 1930s was characterized by a Great Depression and it would take a long time before the stock market would stabilize.

## GREAT DEPRESSION

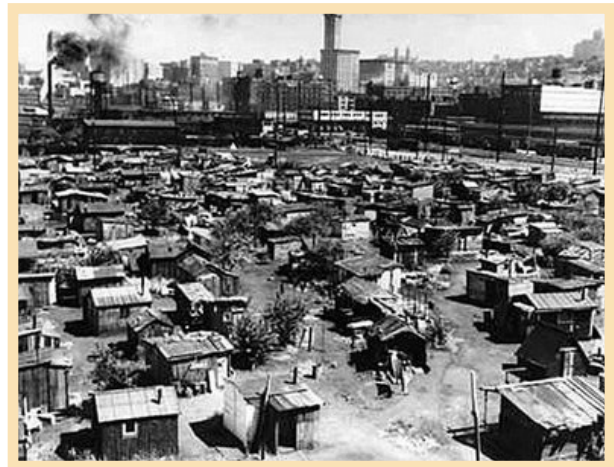
The stock market crash affected every sector of American life. There was less demand for crops, so many farmers suffered. People stopped buying unnecessary items, so retailers suffered. Families lost their savings almost instantly and because the



demand was down in virtually every industry, many lost their jobs. During the Depression, 6000 banks went out of business, 85,000 businesses went bankrupt, 13 million people were unemployed, and 2,600 schools closed. It would take the country many years to recover from this economic disaster.

## HOOVERVILLES

As a result of the Great Depression, many Americans became homeless. These people began to set up temporary housing in tents and small shacks in large communities. These homeless shantytowns earned the nickname “Hoovervilles.” This was a reference to Herbert Hoover, the President at the time. Many blamed Hoover for letting the country slip into the Great Depression.



# Stars and Personalities of the 1920s-1930s

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*Backwards in High Heels* refers to many well-known personalities of the twenties and thirties, though many of these names are not very familiar today. Find out who these people actually were, and see if you can identify them when they appear in the production at Cleveland Play House:



## ETHEL MERMAN

Merman was notorious for her loud, brassy voice. She was one of the most important performers to ever grace the Broadway stage. Composers loved her unique sound and the gumption with which she tackled each role. She had many roles in musicals written with her in mind:

Annie in *Annie Get Your Gun*, Reno Sweeney in *Anything Goes*, and Mama Rose in *Gypsy*. The advice that Ethel gives to Ginger early in the show is authentic. George Gershwin once told Ethel to never forget her shorthand; Merman had been a secretary before she became a singer.



## KATHARINE HEPBURN

Katharine Hepburn was one of the most adored film and stage actresses of the 1930s. She was raised in Connecticut and was famously outspoken, which was not common in women of the time. Katharine defied many expectations about

women by wearing pants and not wearing makeup. Hepburn was nominated for the Academy Award twelve times, and won

four times. Hepburn's harsh treatment of Ginger Rogers in the play is based on fact; she was known for publicly slighting many celebrities, but Rogers was often the target of her insults.

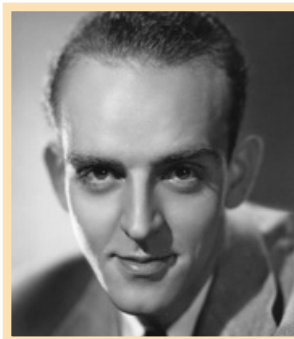


## JIMMY STEWART

Stewart was an American film actor who appeared in classics such as *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, *Rear Window*, *Vertigo*, and *It's a Wonderful Life*. He costarred with Katharine Hepburn in *Philadelphia Story*, a film referenced in *Backwards in High Heels*.

He won an Academy Award

for Best Actor in *The Philadelphia Story*, the same year Ginger Rogers won her Academy Award for *Kitty Foyle*. Stewart had an impressive military career, serving in World War II and the Vietnam War.



## HERMES PAN

Hermes Pan was the choreographer responsible for most of Fred and Ginger's routines. Born Hermes Panagiotopoulos to Greek parents in Tennessee, he learned to tap dance at a young age and eventually began to act in films. He first collaborated with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers

on their first film, *Flying Down to Rio*, and a strong team was formed. Even after Ginger and Fred stopped dancing, Hermes and Fred continued to work together throughout their careers.

# Stars and Personalities of the 1920s-1930s (Continued)



## VERNON AND IRENE CASTLE

The Castles were a famous ballroom-dancing couple in the early 20th century. They performed on stage and screen and popularized ballroom dancing for many Americans. The Castles were fashion icons known for their progressive lifestyle. Irene and Vernon's career as a couple ended when Vernon returned from World War I. He was sent to Fort Worth to train American pilots and died in a freak plane crash. Fred Astaire

and Ginger Rogers played this famous couple in the film, *The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle*. Irene served as a consultant during filming and complained about Ginger's portrayal of her throughout the process.

## FUN FACT

### WERE FRED AND GINGER EVER AN ITEM?

According to Ginger's memoirs, it was her idea to sing "We're in the Money" in Pig Latin. She began doing it while she was trying to learn the words to the song for the film, *The Gold Diggers of 1933*. The producers overheard her and decided it would be a great bit to include in the film.



## THEDA BARA

Theda Bara was one of the most popular silent film actors of her time. Born Theodosia Burr Goodman, she like many actors of her time, took a stage name that was easier to pronounce and remember. Sadly,

most of Bara's films were lost in a studio fire. Today, only three films of the forty silent movies she filmed remain entirely intact. When Ginger Rogers's mother Lela moved to Hollywood, she wrote several scripts for Theda Bara's silent film career.

## FASHION IN THE 1930s: THE ZIPPER

In the play, Lela remarks to her daughter at a rehearsal for the 1929 production of *Girl Crazy*, "Virginia, that costume is adorable—imagine! They're putting zippers in dresses now!" Several different inventors introduced various models of the zipper in the late 19th century, but it was only in the early 20th century that its use became more widespread in daily life. Men's trousers and children's clothing would have zippers, but it was rare for women's clothing to feature the new invention. In the 1930s, however, haute couture fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli began to include zippers in her gown designs. This paved the way for zippers to be acceptable in women's attire.

# Prohibition

Early in the play, Jack Culpepper invites Ginger to an underground party that will be serving alcohol, but Ginger reminds him that it's against the law. This scene took place during in a period of American history known as Prohibition; the thirteen years when alcohol was illegal.

## THE AIM OF PROHIBITION

Prohibition, also known as The Noble Experiment, began with the temperance movement that slowly swept through the states growing in popularity, and becoming a political issue. By 1920, the eighteenth amendment went into effect, which ruled that all alcohol was illegal. The major reason for the enforcement of this law was the health of the American citizens. The aim of prohibition was to wipe out the social evil of alcoholism. Prohibition also grew largely out of a fear of the newly arrived immigrant population, and their capacity for drunkenness. It was seen as a way to control those who threatened traditional, puritanical, "American" values. Calvin Coolidge called it "the greatest social experiment of modern times," though many would argue that no one actually considered the consequences of the experiment.



## THE SIDE-EFFECTS

Although alcohol was illegal, many speakeasy clubs were formed where alcohol was illegally sold and consumed. Gangsters and mafia groups took over American cities. Prior to Prohibition, organized crime groups worked in gambling and theft, but Prohibition gave them the opportunity to venture into a new business: bootlegging. Bootleggers would make, transport, and/or sell alcohol. They would earn a lot of money because alcohol was in such high demand. Many gangs began to infiltrate law enforcement agencies, leading to a great deal of corruption in the police force and the government. In an attempt to prevent bootlegging, the government ordered industries to poison industrial alcohol, and many people died as a result of this act. Once alcohol became illegal, many kinds of crime began to flourish.

