



**URBAN STAGES**  
259 West 30th Street  
Between 9 & 10th Avenues

# THE SNOW QUEEN TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE



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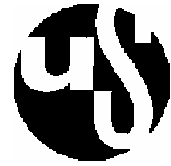
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*\*Reproducible (Hand Outs)*



# INTRODUCTION



Dear Educator,

**Thank you** for joining us to see Urban Stage's *The Snow Queen*, an adaptation of Hans Christian Anderson's classic fairy tale *The Snow Queen*. This resource guide will provide you with some pre and post performance classroom work that can help enrich the play going experience for your students.

Along with background information on the play there are also suggested exercises and reproducible activity pages included in the Teacher Resource Guide. Please do not feel that you need to do everything in this guide. The guide provides drama and theater based teaching techniques that you can use as they are presented to you or you can adapt them to your own teaching style.

Established in May 1983, Urban Stages' mission is to discover and develop new plays by authors of diverse cultural backgrounds. Urban Stages is theater for the increasingly diverse population of this country concerning issues relevant to their lives. It is our belief that theater has the power to dramatically change lives, offer new alternatives for the future, and be used as a teaching tool. Our Educational Programs compose the heart of the organization. Working in close collaboration with the NYC Public Library Systems, Adult Literacy Programs and the Public School System, Urban Stages brings the wonder of the theater to nontraditional audiences of all ages.

In addition to our Matinee Program, which gives selected classes the opportunity to see a Matinee Performance at our Off Broadway theater at 259 30<sup>th</sup> Street, we have a teaching artist residency at the Harlem Day Charter School. Also, we provide a variety of programs for all ages to libraries throughout the five boroughs.

If you would like to obtain more information about our Educational Programming, please call Lori Laster, Education Director at 212.421.1380 or email her at [lorilaster@urbanstages.org](mailto:lorilaster@urbanstages.org).

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## The Life of Hans Christian Andersen



When Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875) published *The Snow Queen* in 1845, he was already a popular writer of books and poems in his native Denmark. But *The Snow Queen* and his other fairy tales brought him international fame. Today, 130 years after his death, his tales continue to be celebrated across the world.

In many ways, Andersen's life was a fairy tale of its own. He was born in the city of Odense in 1805 to poor parents—his father was a cobbler, his mother a washerwoman. Though the family couldn't afford to

give Andersen a formal education, he constantly created and acted out stories in a small puppet theater his father built. He left for Copenhagen (Denmark's largest city) at age 14 with dreams of becoming an actor and singer, but he soon discovered writing was his true talent. He spent hours in his tiny attic apartment creating plays, poetry and fiction.

At age 29, Andersen completed his first book of fairy tales. Breaking away from the simplistic style of most children's stories of the time, Andersen's writing captivated readers throughout Denmark and Europe. As one Andersen biographer wrote, "The magical tales were as rich as chocolate cake after a diet of wholesome gruel."

Impressed by the stories, the king of Denmark awarded Andersen a royal stipend for life. No longer having to worry about money, Andersen fully dedicated himself to his fairy tales. Many times, he told the stories to rooms full of mesmerized adults and children before writing them down. From 1835 to 1872, he published more than 150 tales, including classics like *The Little Mermaid*, the *Ugly Duckling*, and *The Emperor's New Clothes*.

Andersen died in Denmark in 1875, at the age of seventy. His legacy, however, shines on in the modern storytelling world. International Children's Book Day is celebrated each year on Andersen's birthday (April 2). And the most prestigious prize in children's literature, the Andersen medal, is named after him.

## **Class Exercise: “Getting to Know Hans!”**

### *One on One Interviews*

Divide students into groups of two. In each group, one student will play the role of an interviewer and the second student will play Hans Christian Andersen. Interviewer will have five minutes to ask Hans questions about his life. Hans should use the preceding bio to form the basis of his/her answers, but Hans should also feel free to expand on the bio information and talk about emotions and thoughts Hans Christian Andersen might have possessed.

