



SOUTH
BEND

CIVIC
THEATRE

PRESENTS

**ONCE ON THIS
ISLAND**

**SPOTLIGHT ON
KATHY BURNETTE**

**LEARNING
ACTIVITY PAGES**

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

SYNOPSIS | THEATRE ETIQUETTE | VOCABULARY LIST | SUGGESTED READING

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**RECOMMENDED FOR
PATRONS 10 & UP**

Thank you for joining us on this journey to the island! If you've ever dreamed of being on stage, creating sets, or helping bring stories to life, we'd love to have you join our community. There's a place for everyone, both on and off the stage!

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THEATRE ETTIQUETTE & ACCESSIBILITY

NO PAPARAZZI PLEASE

Leave cell phones, tablets, hand held games, and other distracting electronics at home or turn them off completely. No texting or photography during the performance.

TAKE YOUR SEAT

When the lights dim, the play is about to begin! Take your seat and stay seated. There will be no intermission for this performance.

SILENCE IS GOLDEN (UNTIL IT ISN'T!)

To ensure you and your fellow audience members have the best experience, focus all of your attention on the play. We ask that you refrain from talking to your neighbors as it distracts the actors onstage. Feel free to laugh and react naturally as the play unfolds. Applauding at the end of scenes and at curtain call is encouraged!

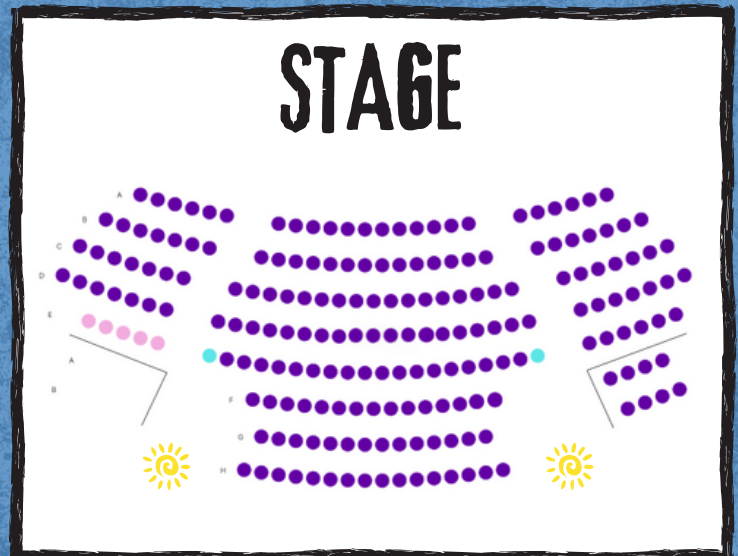
ACCESSIBILITY

Exits located on either sides of the aisles marked with suns.

Two **wheelchair accessible seats** are marked in teal and can be found on either side of row E.

Five **armless seats** are marked in pink and can be found on audience left in row E.

STAGE



SYNOPSIS

Once on This Island is a one-act musical set in the French Antilles. Told as a fable, the story follows Ti Moune, a young peasant girl saved by the gods during a storm and adopted by peasants Mama Euralie and Tonton Julian. As she grows up, Ti Moune becomes fascinated by the divide between her people and the wealthy “grands hommes,” or descendants of French colonizers.

After Daniel Beauxhomme, a grand homme, crashes his car near her village, Ti Moune nurses him back to health. She prays to the gods for his survival, and they intervene: Erzulie, Goddess of Love, inspires her devotion, while Papa Ge, Demon of Death, demands her life in exchange for Daniel’s. Ti Moune agrees, sacrificing herself to save him.

Ti Moune follows Daniel to his world, but despite their romance, he ultimately marries Andrea, a woman of his class. Heartbroken, Ti Moune is confronted by Papa Ge, who tempts her to kill Daniel in revenge. She refuses, choosing love over vengeance, and sacrifices herself instead. Papa Ge takes her life, and the gods transform Ti Moune into a tree. The tree grows strong, breaking the barriers between the peasants and the grands hommes, symbolizing the enduring power of love and unity.

The story ends with the villagers reminding the young girl that Ti Moune’s sacrifice brought hope to their island. Her legacy lives on, inspiring future generations.



