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PERFORMING ARTS SOCIETY OF ACADIANA

BACKSTAGE PASS

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STUDENT
GUIDE

The Story Never Ends...

The Iliad, which is very, very old, has remained popular for generations and more. It has survived the rise and fall of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, the New Kids on the Block, and ALL of the Star Wars movies. Scholars ascribe this not just to the awesome battle scenes, the twisted love triangle that spawned the fighting, or to the ongoing interference of the various gods and goddesses, but also to the universal themes that the story contains. In short, universal means that all people can understand or relate to the concepts and feelings presented in the story. Listed below are a selection of themes from the Iliad and some of the scenarios they relate to. Study them, and then prove their universal nature by naming a movie you know that contains the same theme. Explain how the movie contains that theme or how it relates to the Iliad.

THEME: *Nostos/Homecoming:* When the Iliad begins, the Greeks have not seen their home for nine years. In addition to their desire to win the war, they struggle with their desire to return home.

FILM:

THEME: *Kleos/Glory:* Many characters in the Iliad crave glory and await the rewards that will be heaped upon them at the end of the battle. However, the drive for victory mingles with need to go home, since a returning soldier will receive a hero's welcome if he is victorious.

FILM:

THEME: *Time/Respect:* This recurring theme is seen again and again when one character fails to act with respect, and these continual conflicts keep the battle from being resolved. For instance, in book one, Agamemnon dishonors Chryses when he refuses to honor the ransom for his daughter, Chryseis.

FILM:

THEME: *Fate:* Many times in the Iliad, both gods and mortals give in to the fates and appear powerless to change a course of action. Even in the face of certain death, characters often plow ahead with what they know they are intended to do.

FILM:

THEME: *Friendship:* In war, friendships are both valuable and tested. Again and again, characters like Achilles and Patroclus support each other, then endure tragedy when a friend is sacrificed to the battle.

FILM:

wednesday OCTOBER 29, 2008

AQUILA THEATRE *presents*

THE ILIAD

All About: AQUILA



Here's what the artistic director, Peter Meineck, artistic director of Aquila Theater, says of the group that will perform the the Iliad, "...Aquila believes that the greatest works should be seen by the greatest number."

"That means that Aquila performances are always interestingly costumed and staged, with obvious current fashion trends," says PASA Executive Director Jackie Lyle, "And While the performances might differ visually from classic portrayals, Aquila's mastery of the Shakespearean and other literature is world-class. The combination of British and American theatrical techniques makes Aquila performances easy to understand and entertaining."

Therefore, it makes sense that Aquila is engaging in a seemingly impossible performance. Their production of the Iliad, based on book one of the epic poem by Homer, bridges the gap between ancient and modern by merging the Trojan War with World War II. This unique production was inspired by the picture which appears

on the cover of Stanley Lombardo's translation of the Iliad: a grimly realistic image of ships crossing each other during World War II.

When you see the play, the Greek soldiers- Achilles, Agamemnon, Odysseus, and their companions will be wearing the uniforms of Allied soldiers in World War II, and you will hear the sounds of modern warfare: booming guns, exploding bombs, hissing smoke.

The words of the play, taken directly from Lombardo's translation of Homer, remain true to the original text, and refer to the life and beliefs of the ancient Greeks.

"Our main consideration," says Meineck, "in transferring 'The Iliad' into a modern-dress production was to bring the story to life during World War II. The costuming, staging and music all grew out of this concept. We felt that creating the feel of a black-and-white movie would allow this great story to speak to a modern audience more clearly."

Here are a few other things to know about Aquila Theatre Company:

The company was founded in 1991. Aquila was originally headquartered in London, and is now based in New York City.

Each year Aquila's touring company visits between 60 and 70 American cities and produces an annual New York season.

In addition to presenting performances, Aquila Theatre conducts a number of educational programs and theater-training workshops.

CapitalOne

Storytime: Examining the Elements

In creating a theatrical production, the first element is usually the book, or spoken word. The book contains the plot, characters, thoughts, dialogue, placement of songs and dances, and some stage direction. The paragraph below contains the plot summary of Book One of The Iliad. Examine the plot summary on a separate sheet of paper. Then develop and draw a family tree diagram that shows the relationships and conflicts presented in the story

