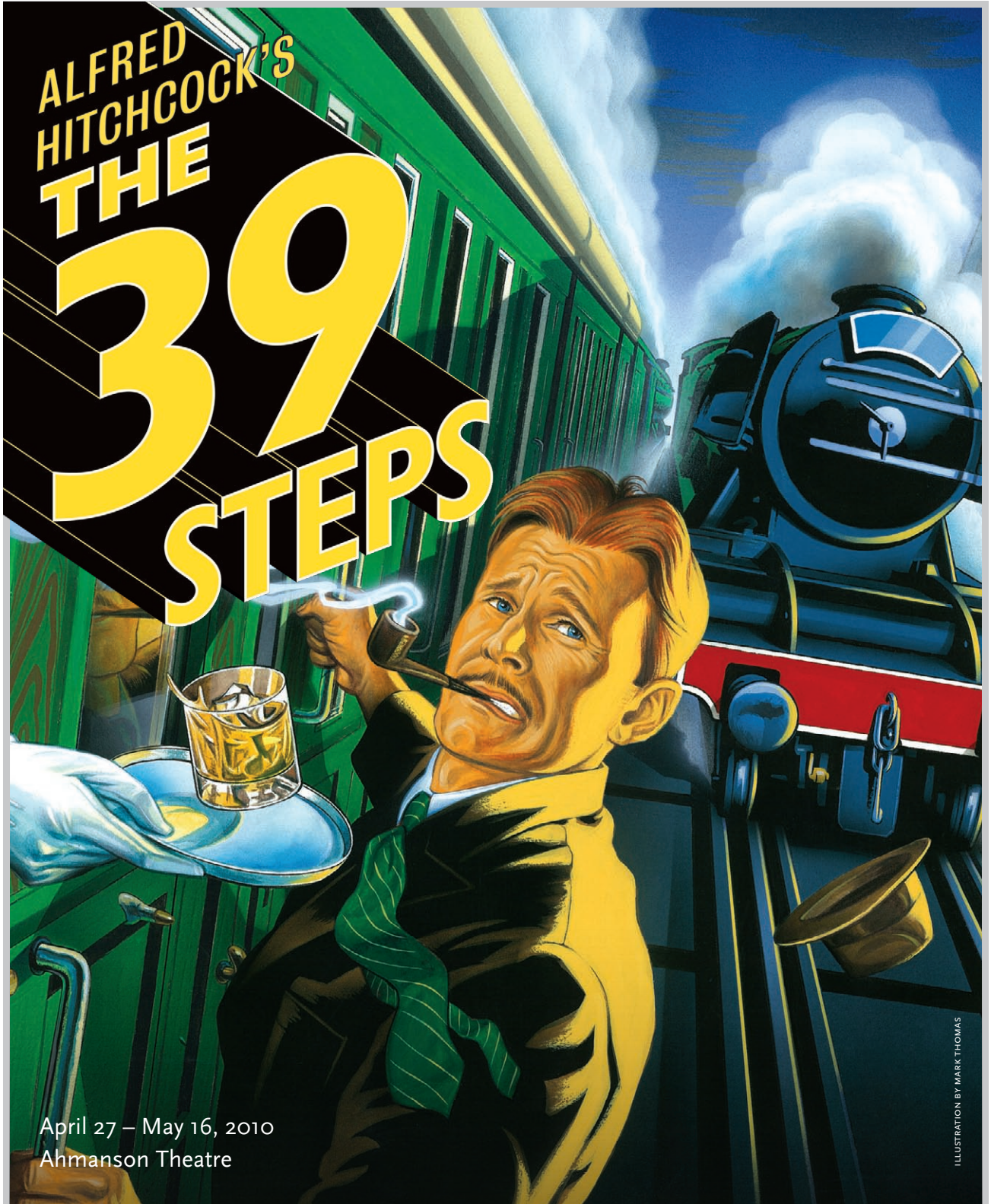


Educator Resources



Welcome

Educator
Resources
*Alfred Hitchcock's
The 39 Steps*

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Center Theatre Group is excited to have you and your students join us at *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*.

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 Student Discovery Guide and Educator Resources raise questions: questions about the appeal of novelist John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps* and why it has inspired countless adaptations, questions about spy fiction and what draws us to those type of stories, questions about what makes a hero, questions about theatre and physical transformation. Our goal is to provide you with a variety of entry points into *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps* so that you can choose what best suits you and your students.

The Educator Resources and Student 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.

We have organized the Educator Resources into the following sections:

Student Discovery Guide

The Student 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.

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. For *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*, this includes the time and place (Europe in 1935), the genre of spy fiction, adaptation from book, to film to stage and the tradition of physical theatre.



L.A.'s Theatre Company

Ahmanson Theatre
Mark Taper Forum
Kirk Douglas Theatre

601 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

This section furthers and deepens the background information provided in the Student 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.

Connection

This section provides ways to explore connections between the ideas presented in the play, the students' lives and the world we live in. Structured thematically, each section contains questions and exercises that may be used for reflection, discussion, and/or writing prompts both before and after the performance.

Creativity

This section 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 *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*. The 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 *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*!

About Alfred Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps*

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Scene by Scene Synopsis

Richard Hannay is bored with his life. He's been in London for three months and can't find anything interesting to do. Looking for a distraction and perhaps some excitement, he heads to the West End to catch a show. There, he meets a beautiful, mysterious stranger, Annabella Schmidt. In the middle of a performance by the amazing Mr. Memory, gunshots ring out and the crowd scatters. In the chaos Annabella convinces Hannay to take her home with him.

In his apartment, Annabella acts very strangely – she demands he shut the blinds, turn off the lights, and ignore the ringing telephone. The reason for her odd behavior: she is a spy hiding from gunmen who want her dead. She's discovered the plot of dangerous secret agent who intends to steal valuable military secrets, smuggle them out of the country, and hand them over to a foreign enemy. If the agent is successful, it could mean global chaos. And Annabella is the only one who can stop him.

Annabella cryptically mentions "The 39 Steps" and warns Hannay that the super spy has the ability to disguise himself a hundred different ways. But he has a weakness, something he can't disguise – he is missing the top joint of his little finger. After a good night's rest, Annabella plans to head for her next contact, an Englishman living in a big house called "Alt Na Shellach," deep in the Scottish Highlands. Hannay graciously gives her his bed and settles into his armchair for the night. His rest is disrupted when Annabella staggers into the living room with a knife in her back. She collapses in Hannay's lap clutching a map of Scotland, and he realizes he's got big problems: not only will he be accused of Annabella's murder, with her dead there is no one left to stop the super spy and his deadly plot. Hannay's choice is clear: he must pick up where Annabella left off, clear his name, and catch the villain before it's too late.

With gunmen outside his door, Hannay manages to sneak away disguised as the milkman. By the time his housekeeper discovers Annabella's body, Hannay is already on a train headed for Edinburgh, Scotland. But he's not out of danger. When the train makes a stop, a fellow passenger buys a newspaper with a story about the murder. It says that Hannay's gone missing and gives a detailed (and extremely flattering) description of his appearance. As the train continues north toward the Scottish Highlands, police board to search for him. Hannay



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ducks into the car of the beautiful Pamela, and tries to evade the police by pretending to be her traveling companion. She won't play along, though, and turns him in. Hannay makes a daring escape by jumping from the train. The police give chase, but lose Hannay when he plunges from a bridge and disappears into the foggy Scottish moors.

Pretending to be an itinerant laborer, Hannay seeks refuge for the night with a farmer and his young wife, Margaret. The farmer is highly suspicious of Hannay, but Margaret is immediately drawn to him. While the farmer is out tending his cows, Hannay and Margaret share an intimate moment talking about her dreams of visiting a big city, something her extremely strict and religious husband disapproves of. Over dinner, Margaret notices the article in the newspaper about Hannay, realizes who he is, but does not reveal his secret to her husband. When the police show up in the middle of the night, she wakes Hannay and sends him off into the dark moors wearing her husband's black Sunday coat as camouflage.

All night and into the next morning, the police chase Hannay through the moors. Over hills and through valleys, they pursue him on foot and from the air in a single engine biplane. But Hannay pushes on, and eventually finds himself at the gate of Professor Jordan's estate, Alt Na Shellach. Relieved, he rings the bell and is greeted by Mrs. Jordan, the professor's wife. Mrs. Jordan graciously invites him to join a party – they are celebrating their daughter's birthday with a number of well-to-do members of the community, including the county sheriff. When Hannay meets Professor Jordan, he reveals everything about Annabella's discovery of the evil plot and her subsequent murder, the villainous foreign agent without a little finger, and he tells the Professor they must act quickly to discover

the meaning of the Thirty-Nine Steps and foil the plot before it's too late. As Professor Jordan assures Hannay he's come to the right place, he holds up his hand – a hand missing a little finger. Hannay has walked right into the villain's lair!

With a revolver in hand, the Professor explains Hannay's options. Because Hannay knows too much, the Professor has no choice but to kill him; unless of course, Hannay would consider joining him. The Professor sees in Hannay all the qualities he's looking for in co-conspirators – intelligence and ruthlessness. And the Professor senses correctly that Hannay's been bored with life, that he is all alone in the world, with no one to go home to. That may have been how Hannay felt before being pulled into this caper, but through it he's discovered qualities in himself that he values deeply: loyalty, selflessness, sacrifice, and even love. With his fake English accent giving way to a German accent, Professor Jordan urges Hannay to join the other side. Hannay plays along, biding his time and trying to get as much information about the plot as possible. Professor Jordan begins to explain the 39 Steps, then realizes what Hannay is doing. Furious, he shoots Hannay in the chest, leaves him to die, and rejoins Mrs. Jordan and the party.

At the same time, the farmer realizes his best Sunday coat is missing, and with it, his hymn book. He becomes enraged when Margaret tells him what she did with it, and threatens to hit her, but she stands her ground and faces him proudly.

Meanwhile, Hannay has made his way to the county sheriff's office, thanks to the hymn book in his chest pocket which blocked the Professor's bullet. Hannay reveals everything to the sheriff and thinks he's finally found an ally, only to discover the sheriff works for the

Professor. In another daring escape, Hannay smashes through a window and dashes into the streets with the police right behind him. A passing parade provides cover as Hannay slips into a local assembly hall looking for help. Instead, the gathering mistakes him for the guest speaker they've been waiting for. So as not to give himself away, Hannay delivers a rousing speech that is well received by the crowd, despite the fact that he hasn't any idea what their cause is. From the podium, he notices the beautiful Pamela from the train, who is with two thugs that she thinks are police inspectors. Hannay tries to make a break for it, but this time he can't get away.

