

Study Guide for *Instant*



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Introduction

Geordie Theatre is Montreal's leading English-language professional theatre for audiences of all ages, entertaining and engaging the imaginations of children and their families since 1980! Over the course of eight months, our 2Play tour travels to schools throughout Eastern Canada, from Ottawa to the Magdalen Islands.

Geordie Theatre is located on the unceded Indigenous lands of the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) nation of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Tiotià:ke (known as Montréal) has existed as a meeting place of many First Nation peoples, including but not limited to the Abenaki, Anishinaabeg (Algonquin), and the Huron-Wendat. We extend our deepest respect to the elders of these communities and to all Indigenous peoples who carry the history of this island's land and waters – caring for it and calling it home. We are honoured and privileged to share stories on this land. We wish to also acknowledge that we are grateful to those seeking sustainable solutions to our global climate crisis, so that we may continue to inspire and challenge our audiences near and far.

A note on acknowledging territory: As part of our visit to your community, a Land Acknowledgment is made at the beginning of the performance. This information is researched and customized for each region we visit and derived personally from our touring actors. **For more information on indigenous teachings and guiding principles, visit pages 16 and 17 of the guide.**

About the Study Guide

This study guide was created as a tool for teachers to help introduce students to the world of theatre, as well as engage them more deeply with the themes and concepts developed in *Instant*. The guide contains a synopsis, character and setting information, a summary of the themes and concepts at play, as

well as discussion questions and activities that can be implemented in the classroom before and after the performance.

While listed in a suggested order, we invite teachers to adapt activities based on the needs of their classroom and curriculum. The activities include presentations and handouts that are class-ready for easy distribution to students. Additionally, most activities can be adapted to an online-learning platform.

To further incorporate *Instant* in your curriculum, the text is available through [Playwrights Canada Press](#).

Note on the Content & Resources

Suicide Prevention and Cyberbullying: While it is not the central theme of *Instant*, there is an allusion to a suicide attempt in the climax of the play as a result of cyberbullying. We understand that this may be challenging for some faculty and students, and trust that teachers will be cognoscente of how this can be approached in and outside of the classroom.

Resources for Suicide Prevention and Cyberbullying

[Suicide Prevention, National Association of School Psychologists](#)

[How Social Media Affects Teenagers, Child Mind Institute](#)

[How Media Literacy Can Prevent Online Harm, Cyberbullying Research Center](#)

For further reading... [When Loss Gets Personal, Discussing Death through Literature in the ELA Classroom](#), Edited by Michelle M Fulter and Steven T Bickmore

Alcohol Consumption: Meredith, Rosie, and Jay attend a house party where underage drinking is taking place. Rosie drinks to the point of inebriation and is embarrassed by her peers.

QEP Competencies

English Language Arts

Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn

Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts

Produces texts for personal and social purposes

Cross-Curricular Competencies

Uses creativity

Cooperates with others

Communicates appropriately

Arts Education - Dramatic Arts Competencies

Creates dramatic works

Appreciates dramatic works

To invent and interpret short scenes

Arts Education - Visual Arts Competencies

To produce individual works in the visual arts

To appreciate works of art, traditional artistic objects, media images, personal productions and those of classmates

Physical Education and Health

To adopt a healthy, active lifestyle

Synopsis

In *Instant*, three teens find out how far they'll go in their quest to be seen and heard. Meredith is a singer-songwriter who makes YouTube videos of covers in an attempt to gain Internet fame. But her friend Jay, a rising hockey star, can't understand why she won't post her original songs. When their classmate Rosie suddenly goes viral after a video is posted of her singing to raise money for her father's medical bills, Meredith's jealousy takes over and she pushes Rosie too far, triggering a near-deadly response.

Meet the Characters



Meredith: 15 years old, grade 10, passionate about music, wants to be a pop star.

Played by Masha Mariia Bashmakova



Jay: 15 years old, grade 10, passionate about hockey, wants to get recruited to the QMJHL and eventually play in the NHL.

