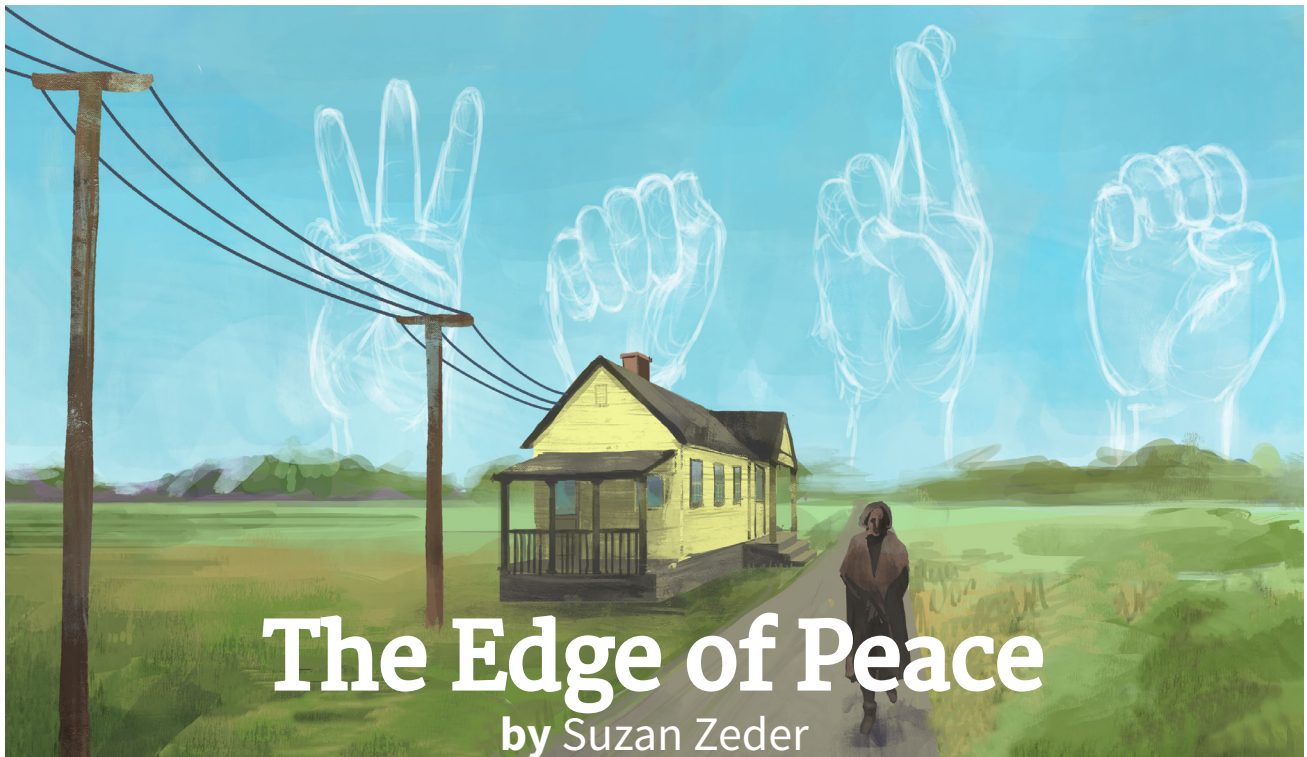




central
square
theater



The Edge of Peace

by Suzan Zeder

directed by Lee Mikeska Gardner & Maggie Moore Abdow

Performance Guide

How To Use This Performance Guide

Thank you for taking the time to look over our Performance Guide for *The Edge of Peace*. This guide contains information about the show to help enrich your students' experience.

The Performance Guide is divided into four sections:

- ***Get Ready*** to help you and your students prepare to see the show;
- ***Deepen Understanding*** to explore specific elements or themes from the show;
- ***Reflect and Connect*** to further engage students in the show they have seen;
- ***Performance Guide Tools*** to further enhance the guide activities.

