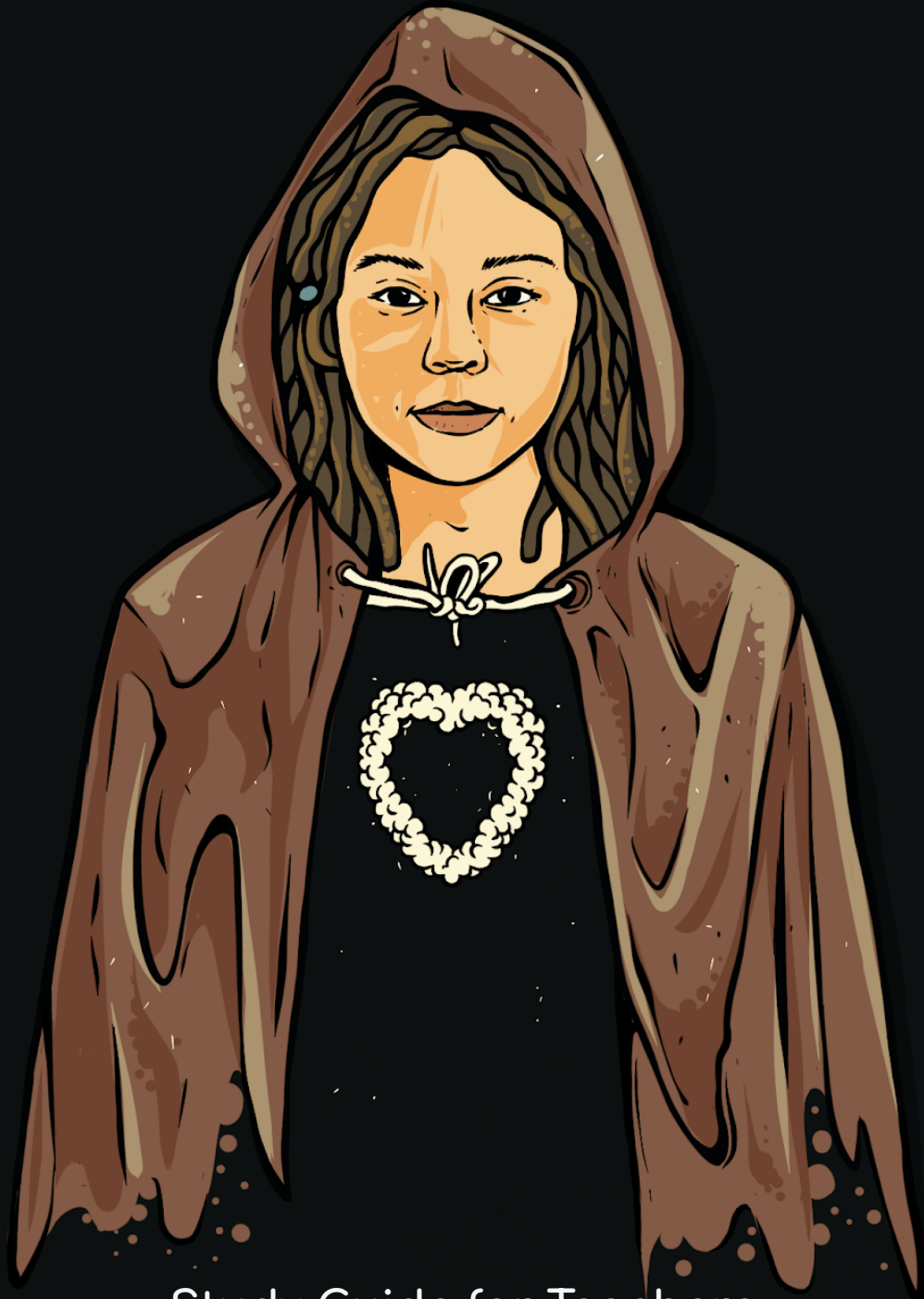


Poof

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Study Guide for Teachers

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INTRODUCTION

Geordie Theatre is a Montreal-based professional theatre company that has presented live English-language productions for young audiences in Quebec and abroad since 1980. Pushing artistic boundaries with provocative and important stories, Geordie delivers more than 200 performances each season and reaches more than 40,000 young people and their communities annually.

