



## TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE



**Written by David Yee**

2019/2020 Season  
Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage

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## Welcome

This guide was created for teachers and students. It contains an overview of the play’s story, as well as informative resources and activities for teachers and students. The guide aims to provide background knowledge and critical perspectives on the play that will yield fruitful discussion and foster an understanding and appreciation of the theatre arts.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for the guide, please contact our group sales representative at 604.687.5315 ext 253 or [groups@artsclub.com](mailto:groups@artsclub.com).

This study guide was written by Hila Graf and Kevan Ellis.

## About the Arts Club Theatre Company

The Arts Club of Vancouver was founded in 1958 as a private club for artists, musicians, and actors. It became the Arts Club Theatre in 1964 when the company opened its first stage in a converted gospel hall at Seymour and Davie Streets.

Now in its 56<sup>th</sup> season of producing professional live theatre in Vancouver, the Arts Club Theatre Company is a non-profit charitable organization that operates three theatres: the Granville Island Stage, the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage, and the Goldcorp Stage at the BMO Theatre Centre. Its popular productions range from musicals and contemporary comedies to new works and classics.

Learn more about the Arts Club Theatre Company at [artsclub.com](http://artsclub.com)

## Keywords

- \* Environment
- \* Contemporary theatre
- \*Natural disasters
- \*Water
- \*Canadian play
- \*Vignettes
- \*Values
- \*Conflict

## Learning objectives

After viewing *carried away on the crest of a wave* and working through the following activities, students will:

- Explore the embodiment of moral dilemmas in the face of a natural disaster
- Engage with theatrical representations of environmental issues
- Experiment with innovative staging forms

## Connections to New BC Curriculum

### Drama /Theatre Company/Theatre Production/Directing and Script Development (11–12)

#### *Big Ideas*

- Traditions, perspectives, worldviews, and stories can be shared through scriptwriting and directing.
- Scriptwriters and directors use language and action to present ideas and influence others.
- Directors shape the audience’s aesthetic experiences through script interpretation and artistic choices
- Drama encourages creativity, innovation, and collaboration in a variety of contexts.
- Artists use movement, sound, imagery, and language to provide unique aesthetic experiences.
- Production challenges are resolved through creativity, innovation, and collaboration.

#### *Curriculum Connections*

- Describe, analyze, and evaluate ways in which props, technologies, and environments are used in drama, using discipline-specific language
- Reflect on aesthetic experiences and how they relate to a specific place, time, and context
- Intentionally select and combine dramatic elements and conventions
- Explore and create dramatic works to express ideas, meaning, and emotions
- Communicate and interpret ideas and emotions through dramatic conventions
- Express personal voice, cultural identity, and values through character development

### Social Studies (Physical Geography/ Human Geography/ Comparative World Religions (11-12)

#### *Big Ideas*

- Natural processes have an impact on the landscape and human settlement.
- Religion can powerfully shape social, political, legal, and environmental values.

### *Curriculum Connections*

- Draw conclusions about the variation and distribution of geographic phenomena over time and space
- Identify and assess how human and environmental factors and events influence each other
- Explain the significance of texts, philosophies, events, or developments at particular times and places within various belief systems
- Evaluate how particular geographic actions or events influence human practices or outcomes
- Make reasoned ethical judgments about controversial actions in the past or present, and determine whether we have a responsibility to respond

### **Synopsis: *carried away on the crest of a wave***

**“The Leap Second Story”** At the International Earth Rotation and Reference Systems Service, Australia, a female scientist, Beckett, gives a very strange press conference. She emphasizes the fact that “the earth changes speed and position constantly,” and on account of this “on December 26, 2004, the earth’s mass was drawn towards its core via tectonic subduction and the planet got...smaller”.

**“The Swimming Child Story”** In Malaysia, two people, siblings called “Runner” and “Swimmer,” are inside a house that has been carried out to the ocean. They chat about their precarious circumstances as they try to determine which personal objects to discard from the house in order to prevent it from sinking further into the sea.