As the "inspectors" drag him to their car, Hannay tells Pamela about the secret plot to steal military secrets and begs her to contact Scotland Yard immediately. Pamela tries to ignore him, but the thugs grab her, too, telling her she needs to come with them to identify the prisoner, and handcuffing her to Hannay. As they drive into the night, she notices they are going the wrong direction. As Hannay tries to convince her that their captors are not actually police inspectors, the car is blocked by a flock of sheep. Hannay sees his chance and jumps out of the car, dragging Pamela along. When she refuses to move, he pretends his pipe is a gun and threatens to shoot her, and they run off into the moors. With both the actual police and the thugs giving chase, Hannay and Pamela brave every conceivable hurdle of the Scottish countryside – cliffs, valleys, bogs, waterfalls, streams, thorn bushes, and thunderstorms.

With rain pouring down, they spot an isolated hotel and check in, pretending to be a young couple on the run. The kindly innkeeper and his wife assure them their secret is safe and leave them alone in their room. As Hannay and Pamela do their best to get comfortable

while handcuffed together, they bicker about her wet clothing and their sleeping arrangements. Without any other option, they lie down awkwardly next to each other on the bed.

When Hannay falls asleep, Pamela manages to squeeze out of the handcuffs. Once free, she digs in his pocket for his "gun" and discovers the pipe. Enraged, she slips out the door. Once out of the room, she overhears the heavies in the lobby on the phone with Mrs. Jordan. They reveal the whole plot: that the Professor has what he wanted, is warning the 39 Steps, and is picking someone up at the London Palladium and heading out of the country that night. Pamela then realizes Hannay has been innocent all along! After the thugs get off the phone, they question the innkeeper about any recent guests, but the innkeeper's wife chases them off without giving Hannay and Pamela away. Relieved, Pamela sneaks back into the room, gazes at Hannay fondly, and curls up to sleep on the floor by the bed.

When they wake the next morning, Pamela explains what she overheard and apologizes for not believing him. Afraid they've lost valuable time, Hannay is furious that she didn't wake him sooner. Whatever closeness they developed is shattered when they part ways screaming at each other. Hannay storms out of the hotel room, finds a car, and races back to London, fearing he may be too late to clear his name, expose the spies, and insure the country's safety.

Having made her way home alone, Pamela finds a callbox and telephones her Uncle Bob, the Chief Commissioner of Scotland Yard and tells him that Richard Hannay is on his way to the London Palladium.

Inside the London Palladium a crowd has gathered for a show. Because the place is crawling with police,

Hannay tries to stay out of sight in a balcony box, but Pamela discovers him, and tells him she's been to Scotland Yard and they insist that no top secret information has been stolen from the Military Office or anywhere else. Confused, Hannay searches the crowd and sees the Professor in another balcony box. If nothing's been stolen, what is the Professor leaving the country with? And why would he come to a show instead of getting away as soon as possible?

The performance begins – it is Mr. Memory again, and his amazing ability to memorize and recite facts on any and every subject. As Mr. Memory prepares to take questions from the audience, Hannay solves the mystery. Mr. Memory is who the professor has come to take out of the country – there is nothing missing from the Military Office because Mr. Memory has memorized it! Just then, the police discover Hannay in the audience. As they drag him out, he shouts, “What are the 39 Steps?” Mr. Memory freezes, then, as if in a trance, begins to answer, “The 39 Steps is an organization of spies working for...”

Before he can answer, Professor Jordan shoots Mr. Memory in the heart. Mr. Memory collapses and the police rush to the Professor as he points the gun at Hannay, then at Pamela. But before he can shoot either of them, a shot rings out from between the curtains, killing the Professor.

Mr. Memory lies dying backstage. Before he drifts off, Hannay asks him about the secret he was taking out of the country. Mr. Memory is relieved to get it out of his head – it is the plans for a new engine that is completely silent. After telling the secret, Mr. Memory dies, and Hannay realizes the full extent of the plot he has just foiled: in the hands of an enemy military, the plans for a silent engine would be devastating.

Outside the Palladium, Hannay is finally a free man. And with Pamela's help, he's saved the country. The adventure is over; Hannay and Pamela reluctantly part ways.

Back in his apartment, everything is just as it was when we began. Hannay is alone, contemplating his life. When Pamela enters carrying a bottle of champagne and we hear a baby in the background, it's clear that things are not at all as they were in the beginning. Before his adventure, Hannay was bored, lonely, and dissatisfied. He longed for meaning and excitement. He certainly got more than he wished for – a murder rap and an international espionage caper that brought him face to face with master spies and killers. In the end, he cleared his name, foiled the enemy, and found true love. What could be less boring than that?

Timeline of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* and its Numerous Adaptations and References

- 1915 “The Thirty-Nine Steps,” novel by John Buchan
- 1935 “The 39 Steps,” film adaptation by Alfred Hitchcock
- 1937 “The 39 Steps,” radio play adaptation of Alfred Hitchcock’s film produced by Lux Radio Theater with Robert Montgomery and Ida Lupino (2)
- 1938 “The 39 Steps,” *The Mercury Theater on the Air* radio play starring Orson Wells (9)
- 1947 “The 39 Steps,” radio play adaptation by Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s *Stage Series*, Vol. 8, with Budd Knapp (10)
- 1948 “The 39 Steps,” radio play adaptation of Alfred Hitchcock’s film by Studio One, with Glenn Ford and Mercedes McCambridge (11)
- 1952 “The Thirty-Nine Steps,” CBS radio play, episode #462 of the *Suspense* series, with Herbert Marshall (12)
- 1959 “The 39 Steps,” color film remake of Alfred Hitchcock’s film, directed by Ralph Thomas, with Kenneth More and Tiana Elg (3)
- 1960 “The 39 Steps,” BBC Radio adaptation in 6 episodes, with James McKechnie, Norman Claridge, Eric Anderson (1)
- 1972 “The Adventures of Richard Hannay,” radio play adapted by Winifred Carey for the BBC from two Buchan novels: “The Thirty-Nine Steps” and “Mr. Steadfast” (1)
- 1978 “The Thirty-Nine Steps,” film adaptation directed by Don Sharp (3)
- 1983 “The Thirty-Nine Steps,” Chivers Audio Books, unabridged reading by Robert Powell (14)
- 1986 “39 Steps,” punk band featured in Woody Allen’s “Hannah and her Sisters” (3)
- 1989 “The 39 Steps,” radio adaptation by BBC 4, with David Rintoul (13)
- 1989 “The 39 Stairs,” Sesame Street’s Monster Piece Theater Episode #2571, Grover climbs 39 steps to see what’s at the top (5)
- 1990 “The Thirty-Nine Steps,” audio book by BBC Radio Collection, with David Rintoul (7)
- 1994 “The Thirty-Nine Steps,” Orbis Publishing audio book, abridged reading by James Fox (8)
- 1996 “The 39 Steps,” two-man stage play based on John Buchan’s novel by Simon Corble & Nobby Dimon of Midsommer’s Actors’ Company, produced by North County Theater to tour village halls and theaters in northern England and Scotland (6)
- 2000 “The Thirty-Nine Steps,” Penguin Audio books abridged reading by Jack Davenport (15)
- 2001 “The Thirty-Nine Steps,” BBC Radio 4 Play two-part adaptation with David Robb, Tom Baker, William Hope, and Struan Rodger, Director: Bruce Young (1)

- 2006 “Alfred Hitchcock’s *The 39 Steps*,” theatrical adaptation of Hitchcock’s film by Patrick Barlow, directed by Maria Aitken, originally titled “John Buchan’s *The 39 Steps*” (3)
- 2008 “*The 39 Steps*,” BBC television feature-length adaptation of Buchan’s novel, directed by James Hawes, with Rupert Penry-Jones (3)
- 2010 “*The 21 Steps*,” digital interactive fiction by Charles Cumming based on Buchan’s novel but set in current times, tells the story using place marks on Google Maps, part of Penguin’s “We Tell Stories” series, *wetellstories.co.uk/stories/week1/(4)*

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Biography – Alfred Hitchcock, director of the film *The 39 Steps*

It's nearly impossible to imagine what modern cinema would be without Alfred Hitchcock, whose directing career spanned nearly fifty years. His films, and their iconic scenes, are recognizable even to people who have never seen them – the screeching violins as a woman is stabbed to death in the shower; the background swirling around a man as he has a paralyzing panic attack; a man in his pajamas confined to a wheel chair with a broken leg, using a telephoto camera to spy on his neighbors; a flock of crazed birds attacking a woman's head and face as she screams and runs for cover; a suited man running across the ridge of Mount Rushmore pursued by a biplane; a woman fighting off her assassin and killing him with a large pair of scissors. Hitchcock's imagination and craftsmanship set the bar for the suspense and psychological thriller genre.

Born in England, he began his film career in 1919 illustrating title cards for silent movies and drawing sets for Paramount's Famous Players-Lasky Studio in London. (3) (4) He worked his way up the ranks from the scripts department, through editing, art direction, and finally became an assistant director in 1922. (3) "The Pleasure Garden," his directorial debut, was completed in 1925 and met with great success. (3) He went on to make several more films in Britain, moved to the United States in 1940 (4), and officially became an American citizen in 1956 but opted to also retain his British citizenship. (1)

In the US, his prolific career continued at breakneck speed. He often explored the theme of the innocent everyman, falsely accused of a crime, who must find

the courage to clear his name and heroically save the day. This would have naturally drawn him to John Buchan's novel "The Thirty-Nine Steps" and the tribulations of its hero Richard Hannay. While Hitchcock's 1935 adaptation makes numerous changes to Buchan's plot, the heart of the story remains the same: Hannay did not do what the police think he did, and in order to prove his innocence he must risk his life to expose a ring of villainous spies.

Some of Hitchcock's other masterpieces are "Strangers on a Train," "Dial M for Murder," "Rear Window," "Vertigo," "North by Northwest," "Psycho," and "The Birds." When he died in 1980, he had directed over seventy films and television shows, (2) earned five Oscar nominations for Best Director, one for Outstanding Motion Picture, and won both the Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award for lifetime achievement in 1967 and the AFI Life Achievement Award in 1979. (1) Britain's *The Daily Telegraph* noted, "Hitchcock did more than any director to shape modern cinema, which would be utterly different without him. His flair was for narrative, cruelly withholding crucial information (from his characters and us) and engaging the emotions of the audience like no one else." (5) Few directors, past or present, have been as prolific or are as respected.

