

Stage TMNOTES

stage

A FIELD GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

SPRING AWAKENING

SPRING AWAKENING

A tool for using the theater
across the curriculum to meet
National Standards for Education

- Production Overview
- Lesson Guides
- Student Activities
- At-Home Projects
- Reproducibles



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This publication is based on *Spring Awakening* with music by Duncan Sheik, book and lyrics by Steven Sater, direction by Michael Mayer and choreography by Bill T. Jones. The content of the *Spring Awakening* edition of StageNOTES™: A Field Guide for Teachers is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all other countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights regarding publishing, reprint permissions, public readings, and mechanical or electronic reproduction, including but not limited to, CD-ROM, information storage and retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly prohibited.

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SPRING AWAKENING

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FIELD GUIDE

USING THE

Camp Broadway® is pleased to bring you this *Spring Awakening* edition of StageNOTES®, the 31st in our series. We are proud to be affiliated with this musical that swept the 2007 Tony Awards winning 8 awards including Best Musical. This guide has been developed as a teaching tool to assist educators in the classroom who are introducing the story in conjunction with the stage production.

By using StageNOTES®, you will understand *Spring Awakening*'s setting of 19th Century Germany (History), expand your vocabulary (Language Arts) and illuminate the human condition (Behavioral Studies). StageNOTES® will also aid in your own self-exploration (Life Skills) and encourage creative thinking and expression (The Arts).

The Camp Broadway creative team, consisting of theater educators, scholars, researchers and theater professionals, has developed a series of lesson plans that, although inspired by and based on the musical *Spring Awakening* can also accompany class study. To assist you in preparing your presentation of each lesson, we have included: an objective; excerpts taken directly from the script of *Spring Awakening*; a discussion topic; a writing assignment; and an interactive class activity. The reproducible lessons (handouts) accompany each lesson unit, which contains: an essay question; a creative exercise; and an "after hours activity" that encourages students to interact with family, friends, or the community at large.

The curriculum categories offered in the *Spring Awakening* study guide have been informed by the basic standards of education detailed in Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education, 2nd Edition, written by John S. Kendall and Robert J. Marzano (1997). This definitive compilation was published by Mid-Continent Regional Education Laboratory, Inc. (McREL) and the Association for Supervision and Curricular Development (ASCD) after a systematic collection, review and analysis of noteworthy national and state curricular documents in all subjects.

The *Spring Awakening* study guide is for you, the educator, in response to your need for a standards-compliant curriculum. We truly hope this study guide will help you incorporate the themes and content of *Spring Awakening* into your classroom lessons.



Lisa Poelle
CEO
Camp Broadway



STORY OF

THE

SPRING AWAKENING

It's Germany, 1891. A world where the grown-ups hold all the cards. The beautiful young Wendla explores the mysteries of her body, and wonders aloud where babies come from, till Mama tells her to shut it, and put on a proper dress.

Elsewhere, the brilliant and fearless young Melchior interrupts a mind-numbing Latin drill to defend his buddy Moritz – a boy so traumatized by puberty he can't concentrate on anything. Not that the Headmaster cares. He strikes them both and tells them to turn in their lesson.

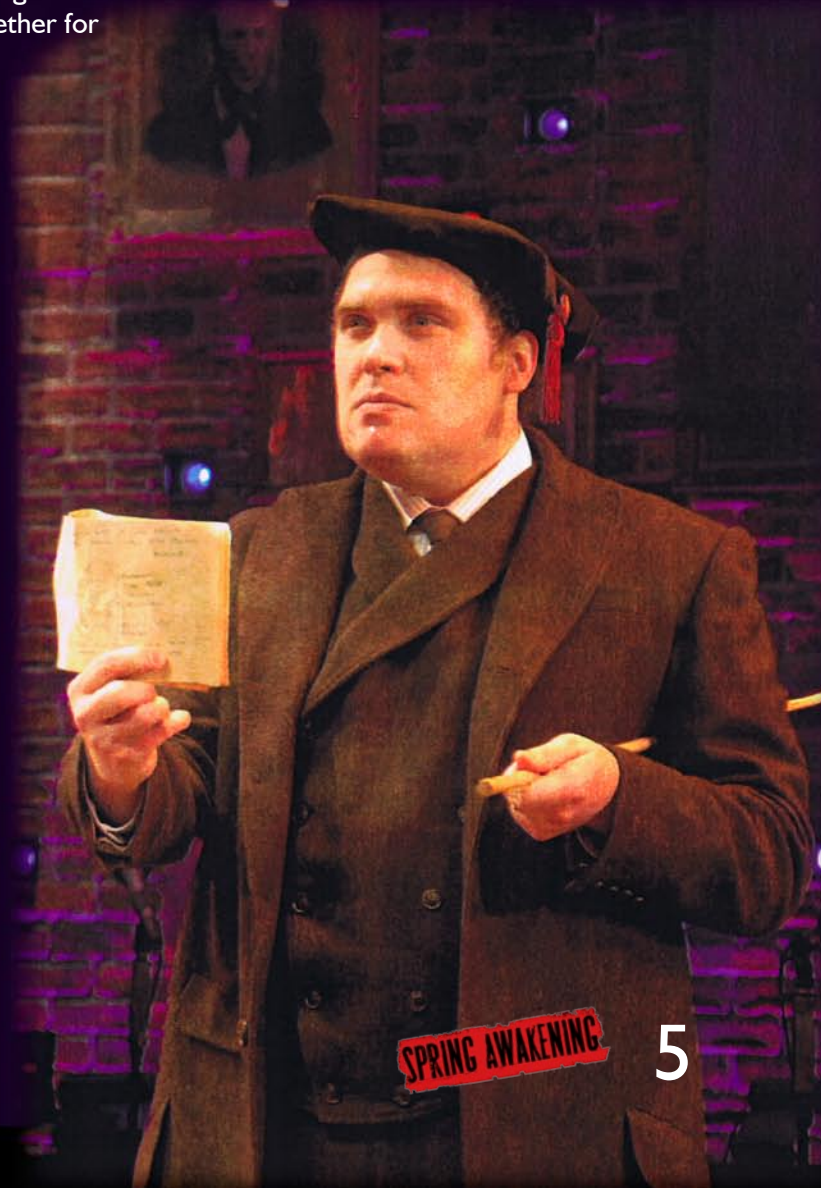
One afternoon – in a private place in the woods – Melchior and Wendla meet by accident, and soon find within themselves a desire unlike anything they've ever felt.

As they fumble their way into one another's arms, Moritz flounders and soon fails out of school. When even his one adult friend, Melchior's mother, ignores his plea for help, he is left so distraught he can't hear the promise of life offered by his outcast friend Ilse.

Naturally, the Headmasters waste no time in pinning the "crime" of Moritz's suicide on Melchior and expel him. And soon Mama learns her little Wendla is pregnant. Now the young lovers must struggle against all odds to build a world together for their child.

Spring Awakening is based on Frank Wedekind's controversial 1891 drama, which was scandalous in its day for addressing sex violence and suicide. The story, dialogue and costumes suggest the 19th Century, and are perfectly wedded to a beautiful alternative pop music score by Grammy nominated singer/songwriter Duncan Sheik and author and lyricist Steven Sater. The creative team also includes Tony Award Winning director Michael Mayer and legendary choreographer Bill T. Jones.

Spring Awakening takes its inspiration from one of literature's most controversial masterpieces – a work so daring in its depiction of teenage self-discovery, it was banned from the stage and not performed in its complete form in English for nearly 100 years.



SPRING AWAKENING

5

THE CHARACTERS OF

SPRING AWAKENING



Moritz
The son of Rentier Stiefel and best friend of Melchior.

Ilsa
A free spirit who grew up with Wendla, Melchior and Moritz.

Otto
Schoolboy; a friend of Melchior and Moritz

Thea
Schoolgirl; a friend of Wendla's

Melchior
A gifted schoolboy and a heartbroken character.

Wendla
The fourteen-year-old, star-crossed lover of Melchior.



Hänschen
Schoolboy;
a friend of
Melchior
and Moritz

Georg
Schoolboy;
a friend of
Melchior and
Moritz

Martha
Schoolgirl;
a friend of
Wendla's

Ernst
Schoolboy;
a friend of
Melchior and
Moritz

Anna
Schoolgirl;
a friend of
Wendla's

LESSONS

USING THE

History After Hours
Teaching Tips: Students take an opportunity to learn more about German history.
Challenge #1: Getting To Know "The Iron Chancellor"

History Experiential
Experiential Objective: Living the life of a 19th-century student.
From the Script: Act 1, Scene 8. Melchior writes in his journal about what it's like to be a student.

History Writing
Writing Objective: Exploring women's rights in two acts.
From the Script: Act 1, Scene 2. Most of the history you study in junior high and high school will be American history. Not

History Discussion
Discussion Objective: Reporting child abuse.
From the Script: Act 1, Scene 8. Wendla and Melchior discuss Martha's abusive situation.
Wendla: Martha Besenell is beaten almost every evening — the next day you can see the welts. It's terrible. Really, it makes you boiling hot to hear her tell it. Later, I can't think about anything else.
Melchior: Someone should file a complaint.
Teaching Tips: What we are aiming for in this lesson is to discuss how child abuse laws have evolved since the 1800s, and inform students of their responsibility in reporting such behavior.
Exercise: Since the 1800s child abuse laws have evolved considerably. Thank goodness. Children in those days and even beyond were considered owned by their parents, and other than social pressure on those who committed such acts, legally, not much was done to protect the child. Students research the history of child abuse laws in America from 1900. They take careful notes. Tell them to create a timeline to help organize events. As you list each event further research its details. These notes will be important in the discussion to follow. The earliest event in the evolution of child abuse laws found by a student will be the starting point of the discussion. The discussion will move forward based on the next talking point based on its date. For instance the first point may have occurred in 1900. The next talking point might have occurred in 1901, and so on to the present. To sum up the discussion ask students if they understand their responsibility to report child abuse. Be sure to address their concerns about false accusations.

