

Town Hall Theatre's
THE CAY

Teacher Resource Guide
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ABOUT THE PLAY

As *The Cay* opens, the threat of World War II has reached the Caribbean island on which Phillip Enright's American family lives. To escape danger, 11-year-old Phillip and his mother board a freighter, which is torpedoed by a German submarine. As the ship goes down, Phillip is struck on the head and wakes up on a raft with an elderly West Indian sailor named Timothy. Phillip soon loses his sight as a result of the blow to his head. The two land on an isolated island, where Timothy provides for their survival. Over several months, Phillip overcomes his racist upbringing and Timothy trains the boy to be self-reliant. When a hurricane strikes, Timothy is killed while protecting his friend. After Phillip survives for another month, he is rescued and carries with him the legacy of Timothy's survival skills, wisdom, and friendship.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Theodore Taylor



(This is an excerpt from a commentary written by Mr. Taylor on his life experiences. The commentary can be read at www.theodoretaylor.com)

Never in my childhood did I want to become a writer. Early on, I had a thing for trees — tall, leafy ones. I climbed the highest ones I could find; then I built houses in them. My father once asked, "Do you plan to become a monkey?" That would have been fine, swinging from limb to limb. Or perhaps become an explorer? I sought out drainpipes to investigate and once I got stuck in one. The fire department unstuck me.

I grew up where the air was fresh and clean. The fields and creeks of North Carolina were my playgrounds, I roamed as free as rabbits and birds and deer. With three or four other boys I played Huck Finn and rafted down the Catawba when I was no more than nine. Never once did my mother ask, "Where are you going?" Off to explore, of course. A very religious lady, she trusted God that I'd come safely home. Several times I came close to joining Him. With another kid I once crossed an abandoned wooden bridge that had been built during the Civil War.

The earth was a hundred feet below and rotten pieces of wood kept falling away beneath my feet. Exploration! A writer needs to explore, mentally and physically.

A few years later we moved to Virginia, I would lie in bed listening to the ships' whistles from the Elizabeth River. Sailing on the night tide, the vessels were bound for exotic places around the world. I wanted to be aboard them, to be a sailor, go to London and Conakry and Durban and Hong Kong and the Java Sea. With the Second World War, that dream came true. I love to read and write sea stories.

But well before December 7, 1941, something happened that turned my life around. At thirteen, green as the creek bank rushes, ill equipped, I began writing for money. Fifty cents a week was my reward for a page and a half of double-spaced sports copy. I reported the week's athletics at my high school for the Sunday edition of the *Portsmouth Star*. Late each Saturday afternoon I'd ride the streetcar to town. I was in awe of the sports editor, who said I was the rawest recruit he'd ever had.

These were Depression times, beginning in the late 1920s, and we were a rather poor family. My father didn't have a steady job for six years. But there are many long-lasting riches that are not material. I did all sorts of things to make money: I plucked steaming chickens at a local grocery; delivered dry cleaning and dental plates on my bicycle; crabbed Paradise Creek from a homemade rowboat, selling the blues for a nickel each; worked as a "cornerman" for a group of boxers, wielding a sponge and applying collodion to eyebrow cuts. Not realizing it, I was training to become a writer, a worker in words. I tell aspiring young writers to do diverse things, to go to as many places as possible, to watch and listen.

I look back on a lifetime at the typewriter, many typewriters in many places, and marvel at how lucky I've been. On those keys I have two-fingered sports and crime and love and death. I've pecked out books for adults and young readers, as well as scripts for radio, TV, and feature films. I've been so very, very lucky. Here I am, still learning the three C's of good storytelling: character, conflict, and construction. And I'm still pecking away.

PRE PERFORMANCE **PERFORMANCE SPECIFIC VOCABULARY:**

refinery - An industrial plant for purifying a crude substance, such as petroleum or sugar.

blackout - The concealment or extinguishment of lights that might be visible to enemy aircraft during an air raid.

navigate - To plan, record, and control the course and position of a ship or aircraft.

navigation- The theory and practice of navigating, especially the charting of a course for a ship or an aircraft.

schooner - A fore-and-aft rigged sailing vessel having at least two masts, with a foremast that is usually smaller than the other masts.

massive - Large or imposing, as in quantity, scope, degree, intensity, or scale

lurch - To roll or pitch suddenly or erratically

catchment - A structure, such as a basin or reservoir, used for collecting or draining water.

connive - To scheme; plot.

treacherous - Marked by unforeseen hazards; dangerous or deceptive

flay - To strip off the skin or outer covering of.

debris - The scattered remains of something broken or destroyed; rubble or wreckage.

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 affect 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

THEMES WITHIN THE PLAY

Courage

Friendship

Family

Growing Up

Racism

Cultural differences

Hate

Recognizing one's strengths

Respect

Perseverance

Dedication

**POST PERFORMANCE
DISCUSSION**

1. Was Phillip a good friend to Timothy? Why or why not?
2. Was Timothy a good friend to Phillip? Why or why not?
3. What sorts of things did Phillip learn on *The Cay*?
4. How does prejudice begin? Are all prejudice people bad? Why or why not?
5. How do you know if someone is prejudice? Have you ever experienced prejudice or known anyone who has? If so, what happened?

WRITING PROMPTS

1. What would have happened if Timothy had lived? Would Phillip have treated him differently once they were off the island? Would Phillip have remained Timothy's friend?
2. What might have happened if there was a third party trapped on the island, besides the cat? What if the third person was Caucasian...or African American... or Caribbean...or a woman of either ethnicity?
3. Is it fair that Timothy died? Would that have happened in real life? Why or why not?
4. How would the story have been different if Phillip hadn't ever lost his sight? Would he still need Timothy?
5. Who do you need? Think about a time when you really needed a friend or family member. Did they come though for you or not? Write a short monologue about how this experience felt and share with the class or a fellow student.