



# THE MAGIC TREE HOUSE **SHOWTIME WITH SHAKESPEARE**

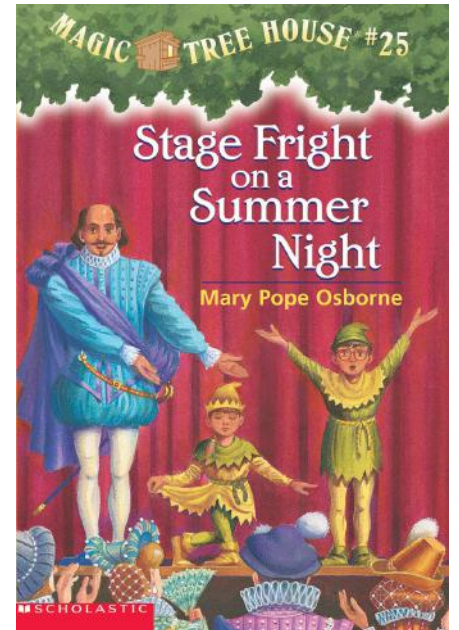
2019-2020  
**AUDIENCE  
GUIDE**

## **ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE**

Siblings Jack and Annie, travel back in time in their magic tree house to London, England in 1601. They are there to solve a riddle: "To find a special magic, you must step into the light and without wand, spell, or charm turn daytime into night." The kids navigate through the crowded and smelly London Bridge and as they make their way they see a sign that reads, "A play at the Globe Theatre!" Jack knows how much Annie loves acting, so he convinces her to check it out. When they arrive at the theatre, a man name Will approaches Jack and asks him to be an actor in his play. Jack is nervous about being onstage in front of other people but Annie is eager to participate. Jack's stage fright gets worse and worse. He almost leaves the theatre he is so nervous. Following some encouraging words from Will, both Jack and Annie deliver performances that the audience loves and shows with loud applause. They find out that Queen Elizabeth I is in the audience and loves the play too. Everyone is happy, especially Jack and Annie because they realize that the Queen helped them solve their riddle. Will tries to get the siblings to stay in London and join his troupe of actors but Jack and Annie need to go back home to eat dinner with their parents. When they are back home they realize that their new friend Will is actually William Shakespeare, one of the most famous playwrights of all time!

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## **ABOUT THE PRODUCTION**

*Showtime with Shakespeare* is based on the book, *Stage Fright on a Summer Night*, part of the Magic Tree House series created by children's book author Mary Pope Osborne. The musical's book and lyrics are written by Will Osborne and Jenny Laird. Music and additional lyrics are by Randy Courts. This production was produced by New Jersey Performing Arts Center and George Street Playhouse. *Showtime with Shakespeare* is written in the genre of Hip Hop Theatre.

## **SUPPORTED BY:**



Beyond Words:

# WHAT TO KNOW

## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

William Shakespeare, also known as the Bard of Avon, was born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. Over his lifetime, Shakespeare wrote about 40 plays and over 150 sonnets (long poems). He wrote tragedies, romantic comedies, and history plays. Shakespeare's plays are still some of the most produced plays in the world, even more than 400 years after his death.

The play includes the line, "Did anybody here see the Scottish play?" This is a reference to Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*. It is an old theatre superstition that it is bad luck to say the name "Macbeth" when inside a theater, unless you are rehearsing the play or performing it. It is sometimes believed that if said there will be a curse on the production. Therefore, people use "the Scottish play" instead of "Macbeth."

## HIP HOP THEATRE

Hip Hop Theatre is a genre of theatre that uses all or most of the four elements of hip hop (MCing (rapping), breakdancing, DJing, and graffiti writing) in a theatrical performance. Hip Hop Theatre began in the early 1990s and the genre continues to evolve as different artists make more art. Today one of the most famous artists creating Hip Hop Theatre is Lin-Manuel Miranda. He wrote the hit Broadway musicals, *In the Heights* and *Hamilton: An American Musical*.

## WHAT IS STAGE FRIGHT?

When you get scared, your body releases stress hormones that increase your breathing rate and your pulse. You might experience shortness of breath, your heart beating fast, or sweating. Researchers talk about how people react to stress in five categories: fight (run toward), flight (run away), freeze, appease (do what is being asked), dissociate (unable to focus on what is going on). A few ways that social workers recommend you deal with stress include: noticing how your body is feeling, taking a few deep breaths, counting down from 10, pinching yourself, taking a walk, and telling other people how you feel using "I" statements. It's important to realize that people are better able to help you when you can tell them what is going on. However, not all stress is bad. Some stress, in small doses, can help you stay alert and motivated.

