

Theatre Online

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Theatre is tricky for distance learning. It is physical – involving movement. But it also involves opening up the imagination and using your senses. These pages contain theatre exercises that can be done via Zoom, facetime, skype or any manner of video during distance learning. Once you are back in the theatre or classroom, they are easily incorporated into your other lesson plans.

In addition to exercises, there is a chapter on creating the “Five-Day Wonder Play” for different age groups. It’s bare-boned theatre, but it’s still theatre.

After “The Wonder Play,” there are 9 short plays that can be done on the computer – offered free of charge for classroom use. They have all been produced.

More Free Scenes for Teens can be found here: <https://www.claudiahaas.com/free-scenes-for-teens.html>.

Okay. We’re ready to go. Places.

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THINK FAST

Age Group: Any age (yay)

Materials: "Found" props.

Gather props from your home – the more mundane the better: a pen, a spoon, a saucepan, a pillow. After you have done this a few times with your group, you can encourage your students to bring different prop to the next session.

Tell your students this "pen" can be anything but *it cannot be a pen!* For example: (and you demonstrate)

- a. (Hold pen sticking out from you nose) – it's Pinocchio's nose!
- b. (Hold pen by forehead) – it's a unicorn horn
- c. (Tapping your hand rhythmically) – it's a drumstick
- d. (Waving it in air measuredly) – it's a conductor's baton
- e. (Hanging it by your ear) – it's an earring

It's important that the student use the object physically. As the students become proficient, it could become a guessing game.

The challenge of course is to keep the movements small and concise. Have each student use the pen in an imaginative manner. After you have gone around twice, switch props. At the onset, you will pick props that the students have on hand such as the pen or paper. Later, each student can bring their own and have the other students mime "the pillow," "the rubber duck," etc.

This exercise helps with the use of props, choosing small concise movements as an actor and of course expanding the imagination.

NOTE: If a student is blocked and just cannot think of anything, the student merely passes the object to the next person or says "pass."

Where Are We?

Age Group: Any

Materials: None

Leader mimes an action that can only take happen in a certain place. The “place” needs to be able to contain as many different actions as possible. Once a student guesses where the person is, the students needs to mime a different action that happens in the same place as the leaders.

This is also a small physical exercise that students can do sitting in a chair without having to move about too much.

Leader mimes ballet moves (yes, just using arms). If students have figured out where the Leader is (dance studio), they will also mime a dance movement. NOTE: the dance movement needs to be *different* than what the Leader is doing (so maybe does a waltz, the twist, etc.). If you have the capability to have the students stand and move that is great. I have done this both in an open room and also just in a circle in a classroom.

Other places that are good for multi-movements:

- playgrounds
- -circus
- -zoo
- orchestra
- restaurant
- swimming pool
- winter activity
- amusement park/fair
- kitchen
- sports stadium

Once you have all (or most of the students) moving, say “FREEZE!” Go around the room and ask the students where they thought they were and what they were doing. In theory, they should all be at the same place however, if the answer makes sense, it is something to discuss.*

*A student typing always creates confusion. At home? The library? Or are they playing the piano? Discuss how to create movement that is very specific that doesn’t cause confusion. This relates to how they move onstage. If you are typing at home, you will move differently than if you are in a classroom.

One Line

Ages: Any (all though the line you supply will change)

Materials: None

Give your students one line. For Grades 1-3, use a line from a picture book, Dr. Seuss, Mother Goose, etc. For grades 4-6, maybe from Harry Potter, a superhero comic, Shel Silverstein; for grades 7 and up – anything goes from Shakespeare to pop culture.

After they know their line, one-by-one give them a character to play. Encourage them to change their voice: pitch, speed, accents, etc. Is your character forgetful? One that never listens to anyone else. One who is above everyone? Nervous? Sick? Tired?

Possible characters: Spiderman, Wonder Woman, Frankenstein, King, Queen, circus performer, child on the last day of school, actor at an audition, Harry Potter, Hermione, Romeo, Juliet, Alice-in-Wonderland, The Mad Hatter, a skunk, Velveteen Rabbit, a turtle, an opera singer, a mad scientist, anyone from a pop culture movie or tv show they are likely to know....

After everyone has said their line, discuss the choices. Was the pitch too high for an audience to understand? Was the accent too thick? How can you make vocal choices that will both reveal character and be clear for your audience.

Sounds

Ages: best with K-5

Materials: None (Unless the Leader wants a prepared story.)

This is a good quieting activity. The Leader makes up a story that includes sounds. After you make the sound once, have the students repeat the sound twice. First normally and then quietly. No raised voices!

For example:

“It was late at night and the clock was ticking (tick-tock). I was time for bed (yawn). I put my book down quietly (quiet slap). A mouse scurried across the room scurry, scurry). The cat woke up with a little meow (meow) and then went back to sleep and purred (pur). Rain softly fell on the roof (drip drip). And the house creaked just a little (creak). Frogs sang in the rain (ribbut) and a dove cooed in the distance (coo coo). I stood up in my soft slippers and pittered-pattered to bed (pitter patter). I fluffed my pillow (fluff fluff) and went to sleep (breathe).

My Body

Ages: any

Materials: None

This is another quieting activity.

Have the students sit quietly with their arms down by their sides. Nobody moves. Nobody says anything. Quietly ask them to:

- wiggle their nose
- stretch open their mouth
- wrinkle their forehead
- move their left pinky finger
- put their right arm on their stomach. Breathe. Let it go up and down.
- clasp their hands
- move their hips left; then slowly right
- wiggle their knees
- wiggle just one knee
- stretch their toes
- and in very slow motion, stand up

The exercise helps with awareness of all the (small) possibilities of movement the each actor has.

The Story Play

Recite a story your group will perform (yes, seated by their computer). It can be a fairy tale (which still works for high school students), a fable, a folktale. It can be Romeo & Juliet in a new time period using vernacular. Students can choose a character (if everyone wants to be the same character, pick a name out of a hat). If the story does not have enough characters, students can add a character.

