LIFEBOAT

Applause Series Curriculum Guide
April 6-8, 2015

DES MOINES PERFORMING ARTS
CIVIC CENTER • STONER THEATER • TEMPLE THEATER • COWLES COMMONS
LIFEBOAT

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for joining us for the Applause Series presentation of Lifeboat. We are delighted to welcome Catherine Wheels Theatre Company, from Scotland, to our stage to share the remarkable story of Bess Walder and Beth Cummings — whose story of survival during a World War II disaster continues to inspire. In telling their story, Catherine Wheels has created a lovely piece of theater that looks at war through the eyes of young people. It is Beth and Bess’s universality — their hopes, their dreams, and their efforts to understand the complexities of world events and their place within them — that makes their story so poignant and relevant for audiences today.

We thank you for sharing this very special experience with your students and hope this study guide helps to connect the performance to your in-classroom curriculum in ways that you find valuable. In the following pages, you will find contextual information about the performance and related subjects, as well as a variety of discussion questions and assessment activities. Some pages are appropriate to reproduce for your students; others are designed more specifically with you, their teacher, in mind. As such, we hope that you are able to “pick and choose” material and ideas from the study guide to meet your class’s unique needs.

See you at the theater,

Des Moines Performing Arts Education Team

Support for Des Moines Performing Arts education programs and the Applause Series is provided by:


This study guide was compiled, written and edited by Yvette Zarod Hermann; edited by Michelle McDonald and Karoline Myers.
Des Moines Performing Arts is a private, nonprofit organization and is an important part of central Iowa’s cultural community. It is recognized nationally for excellence as a performing arts center and is committed to engaging the Midwest in world-class entertainment, education, and cultural activities.

Des Moines Performing Arts presents professional touring productions, including theater direct from Broadway, world-renowned dance companies, family programming, comedy, and concerts.

Education and Community Engagement programs are core to Des Moines Performing Arts' mission as a nonprofit performing arts center.

Public education programs allow audience members and local artists to make meaningful and personal connections to the art they experience on our stages. Guest lectures and Q&As with company members allow audiences to explore the inner workings of the performance. In addition, master classes, workshops, and summer camps taught by visiting performers give local actors, dancers, and musicians the chance to increase their skills by working directly with those who know what it takes to succeed on the professional stage.

Through its K-12 School Programs, Des Moines Performing Arts strives to ensure that central Iowa students have affordable access to high quality arts experiences as part of their education. More than 50,000 students and educators attend curriculum-connected school matinee performances through the Applause Series annually. In addition, Des Moines Performing Arts sends teaching artists into the schools to provide hands-on workshops and residencies in special opportunities that engage students directly in the creative process. And, through its partnership with the John F. Kennedy Center, Des Moines Performing Arts provides teachers with in-depth professional development training on how to use the arts in their classrooms to better impact student learning. The Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards is Des Moines Performing Arts’ newest initiative to support the arts in Iowa schools, providing important learning tools and public recognition to celebrate the achievements of students involved in their high school theater programs.
YOUR ROLE AS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER

Attending a live performance is a unique and exciting opportunity. Unlike the passive experience of watching a movie, audience members play an important role in every live performance. As they act, sing, dance, or play instruments, the performers on stage are very aware of the audience’s mood and level of engagement. Each performance calls for a different response from audience members. Musicians and dancers may desire the audience to focus silently on the stage and applaud only during natural breaks in the performance. Audience members can often take cues from performers on how to respond to the performance appropriately. For example, performers will often pause or bow for applause at a specific time.

As you experience the performance, consider the following questions:

* What kind of live performance is this (a play, a dance, a concert, etc.)?
* What is the mood of the performance? Is the subject matter serious or lighthearted?
* What is the mood of the performers? Are they happy and smiling or somber and reserved?
* Are the performers encouraging the audience to clap to the music or move to the beat?
* Are there natural breaks in the performance where applause seems appropriate?