### *Hans on TV*

After the one-on-one interviews, select two students to conduct an “on-air” interview in front of the class. One student will play Hans and the other will play a TV talk show host. The host should introduce Hans to the class, saying a few brief words about his life. The host and Hans should then have a short improvised conversation about the writer’s work and achievements. After several minutes, the host can invite questions from the audience (the rest of the class). Let the students have fun and bring out aspects of Hans’ character.

# Hans Christian Andersen and the Modern Fairy

Fairy tales—fanciful stories intended to entertain children—have existed since ancient times. For centuries in many cultures, stories involving supernatural forces and faraway places were passed down orally from older generations to younger ones. In the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century, a pair of German brothers—Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm—became the first internationally famous fairy tale authors when they wrote and published *Cinderella*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Little Red Riding Hood* and a number of other classic tales.

Hans Christian Andersen, however, is considered the father of the modern fairy tale. Though he wrote several decades after the Brothers Grimm achieved fame, Andersen's tales revolutionized children's literature. Here's what made his tales unique:



## ◆ The Here and Now

Before Andersen, fairy tales almost always took place “once upon a time” and focused on princesses, kings and other members of royalty. Andersen, however, set his stories in the present day, and his main characters (like Gerda and Kay in *The Snow Queen*) came from regular walks of a life.

## ◆ A Real Story Telling Experience

In his stories, Andersen always used a narrator who would address readers directly. This let readers feel a special connection to the story, as though Andersen were in the room telling the story to them.

## ◆ The Not-So-Happy Ending

Though *The Snow Queen* ends pleasantly with Kay and Gerda reuniting, many Andersen fairy tales conclude with feelings of sorrow. In *The Little Mermaid*, for instance, the beautiful mermaid has her heart broken and transforms into sea foam. And the *Little Fir Tree* tells the story of a tree who hopes to be decorated for Christmas but ends up being thrown into a fire.

◆ **Where's the Moral?**

Most children's stories in Andersen's time conveyed a simple, clear-cut moral. But his fairy tales broke that mold completely. Andersen explored relationships between characters and touched complex themes, like love and loneliness. As a result, the stories appealed to readers of all ages. "I grasp an idea for the grown-ups," Andersen wrote, "and then I recount it for the little ones remembering that father and mother are listening, too."



◆ **Objects and Animals**

Andersen often gave simple objects human characteristics. Flowers, the sun and toy soldiers all come alive and play important roles in Andersen's stories. In this way, Andersen shows the magic and beauty of the everyday world. Talking animals also make their way onto the page: *The Ugly Duckling* is filled with animal characters, and in *The Snow Queen*, Gerda is guided on her journey by sparrows, crows and a reindeer.



## **Fairy Tale Activities/Exercises**



### ***“Andersen Lives On!”***

Discuss with the class the characteristics of Andersen’s stories that can still be seen in American culture today. Have students think about movies aimed at younger audiences. Animals are main characters in films like “The Lion King,” “Finding Nemo,” and many others. Also, in “Beauty and the Beast” and “Aladdin” everyday objects come alive as characters. How about modern children’s literature? Just like Gerda and Kay, Harry Potter is a seemingly normal kid living in London who discovers a magical world around him.

### ***“Supermarket Fairy Tale”***

Ask students to write their own Andersen-style fairy tales—that is, fairy tales set in the modern world. Give students freedom to create their own stories, but give these basic guidelines to help students frame the assignment:

- ◆ The fairy tale takes place in a supermarket
- ◆ The story is told by a narrator
- ◆ The story starts when two friends get separated
- ◆ Objects (apples, grocery carts, loaves of bread, etc.) come to life as characters in the story
- ◆ The story concludes when the two friends reunite



# Adaptation

The play you will be seeing at Urban Stages Theater is an adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's original fairy tale. An adaptation is a re-rendering of a work written in one genre or medium into another genre or medium. Most adaptations try to remain loyal to the thrust of the story by displaying some of the same morals, themes and events that are in the original text. When adapting *The Snow Queen* playwright Stanton Wood modernized the tale and changed the various destinations that Gerda visits. He also simplified the storyline by cutting out some characters from the original fairytale. Below are some major differences between the fairy tale and the play.