The Iliad begins with the poet calling on the Muse to sing of the wrath of Achilles and its consequences. Apollo's priest Chryses comes to the Greek (Achaian) camp and asks to ransom back his daughter Chryseis, who has been captured and taken as a prize by Agamemnon. Agamemnon refuses to release her, even for a large amount of money, and Chryses prays to Apollo to punish the Greeks, which Apollo does by sending a plague upon them. Achilles calls an assembly to ask the prophet Kalchas why Apollo is angry. First Kalchas secures Achilles' promise that he will protect him from the backlash, and then he explains the situation. Agamemnon angrily denounces Kalchas. Agamemnon agrees to give up Chryseis, who is his concubine, but demands some other "prize" to replace her. Achilles answers that another prize will come later, when Troy is sacked. Agamemnon angrily threatens to take Bryseis, the captive woman who is Achilles' prize, and Achilles responds to this slight by denouncing Agamemnon and threatening to leave the fighting and go home. Agamemnon repeats his threat to take Achilles' prize, and Achilles is about to draw his sword when Athena appears to him and stops him. Instead of attacking Agamemnon, Achilles berates him some more, and swears an oath to stay out of the battle so that the Greeks can see how important he is. Nestor tries to reconcile the two chiefs, but without much success. Achilles agrees to surrender his captive woman, Bryseis, without a fight. When the messengers from Agamemnon arrive, Achilles hands her over. He then meets with his mother, Thetis the sea-nymph, and tells her the whole story of how he has been dishonored. He asks her to convince Zeus to make the Trojans win for a while, so the Greeks will realize how much they need Achilles. Thetis leaves, and the Greeks set about returning Chryseis to her home and appeasing Apollo. Thetis meets with Zeus and explains the situation; he owes her a favor, so he agrees to give glory to the Trojans on Achilles' behalf. Hera, who favors the Greeks, expresses her displeasure over this plan, but Zeus asserts his authority and she is silenced. Hephaestus comforts his mother Hera, and soon all the gods are again at peace, and the day ends.



Since this theatrical production began as an oral history, let's examine the elements of the text. In the boxes provided, draw something that represents the events in this section of The Iliad or the theme or mood of that section.

A. PLOT The plot is the structure of the play is the actions/ events which make up the story. The plot has five parts:

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| |

Exposition:

The presentation of information that the audience needs to enter the play's action.

Rising Action: Central part of the story during which various problems and complications arise, which cause the characters to take action.

Climax: The highest turning point in the action, which pits protagonist and antagonist against each other in a final confrontation that settles all their difficulties

Falling Action: Contains the action or dialogue necessary to lead the story to a resolution or ending.

Resolution: The end of the story in which the problems are solved and the story is finished.

DISCUSSION SECTION: These questions should be answered after viewing the play.

B. STRUCTURE

Definition: The way the story is organized and presented. The order of the action and the placement of characters within it.

1. Is the structure of the play similar to or different from the book or from movies about the Trojan War that you have read or seen?
2. Would you choose different or more information to the play? Or take away different elements?
3. How did the actors encompass all the characters in the play? How did they physically or vocally transform themselves for each character?

C. SETTING

Definition: The time and place of the story. Geography, social eras and political events are all influential to a story's setting. Aquila Theatre's production of the *Iliad* is set in the modern world. Do you feel that setting the play in today's world did the poem justice?

- How did the setting of the production affect the storytelling?
- How did the costuming of the production affect the story?
- How was the lighting of the production used to tell the story?

Enhance your understanding of Aquila's epic task by completing the chart below. Use a dictionary to define each italicized word, then create a non-linguistic representation or picture of each definition. Finally, re-assess Aquila's mission statement. Once you better understand it, how would you re-write it?

| Definition | Non-Linguistic Representation |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Cannon</i> | |
| <i>Collaborating</i> | |
| <i>Commitment</i> | |
| <i>Technology</i> | |
| <i>Herculean</i> | |

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

Think you might want to be an actor? Then consider this advice from William Shakespeare, a multi-tasking playwright/actor/director, which is still relevant even though it is 400 years old. Although Shakespeare set down his code for actors in Act III, Scene 2 of the play Hamlet, the rules given here are stated in simple language.

- NEVER turn your back to the audience. If the audience can't see your facial expressions and body language, they won't understand your character.
- Speak loudly and clearly, and stick to what is written in the script.
- Exaggerate facial expressions slightly – a stage is not a movie screen, and people in the back row need to see things, too.
- Keep it real. Many directors say "Remember to act like a human being" as a way of encouraging their actors to avoid unnecessary movements or too-dramatic displays of emotion. The audience should believe you ARE your character, not just someone pretending to be that character.
- Become your character. Be able to show-not-tell, the audience your age, social status, and likes and dislikes by the way you move your body and use your voice.
- Learn to do nothing effectively. A good actor knows that they must appear to be part of a scene even when they are not speaking. They will develop ways of remaining active but not taking attention away from the others on the stage.
- Avoid being a scene-stealer, or an actor who makes up things to do that are NOT in the script, simply to get the audience's attention.

