

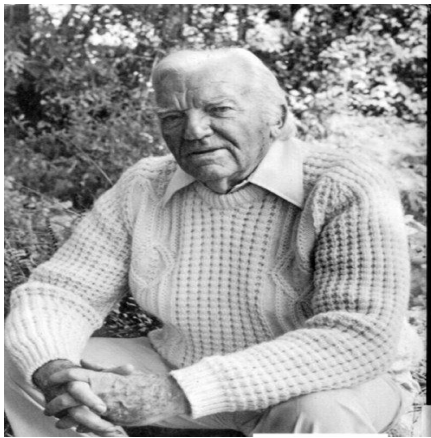
Town Hall Theatre's
Island of the Blue Dolphins

Teacher Resource Guide
Brittany Hinkle, Education Director

ABOUT THE PLAY

This is the remarkable story of a young Indian girl who, during the evacuation of her people's island, jumped ship to stay with her young brother who had been left behind. Told in a traditional native storytelling style, this is the gripping story of how young Karana battled the elements, wild dogs and sea elephants to survive nearly eighteen years on her own.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Scott O 'Dell (<http://www.scottodell.com/>)

“Los Angeles was a frontier town when I was born there. It had more horses than automobiles (we went to town in a rubber-tired buggy with a red fringe on top) and more jackrabbits than people. The first sound I remember was a wildcat scratching on the roof of our house.

We moved a lot, but never far. To San Pedro, which was a part of Los Angeles, and Rattlesnake Island, across the bay from San Pedro, where three-masted ships sailed by. To Claremont, just east of Los Angeles, at the foot of Mount Baldy-sagebrush country where descendants of the first Spanish settlers lived. And to Julian, an old gold-mining town southeast of Los Angeles on the Mexican border, in the heart of the Oriflamme Mountains, the ancestral home of the Diegueno Indians.

That is why, I suppose, the sound of the sea and the feel of the frontier are in my books. And why many of the people I have written about are Indians, Spaniards, and Chicanos.

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Stories from My Memories

Island of the Blue Dolphins, though it is based upon the true story of a girl who lived alone on a California island for eighteen years, came from the memory of my years at San Pedro and Dead Man's Island, when, with other boys my age, I voyaged out on summer mornings in search of adventure.

One day we left the landlocked world and went to sea, each of us on separate logs. From the forests of Oregon, the logs had been towed into the harbor in great rafts. They were twelve feet long or longer, rough with splinters, and covered with tar. But to each of us young Magellans, they were proud canoes, dugouts fashioned by ax and fire, graceful, fierce-prowed--equal to any storm.

We freed them from the deep-water slips where they waited for the sawmill. Paddling with our hands, we set to sea--to the breakwater and even to Portuguese Bend. We returned hours later, having circumnavigated the watery world. Some mornings, in sun or rain, we searched for devilfish among the sea-washed rocks off Dead Man's Island.

Stories from My Personal History

Many of my stories, however, did not come from memory. Take *Sarah Bishop*, for instance. During the American Revolution, in the midst of the battle for New York, Sarah fled from the city and found refuge in a cave on Long Pond in northern Westchester County. (From the windows of the house I live in now I can see her cave on the hillside. Children come from all over to visit it in spring and summer.) What Sarah did during those years she hid from the war I can only imagine.



Whether remembered or imagined, all of my stories are in a certain sense written not for children, but for myself, out of a personal need. Yet all of them exist in the emotional area that both children and adults share.

Writing stories you hope children will read is more rewarding than writing for adults. Adults are not good correspondents. But if children like your books, they respond with thousands of letters.

What My Readers Want to Know

Children ask a lot of questions. One of the most frequent is, "What's the most important thing a writer should have?" Anthony Trollope, the great English storyteller, said that it was a piece of sticking plaster with which to fasten your pants to a chair. I agree. Writing is hard, harder than digging a ditch, and it requires patience."

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The Real Karana- Lost Woman of San Nicholas Island



Few figures in California history have the enduring appeal of the Lone Woman of San Nicolas Island. Her story embodies the demise of native peoples and traditions following Spanish and American colonization.

In the early 1800's, Russian and Aleut sea otter hunters clashed violently with Indian people living on remote San Nicolas Island. The mission padres requested that these Indians be moved to the mainland for their own safety, and in 1835 a schooner was sent to pick them up.

As the ship was being loaded, a woman discovered her child had been left in the village and went back to find it. Meanwhile a strong wind arose. The ship was forced to sail and the woman was abandoned on the island, her child apparently killed by wild dogs. The schooner was unable to go back for her, and she spent eighteen years alone on the barren, windswept island. She never saw her fellow islanders again.