**“The Saint Story”** Ma’mar, an architect and structural engineer, has been sent by the Vatican to the Basilica of Our Lady of Good Health in Velankanni, Tamil Nadu, India, to determine the credibility of a supposed miracle: the tsunami destroyed nearly everything in the area except for the basilica. The two have an argument about their differences in religion and worldview, and whether this event was, or should be considered a “miracle.”

**“The Radio Story”** In Toronto, an outspoken, white, middle-aged radio DJ, Rick, has written a joke-song about the Indian Ocean tsunami and the supposed indifference of Western people to this tragedy. His radio station does not want him to perform this song on the air, and a corporate manager, Sanjay, has come in to explain their decision.

**“The Orphan Boy Story”** At Bandaranaike International Airport, Sri Lanka, an older Chinese man sits with a young girl who has lost all her immediate family in the tsunami, waiting for a relative to arrive and get her. As they wait, the man tells the girl about his experience being bullied as an orphan child.

**“The Water Story”** A white man, “Mr. Crumb,” and a Thai woman, evidently a prostitute, “Jasmine,” lie together naked and sweaty, post-coital, in a hotel room bed in Khao Lak, Thailand. Crumb opens up to her, confiding about the romantic and sexual details of a past, long-term relationship that he had with a woman, and their connection to the Tsunami.

**“The Falling Story”** Somewhere deep underground, a man, Kintaro Kobayashi, plummets down a hole, continuously falling without ever reaching the bottom.

**“The Millimetre Story”** In Salt Lake City, Utah, in 2009, an FBI special agent, Nguyen comes to the home of Lenore, an Asian-American woman. He questions her about an event in her past, and gradually makes it known to her that he is aware of a serious crime that she committed.

**“The Vermin Story”** In Ko Phi Island, Thailand, at the present time, Diego Garcia sits on a beach and stares out at the ocean, when he is approached by another man, “Mr. Vermin,” who instantly begins talking to him. Diego confesses that the people who died in the tsunami died because of him. Vermin is apparently already aware of this, and shows Diego that he is carrying a pistol.

## Characters List

Beckett  
Swimmer  
Runner  
Amal  
Ma'mar  
Rick  
Chili  
Sanjay  
The Hard-boiled Man  
Kid  
Crumb  
Jasmine  
Makoto  
Kintaro  
Nguyen  
Lenore  
Vermin  
Diego

## Discussion Questions

*These questions can be used as writing prompts, as well as prompts group discussions.*

### **Pre-show discussion questions:**

*The following questions have been included to spark discussions and to get students thinking about what they might experience prior to viewing the production.*

- Have you seen any live performances on stage before? What are your expectations about what you will see on stage in this production?
- What do you already know about the play, including the main theme, historical content, production elements and the characters? How do you anticipate that these elements will come together in the play?
- What technical elements do you anticipate seeing in the production? How do you think these elements will affect the audience's experience of the play?
- Knowing the play is composed of 9 stories, how do you imagine they will be woven together as a cohesive piece? What elements do you expect to be used in the transitions (movement, lighting, sound, projections etc.) and how?

### Post-show discussion questions:

*The following questions are ideal for engaging students in reflection and exploration of the major themes, characters, and other elements of the production.*

- Think about the set of the piece. How did it serve the main theme and action of the play?
- Think about an interesting character or relationship you've seen in the play. What about them resonated with you? What perspective did they bring to the theme of the play?
- What did you notice about the use of technology as part of the play and the production? In what way did it serve the themes of the play?
- What were some of the ethical discussions the play explored? What did they make you think/feel?
- The play deals with the aftermath of the 2004 Tsunami. In what ways was the Tsunami present as part of the production? What artistic choices did you recognize to express it?

## Activity One: Conflict of Values

**Key Concepts:** Scriptwriting, Dramaturgy, Characters, Conflict, Values, Ethics

### **Rationale**

*carried away on the crest of a wave* explores the aftermath of a natural disaster, the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which resulted in more than 220,000 casualties. One of the issues that the play explores is the moral dilemmas communities face in the aftermath of such a disaster. In this activity, students will experiment with creating a scene based on a strong moral conflict, and learn about the embodiment of a conflict between two values through theatre.

