



INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE

KEN LUDWIG'S
**THE GAME'S
AFOOT**

April 23 – May 18, 2014, on the IRT's OneAmerica Stage

STUDY GUIDE

edited by Richard J Roberts & Milicent Wright
with contributions by Janet Allen, Peter Amster
Russell Metheny, Tracy Dorman, Ann G. Wrightson, Gregg Coffin

Indiana Repertory Theatre
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Ken Ludwig's **The Game's Afoot**

1930s Broadway actor William Gillette invites his co-stars to his elaborate Connecticut mansion for a Christmas Eve celebration. When one of the guests is found murdered, Gillette employs the persona of master detective Sherlock Holmes to solve the case. What follows is a labyrinth of double-crosses, triple-crosses, gun play, lies, deceit, disguise, and affairs. As Holmes would say, "The game's afoot!"

Estimated length: 2 hours and 15 minutes

Recommended for students in grades 7 through 12
(previewing the script is recommended for middle school)

This play will help meet [Common Core Standards / Indiana Standards](#) applications for English and Theatre Arts.

Themes & Issues:

Murder
Mystery
Mayhem
Comedy

Student Matinees at 10:00 am: April 24 & 30; May 2, 9, 13, & 14

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Out with a Bang!

by Janet Allen, Executive Artistic Director

Selecting a play with which to end the season always offers its own particular delights. We definitely like to go out with a bang of some kind or other, and this year we've got bangs galore for you as we venture into Ken Ludwig's *The Game's Afoot*.



Ludwig is a very accomplished and prolific American writer of stage comedy, probably best known for his early play *Lend Me a Tenor*. The leverage point for *The Game's Afoot* was a London trip with his family, where they saw the watershed of all great stage mysteries: Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap*, which has been running continuously in London for more than 60 years. Ludwig was reminded, in part by the enthusiasm of his children, how beguiling a good mystery can be. He says that as he researched the genre, he learned that it's harder than it looks. Not only does it take tremendous plotting precision, but also real structural rigor. As that great lady Agatha Christie herself said, "... the austerity and stern discipline that goes into making a 'tight' detective plot is good for one's thought processes." So, in addition to being entertained, watching for all the clues in today's play can also make us smarter!

Gathering the band of zanies for this one was particularly enjoyable. At the helm we have our beloved Peter Amster, who has steered us on many a wild and joyous ride, most recently last season's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. (Peter is already at work on next season's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, which promises delights all its own!) While gathering some of our wonderful local actors, and sprinkling in some favorites and some newbies from Chicago, we also have the joy of welcoming back the inimitable Priscilla Lindsay, an Indianapolis favorite for more than three decades. Priscilla and her husband, Richard, were among the first artists to establish the IRT's reputation as a place that gathered exciting talent, and both eventually took on important administrative roles. They contributed to the vibrant life of the IRT for many years, until four years ago, when Priscilla was named the chair of the theatre program at their alma mater, the University of Michigan. This is Priscilla's first time back trodding the boards at the IRT, on a stage she has graced so beautifully in more than 50 roles. So this is also something of a reunion: with artisans and artists with whom she has worked closely, and with an audience who has been delighted by the wide variety of roles that Priscilla has taken on—including a fair share of murder mysteries, so watch out!

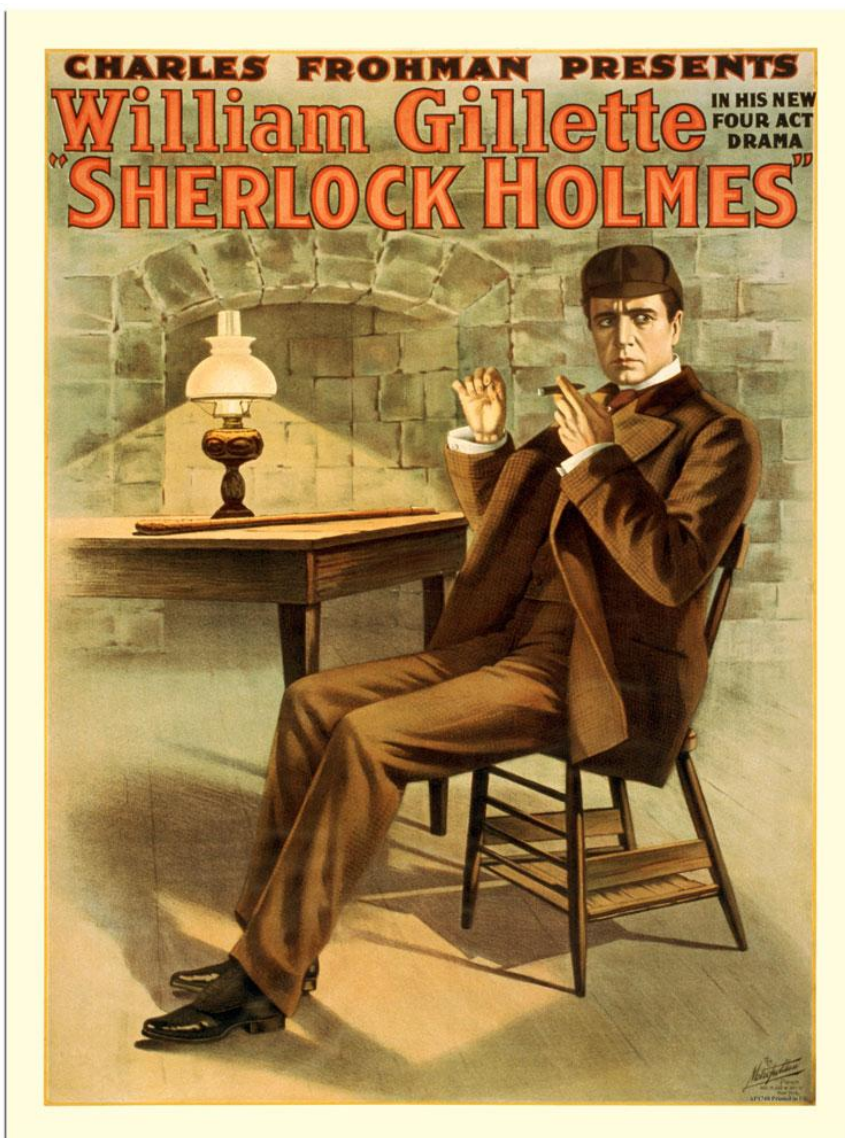
Thanks to all our patrons—ages 9 to 90—who have filled our theatre for some 250 performances this year. It is for you we make the work, and it with you we celebrate the conclusion of IRT's 42nd season.

