

THE AMISH PROJECT

By Jessica Dickey | Directed by Leda Hoffmann

This Teacher Guide is designed to be used in the classroom along with The Rep's Play Guide for *The Amish Project*. These are some suggested activities for your classroom. The Play Guide is available online at <http://www.milwaukeerep.com/RepGlobal/docs/amish-playguide.pdf>.

TEACHERS: Please be aware that *The Amish Project* contains sensitive subject matter regarding a school shooting. It is suggested that you read *The Amish Project* Play Guide in full and discuss relevant topics with your students prior to seeing the show in order to best prepare them for this challenging, yet important story.

AMISH CULTURE

DISCUSS: Pre-Show Questions

- What are your cultural perceptions about the Amish and their way of life?
- How do the religion, community, and family in which we are raised affect how we define our own identities, or how we view larger topics such as love, hate, and forgiveness?
- What is your individual view on forgiveness?

DISCUSS: Post-Show Questions

- What about their culture allowed or encouraged the Amish to forgive the gunman so quickly? Do you agree with their decision, and would you have done the same?
- Is it harder to forgive others or to hold on to the negative emotions? What are the outcomes of both?
- Have you ever participated in a school safety drill? How did it make you feel? Do you think it is important to have these precautions in place?

RESEARCH & WRITE: "A Day in the Life" Amish Diaries

Using books, the internet, and The Rep's Play Guide for *The Amish Project* as reference, have students research Amish culture and customs. Incorporating what they learn, have students write diary entries that track a day in the life of a member of an Amish community. Students should consider their characters' specific role in the community, and how that might affect their daily activities, their personal beliefs, and their interests. Have students share their entries in groups or one-by-one in front of the class.

To debrief: *What roles do these members play? How does their culture influence the way in which they discuss their own lives? In what ways does your community's culture or customs influence your life?*

GROUP STORYTELLING & MULTIPLE NARRATORS

DISCUSS: Pre-Show Questions

- How does the telling of a story change when you have multiple narrators rather than just one?
- Do we participate in group storytelling in our everyday lives? Give examples.

DISCUSS: Post-Show Questions

- What did each of the characters contribute to the telling of the story of *The Amish Project*?
- Why might it be important to have multiple narrators telling this particular story? Look back to the diary project: how did those varied perspectives give us a better view of the community as a whole?

See the *The Amish Project* Play Guide page 3 for more about the show's multiple narrators.

RESEARCH & WRITE: Current Events

Have students choose a current event about which to write. Students should write a short theatrical scene that presents the event from at least three perspectives. The perspectives do not necessarily have to be from people directly involved in the event. Students should focus on individual character voices and opinions, considering the way each character might interpret the event differently. Have students share the scenes with the class.

To debrief: *How was the telling of the story affected by having multiple narrators? What did you have to keep in mind as you attempted to write a group story? In our day-to-day lives, how do other people influence our personal stories or the ways we express ourselves?*

TEACHER GUIDE

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

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SUGGESTED TEACHING TOPICS

- 1.) Amish Culture
- 2.) Group Storytelling & Multiple Narrators
- 3.) Fact vs. Fiction



Deborah Staples in Milwaukee Rep's *The Amish Project*
Photo: Michael Brosilow

FACT VS. FICTION

DISCUSS: Pre-Show Questions

- What needs to be considered when writing about real people or events?
- Why might one want to fictionalize details when writing about a real event?
- Is it ever acceptable to alter the truth?

DISCUSS: Post-Show Questions

- Media reporting should be factual, but reporters often add their own spin on stories. In comparison, artists often take “artistic liberties” with the truth, embellishing fact with fiction. Where does the boundary between fact and fiction lie? Do you think these deviations from the truth are acceptable for people in certain fields (i.e. artists, reporters, etc.)?
- How does knowing that *The Amish Project* is a fictionalized account alter the way you as an audience member interact with and respond to the play?

RESEARCH & WRITE: Historical Two Truths and a Lie

Each student should choose a historical event to research. During their research they should write down three facts about the event. Two facts should stay the same, but the third fact they should change slightly to make it false. Other students must then try to guess which of these facts is actually a fake. Each student who guesses the fake correctly gets a point. After everyone has gone, the student with the most points wins.

To debrief: *Was it easy or hard to spot the lies, and what made it so? What elements about the event did you choose to change when writing your lie? Did your alteration drastically change the reality of the event or, overall, did the edit not change the intrinsic truth of the fact? Do we have the authority to rewrite or alter history? Do we think history is truthful, and why or why not?*



Deborah Staples in Milwaukee Rep's *The Amish Project*
Photo: Michael Brosilow

TOPICS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

- 1.) One-Actor Theatrical Performances
- 2.) Collective Morality in Our Community
- 3.) Forgiveness in Other Cultures or Religions
- 4.) Historical Fiction

STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards:

English Language Arts

RL.8-12.3 NARRATIVE DEVELOPMENT

RL.8-12.4 STRUCTURE

W.8-12.7 INFORMATIVE WRITING

W.8-12.3 NARRATIVE WRITING

W.8-12.7 RESEARCH

SL.8-12.1 COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSIONS

Wisconsin Model Academic Standards:

Theater

A.12.1 ATTEND & EVALUATE THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE

MILWAUKEE REP EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

The Education Department offers backstage tours, pre- and post-show workshops and classroom residencies.

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