Goodman Theatre
Student Subscription Series
2007/2008 Season

Student Guide

Passion Play:
a cycle in three parts

By Sarah Ruhl

Directed by
Mark Wing-Davey

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Welcome to the Study Guide
A useful key for what’s inside

All of the pages have a **title and subtitle**. Not all of them rhyme (we’re not that clever), but they’ll give you a general idea of what type of information is on the page.

**Think About It:**
**(Topic)**
Dashed circles surround **questions for you to consider** as you discuss the play and other related topics. Rather than focusing directly on the text, most questions will encourage you to relate ideas from the play to your personal experiences.

Whenever you see a black box with white text, read it before anything else! It contains the **background information** you need to understand the rest of the material on that page. You won’t see one of these on every page, but keep an eye out for them.

A happy computer symbol means the content on that page is expanded upon or included in full in our Knowledge Nucleus online at goodmaneacp.tytpad.com/knowledge. Things like videos, the full text of articles, interviews, etc. will be posted there along with other educational resources.

**Activity**
**(Name of activity)**
Stars like this are **activities** for you and your classmates: everything from group contests to individual acting exercises.

All **quotations** are in cursive writing inside boxes. The quote below doesn’t have anything to do with the rest of the guide—it’s just Elizabeth’s favorite. However, all other quotes will relate to the topics of the pages on which they appear.

“**Dream as though you’ll live forever; live as though you’ll die today.**”

- James Dean
Exploring the Production
Sarah Ruhl
The playwright

Sarah Ruhl's first play to be performed at Goodman Theatre was The Clean House in 2006. However, she began writing plays many years before that. After spending her childhood in Chicago, Ruhl attended Brown University in Rhode Island, where she received a Master of Fine Arts degree in 2001. During her time at Brown she was a student of acclaimed playwright Paula Vogel and developed several works, including Passion Play. Her 2003 play Eurydice garnered national attention, and in 2004 The Clean House was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. Ruhl's works have also been produced internationally in London, Canada, Germany, Latvia and Poland.

Sarah Ruhl was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship—nicknamed the "genius grant"—in 2006. According to the foundation's website, the $500,000 fellowships are meant to “encourage people of outstanding talent to pursue their own creative, intellectual, and professional inclinations.” The awards are given to between 20 and 40 U.S. citizens or residents every year, through a completely anonymous nomination and voting process. Winners generally don’t even know they were nominated until they receive the congratulatory phone call.

Sarah Ruhl

In Conversation

The following is an excerpt from Paula Vogel's interview with Sarah Ruhl from the Select Equity Group Series on Playwriting. The full text of this conversation can be found online in the Knowledge Nucleus.

Paula Vogel: Your plays challenge actors. They have to get up there and emote. It's about those larger-than-life moments; there's no hiding and you can't work your way up to it in a logical sequence of events. You have to jump in the cold, deep end of the pool.

Sarah Ruhl: That's how I experience emotions. They come at you so suddenly sometimes. I watch my daughter, who's in the middle of crying, and then you do a little dance for her and she starts laughing. Not that we're all infants—

PV: Yes, We are. (LAUGHTER)

SR: I don't think that our emotions are easily bendable to dramaturgical reason. Emotions can come out of thin air in my work and it can be difficult for actors, especially if their training doesn't allow that.

[On Passion Play:]

PV: I don't think people know how long it takes to write such a big play. And the different steps.

SR: It's not only the physical writing, but the time in between each draft, when you become a different person as a writer. You know things that you didn't know five or ten years ago.

PV: So you started [Passion Play] when you were twenty?

SR: Twenty-one, maybe. I wrote the first act when I was at Brown with you. I wrote the second act there too, but a draft that was fairly unintelligible at the time. So I spent a lot of time rewriting the second act, and then Molly Smith at Arena Stage, along with Wendy Goldberg, commissioned the third part, and I'm grateful to them. So eight years after beginning the whole thing, I wrote the third act. I need to rewrite that, so that's the primary thing we're going to look at, and how the three acts all fit together.
Passion Play is Director Mark Wing-Davey's Chicago debut, though he has worked throughout the U.S. on other productions. Wing-Davey served as the first appointed artistic director of the acclaimed Central School of Speech and Drama in London from 1988-1990, and has won numerous directing awards for productions all over the world, including Caryl Churchill's Mad Forest (for which he won a Village Voice OBIE Award for Outstanding Director) and Tony Kushner's Angels in America (winner of the Bay Area Critics Circle Award for Best Director). In his few moments away from Goodman Theatre's rehearsal rooms, he took the time to answer the following questions about his work on Passion Play.

I found it interesting that you did not do a table read until later during rehearsal. Was that choice because of this play or is that the way you normally work?
Mark Wing-Davey: No, it wasn't just for this play. That's the way I normally work. I don't like to do a reading until the vocabulary for the rehearsal room has been established. I find that this generally takes a week. By doing this, the actors don't "fall in love" too early with ways of saying lines before we've discovered the function of those words in the scene.

As a director, what role do you feel you play in terms of the overall production? How do you approach your work?
Mark Wing-Davey: I see my job as putting flesh on the bones of the script. I suppose I give the actors a solid base from which to work while adding a vision stroke mechanism for the staging. This can involve all sorts of things like music, sound effects, lights, etc. It's always hard to maintain the balance between that which elucidates the piece and that which represents the uniqueness of the rehearsal situation itself.

When you first directed Passion Play in London, only the first two parts had been written. What has been different about your process directing the play in its current three-part form?
Mark Wing-Davey: One major difference was that we began with a workshop with Sarah (the playwright) in NYC where I could use the rehearsal techniques I use in many plays. That gave us and the writer a different approach. In addition, the play works forwards and backwards. By that I mean that there are sections in the first two plays that refer to the third and moments in the third play that mirror moments in the first two. This fact means that one is incorporating those elements over a larger canvas. The third act also takes place in America, so working on it here is certainly different than it would be anywhere else.

Passion Play employs a sort of "magical realism." What approach do you take when directing this type of work? Have you ever directed a magical realist play before?
Mark Wing-Davey: Yes, I have directed plays that have been called "magical realism" before. Skriker by Caryl Churchill has elements of non-naturalistic approach to the things we see on stage (like this play). Angels in America by Tony Kushner also does. I think that even in the most "realistic" play there are elements of control of what the audience sees which could be seen as toned down version of "magical realism." It is a spectrum and this play just happens fall farther along that spectrum.

