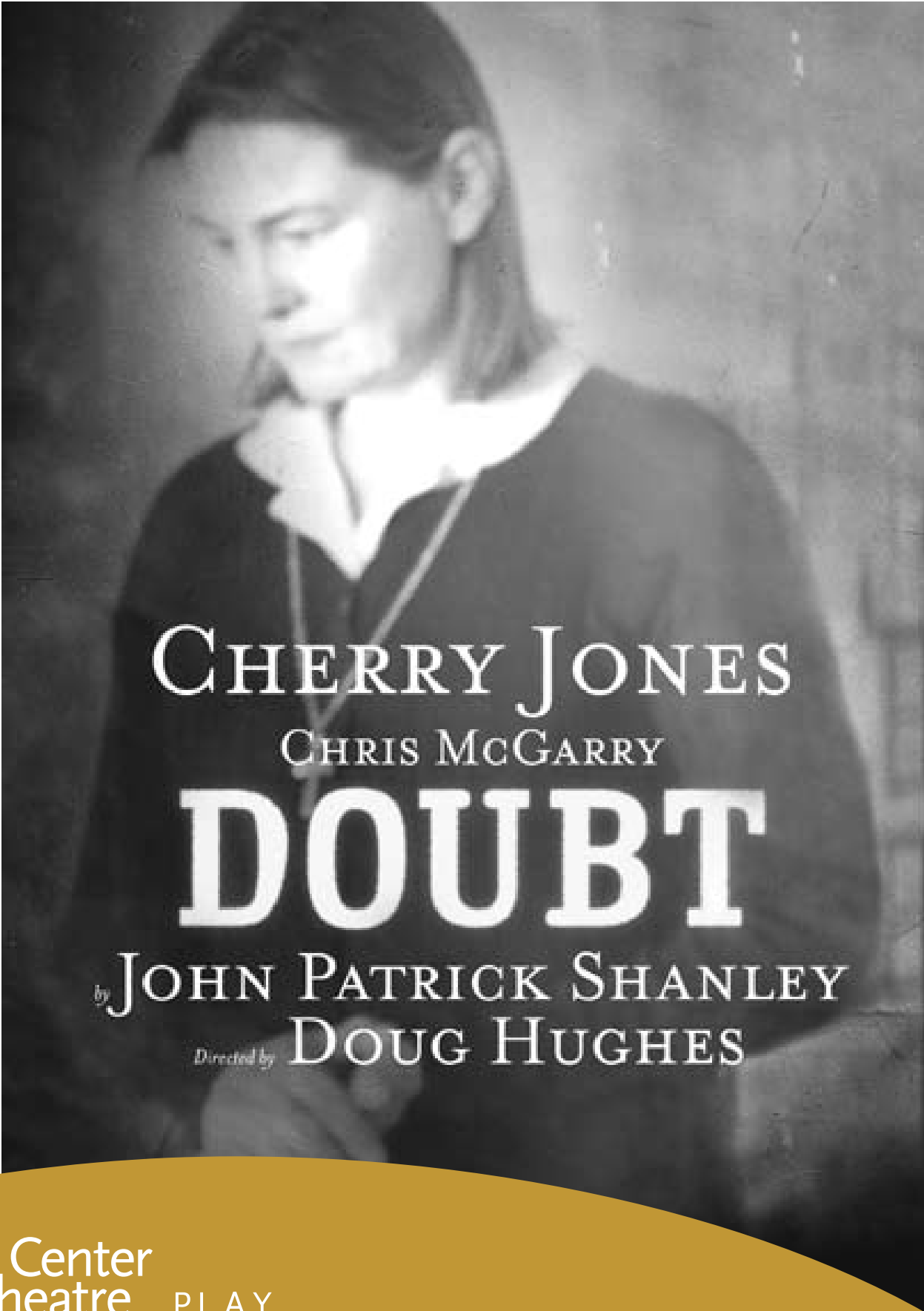


TEACHING INSTRUCTIONS



CHERRY JONES

CHRIS MCGARRY

DOUBT

by JOHN PATRICK SHANLEY

Directed by DOUG HUGHES



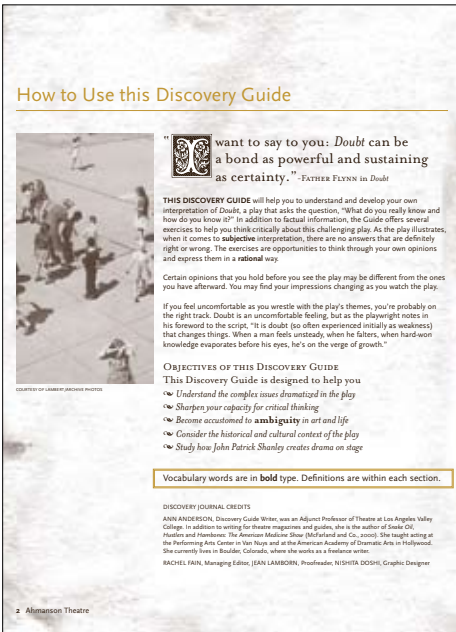
Center
Theatre
Group

P.L.A.Y.

Performing for Los Angeles Youth

L.A.'s Theatre Company

How to Use the Discovery Guide



THE DISCOVERY GUIDE

provided to you and your students is the guide for the production of *Doubt* by John Patrick Shanley. It is designed to help you lead your students through an examination of the play from historical, theatrical and social perspectives. The play is about issues that may be viewed as personal and sensitive in nature. The Guide has been designed to tackle these issues in a discreet and thoughtful way. You will see some quotations by authors other than the playwright interspersed throughout. These quotes are included to add a variety of perspectives to the study topics in the Guide. You can use them as “talking points” for discussion, or in any way you see fit.