Die Laughing

by Peter Amster, Director

I always think it's a good sign, when presented with a comedy to direct, that I laugh out loud on the first reading. *The Game's Afoot* offered me that pleasure. It's a fun piece of whodunit nonsense, peopled by some of our favorite kinds of characters: Theatre Folk Behaving Badly. There are inflated egos, grand gestures, melodramatic moments of wounded pride, boundless bitchiness, and great camaraderie.

The premise of the play is an interesting one: William Gillette, the American actor who created the stage role of Sherlock Holmes, is shot on stage, but is only wounded. On Christmas Eve, he gathers the members of the cast at his castle on the Connecticut River (it's actually there; you should go visit it if you're up that way!) to celebrate his recovery and to find out who did it and why.



The Game's Afoot manages to be both a send-up and a loving embrace of the Agatha Christie formula of murder mystery: a group of people isolated by weather, or on a train or ship or plane. (In this case, it's a snowstorm—not that Indianapolis would know anything about those....) An inspector calls, and the false confessions, red herrings, and bodies pile up until the real culprit is discovered. But in *The Game's Afoot*, there is more than one victim: theatre critics, hammy actors, under-endowed men, and over-sexed women are also hilariously skewered.

I hope that *The Game's Afoot* provokes the same laughs in you (along with some serious frights and gasps) that it provided to me on the first read.

Playwright Ken Ludwig



Ken Ludwig has had six shows produced on Broadway and six in the West End, and he has won two Laurence Olivier Awards, three Tony Award nominations, and two Helen Hayes Awards. His work has been commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company and has been performed in thirty countries in more than twenty languages. Broadway and West End shows include *Crazy for You*, *Lend Me a Tenor*, *Moon over Buffalo*, *Twentieth Century*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and *Treasure Island*. Other major plays include *Shakespeare in Hollywood*, *Leading Ladies*, *Be My Baby*, *The Beaux' Stratagem* (a completion of Thornton Wilder's adaptation at the request of the Wilder estate), *The Three Musketeers*, *The Fox on the Fairway*, *'Twas the Night before Christmas*, *Midsummer/Jersey*, and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. His book, *How to Teach Your Children Shakespeare*, was published in 2012 by Crown. He studied music at Harvard with Leonard Bernstein and theatre history at Cambridge University in England. www.kenludwig.com

*Justin Bartha and
Tony Shalhoub
in the 2010
Broadway revival
of Ken Ludwig's
Lend Me a Tenor.*

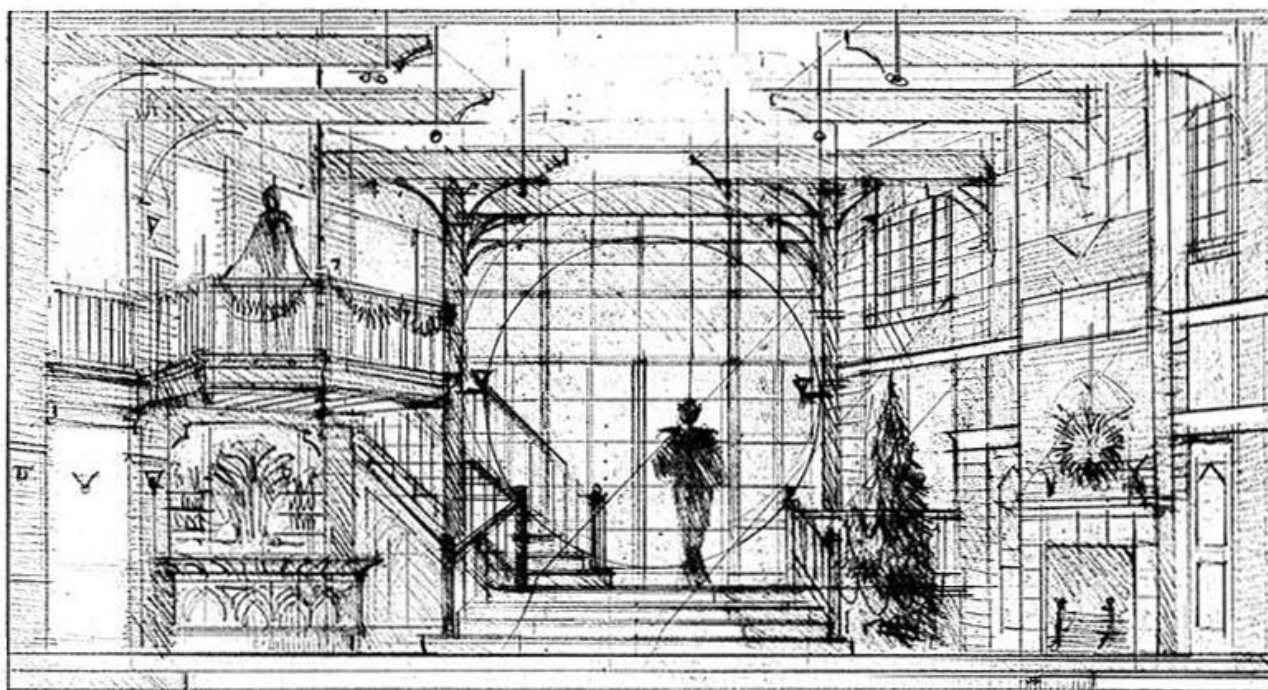


It was a dark and stormy night.

Russell Metheny Scenic Designer

On first reading, this play felt like an old-fashioned black-and-white movie that suddenly opened up to a wide-screen color film. The plot creates so much visual stimulus, it can be a challenge for the designer just to get the lay of the land to make sense. The trick was not to represent the actual Gillette Castle as an historical artifact, but to create a theatrical space. Presentational staircases, an oversized window wall, and an overlook balcony create a stage-worthy home that amplifies the characters' over-the-top personalities. Cobalt blue and mirrored glass shimmer within the wood-and-stone grandeur of a great medieval hall on a snowy, stormy Night before Christmas. It's a most witty, bizarre atmosphere for setting a whodunit in motion. A great cast both familiar and new makes this an actor-driven crazy express ride to pure pleasure.

*Rough
elevation
by scenic
designer
Russell
Metheny.*



Ann G. Wrightson Lighting Designer

Thriller, comedy, spoof—this play possesses all of these and then some. It's set on Christmas Eve, 1936, in a snowstorm, in a castle. All of this informs what the atmosphere for lighting needs to be: shadowy, mysterious, elegant, exciting. I wanted a base of elegance etched in deep blues and buttery golds to enhance the many lighting fixtures throughout the exquisite Art Deco set. Then as the story unfolds, there are deeper colors of purples and blues in patterns to exaggerate the shadows of the architecture. Most of the energy in this design comes from the cueing—the sequence of lighting changes that happen throughout the play. The lights in this house change constantly because of the storm, so there is much excitement and abruptness that charges a scene with mystery. Lights snap down, snap up, fade down, snap up, tons of lightning, and then simply a beautiful picture of beautiful people at a beautiful party.