### **Step 1**

At the core of a strong scene, there are two conflicting values—abstract notions that humans base their life choices and actions on. Invite the class to create a list of values. These can include:

- Faith
- Culture
- Love
- Friendship
- Family
- Truth
- Equality
- Justice
- Kindness
- Religion

### **Step 2**

Read with the students the excerpt of “The Saint Story”, one of the 9 stories presented in the play, found in the appendix section (p. 8). Discuss: what is the moral dilemma the characters are facing? (Whether to call the saving of 2000 Catholics from the tsunami a god-made miracle). What are the conflicting values that the scene is built on (Religion and Science/Faith and Truth/God and Man)?

### **Step 3**

Give each student a card, and invite them to write one value on it. Divide the students in pairs. Have each pair choose two random cards. Then, invite the students to create a scene with two characters, each character representing one of the values on the cards (e.g. family/religion, truth/kindness, equality/justice). The students will be tasked with finding the specific conflict between the two characters, based on the two values. Make sure the scene is set in a specific time and space.

## **Activity Two: Project: Staging the Extraordinary**

**Key Concepts:** Directing, Staging, Interpretation, Ideation, Characters, Collaborative work

### **Rationale**

In the script of *carried away on the crest of a wave*, there are a few scenes that involve settings that are fantastical, surreal, or perhaps even metaphorical. When a director and cast are faced with interpreting these scenes within these settings, certain decisions have to be made which can involve many factors such as; available resources, available personnel, parameters of working space, stage configuration, among others. In this activity, students will think about how to use the mentioned factors as well as their own creativity to stage a scene with an unusual setting.

### **Step 1**

Have the students come up with a list of unusual settings that may not be considered a standard stage setting. Examples could be; underwater, floating in outer-space, a hole opening in the ground etc. What are some of the ways of staging such a setting/scenario? What theatre elements can you use to make this staging happen? (lighting, sound, projection, movement, audience participation, props, set etc.)

### **Step 2**

Have each student write an idea for an extraordinary setting on a note. Divide the students in groups of four. Have each group choose a setting for a scene (place, time, characters, and conflict). At this point, the scene could have a realistic setting (e.g. two people fighting over the last piece of brownie in a café). Once the scene's setting is established, each group will pick a random note from the "extraordinary setting" pile (e.g. "a character slides on a frozen wave"). Their assignment is to incorporate the extraordinary setting into the scene and stage it while utilizing theatre elements.

### **Step 3**

Have the students perform each scene in front of the class. At the end of each scene, discuss with the groups the challenges and successes. What can be gained from staging these scenes in these particular settings? Can it elevate the material? And if so, how?

## Appendix

### the saint story

*Basilica of Our Lady of Good Health in Velankanni, Tamil Nadu, India. Father amal Thomas is blowing out votive candles. ma'mar Shaikh enters, timidly, carrying small bags of electronic equipment. He stands off to one side, admiring the interior of the basilica. amal watches him for a moment, then approaches.*

**amal:** Peace, my son.

**ma'mar:** Peace, brother.

**amal:** I have seen you circling around for days. I wondered if you would land here.

**ma'mar:** Ah. . .

**amal:** That was you, yes? The other day, with a metal detector or some business, around the beach.

**ma'mar:** Oh. Yes. . .

**amal:** Looking for buried treasure, were you? Find any?

**ma'mar:** Oh, I wasn't. . .

**amal:** Don't keep it all for yourself, na. A small donation to the church is good for the soul.

**ma'mar:** You misunderstand. . . *Beat.* I've been around, yes, taking density readings. . . I think you've been expecting me; I am the engineer—

**amal:** Yes! Yes of course! I'm so sorry, sir, you are so young. I was expecting an old man, you know the kind, thick glasses and. . . my apologies, you are here to *substantiate* our miracle!

**ma'mar:** (*correcting*) Investigate.

**amal:** (*waves it off*) No matter. Welcome.

**ma'mar:** (*extending his hand*) I am Ma'mar Shaikh. *amal is taken aback by the name. He looks at ma'mar's hand, refusing to take it.*

**amal:** "Ma'mar Shaikh."

**ma'mar:** (*a bit unsettled*) Um. . . I believe Monsignor Parish mentioned I would. . . he sent. . . *He retrieves a sheet of paper from his bag and hands it to amal.*

**amal:** You. *You* are the expert.

**ma'mar:** I am an architect and structural engineer. Top of my class at IIT and MIT in America. I designed the Citi Centre in Chennai, have you been?

