

GUARDS AT THE TAJ

By **Rajiv Joseph** | Directed by **Brent Hazelton**
September 26 - November 4, 2018 | **Stiemke Studio**

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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

Edited by **Jenny Toutant**, *Education Director*
Auburn Matson, *Education Administrator*

SUGGESTED TEACHING & CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- 1.) Image Theater
- 2.) The Nature of Art and Beauty
- 3.) Power and Oppression in History

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

THIS PRODUCTION CONTAINS BLOOD, VIOLENCE AND BRIEF PARTIAL NUDITY. IT IS RECOMMENDED FOR AGES 12 AND UP.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What ends would you be willing to go to raise your station in life?
2. How do you express your love to others? How do you pay tribute or respect to those whom you have loved who have passed away?
3. What is the nature of power? Who deserves to have power? What are the qualities of a person who should have power?
4. What are the intersections between love and pain? How can love be destructive?
5. What makes something beautiful? How is beauty present in your life? What are acceptable reasons to destroy beautiful things?

MUGHAL POETRY

The most common type of poetry in the Mughal Empire was the ghazal, a complex form which focused on love and relationships and originated in Persia, but became a popular form in India during the Mughal rule.

Examples and a further explanation of the ghazal form can be found here: <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/ghazal-poetic-form>. Have students read the article and some example ghazals as a class and then try their hands at this beautiful poetic form popular in the time of *Guards at the Taj*.



Photos of actors courtesy of The Atlantic Theater Company's world premiere production of *Guards at the Taj* directed by Amy Morton. Left to right: Omar Metwally and Arian Moayed. Photo by Doug Hamilton.

DICTATORS IN HISTORY

Shah Jahan could definitely be considered a dictator, as he rules absolutely over his people. Babur and Hamayun must do as they are ordered by the authority of the Shah, no matter the moral price.

Throughout history, many dictators have ruled throughout the world, to great cost to many people. Have students research a dictator in history (ie: Hitler, Caligula, etc.). They should look for why these leaders came to power, how they enforced their regime, how they restricted people's freedoms, and if there was any fight against their power. Then they may share with the class what they have learned.

IMAGE THEATER

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.

CHAIRS AND POWER

Guards at the Taj explores the idea of power and oppression. This activity explores power through physical movement and also looks at theatrical staging in the context of power.

Place two chairs in the center of the room. One at a time, students will enter the space, and go to a place in the room where they believe they have the most power. After all students have placed themselves, discuss the activity.

Who is in the position of most power? The least?

Why did you choose the positions you did?

What does this activity tell us about power?

(In theater classes) How does this activity help us to better stage our work as directors?

WHAT IS BEAUTIFUL?

Guards at the Taj explores the idea of beauty and art and who should or can have access to it. Allow students to explore the idea of art and beauty through multiple mediums for this activity.

Put out various art supplies: paints, markers, collage materials, whatever you have on hand. Ask students "What is beauty?" and allow them to portray the concept through their visual art or through creative writing.

After students have created their pieces, have them pair and share about their work. If students are comfortable, display their work in the classroom or around the school.

This is also an excellent lead in to a discussion about art and access. Some questions to begin your discussion:

Have you ever been to an art museum? Seen public art in your community?

What is art?

Do you feel that who has access to art is limited? If so, how?

How could we increase access to art for everyone?



Photos of actors courtesy of The Atlantic Theater Company's world premiere production of *Guards at the Taj* directed by Amy Morton. Left to right: Omar Metwally and Arian Moayed. Photo by Doug Hamilton.



Contact Us:

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

MILWAUKEE REP EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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

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

Standards

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.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

NCAS Anchor Standard #7 Perceive and analyze artistic work.

NCAS Anchor Standard #8 Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

NCAS Anchor Standard #10 Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

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 Partnership for the
Arts & Humanities

Northwestern Mutual Foundation
Townsend Foundation
Wisconsin Energy Corporation Foundation

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!