## The Fairy Tale

- Gerda lives in 19<sup>th</sup> century Denmark
- In her search for Kay, she travels north to Finland and Lapland near the North Pole
- She is helped on the way by sparrows, pigeons and an old woman

## The Urban Stages Play

- Gerda lives in modern day New York City
- She travels to the Caribbean, South America and finds Kay near the South Pole
- She is helped by a giant squid, a rose and a beach

**Exercise:** On the following page you will find a map detailing Gerda's journey to the South Pole in the Urban Stages version of *The Snow Queen*. Make photocopies of the drawing and give each student a copy AFTER they have seen the performance. As a class, fill in the blanks on the map. This should refresh students' memories about the play's main plot line.

## Why the changes?

Plays and written stories (novels, short stories, fairy tales, ect.) work in different ways. When adapting a story like *The Snow Queen*, a playwright must *show* the story to the audience. Below, you will find some fundamentals that help bring the page to the stage. It may be useful to review these points with your students before engaging them in further adaptation exercises.

### A blueprint for performers

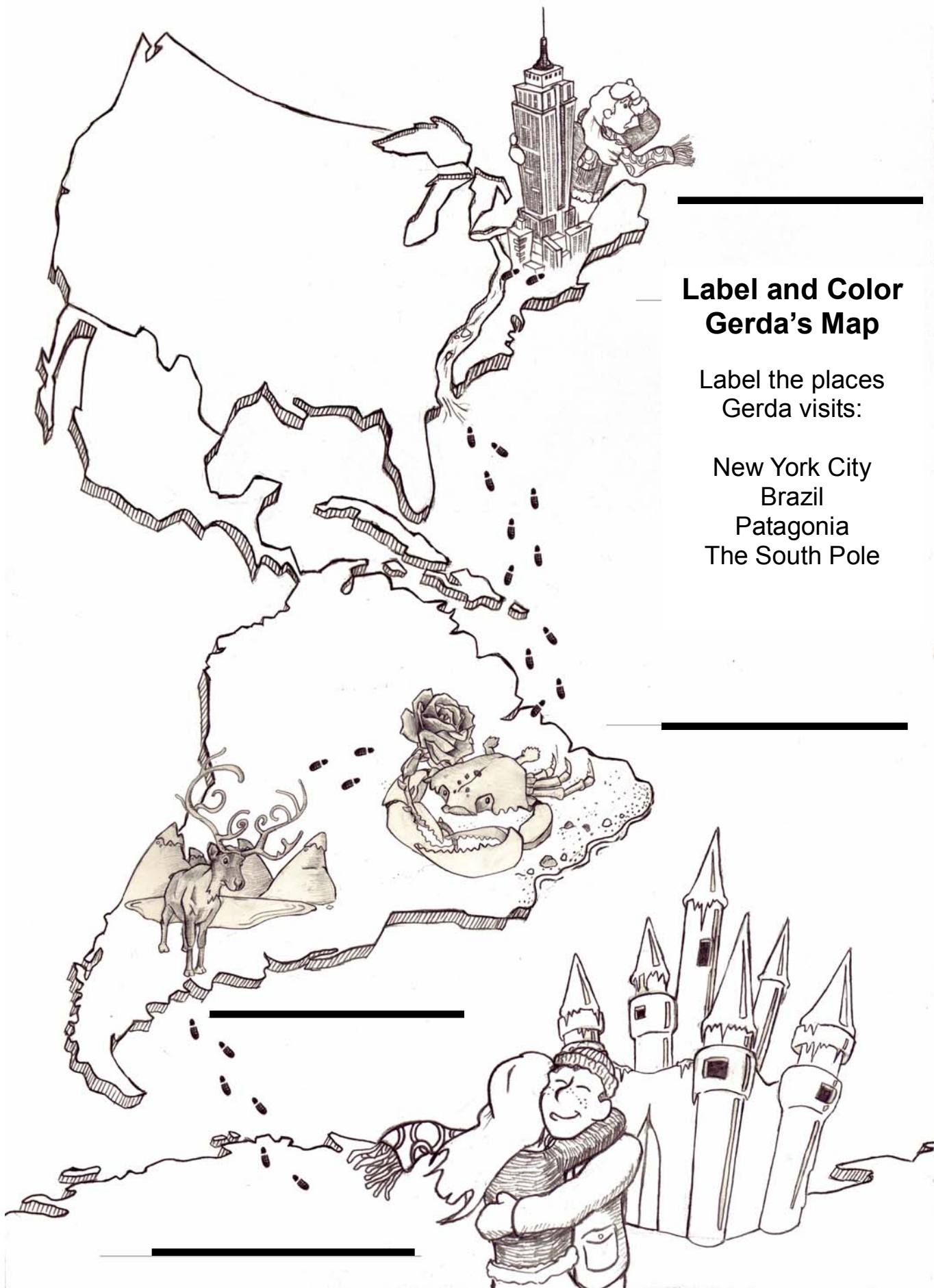
A novelist's final product is a set form captured forever within the pages of a book. A play, however, is interpreted and extended by talented directors, designers and actors who use their talents to bring the performance to life.