Tracy Dorman Costume Designer

Our initial approach as a design team was to find a technique to bring out the humor of the play in an elegant way: we wanted it to be a stylish, delicious treat for our audience. Each of our characters is such a specific “type” that it was immensely fun to design. Each is a little larger than life in his or her own way, so I tried to accentuate that individuality in the choice of the clothes. It was a great opportunity to dig into the research of the thirties—an equally glamorous era for both men and women. Clothes from this period offer a designer so many choices to establish character, and I tried to choose silhouettes and fabrics that would telegraph the characters’ traits immediately to the audience. Another thing to consider is movement: this play has a lot of physical comedy in it, and the clothes should enhance that aspect.

*Costume
renderings
for
Daria Chase
and
William Gillette
by designer
Tracy Dorman.*



Gregg Coffin Musical Arrangements

It's very exciting and challenging to support this wonderful take-off on an Agatha Christie whodunit. The trap with a show like this is to over-compose with lots of underscores and musical commenting, but that way of working starts to tell the audience how to think and can take away the element of surprise. So we're keeping the instrumental cueing to a minimum, allowing the audience to have a more suspenseful ride. The play happens to take place during the holidays, so you might hear some interesting references in the incidental score for this production. Listen closely and see how many themes you can pick out!

The Real William Gillette

In writing *The Game's Afoot*, Ken Ludwig was inspired by William Gillette, who in his time was not only America's most beloved actor, he was also the world's most famous interpreter of Sherlock Holmes, as well as the architect of his own eccentric New England castle. Using these basic facts, the playwright surrounded Gillette with a fictional troupe of theatrical friends and created a fictional murder mystery set in a fictional time—the glamorous 1930s we know and love from Hollywood movies.

But what of the real William Gillette? He was born in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1853. His father was an abolitionist US Senator who fought for public education, temperance, and women's suffrage; his mother had descended from America's Puritan founders. The family's neighbors included Mark Twain and Harriet Beecher Stowe. As a child, William built a small stage and gave puppet shows for his friends. Later he took classes at five different colleges, including Yale, Harvard, and MIT, but he never graduated. Gillette began his acting career at the age of 20. He performed in stock companies in Boston, New York, and the Midwest. In 1882 he married Helen Nichols of Detroit. She died six years later when her appendix ruptured. He never remarried.



William Gillette (1853-1937)

A classic matinee idol, Gillette strove to differentiate himself from other handsome leading men with his naturalistic style. He disdained melodrama's grand gestures and declamatory speeches, instead creating characters who talked and behaved like real people. He perfected the art of capturing the audience through stillness. He kept his onstage emotions reined in; he rarely gestured, and then when he did, it was sudden, bold, and expressive. Theatre historian S. E. Dahlinger writes of Gillette, "Without seeming to raise his voice or ever to force an emotion, he could be thrilling without bombast or infinitely touching without descending to sentimentality. One of his greatest strengths as an actor was the ability to say nothing at all on the stage, relying instead on an involved, inner contemplation of an emotional or comic crisis to hold the audience silent, waiting for the moment when he would speak again."

In his book *The Illusion of the First Time*, Gillette promoted what he felt was a key element in keeping stage performances fresh. "Each successive audience ... must feel—not think or reason about, but feel—that it is witnessing, not one of a thousand weary repetitions, but a Life Episode that is being lived just across the magic barrier of the footlights." Today, this idea has become so fundamental to the basic core of acting that it is difficult to imagine a time when it was not.

During his lifetime, Gillette was considered the greatest actor in America; but this was not enough for him. He also wrote 13 original plays and seven adaptations and directed many of his own productions. His naturalistic approach to acting also applied to his work as a playwright and director, which was considered remarkably believable and lifelike for its time. The scenery and costumes for his plays were praised for their accuracy and realism, and he was constantly developing new sound and lighting effects to make his plays more authentic. His several patents included a method for recreating the sound of a horse's hooves on stage.

Among his most successful plays were two Civil War dramas. *Held by the Enemy* (1886) featured a love triangle between a Union officer, a southern belle, and her Confederate fiancé. This was the first American play to be a success in London. In *Secret Service* (1896), a Union officer is "dishonorably discharged" so he can join the Confederate Army as a northern spy; but when he falls in love with the daughter of a Confederate general, his loyalties are tested.

Gillette's greatest success was *Sherlock Holmes*. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Holmes's creator in short stories and novels, tried his hand at a stage play that was turned down by Britain's leading actors. Doyle's agent sent the script to Gillette's agent, who suggested that Doyle should allow Gillette to write his own adaptation. Doyle agreed, and Gillette proceeded to read all of Doyle's stories for the first time.

For his stage play, Gillette combined the plots of Doyle's "A Scandal in Bohemia" and "The Final Problem," adding various elements from other stories as well. Gillette's work was highly influential,

and numerous Sherlock Holmes adaptations since have followed this model, combining these two stories. When his only manuscript copy was lost in a hotel fire, Gillette rewrote the entire play from memory. It premiered in 1899 and was an instant smash hit.



*William Gillette as
Sherlock Holmes.*

Many of our perceptions of Sherlock Holmes today come not from Doyle, but from Gillette. The deerstalker cap that Sidney Paget featured in just a few of his original Holmes illustrations was widely popularized by Gillette. He also introduced the meerschaum pipe with its bent briar, instead of the straight pipe seen in most illustrations. It is thought that this innovation was designed to make Gillette's face easier to see on stage. And it was Gillette who first wrote, "Oh, this is elementary, my dear fellow," which appears in none of Doyle's stories. This phrase was adapted in the movies as "Elementary, my dear Watson," and has since become one of the most famous expressions in the English language.

Gillette played Holmes on Broadway and across America, as well as in London—some 1,300 performances over 30 years. He also played the role in a 1916 silent film (now lost) and two radio plays. Appearing in photographs and illustrations in magazines all over the world, Gillette became the face of Sherlock Holmes, and Doyle and Gillette became good friends. Doyle liked Gillette's play so much that he later said, "My only complaint is that you made the poor hero of the anemic printed page a very limp object as compared with the glamor of your own personality which you infuse into his stage presentment."

By the age of 60, Gillette had accumulated a vast fortune, and from 1914 to 1919, near Hadlyme, Connecticut, he built his own castle. Every detail down to the door latches was designed by Gillette himself, in a style that combined Craftsman and Medieval. Built of Connecticut fieldstone over a steel framework, the castle's interior is crafted of southern white oak. In 14,000 square feet, it features 24 rooms as well as mazes, hidden chambers and passageways, and a system of secret surveillance mirrors. There are 47 hand-carved doors—and no two are identical. The 184-acre grounds once featured a narrow gauge railroad with 3 miles of track, including several trestle bridges and a tunnel.