Hitchcock Words of Wisdom

"I am a typed director. If I made Cinderella, the audience would immediately be looking for a body in the coach." (4)

"To make a great film you need three things – the script, the script, and the script." (4)

"Fear isn't so difficult to understand. After all, weren't we all frightened as children? Nothing has changed since Little Red Riding Hood faced the big bad wolf. What frightens us today is exactly the same sort of

thing that frightened us yesterday. It's just a different wolf." (4)
"Drama is life with the dull bits left out." (6)
"There's no terror in the bang, only in the anticipation of it." (6)

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Biography – John Buchan, author of the novel *The Thirty-Nine Steps*

There are few modern historical figures as decorated or accomplished in such a wide variety of fields as John Buchan. He found success not just as an author, but also as a publisher, historian, politician, administrator, lawyer, and parliamentarian. Born in Perth, Scotland in 1875, he spent his boyhood exploring the moors and countryside that would later provide backgrounds for his countless written works. (1) (2) At seventeen he attended Glasgow University to study classics and poetry, and had his first work published in the Glasgow University Magazine. (3) At twenty he left his beloved Scotland and ventured to Oxford, England, to study law. (3) (4) It was there he published his first novel, *Sir Quixote of the Moors* in 1897. (1) Directly out of college,

he pursued a political and diplomatic career in which he held a variety of important government positions all over the world – from Private Secretary to the High Commissioner of South Africa in 1901 (1) (2), to Lord High Commissioner of the Church of Scotland (1933-1935) (1) (2), with countless posts in between. In 1935, after earning the title of First Baron Tweedsmuir, he was appointed Governor-General of Canada, where he served with great commitment and acclaim until his death in 1940. (2) (4)

Simultaneously, he never stopped writing, and completed well over a hundred works of both fiction and non-fiction in his lifetime. (4) In 1915, his most famous novel, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, was published while he was serving as a war correspondent for *The Times*, as well as working for the British War Propaganda Bureau and the French Intelligence Corps. (1) (2) His written work was so well received and his administrative skills so well respected, that in 1917 he was appointed Director of the Department of Information for the British Army. (1) Buchan took the responsibility of that office very seriously. He's noted as saying, "It was the toughest job I ever took on." (1)

Buchan's rich and varied life experiences reveal themselves in his writing, particularly *The Thirty-Steps* and follow-up novels featuring its hero Richard Hannay. His love of the outdoors and his native Scotland is evident in the detailed descriptions of the Scottish countryside. His faith in politics, which he saw as a means "give actual human beings the chance of a worthy life" and "ensure peace and cooperation between nations," (1) is represented by Hannay in his pursuit of justice and his unwillingness to cave in to outside influences. His experience during WWI both at the front and with the Propaganda Bureau made him keenly aware of the deep anxieties felt not

just in England, but around the world – fear of the enemy, and more importantly, fear that the enemy might be someone you know and trust, as when the kindly Englishman Hannay encounters in the Scottish Highlands first appears to be an ally but turns out to be a German spy set on destroying the English military. Buchan's legacy is vast. His hundreds of written works, countless titles, honors, medals, awards, military appointments, and honorary degrees, as well as his diplomatic accomplishments around the world, insure his contributions will endure.

Buchan Words of Wisdom

“Civilization is a conspiracy...Modern life is the silent compact of comfortable folk to keep up pretences. And it will succeed till the day comes when there is another compact to strip them bare.” – *Tells of a Midsummer Night*, Chap. 3(5)(6)

“You think that a wall as solid as earth separated civilization from barbarism. I tell you the division is a thread, a sheet of glass. A touch here, a push there and you bring back the reign of Saturn.” – *Tells of a Midsummer Night*, Chap. 3(5)(6)

“Every man at the bottom of his heart believes that he is a born detective.” – *I First Hear of Mr. Andrew Lumley*, Chap. 2 (5)(6)

“Civilization needs more than the law to hold it together. You see, all mankind are not equally willing to accept as divine justice what is called human law.” – *Tells of a Midsummer Night*, Chap. 3 (6)

“To-day we have fewer dogmas, but I think that we have stronger principles. By a dogma, I mean a deduction from fact which is only valid under certain conditions, and which becomes untrue if those conditions change.

By a principle I mean something that is an eternal and universal truth.” – *A University Bequest to Youth*, speech given 10/10/1936 (6)

“Our sufferings have taught us that no nation is sufficient unto itself, and that our prosperity depends in the long run, not on upon the failure of our neighbors but their successes.” – *A University Bequest to Youth*, speech given 10/10/1936

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Biography – Patrick Barlow, playwright/adaptor of the stage play *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*

In Patrick Barlow's thirty year career, the well known British actor, writer, and director has made his mark in practically every medium. In addition to his many roles in British sitcoms, he can also be seen in the films *Shakespeare In Love* (1998), *Notting Hill* (1999), *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001), and *Nanny McPhee* (2005). As a scriptwriter, he's genre-hopped from television

mysteries such as “Agatha Christie’s Miss Marple” series, to teen dramedy “The Growing Pains of Adrain Mole” (1987).

His largest and most accomplished body of work is that of The National Theatre of Brent, a two-man acting troupe famous for taking on the largest and most complicated epics of human history, and reenacting them with minimal backgrounds, props, and costumes. Founded in 1980 by Barlow’s alter ego, Desmond Olivier Dingle, the National Theatre of Brent has tackled everything from the Passion Play in “The Messiah” (1984), the French Revolution in “Revolution!” (1989), the entire history of human civilization in “All the World’s A Globe” (1992), and the relationship of Prince Charles and Princess Diana in “Love Upon the Throne” (1998) (nominated for a Laurence Olivier Award for Best Comedy in the UK). The 21 shows of the National Theatre of Brent cannot have been seen and heard on stages, radios and televisions all over the world.

Barlow’s comedic dexterity, his skill in making a lot from very little, and his ability to tell stories that are both hilarious and moving, made him ideally suited to Alfred Hitchcock’s *The 39 Steps*. In 2005 producer Edward Snape approached Barlow about adapting the script for a stage production of “The 39 Steps,” a property that had been touring England since 1995. While the previous version combined both John Buchan’s 1915 novel and Alfred Hitchcock’s 1935 film, Barlow’s adaptation focuses almost exclusively on the film for source material. As he says, “I just took the film and added things that make me laugh.” (5)

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Comprehension

Comprehension | Connections | Creativity

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. For *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*, this includes the time and place (Europe in 1935), the genre of spy fiction, adaptation from book, to film to stage and the tradition of physical theatre.

This section furthers and deepens the background information provided in the Student 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.

Adaptation

There is something special about John Buchan's novel, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. Rarely has a story been retold so many times and in so many different mediums. On television, in films, on the radio, and on stage, there are more than twenty different versions of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, and each tells the story in a different way. This is partly because the artists who spearhead the adaptations have their own points of view and opinions about the story's essence. It is also because the mediums themselves are different, with different strengths and limitations. These two elements combined greatly affect the end product.

The play *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps* started out as a pre-WWI espionage novel written by John Buchan in 1915 and was adapted by Alfred Hitchcock into a spy/romance film set in 1935. In 2006, Patrick Barlow re-imagined the Hitchcock film as a comedic stage-play.

There are a few things that all three versions have in common. They all feature Richard Hannay, a Canadian living in London. A secret agent asks him for help, tells him about a plot that threatens England's national security, and is then murdered in his apartment. Hannay must go on the run from both the police who think he's a murderer, and the assassins who think he knows too much. He travels by train to Scotland, where he meets a well-to-do Englishman he thinks will be an ally, but turns out to be the evil mastermind super-spy behind both the secret agent's murder and the plot to steal military secrets. While none of these versions say explicitly where the spies are from or who they are working for, most versions' villains have German accents or speak German. A key element of each espionage plot is that nothing is physically taken; the stolen secrets are memorized so no one will know anything is wrong until it's too late. In all three, Hannay poses as a milkman to make his first getaway, gives a political speech at a rally that he knows nothing about, and jumps from a moving train. And all three conclude with Hannay unraveling the mystery of "the 39 steps," clearing his name, foiling the sinister plan, and saving the world.

Beyond those key elements, the stories vary widely. Buchan's novel has no prominent female characters, and no romantic subplot. His travels through Scotland are far more complicated – he stops in more locations and interacts with many local characters. Everyone he asks for help gives it to him without reservation. Throughout, Hannay uses a variety of disguises to elude both police and assassins, changing his wardrobe, body language, and accent

numerous times and with great success. More than once he comes face to face with his pursuers and they don't recognize him. Disguises are also used by the spies. They hide in plain sight disguised as wealthy, vacationing Englishmen, in a mansion on a cliff (spoiler alert!) with "39 steps" leading up to it. The mastermind even makes himself look exactly like a well known, high-ranking British military official, walks into a top-secret government meeting, memorizes everything discussed at the meeting, and walks out without anyone knowing the difference.

Hitchcock's film either cuts out or simplifies many of the Scottish locations, and adds important female characters. The secret agent who puts everything in motion is a man in Buchan's version, but is the beautiful and mysterious Annabella Smith in Hitchcock's. Hitchcock also adds the oppressed farmer's wife, Margaret, who is the only person in the film who believes Hannay and willingly helps him. Pamela, the love interest, doesn't trust him from the moment she meets him, and only realizes the truth when she overhears a revealing conversation between the assassins who have been chasing them. Hannay relies on his wits and courage to survive, but only once does he wear a disguise – to get from his apartment to the train station, he borrows a milkman's clothes. When Hannay and Pamela are handcuffed together, Hitchcock takes the opportunity to add some humor to the story. Their bickering is the banter of a romantic-comedy, not serious arguing, and foreshadows their eventual falling in love. Professor Jordan – the mastermind behind the espionage plot – lives quite publically, is a pillar of his community, and has close relationships with local officials. His evil plan is different from that of the novel, although it does rely heavily on memorization. Mr. Memory, a vaudeville performer with the ability to remember anything, is forced to memorize plans for a revolutionary invention: a silent engine. To get the plans out of the country, the Professor must take Mr. Memory. Before that happens, Hannay unravels the mystery and stops it. In the end, Mr. Memory reveals the secret of "The 39 Steps" – an international ring of spies – but he dies before saying who they work for.

