



# Educator Resources

YOUNG AUDIENCES PROGRAM

RODGERS & HAMMERSTEIN'S

# The Sound of Music

Book By

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AHMANSON THEATRE SEP 20 – OCT 31, 2015  
213.972.4400 [CenterTheatreGroup.org](http://CenterTheatreGroup.org)

# Welcome

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Center Theatre Group is excited to have you and your students join us at Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music*. A great play raises questions about the human condition and a great educational experience allows students an opportunity to reflect upon those questions and begin to discover their own answers. To that end the material in Center Theatre Group's Discovery Guide and Educator Resources raise questions: questions about the power of music to bring people together, questions about standing up for what you believe in, questions about finding your dream.

Our goal is to provide you with a variety of entry points into *The Sound of Music* so that you can choose what best suits you and your students.

The Educator Resources and Discovery Guide are companion pieces, designed to help you prepare your students to see the play and to follow-up the performance with options for discussion, reflection and creativity.

## Discovery Guide

The Discovery Guide provides students with background information about the play and the subject matter, as well as questions for individual reflection. Written to be student-driven, the Discovery Guide helps prepare your students for the performance.

We have organized the Educator Resources into the following sections:

## About This Play

This section includes a scene-by-scene synopsis of the play to provide you with detailed information about the content and form of the play.

## Comprehension

This section includes background information about the setting and subject matter of the play. We have selected the information that most directly connects to or informs what happens in the play.

This section furthers and deepens the background information provided in the Discovery Guide. This section can be shared before the play and/or discussed after the performance. It can also be used to provide research topics for your classroom.

## Connections and Creativity

This section provides ways to explore connections between the ideas presented in the play, the students' lives, and the world we live in. In addition, it provides opportunities for your students to use theatre to explore and express. Theatre activities are included that examine both specific artistic aspects of the production, as well as delve deeper into the ideas and questions raised by the production. The questions, activities and information in this section can be used both before and after the performance.

We know the hard work and dedication that it takes to bring students to see theatre. These materials are designed to support you in making the most of that experience. We applaud your passion for sharing theatre with your students and thank you for sharing your students with all of us at Center Theatre Group. We look forward to seeing you at *The Sound of Music*.



L.A.'s Theatre Company  
A non-profit arts organization

Ahmanson Theatre  
Mark Taper Forum  
Kirk Douglas Theatre

601 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

# About *The Sound of Music*

This section includes a scene-by-scene synopsis of the play to provide you with detailed information about the content and form of the play.

## SCENE-BY-SCENE

### ACT I

#### **Scene 1: The Nonnberg Abbey**

“Preleudium” (*The Nuns of the Nonnberg Abbey*)

The bells of Nonnberg Abbey ring and voices chant the Latin prayer, “Dixit Dominus.” As the lights come up, the interior of Nonnberg Abbey is revealed. It is filled with nuns in the midst of their daily duties. Some are stopping at an altar to pray, others are carrying milk pails, laundry baskets and musical instruments. Sister Berthe enters to monitor the nuns’ activities. As she checks off the names of nuns and postulants in her notebook, she realizes that someone is missing. The singing stops. The nuns in the Abbey begin to call out for Maria.

#### **Scene 2: A Mountainside Near the Abbey**

“The Sound of Music” (*Maria*)

Maria Rainer, the postulant that the nuns are looking for, is on a nearby mountainside, enjoying her time away from the Abbey. She begins to sing about her days in the hills, and how the hills fill her heart with the sound of music.

#### **Scene 3: The Office of the Mother Abbess**

“Maria” (*Sister Berthe, Sophia, Margaretta and Mother Abbess*)

“My Favorite Things” (*Maria and Mother Abbess*)

The Mother Abbess (the person in charge of the Abbey), Sister Berthe (Mistress of the Postulants) and Sister Margaretta (Mistress on the Novices) discuss which postulants are ready to enter the novitiate, and which are not. The subject of Maria comes up. Sister Berthe and Sister Margaretta are in disagreement about what to do with Maria. Sister Sophia enters and announces that Maria is waiting to see the Mother Abbess. The Mother Abbess asks Sister Sophia’s opinion about Maria. The four nuns begin to sing, “How do you solve a problem like Maria?” When the song ends, a decision still has not been made. The Mother Abbess states that she “should talk to Maria instead of about her.”

The nuns leave the Mother Abbess’ office and Maria enters. Maria immediately begins to apologize for the previous day’s tardiness. The Mother Abbess wants to speak with her about another topic: a song that Maria sang in the Abbey recently. Maria begins another apology, because one can only sing in the Abbey with permission, and she did not have it. However, the Mother Abbess had enjoyed Maria’s singing. The song was familiar to her, and she wants Maria to sing it for her again. Maria begins to sing “My Favorite Things,” and the Mother Abbess eventually joins in with her for a duet.

After the song, Maria asks the mother Abbess where she learned the song. Her reply is that she “was brought up on the mountain” herself, just like Maria.

## About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

The Mother Abbess kindly tells Maria that she thinks life in the Abbey might not be quite right for her. She asks Maria what the most important lesson learned in the Abbey has been. Maria replies, “To find out what is the will of God and to do it.” Then the Mother Abbess says, “It seems to be the will of God that you leave us.” Maria is to leave the Abbey temporarily to be a governess for the seven children of the von Trapp family. During this time, the Mother Abbess hopes it becomes apparent to Maria whether or not she should become a nun. Maria is sad to hear about this arrangement, but she does not want to disappoint the Mother Abbess. She agrees to go.

### **Scene 4: A Corridor in the Abbey**

Reprise: “My Favorite Things” (*Maria*)

Maria sings “My Favorite Things” to console herself about leaving the Abbey. She encounters Sister Margareta while she’s singing. Maria continues to sing and then exits. Sister Margareta, simultaneously feeling frustration with, and compassion for, Maria, sings “How do you hold a moonbeam in your hand?”

### **Scene 5: The Living Room of the von Trapp Villa, that afternoon**

“Do-Re-Mi” (*Maria and the von Trapp Children*)

Captain Georg von Trapp enters the living room and blows on a whistle to send a signal. He gets no response. He blows a different signal, and the butler, Franz, appears. Captain von Trapp tells Franz he needs to speak with the housekeeper, Frau Schmidt. She enters shortly afterward and welcomes the Captain back home from his journey. The Captain inquires as to why the last governess left. Frau Schmidt informs him that she just walked out and said, “I’ve had enough of this.” The Captain lets the staff know that a new governess from Nonnberg Abbey will arrive shortly. He is determined that this one must stay.

Frau Schmidt expresses to the Captain that she hopes he will be home for a while this time. He informs the staff that he will be gone again for about a month, and when he returns, he will bring two guests: Herr Detweiler and Frau Schraeder. The Captain exits.

Frau Schmidt and Franz discuss a telegram that will be arriving for Franz around seven o’clock. Frau Schmidt comments on “that scatter-brained boy delivering telegrams”; Franz says that at least if the Germans take over Austria, there would be efficiency. Frau Schmidt warns Franz not to let the Captain hear him talk like that. She changes the topic of conversation by mentioning that the Captain never whistled for them while his wife was still alive, and that it is humiliating. Franz, who also served the Captain’s orderly in the Imperial Navy, observes that the Captain is acting like he is in charge of a ship.

The doorbell rings and Franz exits to answer it. Frau Schmidt leaves the living room to continue her household duties. Franz re-enters with Maria. She is wearing an unbecoming dress and carrying a carpetbag. While Franz goes to fetch the Captain, Maria marvels at her new surroundings. She hears the Abbey bells off in the distance and kneels down in prayer. The Captain enters and stops to observe her before speaking to her. He doesn’t like the clothes she wore, and instructs her to change her dress before she meets the children. She informs the captain that it is the only one she has. All of her worldly belongings were given to the poor when she entered the Abbey. She says that she knows how to make her own clothes, and the Captain says he will have material delivered to her, hopefully by day’s end.

