



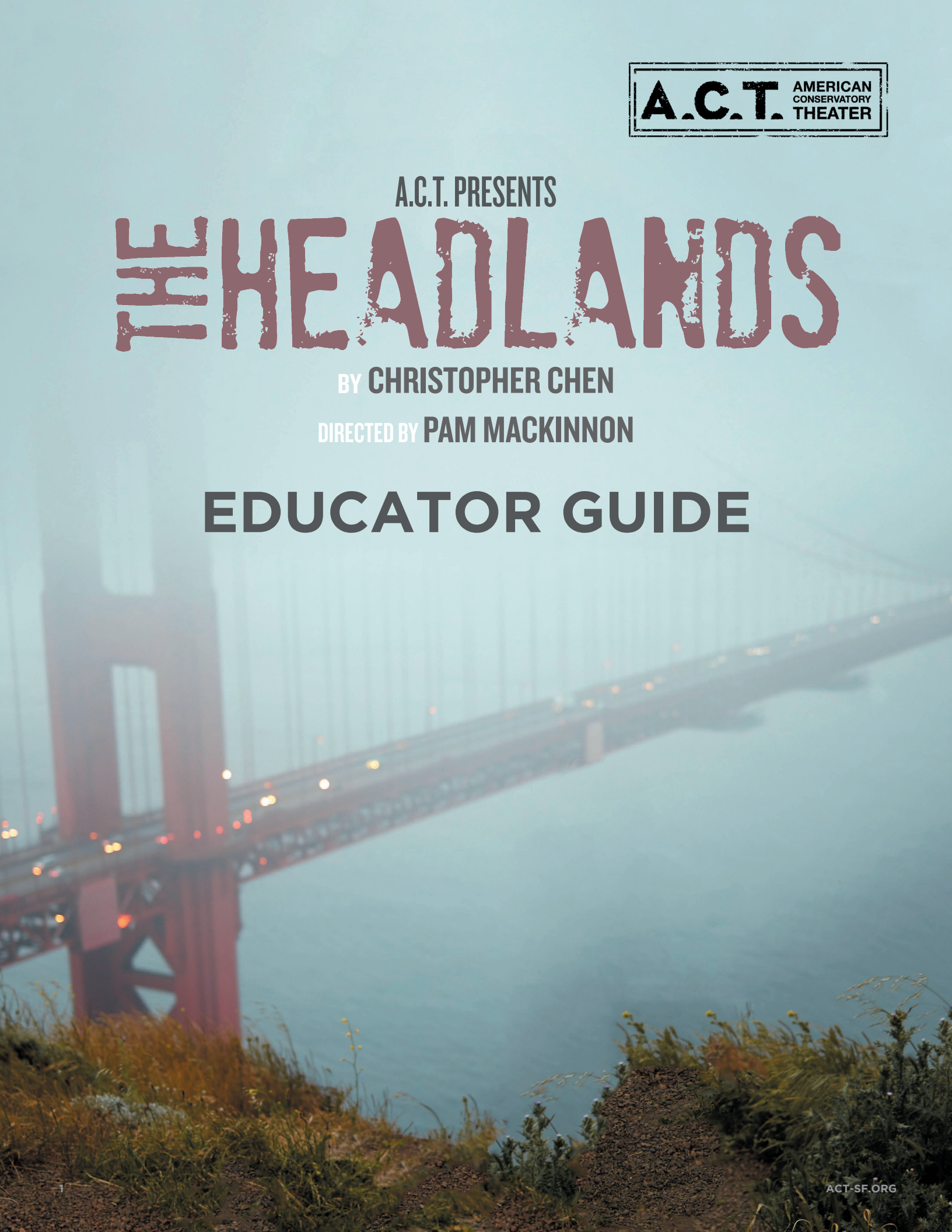
A.C.T. PRESENTS

THE HEADLANDS

BY CHRISTOPHER CHEN

DIRECTED BY PAM MACKINNON

EDUCATOR GUIDE



WELCOME!

American Conservatory Theater's Education & Community Programs Department is delighted to welcome you and your students into the dark and mysterious world of *The Headlands*.

This guide was created in January 2023 by Natalie Greene and Anne Yumi Kobori, and designed by Laura Clatterbuck.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Prepare your students for their experience seeing *The Headlands* and use these materials to walk them through the show's locations, genre and themes. Consider your curriculum, your own perspective, and how your students might engage with this information, then adjust the content as you see fit. Choose your own adventure and adapt the activities to fit your students' grade level, capacity, interests, and needs.

Please reach out to education@act-sf.org if you have any questions or support needs. We hope you enjoy the show!

NATIONAL ARTS STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS GUIDE

<https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/>

Creating: Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work - CR1, CR2, CR3.

Performing/Presenting/Producing: Realizing artistic ideas and work through interpretation and presentation - PR4, PR6.

Responding: Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning - RE7, RE8.

Connecting: Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context - CN10.