THEATER ETIQUETTE

Here is a checklist of general guidelines to follow when you visit the Civic Center:

* Leave all food, drinks, and chewing gum at school or on the bus.
* Cameras, recording devices, and personal listening devices are not permitted in the theater.
* Turn off and put away all cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices before the performance begins.
* Do not text during the performance.
* Respect the theater. Remember to keep your feet off of the seats and avoid bouncing up and down.
* When the house lights dim, the performance is about to begin. Please stop talking at this time.
* Talk before and after the performance only. Remember, the theater is designed to amplify sound. Other audience members and the performers on stage can hear your voice!
* Use the restroom before the performance or wait until the end. If you must leave the theater during the show, make sure the first set of doors closes before you open the second — this will keep unwanted light from spilling into the theater.
* Appropriate responses such as laughing and applauding are appreciated. Pay attention to the artists on stage — they will let you know what is appropriate.
* Open your eyes, ears, mind, and heart to the entire experience. Enjoy yourself!

A SPECIAL EXPERIENCE

Seeing a live performance is a very special experience. Although it is not required, many people enjoy dressing up when they attend the theater.
Thank you for choosing the Applause Series with Des Moines Performing Arts. Below are tips for organizing a safe and successful field trip to the Civic Center.

ORGANIZING YOUR FIELD TRIP
* Please include all students, teachers, and chaperones in your ticket request.
* After you submit your ticket request, you will receive a confirmation e-mail within five business days. Your invoice will be attached to the confirmation e-mail.
* Payment policies and options are located at the top of the invoice. Payment (or a purchase order) for your reservation is due four weeks prior to the date of the performance.
* The Civic Center reserves the right to cancel unpaid reservations after the payment due date.
* Tickets are not printed for Applause Series shows. Your invoice will serve as the reservation confirmation for your group order.
* Schedule buses to arrive in downtown Des Moines at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the performance. This will allow time to park, walk to the Civic Center, and be seated in the theater.
* Performances are approximately 60 minutes unless otherwise noted on the website and printed materials.
* All school groups with reservations to the show will receive an e-mail notification when the study guide is posted. Please note that study guides are only printed and mailed upon request.

DIRECTIONS AND PARKING
* Directions: From I-235, take Exit 8A (Downtown Exits) and the ramp toward 3rd Street and 2nd Avenue. Turn onto 3rd Street and head south.
* Police officers are stationed at the corner of 3rd and Locust Streets and will direct buses to parking areas with hooded meters near the Civic Center. Groups traveling in personal vehicles are responsible for locating their own parking in ramps or metered (non-hooded) spots downtown.
* Buses will remain parked for the duration of the show. At the conclusion, bus drivers must be available to move their bus if necessary, even if their students are staying at the Civic Center to eat lunch or take a tour.
* Buses are not generally permitted to drop off or pick up students near the Civic Center. If a bus must return to school during the performance, prior arrangements must be made with Des Moines Performing Arts Education staff.

ARRIVAL TO THE CIVIC CENTER
* When arriving at the Civic Center, please have an adult lead your group for identification and check-in purposes. A Des Moines Performing Arts staff member may be stationed outside the building to direct you to a specific entrance.
* Des Moines Performing Arts staff will usher groups into the building as quickly as possible. Once inside, you will be directed to the check-in area.
* Applause seating is not ticketed. Ushers will escort groups to their seats; various seating factors including group size, grade levels, arrival time, and special needs seating requests may be used to assign a group’s specific location in the hall.
* We request that an adult lead the group into the theater and other adults position themselves throughout the group; we request this arrangement for supervision purposes, especially in the event that a group must be seated in multiple rows.
* Please allow ushers to seat your entire group before rearranging seat locations and taking groups to the restroom.
* As a reminder, children under the age of three are not permitted in the theater for Applause performances.

