

THINGS I KNOW TO BE TRUE

By **Andrew Bovell** | Directed by **Mark Clements**
March 5 - 31, 2019 | Quadracci Powerhouse

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Written by **Lindsey Hoel-Neds**, *Content Writer*

Edited by **Jenny Toutant**, *Education Director*
Jeffrey Mosser, *Education Manager*

SUGGESTED TEACHING & CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. Physical Theater
2. Scenic Design
3. Adaptation

This Teacher's Guide is designed to be used in the classroom along with The Rep's PlayGuide for *Things I Know To Be True*. These are some suggested activities for your classroom. The PlayGuide is available online at <https://www.milwaukeekeerep.com/Tickets--Events/201819-Season/Things-I-Know-To-Be-True/Things-I-Know-To-Be-True-PlayGuide/>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What expectations do the adults in your life place upon you? How do those expectations make you feel? Why do you think they expect those things of you?
2. How does your home or another place where you spend a lot of time impact you? What memories stick out for you about that place?
3. Think about someone you know who has done something drastically different in their life than what they expected. How do you think that change made them feel? If you were in the same place, how would you feel?
4. When you dream about your life as an adult what do you see? Family? Career? Travel? What do you think you need to do to achieve those dreams?
5. Think of a time in your life that someone has done something unexpected or not lived up to your expectations. How did that make you feel? Did it change your relationship with that person? If so, how?



U.K. Production of *Things I Know to be True*. Photo Credit: London Theatre Co. UK.

IMAGE THEATER

**This activity can be used on its own or as a building block towards creating physical theater pieces discussed in the next activity.*

Image theater is a tool with which we can explore various complex ideas through physical movement.

Directions for students:

Find a partner. Shake hands with your partner and then freeze. One of you will unfreeze and make a new image in connection with your partner's frozen position. Don't overthink it, just do it. Then you freeze, your partner unfreezes, and they make a new image. You continue this process, creating new images as you go.

Now, start the process over, but this time, you will create images with words as inspiration for your images. Think outside the box and do not just go for the literal. I will share the words as you go.

Words to use: love, beauty, hate, right, wrong, choice, justice, injustice, oppression, friendship, etc.

Discuss the images created and the experience after the exercise.

PHYSICAL THEATER

Things I Know to be True uses techniques of physical theater to help tell its story. Have students read the information about physical theater and The Rep's collaboration with Lucky Plush in the PlayGuide. Also, have students watch some video footage of physical theater troupes in action. A few example Youtube videos:

"Physical Theater Compilation" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOvVIEqN7YM>

"About Lucky Plush Productions" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlylRmh6DBM>

"PUSH Physical Theatre (2013 Promo)" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YC1jlzVzf0>

After students have read about physical theater and watched some examples, or if you have already seen the play, discuss physical theater. How does movement help tell a story? What elements did they notice about how the performers use their bodies? Have they seen any examples of these techniques in other contexts?

Things I Know to be True was created with a collaborative team of performers, directors, designers, and the playwright working together to develop the piece for production. Creation of a theatrical work from the ground up using improv, text, movement and a variety of other techniques is known as devising. Now allow students to take some time and create short devised pieces using some physical theater techniques. As safety is of the utmost importance, encourage students to think about innovative ways to use their bodies to tell a story while also utilizing movement that remains safe and respectful of others' bodies and comfort levels. You may let students choose their own topics for the scenes or assign them ones that would provoke interesting conversations and devising processes.

After students have created their pieces, have them share them with the class. In the spirit of collaboration and innovation, have audience members reflect on the performances, focusing on the innovation and storytelling over the "quality" of performance.

LETTER WRITING

In the play, Pip writes a letter to Fran that explains everything she couldn't bring herself to say aloud. Students may choose one of two approaches to this activity:

1. Write a letter to Fran or Bob as one of the other children in the play explaining their innermost truths and feelings.
2. Write a letter as themselves to someone in their real life, explaining feelings or truths that they could not say in person.

If students choose the second option, the activity requires them to show a level of vulnerability, so making sure they understand your classroom is a safe space in which to show that in their writing is essential. This would also be a good activity for students to not need to share with the class.

SCENIC DESIGN

The setting of *Things I Know to be True*, the family's home and garden, is an essential part of the storytelling in the play. Have students discuss the impact the scenic design has on their perception of the story and the performance as a whole. Also have them read the Featured Artist profile of scenic designer Scott Davis in the PlayGuide.

After spending some time learning about and discussing the scenic design, have students create their own scenic designs for the show. Encourage them to think about the elements of design, the changing seasons the set must show, theatricality, storytelling, and practical concerns. After students have completed their designs, have them share them in small groups and receive feedback. If time allows, in addition to having students create two-dimensional designs have them create three-dimensional models of their sets.

ADAPTING FOR A NEW AUDIENCE

Things I Know to be True originally premiered in Australia and then the U.K., but the playwright adapted the play for a Milwaukee audience for our production. Have students think of a story or play they know (perhaps one you've read as a class) and how it would change for a local audience. Have students rewrite the story or a scene for an audience in our community, adding in details, language, and locations that are more familiar. Share the stories with the class aloud or if using a drama, perform the scenes for the class.



MILWAUKEE REP EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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

Contact Us:

Milwaukee Repertory Theater
Education Department
108 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

For questions or to schedule a workshop, please contact:

Auburn Matson, Education Administrator
414-290-5393 • amatson@milwaukeerep.com
www.MilwaukeeRep.com | 414-224-9490

If you utilize any of the activities above, please share them with us at The Rep! We would love to see your students' work. Email Auburn at amatson@milwaukeerep.com with any work samples you would love for us to see.

Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively

WI Theatre: TP.Cr.20.h: Collaboration: Collaborate as a creative team with specified roles to make artistic, interpretive choices in a devised or scripted work.

WI Theatre: TP.Cr.18.h: Text/Script: Devise an original or adapt an existing work that incorporates dramatic structure.

WI Theatre: TP.P.17.h: Nonverbal Communication: Demonstrate a character's inner life by utilizing techniques of physical expression and movement to convey subtext.

WI Theatre: ID.R.10.h: Analysis Critically: analyze the effectiveness of design and technical elements for a theatrical production.

WI SEL SC.9-10: Learners will be able to reflect on their own beliefs relative to different familial and societal norms.

CONNECT WITH
US ONLINE:



Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @MilwRep to hear about the latest news, special offers, and happenings at The Rep!

PROGRAMS IN THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT RECEIVE GENEROUS FUNDING FROM:

Bader Philanthropies
Patty & Jay Baker Foundation
Clarice S. Turer Charitable Fund
Mae E. Demmer Charitable Trust

The Einhorn Family Foundation
Ralph Evinrude Foundation
Gardner Foundation
Greater Milwaukee Foundation
GMAR Youth Foundation

The Harley-Davidson Foundation
The Richard and Ethel Herzfeld Foundation
Frieda & William Hunt Memorial Trust
Dorothy Watkins Inbusch Foundation
Johnson Controls Foundation

Herb Kohl Philanthropies
Kohl's Foundation
Lubar Family Foundation
MPS Community
Grant Program

MPS Partnership for the Arts & Humanities
Northwestern Mutual Foundation
Townsend Foundation
Wisconsin Energy Corporation Foundation