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The Captain instructs Maria in her duties as governess. “The first rule in this house is discipline.” He takes out his whistle and summons the children with it. They enter from all parts of the villa and end by forming a single line: Gretl, Marta, Kurt, Louisa, Friedrich and Liesl. They are dressed in white sailor uniforms. The Captain changes his signal so that they begin to march. Brigitta, another von Trapp child, belatedly joins them.

The Captain introduces each child, and his or her particular whistle tone, to Maria. Afterward, he hands Maria the whistle and tells her to repeat what he has just done. Maria informs the captain that she won’t need a whistle. The Captain goes to exit, and Maria blows hard on the whistle to get his attention. He stops and she says, “Pardon me, sir – I don’t know how to address you.” He tells her to call him “Captain.” Maria then gives him back the whistle, telling him once again that she won’t need it. He leaves her to become acquainted with the children.

Maria gets introductions from the children once again. She wins them over with her kindness and honesty. They ask why she brought a guitar. She replies, “For when we all sing together.” Marta informs her that they don’t sing. Maria says, “Of course you sing. Everybody sings.” And, with that, she teaches them to sing with “Do-Re-Mi.”

### **Scene 6: Outside the Villa, that evening**

“Sixteen Going On Seventeen” (*Rolf and Liesl*)

Outside of the villa, Liesl greets Rolf Gruber, a messenger boy, as he is about to leave the grounds. He has just delivered a birthday telegram to Franz. Liesl and Rolf are happy to see each other. Rolf jokingly suggests he could return the next evening by “mistakenly” delivering a telegram to a Colonel Schneider, who is in town from Berlin. After revealing Colonel Schneider’s presence to Liesl, he asks her not to tell her father. Liesl asks “Why not?” Rolf replies, “Well, your father’s pretty Austrian.” He mentions that others think they ought to be German. He says that he is not worried about Liesl’s father; he is more worried about Liesl. Rolf begins to sing “Sixteen Going on Seventeen,” which expresses his concern about her facing the world of men. He is “seventeen going on eighteen” and offers to take care of Liesl. She joins him in the song, and at the end, they kiss.

### **Scene 7: Maria’s Bedroom, later that evening**

“The Lonely Goatherd” (*Maria and the Children*)

Maria is offstage getting ready for bed. Frau Schmidt enters with a bolt of fabric from the Captain for Maria’s new dress. Maria enters and sees the fabric. She is extremely pleased and states that it is the finest she’s ever had. She tells Frau Schmidt that she would love to have more fabric to make play clothes for the children. Frau Schmidt informs Maria, “The von Trapp Children never play... The Captain says the best exercise is marching.” This takes Maria by surprise. Frau Schmidt tells Maria that she should also put her guitar away for there will be no use for it. When Maria inquires “Why?” Frau Schmidt reveals that since the Captain’s wife died, he no longer allows music in the house. There used to be all kinds of music made in the house, with his wife singing and the Captain playing the violin or guitar. Frau Schmidt also tells Maria that this situation may soon end because the Captain may be getting married again soon.

Frau Schmidt exits, and Maria begins her bedtime prayers. She is excited because it has occurred to her that she may have discovered her mission from God: to prepare the von Trapp children for their new mother. As she continues her prayers, Liesl sneaks into the room through the bedroom window.

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On her way back to the house after meeting with Rolf, she got caught in a rainstorm and is soaking wet. She thinks Maria doesn't see her, but Maria knows she is there. Maria incorporates Liesl into her prayers, asking God to "help her to know that I am her friend, and help her to tell me what she is up to." Liesl confides in Maria about the situation. Once she is sure Maria will not tell the Captain, her attitude toward Maria softens. As she exits to find some dry clothes, Liesl admits that maybe she does need a governess.

The storm outside has become more ferocious, so little Gretl comes to visit Maria. Gretl thinks she is the only one who is afraid, but eventually all of the von Trapp children end up in Maria's bedroom for the very same reason. Maria suggests, "Maybe if we all sing loud enough we won't hear the thunder." As the ensemble sings "The Lonely Goatherd," their yodels drown out the sounds of the storm.

### **Scene 8: A Hallway in the Villa**

Reprise: "The Lonely Goatherd" (*Gretl*)

Gretl, carrying a candle, heads back to her own room, followed by Brigitta, Marta and Louisa. The girls hear a clap of thunder, and Gretl tremulously begins to sing "The Lonely Goatherd" to summon her courage. Another clap of thunder sends Brigitta, Marta and Louisa scampering to their room. Gretl doesn't notice this at first, but eventually comes to realize that her sisters have deserted her. A boom of thunder sends Gretl racing off to her room, too.

### **Scene 9: The Terrace of the Villa, six weeks later**

"How Can Love Survive?" (*Max, Elsa and Captain von Trapp*)

Reprise: "The Sound of Music" (*The Children and Captain von Trapp*)

Elsa Schraeder, a sophisticate from Vienna, is sitting on the terrace of the von Trapp villa, admiring the view of the Austrian Alps. Captain von Trapp is there as well. He is admiring the view of Elsa. Franz is serving them coffee, and the Captain asks him about a family friend, Max Detweiler, who is at the villa, but hasn't joined them on the terrace yet. The Captain also asks about the children, for he wants them to meet Elsa.

Franz exits, and the Captain and Elsa begin a conversation about the Captain coming back to the villa more often and, perhaps, Elsa joining him.

Max enters and apologizes for taking so long to join them. He updates the couple on his lack of success in booking musical acts for the Kaltzberg Festival, a music event that he is in charge of. The Captain is eager for the children to meet Elsa, so he goes off to find them.

Max and Elsa are left alone on the terrace, and Max asks Elsa if the Captain has made up his mind about marrying her yet. She replies, "Oh, yes! He hasn't admitted it yet. There seems to be something standing in his way." She doesn't know what it is, but Max does. He explains, "It's very simple. It's money." He begins to sing, "How Can Love Survive", and Elsa joins him. The Captain returns and they sing to him. The song laments that Elsa and the Captain's love will not survive because their wealth will lead to a lack of struggle and drama in their lives.

At the end of the song, Rolf enters the villa grounds. He does not notice the Captain, Elsa and Max because he is looking for Liesl. The Captain startles him by asking him what he wants. Rolf replies with a "Heil" and says that he has a telegram for Herr Detweiler.

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Rolf hands it to Max, then the Captain orders him out. After Rolf's exit, Elsa comments that Rolf is just a boy, to which the Captain replies, "I am an Austrian--I will not be heiled!" Max advises him to take a less combative perspective on the current political situation. He says to the Captain, "What's going to happen is going to happen. Just be sure it doesn't happen to you."

The Captain hears the sound of yodeling coming from the garden. Suddenly, Gretl runs onto the terrace and takes a leapfrog position. She is followed by the rest of the von Trapp children, all of them leapfrogging their way to the terrace. They are wearing play clothes made from Maria's old bedroom curtains. Maria is the last to enter. She is also playing leapfrog and lands at the Captain's feet. She is startled, but happy, to see him.

The Captain takes out his whistle and blows it, ordering the children to attention. He inspects their strange clothing, orders them to change, clean up, and report back at once. The Captain then scolds Maria for parading his children around town dressed in old curtains. He tells her that his children "have always been a credit to my name." Maria replies, "But, Captain, they weren't. They were just unhappy little marching machines." The Captain says he doesn't want to hear about his children from her. Maria answers, "Well, you must hear from someone. You're not home long enough to know them." In spite of the Captain's protestations, Maria chronicles what is going on with each child, and how the captain needs to engage this child to support him or her.

As the Captain orders Maria to pack her things and head back to the Abbey, they hear the children singing "The Sound of Music." The tone of the scene changes. Maria informs the Captain that she wanted the children to sing for Frau Schraeder when they met her. Elsa enters, entranced by the children's voices. The Captain sings the end of the song with them.

As the song finishes, Gretl presents a white flower, Edelweiss, to Elsa. She asks the Captain, "Why haven't you told me how enchanting your children are?" The Captain motions for his children to gather around him, he hugs them, and asks them to show Elsa around the garden.