IN THE THEATER
* In case of a medical emergency, please notify the nearest usher. A medical assistant is on duty for all Main Hall performances.
* We ask that adults handle any disruptive behavior in their groups. If the behavior persists, an usher may request your group to exit the theater.
* Following the performance groups may exit the theater and proceed to the their bus(es).
* If an item is lost at the Civic Center, please see an usher or contact us after the performance at 515.246.2355.

QUESTIONS?
Please contact the Education department at education@desmoinesperformingarts.org or 515.246.2355 Thank you!
**VOCABULARY**

**evacuee**: a person moved from a place of danger to somewhere safe. The two main characters in *Lifeboat* are evacuees.

**City of Benares**: the name of an 11,000-ton City Lines passenger ship carrying 400 passengers and 99 evacuee children on their way to a new life in Canada. The ship was torpedoed by a German ship 600 miles and five days out from Liverpool, England, its starting point.

**refugee**: a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.

**World War II**: lasted from 1939 to 1945. It involved a majority of the world’s nations, eventually forming two opposing groups: the Allies (U.S., Britain, France, USSR, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, Greece, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, South Africa, Yugoslavia) and the Axis (Germany, Italy, Japan, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria). It was the most widespread conflict in history, and directly involved more than 100 million people, from more than 30 different countries.

**torpedo**: a self-propelled, underwater missile designed to be fired from a ship or submarine or dropped into the water from an aircraft and to explode on reaching a target. Torpedoes were used by both Allied and Axis nations during World War II. Many people thought it was not right to shoot torpedoes at nonmilitary ships.

**Adolf Hitler**: an Austrian-born German politician. He was chancellor of Germany from 1933 to 1945 and dictator of Nazi Germany from 1934 to 1945. He was considered an enemy to democracy and freedom by the Allied nations.

**Winston Churchill**: the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1940 to 1945 and again from 1951 to 1955. Churchill was also a historian, an author and an artist. Churchill is the only British Prime Minister to have won the Nobel Prize for Literature, and was the first person to be made an honorary citizen of the United States.
ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Lifeboat is the extraordinary true story of Bess Walder and Beth Cummings. Set in World War II, it is a story of courage, survival, and enduring friendship.

**Run Time:** Approx. 70 minutes

**THE STORY**

On Friday 13, September 1940, a ship, The City of Benares, set sail from Liverpool for Canada. On board were 90 evacuees — children escaping the relentless bombing and dangers of war torn Britain. Four days into the crossing, the ship was torpedoed and sank. Only eleven of the evacuees survived.

Two fifteen-year-old girls, Bess Walder and Beth Cumming, spent 19 terrifying hours in the water on an upturned lifeboat. They willed each other to survive.

**ORIGINS**

Director and founder of Catherine Wheels Theatre Company, Gill Robertson, first came across the remarkable story of Bess and Beth in a magazine article: "I immediately thought that this was a fantastic story that had to be told, but I also thought it was near enough impossible to stage. I spoke to scriptwriter Nicola McCartney about the story and it really captured her imagination too, so we set about working out how we could bring it alive for young audiences." They were both lucky enough to then visit Bess at home and hear her story.

**WHAT YOU WILL EXPERIENCE**

Lifeboat is performed by just two actors, who play Bess and Beth as well as all of the other characters the girls meet along the way.

As Beth and Bess’s story unfolds, you will be immersed in British adolescent life and songs from the 1940s ("Pack Up Your Troubles," "Mairzy Doats," "Don't Fence Me In") as the girls experience a series of flashbacks from "normal" teenage life to that harrowing night.

Their flashbacks, as well as their innocent view of the world, provide moments of lightness and humor throughout an otherwise dark chapter of human history.

**WATCH FOR...**

As you watch, think about how the seemingly simple set transforms to suggest a wide variety of settings and events, including:

- Home life
- The hubbub of travel
- The vast and terrifying ocean

**THEMES**

- Friendship
- Sacrifice
- Determination
- Resourcefulness
- Interconnectivity
- Collaboration
- Coping with Adversity

"The tale is harrowing and inspiring... the play’s high adventure and touching lessons in family, fortitude and friendship are conveyed with exceptional theatrical skill, making Lifeboat an admirable attraction."