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SYNOPSIS

The Headlands is a complicated love letter to our city. Obie Award–winning playwright Christopher Chen dives deep into his San Francisco roots to tell the story of Henry Wong, Google Engineer and true-crime fan. For Henry, his father’s unexplained death is the ultimate cold case. George Wong was the co-owner of a kitchen contracting business in the Sunset District before he was shot in what the police declared “a random burglary.” The first witness on the scene, George’s wife Leena, has since passed away from cancer. As Henry digs into the SFPD evidence, he’s haunted by the myths and misdirections of his own family history. The almost obsessive focus which drives our protagonist to solve the mysteries of the past will not be stopped, even when it threatens to drive away his present-day girlfriend, Jess.

The clues (and countless red herrings) Henry uncovers through his interviews with George’s business partner Walter Bingham, Leena’s best friend Pat, and the original case detective, only serve to deepen the mystery of George’s death. Henry’s own buried childhood memories bring even more uncomfortable truths to light. How did his parents really meet? What’s behind the detective’s warnings about the case? And what is hidden in the Marin Headlands?

Experience the West Coast Premiere of the shadowy and compelling mystery of *The Headlands*, directed by Tony Award winner Pam MacKinnon—you’ll never look at San Francisco the same way again.

THEMES

Love

Loyalty

Betrayal

Justice

Family

Identity

Mystery

Memory

Imagination

TO SPARK CONVERSATION WITH YOUR STUDENTS BEFORE OR AFTER THE SHOW, ASK:

- What do these words mean within the context of your family?
- How about in your larger community or culture?
- Which of these themes are most important to you, and why?
- Which of these themes are most interesting to you, and why?

**PAM
MACKINNON**
Artistic Director

**JENNIFER
BIELSTEIN**
Executive Director



PRESENTS

THE HEADLANDS

THIS PRODUCTION IS MADE
POSSIBLE BY

Company Sponsors:

Donald J. and Toni Ratner Miller

Executive Producers:

Abby and Gene Schnair;
Jay Yamada; Neil and Elsa Pering

Producers:

Carlotta and Robert Dathe;
Luba Kipnis and David Russel

Associate Producers:

Paul Angelo and Cindy Low;
Linda K. Brewer; Marielle Ednalino and
Ken Lamb; Marmor Foundation/
Drs. Michael and Jane Marmor;
Lee and Carolyn Snowberg;
Richard and Julia Geist

Benefactors:

Helen and Roger Bohl;
Sally and Toby Rosenblatt

This production of *The Headlands* is
generously supported in part by



Season Presenters

Barbara Bass Bakar; Jerome L. and
Thao N. Dodson; Kathleen Donohue
and David Sze; Priscilla and
Keith Geeslin; Michael P. N. A. Hormel,
in loving memory of James C. Hormel;
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Toni Ratner Miller; David and Carla
Riemer; Patti and Rusty Rueff;
Kay Yun and Andre Neumann-Loreck



THEATRE FORWARD

THE HEADLANDS

By **Christopher Chen**
Directed by **Pam MacKinnon**

THE CAST

KEIKO SHIMOSATO CARREIRO Pat/Older Leena
SAM JACKSON Jess
CHARLES SHAW ROBINSON Walter/Detective
ERIN MEI-LING STUART Leena
JOMAR TAGATAC Tom
PHIL WONG Henry
JOHNNY M. WU George

UNDERSTUDIES

WILL DAO Henry, Tom
KHALIA DAVIS Jess
BRIAN HERNDON Walter/Detective
ALEX HSU George, Tom
JENNY NGUYEN NELSON Leena
MIYOKO SAKATANI Pat/Older Leena

STAGE MANAGEMENT

ELISA GUTHERTZ Stage Manager
CHRISTINA HOGAN Assistant Stage Manager

CREATIVE TEAM

ALEXANDER V. NICHOLS Scenic & Projection Design
LYDIA TANJI Costume Design
WEN-LING LIAO Lighting Design
LEAH GELPE Sound Design
BYRON AU YONG Original Music
JOY MEADS Dramaturg
KATIE CRADDOCK & JANET FOSTER, CSA Casting
NATALIE GREENE Intimacy

A.C.T. PRODUCING TEAM

ANDY CHAN DONALD Associate Artistic Director
LOUISA LISKA Director of General Management & Operations
AMY DALBA General Manager
MARTIN BARRON Director of Production

Commissioned and Produced by Lincoln Center Theater, New York City, 2020

The actors and stage managers employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

Recording notice: The videotaping or making of electronic or other audio and/or visual recordings of this production, or distributing recordings on any medium, including the internet, is strictly prohibited.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTOPHER CHEN

By Lauren Yee

Edited by Katie Craddock

One January evening, beloved San Franciscan playwrights Lauren Yee and Christopher Chen met over Zoom. Chris was at home in the Outer Sunset (a setting of *The Headlands*), where a massive windstorm raged outside; Lauren was in New York City, where it was quite late and her young children were ostensibly asleep. While their imaginations and sensibilities are wonderfully distinct, both Chris's and Lauren's works are marked by their San Francisco upbringings. We at A.C.T. are superfans of both; we are proud to have produced Lauren's *The Great Leap* and Chris's *Communion*, and were thrilled when they agreed to have a conversation for this program, musing on Chris's creative inspirations, evolving relationships with home, and the moody mystery of our city.