### Plays are set in the present, moving future

While characters in a novel did or said that, characters in a play are speaking and acting right now. A play is lively, ever present sense of future with characters constantly moving toward some impending goal.

### A narrow focus

Frequent and sweeping movements through time and space enhance the narratives in novels and screenplays. Plays, on the other hand, are more powerful when tightly written. Instead of showing many scenes to show a story's large universe, a play will compress action into a single whole that represents the larger universe.



**Label and Color  
Gerda's Map**

Label the places  
Gerda visits:

- New York City
- Brazil
- Patagonia
- The South Pole

## Exercises in Adaptation

### Step One

Break the students into teams of four or five and ask each group to select a well-known classic fairy tale they all like. Have them each choose a character. Some students may need to double up on characters.

### Step Two

Have the students write paragraphs of any length answering each of the following questions and act as their characters in detail:

*Who are you?*

Example: I am little red riding hood, I am a little girl who loves her grandma

*What are you doing when we first meet you?*

Example: I am walking through the forest

*Where are you?*

Example: I am in the forest on my way to Grandmother's house

*When are you doing it?*

Example: Its mid morning in the middle of fall

*How are you doing it?*

Example: I'm really excited to see my Grandmother



These questions are a set of questions that actors ask themselves as they begin to explore the character they are going to play onstage. The more specifically they can answer the questions the more interesting the character will be to the audience

### Step Three:

Select one or more of the following exercises to allow students to explore characters before writing

#### *Talk Show*

Have each group decide on a contemporary talk show host ( ie. Oprah, Tony Danza, Montel). Set up three to four chairs and allow the Talk Show host to interview characters as if the fairy tale is a set of circumstances from the recent past. Have the good and evil characters explain their actions. Allow for rehearsal time and have them perform their skits for the class.

### *Costume*

Costume can convey a lot about a character. Have each of the students decide on what color clothing their character should wear. Have each of the characters decide what kind of contemporary shoes they would wear to convey the characters walk. For instance would their character wear high heels, army boots, sandals, or bare feet? Each shoe will make the student walk differently. Ask the students such details as: Are they new? Do they hurt their feet? Ect.

### **Step Four:**

Allow students time to use the characterizations they have discovered in the previous exercise to decide when and where their adaptation of the fairy tale will take place. Let them know that they can change the setting and time period from the original, as long as the basic plot remains intact.