- The New York Times
ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Learn more about Catherine Wheels Theatre Company and the actors of Lifeboat before seeing the show.

THE COMPANY
Catherine Wheels Theatre Company is Scotland’s most prolific producer of work for children and young people. The company has received 12 awards and many nominations, including two prestigious Drama Desk award nominations for Unique Theatrical Experience on Broadway.

The company was the first Scottish children’s theatre company to perform at Australia’s Sydney Opera House, and has now played at the iconic art venue three times.

At home in the United Kingdom, Catherine Wheels tours into schools, theatres and to festivals from Highland glens and remote Scottish islands to the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, as well as to London’s Southbank and the Barbican Centre.

ASHLEY SMITH
(BETH CUMMING)
Ashley Smith trained at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and graduated in 2008. Since then she has worked extensively in Scotland theater working with companies such as the National Theatre of Scotland, Traverse Theatre, Dundee Rep, Catherine Wheels and Lyceum Theatre. She has been lucky enough to tour shows all over the UK as well as to New York and Singapore. She recently filmed a new Scottish comedy series called Scot Squad which is due to air soon and she is also the voice of the children’s audio on the Ghoulish Glasgow City Sightseeing tour.

Ashley toured Lifeboat throughout Scotland and Ireland in 2013 and is looking forward to bringing the show to North America in the spring of 2015.

HANNAH DONALDSON
(BESS WALDER)
Hannah trained at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and graduated with critical praise ‘widely hailed as a star among...graduates’ [Joyce McMillan, The Scotsman].

She has worked with many theater companies including Pachamama Productions, National Theatre of Scotland, Royal Lyceum theatre, His Majesty’s Theatre Aberdeen, Borderline, Open Book, and Edinburgh International Festival/ Traverse Theatre.

Hannah also has extensive film, TV and radio credits that include: Case Histories (BBC); Rab C Nesbitt (STV); The Secret Adventures of Scotland (The Comedy Unit), and Maggie’s Story (BBC/Hopscotch films).

DID YOU KNOW?
Lifeboat is one of Catherine Wheels’ most-loved productions.
GILL ROBERTSON,
FOUNDER OF CATHERINE WHEELS THEATRE COMPANY

"I got the inspiration for the play in 1999 after reading a HOW WE MET inside one of the Sunday Magazines. In the article two women, Bess Walder and Beth Cummings, who were then in their 70s, explained how they met while on the evacuee ship The City of Benares in September 1940. The ship was taking 90 evacuee children from different parts of Britain over to Canada. Four days into the crossing the ship was torpedoed and sank, and only 13 of the children survived. Bess and Beth, who were teenaged girls at the time, survived by hanging on to an upturned lifeboat in the middle of the Atlantic for 18 hours in a force 8 storm.

"In the magazine article they credited their survival on the fact that they were both together and willed each other to survive, and that they were young and did not realize the direness of the situation. In fact many of the adults that were with them hanging on to the lifeboat gave up, and they finished the article by saying 'WE WERE NOT IN THE BUSINESS OF GIVING UP... WE HUNG ON' which of course ended up a line in the play.

"I was amazed by this story and started to think about what a potential great show it would make for young people. It had all the right ingredients ... the story of a great friendship, the wartime background and the unbelievable story of the survival and courage of the two girls. There was also other elements of what happened to Bess and Beth which seemed like an amazing coincidence, and which could have been penned by a writer. Bess ended up marrying Beth’s brother Geoff, and Bess’s younger brother Louis who was travelling with his sister to Canada also survived which made them the only siblings to have survived the sinking. And the fact that 60 years later as they wrote that article they were still firm friends."