The Captain and Maria speak about what just occurred. He tells her that she was right, he doesn't know his children. He invites her to remain at the villa, telling her, "you have brought music back into my home. I had forgotten..." They sing "The Sound of Music" together.

At the end of the song, the Captain exits into the house. Maria is alone onstage and has a private celebratory moment. Elsa enters to congratulate Maria on her success reconnecting the Captain and his children. Maria informs Elsa that as of September, she will return to Nonnberg Abbey to become a nun. Before she exits to the garden, Maria tells Elsa that she will pray for her. Elsa wonders whether Maria was being thoughtful or insulting.

### **Scene 10: A Hallway in the Villa, one week later**

Frau Schmidt is teaching Gretl how to greet guests who will be attending a party in the von Trapp villa that evening. The party is in honor of Elsa, who wants to meet the von Trapp's neighbors. Marta remarks that they have never had a party in their house before. However, Frau Schmidt and the older children remember a time when there used to be lots of parties. They reminisce about a Gypsy orchestra from Budapest and one lady, "the most beautiful of all," who was there all the time: their mother. Brigitta then asks if they are allowed to dance at the party. Liesl replies, "Yes, of course. Remember what Fraulein Maria told us." Kurt and Brigitta begin to waltz together, as do Louisa and Friedrich. Liesl imagines dancing with a young man.

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### Scene 11: The Living Room, the same evening

“So Long, Farewell” (*The Children*)

The von Trapp living room is filled with waltzing couples. Two men not dancing, Baron Elberfeld and Herr Zeller are arguing about Anschluss and whether Germany and Austria should reunite. The Captain enters, senses the tension, and diplomatically encourages all to move on to the terrace. Another guest, Baroness Elberfeld tells the Captain on how charming Frau Schrader is. Baron Elberfeld says he hopes she isn't ill, because she has left the party for a brief time due to a headache.

The Captain exits to bring Elsa a glass of brandy. The guests on the terrace are seen dancing an Austrian folkdance, the Laendler. Maria and Kurt enter from the terrace; Kurt asks her to teach him the dance. The Captain re-enters the scene, and pauses on the balcony to watch them dance. When they attempt to execute a dance move that is awkward, the Captain steps in to show them the way it is done.

The Captain and Maria are now dancing the Laendler together. The dance reaches the point at which Maria and the Captain, while holding hands, must execute a figure which calls for Maria to turn under the Captain's arms and assume a position in which his arms are around her and his face close to hers. This physical embrace brings an awareness to both of them. When this same figure is repeated, Maria finds herself under the spell of an emotion that she has never experience before and does not understand. She breaks away from the dance. The Captain has become self-conscious, too.

Elsa enters and watches the Captain disappear. She hears Brigitta comment on how red Maria's face is. Maria says she must not be used to dancing. Elsa greets the group. Maria and Kurt exit as Max arrives at the party. The Captain enters to welcome him, then tells Frau Schmidt to set two more places at the dinner table; one for Max and one other. The Captain informs Max and Elsa he will be inviting Maria to the table because they now need another woman since Max has arrived. Max and Elsa protest, saying the Captain can't let his friends dine with a nursemaid. Max asks Elsa to explain to the Captain why. At that moment, Brigitta enters and tells Elsa that the people outside have been talking about her. Elsa says to the Captain, “Come on, Georg, I've been dodging these people for an hour.” They exit to the terrace.

Maria enters and asks Brigitta where the Captain is. Max greets Maria and exits. Brigitta tells Maria that Elsa didn't have a headache. She was faking it to get out of being at the party for a while. Maria tells Brigitta that it is important that she like Frau Schraeder, because she is going to be their new mother. Brigitta says that will never happen because their father is in love with her, Maria. And she could also see that Maria is in love with him. Maria protests at first, but is eventually stunned into silence.

The Captain enters from the terrace with some of the children. He tells them they can have one more dance before bedtime. He approaches Maria and invites her to join them at dinner. He asks her to wear the lovely dress that she wore the other night when they were all singing. Maria quickly exits.

Elsa requests that the children say goodbye to the guests with a song before dinner. They sing “So Long, Farewell” to everyone. When the song is over and the children have gone off to bed, Franz announces dinner. Everyone exits towards the dining room, except for Max and Elsa.



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Max expresses his amazement at the children's talent and wants to enlist them in the Kaltzberg Festival. Max asks Elsa's help in persuading the Captain to allow this. They exit to join the other guests at dinner.

Maria enters, wearing the hat and dress she wore the first day she arrived. She is carrying her guitar case and a bag. She takes a last farewell look around the villa and exits to the outer corridor. She has decided to leave the von Trapp home.

### **Scene 12: A Corridor in the Abbey**

"Morning Hymn" (*The Nuns*)

Sister Sophia enters with a young girl who is a new postulant at the Abbey. From the opposite direction, six nuns enter chanting "Morning Hymn." Sister Sophia and the girl stop to watch the nuns as they sing and walk down the corridor. As the nuns exit, Sister Sophia and the postulant continue on their way.

### **Scene 13: The Office of the Mother Abbess, three days later**

"Climb Ev'ry Mountain" (*Mother Abbess and the Nuns*)

Sister Sophia and the young Postulant are signing papers at the Mother Abbess' desk. Sister Margareta enters and informs the Mother Abbess that Maria would like to speak with her. She says Maria is "happy to be here—but she's unhappy, too." Since her return, Maria hasn't spoken to anyone and has only been praying. The Mother Abbess agrees to see Maria.

Sister Sophia and the postulant exit as Sister Margareta re-enters with Maria. The Mother Abbess begins her conversation with Maria by acknowledging how difficult the situation must have been for her, and asks her what lesson she has learned. Maria says that she "never want(s) to leave these walls again." The Mother Abbess asks Maria why the family asked her to leave. Maria explains that she left of her own accord without saying goodbye. The Mother Abbess asks Maria what happened. Maria explains that she was frightened and confused. She has never felt this way before and couldn't stay. She knew she'd be safe in the Abbey. The Mother Abbess says the Abbey is "not to be used as an escape." She asks, "What is it you can't face?" Maria replies, "I can't face him again." The Mother Abbess sends Sister Margareta out of the room.

The Mother Abbess asks Maria if she is in love with Captain von Trapp, to which Maria replies, "I don't know." The Mother Abbess asks Maria to explain the situation. Maria tells her about Brigitta's observations, and her own breathlessness at seeing the Captain. Maria saw herself as being there on God's errand; hence asking for the Captain's love was wrong in her eyes. She knew she couldn't stay. She tells the Mother Abbess that she is ready to take the vows of poverty, obedience and chastity and move on to the next stage of becoming a nun.

The Mother Abbess explains to Maria "the love of a man and a woman is holy, too." She says loving this man wouldn't mean she loved God any less. She instructs her to go back and find out if she is truly in love with the Captain. Maria resists this notion, but the Mother Abbess says, "These walls were not made to shut out problems. You have to face them. You have to find the life you were born to live." Maria asks, "How do I find it?" The Mother Abbess' reply is "Look for it." She then begins to sing "Climb Ev'ry Mountain," a song about following your dreams. By the song's finish, Maria decides to return to the von Trapp villa.

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## ACT II

### Scene 1: The Terrace, the same day

Reprise: “My Favorite Things” (*The Children and Maria*)

“No Way To Stop It” (*Elsa, Max and Captain von Trapp*)

“An Ordinary Couple” (*Maria and Captain von Trapp*)

Max and the children are on the terrace playing blind man’s bluff and singing “The Lonely Goatherd.” The children are not very enthused about singing, now that Maria has left. The Captain and Elsa enter from the garden. Louisa says they need Fraulein Maria, but the Captain says you can sing just as well with me. He picks up his guitar and asks them what they want to sing. Kurt starts to say that Fraulein Maria always started with..., but the Captain cuts him off, saying they are not to mention Maria. Max and Elsa exit to take a walk.

