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Theatre for Young People

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THE INVISIBLE GIRL



THE INVISIBLE GIRL

BY MICHELE RIML

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STUDY GUIDE

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PHOTO FEATURES AMY LEE

LIVE THEATRE IS AN ACTIVE EXPERIENCE!

GROUND RULES:

As members of the audience, you play an important part in the success of a theatrical performance. Please review the following theatre rules with your students prior to your LKTYP visit.

- Food, drinks, candy and gum are not permitted in the theatre.
- LKTYP is a nut-free zone. Many children have severe life-threatening allergies; NO PEANUTS or NUT products may be brought to our theatre.
- No electronic devices are permitted in the theatre because they affect our sound system. Photography, audio and video recording during a performance is prohibited by the Canadian Theatre Agreement.
- Students are not permitted to leave the theatre unless they are accompanied by an adult.

THEATRE IS A TWO-WAY EXCHANGE:

Actors are thrilled when the audience is engaged and responsive. We want you to laugh, cheer, clap and really enjoy your time at the theatre. However, please be considerate audience members. Talking, whispering and excessive movement during a live performance is distracting for the actors, and disruptive for other audience members.

Enhance your visit by encouraging your students to look at different aspects of the production. Before the show, identify tasks for your class. Have one group of students looking at the set, another listening for the music and sound effects, a third watching the lighting and a fourth, the costumes. Compare notes after the show about what they observed. Your students will be more informed and they'll be surprised by how much they noticed. Ask them to be prepared with one question for the actors after the show. Brainstorm with them about possible topics to get the most out of the experience!

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Additional support for our Study Guides is generously provided by the J.P. Bickell Foundation.

THE STUDY GUIDE

THEMATIC OVERVIEW

What happens when a middle-school girl instinctively does the absolute right thing resulting in the most socially disastrous results? Ali, a member of “The Ultimates,” a clique of girls who take it upon themselves to determine what’s hot and what’s not, crosses into dangerous territory by nominating the terminally not hot Dolores to sing the school solo, an honour that is expected to go to Cali, Ali’s “best friend.”

“Dear Ali, If you don’t unnominate Dolores I have to un-invite you to Saturday. Sorry, but my dad really wants me to sing the Sleeping Beauty Solo. And he says you have to watch out for people who try to sabotage your career with their own agendas (sic). Your almost former friend Cali.”

Ali has choices to make. She can unnominate Dolores and maintain her social status or she can stand by her decision and risk social alienation. In her quest to decide between these choices, Ali thinks about and questions the basic notions of friendship, status and power. Students at every age are in a constant state of negotiation; they must negotiate between their values and those of their friends, expectations of themselves and their peers, and trying to determine and act like the person they aspire to be. These can be difficult issues for anyone to grapple with these but at age 10, 11 or 12 it can be overwhelming. Ali (maybe even despite herself) uses her strong sense of empathy as she evaluates her choices. What is it like being Dolores? Why is Dolores determined to go unnoticed at school especially when she is a talented singer? Why would anyone want to be invisible?

In this study guide you will find exercises intended to help students reflect on themes of inclusion/exclusion, **conformity**, and bullying. Students will work towards understanding power dynamics and actively create strategies to promote inclusion and healthy friendships in their school. Students will also be asked to evaluate their theatre going experience. To this end, see Jon Kaplan’s Introduction to Student Reviewers on pg. 10 for tips and ideas on how to approach a play review.

This year, LKTYP’s season is examining Friendship, Bullying and the Need to Belong. **The Invisible Girl** is a thought-provoking play that will prompt students to consider these themes in a meaningful way.

STRANDS AND CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS: Language: Media Literacy, Health and Physical Education: Relationships and Social Skills



CHARACTER EDUCATION CONNECTIONS: Respect, Fairness, Integrity, Empathy



THEMES: Bullying/Peer Pressure, Popularity, Choices

In addition to DRAMA **A** and LANGUAGE ARTS **L**, **The Invisible Girl** directly relates to student development in the areas of:



HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION: Emotional and Psychological Well-being, Growth and Development, Individuality, Health Issues and Lifestyle.



SOCIAL STUDIES AND THE HUMANITIES: Individual Development, Relationships, Characteristics and Influences of Groups, the School as an Agent of Socialization, the Role of Authority, Decision Making and Problem Solving.