Lauren Yee: San Francisco weather makes me think about noir.

Christopher Chen: Yes. Obviously, there's the fog. And the hills—they can hide things, like the fog does. All the little neighborhoods have their own little mysteries going on inside. San Francisco is such a noir-y city, especially the Sunset District, with all

its not-quite-uniform, suburban-like Eisenhower 1950s houses side by side. It's not a sunny picket-fenced suburb. Your paint is chipping off because of the water damage. It's a bit mysterious, a bit desolate. Everything is a little weather-beaten. Surfers say Ocean Beach is more rugged and wild than other surfing beaches around. It's beautiful here, but there's something wild and feral just under the surface.

LY: There is a certain wildness to the city which is tied to the American identity. The American idea of "going West"—problematic in its own way—that journey stops in California; San Francisco is the end of that road, of that dream. Of course, *The Headlands* is a San Francisco play, but what was the germ of the idea? What did you intend to write when you started?

CC: I set out to write the ultimate Chris Chen play: something that encompasses my personal obsessions and passions and loves. As a big film

fan, I took the San Francisco mystery *Vertigo* as inspiration. I threw my idol Kazuo Ishiguro into the mix—his use of genre and unreliable narrators. And I love using multimedia in fun ways in theater. It's sometimes given a bad name, but when used innovatively, it's thrilling. The film noir idea fit neatly with the multimedia design.

LY: In your stage directions about the video projections, you built a kind of sandbox with space for your collaborators to play around with the exact images.

CC: I came to theater initially because I wanted to be a director. So I have these directorial fantasies on the page, with the understanding that a director is going to take what's written and lift it up by making it their own. My stage directions include images like the details of a Sunset District house, or a person's eye, or a piano playing. I want it to feel immersive—almost like a movie that's being created before our eyes.

LY: How would you characterize San Francisco audiences?

CC: In the theater scene in San Francisco—audiences and makers alike—there's this generosity and an open spirit here. I think a lot of San Franciscans have a kind of pioneering spirit; new things are rewarded here. I'm a Bay Area audience member, too, so I write for myself.

LY: We both went to Lowell for high school. And we met because—

CC: —you reached out to me as a young theater entrepreneur after you graduated. You organized a young playwrights' conference.

CONTINUED

LY: I didn't do so much theater while I was at Lowell. I never wanted to be an actor; I was never in the school play.

CC: How did you stumble into theater, then?

LY: In high school, I found an email in my father's inbox from Asian American Theater Company. I thought, "I could write a play," and they chose my play as one of their readings of short plays about Lunar New Year. Your experience at school is very different when you're doing *The Crucible* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—classics you're interacting with but not creating yourselves. I thought, "I'm gonna make my own theater company."

CC: Your plays all have a spunky inventiveness about them, a do-it-yourself kind of aesthetic. There's a makeshift attitude, like "Come on, let's put together a play." How would you define your relationship to San Francisco? It pops up in your plays.

LY: Because it's a place where I don't currently live, writing about San Francisco is my way of going home. It's a place where I've gotten to work artistically, which is gratifying. I feel it in a longing for home—like the Chinese food in San Francisco feels very specific to me, and I can't quite get it other places; even places that have Cantonese populations and those foods, it just doesn't quite taste the same.

What would be your ideal day in the city?

CC: I love taking long urban walks. One walk I take is more or less the length of California Street, starting in the Richmond District and going to the Ferry Building. San Francisco is unique because it has so many amazing little neighborhoods tightly packed together. The past and new energy coincide. It doesn't

seem to be dominated by one thing or another.

LY: Any favorite Sunset District businesses you want to shout out? Where should people go for a snack?

CC: A standby called Old Mandarin serves Islamic Chinese food—it's on Vicente, close to my house. And there's a place on Taraval, Kingdom of Dumpling (which on Yelp is called Asian American Food Company), where you can get dumplings wholesale.

LY: I have this theory that all writers have a primal or ur-story we return to over and over. For me it's families and secrets—intergenerational stories and revealing the truth. Do you have a sense of what is your ur-story?

CC: I also gravitate towards the search for truth, though it comes out in a different way. Something is nagging at the characters and causes them to go pull a thread. And the thread keeps pulling and pulling and pulling with no end in sight; they keep getting deeper and deeper into whatever they're picking at. They're searching for something beyond their status quo. Sometimes they find it, sometimes not, but the journey is the thing. The meaning I go back to is that they should be in the present more, and be aware of their blinders.

