

Teacher Tool 69: Inside the Artist's Studio: Afflicted: Producing the Play Study Guide

Study Guide for Theater 10: Inside the Artist's Studio: Afflicted—Producing the Play

Program Description and Objectives	Page 2
Program Format	Page 3
Standards	Page 4
Program-Related Activity Suggestions and Supplemental Resources	Page 7

Educate.Today 
Innovate · Illuminate · Inspire

Inside the Artist's Studio

Afflicted: Producing the Play

Original Air Date: March 12, 2015

Grade Levels: 6-10

Program Description:

What would cause a group of girls living in Puritan New England to accuse more than one hundred of their friends and neighbors with the horrific crime of witchcraft? Over the years many theories have been proposed: Maybe it was caused by drug induced hallucinations or superstition induced hysteria...perhaps it was the stress of a long and oppressive winter and incessant Indian attacks...possibly it was the result of long standing grudges between families in the village...or potentially something else entirely.

Laurie Brook's compelling new play for young audiences, "Afflicted: Daughters of Salem," is an electrifying exploration of that historic and unanswered question. She imagines what life in Puritan New England would have been like for a young girl coming of age in a society that allowed her no opportunity for self-expression or imagination and no hope for a future of her own. She creates an origin story that follows Abigail Williams, Ann Putnam, Mercy Lewis, Mary Warren, Betty Parris, and Tituba up to the moment before the events of Arthur Miller's "The Crucible" begin.

What does it take to bring such a play to life? How could you make it both historically accurate and dramatically compelling? How would you create a character? How would you design and build a set? How would you direct the action? What would you want the costumes to look like? View this program archive to explore these important questions and more.

Program Objectives:

1. The participant will explore the process of staging a play from its selection through casting and design development to rehearsal, construction and implementation of technical elements, and performance.
2. The participant will engage in a discussion about the collaboration necessary to successfully stage a production and explore choices made by those collaborators involved in producing, directing, acting, and technically designing (lights, costumes, scenery) Metro Theater Company's production of "Afflicted: Daughters of Salem."
3. The participant will interact with professional theatre performers and technicians, watch a scene in performance, and engage in critical evaluation of the script, characterization, direction, and technical elements.

Program Format:

Time Codes are provided in blue to help you find specific segments in the program.

1. Welcome and Introduction—Student groups and experts are introduced and welcomed to the program. (00:00 to 02:30)

- A. Meet Julia Flood, Artistic Director of Metro Theater Company
- B. Meet playwright Laurie Brooks

2. Background of the Play—We continue to talk with Laurie Brooks and Julia Flood about the story, setting and themes of the play. The play’s costume designer and set designer also join in to discuss how they first began to think about bringing this play to life on stage. (02:31 to 08:37)

- A. Inspiration for the Play
- B. Elements of the Play
 - 1. Setting
 - 2. Character
 - 3. Theme
- C. Visualizing Elements of the Play on Stage
 - 1. From a director’s point of view
 - 2. From a set designer’s point of view
 - 3. From a costume designer’s point of view

3. Staging the Play—We continue conversation with our program guests and are also joined by actors and stage manager working on the current Metro Theater Company production of the play. The focus of this segment is on how the elements of the play come to life on stage through rehearsal, design, construction, and performance. A scene from the play is included. Audience questions are included throughout the segment.

- A. Watching a Scene from the Play (08:38 to 18:07)
 - 1. See opening scene of the play
 - 2. Meet the actors and the characters they portray
- B. Bringing Elements of the Play to Life on Stage (18:08 to 50:42)
 - 1. Role of the playwright
 - 2. Role of the director
 - 3. Role of the set designer
 - 4. Role of the costume designer
 - 5. Role of the stage manager
 - 6. Role of the actor

5. Summary and Closing—We include final questions from student groups, summarize the major ideas we have learned about today, say thanks and good-bye. (50:43 to 58:41)

- A. Final Questions from Students
- B. Final Comments from Guests

Featured National Standards:

English/Language Arts

Standards Developed by International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, and graphics).
8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, and video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Theatre

NA 5-8.3 Designing by developing environments for improvised and scripted scenes

Students analyze improvised and scripted scenes for technical requirements

NA5-8.7 Analyzing, evaluating, and constructing meanings from improvised and scripted scenes and from theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions

Students articulate and support the meanings constructed from their and others' dramatic performances

Students use articulated criteria to describe, analyze, and constructively evaluate the perceived effectiveness of artistic choices found in dramatic performances

NA 9-12.2 Acting by developing, communicating, and sustaining characters in improvisations and informal or formal productions

Students analyze the physical, emotional, and social dimensions of characters found in dramatic texts from various genres and media

NA 9-12.3 Designing and producing by conceptualizing and realizing artistic interpretations for informal or formal productions

Students analyze a variety of dramatic texts from cultural and historical perspectives to determine production requirements

