



Resource Guide

Our Education Programming is funded in part by the following:

Literacy in Action
Student Matinee Field Trips
Theatre Mentor/Interns
Professional Development
Education Director
Teen Dating Awareness



The Heinz Endowment



Massey Charitable Trust



Bringing Literature to Life



Prime Stage Education Programs include:

POST—SHOW CHAT SESSIONS After each student matinee

Stay after the school matinees to ask questions of both the actors and the production crew! During the 15-minute post-show chat sessions, delve into the story and then ask questions of the actors about the rehearsal process, theatre performance, and their experiences working on that particular production. No registration required.

THE LITERACY IN ACTION PROGRAM – A year-long residency program

Prime Stage Theatre's flagship education program strives to increase adolescent literacy through theatre in underserved and underperforming school districts in the Western Pennsylvania area. In this FREE program, schools receive tickets and books for each Prime Stage production, 10 in-school workshops, and professional development opportunities for teachers. If you would like your school to become involved, please download an application at our website, http://primestage.com/files/pdf/application_aas.pdf.

TEEN DATING AWARENESS PROGRAM – A touring program for schools and communities

Prime Stage Theatre is proud to offer a touring production of You Belong to Me a 60 minute program designed to identify the warning signs of teen dating violence that can help save the life of a friend, loved one or even you. The three part program includes the testimony of a parent who lost a child, the one-act performed by Pittsburgh area teens, and a Q&A session. This program will make an impact at your school or community center. If you would our Teen Dating Awareness Program to come to your school or community center, please visit our website, http://www.primestage.com/education/teen_dating_awareness.html

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEENS, FAMILIES AND ADULTS

Prime Stage Theatre offers opportunities for people of all ages to get involved with the theater. Check out our website to learn about the Mentorships, Volunteering, Book Readings and many other exciting events. There is something for everyone at Prime Stage! <http://primestage.com/>

Welcome to Prime Stage Theatre: *Bringing Literature to Life!*

Dear Educator,

Welcome to Prime Stage Theatre's 2014-2015 season!

Photos from
this season



Animal Farm



Jekyll and Hyde



This year, we are pleased to bring you *The Mousetrap* by Agatha Christie, the world's longest running mystery, along with George Orwell's classic story – *Animal Farm* and Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

All literature produced by Prime Stage is always drawn from middle and secondary Reading Lists and themes are in the curriculum.

This Resource Guide is designed to provide historical background and context, classroom activities and curricular content to help you enliven your students' experience with the literature and the theatre. We encourage you to use the theatrical games and creative thinking activities, as well as the Theatre Etiquette suggested activities to spark personal connections with the themes and characters in the stories.

If you have any questions about the information or activities in this guide, please contact me. I'm happy to help and welcome your suggestions!

Linda Haston Education Director

lhaston@primestage.com 

Check out what's inside!

PA Standards addressed in the Guide	5
<i>Mousetrap in 3 minutes ... or less without giving away the ending!</i>	6
Agatha Christie	7
Lesson Plans	8-13
A Peek Backstage – Interview with the Set Designer	14
The Characters and actors	15
Watching the play	16-17
Music and connections	18
House Rules	19
Personal journals and a newspaper activity	20

Prime Stage's mission, "to entertain, educate, and enrich theatre-lovers, students, educators, and families with live theatre and literature" brings literature to life, along with relevant topics which stimulate the imaginations, intellects and emotions of audience who seek compelling theatrical entertainment.

The activities in this guide are intended to enliven, clarify and enrich the text as you read and the experience as you watch the literature.



When you see these logos, it is something for you to look for in the production



When you see these icons, there is a hot link to explore.

Prime Stage Social – Be sure to Like Us on Facebook!



All Prime Stage productions *and* Resource Guides address the following PA Core standards:

CC.1.3.9-10.A: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CC.1.3.9-10.C: Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

CC.1.3.9-10.D: Determine the point of view of the text and analyze the impact the point of view has on the meaning of the text.

CC.1.3.9-10.E: Analyze how an author's choices concerning structure, order events within it and manipulate time create an effect.

CC.1.3.9-10.F: Analyze how words and phrases shape meaning and tone in texts.

CC.1.3.9-10.G: Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment.

CC.1.3.9-10.H: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms themes, topics, character types, and/or other text elements.