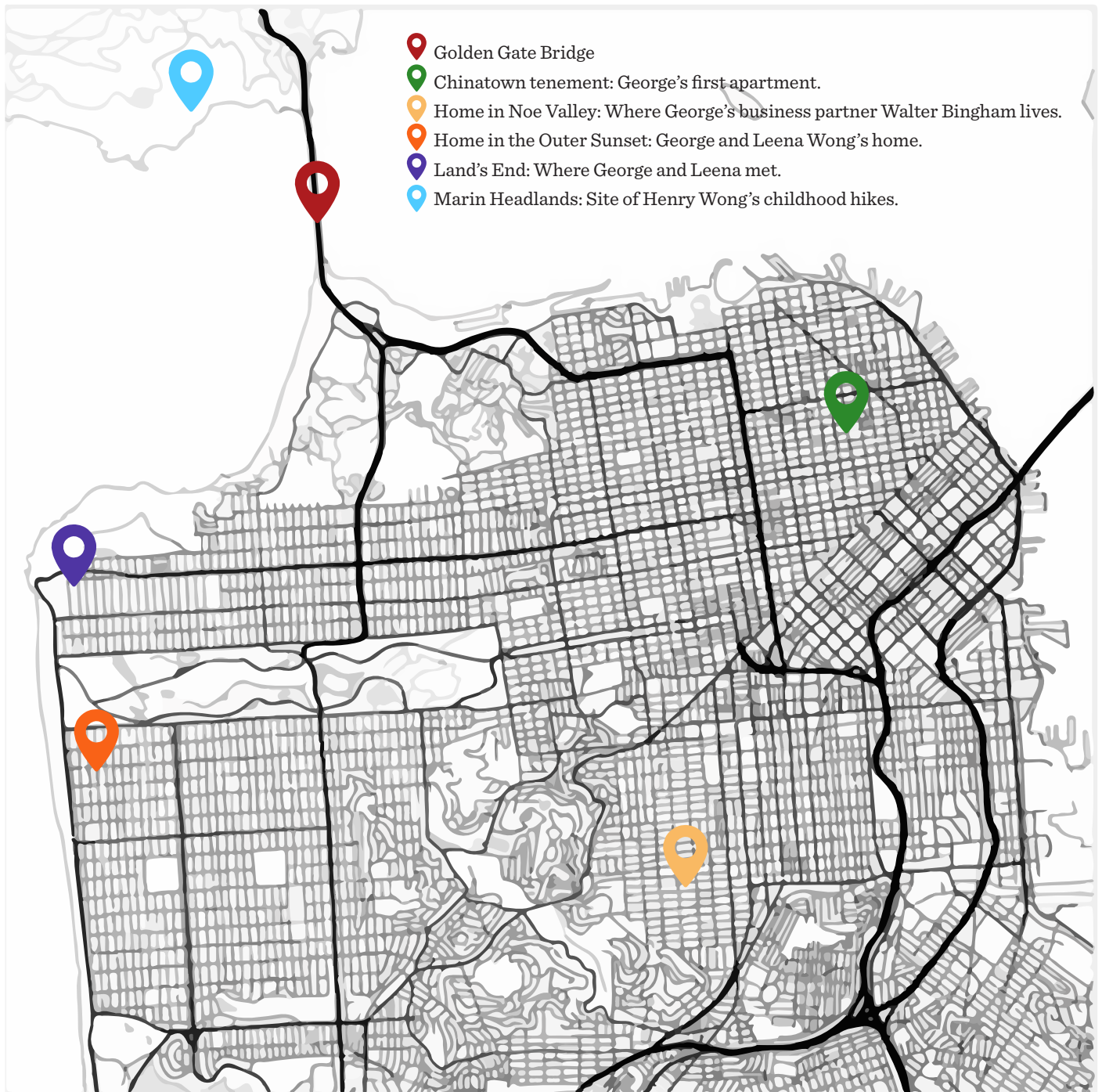
LY: I also think of your work as though there are many locked boxes inside of one another.

CC: There's always something structural that has to happen to surprise people. My main philosophy as a writer is surprise.



SIGNIFICANT LOCATIONS IN THE HEADLANDS

The Headlands takes place in the San Francisco Bay Area. Scenes in the play unfold in many San Francisco locations, as well as in the Marin Headlands. Check out the map below to see where scenes in the play take place, including well-known monuments like the Golden Gate Bridge and homes in beloved residential neighborhoods.



HEADLANDS MAP ACTIVITY

Have students spend a few minutes studying the map before their discussion. You might decide to facilitate a full-class conversation, or split the students into small groups to talk with each other directly. For a small group conversation, we suggest you:

- Give time limits! For example, *3 minutes per question*.
- Ask students to work together to ensure an equitable conversation: Take turns, make sure no one person speaks more than others, and make sure each student speaks and shares their responses. *Take space, make space.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Have you visited or passed through any of these locations? What are some of your memories there or curiosities about these places?
2. Imagine the sights, sounds, smells and social environments of these places, and imagine writing a play that takes place in these locations. Which locations seem dramatic? Which locations seem commonplace? What kinds of scenes could happen in each place?
3. Imagine writing a play in which **you** are the main character. What would be the top 3 locations where your play would take place, and why? Consider locations such as your home or school, places where favorite memories took place, and other places where interesting events could happen.



GLOSSARY TERMS FOR FILM NOIR

Familiarize your students with these terms & concepts before seeing the show.

FILM NOIR (FRENCH, 'BLACK CINEMA/DARK FILM'): A film style characterized by a mood of cynicism, fatalism, and menace. The term was originally coined by French critics to describe American thriller/detective films of the 1940s-50s.