THE COMPANY

THE CAST

Ali **Amy Lee**

CREATIVE TEAM

Director	Nina Lee Aquino
Playwright	Michele Riml
Movement Designer	Clare Preuss
Set & Costume Designer and Art Direction	Camellia Koo
Lighting Designer	Kimberly Purtell
Original Music and Sound Design & Video Direction	Romeo Candido
Stage Manager	Kat Chin

SYNOPSIS

Ali can't explain why she nominated the totally unpopular Dolores for the solo in the school concert. She barely knows her; she just happens to know that Dolores has a killer voice. Now all Ali's fashion-loving friends are giving her the cold shoulder and she's becoming almost as invisible as Dolores. A fresh and lively take on the pursuit of popularity and the value of true friendship.

GLOSSARY

The words in the Glossary appear in pink throughout the study guide.

- Belonging:** the feeling of being part of a group (eg. friends, family, community, club).
- Conformity:** acting in accordance with prevailing social standards or norms, attitudes and practices.
- Group Dynamic:** interacting forces within a group of individuals.
- Overt bullying:** bullying that is open, exposed (opposite is "covert" hidden bullying)
- Peer Pressure:** social pressure by members of one's peer group to take a certain action, adopt certain values, or otherwise conform in order to be accepted.



PHOTO FEATURES AMY LEE, PHOTO BY IDEN FORD PHOTOGRAPHY

COMING SOON: A WORD WITH THE DIRECTOR

Coming soon.

UNITS OF STUDY

Curriculum Expectations: By participating in these activities, students will

- Apply living skills (Example: decision-making, assertiveness, and refusal skills) in making informed decisions, and analyze the effects of group mentality.
- Engage actively in drama exploration and role-play, with a focus on examining multiple perspectives and possible outcomes related to complex issues, themes and relationships from a wide variety of sources.



PHOTO FEATURES AMY LEE, PHOTO BY IDEN FORD PHOTOGRAPHY

PRE-SHOW UNIT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS — ALL GRADES

- What makes you respect and admire someone?
- Are the nicest people always the most admired?
- What other traits can make people powerful and popular at school?
- Why might someone want to be “invisible” within a group?
- What makes someone a good leader?
- How might someone act as a “bad leader”?
- What does it mean to be “pressured?”
- Why might someone pressure you to do something?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to speak your mind within a group?
- How do people earn positions of power among their peers?
- If everyone looked exactly the same, how would friendships and social relationships change?

ACTIVITY #1: CHANGE THE RHYTHM

Directions:

- Ask students to sit in a circle
- Begin by establishing a simple rhythm for the group.
- Once the rhythm is established nominate someone in the group to clap to a different rhythm while the rest of the group maintains the original rhythm. Observe the outcome.
- Bring students back to the original rhythm.
- Begin again, this time give students the opportunity to change the beat without choosing a specific leader. The leader must emerge from the group non-verbally. Should multiple leaders attempt to change the beat, continue on with the activity observing which beat ultimately wins the group over.

Debriefing Questions:

- Could the rest of the class maintain the original rhythm? Why? Why not?
- Could the person who changed the rhythm maintain the new rhythm on his/her own or did he/she conform to the group?

ACTIVITY #2: CHOOSE SIDES

Directions:

- Create a playing space in the classroom and divide the students into three groups.
- Ask two of the groups to plan their own distinct clapping/stomping pattern. At the count of three, both groups will perform their patterns simultaneously. Without talking to one another, the third group must “pick a side” and adopt their chosen group’s pattern. When they have done so, the group whose pattern was not chosen must join the other two groups in the pattern until everyone is doing the same stomping/clapping.

Debriefing Questions:

- How did you plan your stomping/clapping pattern? Did your group have a clear “leader?”
- How did it feel to be “on display” while trying to win over the third group? Have you ever felt like this before?
- How did you decide as a group which team to join? Were all members satisfied by this decision?
- How did it feel to be the group not chosen? Did you want to join the other two groups? Why or why not?
- In what ways might this activity represent behavior patterns in the playground?

CULMINATING ACTIVITY — FROZEN IMAGES:

Directions:

- Create a playing space in the classroom and divide the students into groups of five.
- Give each group one of the following themes: **belonging**, friendship, togetherness, leadership.
- Ask each group to make a still image that reflects this theme in a positive way (brainstorming examples as a class may help younger students generate ideas).
- Invite groups to perform their work for the class. Ask audience members to consider how each frozen image might look different if the theme were considered in a negative way. Audience members can volunteer to physically “sculpt” the frozen images to reflect the negative interpretations. Could any of the “positive” images already be “negative” to characters outside of this picture? *This might be an opportunity to discuss covert vs. overt bullying.