CC.1.3.9-10.K: Read and comprehend literary fiction on grade level, reading independently and proficiently.

CC.1.5.9-10.A: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grades level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CC.1.5.9-10.G: Demonstrate command of Standard English when speaking based on grade level and content.

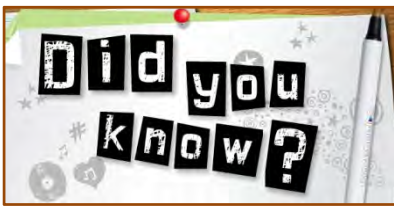


Prime Stage is proud to have this production of *The Mousetrap* be part of the 125 Celebration of Agatha Christie!
#125Stories - <http://125stories.com/feed>.



***The Mousetrap* in 3 minutes or less without giving away the ending...**

The play begins in an old house that has been converted into a hotel called Monkswell Manor. Mollie and Giles, a young newlywed couple, have inherited the home and turned it into a hotel and are preparing for their first guests. Over the radio there is a report of a recent murder, and an approaching snow storm. As the guests arrive and discuss the recent murder there is a telephone call from the police informing Mollie that they are coming to ask her husband some questions about the murder. Sergeant Trotter arrives and announces that everyone in the house is in danger as Monkswell Manor was listed in a notebook found at the scene of the murder. Sergeant Trotter believes the next victim along with the murderer is in the house, and everyone is in danger. It does not take long for the first guest to be killed leaving the rest to wonder who among them is next, and who wants them dead!



The Mousetrap was initially performed as a radio play in 1952 and was broadcast by the BBC with the title *Three Blind Mice*. The radio play was commissioned in 1947 by Queen Mary, who was a Christie fan. The forty-five minute play was based on a short story on which Christie had been

working; however, audience reaction was so positive that Christie went back to work on the script, elaborating on it, and with its first performance on October 6, 1952, *The Mousetrap* became a stage play. After a seven-week tour, the play opened in London at The Ambassadors Theatre on November 25, 1952. The play later transferred to St. Martin's Theatre in London on March 23, 1974 and has been running there ever since.

The Mousetrap has broken several records for its continuous theatrical run since its opening, and it is estimated that more than four million people had seen the play by the time its twenty-five year anniversary was celebrated in 1977. After another twenty years of performances it is safe to speculate that an additional three to four million people have probably sat in the dark and tried to puzzle out the identity of the murderer. Performances of *The Mousetrap* continue to benefit from tourists who seek out the play both for its artistic merits and for the joy of being part of a theatrical tradition. Christie signed over the royalties from the play to her grandson at its opening in 1952. It is thought that he has become a multimillionaire from the royalties of this one property alone.

The Mousetrap has had 382 actors appear in the play, and during its run there have been 116 miles of shirts ironed, and 415 tons of ice-cream sold and the play has been performed over 24,000 times. The original set was replaced for the first time in 2000 without missing a show. Currently there is not a closing performance in sight!

Agatha Christie



Agatha Christie was a skilled playwright and novelist and is known as one of the greatest writer of “Who-dun-its” ever! Look at the list and choose another one to discover in class or on your own

Agatha Christie wrote eighty novels and short story collections.

Many have been translated into over 45 languages. She also wrote over a dozen plays, including *The Mousetrap*, which is the longest running play in theatrical history.

Christie's first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, was the first to feature her eccentric Belgian detective Hercule Poirot. Christie's last published novel, *Sleeping Murder*, featured her other world-famous sleuth, the shrewdly inquisitive Miss Jane Marple of St. Mary Mead. Miss Marple appears in twelve novels, and twenty short stories; the first novel to feature her was *The Murder at the Vicarage* in 1930. The Poirot and Marple novels have been widely dramatized in feature films and television movies. *Murder on the Orient Express* (1974), *Witness for the Prosecution* (1957), *And Then There Were None* (1945), and *Death on the Nile* (1978) are a few of the successful films based on her works.

Agatha Christie has become synonymous throughout the world with England. Her quintessential “English” characters offer a charming view of a bygone era when people sat down to tea in the afternoon, tended roses in their gardens and where village life provided all the scandal one could ever want to hear!