ARCHETYPES: An archetype is a pattern that connects the people of the world across time and culture. (Conceived by Carl Jung).

CHARACTER ARCHETYPE: A type of character who represents a universal pattern, and therefore appeals to our human 'collective unconscious'. Ex: The 'hero' is the most fundamental archetype, which corresponds to us each being the hero of our own life story. © 2022 Novel Factory

COMMON ELEMENTS OF FILM NOIR:

ANTI-HERO PROTAGONIST: the central character in a play, book, or movie who does not have traditionally heroic qualities, such as courage, and is admired instead for what society generally considers to be a weakness of their character. © Cambridge University Press 2023

FEMME FATALE (FRENCH, 'FATAL WOMAN'): a seductive and beautiful woman who brings disaster to anyone with whom she becomes romantically involved. Her intelligence is as essential to the archetype as her beauty. It is her conniving and ambition that often drives plots. © 2023 Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

TIGHT, CONCISE DIALOGUE: Dialogue between characters that is brief, direct, and to the point. Ex. "I'm afraid I don't like your manner." // "Yeah, I've had complaints about it, but it keeps getting worse." (from *Murder, My Sweet*, 1947).

HIGH-CONTRAST LIGHTING: Film noir typically employs harsh lighting and effective shadows to compensate for low costs. Shots of characters shrouded by shadowing are famous, primarily when low-key lighting is used to produce suspicious shadows. © 2023 Nashville Film Institute

POST-WAR DISILLUSIONMENT: The loss or destruction of illusions or idealistic beliefs which many Americans experienced following the end of WWII.

RED HERRING: A false clue, which misleads or distracts the audience/characters from the larger mystery.

SPECIFIC GLOSSARY TERMS FOR THE HEADLANDS:

CHINATOWN: a district of a large non-Chinese town or port in which the population is predominantly of Chinese origin. San Francisco Chinatown is the largest Chinatown outside of Asia as well as the oldest Chinatown in North America. (www.sanfranciscochinatown.com)

MEMORY: The ability to retain information or a representation of past experience, based on the mental processes of learning or encoding, retention across some interval of time, and retrieval or reactivation of the memory.

EMDR (EYE MOVEMENT DESENSITIZATION AND REPROCESSING): is a psychotherapy that enables people to heal from the symptoms and emotional distress that are the result of disturbing life experiences, or traumatic memories.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN NOIR ADVENTURE

The following activity is designed to introduce students to the dialogue and archetypes typical of noir, igniting their imaginations and their knowledge of San Francisco to create an original short noir play.

BEFORE BEGINNING THIS ACTIVITY:

1. Watch the following video together as a class, to get into a noir mindset:
“San Francisco: The Perfect Setting for Film Noir” (Total time: 5:12)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJDDmMTi9AY>
2. Read through the Glossary Terms, above.



NOIR ADVENTURE ACTIVITY

Part 1: **Choose Your Own Noir Adventure**

5-10 minutes

Worksheet (individuals)

*CN10

Print this page and have each student fill in the blanks for this mad-lib adventure worksheet

Part 2: **Cast and Rehearse the Noir Scripts**

10-15 minutes

Conversation & Rehearsal (small groups)

*PR4

In groups of 3 or 4, students choose and rehearse one Noir Adventure to perform for the class

Part 3: **Presenting Your Noir Adventure**

20-40 minutes, depending on class size

Theatrical Activity (presentation)

*PR6

Groups perform their scripts for the class, and class discusses each presentation

CHOOSE YOUR OWN NOIR ADVENTURE

Fill in the blanks for this mad-lib adventure worksheet in the style of noir.

ROLES:

DETECTIVE: A hardboiled private investigator.

FEMME FATALE: An ambitious woman with a hard-luck story.

VILLAIN: A suspicious character in disguise.

SETTING: San Francisco, CA

TIME: 2023 (in the style of the 1940s)

DETECTIVE

The house looked ordinary enough. Full of rich people, doing rich people things. Gardening, and country fairs, and social calls. Dinner parties every evening. And not a cup of coffee in sight. Always that darn tea. Hardly my usual beat. But the crime rolled out with the fog this summer, and business has been pretty slow. The business of catching crooks, that is. So when some broad named _____
(femme name ending in "A", ex: "Eva," "Velma") offers 200 dollars to catch a crook in _____,
(SF neighborhood) well, my bank account can't say no. So here I am, Detective _____
(first name) _____
(last name). Ready to catch a crook.

FEMME FATALE

The crook's name was "Lazy _____."
(name beginning with "L") What a creep. This con-artist from the backstreets and backwaters of the Embarcadero had been grifting since the year 19____. We first met at Pier _____,
(number) by arrangement.

DETECTIVE

What sort of arrangement, _____?
(femme fatale's name)

FEMME FATALE

A lady never tells, Detective _____.
(detective's name)

VILLAIN

But _____ was no lady. This dame was only pretending to be an heiress! One quick look through her
(femme fatale's name) bogus family tree and she was made. Of course I listened to her sob story - missing _____ necklace,
(jewel) precious family heirloom. What she really wanted was a fake version of a famous necklace at the _____
(SF Museum) so she could replace the real thing with the paste!