**amal:** (*disdainfully*) Huh. Yes. The *shopping mall* everyone raves about.

**ma'mar:** Thank you.

**amal:** Hm. I have been. The floors are uneven.

**ma'mar:** They are?

**amal:** And the inside is too. . . fancy. So much *moulding*, na. Looks like a wedding cake.

**ma'mar:** I'm sorry you feel that way.

**amal:** And the prices at Forever 21 are extravagant.

**ma'mar:** I'm not sure that one is my fault.

**amal:** Che. (*waves the subject off*) You are the expert. . .

**ma'mar:** I am told—

**amal:** You expect me to believe that the CCS, the *Vatican*,  
na. . . sent *you*.

**ma'mar:** As I said, I was top of my—

**amal:** (*waves him quiet*) Yes, yes, you built a shopping mall, you are obviously a wunderkind. Was there no Catholic available? Or even a Hindu (Lord, send me a Hindu!). . . but, *this*. . . a Muslim investigating a miracle for the Vatican. I do not believe this.

**ma'mar:** I'm Ismaili. If that makes any difference. *Beat. It doesn't.* The Vatican has engaged the services of non-Catholics before, when necessary. There is precedence—

**amal:** (*scoffs*) "Precedence." First he's an architect, now he's a lawyer. *Beat.*

**ma'mar:** I am told that the event destroyed everything at this elevation, except your basilica. I am told that when the waves touched the statue outside, they stopped. I am told of two thousand people inside this room, not one pair of feet was wet. That, to me, Father Thomas, sounds like a miracle. *Beat.* But, I am also told. . . to investigate using science. Not faith.

**amal:** Science will prove faith.

**ma'mar:** And yet, it is faithless. It is the same from a Muslim as it is a Buddhist or a Christian. Now, you don't want me here and I have a cricket match I could be watching, so why don't you show me to the site and we can both get on with our days? *Beat. amal quietly acquiesces. He leads ma'mar outside to the statue.*

**amal:** On Christmas Day, a young Japanese girl, a visitor to the basilica, placed a rosary on the hand of Our Lady. Not an uncommon practice, but this particular rosary had been blessed by Pope John Paul II. His holiness has not yet been canonized, but this miracle would ensure it. (*a commiserating aside*) It is. . . politic, you know? A story like this. . .

**ma'mar:** Looks good on the brochure, yes?

**amal:** We have a saying: "It helps the flock to flourish."

*They reach the statue. It is relatively unremarkable, but there are rosaries hanging off her hand.*

**ma'mar:** Was it this one, here? The rosary in question?

**amal:** No, no, this is a . . . placeholder. It was here that the water turned back, after touching the statue of Our Lady. The statue was undamaged, but the rosary was swept away. Our Blessed Mother reclaiming it, perhaps. There are many theories.

**ma'mar:** (*considers this*) It is 325 feet to the shoreline, yes?

**amal:** Yes. The waves went miles inland, but the basilica and all in its shadow were untouched.

*ma'mar feels the bottom of the statue. It's porous.*

**ma'mar:** Sandstone for the base?

**amal:** You are the expert.

**ma'mar:** I'd like to take some readings around here. *He begins to remove equipment from inside his bag, assembling a high-tech-looking device.*

**amal:** I can only imagine what you think of this. . .

**ma'mar:** Think of what?

**amal:** This statue. Our claims. Iconography of holy persons is forbidden by Islam, yes? So this statue, to you, this must appear to be incredible sacrilege.

**ma'mar:** (*gives the statue a once-over*) Not one of our saints, so I suppose it's fine.

**amal:** Still, you must find the concept offensive or. . .

**ma'mar:** I am Ismaili. I don't think anything of your statue, your crucifix or your medallions. I have a little St. Christopher in my car. He was there when I bought it. His head bobbles, it's very charming.