Played by Sebastian Quint



Rosie: 15 years old, grade 10, trying to help her dad who has multiple sclerosis (MS), quiet, shy, would love to be more popular.

Played by Meenu Atwal

Settings

- School
- Hockey rink
- Dave's house party

Themes/Concepts

- Digital Literacy
- Online Identity & Perception
- Peer & Parental Pressures

Ancestral Teachings: Truth and Love

Glossary

Multiple Sclerosis (MS): A chronic disease that impacts the central nervous system, for which there is currently no cure. Treatment plans can include medications, using assistive devices, and rehabilitation activities. Rosie's dad lives with MS and her family struggles with the cost of his care.

QMJHL: Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, a pre-professional league for players aged 16-20. Jay plays high level competitive hockey and hopes to be scouted by the league in preparation for playing in the NHL.

NHL: National Hockey League, professional American hockey league

Overview: Activities & Lesson Plans

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Pre-Show

Introduction – *What’s in a name?*

J.K. Rowling, Mark Twain, Lewis Carol, Stan Lee, George Orwell, George Eliot, Stephen King, and George Sand¹ are examples of *nom de plume* or pen names from Western literature. There are various reasons why authors use a pseudonym to publish their material under another name². In literature, a pen name has been used, for instance, to conceal the author’s identity or gender. In the case that their names have been banned for political or religious reasons. But also historically, female authors had to write under a male name or gender-neutral initials in order to be published. More commonly, some authors have to differentiate their name from another author or public figure with a similar or identical name. Others would like to try something different or to make it more suitable for a genre. If their real name were difficult to pronounce or spell³, they would choose another with a better “ring” to it. Sometimes even to climb the alphabetic ladder in libraries and bookshops⁴.

In this multiplicity of authorships, Portuguese poet and writer Fernando Pessoa (1888–1935) is a case apart. If we consider his first childhood writings, Pessoa created and wrote under almost one hundred different pseudonyms⁵. His three most prolix ones he named ‘heteronyms.’ He provided them with a full backstory and personality, religion and political affiliation and a unique writing style⁶. Biographer Richard Zenith (2021) states that given that each heteronym had an “exquisite body of work stylistically unlike the poetry” of the

¹ Their real names are Joanne Kathleen Rowling, Samuel Langhorne Clemens, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, Stanley Martin Lieber, Eric Arthur Blair, Mary Ann Evans, Richard Bachman, Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin, respectively.

² <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-and-why-to-use-a-pseudonym>

³ <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-and-why-to-use-a-pseudonym>

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/dec/07/writers-pen-names> by Alison Potter, 7 Dec 2011

⁵ <https://lithub.com/the-heteronymous-identities-of-fernando-pessoa/> by Richard Zenith July 22, 2021

⁶ *Idem*

others, he can affirm that Portugal's best four poets of the twentieth century were all Fernando Pessoa himself⁷.

In some cases, many authors would write under one pen name as a collective or have subsequent ghostwriters⁸. In others the authorship of one single author may be doubted as the case of [Shakespeare authorship question](#)⁹, where scholars debate the possibility that other authors, or author from nobility would have been more likely to have penned the masterpiece of plays and poems instead of the bard born in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Artistic names, ring names, and social media handles are common today, but historically large parts of the world's populations have had their original names changed by force. These peoples, due to social, political, religious, and cultural circumstances, were robbed of their identity by an oppressive power; they had no choice but to yield. Some tragic examples are the transatlantic slave trade, forced religious conversion or assimilation, such as the ones suffered by indigenous nations under colonization. However, whitewashing foreign-sounding names is still a very widespread practice. But as Zainib Al-Jayashi argues, "Names carry the details for the infinite, ever-changing story of identity."¹⁰ Recently, Chilean-born actor Pedro Pascal talked about his decision to change back to his original name after changing his name to Alexander for a year to try to get more acting jobs in the United States. "I was willing to do absolutely anything to work more," he explained. "It didn't work."¹¹

