



**Diablo Theatre Company
Presents**

CURTAINS

**A Study Guide for Students
Ages 14 and up**

**Artistic Director: Daren A.C. Carollo
Education Coordinator: Rena Wilson
Written by: Beth Wynstra, Ph.D.**



CURTAINS STUDY GUIDE

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Director's Notes
by Daren A.C. Carollo

Diablo Theatre Company is proud to present the Northern California premiere of *Curtains*, our first Northern California premiere since 1971. We are bringing Broadway directly to you.

John Kander said of *Curtains*, "it's a valentine to the world of musical theatre that Fred Ebb and I were allowed to live in for 40 years." Notice how he used the word "allowed," no sense of entitlement in them at all. Lucky guys! To work, live and breathe musical theatre for their entire careers. Together they built 13 Broadway shows out of just ideas. They worked relentlessly to achieve the successes they shared. The song "I Miss the Music" from *Curtains* is actually a thank you written by Kander to Ebb for all the memories they shared writing together. *Curtains* was the end of their long partnership. Fred Ebb died without ever seeing the show performed.

They gave us a story with incredibly motivated characters, all on strong missions. Lieutenant Cioffi has to figure out who killed the star of *Robbin' Hood*, but he keeps getting distracted by thoughts of improving the show. Georgia and Aaron need *Robbin' Hood* to be a huge success so they can justify rekindling their passion for each other. Bambi has to prove to her mother she is talented. Niki and the whole cast of *Robbin' Hood* wants what every actor wants, to perform on Broadway. Carmen, Sid, and Oscar need what every producer needs, a successful production to keep them in show business. All these story lines weave together effortlessly in a show that will leave your side hurting from laughter.

This study guide should spark discussion. That is what all art is meant to do. So please contact us at Diablo Theatre Company if you have questions or want to sit in at a rehearsal. Our door is always open to you as you are the next generations of artists, patrons and donors.

Rupert Holmes wrote in *Curtains* "putting on a musical has got to be the most fulfilling thing a person could ever hope to do." Having had the pleasure of producing theatre for Diablo Theatre Company for the last five years, I must say I agree. I hope to see you at the theatre!

And always remember, keeping theatre alive is OUR mission. We need your help to do that so keep learning about theatre and arts and never stop supporting it.

ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

John Kander (Music) and **Fred Ebb** (Lyrics): Kander and Ebb are considered one of the greatest songwriting teams on Broadway. In fact, the team of Kander and Ebb is the longest-running music-and-lyrics partnership in Broadway musical history. In 1956, John Kander started his musical career as pianist for *The Amazing Adele*, during its pre-Broadway run, and for *An Evening with Beatrice Lillie* in Florida. It was not long before he was preparing dance arrangements for the musicals *Irma la Douce* and *Gypsy*. In 1962, he made his Broadway debut as a composer. The musical was *A Family Affair*. It was that same year that Kander met Fred Ebb.

Ebb had been a writer for nightclub material. He also wrote a television show called "That Was the Week That Was." When Ebb and Kander met, they instantly complimented each other's abilities. Their first success, the song, "My Coloring Book," came the same year. In 1966, their first major success—*Cabaret*—had a run of 1,166 performances and won the Tony Award as the season's best musical.



John Kander, left, and Fred Ebb

Kander and Ebb's other musicals/ scores include: *The Happy Time* (1968), *Zorba* (1968), *70 Girls 70*, *Chicago* (1975) [Film version of *Chicago* in 2003 won the Academy Award for Best Picture], *Funny Lady* (1975), *The Act* (1978), *Woman of the Year* (1981), *The Rink* (1984), *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1993), *Steel Pier* (1997), and *The Skin of Our Teeth*.

As a team, they wrote successfully for films and for singers like Barbra Streisand, Lauren Bacall, Joel Grey, Gwen Verdon, Frank Sinatra, Robert Goulet, and Chita Rivera. They are best remembered for the title song for the 1977 film musical “New York, New York,” starring Liza Minnelli and Robert De Niro. It became their biggest hit since *Cabaret*. Their song, “New York, New York,” replaced Leonard Bernstein's song with the same title as the unofficial theme song for New York City.

Fred Ebb died in 2004.