The Guide is also an opportunity to take a close look at the methods of one of our most provocative and successful playwrights; Shanley’s structure, dialogue, characters and action are carefully crafted and purposeful. There are many exercises and discussion questions in the Guide; these Teaching Instructions will help you expand upon them to foster a fuller understanding of this specific play and theatre in general. The Discovery Guide and Teaching Instructions offer interactive classroom exercises, research projects, short essay topics and questions designed to promote critical thinking. *Doubt* is a play that will provide your students with many opportunities to examine their thought processes and engage in rigorous analysis of a challenging artistic work.

The Discovery Guide is not designed for your students to use on their own.

It is a workbook that requires instruction, active discussion and participation. If your students are not familiar with *Doubt* and the issues it portrays, such as the turmoil of the 1960s and the recent Catholic priest scandal, using the Guide before you see the play will greatly enhance their experience of the performance.

Using the Guide after you and your students have seen the play will deepen their understanding of the play and the milieu in which it is set.

Your Students Want to Think for Themselves

Doubt will delight those who enjoy art that is open to interpretation and may prove frustrating for those who prefer clear, unambiguous endings. For either sort of student or playgoer, *Doubt* is an ideal play for promoting lively discussion. Shanley has deliberately created a story in which everything, including the characters’ motivations and actions, are cast in shadows of uncertainty. The play is an exercise in ambiguity — your students are certain to have varying opinions about what really happened in the course of the story. Who did what to whom and why has kept audiences guessing and talking since the play’s first performance. The Guide will allow your students to express their own ideas about the play, while permitting a wide range of possible answers. Use the Guide to help your students formulate and express their thoughts in a reasoned and cogent way.

The Importance of Researching, Writing and Discussing Actual and Theatrical Events

The Discovery Guide and the supplemental exercises in these instructions will help students understand the relationship between research, critical thinking and creative writing. As the play itself and the Guide exercises illustrate, human behavior is not easily quantified or categorized. The Guide will help your students understand that art can be as mystifying and also as satisfying as real life.

The Exercises

At the top of each exercise, the applicable California Public School Framework has been indicated. The suggested exercises, writing topics and discussion questions are designed to assist you and your students in working through the Discovery Guide in its entirety.

Rationale

Each of these exercises and discussion questions address many elements across the full range of Content Standards for Theatre, Language Arts and History-Social Science. Use your discretion in adjusting individual exercises to conform to the Standards according to class and grade level.

Background

CATHOLIC PRIEST SCANDAL
John Patrick Shanley does not actually mention sexual abuse in *Doubt*, yet there is little doubt that the recent Catholic priest scandal informs the play and to a large extent, is its subtext. Below is a very brief summary. More information is available online; please see the reference section of the Discovery Guide. Use your discretion in discussing this background material with your students. The depth of your class's investigation into the scandal should correlate with their academic development and maturity. You may wish to discuss the background material after your students have seen the play to avoid pre-disposing them toward a particular viewpoint before they've had a chance to form their own.

In 2002, *The Boston Globe* broke the story of widespread sexual abuse among the priests of the Archdiocese of Boston. The victims, who at the time of the abuse were almost all elementary school boys, had been coming forward with charges of molestation since the mid-1990s. For years, their complaints were ignored or suppressed by the Church hierarchy, specifically by Cardinal Bernard F. Law, Archbishop of Boston, while accused priests were shuffled from parish to parish.

The truth could not be hidden forever, and as hundreds of survivors of sexual abuse came forward, it became clear that priests all over the country, including some in Los Angeles, were abusing children under their spiritual care. The scandal eventually became front-page news all over the world. The *Los Angeles Times*, for example, ran many articles and opinion pieces about the scandal. (Archived material can be found at latimes.com.) The Church was forced to confront its complicity in thousands of acts of child sexual abuse. Certainly not all priests are guilty of this behavior, but the abuse was so widespread and had been going on for so long that it precipitated a crisis of faith among many individuals and congregations.

After an agonizing struggle between survivors of abuse and the Church hierarchy, it now looks as if this sad chapter may be reaching a resolution. Cardinal Law eventually admitted the extent of the abuse, apologized to the people of Boston and resigned. The Church has settled many lawsuits with abuse survivors. In one instance, a suit in Boston with 500 **plaintiffs** was settled out-of-court for \$85 million. Most importantly, the Catholic Church has recognized that it has a **pernicious, systemic** problem within its ranks and is taking measures to address it.

ADDITIONAL VOCABULARY

Plaintiff: The complaining party in a lawsuit

Pernicious: Highly injurious or destructive

Systemic: Affecting the body as a whole

Exercise

Review the preceding section according to your students' grade and developmental level – use your discretion. What specific moments in *Doubt* lead the audience to believe that this scandal is the basis for the play? What else could have happened? Did anything happen in the play to make you think it was not about sexual abuse?

Optional Exercise

There is a great deal of newspaper coverage concerning the Catholic priest abuse scandal. If you deem it appropriate, ask your students to research, read and prepare reports on the topic. They will find an Internet link in the Resources section of the Discovery Guide.

Optional Exercise

WHO DO YOU BELIEVE?

Depending upon your class's written English proficiency, assign the following essay as described below or modify it accordingly. This exercise could also be a class discussion.

Which people or events have shaped your world view? Have you become disillusioned in any way? How do you feel about that? Write a brief essay about a person or event that caused you to reevaluate your concept of how the world works. Use examples.