⁷ *idem*

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pen_name

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2016/apr/23/shakespeare-authorship-question-teenage-readers>

¹⁰ <https://lseclarion.com/15554/opinion/thats-not-my-name-how-the-whitewashing-of-ethnic-names-is-a-silent-approval-of-white-superiority/> by Zainib Al-Jayashi

¹¹ <https://www.mirror.co.uk/3am/us-celebrity-news/pedro-pascal-changed-name-touching-29305265> by [Kyle O'Sullivan](#), 6 Mar 2023

Names are very important to the subjectification process of the individual as it stands for cultural and family roots, gender expression, personal identity, and collectivity such as tribe, clans and personal affiliation.

****A digital presentation is included to aid the introduction of this topic, discussion (Activity 1), and its application (Activity 2) in the classroom***

Activity 1 – Structured Discussion

To probe students' prior knowledge, research skills, and personal opinions on this important debate behind what's in a name, here are some suggestions for a structured discussion format:

- a) Debate
- b) Town Hall Session
- c) Reader's Theatre¹²
- d) Poetry Slam

Investigative questions might include...

- Do you think names shape your personality? Why?
- How easy or difficult is it for someone in this province to change their name?
- What factors should parents consider in choosing names for their children?

For ESL classes, see page 15 for conversation questions.

Activity 2 – Artistic Names

Ask students to choose a personality or historical fact, research it, and share it with their peers in a creative format (i.e. video editing, impersonation, news, interview, biography). Find an artist's made-up name, research their meaning and the reasons why they might have changed multiple times.

¹²<https://www.scholastic.com/librarians/programs/whatisrt.htm>

Activity 3 – Ethics Reflection and Discussion

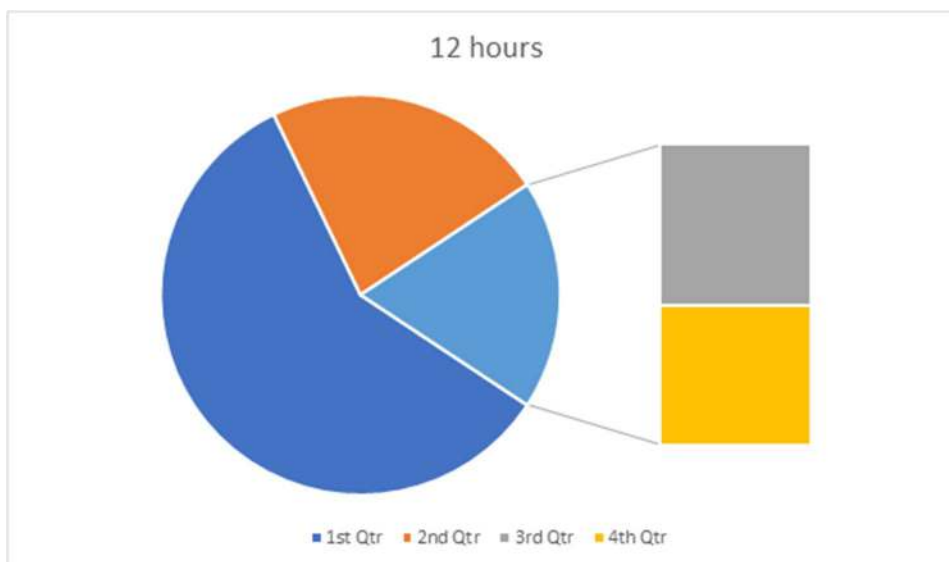
After covering the various possibility of a multiplicity of identities the issue of ethics needs to be addressed.

- 1) What is the difference between these cases and fake ID's or anonymous postings on the internet?
- 2) What are the ethical implications of these practices?
- 3) What could be the real consequences of these practices?

Activity 4 – Self-Regulation

How do you spend your time?

Create a diagram of how you think you use your time during the day and then compare it to an app on your phone that tracks your screen time.