Peter Stone (Original Book and Concept): Peter Stone was the first writer to win the Tony, the Oscar, and the Emmy. With fifteen Broadway productions to his credit, he received Tony Awards for his books to *1776*, *Woman of the Year*, *The Will Roger Follies*, and *Titanic* (all four also winning the Tony for Best Musical). His other Broadway credits include the musicals *Two By Two* (written with composer Richard Rodgers and lyricist Martin Charnin), *My One and Only*, and *Sugar*. With Erich Maria Remarque, he collaborated on the Broadway play, *Full Circle* and in 1999 he adapted the book for the Tony winning revival of *Annie Get Your Gun*. The author of more than two dozen feature films, he won an Academy Award for his screenplay, *Father Goose*, the Edgar (Mystery Writers of America Award) for his film *Charade* (remade in 2002) and the Christopher Award for the screen adaptation of his own musical, *1776*. Among his other films are *The Taking of Pelham 1-2-3*, *Mirage*, *Arabesque*, *Sweet Charity*, *Skin Game*, *Who's Killing the Great Chefs of Europe?*, and *Just Cause*. His television credits include the acclaimed CBS series “The Defenders” (earning an Emmy Award) and the libretto adaptation of George Bernard Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*, with songs by Richard Rodgers (NBC, 1967; stage premiere, 2002). From 1981-1999, Mr. Stone was President of The Dramatists Guild, the national society of playwrights, composers and lyricists.

Peter Stone died in 2003.

Rupert Holmes (Book): Rupert Holmes was born in England, where his father was serving in the U.S. military as a bandleader. After studying clarinet and composing, Holmes started playing bass in a rock band and writing songs. In his 20's he was a session musician who wrote jingles and pop tunes (including for television's “The Partridge Family”). Holmes released his first album in 1974 and got the attention of Barbra Streisand, who used some of his songs in the movie “A Star is Born.” His 1979 album, “Partners in Crime,” yielded the top hits “Escape (The Piña Colada Song)” and “Him.” In 1986 he won three Tony awards for his Broadway musical, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, and in 1996 he was the creator and writer of the television series, “Remember WENN,” on American Movie Classics until 1999. Holmes also wrote the Tony Award-nominated (“Best Play 2003”) *Say Goodnight, Gracie*, based on the relationship between George Burns and Gracie Allen. The play, which starred Frank Gorshin, was that Broadway season's longest running play. He has also written the comedy-thriller *Accomplice* (1990), which was the second of Holmes's plays to receive an Edgar Award (following *Drood*.) Holmes has written a number of other shows, including *Solitary Confinement* (2002), which set a new Kennedy Center box office record before its Broadway run, *Thumbs*, the most successful play in the history of the

Helen Hayes Theatre Company, and the musical *Marty* (2002). Holmes also joined the creative team of *Curtains* after the deaths of both Peter Stone (the original book-writer) and Fred Ebb (the lyricist). Holmes rewrote Stone's original book and contributed additional lyrics to the Kander and Ebb songs.

CURTAINS CAST OF CHARACTERS

Robbin' Hood- A musical show within the show *Curtains*.

Frank Cioffi- the detective. He is a community theatre ham who is backstage at *Robbin' Hood* to investigate a murder but is also thrilled to be rubbing elbows with the performers.

Carmen Bernstein- the aggressive, determined, and sometimes ruthless producer. She is also Bambi's mother.

Christopher Belling- the egomaniacal and temperamental director. He loathes Jessica Crenshaw and spits out witty and scathing comments at every opportunity.

Niki Harris- the sweet, too-good-to-be-true ingénue. She is a chorus girl/understudy in the *Robbin' Hood* and she aspires to star on Broadway.

Bobby Pepper- the choreographer and leading man. He is a Gene Kelly type who is the one shining star in an otherwise dire show.

Jessica Cranshaw- a fading Hollywood star and a talentless diva. She is a terrible singer and actress who stars in *Robbin' Hood*.

Oscar Shapiro- a big-wig in the garment industry who is a first-time investor in *Robbin' Hood*. He does not understand theatre people but is trying hard to fit in.

Bambi Bernet-the ambitious understudy and chorus dancer. As the name might suggest, she is a true bimbo.

Daryl Grady- the Boston Globe critic who has given *Robbin' Hood* a very bad review but has stuck around to cover the crime.