## THE LASTING IMPACT

Prohibition did much more than criminalize alcohol consumption. It led to an increase in crime, violence and death. Organized crime grew in impressive numbers during this time, and mafia groups managed to corrupt many authority figures and government agencies. The 21st amendment, which put an end to Prohibition, gave each state the right to ban the sale of alcohol. To this day, there are several dry counties and cities throughout the United States. The major lesson that Prohibition taught the country is the importance of examining the consequences of any law. The same question faces our country today as many states consider the legalization of marijuana. Prohibition taught us that legislation alone is not the answer.

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Lewis, Robert M. *From Traveling Show to Vaudeville: Theatrical Spectacle in America, 1830-1910*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2003. Print.

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## SUGGESTED READING FOR YOUNG ADULTS

*The 1920s: Luck*, by Dorothy Hoobler and Tom Hoobler, 2000

*A Long Way to Go: A Story of Women's Rights to Vote*, by Zibby Oneal, 1992

*Astaire, the Man, the Dancer*, by Bob Thomas, 1985

*The Beautiful and the Damned*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1922

*Broadway Barks: with CD*, by Bernadette Peters, 2008

*Broadway Beginner*, by Jody Davidson, 2006

*Broadway Chances*, by Elizabeth Starr Hill, 1994

*Broadway Chicken*, by Jean-Luc Fromental, 1995

*Give My Regards to Broadway*, by Bruce Hale, 2005

*I Could Do That! Esther Morris Gets Women the Right to Vote*, by Linda Arms White, 2005

*If You Lived When Women Won Their Rights*, by Anne Kamma, 2008

*The Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers Book*, by Arlene Croce, 1974

*Fred and Ginger - The Astaire-Rogers Partnership 1934-1938*, by Hannah Hyam, 2007

*Ginger: My Story*, by Ginger Rodgers, 1991

*Ginger Rogers and the Riddle of the Scarlet Cloak*, by Lela E. Rogers, 1942

*New Paths to Power: American Women 1890-1920*, by Karen Manners Smith, 1998

*No Applause- Just Throw Money: The Book That Made Vaudeville Famous*, by Trav S.D., 2005

*Radical Red*, by James Duffy, 1993

*Way Off Broadway (CatDog)*, by Greg Crosby, 1999

## SUGGESTED READING FOR EDUCATOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

*The 1920s (American Popular Culture Through History)*, by Kathleen M. Drowne and Patrick Huber, 2004

*America Has Fun: The Roaring Twenties*, by Sean Price, 2009

*Media and Society in the Twentieth Century: A Historical Introduction*, by Lyn Gorman and David McLean, 2002

*Once Upon a Time in America*, by Adrian Martin, 2008

*Women's Suffrage: A Primary Source History of the Women's Rights Movement in America*, by Colleen Adams, 2002

*The Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York*, by Robert W. Snyder, 2000

# Scripted Words to Know

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## VOCABULARY FROM THE SCRIPT

**Asset** – a resource having economic value that an individual, corporation, or country owns or controls with the expectation that it will provide future benefit.

**Au revoir** – French expression for goodbye, farewell for now.

**Cad** – one who behaves dishonorably or irresponsibly toward women.

**C'est finis** – French expression for coming to an end, “it’s finished.”

**Coda** – The conclusion or concluding passage of a movement or musical composition, implying “see you at the finish line.”

**Defer** – to put off or delay.

**Fickle** – unsteady or inconsistent; likely to change.

**Hedge your bets** – expression meaning to avoid committing oneself.

**Long in the tooth** – expression meaning old or elderly; aging.

**Mink** – a fur coat or stole.

**Nattering** – to talk incessantly; chatter.

**Orpheum Circuit** – company started by Martin Beck, comprised a series of vaudeville and motion picture theatres organized to carry on theatrical and amusement business.

**Pariah** – an outcast or person that is generally despised or avoided.

**RKO** – Radio-Keith-Orpheum Pictures; an American film production and distribution company.

**Studebaker** – type of automobile; a United States wagon and automobile manufacturer based in South Bend, Indiana.

**Talkies** – talking picture or motion picture with sound.

## VOCABULARY FROM THE STUDY GUIDE

**Aristocratic** – characteristic of an aristocrat; having manners, values, or qualities associated with the ruling class or nobility.

**Blackface** – a performer made up to imitate a person of color by using make-up consisting of burnt cork.

**Cohesive** – to cohere, stick together, or integrate.

**Dapper** – adjective meaning neat, trim, and smart.

**Exhibition** – showing or presenting to view; public display.

**Exuberant** – extremely good; overflowing; plentiful. Abounding in vitality and joy.

**Gumption** – to show courage and initiative when tackling a project.

**Haute couture** – high fashion; the most fashionable and influential dressmaking and designing.

**Infiltrate** – to filter into or through.

**Legislation** – the act of making or enacting laws.

**Manipulative** – to manage or influence in an unfair manner.

**Prolific** – producing in large quantities or abundance.

**Puritanical** – very strict in moral or religious matters, often excessively so.

**Slighting** – derogatory or belittling.

**Syncopation** – a shifting of the normal accent in piece of music, usually by stressing the off or unaccented beats.

**Temperance** – moderation or self-restraint in action or statement. The practice of self-control, commonly associated with the use of alcohol.

**Toil** – hard and continuous work; exhausting labor or effort.

**Unconventional** – not conforming to accepted rules or standards.

\*All definitions obtained from dictionary.com, excluding French translations.



# Word Search

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

The following words can be found in the word search:

**BACKWARDS**

**BALLROOM**

**BROADWAY**

**CHARLESTON**

**FRED**

**GERSHWIN**

**GINGER**

**HIGHHEELS**

**HOOVERVILLE**

**ORPHEUM**

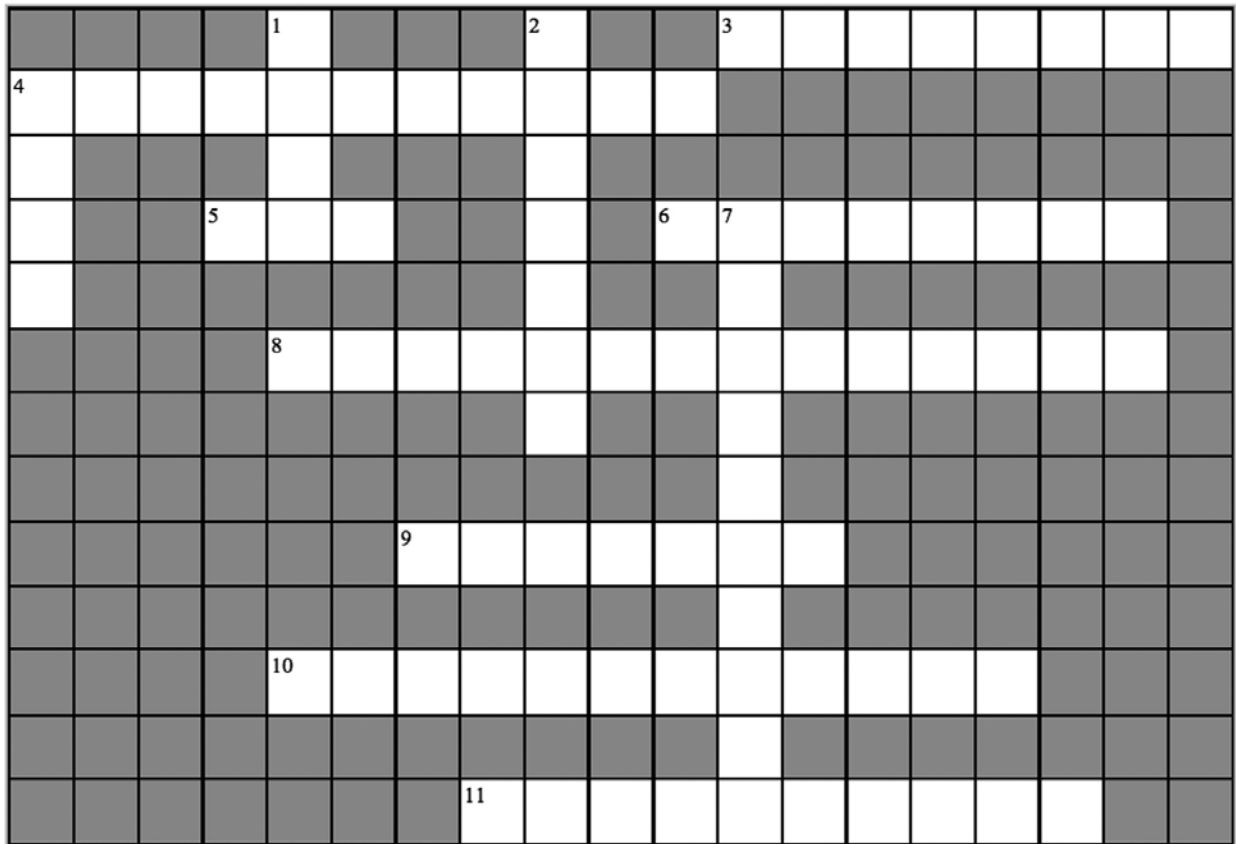
**PROHIBITION**

**REDHEADS**

**RHYTHM**

**VAUDEVILLE**

# Crossword Search



## ACROSS

3. A popular street in NYC referred to as The Great White Way.
4. Ginger's longtime dancing partner.
5. Ginger and Fred filmed their first movie together for this studio.
6. These guidelines were a form of censorship to ensure that controversial issues of the day such as nudity, drugs, lengthy kissing scenes, and homosexuality were not captured on film.
8. Ginger won a tour on this after winning the Texas National Charleston Championship.
9. Regarded as the first American ballroom dance, typically to ragtime music.

10. The name for large communities of temporary housing in tents and small shacks set up by newly homeless Americans during the Great Depression.
11. "The Father of American Musical Theatre."

## DOWN

1. The name of Ginger's first husband.
2. The age Ginger was when she won her first dance competition.
4. The number of carats of the emerald-cut diamond engagement ring presented to Ginger by Howard Hughes.
7. Ginger's mother left her husband because of this disorder in which consumption of alcohol becomes excessive.

# Word Jumble

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The genre of dance found in *Backwards in High Heels* is vaudeville, a type of theatrical entertainment in the United States and Canada originating in 1880 and lasting through the early 1930s. Vaudeville derived from combining different types of amusement such as freak shows, dime museums, concert saloons, burlesque shows, and minstrelsy. The term “vaudeville” is suggested to have come from the French phrase *voix de ville* meaning “\_\_\_\_\_ of the city.”

The following terms are acts you might see in a vaudeville show. Unscramble the words then place the letters in the spaces below in numerical sequence to fill in the blanks and uncover the “secret word.”

IICSMGAAN \_\_\_\_\_

SMNEOCAID \_\_\_\_\_

2

NRECSDA \_\_\_\_\_

NAIRTDE MNLSIAA \_\_\_\_\_

3

CIINMSSUA \_\_\_\_\_

4

SUELJGGR \_\_\_\_\_

EEASTTHL \_\_\_\_\_

5

RATSBOAC \_\_\_\_\_

SIEVOM \_\_\_\_\_

1

THE SECRET WORD IS: \_\_\_\_\_

1 2 3 4 5

# Lesson Plan: Mother Knows Best?

APPROPRIATE GRADES: 6-12

**KEY SUBJECTS AREAS & ACTIVITIES:**

LANGUAGE ARTS - Communication, Characterization, Theme  
 SOCIAL STUDIES - Research and Presentation  
 DRAMA - Creative Expression, Characterization, Theme  
 MUSIC - Rhythm

**LESSON SUMMARY**

After seeing *Backwards in High Heels*, students will discuss and list the qualities of a good and/or bad mother, then create and perform a rap using these qualities.

**COMMENTARY**

Modifications are required by the individual teacher to meet the appropriate grade and skill level of each student.

Instructional Procedures:

1. Define Performance Space or "Stage" (this could be the front of the room or anywhere the audience looks to see the performance). When the audience is seated in rows, in front of the stage, it is called a Proscenium stage.
2. Students should know that when performing, it is important to:
  - Speak to be heard and understood.
  - Face the audience.
3. After seeing the show, class should discuss the qualities that made Ginger Rogers' mother a good and/or a bad mother. Qualities should be listed on the chalkboard.
4. Using some of the qualities from the list, each student should write a rap (see Key Vocabulary) about either the good and/or bad qualities of a mother. Feel free to add anything to improve the rap style and content. Students may also ask other students help them with their rap. Instead of a single student writing a rap, groups of students may work together.
5. Once raps are written, each student, or group of students, should rehearse it several times for performance. Beat box sounds and dance may be added, if desired.

6. Once rehearsals are completed, each student, or small group, should perform on the stage for the class. At the end of each performance, audience will give actors a round of applause as actor bows. Performance is followed by a quick discussion reflecting on the content of the rap, not the performance.

7. Use checklist for assessment.

**ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST:**

DID THE STUDENT:	YES	NO	NOTES
1. List the characteristics of a good mother?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. List the characteristics of a bad mother?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Write a rap using some of the characteristics?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Use rhythm in writing the rap?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Use rhyme in writing the rap?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Rehearse the rap?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. Perform the rap for the class (with or without other students helping)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Speak to be heard and understood during the performance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9. Face the audience during the performance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10. Use vocal expression during the performance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
11. Bow at the end of the performance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

# Lesson Plan: Mother Knows Best? (Continued)

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## EXTENSION QUESTIONS

1. How can a parent affect a child's future?
2. How hard is it for a parent to accept that his child has become an adult?
3. How does a parent/child relationship change when a child is grown?

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

1. Using Instructional Procedures 1-7, list, then create a rap, to describe the good and/or bad
2. Characteristics of other figures such as doctors, teachers, siblings, friends, presidents, etc...

## KEY VOCABULARY

Rap: a popular style of music where the words are quickly and rhythmically recited over electronic music and/or percussive sound.

\*Encarta World Dictionary

## OHIO STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

### SOCIAL STUDIES

Skills and Methods:  
6-8, 11-12: D

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:

Communications: Oral and Visual Standard  
5-12: A

Writing Process:  
5-7: A, B

### FINE ARTS DRAMA/THEATRE:

Connections, Relationships And Applications  
9-12: B

### FINE ARTS: MUSIC:

Creative Expression and Communication:  
5-12: A  
11-12: B

Connections, Relationships And Applications:  
5-8: B

# Lesson Plan: Vaudeville and The Picture Shows: An Escape from Hard Times

APPROPRIATE GRADES: 6-12

## KEY SUBJECTS AREAS & ACTIVITIES:

LANGUAGE ARTS - Communication, Conflict, Setting

SOCIAL STUDIES - Research and Presentation

DRAMA - Creative Expression, Conflict, Setting

## LESSON SUMMARY

Students will research the Great Depression, or World War II, then create scenes that illustrate reasons people went to see Vaudeville or Picture Shows during these times.

## COMMENTARY

Modifications are required by the individual teacher to meet the appropriate grade and skill level of each student.

## INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES

1. According to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, "Ginger Rogers was a favorite star of the American public. During the Great Depression, she eased the country's burden with song and dance. During the grim years of World War II, she allowed the country to smile with her smart and funny portrayal of strong independent females, which provided much-needed role models for the American women on the home-front and for generations that would follow."
2. Define Performance Space or "Stage" (this could be the front of the room or anywhere the audience looks to see the performance). When an audience is seated in rows, in front of the stage, this space is it is called a Proscenium stage.
3. Explain that a Tableau is a still picture created by using the body, including facial expressions. Tableaux are a series of several Tableau.
4. Divide the class into small groups of 4-6 students. Small groups will research life during the Great Depression, or during World War II. Groups must choose 3 or more particular times, from that era which demonstrate things people were trying to escape from by going to Vaudeville or Picture shows. Each group will have to make series of

at least 3 Tableaux. Examples of facts for the Great Depression include: unemployment, eviction from one's home, soup kitchens, crop failure, homes with no running water or electricity. Examples of facts for World War II include: death of sons, husbands, and fathers in combat, internment camps, rationing, women working in factories.

### Research life during the Great Depression at:

<http://www.42explore2.com/depresn.htm>

<http://www.allabouthistory.org/life-during-the-great-depression.htm>

<http://middle.usm.k12.wi.us/faculty/taft/Unit7/citylife.htm>

<http://history1900s.about.com/od/photographs/tp/greatdepressionpictures.htm>

### Research life during World War II at:

<http://www.42explore2.com/worldwar2.htm>

<http://www.angelfire.com/retro2/lisanostalgia2/40swar.html>

<http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/nettsch/time/wlife.html>

<http://www.teacheroz.com/WWIIHomefront.htm>

<http://www.iwm.org.uk/upload/package/20/lifeinww2/index.htm>

DISCLAIMER: Contents on the World Wide Web change continuously. Therefore, it is advisable that adults review all sites before students.

5. Small groups should rehearse the series of Tableaux. One member of the group should say what the audience will see before the picture/tableau is made. Groups should make sure they have a smooth transition from tableau to tableau. An example of a script to use for transitions could be the following underlined section, which is read by a narrator who is chosen by the group.

(For example, the narrator reads.)

Moments from the Great Depression

that served as a diversion from people's difficult lives.

(Group poses in Tableau #1 to show:)

(Narrator reads:) Family being evicted from their homes when they could not afford to pay their rent or mortgage.

(Group poses in Tableau #2 to show:)

(Narrator reads:) Family in line at a soup kitchen to get food because they didn't have money to buy food.

(Group poses in Tableau #3 to show:  
 (Narrator reads:) Family finding crops dead on their farm.

(Group poses in Tableau #4 to show:  
 (Narrator reads:) Family enjoying watching a movie.

(Narrator reads) Yes, families had many reasons to want to escape and the movies provided that escape.

- Use the checklist for assessment.
- After all Tableaux are rehearsed; each group should perform for the class, bowing when finished as the audience gives the small group a round of applause.

### ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

DID THE STUDENT	YES	NO	NOTES
1. Research the Great Depression or World War II?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Choose at least three particular times, from one of the eras above, when people wanted to escape from their daily lives?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Write a description of each of those times?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Choose a member of the group to be the narrator?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Rehearse making a tableau of each occasion?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Add the narration to the tableau?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Rehearse the tableau and the narration?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Narrator speak to be heard and understood?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. During the performance, face the audience?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Actors bow at the end of the performance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

### EXTENSION QUESTION

- List reasons why people need various forms of escape from their daily lives.

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- Research what other forms of escape existed during the Great Depression and World War II.
- Compare forms of escape during the Great Depression and World War II with forms of escape today.

### KEY VOCABULARY

**VAUDEVILLE:** a popular type of entertainment during the late 19th and early 20th centuries consisting of a variety of singing, dancing and comedic acts

**PICTURE SHOW:** a popular form of entertainment where a story is told through sound and a sequence of photographic images giving the illusion of continuous movement; also called movie, film, or motion picture

### OHIO STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

#### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:

- Writing Process:  
 5-12: A
- Writing Applications:  
 5-10: A
- Research:  
 5-12: E
- Communication: Oral and Visual:  
 5-7, 11-12: A, C, F  
 8-10: A, D, G

Connections, Relationships, and Applications:  
 5-12: A, B

#### SOCIAL STUDIES

People in Societies  
 6-8: B, C  
 9-10: B  
 11-12: A, B

Skills and Methods:  
 3-5: B, D  
 6-8: A, D  
 9-10: B  
 11-12: C, D

#### FINE ARTS: DRAMA/ THEATRE

Creative Expression and Communication:  
 5-8: A, D  
 9-12: A, C

# Lesson Plan: American Idol

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APPROPRIATE GRADES: 6-12

## KEY SUBJECTS AREAS & ACTIVITIES:

LANGUAGE ARTS - Communication, Characterization

SOCIAL STUDIES - Research and Presentation

DRAMA - Creative Expression, Characterization

## LESSON SUMMARY

After seeing *Backwards in High Heels*, students will decide what qualities make an entertainer great. They will choose an entertainer and persuade a team of judges that their choice should be the next American Idol.

## COMMENTARY

Modifications are required by the individual teacher to meet the appropriate grade and skill level of each student.

## INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES

1. According to the official Ginger Rogers website, she began her career "winning the Texas State Charleston Championship. Her prize was four weeks of appearances in Texas cities on the Interstate Theatre Circuit." The performances were so successful, she continued touring throughout the western United States. More appearances followed, as a star was born.
2. Ginger Rogers has said that to make it in Hollywood, a girl needs "intelligence, adaptability, and talent. And by talent, I mean a capacity for hard work. Lots of girls come here with little but good looks. Beauty is a valuable asset, but it is not the whole cheese." Discuss this quote as a class, then list on the board the qualities of a successful entertainer.
3. Choose 3 students to be the judges for your class' version of American Idol.
3. Divide remaining students into small groups of 3-6. Have each group choose, then research, an entertainer that they think is great. When research is complete, each small group should write a speech to persuade the judges that their entertainer is should be the next American Idol. They should keep in mind the qualities, the class listed on

the board, that make a great entertainer. They should demonstrate something special that their entertainer does, for example, play a CD or show a clip from a movie. They should choose something that will convince the judges. Small groups should make sure that their persuasive speech is entertaining. Do not just tell the judges what makes their entertainer great...show them. When creating the presentation, use the rubric that shows the criteria for a persuasive speech.

4. While small groups are preparing their persuasive speeches, judges should define the following characteristics:  
Skill, Technique, Talent, Uniqueness, Fulfilled intent, Personality, Poise, Enthusiasm, Emotional connection with art, Showmanship, Style, and Energy.  
Judges should make a scoring chart to use when viewing all the entertainers. This scoring chart should help judges choose the next American Idol.
5. Small groups should rehearse their speech, and then present it for the judges. After each presentation, Judges should comment on the performers. Judges should keep score for each of the performances. When all performers are finished, judges should have 5 minutes, or less, to decide who wins the title. Judges should give reasons for their choice.
6. After the Judges present their decision, the class should discuss each entertainer. Then, using the same criteria, students should vote for their choice for American Idol.

## EXTENSION QUESTIONS

1. How do we choose our Idols (the people we admire) in sports, government, entertainment, literature, etc.?
2. Why do we choose the people we admire?
3. Discuss how we treat our Idols.
4. Do we ever admire people who do not deserve to be admired? Discuss.
5. How do we distinguish between the talent and the personal life of our Idols? Should their personal lives be scrutinized? When?
6. Do we expect our idols to be role models? Should we expect that from them? Should we expect that from anyone?