What are the most important things students should look for (in terms of direction) in this production?
Mark Wing-Davey: It is important to remember that the director is making lots of choices about what you see on stage. Everything was selected. The best way to see a director's work is to ask questions while you watch. In general you can ask yourself questions like "Why did he/she choose to do it that way?" That could apply to lights/sound/staging etc. "Why those clothes/shoes?" "Why that music?" For this play in particular people could ask questions like, "Why is some of what we see/hear not historically accurate?" "Why those chairs? Set?" Each of the three plays features a similar, but different large table. An audience member curious about directing might ask "How is the table similar and different in each act? How does the way it's used change?"
Magical Realism

A whole new world... sort of.

What is magical realism?

Magical realism is a genre of art in which magical elements appear in an otherwise realistic setting. Mundane objects are transformed into mystical ones, supernatural events become commonplace and the usual constraints of space and time are obsolete.

Examples from Film & TV

Family Guy
This cartoon TV show includes a dog that talks to family members and reads the newspaper, and a toddler who tries to kill his mother and plots to take over the world. Not very "realistic"! But these magical elements appear within an otherwise real setting.

Big Fish
In this movie, a young man tries to piece together the life story of his dying father, who has told him truths and half-truths over the years. Reality and myth blur together as magical characters appear, time freezes at will and his father, ultimately, turns into a big fish... or does he?

The Lake House
A man and woman communicate with each other via a mailbox that sends their letters back and forth through time from 2004 to 2006.

Activity: Finding the magic

Examples of several types of magical realism found in Passion Play are listed below. What other examples can you find in the text? In which category does each fit best? Why do you think Sarah Ruhl chose to make those moments “magical”?

Mundane object(s) transformed into mystical object(s):
Big fish carry Pontius offstage (Part 1)

Supernatural events become commonplace:
Violet sees P controlling the wind/boats and doesn’t question it (Part 3)

Constraints of space and time are obsolete:
Queen Elizabeth appears in 1969 South Dakota (Part 3)

Think About It:
From the page to the stage

At the end of Part 1 of Passion Play John the Fisherman enters with the body of Mary 1. The stage directions read: Water pours out of her mouth onto the stage. Water continues to pour out of her and off of her.

Before you see the show, think about how you would stage this scene. How was the way the director staged this scene in the performance similar or different to what you imagined? When putting magical realism onto the stage, how important is direction to the audience’s perception of those moments? What makes moments of magical realism on stage different from similar moments in movies or on TV?
Exploring the Text
**Vocabulary**

It does a conversation good

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**Straight from the Play**

The following words can be found in the text of *Passion Play*. How a word is used in the text—its context—can often help you figure out what the word means, even if you don't know its exact definition. Hint: familiar words and phrases near the unknown word in a sentence can help!

- brawny
- tableau
- province
- penances
- malice
- drveling
- haunches
- scourge
- priest-hole
- lecherous
- shrubbery
- homologue
- addled
- smite
- tantamount
- anarchy
- lament
- defamation

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**“The only proper intoxication is conversation.”**

- Oscar Wilde

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**Activity**

The Dictionary Game

**Instructions**

- Your teacher selects a word from the list to the left.
- You and your classmates use identical pieces of paper to write your own made-up definitions of the word, making them sound like "real" dictionary definitions. (Hint: try to sound as "professional" as you can.) Don't let anyone else see!
- Turn your definitions into your teacher, who also has a copy of the actual definition. S/he reads all of the definitions aloud once so everyone can hear them, then on the second reading you and your classmates vote on which definition is actually from the dictionary. (This is why you want your definition to sound "real," even if you don't know what the word "really" means.)
- You score one point for every person who votes for your definition, and two points if you choose the actual dictionary definition.
- The student with the most points at the end of the game is the winner!

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**Think About It:**

Different words, same meaning

In Part 1, John the Fisherman plays Jesus in his community's Passion play. However, others refer to his character by different names, including Christ, the Christus, Lord, the Messiah, etc. Outside of religion, what other specific names or words refer to the same person/idea? Which have changed over time? What phrases do you use with your friends that are different from your parents' generation, even though they mean the same thing? (For example, “groovy” and “rad” both mean “cool.”) Why do you think these changes in words occur?
Passion Play is an ensemble piece in which each of the 11 actors takes on different yet similar roles in each Part. For instance, the man playing John in Part 1 plays Eric in Part 2 and J in Part 3, yet all three of these characters take on the role of Jesus in the “play within the play” (the Passion play). Similarly, every single character played by the actress portraying Mary 1 in Part 1 always plays the Virgin Mary in the Passion.

In ensemble pieces, each character is vitally important to the function of the group as a whole. Consider the different positions people play on sports teams—without each person playing his/her role, the team could not succeed as a whole. Their roles vary, but they are all equally important.

Why might Sarah Ruhl have chosen to write an ensemble piece in which the actors play related parts? How are their parts related?

Think About It:
High school ensembles

How are the sports, clubs, musical groups or other activities that you participate in similar to dramatic ensembles? How are they different? (Besides singing and dancing and stage combat, of course.)

Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.”

- Henry Ford
This play brings into question why we play certain roles, or on the flip side, why certain roles are assigned to us. In Act 1 Scene 5, the Director tells Mary 1 and Mary 2 that they've been assigned to particular roles because one of them “look[s] like a saint” and the other “look[s] like a whore.” In other words, they must play only the roles that he thinks “fit” them.

High school is a time when you will continue to discover who you are, or which “roles” you will play in your life. Jock, band nerd, bookworm, slacker, mean girl, etc., are all high school stereotypes found in movies and the media, such as High School Musical and Mean Girls. What happens when we try to “fit” other people into these stereotypes? In Passion Play, the Director decides where each Mary fits based on her appearance—other than how someone looks, in what ways do we judge who people are before we get to know them? (How they speak or walk, for example.) Is this fair?

“All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players: They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts...”

- William Shakespeare

List a few of the ensembles that you belong to at your high school or in your community. Then list all of the assumptions people have about members of those groups. (For instance, a student who participates in many theatre productions may be called a “drama queen.”) Are these stereotypes negative or positive? Do they “fit” you? If so, are they true because you chose those particular roles for yourself or because you are maintaining the roles that were “assigned” to you by other people?

Activity
The roles we play

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<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Characteristics/ roles that others assign you</th>
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Joseph Fiennes in a scene from Shakespeare in Love.