This was mainly used for Grades 1-8. Thoughts of working on a play with high school students follows.

In one class we did "The Golden Goose." One student was determined to be an Irish, turkey-seller in the woods. Did it matter that there was no turkey seller in the story? No. And it worked.

The example below is a "play" developed by students in grade school. It was part of a theatre class entitled "Sillies." The story is the "The Building of Chelm." (The folklore of Chelm is a rich resource of some very silly stories that sometimes quietly deliver a message of "working together." And sometimes, yeah, they're just silly. Silly is good.

The Story

Once the world was new and there were no people. Two angels (messengers, whatever you prefer) were given the job of populating the world. One angel had a sack of wise souls. Another angel had a sack of silly souls. They were to distribute them equally throughout the world.

After days of flying around the earth, the angel with the "silly souls" was very tired. When they came to a mountainous area, the tired angel could barely see straight and flew – right into a mountain! All the silly souls dropped into one valley. And the town of Chelm was born. With not one wise soul to help them.

The town grew. And grew some more. In time, the town grew so much that there was no room. A town meeting was held and there were many arguments as to how to get more space in the tiny town.

Remember, they were nestled between two mountains. In order to build elsewhere, someone would always have to be climbing a mountain to get into the new space. Finally, one person had an idea!

"Move a mountain!"

"Move a mountain?" cried the townspeople.

And the more they thought about it, the more they decided this was a very good idea.

The next morning, the entire town positioned themselves in front of a mountain. And pushed. And pushed. And – well, you get the idea. After hours of pushing, the sun was high in the sky and they were getting hot. They decided to take off their jackets and have a short nap. They put their jackets into a huge pile and had a short nap at the bottom of the mountain.

Meanwhile, robbers were watching with amusement. As they watched the people go to sleep, they decided to steal the jackets. I mean, they were robbers after all.

One robber worried. “What if they wake up and catch us?”

But another robber declared, “What will they do? These people *are trying to move a mountain!*”

The robbers made off with all of the jackets. Meanwhile, the townspeople woke up and resumed pushing the mountain. Suddenly, one town person noticed that their jackets were missing.

“But that is wonderful,” exclaimed another town person. “That means we have pushed the mountain so far away, we cannot see the jackets anymore!” And the townspeople went home and celebrated.

The beauty of this story is that it is indeed silly and fun – much needed right now. And your young performers can be anyone they want to be. An opera singer? A baker? A trapeze artist? Anything goes. And none of the characters are assigned a gender. You can even make up your character’s name.

While there are no lines set in stone, explain carefully to your students what *has to happen*.

- the angels dropping off souls
- the creation of Chelm
- the town meeting
- pushing the mountain
- taking off their jackets and napping
- the robbers stealing the jackets
- waking up and noting they have moved their mountain
- the celebration

How they get there will vary.

Below is the script that a class of nine developed. I have done this with a class of six and also with eighteen. This is merely an example. Let the students play.

Below is an outline of the play that was used for Grades 1-3. It can be streamlined as you get older. If using for teens, you will probably not need a narrator at all.

Moving a Mountain

CHARACTERs:

NARRATOR: (this can be the leader or an advanced student) The purpose of this role is to keep the students on track and to offer a little nudge if a student gets lost or forgets a line. E.g. "And then the First Angel said....."

FIRST ANGEL (make up a name)

SECOND ANGEL (again, make up a name)

(For the remainder of the characters, make up a name. I like characters with names.)

FLOWER LADY

DANCER

SILLY MAYOR

THINK'S HE'S SMART TEACHER

OFFICER

ROBBER BOB

ROBBER ROBBIE

ROBBER ROBIN

1. First we introduce the characters – that is important for the younger grades.

NARRATOR

Once upon a time there were two angels who populated the world with souls. The first angel carried the wise souls –

(First Angel enters and makes an introduction.)

NARRATOR

And the second angel carried the sill ones.

(Second angel enters and makes an introduction.)

NARRATOR

They had been delivering souls for days and were getting tired.

(Angels create scene.)

NARRATOR

And so they headed off into the mountains. The first angel was doing very well sprinkling the wise souls all over the earth but the second angel wasn't seeing very well and flew into a mountain.

(Angels create scene.)

NARRATOR

And the town of sillies named Chelm was born. The town grew...
(Student enters and introduces.)

NARRATOR

And grew....

(Student enters and introduces. Continue doing so until all of the students have been introduced – including the robbers.)

(Late the Angels can join in the scene where they push the mountain so they are not excluded from the rest of the play.)

NARRATOR

And soon there was no room in the valley for all the people in the town. So they held a meeting. They complained as silly people do.

(The students enact the meeting, complaints and all until one decided to *move a mountain!*)

NARRATOR

The next morning, the townspeople lined up at the foot of the mountain (they do so) and pushed. And pushed. And pushed.

(Students enact scene.)

NARRATOR

They didn't know it but they were being watched by robbers!

(Robbers act scene.)

NARRATOR

By midday, they were so tired they couldn't push anymore.

(Students get tired, decide to nap, pile jackets, etc.)

NARRATOR

While they were sleeping, the robbers came out of hiding.

(Scene.)

NARRATOR

The townspeople woke up and lined up again and pushed. And pushed and pushed.

(They do so.)

NARRATOR

Finally, the Smart Teacher noticed the jackets were missing!

(They act the scene.)

NARRATOR

And they went home to celebrate. And plan their next building in their new, spacious town.

(Students act scene.)

(You may add music, a song, a dance – yes, a dance at your computer.)

THE END

Scroll down for table work for high school students working on a play.