Curriculum Connections

The questions and activities in this Study Guide connect with many of the standards in the MA Curriculum Frameworks for Arts, English Language Arts and History and Social Science. The following list is a sampling of standards that connect with the lessons in this guide. These standards are taken from the Massachusetts Department of Education Curriculum Frameworks. (www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current)

Theater Arts Curriculum Frameworks

On THEATER, students will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the playwright as a collaborating artist who works with the director, actors, designers, and technicians [2.12]
- Read plays from a variety of cultures and historical periods, describe their themes, interpret their characters' intentions and motivations, and determine their staging requirements. [3.1]
- Rehearse and perform a variety of dramatic works for peers or invited audiences. [3.6]
- Attend live performances of extended length and complexity, demonstrating an understanding of the protocols of audience behavior appropriate to the style of the performance. [5.11]

On CONNECTING ART TO OTHER DISCIPLINES, students will:

- Describe the purpose for which works of dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and architecture were and are created, and, when appropriate, interpret their meanings [PreK-12 STANDARD 6: Purposes and Meanings in the Arts]
- Describe the roles of artists, patrons, cultural organizations, and arts institutions in societies of the past and present [PreK-12 STANDARD 7: Roles of Artists in Communities]
- Demonstrate their understanding of styles, stylistic influence, and stylistic change by identifying when and where art works were created, and by analyzing characteristic features of art works from various historical periods, cultures, and genres. [PreK-12 STANDARD 8: Concepts of Style, Stylistic Influence, and Stylistic Change]

MA English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects Curriculum Frameworks

Reading Standards for Literature, Grades 6-12. Students will:

- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. [Standard 1]
- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text. [Standard 2]
- Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g. where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed). [Standard 4]
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. [Standard 5]
- Relate a work of fiction, poetry, or drama to the seminal ideas of its time. Analyze a work of fiction, poetry, or drama using a variety of critical lenses (e.g. formal, psychological, historical, sociological, feminist). [Standard MA 8A]

English Language Arts History/Social Science Standards:

Writing Standard: Introduce a topic and organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole. [Standard 2A]

Reading Standard: Synthesize information from a range of sources (e.g. texts, experiments, simulations) into a coherent understanding of a process, phenomenon, or concept, resolving conflicting information when possible. [Standard 9]

MA History and Social Science Curriculum Frameworks

Grades 8-12, Concepts and Skills in History and Geography. Students will:

- Show connections, causal and otherwise, between particular historical events and ideas and larger social, economic, and political trends and developments. [Concept/Skill 7]
- Interpret the past within its own historical context rather than in terms of present-day norms and values. [Concept/Skill 8]

About Central Square Theater

Central Square Theater (CST) is a state of the art theatrical arts facility where audiences find under one roof the distinctive repertoires of two award winning, professional companies, Underground Railway Theater (URT) and The Nora Theatre Company (The Nora), as well as collaborative projects drawing on their creative synergy. A cultural anchor in the community, schools, families, and community groups benefit from outreach and educational programs, and the local economy is boosted by the over 26,000 audience members that visit CST each year and enjoy the multi-cultural, multi-generational, urban environment of Central Square, Cambridge. As the first permanent home for both theater companies, CST is a vibrant hub of theatrical, educational and social activity, where artists and audiences come together to create theater vital to the community. The theater is dedicated to providing affordable ticket prices for underserved communities and offers free or discounted tickets to many local non-profit organizations.

The Nora Theatre Company, founded in 1987 by Mary C. Huntington, promotes the feminine voice with an inclusive and humanistic view of our times. While championing female writers, directors, designers and artisans, The Nora works with progressive artists of all identities and seeks to reflect and impact the diverse world in which we live and grow. Before moving to Central Square Theater in 2008, The Nora also resided at the Harvard Freshman Union and at Boston Playwrights' Theatre. Throughout its history, The Nora has received many awards and citations for the high quality of its work including seven Elliot Norton Awards, five IRNE Awards, and mentions in "Best Of" lists from, among others, *The Boston Globe*, *EDGE Boston*, and *Boston Phoenix*. Under the leadership of Lee Mikeska Gardner, who took the helm in 2014, The Nora has received critical acclaim for its first two productions, *Her Aching Heart* and *Emilie*, of which the latter received a "Best Of" nod in *The Boston Globe*.