Featured Lesson Units

- 1 History
- 2 Language Arts
- 3 Behavioral Studies
- 4 Life Skills
- 5 The Arts

Each Lesson Unit (History, Language Arts, etc.) contains the following Lessons:

Discussion:

The focus is on facilitating an in-depth class dialogue.

Writing:

The focus is on the expression of thoughts in written form.

Experiential:

The focus is on understanding social dynamics as well as collaboration and teamwork in small and large groups.

A take-home "After Hours" lesson

Each StageNOTES™ lesson generally includes the following components:

Objective:

An overall note to the teacher outlining the goals of the lesson to follow.

From the script:

An excerpt or situation from the script of *Spring Awakening* to help "set the stage" for the activity that follows.

Exercise:

A detailed description and instructions for the activity to be facilitated in class.

Teaching Tips:

Direct questions teachers may use to help guide the students through the activity.

The Standards listed throughout the StageNOTES™ Field Guide are excerpted from *Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education (2nd Edition)* by John S. Kendall and Robert J. Marzano, published by Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory, Inc. (McREL) and the Association for Supervision and Curricular Development (ASCD), 1997.

The ^{CAMP} *Broadway* Guide to Theatergoing Etiquette

In the early part of the nineteenth century, theatrical performances usually began at six o'clock. An evening would last four or five hours, beginning with a short "curtain raiser," followed by a five-act play, with other short pieces presented during the intermissions. It might be compared roughly to today's prime-time television, a series of shows designed to pass the time. With no television or radio, the theater was a place to find companionship, light, and warmth on a cold winters evening.

As the century progressed, the theater audience reflected the changing social climate. More well-to-do patrons still arrived at six o'clock for the full program of the evening, while half price admission was offered at eight or eight-thirty to the working class. This allowed for their longer workday and tighter budgets. Still, the theaters were always full, allowing people to escape the drudgery of their daily lives and enjoy themselves.

Because of this popularity, theaters began to be built larger and larger. New progress in construction allowed balconies to be built overhanging the seats below—in contrast to the earlier style of receding tiers. This meant that the audience on the main floor (the section called "the orchestra") were out of the line of sight of the spectators in the galleries. As a result, the crowds became less busy peoplewatching and gossiping among themselves, and more interested in watching the performance. The theater managers began the practice of dimming the lights in the seating area (called the "house lights"), focusing the attention of the audience on the stage. The advent of gas lighting and the "limelight" (the earliest spotlights) made the elaborate settings even more attractive to the eye, gaining the audience's rapt attention.

By the 1850s, the wealthier audiences were no longer looking for a full evenings entertainment. Curtain time was pushed back to eight o'clock (for the convenience of patrons arriving from dinner); only one play would be presented, instead of four or five, freeing the audience for other social activities afterward. Matinee (afternoon) performances were not given regularly until the 1870s, allowing society

ladies, who would not have ventured out late at night, the opportunity to attend the theater.

Now in a new millennium, many of these traditions are still with us. The theater is still a place to "see and be seen"; eight o'clock is still the standard curtain time; and the excited chatter of the audience falls to a hush when the house lights dim and the stage lights go up, and another night on Broadway begins.

You can make sure everyone you know has the very best experience at the theater by sharing this Theater Etiquette with them. And now, enjoy the show!

Being a Good Audience

Remember, going to the theater isn't like going to a movie. There are some different rules to keep in mind when you're at a live performance.

Believe it or not, **the actors can actually hear you.** The same acoustics that make it possible for you to hear the actors means that they can hear all the noises an audience makes: talking, unwrapping candy, cell phones ringing. That's why, when you're at a show, **there is no food or drink at your seats** (eat your treats at intermission; save the popcorn-munching for the multiplex)

No talking (even if you're just explaining the plot to the person next to you)

Always keep cell phones and beepers turned off (This even means no texting your friends during the show to tell them how great it is...)

Of course, what the actors like to hear is how much you're enjoying the performance. So go ahead and laugh at the funny parts, clap for the songs, and save your biggest cheers and applause for your favorite actors at the curtain call. That's their proof of a job well done.



HISTORY

OVERTURE TO



Art as reflection of its time is undeniable. In the case of *Spring Awakening*, the original 1891 play confirms the adage. Although certainly not the first work to challenge the norms of its day, it was considered an ultra-radical attempt in its time.

Most of German society as it had been up until then vanished by 1900.

The pace of urbanization was rapidly

escalating. By 1910 Berlin was a major metropolitan center. People from all over Europe, many escaping war and the confines of less progressive societies, flocked there. Inventions such as the telegraph, telephone, electricity and mass transportation undreamed of one hundred years before were now reality. Along with scientific discoveries it was also a time of great change in political and social thinking.

Social change, confusion, and moral ambiguity were present in all areas of life – politics, technology, identity, and sexuality. Male domination coexisted with an active Women's Movement. Women, too long

victims of a feudal system that made them dependent on their husbands, began to speak out. The League of Progressive Women's Associations called for a boycott of marriage and for social acceptance of sex as an enjoyable behavior. Founded by Lily Braun and Minna Cauer, the league sought to organize and unionize prostitutes, promote contraception, a woman's right to abortion and the decriminalization of homosexuality. Writer Emma Trosse published her controversial brochure titled "Is free love immoral?"



Lily Braun

Summary of Standard for Historical Understanding

1. Understanding and analyzing chronological relationships and patterns:

▪ Analyze influence of specific beliefs on these times. How would events be different in the absence of these beliefs?

▪ Analyze the effects specific decisions had on history. How would things have been different in the absence of these specific decisions?

2. Understanding the historical perspective:

▪ Understand that the consequences of human intentions are influenced by the means of carrying them out.

▪ Understand how the past affects our private lives and society in general.

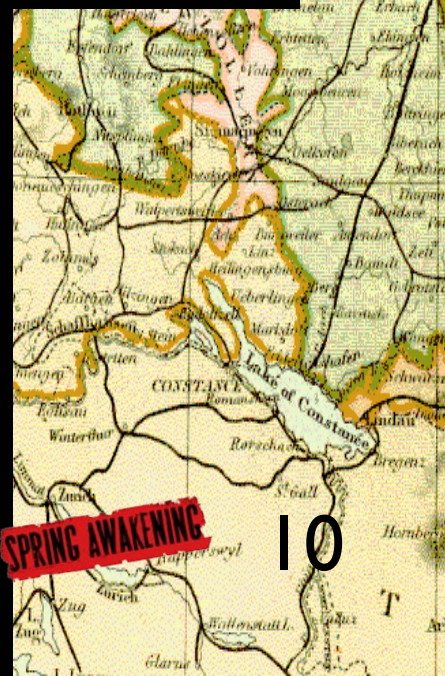
▪ Perceive past events with historical empathy.

▪ Evaluate credibility and authenticity of historical sources.

▪ Evaluate the validity and credibility of different historical interpretations.

Politician, feminist and writer, Lily Braun was the daughter of Prussian general. With no formal education, she moved to Berlin and lived financially independent of her family through her writings. The most famous is the historical literary work--*Memoirs of a Socialist Woman* used widely today in Women's Studies classrooms.

Minna Cauer promoted radical democratic causes through the feminist newspaper, *The Women's Movement*. She was an avid campaigner for abortion





Minna Cauer



Emma Trosse



rights. In 1895 she co-drafted a petition for the abolition of the Law of Association prohibiting women from joining political organizations and is credited as primary organizers of the Union of Progressive Women's Associations established in 1899.

Raised in a middle class home much like that of the characters in *Spring Awakening*, Emma Trosse was one of the first women admitted to attend lectures as a guest at the Friedrich Wilhelms University of Berlin. There is no evidence she was ever allowed to become a full time student. Yet she did become a teacher. It is safe to assume as eventual head of a boarding school she was nothing like her counterpart in the play, the rigid headmistress.

The expansion of education, entertainment, and access to newsreels brought information about progressive social movements to the masses. Fleeing a seriously exploited landscape, large populations emigrated from the rural German countryside to its cities, where literacy promoted new ideas about personal freedom. While people still respected and looked to parents for guidance, the idea that children's perspectives on important topics should necessarily mimic their forbearers' was quickly becoming extinct.

Along with social and cultural reforms Germany was becoming a world industrial power as well. Through the mid-19th century, Britain had dominated economically and militarily. In the late 1800s, however, things were about to change. By the end of the century Germany, with its burgeoning military/industrial complex, had overtaken it and would soon become the greatest power on the continent. World Wars I and II are traced by some historians to this period.

While all of this captured the imagination of sophisticated city residents, older rural Germans left behind clung tightly to traditional ways. Their children, however, were very much aware that something exciting was going on beyond the narrow confines of their village. It is in this setting that Frank Wedekind, author of the original 1891 play, *Spring Awakening*, placed his characters. Born in Munich, a center of progressive thinking, his work often criticized middle class attitudes toward sex and the repression of German youth. Considered too suggestive for the theatre, the play was not performed until 1906; large sections of it were cut by censors.

The topics addressed in the play and the musical are timely even today—teen sex, suicide, incest and child abuse, abortion and the general difficulties confronting adolescents in an adult controlled world. If history indeed repeats itself, the story is a mirror of its times—then and now.

SPRING AWAKENING



Discussion Objective

Reporting child abuse.

Teaching Tips

What we are aiming for in this lesson is to discuss how child abuse laws have evolved since the 1800s, and inform students of their responsibility in reporting such behavior.

From the Script

Act I, Scene 8

Wendla and Melchior discuss Martha's abusive situation.

Wendla

Martha Bessell is beaten almost every evening -- the next day, you can see the welts. It's terrible. Really, it makes you boiling hot to hear her tell it. Lately, I can't think about anything else.

Melchior

Someone should file a complaint.

Exercise

Since the 1800s child abuse have evolved considerably. Thank goodness. Children in those days and even beyond were considered owned by their parents, and other than social pressure on those who committed such acts, legally, not much was done to protect the child.