NICOLE MCCARTNEY,
PLAYWRIGHT

"Out of all the plays I have written, this one was a real gift in every sense of the word. Firstly, it was a gift from Catherine Wheels director Gill Robertson who found the story and asked me to be the writer for Lifeboat — my first ever play for young people. I learned an enormous amount from working on it. Because the story behind the play — true, inspiring and life-affirming — was a gift from Bess and Beth, told me by each in her own words. It never fails to pick me up and drive me forward when I sometimes think about giving up.

"Only when she was in her 80s did Bess make her first crossing of the Atlantic by ship since the tragedy over 65 years ago, and at long last she was able to cast flowers into sea where the City of Benares and the majority of its young passengers were lost. Bess and Beth have never forgotten them. Through Lifeboat we remember all of them too. And I hope that you, like all of us who worked on this play, might be inspired by the great courage of the teenage Bess and Beth, to 'hang on' to life and live it to the full."
Life during World War II was not very long ago, but the lives of young people then were quite different from our lives in the United States today. They had to deal with wartime conditions of evacuation, bombing raids, and rationing — as well as growing up!

Imagine the narrator of each of these real stories. What led to their experiences? Does any part of their stories remind you of anything you have experienced?

EVACUATION

“We arrived in Montreal and were conveyed by bus to the dormitories of a women's college whose students were on holiday. It was a curious place... all the doors had been removed, taken off their hinges. We were assigned beds, and sat about wondering what would happen next. Somebody started to cry, and with no doors... it swept through the dormitories until we were all wailing, regardless of age. In an odd way, I seem to remember that it helped.”

◊ Why do you think different children had different views of being evacuated?
◊ Why were some afraid?
◊ How would you feel in this situation?
◊ What would you write in a postcard home about your experience being evacuated?

BOMBING

“The night had started as a perfect autumn evening; bright and cloudless, the moon full and the clear air crisp and fresh. Now the air stank of stale, singed dust, similar to an old Hoover dust bag.”

“I heard machine-gun fire and an engine roaring behind me. I turned around and suddenly, from behind a fluffy cumulus cloud, a German aeroplane emerged with jet-black smoke pouring from one of the engines. The plane was diving towards me. I was terrified, thinking that I was going to be machine-gunned...”

◊ Imagine you are an adult who has to explain why there is bombing, what to do and how to cope with any devastation. What would you say?
◊ What would happen today if all the trains stopped running, there was no electricity, shops were destroyed, and factories could not produce goods? Why might people want to stop all these things working during wartime?
◊ Why might adults and children have had different views of the war?

RATIONING

“Mum made him sandwiches to eat on the train. All there was to eat at that time was dry bread and mustard powder, which was made into a paste with water. These mustard sandwiches were carefully wrapped with Mum saying over and over, ‘I am sorry, David, I am so sorry.’”

◊ All types of food and necessities (like toilet paper and toothpaste!) were limited in supply during World War II. Why do you think this happened? What would be the hardest to get during wartime?
◊ Rationing means everyone gets a small amount. Does this sound like a good idea to you? Why or why not?
◊ Sweets and snacks were not available at all during World War II. What would you miss most if you could have no sweets or snacks at all?
◊ Do you think children in the 1940s would have felt the same as you do?

Adapted from "Learning Zone Sources: Young People and War." BBC.
ABOUT SCOTLAND, HOME OF CATHERINE WHEELS

Lifeboat is coming to Des Moines from the international company Catherine Wheels Theatre Company, which is from Scotland. Learn more about Scotland prior to seeing the show.

GEOGRAPHY
Scotland is in northwest Europe and is part of the United Kingdom. It shares a land border to the south with England and is surrounded by the North Sea on the east and the Atlantic Ocean on the west.

Scotland is a mountainous country that is famous for its fresh water lochs (lakes). There are over 600 square miles of them. (One of the most famous is Loch Ness, where a mysterious monster is said to live.)

Scotland has more than 800 islands along its coast. 130 of them are inhabited.

KNOWLEDGE
Scotland is also famous for its clans, kilts, medieval castles, and poetry.