Underground Railway Theater creates live performance in the activist and collaborative spirit of its namesake. Through interdisciplinary inquiry and partnership, URT creates accessible theater of great beauty and social content; theater that challenges and delights, informs and celebrates. Through its productions and a constellation of education and outreach programs, URT activates commitments to cultivating local artists of all ages and to creating new work. Founded in Oberlin, Ohio, one of the stops on the Underground Railroad, URT toured nationally for 30 years before becoming a resident company at CST. Through its work with symphony orchestras, URT has represented Massachusetts at over a dozen U.S. theater festivals and also in France, Canada, Spain, Taiwan, Greece, and Hong Kong. Awards for theater and public education include those from Our Place Theater Project, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Cambridge Peace Commission. The company has been cited for excellence by *The Boston Globe* and *The Los Angeles Times*.

About *The Edge of Peace*

The Edge of Peace is the third and final play in the acclaimed Ware Trilogy, which includes playwright Suzan Zeder's award-winning plays *Mother Hicks* and *The Taste of Sunrise*. To culminate the story of Tuc, Nell Hicks, and Girl, we return to Ware, Illinois in the year 1944. Tuc, a Deaf man now in his thirties, has become a skilled mechanic and Postman; he is also Nell Hick's only link to the town from high up Dug Hill. Nell, said to be a "witch," has mysteriously taken to listening to radio broadcasts from Germany, and Girl has taken flight from the community, literally parachuting in only at the behest of Tuc. In town, the Ricks family desperately waits for news about their son Ricky, missing in action since The Battle of the Bulge, while his younger brother, Buddy, fantasizes about being a war hero. When a German prisoner of war escapes from a nearby POW camp, Buddy patrols the streets, keeping neighborhood watch and looking for clues. In interviews, Ms. Zeder has said, "*The Edge of Peace* is about home and the challenges of leaving home, coming home, and staying home when the danger and adventure of the world is far away."

Get Ready:

Attending a Live Performance

Attending a live show is a unique experience. Going to see a play can be a great opportunity for students, but there is a lot of responsibility that goes with it. In a play, the actors are live onstage in front of the audience. This means they can hear (and sometimes see) the audience. How you react as an audience member affects what the actors do onstage. Because of this, the audience is often considered another character in the show.

Teachers: Before you come to the theater, please talk with your students about seeing a play and what is expected of them during a live show. Here are some important etiquette points to remember when going to the theater:

- There is no food, candy or gum allowed in the theater
- Cell phones, Mp3 players and other electronic devices should be turned off and put away for the performance. If audience members take these items out during intermission, they need to be completely turned off when the show starts again.
- During the performance students should focus their energy and attention on the action happening onstage.

We encourage you to use the questions below to have a conversation with your students about attending the theater:

- Have you ever performed in front of an audience in a play, dance performance, concert or sporting event? What about doing a report or presentation in school? Do you enjoy doing this? Why or why not?
- How aware were you of the audience and their reactions during your performance? How did their presence affect your performance?
- Can you imagine (or have you experienced) performing in front of an audience that was clearly interested in what you were sharing? How did you know? Did this affect your performance/presentation?

After the show, students will have a chance to talk with the actors in the production and ask them questions about the show. Ask students to write down some possible questions they could ask, using the prompts below:

- What is one question you have about the show before you see it?
- What is one question you might ask an actor in the production?
- What is one question you might ask the director or playwright of the show?
- What is one question you might ask one of the designers (lighting designer, costumer designer, set designer, sound designer)?

Get Ready: Pre-Show Discussions

Use the leading questions below as discussion topics or writing prompts prior to seeing our production!

What do you think of when you think of “feeling at home”? How might this differ from your classmates or people living in other states? Other countries?

The Edge of Peace takes place during World War II. How do you think your everyday life differs from kids your age at that time? (Rations, curfews, no TV, etc.)

Do you have any experience communicating with a Deaf person? Do you know any American Sign Language?

(If you have chosen to read the play ahead of time)

Now that you’ve read the play, how do you picture Mr. Clovis’ shop? or Nell Hick’s House on Dug Hill?