Students should research the history of child abuse laws in America from 1900 and take careful notes. They should create a timeline to help organize events. As each event is listed, further research its details. These notes will be important in the discussion to follow.

The earliest event in the evolution of child abuse laws found by a student will be the starting point of the discussion. The discussion will move forward based on the next talking point based on its date. For instance the first point may have occurred in 1900. The next talking point might have occurred in 1901, and so on to the present.

To sum up the discussion, ask students if they understand their responsibility to report child abuse. Be sure to address their concerns about false accusations.

Writing Objective

Exploring women’s rights in two cultures.

Teaching Tips

Most of the history you study in junior high and high school will be American history. Not much about German history will be discussed. There are many parallels between the histories of the two nations. Here’s an opportunity to get a glimpse of German culture and the women’s rights movement which may help you understand the significance of our own.

From the Script

Act I, Scene 2

Most of the history you study in junior high and high school will be American history. Not much about German history will be discussed. There are many parallels between the histories of the two nations. Here’s an opportunity to get a glimpse of German culture and the women’s rights movement which may help you understand the significance of our own.

Herr Knochenbruch

Look at that. Melchior Gabor, a young man of distinct intellectual capability --

Fraülein Knuppeldick

Thoroughly distinct.

Herr Knochenbruch

A young man who could be our finest pupil --

Fraülein Knuppeldick

Our finest, Herr Knochenbruch.

Act I, Scene 3

...the young women, Anna, Thea and Wendla prattle on about marriage and boys

Anna

I certainly hope your Mama approves the man I marry.

Martha

Melchior Gabor!

Thea

And who doesn’t?

Thea

And the man I marry!

Anna

He is rather handsome. . .

Wendla

Well, we all know who Thea longs to marry!

Exercise

The excerpts above reinforce how differently young men and women were perceived in those days. The young women were raised to marry and have families while the young men were educated for careers. Obviously women, at least in the rural areas of Germany, did not go to school.

The late 19th and early twentieth centuries were energetic times for the women’s rights movement. As we see from our Overture, it certainly was in Germany. But there were similar movements going on in America at about the same time. Let’s explore a few of the more important women who fought for women’s rights—and won.

Tell students to pick one of the women mentioned in the Overture to History. They may select another German women’s rights activist if they choose. Tell them to research an American women’s activist who fought for women in about the same time period—late 19th/early 20th centuries. Write an essay comparing the work of the two women titled: “Sisters in Freedom.”

Teacher's Note

It is probably wise to send a parental permission slip home with students explaining the experiment to parents.

Experiential Objective

Living the life of a 19th-century German student.

Teaching Tips

Life for students today is nothing like it was “back then.” Modern attitudes about education have drastically changed the classroom landscape. How do you think you would handle life in a 19th century classroom?

From the Script

Act I, Scene 8

Melchior writes in his journal about what it's like to be a student.

Melchior

... a world where teachers -- like parents -- view us as merely so much raw material for an obedient and productive society...

... a unified, military-like body, where all that is weak must be hammered away...

... where the progress of the students reflects back only on the rank and order of the faculty, and therefore a single low mark can be seen as a threat to --

Exercise

Everyone, including the teacher, will be involved in this unusual experiment.

Life for students in German schools was hard, to say the least. Rigid teaching methods and sometimes unreasonably high expectations were the norm. Take some time to do extensive research on the educational environment of classrooms in the 19th century. When the class has finished, get together and combine all of the information found. As a class they should develop a profile that can be easily implemented. Everyone reads the final profile and understands their roles.

With the teacher as school master or mistress, spend a period learning the way students at that time might learn the material. Since corporal punishment in those days was a fairly common activity, teachers, of course, may only simulate the striking of errant students. Teachers may use the simulated corporal punishment as they see fit and based on information found by students in their research.

Aren't you lucky to be a student today!?

Teaching Tips

Students take an opportunity to learn more about German and German-American history.

Challenge #1

Getting To Know “The Iron Chancellor”

For hundreds of years, Germans lived in many separate states, one of the most powerful of which was the kingdom of Prussia. During the late 1800’s, Otto von Bismarck, the prime minister of Prussia, united most of these states and cities under Prussian leadership. Expand your history knowledge. Read up on Bismarck and get to know who he was and what he meant to Germany.

Challenge #2

Who Were They?

Daniel Pastorius
John Peter Zengler
Gottfried Duden
August Follen
Carl Schurz
Franz Sigel
Peter Osterhaus
Friedrich Heckler
Adalbert Volck
Gottfried Kinkel
Johann Most
August Spies,
Adolph Fisher
Louis Lingg
George Engel
John Peter Altgeld
Johann Suter
Oscar Hammerstein
Joseph Seligman
Frederick Weyerhaeuser

LANGUAGE ARTS

OVERTURE TO



Benjamin Franklin Wedekind, or Frank Wedekind, was born in 1864 in Hannover, Germany but grew up in Switzerland. His father was a doctor and before her marriage, Wedekind's

mother was an actress. Although Wedekind played an influential role in the development of German epic theatre, and is considered a father of theatrical expressionism, his work is not part of any particular school. He was, however, credited then and now with being one of the first literary

figures to identify and write about sexuality as a major driving force in the human condition.

Summary of Standard for Language Arts

Writing

- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the writing process
- Demonstrates competence in rewriting, drafting and revising, editing and publishing
- Demonstrates competence in the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing
- Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions
- Gathers and uses information for research purposes

Reading

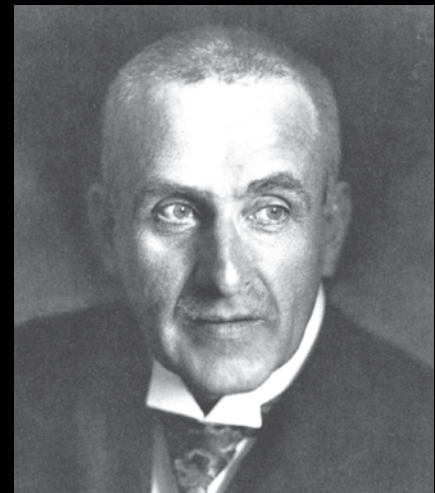
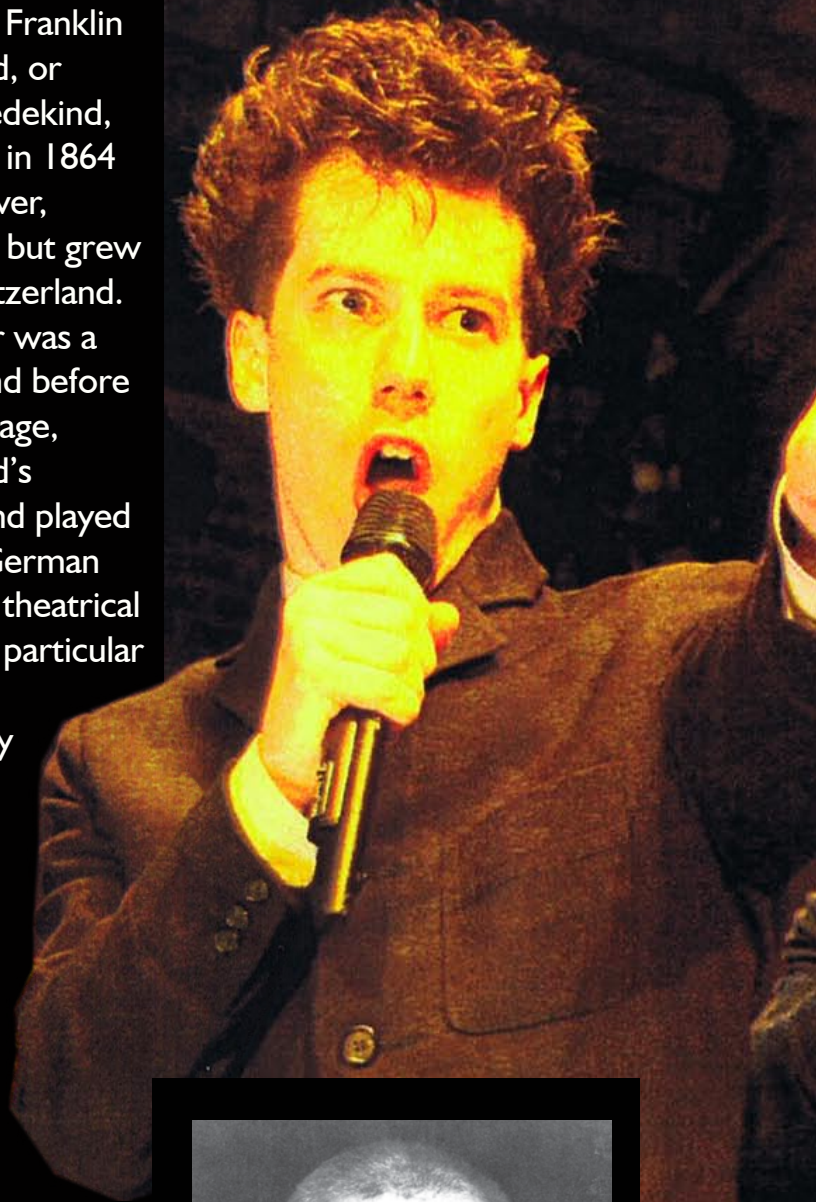
- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the reading process
- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies for reading a variety of literary texts
- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies for reading a variety of informational texts

Listening and Speaking

- Demonstrates competence in speaking and listening as tools for learning

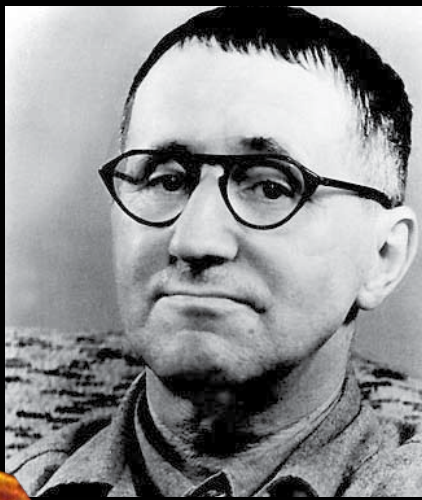
After a number of jobs in which he traveled about, Wedekind landed in Munich at a time of renewed interest in the dramatic arts. It was the perfect environment for his controversial *Spring Awakening*, written between 1890 and 1891 while Wedekind was in his late twenties. Chronicling the lives of German teenagers attempting to discover their sexual identities, the play met with resistance from German producers and was not staged until some time later, heavily censored.