*Beat.* You know the Quran teaches us, "Revile not those unto whom they pray beside Allah lest they wrongfully revile Allah through ignorance." *Beat.* Does your book offer a similar passage?

*Beat. amal thinks.*

**amal:** (*changing the subject*) What are you building, there?

**ma'mar:** It's like a sonograph machine for underground. It takes density readings of lower horizon levels. *amal looks at him blankly.* Okay, the ground under our feet is made up of layers—

**amal:** Che! I know!

**ma'mar:** This machine tells me if the bedrock beneath us is more or less dense than the surrounding area. I graph it with the readings from along the coastline that you've seen me take, and it gives me a picture of what the upper ocean basin looks like.

**amal:** And what does all that have to do with our miracle?

**ma'mar:** The graph will tell us. My machine is parsing this data with readings done from the Anna University Institute for Ocean Management and the National Institute of Oceanography in Goa. I'm connected already over WiMAX, so it will only take moments what would before take several days. Luckily. . . (*a little joke*) "there's an app for that." *He grins at amal, who stares blankly back at him.*

**amal:** What?

**ma'mar:** Um. . . an app for. . . like the iPhone.

**amal:** This is on your phone?

**ma'mar:** No, it's. . .

**amal:** Are you calling them?

**ma'mar:** It was just a little joke.

**amal:** Okay, very funny. App-something, okay. What about my miracle, na?

*The machine beeps.*

**ma'mar:** The graph is complete.

*ma'mar looks at his screen.*

Hm.

**amal:** "Hm"?

**ma'mar:** I'm sorry, brother.

**amal:** Why "sorry"? What is there to be—

**ma'mar:** This graph. . . it shows me there is a natural breakwater leading from five miles out in the bay. . . running along either edge of the basilica. This. . . was no miracle. I'm sorry.

**amal:** You are making another joke, yes? *ma'mar shakes his head.* My friend, there were two thousand eyewitnesses. *Dry feet, na.*

**ma'mar:** Watch, watch. . . *ma'mar gestures using the graph and his arms.* The waves start hundreds of miles out to sea. As they travel to land, their direction, their speed, even their shape is formed by the topography of the ocean basin. The breakwater acted as a barrier, directing the waves to either side of the basilica. All this sandstone soaked up the runoff. . . that's why no one's feet got wet. It is. . . incredibly *lucky*, what happened here. But miraculous? I'm afraid not.

*Beat.*

**amal:** My parishioners are. . . charitable. . . people. So blessed they felt when they were saved that they worked the next four days without rest, searching for survivors amid over eight hundred corpses. And do you know how far they got? One half a mile. A five-minute walk—eight hundred water-ravaged dead bodies. Many of them feel their lives have been *redefined* by this moment, this *miracle*. You can't just tell them it was luck. No, it was an act of God. A reward for their faith.

**ma'mar:** Do you believe in God's plan?

**amal:** Of course—

**ma'mar:** Then there you have it. It was in His plan for this to happen, for them to be saved—

**amal:** You don't understand—

**ma'mar:** My brother, I do—

**amal:** As a Muslim, you have no concept of what the Catholic faith teaches us—

**ma'mar:** Brother, please do not—

**amal:** I am not your brother!

**ma'mar:** We are all brothers! And I am telling you, *my brother*, I know. And it is true, what I'm saying. The hand of God may not have come down to shield you from the waves on that day, but it was His will that formed a breakwater in the earth and His will when the basilica was built on it. You call him one thing, I call him another, but this is his work.

**amal:** So you are saying, this *was* a miracle. . .

**ma'mar:** A miracle, no. But this, all of this, is the work of God.

**amal:** You mean "Allah."

**ma'mar:** Does it matter?

**amal:** Of *course* it matters! Because *we* were saved, not Muslims, not Hindus, not Bahá'í, *us*.

**ma'mar:** And you really believe what you should take away from that is that *your* God is the right God and everyone else is worshipping a false idol?

**amal:** Isn't that what *you* would do, if this had been a mosque?

**ma'mar:** No, it isn't.

**amal:** Well then you're a bad Muslim.

**ma'mar:** And you are an *excellent* priest.

*Long pause. ma'mar begins packing up his equipment.*

**amal:** You don't have to do this. You could. . . you could just say you didn't find anything. You could say. . . and they'd believe you. I mean. . . that's something you could do.