The ensemble from Disney's High School Musical.
Setting

Where it’s at

Periods of the Play

*Passion Play* is set in several different periods and locations: Elizabethan England (Part 1), 1930’s Germany (Part 2) and 1960’s-80’s South Dakota (Part 3). Throughout the play, the characters’ dialogue can help you define the settings in which they live. Political climate, social norms and changing religious beliefs, among other things, are revealed through textual clues.

Dissecting Dialogue

The following quotations are pulled from Part 3 of *Passion Play*. Read over them and consider the questions below, which will help you compare the play’s settings, using only the information within the text.

Think About It:
Verbal clues

What can be determined about a person’s background simply by listening to him/her speak? Age? Where s/he grew up? Level of education? Economic background?

Is it fair to make judgments about people based on what they say and how they say it? Consider the way the media tears apart presidential candidates, or even the way we judge celebrities and other public figures. Do you think the way they speak accurately reflects who they are?

Taking it a Step Further

Setting isn’t just about a physical place—it’s about the environment of that place as well—the whole society. You can learn about social norms related to the following by studying the characters’ dialogue:

- Class relations
- Gender roles
- Homosexuality
- Politics
- Religious worship

How does each of these political figures feel about war? What does this suggest about the military climate of Elizabethan England and 1980’s America, the settings in which these characters lived? About how involved political figures were in military affairs during each period?

What kind of relationship do you think Queen Elizabeth had with her subjects? What about President Reagan’s relationship with the American people?

In *Passion Play*, Hitler never shares his feelings about war or the military. Why might Ruhl have chosen not to include this information within his dialogue?
1. Think about the ensembles in your life. How do these different groups of people interact? What is your role within each of these groups?

2. Ancient Greek plays use an ensemble chorus as one collective “voice” throughout a production: members of the chorus chant and/or sing together to further the plot of the story and create a ritualistic environment. Is there anything ritualistic about the ensemble in Passion Play? What makes this ensemble similar or different from a Greek chorus?

3. Is the way we speak influenced at all by who we’re speaking to? Think about the way you talk to your teachers at school compared to the way you talk with friends. Do you use any words or phrases only with one group and not the other? Why? What factors influence how you speak to someone (age, how long you’ve know the person, etc.)?

4. How important is knowing someone’s background when listening to what s/he is saying? (For instance, would knowing about our President’s life help you better understand a State of the Union address?) How important is it to know a character’s background when examining his/her speech in a play?
Exploring the Context
Passion Plays
A brief history

What is a Passion Play?
A dramatic presentation that tells the story of the sufferings and crucifixion (Passion) of Jesus Christ.

The timeline below details the development of Passion plays as well as reactions to the plays throughout history. The bolded sections are related to the locations and periods of Sarah Ruhl’s Passion Play. A more detailed timeline with links to information about some of these events can be found online in the Knowledge Nucleus.

970 (ca.)
Hrotsvitha, a nun, writes Christian comedies based on plays by Terence, a Roman.

1140 (ca.)
Play of Adam, about the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, marks the first appearance of scriptural drama in the vernacular (common language).

1538
First documented La Passió d’Olesa (The Passion of Olesa) in Olesa de Montserrat, Spain.

1575
Queen Elizabeth I bans all religious plays in England in an effort to control religious representation.

1633
The villagers of Oberammergau, Bavaria, vow to God that they will perform a Passion play every 10 years if spared from the bubonic plague.

1634
Oberammergau Passion Play first performed.

1930
Adolf Hitler attends a performance of the Oberammergau Passion Play.

1939
Black Hills Passion Play performed for the first time in Spearfish, South Dakota.

1955
Yearly staging of Via Crucis (Way of the Cross) begins in San Fernando, Philippines.

1962
A poor villager in San Pedro Cutud, a village near San Fernando, is literally nailed to a cross during Via Crucis. From this year forward, three or more penitents each year make a “vow of sacrifice” and are nailed to crosses for several hours during the San Pedro Cutud Lenten Rites.

1981
Miami Anti-Defamation League reports it received complaints about the Black Hills Passion Play (which is also performed in Florida) since the early 1960’s.

1984
American Jewish Committee requests a copy of the Black Hills Passion Play script in response to claims that it is anti-Semitic. The request is denied on the grounds that no finished copy is available.

2000
Most recent performance of the Oberammergau Passion Play.

2004
Fourteen volunteers are crucified during the San Pedro Cutud Lenten Rites.


As shown in the timeline on the last page, Passion plays have been around for quite a long time. They remain very popular today—in 1990, the Oberammergau Passion Play drew in approximately 480,000 visitors. Are Passion plays a form of religious worship, art, or both? Why might people be drawn to this particular story?

Passion plays are full theatrical productions with costumes, props, sets, actors, directors and large audiences. Some places where Passion plays are performed today even sell tickets to the events, such as in Oberammergau and the Black Hills. In what other ways are Passion plays similar to other theatrical productions? How are they similar to different forms of worship?

Think About It:

Religion and theatre

Can you think of ways in which theatrical elements are used in religious worship? How important are these elements to the worship itself? To the way people understand and relate to different religions?

Activity

Method acting

In Part 1 of Passion Play, the character Mary believes that in order to “keep [her] part” she must feel/act like the Virgin Mary in real life. “Method acting” is a style of acting in which actors try to feel the emotions of their characters so that their choices and the characters’ choices are one—in other words, they attempt to “become” the characters they are portraying. This activity will give you an idea of what it feels like to use this acting approach.

Instructions

♦ Choose the person (character) you will attempt to “become.” It should be someone you know very well—a sibling, close friend, etc.

♦ Consider all of the unique things about the way this person acts—how does s/he pick up a fork when eating? How does s/he whisper? Does s/he walk quickly or slowly? How does s/he open a locker/take off a jacket/smile/blink? The more specific you can be, the better!

♦ Select a day of the week to “become” this person, and act exactly as s/he would act for as long as possible without taking a break.

♦ Afterward, consider the following questions:

  - How long did you last? Was this exercise tiring? Why/why not?
  - For Passion play actors, why might it be harder or easier for them to portray religious figures?
  - What might be the benefits of using this approach as an actor? The disadvantages?

“Religion and art spring from the same root and are close kin.”

- Nathaniel Hawthorne

When Philip Seymour Hoffman (above) played Truman Capote (below) in the 2005 film Capote, he maintained the voice and physicality of his character through entire days of filming—even during breaks off-set!