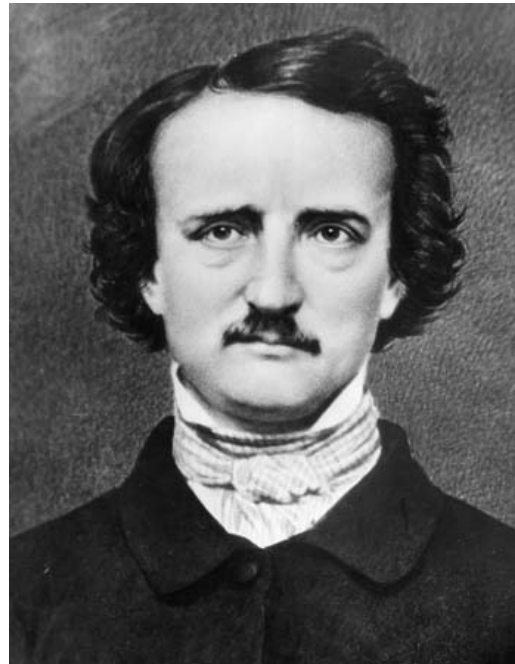
Georgia Hendricks- the lyricist and Aaron's partner and ex-wife. She is a former dancer and singer who is later forced to replace Jessica after she is killed.

Aaron Fox-the "slightly mad" composer of *Robbin' Hood*. He is still in love with Georgia.

MURDER, MAYHEM, AND MALICE: A brief history of detective fiction in Western culture

The detective novel is one of the most well loved and most easily recognizable literary forms in Western culture. Tracing its roots to the Gothic romances of such authors as Edgar Allen Poe, the detective novel has, for nearly a century, enjoyed a loyal readership both here in the United States and in Europe.

*Gothic poet and novelist Edgar
Allan Poe*



According to scholar William Marling, Poe, in his early stories, “laid out the basics of the detective story which underlie much hard-boiled fiction.” We can credit Poe for first introducing the brilliant, albeit eccentric detective (in his story “Murders in the Rue Morgue,” published in 1841), for inventing the plot of the stolen document (in his story “The Purloined Letter”), as well as for first presenting important detective novel motifs: 1) the criminal confesses when faced with the enormity of his crime, 2) the detective follows a trail of false clues, and 3) he deduces that the criminal is the least likely suspect.¹

Another powerful force on shaping detective stories was Frenchman Francois-Eugene Vidocq, who founded the world’s first detective bureau in France. In the early nineteenth century, Vidocq published an autobiographic account of his years as a soldier, smuggler, inmate, and secret police spy entitled *Memoirs of Vidocq*. Vidocq became a model for

¹ See Marling, William. *Hard-Boiled Fiction*. June, 2007. Case Western Reserve University. December 1, 2009. www.detnovel.com.

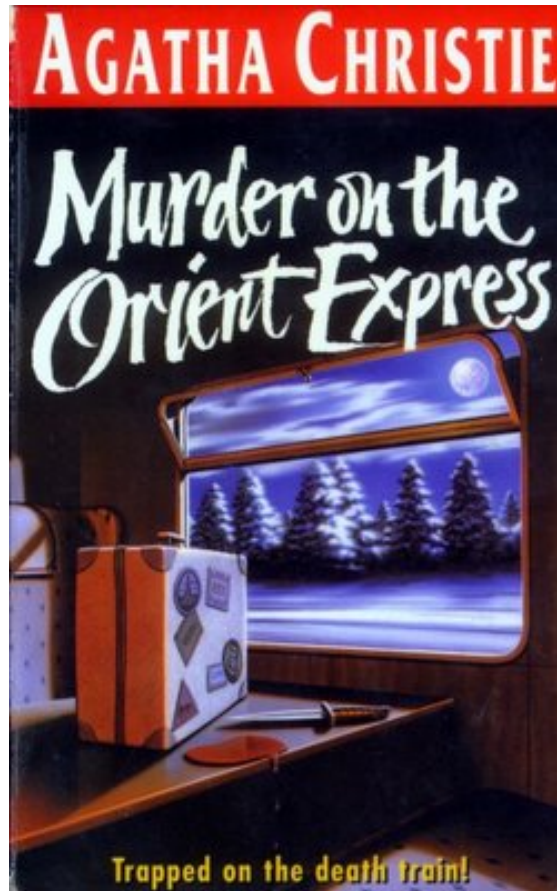
the hero character in several subsequent detective/mystery stories. In fact Victor Hugo based the character Jean Valjean in his *Les Misérables* on Vidocq.