Land Acknowledgement: We would like to begin by acknowledging that the territory on which Geordie Theatre operates is the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehà:ka Mohawk nation of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Montreal is known in the Mohawk language as Tiotià:ke or Broken in Two because of the way the river breaks around the island. It is considered unceded territory of the Kanien'kehà:ka nation. This land has also existed as a meeting ground of many peoples including the Abenaki, St. Lawrence Iroquians and Huron-Wendat people. We extend our deepest respect to the elders of these communities and to all Indigenous peoples who carry the history of the land-caring for it and calling it home. We are privileged to share a story with you on this land.

A note on acknowledging territory: A crucial part of Geordie Theatre's visit happens at the beginning of the performance- the Land Acknowledgement. The Land Acknowledgement is researched and customized for the territory on which your school is located, and acts as a crucial bridge between Geordie Theatre and Indigenous Peoples.

ABOUT THE STUDY GUIDE

This study guide was created as a tool for teachers to help introduce young students to the world of theatre, as well as engage them more deeply with the themes and concepts developed in *Poof*. The guide contains a synopsis, character and setting information, a summary of the themes and concepts at play, as well as pre- and post-show discussion questions, activity ideas and lesson plans.

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. Corresponding cross-curricular and subject-specific competencies from the Quebec Education Plan (QEP) are indicated for each lesson plan.

NOTE ON CONTENT & RESOURCES

Loss and Grief

In *Poof*, Gill's grandmother has a stroke and subsequently dies. While the topic of loss and death is challenging, it is crucial for adolescents to have these conversations. Many adolescents will face loss and grief for the first time during this time of their lives, when their coping skills are only just emerging. These conversations provide them with an opportunity to process past losses, and to develop knowledge and coping skills in preparation for future losses. Please refer to resources for helping students with death and loss below.

Resources for helping students dealing with death and loss

If a child in your class appears distressed during the topic of loss and grief, please speak to the school counsellor.

- [Child Mind Institute's *Helping Children Deal with Grief*](#)
- [Nemours TeensHealth's *Death and Grief*](#)
- [What's Your Grief's *Helping A Teenager Deal With Grief*](#)
- [*Coping With Grief and Loss by Help Guide*](#)

Alcohol

In the days following her grandmother's death and finding out her parents are getting divorced, Gill attends a get-together with friends and drinks to the point of inebriation and vomiting.

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

Gill is just an average teenage girl- not too cool but not a loser either, just an average 16 year-old girl. As average as she is, however, Gill is having a rough time. Her crush, Qasim, has been cast as Romeo in the school's production of Romeo and Juliet while her nemesis, Melissa, has been cast as Juliet. Gill, disappointed, has been cast as Balthasar, Romeo's manservant. She is trying to navigate a short and confusing relationship with Josh all the while attempting to process the death of her grandmother and the news that her parents are getting divorced. She is confused about the meaning of love and whether she will go through her whole life without experiencing love. Her grandmother left her a cryptic note on love, confusing her further. Her confusion and frustration push her to interrupt the school play to question whether the play Romeo and Juliet is a true representation of love. Thankfully for Gill, her brother Peter is there for her in the end and the two of them connect over trying to make sense of it all.