Liesl begins to lead the children in the “The Sound of Music,” but the Captain doesn’t want to hear that song. The Captain wonders aloud why Maria left. The children ask if she is coming back, and he says no. He then tells them that instead of getting a new governess, they are going to have a new mother, Frau Schraeder. The Captain says he is very happy about this, and exits into the house.

The children are still sad because of Maria’s departure. They begin to sing “My Favorite Things” to comfort themselves. Off in the distance, they hear Maria’s voice singing with them. She enters the terrace, and everyone warmly greets each other. They finish the song together.

Maria says she needs to see the Captain right away. Marta and Kurt go into the house to retrieve him. In the meantime, Maria catches up with the rest of the children. Just as she learns that the Captain and Elsa are to be married, the Captain enters. He asks Maria why she left, but she tells him not to ask, and that the reason has gone away now. She says she will stay on as governess until they can find her replacement. The Captain expresses how much everyone missed her and how everything was wrong while she was gone. She exits to go be with the children.

Max and Elsa come back from their walk. Franz comes outside to tell Max that, earlier, he had a phone call from Berlin. This sparks a conversation between the Captain, Max and Elsa regarding the situation between Germany and Austria. Elsa says the Germans have promised not to invade Austria. In case they don’t keep their promise, Max wants friends in Berlin. The Captain will defy the Germans if they invade Austria. The trio sings, “No Way to Stop It,” where the Captain is advised to “Be Wise, Compromise!”

Franz calls Max out of the room so he can take a phone call from Berlin. Elsa and the Captain continue their political discussion. Elsa asks the Captain to see things her way. He replies that he cannot, since she sees things the way the Germans do.

In that moment, Maria enters the room to ask the Captain if she and the children can go on a picnic. She congratulates the couple on their engagement, saying she received the news from the children. Elsa says she is afraid the children were wrong. Elsa goes to prepare for her return to Vienna, and, as the Captain kisses her hand, she returns his engagement ring. Elsa exits into the villa.

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Maria apologizes to the Captain for saying the wrong thing. The Captain tells her that she said it at the right time. He asks her why she came back to the family. She replies that she was taking the Mother Abbess' advice; she had to look for her life. The Captain observes that one doesn't often recognize it at first, "Then one day—one night—all of a sudden, it stands before you." In this moment, the Captain and Maria confess their love for one another and sing the duet, "An Ordinary Couple." At the end of the song, the Captain asks Maria if there is someone he should go to, to ask permission to marry her. She replies, "Why don't we ask the children?"

### **Scene 2: A Corridor in the Abbey, two weeks later**

Three young postulants run on stage and almost collide with four nuns coming from the other direction. The postulants stop to let the nuns pass. When they are sure the nuns are gone, they run off in the opposite direction. Two other nuns enter with the Mother Abbess' ceremonial cape. Sister Margareta and Sister Berthe enter and take the cape. The Mother Abbess enters and Sister Margareta and Sister Berthe put the cape on her. They say a prayer together, then exit.

### **Scene 3: The Office of the Mother Abbess, immediately following**

"Gadeamus Domino" (*The Nuns*)

Maria is getting dressed for her wedding day, with the help of some of the nuns. The Mother Abbess enters with Sister Berthe and Sister Margareta. Maria asks the Mother Abbess' permission to look at herself in a mirror, and is surprised at how beautiful she looks. Sister Berthe and Sister Margareta offer Maria a white prayer book, and the Mother Abbess places a wreath of myrtle on her head. As Maria moves into position for the wedding march, the nuns begin to chant "Gadeamus Domino."

### **Scene 4: A Cloister Overlooking the Chapel**

Reprise: "Maria" (*The Nuns*)

"Confitemini Domino" (*The Nuns*)

The action continues from the previous scene. Maria offers the Mother Abbess a farewell gesture and begins her march to the altar. The nuns and the Mother Abbess watch from afar. The von Trapp girls join Maria, and the boys enter with the Captain. A wedding march plays and, against it, the nuns sing "How do you solve a problem like Maria?" The Captain joins Maria, offers her his arm, and the procession continues until the wedding party moves offstage. The Mother Abbess and the nuns remain behind, singing "Confitemini Domino."

### **Scene 5: The Living Room, one month later**

Reprise: "Sixteen Going on Seventeen" (*Maria and Liesl*)

Max enters calling out for the children. He has entered them in the Kaltzberg Festival of 1938, and wants to show them their names in the programs. Frau Schmidt enters and asks for Max's help because the Gautelier (Nazi Party leader) has arrived. He wants to know why the von Trapps aren't flying the new flag of the Third Reich. Herr Zeller, the Gautelier, enters and heils Max. He demands that the flag be flown, even if the Captain is out of town on his honeymoon. Anschluss occurred four days earlier, and Herr Zeller says that now the household has to take orders from the Nazis, not Captain von Trapp. Herr Zeller exits.

## About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

Max and the children go back to their conversation about the Kaltzberg Festival. Just then, the Captain and Maria enter the living room, returning from their honeymoon. They learn that the children will sing in the festival on Friday. Maria and the Captain hand out presents from their trip, and all of the children exit, except for Liesl, who stays on the balcony to listen to the adults. The Captain is furious that Max has entered the children into the festival and they argue. The Captain exits and Max asks Maria to help him. Maria refuses because she can't ask Georg "to be less than what he is." After Max exits, Liesl reveals to Maria that she now understands that Maria not only loves the children, but she loves her father as well.

She asks Maria how she can be so sure about her love, and Maria replies that she doesn't think of herself first anymore. Maria then begins to sing the reprise of "Sixteen Going on Seventeen" with Liesl.

At the end of the song, Frau Schmidt enters, followed by Rolf, who has a telegram for the Captain. Liesl is happy to see Rolf, but his demeanor is cold. He is all business and refuses to give the telegram to Maria, saying he is under orders to give the telegram to the Captain himself. Franz enters, they hail each other, then Rolf gives the telegram to Franz to give to the Captain. Maria and, especially, Liesl are shocked by all of this. Rolf warns them that the Captain and his family better come over to the right side, if they know what's good for them. He exits. Maria thinks his words are more of a warning than a threat.

The Captain enters with more bad news. Berlin has offered him a commission in their German Navy. He would love to be the captain of a naval vessel again, and he would be happy to know that his family is safe. But he also despises the Germans. He asks for Maria's help, and she responds that whatever he decides will be her decision, too. The Captain says they must flee Austria. Since they are being watched, he suggests they carefully plan their exit.

Franz enters, announcing the arrival of Admiral von Schreiber of the Navy of the Third Reich. The Captain and Franz exit to greet them. Max enters, upset by all of the troops that he has seen outside of the villa. Maria asks Max to stay with Georg, and she goes to be with the children.

The Captain enters with Admiral von Schreiber and Herr Zeller. They express concern that the Captain hadn't yet responded to their offer regarding the German Navy. The Captain explains that he had been away on his honeymoon. They tell him he must report immediately for duty. Maria overhears this and interrupts the conversation saying this wouldn't be possible, for the family is scheduled to sing at the Kaltzberg Festival in two days. The Admiral gives the Captain more time. However, Herr Zeller is skeptical about the Captain really singing with his family, and demands that they all sing for him. Maria and the children begin a round of "Do-Re-Mi," and the Captain does his best to join them.

### **Scene 6: The Concert Hall Stage, three days later**

Reprise: "Do-Re-Mi" (*Maria, Captain von Trapp and the Children*)

"Edelweiss" (*Captain von Trapp, Maria and the Children*)

Reprise: "So Long, Farewell" (*Maria, the Children and Captain von Trapp*)

The scene opens with the von Trapps in concert position, and in Austrian folk costume, continuing to sing *Do-Re-Mi*. At the song's end, Max walks on stage and hands the Captain his guitar. The Captain begins a rendition of "Edelweiss"; Maria and the children eventually join him.

## About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

As the audience applauds, Max comes on stage. He asks the von Trapps for an encore while the judges make their final decision. He also says that this is the last night the family will be singing together for a long time. He announces that, after the concert, the Captain has to immediately report for his new command in the naval forces of the Third Reich. There is an honor guard present in the concert arena to escort him to the naval base at Bremerhaven.