TABLE WORK – High School

The Story – all its nuances, themes clarified

- Students retell the story: orally, written or as a storyboard. For a storyboard, students can do this together.
- Students list every event in story
- Students identify conflict and the climax of the play

Characters

- Students create images of each character: through written work, orally or creating a collage
- Students work instinctively:
 - if this character was an animal, what would it be?
 - or a color?
 - or a sound?
 (And how do these answers help the actor create a vocal and body language for character?)

World of the Play

- Students identify time period, place
- do the characters react in typical fashion to their world or in atypical fashion?
- improvise/write/draw rituals that the characters would do during their day
(What do they eat? What do they believe spiritually? What is their work?)

Play with the Play

- One student reads a scene, other students act it out in pantomime
- Improvise a scene that isn't in the play - before or after a particular scene

Connect

- What are the themes in the play?
- What does each character want?
- What idea/character/scene connected you the most to the play?

Scroll down for some scenes that can be done seated at the computer.

FLYING
By Claudia I. Haas

CAST:

Allie: (f) 12; protective and pragmatic big sister

Liza: (f) 10; younger sister, fanciful or has a super-power

PLACE: The sisters' bedroom.

TIME: Today

AT RISE Liza swoops into Allie's bed.

ALLIE

Whaaaaat?

LIZA

Wake up! *Wake up! WAKE UP! I FLEW!*

ALLIE

That's nice. Go to sleep.

LIZA

How can I sleep after flying around the room?

ALLIE

Come again?

LIZA

I did it! I opened my eyes and saw myself swooping down to you. I flew into you! Isn't that amazing?

ALLIE

You're dreaming.

LIZA

Awake! And then I just – I don't know – came down as quickly as I was up and landed in your bed.

ALLIE

If you say so. Would you mind – errrrr..... flying back to your bed, Little Bird?

LIZA

You don't believe me.

ALLIE

I – just – don't want you jumping off rooftops or out of trees. Too dangerous.

LIZA

I won't. Because I don't know how it happened. I woke up – and was in the air!

ALLIE

Was it cool?

LIZA

Way cool.

ALLIE

Good. Back to sleep?

LIZA

Next to you? Flying is scary.

ALLIE

Next to me. Night little bird.

LIZA

Night Allie.

End of Play

FUMBLE AND THE FAIRIES (Group Scene)*
By Claudia I. Haas

*The “dancing” should just be rhythmically seated using arms.

Characters: Fairies (8) (1m, 1f 6 m or f)
Pennyroyal (f) the Queen (in charge)
Basil (m) the King (a bit vain)
Sorrel (m/f) moody
Dilly (m/f) dreamer
Verbena (m/f) a rule-follower
Chervil (m/f) exacting
Fennel (m/f) deep-thinker
Woodruff (m/f) intellectual

PENNYROYAL

A perfect spot for our midsummer dances.

BASIL

The flowers will be in awe of my majestic movements.

SORREL

I don't know. It looks like a weasel tunneled here. We could sprain an ankle.

DILLY

Oh Sorrel! Don't be so gloomy. We could teach the weasel to dance!

SORREL

In your dreams.

DILLY

I love my dreams.

VERBENA

If the King and Queen say we dance here, then we dance here.

CHERVIL

Absolutely. And we must map out exactly where our dance floor is to be. This way, nobody will get lost in the woods.

VERBENA

What an excellent idea. Shall we take measurements?

CHERVIL

(Taking out a large tape measure.)

I thought you'd never ask.

FENNEL

We must be aware of the weather patterns. For beautiful dancing cannot happen in the mud.

WOODRUFF

True. We must check the clouds every hour, At present, I only see cirrus clouds which are very high up at about 18,000 feet and not likely to rain on us. We must keep a lookout for the large, puffy cumulonimbus clouds. They are most likely to produce rain and certainly dampen our spirits.

FENNEL

How do you know that stuff?

WOODRUFF

Wikipedia.

PENNYROYAL

Shall we have a short practice session?

BASIL

Can you keep up with me?

PENNYROYAL

Let's show them how it's done.

(BASIL and PENNYROYAL begin a short dance.)

SORREL

I love how graceful they are. I fear I will never be so.

DILLY

You can do anything if you put your mind to it. Shall we?

(And they dance.)

VERBENA

That's a new dance. So, it's just this step and that step and this step, correct?

CHERVIL

Actually Verbena, it's *that* step and *this* step and *that* step. Shall we?

(And they dance.)

FENNEL

They glide in such a rhythmic fashion. I feel if I could become one with the movements, I will be able to do this dance.

WOODRUFF

Dance is nothing more than moving rhythmically to music in a series of steps. Like so.

(WOODRUFF dances and FENNEL joins WOODRUFF. The FAIRIES dance off.)

Scroll down for next scene

Searching for Truth
By Claudia I. Haas

CAST: 6 (4 female, 2 male or female)
 Anna (female); a young teen; the searcher
 Mother (female): Anna's Mother; not one to give advice
 Rocky (male or female); a tricky rock
 Birchness (male or female); a birch tree
 Lily Pad (female); a very self-involved lily-pad
 Truth Female); a wizend, semi-wise woman
 (Mother and Truth could double)

PLACE: The woodsy world

TIME: Timeless

SYMOPSIS: Anna is growing up and seeks to know the wisdom of all things and so goes searching for Tuth.

Searching for Truth

AT RISE, we could be on a set of levels – that can serve as ANNA'S home and her journey into the forest to find TRUTH – who is living in a cave, ANNA and MOTHER enter – knee-deep in argument.

ANNA

But Mother, what is it? I don't understand?

MOTHER

I don't understand why you can't ask me simple questions. Questions such as "Why is the sky blue?"

ANNA

Because I know why the sky's blue. The molecules in the air scatter the blue light from the sun more than they scatter the red light. Of course, that changes at sunset. But back to my question -

MOTHER

It's true because it is true.

ANNA

But how do you know what is true? Maybe truth is a lie.

MOTHER

This is one question where you have to discover the answer for yourself.

ANNA
But how?

MOTHER
You must search for Truth and ask her.