BEFORE THE PLAY

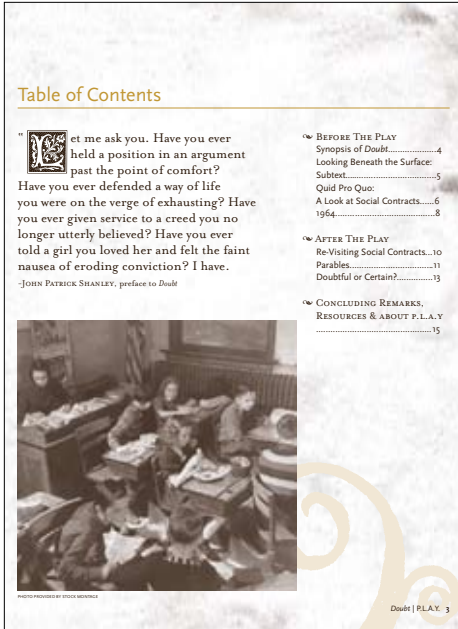


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For the “Before the Play” exercises on pages 3–9: All of the questions posed in this section of the Discovery Guide will provide ample material for pre-play group discussion.

PAGE 3: TABLE OF CONTENTS

Standards

Literary Response and Analysis
3.7b *Relate literary works and authors to the major themes and issues of their eras.*

Exercise

Read the quote from *Doubt* playwright John Patrick Shanley. Review and discuss each question in the quote, one at a time. Ask for a show of hands for “yes” or “no” answers and then solicit personal examples from individual students.

Optional Exercise

Pose a question for debate such as “Do you support the war in Iraq?” Have your students argue the opposite side from their own convictions.

Optional Exercise

Pose a question for debate such as “Do you think the legal drinking age in California should be lowered to 16?” Have your students write a 100-word answer that argues the opposite of their beliefs.

Optional Exercise

Ask your students to name a cause or belief in something about which they feel strongly. Ask them to imagine a circumstance that would cause them to change their minds about their convictions. Entertain any suggestion no matter how far-fetched.

BEFORE THE PLAY

Synopsis of *Doubt*



If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts he shall end in certainties. —FRANCIS BACON, 1561-1626

DOUBT IS A PARABLE, which means it's a very simple story that has an underlying lesson. The story is about Sister Aloysius, a Catholic school principal, who suspects on the basis of *inference*, not hard evidence, that Father Flynn, the resident priest, has been behaving inappropriately with a student. She recruits one of the teachers, Sister James, to keep an eye on Father Flynn. Sister Aloysius is adamant that he must be removed from her campus and their parish, but is her conviction justified?

As you can see, the plot, or story line, of *Doubt* is very simple. This is a parable, but what is the lesson? The playwright has written a deliberately open-ended parable, in which the lesson to be learned is for you, the audience, to interpret for yourselves. A few of the many questions that the play raises are:

- What do you really know for sure?
- By what method do you *ascertain* whether what you believe to be true is actually true?
- Are you willing to accept the consequences of actions based on beliefs that might be false?
- How do you tend to see the world—in black and white or in shades of gray?

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

JOHN PATRICK SHANLEY (1930) was born in the Bronx borough of New York City. His first teachers were the Irish Christian Brothers and the Sisters of Charity. He attended New York University (NYU). Mr. Shanley says that he was expelled from kindergarten, expelled from high school and granted an academic probation by NYU. Then he joined the Marines, where he did just fine. He is still doing fine.

Mr. Shanley has written many plays, including *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea* and *Savage in Limbo*. His screenplay for the 1987 film, *Moonstruck*, won the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay. He wrote and directed the 1990 film, *Jeeves and the Woobies*, starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan.

In 2005, *Doubt* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, the Drama Desk Award and the Tony Award for Best Play. Mr. Shanley is interested in your reactions to his play. You can email him at Shanleyjohn@aol.com.

VOCABULARY

- Ambiguity:** Uncertainty; lack of clarity
- Ascertain:** To find out or learn with certainty
- Inference:** A conclusion derived from fact or assumption, such as seeing smoke and inferring fire
- Rational:** Based on reason
- Subjective:** Peculiar to a particular individual

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SYNOPSIS OF *DOUBT*: Page 4

PAGE 4: SYNOPSIS OF *DOUBT*

Standards

Artistic Perception 1.0

Students observe their environment and respond, using the elements of theatre.

Exercise

Read the synopsis with your class. As you will see, the storyline of *Doubt* is very simple, but like all good parables, it raises complex questions about morality and behavior. Pay particular attention to the questions at the bottom of the section. These are the themes in *Doubt*. John Patrick Shanley is concerned about the lack of civility and critical thinking in both private life and public discourse. His play and the Discovery Guide provide an opportunity for you to teach the skill of critical thinking as well as respect for the opinions of others. This may be the first time that your students have examined how they think and express their views. *Doubt*, according to Shanley, is a healthy mental state, while certainty, in his opinion, can lead to all sorts of difficulties. Use the questions in the Guide as the basis for class discussion after reviewing the synopsis and vocabulary words.

Exercise

Read the sidebar about playwright John Patrick Shanley and see if the brief bio gives you or your students any insights into the play.

Can you or your students think of any other authors who have written a similar story? From what your students can glean from the sidebar, can they see how the play might be infused with the writer's personal history?

Optional Exercise

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

Make a list of questions such as “What color are your mother’s eyes?” “Who do you trust?” “What color is the ocean?” “Is there life after death?” “Is it always wrong to steal?” “Is there life on other planets?” After they answer each question, ask the students to identify how they know the answers. Are they relying on direct observation? Intuition? Hearsay? Other sources? Why are they so sure? Or aren’t they?