FEMME FATALE

Talk is cheap, Mr. _____ (Detective's name). That grifter will talk all the _____ (zoo animal name) out of the San Francisco Zoo, but the truth of the matter remains: the _____ (jewel) necklace is missing. I don't have it, and you don't have it, but I'll pay you \$200 to get "Lazy _____" (villain's name) to give it to me, dead or alive. How's that for a story, big shot?

DETECTIVE

I'm not looking for a story, dollface, I'm looking for a crook. And the only crook out here in _____ (SF neighborhood) is you! Now give up the _____ (jewel) necklace quietly, and no one needs to go to the police.

VILLAIN

Hey, put down that _____! (murder weapon)

FEMME FATALE

What fools men are. I don't care about the jewels, I only care about revenge. "Lazy _____," (villain's name) you'll never betray a woman over _____ (famous SF food) again!

ENDING #1: The story ends with a splash! The Villain jumps to safety in the SF Bay, and the Detective convinces the Femme Fatale to abandon her vengeful ways in a long hardboiled speech about love and death and bad choices.

ENDING #2: The story ends with a bang! The Femme Fatale fatally wounds the Villain, and the Detective turns her in to the police after a long hardboiled speech about love and death and bad choices.

ENDING #3: The story ends in a fog. The famous SF fog rolls in, obscuring everyone's vision and allowing the Villain and Femme Fatale to escape into the murky underworld of the city streets. The Detective gives a long hardboiled speech about love and death and bad choices.

ENDING #4: Write your own ending! Be sure to include the fate of each character and an exciting sound or visual effect for the audience.

REHEARSE & PERFORM THE NOIR SCRIPTS

- In groups of 3 (or 4, with Ending Narrator), **students share their worksheets and decide which one they would like to present.**
- Students work together to cast the roles of Detective, Femme Fatale, and Villain. Remind them that students of any gender can play any role.
- **The group reads through the script aloud**, focusing on how to animate the characters with their voices in a mysterious, noir style. If you have time, consider sharing:
 - *What's with the accent?* “The Origin of That Old-Timey Accent in Classic Movies”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLT-SQUBRDw>
 - *What's with the slang?* “How to Speak Noir” (content warning: brief gun violence)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C63A4w3QTkc>
- Next, **the group practices delivering their lines while acting out the story**, embodying their characters and performing it on their feet.
 - Remind students to perform the whole time, not just when their character speaks.
Acting is reacting.
 - Either the Detective or the Ending Narrator (person #4) can read the ending in a film noir voiceover style while the other characters perform the action.
- *Advanced Option: How does your character move? What can we learn about your character, through their body language?*
 - Students investigate a character walk, posture, and a signature gesture.
 - Examples: Detective tips his fedora, or strokes his mustache. Femme Fatale tosses her hair, or pretends to swoon/faint. Villain enters in a sneaky tip-toe walk. Etc.
 - Integrate the movement before they start to speak their lines, and during the scene.

PRESENTING YOUR NOIR ADVENTURE

- Before groups perform for the class, remind everyone:
 - Project and articulate your voices.
 - Stay in character, even if the audience is reacting. If the audience laughs, it's okay to pause briefly before delivering your next line.
 - When you're in the audience, enjoy the performances **and** be respectful to the performers.
What does a good audience look like?
- **Groups perform their scripts for the class.**
- After each group, invite the audience to share 2-3 unique things about that noir adventure.
- After all groups have performed, encourage the class to discuss what differences they noticed between the scenes, and whether those differences were because of writing & scripts, or because of performance & acting.

FAMILY HISTORY

Although several Bay Area locations are important in *The Headlands*, according to playwright Christopher Chen, “this play ultimately takes place inside of the mind.”

In the show, several large video projections help tell the story, while the actors onstage perform simultaneously. The protagonist Henry is a true crime aficionado, and he is looking into a cold case that involves his own family. Through video, Chen notes, “we quickly jump from place to place in memories and filaments of the subconscious, with different layers of the mind reflected simultaneously.” The video screens reflect Henry’s memory and imagination, piecing together information about his family that is both known and imagined, blurring the lines in between.

The following activity is designed to walk students through an investigation of their own family history, and prepare them to create physical and theatrical representations of what they know and what they imagine.

Part 1: **Family History Brainstorm**

5-10 minutes

Worksheet (individuals)

*CN10

Print this page and have each student fill in the blanks to explore their family history

Part 2: **Family Identity Discussion**

10-15 minutes

Conversations (small groups)

In groups of 4-5, students discuss their families and identify similarities and distinctions

Part 3: **Rehearse & Perform Family Tableaux**

20-35 minutes, depending on class size

Theatrical Activity (presentation)

*CR1, CR2, CR3, PR6, RE7

Groups create and perform tableaux that animate their families, including facts and curiosities

A trauma-informed approach: Before you assign and facilitate this activity, let students know they will be asked to use their memory and imagination to think and write about their families. Assure them that:

- they are in the lead,
- they decide what “family” means,
- they decide how deep to go,
- they will not be asked to share anything that they don’t feel comfortable sharing,
- all families are strange, and you hope they have fun with this activity.