## HIP HOP AND SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare's plays deal with experiences that define the human condition: love, hate, jealousy, fear, sadness, etc. Since its beginning the genre, or movement of hip hop has navigated the same topics. Most MCs or rappers write about their experiences growing up in big cities (Jay-Z and Tupac Shakur), relationships and love (MC Lyte), and social activism (Lauryn Hill). Shakespeare and Hip Hop Theatre are also often connected because the writing style in both have rhythmic and rhyming elements to them. Shakespeare often wrote in what is called prose or verse while rappers also focus on rhythm and metaphor when they write lyrics. Both Shakespeare and rappers are known for complex, inventive and vivid writing. They all share a love for words!

Learn how to write your own rhymes here:  
<https://www.flocabulary.com/warp/intro/>

## 1600'S LONDON

London was the biggest and wealthiest city in England at this time period. And, it was growing in size every day. People from other parts of England and Europe were moving there to find work. The population grew from about 50,000 people in 1530 to 225,000 in 1605. This rapid growth made it hard to live in London. It was overcrowded, dirty, and people got sick because they were living in close quarters. The air quality was poor due to all the smoke from burning coal. Streets were made of packed dirt and when it rained it was dangerous and messy. Global trade brought bananas, coffee, hot chocolate, tea, and spices to England. However, these were expensive items and most people could not afford them. Theatre was a very popular form of entertainment during this time. Everybody went to see theatre - from chimney sweeps to members of the royal court. Plays would be performed during the daytime because the number of candles needed to light the theatre was expensive and dangerous.

Learn more about London in the 1600s here:  
<http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/timeline/accessvers/1600s/index.html>

# ACTIVITIES

## WHO MAKES A PLAY?

There are many different types of artists and technicians who work together to create a play. Which one sounds interesting to you? Why?



### ACTOR

The person who takes on the role of a character in the performance.

### CHOREOGRAPHER

The person who creates the dance and movement for the performers.

### SET DESIGNER

The person who creates what the stage will look like including what walls and furniture will be on stage.

### COSTUME DESIGNER

The person who creates the clothes for the performance.

### SOUND DESIGNER

The person who creates the sound and music that is played during the performance.

### PLAYWRIGHT

The person who writes the script for the performance.

### DIRECTOR

The person who tells the actors in the play or performance where to move and what emotion to show when they speak.

### LIGHTING DESIGNER

The person who creates what kind of light will be onstage during the performance.

## BOOK OR PLAY?

Go to your local library and borrow *Stage Fright on a Summer Night* by Mary Pope Osborne. It is #25 in the Magic Tree House series. Read it to yourself, a friend, or have someone else read it to you. After you see the play, compare and contrast the book *Stage Fright on a Summer Night* with the play *Showtime with Shakespeare*. What was similar across the two? What was different between the two? How did the theatre performance feel different from the story you read? Using specific examples, explain which version of the story you enjoyed more and why?

## CONQUERING FEAR

Take a moment to think, then draw a picture or create a collage that shows a time when you felt afraid. How can you use different colors to show how you were feeling? (i.e. blue often shows sadness, red often shows anger.) Share the drawing with someone in your house. You can use these questions to help talk about your drawing.

- What made you feel afraid? What happened?
- How did your body feel when you were afraid?
- What helped you feel less afraid?
- In the future, how can that experience help you deal with another situation where you might feel afraid?

## MAKE A PLAY

With your family, or friends, or stuffed animals, turn any story into a play. The difference between writing a story and performing it is that the story is all told through characters talking to each other and acting out the actions. Actors have a toolbox of skills that they use when performing to show different emotions – their faces, their bodies, their voices. You've got these tools too!

## TALK ABOUT IT

On your way home from the production ask those you went with what they thought about the performance. Then have them ask you the same questions. Come up with your own questions too!

- What moment do you most remember? Why?
- What parts made you laugh? Why?
- What did you like about the set, costumes, dancing, and music?

## YOU, THE AUDIENCE

Audience members play a special and important role in the performance. The performers are very aware of the audience while they perform and each performance calls for different audience responses. Lively bands, musicians and dancers may desire audience members to clap and move to the beat. Other performers require silent focus on the stage and will want an audience to applaud only when they have completed a portion of their performance. As you enjoy the show, think about being a part of the performance. You are part of a community of audience members and you all work together to create your theater experience.

- What are the differences between attending a live performance and going to a movie or watching television?



## ABOUT PORTLAND OVATIONS

Founded in 1931, Portland Ovarions produces dynamic performing arts events including classical music, jazz, opera, dance, theater, and Broadway. We believe that cultural enrichment should be high quality and accessible to all. Ovarions collaborates with other nonprofit organizations, education systems, and the business sector to promote lifelong learning while celebrating the power and virtuosity of the performing arts. We bring the exhilaration of the performing arts into our communities with free events as part of Ovarions Offstage, connecting artists and audiences. Join us at unexpected “art happenings,” classroom workshops, masterclasses, community discussions, and pre-performance lectures to explore together the relevance and connection of the performing arts to our lives.