A satire video clip of this type of acting approach can be viewed online in the Knowledge Nucleus.
History of the Play

This section will explore the time periods spanned in Passion Play: Elizabethan England (Part 1), 1930’s Germany (Part 2) and 1960’s-80’s South Dakota (Part 3). The third part has been broken down by decade—60’s, 70’s and 80’s—because unlike the other two parts of the play, Ruhl chose to set Part 3 in different time periods. As you review the main events and social trends of each period, consider why Sarah Ruhl might have chosen that particular setting for her play. How are these periods related, other than the Passion plays performed within them? What sets them apart that may be relevant to the themes and ideas within the play? Why is Part 3 set in several periods instead of one?

Elizabethan England

Elizabeth Tudor became Queen of England in 1558 at the age of 25. The period of her 45-year reign (which ended with her death in 1603) is often referred to as the Elizabethan era because her influence helped England emerge as a nation of great political power and cultural achievement.

Elizabeth I was enormously popular, the first monarch to have a cult following. According to numerous historical records, each of her public appearances became an occasion for spectacle, flashy displays and huge crowds. Dramatic writing transformed during this period, encouraged in part by Elizabeth’s own love of plays and poetry. Many writers were greeted with encouragement and patronage (funding from wealthy citizens). Whereas in the past, plots were often simplistic and based on religious writings, the playwrights of Elizabethan England began to incorporate legends, myths, classical forms, as well as greater character development and themes. The numerous works of William Shakespeare are a prime example of this new style.

Think About It:
Disease and religion

How might the bubonic plague and other fatal diseases of this period have affected the way people thought about religion in their daily lives? Do you think it changed the way Passion plays were perceived? How do modern epidemics, such as HIV/AIDS, affect people’s perceptions of religion today?

Black Death

In 1563, London experienced an outbreak of the bubonic plague, also known as the “black death.” Spread by rats and other rodents to humans through flea bites, the disease killed an estimated 80,000 people, approximately 1/4 to 1/3 of London’s population at that time. People died at a rate of up to 1,800 per week during October of that year.

To put this in perspective: imagine 675,000 to 891,000 people in Chicago dying in the span of a few months! (The population of Chicago in 2006 was about 2.7 million.)
The rise of the Nazi Party and its determination to expand the German state and “purify” its population led to the start of WWII. The Nazis exterminated millions of Jews, homosexuals, political opponents and other minorities in what was one of the most severe genocides in modern history: the Holocaust. It is impossible to think about this period of German history without thinking about the Nazis and their infamous leader, Adolf Hitler. From 1933 when Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany to the fall of the Nazi party at the end of WWII in 1945, the Nazis influenced and controlled by force all things political and social in Germany.

Women’s rights were limited in Nazi Germany, as the party did not support their emancipation or the feminist movement, claiming it was led by Jews and bad for society. Hitler appointed a Reich Women’s Leader to advocate for patriarchal gender roles. Women were instructed that they should be obedient to men and fulfill their primary role in society: bearing children. Organizations were started for groups of young women to reinforce these ideals.

“"I believe today that my conduct is in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator.""
- Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf

The Nazi regime mandated that yellow patches of the Star of David be sewn on the clothing of all Jews. However, many of the people wearing them did not consider themselves Jewish at all.

"The Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor," one of the 1935 Nuremberg Laws to strip Jews of their civil rights, defined “Jewish” as a separate race. Thousands of Germans who had not considered themselves Jewish, and who practiced other religions, were treated as poorly as members of the Jewish faith. They were assigned a role they had not chosen, a role that led many, if not most of them, to their deaths.

Think About It
Religion and politics
As shown in the quote at left, Hitler believed that his actions were in line with the will of his god. What other political figures can you think of who have used religious reasoning to defend a military or other political action (such as a law)? Do you think it is acceptable for public leaders to govern based on their own religious beliefs? Why or why not?
During the 1960’s, the civil rights and feminist movements in the United States gained momentum. Racial minorities and women fought for equal treatment as citizens, rallying against racism and sexism in public protests. Some leaders, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., used peaceful methods such as sit-ins at segregated restaurants, while Malcolm X and others fought “by any means necessary,” responding to police brutality with violence of their own. Women challenged their traditional roles by petitioning for equal pay at work and protesting beauty pageants and other media that portrayed them as “exclusively sexual beings.”

This decade was also marked by a large youth counterculture that endorsed marijuana and other drug use, mythic religions (such as Zen Buddhism) and sexual freedom. Previous taboos on sex, violence and language were ignored by filmmakers in such movies as Psycho, in which a woman is stabbed to death in a shower, and The Graduate, in which a young Dustin Hoffman is seduced by a woman twice his age. The Motion Picture Association of America created the film rating system in response.

Timeline summarized from kclibrary.nhmccd.edu
Mandatory bussing used to achieve racial integration in schools often led to violence, but was upheld by the Supreme Court. The Title IX Education Amendments passed by Congress banned sexual discrimination in all educational institutions that received federal funding.

Proving that U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War was still a controversial issue, four students were killed and nine injured during a tragedy at Kent State University in Ohio where National Guardsmen fired into a crowd of anti-war protestors. Because of the increasing number of Black elected officials, the Congressional Black Caucus was formed to represent Black members of Congress. Several cities in the U.S. also saw their first Black mayors elected in this decade, L.A. and Atlanta among them.

Many technological advances were also made, with mass-market personal computers making their debut. Popular fads (many of which are still around today) included mood rings, lava lamps, Rubik’s cubes, Sea Monkeys, smiley face stickers and pet rocks. Streaking nude in very public places was also popular, though illegal!

### 1970's USA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Kent State shootings; first ATM demonstrated and used in Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Congressional Black Caucus formed; Supreme Court upholds court-ordered bussing in Charlotte, NC, clearing the way for mandatory bussing as a tool to achieve integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Atari releases Pong, the first commercial video game (a ping-pong simulation); compact disc invented; Congress passes the Title IX Education Amendments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Last remaining U.S. troops withdraw from Vietnam; Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision legalizes abortion; the Watergate scandal (in which Republican agents burglarized Democratic headquarters) leads two top Nixon aides to resign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>President Nixon resigns as a result of Watergate; Gerald R. Ford becomes President in August; Ford pardons Nixon in September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>South Vietnam falls to communist forces of North Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Apple, Radio Shack and Commodore introduce mass-market computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Birth of first “test tube baby” (lab fertilized before being implanted in a woman’s womb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>More than 500,000 computers are in use in the United States; women surpass men in college enrollment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Movements for racial and sexual equality continued in this decade, with affirmative action becoming a controversial policy as minorities and women asserted their rights to jobs and quality educations.