Well-known people from Scotland include:
• Walter Scott
• Robert Louis Stevenson
• Arthur Conan Doyle
• David Hume
• The actor Sean Connery

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OTHER FACTS
Currency: Pound Sterling (£)
Capital: Edinburgh
Largest lake: Loch Lomond (24 miles long)
National Animal: Unicorn

ABOVE: Scotland’s largest lake, Loch Lomond, surrounded by mountains. Image courtesy of loch-lomond.net.
1) STRENGTH OF CHARACTER

Goal: To explore the core concepts of Lifeboat through physical imagery and in their writing

Preparation: Create packs of index cards with the words: COURAGE, DETERMINATION, LOYALTY, HONESTY, SELFLESSNESS. Divide students into groups of five or the classroom into five or six work areas. Have a timer ready.

Explanation: Students will work in groups to create tableaux (frozen pictures) to illustrate each word. They will then use their experiences acting each word to write an anecdote about the word of their choice.

Activity:
1. Push desks to the edges of the room to give students room to work. Each group should have their own well-defined space. Tell students they are going to be actors who only use their bodies, not words, to tell a story.
2. Ask one group to demonstrate a tableau of the word “peace.” Allow them one minute to work together and lead the class to notice what makes the tableau strong (frozen bodies, expressive faces and hands, poses with variation in height, implied relationships, the illusion of motion) and what could be improved (focus, expression, variety, greater connection between group members, or stronger physical choices such as a lunge or arms overhead)
3. Ask if students have any questions before they begin a series of five one-minute tableau challenges. Tell them when they hear you say, “3 - 2 - 1 - FREEZE!” they should be prepared to freeze in their tableaux.
4. Tell students the first word and begin the one-minute timer. Count down the last ten seconds, ending with a clear “3 - 2 - 1 - FREEZE!” While students are frozen, quickly point out commonalities between groups and strong choices within groups.
5. Move swiftly to the next challenge. Repeat until the students complete tableaux for all five words.
6. Ask students to move their desks back into place and prepare to write.
7. Ask students to recall the words and display them.
8. Tell students what an anecdote is — a short story about an event. Then, ask students to choose a word and write a real (nonfiction) or a made-up (fiction) anecdote illustrating their selected word. The title of their story should have their selected word in it. Younger students may draw an illustration instead.
9. Provide opportunities for sharing:
   For older students: collect the stories and read one aloud each day. Allow students to ask questions of the author. Create a class list of what makes a story fun to read: interesting characters, unexpected action, funny dialogue, a satisfying ending...
   For younger students: group each illustration by word selected and hang them on the wall. Ask students to “walk the gallery” and discuss what illustrations stood out the most to them.

Follow-Up Discussion Questions:
1. Was one minute long enough for your group to create strong tableaux? Why or why not?
2. What was your group’s most successful moment? Were there any difficulties with working together? Without naming names, what were the difficulties?
3. What are one or two of your favorite details you used to create a picture in the reader’s imagination?
4. What did you learn about COURAGE, DETERMINATION, LOYALTY, HONESTY, or SELFLESSNESS? Which do you value the most?
2) DON’T LET GO

Goal: Students will explore the core concepts of *Lifeboat* through physical imagery and in their writing.

Preparation: Project, write on the board, or make a handout with the following three lines from *Lifeboat*:

A: "We didn’t let go. Why didn’t we let go?"

B: "Well, we couldn’t give up, could we?"

C: "That’s right, we’re not in the business of giving up."

Explanation: Students will work in pairs or small groups to create a short scene (context) around one of the lines listed above. They will then write and present their scenes and allow the class to guess the context.

Additional Suggestions:
Students who prefer not to perform can be helpful as stage crew, sound-effects makers, or visual-effects designers. As an alternative, this activity could simply be a dialogue-writing exercise, with no performance requirement.