NA9-12.5 Researching by evaluating and synthesizing cultural and historical information to support artistic choices

Students identify and research cultural, historical, and symbolic clues in dramatic texts, and evaluate the validity and practicality of the information to assist in making artistic choices for informal and formal productions

NA9-12.7 Analyzing, critiquing, and constructing meanings from informal and formal theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions

Students articulate and justify personal aesthetic criteria for critiquing dramatic texts and events that compare perceived artistic intent with the final aesthetic achievement

Students analyze and critique the whole and the parts of dramatic performances, taking into account the context, and constructively suggest alternative artistic choices

Featured State Standards (Missouri):

Schools from across the country are invited to join in the program. Missouri state standards are provided for Missouri schools since partial funding for this program comes from various Missouri organizations.

Communication Arts Grade Level Expectations

1H: Apply post-reading skills to comprehend and interpret text

- question to clarify
- reflect
- analyze
- draw conclusions
- summarize
- paraphrase

II Compare, contrast, analyze and evaluate connections between

- information and relationships in various fiction and non-fiction works
- text ideas and own experiences
- text ideas and the world by analyzing the relationship between literature and its historical period and culture

2C Use details from text to analyze character, plot, setting, point of view and development of theme

Theatre

GLE: PP1B8.9-12 Develop and apply skills to communicate ideas through theatrical performances—Acting

Use basic terms of theatre

Use advanced terms of theatre

GLE: PP1D9-12 Develop and apply skills to communicate ideas through theatrical performances—Directing

Evaluate the director's role in creating a production

GLE: EP1B7.8.9-12 Select and apply theatrical elements to communicate ideas through the creation of theatre—Acting

Identify cue, notes, on/off book, cheat/open out, and cold-reading

Identify ensemble and polish ensemble work

Identify centering, counter-cross, upstaging, emotional memory, motivation, obstacle, objective, tactic, action, pitch, rate, phrasing, volume, tempo, quality, and prepared audition

GLE: EP1B7.8.9-12 Select and apply theatrical elements to communicate ideas through the creation of theatre—Design and Technical Theatre

Identify technical elements of theatre to represent time and place, establish character, enhance mood and create dramatic environments for improvised or scripted scenes

Identify and apply stagecraft skills

GLE: EP1D9-12 Select and apply theatrical elements to communicate ideas through the creation of theatre—Directing

Define the director's responsibility to the author's intent, script, actors, designers, technicians and the audience

Identify the director's role in creating a production

Identify the skills necessary to block a scripted scene

GLE: AP1A7.8.9-12 Develop and apply skills to explain perceptions about and evaluations of theatre and theatrical performance—Analysis and Evaluation

Define the terminology and process of evaluation and apply this process to performances using appropriate theatre vocabulary

GLE: AP1B9-12 Develop and apply skills to explain perceptions about and evaluations of theatre and theatrical performance—Personal Preferences

Articulate, justify and apply personal criteria for critiquing dramatic texts and performances

GLE: HCC2A7.8 Develop and apply skills necessary to understand cultural diversity and heritage as they relate to theatre—Cultural Diversity and Heritage

Examine and compare characteristics of theatrical works from various cultures throughout history

GLE: HCC2B7.8.9-12 Develop and apply skills necessary to understand cultural diversity and heritage as they relate to theatre—Careers

Compare and contrast selected occupations in theatre

Program-Related Activity Suggestions:

1. **Becoming Familiar with the Play**—Prior to viewing the program, students can read the short play synopsis and an excerpt from the play on the Dramatic Publishing website at <http://www.dramaticpublishing.com/afflicted-daughters-of-salem>. This short scene is performed during the program.
2. **Responding to the Program**—Have each student journal about how their experience viewing the program has influenced their ideas about producing a play. What new things have they learned? What new questions do they have? What new insights into the story of the Salem Witch Trials have they developed?
3. **Reading the Entire Play**—Have interested students read a copy of the play in its entirety and report on it to you and/or their classmates.
4. **Create Their Own Origin Story**—Laurie Brooks calls her play an origin story since it provides a dramatic context for a historic event. She seeks to give the audience a chance to answer the question, “Why did these girls accuse so many of their neighbors with the crime of witchcraft?” As part of a cross-curricular explanation, have students develop a short origin story of their own for an historic event you have studied this year. Using historic research you have done in class while studying that event, have students consider what would have caused those events to happen and write a short story that brings their theory to life.

Supplemental Resources:

Learn more about our program collaborator Metro Theater Company at their website, <http://www.metroplays.org>.

Learn more about playwright Laurie Brooks and her play, “Afflicted: Daughters of Salem,” at <http://lauriebrooks.com>.

Learn more about the Salem Witch Trials at any of the following websites:

<http://www.history.com/topics/salem-witch-trials>

<http://www.salemwitchmuseum.com/education/>

<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/salem.htm>