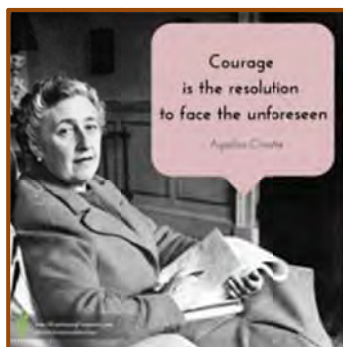
The richness of the settings in Christie's novels comes from how she drew on real places when writing her stories. Many are set in Devon where she grew up; Burgh Island, just off the coast is said to be the setting for *And Then There Were None* and *Evil Under the Sun*. Her beloved Greenway was to provide the basis for *Dead Man's Folly*, *Ordeal by Innocence* and *Five Little Pigs*.

Agatha Christie also wrote six romantic novels under the pseudonym Mary Westmacott. She also wrote non-fiction; one book *Come Tell Me How You Live*, describes her archeological travels with her husband Max and the other two are collections of poems, stories and verses, some with a religious theme. She also wrote her autobiography, which she completed in 1976. Although synonymous with crime fiction, the breadth of themes in her novels is quite extraordinary and she deserves her place as one of the best-loved writers of all time.

(from www.agathachristie.com)



Quotes -- **“The best time to plan a book is while you're doing the dishes.”**



LESSON PLANS FOR MOUSETRAP

WORKSHOP I – Theatrical Warm-up and Get students engaged!



Objective: Students will develop physical awareness as it relates to self-expression and vocal production. Stretching limbers the muscles and connective tissues so that they can move with the demands of any dramatic situation.

Procedure: Begin with movement/vocal warm-up

Start with head/neck roles

The Puppet –

1. Stand in a circle with some room around you to move.
2. Imagine a string is attached to each of your shoulders. Let the string pull your shoulders up to the ceiling. Try and touch the ceiling with your shoulders. Really try.
3. Now imagine the string is attached to your elbows. Let it lift your elbows to the ceiling. Try and touch the ceiling with your elbows.
4. Now imagine the string is attached to your wrists. Try and touch the ceiling with your wrists.
5. Now imagine the string is attached to your fingertips. Try and touch the ceiling with your fingertips. Stretch and reach to the ceiling.
6. Release your spine from the waist with a big “uhhh” sound. Hang bent over at the waist like a rag doll, relaxing everything in your body but those few muscles required to keep you on your feet.
7. Breathe a big sigh and let out any tension remaining.
8. Now roll up your spine, stacking one vertebra atop the other. Leave your head, shoulders and arms released until the very last minute when your head will float into place above the spine.
9. Breathe another big sigh and release the tension.
10. Repeat the entire exercise double time.

6-8 minutes



Christie believed that her play would run in the West End for about eight months.

VOCABULARY – COMPREHENSION AND FOCUS

Objective: Students will strengthen inter-personal skills with knowledge of vocabulary used in different ways throughout their reading. Using and understanding different vocabulary will also expedite comprehension and focus.

- **Comprehension Focus**



Look and listen for the following words in the text and in the play. Where do they occur, who says them and how are they used?

Find ways to use them in discussions about the play, the production or in a scene you write.

sleuth	a detective
Daily Woman	A woman who comes in to clean the house
surmise	to figure out
dissemble	to disguise oneself
stoke up	add fuel to a fire to make it burn hotter
tete a tete	head to head; "two heads together whispering" secretly
guineas	A guinea In US costs \$15-30. With the cost for staying at Monkswell Manor being 7 guineas in 1952, it would be about \$70 - \$80 dollars.
chilblains	An injury due to cold temperatures that, although painful, causes little or no permanent impairment. It appears as red, swollen skin that is tender, hot to the touch and may itch.
coke	the residue of coal used as fuel
tins	canned food
alibi	story verifying a suspect could not have committed the crime
amenities	features conducive to attractiveness and value, something pleasant
bilk	cheat out of
spade	a tool primarily for digging or removing and spreading soil
kindling	easily combustible material for starting a fire
bona fide	made in good faith without fraud or deceit; genuine, real, authentic
ruddy complexion	a healthy, reddish skin in the face
antiquarian	one who studies or collects antiques
solicitor	one who represents a client
discretion	use judgement, caution
four-poster	a bed with four, tall corner posts
general dogsbody	someone who does work that doesn't require skill

VOCABULARY – READING AND RESPONDING TO TEXT

Objective: Students will strengthen inter-personal skills with knowledge of vocabulary used in different ways throughout their reading and writing. Using and understanding different vocabulary will also expedite comprehension and focus. It allows for **audibility:** projecting your voice so your audience can hear and understand you; **pronunciation:** recognizing words before you say them and pronounce all sounds correctly; **articulation:** using your tongue, mouth and lips to pronounce all the sounds correctly; **vocal variety/expression:** using appropriate pitch, volume and flow.