Girl parachutes in from a plane - how do you picture this happening on stage?

Who is your favorite character/who do you identify most with in *The Edge of Peace*?

Reflect and Connect: One Play, Two Languages

John McGinty is the Director of Creative ASL (American Sign Language) for *The Edge of Peace*. What does that mean? Our Assistant Director, Gabrielle Weiler, decided to investigate the answer with an interview!



GW: What did you need to take into consideration while translating this script?

JMG: Script analysis can take on many forms, from historical research to biographical information of the playwright. However, the first step is examining and comprehending what the text means. In many cases, the meaning behind a piece of text is fairly transparent; at other times, it is elusive and difficult to grasp. We have to ensure that Tuc's sign choices reflect the region around Ware, Illinois, the 1930's and 1940's time period, the lack of fluent signers in Tuc's early developmental years, the development of his "home signs" (personally invented signs) and his subsequent exposure to ASL at the State School of the Deaf. The sign choices also need to reflect the natural progression of his sign development as he gained more education. Also, we have to see if the actors involved in the translation process have the training, language background or bilingual fluency to work effectively with translations. Most importantly, we clarify intent and meaning, and find artistic equivalency between the two languages.

GW: What do you find interesting about the process of translating?

JMG: The time period. Recently, I met with the ASL Consultants from the other productions (*Mother Hicks* and *A Taste of Sunrise*). In the trilogy, there is some terminology (i.e. locations, characters names, tangible/intangible things, etc.) that is similar from the scripts and we all want to make ensure that the choices of vocabulary are the same.

GW: How does the team who translated the script work together?

JMG: Since I am based in New York, the ASL Consultants in Boston and I met through a video chat platform and then in person here in Boston. We talk about the character's names, locations, and different things to determine the most appropriate sign for the cast / interpreters and is visible enough for the audience. Also, we share our directors' vision of each play.

GW: How is it different to translate a script into ASL rather than a spoken language?

JMG: American Sign Language is tied to the Deaf community. We use our language in a certain way that constitutes ASL grammar. American Sign Language has its own grammar system, separate from that of English. What this means is ASL grammar has its own rules of phonology, morphology, syntax and pragmatics. ASL follows several different word orders depending on what is needed. Which word order you choose depends on your audiences' familiarity with the topic and what you are trying to do: explain, remind, confirm, negate, cause to consider. Normal conversations tend to follow subject-verb-object or subject-verb order. Some people might confuse this to mean English word order. While the word order in ASL and English can be similar, ASL does not use BE verbs (am, is, are, was, were) or anything to indicate the state of "being." Additionally, we also use Time-Subject-Verb-Object or Time-Subject -Verb word order. That is, when discussing past and future events we tend to establish a time frame before the rest of the sentence. As for spoken language, you would speak word to word in order from the script.

GW: What were some challenges of translating this script?

JMG: 1) Ensuring that we use the correct signs from the previous two productions in the current one when needed to keep the language consistent.

2) Balancing authenticity and artistry of sign language with the correct time period.

3) Ensuring that the performer matches the character's tone

4) Ensuring that the performer is clear and part of the character's choice.

CONNECTING: What other questions would you ask John? Do you know any American Sign Language?

Reflect and Connect: Writing Prompts

After your students have seen *The Edge of Peace* ask them to be theater critics and write a review of the show. Here are some questions you can use as prompts in your writing:

- What was the most compelling or intriguing aspect of the production you saw?
- What questions did you have about *The Edge of Peace* or what was something that confused you?
- Can you make any connections between this play and other plays you have seen? Between the play and books you have read or movies you have seen? Between the play and something from your own life? Compare and contrast the play to these other stories.
- Consider the title, *The Edge of Peace*. To what could it be referring? How did each of the characters find peace at the end of the play?
- Where in the play do we see foreshadow? How did this foreshadowing affect your reaction to the end?
- How was seeing the play different than reading it?

We love to hear from students and teachers who have come to see shows at Central Square Theater. If your students have written a review of the show or generated any other work based on their experiences at the theater, please send work to:

Central Square Theater ATTN: Education
450 Massachusetts Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02139

Or email work to:
seg@centralsquaretheater.org