Gillette announced his retirement from the stage at least three times during his career, but he always returned. In 1937 he died from a pulmonary hemorrhage at age 83. Gillette Castle was purchased by the state of Connecticut in 1943 and today is still a popular state park.

Gillette Castle today.

Sherlock Holmes

Sherlock Holmes first appeared in 1887 in Arthur Conan Doyle's novel *A Study in Scarlet*. The power of his deductive reasoning, his flair for disguise, and his uncanny skill at detective forensics made Holmes a unique and popular figure. Doyle followed up with a second novel in 1890; the following year his short stories began to be published in the *Strand* magazine. By 1927, Doyle had published a total of four novels and 56 short stories. Other fictional detectives had appeared before Holmes, such as in Edgar Allen Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841); but Holmes captured the public imagination as few other literary figures have done.

Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, and studied medicine at Edinburgh University, where he was inspired by the brilliant deductive skills of his mentor, Joseph Bell. While studying, working as a ship's doctor, and operating his own practice, Doyle wrote a number of short stories, but he struggled to find a publisher until he created Holmes. From 1899 to 1902, he served as a physician in the Boer War. Beyond his detective fiction, he wrote about that war as well as about Spiritualism, a subject in which he was deeply interested (as is mentioned in *The Game's Afoot*). He was knighted in 1902 and died in 1930.



The first of many Sherlock Holmes societies was founded in 1934, and such organizations still debate the finer points of the detective's work. Dozens of books and articles treat Holmes and his friend Dr. Watson like actual historical figures, filling in gaps and calculating dates from clues in the stories. More than 75 actors have portrayed Holmes in more than 200 films. Today's audiences may choose from Robert Downey Jr.'s steampunk action movies or Benedict Cumberbatch's contemporary television series. For more than a century, Sherlock Holmes has been one of the most widely known fictional characters ever created.

Arrhur Conan Doyle in 1890.

Quotable Quotes

The characters in The Game's Afoot, most of them actors, love to quote from Shakespeare and other works of classic literature.

"I am not shaped for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;
I am rudely stamped, and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph ...
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them."

—paraphrased and abridged from Richard III, Act I, scene 1

"What country, friend, is this?"

"It is Illyria, lady."

"My brother, he is in Elysium.

Perchance he is not drowned. What think you, sailor?"

"It is perchance that you yourself were saved."

—paraphrased and abridged from Twelfth Night, Act I, scene 2

"And the snow fell gently upon the little stable ... and in the manger was a boy-child—"

—a faux quote.

"Blow winds, and crack your cheeks! Spout
Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!"

—abridged from King Lear, Act III, scene 2

"But even then the morning cock crew loud
And at the sound it shrunk in haste away."

—quoted from Hamlet, Act I, scene 2

"The knave turns fool that runs away."

—quoted from King Lear, Act II, scene 4

"Where's my fool? Ho! I think the world's asleep!"

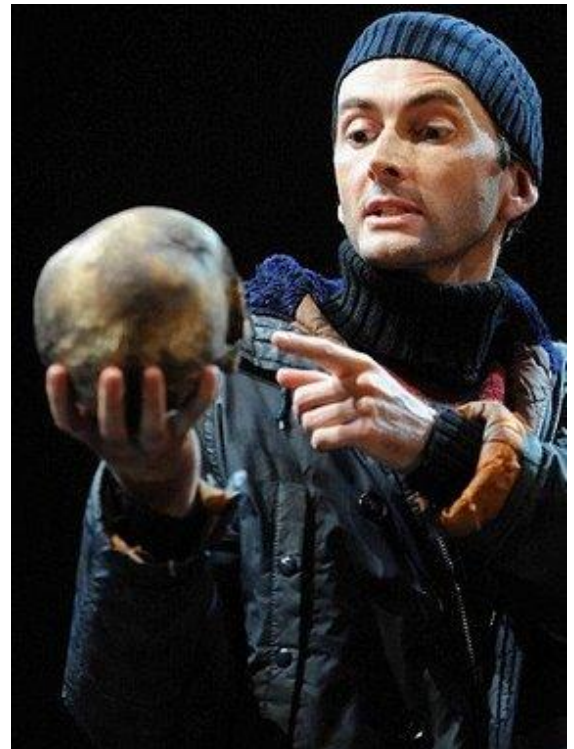
—quoted from King Lear, Act I, scene 4

"To sleep, perchance to dream" ...

"To sleep, no more."

—quoted from Hamlet, Act III, scene 1

David Tennant as Hamlet.



“an ill-favored thing, sir, but mine own.”

—*quoted from As You Like It, Act V, scene 4*

“Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more,
Or close the wall up with our English dead!
I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,
Straining upon the start. The game’s afoot!”

—*quoted from Henry V, Act III, scene 1*

“Truth and beauty ... it is all we know on earth and all we need to know”

—*paraphrased from “Ode on a Grecian Urn” by John Keats*

“Ah, Philostrate! Master of the Revels! ... Turn melancholy forth to funerals.”

—*paraphrased from A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Act I, scene 1.*

“When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world!”

—*quoted from Hamlet, Act III, scene 2*

“The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interrèd with their bones.”

—*quoted from Julius Caesar, Act III, scene 2*

“It is a far, far better thing I do than I have ever done before. It is a far, far better place I go—”

—*paraphrased from Charles Dickens’s A Tale of Two Cities*

“Blood will have blood.”

—*quoted from Macbeth, Act III, scene 4*

“Is this a dagger which I see before me ...?”

—*quoted from Macbeth, Act II, scene 1*

“Come, you spirits ... Of direst cruelty.”

—*quoted from Macbeth, Act I, scene 5*

“What is love? ’Tis not hereafter.
Present mirth hath present laughter.
What’s to come is still unsure.
In delay there lies no plenty.
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty.
Youth’s a stuff will not endure.”

—*quoted from Twelfth Night, Act II, scene 3*

Ben Kingsley as Feste in Twelfth Night.



Name Droppers

Famous themselves, the characters in *The Game's Afoot* aren't afraid to name names.

Shakespeare

Hamlet's mother

Hamlet dramatizes the prince's revenge on his uncle Claudius for murdering Hamlet's father and marrying Hamlet's mother, Gertrude. With themes of treachery, revenge, incest, and moral corruption, *Hamlet* is among the most powerful and influential tragedies in English literature.



Henry V

Henry V

Henry V focuses on events surrounding the Battle of Agincourt (1415) during the Hundred Years' War. While in his earlier *Henry IV* plays Shakespeare had depicted Henry (1386-1422) as a wild, undisciplined lad, in *Henry V* the prince has become a mature young man.