Activity:
1. Ask each student group to select A, B or C to be the last line of their scene. Their job is to fill in the setting and character relationships using dialogue.
2. For younger students, you may adapt the scene into a pantomime, so the only line of text needed is A, B or C.
3. For older students, you may extend the requirements, such as adding a prop (an object) or sound effects.
4. Ask students to think about and be prepared to answer the following questions at the conclusion of their scene:
   - Who might these people be?
   - In what way might they be connected?
   - What might they be talking about?
   - Why might they be in this situation?
   - What might have happened if they had given up?
5. When the stories are complete, students share the results by presenting their scene to the class. They should not introduce their scene or explain the context; the audience has to guess at the end of each scene.
6. After each scene, choose volunteers to guess the answers to the questions above. Actors should stay silent until all the questions have been discussed and guessed before they offer their explanation.

Follow-Up Discussion Questions:
1. Did the audience guess correctly about your scene? If not, what could you have changed to make it clearer?
2. Which was your favorite scene and why?
3. What could be the connection to *Lifeboat*, the show we are going to see? (As the discussion concludes, share with students that A, B and C are the last three lines of the show.)
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BEFORE THE SHOW

1. Have you ever been to another country? What made it different from home?

2. The kids in Lifeboat are amazed when they see The City of Benares, a huge passenger ship. Have you ever seen anything that made you say, “Wow!” What was it and why did it inspire awe?

3. Where you born in the US or in another country? Do you like living in Iowa?

4. How you ever been on an overnight boat trip? Where did you go? What was it like?

5. What is the most dangerous situation you have ever been in? What do you remember most about it? How did you get to safety?

6. What are the most important qualities you look for in a friend? Name five, and put them in order of importance to you. What kind of friend are you? Do you match your list of five qualities? Why or why not?

7. Do you have any “unusual” friends? What makes them special?

AFTER THE SHOW

1. What was the most memorable moment of the performance for you? Why?

2. What parts of the show made you laugh or smile? What other emotions did you feel and when?

3. What questions do you have for the show’s designers?

4. How were Beth and Bess similar to kids today? How were they different?

5. If you did the tableau activity “Strengths of Character,” reflect on the different character attributes you created in class and how they relate to the characters in the show. (COURAGE, DETERMINATION, LOYALTY, HONESTY, SELFLESSNESS)

6. Beth and Bess were refugees, people who have been forced to leave their country in order to escape war. Are there refugees in our world today? What have you heard in the news about refugees? Do you know any people who were refugees that live in your community today?

7. Did Beth and Bess’s story remind you of other stories you have heard – fictional or non-fictional? If so, what?
POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES & ASSESSMENT

1) DREAM INTO REALITY

Goal: Students will reflect on the Lifeboat theme of “don’t let go” and how that can translate to their own abilities to achieve remarkable things.

Explanation: Gill Robertson, the producer of Lifeboat, stated, “I hope that all young people who see Lifeboat take away the message ‘don’t let go’ — we can all achieve remarkable things.”

In this activity, students will focus on their own futures, “mapping out a lifeline that has them achieving a goal by the time they are 30 years old.

Steps:
1. Ask students: What remarkable things do you dream of doing? Have them make a list of three big goals they have for their lives. Tell students to share their goals with one other student then pick their favorite goal to work on today.
2. Ask students to list the things they learned from Bess and Beth that could help them achieve their goal.
3. Ask students to think about what steps they need to take in their own lives to achieve that goal. Help them understand what kind of education or experience they might need during and after high school.
4. Show students a sample timeline.
5. Ask students to create a rough draft of their life timeline from birth to age thirty. Remind them to include their birthday as the first item, then mark each grade from kindergarten all the way through high school, into their future dreams! Younger students may add pictures if they like.

6. Ask students to create a final version of their timeline (in class or for homework) using a computer or art supplies. You may want to supply roll paper to encourage students to make large visual timelines.
7. Display the timelines in the hallway and allow students to look at each other’s work. Encourage positive comments and clarifying questions.