Vocabulary

Review these terms with students and discuss them in the context of the play.

Divide class into teams. Use vocabulary cards and distribute copies to the students for example:

Plot – The arrangement of dramatic incidents or the story of the play’s action

Subtext – The meanings of dramatic incidents or the story of the play’s actions

Exposition – That part of the play that reveals what has happened before, exposing theme, characters, and previous events

Climax – The culminating events of a series of events; the point of highest dramatic tension; the decisive turning point of the action

Crisis – A decisive state of things, the turning point at which something must soon terminate

Denouement – Unknotting or unraveling of the main dramatic complication of the plot, producing the final outcome

Foreshadowing – An event that predicts future outcomes often through symbolic objects, actions or sayings

Symbolism – Investing objects with non-intrinsic meanings

Red Herrings – A term derived from the practice of drawing a smoked herring across a trail to confuse hunting dogs; later became known as something that distracts attention from the real issue

Ask students to refer to the definitions they wrote on their vocabulary cards to answer each question below. The questions encourage them to apply the meaning of the words to their own experiences.

1. What is an experience that you find **symbolic**?
2. When have you seen something that reached a **climax**?
3. Describe a **mysterious** character from a movie.
4. Tell about a **critical** event from the news.
5. What would you describe with the word **denouement**?
6. What would be a “**red herring**?”

20 minutes



*True story behind Agatha Christie's 'The Mousetrap' to be published -
[Someone to Love Us](#)*



Analyze a Theme

Allegories are similar to metaphors: in both the author uses one subject to represent another, seemingly unrelated, subject. However, unlike metaphors, which are generally short and contained within a few lines, an allegory extends its representation over the course of an entire story, novel, or poem.

This lesson plan will introduce students to the concept of allegory by using Agatha Christie's widely read play, *The Mousetrap*. Use the statement above to support students in examining the themes in *Mousetrap*. Ask them to list the traits and actions of all "characters" as they read.

When they have finished the play, ask students to state its theme in one or two sentences using the traits from their list as support. Guide a discussion, encouraging students to share their answers and evidence.

Overarching Question: How can Christie's use of allegory promote social change?

1. Divide students into teams
2. Using all the characters in *The Mousetrap* distribute "Character" cards to the teams.
3. Allow them to discuss among themselves for 4 minutes how the characters contribute to the theme and movement of the play.



19-20 minutes



WORKSHOP II

Objective: Students will develop physical awareness as it relates to self-expression and vocal production. Stretching limbers the muscles and connective tissues so that they can move with the demands of any dramatic situation.

Procedure:

- Begin with movement/vocal warm-up from Workshop I

6-8 minutes

Theatre Game: Observing Change

This exercise focuses entirely on your power of observation. It becomes more difficult for your partner as your attention to detail improves. This exercise will all also discipline the student to focus and observe the performance for comprehension and clarity.

1. Sit on the classroom floor across from a partner.
2. Spend two minutes observing everything about your partner in as much detail as possible
3. Turn away. Your partner will then change three small things about his or her appearance.
4. Turn back when your partner is ready.
5. Try and guess the three changes.
6. Switch roles.

This exercise can be done with four students at a time so that the class can observe changes.

20 minutes

Objective: Training students on how to be an effective “audience” member.

Theatre Etiquette



1. Bring in a playbill – explain the importance of reading the contents of the Playbill.

2. Bring in picture of the set – explain the importance of observing the set and how important it is to the movement and tone of the play.

Explain how important it is to respect performers on stage by being quiet and listening to the performance. Students will learn the proper way to attend a theatrical performance by being observant and focused on the playbill, the set the language and will thus have an enjoyable experience and be able to ask intelligent questions at the Q&A after the performance.