Extension:

Ask each student to consider what his/her character might be thinking in the frozen image. Students can share these imagined thoughts while frozen or in a post-activity debrief. This could also be an opportunity for older students to journal “in role” as their characters.

POST-SHOW UNIT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS — ALL GRADES

- Why does Dolores want to be invisible?
- Do you agree with Ali’s theory that life would be better if everyone was “invisible”?
- How would the play change if the main characters were boys?
- Are there differences between male and female bullying?
- How does Ali change over the course of the play?
- Why does Ali have trouble un-nominating Dolores after she got to know her?
- What if, at the end of the play, Dolores had retracted her nomination and Ali had remained silent?
- Why is Cali in a position of power?
- Ask students to consider the names of the characters in the play. Do they hold any significance?
- Does Ali’s decision at the end of the play seem realistic? Why or why not?
- How might shows such as “American Idol” contribute to the ways in which people relate to one another and judge one another?

ACTIVITY: IN-ROLE MEETINGS

Directions:

- Have students think about and list (in groups or individually) instances during *The Invisible Girl* when Ali and/or Dolores are being treated badly by their peers (i.e. when “The Ultimates” decide Ali should now be the ears of their perfect face, that “The Ultimates” call Dolores “Fat Dolores” or “FD.” etc.)
- Divide students into two groups: Teachers/Adults and Students.
- Working with “Students” first, assign each student a role at random (roles are indicated on flashcards on pgs. 8 & 9).
- Ask the “Students” to “take the stage” and sit as if in a meeting- semi-circle may be appropriate. The “Teachers” will be out of role in the audience.
- The “Students” are meeting for 5-10 min to discuss the bullying of Ali or Dolores. Students must try to work as a team to think of ways in which they could help Ali or Dolores deal with the behaviour of the other students.
- Students should be encouraged to consider the potential involvement of school staff. Would they be interested in asking for the help of authority figures? Why or why not?
- After the students have met, it is the “teachers” turn to “take the stage.” The teachers are to discuss the same problem from their perspective.
- To facilitate the role-play with younger students, you, the teacher, might want to join the scenes in role as “Student Council leader” or “Fellow Teacher.”
- Respond to the debriefing questions on pg. 10.

ROLES — STUDENTS

Use blank spaces to determine your own characters.



Ali or Dolores' sister/brother	Ali or Dolores' "buddy"- your teacher says that you are supposed to look out for her.
A popular student leader	One of the people who has secretly bullied Ali or Dolores
A popular student leader	Decide what type of student you are
An unpopular student- formerly bullied	Decide what type of student you are
One of the people who has secretly bullied Ali or Dolores	Create you rown character
A person who frequently gets bullied	Create you rown character
Decide what type of student you are	Create you rown character



ROLES — TEACHERS

Principal	Decide what type of teacher you are
Vice Principal	You are the head of the teachers' "anti-bullying" committee
Teacher	Hall monitor
Ali or Dolores' Aunt	Decide what type of teacher you are
Teacher- you really like Ali or Dolores	Decide what type of teacher you are
Head of the Parent Council	Create you rown character
A person who frequently gets bullied	Create you rown character



Debriefing Questions:

- Did the groups function effectively as teams? Why or why not?
- Did clear leaders emerge within the **group**?
- Did these scenarios seem realistic? Why or why not?
- Did all students feel that they were listened to within the scenario?
- Did all students (as their characters) remain honest throughout the role play?
- Why might individuals conceal information within a group setting?

CULMINATING ACTIVITY: ACTION PLANNING

Materials:

chart paper, markers

Directions:

- Ask groups to reconvene, this time simultaneously.
- Ask each group to come up with three strategies that the school might use to create a safe environment for Edna and others like her. You might consider asking older students to make a detailed 3-step action plan to accompany one of their strategies.
- The groups will share their ideas and discuss one another's proposed solutions.
- Are the proposed ideas realistic and achievable? Why or why not?

REVIEWING A PLAY

JON KAPLAN'S INTRODUCTION TO STUDENT REVIEWERS

Theatre is, for me, an art form that tells me something about myself or gets me thinking about the world in which I live.

Whether going to the theatre as a reviewer or simply an audience member, I think that watching a play is an emotional experience and not just an intellectual one. I always let a show wash over me, letting it touch my feelings, and only later, after the show, do I try to analyze those feelings.

That's when I start to think about some of the basic questions you ask when you're writing a review – what did I see (story, characters, themes); how did I respond to what I saw; what parts of the production (script, performances, direction, design and possibly other elements) made me feel and think what I did; why was I supposed to respond in that fashion?