ANN VECCHIO KNEELING OVER THE BODY OF JEFFREY MILLER AT KENT STATE UNIVERSITY IN OHIO AFTER HE WAS SHOT BY THE NATIONAL GUARD.

These are the lyrics to “Four Dead in Ohio,” a song by Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young written in response to the Kent State shootings:

> Tin soldiers and Nixon’s comin’.
> We’re finally on our own.
> This summer I hear the drummin’.
> Four dead in Ohio.

[Verse:]
Gotta get down to it.
Soldiers are cutting us down.
Should have been done long ago.
What if you knew her and
Found her dead on the ground?
How can you run when you know?

Na, na, na, na, na, na, na, na.
Na, na, na, na, na, na, na, na.
Na, na, na, na, na, na, na, na.
Na, na, na, na, na, na, na, na.

[Verse repeats]

Tin soldiers and Nixon’s comin’.
We’re finally on our own.
This summer I hear the drummin’.
Four dead in Ohio.
Four dead in Ohio.
Four dead in Ohio.
Four dead in Ohio.
Four dead in Ohio.
Four dead in Ohio.
Four dead in Ohio.

How do these musicians feel about the shootings? Nixon and the soldiers? How do you think the other students might have felt?

What would the public and media responses be if this tragedy occurred today? How would they be similar or different to responses to the Kent State shootings?

Lyrics from [www.lyricsdownload.com](http://www.lyricsdownload.com)
Tensions between the U.S. and Soviet Union continued through this decade, with each country boycotting the Olympic games hosted by the other. Ronald Reagan—an actor and California governor long before Arnold Schwarzenegger—was sworn in as 40th President in 1981 and served two full terms. He increased defense spending and fought international terrorists abroad, sending U.S. bombers to Libya in response to an attack against American soldiers in Berlin, Germany.

Space shuttle Challenger disintegrated just after takeoff in 1986, killing all seven people onboard and resulting in a 32-month hiatus in the shuttle program. In other technology news, CDs and videogames grew in popularity and the personal computer was named “Machine of the Year.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>CNN launches as the first all-news network on TV; Ronald Reagan elected President; U.S. boycotts the summer Olympics in Moscow, USSR; John Lennon is assassinated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Launch of the space shuttle Columbia; Sandra Day O’Connor becomes first female Supreme Court justice; AIDS virus identified; Pac-Man a popular video game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Michael Jackson’s <em>Thriller</em> sells 20 million albums (it is currently the 2nd best selling album ever); <em>ET</em> movie released; <em>Time</em> magazine names the computer “Machine of the Year”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Soviets boycott the summer Olympics in Los Angeles, CA; <em>Bill Cosby Show</em> premieres; <em>Ghostbusters</em> movie released</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Space shuttle Challenger explodes; third Monday of January becomes Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, a national holiday; U.S. warplanes bomb Libya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>George H. W. Bush becomes 41st President; CDs outsell vinyl for the first time; first <em>Die Hard</em> movie released</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Part 3 of *Passion Play* spans from the 1960’s to the 1980’s. Seven Presidents and numerous other political figures led our country during this period; however, Ruhl chose to include only one historical U.S. figure in Part 3: President Ronald Reagan.

After looking over the historical events and advances of the ‘60s, ‘70s and ‘80s, consider the following questions:

♦ Why might Ruhl have chosen Reagan to appear in her play instead of a different U.S. President or political figure? What makes Reagan important to this particular story?

♦ How is Reagan similar or different to the other leaders in the play (Queen Elizabeth I and Adolf Hitler) in terms of public speaking and military involvement?

♦ Why do you think Ruhl chose not to include one of the Presidents from the Vietnam War era?

---

“Freedom prospers when religion is vibrant and the rule of law under God is acknowledged.”

- President Ronald Reagan
The ‘60s, ‘70s and ‘80s are decades in history that many people in your family and community lived through and probably remember very well. While each of the previous three pages has provided you with basic information about the events of each decade, the people you know and live with can likely provide you with much more detailed and interesting information—straight from their own lives! Sit down with a relative or other “family historian” and go through the following questions with him/her to find out what life was really like “back in the day.”

What stands out to you as the most memorable events of each decade? Why do you think each of these events was so important?

The ‘60s:

Tell me about our family history during this period. What events are important?

1960

1965

1970

1975

1980

1985

1990

Which popular fads (clothing, video games, music, toys, etc.) were you into during this period? Can you think of any “modern” fads that originated back then and are still around?

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________
1. Considering the timeline on page 16, why might Passion plays have sparked controversy and government action for so long? Why might people choose to leave the story “as is” rather than making changes so that it is less “problematic”? Can you think of any other stories that are historically controversial?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

2. Do you think worship and art are as closely linked today as they were hundreds or even thousands of years ago? Why/why not? What modern examples of “worship through art” can you think of?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

3. Why might so many people have supported Hitler and the Nazi regime during World War II? Is there any cause you believe in so strongly that you would die for it? Or that you would knowingly send other people to their deaths in order to support it? Should any cause or idea ever be valued over human life? Why/why not?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

4. Fashion, music and other elements of popular culture changed drastically between 1960 and 1990. Do you think these things still change frequently today? What changes have you seen in your lifetime?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________
Exploring the Social Issues
Anti-Semitism

Is it fueled by the Passion story?

What is anti-Semitism?

According to the American Jewish Committee, anti-Semitism is “loosely defined as hatred toward Jews and is directed toward the Jewish religion, Jews as a people, or Israel, the Jewish state” (www.ajc.org).

In Part 3 of Passion Play, P becomes upset while rehearsing for the role of Pontius Pilate. He asks his director, “How come [the Jews] want to kill [Jesus] and I’m being all heroic?” Mary 1 tries to calm him down by saying, “We’re just telling the story, honey, the story from the Bible.” However, this angers P even further, as he responds, “I just telling the story, bullshit! Either the Jews killed Jesus or else they’re innocent!” Do you agree with Ruhl’s portrayal of the Passion story? Is P’s interpretation accurate? Is placing blame necessary to tell the Passion story? To understand it? How would people react differently to the story if there were no mention at all of the people involved in the events leading up to the Passion?