As the rigid school mistress states when "punishment" of wayward



Frank Wedekind

SPRING AWAKENING



Bertolt Brecht



The Scream by Edvard Munch

teens comes up, “I cannot stand the creeping sensuality of these liberal times.”

The play also focused on other issues plaguing teens today: sex, abortion, coming into ones own and the struggle that exists between teens and authority figures.

Epic theatre earned its name by using clear description, a reporting style, choruses and projections as a means of communicating with audiences. It renounced the romanticism of earlier theatre and presented characters who represented different sides of an argument. The audience was invited to draw its own conclusions about the situations presented in a more detached “scientific” way—an approach fully developed in the mid 20th century by noted German playwright, Bertolt Brecht. He called the scientific approach the “alienation effect.” Both Wedekind and Brecht used unrealistic sets and comedy to soften the harsh realities of events presented in their plays.

The ever-present anxiety of the characters in *Spring Awakening* foreshadowed the expressionist movement in German theatre which became prominent in the early 20th century. Involving a distortion of emotion, the concept of expressionism was widely present in European art movements of the time. Edvard Munch’s “The Scream” is a good example of the expressionist style.

Spring Awakening also incorporates an element of epic theatre called “breaking the fourth wall,—an imaginary partition at the front of the stage separating the actors from the audience. Theatrically speaking, “the forth wall” is meant to symbolize the barrier between the world of fiction on stage and the audience. When an actor “breaks the fourth wall” he or she speaks to the audience directly. These techniques are regularly used in today’s sitcoms filmed before live audiences. In the show “Malcolm in the Middle”, the main character often speaks directly into the camera while other characters seem not to hear him. One actor can also play several rolls, as the two “adults” in the musical version play mothers, fathers, headmaster and mistress of the school. All of these techniques are present in 1800s German theatre, which one can safely assume was light years ahead of its time.

Discussion Objective

Language as a life altering tool.

Teaching Tips

Words we read and hear can have an enormous impact on our lives. A way in which we may have thought about something can change in a flash if presented in a different light through language. Words are knowledge; words are power.

From the Script

Act I, Scene 2

Moritz is confused about his sexuality. Melchior offers some writing and sketches he's done on the subject which today's students might see in their health/sex education class.

Melchior

All right then. I'll tell you everything. I got it out of books. But prepare yourself...

Moritz

No no -- not here! I can't talk it! No -- do me a favor: write it down. All of it. Conceal it in my satchel -- after Gymnastics -- tomorrow.

If you like, you could add some illustrations in the margins

Exercise

The famous playwright, Bertolt Brecht once said of epic theatre that, "The [lts] point is not to leave the spectator purged by a cathartic but to leave him a changed man (or woman)."

Moritz is unhappy and confused about his feelings of sexuality. He doesn't understand any of it. Melchior, who is more sophisticated, offers to give him some written material that will help him. As we know from earlier scenes between Wendla and her mother, reproduction is simply not something that is discussed. Moritz is in the same situation. In giving him the information Melchior hopes he will understand, be less confused and thus happier.

Words and information can be a great catalyst in changing attitudes about nearly everything, not only human sexuality. The words Moritz will read have the power to change his young life. Ask students to think of a time when words, spoken or written, have entirely changed their attitude about something. Discuss these changes.

Writing Objective

The use of the chorus in theatre.

Teaching Tips

Your students may or not study Greek tragedy in high school. Yet the use of theatrical techniques like the chorus can be helpful in understanding how language, in many forms, can be employed to help audiences understand a story.

From the Script

Act 1, Scene 2

The Schoolboys sit upright at their desks, reciting in Latin from Virgil’s Aeneid. They stand, one after the other, for their recitation.

All the Boys

... litora multum ille et terris iactatus et alto
vi superum saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram;
multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem...
Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris
Italiam, fato profugus, Laviniaque venit
litora, multum ille et terris iactatus et alto
vi superum saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram;
multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem...

The boys’ recitation grows louder, more insistent, more numbing—as if somehow we were entering into Melchior’s psychic experience of it.

Exercise

The Greek chorus grew out of the Greek tragic plays of the ancient Greek theatre. The chorus offers a variety of information to help the audience follow the performance. The chorus expressed to the audience what the main characters could not say, such as their fears or secrets. It usually communicated in song form but sometimes spoke its lines in unison. Among other techniques of epic theatre, the category in which the tragedy *Spring Awakening* falls uses chorus.

What is Greek chorus? In the wider sense of language use, how does it express what an author wants to say?

Write an essay on Greek chorus in which you discuss its use in *Spring Awakening*.

Experiential Objective

“Breaking the wall.”

Teaching Tips

Young people often find themselves in situations where they wish they could explain their take on things that are going on. In fact, we’ve all had the experience of talking to someone while simultaneously conducting a private dialogue in our own head. You’d like nothing more than to be able to say what you are thinking to someone else.

From the Script

Act 2, Scene 2

Ilse tries to convince Moritz to come with her and rekindle the friendship they had when they were young. He refuses, telling her he has too much school work to do. Despondent, he turns to the audience and lets it know he can no longer bear the pressures being placed upon him. .

Moritz

For the love of God, all I had to do was say yes.

(Calls after)

Ilse? Ilse...?

(Waits)

So, what will I say? I’ll tell them all, the angels, I got drunk in the snow, and sang, and played pirates... Yes, I’ll tell them, I’m ready now. I’ll be an angel.

Exercise

In the Overture to Language Arts we spoke about the dramatic technique called, breaking the wall. The sitcom “Malcolm the Middle” uses this technique, as Malcolm frequently takes himself out of the general dialogue and talks about his take on the scene directly to the audience.

In the above scene Moritz provides a hint to the audience about what he is thinking and planning to do now that he realizes he will never be free of the expectations of others. He can not accept Ilse’s invitation to play as they as they had when they were children. He is despondent.

Have students watch an episode of “Malcolm in the Middle”. Tell them to pay strict attention to the number of times he “breaks the wall.”

Divide students into groups. Tell them to pick a topic and begin a group discussion with the rest of the class listening. Have them select one member of group who will “break the wall” and periodically take him or herself out of the group discussion and provide personal insights to the class about what he or she is thinking.

Challenge

Write a New Ending

Spring Awakening is a tragedy. Main characters in the end do not have lives they dreamed. Wendla, an incurable romantic, is a victim of an abortionist, a charlatan who does not know what he is doing and is only in it for the money. Melchior loses her, the love of his young life. The pressure of trying hard and never being able to please either the school master and mistress or his parents in despair commits suicide.

The author strongly suggests that all of this could have been avoided if not for the repressive backward attitudes of the people in this rural community. If only Wendla's mother had been honest with her about the subject of sex, if Melchior had only thought twice about Wendla and not his own physical desires, if only Moritz had had the strength to take Ilse up on her offer to rekindle the wonderment of their childhood and free himself from the pressure placed upon him by the adults.

Using the "if only" scenario, write a new happier ending for this play. Explore all of the possibilities available for young people today that might have changed the outcome. This will require a good deal of thinking on your part. A lot of "ifs" can be employed: sex education in schools; choices for teens who do become pregnant; changed social attitudes toward pregnancy; therapy for Moritz and life choices other than succeeding as a top student; more enlightened attitudes of schools and educators. How many more can think of?

LIFE SKILLS

OVERTURE TO



Teen pregnancy, suicide, adult dominance, academic pressure, social acceptance, biological changes--no question about it, the road from teenager to adulthood traverses some pretty rocky

terrain. The notion of teenagers as carefree creatures flies in the face of reality. Ask any teenager and he or she will likely tell you that life can be tough, and as a "child," technically, there isn't much you can do about it.

Probably the most frustrating and contradictory element to being young relates to the physical reality that hormones are raging, yet everyone says don't have sex, wait until your, what? 18? 20?--long past the time nature says you're ready. This leaves adults and teenagers alike with some perplexing problems.

Older people forget what being a teenager was like. Everyone goes through this time of self-discovery, self-doubt and changes in their bodies and attitudes about sex. Yet adults conveniently forget. Too painful, perhaps? Many parents also feel uncomfortable discussing these feelings with their children.

Enter teen experimentation and fierce family arguments with teens exploring their sexuality in destructive ways. What might have been a solid relationship until then suddenly evolves into "Don't tell me what to do," or worse, sneaking about doing things that may hurt them in the long run.