STATE LEARNING STANDARDS



NOTE: Referenced standards listed on the following pages

INDIANA STATE 5-12 LEARNING STANDARDS

Once On This Island explores a variety of themes and concepts. A few Discussion Topics we believe are particularly relevant include love and sacrifice, class and cultural divides, fate and free will, resilience and hope, and the power of storytelling.

Watching this production and engaging with our Behind The Curtain audience guide can foster essential skills for navigating the modern world including: **Creative Thinking, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Perseverance, Communication, and Growth Mindset.**

Additionally, we believe this experience and the accompanying guide can assist educators in meeting various **Indiana State Learning Standards.** We've highlighted some standard that align well with specific articles and activities below. While we've selected a few examples, we encourage you to get creative and find other connections between what your students are learning and this theatrical experience!

ATTENDING A PERFORMANCE OF

Once On This Island

FINE ARTS

THEATRE ARTS | Anchor Standards 7-11

DANCE | Anchor Standards 7-9 & 11

MUSIC | Anchor Standards 1-3

PROFILE OF THE PLAYWRIGHTS

FINE ARTS

THEATRE ARTS | Anchor Standards 7-9

ENGLISH & LANGUAGE ARTS

READING COMPREHENSION | 11.RC.1 & 11, 9-10.RC.1 & 9, 8.RC.1 & 5, 7.RC.1 & 7, 6.RC.1 & 7, 5.RC.6

ROOTS OF THE STORY

ENGLISH & LANGUAGE ARTS

READING COMPREHENSION | 11-12.RC.1-14, 9-10.RC.1-7 & 9-13, 8.RC.1-9 & 11, 7.RC.1-12, 6.RC.1-12, 5.RC.1-12 & 14

SOCIAL STUDIES

HISTORY | WH.7.1, GHW.7.2, GHW.4.1, 7.H.10, 6.H.16

CIVICS & GOVERNMENT | 6.CIV.14, 5.C.7

SUGGESTED READING

ENGLISH & LANGUAGE ARTS

READING FOUNDATIONS | 5.RF.1

READING COMPREHENSION | 11-12.RC.1-14, 9-10.RC.1-7 & 9-13, 8.RC.1-9 & 11, 7.RC.1-12, 6.RC.1-12, 5.RC.1-12 & 14

SOCIAL STUDIES

HISTORY | WH.4.4, GHW.4.1, GHW.7.2, 5.H.3, 5.G.7, 5.E.1

THEMES & DISCUSSION TOPICS

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Anchor Standards 1, 2, 4, 7 & 8

ENGLISH & LANGUAGE ARTS

READING COMPREHENSION | 11.RC.1 & 11, 9-10.RC.1 & 9, 8.RC.1-2, 7.RC.1-2, 6.RC.1, 5.RC.6

WRITING | 11-12.W.4, 9-10.W.4, 8.W.4, 7.W.4, 6.W.4, 5.W.4

COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION | 11-12.CC.1-5, 9-10.CC.1-7, 8.CC.1-6, 7.CC.1-6, 6.CC.1-6, 5.CC.1-5