Consider

- How much time is spent consuming, creating content, or interacting online?
- Within online interactions, what is the ratio of people you've met in person compared to online?
- What is the nature of online interactions or relations? What is the common factor drawing you together?
- Could the same norms or community be replicated in person?

Post Show

Activity 5 – How would you have reacted?

Imagine you are one of the characters in the play or in a very similar situation. How would you have reacted to the situation A, B or C?

(This can be done as an anonymous poll or post-its)

- a. Differently
- b. Same
- c. Not at all

Please expand:

Examples to consider...

- Rosie receiving hateful comments online.
- Jay being provoked during a hockey game.
- Meredith witnessing Rosie's accident at the party.

Activity 6 – Forum Theatre – alternative endings

Augusto Boal developed Forum Theatre as one of the dramatic strategies of his main body of work called Theatre of the Oppressed¹³.

*FORUM-THEATRE presents a scene or a play that must necessarily show a situation of oppression that the Protagonist does not know how to fight against, and fails. The spect-actors are invited to replace this Protagonist, and act out – on stage and not from the audience – all possible solutions, ideas, strategies.*¹⁴

Re-enact some of the important scenes of the play. Stop at the climax and ask the students to step into one of the character's shoes and act differently by including different reactions and attitudes.

Activity 7 – What are friends for?

Based on the play, consider Jay and Meredith's friendship. How well do they know each other? What kind of support do they give each other?

From this, students can write a correspondence between the two characters.

- Option 1: Create a series of direct messages between them on a social media platform in the events leading up to or directly following the play. How might their “online voice” differ from their interactions in person?
- Option 2: Write a letter or email from the point of view of one of the characters, set five or ten years in the future. How has their relationship changed over time? What do they recall from high school?

¹³ Boal, A., & McBride, M. O. L. (2020). Theatre of the Oppressed. In *The Applied Theatre Reader* (pp. 134-140). Routledge.

¹⁴ <https://imagination.org/media/our-methods/theatre-of-the-oppressed-2>

Activity 8 – Improv Activity – voices in your head

Like the trope commonly used by animation as an angel and demon on one's shoulder whispering advice.

Draw or delimit the acting space as two parallel lines about 1 meter apart. The actor playing the character stays in the middle.

Participants place themselves on either side assigned for their type of argument.

Taking turns, they give advice on the character's subsequent actions presenting the pros and cons of a particular course of action.

They can shift sides if they want.

After listening to multiple pieces of advice, the character then makes a choice.

Group Discussion: What would be the consequences of that action? Have they considered all the factors and those involved?

Activity 9 – The ripple effect

Reflect on the consequences of one's actions.

Analyze the character's arc in the play. "A character arc is the path a character takes over the course of a story. A character's arc involves adversity and challenges, as well as some changes to the character, and ultimately leads to resolution"¹⁵

Note how each character succumbs or inflicts what they fear the most on themselves or others.

Jay – Violence

¹⁵ <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-a-captivating-character-arc#6aFsdby1Zwe91v2BhqZgQl> Accessed July 17th

Mer – Cyberbullying

Rosie – Death

Based on the play, ask students to write new scenes or monologues for any characters, not necessarily for the three main ones. They can be parents, siblings, colleagues, etc. Get inspiration from the implied information or from what you could infer from the dialogue and the acting. You can project these characters into the future based on their choices at the end of the play or write a scene from their past.

Perform, record, or read the scenes to an audience!

Ancestral Teachings: Reflection Questions

Written by Dylan Thomas-Bouchier, Artistic Assistant

The Seven Sacred Teachings, also known as the Teachings of the Seven Grandfathers, is a set of teachings on human conduct towards others. They are what was traditionally and still is to this day needed in order for communities to survive.

While we recognize that not all First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures and histories recognize The Seven Sacred Teachings or the Teachings of the Seven Grandfathers our intention is to be as inclusive as possible.