Optional Exercise

Using a dictionary, define and discuss the differences between parable, myth, fable and allegory. Cite examples and discuss the various functions of each literary form.

Optional Exercise

UNDERSTANDING STRUCTURE

Doubt is written as a series of nine short scenes and is performed without an intermission. Ask your students what the implications are of presenting a story without an act break. Have them list and discuss other ways of structuring plays such as one act, three acts, etc.

BEFORE THE PLAY

Looking Beneath the Surface: Subtext

There's nothing there except lines of dialogue. If they're sketched correctly and minimally, they will give the audience the illusion that these are "real people," especially if the lines are spoken by real people - the actors are going to fill a lot in. So a large part of the technique of playwrighting is to leave a lot out."

—DAVID MAMET, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright

DO YOU ALWAYS state exactly what you mean or ask for exactly what you want? Isn't it true that at certain times we're direct, and at others we hint at what's on our minds? Because theatre reflects life, characters in plays behave that way, too.

When actors and directors work on a play, they often discuss the subtext—the meaning beneath the surface meaning of the words on the page. It's the underlying tension that brings a scene to life. It's what the characters are really thinking, as opposed to what they may be saying or doing. Sometimes the subtext is the opposite of what a character says.

Doubt is a play with very rich subtext. What the characters *imply* and *infer* is as meaningful as the words they say, and in some cases, more so. When you see the play, notice how expert actors such as Cherry Jones bring out the underlying meaning of their dialogue.

Subtext gives actors room to use movement, gesture, facial expression and vocal inflection to fill out the scene. There are successful plays without subtext, but in most good plays what is not said is as important as the actual dialogue. As John Patrick Shanley says in his preface, "What's under a play? What holds it up? You might as well ask what's under me!" Or what am I built? There's something silent under every person and every play. There is something unsaid under any given society as well."

PLAY THE SUBTEXT
ON SMALL PIECES OF PAPER, write a clear, direct message such as "Please do the dishes," or "I really like you." Swap messages. Think of a subtext or several possible subtexts, and say the line with those underlying thoughts in mind. Use tone of voice, expression and gesture to express your true meaning. Example: "Please do the dishes" could be said to convey, "You don't respect me," or alternatively, "I am in charge of you." Discover how many meanings can be communicated with one simple line of dialogue.



Cherry Jones in *Doubt* (photo © Jon Wernick)

VOCABULARY
Imply: To express indirectly
Infer: To reason from circumstance or evidence



Doubt | PLAY 5

LOOKING BENEATH THE SURFACE: Page 5

PAGE 5: LOOKING BENEATH THE SURFACE: SUBTEXT

Standards

Artistic Perception 1.3
Identify the use of metaphor, subtext, and symbolic elements in scripts and theatrical productions.

Creative Expression 2.1
Make acting choices, using script analysis, character research, reflection and revision through the rehearsal process.

Exercise

Read the section with your students. Make sure they understand the meaning of the word "subtext" before continuing to the exercise in the Discovery Guide. Review vocabulary words.

Optional Exercise

WHAT'S THE SUBTEXT?

Here's a brief, mundane conversation between a boy and a girl. The top line is what they say, and the line underneath it in parentheses is the subtext:

HIM: Hello. (Hello? Think of something else to say!)

HER: Hi. (I think I have lipstick on my teeth.)

HIM: Good party, huh? (Am I boring her?)

HER: Yeah. Good party. (He's cute.)

HIM: Are you a friend of Danny's? (She's really pretty. I'm starting to sweat.)

HER: No, I'm here with my friend, Chrissie. (Why did I wear this stupid outfit?)

The lines are simple, but what's underneath them carries a bigger emotional load. What else could be going on underneath the lines? Here they are again. Ask your students to write the subtext. Ask for pairs of volunteers to act out the scenes conveying the varying subtexts.

HIM: Hello.

HER: Hi.

HIM: Good party, huh?

GIRL: Yeah. Good party.

HIM: Are you a friend of Danny's?

HER: No, I'm here with my friend, Chrissie.

Optional Exercise

Solicit examples of non-verbal communication such as gestures and facial expressions. Sort these signifiers into those that the whole class understands and those that are specific to individuals. For example: Are your students aware of any behaviors (such as biting their lower lip or hair twirling) that they exhibit when they're angry? Insecure? Frustrated? Do other people, say family members or friends, know how to read those gestures?

Optional Exercise

Discuss the meaning of "reading between the lines." Are your students aware of meanings between the meanings of what you, their parents or friends do or say?

Optional Exercise

Solicit a list of your students' favorite TV shows or movies. Discuss the dialogue in those programs. Rate the dialogue on a scale of one to five according to its subtlety or directness (subtext or no subtext).

BEFORE THE PLAY

Quid Pro Quo: A Look at Social Contracts



Doubt requires more courage than conviction does, and more energy, because conviction is a resting place and doubt is infinite—it is a passionate exercise. You may come out of my play uncertain. You may want to be sure. Look down on that feeling. We've got to learn to live with a full measure of uncertainty. There is no last word. That's the silence under the chatter of our time."
—JOHN PATRICK SHANLEY, preface to *Doubt*

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS can be viewed from different angles. Theatre provides a way of seeing those connections from various perspectives. One might say that relationships are based on agreements, or contracts. Status, age and gender are some of the factors that influence personal contracts. Social scientists examine these factors all the time, but in a generalized, detached way. Playwrights, on the other hand, often portray the complexity and pitfalls of such contracts in ways that engage us emotionally and specifically by involving us in the characters' lives. Before you see the play, consider this:

SOCIAL CONTRACT is...

Definition 1b: An agreement among the members of an organized society or between the governed and the government defining and limiting the rights and duties of each.