Summary of Standard for Life Skills

Thinking and Reasoning

- Understands and applies the basic principles of presenting an argument
- Understands and applies basic principles of logic and reasoning
- Effectively uses mental processes that are based in identifying similarities and differences (compares, contrasts, classifies)
- Understands and applies basic principles of hypothesis testing and scientific inquiry
- Applies basic trouble-shooting and problem-solving techniques
- Applies decision-making techniques

Working With Others

- Contributes to the overall effort of a group
- Uses conflict-resolution techniques
- Works well with diverse individuals and in diverse situations
- Displays effective interpersonal communication skills
- Demonstrates leadership skills

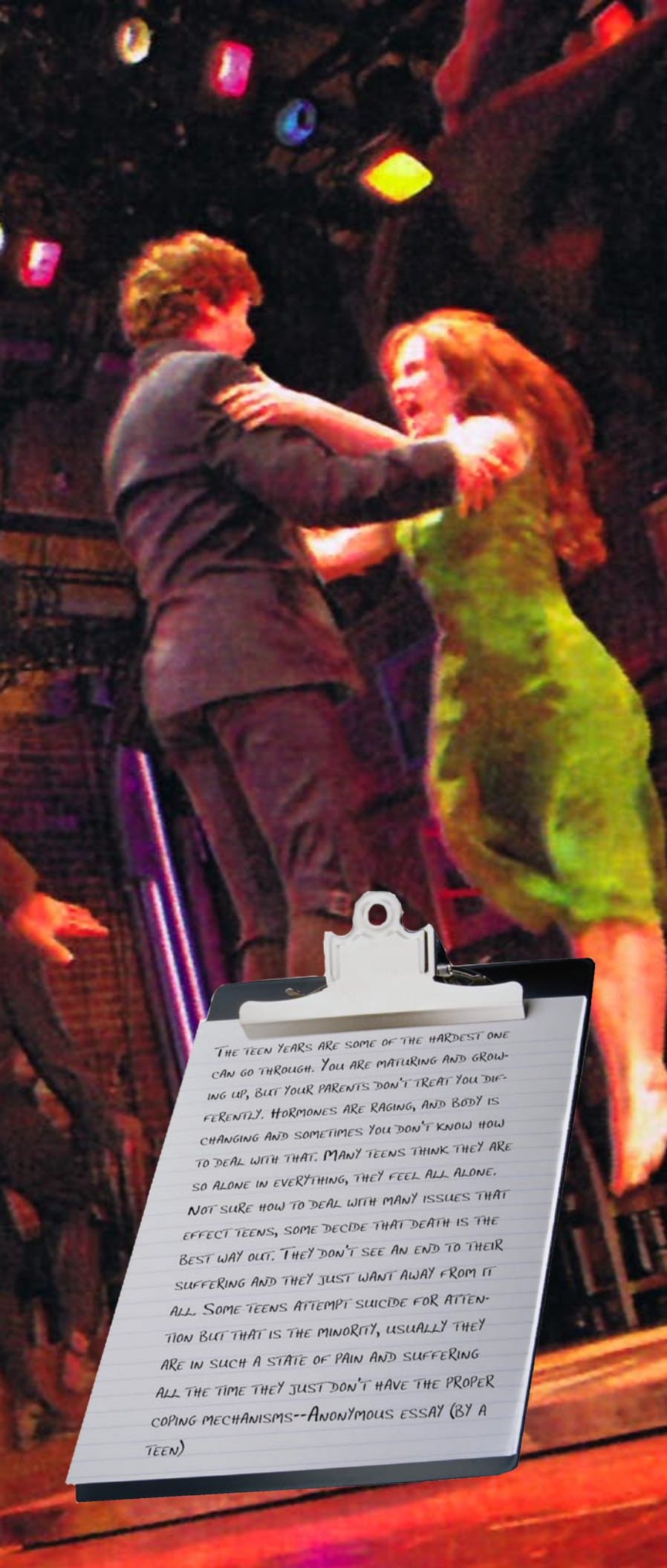
Self-Regulation

- Sets and manages goals
- Performs self-appraisal
- Considers risks
- Demonstrates perseverance
- Maintains a healthy self-concept
- Restrains impulsivity

Life Work

- Makes effective use of basic tools
- Uses various information sources, including those of a technical nature, to accomplish specific tasks
- Manages money effectively
- Pursues specific jobs
- Makes general preparation for entering the work force
- Makes effective use of basic life skills
- Displays reliability and a basic work ethic
- Operates effectively within organizations





THE TEEN YEARS ARE SOME OF THE HARDEST ONE CAN GO THROUGH. YOU ARE MATURING AND GROWING UP, BUT YOUR PARENTS DON'T TREAT YOU DIFFERENTLY. HORMONES ARE RAGING, AND BODY IS CHANGING AND SOMETIMES YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH THAT. MANY TEENS THINK THEY ARE SO ALONE IN EVERYTHING, THEY FEEL ALL ALONE. NOT SURE HOW TO DEAL WITH MANY ISSUES THAT EFFECT TEENS, SOME DECIDE THAT DEATH IS THE BEST WAY OUT. THEY DON'T SEE AN END TO THEIR SUFFERING AND THEY JUST WANT AWAY FROM IT ALL. SOME TEENS ATTEMPT SUICIDE FOR ATTENTION BUT THAT IS THE MINORITY, USUALLY THEY ARE IN SUCH A STATE OF PAIN AND SUFFERING ALL THE TIME THEY JUST DON'T HAVE THE PROPER COPING MECHANISMS--ANONYMOUS ESSAY (BY A TEEN)

Today there's plenty of advice for parents, teachers and other adults on how to help teens cope with this difficult period of development. Certainly more than there was in the 1800s. Websites like Teenwire help teens understand their sexuality and other problems facing them. But does understanding translate into coping? Does the advice that "it's just a phase and everything will be fine in the end if you just stick it out" make it any easier? After all, they're still battling hormones, lack of peer acceptance, depression, academic pressure. Unless families can afford long term therapy, teens are on their own— fledgling adults in a world which keeps insisting, "In the end, it will all be okay."

While feelings of their own sexuality are not going away, and social, academic and adult pressure will be there no matter what, all we can really do is help them cope. Life doesn't come with an owner's manual. We have to figure it out for ourselves. When it comes to growing up adults don't have all the answers. Some who think they do quickly discover they are not always the ones teens want to hear. Without options, teens may become disillusioned and make bad choices, like Wendla and Moritz and Melchior and even Wendla's mother, who chose a dangerous abortion procedure rather than bear the shame of her daughter's pregnancy.

As teachers there are several things we can do to. Involve students in group activities that are not stressful; try to eliminate teasing and belittling and any behavior that may humiliate the student; encourage and praise doing well on assignments; promote leadership roles; encourage contributions to community and world activities that are meaningful and noteworthy; respect their needs for physical, creative and expressive outlets. And most important, listen. If you're really worried, ask. Teens see things a lot more clearly than you might think.

Discussion Objective

The practical value of education.

Teaching Tips

In this lesson you are addressing the issue of the value of education and dispelling the often held notion that what is learned in school is worthless in real life.

From the Script

Act I, Scene 2

Melchior questions the value of education in teaching young people about real life.

Melchior

All they say
Is "Trust in What Is Written".
Wars are made,
And somehow that is wisdom.

Exercise

How often have you heard statements like this one: "What do I need know (let's say) algebra for. When will I ever use it in life?"

Well, first of all, in looking at the skills used in math, especially those involving logic and analytical thinking, there's plenty you will learn in that area when studying advanced math that will help you think more clearly about a lot of things. The skill of moving from one logical concept to another will come up often in life. If can do it you will find life gets a lot easier in many ways. So the next occasion when you're tempted to say it, or you hear someone say it, you might want to remember that.

The whole topic makes for a very interesting and fruitful discussion rarely attempted by teachers and students. Start by repeating the quote in the first paragraph for effect. Lead into a general discussion of information learned in all educational subjects. Then move to comments about how students think what they learn helps them in life. Please include topics such as how much more interesting life becomes when you can take part in conversations instead of sitting silently by. How would it feel to have to do this? Would you feel inadequate, less confident? What about your self esteem? Learning also leads to interests beyond the classroom that can further lead to career choices later on. How are the lives of people who do not have access to education limited?

Writing Objective

Develop support skills for people in need.

Teaching Tips

This exercise develops sensitivity toward the problems of others while encouraging students to examine their own extreme reactions to problems. This is an important life skill, since teens tend to do this, many times to tragic results.

From the Script

Act I, Scene 10

Moritz has failed his exams. His request to Herr Gabor for money to go to America is denied (letter listed as excerpt below). Had she only sensed his desperation and what was to come, she may have tried to help Moritz. Later, he indicates that it's all too much for him and that he will commit suicide.

Herr Gabor

I've spent the entire day thinking about your note. Truly, it touched me, it did, that you'd think of me as a friend. Of course, I was saddened to hear that your exams came off rather less well than you'd hoped, and that you will not be promoted, come fall. And yet, I must say straightaway, that fleeing to America is hardly the solution. And even if it were, I cannot provide the money you request.

Exercise

Teen suicide is an ongoing tragedy in America. Perhaps students know someone who has taken their own lives. Hopefully not. However the newspapers are full of tragic stories about teens who feel so despondent, for whatever reason, that they choose this awful alternative.

"Talking someone down off the ledge" is a tactic used by police emergency teams to talk a person contemplating suicide into not doing it. There is information online about people who do this work and their experiences. Go to some of the sites and read about this very specialized skill.

Look at all the reasons Moritz might be contemplating taking his own life. It has more to do with merely failing. Other pressures have gotten him to the point where he can't think straight, and taking his life seems the only (and in a sense, easiest) way out.

Write a letter of your own to Moritz convincing him not to take his life. Focus on positive possibilities and solutions. Offer your direct help and friendship. Above all, do not be judgmental or critical. Essentially, "talk Moritz down off the ledge."

Experiential Objective

The skill of sharing with and supporting others.

Teaching Tips

The characters in *Spring Awakening* had each other to talk to, but the adults in their lives were so controlling that it did not matter much. We're a little better at that today. Adults with help of willing teens have created opportunities for adolescents to speak their minds in ways that matter.

From the Script

Act I, Scene 8

Melchior writes in his journal about the trials of being young.

27 November -- the trouble is: the terrible prerogative of the Parentocracy in Secondary Education...
... a world where teachers -- like parents -- view us as merely so much raw material for an obedient and productive society..

Exercise

Adolescence is perhaps the most difficult period in a person's life. In the Overture to Life Skills we discuss some of these difficulties and how one might go about handling them.

Some teens, for a variety of reasons, need more help than others. Melchior, above, uses his journal as a kind of sounding board for his feelings of repression. Many churches and organizations hold discussion groups especially geared toward teens and their issues.