-Excerpt from Empowering the Spirit, [Seven Grandfather Teachings First Nations Métis Inuit Student Education Resources Alberta Educators \(empoweringthespirit.ca\)](http://empoweringthespirit.ca)

The 7 teachings provide a structure for students to understand their own value and impact. These are ideas we are exploring this season at Geordie Theatre, using these as guiding principles in our offices and rehearsal rooms. They can also help us think about how the themes of our plays connect with the world around us.

- Humility** To recognize oneself in relation to others and all that sustain us.
- Truth** To speak only to the extent we have lived or experienced.
- Respect** To honour one another and all of creation
- Wisdom** To cherish knowledge and living with vision
- Honesty** To understand oneself and how we carry ourselves through the world
- Courage** To live with a solid, strong heart when facing our fears
- Love** To know peace when carrying all teachings

We invite you to use these teachings to guide reflection, whether written or in conversation. Consider how **Truth** and **Love** is present in *Instant*.

Pre-show

Have you ever felt like someone was being insincere with you?
What's a way you show yourself self-love?

Post-Show

Do you identify with any of the characters?
To know love is to know peace. How have you found peace after a difficult time?
Truth is carried by the turtle; he is slow and meticulous. How important is it to take your time when telling the truth with your friends and family?

NAMES QUESTIONS

1. Are you happy with your name? Why (not)?
2. Is your name usual or unusual? How did your parents choose your name?
3. What are some unusual names you've heard?
4. Do you think names shape your personality? Why?
5. In your culture, when you introduce yourself, does the last name come first or the first name?
6. Does your name have a meaning? If so, what does it mean? Where does it come from?
7. Do you have a middle name? What is it?
8. Do you have a nickname? If so, what is it and how did you get it? What nicknames do you remember from school?
9. If you could change your name would you? What would it be? Why?
10. What is your favourite English name?
11. Do you prefer giving your child a more traditional name or a unique name?
12. In some countries, when women marry they take **their husband's last name**? What do you think of this?
13. Is there a tradition in your family of using names of grandparents for children?
14. Which first names are most popular in your country at the moment?
15. Do you know anyone who has changed his / her name? Why? Why do you think do people change their names?
16. Are there any names you absolutely love or hate? Why?
17. What do you think of people who name their children after months, seasons or days of the week?
18. What do you think of parents who make up unique names for their children?
19. Some parents give their children names in alphabetical order. Do you think this is a good idea?
20. Do you think it is okay to give pets human names? What is the most popular name for a dog in your country?

How to Write a Critique for a Theatrical Performance

A critique is an evaluation of a performance of a show. It should acknowledge the five components listed below. Each component can be a paragraph.

1. Part 1—The Basics

Include the answers to the five W's:

- Who (the playwright, directors, and actors)
- What (the title of the play)
- Where (the name of the school or theater)
- When (when did you see it?)
- Why (In a few sentences, state the basic theme of the show)

2. Part 2—The Plot

Briefly summarize the plot of the show:

- How well did the story work?
- Was it interesting, entertaining?
- Did you like the actual script?

3. Part 3—The Acting

Reactions to the performers playing the characters in the play:

- Use their real names and character names
- Were they believable?
- How was their volume and articulation?
- Did their gestures and body movement stay true to the character?

4. Part 4—The Design

Set:

- Did it establish a definite mood and correct time period for the play?

Lights:

- Did they convey appropriate mood, emphasis, and brightness?

Costumes and Makeup:

- Were they true to the period of the show and to the characters?

Sound:

- How did the sound effects and music contribute to the show's mood?
- If this performance was a musical, what is your opinion of the orchestra's performance?

5. Part 5—The Reaction

What is the play's effect on the audience?

- Was the audience attentive?
- Was the audience interested?
- What was your opinion of the show as a whole?

Remember to:

- Back up all your opinions with valid reasons.
- Be objective, fair, and sincere.
- Evaluate the entire production.
- Be constructive. Indicate good points along with those you felt needed improvement.
- Enjoy the show—don't go to be overly critical.