CONTENT	4	3	2	1
	SURPASSES STANDARD	MEETS STANDARD	WORKING ON STANDARD	BELOW STANDARD
INTRODUCTION	Attention-getter grabs the audience.	Attention-getter gets audience involved.	Attention-getter is present but limited.	Attention-getter is not present.
THESIS	A strong thesis sets tone & direction for the speech.	An acceptable thesis is given in complete sentences.	Thesis is weak, general, bland.	No real thesis is stated.
OPENER	Opening clearly states 4 interesting main points in one or more complete sentences.	Opening clearly states 3 interesting main points.	Opening alludes to 2 main points.	Opening does not clearly state 1 or any main point.
BODY	Each main point is fully developed & clearly organized with 2-3 sub-points.	Each main point is developed & organized with 2 sub-points.	Development of 1 main point is vague.	Little, or no development of main points.
VISUAL or AUDIO AIDS	Visual or Audio Aids added interest & clarity to speech.	Visual or Audio Aids helped the presentation.	Used Visual or Audio Aids but they did not add to presentation.	Use of, or lack of Visual/Audio Aids detracted from speech.
EYE CONTACT	Strong direct eye contact with audience.	Some eye contact with the audience.	Eye contact is attempted with the audience.	Needs to work on eye contact.
MOVEMENT & GESTURES	Greatly supports the message; brings it to life.	Add "a little" energy to the speech.	Weak or distracting at times.	Detract from the message, or no movement/gestures included.
CONCLUSION	Clearly sums up 4-5 main points.	Clearly sums up 2-3 main points.	Clearly sums up 1-2 points.	No real summary.

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Instead of an entertainer, small groups (or individuals) should choose a historical, political, sports, or literary figure and follow the prior instructional procedures to determine a idol not in the entertainment field.
2. Have a class talent show. Then use the prior instructional procedures to choose your Class Idol. Do not just focus on musical or dance, incorporate knowledge, talents, and skills in math, science, social studies, literacy, gym, health, foreign languages, etc. Choose a well-rounded Idol or an idol well versed in math or science, etc.
3. Adjusting the procedures above, have a CURRICULUM IDOL contest where students write persuasive speeches about their favorite subject.

### KEY VOCABULARY

**IDOL:** somebody or something greatly admired

\*Encarta World Dictionary

### OHIO STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

#### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:

Writing Applications:  
5-12: E

Writing Process:  
5-12: A

Writing Applications:  
5-10: A

Research:  
5-12: E

Communication: Oral and Visual:  
5-7, 11-12: A, C, F  
8-10: A, D, G

#### FINE ARTS: DRAMA/ THEATRE:

Creative Expression and Communication:

5-8: A, D • 9-12: A, C

Connections, Relationships, and Applications:

5-12: A, B

#### SOCIAL STUDIES:

Skills And Methods:

3-5: D • 6-8: A, D

9-10: B • 11-12: C, D

# Theatre Etiquette

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## DO'S AND DON'TS

Please **BE ON TIME**... things do happen: construction, traffic, wrong turns, weather, etc., be prepared and plan to arrive early - we recommend 30 minutes early. We do not hold the curtain due to contract constraints, and our seating is based upon the time of your arrival. If you are encountering a delay please contact the Play House at 216- 795-7000 and speak to the operator so we can be prepared to seat you when the production permits.

Please **NO CAMERAS OR CAMERA PHONES** within the theatre proper; photos may be taken in the lobbies, but not once you have entered the theatre: before, during or after the show.

**SILENCE CELL PHONES, ALARM WATCHES, BEEPERS, ETC** - anything that could make a noise distracting to the actors or your neighboring audience members (this includes cell phones on vibrate!)

Please **NO ELECTRONIC DEVICES** such as phones, iPods, gaming devices etc. The light emitted from these devices can be distracting to the theatre experience as well as to the actors and neighboring audience members. Therefore, **NO TEXT MESSAGING**.

**SHHH!** Do not talk, whisper, sing, or hum during the performance. When someone is addressing you from the stage area, please be silent and **LISTEN**; important information and instructions will be given to you and your group, so again: shhhhhh.

**BE POLITE**, attentive, and don't leave your seat. The restroom should be used prior to the show or at intermission.

**SIT STILL** and keep body movements to a minimum. Ramming elbows into your neighbor or kicking the seat in front of you is highly annoying.

The actors love to hear **APPLAUSE** because it shows how much you enjoyed it so clap with enthusiasm... however, "hooting and hollering" should be saved for sporting venues. Laughter and clapping at inappropriate times are distracting to the actors and neighboring audience members.

At the end of the performance - please **REMAIN SEATED**; Don't be in a rush to leave us so soon... our staff needs to dismiss you based upon your transportation. It is important to remain quiet, too, so you can hear instructions. Thank you!

Please **NO GUM OR EATING** during the performance, it's not polite (nor is wearing hats, gentlemen).

Teachers, if you have arranged to stay to eat **LUNCH**... please have your bagged lunches with student names on them collected in a large box, basket, or other container with the school and teacher names upon arrival. Our staff will collect the lunches and place them in your designated luncheon area. Students are not permitted to keep their lunches with them during the performance or to eat in the lobby areas. Lunch room availability is arranged on a first-come, first-served basis and must be reserved in advance.

# Discussing Your Experience

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Theatre is meant to be discussed. The following are some suggested areas to start dialogue about your trip to the theatre.

## STRUCTURE

How does the play start?

How is mood established within the theatre?

How did the play make you feel and why did you feel that way?

What theatrical elements are present?

What did you find interesting or memorable?

How does the playwright set the scene and introduce the characters?

## CHARACTER

Who are the main characters?

What are the main characters' goals?

What problems did the main characters face?

What causes the main problem in the play?

Why do stories need problems (or conflict)?

How do the main characters develop and change throughout the play?

Are there any characters that help the main character to achieve his/her goals? How do they help?

## SETTING/COSTUMING/PROPS

How does the set structure help identify the time period of this story?

How would the play be different if the time period were different?

What do you think was difficult about building the set, making costumes and props, etc.?

What would you have done differently to tell the playwright's story?

Is there anything that left you wondering "How did they do that?"

## PURPOSE

What did you learn from the play?

What are the elements that make this piece suited for the stage versus film or television?

Did you enjoy interacting with the actors?

What is your personal response to this play?

## EXPERIENCE

Do you have any questions about how things were done at the theatre?

What did you think of the lobby spaces?

What was unique about the theatre space itself?

Were you distracted by anything during your visit?

Was there anything that could have been done to make your experience better?

Will you attend more plays now?

What did you like best about your experience?

What did you like least?

If you could get involved with any aspect of theatre, which would you choose and why?

# Standards & Benchmarks

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GRADES 6-12

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## STANDARD: Drama

### *Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts*

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Students understand and appreciate the historical, social, political and cultural contexts of drama/theatre in societies both past and present. Students identify significant contributions of playwrights, actors, designers, technicians, composers/lyricists, choreographers, directors, producing organizations and inventors to dramatic/theatrical heritage. Students analyze the social and political forces that have influenced and do influence the function and role of drama/theatre in the lives of people.

#### **BENCHMARKS (5-8)**

- A. Explain the style of a dramatic/theatrical work in historical or cultural context.
- B. Compare and contrast playwrights and/or screenwriters from various time periods.

#### **BENCHMARKS (9-12)**

- A. Determine the authenticity and effectiveness of a dramatic/theatrical work or experience in terms of style, time period, culture and theatre heritage.
- B. Discuss the place of a dramatic/theatrical writer's body of work in drama/theatre history.

### *Creative Expression and Communication*

---

Students improvise, create, produce and perform dramatic/theatrical works. Students experiment with dramatic/theatrical processes, develop dramatic/theatrical skills and participate in drama/theatre.

#### **BENCHMARKS (5-8)**

- A. Use basic acting skills (e.g., voice, posture, movement, language) to develop characterizations.