Robert Downey Jr. as the title character in the 2009 film "Sherlock Holmes"

At the end of the nineteenth century readers were introduced to arguably the most famous detective of all time, Sherlock Holmes. In Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* (published in 1887) Holmes, along with his loyal and sometimes bumbling assistant Watson, solved their first mystery. Doyle continued to publish Sherlock Holmes mysteries into the twentieth-century, and even Doyle's death in 1930 did not stop his influence on contemporary detective fiction. Several writers in the 20th century have modeled their own stories on plots in Doyle's work as well as modeled their detectives on the illustrious Holmes.

The early years of the twentieth century readers saw a staggering number of distinguished detective novels such as those by British writers G.K. Chesterton, Freeman Wills Croft, and of course Agatha Christie, whose fictional detectives Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple became household names. Hercule Poirot was the only fictional character to receive an obituary in the *New York Times*. These British mysteries usually focused on members of the middle or upper class and included detectives who interrogate each suspect and carefully examine each clue so that readers can solve the crime along with the detective.



In the United States, the 1930's marked the Golden Age of detective novels. Authors such as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler created detectives that were definitely more hard-edged than their British counterparts. In these American works we no longer find virtuous and law-abiding detectives; rather we have characters like Sam Spade, the infamous and tortured protagonist of Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*, who follows his own moral compass as he finds himself in complicated love affairs, illicit dealings, and, of course, precarious predicaments.

It was the American detective stories that greatly influenced *film noir*. *Film noir* was a term first used by French critic Nino Frank to describe a string of films released in the United States between 1941 and 1944; these films included *The Maltese Falcon*, *Murder, My Sweet*, *Double Indemnity*, and *Laura*. Frank was struck by what he saw as a radical departure from the detective films of the 1920's and 1930's where the emphasis was on plot twists and turns, and the primary concern was unmasking a killer. In *film noir*, the focus shifts to the characters' unpredictable and uncertain psychology. This new focus led Frank to describe *film noir* as delivering "murder with a psychological twist." As Frank argued, "The essential quality is no longer 'who-done-it?' but how does this protagonist act?"

Film noir's emphasis on character psychology manifested itself in fresh narrative strategies rarely seen by American film audiences: flashbacks, dream sequences, first-person voice-overs, multiple narrators are all key characteristics of *film noir*.

Furthermore the endings of these films are often ambiguous and inconclusive, which was certainly a departure from the detective films of the 1920's and 1930's, which sought to comfort and reassure audiences. The ambiguous and often inconclusive endings of *film noir* can be seen as a reflection of the world in which these films gained prominence. Film historians have argued that *film noir* held a "dark mirror" to post-war America; angst-ridden protagonists, unresolved crimes, and unseen enemies that dominate *film noir* resonated with 1940's moviegoers who felt their own anxieties about the end of isolationism, the dropping of the hydrogen bomb, women moving from the workforce back to the home, McCarthyism, and the Cold War. Violent images from World War II in newsreels and documentary films had desensitized American audiences and had bent censorship laws making way for the grotesque murders depicted in *film noir*. The disillusioned private-eye, or the quintessential center of most *film noir*, is very often a war veteran who has trouble adjusting back to civilized life. In other words, *film noir* audiences saw their own lives reflected on the screen; one film reviewer in the 1940's argued, "...psychologists explain that the moviegoer likes this type of film because it serves as a violent escape in tune with the violence of the times, a cathartic for pent-up emotions...the war has made us psychologically and emotionally ripe for pictures of this sort."



*Humphrey Bogart as Sam Spade in
"The Maltese Falcon."*

Film noir is certainly a benchmark in American film history as well as an important cultural checkpoint for post-war America. Its influence can be seen in later works of the 20th century such as *The Godfather*, *Taxi Driver*, *Raging Bull*, and *L.A. Confidential*.

HOW DOES A SHOW MAKE IT TO BROADWAY? The out-of-town tryout process

From *The Making of a Musical* by John Kenrick²

Up until the 1960's, almost all new musicals were taken on tour to work out any kinks before opening on Broadway. Just how much fun is it to take a new musical out on the road? A writer (sources differ as to who) once quipped that the worst he could wish on Hitler was that he be stuck out of town, working on a musical during its pre-Broadway tryout. It's amazing how many producers have ignored disapproval on the road. When the owner of Bloomingdale's opened the ill-advised musical *Allah Be Praised* (1944) in Philadelphia, he called in play doctor Cy Howard (another version says it was it playwright George S. Kaufman), who urged him to "close it and keep the store open nights." Refusing to cut his losses, Bloomingdale brought the show to Broadway, where it quickly failed.