Frame the activity in the context of the larger creative experience. It is supposed to be thought-provoking and enjoyable, preparing students for the family mystery they will experience in *The Headlands*.

FAMILY HISTORY BRAINSTORM

THINK ABOUT YOUR OWN FAMILY.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW? WHAT DO YOU IMAGINE? WHAT DO YOU WONDER?

1. WRITE A SHORT LIST, at least 3 things per question:

a. What are some facts you **know** about your family history?

*Examples: My Mom was born in Los Angeles, my Dad was born in New Jersey.
My family loves Korean food, but my sister won't eat spicy things.*

b. What are some things you don't know 100%, but you **imagine** to be true about your family history?

*Examples: My Dad only stayed in California because he fell in love with my Mom.
My Aunt and Uncle wish I was their kid. My brother is going to be a movie star.*

c. What are some things you wonder about your family history?

What are you unsure or curious about?

*Examples: Will my parents stay in California for the rest of their lives?
I wonder if my Grandparents ever regret leaving their country to come here.*

2. Consider what your family seems like from the outside. Consider what your family seems like from the inside.

Then respond:

People expect my family to be _____,
but in reality we are _____,
and I wonder if _____.

3. If you were to write a mystery novel or a script for a film noir, and the main characters were your family members, the story would be about:

FAMILY IDENTITY DISCUSSION

- Divide students into **groups of 4-6**.
- Have each group select a timer (using a computer or phone), or facilitate and time them yourself.
- In small groups, **each person has 30 seconds to talk about their family**.
 - Remind students they don't have to share anything they don't want to share, and they are the leader of their own response.
 - Students might share their answers to questions from Part 1, or tell a story that brings their family to life for listeners.
- Once everyone has shared, group members work together to identify at least one thing their families have in common, and individuals determine at least one way their family is unique.



REHEARSE & PERFORM TABLEAUX

FAMILY TABLEAUX

Step 1: Play one or more of these videos, to teach the concept of **tableau**

(short for *tableau vivant* - from French, meaning a living picture)

How to Create a Group Tableau from Santa Monica Repertory Theater:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6vJTpVDT-c> (Total time: 4:34, but the first 90 seconds will do!)

How to Make a Tableau from Singapore Repertory Theatre:

<https://youtu.be/YfNmlY1-t5k> (Total time: 2:08)

Additional examples and instructions can be found here: <https://dramaresource.com/freeze-frames>

Step 2: Rehearsal

- In groups of 4-6, students volunteer to share their responses to question #2 from the worksheet (“People **expect** my family to be ____, but in **reality** we are ____, and I **wonder** if ____.”)
- Groups then **choose a student director** who is willing to share their answer with the class and lead their group members in a tableau activity, bringing their responses to life.
 - First, the director casts who will play which family character. We recommend the director cast a different actor to play themselves, so they can lead and assist their group from the outside. Remind them to be creative if the total number of group members isn’t the same number of people in their family.
 - Next, the director instructs their group on how to create & memorize a family portrait tableau for their “expectation.”
 - Next, the director works with their group to create & memorize another family portrait tableau for their “reality.”
 - Finally, they create a third tableau for their “curiosity” or “wonder.”
- **The group practices moving from one tableau to the next**, in sequence, while the director cues each shift by saying “expectation, reality, curiosity.”

Step 3: Presentation

- Before groups perform for the class, remind everyone:
 - Move and freeze together. Hold your position strong, until your next cue.
 - Stay in character, even if the audience is reacting.
 - When you’re in the audience, enjoy the performances **and** be respectful to the performers.
What does a good audience look like?
- **Groups perform their tableau sequence for the class.**
- After each group performs, invite the audience to discuss what they saw, what they thought, and what they wondered about the various family portraits.
 - The student directors should not be forced to explain or defend themselves, however, they should be invited to respond or elaborate if they want to.
 - Promote equitable conversations by giving each group and director around the same amount of conversation time.

Optional Step 4: Repeat the activity with different student directors.

VIDEOS & RESOURCES

To learn more about film noir, and why San Francisco is “the perfect setting,” we strongly encourage watching this video:

“San Francisco: The Perfect Setting for Film Noir”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJDDmMTi9AY> (Total time: 5:12)

- Includes clips from film noir classics set in San Francisco, a place of shadows and fog: The Maltese Falcon (1941), The Lady From Shanghai (1947), Out Of The Past (1947), Dark Passage (1947), and Woman On The Run (1950).
- Content warning: brief depictions of violence, including gun violence
- Source: <https://www.fandor.com/about-us>

For more **film noir**, check out:

1. **“Vertigo” film clip: Golden Gate Bridge scene.** Directed by Alfred Hitchcock and shot on location in San Francisco. One of playwright Christopher Chen’s primary inspirations for The Headlands.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8cWjLMuJgo&list=PL518C3FE4926104E6&index=3> (Total time: 2:11)

2. **“Maltese Falcon” classic noir film clip.** Written and directed by John Huston, and based on the 1930 novel by Dashiell Hammett. Featuring multiple villains, snappy dialogue, suspense/intrigue.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sgbe_owOvEI&list=PLZbXA4lyCtqqcfqB9N3d166s50JFvfgP0&index=5 (Total time: 2:26)

3. **“No Way Out” film clip.*** Directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, the 1950 movie brought the subject of racism into Hollywood cinema in an explicit way. This film stars Sydney Poitier, the first Black actor and first Bahamian to win the Academy Award for Best Actor, in his screen debut.