SOCIAL STUDIES

HISTORY | WH.4.4, WH.7.3 & 6, GHW.7.2, GHW.10.3, GHW.4.1, 6.H.16

CIVICS & GOVERNMENT | 5.C.7, 5.C.8

GEOGRAPHY | 6.G.2, 6.CIV.13-15

ECONOMICS | E.1.1-2 & 4, E.2.6, E.4.1

VOCABULARY

ENGLISH & LANGUAGE ARTS

READING FOUNDATIONS | 5.RF.1 & 2

READING COMPREHENSION | 11-12.RC.8 & 11-14, 9-

10.RC.8-13, 8.RC.8-10, 7.RC.10-13, 6.RC.10-13, 5.RC.11-14

WRITING | 8.W.6, 7.W.6, 6.W.6, 5.W.6



STATE LEARNING STANDARDS



HISTORY LESSON & FURTHER LEARNING

SOCIAL STUDIES

HISTORY | WH.7.6, WH.7.4 & 3, WH.7.1, WH.4.4, GHW.4.1, GHW.6.3, GHW.9.1, GHW.6.1, GHW.10.3, GHW.7.2, 7.H.10, 6.H.16

CIVICS & GOVERNMENT | 8.C.5, 6.CIV.13-15, 5.C.7 & 8

GEOGRAPHY | 6.G.2

ECONOMICS | E.8.1&2, E.4.1, E.3.3, E.2.6, E.1.1-2 & 4, 6.E.4, 5.E.4

SPOTLIGHT ON KATHY BURNETTE

ENGLISH & LANGUAGE ARTS

READING COMPREHENSION | 11-12.RC.1 & 4, 9-10.RC.1 & 8, 8.RC.1, 7.RC.1, 6.RC.1, 5.RC.6

SOCIAL STUDIES

HISTORY | WH.7.3, WH.4.4, GHW.7.2, GHW.6.3, 6.H.16

CIVICS & GOVERNMENT | 6.CIV.13-15, 5.C.7

GEOGRAPHY | 6.G.2

ACTIVITY PAGES

FINE ARTS

THEATRE ARTS | Anchor Standards 7-9

SOCIAL STUDIES

HISTORY | WH.7.4, WH.7.2, WH.5.5, WH.4.4, GHW.6.2, GHW.4.1

ENGLISH & LANGUAGE ARTS

READING COMPREHENSION | 11-12.RC.1, 11-12.RC.6 & 9-10, 9-10.RC.1, 9-10.RC.5 & 8, 8.RC.1 & 7, 7.RC.1 & 6, 6.RC.1, 5.RC.1, 5.RC.3 & 9

WRITING | 11-12.W.2-3, 9-10.W.2-3, 8.W.2-3, 7.W.3, 6.W.3, 5.W.2

COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION | 11-

12.CC.1-3, 9-10.CC.1, 9-10.CC.4-5 & 7, 8.CC.1-3 & 6, 7.CC.1-2 & 4, 6.CC.1, 5.CC.1-2 & 7

FINE ARTS

THEATRE ARTS

Anchor Standard 7 Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard 8 Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Anchor Standard 9 Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

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

Anchor Standard 11 Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

MUSIC ARTS

Anchor Standard 1 Connect with a varied repertoire of music by exploring the relationships between music and personal experience.

Anchor Standard 2 Connect with a varied repertoire of music by exploring the relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.

Anchor Standard 3 Connect with a varied repertoire of music by exploring the relationships between music and history and culture.

DANCE

Anchor Standard 7 Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard 8 Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Anchor Standard 9 Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

Anchor Standard 11 Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Anchor Standard 1, 2, 4, 7 & 8 [View Health & Wellness Standards](#)

STATE LEARNING STANDARDS



ENG. & LANGUAGE ARTS

READING FOUNDATIONS

5.RF. [View 5th Grade Reading Foundations Standards](#)

READING COMPREHENSION

11-12.RC. [View 11-12th Grade Reading Comprehension Standards](#)

9-10.RC. [View 9-10th Grade Reading Comprehension Standards](#)

8.RC. [View 8th Grade Reading Comprehension Standards](#)

7.RC. [View 7th Grade Reading Comprehension Standards](#)

6.RC. [View 6th Grade Reading Comprehension Standards](#)

5.RC. [View 5th Grade Reading Comprehension Standards](#)

WRITING

11-12.W. [View 11-12th Grade Writing Standards](#)

9-10.W. [View 9-10th Grade Writing Standards](#)

8.W. [View 8th Grade Writing Standards](#)

7.W. [View 7th Grade Writing Standards](#)

6.W. [View 6th Grade Writing Standards](#)

5.W. [View 5th Grade Writing Standards](#)

COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION

11-12.CC. [View 11-12th Grade Communication & Collaboration Standards](#)

9-10.CC. [View 11-12th Grade Communication & Collaboration Standards](#)

8.CC. [View 8th Grade Communication & Collaboration Standards](#)

7.CC. [View 7th Grade Communication & Collaboration Standards](#)

6.CC. [View 6th Grade Communication & Collaboration Standards](#)

5.CC. [View 5th Grade Communication & Collaboration Standards](#)

SOCIAL STUDIES

HISTORY

GHW. [View Geography & History of the World Standards](#)

WH. [View World History & Civilization Standards](#)

8.H. [View 8th Grade History Standards](#)

7.H. [View 7th Grade History Standards](#)

6.H. [View 6th Grade History Standards](#)

5.H. [View 5th Grade History Standards](#)

GEOGRAPHY

6.G. [View 6th Grade Geography Standards](#)

6.CIV. [View Grade 6 Middle School Civics Standards](#)

CIVICS & GOV.