Find a teen discussion group near you and join it. You may well find this opportunity to "vent" very helpful. Even if you do not have much to talk about, sharing concerns with others in your age category can be a great way to touch on issues you didn't even know you had, not to mention the support you provide to others.

Teaching Tips

Courage isn't always a matter of life or death. Everyday, in small ways, people show courage by standing up for what it right, or by simply being strong in the face of adversity. There are many ways to show courage. Are you a courageous person? Would you like to be more so?

Challenge

Organize a Talk-Through

Teen pregnancy, suicide, adult dominance, academic pressure, social acceptance, biological changes--no question about it, the road from teenager to adulthood traverses some pretty rocky terrain.

The line above comes from the Overture to Life Skills in the guide. When it comes to growing up adolescent, it says, as they say, a mouthful. We can talk about teen issues from now to forever. But if adults don't interact with teens in a meaningful way, we can talk about it all we want; the two groups will still be at odds and seemingly at each others throats until the one group grows up and the adults are too old to care. Maybe, however, it doesn't have to wait that long. Maybe what we need is more interaction and plain talk between adults and teens—equal opportunities to “vent,” so to speak.

Talk to school officials about setting up a teen/adult forum in your gym or other space big enough to hold a large crowd. We say “large” because this will be a community event and lots of people will want to attend. Post the “Talk-Through” in your local newspaper, distribute flyers or whatever you have to do to promote the event. Develop a talking point agenda based on the six points in the lead sentence. One person will play monitor and move the session on to the next topic when time is appropriate. Everyone gets a turn to speak, alternating between a teen and an adult. Each person will be allowed a certain amount of time to speak. They must stop speaking when their time is up. At the end of the Talk-Through hold a coffee and cake gathering where participants younger and older can continue to interact.

BEHAVIORAL STUDIES

OVERTURE TO



In 19th century Germany, sex education was not taught in schools. The educational system was guided by social norms of the day, which based on Wenzel's mother's avoidance of the topic, did not include discussions

of this type. That lack of available information directly leads to some of *Spring Awakening's* most noteworthy plot developments. Moritz asks Melchior to tell him everything he knows about sexuality, and the discovery of Melchior's letter to Moritz leads to Melchior's expulsion from the school.

Adolescents in that time could not turn to their parents for help on the subject. This is apparent when Wenzel asks her mother about the nature of sexual reproduction in the song "Mama Who Bore Me?" Her mother skirts the issue, leaving the question completely unanswered. Therefore, when her daughter is impregnated by Melchior Wenzel is completely in the dark as to how it happened. Had there been adequate sexual education either in school or at home she may have decided not to engage in sexual intercourse with Melchior.

Summary of Standard for Behavioral Studies

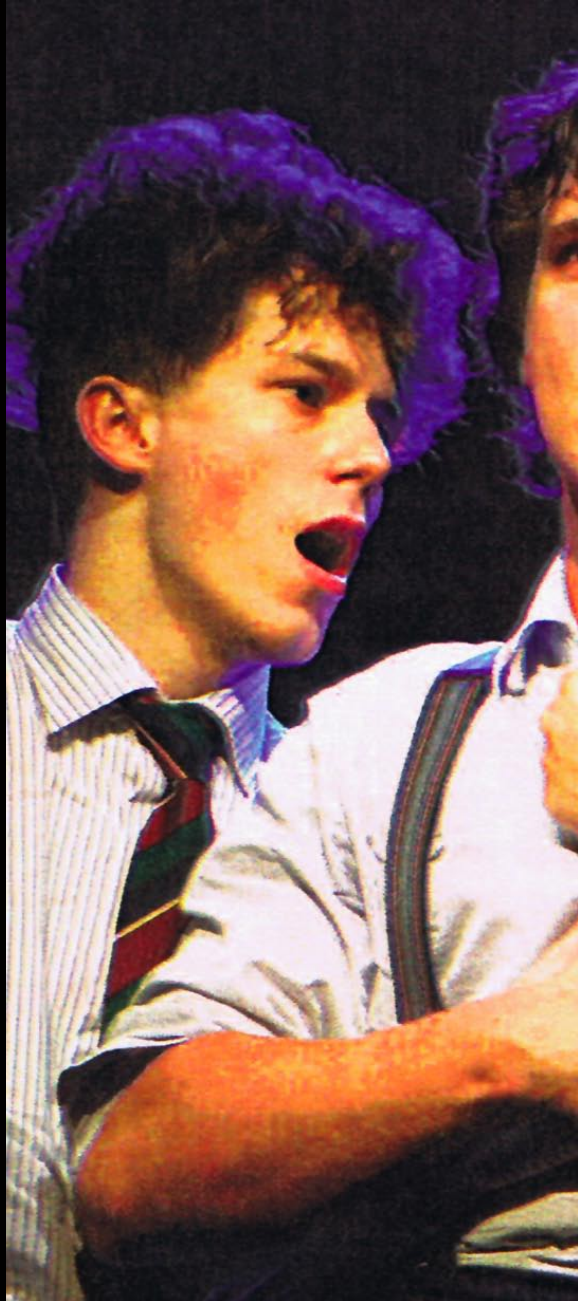
- Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity, and behavior
- Understands various meanings of social group, general implications of group membership, and different ways that groups function
- Understands that interactions among learning, inheritance and physical development affect human behavior
- Understands conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among individuals, groups and institutions

This sort of avoidance with regards to sex education may seem almost laughable today, but in those days it was indicative of the tendency by society to deny the reality of human sexuality by simply not discussing it. In *Spring Awakening* such questions and actions involving sexual

discovery are dismissed with words such as "dirty," "evil," or "impure."

It is no wonder then that in this climate of suppression, teen pregnancy was cause for alarm. Wenzel effectively becomes a social pariah; her future standing in the community, reputation and very life is threatened by forces over which she has no control. Her mother, like society in general, accepts no responsibility for the pregnancy. It's simply easier to rush her off to the abortionist and Melchior off to reform school. Wenzel is treated with disturbing inhumanity as she is literally dragged off into the night to her fate—death.

The moral implications surrounding teen pregnancy are as integral a part of society today as they were





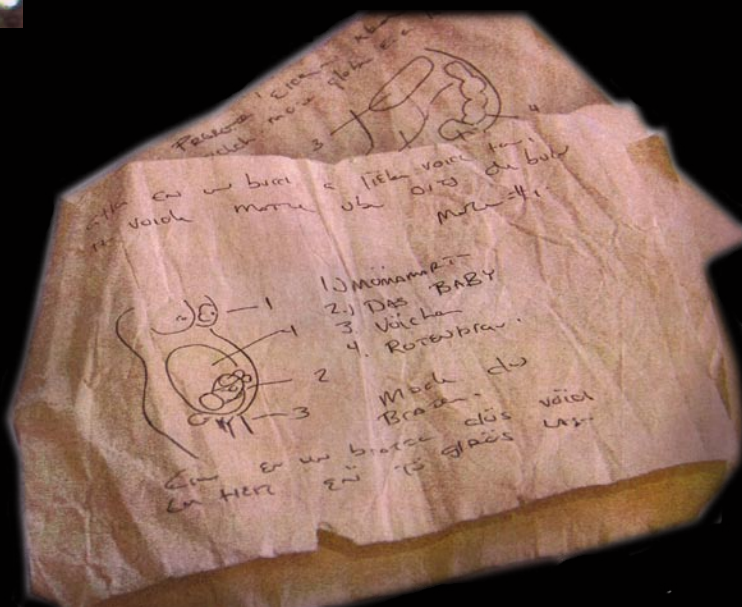
difficult and relies heavily on one's religious and moral beliefs. Fortunately there are also programs and organizations available that not only help teens and families make decisions but provide options including adoption and support for teens choosing to keep their babies. Medical help is also available to ensure the health of the mother and her child.

Organizations including Planned Parenthood, RECAP, the Candie's Foundation, NOW, and NARAL do a great job in this area. There are also several youth advocacy groups which seek to keep adolescents informed about sexual education as well as methods of prevention. One of these websites is www.advocatesforyouth.org.

The U.S. teen pregnancy rate reached its highest point in the 1950s, and has generally declined since. But don't let this fool you. Teen pregnancy is still a serious social problem. According to UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund), the teenage birth rate in the U.S. today is still a disturbing 53 women per 1000. It is the highest rate among all industrialized nations. By comparison, Germany's teenage birth rate is 11 women per 1000. In 2006, the U.S. teen pregnancy rose for the first time in fourteen years—a disturbing trend. This development has caused many communities to rethink school education programs and whether they are reaching their intended targets.

in 19th century Germany. While students today have sexual and reproduction education available to them in schools, there remains a debate over the method employed, and in some places, whether schools should even be teaching sex education. No matter where individuals stand on the issue few today would dispute the need for youngsters to know about sex and about the consequences involved.

If a teen becomes pregnant in the U.S. options exist that did not for poor Wendla. The Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion in 1973. This landmark court ruling essentially made dangerous, underground abortions (such as the one in *Spring Awakening*) obsolete. Yet the decision whether to have an abortion or not is



Discussion Objective

The importance of plain talk in understanding teen sexuality.

Teaching Tips

Teens will talk about sexuality among themselves, but they too often avoid such conversations with adults. Avoidance is not only an adult problem. It's important that teens feel they can speak openly. One way to encourage this is to discuss issues in open forum.

From the Script

Act I, Scene I

Wendla's mother avoids her daughter's questions about reproduction.

Wendla

But you cannot imagine I still believe in the stork.

Frau Bergman

I honestly don't know what I've done to deserve this kind of talk. And on a day like today! Go, child, put your clothes on.

Wendla

And if I run out, now, and ask Gregor -- ? Our chimney sweep...?

Frau Bergman

Very well, I'll tell you everything. But not today. Tomorrow. Or the day after.

Exercise

The behavior of avoiding of the topic of reproduction and sex has always been a barrier to teen understanding and their subsequent ability to make intelligent decisions. No one ever said it was an easy topic to address. Yet, the importance of talking about such issues in a clinical environment, no matter what your moral views may be on the subject, is helpful.