Quote Analysis

♦ On what things does each man base his interpretation of the Passion?
♦ Hitler notes that the Passion play he saw takes place “in the times of the Romans.” Do you think it is effective to use events from the distant past to justify beliefs and actions in the present? (For instance, Hitler using the Passion story to justify his persecution of Jews in the 1930s.)
♦ Gibson says in his defense that his film “conforms to the narratives of Christ’s passion and death found in the four Gospels of the New Testament.” Is this a strong argument? Are religious writings always free of prejudice? How can we determine this?

Whether or not the story of Christ’s Passion in the Bible is fundamentally anti-Semitic has been a topic of heated debate for centuries. The quotes below represent two very different viewpoints regarding this issue.

The first is from a statement Adolf Hitler made after seeing the Oberammergau Passion Play (it also appears directly within the text of Passion Play in Part 3). The second quote is a statement Mel Gibson made in the June 12, 2003, issue of Daily Variety, in which he defends himself against public accusations that he was anti-Semitic after the release of The Passion of the Christ, a film version of the Passion story he produced, directed and co-wrote. Consider the questions to the left as you think about differences in these interpretations, the Passion story, and how they relate to anti-Semitism and other forms of prejudice.

It is vital that the Passion Play be continued at Oberammergau; for never has the menace of the Jews been so convincingly portrayed as in this presentation of what happened in the times of the Romans. There one sees in Pontius Pilate a Roman so racially and intellectually superior, that he stands out like a firm, clean rock in the middle of the whole muck and mire of the Jews.

Anti-Semitism is not only contrary to my personal beliefs, it is also contrary to the core message of my movie... For those concerned about the content of this film, know that it conforms to the narratives of Christ’s passion and death found in the four Gospels of the New Testament... This is a movie about faith, hope, love and forgiveness—something sorely needed in these turbulent times.

Think About It: Placing blame

Adolf Hitler

Mel Gibson

Anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda on the cover of a magazine published in Germany in 1941-42. It attempts to convince its audience that the hostilities in Europe at the time (in particular the Allied forces’ attempts to stop the Nazis) were completely the fault of its Jewish population.
**What is the Anti-Defamation League?**

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) is an advocacy group that fights anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry within the U.S. and abroad. The ADL’s mission, as stated on its website, “is to stop, by appeals to reason and conscience and, if necessary, by appeals to law, the defamation of the Jewish people. Its ultimate purpose is to secure justice and fair treatment to all citizens alike and to put an end forever to unjust and unfair discrimination against and ridicule of any sect or body of citizens.” In working towards these aims, the ADL advocates before Congress, develops educational programs and serves as a public resource.

**Think About It:**

**Anti-Semitism & hate crimes**

Do you think Passion plays are always a form of discrimination against Jews? Under what circumstances should they be allowed or banned? Can you think of any other widespread media (theatrical, televised or otherwise) that is controversial for its depiction of a particular group of people? Why do you think these depictions continue year after year? What can we do to stop them?

---

**Recent changes made to the Oberammergau Passion Play**

**1980**
- Removal of several lines suggesting Jewish rejection by God (e.g. “The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and be given to a nation bringing forth better fruits”)
- “A few” people in the crowd before Pilate call for the release of Jesus
- Removal of several lines presenting Jewish law as harsh and vindictive (e.g. “Up Fathers—the law calls for vengeance”)

**1990**
- Jesus and his disciples assume prayer shawls at the opening of the Last Supper, showing they were all Jews
- Caiaphas does not wear a horned hat
- The “blood curse” of Matthew 27:25 (“His blood be upon us and upon our children”) is said only once

**2000**
- “Blood curse” completely removed
- Jesus says a Hebrew blessing and is called “Rabbi,” stressing he is Jewish
- The term “Old Testament” is replaced by the term “Hebrew Bible”
- The crowd before Pilate is divided between those who are for and against Jesus

---

**The ADL and Oberammergau**

In a group of articles on the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) website titled “The Oberammergau Passion Play: The new script for the 2000 presentation,” the ADL gives its critique of the play, detailing what it believes are the anti-Semitic elements, as well as discussing the changes that were made to the play for the 2000 presentation. The text of the intro to these articles is copied below. You can access the other parts of the ADL website through a link on our Knowledge Nucleus.

The Oberammergau Passion Play will be presented in Germany on May 21, 2000. The script of the new version has been changed much to avoid anti-Judaism and the organizers are to be congratulated for their editorial efforts and constant cooperation with ADL. We look forward to continue [sic] our creative working relationship. There is still, however, a serious problem and concern about the very negative presentation of Jewish leadership in the complex society of the First Century. It implies a sense of community guilt for Jesus’ death, minimizing Pilate’s and Roman responsibility for the death of Jesus.

Passion plays are, in general, sources of theological anti-Judaism and do not help to improve the relationship of Christians and Jews. It is equally important to point out that Jews are not against the Passion of Jesus, but are deeply concerned with the presentation of the Passion without an explanation that avoids any anti-Jewish theological or anti-Semitic interpretation. This concern has been expressed by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in their document “The Criteria for the Evaluation of Dramatizations of the Passion.” For this reason, it is suggested that tourist agencies or different organizing groups alert tourists and visitors to the Oberammergau Passion Play and to the problems related to the presentation of Jews and Judaism in the play and its theological negative projections—a heritage of centuries of contempt—which prepared the atmosphere for the Holocaust, a painful reality in the nearby Dachau concentration camp.

The Oberammergau City Hall will be presenting a millennial presentation of its Passion play in May, 2000. It was first performed as a way to thank God for saving the city from a plague that was devastating Europe in the Middle Ages. The presentation is based on New Testament narratives of the Passion of Jesus. Since the late Seventies, the Anti-Defamation League has been very critical of the script which projected a theological anti-Judaism, as well as an anti-Semitic message. It is not by chance that Adolf Hitler, who saw the 1934 presentation, praised it as a "precious tool" in the fight against Jews and Judaism.
Gender Roles
More than outside appearances

The Difference Between Gender and Sex

Male and masculine; female and feminine. These pairs mean the same thing, right? Wrong. Male and female refer to one’s sex, while masculine and feminine refer to one’s gender.

Your sex is determined by biological factors: chromosomes, hormones and internal/external reproductive organs. On the other hand, your gender is based on the characteristics that your society or culture delineate as “masculine” or “feminine.” For instance, according to bathroom doors across the country, women wear dresses and men don’t. At least that’s what the pictures would have us believe.