When you go to the theatre to review, take a few notes during a show if you feel comfortable doing so, but don't spend your time writing the review during the show; you'll miss what's happening onstage.

Writing a review doesn't mean providing a plot summary. That's only part of the job; you have to discuss your reaction to what you saw and try to explore some of the reasons for that reaction.

I don't believe that there's any such thing as a totally objective piece of criticism. We are all individuals, bringing our own backgrounds, experiences and beliefs to a production. In some fashion, every one of us sitting in the theatre is a critic, no matter whether we're writing a review or not; we all react to and form judgments about what we see on the stage.

When I go to a production, I always keep in mind that the people involved in putting it on have worked long and hard – weeks, months, sometimes years – getting it onto the stage. Even if I have problems with the result, it's important to respect the efforts that went into the show.

Jon Kaplan is senior theatre writer at NOW Magazine, where he's worked for the past 30 years.

RESOURCES

Boost Child Abuse Prevention & Intervention
890 Yonge Street, 11th Floor,
Toronto, ON M4W 3P4
Tel: (416) 515-1100
Fax: (416) 515-1227
www.boostforkids.com
E-mail: info@boostforkids.com

Kids Help Phone
439 University Avenue, Suite 300
Toronto, Ontario
M5G 1Y8
Tel: 416-581-8969
Toll free: 1-800-268-3062

National Bullying Awareness Week Nov. 14-20 2010
<http://www.bullyingawarenessweek.org/>

Prevnet
PREVNet Administrative Centre
Queen's University
98 Barrie Street
Kingston, ON
K7L 3N6
www.prevent.org
Tel : (613) 533-2632 or Toll Free (866) 372-2495
Fax: (613) 533-6732

Arts Impact: Making a difference in the lives of students

LKTYP is proud to have **Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life** as lead sponsors for its Arts Impact programme, which provides opportunities for schools in low-income areas of Toronto to participate in quality arts education. Arts Impact's goal is to deepen students' understanding of theatre, allowing them to be inspired by the material presented on stage and to think in ways that challenge their own perceptions.



Connections: Addressing the pattern of poverty

There is empirical evidence that children who live in poverty are at greater risk of dropping out of school. Studies have also proven that exposure to the arts improves scholastic ability and attendance. Thanks to the generosity of **CIBC Children's Foundation**, LKTYP can offer special subsidized tickets to qualifying schools.



CIBC Children's Foundation



Allen MacInnis
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

LORRAINE KIMSA THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

(formerly Young Peoples Theatre) is the largest Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) company in Canada and a significant institution in the Canadian professional theatre community. Over our 45-year history we have produced many of the most important works that now form the canon of plays for young audiences in this country. At the heart of founder Susan Rubes'

idea for Young Peoples Theatre (YPT) was a belief that children deserve a theatre of their own – with resources and standards no lesser than those for adults. She believed – as we do today – that young people deserve good theatre because theatre is good for young people.

Through the communal experience of the theatre we create for them, children can receive indications of what is important, funny, trivial; positive, negative, wrong, right, rightish, wrongish; frightening, reassuring, empowering, unavoidable; familiar, new, eternal ... We strongly believe that even through the most playful of plays, we are speaking powerfully to children about the community and the world in which they live.

Therefore, at the centre of the artistic policy of LKTYP is a desire to have a positive and lasting impact on the emotional, social, and intellectual development of young people. We want children

to be imprinted with experiences that will increase their access to the world, in order for them to grow into the unique and wonderful people they were born to be. To do this, our programming is drawn from the world classics of children's stories, from contemporary works, from the new plays we develop, and from productions showcasing the most innovative and accomplished theatre for young audiences by other Canadian and international theatre companies.

At LKTYP, because we are serious about child development through theatre art, children can experience our work as either audience members or theatre creators. We extend the learning opportunities of our professional productions through our substantial Education & Participation Department. The Department's services for teachers and students helps connect curriculum objectives and learning outcomes to the content of our professional productions; its Community Participation projects link our theatre skill with the educational aspirations of partners who are dedicated to the growth of young people; our interest-based Drama School offers young people the chance to engage deeply in the excitement of theatre art; and our Community Volunteer programme offers everyone who wants it, the opportunity to participate in the mission of LKTYP.

LKTYP is not only a professional theatre for young audiences but a vital community-based centre of arts education.

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TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON!

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The Ontario Arts Council and the Ontario Trillium Foundation are agencies of the Government of Ontario.