When Patrick Barlow adapted *The Thirty-Nine Steps* for the stage, he stuck closely to Hitchcock's plot and characters, but greatly increased the comedic elements. In fact, in this version, everything is played for laughs. Barlow also brought back two elements from the novel. First, he added an opening monologue that establishes Hannay's state of mind. His complaints – that he's depressed and lonely, bored with London and bored with life – come directly from the book's first pages. He also brought back the use of disguises,

but this time they're not used by Hannay, they're used by everyone else. In reimagining the story for the stage, Barlow whittled the cast down to four actors – one to play Hannay, a woman to play the three key female roles, and two men to play over 150 other people! Like Buchan's idea in the novel, by changing very little – a hat, a coat, an accent, a limp – one actor can be an infinite number of characters.

What are The 39 Steps?

In Buchan's novel, "39 Steps" is the clue necessary to tracking down the foreign spies, who are hiding in a sea-side mansion on a cliff, surrounded by other mansions. Theirs, however, is the only one with exactly 39 steps leading to it from the beach. In Hitchcock's film and Barlow's adaptation, "The 39 Steps" does not refer to a location. Instead, it is the name given to the ring of spies.

Time & Place – London

"London. 1935. August. I'd been back three months in the old country and frankly wondering why. The weather made me liverish, no exercise to speak of and the talk of ordinary Englishmen made me sick. I'd had enough of restaurants and parties and race meetings...And I was bored. No, more than bored. Tired. Tired of the world and tired of life frankly... Picked up an evening paper, put it back. Full of elections and wars and rumors of war. And I thought – who bloody hell cares?" In *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps* Richard Hannay's dissatisfaction with his surroundings – specifically London in 1935 – propels him out of his ordinary routine and into an adventure of epic proportions. He crosses the border and travels deep into the Scottish Highlands, an area still quite rural and certainly a world away from metropolitan London.

1930s London

London may have seemed dull and boring to Richard Hannay, but in the years between World War I (1915-1919) and World War II (1939-1945), the city experienced tremendous highs and lows.

By the beginning of the 20th century, London was the center of international commerce and trade, and served as the hub of what was arguably the world's largest and most powerful empire, the United Kingdom. It was a

city committed to efficiency, cleanliness, and embracing modern advances in technology that would benefit the community at large. (3)(1) For London, the interwar years were formative. As it recovered from the effects of World War I and anticipated the inevitability of World War II, the city experienced both great tension and great possibility.

World War I left deep scars on all of Europe, and London was no exception. The 1915 air raid by German Zeppelins – giant rigid-framed blimps – marked the first time in nearly 250 years that the city had been directly attacked and the first time it had ever been attacked from the sky. The initial air raid on May 31st resulted in 39 casualties; by the end of the war nearly 650 Londoners had been killed by Zeppelin bombs. The effect of this new form of aerial warfare was terrifying, and not easily forgotten, even after the war had ended. (1)(2)(5)

The First World War left all of Britain in a deep financial crisis. The years 1929-1932 saw a tremendous economic downturn, also known as “The Great Slump.” Britain, like much of Europe, accumulated a huge national debt paying for their involvement in the war. They were therefore extremely vulnerable when the New York Stock Exchange crashed in 1929, collapsing the American economy, and contracting markets all over the world. As demand for British products dropped, unemployment shot to 20% in 1930, and continued to upward to 25% in 1931 – close to 3 million people without jobs. By the mid 1930s, surveys show an estimated 25% of the entire United Kingdom was surviving on a subsistence diet; increased cases of scurvy, rickets, and tuberculosis indicated high levels of childhood malnutrition. Industrial areas and coal mining districts, the poorest areas to begin with, were hit the hardest. (4)

The national government did what it could to help citizens through the tough times. Since the early 1900s England maintained one of the most advanced welfare programs in the world. In 1931, it revamped the system to deal with the specific needs caused by the Depression. It established fully government-funded unemployment benefits that were paid according to need. It also sponsored public works programs like road reconstruction to boost employment. Even with these measures, recovery was extremely slow. Nationwide unemployment dropped slightly between 1935 and 1936, but most of the improvements were centered in the south around large cities.(1)

London weathered the Depression better than most British cities. Unemployment did rise significantly (close to 13.5%), but the city’s established industries – engineering, electrical goods, furniture, paper, printing, clothing,

food and drink – employed 1.6 million people and prospered (4)(1). Mass production of consumer goods made domestic luxuries affordable for the middle class. As they bought radios, washing machines, electric kitchen appliances, and even automobiles, demand went up, bringing more factories to London.(1)(5) Between 1932 and 1937, close to half of all the new factories opened in England were located in London. (4)

London also experienced a dramatic and unprecedented population growth during the interwar period. Between 1921 and 1939, the population increased by over 1.2 million to a total of 8.6 million people, the largest to date.(5) More people meant a need for more housing and that, combined with the government's lowered interest rates, resulted in increased suburban home construction.(4) A larger population also meant additional city-wide improvements. London greatly expanded its public transportation system, laying new railways connecting the countryside, suburbs, and the city.(3) In 1933, the local telephone system was fully automated.(1) And in 1936, the first London-Paris train was completed, connecting successful Londoners to another major international city.

Even with the success of certain London industries, political tensions were high. The increasingly erratic behavior of Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy created great uneasiness in a population still reeling from the destruction of World War I. As the British government struggled to pull the country out of debt and end the Depression, extremists on both the right and left flourished. The Communist Party of Great Britain won a seat in the House of Commons; at the same time the British Union of Fascists' membership grew.(5) On October 4, 1936, the BUF marched through London's Jewish East End, dressed in uniforms resembling the Italian Blackshirts. 300,000 anti-fascist protestors from many of London's diverse communities – Jewish, Irish, Socialist, Communist – turned out in force, erected hand-made roadblocks to barricade the street, and stopped the BUF from marching.(1) The clash came to be known as the Battle of Cable Street, and as a result, the British government passed the Public Order Act of 1936, which banned wearing of political uniforms in public and prohibited marches that did not have police authorization.(7)

Late in 1936 the British government began massive rearmament in response to Germany's launching and testing of U-boats – submarines armed with torpedoes – a blatant violation of the Treaty of Versailles. As frightening as a potential war with German may have been, it provided the economic stimulus

necessary to end the Depression. In 1937, nationwide unemployment fell to 1.5 million, half of what it had been six years earlier. Unemployment continued to fall due to the massive amount of manpower necessary to support the war effort.(4) Economic pressures may have lessened, but they were replaced by the fear of what was to come, and the painful memories of Zeppelin bombings. When the 1930s ended, the threat of a German attack was so great that Londoners began evacuating their children to the countryside in hopes of protecting them from the terrifying aerial attacks that still haunted them.(1)(2)

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Time & Place – Rise of the Third Reich

“*Our home!* That is the only place you will find ‘love’ old chum. Where you truly belong. Oh we will give you love Hannay. And in return? You will love us! The master race. On our great unstoppable march. Commanded eternally by destiny itself!” – Professor Jordan, urging Richard Hannay to switch allegiance, *Alfred Hitchcock’s The 39 Steps*

Although it is never said directly, the Professor’s language and the use of the Third Reich marching song at the end of his confrontation with Hannay indicate that he is in some way affiliated with Germany’s Nazi movement. This would make Professor Jordan the embodiment of Great Britain’s worst fears – a Nazi spy moving freely among them, living as a respected Englishman, and stealing secrets without causing any suspicion. The thought is terrifying. And Hitler’s actions in the 1930s gave them every reason to be afraid.

The “Third Reich” refers to Germany under the leadership of Adolph Hitler and the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP or Nazi) between 1933, when Hitler became Chancellor, and 1945, when World War II officially ended. (1)(2) It is true that Hitler expertly manipulated the electoral process to gain power, but he did receive a tremendous amount of support from the German people which was essential to any successful grab for power. Several factors contributed to his meteoric rise. Germany had been struggling with the terms of the Treaty of Versailles since 1919. It required their acceptance of sole responsibility for causing World War I, the permanent loss of valuable territories, complete disarmament, extreme restrictions on future military development, and payment of heavy reparations.(1) That, combined with the global economic depression began by the 1929 New York Stock Exchange crash, left the German economic situation in dire condition. Germany’s largest bank collapsed in 1931 and by early 1932 more than 6 million Germans were unemployed.(2)

Many Germans were angry, out of work, and hopeless about their future. Hitler found support among young voters, the lower middle class, rural communities, and the millions of unemployed because he promised a better quality of life, an end to unemployment, a strong government that would stand up to foreign governments, and racial purity that would, according to the horribly twisted Nazi philosophy, return Germany to its past greatness and restore national pride.(1)(2) This concept of racial purity most brutally targeted the Jewish community, but also included the eradication of other groups deemed a threat to Aryan perfection, such as Roma Sinti, homosexuals, and the mentally and physically challenged.(3)

Nazi ideology alone would be enough to cause concern among the leaders of other European countries, but the Party’s behavior in the months and years after gaining control of the government guaranteed wide-spread fear. In February of 1933, less than one month after Hitler became Chancellor, the German Senate – the Reichstag – was burned to the ground. With no real evidence, Hitler immediately blamed Communists, arresting thousands of German citizens affiliated with the Communist, Socialist, and Anarchist movements, and sending many of them to the Dachau concentration camp. (2)(3) Claiming that the fire signaled the beginning of more attacks from Communist revolutionaries intent on destabilizing the country and forcing their own agenda, Hitler urged the Reichstag to pass legislation that would consolidate power into his hands, in the so-called interested of national safety. His scare tactics worked – within weeks the Reichstag passed the “Fire Decree,”

which suspended habeas corpus and other civil liberties, and the “Enabling Act,” which allowed the Chancellor to pass laws without a Parliamentary vote and ignore provisions of the German constitution.(1)(2) The “Enabling Act” was the key to establishing the Third Reich as a dictatorship. It gave Hitler the power to do whatever he thought necessary, without any form of checks and balances. This was a dramatic departure from the liberal ideals of Germany’s previous government, the Weimar Republic.