MEET THE CHARACTERS



Gill: a very average, not too cool, not too loser-y 16 year-old
Played by: Ravyn Bekh

Peter, Gill's brother: 20, a good brother to Gill
Played by: Jackson Thouret

Gill's father and mother: planning to get divorced

Gill's Grandma: has a stroke and is in hospital

Josh: friend of Gill's and they date briefly

Qasim: Gill's crush, cast as Romeo in the play

Melissa: Gill's nemesis, cast as Juliet in the play

Nisha: Acquaintance from play, hosts a house party

SETTING

- Set for school's production of Romeo and Juliet
- Hospital where Gill's grandmother is staying
- Nisha's house

THEMES/CONCEPT

- Love in its different forms
- Loss and grief

OVERVIEW: Activities & Lesson Plans

To help engage students with the themes and concepts developed in *Poof* a variety of activities are proposed:

- Pre-show discussion questions (writing or classroom discussion)
- Lesson plans (lessons at the end):
 - What Is Love? (reading or watching, health, reflecting and writing)
 - Coping with Grief and Loss (class discussion & analysis, reflecting and writing)
- Post-show activity ideas
 - Frozen in Time (dramatic arts: movement, interpretation)
 - Poof Or No Poof: Exploring Contrast (dramatic arts: interpretation or writing)
 - Saying Goodbye: Tension and Tone (interpretation or writing)
 - Class Talent Show (dramatic or visual arts: movement, performance)
 - Write a Review (written expression: persuasive)
- Post-show discussion questions (writing or classroom discussion)
- Quotation Analysis: Love (writing or classroom discussion)
- Quotation Analysis: Nostalgia (writing or classroom discussion)

Lesson Plans

➔ I. What Is Love? (p. 11)

In this lesson students will explore the meaning of love in its various forms and learn to recognize and express the feelings and emotions associated with love. Students will demonstrate what love means to them by building a project of their choice, through the means of visual or dramatic arts, language arts, or media.

- To explore the meaning of love
- To learn to express emotions and feelings through visual or dramatic arts, language arts, or media

➔ II. Coping with Grief and Loss (p. 13)

Following the play *Poof*, students will reflect on the process of grief and loss, including death, break-ups, moves, life changes, etc. They will explore myths and facts, as well as develop coping mechanisms for themselves, and learn to help a grieving friend. In a culminating activity, they will explore how to find purpose in loss.

- Develop an understanding of grief and loss
- To learn to help themselves and others through grief and loss.

Pre-Show Discussion Questions

The following discussion questions may be used to initiate conversation and build background information of the main themes in *Poof*. They might also be used as writing/short scene prompts or as an introduction to lesson plans. Please select the questions that are most appropriate for the level you teach.

Love in Its Different Forms

- When have you felt love in your life? What are examples of feeling and showing love? What are the different forms of love?
- Humans are wired to love and seek love. Why is that? What might be the biological reason for that?
- What is the physiological response to love? How does it make your body feel?
- Love is different for everyone. What does it feel like for you? What would your life be like without love?
- What does it feel like to say, “I love you”? How do you feel when it’s been reciprocated?
- Are there any rules to love? Does it feel the same for everyone?

Loss and Grief

- Have you lost a family member, friend, community member or celebrity, or pet? Explain the circumstances of a grieving experience in your life and how you reacted.
- What kinds of things did you do to try and get over it? What was most helpful? Least helpful?
- Have you participated or know someone who has participated in a grief support group or individual psychotherapy? Whether you have or not, what do you think are the particular advantages of each therapy?
- Have you experienced loss caused by something other than death, such as your parents’ divorce or moving away or changing schools? How did it make you feel? Do you still think about it? What did you do to get through it?
- What about when you think of your childhood? Do you ever feel nostalgic about your childhood? If so, why? What parts of childhood do you miss the most? Does growing up into adolescence and adulthood feel like a loss of childhood? How does it feel?

Post-Show Activity Ideas

Frozen in Time

Students create a live tableau (a scene in which all students are “frozen” in their action) based on the scenes of *Poof*. Each group of 3-4 students selects a scene of their choice and practices their tableau. Have them present and hold the tableau for the rest of the class. Have the class guess which scene is being presented.