5.G. [View 5th Grade Civics & Gov. Standards](#)

6.G. [View 6th Grade Civics & Gov. Standards](#)

6.CIV. [View Grade 6 Middle School Civics Standards](#)

ECONOMICS

E. [View Economics Standards](#)



PROFILE OF PLAYWRIGHTS

LYNN AHRENS &

STEPHEN FLAHERTY



PC Nathan Johnson

Lynn Ahrens (book & lyrics) and Stephen Flaherty (score) are the award-winning creators behind some of Broadway's most beloved musicals. They won the Tony, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle Awards and earned two Grammy nominations for their score of *Ragtime*. They also received Academy Award and Golden Globe nominations for their songs and score for *Anastasia* featuring a Gold Record and a Number One song. Their Broadway hits include *Once On This Island*, which won eight Tony nominations and Olivier Award for Best Musical, and *Seussical*- a popular favorite with Grammy and Drama Desk nominations. Their other works include *My Favorite Year*, *A Man of No Importance* (Outer Critics Circle Award), *Dessa Rose* (Audelco Award), *Lucky Stiff* (Helen Hayes Award), and *The Glorious Ones* (Drama Desk nominations). The duo also created music for *Chita Rivera: The Dancer's Life* and the 2009 revival of *Ragtime*.

Individually, Ahrens contributed to the Madison Square Garden and NBC adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* and wrote songs for *Schoolhouse Rock*, earning an Emmy Award and four nominations. Flaherty has premiered work at both the Hollywood Bowl and Carnegie Hall, as well as receiving the Joseph Jefferson Award for *Loving Repeating*.

Both are members of the Dramatists Guild of America, ASCAP, and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and they co-chair the Dramatists Guild Fellows program for emerging writers. In 2014 they were awarded the Oscar Hammerstein Lifetime Achievement Award, and in 2015 they were inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame.



ROOTS OF THE STORY

BY SARAH SCHLESINGER*

Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*, which inspired Trinidad novelist Rosa Guy to write *My Love, My Love*, has been told many times, most recently in the Disney animated film. The tale is basically a romance between two people from different worlds: a sea-bound mermaid; and a land-bound human Prince.

When Rosa Guy read the Hans Christian Andersen tale, she was so moved by its sadness and beauty she wanted to adapt it in a fresh way. She chose the island of Haiti, located in the Great Antilles (a chain of islands in the Caribbean Sea), as the setting for her version of the beloved tale. In Haiti, where great wealth and staggering poverty exist side by side, there were clearly two different worlds in which place to place the heroine and hero of her story.

The stern social distinctions on the island are based not only on wealth (or lack of it), but on skin color and ancestry. The wealthy ruling class (the "grand hommes") are mulatto, descended from the union between early French settlers and their black slaves. In 1791, a slave revolution led by the charismatic Toussaint L'Ouverture ousted the French colonists and created the first black independent republic. Nevertheless, as decades passed, class distinctions between lighter-skinned Haitians of mixed blood and black former slaves continued to separate the people of the island. Today, the grand hommes govern the island from positions of great wealth and power.

In the novel Ms. Guy created, Ti Moune (Andersen's Mermaid) is a dark-skinned peasant girl who falls in love with a light-skinned young grand homme named Daniel. *My Love, My Love* tells the bittersweet tale of the girl's obsession with the boy whose life she saves and her journey to "his world" to convince him to marry her. The novel incorporates many of the details of Haitian life Rosa Guy observed while living there: the strong faith of the peasant in their gods, the separation of light- and dark-skinned Haitians, the rural way of life, and the sophistication of urban Haiti. *Once On This Island* remains faithful to Mrs. Guy's books, and to her Caribbean setting and characters.

However, the musical departs from the novel in its ending, which is closer in spirit to the ending of Hans Christian Andersen's story. *Once On This Island* offers spiritual redemption for Ti Moune. The triumph of her faith and her ability to forgive enable the show's storytellers to find a healing message for their own lives.

THEMES



LOVE AND SACRIFICE

The story highlights the transformative power of love and the sacrifices people make in its name, even when it leads to personal loss.

CLASS AND CULTURAL DIVIDES

The tension between the wealthy "grands hommes" and the poorer islanders underscores themes of inequality and the challenges of bridging societal divides.

FATE AND FREE WILL

The influence of the gods raises questions about destiny versus choice, as characters navigate their paths amidst divine intervention.