ANNA
Where will I find her?

MOTHER
She does travel the world. But she often comes home to her cave somewhere in the
“forest-of-all-that-can-be- trusted. “

ANNA
Will you come with me?

MOTHER
It’s a journey you must make for yourself. I did when I was young and now it is your
turn.

ANNA
Is it scary?

MOTHER
It’s – unpredictable. Let me get you some fruit and water for your adventure.

(MOTHER exits.)

ANNA
Adventure? I didn’t want to go on an adventure! I was just asking a few questions! I
don’t even know where to begin.

(MOTHER hurries back with a basket of fruit and some water.)

MOTHER
Mind your manners, stay away from wolves and come home to me soon!

ANNA
Wolves?

MOTHER
They usually leave you alone.

ANNA
Usually?

(MOTHER hugs ANNA.)

MOTHER
I love you!

(MOTHER exits.)

ANNA
(Calling after her.)

Sending me into a forest with wolves is a strange way of showing your love! You'll be sorry when I'm gone! You'll be –

ROCKY
Lady, what's your problem?

ANNA
Wait! What? Did a rock talk to me! Rocks can't speak!

ROCKY
Nobody told me that.

ANNA
Well, since you can speak – maybe you can help me.

ROCKY
What's in it for me?

ANNA
I have some fruit ... and some water ...

ROCKY
Don't be silly. Rocks don't eat or drink!

ANNA
I knew that.

ROCKY
Warmth. I crave warmth. Day after day I sit here under a tree never knowing the warmth of the sun. Rocks need warmth, too.

ANNA
Sooooo..... if I move you into the sun – you will help me?

ROCKY

I'll tell you what I know.

(And with great effort, ANNA, "rolls" ROCKY into the sun.)

ANNA

I'm looking for Truth. Do you know where she lives?

ROCKY

Not so fast. I'm – itchy. Could you scrape some of the moss off my back?

(ANNA finds a stick and does so.)

ANNA

Now will you help me? I need to find Truth. It's very important.

ROCKY

Never saw her.

(ANNA abruptly stops scratching ROCKY'S back.)

ANNA

I moved you into the sun! I scratched your back! And you refuse to help?

ROCKY

Don't get all huffy with me. I said I'd tell you what I know and I don't know anything. You don't see a lot lying on the ground all day. Bugs! I see a lot of bugs! Why don't you ask the Birch Tree? Birch trees are tall and see things.

ANNA

Thanks for nothing! Birch Tree? Oh Birch Tree!

(A BIRCH TREE moves into the forest.)

BIRCHNESS

Ahhhhhhh – CHOOOOOOOO!

ANNA

Gesundheit! Can you help me? I'm searching for Truth.

BIRCHNESS

I know that you silly child. If you want me to help you, you must do as I say.

(BIRCHNESS blows some dust off of her/his branch.)

BIRCHNESS (cont'd)

Would you look at that? Perfectly awful! My branches are covered in dust and I'm allergic to dust! All these spider webs and bird feathers and nests – nasty stuff! It's enough to turn me into a crab tree! I could use with a good dusting.

ANNA

You – want me to dust your branches?

BIRCHNESS

Quickly. Ahh-chooo!

ANNA

And then you will tell me where I can find Truth?

BIRCHNESS

Akkhhh-choo

(A leaf falls off.)

If this keeps up, I will have no more leaves and be naked. That would be very embarrassing!

(ANNA takes a napkin from her basket of food and begins to dust.)

ANNA

You will help? When I'm finished dusting, you will give me some useful information?

BIRCHNESS

Of course. I'm not a trickster like Rocky!

ROCKY

Watch it!

ANNA

You're dusted! Is there anything else I can do for you?

BIRCHNESS

A spot of tea would be nice.

ANNA

Where am I going to find tea in the forest?

BIRCHNESS

You have a point.

ANNA

Dear Lofty and Esteemed Birch Tree, now will you tell me where I can find Truth?

BIRCHNESS

Of course. Yesterday, I saw her drawing water from the pond over there.

(LILY-PAD and her pond moves into place.)

ANNA

Where did she go after that?

BIRCHNESS

I have no idea. It's hard to see things in the forest for the trees. If I were you, I'd ask the pond.

ANNA

Very well. Which way to the pond?

BIRCHNESS

Just yonder down the path of brambling bushes. You can't miss here. She's the only pond here. Ahh-choo! Oh dear! The dust is settling again.

ANNA

Now, I'll go to the Pond and she'll ask me for favors and this story will go on and on and I'll never find Truth!

(And she bumps into the pond. On top of the pond is LILY-PAD who is meditating.)

Oh! Hello!

LILY PAD

Shhh. I'M MEDITATING!

ANNA

Who are you?

LILY PAD

I am Lily, the Pod of the Pond. Have you ever seen a lovelier plant?

ANNA

Why – yes. You look fine.

LILY PAD

A little bit more, please.

(LILY PAD sways on the water.)

ANNA

More ... what?

(ANNA starts to sway with her.)

LILY PAD

Compliments. Worship my beauty. I thrive on compliments and worship.

ANNA

Can you stay still? I'm getting seasick.

LILY PAD

Occupational hazard, I'm afraid. I live on the water and water moves. Now, back to my favorite subject – me. How many ways do you find me beautiful?

ANNA

I need to ask you something.

LILY PAD

I won't answer until you speak poems about my loveliness.

ANNA

Very well. You are lovelier than than A toad!

LILY PAD

A toad? You are going to have to do better than that if you want my help. It's only fair, I scratch your back after you compliment mine.

ANNA

All right. You are – adequate!

LILY PAD

Adequate? ADEQUATE? Is that the best you can do? A lump of mud is adequate! A piece of bark is adequate! Even beetles are adequate!

ANNA

Actually, I think beetles are kind of cute.

LILY PAD

Beetles are cute and I am merely adequate? I am so beautiful that frogs weep when they see me. Butterflies curtsy before me. I am brilliant! Radiant? Venus in all her glory would bow before the gorgeousness of me!