In the first months of 1933, the Nazi party moved rapidly to eliminate any and all opposition to their agenda. One by one, the Communist, Nationalist, State, People’s, and Social Democratic Parties were banned. By July, Germany was officially a single-party state.(2) In 1934, the “Act to Rebuild the Reich” was passed, further consolidating power into the Nazi government by dismantling local state, city and town governments.(1) When President Hindenburg died in August of the same year, the final barrier between Hitler and complete control was gone. Hitler issued a decree merging the offices of President and Chancellor, giving himself command of the German military and titling himself *Fuhrer und Reichskanzler* (Leader and Chancellor). (2)

Domestically, the Nazi government continued to force their ideology and symbolism into every aspect of day-to-day life. Textbooks were rewritten and teachers who did not support the new curriculum were fired, if not arrested. Use of the old national flag was prohibited; it was officially replaced by the Nazi Party’s swastika flag.(1) The passing of the Nuremberg race laws in 1935 revoked the citizenship of German-Jews, and made marriage between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans illegal.(2) The Gestapo, a separate, secret police force without any civil authority, used aggressive, coercive, violent tactics to control the German people. Spying on one’s family, friends, neighbors and co-workers and reporting anything that appeared anti-Nazi was openly encouraged, even considered patriotic. Individuals reported on to the authorities were often whisked away to prison camps. In just the first few years of Hitler’s rule, tens of thousands of German citizens died or disappeared because of their political beliefs or religious affiliation.

Abroad, Hitler was equally open in pushing forward his agenda: to revoke the Treaty of Versailles and everything it stood for; to regain the territories lost after World War I; and to return Germany to the greatness of its historic past. In 1933, he began building U-boats, a direct violation of Versailles. In 1935, he launched and tested them, and announced his intention to begin compulsory military service, another major violation.(4) In 1938, he began amassing

territory – and action specifically prohibited by Versailles – by sending troops to Austria in support of a Nazi coup, and ultimately annexing the country. Hitler next turned his attention to parts of Czechoslovakia. At the 1938 Munich Conference, during diplomatic talks with Great Britain and France, Hitler insisted that the German territories allocated to Czechoslovakia at the end of the war (called Sudetenland) be returned.⁽¹⁾ Backed by Italy's Mussolini, Hitler insistence felt more like a threat than a request. In a desperate attempt to avoid out right war, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain allowed Sudetenland to be annexed. In return, Hitler promised that this was the last of his territorial claims. And yet soon after talks ended, the Nazis encouraged unrest in Czechoslovakia, destabilizing their government, and ultimately seizing control of the whole country.

Hitler's choices both domestically and abroad indicated a readiness, if not an eagerness, for war. The Third Reich's oppression of its own people, the blatant disregard shown toward international diplomacy and complete willingness to ignore their own promises to foreign leaders colored the 1930s for all of Europe. The final straw came in 1939 when Hitler, with the support of the Soviet Union, invaded Poland. Germany's aggressive actions could no longer go without response; Britain and France were forced to declare war, signaling the beginning of World War II.

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Time & Place – Scotland

“Listen Hannay! We're not such imbeciles in Scotland as some smart Londoners may think! I don't believe your cock-and-bull story about the Professor...Oho! You're in deep water Hannay and it's getting deeper by the second!” – Scottish Sheriff responding to Hannay's plea for help in *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*.

Scotland is one part of the United Kingdom, with England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Bordered by England to the South, it occupies the upper third of the island of Great Britain. The Kingdom of Scotland was independent

until 1707, when it joined with the Kingdom of England to establish the United Kingdom of Great Britain. Scottish culture and national pride have always been extremely strong, and while certain aspects of government came under the control of the United Kingdom, Scotland's distinct identity survived and flourished in large part due to their separate legal, educational and religious institutions. (1)

In the interwar period, Scotland experienced the same stresses as other European countries. They, too, struggled to bounce back from the casualties of World War I while dealing with the pressures of the global economic depression. Like London, Scotland's fears of German aerial attacks motivated mass evacuations of children out of major cities and into rural areas. As Great Britain mobilized for war, Scotland's primary industries – ship building, coal, and steel manufacturing – experienced a significant rebound. (2)

The Sheriff's reaction to Hannay, quoted above, hints at the historic rivalry between Scotland and England. For centuries their monarchs competed for power and land; tensions did not go away with the 1707 unification. From the mid 1700s through the late 1800s, English landowners routinely evicted Scottish crofters to make way for sheep farms.(3) Actions like these led to the founding of the Scottish National Party in 1934, their primary platform being Scottish independence from the United Kingdom. Slow to gain influence – its first elected seat was not won until 1967 – the Scottish National Party is now the second largest political party in the Scottish Parliament. (4)

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Pastiche & Parody

The Oxford English Dictionary defines pastiche as, "A work, esp. of literature, created in the style of someone or something else; a work that humorously exaggerates or parodies a particular style." Patrick Barlow's *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps* is just one of a number of recent pastiches gaining popularity. "The Brady Bunch: The Series" in the mid-1990s reenacted episodes of the popular television series on stages in Los Angeles and New York. Currently,

audiences are enjoying stage adaptations of the films “Point Break” and “Evil Dead,” both as musicals.

Parody is closely related. It is defined as “a literary composition modeled on and imitating another work, esp. a composition in which the characteristic style and themes of a particular author or genre are satirized by being applied to inappropriate or unlikely subjects, or are otherwise exaggerated for comic effect. In later use extended to similar imitations in other artistic fields, as music, painting, film, etc.” Television shows like “Saturday Night Live” and “Mad TV” famously parody current events and celebrity culture; the “Austin Powers” movies series parodies spy films from the 1960s; and “The Simpsons” routinely parodies classic movies and works of literature, with episodes like “Homer Goes to Washington.”

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Spy Fiction

“When British historian David Stafford was writing his book on the WWII Special Operations Executive (SOE) he discovered that some of the officers who volunteered for dangerous work were motivated by the fictional stories of espionage in the books *The Thirty-Nine Steps* and *Greenmantle* by John Buchan.” – quoted in CIA journal “Studies in Intelligence: The Intelligence Officer’s Bookshelf, Vol. 53, No. 3.” (13)

“I have long cherished an affection for ...the ‘dime novel’ and...the ‘shocker’... where the incidents defy the probabilities, and march just inside the borders of the possible...these days when the wildest fictions are so much less probable than the facts.” – John Buchan in letter to friend Thomas Nelson, published as introduction to 1915 edition of “The Thirty-Nine Steps”

Stories of spying and deception have been popular for as long as humans have told each other stories. Why? What draws us to these kinds of stories? Spy fiction as its own distinct genre developed in the early 1900s, when governments were beginning to depend on intelligence gathering and espionage as key elements of national defense (1) (6), and advances in engineering, industry, and military technology, made gadgetry accessible and interesting to readers (6). Unlike the stories of antiquity where spies were viewed as unsavory, deceptive, and dishonorable, the dawning 20th century saw in the spy a potential hero, serving a cause, motivated by duty and honor (6).

As Europe moved toward war with Germany, popular spy novels often featured German villains (1), and early silent films explored the fear of German invasion (2). After WWI and the Russian Revolution in 1917, the imperialist villains were replaced by the fear of an international Communist conspiracy (1). In the 1930s, spy fiction reflected the crisis in Europe caused by the growth of Italian Fascism and German Nazism (6). During WWII (1939-1945), anti-Nazi espionage stories rose in popularity (3). During the Soviet-American Cold War, between 1945 and 1991, the popularity of spy novels dramatically increased. Spy novels of this period focused on anti-imperialism, with Russia, Eastern European countries behind the Iron Curtain and Communist ideology serving as most feared enemies (1) (3) (7). James Bond stories, in both books and films, with their bold nationalism, glamour, and simple morality (it's very clear who is bad and who is good) were particularly popular during the Cold War (6).

When Russia collapsed and the Cold War ended in 1991, the readership of spy novels declined dramatically – so much so that *The New York Times* ended their long-running spy novel review column (1). With no one specific threat to global safety, spy movies in the 1990s tended to be more action oriented with espionage subplots. After the events of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent War on Terror, the popularity of the spy novel surged and has remained high ever since, although the earlier trend of casting villains from our real-life enemies has not manifested in a surge of stories focused on Islamic terrorists (5).

The spy genre continues to be extremely popular today in all mediums, and for all ages. From the action packed novels of Tom Clancy and the Bourne film trilogies, and the gritty realism of films *Munich* and *Syriana*, to the television series *Chuck*, *Burn Notice*, and the wildly popular *24*, spies are everywhere. Likewise, youth spy fiction is fast growing with movies like *Agent Cody Banks* and *Spy Kids*, and the Alex Rider, Young James Bond and CHERUB novel series (1)(10).

The spy genre has also moved beyond the pages of literature and the movie screen. A slew of video games have found rich material in espionage plot lines. Games like *Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell*, *James Bond's Nightfire*, *Spycraft*, *Spy Fiction*, *Metal Gear*, *No One Lives Forever*, and *Evil Genius*, cast the player as the spy, provide complicated storylines and film-quality graphics (1). These games allow a player to work undercover, infiltrate enemy organizations, and participate in secret missions for the government (11). Many give a player the option of being multiple characters, even the villain, seeing the story from

different points of view (12). In a video game, unlike a book or movie, there is the potential for creating more than one narrative. Because the plot depends on choices the player makes, each story is different (12). And in a computer game, the hero can be killed. The player is safe, but their character is not (12).

We know the spy story has vast appeal, but why? Looking closely at how these stories change over time, we see they reflect what we as a society are most afraid of – whether that be an outside enemy, an ideology, or even ourselves. And, the popularity of these stories seems to rise and fall according to how afraid or unsettled we are. In the 1990s spy fiction faded into the background when the world experienced a period of relative safety and stability. But since 2001, with new conflicts seeming to arise every day all over the world, spy stories have dominated the bestseller lists and box offices. There is an element of fantasy in these stories that provides us with an escape when times are tough, as articulated by the soldier in the trenches who wrote to John Buchan after reading “The Thirty-Nine Steps.” “The story is greatly appreciated in the midst of mud and rain and shells, and all that could make trench life depressing.” (15) Unlike real life, these stories give us the satisfaction of a solution – everything gets wrapped up in the end, and (usually) good prevails. The hugely popular kinds of spy stories preferred by Buchan and Alfred Hitchcock, in which normal, everyday people are pulled into complicated capers where they must rely on their own wits to survive, allow us to ask the question, “What would I do? Would I be able to jump from a train, outsmart and fight trained killers, or take a bullet, like Richard Hannay?” By reading a spy novel, watching a spy movie, or playing a spy video game, we imagine ourselves in those situations without ever being in real danger.