### **Step Five:**

#### **SHUFFLE CHARACTERS**

(Characters taken from the previous Exploring Character exercises) Once the students have explored their characters, shuffle groups from different stories. For instance put the ugly duckling with the Big Bad Wolf, or the little Mermaid with Jack from Jack and the Beanstalk.

### **Final Step**

Have them pick Contemporary settings and *Write it Down*: Adding dialogue and stage directions

### **Perform the plays**

Encourage students to bring costumes and props. Set an atmosphere of fun and let every student know there is no right or wrong in doing this exercise except by not participating in some way or another. Theatre is all about collaboration and the success of the group is dependent on it.

## **Casting and Adapting**

*This exercise is designed to be used after seeing the play!*

The students will create a cast list for the movie version of *The Snow Queen*

Exercise:

Ask the students, "if you were casting a movie of "The Snow Queen," what stars would you cast in the movie? Ask each to work independently and cast Gerda, Kay, The Snow Queen, the Reindeer, Yojaba, Fernig, and the Robber Maiden. Would they use animation, puppets, or live actors? Why? Would you cast different actresses for the parts of Yojaba, the Robber Maiden, and the Snow Queen, or would one actress play all the parts?

While considering the movie, where would each segment be filmed? Would Gerda and Kay still be from New York?

## ***The Mystery of Puppets***

Puppetry plays an important role in the Urban Stages version of *The Snow Queen*. Many of the play's smaller characters—like the Snow Queen's ice guards and the rose that guides Gerda—are presented in puppet form. This use of puppetry helps create the feeling of a magical world unfolding before us onstage. Because many different kinds of characters are shown through puppetry, several distinct styles of puppets are used in *The Snow Queen* production. The following descriptions will help you identify the different puppet styles you may see.

**Rod Puppets:** This type of puppet is mounted on a rod or pole running through the center of the puppet body. Oftentimes, smaller rods connect to the puppet's arms, legs and hands. This gives the puppeteer lots of control, letting him or her create very precise, realistic movements. Rod puppets can be very small or extremely large (the biggest rod puppets require more than a dozen puppeteers to operate). In *The Snow Queen* Fernig is a rod puppet.

**Marionettes:** These small puppets have joints at their elbows and knees and are operated from above. Strings typically attach to the head, arms and legs. The strings connect to two pieces of crossed wood, which the puppeteer turns and twists to create the puppet's movement. The original Pinocchio was a marionette-style puppet.



**Shadow Puppets:** A style developed in India centuries ago, shadow puppetry is created by strategically placing large, flat figures in front of light. As a result, the audience sees only the shadows of the puppets on a wall or screen. This method is useful in creating a spooky or surreal atmosphere onstage where only the dark shapes of the puppets are visible. In *The Snow Queen* The Ice Guards are Shadow Puppets.

**Bunraku:** Bunraku puppetry originated more than 300 years ago in Japan. Traditionally, Bunraku used three puppeteers working together to create the motion of one puppet. Many contemporary Bunraku productions, however, require only one puppeteer per puppet. Bunraku-style puppeteers are always visible to the audience, and they sometimes dress in the same clothes as the puppet they're controlling.

# **Puppetry**

## **Activities/Exercises**

Now that you know more about the differences between each puppet style, try to imagine which kind of puppet should be used for the different characters in a play. In each of the sections below, list the words that come to mind when you think of each kind of puppetry. For example, Shadow Puppetry might make you think of words like “scary” or “dangerous.” When you’ve finished listing words for each puppet style, you’ll discuss as a class what kind of characters could be best portrayed by each puppet style.

**Rod Puppets:**

**Marionettes:**

**Shadow Puppets:**

**Bunraku:**

## Prepare for Q & A

**This exercise is designed to be used BEFORE seeing the play!**

### Objective

The students will create questions for the post performance Q & A

Exercise: To make the post performance Question and Answer session more beneficial to everyone, the students might create a few questions before the performance. Ask students to think what questions they might want to ask after the play? Here are some starter questions:

- \* How long did it take you to write the play?
- \* What are the actor's favorite scenes to perform?
- \* Why did the writer decide to use puppets for certain characters?