The original production of *No, No Nanette* toured for nearly two years, changing most of the score and libretto before it finally came to New York. As a rule, most shows toured for no more than a few weeks. Favorite tryout cities included New Haven, Boston, Philadelphia, Atlantic City, and Baltimore. Today, any town with a respected regional company may become a tryout location.

Tryouts have often involved exhausting re-writes and revisions. After the authors sit up all night re-writing scenes and songs, the cast rehearses the changes and adds them as soon as possible. This frequently entails rehearsing the new material in the morning, performing the old version at a matinee, and debuting the new material that evening! When *Call Me Madam* was previewing in Boston, the authors kept re-writing until it got on leading lady Ethel Merman's nerves. As she later told it:

They never stopped trying to add a joke, tidy up an exit, improve a punch line. I went along with the tinkering until the Thursday before our New York opening, when the show was supposed to be frozen -- meaning no more changes. Still they continued making a change here and there until I faced them down, saying, 'Boys, as of right now, I am Miss Birdseye of 1950. I am frozen. Not a comma.'

In the 'good old days,' a show followed up its tryout tour by playing one or two previews in New York (for technical purposes) before all the critics attended the official opening night. For a hilarious, and only slightly exaggerated glimpse at what the traditional tryout process could be like, track down a video of the classic MGM musical *The Bandwagon* (1953). Writers Betty Comden and Adolph Green based the film on their actual experiences with egotistical directors, frazzled stars, sets the refused to work, and backers that slithered into the night at the first sign of trouble.

² See www.musicals101.com for full article.

Since the 1970's, it has been too costly for most musicals to tour before opening in New York. Some shows now start with full-scale productions at one or more regional theatres. Other producers opt for four to six weeks of Broadway previews, charging full price to those adventurous enough to catch a work in progress.

The downside of extended Broadway previews is that a new show is subjected to the merciless scrutiny of New York's theatrical community. Many important musicals (*Merrily We Roll Along*, *Legs Diamond*, *Carrie*) were so roundly ripped apart by preview word-of-mouth that they were almost doomed to failure. Since the appearance of internet chat rooms, it is possible for New York's theatre buffs to share intimate details of every preview. After critics dismissed *Jekyll and Hyde*, fans of the show quickly organized via the web, helping to keep the show alive. When Bernadette Peters missed several previews of *Gypsy* (2003), disgruntled fans had the word out on the web long before newspapers picked up the story.

Some shows have tried to extend previews endlessly and avoid the critics. *Beatlemania* (1977) postponed its opening for several months, playing to packed houses. Thanks to strong word of mouth, it then survived bad reviews and ran for several years. Others that tried to avoid the critics were not nearly as lucky. *Sarava* (1979) cancelled its opening three times, but even an amazingly aggressive ad campaign could not keep it open for more than 149 performances. *Merlin* (1983) tried the same tactics, folded after 199 performances, and lost millions.

New shows usually undergo revision during previews. Songs, scenes, and bits of business that seemed fabulous during rehearsals are often scrapped. Now and then, a performer is replaced or a role is cut. When a show is in serious trouble, new songs and scenes may be added, but this is an expensive proposition. When *Legs Diamond* added a new opening number part way through previews, the orchestrations and extra rehearsal time cost tens of thousands of dollars. Although the number ("When I Get My Name in Lights") was a success, it was not enough to save an otherwise ill-conceived show.

Previews are also the time when all kinds of technical problems must be resolved. The massive turntable that kept *Les Miserables* flowing froze during previews, and the musical version of *Shogun* had critics in the audience when a runaway set knocked the lead actor out cold. The performance had to be stopped, and the critics returned a few weeks later. Their reviews were so scathing that it hardly seemed worth the wait.

Eventually, a show reaches that culminating moment – the opening night. Not all openings are created equal.

GLOSSARY OF THEATRE TERMS

ACOUSTICS: qualities that evaluate the ability of a theatre to clearly transmit sounds from the stage to the audience.

ACT: main division of a drama, ACTS may be further divided into SCENES.

ACTOR: a performer in a play; may be male or female.

ADAPTATION: a reinvention of an existing story or play; includes turning novels into plays, plays into musicals, or making changes in language or plot.

AD-LIB: making up a line not originally in a play, usually done when an actor forgets a line or someone misses an entrance.