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Physical Theatre

"Creating" a moving train with only a few small props? Lightning-fast, expertly timed costume changes? Madcap antics that leave the spectator nearly as breathless as the performer? You might be watching physical theater!

In Western theater traditions, physical theater is a name given to performances and performance styles that use significant bodily movements on stage, as opposed to simply written narrative, to tell a story. In other words, theater is physical if the enjoyment of the story comes at least as much, if not more, from its physical movements as from its text. Many people rightly say that all theater is physical. After all, actors always use their bodies to communicate. Shows like *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*, however, take this embodiment to the extreme. In *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*, you will see actors switch to drastically different characters simply by turning their bodies, shadow puppetry, men in drag, and lots of clowning. All of these are very physical forms of theater.

Physical theater has long been present in the West in the miming and clowning traditions of Renaissance-era Commedia dell'Arte and the work of modern actors like Marcel Marceau and Charlie Chaplin. Physical theater has found a renewed prominence in the West over the past 50 years. Western theater writers and practitioners like Jerzy Grotowski and Peter Brook both thought that the realism of Western theater was making it too intellectually driven and that Western theater lacked urgency. They traveled the world and studied

various Asian theater forms and borrowed greatly from them. Several forms were influential to them:

CHINESE THEATER

- Xiqu (pronounced “She-Chew”): wide variety of forms including opera, martial arts theater, and breathtaking gymnastic feats

JAPANESE THEATER

- Noh: Very slow movements with a chorus of musicians on stage, serious
- Bunraku: Very lifelike puppetry, serious or comic
- Kabuki: Very lively plays with colorful costumes, orchestra
- Butoh: Drab colors and haunting corpse-like makeup, intended to reject the smooth movements of traditional dance

INDIAN DANCE-DRAMA

- Bharata natyam: teenage girls’ dance, directly descended from temple dances; strong in southern India
- Kathakali: masculine dance form, with grotesque, heavy makeup, elaborate costumes, and stories usually taken from the sacred Hindu stories of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*
- Kathak: male and female form developed later under Mughal rulers of 16th and 17th centuries AD in northern parts of India
- Manipuri: slow, serpent-like movements

Many companies in the United States and Europe have adopted physical theater as their primary focus. There is Innovo, a company in Pasadena, and, of course, Cirque du Soleil. Several schools emphasize physical theater training, among them Dell’Arte International School of Physical Theatre in Northern California, University of Missouri-Kansas City, which emphasizes Commedia dell’Arte, the Jacques LeCoq School in Paris and the London International School of Performing Arts, which emphasize miming and movement theater.

Physical theater includes a variety of forms, including Asian and European traditions of mask and clowning, Asian forms of dance-drama, circus arts, stage combat and stunts, dance-theater, contact improvisation, and many more forms. California has a number of widely respected troupes and training academies for youths and adults who want to study these forms for professional development or personal interest.

Physical Theater Companies in California

Dell'Arte is one of the most well-known and respected physical theater companies and schools in the United States. It offers touring productions, professional training, and summer training for youths and adults. It also offers opportunities to study in Bali, home of some of the complex dance-drama traditions that helped inspire a revitalization of physical theater in the United States and Europe.

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

Rachel Rosenthal and her Instant Theater Company have been called a Cultural Treasure of Los Angeles. They use improvisation in movement, text, voice, and music to make theater that explores the human condition. Rosenthal teaches her signature method, called “Doing by Doing,” in workshops for youths and adults.

<http://www.rachelrosenthal.org>

The San Francisco Mime Troupe is one of the most respected mime companies in the United States. It is known for using a wide variety of theatrical forms to critique political injustices and oppression. In addition to performing, SFMT offers courses including mime, clowning, juggling, and improvisation for youths and adults.

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

Stage Combat and Stunt Training in California

Eastern and Western physical theater traditions have made an art out of safely performing staged acts of violence while making them appear to be death-defying. Because martial arts and weapons can cause serious injuries or death, using them on stage or in film requires years of training. If you are interested in participating in stage combat or stunts, you must take long-term training very seriously. (After all, if you find yourself on stage with someone else pointing a sword at you, you would want that person to have trained well!)

Southern California

- Academy of Theatrical Combat
<http://www.theatricalcombat.com/>
- Roberta Brown
<http://www.robertabrown.com>

- Samurai Stage Combat
<http://www.samuraistagecombat.com/>
- SwordPlay LA
<http://www.swordplayla.com/>
- Northern California
The Academy of the Sword (San Francisco)
<http://www.academyofthesword.org/>
- Dueling Arts (Bay Area, central California)
<http://duelingarts.com>

Circus Arts

Trapeze School *New York* in Los Angeles offers daytime and evening classes for people interested in studying trapeze arts, amateur or professional.
<http://losangeles.trapezeschool.com/>

Circus Center in San Francisco offers training in many varieties of Eastern and Western circus performance forms like clowning, acrobatics, trapeze, contortion, and juggling.
<http://www.circuscenter.org>

Connections

Comprehension | Connections | Creativity

This section provides ways to explore connections between the ideas presented in the play, the student's lives and the world we live in.

Structured thematically, each section contains questions and exercises that may be used for reflection, discussion, and/or writing prompts both before and after the performance.

Memory:

“Mr. Memory commits to memory fifty new facts and remembers every one of them! Facts from history and from geography, from newspapers and scientific books.” We meet a character named Mr. Memory in the play *Alfred Hitchcock’s The 39 Steps*, and both individual and national memories play a role in the unfolding of the story.

- Why is memory important? Or is it important?
- As an individual, what is important for you to remember about your life? How do you want others to remember you? How do your memories, both happy and sad, contribute to the person you are today?
- Do you keep certain items for memories’ sake? If so, what are they? If not, why not?
- What are things a nation should remember? What are the things a nation likes to remember? What are the things a nation would rather forget? Why would someone want to steal memory from a country? Would it be valuable to others? Why or why not?
- We often use the term “memory” in relation to computers. We now rely on machines to hold much of our memory for us. Is this good or bad? What kind of information are these machines able to hold? Is it more about quality or quantity? From your point of view, is this a good thing or a bad thing? Both? Neither?
- Is it more important to remember or to experience?

War and Peace

Professor: You see you’re just the kind of man we need. Sharp. Intelligent. Utterly Ruthless. When the war comes these will be the exact qualities we need.
Hannay: And what if I don’t believe in those qualities?
Professor: What other qualities are there?

Hannay: Loyalty, selflessness, sacrifice, love
Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps

- In the above piece of dialogue, why are “sharp” and “intelligent” not associated with qualities of peace? Do you think they could or should be associated with peace?
- Are the characters in this play either totally good or totally bad? Completely war-mongering or completely peace-making?
- Are people in real life usually totally good or totally bad? Completely war-mongering or completely peace-making? Explain.

“Let’s just set ourselves resolutely to make this world a happier place! A decent world! A good world! A world where no nation plots against nation! Where no neighbor plots against neighbor, where there is no persecution or hunting down, where everybody gets a square deal and a sporting chance and where people try to help and not hinder! A world where suspicion and cruelty and fear have been forever banished! That is the sort of world I want! Is that the sort of world you want?”

Hannay, *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*

- Is this the sort of world that you want? Do you think everyone wants this sort of world?
- Do you think it is attainable? Why?
- What is the sort of world that you want? Is it similar to or different from the world described above?
- What must be done to create this world? Who is responsible for creating a world with this vision? With your vision?
- Do you think the audience will laugh at the dialogue above or take it seriously? Or both?
- After reading the above excerpts, it’s apparent that Hannay is a bit of an idealist. Are his views too idealistic or are they obtainable? Realistic or unrealistic?

Creativity

Comprehension | Connections | Creativity

This section 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

Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps. The activities and information in this section can be used both before and after the performance.

Cultural Mapping

OBJECTIVES

- Students will gain knowledge of similarities and differences in their classmates.
- Students will be introduced to *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps* and begin to reflect on the play.

EXERCISE

Ask the students to move the desks to the side and stand in a circle.

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.)

Repeat activity using other divisions: Oldest, middle, youngest, only child.

Speak one language, two languages etc.

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?

Quotes from Alfred Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps*:

Beautiful mysterious woman pursued by gunmen. Sounds like a spy story.

It's rather exhilarating isn't it?

Overture. A bare stage...The clowns run on.

Let's just set ourselves resolutely to make this world a happier place!

Drama is life with the dull bits left out.

There's no terror in the bang, only in the anticipation of it.

Tableau/Frozen Picture

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 *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps* through a physical exploration of its themes.

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. Repeat exercise with B as the artist and A as the sculpture.

Repeat with the themes of Memory, Hero, Spies, London. Have each student sculpt an image that represents one of these themes. Discuss what these ideas mean to your students and what these ideas meant to the characters in *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*. Are they similar or very different?

Identity Switch (Handshake game)

OBJECTIVES

Students will work together as an ensemble similar to the actors in Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps.

Ask each student to think of a fact to share about themselves.

Each person moves through the space. At the same time everyone finds someone in the space, shakes their hand and shares their fact. Ex. "I'm Deb and I make perfume." The other person shares their fact with you and you exchange "identities". Take your new fact and share with another person.

Keep taking on identities until you get your own name back. Sit down. At end, everyone reclaims their identity and shares them out loud.

Discuss the many roles that the actors play in *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*. What are all the theatrical devices they use to "switch identities?"

Environment walks:

OBJECTIVES

Students will create physical environments using their bodies and imaginations, mirroring the process used in Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps.

Have the class cover the space. Add in different environments. How do you use your body to communicate "where you are" by "how you move?"

Ex. Forest, desert, icy terrain, quicksand, outer space.

Super Hero/Mortal Enemy:

OBJECTIVES

Students will use their body and imagination to create an environment of suspicion.

Students cover the space and secretly identify a classmate as an enemy whom they must avoid at all costs. This activity is done without words.

Stress that this is over the top, the person has the ability to turn them to ice if they get too close. They move through the space trying to subtly stay as far away from this person as possible. Next, they then secretly identify a super hero whom they must keep between themselves and their enemy at all times. Stress that this person has super powers and can protect them from all bad. Students continue to move through the space keeping their super hero between them and their enemy. The game should speed up. Stop the game and ask students if they felt they were someone's super hero. How did they know? How does this activity connect to the world of *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*?