- B. Explain the functions and interrelated nature of scenery, props, lighting, sound, costumes and makeup to create an environment appropriate for drama.
- C. Explore the roles and responsibilities of various theatrical personnel.

#### **BENCHMARKS (9-12)**

- A. Analyze the physical, social and psychological dimensions of a character and create a believable multidimensional portrayal of that character.

### *Analyzing and Responding Standard*

---

Students respond to dramatic/theatrical texts, experiences and performances by describing the distinguishing characteristics and interpreting meaning, themes and moods. Students analyze the creative techniques used in creating and performing dramatic/theatrical works and evaluate dramatic/theatrical works using appropriate criteria.

#### **BENCHMARKS (5-8)**

- A. Use appropriate dramatic/theatrical vocabulary, elements and principles.
- B. Discuss the collaborative nature of drama/theatre as a vehicle for the expression of ideas.
- C. Articulate opinions about dramatic/theatrical work using established criteria.

#### **BENCHMARKS (9-12)**

- A. Incorporate specialized dramatic/theatrical terminology accurately and consistently in analyzing and responding to dramatic/theatrical experiences.
- B. Indicate the artistic techniques used in planning and performing drama/theatre work.
- C. Evaluate dramatic/theatrical works using appropriate criteria.

# Standards & Benchmarks (Continued)

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## *Valuing Drama/Theatre/Aesthetic Reflection*

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Students demonstrate an understanding of reasons why people value drama/theatre and a respect for diverse opinions regarding dramatic/theatrical preferences. Students develop personal drama/theatre philosophies and articulate the significance of drama/theatre in their lives.

### **BENCHMARKS (5-8)**

- A. Defend personal responses to a drama/theatre event.
- B. Compare their personal responses to a drama/theatre event with the response of another person.

### **BENCHMARKS (9-12)**

- A. Defend their responses to a drama/theatre event based on their personal drama/theatre philosophies.
- B. Respect diverse opinions regarding drama/theatre preferences.

## *Connections, Relationships, and Applications*

---

Students identify similarities and differences between drama/theatre and other art forms. Students recognize the relationship between concepts and skills learned through drama/theatre with knowledge learned in other curricular subjects, life experiences and potential careers in and outside the arts. Students recognize the benefits of lifelong learning in drama/theatre.

### **BENCHMARKS (5-8)**

- A. Discover the interdependence of theatre and other art forms.
- B. Explain the relationship between concepts and skills used in drama/theatre with other curricular subjects.
- C. Identify recurring drama/theatre ideas and concepts that occur across time periods and/or cultures.
- D. Discuss drama/theatre skills as a foundation for lifelong learning and potential employment.

### **BENCHMARKS (9-12)**

- A. Synthesize knowledge of the arts through participation in the creation of a dramatic/theatrical work or experience.
- B. Synthesize the relationship between concepts and skills used in drama/theatre with other curricular subjects.
- C. Explain how the arts are an index to social values and accomplishments of a civilization.
- D. Engage in activities that lead to continued involvement in theatre.

## **STANDARD: Drama**

### *Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts*

---

Students understand dance forms and styles from a diverse range of cultural environments of past and present society. They know the contributions of significant choreographers, dancers and dance organizations to dance heritage. Students analyze the philosophical beliefs, social systems and movement norms that influence the function and role of dance in the lives of people.

### **BENCHMARKS (5-8)**

- A. Perform and describe dances from various cultures and historical periods with emphasis on cultures addressed in social studies.
- B. Explain the social and historical contexts that influence the development of dance in a culture.
- C. Research a recognized contributor to dance (e.g., choreographer, dancer or educator) and trace the development of the individual's work to its historical and cultural influences.

### **BENCHMARKS (9-12)**

- A. Synthesize contextual information about culturally representative dances to understand and explain their development.
- B. Explain how dance is a meaningful expression of culture.
- C. Explain ways in which works of dance relate to themes and issues of their historical, cultural and social contexts.

---

### *Creative Expression and Communication*

---

Students create, interpret and perform dances to demonstrate understanding of choreographic principles, processes and structures. They understand how to use dance and movement to express ideas and to make meaning of their world.

#### **BENCHMARKS (5-8)**

- A. Perform basic dance movement, body positions and spatial patterns from one or more dance styles or traditions.
- B. Reflect on, evaluate and refine choreographic, rehearsal and performance processes.

### *Analyzing and Responding*

---

Students express orally, and in writing, their interpretations and evaluations of dances they observe and perform. They understand and use the vocabulary of art criticism to discuss their responses to a variety of dance forms and styles.

#### **BENCHMARKS (5-8)**

- A. Demonstrate knowledge of different approaches to art criticism when analyzing and interpreting dance performances.
- B. Analyze how dance elements are used to convey concepts or themes in dance performances.

#### **BENCHMARKS (9-12)**

- A. Synthesize knowledge of all aspects of a dance performance (e.g., dance elements, choreography, performance skills, staging, theatrical elements and sound) to interpret and evaluate dances.
- B. Analyze and interpret recognized works of dance by a variety of choreographers.
- C. Use established criteria to assess the effectiveness of dance and theatrical elements in communicating meaning.

### *Valuing the Arts/Aesthetic Reflection*

---

Students inquire about the nature and experience of dance in their lives. They reflect on the significance and value of dances they observe and perform. Students present points of view about dance and respond thoughtfully to others' points of view.

#### **BENCHMARKS (5-8)**

- A. Articulate their viewpoints about the merits of selected dances and explain the basis for their views.

#### **BENCHMARKS (9-12)**

- A. Articulate and justify a philosophy of dance and cite sources (e.g., personal experience, professionals in the field and artists' biographies) that contributed to their thinking.

### *Connections, Relationships and Applications*

---

Students apply their knowledge of dance to the study of other arts areas and disciplines outside the arts. Students make connections between dance and healthful living.

#### **BENCHMARKS (5-8)**

- A. Demonstrate the inter-relationship of dance content and skills to those in other academic disciplines.

#### **BENCHMARKS (9-12)**

- A. Explain common issues, topics and problems that demonstrate the connections between dance, other arts areas and disciplines outside the arts.
- B. Explain how the study of dance provides knowledge and skills essential to life, personal health and effective work in various careers.

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## STANDARD: Music

### *Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts*

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Students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a variety of music styles and cultures and the context of musical expression or events, both past and present. Students identify significant contributions of composers and performers to music heritage. Students analyze the historical, social and political forces that have influenced the function and role of music in the lives of people.

#### **BENCHMARKS (5-8)**

- A. Compare and contrast styles and forms of music from various historical periods.
- C. Describe how events during various historical periods have influenced the development of music.

### *Analyzing and Responding*

---

Students listen to varied repertoire of music and respond by analyzing and describing music using correct terminology. Students evaluate the creating and performing of music by using appropriate criteria.

#### **BENCHMARKS (5-8)**

- A. Describe and evaluate a piece of music using developed criteria based on elements of music and music vocabulary.
- B. Apply appropriate criteria to support personal preferences for music choice and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of a music performance.

#### **BENCHMARKS (9-12)**

- A. Analyze and evaluate music selections based upon established criteria.
- B. Analyze and respond to conducting patterns and gestures in relation to interpretation of music performance literature.

### *Valuing Music/Aesthetic Reflection*

---

Students demonstrate an understanding of reasons why people value music and a respect for diverse opinions regarding music preferences. Students articulate the significance of music in their lives.

#### **BENCHMARKS (5-8)**

- A. Reflect on and describe how music performance and settings affect audience response.

### *Connections, Relationships and Applications*

---

Students identify similarities and differences between music and other arts disciplines. Students recognize the relationship between concepts and skills learned through music with knowledge learned in other curricular subjects, life experiences and potential careers in and outside the arts. Students develop a desire for lifelong learning in music.