Definition 2a: An implicit agreement among people that results in a societal structure in which the individual surrenders liberty in return for protection.

Social contract theory is almost as old as human society. Socrates (470-399 BCE) wrote about the individual's relationship to the state; later the English philosophers Thomas Hobbes (1588-1639) and John Locke (1632-1704) further clarified the rights and responsibilities of people in an organized society. Still later, in France, Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1788) added his thoughts to the discussion, and many contemporary theorists have weighed in as well.

The term "social contract" can be used to discuss citizens and their government, but it can also describe the benefits and obligations of many relationships, such as between parents and children, teachers and students, clergy and parishioners.

Sister, Sister

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH is organized as a hierarchy. Power is concentrated at the top point of a pyramid in the person of the Pope, who is the elected spiritual head of the Church and holds that office until his death. The Church structure, which consists of cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests and deacons, is in that descending order, is paternalistic, meaning that its authority rests with men.

Nuns are consecrated women who devote themselves to service, prayer and meditation by joining a religious order. Roman Catholic nuns take vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. They are obedient first to their order's Mother Superior, and then to their local priest, bishop, and so on up the hierarchy. Nuns exchange a life of service, typically as teachers, nurses or social workers, for a home, community and spiritual fulfillment. In broad terms, that is their contract.

VOCABULARY

Clergy: The group ordained to perform religious rites

Consecrated: Dedicated to a sacred purpose

Hierarchy: A ruling body organized by rank

Implicit: Capable of being understood from something unexpressed

Laity: The people of a religious faith who are not part of the clergy

Quid pro quo: An exchange of favors; Latin for "this for that"

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QUID PRO QUO: Page 6

Page 5: (cont'd)

Optional Exercise

Review this quote from Shanley's preface to *Doubt*: "There's something silent under every person and every play. There is something unsaid under any given society as well."

Ask your students to write one thesis sentence that describes what's "under" them. Have them do the same for the United States, their best friend and their least favorite person.

PAGE 6-7: QUID PRO QUO: A LOOK AT SOCIAL CONTRACTS

Standards

Historical and Cultural Context

3.1 Identify how media influences culture and 3.2 Describe the ways in which playwrights reflect and influence their culture.

Social contract theory is complex. So are the relationships in *Doubt* and indeed, in all of our lives. Before beginning the exercises below or in the Guide, review and discuss the meaning of social contracts and the notion of quid pro quo. Your students can examine something that is often taken for granted, namely, their expectations of others and what they believe is expected of them. Shanley's concern as a playwright is that people no longer really listen to each other or honor their agreements. All of these exercises are designed to help your students listen more closely and think more deeply.

Exercise

Discuss the quote from John Patrick Shanley's preface to *Doubt*. Select debate teams of two members each and debate Shanley's proposition that "Doubt requires more courage than conviction does." Ask the rest of the class to select the winners of the debate and explain their choice.

Exercise

Select two or three students to read the section aloud. Review the vocabulary words. Make sure your students understand the meaning of "social contract" before proceeding to the written exercise. Allow 15-20 minutes to complete the exercise "Review Your Contracts." Ask your students to share their responses.

Exercise

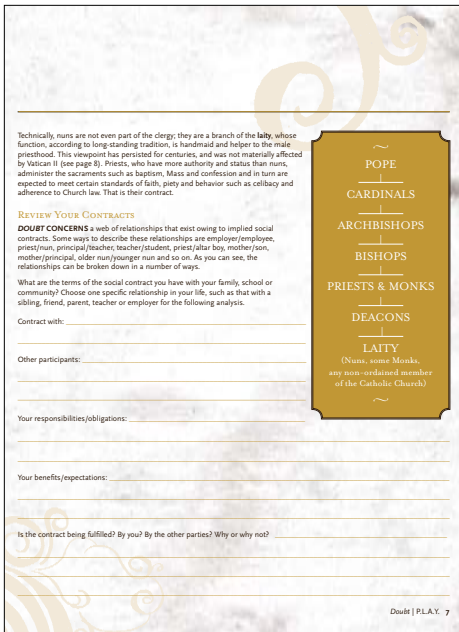
Review the sidebar "Sister, Sister." Ensure students have an understanding of the power structure in the Church – this will be important for analysis of the actions of the characters in the play. Ask your students if they have had any personal relationships with Catholic nuns that are relevant to what has been studied and discussed so far. Discuss how the notion of social contracts plays into the relationship of men/women, laity/clergy.

Optional Exercise

THE CHATTER OF OUR TIME

Read aloud the following quote from Shanley's preface to *Doubt*: "We are living in a culture of extreme advocacy, of confrontation, of judgment, and of verdict. Discussion has given way to debate. Communication has become a contest of wills. Public talking has become obnoxious and insincere."

BEFORE THE PLAY



QUID PRO QUO: Page 7

Pages 6–7: (cont’d)

Optional Exercise

Why? Maybe it’s because deep down under the chatter we have come to a place where we know that we don’t know . . . anything. But nobody’s willing to say that.”

Ask your students to find an example of the “obnoxious and insincere” public discussion that the playwright is referencing. (Perhaps they watch *Face the Nation* or *Hardball* or listen to talk radio programs.) Have them identify instances in which the participants rely on insult, misdirection, outright lies or sheer volume as opposed to facts and logical thinking. Ask them to take note of remarks that are deliberately inflammatory, off-point or just plain rude. Have them bring their notes to

class and share them aloud. As a class, create awards for Most Creative Insult, Snappiest Comeback Line, Most Competitive Talker, Talking the Most While Saying the Least, Loudest Non-Response, etc. Program (name of show or channel/station) _____

Participants _____

 Topic of conversation _____

 Remarks _____

How do the confrontations in *Doubt* stack up against the real conversations you’ve monitored? Do you think that Sister Aloysius and Father Flynn are straight with each other? Are they logical and fair? Manipulative and prejudiced? All of the above?