Activity
Gender stereotypes

What does it mean to be “masculine” or “feminine”? Gender roles are often determined by societal stereotypes; for instance, “men are strong” or “women are bad at directions.” In Part 2 of Passion Play, the foot soldier says to Eric, “I couldn’t carry a gun properly if I had your little hands,” suggesting that size and strength are part of the masculine identity. List below all of the gender stereotypes you can think of that people attach to men and women. Several examples are given in each category to get you thinking. After you complete your list, consider the following questions:

♦ Which stereotypes do you think are specific to this country? Which might be worldwide? Why?
♦ Which stereotypes did you learn from your parents? Friends? TV and movies?
♦ Which stereotypes can you find in Passion Play? How long have these stereotypes been around?

In the Elizabethan era, it was practically unheard of for women to work professionally outside the home while their husbands took care of the children and cleaned house. Now, this arrangement—and everything in between—is commonplace. Why? Gender roles are changing; or more specifically, the stereotypes of what it means to be male or female are changing.

Throughout Passion Play, the gender roles available for males and females in each period also change. How are “masculine” and “feminine” identities defined in each part of the play? Track how these identities change throughout the course of the play. For instance, in Part 1 women play the roles of a virgin (Virgin Mary), whore (Mary Magdalen) and idiot (Village Idiot). Do women’s roles change or stay the same throughout the play? What about men’s roles? How do gender roles relate to time period and religion?

Think About It:
Accepting a gender

How often do you think stereotypes about gender identity are accurate? Is this the case because the stereotypes are inherently “true,” or because people conform to the stereotypes placed on them? Which gender stereotypes, if any, do you conform to within your life?
In this activity you will compare and contrast the political actions and religious beliefs of each historical figure in *Passion Play* as well as our current President. Some of this information can be found throughout this study guide or in the text of the play itself—other facts you will have to look up on your own. After you have filled in the chart, consider why these individuals may have acted the way they did. Who do you think was the best leader? Who was the worst? Why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political figure</th>
<th>Queen Elizabeth I</th>
<th>Adolf Hitler</th>
<th>Ronald Reagan</th>
<th>George W. Bush</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates in office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2001-present</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wars and military conflicts during this period</td>
<td></td>
<td>World War II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military service completed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>U.S. Army 1937-45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious affiliation</td>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious quotes from outside the play</td>
<td>“I believe today that my conduct is in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious quotes from text of the play</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion-based political actions (if any)</td>
<td>Banned religious plays in England</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Think About It: Separation of church and state**

The First Amendment in the U.S. Constitution begins: *Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof…*

Do you think our government follows this rule? Can you think of any laws in this country that have been formed around a religious belief or doctrine?
Music of Protest
Make songs, not war

Activity
All in the Lyrics

Each of the songs on the next page protests our country's military affairs. “Ballad of October 16th” was released after our government began drafting men for World War II; “War” was a response to our involvement in the Vietnam War; and “Holiday” is a recent reaction to the Iraq War. Read over each song’s lyrics and consider the questions below as you compare and contrast the wars, public reactions and more.

How does each artist feel about the war the country has entered into (or plans to enter into)? Are there any similarities between them?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Looking only at these lyrics, can you determine any ways in which these wars were similar/different?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

How does each artist feel about the President in office at the time of each of these military actions? How can you tell?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Do any of these songs make references to religion in any way? If so, what are those artists trying to say about religion?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Elizabethan Music

Church music was very popular during this period, as were madrigals, pieces written for several voices without musical accompaniment. Songs of this period were operatic and lyrical, often written like poetry. Protest songs commenting on the government’s actions were unheard of, perhaps because individual rights were so limited. Elizabethan England was a monarchy, not a democracy, and people couldn’t choose which religion they practiced, let alone speak out against a government that had the power to take whatever means necessary to quiet them.

Music of Support

Listed below are songs released in support of World War II, the Vietnam War and the Iraq War. Look up the lyrics to some of these songs and see how they compare to the songs on page 31.

World War II
“The Road to Victory” by Bing Crosby
“Dear Mr. President” by Pete Seeger
“There’s a Star-Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere” by Bob Miller

Vietnam War
“Ballad of the Green Berets” by Sgt. Barry Sadler
“Okie from Muskogee” by Merle Haggard
“The Fightin’ Side of Me” by Merle Haggard

Iraq War
“Have You Forgotten?” by Darryl Worley
“Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (The Angry American)” by Toby Keith
**War**

By Edwin Starr (1970)

Lyrics from www.edwinstarr.info

---

**Holiday**

By Green Day (2004)

Lyrics from www.azlyrics.com

---

**Ballad of October 16th**

By Millard Lampell (1941)

Lyrics from www.lyricsdownload.com

---

*On Oct. 16, 1940, it was announced that over 16 million men had registered for the draft—the first peacetime draft in U.S. history. (We joined the war in 1941.)*

---

War, h uh, yeah
What is it good for?
Absolutely (nothing), ah, ha, ha, ha

[Repeats twice with slight variations]

War I despise
've cause it means destruction of innocent lives
War means tears to thousands of mother's eyes
When their sons go out to fight and lose their lives

[Chorus:]
I said, war, huh, good God y'all
What is it good for?
Absolutely (nothing)
Oh, say it again

War (Huh)
Woh, woh, woh, woh
What is it good for?
Absolutely (nothing)
Listen to me

War, it ain't nothin' but a heartbreaker
War, friend only to the undertaker]

---

Ah, war is an enemy of all mankind
The thought of war blows my mind
War has caused unrest within the younger generation
Induction then destruction
Who wants to die? Ah...

[Chorus repeats with slight variations]

Ah, war has shattered many a young man's dreams
Made him disabled, bitter and mean

Life is much too short and precious
To spend fighting wars each day
War can't give life
It can only take it away

[Chorus repeats with slight variations]

Peace, love and understanding, tell me
Is there no place for them today?
They say we must fight to keep our own freedom
But Lord knows there's gotta be a better way

Ahh, war, (Huh)
Good God y'all
What is it good for?

---

Say, hey!

Hear the sound of the falling rain
Coming down like an Armageddon flame (Hey!)
The shame
The ones who died without a name

Hear the dogs howling out of key
To a hymn called "Faith and Misery" (Hey!)
And bleed, the company lost the war today

[Chorus:]
I beg to dream and differ from the hollow lies
This is the dawning of the rest of our lives
On holiday]

Hear the drum pounding out of time
Another protester has crossed the line (Hey!)
To find, the money's on the other side

Can I get another Amen? (Amen!)
There's a flag wrapped around a score of men (Hey!)
A gag, a plastic bag on a monument

---

---

It was on a Saturday night and the moon was shining bright
They passed the conscription bill
And the people they did say for many miles away
'Twas the President and his boys on Capitol Hill.