ANTAGONIST: the opponent or adversary of the main character (protagonist); provides the obstacle the protagonist tries to overcome.

ARENA STAGE: stage placed in the center of a room with audience seating surrounding it, also known as theatre in the round.

ASIDE: a brief remark made by a character and intended to be heard by the audience but not by other characters.

ATMOSPHERE: tone or mood established by events, places, or situations.

AT RISE: refers to the action taking place as the curtain rises.

AUDITION: a brief performance of either a monologue or a short scene done by actors for the director of a play in order for the director to decide which actor he or she wants to cast in a particular role.

BACKSTAGE: refers to the areas not a part of the actual stage, but restricted for actors and crewmembers. It usually includes the green room and the dressing rooms, and frequently offices and scenic shops as well.

BOOTH: the small room set up for the management of the technical elements needed during a play, usually set behind the audience with a window facing the stage. The Stage Manager calls the show from there. The sound and light board operators run the audio and lighting equipment from there as well.

BREAK A LEG: a superstitious good luck wish exchanged by actors who feel that saying “good luck” is a jinx.

CALL: the time at which an actor is supposed to be at rehearsal or performance.

CALLBACK: a second or third audition used to further narrow the field of actors competing for a particular role in a play.

CAST: (verb) to assign parts to the actors in a play. **CAST:** (noun) group of actors in a

particular play.

CASTING CALL: notice to actors of an audition for parts in a play.

CHARACTER: a person in a play created by the playwright and represented by an actor.

CHOREOGRAPHER: the artist in charge of creating the dances and/or movements used by actors in a play.

CLIMAX: (of a script or play) the moment of highest tension or suspense in a play; the turning point after which all action moves to a resolution.

COMEDY: a story where the protagonist (main character) achieves his/her goal.

COMIC RELIEF: a humorous moment, scene or speech in a serious drama which is meant to provide relief from emotional intensity and, by contrast, to heighten the seriousness of the story.

COSTUMES: the clothes worn by actors in an a play designed to fit the era, mood, and personality of the characters as well as enhance the overall design look of the production.

COSTUME DESIGNER: the artist in charge of creating the look of the costumes for a play.

COSTUME SHOP MANAGER: the person in charge of realizing the vision of the costume designer in actual clothes, responsible for maintaining the costumes and wigs during the course of the production.

CRITIC: a writer who reviews plays.

CROSSOVER: a hidden passage, often behind the scenery, through which actors can go from one side of the stage to the other without being seen by the audience. It is used if actors need to exit on one side and make their next entrance from the opposite side.

CUE: the last words or actions that come before another actor's speech or entrance; a light, sound or curtain signal.

CURTAIN: end of a scene; closing of a curtain to depict the end of an act or scene.

CURTAIN CALL: the process of actors taking their bows, receiving applause, and/or being reintroduced to the audience at the end of a play.

DANCE CAPTAIN: member of the cast in charge of working with the dancers to maintain the quality of the dance numbers, make sure dancers are properly warmed up before performance, and teach understudies and new cast members existing numbers

DESIGNER: a person who conceives and creates the plans for scenery, costumes, lighting, sound, makeup, hairstyles, props and other visual aspects of a performance.

DIALECT: a speech pattern which is distinctive, or the use of a cultural accent on stage.

DIALOGUE: conversation between two or more actors in a play.

DIALOGUE COACH: person responsible for working with a cast on correct pronunciation and dialect usage.

DIRECTOR: a person responsible for initiating the interpretation of the play, enhancing that interpretation with the concepts of the designers and making all final decisions on production values; tells the actors where to move and how best to communicate the interpretation of the play to the audience.

DOWNSTAGE: front area of the stage, nearest to the audience.

DRAMA: the playscript itself; the art of writing and staging plays; a literary art form different from poetry or other fiction

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: cast of characters in a drama or, more generally, participants in an event.

DRESSER: a person in charge of assisting actors with their costumes, wigs, and makeup during a production.

DRESSING ROOM: the place where actors take their costumes, wigs, and makeup on and off. Sometimes dressing rooms are communal, one for men, one for women, sometimes actors have a dressing room all to themselves or to share with just one or two other actors. Dressing rooms often contain (or are in close proximity to) toilets, sinks, showers, lighted make-up tables and sleeping areas.

EXEUNT: stage direction meaning “they exit.” **EXIT:** stage direction telling an actor to leave the stage.