Poof or No Poof: Exploring Contrast

To have students explore contrast as a dramatic element, have students brainstorm situations that make their heart go poof - that excite them and elicit joy - versus situations that do not. Have them develop a skit or possibly a monologue in which they describe these activities, jumping from one to the other for effect. Alternatively, students could write the scene or a short narrative as an English Language Arts activity.

Saying Goodbye: Tension and Tone

Both Gill and Peter were dissatisfied with their closing conversation with their grandmother; they wished they had said more. In pairs, have students develop a dramatic scene in which someone is bidding goodbye to a loved one. Alternatively, students could write the scene or a short narrative as an English Language Arts activity.

Write a Review

Have students discuss the show. What was the play called? What was it about? What was the acting like? What were the set, costume, sound, lighting, video design and special effects like? What did you think of the play? Why? Have older students write a critique using the following sections: (1) introduction, (2) plot summary, (3) performance, (4) design elements and (5) personal reaction and recommendation.

Post-Show Discussion Questions

The discussion questions may be used to build an understanding of *Poof* and its messages. They can be used as writing prompts or as an introduction to lesson plans.

- Is Gill an average girl? What is average about her? What similarities, including her feelings, experiences and thoughts, do you share with her?
- What do you think about Gill and Josh's relationship? Were they in love? Is it typical of a first relationship?
- Why do you think Gill's parents are waiting to get divorced? According to you, is this the best course of action? Why or why not?
- At Nisha's house, Gill gets severely inebriated. Why do you think this happens? Inexperience? Is it related to the loss of her grandmother and her other current life challenges?
- What does the play *Romeo and Juliet* say about love? Gill feels it is inadequate, or lacking. What are your thoughts?
- Are Peter and Gill close as siblings? What is the role of Peter in Gill's life? How close are you to your siblings? What might be the benefits of sibling love and support in life?
- How might Gill respond to the question: "What is love?" by the end of the play?
- What different types of love are explored in the play? How has this play influenced your concept of love?

Quote Analysis: Love

GILL:

Do you ever worry that you're never going to experience love
Because
You are unlovable?
That you're unique make up, the things that make you you, are the things that make you unlovable?
It's like... who you are, who you are in the world, is like Not made for love
That you can't process it.
That your physical make up
Can't send out the love signals
And definitely can't take them in
And that
You'll just die alone.
Not even with a cat.
The only person at your funeral will be like
Someone who thought it was someone else's funeral
And feel awkward for being there
So he'll make a impromptu speech about like
"Ahem. Everyone who knew her loved her. What a light she was in the world. Cough cough"
And you'll be turning over in your grave
Because even in death
Even when your body is not a body- You don't know what love is.
That you made it through all of your life
And all your death
Not experiencing a single moment of true love.
This is the scariest thought in the world to me.

- Why does Gill worry about being unloveable?
- How does self-esteem impact your ability to love and be loved? What is the importance of self-love?
- What are the different types of love? Who does Gill love in her life? What does Gill mean about true love?
- How does love make your body feel? Describe the body's physiological response to love? What about specifically to romantic love? Is it different? If so, how?
- What is the point of love? How can love enrich your life?
- How are other feelings and emotions, such as honesty, care and trust, related to love? Which comes first? Can you have love without trust?

Quote Analysis: Nostalgia

GILL:

Everyone left.

I was feeling- Ugh.

The lights shut off.

I walked onto the stage and lay down.

Looking up at all the lights. The ropes. The curtains.

I want to be four years old again. At the lake with Grandma and Peter. We're watching the fireflies and we're giggling so much. That memory used to make my heart go poof.

Instead. I'm here alone.

Nostalgia: A sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past, typically for a period or place with happy personal associations.