20 minutes

END Workshop II

WORKSHOP III

AFTER THE PRODUCTION

Evaluation, Reflection and Comprehension

Objective: To evaluate the learning experience of the play and comprehension quality of the experience. Reflections on student experience.

Procedure: Initiate and participate with students in collaborative discussion on various aspects of the play. A Q&A period on paper and/or verbally for the entire session.

To properly evaluate the learning experience for the students, the Education Director or Instructor can pose questions on paper from Workshops I and II and the theatre experience. This will be distributed at the end or during this Workshop to be picked up at a later by the Education Director.

40 minutes

We encourage you and your students to explore these topics further by checking out the following resources:

Internet Source, www.bookrags.com, Lesson Plans for Mousetrap of tests, essay questions, lessons, and other teaching materials!

Internet Source, www.penguin.com/static/, The Mousetrap and Other Plays by Laura Facciponti and Arthea J.S. Reed, PhD. Teachers Guide

Using Mysteries to Encourage High Levels of Thinking

Below are some ways to move students to higher levels of thinking during the reading of any of Agatha Christie's plays.

Knowledge – Have students arrange the characters and events in the mystery in order.

Comprehension – Have students classify events, describe characters, and explain precisely what has occurred

Application – Students can apply existing knowledge to the mystery by illustrating, dramatizing, and writing their interpretations

Analysis – Have students analyze, categorize, and differentiate characters and events

Synthesis – Students can collect and organize facts to form hypotheses. They can attempt to solve the mystery, using evidence presented during the play

Evaluation – Have students appraise, argue, assess, and evaluate their opinions in the process of solving the mystery

A Peek Backstage

Look for how this drawing of *The Mousetrap* set by Johnmichael Bohach, the Set Designer, compares to the actual set when you see the production.

Interview with Johnmichael Bohach:

-- *The Mousetrap* is usually done on a proscenium stage. What were some of the challenges you met by staging this at The Hazlett Theater and how did that influence your choices as a designer?

The *Mousetrap* was written with the idea that audiences would be sitting on one-side of the set from the front instead of three-sides like our space at The Hazlett Theatre. This meant that we had to create an English manor house without using any walls. After doing research into what the house might look like, I picked out the most important elements and deconstruct what we normally identify when we walk into a room - The walls were erased, the doorways were left empty and I wanted to draw focus to the most important element - the window.



The window, or rather 'the outside,' is a character all of its own. It has trapped all of the characters in the house with no way to leave. In breaking down the conventional "box-set" design, we give the audience permission to use their imaginations in filling in what they imagine Monkswell Manor might look like.

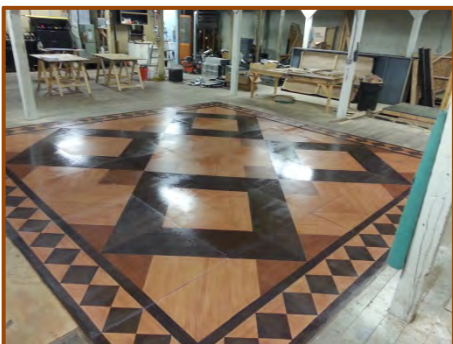
-- In your conversations with Rich Keitel, the director, what were some ideas and things you both wanted to achieve and how did you realize them?

I love working with Rich (this is our 7th production together). He is a director that really allows a designer to play with the space and explore what the environment can lend to the production. In our initial design meeting, we sat down and made a list of all of the things that were necessary - a large window, some furniture, and at least five distinct entrances/exits into the space. Beyond that, anything was possible. Once the structure were decided on - where actors would come and go and how they would move around the space - my main goal was to make it feel like you were in an English manor house. I researched architecture, floor patterns, and furnishings that might appear in the home and pulled in as much detail as we could muster.

-- What was the inspiration for your design of the set and the silhouettes?

In designing *The Mousetrap*, I wanted to pay homage to where the play got its start, as a short radio play in the 1940s. The looming gothic-inspired window was designed to mimic a cathedral radio of the period, similar to one that a family might have gathered around to listen to the initial broadcast. There are also a series of portraits hanging in the space that are reminiscent of vintage hand-cut paper silhouettes. I wanted these to call up thoughts of playing cards that you might find in a game of Clue where all the characters are suspects in Agatha Christie's "who-dun-it" or perhaps reminiscent of the opening credits to an Alfred Hitchcock film.