Henry VIII

Henry VIII is believed to be a collaboration between William Shakespeare and John Fletcher. It is based on the life of Henry VIII of England (1491-1547), known for his six marriages and for his role in the separation of the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church.

Othello

Othello revolves around a Moorish general in the Venetian army, Othello, who is falsely persuaded by his trusted ensign, Iago, that his new wife, Desdemona, is having an affair. With its themes of racism, love, jealousy, and betrayal, *Othello* is still widely performed.

Portia

Porcia Catonis (70–43 BCE) was the second wife of Marcus Junius Brutus, the most famous of Julius Caesar's assassins; in his play *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare spelled her name as Portia.

Richard III

Shakespeare's *Richard III* depicts the rise to power and subsequent short reign of Richard III of England (1452-1485). Shakespeare paints Richard as an ugly hunchback and a cruel tyrant; the accuracy of Shakespeare's portrayal has been much debated over the centuries.

Sir Toby Belch

Sir Toby Belch is a character in William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. He is considered one of William Shakespeare's finest comic characters, an ambiguous mix of high spirits and low cunning, a force for vitality, noise, and good cheer.

History and Literature

Croesus

Croesus was the ancient Greek king of Lydia from 560 to 547 BCE, renowned for his wealth. In Greek and Persian cultures, the name of Croesus became a synonym for a wealthy man; today, the expression “rich as Croesus” is still used to indicate great wealth.

Keats

John Keats (1795 –1821) was an English Romantic poet, one of the most beloved of all English poets. Today his poems and letters are some of the most popular in English literature.



Croesus

Professor Moriarty

Professor James Moriarty is the nemesis of Sherlock Holmes. He is something of a Mafia godfather; he protects nearly all of the criminals of England in exchange for their obedience and a share of their profits.

Eugene O'Neill

Playwright Eugene O'Neill (1888–1953) introduced the realism of Chekhov, Ibsen, and Strindberg to American drama. Living on the fringes of society, his characters struggle to maintain their hopes and aspirations, but usually slide into disillusionment and despair.

Saint Joan

Born a peasant, Joan of Arc (c. 1412–1431) claimed that she saw visions and heard the voices of saints. She supported Charles VII and helped recover France from English domination in the Hundred Years' War. Captured by the English, she was tried for heresy, idolatry, and witchcraft, and was burned at the stake at the age of 19. She was canonized in 1920.

Shelley

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) was one of the major English Romantic poets and is regarded by critics as one of the finest lyric poets in the English language.

Ulysses

Ulysses is the Latin name for Odysseus, legendary Greek king of Ithaca and the hero of Homer's *Odyssey*. Renowned for his brilliance and guile, he is most famous for his Trojan Horse subterfuge and for the ten eventful years he took to return home.

Dr. Watson

Dr. John H. Watson is the friend, confidante, and biographer of Sherlock Holmes. A physician like Holmes creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Watson served in the British Army Medical Corps in Afghanistan, but was discharged following an injury received in battle.

The 1930s

Astaire and Rodgers

Fred Astaire (1899-1987) and Ginger Rogers (1911-1995) were iconic dance partners who made nine motion pictures together between 1933 and 1939, most notably *The Gay Divorcee* (1934), *Top Hat* (1935), and *Swing Time* (1936).

*Fred Astaire and
Ginger Rogers*



Lionel Barrymore

A member of the theatrical Barrymore family (and great-uncle of Drew Barrymore), Lionel Barrymore (1878–1954) is perhaps best known as the kindly Otto Kringelein in *Grand Hotel* (1932) and as the villainous Mr. Potter in *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946).

Nick and Nora Charles

Nick and Nora Charles are fictional characters created by Dashiell Hammett in his novel *The Thin Man* (1934). The characters were featured in a series of six *Thin Man* films starring William Powell and Myrna Loy between 1934 and 1947.

Joan Crawford

In her long career, Joan Crawford (1904–1977) moved from chorus girl to ingénue to leading lady to character actress. Although her roles often featured a bitter edge, she won the 1945 Academy Award for Best Actress as a hard-working, self-sacrificing mother in *Mildred Pierce*.

Clark Gable

Clark Gable (1901–1960) was a leading man in more than 60 motion pictures, including *It Happened One Night* (1934, Academy Award for Best Actor), *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935), *Gone with the Wind* (1939), and *The Misfits* (1961).

Adolf Hitler

Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) was an Austrian-born German politician and the leader of the Nazi Party. He was at the center of World War II and the Holocaust.

Myrna Loy

Myrna Loy (1905-1993) started her silent film career as an exotic femme fatale, but with the advent of sound she was recast as the witty, urbane, professional woman. She is perhaps best remembered for her role as Nora Charles in six *Thin Man* films (1934-1947).

Franklin D. Roosevelt

FDR (1882–1945), served as President of the United States from 1933 to his death in 1945. Elected for four consecutive terms, he remains the only president to serve more than eight years. He led the United States through the Great Depression and World War II.

FDR



Rosalind Russell

Rosalind Russell (1907–1976) is perhaps best known for her film roles as a catty gossip in *The Women* (1939) and a fast-talking newspaper reporter in *His Girl Friday* (1940). She played the glamorous, eccentric title role in *Auntie Mame* both on Broadway (1957) and on film (1958).

Sacco and Vanzetti

Nicola Sacco (1891–1927) and Bartolomeo Vanzetti (1888–1927) were Italian-Americans executed for murdering two men during an armed robbery in 1920. Today it is believed that the men were convicted largely because of anti-Italian prejudice and their anarchist beliefs.

Wallis Simpson

Wallis Simpson (1896–1986) was a twice-married American socialite who became the mistress of Edward, Prince of Wales. After Edward's accession as king, his desire to marry a divorcee threatened to cause a constitutional crisis in the United Kingdom, leading to his abdication.

Common Core & Indiana State Standards

Attending *The Game's Afoot* along with using the discussion questions, writing projects, and activities in our study guide can link your lessons to the following Common Core or Indiana State Standards:

Language Arts:

Reading Standards for Literature/Key Ideas and Details

Reading Standards for Literature/Craft and Structure

Reading Standards for Literature/Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Theatre Arts

Analysis and Response

History and Culture



Catch Phrase Matching Game

Sherlock Holmes is famous for his catch phrase "The game's afoot!"

Match these other famous catch phrases with who said them.

For bonus points, find out when or where the phrases were first used.