ANNA

Are you done?

LILY PAD

I'm done. But you are not.

ANNA

All right! All right! You're not as slimy as a worm!

LILY PAD

I don't think you have the hang of this compliment thing at all.

ANNA

I am searching for Truth. I need to find Truth! How else can I find her if I am not truthful?

LILY PAD

I want to get rid of you. It's time for my beauty nap. Around the bend and through the clearing, you will find a cave. In that cave you will find Truth.

ANNA

Oh! Thank-you! Thank-you, you splendid, sparkling jewel of a dream!

(ANNA continues her journey.)

LILY PAD

I liked that. Truly I did. Time to sleep.

ANNA

Tru-uth! Oh Tr-uth! Are you about?

(A wizened old woman enters.)

Are you Truth?

TRUTH

I am.

ANNA

I have come to you for wisdom in all things. To learn about truth in life.

TRUTH

Come, Child. We will begin simply. Did you know that a fly is the only one who may eat at a king's table without using a napkin?

ANNA

Truly?

TRUTH

Absolutely. And a rock is a rock is a rock.

ROCKY

No kidding.

(ROCKY gets up and walks away and will exit)

ANNA

Hey! I thought you couldn't walk!

ROCKY

One never knows what one can do until one tries.

TRUTH

Elephants have flat feet from jumping out of birch trees.

BIRCHNESS

Flea-bitten creatures.

(BIRCHNESS exits.)

TRUTH

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder!

LILY PAD

And all who behold think me lovely!

(LILY PAD exits.)

TRUTH

Let us see if you can think properly. What is big at the bottom, little at the top and has ears?

ANNA

I don't know.

TRUTH

You are not thinking. You must develop your mind. Big at the bottom? Little at the top? Nice, big ears? Why, mountains of course!

ANNA

But – mountains don't have ears.

TRUTH

Have you never heard of a mountaineer?

ANNA

Tricky.

TRUTH

Yes – sometimes the truth is tricky. Let's try again. What is like a bird? But not a bird? It flies – but has no feathers. And if it lands in your hand – it dies.

ANNA

Is it – alive?

TRUTH

It doesn't know.

ANNA

How can I know about it if it doesn't know about it?

TRUTH

What flies without feathers? What dies in your hand?

ANNA

Nothing dies in my hand!

TRUTH

A snowflake does, of course. I see you are not a deep thinker.

ANNA

I'm just learning. Ask me another. Please.

TRUTH

Listen. You can hear me. You can see what I do but you cannot see me. What am I? What can you hear – but cannot see? But you can see what it does?

ANNA

I hear rain – but I can see it. I hear birds, animals, hail, wind – ohhhh! I hear wind but cannot see wind. I can see what wind does! It's the wind!

TRUTH

I see you are finding your way of thinking. We will try one more before I send you on your way. What was made when the world began but is always less than a month old?

ANNA

Old. But not old. Month The clue is in month. What changes every month? *The moon!*

TRUTH

See. You have known truth all along. Without knowing it. I must send you home before it gets dark, but please do me one favor. When you tell people you have met Truth and Truth has taught you well. Please add that you found Truth was – perfection. I wouldn't mind if you also said she was young and beautiful – I was - you know – in my time.

ANNA

You still are. Thank-you.

TRUTH

I will always be here for you.

ANNA

And I shall cherish you.

(She gives Truth her fruit and water.)

Thank-you.

(ANNA exits.)

END OF PLAY

Scroll down for more plays...

HE LOVES ME
By Claudia I. Haas

SAM – teens

ALYSSA – teens; holding a flower and counting off petals

ALYSSA: (Gently pulling a petal away) He loves me ...

SAM: Well, sure I can go to the dance with you. As long as you're sure we can do it as "just friends." Not interested in anything more.

ALYSSA: (Pulling off another flower) He loves me, not!

SAM: I'll spring for the wrist corsage. Everyone does it. It doesn't mean anything.

ALYSSA: (Pulling another petal) He loves me.

SAM: And I only have to dance with you once or twice, right? I mean - we are just friends! We don't want to go anywhere with this. Right? Just good buddies.

ALYSSA: (Pulling another petal) He loves me - not.

SAM: One slow dance is fine. I read that if you take a girl to a dance, one slow dance has no meaning. But two slow dances means you're romantically entwined. So we'll stop at one. Because I really respect you and all of that. I'll get you punch and do all the right things.

ALYSSA: (Pulling another petal) He loves me.

(ALYSSA smiles at SAM who is taken aback.)

SAM: Alyssa?

ALYSSA: Sam?

SAM: I've been meaning to tell you - you're looking pretty good these days - I didn't notice until I saw you in this light - but - wow! You know what? I'm thinking ...

ALYSSA: (Throwing flower on the ground) NOT!

HEALING

By Claudia I. Haas

CAST: 5+ (1 male, 4 male or female), all Native American; if your acting pool does not have Native American actors, I encourage you to be as diverse as you can. The only non-Native American victim was a Caucasian teacher.

You may certainly add more. Fill the stage if you wish.

(I have opted to not use the names of victims and survivors out of privacy)
CAST: (They are all high school students.)

Family Member A

Family Member B

Family Member C

Family Member D

Family Member E

A community room.

Mid-to late March 2005

SYNOPSIS: Healing ceremonies were held after the school shooting at Red Lake, March 21, 2005. Childhood cherished toys of the victims are in the center. Traditional pipes could be used and/or rattles (birch bark sticks covered in hide and filled with pebbles) or recorders. Information about the Ojibwe Healing Ceremony resources can be found after the end of the play.

This is a spur-of-the-moment get-together by teens after two funerals.

Props: tobacco, sage bundles, sweet grass, cedar.

HEALING

AT RISE the characters are gathered in a semi-circle in a community room in Red Lake, MN.