## *Theater Etiquette*

**Please make your students are aware of the standard rules of behavior in the theater:**

- Be on time for the performance
- Turn off all cellular phones and pagers
- There is no eating or drinking in the theater
- Talk before or after the performance or during intermission only. Remember that the people near you and on stage can hear you.
- Appropriate responses to the performances, such as laughing and applauding are appreciated
- Act with maturity during romantic, violent and other challenging scenes
- Keep your feet off the chairs around you
- Read your program before or after not during the play
- Personal hygiene (e.g., combing hair, applying makeup, ect.) should be attended to in the restrooms
- Once you are seated and the play has begun, stay in your seat
- Always stay until after the curtain call



## **More to do After You See The Play**

Please encourage your students to reflect on the plan in some of the following ways.

Write:

- Write a play or scene in response to the play.
- Improvise a scene with a partner and then write it down.
- Write a monologue in the voice of one of the characters.
- Write a review of the production

Draw:

- Draw the world of the “Snow Queen”
- Draw images from the production
- Draw a poster for our production
- Create a collage of images from magazines in response to the play.



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Urban Stages' Outreach Programs are made possible by the generous support of the Department of  
Cultural Affairs, The San Francisco Foundation, Peter J. Sharp Foundation, J.M. Kaplan, Michael  
Tuch Foundation Inc., Schnumacher Foundation, Harold and Mimi Steinberg Trust, and The Car-

## Glossary of Theater Terms

**Audience:** The group of people who watch the play.

**Actors:** People who perform in a play. Actors are the people you see every time you come to the theater.

**Audition:** A tryout for the play. Before you can be in a play you must audition for a part. An audition usually involves the actor saying a monologue in front of the director.

**Blocking:** Where the actors go on stage and where they move. Blocking is given to actors by the director.

**Dramaturg:** Literary advisor, supplier of information about past productions and interpretations of scripts and about the milieu out of which a play has come.

**Callback:** A second audition for a part. The actor comes back after his/her first audition and performs again for the director. The director is usually matching actors together in order to make the best cast for his/her play.

**Choreographer:** Teaches dance moves to dancers of a musical or play.

**Costume Designers:** Plans the clothing that the actors wear.

**Curtain Call:** The whole cast comes out onstage after the play to take their bows to the audience.

**Director:** A person who supervises the creative aspects of a play and instructs the actors and the stage manager. The director tells the actors where to move on the stage and oversees everyone's work.

**Intermission:** A set amount of time in between Acts and Scenes to allow the audience to rest and the crew to reset the stage.

**Lighting Designer:** plans the kind of lights to show the setting and mood of each part of the play

**Mime:** Telling a story with your body and without words

**Monologue:** A memorized speech that one actor gives onstage. Monologues are also used in auditions.

**Playwright:** Writes Musicals or plays. What they write tells the actors what to say on stage. Some playwrights adapt stories so they can be performed onstage.

**Prop Master:** In charge of the objects used by the actors.

**Rehearsal:** The act of practicing in preparation for a play.

**Scenery:** Includes walls, furniture, shelves, closets, doorways, trees. The scenery indicates to the audience where the action of the play is taking place.

**Script:** A written play that actors work from, make notes in, and refer to when rehearsing the play

**Set Designers:** plan the scenery for the play

**Stage Manager:** The person who helps the director during the rehearsal and the performance of a play. They are usually backstage and are not performing in the play. The stage manager is responsible for calling lighting cues and supervising the technical crew.

**Post Performance Questionnaire**  
(To be filled out by Teacher)

I enjoyed seeing *The Snow Queen*

1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

My class enjoyed seeing *The Snow Queen*

1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

My students easily related to the play

1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

*The Snow Queen* was better than other plays I have seen before

1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

*The Snow Queen* The Resource Guide provided for was helpful and informative

1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

Questions or Comments:

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