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. "Ask not what your country can do for you;
ask what you can do for your country" | A. Maya Angelou |
| 2. "One small step for man...
one giant leap for mankind" | B. Charlie Brown |
| 3. "Good Grief" | C. Albert Einstein |
| 4. "All great achievements require time" | D. William Shakespeare |
| 5. "To infinity and beyond!." | E. Dr. Seuss |
| 6. "Good night, and good luck" | F. Martin Luther King Jr. |
| 7. "Imagination is more important
than knowledge." | G. Edward R. Murrow |
| 8. "Yes we can!" | H. Barak Obama |
| 9. "All that glitters is not gold" | J. Neil Armstrong |
| 10. "An eye for an eye only ends up
making the whole world blind" | K. Mahatma Gandhi |
| 11. "Be who you are and say what you feel,
because those who mind don't matter,
and those who matter won't mind." | L. John F. Kennedy |
| 12. "Injustice anywhere is a threat
to justice everywhere." | M. Buzz Lightyear |

Pre-Show Activities

Choose words from the Glossary at the back of this Study Guide for your students to research, define, and use in sentences.

The Game's Afoot is set in 1936 and contains a number of pop culture references from the era (see pages 16 and 17). Your students might enjoy learning about that era before seeing the play. Have them go online and research people and events of the 1930s, perhaps creating a PowerPoint presentation. Here are a few web links to get them started:

http://www.softschools.com/timelines/1930s_timeline/60/

<http://historytimeline.8m.com/1930-1939.html>

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~1930s2/Time/1936/1936fr.html>

See pages 12 and 13 for Shakespeare and other literary quotes used in the play. Which of these plays have your students read? Have your students do research on the others. What is the significance of these quotes in their source plays? How might these quotes be applied to various situations in our own lives? See the Resources section in this study guide for some helpful books.

Post-Show Writing Prompts

Write a review of the play. What moments made an impression on you? How do the elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound work with the actors' performance of the text to tell the story? What ideas or themes did the play make you think about? How did it make you feel? Post your review on the IRT website: <http://reviews.irtlive.com/>

In the play, the character William Gillette says, "But if this were a play, it would make a good sequel...." Try your hand at writing a sequel (or prequel) to this play. Where would you set it? How long after this Christmas 1936 would it take place? Which characters from this play would you keep? What unseen characters from this play, such as the Gillette's servants, Noggs, or Hugo, might you include? Who would be your new characters?

We go through this play with William Gillette as the main character, following his point of view. Choose one of the other characters of the play and try your hand at writing a scene from his or her point of view. Perhaps your scene takes place upstairs in one of the bedrooms after everyone has retired. Maybe your scene features Inspector Goring at her office getting the word about the murder and talking with other officers on their course of action.

Compare and contrast Sherlock Holmes and another literary or cinematic detective of your choosing.

Post-Show Discussion Questions

How many Shakespeare quotes were you able to recognize?

Were you able to solve any of the mysteries in the play before the characters did? What led you to your conclusions? What clues did you note along the way? What clues did you miss? What revelations surprised you?

The characters in this play are very distinct types. Discuss how the actors played these types. In what ways did their idiosyncrasies add to the suspense and humor of the play? How do these characters compare with characters from other mysteries you have read or seen?

In the play, the character Daria says, "Everyone wants publicity." How much truth is there in that remark today? How does the current trend of reality shows and talk shows evince this quest? How does wanting to be known come in conflict with trying to preserve your reputation? Discuss the saying, "There's no such thing as bad publicity."

Discuss the playwright's use of language in this play. How does he use word play, puns, quips, metaphor, and repartee? How did the play's language, style, physicality, and characters remind you of other plays, movies, or television shows?

Why do you think we are fascinated by the supernatural? Have you or someone you know been to a séance, played with a Ouija board, or read Tarot cards? What does the séance scene add to the play's mood and plot?

What did you find funny in the play? Did you discover that there were parts that others found humorous that you did not? Discuss different styles of humor and what makes different people laugh.

In this play, Ken Ludwig takes a real historical character, William Gillette, and builds a fictional plot around him. What other plays, books, and movies do you know where facts were woven with fictional plots? How was it done? What makes such works engaging? How might such blends of fact and fiction lead us to learn more about history and/or literature?

Although murder is a horrifying crime in reality, it makes for very popular entertainment in fiction and drama. Why do you suppose we are fascinated by detective mysteries in all formats. Is it our desire to have a hero? Do we need the cause revealed so we can come to an understanding of the actions and thereby have peace of mind? What do you think?

Post-Show Activities

Have your students create their own murder mysteries. Divide them into groups of eight or so and give each group a prompt to base their mystery on. The prompts might be a bag of props to use in their story, or quotes from a book or play to incorporate into their story, or simply a card listing a location, a conflict, and some character suggestions. You might want to limit these improvisational murder mysteries or scripted plays to 10-minutes. Remind the students that every story has to have a beginning, middle, and end, and that every character has to have a desire—a motive. In the theatre, a character’s motivation is what puts him or her into action. He or she wants something and must go after it, even if he or she fails. In a murder mystery, not only the murderer, but several characters must have motive, means, and/or opportunity.

Play the theatre game “Murder.” There are different ways of playing this game; the “handshake” version is most common at the IRT. Everyone in the game is attending a social event where no one knows each other, so they must introduce themselves to everyone else by mingling with everyone in the room, shaking hands and conversing. The designated murderer will kill his or her victims by quietly scratching their palms with one finger while shaking hands. Once a student has been murdered, he or she should silently count to five (giving the murderer time to move away) before dying a “dramatic” death. Begin each round with the students standing in a circle facing out, with their eyes closed and their hands over their eyes. The teacher walks around inside the circle and silently chooses a murderer by tapping him or her on the back or shoulder. As the game progresses and bodies begin to accumulate, those participants still “alive” may stop the gathering and name their suspect. If the group guesses three times and does not find the murderer, the game is over and the killer goes free! (This game can last five minutes or as long as you wish)

Discuss the term denouement. What is it? Why is it important? Discuss the denouements of *The Game’s Afoot* and other works your class has seen or read together this year. When did the writers choose to tie up all the loose ends, or to leave some ambiguities? How can either choice make a greater impact or give more satisfaction?

Look up some reviews and critiques of other productions of this play and discuss the elements of those productions in comparison to the IRT’s production that you saw. Did those critics lead you to more insight on any of the play’s elements? Discuss the critic’s use of descriptive language to comment about the production.

Readers like the detective characters in mysteries such as Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys, Nero Wolf, Easy Rawlins, Jim Chee, Jane Tennison, Kinsey Millhone, Jessica Fletcher, and of course Sherlock Holmes. Try your hand at creating a contemporary detective of your liking. To develop a full character, ask and answer questions: Where and when does your character live? What are his or her likes and dislikes? How did he/she get into this line of work? What are his or her dreams, nightmares, and aspirations? Family history? Strengths and foibles?