RESILIENCE AND HOPE

The tale celebrates the enduring spirit of the islanders, emphasizing their ability to find hope and renewal in the face of hardship.

THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

The framing of the story as a communal legend demonstrates how stories preserve history, teach lessons, and inspire future generations.

DISCUSSION TOPICS



Ti Moune is drawn to Daniel despite their differences in class and skin color. How does their relationship challenge or reinforce the stereotypes and prejudices of their society?

In what ways do you see class or cultural divisions reflected in the world today, and how do people attempt to overcome them?

Do you think Ti Moune's destiny was entirely controlled by the gods, or did her choices play a role in shaping her fate?

How do the villagers show resilience in the face of challenges like poverty and natural disasters?

Write a one-page paper answering the following question: Storytelling is an important element of Caribbean culture. How does storytelling help preserve the history and culture of the islanders, and how does it function in our own lives or communities?

In what ways does the musical critique or reflect the real-world impact of colorism? How might these themes resonate differently for audiences today versus when the show was first written?

SUGGESTED READING



FIND THESE & OTHER
TITLES AT THE ST. JOE
PUBLIC LIBRARY!

El Deafo

by Cece Bell

THEMES EXPLORED: Resilience &
Hope, The Power of Storytelling
AGES 10-12

The Crossover

by Kwame Alexander

THEMES EXPLORED: Love &
Sacrifice, Resilience & Hope
AGES: 10-12

Esperanza Rising

by Pam Muñoz Ryan

THEMES EXPLORED: Class &
Cultural Divides, Resilience & Hope
AGES 10-14

Brown Girl Dreaming

by Jacqueline Woodson

THEMES EXPLORED: Resilience &
Hope, The Power of Storytelling
AGES 10-14

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

by Sherman Alexie

THEMES EXPLORED: Class &
Cultural Divides, Resilience & Hope
AGES 12-18

The House on Mango Street

by Sandra Cisneros

THEMES EXPLORED: Class &
Cultural Divides, Resilience & Hope
AGES 12-18

Long Way Down

by Jason Reynolds

THEMES EXPLORED: Fate & Free
Will, Resilience & Hope
AGES: 12-18

Aristotle & Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe

by Benjamin Alire Sáenz

THEMES EXPLORED: Love &
Sacrifice, Resilience & Hope
AGES 14-18

The Hate U Give

by Angie Thomas

THEMES EXPLORED: Resilience &
Hope, The Power of Storytelling
AGES 14-18

VOCABULARY

DEFINITIONS SOURCED FROM THE MERRIAM WEBSTER DICTIONARY

Grands hommes*- (n) French term meaning “great men.” The term is used in the play to describe the free people of color, gens des couleurs, who have the most economic power and make up the governing class of the island.

The grands hommes, with their pale brown skins and thier French ways, owners of the land and masters of their own fates.

Loom- (v) to take shape as an impending occurrence
Nothing but trouble looms ahead.

Arrogant- (adj) showing an offensive attitude of superiority
Arrogant fool, [you] think you can hold back death?

Mulatto- (n) the first-generation offspring of a Black person and a white person (usually offensive)
Ti Moune had promised her soul, pledged her life for this pale mulatto boy named Daniel.

Descend- (v) to originate or come from an ancestral stock or source
Daniel Beauxhomme... a boy from another world, another people, a people descended from the French!

Ailing- (adj) having or suffering from an illness or injury
The ailing Daniel Beauzhomme had chosen a peasant as a lover.

Trousseau- (n) the personal possessions of a bride usually including clothes, accessories, and household linens and wares
Some girls take pleasure in buying a fine trousseau.

Mademoiselle- (n) an unmarried French girl or woman
I'm so happy to meet you, my dear mademoiselle.

Temperamental- (adj) marked by excessive sensitivity and impulsive mood changes
Ah, such powerful, such tempermental gods rule our island.

Murmur- (n) a low indistinct but often continuous sound
We dance to the music of the gods, through... the murmur of the river and the roar of the rain.

Refrain- (n) a regularly recurring phrase or verse especially at the end of each stanza or division of a poem or song
As the the rich go racing to their own refrain, we dance to the Earth.

Subside- (v) to become quiet or less
At last, the storm subsided and the morning sun glowed.