[Chorus:]
Oh, Franklin Roosevelt told the people how he felt
We damned near believed what he said
He said, "I hate war, and so does Eleanor
But we won't be safe 'til everybody's dead."

When my poor old mother died I was sitting by her side
A-promising to war I'd never go.
But now I'm wearing khaki jeans and eating army beans
And I'm told that J. P. Morgan loves me so.

---

I have wandered o'er this land, a roaming working man
No clothes to wear and not much food to eat.
But now the government foots the bill
Gives me clothes and feeds me swill
Gives me shot and puts me underground six feet.

[Chorus]

Why nothing can be wrong if it makes our country strong
We got to get tough to save democracy.
And though it may mean war
We must defend Singapore
This don't hurt you half as much as it hurts me.

[Chorus]
1. Homosexuality is another theme explored in *Passion Play*. How does homosexuality factor into gender identity? Is sexuality an important determining factor in whether someone is “feminine” or “masculine”? Why/why not? (Also, check out our Knowledge Nucleus online for an essay on homosexuality, homophobia and identity.)

2. Should political leaders be exempt from certain lawmaking or other duties because of their religious affiliations? What about other strong beliefs leaders may have? Is it possible for someone to be completely objective when making a decision?

3. The picture next to the title of page 29 is a close-up of our dollar bill. It reads: *IN GOD WE TRUST*. Do you think this is a violation of the First Amendment? Why/why not? The Pledge of Allegiance said in schools still includes the line “One nation under God”—is this a violation? Do either of these examples suggest our government is endorsing religion?

4. Besides Jews, what other groups of people have been historically persecuted? Which groups are still the victims of hate crimes today? What is being done to stop these instances of persecution? Is this enough?
Dear Susan Hart,

My name is Erika Janea Dickerson, and I am a sophomore at Walter Payton College Prep, and I am also a poet and feminist. First off, I wanted to commend you on your performance Wednesday, May 23 at the Goodman Theatre. I have a few questions for you concerning your character, Jocasta, and your portrayal of her. While engaging in conversation about Oedipus Complex in my American Literature class, I always felt as if Jocasta's appearance in the play is overlooked, and ultimately, appears to be insignificant. Do you feel that Jocasta's semblance in the play (not her role as Oedipus' mother/wife) is diminished? If so, do you feel that Galati purposely put forth less effort in developing Jocasta than Oedipus? […]

Aside from my questions about the adaptation of the play, I am also curious about how you felt about your role, as an actress. Was it challenging or enjoyable working with a generally all male cast? Did you ever personally feel that you had to prove yourself as an actress because of your gender? Personally, I think its more enjoyable and more edifying to watch a play than just read one. With that being said, did you already picture your portrayal of Jocasta when you first read the adaptation or did your understanding of her evolve as you went along? Lastly, who do you feel Jocasta represents as a character in Oedipus Complex as a woman, mother and wife? Ultimately, is she the victim or the culprit in the story? Once again, it was great watching you in this production, and good luck on all your future endeavors.

Erika Janea Dickerson

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Dear Nick Sandys,

My name is Gerron Jordan and I am a student at Jones College Prep here in Chicago, IL. I was given the opportunity to be a part of your audience on May 22, and what I saw completely intrigued me. I was taken aback from you acting as well as the excellent choral work done by the ensemble. It was just an amazing show and I am glad I had the opportunity to see it.

I was very thrilled to see how, in essence, you played two roles and played them both with a tremendous amount of commitment. Being a student of theatre, I find it difficult to master one role, and the way you mastered both was just phenomenal. During my high school years I’ve learned about the Oedipus Rex story and I knew its significance. However, it was brought into a new light seeing you, as Sigmund Freud, in the production. […]

As I close, I do have one question. I’m sure being asked to play Freud in this production, you had read and knew the story of Oedipus. So looking in retrospect, how did your previous conceptions of the story affect your performance as Freud? Also, by adding Sigmund Freud to the story, did you gain a deeper meaning of the Oedipus Rex story as a whole? Those were just a couple questions I was asking myself as I watched your magnificent performance.

Gerron L. Jordan

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After you have seen the show and discussed your responses in the classroom, it’s time to let us know what you thought! Your response letter to plays an important role at Goodman Theatre. All of the letters we receive are forwarded to our artists, and you may get a response!

Pick one of the artists involved with Passion Play whose work was particularly memorable to you—an actor, designer, the playwright or the director—and write that artist a letter describing your experience at the show and your feedback about his/her work. Be honest and ask any questions that are on your mind.

Your teacher will send us your letter, and we’ll forward it on to that artist!

Important information to include:

♦ Your name, age and grade
♦ Your teacher’s name, school and the school’s address

Including these things will make it easier for our artists to respond!

Send your letters to:

Education and Community Programs
Goodman Theatre
170 North Dearborn Street
Chicago, IL 60601

Here are two great student letters we received in response to Oedipus Complex:

Dear Susan Hart,

My name is Erika Janea Dickerson, and I am a sophomore at Walter Payton College Prep, and I am also a poet and feminist. First off, I wanted to commend you on your performance Wednesday, May 23 at the Goodman Theatre. I have a few questions for you concerning your character, Jocasta, and your portrayal of her. While engaging in conversation about Oedipus Complex in my American Literature class, I always felt as if Jocasta’s appearance in the play is overlooked, and ultimately, appears to be insignificant. Do you feel that Jocasta’s semblance in the play (not her role as Oedipus’ mother/wife) is diminished? If so, do you feel that Galati purposely put forth less effort in developing Jocasta than Oedipus? […]

Aside from my questions about the adaptation of the play, I am also curious about how you felt about your role, as an actress. Was it challenging or enjoyable working with a generally all male cast? Did you ever personally feel that you had to prove yourself as an actress because of your gender? Personally, I think its more enjoyable and more edifying to watch a play than just read one. With that being said, did you already picture your portrayal of Jocasta when you first read the adaptation or did your understanding of her evolve as you went along? Lastly, who do you feel Jocasta represents as a character in Oedipus Complex as a woman, mother and wife? Ultimately, is she the victim or the culprit in the story? Once again, it was great watching you in this production, and good luck on all your future endeavors.

Erika Janea Dickerson

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Gerron L. Jordan