FAMILY MEMBER E

It's been a tough week for everyone. Two funerals today. More tomorrow and the Ojibwe Healing Ceremony at the end of the week. I know a few of us wanted to get together because we were there. We saw our friends – die. So here we are - using our tradition of bringing peace to those who are journeying in the sky – ishpiming. We are not here for judgment. We are here to help the ten victims/

FAMILY MEMBER A

Ten?/

FAMILY MEMBER E

/Ten. Yes. Ten. I think we have to be here for everyone even if it's not easy. (Beat.) Let's go for it. Ready? I hold in my left hand, - the hand closest to my heart - tobacco. It is to please the spirits and have them welcome our friends and family into the next world.

FAMILY MEMBER A

This bundle of sage is for my cousin. It reminds me to open my mind to think clearly, So I can remember and honor her. The sage cleans our sight to see goodness.

FAMILY MEMBER B

For my friend, I give this bundle of sage for cleaning the mouth so we only speak kindness as she did.

FAMILY MEMBER C

This sage is for purifying the feet so we walk lightly on our earthly home. Remember our teacher's garden? She loved the land.

FAMILY MEMBER D

For everyone, I offer cedar for balance. I hope those who left us find balance and I also want it for us. For my bestie, I offer sweet grass. This honors the mother earth and so I honor him.

FAMILY MEMBER E

And for our troubled one/

FAMILY MEMBER A

/No!

FAMILY MEMBER E

Does he not deserve peace?

FAMILY MEMBER A

But he/

FAMILY MEMBER E

/I know what he did. He is a lost soul. I'm thinking we need to guide him/

FAMILY MEMBER A

/I don't know!

(Someone takes her/his hand. Then another takes her/his hand. And squeezes it. FAMILY MEMBER A works hard at this and calms down. They all join hands.)

FAMILY MEMBER A

For our troubled one, I offer cedar and hope he finds balance and looks for love instead of holding on to hate.

Now, I would like to do something the school calls “affirmations.” They do this at the end of the year in all the school clubs. What will you take from those we have lost?

(These should go fairly fast.)

FAMILY MEMBER A

Fishing, Especially for walleye.

FAMILY MEMBER B

Comics.

FAMILY MEMBER C

Elephants! Don’t ask.

FAMILY MEMBER D

Alone.

FAMILY MEMBER A

Lonely.

FAMILY MEMBER E

Lost. Now we try and take the energy from the earth. Feel it come into our feet and up to our hearts. We know who we are. We know how to pray. Let us give each other peace.

(Maybe we hear a drumbeat. All come closer and hold hands and bow their heads.)

END OF PLAY

Resources

Ojibwe Healing Ceremony: <http://www.thesacredscience.com/ojibwe-healing-ritual-will-move/>

Ojibwe Resources: <http://ojibweresources.weebly.com/ojibwe-medicines.html>

7 Weeks. 3 Days

By Claudia I. Haas

CHARACTERS: 2 females (they should look around the same age)

Mari, 14-15, sick and a bit lonely

Emma 14-15, friend, a bit clueless but well-meaning

SYNOPSIS: Emma visits her friend Mari. Mari's been sick. It's awkward. She's awkward. Everything is awkward.

TIME: Today, later afternoon, after school

PLACE: a living room or family room in MARI'S home. All you need are some chairs and possibly a table.

(AT RISE, MARI is sitting. She can be reading or at her computer. She is thin and dressed in comfortable (yoga?) clothes. EMMA enters and quietly looks at MARI for a moment.)

MARI

Emma! How long have you been standing there?

EMMA

Just for you know – a second. You look ... great!

MARI

Liar.

EMMA

No – really. Absolutely. I didn't know/

MARI

/What to expect?

EMMA

Yes.

MARI

It's been ages. Well actually, seven weeks and three days but who's counting?

EMMA

I know. I'm sorry. My mom said you were "away." Hard to visit someone when you don't know where they are.

MARI

Nope. Not away. Here. Or in the hospital.

EMMA

I didn't know. Nobody did. I mean I called and my mom called/

MARI

/And then you stopped calling.

EMMA

Kind of. Sorry. (Beat.) Sooo... coming back to school anytime soon?

MARI

The prevailing theory is "maybe in two weeks." Which I have heard for seven weeks and three days.

EMMA

How will you catch up?

MARI

I have this tutor. Comes three days a week and gives me all this – stuff. Stupid, stupid stuff. I mean who cares about extinct species when you could be extinct?

EMMA

What?

MARI

I'm sick.

EMMA

But... sick as in "Get Well Soon," "Wishing you a Speedy Recovery," /

MARI

/"Sending you thoughts and prayers" – that's a personal favorite. No. Sick as in, "we're going to try this and see what happens..."

EMMA

I didn't know – Mari. Nobody knows anything. There were all these rumors – maybe Mari is in trouble – maybe rehab – maybe Juvie Hall – all sots of stuff -

MARI

Whaaat?

EMMA

Sorry. Shouldn't have said –

MARI

How's that possible – I'm the poster child for people pleasing. The original "good little girl" who never stands up for herself. Of course, what do they say? "Only the good die young?" Funny how easy it is for people to think the worst.

EMMA

Sometimes we fall overboard looking for drama.

MARI

My days are filled with drama.

EMMA

Why so quiet? I mean nobody knows anything. I finally took the plunge and called your mom. Again.

MARI

My mom wanted to keep it in the family. Till everything was settled and we had answers to all the questions people ask. She ... has a hard time answering questions right now. Most of the time she is a puddle.

MARI

- do *you* have trouble answering questions?

MARI

If that's your way of asking, what's wrong with me. It's called AML: acute myeloid leukemia.

EMMA

Is ... that bad?

MARI

Hard to say. It's different for everyone. Mine has been a bit stubborn even with chemotherapy, I had to do some targeted drug therapy which does not make me feel great.

(Beat.)

EMMA

I don't know what that means.