**ma'mar:** You don't really mean that.

**amal:** My people need hope.

**ma'mar:** They have you.

**amal:** I'm not enough.

**ma'mar:** They have their faith.

**amal:** And when that's not enough?

**ma'mar:** It has to be. That's why they call it "faith."

**amal:** Brother. *Beat. ma'mar looks at amal.* Please. . .

*Beat.*

**ma'mar:** Do you know what it takes to be made a saint under Islam?

*amal looks blankly at ma'mar.*

No. Of course you don't. (*deep breath*) First of all, they're not called saints, they're called *wali*. . . this means "friend of Allah" or "walks with Allah." One test they use to determine if you can be a saint is that they dig up your body as many as six months after you die. And if the body is decomposing. . . you're not a saint. You are not faithful enough to walk with Allah. I have family in Aceh. They are not poor, they live a good distance inland, so they weren't affected. But you saw eight hundred dead bodies that day? In Aceh there were over one hundred and fifty thousand. Most, if not all, of them were Muslim. I had been to *jamatkhana* with those people. They were *good* people, *pious* people. So many died saving others, men who'd made it to safety first, then gone back to rescue who they could. Died saving a person they didn't know. All they knew is this was someone's son. . . someone's husband. . . someone's brother. They put a stranger's life before their own. And not *one* of them was a saint? Those bodies all decomposed. . . they became bloated in water, skin sloughed off in sheets, their lifeless bodies were swollen and black and turning to sludge. . . because we are *men*. Just men. And do you know what our leaders said? "Allah must have been angry. They must have been. . . bad Muslims." Do you see? Two hundred thousand dead. . . and it's used as a cautionary tale against us. Saying all of those people, all of them, were bad. . . because they decomposed. The way anyone would. And now you want me to say that God worked a miracle on your Catholic basilica because someone put a string of beads on the statue of a woman? You want me to say those two thousand people standing on a breakwater were *better* than the two hundred thousand who died in Aceh? Is that what you're asking me to do?

*Beat.*

**amal:** I. . . I am asking you. . . to protect these people's faith.

**ma'mar:** At what cost, Father?

*Beat.*

**amal:** (*shakes his head*) My father told me never to get into a theological discussion with a Muslim.

**ma'mar:** Smart man.

**amal:** He said, "They are relentless, Amal. But we. . . we are *right*."

**ma'mar:** (*smiles*) Maybe you are. Just. . . not today. I'm sorry, Father.

*ma'mar shoulders his bag and extends his hand to amal, who again doesn't take it. He is just staring at the statue of Our Lady. ma'mar shakes his head and begins to walk away when amal finally speaks.*

**amal:** You know my name, my surname, "Thomas." This name comes from a saint. St. Thomas. One of the original apostles of Christ, and the first to preach Christianity in India. He has a church (*He waves his hand to indicate.*) in Chennai. Near to your shopping mall, maybe. Anyway, I've always liked

St. Thomas. Maybe because of the namesake, I've just always felt. . . close. . . to him. Do you understand what I'm describing?

**ma'mar:** A kinship.

**amal:** Yes. A kinship. *Beat.* You know what St. Thomas is the patron saint of?

**ma'mar:** I don't.

*Beat.*

**amal:** Architects. He's the patron saint of architects. *Beat.* Isn't that funny?

**ma'mar:** Yes. I suppose it is. *amal looks at ma'mar, a great weight in his eyes. He reaches out his hand.*

*ma'mar takes it.* Peace, brother.

**amal:** Peace, my son.

*ma'mar exits. amal continues standing by the statue. He is racked with grief. He puts his hand on the statue to help him stand as he composes himself. After a moment, he notices his hand is wet. He looks at the statue of Our Lady. She is weeping. The statue is weeping.*

## Sources

*Curriculum Documents:*

BC Drama Curriculum documents (11–12)

<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/arts-education/12/courses>

BC Social Studies Curriculum documents (11-12)

<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/social-studies/12/courses>