Resources

Books

William Gillette, America's Sherlock Holmes by Henry Zecher

The Bedside, Bathtub, & Armchair Companion to Sherlock Holmes by Dick Riley & Pam McAllister

The Sherlock Holmes Scrapbook edited by Peter Haining

Sherlock Holmes and the Baker Street Irregulars #1: The Fall of the Amazing Zalindas
by Tracy Mack & Michael Citrin

Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection edited by Chris Steinbrunner & Otto Penzler

The Craft of Crime by John C. Carr

*Brush up your Shakespeare!: An Infectious Tour Through the Most Famous and Quotable Words
and Phrases from the Bard* by Michael Macrone

*A Dictionary of Quotations from Shakespeare: A Topical Guide to Over 3,000 Great Passages
from the Plays, Sonnets, and Narrative Poems* by Margaret Miner & Hugh Rawson

Bardisms: Shakespeare for All Occasions by Barry Edelstein

*Shakespeare 101: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about the Man, His Life and Times, and
His Works* by Michael LoMonico

Kneading to Die (Pawsitively Organic Mysteries) by Liz Mugavero

Ghost Hero by S. J. Rozan

*Rawson's Dictionary of Euphemisms and Other Doubletalk: Being a Compilation of Linguistic Fig
Leaves and Verbal Flourishes for Artful Users of the English Language* by Hugh Rawson

Plays

Sherlock Holmes (Acting Edition) by Arthur Conan Doyle and William Gillette

And Then There Were None by Agatha Christie

Arsenic and Old Lace by Joseph Kesselring

Blithe Spirit by Noel Coward

Deathtrap: A Thriller in Two Acts by Ira Levin

Corpse! by Gerald Moon

Sleuth: A Play by Anthony Shaffer

Films & TV

Basil Rathbone starred as Sherlock Holmes in 14 films in the 1930s and 1940s, including *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, and *The Scarlet Claw*. Jeremy Brett played Sherlock Holmes in 41 episodes of “The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes” produced by Granada Television between 1984 and 1994 and shown in the United States on PBS.

Sherlock (TV) starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman

Agatha Christie: Miss Marple (TV)

Castle (TV)

Clue (1985)

Dial M for Murder (1954)

Ghost (1990)

Gosford Park (2001)

Inspector Gadget (1999)

Jeeves and Wooster (TV)

Mission Impossible (1996)

Murder by Death (1976)

Pushing Up Daisies (TV)

The Thin Man (1934)

Rear Window (1954)

Laura (1944)

Websites

Gillette Castle State Park

http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2716&q=325204&deepNav_GID=1650%20http://gonewengland.about.com/od/ctsightseeing/a/gillettecastle.htm

Sherlock Holmes

<http://www.sherlockholmesonline.org/SherlockHolmes/index.htm>

An Internet Information Center for Sherlock Holmes

<http://www.sherlocktron.com/>

The 20 Greatest Sherlock Holmes on screen portrayals

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/10535503/Sherlock-the-20-greatest-Sherlock-Holmes.html#?frame=2773984>

American Theatre Critics Association

<http://americantheatrecritics.org/>

The Role of Theater Criticism: An interview with *Time Out New York* theater critic David Cote.

<http://www.theatermania.com/new-york-city-theater/tmu/11-2012/the-role-of-theater-criticism-63676.html>

Is Theatre Criticism in Crisis?

<http://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2013/oct/08/theatre-criticism-in-crisis-critics>

American Theatre: "Critical Juncture: 12 of the nation's most influential theatre critics"
by David Cote

http://www.tcg.org/publications/at/nov11/critical_juncture.cfm

Answers to Catch Phrase Matching Game:

1-L 2-J 3-B 4-A 5-M 6-G 7-C 8-H 9-D 10-K 11-E 12-F

Text Glossary

Art Deco

Art Deco flourished internationally in the 1930s and 1940s. It is an eclectic style combining traditional craft motifs with Machine Age imagery and materials, characterized by rich colors, bold geometric shapes, and lavish ornamentation. During its heyday, Art Deco represented luxury, glamour, exuberance, and faith in social and technological progress.

balderdash

In the 1590s balderdash meant a jumbled mix of liquors (milk and beer, beer and wine, etc.); by the 1670s, it had come to mean a “senseless jumble of words.” Dutch, German, or Scandinavian *balder* (noise or clatter) may have been combined with the English *dash*.

Bank of England

Established in 1694, the Bank of England is the central bank of the United Kingdom and the model on which most modern central banks are based. A central bank is an institution that manages a state’s currency, money supply, and interest rates.

Begorah

a mild Irish oath; a euphemism for “By God!”

Black Diamond slope

Traditionally, Alpine ski trails in North America were rated in three levels of difficulty: Green Circle (easiest), Blue Square (intermediate), and Black Diamond (advanced).

bone marrow

Bone marrow is the flexible tissue in the interior of bones, considered a delicacy in such dishes as *osso buco*. The texture of cooked bone marrow is often described as being like yogurt.

brace of pistols

A brace is a pair; from Latin, Greek, and French words for arms.

broadsword

a large heavy sword with a broad blade for cutting rather than thrusting

Buddhist

Buddhism is an Asian religion inspired by Gautama Buddha, who taught that suffering is inherent in life but that one can be liberated from it by mental and moral self-purification.

Bunsen burner

A Bunsen burner, named after its inventor, Robert Bunsen, is a common piece of laboratory equipment producing a single open gas flame used for heating, sterilization, and combustion.

consulting detective

a dated term for private detective

electric snow shovel

Although various automatic snow-removal devices were patented as early as 1870, the first practical snow blower, a large, tractor-mounted, road-sized machine, was developed in 1925. The first domestic hand-pushed snow blower was introduced by Toro in 1951.

A Farewell to Arms

Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* is set during the Italian campaign of World War I. Published in 1929, the novel focuses on a love affair between an American ambulance corps lieutenant and a nurse. Inspired by the author's war experiences, it was his first best-seller.

Flash Gordon

Flash Gordon was a science fiction adventure comic strip first published in 1934, following the adventures of a handsome polo player and Yale University graduate who is kidnapped by the mad Dr. Zarkov and rocketed to the planet Mongo, where he battles Ming the Merciless.

garrote

a wire, cord, or apparatus used to strangle someone

gasworks

A gasworks is an industrial plant that produces flammable gas, usually generated from coal.

harridan

a strict, bossy, or belligerent old woman

Khedive of Egypt

Derived from a Persian term for "ruler," khedive was the title of the Turkish viceroys in Egypt from 1867 to 1914. A viceroy is an official who runs a colony in the name of the monarch.