Putting on airs - (idiom) to act in a way that shows one thinks one is better than other people
Now, what do you make of a peasant like her? Putting on airs without a doubt!

Tempest- (n) a violent storm
Sweet as Eucalyptus and terrible as a tempest banging a drum, Ti Moune growing up to soon.

Vigil- (n) the act of keeping awake at times when sleep is customary
The peasants carried the boy to the village, and laid him on Ti Moune's mat. And her long vigil began.

HISTORY LESSON: FURTHER LEARNING RESOURCES



LOVE HISTORY OF HAITI | RICH COLONY FOR FRANCE

Checkout this video providing an overview of how Saint-Domingue became a prosperous French colony, emphasizing the economic and social conditions of the time. AGES: 12-18



HAITAIN REVOLUTIONS | CRASH COURSE WORLD HISTORY

Checkout this video providing a comprehensive overview of the Haitian Revolution, detailing the French colonization period and the subsequent fight for independence. AGES 14-18



THE HAITAIN REVOLUTION & IT'S CAUSES | WORLD HISTORY PROJECT

Checkout this video covering the onset of the Haitian Revolution, providing valuable context about the French colonial period leading up to the uprising. AGES: 14-18

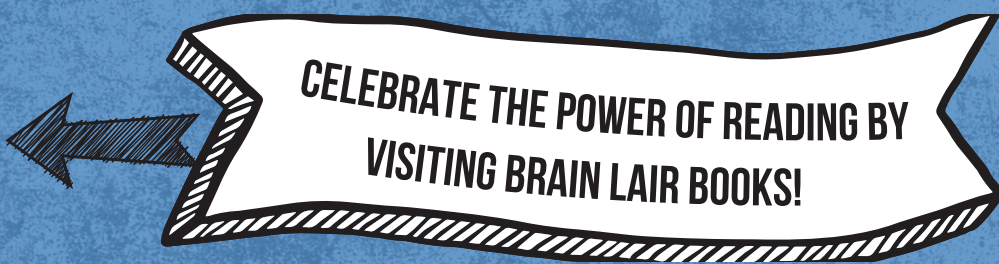
SPOTLIGHT ON KATHY BURNETTE



THE ROLE OF STORYTELLING IN CULTURAL IDENTITY

In *Once on This Island*, storytelling is more than a narrative device; it serves as the heartbeat of cultural preservation and communal identity. Through the powerful opening number, "We Tell the Story," the islanders unite to recount the tale of Ti Moune, illustrating how shared stories transmit collective values, history, and resilience. This oral tradition reflects the rich heritage of the Caribbean, where storytelling often intertwines with music, dance, and spirituality to bind communities together. By weaving themes of love, sacrifice, and the interplay between humanity and the divine, the storytellers in the musical not only entertain but also pass down the wisdom and struggles of generations. Exploring this theme reveals how storytelling becomes a form of resistance, healing, and cultural pride in the face of historical challenges such as colonization and natural disasters. The islanders' tale reminds us of the universal power of stories to preserve identity, inspire hope, and forge connections across time and space.

Much like the community depicted in the musical, South Bend is a vibrant hub of culture, resilience, and diverse voices. Kathy M Burnette, founder of Brain Lair Books, has long been a champion of storytelling as a tool for fostering empathy, understanding, and community engagement. By curating an inclusive collection of books and hosting events that celebrate underrepresented voices, the bookstore exemplifies the transformative power of stories to bridge divides and uplift marginalized perspectives. As a space dedicated to education and cultural dialogue, Brain Lair Books embodies the same commitment to storytelling's role in cultural identity as *Once on This Island*.



ACTIVITY

EXERCISE: *Once On This Island: Gossip Column!*
GRADES: 5th-12th Grade
TIME: 45min



SUPPLIES: Notebook, Pencils, Script (QR code), Computers (optional)

OVERVIEW:

"Once On This Island" centers around Ti Moune and Daniel, a peasant girl and a "grand homme," who inhabit different worlds on the island of Haiti. Their fleeting romance has become the talk of the community. Students will write a submission in the style of a gossip column, adopting the perspective of a character other than Ti Moune and Daniel. They can select any character from the show, including the deities. This article can take place at any moment during the play but must relate to Ti Moune and Daniel's "relationship" in some manner, supported by textual evidence.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Begin the activity by initiating a discussion with students about gossip or what they might currently refer to as "drama." Explore questions such as: How are rumors initiated? How does drama spread today? What methods were used to circulate gossip in the past?
2. If students haven't already touched on gossip columns or magazines, introduce this concept to them. Inform them that they will be crafting their own gossip piece from the viewpoint of a character in *Once On This Island*, focusing on Ti Moune and Daniel's "relationship."
3. Students can select any named character, including the gods or deities from the play, or even an unnamed peasant or grand homme. The article can be set at any point during the events of the play, as long as it occurs after the public becomes aware of Ti Moune and Daniel's "relationship." The opinions expressed must be backed by textual evidence.
4. Allow students 15 minutes to choose their character and search through the script for supporting material. Give them 30 minutes to write their articles.
5. Once the articles are complete, have students present them in small groups. Encourage them to share their textual evidence and pose respectful questions about their peers' articles. If time allows, invite those who wish to share with the entire class.

ASSESSMENT:

- Were students able to use text based evidence to write original material set within the world of the play? If not, in what ways did they struggle?
- Could students effectively share out their written work verbally, and have it remain cohesive? When and how did we fall short?
- How many details did students remember about the play in order to relate it to their article? Did anyone in particular struggle with this recall? How can they further be supported?

ACTIVITY

EXERCISE: *Once On This Island:*
Comparing & Contrasting The Gods
GRADES: 8th-12th Grade
TIME: 45min-1hr+



SUPPLIES: Notebook, Pencils, Script (QR code), Means to Research, (book or online), Optional: Poster Boards/Large Paper, Markers, Printer Access

OVERVIEW:

"Once On This Island" deeply explores Haitian folklore and mythology, featuring the deities as characters woven throughout the narrative. These deities propel the story, engage with humans, and directly influence the unfolding events, mirroring their roles in traditional mythology. Students will select one of the gods presented in "Once On This Island" to compare and contrast their portrayal in the play with their representation in traditional Haitian folklore and history.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Begin by asking students for their opinions on the gods presented in *Once On This Island*, facilitating the ensuing discussion. Have they encountered these gods before? Do they remind them of other deities from different folklore? In what ways did these gods assist or hinder the narrative?
2. Explain to students that while playwrights, particularly these authors, strive to faithfully represent folklore in their works, they sometimes take creative liberties to advance the plot or create a more cohesive story.
3. Today, students will compare and contrast how these gods are depicted in *Once On This Island* with their traditional representations in Haitian folklore and historical texts. Each student should utilize at least two reliable sources for their comparisons. If the class has not yet discussed how to identify credible sources, now is an ideal opportunity. The deities to choose from include: Papa Ge (God of Death), Erzulie (Goddess of Love), Agwe (Goddess of Water), or Asaka (Mother of the Earth).
4. This project can be approached as either an individual compare and contrast essay or as a group visual presentation (in groups of 4-5), utilizing the materials mentioned earlier. Select the format that best suits your students and their grade level.
5. Provide students with at least 15 minutes for research and 30 minutes or more to create their essays or visual presentations. Encourage them to share their essays in small groups or present their visuals to the entire class.

ASSESSMENT:

- How well did students remember the gods and their actions in *Once On This Island*? Were their thoughts and opinions supported by the text?
- How well were students able to craft compare and contrast arguments for these deities?
- Were the arguments made consistent with how their grade level is expected to perform? How can we work further with students who struggled with this activity?
- Did students ultimately believe *Once On This Island* to be an accurate portrayal? Why or why not?

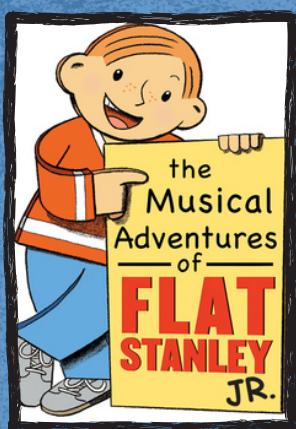
WORK WITH US

SOUTH
BEND
CIVIC
THEATRE

Whether you like to be “in the spotlight,” or prefer to stay “behind the scenes,” South Bend Civic Theatre offers plenty of opportunities to volunteer in every aspect of theatrical production, including field trips, learning new skills, and even opportunities to see shows for free! Checkout our website to learn more!



UPCOMING SHOWS



LEARN MORE AT SBCT.ORG