Optional Exercise

From your students’ responses to the written exercise, select a colorful, funny or interesting example of a social contract that has been breached. Role-play and set up a mock court with a plaintiff, defendant, judge and jury. Try the case in class. (Make up your own procedural rules.) If the jury rules for the plaintiff, have the judge determine a suitable (mock) remedy.

Exercise

RESEARCH PROJECT

Divide the class into groups. Using the Internet or public library, ask your students to research social contract theory and prepare brief oral reports. Subheadings for the topic include Feminist Theory, 20th Century Social Contracts, Medieval European Social Contracts, 19th Century Colonial Societies and so on. Your students may have their own ideas about aspects of social contracts that they’d like to explore.

Optional Exercise

Divide your students into groups. Using the Internet, public library or their personal contacts, have your students research the current and historical role of Catholic nuns and their relationship to the priesthood. Have them present five-minute oral reports.

Optional Exercise

Have your students research the hierarchical structure, history and function of priests, monks, nuns, mullahs and others in various world religions such as Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, the Protestant sects and so on. Research can be organized around time period, geographical location, gender divisions and so on according to your students’ grade level and capacity.

BEFORE THE PLAY

1964



True science teaches, above all, to doubt and be ignorant.
—MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO, 1864–1936

Although the play makes a clear reference to recent headlines, the playwright made an artistic choice to set the play in 1964, a year known for its dizzying pace of societal change. Here are two key events of that time.

VATICAN II
IN OCTOBER OF 1962, Catholic bishops from all over the world met in Vatican City in the heart of Rome to re-define the mission, tenor and shape of the Catholic Church. They met every autumn from 1962 until 1965. The series of conferences, known as the Second Vatican Council, or Vatican II, was intended to be an ecclesiastical, theological and ecumenical examination of Church practice and doctrine. Pope John XXIII, who first convened Vatican II, spoke of “opening the windows” of the Church. Vatican II effected more changes within the Catholic religion than in any time in the preceding 500 years. That doubt takes place during a time of self-examination and change by the Church hierarchy.

Some of the changes that the council made were to include greater use of native languages (as opposed to Latin) in the Mass. After Vatican II, priests faced the congregation instead of standing with their backs to them as they faced the altar. The Jewish people, who were previously blamed by the Church for the death of Jesus, were officially deemed not responsible for that historical crime. The bishops also declared a commensality with people of all faiths, including Protestants. There are but a few of the changes wrought by the council, some of which are controversial to this day. Some Catholics view Vatican II as a “new springtime for the Church,” while others see it as a regrettable turn away from the Church’s core principles.

CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964
UP UNTIL 1964, prejudice against minorities, particularly African Americans, was mandated by law in parts of the United States and openly acceptable in others. “Jim Crow” laws in the South set up separate schools, restaurants, theaters, parks, hospitals and other public buildings. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was landmark legislation that did not completely cure the problem, but went a long way in remedying it. It made racially-based job discrimination and segregation of schools and other institutions illegal, and eventually opened many opportunities for men and women of color.

Vatican II gave the Catholic laity a greater voice in their parishes than before. Owing to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, African Americans gained legal entitlement to greater opportunity and protection from discrimination. The year 1964 was notable for dramatic shifts in many areas, which you will research below.

VOCABULARY
Ecclesiastical: Of or related to a church
Ecumenical: Worldwide in extent, influence or application
Tenor: The general sense of something spoken or written
Theological: Related to the teachings of an organized religious community

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1964: Page 8

WHAT ELSE HAPPENED IN 1964?
Using Internet and library resources, research other major events and movements of that year. List them below.

Look over your research above. What makes 1964 similar to or different from today? Why did Sharley set the play during the 60s instead of the present day? In an essay, compare and contrast the 60s and specifically 1964 with present day, and explain why the playwright might have chosen 1964 as the backdrop for his play.

Doubt | P.L.A.Y. 9

1964: Page 9

PAGES 8–9: 1964

Standards

Historical and Cultural Context 3.2
Describe the ways in which playwrights reflect and influence their culture.

Exercise

Read the sections on Vatican II and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with your class. Review vocabulary list. Both of these events inform the action of the play, so make sure the students have a clear understanding of the basic facts and fallout of each.

Exercise

WHAT ELSE HAPPENED IN 1964?
Allot class or homework time to research 1964 – use the assignment as it is written in the Guide or try one of the suggestions below in preparation for the writing assignment.

Exercise

After the year 1964 has been thoroughly researched and discussed, ask your students why the playwright set the story in that year. Why is that particular context important socially and theatrically? Note techniques of distancing to allow for clarity or safety – discuss how artists in oppressive regimes use metaphor and allegory to safely criticize their governments, and how a historical setting for a story with current implications frees the

audience to be more critical. (This discussion will lead into a post-play discussion about *Doubt* as a parable and what the playwright’s lesson is.) When assigning the essay, be sure to read the instructions aloud to ensure students understand the assignment.

Optional Exercise

There is much more information available on Vatican II and the Civil Rights Act than is presented in the Discovery Guide. Both topics are complex, rich sources of study about history and social science. Assign papers, oral reports or other research projects on these topics according to your class’s grade level and capacity.

Optional Exercise

The year 1964 was a lively, colorful year. The Beatles performed on *The Ed Sullivan Show* and the first Ford Mustang rolled off the assembly line. Have your students research the other events of 1964 and bring oral or visual representations to class.