#### **BENCHMARKS (5-8)**

- A. Compare and contrast common terms used in and for the interpretation of music and other arts disciplines.
- B. Demonstrate ways that subject matter of other disciplines is interrelated with that of music.

#### **BENCHMARKS (9-12)**

- A. Articulate similarities and differences between music and other content areas.
- C. Compare and contrast several cultures' music works based on the function music serves, role of the musicians and conditions under which they music is performed.

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## STANDARD: Social Studies

### History

Students use materials drawn from the diversity of human experiences to analyze and interpret significant events, patterns and themes in the history of Ohio, the United States and the world.

#### BENCHMARKS (9-10)

- B. Explain the social, political and economic effects of industrialization.

## STANDARD: English

### Informational, Technical, and Persuasive Text

Students gain information from reading for purposes of learning about a subject, doing a job, making decision, and accomplishing a task. Students need to apply the reading process to various types of information texts, including essays, magazines, newspapers, textbooks, instruction manuals, consumer and workplace documents, reference materials, multimedia and electronic resources. They learn to attend to text features, such as titles, subtitles and visual aids, to make predictions and build text knowledge. They learn to read diagrams, charts, graphs, maps and displays in text as sources of additional information. Students use their knowledge of text structure to organize content information, analyze it and draw inferences from it. Strategic readers learn to recognize arguments, bias, stereotyping and propaganda in informational text sources.

#### BENCHMARKS (8-10)

- D. Explain and analyze how an author appeals to an audience and develops an argument or viewpoint in text

#### BENCHMARKS (11-12)

- E. Analyze an author's implicit and explicit philosophical assumptions and beliefs about a subject.

### Literary Text

Students enhance their understanding of the human story by reading literary texts that represent a variety of authors, cultures, and eras. They learn to apply the reading process to various genres of literature, including fables, folk tales, short stories, novels, poetry, and drama. They demonstrate their comprehension by describing and discussing the elements of literature (e.g., setting, character and plot), analyzing the author's use of language (e.g., word choice and figurative language), comparing and contrasting texts, inferring theme and meaning and responding to text in critical and creative ways. Strategic readers learn to explain, analyze and critique literary text to achieve deep understanding.

#### BENCHMARKS (4-7)

- A. Describe and analyze the elements of character development.
- B. Analyze the importance of setting.
- C. Identify the elements of plot and establish a connection between an element and a future event.

#### BENCHMARKS (8-10)

- A. Analyze interactions between characters in literary text and how the interactions affect the plot.
- B. Explain and analyze how the context and the author's choice of point of view impact a literary text.
- C. Identify the structural elements of the plot and explain how an author develops conflicts and plot to pace the events in literary text.
- G. Explain techniques used by authors to develop style.

#### BENCHMARKS (11-12)

- A. Analyze and evaluate the five elements (e.g. plot, character, setting, point of view, and theme) in literary text.
- B. Explain ways characters confront similar situations and conflict.
- E. Critique an author's style.



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### *Communications: Oral and Visual*

Students learn to communicate effectively through exposure to good models and opportunities for practice. By speaking, listening and providing and interpreting visual images, they learn to apply their communication skills in increasingly sophisticated ways. Students learn to deliver presentations that effectively convey information and persuade or entertain audiences. Proficient speakers control language and deliberately choose vocabulary to clarify points and adjust presentations according to audience and purpose.

#### **BENCHMARKS (8-10)**

- D. Evaluate the content and purpose of a presentation by analyzing the language and delivery choices made by the speaker.

# Glossary of Terms

---

**Here is a list of theatre terms and definitions that anyone in the theatre profession uses on a regular basis.**

**ACOUSTICS:** qualities that evaluate the ability of a theatre to clearly transmit sounds from the stage to the audience.

**ACT:** main division of a drama, ACTS may be further divided into SCENES.

**ACTOR:** a performer in a play; may be male or female.

**ADAPTATION:** a reinvention of an existing story or play; includes turning novels into plays, plays into musicals, or making changes in language or plot.

**AD-LIB:** making up a line not originally in a play, usually done when an actor forgets a line or someone misses an entrance.

**ANTAGONIST:** the opponent or adversary of the main character (protagonist); provides the obstacle the protagonist tries to overcome.

**ARENA STAGE:** stage placed in the center of a room with audience seating surrounding it, also known as theatre in the round.

**ASIDE:** a brief remark made by a character and intended to be heard by the audience but not by other characters.

**AT RISE:** refers to the action taking place as the curtain rises.

**AUDITION:** a brief performance of either a monologue or a short scene done by actors for the director of a play in order for the director to decide which actor he or she wants to cast in a particular role.

**BACKSTAGE:** refers to the areas not a part of the actual stage, but restricted for actors and crewmembers. It usually includes the green room and the dressing rooms, and frequently offices and scenic shops as well.

**BOOTH:** the small room set up for the management of the technical elements needed during a play, usually set behind the

audience with a window facing the stage. The Stage Manager calls the show from there. The sound and light board operators run the audio and lighting equipment from there as well.

**BREAK A LEG:** a superstitious good luck wish exchanged by actors who feel that saying “good luck” is a jinx.

**CALL:** the time at which an actor is supposed to be at rehearsal or performance.

**CALLBACK:** a second or third audition used to further narrow the field of actors competing for a particular role in a play.

**CAST:** (verb) to assign parts to the actors in a play.

**CAST:** (noun) group of actors in a particular play.

**CASTING CALL:** notice to actors of an audition for parts in a play.

**CHARACTER:** a person in a play created by the playwright and represented by an actor.

**CHOREOGRAPHER:** the artist in charge of creating the dances and/or movements used by actors in a play.

**CLIMAX:** (of a script or play) the moment of highest tension or suspense in a play; the turning point after which all action moves to a resolution.

**COMEDY:** a story where the protagonist (main character) achieves his/her goal.

**COMIC RELIEF:** a humorous moment, scene or speech in a serious drama which is meant to provide relief from emotional intensity and, by contrast, to heighten the seriousness of the story.

**COSTUMES:** the clothes worn by actors in a play designed to fit the era, mood, and personality of the characters as well as enhance the overall design look of the production.

**COSTUME DESIGNER:** the artist in charge of creating the look of the costumes for a play.

# Glossary of Terms (Continued)

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**CRITIC:** a writer who reviews plays.

**CUE:** the last words or actions that come before another actor's speech or entrance; a light, sound or curtain signal.

**CURTAIN:** end of a scene; closing of a curtain to depict the end of an act or scene.

**CURTAIN CALL:** the process of actors taking their bows, receiving applause, and/or being reintroduced to the audience at the end of a play.

**DESIGNER:** a person who conceives and creates the plans for scenery, costumes, lighting, sound, makeup, hairstyles, props and other visual aspects of a performance.

**DIALECT:** a speech pattern which is distinctive, or the use of a cultural accent on stage.

**DIALOGUE:** conversation between two or more actors in a play.

**DIRECTOR:** a person responsible for initiating the interpretation of the play, enhancing that interpretation with the concepts of the designers and making all final decisions on production values; tells the actors where to move and how best to communicate the interpretation of the play to the audience.

**DOWNSTAGE:** front area of the stage, nearest to the audience.

**DRAMA:** the playscript itself; the art of writing and staging plays; a literary art form different from poetry or other fiction.

**DRESSER:** a person in charge of assisting actors with their costumes, wigs, and makeup during a production.

**DRESSING ROOM:** the place where actors take their costumes, wigs, and makeup on and off. Sometimes dressing rooms are communal, one for men, one for women, sometimes actors have a dressing room all to themselves or to share with just one or two other actors. Dressing rooms often contain (or are in close proximity to) toilets, sinks, showers, lighted make-up tables and sleeping areas.