In 1853 when she had been all but forgotten, a party headed by sea otter hunter George Nidever found the Indian woman alive and well on San Nicolas. Clad in a dress of cormorant skins sewn together, she lived in a shelter made from whale bones. She was pleased to see her rescuers and willingly went with them, bringing along only a few possessions--water baskets, bone needles, and the feathered dress.

Nidever brought her home to live with him and his wife in Santa Barbara, where she caused quite a sensation. She enjoyed the company of the steady stream of visitors who came to see her. No one, including the local Chumash Indians, could understand her language, which was related to that of native peoples in the Los Angeles area.

In town, the new living conditions and altered diet affected the woman's health. She contracted dysentery and died after she had been on the mainland for only seven weeks. The Lone Woman was baptized conditionally with the Christian name Juana Maria (her Indian name is unknown) and buried in an unmarked grave at Mission Santa Barbara.

It was said that the mission priest sent her feathered dress to Rome, but researchers have found no indication that it was ever received by the Vatican Museum. The 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire destroyed the woman's water basket and bone needles, which were part of the collections of a museum there. Now only memories remain of the Lone Woman and her tragic story.

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PRE PERFORMANCE

PERFORMANCE SPECIFIC VOCABULARY:

(As listed in Merriam-Webster Dictionary, <http://www.m-w>)

League- any of various units of distance from about 2.4 to 4.6 statute miles

Abalone-A type of marine snail.

Cormorants- a large water bird, its' appearance makes it seem almost reptilian.

Aleuts- a member of a people of the Aleutian and Shumagin islands and the western part of the Alaskan Peninsula.

Pelts- an animal skin stripped of hair or wool for tanning.

Squalls-To cry out loudly and full of emotion.

Cove- a small sheltered inlet or bay, a leveled area sheltered by hills or mountains.

Omen- an occurrence or phenomenon believed to portend a future event

Tide- the alternate rising and falling of the surface of the ocean and of water bodies (as gulfs and bays) connected with the ocean that occurs usually twice a day.

Shaman- priest or priestess who uses magic for the purpose of curing the sick, divining the hidden, and controlling events

Ancestors- one from whom a person is descended and who is usually more remote in the line of descent than a grandparent

Earthquake- a shaking or trembling of the earth.

Serenity-the quality or state of being calm.

Yucca-a type of plant with large white flowers.

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THEATRE VOCABULARY LIST

(As listed in the Stage One educational tools website, www.stageone.com)

Acting: pretending to be a character.

Beginning, Middle, End: Three parts of a story.

Characters: A person portrayed in a drama novel or artistic piece.

Conflict: The struggle between the opposing forces, ideas or interests in a play.

Courage: The spirit that enable one to face danger and fear with confidence and resolution, bravery.

Dialogue: A conversation that takes place between two or more characters that expresses thoughts, feelings and actions.

Facial Expression: The manner in which an actor uses his or her face to portray an emotion.

Improvisation: Using a character to express thoughts and feeling or to act out a scenario without prior rehearsals.

Movement: How the actor uses his or her body to create a character.

Plot/Storyline: The action of the story, the development of the story, has a beginning, middle and end.

Point of View/Perspective: Feelings, opinions, and experiences that effect the reader's outlook.

Setting: Time and place where a story occurs.

Teamwork: Working together as a team.

Three tools of an actor: Voice, body and the imagination.

Vocal Expression: The way the actor uses his or her voice to express an emotion

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THEMES TO LOOK FOR

Courage	Wilderness Survival
Overcoming fears	Loneliness
Family	Indigenous Cultures
Growing Up	Adventure
True friendship	Patience
Recognizing one's strengths	

POST PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION

1. In your mind did you think that Karana would ever get to leave the Island of the Blue Dolphins? Why or Why not?
2. Karana feared making a weapon because she had always heard that if she did it would break in her hands when she needed it most. Do you think it was unintelligent of her to think in that way? Why or why not?
3. The Island of the Blue Dolphins was told in a traditional Native American storytelling style, what were your thoughts about this style versus a more traditionally used straight acting style? How does it compare with other plays you have seen?

WRITING PROMPTS

1. If you knew ahead of time that you were going to be stranded on a desert island for a long time, whom would you bring with you? What if you could only have one person?
2. During your time stranded on the island you will need tools and several things for your survival. What necessities would you need and how could you go about making them from things that you could find on your new island home.
3. All of the tribes' people made up myths to explain the things that they could not understand. For example, they thought that two serpents' arms held up the earth and when the serpent moved the result was an earthquake. If you visited an ocean for the first time what might you infer about your experience?

TIMELINE

Island of the Blue Dolphins, by Scott O'Dell