- In your opinion, why is Gill having a nostalgic moment at this point in her life?
- What is the significance of Peter and her grandmother being part of the memory?
- Have you felt nostalgia before? What triggered the nostalgia? Describe the memory and feeling you felt nostalgic about.
- How is nostalgia related to love?
- When you find yourself having a strong nostalgic moment, what do you do? Do you try to ground yourself in the present or release those emotions by talking about them? Do you let them flow through you and enjoy the memory?

I. What Is Love?

Overview & Purpose

In this lesson students will explore the meaning of love in its various forms and learn to recognize and express the feelings and emotions associated with love. Students will demonstrate what love means to them by building a project of their choice, through the means of visual or dramatic arts, language arts, or media.

- To explore the meaning of love.
- To learn to express emotions and feelings through visual or dramatic arts, language arts, or media.

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:** Cooperates with others; Communicates appropriately
- **Physical Education and Health:** To adopt a healthy, active lifestyle

Activity

1. Class discussion:
 - When have you felt love in your life? What are examples of feeling and showing love? What are the different forms of love?
 - Humans are wired to love and seek love. Why is that? What might be the biological reason for that?
 - What is the physiological response to love? How does it make your body feel?
 - Love is different for everyone. What does it feel like for you? What would your life be like without love?
 - What does it feel like to say, “I love you”? How do you feel when it’s been reciprocated?
 - Are there any rules to love? Does it feel the same for everyone?
2. Watch [YouTube: What is love? - Brad Troeger](#) and continue the discussion on love in its various forms.
3. Based on these discussion questions, have students develop individual projects on the meaning of love. Topics and products can be chosen by the student or on the subject you teach.
 - Topics:
 - Self-love
 - Romantic love
 - Love or passion for a sport, artform, hobby, science, etc.

- Love and admiration for an elder or other influential person
- Sibling or family love
- The concepts of soulmates
- Cultural differences of the concept of love
- Love and betrayal
- Materialistic love
- Products:
 - Monologue or scene
 - Short film
 - Mini-documentary
 - Essay
 - Written article or blog post
 - Love letter
 - Analysis of love in literature (be specific)
 - Oral presentation
 - Science-oriented project on the biology of science
 - Visual arts (inspiration or vision board, painting, sculpture, etc.)
 - Interpretive dance
 - Musical piece composition
 - Poem
- 4. As a culminating activity, have students share and discuss their product with the class.

Extensions & Resources

- Does romantic love have a purpose? Older students can watch the following TED-Ed talk to explore five interesting philosophical perspectives on why we love. Please watch the video before showing it to your students to ensure it is age-appropriate. [Why do we love? A philosophical inquiry - Skye C. Cleary](#)
- To explore contrast as a dramatic element, have students brainstorm situations that make their heart go poof - that excite them and elicit joy - versus situations that do not, by completing the activity *Poof or No Poof: Exploring Contrast* on page 7.
- After watching the play, complete the Quote Analysis: Love activity on page. 9

II. Coping with Grief & Loss

Overview & Purpose

Following the play *Poof*, students will reflect on the process of grief and loss, including death, break-ups, moves, life changes, etc. They will explore myths and facts, as well as develop coping mechanisms for themselves, and learn to help a grieving friend. In a culminating activity, they will explore how to find purpose in loss.

- Develop an understanding of grief and loss
- To learn to help themselves and others through grief and loss.

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
- **Arts Education - Dramatic Arts Competencies:** Appreciates dramatic works
- **Cross-Curricular Competencies:** Uses creativity

Materials Needed

- Activity handouts (below)

Activity

Pre-lesson: Before teaching this lesson, consider reading [Nemours TeensHealth: Death and Grief](#) and [Helping A Teenager Deal With Grief](#) by What's Your Grief, to inform yourself about how adolescents grieve.

1. Class discussion:
 - Have you lost a family member, friend, community member or celebrity, or pet? Explain the circumstances of a grieving experience in your life and how you reacted.
 - What kinds of things did you do to try and get over it? What was most helpful? Least helpful?
 - Have you participated or know someone who has participated in a grief support group or individual psychotherapy? Whether you have or not, what do you think are the particular advantages of each therapy?