**ENTRANCE:** the movement of an actor onto the visible areas of the stage.

**EXEUNT:** stage direction meaning "they exit."

**EXIT:** stage direction telling an actor to leave the stage.

**EXPOSITION:** dialogue which gives the audience the background information it needs to follow the action of the play; most will occur early on in the play.

**FALLING ACTION:** (of a script or play) the acceptance of the situation derived from the climax; the conflict is worked out or resolved.

**FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER:** the artist in charge of staging fight scenes, can include swordplay, other weapons, or barehanded combat.

**FORESHADOWING:** a hint of what is to come in the story. This is often used to keep the audience in a state of expectancy.

**GREEN ROOM:** a small lounge backstage where actors can relax and get ready to go on.

**HALF-HOUR:** the usual call for actors to be at the theatre, thirty minutes before curtain.

**HOUSE:** the audience or the theatrical building.

**HOUSE MANAGER:** the employee in charge of the audience during a performance, trains ushers, runs the concessions, and troubleshoots seating problems.

**IMPROVISATION:** to make up as you go along; often used as a rehearsal technique to make actors more comfortable with their characters; may be a part of some performance situations.

**INCITING INCIDENT:** (of a script or play) the launching pad of the play; the action or short sequence of actions that constitute the point of attack.

# Glossary of Terms (Continued)

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**IRONY:** a contrast between what is and what appears to be. Two types of irony are--- **VERBAL IRONY** when a character says one thing and means another; **DRAMATIC IRONY** when the audience knows something that the character does not

**LIGHTING DESIGNER:** artist in charge of creating the lighting effects for a play.

**MAKEUP:** cosmetics, wigs, hair colorings, or other items applied to the actors to change or enhance their appearance.

**MELODRAMA:** play with exaggerated plot and emotion.

**MONOLOGUE:** long speech spoken by one actor without interruption.

**MOTIVATION:** a character's reason for saying or doing something; actors search for this in studying their role and use voice and movement to relay it to the audience.

**NARRATOR:** one who tells the story; speaks directly to the audience.

**OBJECTIVE:** what the character wants/needs/desires.

**OFFSTAGE:** areas on the stage which are not seen by the audience, like the wings or the crossovers, where action can take place and be heard by the audience, or where actors can wait for their entrances.

**PLAYWRIGHT:** author of a play.

**PLOT:** the story of the play.

**PROP:** any moveable item used on the set of a play or handled by an actor.

**PROSCENIUM:** a form of staging in which an arch frames the stage; the stage is at one end of a room and the audience sits in front of it, watching the play through an arch which frames the action.

**PROSCENIUM ARCH:** opening in the proscenium through which the audience views the play.

**PROTAGONIST:** the main character; the person with whose success or failure the audience is most concerned.

**REHEARSAL:** the time period before a play opens involving the practice of the dialogue, movement, rhythms and interpretations of the play.

**RISING ACTION:** (of a script or play) the sequence of action and events that leads to the climax of the play; the conflict becomes clear and tension builds as obstacles are presented.

**RUN CREW:** people in charge of moving scenery and props onstage during a performance, and helping create live audio or visual special effects.

**SCENE:** a small unit of a play in which there is no shift of locale or time.

**SCENIC ARTIST:** a painter or machinist who reproduces the scene designer's drawings in full scale on the stage.

**SCRIPT:** the written words and stage directions created by a playwright.

**SET:** the scenery of the play; depicts time, place and mood.

**SET DESIGNER:** the artist in charge of creating the physical world in which the play will live; usually creates in drawings and scale models.

**SOLILOQUY:** a speech given by a character alone on the stage where the audience gets to know the inner thoughts and feelings of the character.

**SOUNDBOARD OPERATOR:** the person who discharges the correct sounds or music at the appropriate moment in the play.

**SOUND DESIGNER:** the artist responsible for the creation of the sounds heard during a performance, including music and special effects.

**STAGE BUSINESS:** small pieces of physical action put into a scene to heighten its appeal, suspense or sense of reality.

# Glossary of Terms (Continued)

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**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** information written into a script which tells the actors when and where to move, or describes the intent or mood of action, may also describe scenery or props.

**STAGE LEFT:** side of the stage on the actors' left as they face the audience.

**STAGE RIGHT:** side of the stage on the actors' right as they face the audience.

**STAGE MANAGER:** person who coordinates all aspects of the production during production and performance, runs or calls the show.

**SUBTEXT:** the thoughts behind the words the actor speaks.

**THEME:** the main idea or ethical precept the play deals with.

**THRUST STAGE:** a stage set at one end of the room which extends out into the audience area; audience surrounds the stage on three sides.

**TRAGEDY:** a story where the protagonist does not achieve his/her goal.

**TRANSLATION:** taking a play in one language and converting it into another.

**UNDERSTUDY:** an actor who has memorized all the lines and action of an actor in a play, so that if the original actor falls ill or cannot perform, there is someone prepared to take his or her place at a moment's notice.

**UPSTAGE:** the part of the stage farthest from the audience. Also, to steal the scene from another actor by moving upstage, forcing the downstage actor to turn his or her back on the audience.

**WINGS:** the areas offstage right and left, hidden from the audience, where actors can enter or exit, do quick costume changes, receive or discard props, or speak lines meant to be heard as if from another room.

# Cleveland Play House

## Fact Sheet

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- America's First Regional Theatre – founded in 1915.
- Today, CPH has an operating budget of \$6.5 million, a full-time staff of nearly 100, and is considered one of the leading regional theatre companies in the country.
- Each year, nearly 150,000 people attend productions, programs, and special events.
- More than 20,000 students from about 350 area schools attend Cleveland Play House productions, as well as drama and playwriting classes each year.
- 12 million people have visited one of CPH's artistic works (more than 1300 productions) over its 95-year history.
- The Cleveland Play House and Case Western Reserve University launched an MFA program in acting in 1997, a program that has quickly become one of the most prominent in the nation.
- Tickets are affordable for all with programs such as “rush” tickets for just \$10 and reduced price Student tickets.
- Since 2006, the Mainstage Season has concluded with a new multi-arts collaborative event, FusionFest, created by Artistic Director Michael Bloom.
- The Cleveland Play House is a major collaborator in the community, working with such arts groups as the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland School of the Arts, Opera Cleveland, Jewish Community Center, Karamu House, Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland Orchestra, Groundworks DanceTheater, and Verb Ballets.
- In 2011, The Cleveland Play House plans to move downtown to a newly renovated Allen Theatre in PlayhouseSquare. Through this relocation, CPH could collaborate with Cleveland State University's Dramatic Arts Program while maintaining their MFA program with Case Western Reserve University. The collaboration represents a bold move for The Cleveland Play House to create a mission-centric business model that is artistically vital and financially stable.
- Internationally, The Cleveland Play House has hosted or exchanged productions with the National Theatre of Hungary, The Czech National Theater, Slovak National Theater, and Russia's New Experimental Theater of Volgograd. Former Associate Artistic Director Seth Gordon directed the Arabic premiere of *Our Town* in Cairo in 2004. In the 2008 season, we hosted a production of *Hamlet* from Tel Aviv's acclaimed Cameri Theatre.
- A remarkable roster of talent has appeared at The Cleveland Play House, including Alan Alda, Ed Asner, Lauren Bacall, Dom DeLouise, Henry Fonda, Calista Flockhart, Margaret Hamilton (company member in 1927), Madeline Kahn, Marlo Thomas, and Jack Weston. Joel Grey and Paul Newman attended *Curtain Pullers* classes as children. These artists add to the Play House legacy, and their experience takes the theatre's reputation across the nation and around the world.

# Sponsor Recognition

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We would like to thank our generous donors and sponsors who make our education and community outreach possible.

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