-- What responses do you hope to achieve from the audience when they see your set and the show?



Of course, any good design should not distract the audience for the main reason they are there - to see the play. I hope the environment we have created enhances the audiences' experience of the text and provides a backdrop of the action of the play. If it also inspires thought or after show chatter of "did you see this?" or "did you notice that?" then I have successfully done my job.

The floor of *The Mousetrap* painted by Adrienne Fisher, our scenic artist.

CHARACTERS in *THE MOUSETRAP*



Look for them in this photo and their silhouettes on the set.



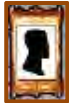
Miss Casewell - A young woman who is somewhat masculine in appearance.



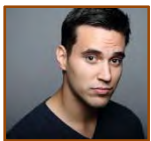
Christopher Wren - A wild-looking neurotic young man with an appreciation for fine furniture.



Mr. Paravicini - A foreign, dark, man with a flamboyant mustache and mysterious ways who also loves magic.



Mollie Ralston – an attractive young woman, married to Giles Ralston who owns and operates Monkswell Manor.



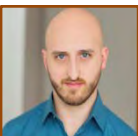
Giles Ralston - An arrogant, attractive man in his twenties. Married to Mollie.



Major Metcalf - A middle-aged, square-shouldered, military man in manner and bearing.



Mrs. Boyle – An older woman who is always in a bad temper.



Detective Sergeant Trotter - A cheerful, common-place police officer.

The Theatre Production Artists who created the show

The people who create a play are the Director, Playwright, Set Designer, Lighting Designer, Costume Designer, Sound Designer, Technical Director/Carpenter, Stage Managers, and the actors.

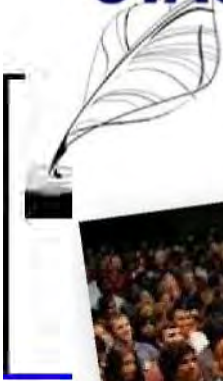


To create your adaptation, form a production team to decide how you would tell the story – what it would look like, who would direct it, and who would be cast in the roles.



Curriculum
Connections

STAGE Watching the play



Watch a play – and discover a living, breathing art form! A live theatre experience is much different from watching a movie. As an audience member, you become a part of the production. The theatre takes you to the heart of the action, where you see, hear, and feel the action as it unfolds for the first time. You are watching something that has never happened before! So, use your imagination, listen, look, feel, laugh, cry, be surprised and show your enjoyment with applause.

What's so special about watching a play?

Watching can be an emotional experience, and it can surprise you more easily than can reading the script. You get not only the art of the playwright, but also the art of those who interpreted it and directed it, acted it, etc.

(from <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20081006235215AAERMnT>).



Curriculum
Connections

How does *The Mousetrap* compare to other plays or musicals you have seen or been in?

Write a review of this production comparing it to other plays or theatre productions you have seen or been in.

Select a favorite story and adapt it into a play or take a moment from the story and create a scene for you or others to perform in the classroom.



Active Reading & Watching



There are many objects, places, and special references used by Agatha Christie and the director **to give you clues** or some **“red herrings.”** **Be a detective and Look** for and identify special things in *The Mousetrap* to bring a deeper enjoyment of the story and play.

All the characters have a special secret throughout the story. As you discover each character’s secret, note the details of the character and how that secret each affects the character by listing key actions.

Character	Secret/ Characteristics / Actions /
Giles Ralston	Where did he go before the story starts and why?



Music

Music is very important to the story. How is it used in the story and the play to create tension and excitement?

Music Connection

WWW.MAMALISA.COM THREE BLIND MICE

Write a variation of a nursery rhyme. Choose a purpose. Learn about the history of the nursery rhyme, and identify how it could be used today.

Create an original poem or song to original music or to that of a popular song. If possible, record or perform the song for the class.



Disguises and Double Identities

Several characters in the story have double identities, worn like actors' masks. Have students discuss each character's double identity and how he or she wears "a mask" in the story, occasionally dropping it to reveal her or his true identity in words in actions.



Some characters to consider are Trotter, Mollie, Paravicini, Miss Casewell, and Major Metcalf.