- Have you experienced loss caused by something other than death, such as your parents' divorce? A breakup? Moving away or changing schools? How did it make you feel? Do you still think about it? What did you do to get through it?
 - What about when you think of your childhood? Do you ever feel nostalgic about your childhood? If so, why? What parts of childhood do you miss the most? Does growing up into adolescence and adulthood feel like a loss of childhood? How does it feel?
2. Remind students that loss includes a move, a breakup, the loss of a cherished item, a divorce, not just the loss of a loved one. In small groups, have them complete the *Myths About Grief and Loss*. Present them with the myths and have them explain why each statement is a myth. After 10-15 minutes, regroup as a class and review their answers while supplementing with facts from the teacher handout version.
 3. Summarize some of the coping mechanisms mentioned during the class discussion prior to the activity on myths, and ask students if they have any other suggestions of coping mechanisms that might help them. Use the resources mentioned in the pre-lesson for more suggestions.
 4. Remind students that in addition to navigating loss themselves, they will eventually be in a situation in which a loved one will be having to deal with loss or grief. Watch with [How do you help a grieving friend?](#) to explore the importance of acknowledgement when helping others.
 5. As a closing activity, let students know that finding purpose in loss may also be a helpful coping strategy, when and if the griever is ready. Have students reflect and share their thoughts, either verbally or in writing on the *Finding Purpose in Loss* handout below, on the following poem.

Grief never ends ...
 But it changes.
 It's a passage,
 not a place to stay.
 Grief is not a sign of weakness,
 nor a lack of faith.
 It is the price of love.

- Anonymous

Extensions & Resources

- Have students develop a dramatic scene in which someone is bidding goodbye to a loved one, by completing the activity *Saying Goodbye: Tension and Tone* on page 7.

Myths About Grief and Loss

Adapted from [Coping With Grief and Loss](#) by Help Guide

1. *Myth: The pain will go away faster if you ignore it*

Fact:

2. *Myth: It's important to "be strong" in the face of loss.*

Fact:

3. *Myth: If you don't cry, it means you aren't sorry about the loss.*

Fact:

4. *Myth: Grieving should last about a year.*

Fact:

5. *Myth: Moving on with your life means forgetting about your loss.*

Fact:

Myths About Grief and Loss

Teacher Handout

Adapted from [Coping With Grief and Loss](#) by Help Guide

1. *Myth: The pain will go away faster if you ignore it*

Fact: Trying to ignore your pain or keep it from surfacing will only make it worse in the long run. For real healing, it is necessary to face your grief and actively deal with it.

2. *Myth: It's important to "be strong" in the face of loss.*

Fact: Feeling sad, frightened, or lonely is a normal reaction to loss. Crying doesn't mean you are weak. You don't need to "protect" your family or friends by putting on a brave front. Showing your true feelings can help them and you.

3. *Myth: If you don't cry, it means you aren't sorry about the loss.*

Fact: Crying is a normal response to sadness, but it's not the only one. Those who don't cry may feel the pain just as deeply as others. They may simply have other ways of showing it.

4. *Myth: Grieving should last about a year.*

Fact: There is no specific time frame for grieving. How long it takes differs from person to person.

5. *Myth: Moving on with your life means forgetting about your loss.*

Fact: Moving on means you've accepted your loss—but that's not the same as forgetting. You can move on with your life and keep the memory of someone or something you lost as an important part of you. In fact, as we move through life, these memories can become more and more integral to defining the people we are.

Finding Purpose In Loss

Grief never ends,
but it changes.
It's a passage,
not a place to stay.
Grief is not a sign of weakness,
nor a lack of faith.
It is the price of love.

- Anonymous

What is the meaning of the poem? What does the author mean when they say that grief is the price of love? Use examples, personal if possible, to illustrate your points.