MARI

I wish I didn't know what it means. My white blood cells are at war with my red blood cells. The white blood cells have been winning some battles. But all is not lost! We forge on to new battlegrounds. (Beat.) It's a form of cancer.

EMMA

I'm sorry. I keep saying that! Because I don't know what to say. The only people I have known with cancer were – old.

MARI

Do I look old?

EMMA

No.

MARI

'Cause I want to be. You know – old. I want to grow old.

EMMA

You will! Of course you will! Don't talk like that!

MARI

I have to say it. Nobody let's me say it. Nobody talks about dying. I could die, Emma and nobody will talk to me about it. Please, let me talk.

EMMA

If it – will help you. (Beat.) I don't like dying talk.

MARI

I don't either. Believe me. But I think it needs to be part of the conversation.

EMMA

I don't know what to say. Again. (Beat) ... will you?

MARI

I don't know. Everyone says "looking good." But then they try a new drug. It's a guessing game.

(Beat.)

Tell me about school. I've been so out of it.

EMMA

It's kind of same-old, same-old. Oh! Mrs. Hudwalker's leaving.

MARI

Hooray! Did everyone dance in the halls?

EMMA

On the cafeteria tables. The lunch ladies were furious!

MARI

Oh I wish I was there!

EMMA

And - at the choir concert - Mr. Crane came up to the podium and laid a really bad, smelly one. The choir couldn't sing – because half of them couldn't breathe and the other half couldn't stop laughing!

MARI

Poor old smelly Crane! He's like an old dog. Faithful, well-meaning and flatulent.

EMMA

He probably wanted to curl up and die!

MARI

I don't think he wanted to die.

EMMA

I didn't mean –

MARI

No worries. Dying comes up a lot in conversation. “Do or die!” “Old habits die hard!”

EMMA

“I'd die for some chocolate!” Oh! Chocolate. The good kind.

(She takes a small box of chocolates out of her purse.)

MARI

Ohhh! Now, *this* is worth dying for.

EMMA

Can you – eat it?

MARI

I'm going to try. And I am not sharing.

(Beat.)

EMMA

It's all different now, isn't it?

MARI

It doesn't have to be. It's just – been months since we were together. If we talked more...

EMMA

We will. I promise. I'll call you every night. No. Wait. I have rehearsal. I'll call after school.

MARI

You're in a play!

EMMA

Chorus. Nothing to get excited about but yeah, I'm in a play. *Beauty and the Beast*. At least I'm not the Beast. But yeah – I'll call you.

MARI

Cross your heart and hope – cross your heart and - everything?

EMMA

Cross my heart – and everything.

MARI

I'd like that.

EMMA

Me, too.

MARI

I have to rest now. I hope you don't mind. I get this medicine and it makes me sick and tired which I am sick and tired of. Don't know which is worse! The disease or the medicine.

EMMA

You can tell me about it. Talk to me, Mari.

MARI

I won't scare you away for another seven weeks and three days?

EMMA

Not a chance.

MARI

I will. I'll call tomorrow around this time.

EMMA

I'll be waiting.

(EMMA starts to exit.)

MARI

You're going to google AML, aren't you?

EMMA

What? No/

MARI

/You're going to google it.

EMMA

Probably. How do you spell it? Acute.....

MARI

Just type in AML. It'll come up. Believe me. I know. And then we'll talk some more. Not just about this – but about everything. Music, boys, Beauty and the Beast - even – you know - the future... and you'll visit again?

EMMA

It's a promise. Save me a chocolate.

MARI

Not a chance.

(They smile. EMMA again starts to leave.)

MARI

Emma? I'm not contagious.

(There is a long pent-up hug and finally EMMA exits. MARI looks at her chocolates.)

MARI (cont'd)

Maybe tomorrow. I'll have one tomorrow. (Beat.) Thanks, Emma.

- END OF PLAY -

Maine
By Claudia I. Haas

CAST: 2 (1m, 1f)
MARA: f, 20's, city girl
GREG: m, 20's, country boy

PLACE: A cabin in Northern Maine

TIME: Summer, after midnight

(There is a door slam as MARA flees from her cabin followed by GREG. It is a chilly summer night and they are wrapped up in “whatever” to stay warm.)

MARA

It's trying to kill me!

GREG

It's a bug! You're bigger than he is!

MARA

At least you know it's a “he!” Hovering over me. Buzzing. Trying to suck up my blood!

GREG

He's more afraid of you than you are of him. Trust me.

MARA

Did you and the demon mosquito actually converse about this? Then tel me, why is he going after me?

GREG

Self preservation.

(GREG kills the mosquito.)

There. It's dead. Don't let one measly mosquito ruin our vacation. Come on, Mara... let's go back inside.

(He gently takes her arm.)

MARA

OUCH! Don't touch that arm! That's where the bee stung me on our hike!

GREG

Oh! Sorry. Come inside... I'll make it all better ...

MARA

You're trying to break up with me, aren't you? But you don't have the guts! I see your plan now! You're thinking, "I'll take Mara to a cabin in Maine and make her so miserable that she'll never want to go out with me again!"

GREG

Mara! No – I thought you'd like this –

MARA

What? The mosquito bites? The bee sting? The chill in the heat of summer? And this bruise! Do you see this bruise? That's from climbing over the slimy rocks on our nature hike!

GREG

I thought you would have brought hiking boots. Never thought you'd bring high heels –

MARA

I'm a city girl! I wear heels! They make my legs look longer!

GREG

Ah! So you admit you taunted the mosquito with the illusion of longer legs!

MARA

Greg! I'm a city girl! My idea of the outdoors is to sit on the fire escape with a glass of wine!

GREG

Don't you like any of this?

MARA

No.

GREG

The north woods –

MARA

- no!

GREG

The babbling brook –

- no! MARA

The star-filled sky? GREG

No! No - MARA

(MARA looks at the sky. There is light dancing.)