Students can compose letters or stories that reveal the characters true identities. For example, Mollie could pen a letter of apology to Georgie. Or, they can create two masks for each character, each revealing another element of her or his identity.



Nursery Rhyme as Plot

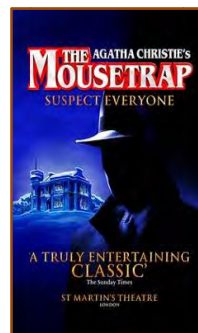
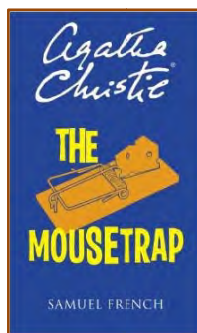
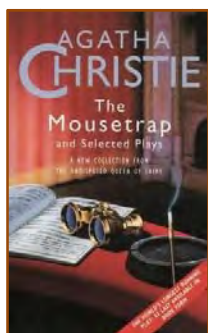
Read the nursery rhyme "Three Blind Mice" and discuss how it provides the structure for the play's plot.

Have students locate other common nursery rhymes, folk tales or famous stories used to provide the structure of popular movies or TV dramas. Examples include *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story*. Bring to class a book on children's literature and read about how nursery rhymes are constructed. Discuss why they provide a good plot structure for other types of literature, particularly drama. [Here are other nursery rhymes to explore.](#)

Selecting a Title

THE MOUSETRAP is based on the nursery rhyme "Three Blind Mice." Although Christie's original radio play shared the title of the rhyme, it was changed when Peter Saunders, Christie's longtime director and friend, remembered another moderately successful play of the same title. Is the name THE MOUSETRAP appropriate for the play? Why? What else might it have been titled?

Create a cover for the play script or a poster.



House rules

It goes without saying that when most children today hear the word “theatre” they think “Oh, MOVIE theatre.” And with that thought comes all of those things that we do at movie theatres: eat popcorn, drink noisily from soda cups, put feet on the seat, text message—and the list goes on from there.

But live theatre is just that: it’s LIVE with LIVE HUMANS who react and respond to the audience, something that we at Prime Stage think is the beauty of the theatre experience. Because of this, live theatre requires a higher level of respect between the audience and performer in order for the experience to be a positive one. As an audience member, you are the final and most important component of this production.

Thinking like a Critic



Think about these questions as you watch the show. Then, discuss and write your answers in a notebook or journal during intermission or on the ride home.

Critics play an important role in theatre. They are often the first to see the show and can write a wonderful – or very critical – review for all the world to see. Prepare your students to attend the show by “thinking like a critic.”

Actor choices

— How did they move and speak?
Did they seem like

people we know? How did they relate to other characters?

How did they relate to other characters?



Remember—it’s all about choices!

Read the following questions before the show.



Designer choices — How did the costumes, lights, or sound tell the story-and why? How did the design elements work together to support the entire production? What choices did the designers make in materials, colors, intensity, detail, etc.? What symbols were in the designs?

What things do you see in the set that the designer mentioned in his interview on page 14? Look for how this model and the actual set compares when you see the show.

Director choices — What was the style, storytelling was very clear? How did the characters, design, and play make you feel?



Model of the *The Mousetrap* set

Personal Journals



In the play, Sgt. Trotter asks the guests several questions and takes notes to remember and refer to the information. Have your students do the same!



Ask students to keep their own personal detective notebook or journal so that they can have records of their discoveries through the play. They can bring in their own journals, or you can provide them with composition books to be used as journals. Since each student is making private connections, don't read them until the end. However, provide students with sustained silent writing time to work on journals. Encourage them to write about their suspicions, predictions, and suspects. At the end of that time, check to see what the detective students have written and give students an opportunity to share their entry with the class.

Students should be free to take them home to work on as long as they bring them to class.

Sculpting the Words



Agatha Christie is a master of using language her writing. Here's a fun way to sculpt her words! What you will need. Since newspapers are important to the story, you will need a newspaper and a copy of *The Mousetrap*.

Ask your students to close their eyes and see the images as other students read a scene out loud. Using only a piece of newspaper, have each student make a sculpture of an image they saw while the scene was being read. Have your students describe their sculptures to the class or through writing. You can also ask students to describe each other's sculptures!