The Captain and Maria quickly confer, and Maria whispers instructions to the children. Then the family begins a version of “So Long, Farewell.” By the songs conclusion, all family members have exited the stage.

Max enters to announce the winners of the festival. When he gets to the first prize, won by the von Trapps, they do not come back on stage to accept their award. Voices are heard asking where they have gone, commanding that roads be blocked and that district headquarters be called. Three S.S. officers run across the stage.

### **Scene 7: The Garden of the Abbey, that night**

“Finale Ultimo” (*The Company*)

The von Trapp family is hiding in the shadows of the Abbey garden. Sister Margareta enters to update them on the progress of the search of the Abbey by Nazi soldiers. The Captain is outraged because the church has always been a sanctuary. Sister Margareta tells him, “Not with these people. This is the third time they’ve searched the Abbey.” The nuns have put the family in the garden because the Nazis never search there. Sister Margareta exits back into the Abbey.

Suddenly, Rolf enters the garden with a flashlight and immediately sees Maria, then the Captain. Rolf takes out his pistol and calls out, “Lieutenant!” His flashlight beams on Liesl’s face, and she look pleadingly at him. We hear the Lieutenant drawing near. Rolf turns and calls out to the Lieutenant, “No one out here, sir!” He gives Liesl one last look, and exits.

The Mother Abbess and Sister Margareta enter to reveal that the Nazis have gone. The Mother Abbess advises the family not to use the car they came in because all of the roads are blocked. Maria and Georg decide to walk the children over the hills to safety in Switzerland. The Mother Abbess reminds them that they will be helped on their journey. She quotes scripture, saying “For Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing.”

The family begins their journey into the mountains, Sister Berthe and Sister Sophia enter, and Mother Abbess and the nuns sing “Climb Ev’ry Mountain.”

# Comprehension

This section includes background information about the setting and subject matter of the play. We have selected the information that most directly connects to or informs what happens in the play.

This section furthers and deepens the background information provided in the Discovery Guide. This section can be shared before the play and/or discussed after the performance. It can also be used to provide research topics for your classroom.

## About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

### GLOSSARY

The following terms used in *The Sound of Music* may be unfamiliar to your students:

**Adriatic Peninsula** – the largest peninsula in the Adriatic Sea; under the rule of Austria from 1797 until 1919, when Italy forcibly seized it from Austria after World War I; also known as Istria

**Anschluss** – the reunification of Germany and Austria after World War I

**Berlin** – the capital of Germany

**Capital Gains** – the increase in value of assets (as stock or real estate) between the time they are bought and the time they are sold

**Dirndl** – a dress with a full skirt and a tight waistband

**Flibbertijibbet** – a silly, flighty person

**Frau** – a German married woman; wife; used as a title equivalent to Mrs.

**Fraulein** – an unmarried German woman; used as a title equivalent to Miss

**Gauleiter** – a Nazi party regional leader

**Governess** – a woman who is paid to care for and teach a child in the child's house

**Heil** – a salute that was used to call German Nazi soldiers to attention, and to honor their leader, Adolf Hitler

**The Laendler** – an Austrian folk dance

**Novice** – a new member of a religious group who is preparing to become a nun or a monk

**Novitiate** – the time when a person is a religious novice

**Nun** – a woman belonging to a religious community and living according to vows

**Postulate** – the first stage of becoming a nun

**Saengerbund** – a German choral society

**Third Reich** – The term often used to describe the Nazi regime in Germany from January 30, 1933 to May 8, 1945

**Will-o'-the-wisp** – a person or thing that is difficult or impossible to find, reach, or catch

**Wimple** – a cloth covering worn over the head and around the neck and chin by women in earlier times and by some nuns today

### MUSICAL THEATRE VOCABULARY

**Book** – all the words the performers say, rather than sing, in a musical

**Basso Profundo** – a deep heavy bass voice with an exceptionally low range; also: a person having this voice

**Broadway** – the world of the theatre in New York City

**Composer** – a person who writes music

**Lyrics** – all the words a performer sings in a musical

**Musical Theatre** – a type of entertainment containing music, songs, and, usually dance

**Overture** – a compilation of tunes from the show that the orchestra plays before the musical starts to give the audience a taste of what the piece will be like

## About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

### THE CREATIVE TEAM

Before a play ever makes it to the stage, an enormous amount of effort has to come from a group of inspired collaborators. *The Sound of Music*'s creative team had to ford many streams while making this beloved musical a reality.

Reality was, in fact, the springboard for the musical's story. It was based on the real life von Trapp family. The group's journey was chronicled in *Maria Augusta von Trapp's memoirs, The Story of the Trapp Family Singers*, originally published in 1949.

Based on Maria's memoirs, two German movies were made about the von Trapps: *Die Trapp Familie* and its sequel, *Die Trapp Familie in Amerika*. These films were seen by Tony Award®-winning director, Vincent J. Donehue. (Donehue would eventually become the director of the original stage version of *The Sound of Music*.) It struck him that the von Trapp's story would make a perfect stage vehicle for Broadway star, Mary Martin, who was looking for a new project. Donehue brought the von Trapp family story to Martin and her husband/manager, Richard Halliday. The couple loved the idea and was eager to proceed.

The next step was for Martin and Halliday to get permission from Maria von Trapp to use her story. Little did they know, Maria had completely given up show business, and was deeply engaged in missionary work in the South Pacific. They began sending letters to her, trying to secure the rights. Each time Maria received a letter "from two people in America about something called a Broadway show," she tore up it and went on with her missionary work.

Months later, Maria returned to the United States, entering through the port in San Francisco. Halliday met her at the dock with theatre tickets to see Martin in a touring production of *Annie Get Your Gun*. Maria was impressed with Martin's talent, but told the couple that she had already sold the rights to a German production company. The Hallidays turned to their friend and colleague, producer Leland Hayward, to help them wrestle the rights away from the German company.

Hayward was successful in this endeavor. He even gave the author, Maria Augusta von Trapp, a small percentage of the show's royalties, a rare gesture in that era.

Hayward, Martin and Halliday now needed to assemble the rest of their creative team. For the book (or script), Hayward suggested they approach writers Howard Lindsay and Russell Crouse, who had written Broadway hits such as *Anything Goes*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, and *Gypsy*.

As Lindsay and Crouse began their writing work, Hayward thought the traditional music used by the von Trapps should be enhanced with new Broadway material. Hayward approached his colleagues, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, with this idea. (Almost a decade earlier, the creative team of Hayward, Rodgers and Hammerstein II had huge Broadway success with the musical *South Pacific* starring Martin.) Rodgers and Hammerstein were interested, but did not like the idea of trying to create new music alongside the likes of Mozart, Haydn and Pergolesi (music sung by the von Trapp family). "Either you do it authentically—all actual Trapp music—or you get a complete new score for it," Rodgers said in a New York Times interview.



## About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

The producers agreed to this approach, but had to wait one year for Rodgers and Hammerstein to come aboard. (At that time, they were contracted to work on *Flower Drum Song*.) This gave Lindsay and Krause time to complete the book, which they initially titled *Trapp Family*.

On November 16, 1959, the creative team's dream finally became a reality when *The Sound of Music* opened on Broadway at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre. The show went on to win six Tony Awards®, including Best Actress in a Musical (Martin), Best Score (Rodgers) and Best Musical.

### THE REAL STORY OF THE TRAPP FAMILY SINGERS AND ARTISTIC LICENSE

*The Sound of Music* was inspired by a true story. In the 1920s, the real Maria Augusta Kutschera lived as a young postulant (nun-in-training) at Nonnberg Abbey in Salzburg, Austria. She was sent to work for Captain Georg von Trapp, a widower with seven children. She married the Captain, and the family performed as a singing group at the Salzburg Festival in Austria. The Trapp Family Singers became a popular musical act all over Europe. The von Trapps had to escape from the German Nazis who took over Austria. Maria eventually wrote a book about their lives called *The Story of the Trapp Family Singers*, published in 1949.