Optional Exercise

1964 AS A SERIES OF LISTS
Divide your class into groups. Assign sub-headings for 1964 such as Music, Fashion, Movies, Science, Industry and so on. Using the Internet, have your groups compile lists of the Top Ten Achievements of 1964 in their respective categories.

AFTER THE PLAY

Re-Visiting Social Contracts

VOCABULARY
Breach: To violate an agreement.
Correlation: The relationship or connection between two things.

freedom of speech and freedom of action are meaningless without freedom to think. And there is no freedom of thought without doubt. —BERGEN EVANS, 1904-1978, *The Natural History of Nonsense*

HOW DID YOU RESPOND to the characters in *Doubt*? At the beginning of the play, who was more sympathetic, Sister Aloysius or Father Flynn? As the play progressed, did you find your first impression shifting? This raises another question: What is the correlation (if any) between a pleasant personality and trustworthiness?

In the space provided below, describe the social contracts between the following characters in terms of benefits and responsibilities. Do the agreements function as they should? List ways in which the contracts are breached or upheld. Be specific.

Sister Aloysius/Father Flynn

Sister Aloysius/Mrs. Muller

Donald Muller/Mrs. Muller

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RE-VISITING SOCIAL CONTRACTS: Page 10

Pages 8–9: (cont'd)

Optional Exercise

Assign each student or group of students a year to research. Ask them to prepare lists, oral or visual presentations on those years as described in the exercises above.

PAGE 10: RE-VISITING SOCIAL CONTRACTS

Standards

Literary Response and Analysis
3.3 Analyze interactions between main and subordinate characters in a literary text (e.g., internal and external conflicts, motivations, relationships, influences).

Exercise

Review and discuss the meaning of social contracts and the vocabulary. Discuss the questions in the section. Proceed to the written exercise, allowing ample time for writing. Share the responses aloud. Discuss disagreements openly and non-judgmentally.

Exercise

Doubt can be viewed as a series of power plays. Discuss how the context of the play supports the theatricality of those pairs of struggles. For example, does the civil rights struggle confer moral authority upon Mrs. Muller? How does her status as a mother stack up against Sister Aloysius' status as a school principal and nun? Does Sister James' compassion confer any status or moral authority upon her, or just the opposite?

Optional Exercise


Assign brief written essays based on the questions listed above.

Optional Exercise

Based on the preceding discussion questions, chart the power plays in *Doubt* on the blackboard using your students' input. Write the characters' names in a higher or lower position in relation to one another according to who comes out on top.

AFTER THE PLAY

Parables



**Forgotten mornings when he walked with his mother
Through the parables of sunlight
And the legend of the green chapels.**

—DYLAN THOMAS, 1914–1953, *Atom in October*

THE SUBTITLE OF DOUBT IS A PARABLE. Parables are very simple stories in which a character must face a choice and accept the consequences of that decision. In other words, a parable is a brief, realistic story that illustrates a moral or ethical choice. In some parables, the main character, or protagonist, makes the right choice, and in others, he or she takes the wrong path. Parables are metaphors; they make their point indirectly.


Parables are often associated with the major world religions, but can also appear in a secular context. The most well-known parables in Western literature are from the New Testament, such as the Parable of the Mustard Seed and the Good Samaritan. However, parables are common to many religious traditions. Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and the Hindu faith all have parables that illustrate their respective creeds.

Doubt begins with a parable. In the course of a sermon (also called a homily), Father Flynn tells the story of a man who is lost at sea and clinging to the hope that he has set the correct course for home. What happens to the man? Father Flynn doesn't say, and thus, the play begins on a note of doubt.

WRITE YOUR OWN PARABLE
Think of an event in your own life that caused you to grow, change your mind or doubt what you previously believed. Use this event as the basis for your own parable. (Examples: the moment you knew there was no tooth fairy or that your parents weren't perfect) Begin with a character, a setting and a simple action such as, "A girl walked into a classroom," or "A boy crossed the street" and go from there. Keep the narrative and the lesson or new-found wisdom contained within it as simple as possible. (Hint: Don't exceed the space allowed.)

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As indicated in the subtitle, the playwright intends for the play itself to serve as a parable. What elements make *Doubt* a parable? What lesson is Shanley trying to teach? Does the lesson change as you look at the parable from each character's point of view? Explain *Doubt* as a parable and describe the lesson or lessons it contains.

VOCABULARY
Context: The circumstance in which an event occurs; a setting or environment
Metaphor: A figure of speech in which one thing represents another
Narrative: Story
Secular: Belonging to the ordinary rather than the sacred realm; worldly
Subtitle: A secondary or explanatory title

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PARABLES: Page 12

PAGE 11–12: PARABLES

Standards

Literary Response and Analysis
 3.6 *Use of archetypes drawn from myth and religion in literature, theatre, etc.* Writing Strategies 1.1
Establish a controlling impression or coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject and maintain a consistent tone and focus throughout the piece of writing.

Exercise

Read the paragraphs on parables and discuss to ensure students understand what a parable is. The most well-known parables in American culture are from the New Testament. However, many religious and cultural traditions use parables to teach lessons about morality and proper behavior. Your class may include students from non-Judeo-Christian or non-Western backgrounds, and their input about the parables they know will enrich the topic tremendously. Look at parables from around the world to kick-start a discussion.

Exercise

Make sure that your students have a thorough understanding of the form, nature and purpose of parables before continuing to the exercise. By definition, parables are brief. As the French writer Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) wrote,

“I have made this letter longer than usual because I lack the time to make it short.” It’s much more difficult to write a brief, economical piece than a long, wordy one. The parable exercise will challenge your students to make every word count. Instruct them to write a first draft and then go back and delete all unnecessary verbiage. Their story should get right to the point, although the point itself may be indirect and subtle. Ask them to share their parables aloud—can everyone guess the lesson? You may also find that your students are better prepared to do this exercise after you’ve done the optional exercise below.