Killington

Killington is a small mountain town in south-central Vermont. Killington Ski Resort, the largest ski area in the Eastern United States, opened in 1958.

limelight

Once used in theatres, limelight was created by directing an oxyhydrogen flame at a cylinder of quicklime (calcium oxide). Today, someone in the public eye is still said to be "in the limelight."

lugubrious

mournful, dismal, or gloomy, especially in an affected, exaggerated, or unrelieved manner

The Maid of Turkey

fictional

meerschaum pipe

Meerschaum (German for *foam of the sea*) is a soft white mineral often used to make smoking pipes. It is sometimes found floating on the Black Sea and is suggestive of sea-foam.

melodramas

Historically, melodramas are dramas of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in which orchestral music or song was used to accompany the action; the term was originally French, derived from Greek *melos* (music) and French *drame* (drama). Melodramas usually feature the same set of central characters: a hero, a damsel in distress, and a villain. Today the term melodrama is most often used pejoratively to suggest a lack of subtlety or sophistication.

The Merry Widow

The Merry Widow by Franz Lehár tells the story of a rich widow, and her countrymen's attempt to keep her money in the principality by finding her the right husband. The operetta has been continuously popular internationally since its 1905 premiere.

miniature railroad

The 184-acre grounds of Gillette Castle featured a three-mile narrow-gauge railroad.

New Deal

The New Deal was a series of domestic programs enacted in the United States between 1933 and 1938. The programs responded to the Great Depression, focusing on what historians call the "3 Rs": Relief for the unemployed and poor, Recovery of the economy to normal levels, and Reform of the financial system to prevent a repeat depression.

Palace Theatre

The Palace Theatre, in Times Square, New York City, opened as a vaudeville house in 1913. When vaudeville declined, the Palace was converted to a cinema in 1932; in 1965 it became a legitimate Broadway theatre presenting musicals and occasional concerts.

Paris Academy of Science

Founded in 1666, the French Academy of Sciences encourages and protects the spirit of French scientific research. It was at the forefront of scientific developments in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Penelope

The real William Gillette's wife was actually named Helen. She and Gillette had only been married for six years when she died; he never remarried.

Peter Pan

Created by Scottish novelist and playwright J. M. Barrie, Peter Pan is a mischievous boy who can fly and who refuses to grow up. In 1983 Dr. Dan Kiley published *The Peter Pan Syndrome: Men Who Have Never Grown Up*, inventing a new pop-psychology term.

pinochle

Pinochle is a card game derived from the game bezique. Playing with a 48-card deck, players score points by trick-taking and forming combinations of cards into melds (matching cards).

Pride and Prejudice

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) focuses on manners and marriage among the landed gentry of early nineteenth-century England. It features the five daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, a quiet, cynical country gentleman and his excitable social-climbing wife.

publicity ... it's changing the world

Since the ancient Pharaohs, public figures have attempted to influence the public through widespread distribution of carefully crafted messages. But with the advent of such widely popular magazines as *Photoplay* (1912), *Time* (1923), the *New Yorker* (1925), *Newsweek* (1933), *Life* (1936), and *Look* (1937), the early twentieth century saw a massive growth in the power of publicity.

remote control

The earliest example of remote control by radio waves was developed by Nikola Tesla, who exhibited a radio-controlled boat in 1898. In 1903, Spanish engineer Leonardo Torres y Quevedo presented his *Telekino* at the French Academy of Sciences. By the late 1930s, several radio manufacturers offered remote controls for some of their higher-end models.

revels

boisterous merrymaking or festivity

Rhinebeck

A town in southeast New York, 120 miles west of Gillette Castle.

séance

A séance is an attempt to communicate with spirits. The word *séance* comes from the Old French *seoir*, "to sit." With the increasing popularity of Spiritualism in the 1920s, interest in séances grew tremendously. Skeptics often treat the séance as a form of entertainment.

sodium carbonate

Sodium carbonate is a sodium salt of carbonic acid (soluble in water). It is a white, odorless powder that absorbs moisture from the air and forms a strongly alkaline water solution. It is domestically well known for its everyday use as a water softener.

speaker-phone

Telephone-based intercoms developed in the 1890s. By 1912, if not earlier, users could choose between a telephone-style handset or a desktop or wall-mounted loudspeaker. As late as the 1930s, however, many intercoms still resembled telephones.

Tamsin

An English name, the short form of *Thomasina*; related to *Tammy*.

Titus

With 14 killings (9 of them on stage), 6 severed members, rape, live burial, and cannibalism, *Titus Andronicus* is Shakespeare's bloodiest play.

two-bit

Two bits is a dated term meaning 25 cents. The term "bit" dates from the colonial period, when the most common unit of currency was the Spanish dollar, which was worth eight Spanish silver *reales* ("pieces of eight"). One eighth of a dollar or one silver *real* was one "bit."

Vanity Fair

Vanity Fair was a society magazine published from 1913 to 1936, highly successful until it lost advertising revenue during the Great Depression and was merged into *Vogue*. The current version was launched in 1983.

Yoga

Yoga is a system of physical, mental, and spiritual practices or disciplines that originated in ancient India with the aim of attaining a state of permanent peace of mind in order to experience one's true self. Yoga came to the attention of an educated western public in the mid-nineteenth century, becoming widely known in the 1930s and 1940s.

yogurt

The origins of yogurt are unknown, but it has been enjoyed since ancient times. Yogurt was first introduced to the United States in the early 1900s as a health food; by 1929, a creamery in Massachusetts delivered fresh yogurt all over New England.

wassail

Wassail is a punch made of wine or cider mixed with sugar, spices, and baked apples, served at Christmas. The word is derived from the Middle English "wass-heil"—"be of good health."

Going to the Theatre: Audience Role & Responsibility

You, the audience, are one of the most important parts of any performance.

Experiencing the theatre is a group activity shared not only with the actors, but also with the people sitting around you. Your attention and participation help the actors perform better, and allow the rest of the audience to enjoy the show. Here are a few simple tips to help make each theatre experience enjoyable for everyone:



Leave mp3 players, cameras, mobile phones, and other distracting and noise-making electronic devices at home.

You may think texting is private, but the light and the motion are very annoying to those around you and on stage. Do not text during the performance.

Food and drink must stay in the lobby.

The house lights dimming and going out signal the audience to get quiet and settle in your seats: the play is about to begin.

Don't talk with your neighbors during the play. It distracts people around you and the actors on stage. Even if you think they can't hear you, they can.

Never throw anything onto the stage. People could be injured.

Remain in your seat during the play. Use the restroom before or after the show.

Focus all your attention on the play to best enjoy the experience. Listen closely to the dialogue and sound effects, and look at the scenery, lights, and costumes. These elements all help to tell the story.

Get involved in the story. Laugh, cry, sigh, gasp—whatever the story draws from you. The more emotionally involved you are, the more you will enjoy the play.

Remain at your seat and applaud during the curtain call because this is part of the performance too. It gives you a chance to recognize a job well done and the actors a moment to thank you for your attention.