**Artistic License: the freedom to create an artwork, musical work, or piece of writing based on the artist's interpretation and mainly for effect; also called poetic license**

When creating the musical, the creative team of *The Sound of Music* used artistic license. They took many liberties with the von Trapp Family story. They changed many elements of it to make it more compelling on stage. The following are some of the differences between the musical and the real life story of the von Trapps.

- Maria arrived at the von Trapp home in 1926 (not the late 1930s) in order to tutor one of the children who was recovering from scarlet fever. She was not originally meant to be a governess to all of the children.
- Georg and Maria got married in 1927, 11 years before the family fled Austria. In the musical, there are 7 von Trapp children. In real life, there were 10. And their names, ages and genders were changed in the story.
- The family was already musical before Maria came to their home. She did not have to teach them how to sing.
- Georg was never distant and cold with his children, the way he is portrayed in the first part of *The Sound of Music*. Even though his character made a more profound change in the story, this portrayal of Georg actually upset many of the von Trapp family members.
- The family did not secretly escape Austria by walking over the Alps to freedom. They traveled to Italy, where Georg had citizenship. He was born in Zadar, a town that was once a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. By the time the von Trapps traveled there, it had become a part of Italy. From there, they traveled to London, then the United States to commence a singing tour.
- Max Detweiler is a fictional character. The family's real life musical director was the Reverend Franz Wasner. He received special permission from the church to leave Austria, and went to Italy with the von Trapps when they fled the Germans. He lived with them in the United States.
- Maria was known for having a bit of a temper. Even though she was very loving and caring, she tended to have angry outbursts from time to time.

## About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

### Questions for students

- Why would someone want to change certain elements of a true story for a stage play?
- What do you think of the changes mentioned above? Do you think they were helpful to the telling of the story? What changes would you make, or not make, to the von Trapps' story?

### Additional Resources

The following are online recordings you can share with your students:

1938 recording of *The Original Trapp Family Singers*, remastered in 1995

[https://www.youtube.com/](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G6P1qNX9Qig&list=PLUSRfoOcUe4bFOcoXgl9SpDwASdrMoiYi)

[watch?v=G6P1qNX9Qig&list=PLUSRfoOcUe4bFOcoXgl9SpDwASdrMoiYi](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G6P1qNX9Qig&list=PLUSRfoOcUe4bFOcoXgl9SpDwASdrMoiYi)

Maria von Trapp and Julie Andrews

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Juaz5UI6gs>

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In Center Theatre Group's *The Sound of Music* Discovery Guide, information has been provided regarding the story's historical backdrop. Topics include the Anschluss (German-Austrian reunification) and Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party.

If you would like to dive more deeply into this era with your class, we recommend the following student-friendly electronic resources:

### BBC Bitesize History

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/history/>

### Museum of Tolerance

[http://www.museumoftolerance.com/site/c.tmL6KfNVLtH/b.5052463/k.AE91/](http://www.museumoftolerance.com/site/c.tmL6KfNVLtH/b.5052463/k.AE91/Teacher_Resources.htm)

[Teacher\\_Resources.htm](http://www.museumoftolerance.com/site/c.tmL6KfNVLtH/b.5052463/k.AE91/Teacher_Resources.htm)

### The National World War II Museum

<http://www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-students/>

### United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

<http://www.ushmm.org/>

# Connections and Creativity

This section provides ways to explore connections between the ideas presented in the play, the students' lives, and the world we live in. In addition, it provides opportunities for your students to use theatre to explore and express. Theatre activities are included that examine both specific artistic aspects of the production, as well as delve deeper into the ideas and questions raised by the production. The questions, activities and information in this section can be used both before and after the performance.

## About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

### CULTURAL MAPPING

#### Age Group

Middle, high school and/or college

#### Length

20-40 minutes depending on the number of categories explored

#### Objectives

Students will gain knowledge of similarities and differences in their classmates.

Students will be introduced to *The Sound of Music* and begin to reflect on the play and any personal connection to the story.

#### Materials needed

Quotes from the play on the walls

“The hills fill my heart  
With the sound of music—“

“I will not bow my head to the men I despise.”

“I think I should talk to Maria instead of about her.”

“The thing to do today is to get along with everybody.”

“You’re a fool if you worry  
Over anything but little Number One!”

“These walls were not made to shut out problems. You have to face them.  
You have to find the life you were born to live.”

#### Activity

1. Ask the students to move the desks to the side and stand in a circle.
2. Describe the room as a map of the world. Identify Los Angeles in the space. Have students who were born in Los Angeles gather in that place. Have the other students group themselves according to their birthplace (north, east, south or west of Los Angeles). Each group must determine two additional things that they have in common. Report back to the whole class. (Example: The members of the “north” group all like pizza and are the oldest in their families.)
3. Repeat activity using other divisions:
  - Oldest, middle, youngest, only child
  - Speak one language, two languages etc.
  - Most inspired by music, image, movement, language
4. Quotes. Ask each student to stand by the quote that most intrigues them. Discuss in the group why they chose that quote. What intrigues them about it?

## TABLEAU/FROZEN PICTURE

### Age Group

Middle, high school and/or college

### Length

30-45 minutes

### Objectives

Students will practice using their bodies to communicate an idea or theme.

Students will reflect on the varied interpretations of the theme.

Students will reflect on the ideas explored in *The Sound of Music* through a physical exploration of its themes.

### Activity

1. Divide students into pairs. Student A is the artist. Student B is the sculpture. Have student A create a statue out of B on the theme of the “future”. Examples: Flying cars, world peace, destroying the environment, graduating from college. Statues can be realistic or symbolic, personal or global. Have each student title their statue and present to the class.
2. Repeat exercise with B as the artist and A as the sculpture.
3. Repeat with any of the following show-specific ideas: Family, Music, Courage, Escape, Grief, Mission, Dream, Faith, Religion, Hills, Empathy, Love (Romantic and Familial), Wealth. Have each student sculpt an image that represents one of these themes.
4. Discuss what these mean to your students and what these ideas meant in *The Sound of Music*. Are they similar or very different?

## About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

### SINGERS AND SOLDIERS

Students learn about the people, places and problems that they'll experience during *The Sound of Music* performance.

#### Age Group

Elementary, middle, high school and/or college

#### Length

15-20 minutes

#### Summary

The game is similar to Simon Says, but the commands are exchanged with prompts inspired by the people, places and problems from *The Sound of Music*.

#### Objectives

Meet main characters  
Familiarize students with story settings  
Introduce basic themes of the story

#### Materials needed

A whistle similar to the one used by Captain Von Trapp  
A large playing space (multi-purpose room, stage, etc.)

#### Activity

1. Teacher leads students through a few minutes of basic "covering the space"
2. Teacher announces the start of a new game called "Soldiers and Singers." In the show, the von Trapp family learns how music and singing helps them find a new home—away from the threats of soldiers and war.
3. The goal of the game is to be the last singer standing!
4. Teacher speaks aloud the following verbal commands and leads students through rehearsing an action for each command:
  - "Singers!" – All students move to the left of the space
  - "Soldiers!" – All students move the right of the space
  - "The Hills!" – All students move forward or downstage
  - "The Mansion!" – All students move backward or upstage
  - "Go to church!" – All students come center or centerstage and kneel
  - "Rolf and Liesel: Lovers Leap" – Students find a partner to create a quick lovey-dovey frozen picture (e.g. Jack and Rose from *The Titanic* film at the front of the ship)
  - "Captain von Trapp's coming!" – All students must freeze at attention stance
  - "[Whistle Blow]" – All students are released from attention stance
  - "Four Nun Choir" – Students form a quartet of singing nuns
  - "Soldier Trio" – Students form a frozen picture about war/battle
5. The teacher continues to shout these commands in a random order. Students who do them correctly are safe. Those who do it wrong are "out" and watch the rest of the game until only one student is safe.