EXPOSITION: dialogue which gives the audience the background information it needs to follow the action of the play; most will occur early on in the play.

ENTRANCE: the movement of an actor onto the visible areas of the stage.

FALLING ACTION: (of a script or play) the acceptance of the situation derived from the climax; the conflict is worked out or resolved.

FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER: the artist in charge of staging fight scenes, can include swordplay, other weapons, or barehanded combat.

FORESHADOWING: a hint of what is to come in the story. This is often used to keep the audience in a state of expectancy

GHOST WRITER: person hired by an author to write on his or her behalf; receives no public credit.

GREEN ROOM: a small lounge backstage where actors can relax and get ready to go on.

HALF-HOUR: the usual call for actors to be at the theatre, thirty minutes before curtain.

HOUSE: the audience or the theatrical building.

HOUSE MANAGER: the employee in charge of the audience during a performance, trains ushers, runs the concessions, and troubleshoots seating problems.

IMPROVISATION: to make up as you go along; often used as a rehearsal technique to make actors more comfortable with their characters; may be a part of some performance situations.

INCITING INCIDENT: (of a script or play) the launching pad of the play; the action or short sequence of actions that constitute the point of attack.

IRONY: a contrast between what is and what appears to be. Two types of irony are---
VERBAL IRONY when a character says one thing and means another; **DRAMATIC IRONY** when the audience knows something that the character does not

LIGHTING DESIGNER: artist in charge of creating the lighting effects for a play.

MAKEUP: cosmetics, wigs, hair colorings, or other items applied to the actors to change or enhance their appearance.

MELODRAMA: play with exaggerated plot and emotion.

MONOLOGUE: long speech spoken by one actor without interruption.

MOTIVATION: a character's reason for saying or doing something; actors search for this in studying their role and use voice and movement to relay it to the audience.

MOVEMENT COACH: a person familiar with the ways people physically relate to one another in different historical periods, as well as general historically and culturally accurate movements. (How to properly use a fan, how women walk while corseted, where and how men and women might stand in relation to one another, etc.)

NARRATOR: one who tells the story; speaks directly to the audience.

OBJECTIVE: what the character wants/needs/desires.

OFFSTAGE: areas on the stage which are not seen by the audience, like the wings or the crossovers, where action can take place and be heard by the audience, or where actors can wait for their entrances.

PLAYWRIGHT: author of a play. **PLOT:** the story of the play.

PROP: any moveable item used on the set of a play or handled by an actor.

PROSCENIUM: a form of staging in which an arch frames the stage; the stage is at one end of a room and the audience sits in front of it, watching the play through an arch which frames the action.

PROSCENIUM ARCH: opening in the proscenium through which the audience views the play.

PROTAGONIST: the main character; the person whose success or failure the audience is most concerned.

PUT-IN REHEARSAL: a special rehearsal called when an understudy is going to go on, so that the rest of the cast has an opportunity to get used to the presence of a different actor.

REHEARSAL: the time period before a play opens involving the practice of the dialogue, movement, rhythms and interpretations of the play.

RISING ACTION: (of a script or play) the sequence of action and events that leads to the climax of the play; the conflict becomes clear and tension builds as obstacles are presented.

RUN CREW: people in charge of moving scenery and props onstage during a performance, and helping create live audio or visual special effects.

SCENE: a small unit of a play in which there is no shift of locale or time.

SCENIC ARTIST: a painter or machinist who reproduces the scene designer's drawings in full scale on the stage.

SCRIPT: the written words and stage directions created by a playwright.

SET: the scenery of the play; depicts time, place and mood.

SET DESIGNER: the artist in charge of creating the physical world in which the play will live; usually creates in drawings and scale models.

SOLILOQUY: a speech given by a character alone on the stage where the audience gets to know the inner thoughts and feelings of the character.

SOUNDBOARD OPERATOR: the person who discharges the correct sounds or music at the appropriate moment in the play

SOUND DESIGNER: the artist responsible for the creation of the sounds heard during a performance, including music and special effects.

STAGE BUSINESS: small pieces of physical action put into a scene to heighten its appeal, suspense or sense of reality.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: information written into a script which tells the actors when

and where to move, or describes the intent or mood of action, may also describe scenery or props.

STAGE LEFT: side of the stage on the actors' left as they face the audience.

STAGE RIGHT: side of the stage on the actors' right as they face the audience.

STAGE MANAGER: person who coordinates all aspects of the production during production and performance, runs or calls the show.