[with https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gklUIDEf9uM&t=25m11s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gklUIDEf9uM&t=25m11s) (Cue video to 25:11 - 27:56. Total time 2:45)

*Content Warning: Advisory that the dialogue following this clip, as well as other scenes in this film, contains racially-charged language and slurs.

4. **“Rear Window” film clip.*** Directed by Alfred Hitchcock and starring Jimmy Stewart and Grace Kelly. Notable for the high tension, suspense, claustrophobia, and voyeuristic elements.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ez6dw3ywcc&list=PLE082F5FCEC9F4631&index=7> (Total time: 3:00)

*Content warning: brief depictions of violence.

ADDITIONAL FILM NOIR RESOURCES:

Film Noir Websites:

<https://filmlifestyle.com/what-is-film-noir/>

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

<https://www.noircity.com/foundation.html>

Classic Noir Films shortlist*: Rebecca (1940), The Maltese Falcon (1941), Shadow of a Doubt (1943), Double Indemnity (1944), The Woman in the Window (1944), Laura (1944), Scarlet Street (1945), The Big Sleep (1946), Out of the Past (1947), Dark Passage (1947), The Third Man (1949), Sunset Boulevard (1950), Strangers on a Train (1951), Dial M for Murder (1954), Touch of Evil (1958), Vertigo (1958).

Neo-Noir Films shortlist*: The Long Goodbye (1973), Chinatown (1974), Blade Runner (1982), Pulp Fiction (1994), Heat (1995), Fargo (1996), LA Confidential (1997), Fight Club (1999), Memento (2000), Drive (2011)

Books about Film Noir: A panorama of American film noir 1941-1953 by Raymond Borde and Étienne Chaumeton; Footsteps in the Fog: Alfred Hitchcock’s San Francisco by Jeff Kraft and Aaron Leventhal.

*Content warning: most of these films are rated R and may include adult themes, adult activity, hard language, intense or persistent violence, sexually-oriented nudity, and drug abuse.

HOW TO MAXIMIZE YOUR EXPERIENCE

PRIOR TO YOUR VISIT

- **Double check A.C.T.'s COVID-19 updates:** <https://www.act-sf.org/about-us/covid-19-updates/>
 - If you are feeling unwell, please stay home. If you or a member of your party is experiencing symptoms similar to those of COVID-19 or have had known exposure to someone with COVID-19, please stay home.
- For more information about ACCESSIBILITY at A.C.T.: <https://www.act-sf.org/your-visit/accessibility/>
- Read the **A.C.T. “Rules of Play”** to learn more about how we hope you arrive, engage and enjoy the show! <https://www.act-sf.org/your-visit/a-c-t-s-house-rules-of-play/>
- If your students would benefit from additional information about theater etiquette, consider discussing some of the points made by Blake Theater here: <https://www.blaketheater.com/theater-etiquette/>

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT THE THEATER

- Front of House Staff including security personnel, ushers, and house managers are trained to assist guests and ensure that safety measures are followed. If you feel uncomfortable or perceive a risk at any time, please speak with one of these team members.
- Hand sanitizer stations are available throughout the theater.
- During the show, please stay in your seat unless using the restroom.

STUDENT MATINEE PERFORMANCE

If you are seeing *The Headlands* during our Student Matinee performance:

- Masks are recommended for all students, staff, and guests, and masks are available upon request. Masks should fit well, meaning they cover your nose and mouth comfortably without need of frequent adjustment. We request that you and your students wear your mask for the full performance.
- No food and beverages will be served or allowed.
- No cell phone use during the performance. No photo, no video.
- **To ensure a positive experience for all in the audience, we kindly request chaperones monitor eating and phone use when your group is in the theater.**
- **There will be a talkback after the show.** Your students will have the opportunity to ask the performers questions! Please consider staying in the theater for the additional ~20-minute engagement opportunity. Invite your students to consider their curiosities in advance, and encourage them to participate in the Q&A.

AFTER THE SHOW

Revisit parts of this guide that you didn't use before, including readings, videos & links, as well as activities and discussion prompts.

Use a “**SEE - THINK - WONDER**” discussion model:

- What did you **see** in the show? What are some memorable images or moments, and why? What role did the video play in the show?
- What did you **think** during the show? When did you realize that Henry was not a reliable narrator? What do you **think** now that you've experienced the full show? What else do you think could have, or should have, happened? Why?
- What do you **wonder** about the show? What are you still curious about? If you could learn more about any of the characters, relationships or events, what would you want to know?

Discuss the end of the play. What do you think the playwright intended to convey with this particular ending? If you were to rewrite the ending, or add onto the play, what might you do?