## About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

### **Variations**

Teachers and students can improvise and suggest new commands and prompts as the game continues. After the class sees the show, even more commands can be added as a result of a post-show discussion.

### **Tips**

Take ample time to rehearse the commands so students are clear.

### **Vocabulary**

**Tableau** – a frozen picture

**Stage directions** – upstage, downstage, center stage, SR, SL, blocking

### **Reflection questions/prompts**

- Who are the 3 Ps (people, places and problems) in the story?
- How do the 3 Ps show up in this game?
- After seeing the show, does the game feel different or make you think differently of the characters and the positions they find themselves in?

## CONFLICTING IDENTITIES

### Age Group

Middle school, high school, college

### Length

30-40 minutes

### Summary

Students will explore and discuss their many identities.

### Objectives

- Students will examine how they identify themselves.
- Students will examine how their many identities may conflict with one another.
- Students will examine how other people identify them.
- Students will examine how other people's perception of them may be in conflict with their own self-identity.
- Students will compare their identities with the characters in *The Sound of Music*.

### Materials needed

Scrap paper and a pen

### Activity

1. Have each student draw a line down the middle of a sheet of paper.
2. On the left hand side, have students list all the ways they identify themselves (i.e.: American, Bi-racial, Jewish, son, friend, student, musician).
3. Have the students imagine or recount a situation where two of these identities may be in conflict with one another (i.e.: Your friend is cheating on a test: as a friend you don't want to do anything, but as a student you feel compelled to tell a parent or teacher; you are asked to identify yourself as white, black or other: as a bi-racial person, you don't feel comfortable denying any part of your ancestry).
4. Have the students share an example of a conflict to the group.
5. On the right hand side, have students list all the ways they perceive that others identify them (i.e.: Black, mixed, wild, misbehaved).
6. Have the students imagine or recount a situation where their identities of themselves and others perception of their identity is in conflict (i.e.: Someone identifies you as Black, but you identify yourself as biracial; someone claims you aren't Jewish because you don't have a Jewish mother; a teacher tells you that you need to leave the class because you are hard to manage, when you feel like you are expressing yourself).
7. Have the students share an example of this conflict.
8. Have students consider characters in *The Sound of Music* and their identities and conflicts with their identities (i.e.: Rolf as an Austrian/Nazi; Captain as an Austrian/German; Maria as a postulant/governess/mother/wife)



## About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

### Reflection questions/prompts

- Try to imagine choosing just one of your many identities. How do you choose? How does it feel to have to choose?
- What feelings come up when other people's perceptions of you aren't in line with your own perceptions of yourself?
- Has your identity ever caused a conflict for anyone?
- Is there someone in your life that really sees you and accepts all of your identities?

### Variations

- Instead of sharing the situation of conflicting identities in steps 4 and 7, have students find a partner to act out the situation in front of the class as a scene.
- For a shorter exercise, it's possible to just have the students begin writing their own identities on one side of the paper and other people's perception of their identities on the opposite side and discuss potential conflicts.
- For a similar (briefer) exercise, please see *Roles in Life* exercise next.

### Quotes

Maria: "I've never been a governess before, how do I start?"

Maria: "Pardon me sir – I don't know how to address you."

Captain: "You will call me Captain."

Zeller: "You have German blood don't you?"

Elberfeld: "I'm not German. I am Austrian."

Captain: "Half the people I invited aren't speaking to the other half"

Margaretta: "How do you find a word that means Maria?"

Margaretta: "How do you solve a problem like Maria?"

## About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

### ROLES IN LIFE

#### Age Group

Middle school, high school, college

#### Length

15 minutes

#### Objectives

Students will look at the different roles they play in their own lives and families.

Students will compare their roles to those played by the characters in *The Sound of Music*.

#### Materials needed

Scrap paper and a pen

#### Activity

1. Have each student draw a line down the middle of a sheet of paper.
2. On the right hand side have students list all the roles they play in their own lives (i.e.: sister, daughter, friend, student, athlete). Encourage them to think about their hobbies, talents, responsibilities, family relationships.
3. On the other side of the paper have students list an adjective for each of their roles (i.e.: bossy sister, loving daughter, loyal friend, hard-working student).
4. Have each student share one role s/he is proud of and a role s/he is less proud of with the rest of the class.
5. Discuss and compare with the many roles the characters play in *The Sound of Music* (i.e.: Liesl may be classified as big sister who is bossy, headstrong, sneaky or stubborn; Maria could be considered a mother, headmistress, postulant or wife; Georg von Trapp is a Captain, father, husband, boss.)

#### Quotes

Maria: "Pardon me sir – I don't know how to address you."

Captain: "You will call me Captain."

Maria: "I've never been a governess before, how do I start?"

Maria: "Friedrick's afraid to be himself — he's shy — he's aloof... Kurt – is sensitive — he's easily hurt."

Margaretta: "How do you find a word that means Maria?"

Margaretta: "How do you solve a problem like Maria?"

## MY FAVORITE THINGS

### Age Group

Elementary school, Middle school, High school

### Length

20 minutes

### Summary

Students will create their own version of “My Favorite Things”.

### Objectives

Students will work together cooperatively to create a song.

Students will practice using their voices expressively.

Students will identify the things that bring them joy.

### Materials needed (if applicable)

Scrap paper and a pen

Audio recording of “My Favorite Things” from *The Sound of Music*

Copy of the lyrics (below)

### Activity

1. Play “My Favorite Things” from *The Sound of Music*.
2. Have students see how many favorite things they can recount from the song.
3. Have students make a list of their own favorite things.
4. Have the students divide into small groups.
5. Give each group a copy of the lyrics.
6. In a small group, have students insert their own favorite things into the song.
7. Give the students some time to rehearse their new original version of “My Favorite Things.”
8. Have each of the small groups sing to the class.

### Reflection questions/prompts

- Does thinking about your favorite things change the way you feel? If so, how can this be useful?
- How different are your favorite things different from Maria’s? Why do you think that is?

### Tips

If students are nervous about singing in front of the group, remind them that they don’t need to sound “good” — it’s just an opportunity to explore our voices. Better yet, offer them some advice from Maria: “Of course you sing! Everybody sings!”

## About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

### Quotes

Marta: "We don't sing."

Maria: "Of course you sing. Everybody sings."

Maria: "Have I permission to sing?"

Frau Schmidt: "The Captain won't have music here... he used to love music. There were wonderful evenings here. His wife would sing and he would play the violin or guitar. But now he's shut all that out of his life."

Maria: "The hills fill my heart/With the sound of music- /My heart wants to sing/ Every song it hears."

### Lyrics

Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens  
Bright copper kettles and warm woolen mittens  
Brown paper packages tied up with strings  
These are a few of my favorite things

Cream colored ponies and crisp apple strudels  
Door bells and sleigh bells and schnitzel with noodles  
Wild geese that fly with the moon on their wings  
These are a few of my favorite things

Girls in white dresses with blue satin sashes  
Snowflakes that stay on my nose and eyelashes  
Silver white winters that melt into Springs  
These are a few of my favorite things

When the dog bites  
When the bee stings  
When I'm feeling sad  
I simply remember my favorite things  
And then I don't feel so bad.

## About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

### EVERYBODY SINGS!

**Age Group**

Elementary, middle, high school and/or college

**Length**

Approximately 30 minutes

**Category**

Musical Theatre, Voice

**Summary**

Singing in a group can be a powerful and positive experience. In *The Sound of Music*, the von Trapp family members heal from their grief and reconnect by singing together.

**Objectives**

- To offer an opportunity for all members of the class to have the experience of singing together in a group.
- To offer time after the exercise to reflect upon this type of experience.
- For the student audience members to make connections with the experiences of the characters in *The Sound of Music*.

**Materials Needed**

Although not necessary, if there is a musical instrument in your class, it can help students to hear the pitch of the notes, or lead to more complex engagement of the exercise.