In the Behavioral Studies Writing Lesson students wrote a history of sex education in schools. Now it's time for students to discuss the topic in open forum. A lot can be learned by listening to others.

Start by having students read the opinion they wrote at the end of their papers stating whether they think sex education has helped them deal with issues related to the topic. Allow them to keep the histories they've written as reference for the discussion to follow.

Since they will be referring to their papers, many related topics may arise. All opinions should be valued. Points to be stressed should include the importance of education in learning how our bodies work, and that learning this in no way means a forsaking of personal moral or ethical values regarding decision making. Encourage all students to participate and feel comfortable about expressing their views. Reinforce, throughout the discussion, how Wendla's innocence led to a bad decision on her part and ultimately, a tragic situation.

Note to Teachers

Have students do this lesson first. Information gathered here will form the basis for the Behavior Discussion Lesson.

Writing Objective

Learn how America changed its mind about sex education in schools.

Teaching Tips

Students are too young to remember the flap over whether or not to teach sex education in the schools. It is important for them to realize that you don't have to go back to 19th century Germany to find antiquated ideas about providing information about sex to young people.

From the Script

Act I, Scene I

Wendla pleads with her mother to explain how babies are born.

Wendla

Mama, don't be cross -- don't be. I'm an aunt for the second time now, and I still have no idea how it happens.

Frau Bergman looks stricken

Mama, please. I'm ashamed to even ask. But then, who can I ask but you?

Exercise

In an ideal world teens would learn everything they need to know about sex and reproduction within the family unit. This, however, is too often not the case. Teens tend to get a lot of their information from friends who have often gotten their information from sources that are not very reliable, such as films and music that distort the issue.

While experts as early as 1912 were calling for some form of sex education in schools the road to actually getting programs into schools was a long and rocky one. Many parents and groups opposed the idea, one even alleging it was "a filthy Communist plot."

Research the topic on the web. Write a paper on *The History of Sex Education* in schools. At the end of the paper, give your opinion on the topic, stating whether you think it has helped young people deal with issues related to the topic.

Experiential Objective

Teen depression and what you can do about it.

Teaching Tips

Since teens spend most of their time together, it's important for them to understand and be able to spot a friend in trouble. While they often seem completely devoted to their fellows, and not at all interested in what the adults are doing, that does not mean they are necessarily empathetic. Adolescence, after all, is a very self-centered period in one's life.

From the Script

Act 2, Scene 2

Ilse leaves Moritz alone with his thoughts, which are dark and ominous

Moritz

sighs, looks out on the night

Ten minutes ago, you could see the entire horizon. Now, only the dusk -- the first few stars...
So dark. So dark. So dark...

Exercise

Moritz is obviously depressed. He is unsure about his sexuality, has failed in school and can not, no matter what he does, seem to please the adults around him. They are all in control and he feels powerless against the "establishment" which confirms, at every turn, that he is pretty much a loser.

Teen depression is more common situation than we would like to think. Today, someone, a teacher perhaps, might have picked up on Moritz's sense of futility and seen that he got the help he needed to get through this difficult period. Many groups, organizations and private physicians now offer help to teens who feel this way. Teen groups run by adult facilitators are particularly helpful. They tend to provide not only a sounding board for teens with similar problems, but, because they are made up of teens, give members the opportunity of sharing a very common experience.

Find a teen support group in your area and ask permission to attend a meeting.

Teaching Tips

This after hours touches on the softer side of the behavior of the plays' characters. Hopefully the challenges will help students explore their own softer sides.

Challenge #1

My Space

Melchior

Wendla Bergman?! Like a tree-nymph fallen from the branches. What are you doing -- alone up here?

Wendla

Mama's making May wine. I thought I'd surprise her with some woodruff. And you?

Melchior

This is my favorite spot. My private place -- for thinking.

Melchior calls the place in the woods "my private place." It is a place of solitude, where he can go to "get away from it all," where he can think and contemplate his life. A place to call his own that no one else knows about.

Do you have a "private place?" No? Perhaps you should. There's nothing like a bit of quiet and solitude to help get through those difficult days. If you do not have one, decide today to select such a place, and by all means, keep it to yourself. That's the whole purpose of a "private place."

Challenge #2

Do Unto Others

Wendla

Well, this morning was wonderful. Our youth group brought baskets of food and clothing to the day-laborers' children.

Melchior

I remember when we used to do that. Together.

Wendla

You should have seen their faces, Melchior. How much we brightened their day.

Melchior

Actually, it's something I've been thinking a lot about.

Wendla

The day-laborers?

Melchior

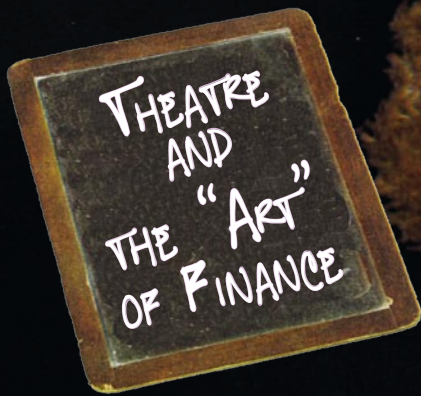
("No")
Our little acts of charity. What do you think, Wendla, can our Sunday School deeds really make a difference?

The message in the above excerpt above from the musical tells us that despite the problems suffered by the characters they still care about other people. Some psychologists believe that looking outside of your own problems and helping others is the key to mental health.

When was the last time you did something nice for someone? Perhaps there is a charity in your area that could use your help. Volunteer. You'll be amazed at how good it will make you feel.

THE ARTS

OVERTURE TO



Spring Awakening explores subjects the producers in their professional wisdom knew to be controversial. A primary responsibility of all Broadway producers is to convince (backers) to invest funds sufficient to see the project through to fruition. Investors must believe that in the end, the project will be a financial success and that they will recoup their investment.

In the case of *Spring Awakening* the producers faced two challenges: guarantee that a significant number of parents and adults would bring their teens to see the play, and audiences in numbers would assure its financial success.

The following excerpt from producer Tom Hulce is posted on the official *Spring Awakening* website. The comments are geared toward addressing the concerns of parents and adults who might have misgivings about the appropriateness of the work for the teens in their charge. Hulce's comments in "How We Got There" provides an artistic roadmap from the production standpoint for how the show was conceived and born. It also offers a common sense "justification" for the show as an important educational experience for teens and adults alike.

Like it or not, artists, while primarily interested in getting their work accepted, must consider the finances involved in getting that accomplished. A producer must not only believe in the project's artistic value but must sell that belief to others. While the notion of art for art's sake is a lovely one, the reality of ensuring that great works get seen and appreciated is quite another matter. It is the "matter" of the theatrical producer along with other considerations.

Depending on the production, producers not only coordinate the financial aspects but hire creative teams, deal with unions theatrical agents and theatre owners, oversee budgets, secure venues, hire publicists, marketing personnel, lawyers—knowing that statistically, highly successful shows and big profits are often the exception. On Broadway, producers are expected to be active members of the team. Their names, like Hulce's and Pittelman's, are put above the title of the show. And justifiably so, for without them we would not have had the joy of experiencing *Spring Awakening* and many other successful productions.

Summary of Standard for The Arts

Art Connections

- Understands connections among the various art forms and other disciplines

Theater

- Demonstrates competence in writing scripts
- Uses acting skills
- Designs and produces informal and formal productions
- Directs scenes and productions
- Understands how informal and formal theater, film, television, and electronic media productions create and communicate meaning
- Understands the context in which theater, film, television, and electronic media are performed today as well as in the past

Music

- Sings, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Performs on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Improvises melodies, variations, and accompaniments
- Composes and arranges music within specified guidelines
- Reads and notates music
- Knows and applies appropriate criteria to music and music performances
- Understands the relationship between music history and culture

Visual Arts

- Understands and applies media, techniques and processes related to the visual arts
- Knows how to use the structures (e.g., sensory qualities, organizational principles, expressive features) and functions of art
- Knows a range of subject matter, symbols, and potential ideas in the visual arts
- Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
- Understands the characteristics and merits of one's own artwork and the artwork of others

How We Got Here

by Tom Hulce

A good number of years ago, director Michael Mayer and I were exchanging ideas about projects we found intriguing. When I mentioned I wanted to commission an opera based on Frank Wedekind's *Spring Awakening*, he said that he had just begun work on a musical based on the same material with author Steven Sater and the songwriter Duncan Sheik. Their unique approach was to keep the story in 1890's Germany but the songs would be in Duncan's contemporary idiom.

I was immediately struck by the potential theatrical tension created between these dozen adolescents in their repressive, provincial community, and the possibility of freedom that the songs might offer. They could find hope and exhilarating release in song, but then have to button right back up into their confusing, restrictive lives. This seemed to me to be a really cool way to tell the story of these young people as they try to find their way through the thrilling, painful, yearning, rebellious, joyful time of their awakening.



Tom Hulce



From left to right: Ira Pittelman, Michael Mayer, Steven Sater and Duncan Sheik

It is extraordinary how contemporary this story feels more than 100 years after it was first written. Then as now, it illuminates not only the stories of these young people, but also the role that we, as adults, take in raising our teens; the challenges of finding a way to be responsive to their needs, to empower them with the truth and to do all within our grasp to guide them with love and understanding into their adulthood.

So, in one sense, we have a cautionary tale about what can happen in the absence of such guidance and compassion. But at the center of *Spring Awakening* is a beautiful and haunting love story between Wendla and Melchior, two young people who (like Romeo and Juliet and *West Side Story*'s Tony and Maria) find each other, fall in love and passionately yearn for each other, wanting to be together, but find themselves at the mercy of a system that might ultimately defeat them. Above all else, this is their story.

Discussion Objective

The role of set design in a theatrical production.