Oh! Is that – can that be - MARA (cont'd)

Yeah. Wow. GREG

I read about them – but – yeah – wow. MARA

(Putting his arm around her.) GREG

The Northern Lights.

(Putting her arms around him.) MARA

Awesome.

(And they gaze in wonder at the sky as the lights fade to black. End of play)

Scroll down for more.

Bound by Stardust – Arctic Scene from my full
length play

OTTO SCHMIDT (Male) Renown Russian Physicist (30's-40s)

MIRANDA –(Female) (15) In mourning for her father

Miranda finds herself in the arctic with her ancestor, the great physicist Otto Schmidt. She's hoping he can help her find a scientific theory that will allow her to see her father who passed away two years ago.

MIRANDA

Nothing's going right! I need to know more. About seeing the past.

OTTO

If something is important to you, then – learn! Delve into your theory. Maybe my theory can help! If you find the origins of the universe, who knows what will present itself!

MIRANDA

There you go again – trying to push your theory on me.

OTTO

It's – unfinished - a perfect jumping off point for you. Someday you could have it published. "The Origins of the Universe" by Otto Schmidt and Miranda Schmidt!

MIRANDA

Alphabetical. Miranda Schmidt and Otto Schmidt!

OTTO

If you say so.

MIRANDA

You're having a little fantasy here, aren't you? Better be careful.

OTTO

You're rubbing off on me! Still, I would like to see my theory in play again.

MIRANDA

You don't want to be forgotten.

OTTO

Is that so terrible?

MIRANDA

But – you have a minor planet named after you!

OTTO

And an island!

MIRANDA

I understand where you're coming from. I'm afraid of the same thing.

OTTO

Of being forgotten?

MIRANDA

Of forgetting. That's why I want to get a mirror on a star, look back in time – see my father. Before my memory of him gets hazy.

OTTO

That could take a lifetime.

MIRANDA

I am starting to realize that it will take longer than a week. And I have been reading. I'm trying to understand. But all I find is endless stuff about fusion and hydrogen and helium. "A star glows because fusing atoms release energy." *That's not what I want to find out!* The stars! They keep secrets! They won't give me anything!

OTTO

The stars have no thought or care about us.

MIRANDA

I *need* to learn how to see what they see.

OTTO

I look at the stars and I want to know their origin. You look at the stars and yearn for the fanciful.

MIRANDA

"What is fancy becomes reality." Didn't you tell me that?

OTTO

You do listen! The fanciful can ignite a spark to encourage the science. But it won't sustain you.

It's the science that keeps us alive on the ice.

MIRANDA

Wouldn't you love a chance to go back? A chance to fix stuff?

OTTO

We can't go back. We are a forward-looking race.

MIRANDA

I like it here. The quiet. I feel – like nothing can hurt me – nothing can touch me.

OTTO

But it is here – where you can be touched.

MIRANDA

Wouldn't it be cool to be here forever – if we had warmth and food and all that survival stuff – just to be here and feel the approval of the stars?

OTTO

Your flight of fancy is showing itself again.

MIRANDA

I feel connected here. I imagine a molecule or two in my body is saying, "Remember when we were up there? Remember when we were in the stars."

OTTO

Such a story!

MIRANDA

But there's truth there, isn't there? There's something in me that came from them.

OTTO

Yes. In a long, roundabout way.

MIRANDA

It's too bad we don't return to them. That would give me a happily-ever-after.

OTTO

You could look at the amazement of the universe as a happily ever after.

MIRANDA

I want a forever connection, you know? That I'd return from where I came and be reunited with my father. I want – a circle. Not a line with a beginning, middle and end – but a circle.

OTTO

All tied up with a nice pretty bow.

MIRANDA

Well ... if we want to dream big! I do feel safe here. For the first time in two years.

OTTO

It's a precarious safety. I am doing all I can to have us rescued. And when I leave, you leave. Immerse yourself in the sky while you can.

MIRANDA

Look!

OTTO

The aurora borealis.

MIRANDA

Look at the colors and shapes. My father used to say they were unborn children playing in the heavens. Can you see them? Little souls chasing each other in a game of tag.

OTTO

They are merely energy particles from the sun colliding with the Earth's magnetic field.

MIRANDA

I like my explanation better.

OTTO

It is sweet. What happens in your story? To those little souls playing tag?

MIRANDA

They are born, I guess.

OTTO

Do they remember playing in the sky?

MIRANDA

Probably not. Too bad. That would be a nice memory to have. Once you're born – the memories are hard.

Scroll down for last scene.

Smile, Baby
By Claudia I. Haas

CAST:

Jake (male) 20's-40's - a catcaller (they come in all ages)

Maura (female) 20's - on her way to work

Logan (male) 20's-30's - a large man whose size would intimidate Jake

Place: A street

Time: Morning, today

AT RISE MAURA (dressed for work) is walking down the street. From elsewhere (or above?), we see JAKE.

JAKE

Smile, Baby!

(MAURA stop short.)

You'd be prettier if you'd smile.

(MAURA is frozen.)

Oh come on! Don't pretend to be annoyed. Look at you - all gussied up - that's not for work. That's for me - to appreciate. And I do. Appreciate. Keep that walk going. Those hips are pure poetry in motion.

(MAURA takes out a whistle and a loud whistle sound is heard. LOGAN enters.)

LOGAN

Well, lookey-here. Aren't you the cute one? Got that sweet, male swagger going. Turn around. Don't be shy. We're here to appreciate.

(JAKE is frozen.)

Those fitted jeans. Pockets in the right places. Keep walking. We mean no harm. We're just here to appreciate. And we do. Appreciate.

(to MAURA.)

Guess he's feeling shy today.

(MAURA and LOGAN walk past JAKE. MAURA turns to him.)

MAURA

Smile, Baby. You're prettier if you smile.

(MAURA and LOGAN exit.)

End of Play

End of Theatre Online