Improvisation Activity HITCHHIKER

OBJECTIVES

Students will use their bodies, voices and imagination to create "over-the-top" characterizations characters similar to the actors in Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps.

4 chairs are used in a front/back seat car configuration
1 person starts as driver, 1 person is the hitchhiker

The driver pulls over to pick up the hitchhiker and asks "Hey where are you going?" The hitchhiker has to take on a HUGE characterization including voice and body, stance and rhythm, etc.

The driver has to copy EXACTLY what the hitchhiker is doing.
Discuss. What skills does it take to work with a fellow actor in this game?
How did this mirror the work and character choices of the ensemble in *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*?

MR. MEMORY GAME

In the play *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*, we learn that "Mr. Memory commits to memory fifty new facts and remembers every one of them! Facts from history and from geography, from newspapers and scientific books."

- Is it hard to memorize words, facts and figures?
- How would a skill like memorization come in useful in telling stories on a stage?

Today, we will play a game that tests our memories. But first we need to pick a student Mr. or Ms. Memory to start our game.

[Teacher selects student and hands them a fake moustache to wear. Teacher can also ask another student to draw a fake moustache on the selected Mr. or Mrs. Student Memory using stage make-up/black greasepaint. This is an opportunity for teacher to reference make-up used in theatre.]

TEACHER:

We're going to gather in a circle to play this game. But before that, please take out a sheet of paper and a pencil. The object of this game is to memorize a pattern. Our student Mr. Memory will start each pattern. We will play three rounds. We'll play a practice round first so you understand. What you write on the paper in front of you will become part of the pattern.

So please make three columns. Label the first column 'History.' The second column 'Geography' and the final column 'Science.'

In the History column, write down the name of one of your favorite people from History. Maybe it's Dolores Huerta, Abraham Lincoln or Wayne Gretzky.

In the Geography column, write down the name of the city where you were born.

And in the science column, write down the name of the something you like that had to be invented. An example could be an iPod, a scooter or a microwave oven.

Remember, these categories are just like the facts that Mr. Memory can remember in the play.

Take one last look at your paper and remember what you wrote.

If I asked who is your favorite person from History, who would you say?
[Teacher calls on student for example]

How about the city where you were born? [Call on student]

And a favorite invention? [Call on student]

Teacher now gathers class in a circle.

In this first round of the game, we'll start with our right hands up in the air. Mr. Memory will point to someone and say the name of the favorite character

from history. If he/she points to you, you point to someone else and say your favorite character from history. We will continue like this until everyone is pointing to someone. If you are the last person, then you must point to Mr. Memory to complete the pattern and say the name of your historical figure.

Teacher leads class in a practice round. Then the class starts again beginning with the student Mr. Memory.

In the second round of the game, we'll start with our left hands up in the air. Mr. Memory will point to someone and say the name of the city where they were born. If he/she points to you, you point to someone else and say your hometown. We will continue like this until everyone is pointing to someone. If you are the last person, then you must point to Mr. Memory to complete the pattern and say the name of your birthplace. For example, I was born in

Teacher leads class in a practice round. Then the class starts again beginning with the student Mr. Memory.

In the third and final round of this game, we'll start with our left and right hands up in the air. Our mustached Mr. Memory friend will point to someone. If he starts with his right hand, we know he is starting the history pattern. If he starts with his left hand, he is starting the geography pattern. No matter which pattern Mr. Memory starts with, he will start the second pattern right after. So you have to listen and watch to see when it's your turn to say out loud your part of the pattern and point to the next person.

Teacher leads class in a practice round. Then the class starts again beginning with the student Mr. Memory.

- What did that feel like to play this memory game? What was easy? What was difficult? Why?
- Can we add on another pattern to this game?
- We don't have any more hands to point, but can we point with our eyes?
- Are you up for a bonus round using our arms and eyes?

OPTIONAL

In this bonus round of this game, we'll start just like we did before: with our left

and right hands up in the air. Mr. Memory will point to someone. If he starts with his right hand, we know he is starting the history pattern. If he starts with his left hand, he is starting the geography pattern. No matter which pattern Mr. Memory starts with, he will start the second pattern right after. So you have to listen and watch to see when it's your turn to say out loud your part of the pattern and point to the next person. But the bonus pattern will also happen too. While our right and left hands are pointing and we are speaking our history and geography patterns, we'll use eye contact to signal the science pattern. So, for example, Mr. Memory will look at person and say the name of the invention he wrote down on his sheet of paper. Whoever he looks at will look at someone else and do the same thing. It's just like point with our fingers and saying a pattern. But this time we'll point with our eyes too. Teacher leads class in a practice round. Then the class starts again beginning with the student Mr. Memory.

- What did that feel like to add the bonus pattern?
- What was easy? What was difficult? Why?
- Other than memorization, what other skills did you have to use to play this game?
- How are those skills useful on stage?

“Memory: remembering yesterday”

(adapted from Augusto Boal's Games for Actors and Non-Actors):

The instructor/teacher guides students through a relaxation exercise to get them settled and focused. They begin by sitting on chairs and remaining quiet with eyes closed. The students are asked to tense and release different sections of the body to achieve relaxation (head and neck, shoulders, chest, arms, hands, rib cage, stomach, hips, thighs, calves, feet). If time is limited, have students breathe deeply, into their bellies for, several breaths. The students are asked to think about what happened the night before, a few hours before they went to bed. They are asked to remember as many details as possible and to think about what sensations they were experiencing: tastes, smells, colors, shapes, sounds, tunes, noise, mood, tactile sensations, etc.

The students are then asked to think about what happened to them that morning. How did they wake up? Did an alarm go off? Did someone need to wake them up or did they wake up on their own? Where did they sleep and what did it look like? Who was the first person they saw in the morning? What did they have for breakfast and where did they eat it?

Then, they are asked to remember what mode of transportation they used to get to this space. Bus, walking, car, subway? Did they travel alone or with someone? What did they see along the way? What, if anything, did they say?

Finally, they are asked to think about the space they are currently in. What did they see first? Who did they see? What was the first sound they heard? What was the first thing that they said? What objects are in the room? Who is near them now?

Students open their eyes, discuss, and compare. Did remembering these events come easily, or was it difficult? Were they surprised by anything that they remembered? What were their favorite memories? What were the most unpleasant? Etc.

Adaptation of “Memory and emotion: Remembering a day in the past”

This exercise is similar to the one above, but this time the students are asked to remember a day from their past when something really important happened, an event that strongly affected them. It could have happened last week or many years ago. The students can go through the exercise in a solitary way, as above, or be paired up. The student doing the remembering will relay aloud the details of his/her story to the partner.

Once again, the students are sitting quietly, the storyteller has her/his eyes closed. The instructor begins by asking questions to get the student’s story started. How long ago did this take place? What is during the day, or at night? Who was there? What were they wearing? What were you wearing? Why is this day important? How were you feeling? What did you smell? What colors did you see? What did you hear? What did you say?

If the students are paired-up, the person remembering the event relays the answers to these questions to the partner. As the partner listens, he or she can

help the storyteller cultivate the memory by asking more questions about the details. Was anyone else there? What were they wearing? What season was it? What time of day or night? Were you hot or cold?

The instructor asks the storyteller to remember one final detail. The students who are creating the memory are then asked to bring their focus to the space they are currently in. What does the classroom look like? Who is sitting near them? What colors are around them? Etc.

The students open their eyes and a discussion takes place about the experience. Was it very different to remember an important event as opposed to a minor event? Was it difficult to remember the details? How was the experience affected by having to relay the story aloud to another? Are you surprised at how much you remembered or didn't remember? Are you surprised at what you remembered? Which part of the story stands out the most to you? Do think that will change in five years? Ten years?

Adaptation of “Chairs in the empty space”

This can be done with the whole class all at once, or in smaller groups so that there can be an audience for the students. Each student has a chair. One at a time, the students enter the playing area and place themselves and their chair in a way that gives them the most power in the space. “Power” means the place and pose which they believe will give them the most attention. Once everyone has taken a turn, go through the order again and have everyone attempt to change the position of their bodies and their chairs with the same goal in mind.

This exercise can be repeated with different intentions when entering the space: enter and place yourself and your chair in a way that gives you the *least* amount of power; the greatest amount of distance from others; the best way of relating with others in the space; as a character from the play; enter and place yourself and your chair in any way and any place you choose to.

Adaptation of “The image of the hour”

This exercise can be done with the entire class all at once, or in smaller groups so that each group has an audience. The instructor calls out a particular time of day and the students have to move their bodies as they normally would do at that time. Not only will the instructor call out times, but different events and occasions as well: Sunrise, 9 a.m., noon, 2 p.m., 4 p.m., midnight, waking up

on your favorite holiday, having dinner on your birthday, your favorite thing to do, your least favorite thing to do, favorite class in school, least favorite class, immediately after school, etc. No matter what time of day or type of occasion is called out, ask students to focus on the movement that is associated with that moment.

Physical Theatre

“Overture. A bare stage...The clowns run on. One blows a whistle and they bow. They proceed to hurtle about at breakneck speed, pulling on the set for scene 1. They set up decorators ladders, three unpacked trunks...”
Stage directions, Alfred Hitchcock’s The 39 Steps

This play unfolds in the wonderful theatrical tradition of a few actors playing multiple roles with bare bones for props and set. The style is not unlike how many of us learned to be actors and/or created theatrical offerings in studio rehearsal spaces with chairs, a table and the all too familiar blocks. The blocks might as well have been the unpacked trunks in “Alfred Hitchcock’s The 39 Steps.” There are wonderful comedic storytelling styled plays that are performed with bare bones. Your students might already be familiar with: “Our Town” by Thornton Wilder, “Greater Tuna” by Jaston Williams, Joe Sears, and Ed Howard, and “Mystery Of Irma Vep,” by Charles Ludlam.

Writing Prompt:

Aim: To remind students about the power of their own imagination

Exercise: Just as in *Alfred Hitchcock’s The 39 Steps* where the actors created the storytelling with their imaginations and minimal props that became the setting for a chase on top of a train, Hannay’s coat flapping to demonstrate to the audience the speed of the train, or a countryside cottage, ask your students to write about a time when they were able to make something out of nothing or very little. Perhaps they had an idea and wanted to realize it but didn’t have everything they needed or at least they thought at first. How did they do this? Did they gather their siblings or friends or parents to help them? Did they look around their home for materials or things that could substitute for something they didn’t have? What items did they find and how did they use them? How were they creative in accomplishing their goal or bringing their idea to life? Finally, what was it they were creating?