Follow-Up Questions:
1. Do you think your timeline is realistic?
2. Why did you choose your goal? Do you think that you chose the right one for you?
3. What circumstances might make you revise your timeline?
4. Which other timeline did you like to look at the most? Why is that?
5. Which timeline is most similar to yours? Which one is most different?
2) REAL LIFE REMARKABLES

**Goal:** To understand that dire circumstances can shape a person’s life and that how we react in difficult circumstances can reveal or shape our characters.

**Explanation:** Students will reflect on the themes of courage, survival, and friendship seen in *Lifeboat* and research examples of these traits in current events to inspire their own writing.

**Activity:**
1. Review the quote: “Theirs is a story of courage, a story of survival, a story of enduring friendship.” As a whole class, explore the idea of Bess and Beth’s courage, survival and endurance as depicted in *Lifeboat*.
2. Ask the class, did Bess and Beth think they were extraordinary people? Do you? Why or why not?
3. For homework or in small groups, find examples of current media stories which show courage, survival or endurance.
4. Review the stories as a class by looking at what might make some people more able to show these qualities than others. Make a list of things that call up people’s courage, survival instincts or capacity to endure hardships.
5. In pairs, ask the class to create a story about two people who have been through something together against all odds.
6. Then ask them to act out or tell a short part of the story, which shows the elements of courage, survival and enduring friendship.

**Follow-Up Discussion Questions**
1. Was your story realistic? Why or why not?
2. Did any of the stories remind you of something you have seen or experienced? How?

3) OTHER ACTIVITY IDEAS

**A. Write a Letter**
Write a letter from Bess to Beth after the sinking of their ship. Then switch roles, replying to Bess as Beth. Date the letters. Remember Bess married Beth’s brother Geoff! Use information from Bess’s obituary to make your letters historically accurate.

**B. Leaving Home**
Brainstorm a list of places you would like to go if you had to leave Iowa. Can you come up with at least ten? Why did you choose the places you chose?

**C. Life as a Young Person**
What are the differences between life as a young person in 1940 and now in 2014? Make a chart.

**D. Conversations — Adult vs. Young People**
Bess and Beth overhear their parents talking about the war, not really knowing what it means. Script a conversation between two 8-year-olds safe in a bomb shelter during a bombing attack. Then script a conversation between two adult parents. Remember to include the muffled sounds of bombing outside the shelter in your script to heighten the mood. How are the conversations different? Why?

**E. Write a Review**
Write a review of *Lifeboat* to inform others what you experienced. Describe with detail: what you saw and heard; how the performance made you feel; and what your favorite part was and why. Remember to paint a picture of the experience with your words so that others who did not see the performance can imagine it.
RESOURCES

A 14-minute clip in which playwright Nicola McCartney discusses her experience of working with young people and writing her play *Lifeboat*:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOxEEmNmyqI&t=42

For alternate perspectives, share this excellent report written by student Sam Teplin about his neighbor, Rainer Kohler, a young German citizen during World War II:

http://www2.needham.k12.ma.us/nhs/cur/wwII/05/p2-05/Brook-SFT-p2-05/WWII_Rainer_Kohler.html

A short overview of the effects of World War II on Britain:

http://www.worldwar2history.info/in/Britain.html

“WW2 People’s War: written by the public, gathered by the BBC.” An archive of eyewitness accounts from World War II, this one from Ken Long, a ten year old London evacuee on September 1, 1939.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/02/a2065402.shtml

Information about the evacuation of British children during World War II:

http://clutch.open.ac.uk/schools/standrews00/gov_evac.htm

More on the effects of World War II on Britain:

http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/children_and_world_war_two.htm

More about the SS City of Benares:

http://uboat.net/allies/merchants/532.html

STUDY GUIDE SOURCES

Catherine Wheels Theatre Company:

http://www.catherinewheels.co.uk/

PCPA Theatrefest Study Guide for Lifeboat:

http://pcpa.org/outreach/lifeboatstudy.html