SUBTEXT: the thoughts behind the words the actor speaks.

THEME: the main idea or ethical precept the play deals with.

THRUST STAGE: a stage set at one end of the room which extends out into the audience area; audience surrounds the stage on three sides.

TONY: awards given annually by the American Theatre Wing for outstanding contributions to the theatre; officially the Antoinette Perry Awards.

TRAGEDY: a story where the protagonist does not achieve his/her goal.

TRANSLATION: taking a play in one language and converting it into another.

UNDERSTUDY: an actor who has memorized all the lines and action of an actor in a play, so that if the original actor falls ill or cannot perform, there is someone prepared to take his or her place at a moment's notice.

UPSTAGE: the part of the stage farthest from the audience. Also, to steal the scene from another actor by moving upstage, forcing the downstage actor to turn his or her back on the audience.

WINGS: the areas offstage right and left, hidden from the audience, where actors can enter or exit, do quick costume changes, receive or discard props, or speak lines meant to be heard as if from another room.

QUESTIONS AND CRITICAL THINKING ACTIVITIES

WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER?

1. What is the name of the show-within-the-show?
2. Who is the first character to die?
3. In what city does *Curtains* take place?
4. Who takes on the lead female role after the first murder?
5. What is Carmen and Bambi's relationship?
6. What is Lieutenant Cioffi's explanation for why the cast of the show-within-the-show is all working for so little money?
7. How is Sidney Bernstein discovered at the end of Act One? (Be specific)
8. What does Belling discover amongst the percussion instruments in the orchestra pit?
9. Who is discovered as the murderer?
10. Who ultimately plays Rob Hood?

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Characters in movies, plays, books, and stories all have a basic similarity: they all have **OBJECTIVES**. An objective is something a character wants, needs, or desires throughout the story. The character usually spends his/her entire time pursuing this desire.

Choose three characters from *Curtains*. What is the primary desire of each of these three characters? Use one specific detail from the musical to support your claim.

LEARNING VOCABULARY

foreclosure	epiphany	provocative
debacle	thespian	anonymity
loathsome	sublime	excoriate
postmortem	pious	perspicacious
fraudulent	autopsy	horrendous

Define each of the words above then use that word in a sentence.

SHAPING INTERPRETATIONS

1. How is Lieutenant Cioffi similar to the stereotypical detective seen in films and stories? How is he different? Use specific examples from the musical to support your answer.
2. What parallels can you draw between the relationship Carmen has with Bambi and the relationship Aaron has with Georgia? What similarities exist with these relationships? What differences exist?
3. In what ways does the show-within-the-show mirror the action of *Curtains*? Why would a Wild West version of Robin Hood be fitting to help tell the murder mystery?
4. What statement do you think authors Peter Stone and Rupert Holmes were trying to make with the occupation of the murderer? What is the relationship between the murderer's occupation and the theatre?

BEYOND THE PERFORMANCE

1. The songwriting team of Kander and Ebb have created some of the most successful shows in musical theater history. Research one of their musicals. What similarities do you find between the musical and *Curtains*? What differences do you find?
2. It can be said that *Curtains* is a love letter to the theater. In many of the songs and in much of the dialogue there are nods and references to other Broadway shows. Some such references include:

- **The Iceman Cometh*
- **No Exit*
- **South Pacific*
- **Lysistrata*

- *Oklahoma!*
- *Gypsy*
- *Waiting for Godot*

Investigate one of the musicals/plays above. Write a report on the performance's significance in American theater history that details the performance's production history, the innovative elements in the performance, and the performance's influence on future musicals/plays.

STATEMENT REGARDING CALIFORNIA STATE STANDARDS

This study guide addresses the following California State Standards for Language Arts:

Grades 9-10

-Literary Response and Analysis (Structural Features of Literature, Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text, and Literary Criticism)

-Writing Strategies (Organization and Focus, Research and Technology, and Evaluation and Revision)

Grades 11-12

-Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development (Vocabulary and Concept Development)

-Reading Comprehension (Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text)

-Literary Response and Analysis (Structural Features of Literature, Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text, and Literary Criticism)

-Writing Strategies (Organization and Focus, Research and Technology, Evaluation and Revision)

THANK YOU TO OUR MAJOR SPONORS

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

The Leshner Foundation

The Thomas J. Long Foundation

Diablo Regional Arts Association

The Bach Group of Morgan Stanley