Exercise

The questions in the essay exercise will guide your discussion about *Doubt* as a parable. They will provide a framework for thoroughness and help you keep the conversation moving if it flags. When discussing the possible lessons, look at the story from different characters’ points of view. Make sure students have a well-reasoned argument, as opposed to a purely emotional response. Some students may not see *Doubt* as a parable at all. If they don’t agree with Shanley’s premise, they may still find it was suitable for dramatization. The point of the discussion from an educational standpoint is to help them deconstruct literature.

AFTER THE PLAY

Doubtful or Certain?

THINKING THAT SOMETHING is so doesn't necessarily make it so. Isn't that the central struggle in *Doubt*? Sister Aloysius says at the end of the play, "I have doubts! I have such doubts!" What exactly does she mean? Why is that admission painful for her?

At times, we all suffer from illusions, which is the state of being intellectually misled. The word "disillusioned," meaning stripped of one's misconceptions, often has a negative connotation, but isn't it better to see things as they really are?

CHART YOUR THINKING
We know things through direct observation (what we see with our own eyes), hearsay (what we've heard from others), intuition (our own gut feeling), assumption (putting two and two together to form a conclusion) and documentary evidence (information from experts that we accept as accurate). Consider what you know, or what you think you know, about your relationships and ideas. Chart how you came to your conclusions. Make check marks in the appropriate boxes.

What You Know	Observation	Hearsay	Intuition	Assumption	Documentation	Other
Parents						
Siblings						
Celebrities						
The Physical World						
My Body						
Religion						

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DOUBTFUL OR CERTAIN: Page 13

Pages 11–12: (cont'd) **Optional Exercise**

Have your students research examples of parables, allegories, fables and myths from any faith or culture and read them aloud in class. Discuss the meaning and purpose of the parables. What are they trying to teach? Are they successful? Why or why not? Are there similarities between parables from different religions or cultures? Differences?

PAGE 13–14: DOUBTFUL OR CERTAIN?

Standards

Writing Strategies 1.3
Structure ideas and arguments in a sustained, persuasive, and sophisticated way and support them with precise and relevant examples.

Exercise

Read the “Doubtful or Certain” section aloud and define any unknown words. Discuss the meaning and implications of Sister Aloysius’ line, “I have doubts! I have such doubts!” Is she referring to her suspicions about Father Flynn, her religious beliefs, her life choices or something else? What occurs in the divide between doubt and certainty is the central theme in *Doubt*. Many young people are uncomfortable with uncertainty, especially in an academic context. In this case, however, uncertainty is the point! No one will have a wrong answer—there are only possibilities. Encourage your students to express their thoughts.

Exercise

CHART YOUR THINKING

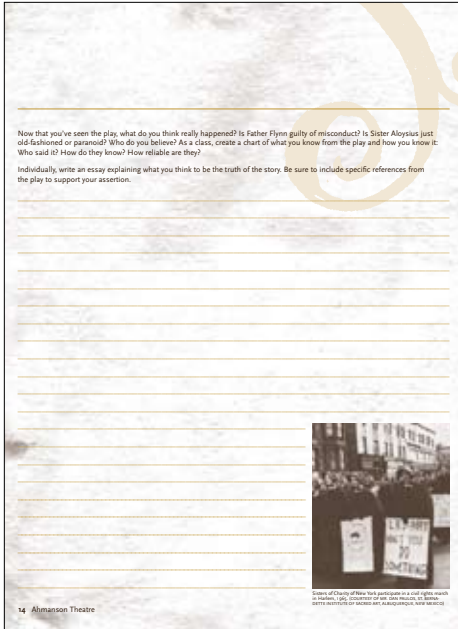
This is an opportunity for your students to examine their own thought processes. Why do they have certain ideas? How did they arrive at those ideas? The chart is designed to let your students look objectively at their own thinking and identify strengths and

weaknesses. The chart exercise is meant to be a fun, different way of organizing one’s thinking. Don’t let your students stress out over it! It’s not necessary to fill in every box. Discuss the chart and make sure your students understand how to work with it and what the value is in doing so. Emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers. Allow ample time to complete the chart. Ask willing students to share their responses.

Exercise

Make a chart (or a list) on the board with the following headings: The Characters in the Play, What They Know and How They Know It. Have the students fill in what each character believes to be true and how or why that character thinks it’s true. (This is at the heart of the conflict in the play.) Be sure to include in your discussion the reliability of the information—why is one character’s account more believable than another’s? After an exhaustive discussion, students should be prepared to write a well-organized and well-considered essay on what they believe happened and why.

AFTER THE PLAY



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Pages 13–14: (cont'd)

Optional Exercise FIRING LINE

Ask a volunteer to stand and name some thing or idea about which he or she is absolutely certain. Let the other students “cross examine” the student asking as many questions as they like to try and find the flaw in that person’s logic.

Optional Exercise WHAT DON'T YOU BELIEVE?

Ask your students to write an essay about something they believe to be untrue, citing as many facts and examples as possible.

Optional Exercise
Ask your students to list any work of art, entertainment or popular culture that has an ambiguous meaning or ending. Have them describe it for the class.

EVALUATION

Please let us know how successful we were in designing the Discovery Guide and these Teaching Instructions. Which parts worked for your class and which didn't? We hope these activities will help to expand the theatre-going experience for you and your students. Send comments along with student responses to:

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