Discussion: Pair students up and have them read their journaling to each other. Then, share them with the larger class or group and ask them to all listen in for the creative process and how their classmates used their imaginations.

Transformation Object Exercise:

As in the spirit of *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*, an unpacked trunk becomes the top of a moving train, or a ladder becomes a suspension bridge, objects can become whatever we decide by utilizing our own sound making, body language, and expression to endow them with the characteristics that we know or imagine them to have.

OBJECTIVE

To endow an object as something we are imagining and utilizing sound making, body language and /or expressions to share its characteristics and thereby freeing up the imagination and gaining flexibility in perception.

Exercise: Stand in a circle where everyone can see each participant. The instructor or leader presents an object. She/he endows it with the characteristics of what they are imagining the object to be. Feel free to make sounds, to utilize gestures and/or body language and expressions to share what the object is without saying what it is.

For example, a hair brush is introduced. The participant might hold the handle and put the other end up towards their mouth like it is a microphone and they start singing.

Pass the object round the circle as each participant shares the gestures, sound, and/or body language of what they endow the object to be. Once around the circle, ask the participants what they noticed. Enjoy another round with a different object. This can be a wonderful part of a warm up for a theater class or club. It brings the collaborators together to focus for the rehearsal.

Improvisation Status/Hat Exercise:

Objective: Through improvisation, to discover the power of status and how this component develops character behavior and the development of relationships between characters.

Exercise: The instructor should have five hats. Ask for five volunteers/players. The volunteers/players should line up five in a row across the playing area so other observers can watch and have a clear view of all the volunteers/players. From the audience's view, the player on the far left is Number one. Number off the rest of the players moving to the right from Number One to Number Five. Their numbers are also their names. All of the players should don a hat. The form of the game is when your hat is taken off and thrown down to the ground, you cannot pick up your hat and don it again, only someone of a higher number can pick up your hat and don it for you. Number One can take off his own hat, but in the case of the other players, someone of a higher number can take off your hat and again, you cannot pick up your hat and don it, only someone of a higher number can. You also must command or ask someone of a higher number to pick up and don your hat.

Examples of commands: From Number One after throwing down his hat, "Number Two, my hat!" Or from Number Two after Number One has taken off and thrown down his hat, "Number Five, my hat before you pick up Number Four's hat!"

The game begins with someone taking off their own hat or someone else's hat with a higher number then that hatless player commanding their hat be picked up and donned.

Helpful hints: It helps if a player moves out of line to pick up or take off a hat of someone further away from them that they return to their order as soon as possible. This helps for remembering the pecking order and for the commands to be clearly directed to the proper status player. The more the players try to fulfill the commands and keep the order of their line, the more the humor and behavior of status comes out. Allow the game to be played for up to 5 minutes—assess the group and how the level of play is going and shorten or lengthen by one to two minute increments. If the level of play is slower to catch on, allow a few minutes of play and then rotate in new players. Often, observing and then getting to participate again is useful. Sometimes students learn the game by watching and then participating. With a large group, rotating often so everyone has the chance to play is valuable for ensemble building. The current group of five can take a seat and a new group of five can take over and start a new round. Or it is valuable to have the group of five switch roles, change Numbers, especially if they are practicing to play multiple roles in their school play or drama project. The instructor can also assign the Number roles to players knowing which

parts reflect the way they have been cast in the school play or drama project. This can assist with character development and building the relationships between the characters.

Discussion: Allow time for discussion. Players will, no doubt, have much to say about being ordered around and/or getting to have some power and ordering around those lower in status. Often asking the Number Five first about their experience is valuable, then following with Number One's experience is interesting and valuable. Following this with asking the Numbers in between can be interesting after the views of Number Five and Number One have been shared.

This is wonderful preparation for seeing *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*. Ask the students to watch for status in the relationships of the character interactions. Then, follow up with a post show discussion and ask the players what they noticed regarding status in the play. It is also valuable to ask the players if they see any similarities in their own lives regarding status; at home in their families, school, work, or in their community? If so, how do they feel about these various relationships? Are they positive relationships? Perhaps a person with high status is a strong leader where leadership is needed? If a person is low status and is mistreated, how might they change their situation? With communication styles? With behavior? What actions might the person take to change their situation? How would they like to be treated if they were Number One or Two, Three, Four, or Five?

This can also be a writing prompt as well as a group discussion.

Adaptation from Film to Stage

TRAIN-ING DAY GAME

In the play *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*, we see how the creative team adapted the film to tell the same story on stage.



What does it mean to *adapt* something?

Definition:

adapt | ˈe ˈdapt |

verb. To make (something) suitable for a new use or purpose; modify

ORIGIN

late Middle English : from French *adapter*, from Latin *adaptare*, from *ad-* 'to' + *aptare* (from *aptus* 'fit').

Today, we will adapt one of the most famous scenes from Alfred Hitchcock's movie *The 39 Steps*. It's the train chase. We'll take what we see on the screen and turn it into our own short version for the stage.

The people who created the live play *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps* to do the same thing. First, let's take a look at a clip from the original movie. We'll compare that with a YouTube clip and a picture from the current production. [Teacher queues up film to 00:19:47 and watches train chase clip.]

- How did the filmmakers create the chase? Do you think they really filmed it on a train? If so, did they do it while the train was moving?
- Before we watch a clip from the stage production, any ideas about how you could create the same scene on stage? Remember, we don't have a real train or big budgets. But we do have our imaginations. Your imagination is one of three important tools in your "actor toolkit." What are the other two tools? [voice, body]

[Teacher queues up YouTube clip labeled "Hannay and the Traveling Salemen" from the website: <http://www.39stepsny.com/media.html>]

Now, let's take a look at this picture:



Eric Hisson and Ted Deasy in *Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps*.
PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ.

With just a few props that include a table, ladders, several puppet silhouettes and spotlights, the cast members — with the help of about 12 people backstage — ingeniously recreate a chase atop a speeding train. Hannay, our main character, goes through a cabin, a long hallway, a dining car, a storage car with barking dogs, and finally to the top of the train.

- We saw the beginning of the scene on YouTube. Somehow it winds up on the top of the train as we see in the picture. How did the actors make this happen?

This activity has two parts. First, we will re-create the train chase with three tableaux: a beginning, middle and an end. In the second part, we will activate the tableaux with script, sounds and movement.

INSTRUCTIONS/Part 1

Teacher divides class into groups of four and gives each group the listed prop set.

PROPS FOR EACH GROUP

2 theatre blocks, 2 chairs, a train whistle, plastic plates/cups, and 4 different hats.

In your groups, you must decide who will play Hannay throughout the 3 Tableaux. The other people in group will get to play different roles in each new tableaux. You'll have to decide who needs to change roles each time the tableaux changes. In other words, if you aren't playing Hannay, you might be Salesman, a Police Officer, a Passenger or someone who works on the train (a waiter for example).

You will work together to create the **beginning tableaux** of the train chase starting in the passenger cabin. Let's demonstrate:

[Teacher uses four volunteers to recreate the passenger compartment with Hannay, 2 Salesman and a porter]

Then, using only the prop, costume and set pieces you have (chairs, blocks, hats and plates/cups) you will create the **middle tableaux** in dining car that Hannay runs through. Show us what is happening in that car with Hannay in a frozen picture. Let's demonstrate:

[Teacher uses same volunteers to recreate the dining car with Hannay, a police officer, a waiter and a passenger sipping tea]

Lastly, your group will create the **final tableaux** which ends our scene on top of the train. Let's demonstrate:

[Teacher uses same volunteers to recreate the train top chase with Hannay and 3 police officers]

[Teacher allows time for groups to create 3 frozen pictures. Then groups each share their pictures with the class]

INSTRUCTIONS/Part 2

Teacher divides class into original groups of four and returns the props to each group.

PROPS FOR EACH GROUP

2 theatre blocks, 2 chairs, a train whistle, plastic plates/cups, and 4 different hats.

In your groups today, you will play your original roles.

Today, the goal is to bring your 3 frozen pictures to life and show us what happens between each scene. And this time, you can use words and sounds.

[Teacher hands out copies of lines to each group or could have the group write their own lines of dialogue]

LINES for first scene

PAPERBOY (in window):

Paper, paper, evening paper! Paper, paper, evening paper!!

SALESMAN 1 (takes newspaper):

Paper?

HANNAY:

No thank-you.

SALESMAN 2:

Good Heavens look! The police are searching the train!

LINES for second scene

HANNAY (running through dining car and jumping out window):
Oh do get on with it!!

POLICEMAN (running after Hannay):
We'll catch him, don't you worry!

WAITER (serving tea):
That's the spirit!

PASSENGER (sipping tea):
He's leapt from the train sir!

LINES for third scene

POLICEMAN 1:
He's on the roof sir!

POLICEMAN 2:
After him!

POLICEMAN 3:
Yes sir!

POLICEMAN 1:
GRAB HIM MAN!
PC 2 tries to grab Hannay. Misses him.

HANNAY:
Missed him sir!!!

In each scene, every person has one line. You are responsible for memorizing 3 lines. You will deliver your first line in the first scene, the second line in the second scene, and the third line in the third scene.

As a group, you can change the order of the lines if it makes more sense. You will work together as a group to bring each picture to life with the lines and show us how you change or transition into the next scene. For example, you could use a train whistle to help bring the scene to life or signal a scene change.

Let's demonstrate:

[Teacher uses volunteers from day one. Teachers asks cast to bring their tableaux to life without speaking lines and transition from the first, to the second to the third frozen picture.]

[Then teacher asks volunteers to repeat the short performance of the three scenes with the transitions. But this time, the teacher asks the student to speak their lines from the script.]

Now, it's your turn to work with your classmates to bring your three tableaux to life with transitions and text.

Groups work on their tableaux.

Share the scenes. How were they similar? What different theatrical choices were made?

Credits

Performing for Los Angeles Youth

Leslie K. Johnson, Director of Education and Outreach

Debra Piver, Associate Director of Education

Traci Cho, Director of School Partnerships

Patricia Garza, Department Manager

Dan Harper, Educational Programs Associate

Shaunté Caraballo, Educational Services Coordinator

Eric Hamme, Interim Communications Coordinator

Janine Salinas, Assistant to the Director of Education and Outreach

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 Engagement

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

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

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