Teaching Tips

Sometimes you'll hear people say they didn't much like a show but were wowed by the scenery. Sets are an important ingredient in theatrical productions. Set designers can take whatever artistic liberties they like in presenting scenes. But do they always work for the audience?

Biography for Christine Jones - Set Designer of *Spring Awakening*

Broadway: *The Green Bird* directed by Julie Taymor.
Off-Broadway: *People Be Heard* (Playwrights); *Burn This* (Signature Theatre); *Flesh And Blood*, *Nocturne* (NYTW); *True Love* (The Zipper). Opera: Giulio Cesare Houston Grand Opera, Lucia Di Lammermoor, (New York City Opera). Current: *The Elephant Man* (Minnesota Opera), *The Onion Cellar* in development with *The Dresden Dolls* for A.R.T. Other: Designed for regional theaters across the country. Music video for Ben Folds Five. M.F.A. from NYU, Professor at Princeton University and NYU.

Exercise

The set design was conceived by Frank Wedekind himself for his original 1800 production. His use of a "one size fits all" set was considered quite avante garde for the time. In keeping with Wedekind's original idea, Jones included no set changes. One set served as a multi-layered, multi-purpose backdrop for all of the action. Some audience members were seated on rows of chairs on the stage. Other audience members could watch and see how the space transformed itself into a classroom. In collaboration with lighting designer Kevin Adams, Jones utilized neon lights on the walls of the stage as well as the theatre, to extend the classroom space into the theatre space, inviting the audience in. With this spacial configuration, the center stage held a multi-layered platform which, depending on the scene, was used either plainly or with minimal furniture to indicate changes in location.

The set design for the play was creative to say the least. But did you like it? Did it work for you? Did you find it confusing? Do you think the play might have been better presented with a variety of sets as used in other shows? Have students discuss the various aspects of the set design and defend whatever positions they take from both an artistic and audience viewpoint.

Writing Objective

Write a reaction piece to modern music.

Teaching Tips

All art is meant to inspire. Music is especially conducive to conjuring emotions and images—sometimes pleasant, sometimes not, depending on the listener. To allow oneself to be inspired and to react emotionally is an important asset both in the enjoyment of art and as a life-enhancing experience.

In The Arts Experiential Lesson we listened to music written by the modern musical master, Duncan Sheik, composer of the score for *Spring Awakening*. In this lesson we will do some writing based on that experience.

From the Script

Act I, Scene I

In these sad, touching lyrics, Melchior laments his lot as a child subject to the whims of adult society.

Melchior

All they say
Is “Trust in What Is Written”.
Wars are made,
And somehow that is wisdom.
Thought is suspect,
And money is their idol,
And nothing is okay unless it’s scripted in their Bible.
But I know
There’s so much more to find --
Just in looking through myself, and not at them.
Still, I know
To trust my own true mind,
And to say: there’s a way through this...
On I go,
To wonder and to learning --
Name the stars and know their dark returning.
I’m calling,
To know the world’s true yearning --
The hunger that a child feels for everything they’re shown.
You watch me --
Just watch me --
I’m calling,
And one day all will know...
You watch me --
Just watch me --
I’m calling,
I’m calling,
And one day all will know...

Exercise

The lyrics above should conjure feelings, especially for teens living at the behest of an adult world. They are touching to say the least. Sheik’s ability to write music that touches our humanity and inspires has become legend in the entertainment world.

In the Experiential Lesson you listened to some of the composer’s music and took notes. Now you will write a minimum one page reaction piece on how the music made you feel—what emotions did it inspire; if a film score, how did it enhance the scene; if a CD, what varied emotions did the different tracks inspire—the lyrics? What did it make you think about?

Experiential Objective

Experience the work of a dynamic modern musical genius.

Teaching Tips

Many students today limit their music knowledge to what they hear on commercial radio. They are unaware of the marvelous music being created in other genres by composers worth their time and attention. Let's correct that.

Biography for **Duncan Sheik** - Composer and Lyricist of *Spring Awakening*

In addition to writing the music for *Spring Awakening*, which received a critically acclaimed Lincoln Center American Songbook Concert staging last season, Grammy award nominated singer-songwriter Duncan Sheik collaborated with Playwright Steven Sater on *The Nightingale*, a musical based on the Hans Christian Andersen classic which premiered during the 26th annual O'Neill Music Theater Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center. Sheik has composed original music for the Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park production of *Twelfth Night* and for *The Golden Rooms of Nero*, which recently debuted at Cornell University and opened at the Magic Theater in San Francisco earlier this year. His self-titled debut album, which was an enormous popular and critical success, introduced the hit singles "Barely Breathing" and "She Runs Away," and spent 30 weeks on the Billboard 200. Other albums include "Humming," "Daylight," "Phantom Moon" with lyrics by Steven Sater and his latest, "White Limousine", which was released in January of 2006. Film Soundtracks: *Great Expectations*, *The Saint*, *Teaching Mrs. Tingle*, *Three to Tango*, *What a Girl Wants*, *Transamerica* and *A Body Goes Down*. Sheik recently composed and produced the original score for the feature film *A Home at the End of the World*, directed by Michael Mayer and starring Colin Farrell.

Biography for **Steven Sater** - Author and Lyricist of *Spring Awakening*

Steven Sater won the 2007 Tony Awards for Best Book and Best Score for his work on *Spring Awakening*, along with the Drama Desk and Outer Circle Award for Best Lyrics. His plays include the long-running *Carbondale Dreams*, *Perfect for You*, *Doll* (Rosenthal Prize, Cincinnati Playhouse), *Umbrage* (Steppenwolf New Play Prize), *A Footnote to the Iliad* (New York Stage and Film), *Asylum* (Naked Angels), *Murder at the Gates* (commissioned by Eye of the Storm), and a reconceived version of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, with music by Laurie Anderson, which played London's Lyric Hammersmith and toured internationally. In addition to *Spring Awakening*, Sater has collaborated with Duncan Sheik on the NY premiere of *Umbrage* (HERE), *Nero* (The Magic Theatre), *The Nightingale* (O'Neill Musical Theatre Conference, La Jolla Playhouse) the critically acclaimed album *Phantom Moon* (Nonesuch), and the songs for Michael Mayer's feature film *A Home at the End of the World*.

Exercise

Duncan Sheik and Steven Sater have professional credits, as they say, "as long as your arm." Yet the likelihood that most students are familiar with their broad range of work is fairly remote. Both Sheik and Sater have written for stage, film and almost every medium.

Have students read the credits then select one. Tell them to listen to the music. If it's a film tell them to view the film and pay particular attention to the score. If it's on CD, they will play it and do the same. Whatever they choose it must be something they can access and listen to in its entirety. (*Spring Awakening* is not an option.)

Caution students to be aware of their reactions to the work(s). Tell them to take notes as they listen. They will be writing an emotional response to it in the Writing Lesson of this Arts Section.

Teaching Tips

This challenge is meant to encourage students to think creatively and also analytically. You might tell them before they attempt the project to try not to merely copy a picture of clothing they find, but to adapt it creatively and add whatever interesting elements they like. For instance, a dress from the French Revolutionary period may have elements of clothing worn today, or from the clothing of another culture or period. They should keep track of their creative thoughts as they design the piece and include a brief typed paragraph explaining the creative process on the back of the poster.

Biography for Susan Hilferty - Costume Designer of *Spring Awakening*

Susan Hilferty has designed more than 200 productions for theatres across America and internationally. Her directorial collaborators include Athol Fugard (set, costumes, co-director), James Lapine, Robert Falls, Robert Woodruff, Joe Mantello, JoAnne Akalaitis, the late Garland Wright, Mark Lamos, Frank Galati, Des McAnuff, Sharon Ott, David Petrarca, Richard Nelson, Chris Ashley, Marion McClinton, Laurie Anderson, Tony Kushner, Carole Rothman, Mark Linn-Baker, Garry Hynes and Emily Mann. Recent work: *Assassins*, *Into the Woods* (Hewes Award, Tony nomination), Lapine's *Fran's Bed*, *Jitney*, *Dirty Blonde*, *Alvin Ailey Love Stories* and *Rodney's Wife*. Elton John's *Lestat*; *Manon*, *L.A. Opera*; and August Wilson's new play *Radio Golf*. She designs opera, film, TV and dance and chairs the Department of Design for Stage/Film at NYU Tisch. Her numerous awards include 2004 Tony, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle awards for *Wicked*.

Challenge

Costume Change

Read the biography about costume designer, Susan Hilferty. Do as much research as possible on the internet and any other place you can find detailed photos of the costumes she designed for *Spring Awakening*. A selection of costume sketches appears on the following page.

The costumes are a unique blend of 19th century German style with modern touches (i.e., Converse-style sneakers). Basically, however, the costumes reflect the styles of the period.

Be a costume designer. As best as possible, sketch a form of your favorite character in the play on poster board. It does not have to be a work of art; just large enough and accurate enough in terms of body form. If you like, print a copy of a character from the web, enlarge the image and trace the form onto the poster board.

Research clothing designs of other periods from other countries. On a separate piece of paper, experiment with possible designs for your poster form. When you are satisfied with one, copy the design onto the form. Color it with markers. Identify the period you chose beneath the sketch.

Costume
Sketches
by

**Susan
Hilferty**



Websites:

www.springawakening.com

The official website for *Spring Awakening*

http://www.temple.edu/lss/pdf/partnerships/lss_partnerships_I12.pdf

<http://www.teenwire.com/>

<http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sex/sexhisto.shtml>

<http://www.costumes.org/history/100pages/babylonlinks.htm>

Books

A History of German Theatre by Maik Hamburger and Simon Williams

19th Century Germany: Politics, Culture and Society 1800-1918 by John Breuilly

History of German Theatre by Anthony Meech

Bertolt Brecht, "Epic Theater," in *Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary*, ed. Maynard Solomon (N.Y.: Vintage, 1974), pp. 355-69.

American Set Design by Arnold Aronson

DVD

Duncan Sheik: On Stage at the World Café (DVD-2007)

StageNOTES™

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