Also, remember that being an actor is not always a glamorous job. Before an actor gets to walk down the red carpet with flashbulbs popping, he or she must study their craft just like a carpenter, hairstylist, computer technician, or lawyer would. Many hopeful actors earn theater degrees in college, where they take part in many plays and participate in "workshops" in which they interpret the rules for acting and critique performances. Every actor must compile a resume, which lists special skills (like dancing or singing) and performance experience (such as dates of plays, names of characters portrayed, etc.). In addition, an actor's resume tells his height, weight, hair color, Resumes are accompanied by



Scene from Aquila Theatre's The Iliad

headshots, which are photos taken to show a detailed study of the actor's face. While people in many other professions go to interviews when they hope to get jobs, actors go to auditions, where they perform scenes and individual pieces called monologues for directors. A director may also have an actor engage in improvisational exercises as a way of judging their performance skills.

Finally, actors have to gain experience before they can expect fame or even job security. For instance, an Aquila Theatre actor may gain experience in a touring company before becoming a member of the permanent theater's residential company. Just as an ad for a secretarial job might state that experience is preferred, actors might also be more likely to get an Aquila Theatre audition if they have previous experience in an acting company.

Even after an actor is hired or becomes part of a group like Aquila Theatre, their work is never done. A professional actor will often continue taking acting lessons from professional teachers. They must learn lines, be fitted for costumes, rehearse for performances and audition for new jobs. Actors must do exercises to keep their voices flexible and expressive, and many engage in some form of exercise to keep their bodies limber for performances. Sometimes, a role might require an actor to change their physical appearance, either by training their body or by applying stage makeup. An actor's day may not be typical, but it is work all the same.



There are actually many options for a young actor looking for training. A community theater in your area may offer open auditions. Or, consider these websites.

- UL Lafayette's Performing Arts Homepage, lists expectations for student actors as well as information about college-level programming. UL sometimes offers student acting workshops. Reach the PFAR at <http://arts.louisiana.edu/degree/pfar/>
- Nationwide index of theater-training summer camps can be found at: www.mysummercamps.com/camps/Arts_Camps/Theater/index.html
- UL Lafayette's Career Services Center: "What do I do with a degree in Theater?" is an interesting read. Check it out at: careerservices.louisiana.edu/students/majors/html/theater.htm

Check Your Aquila Expertise

After working through this study guide, you can test yourself with the cloze-inspired passage below. Simply complete each statement and then check to see if your answer appears in the word search puzzle. If it does, then you have answered correctly. As they say in the theater, break a leg!

1. King Agamemnon is the leader of the _____ people during the Trojan War.
2. One of the goals in Aquila Theatre's mission statement is to broaden the classical _____; the Iliad is part of this.
3. Many Greek gods and goddesses have a hand in the outcome of the Trojan War. Among them is _____ who takes a special interest when his priest Chryses asks for his intervention.
4. Since Aquila Theatre does Shakespearian-style acting, the audience will be asked to use language and imagination to fill in for the fact there is little or no _____.
5. The Aquila Theatre production of The Iliad was inspired by a photo taken during the D-Day invasion. Therefore, its setting has been moved from the ancient world and now takes place during _____.
6. Amongst the many things Shakespeare advises an actor never to do, not turning your _____ to the audience is chiefly important.
7. The job of selecting and casting actors is assigned to the _____ of a play.
8. The Greek word for glory is _____; this is one of the universal themes present in The Iliad.
9. Because even the immortal gods in The Iliad sometimes act in seemingly dangerous manners when they believe they cannot escape their destiny, one could say that a theme of The Iliad is "You can't fight _____."
10. In Shakespeare's day, actors wore everyday clothes instead of _____; Aquila Theater tends to follow this practice.

V R L J H F E E E Y S D K Y P
 Y P O A W H E H T E B L V K M
 D Y D Z R M K W M A E H C K L
 O X P T D A H U J O F R E R A
 L W V E Z L T D S A Z Z C Q V
 U T C S N S S R D V B Y G M O
 T R Q R O I I N B F R V R I Y
 C O A C A X L V U W N A E N K
 C T A P O W C A N N O N E L Y
 V C C D O B D K C A B X K V I
 T E P T S L D L U H A X V N R
 F R O W G V L V R W Z S C G K
 T I H I P K Y O L O D I R X X
 O D S D S F V S H P W N I Q H
 J H N Q R U E K H E K W Y N T

BACKSTAGE PASS

Any play or stage show is made up of more than actors. Even in an improvised production, many jobs must be completed behind the scenes, backstage, or in a theater office. Study the list of production staff and their jobs below and consider it carefully when you watch Aquila Theatre perform. Actors are the most visible part of any production, but without the production staff, there would literally be no place for them to perform.