**Activity**

1. A conductor or music director is chosen. (The classroom teacher can start the exercise. Student volunteers can step in later as conductors.)
2. 8 small groups are formed in the class.
3. Each group is assigned one note from the C scale used in the song, Do-Re-Mi. (One group sings the sound for “Do”; one group sings the sound for “Re”; etc.)
4. The singers make their assigned sound when the conductor points to their group. To begin, practice the notes in order, forward and backward, several times. (Do-Re-Mi-Fa-So-La-Ti-Do).
5. The conductor then begins to shuffle the order of the notes, in any way he or she chooses, pointing to the group she wants to sing.
6. The conductor begins to make the singing more complex by gesturing to singers to hold their notes, or cut them short, or to change their volume (just like an actual orchestra conductor).
7. The conductor may even have two or more groups sing at the same time, creating moments of harmony within the musical piece.
8. End the exercise with the conductor singing/holding one note (with a humor an “Ah” sound), and, when each individual is ready, he or she joins the conductor in singing a note of their own, not an assigned note. The group continues to make its sounds together until, as a group, everyone decides to stop singing.

## About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

### Variations

- Choose other conductors from student volunteers.
- Sing the “Do-Re-Mi” song from *The Sound of Music*. While a one small group is singing its assigned note, the rest of the class sings the other lyrics. (e.g.: One group sings, “Do” and the rest of the class sings, “A deer, a female deer”)
- Aside from improvising pieces (as suggested above), challenge the conductor to “play” a familiar song, using the group.
- Change the scale to a different pitch by having the singers raise or lower the notes they sing. (Start with changing “Do” first and go from there.)
- Have each group create a movement or gesture for the sound that they make. They perform their movement/gesture every time they are instructed to sing their note.

### Tips

- Encourage the students to listen attentively to each other as they sing, as a way to connect.
- Encourage students to listen to singers around them if they feel lost or are having trouble finding the notes.
- Remind students that this exercise focuses on connecting through singing (not finding the best singers). It is not about singing perfectly. All are encouraged and welcome to join in.

### Quotes

Brigitta: “What’s in here?”

Maria: “My guitar.”

Brigitta: “What did you bring this for?”

Maria: “For when we all sing together.”

Marta: “We don’t sing.”

Maria: “Of course you sing. Everybody sings.”

“Music acts like a magic key, to which the most tightly closed heart opens.”

—Maria Augusta von Trapp

“When you know the notes to sing You can sing most anything.”

—the character of Maria in *The Sound of Music*

### Vocabulary

**Diatonic scale** – the notes found within a major or minor scale.

**Dynamics** – Varying degrees of volume in the performance of music.

**Elements of music** – Melody, harmony, rhythm, and form and the expressive elements of dynamics, tempo, and timbre (tone color).

**Harmony** – The simultaneous sounding of two or more tones.

**Improvisation** – spontaneous creation of music.

**Pitch** – The location of a note related to its highness or lowness.

**Rhythm** – the combinations of long and short, even or uneven sounds that convey a sense of movement in time.

**Scale** – the arrangement of notes in a specific order of whole and half steps.

**Tone** – the quality of a sound produced by a musical instrument or singing voice.

**Volume** – the amount of sound that is produced.

### Reflection questions/prompts

- How did it feel to sing with the group? Was it enjoyable, or did you feel nervous or uncomfortable?
- What positive things can result from singing with a group?

# About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

## MY STORY

### Age Group

Middle, high school and/or college

### Length

One class period or several (Teacher's discretion.)

### Category

Writing

### Summary

*The Sound of Music* is based on the real life story of the von Trapp family. What would it be like to put your life story, or your family's, on stage?

### Objectives

- Students write a version of their own life story, or their family's.
- Students make connections with the real life aspects that *The Sound of Music* is based on.

### Materials needed

Paper and writing utensils

### Activity

1. Students are asked to choose to write about their own life story, or their family's.
2. Students create a timeline of their life, or their family's, listing major and/or memorable events.
3. Students begin to make more specific decisions about the story they want to tell:
4. Focus on one event or many
5. Create a plot with a beginning, middle and end of the story
6. Choose the genre the story will be told in (comedy, drama, tragedy, etc.)
7. Choose the characters that will be in their story and describe them
8. Create a title for their story
9. The teacher and students can go as deeply into this process as time will allow. A brief exploration can be conducted, with students creating a basic outline. Or students can dive into creating short plays.

### Variations

- Have students share their stories in cooperative groups before sharing with the whole group.
- Explore artistic license (mentioned previously in the Educator Resources). If a student were to change aspects of their story to make it more compelling, what would they change?

### Tips

It may be difficult for some students to write or share about themselves or their families. If this is the case, find an alternative way for them to participate in the exercise. Perhaps they create a fictional family to write about.

### Quotes

"We learned the shocking truth that 'home' isn't necessarily a certain spot on earth. It must be a place where you can 'feel' at home, which means 'free' to us."

—Maria Augusta von Trapp in *The Story of the Trapp Family Singers*

## About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

### FLIBBERTIGIBBET, WILL-O'-THE-WISP, CLOWN

**Age Group**

Elementary, middle, high school and/or college

**Length**

Approximately 30 minutes

**Category**

Acting, Improvisation

**Summary**

In *The Sound of Music*, Maria is described as a problem. The nuns refer to her as a “Flibbertigibbet, a will-o’-the-wisp, a clown.” In the following exercise, students will get to “play” with these terms.

**Objectives**

- Students will employ their creativity and imaginations by exploring these terms through creative dramatics.
- Students will become familiar with concepts presented in *The Sound of Music*.

**Activity**

1. Ask students what they imagine “Flibbertigibbet” or “will-o’-the-wisp” to mean. How would they define “clown”?
2. Discuss the actual definitions. (See Vocabulary section below.)
3. Create small cooperative groups of 3 students. Assign each student in the group to be a flibbertigibbet, a will-o’-the-wisp or a clown.
4. Each group creates a tableau (frozen picture), with their assigned characters.
5. Students present their tableaux to the class.

**Variations**

- Have students create characters based on these terms and improvise or write and perform short scenes with their characters.
- Have the three students in the small groups switch characters when they improvise together.
- Put all of the flibbertigibbets in a group and have them improvise with each other. Do the same with the will-o’-the-wisps and the clowns.
- Play with other descriptions of Maria in the quotes below (cloud, moonbeam, wild, riddle, child, etc.).



## About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

### Quotes

“How do you catch a cloud and pin it down?”

“How do you catch a moonbeam in your hand?”

“She is wild,  
She’s a riddle.  
She’s a child.  
She’s a headache!!  
She’s an angel.  
She’s a girl.”

—Lyrics from the song, Maria, in *The Sound of Music*

### Vocabulary

**Flibbertigibbet** – a silly flighty person. Synonyms: birdbrain, cuckoo, ditz, featherbrain, featherhead, nitwit, rattlebrain, scatterbrain, softhead

**Will-o'-the Wisp** – a person or thing that is difficult or impossible to find, reach, or catch

Clown: someone who does funny things to make people laugh, or a rude, stupid person

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Center Theatre Group's mission is to serve the diverse audiences of Los Angeles by producing and presenting theatre of the highest caliber, by nurturing new artists, by attracting new audiences, and by developing youth outreach and education programs. This mission is based on the belief that the art of theatre is a cultural force with the capacity to transform the lives of individuals and society at large.

### Education and Community Partnerships

Theatre is an enduring and powerful tool for communicating ideas, stories, emotions and beliefs that fuel the intellect, imagination and creative spirit. Center Theatre Group believes that stimulating awareness, creativity, dialogue and an inquisitive mind is integral to the growth and well-being of the individual and the community; and that nurturing a life-long appreciation of the arts leads inextricably to an engaged and enlightened society.

**Center Theatre Group's education and engagement programs advance the organization's mission in three key ways:**

**Audiences:** Inspiring current and future audiences to discover theatre and its connection to their lives;

**Artists:** Investing in the training, support and development of emerging, young artists and young arts professionals who are the future of our field; and

**Arts Education Leadership:** Contributing to the community-wide efforts to improve the quality and scope of arts education in Los Angeles.

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