Producer Handles most budgeting for the show and finds investors, often called “angels,” to provide the money needed to develop a play. The producer may hire the director and many of the key production staff.

Director Selects actors, assigns their roles, sets a rehearsal schedule, oversees rehearsals, develops a vision for the production and sees that it is carried out.

Assistant Director Provides support for the director and acts as a liaison to the crew.

Scenic Artist (Designer)

Envisions sets, costumes, and lighting and develops plans for all of these.

Technical Director Works hand in hand with scenic director, responsible for executing the designs for sets, costumes and lighting.

Stage Manager In charge backstage during rehearsals and performances. Develops cue and command sheets for lights, props, etc.

Grips Change scenery and alter stage as needed during a production.

Property Chief Collects furniture and props requested, stores and cares for these items, organizes props backstage, and hands props to actors as they go onstage.

Business Manager Pays bills, prints and sells tickets, develops and prints programs

Publicity Manager Promotes the show in the community (including radio, television, and print advertisements). Any posters or other materials made to promote the show come from this office.

House Manager Responsible for seating and comfort of audience and supervision of ushers.

Ushers Direct patrons to their seats and distribute programs, assist as necessary during a performance.



The basic rule of behavior: Theater behavior falls somewhere in between that expected for a church and a movie. If you wouldn't do it in one of the above don't do it here.

THEATER ETIQUETTE

DO turn your cell phone off.

DON'T eat or drink in the theater unless refreshments are sold there.

DO sit in your assigned seat.

DO arrive on time.

DON'T disturb those around you (even if you are bored).

DON'T sing along at an opera or musical.

DON'T shout rude things at the performers. Treat them as you would want to be treated if you were onstage.

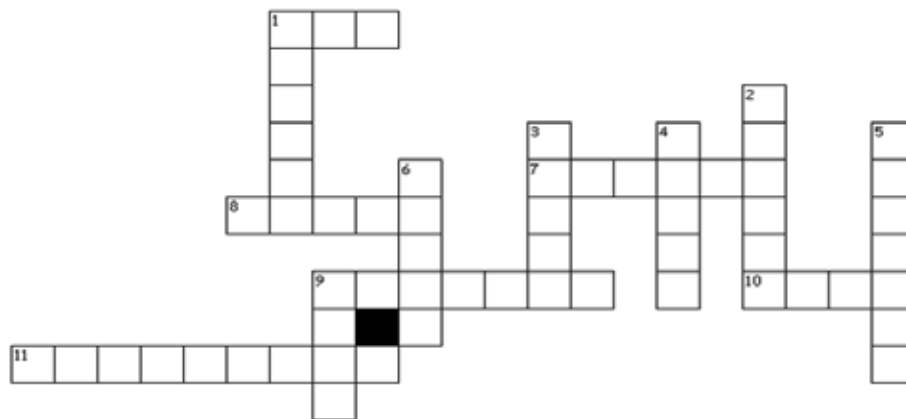
DON'T forget to enjoy yourself and learn new things.

DO remain in your seat until intermission.

DO clap at the end of an act, a scene, after a wonderful moment called a “show-stopper”, or at the end of a production. If you are unsure, clap when others do.



Good Theater Behavior: DO YOU KNOW THE DO'S AND DON'TS?



ACROSS

- Clap at the end of a _____.
- Good theater behavior falls between that expected for a _____ and for a movie theater.
- Always remember to _____ new things.
- Clap after an especially amazing part in the play called a “show-_____.”
- The only time you should leave your _____ is during intermission.
- Your _____ should always be turned off.

DOWN

- _____ on time.
- If you are unsure of when to clap, clap when _____ do.
- Clap at the end of a _____.
- Never eat or _____ unless refreshments are sold in the theater.
- Pay attention during the production. Even if you are not interested, sit _____ to avoid disturbing others.
- Always remember to _____ yourself.
- Do not _____ along at an opera or musical.

SPECIAL THANKS TO



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ANSWERS TO “Good Theater Behavior”

| Across | Down |
|---------------|------------|
| 1. act | 1. arrive |
| 7. church | 2. others |
| 8. learn | 3. scene |
| 9. stopper | 4. drink |
| 10. seat | 5. quietly |
| 11. cellphone | 6. enjoy |
| | 9. sing |

AQUILA THEATRE —
STUDENT PERFORMANCE
“THE ILIAD”
WEDNESDAY
OCTOBER 29
10:30 pm

EVENING PERFORMANCE
“The Comedy of Errors”
PARC INTERNATIONAL
Thursday
OCTOBER 30
7:00 pm

ANSWERS TO “Check you Aquila Expertise”

- Greek
- cannon
- Apollo
- set
- World War II
- back
- director
- kleos
- fate
- costumes

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