

LEARNING LINKS

**Roseneath  
Theatre:**  
*The Incredible  
Speediness of  
Jamie Cavanaugh*

MONDAY  
NOVEMBER 14 2016  
11 AM  
TUESDAY  
NOVEMBER 15 2016  
9:30 AM & 11:30 AM

2016 > 2017

BROADEN THE HORIZONS  
OF YOUR CLASSROOM.  
EXPERIENCE THE VIBRANT  
WORLD OF THE ARTS  
AT THE McCALLUM!



McCallum Theatre Institute  
**Field Trip Series**



McCALLUM THEATRE INSTITUTE  
PRESENTS

## **Roseneath Theatre: *The Incredible Speediness of Jamie Cavanaugh***

MONDAY  
NOVEMBER 14 2016  
11 AM

TUESDAY  
NOVEMBER 15 2016  
9:30 AM & 11:30 AM

“The play is really about  
...the nature of friendship,  
understanding others, and  
the essence of empathy.”

Richard Greenblatt • Director

### **Connecting to Curriculum and Students' Lives!**

**HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY** • Canada

**ARTS** • Theatre

**LANGUAGE ARTS** • Plays and playwrights

**STUDENTS' LIVES** • ADHD, divorce, bullying, tolerance

### **Expanding the Concept of Literacy**

What is a “text”? We invite you to consider the performances on McCallum’s Field Trip Series as non-print texts available for study and investigation by your students. Anyone who has shown a filmed version of a play in their classroom, used a website as companion to a textbook, or asked students to do online research already knows that “texts” don’t begin and end with textbooks, novels, and reading packets. They extend to videos, websites, games, plays, concerts, dances, radio programs, and a number of other non-print texts that students and teachers engage with on a regular basis.

We know that when we expand our definition of texts to the variety of media that we use in our everyday lives, we broaden the materials and concepts we have at our disposal in the classroom, increase student engagement, and enrich learning experiences.

Please consider how utilizing your McCallum performance as a text might align to standards established for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language.

How do we help students to use these texts as a way of shaping ideas and understanding the world?

Please use this material to help you on this journey.

**NON-PRINT TEXT** • any medium/text that creates meaning through sound or images or both, such as symbols, words, songs, speeches, pictures, and illustrations not in traditional print form including those seen on computers, films, and in the environment.

## The Work of Art

### A Non-print Text for Study

- What's it made of? How can this work serve as a *Common Core State Standards*-mandated "text" for student study in the classroom?



Step into a cartoon!

Not literally, of course. This is a play about a young lady with a very contemporary challenge. When we say 'cartoon,' we have in mind the panels that make up the stage set. All primary colors and simplified images, they convey the sense that we have just entered into the pages of a storybook. There's another way, though, in which the invitation to enter a cartoon is apropos. Jamie C., our young heroine, has ADHD. She hasn't been diagnosed yet, but something is clearly up. The school social worker is called in to evaluate. In the course of their conversation, it gradually dawns on Jamie that her speediness — of brain and movement — just might be an indication that she is a superhero with super powers. To tell the truth, that's the kind of good news Jamie is longing to hear. Otherwise, her day has not been going well. She knocks into things, breaking them, can't sit still, and chatters away a mile a minute. She's taken a good bit of guff from the schoolyard bully and his no-neck pal, the two of them amusingly and aptly named Rock and Hard Place. One way or another she's always in trouble. And even her friend and confidante, Max, is going through choppy waters at home.

So she can be excused if she clings tightly to the superhero conceit. Alas, the solution isn't that easy — or cartoon-like. Her parents are growing increasingly alarmed. They grasp that all is not well in Jamie-land. They take her to visit a specialist in childhood disorders. And sure enough, the verdict is ADHD. Now, we aren't going to give away the rest of the plot. Suffice it to say that heartaches lie ahead. Triumphs do too!

"A theatrical experience allows all of us to disappear inside the lives of the characters for a moment in time and have a chance to understand the joys and woes of their day to day existence. When you watch *The Incredible Speediness of Jamie Cavanaugh* with your class, you will all have a chance to look inside the rather muddled and definitely speedy mind of a young girl with ADHD."

So says Liane Shaw, a Learning Strategies Consultant for the Upper Canada District Board. In her job she works with students and educators at the K-8 levels. Her special focus is "inclusive learning;" that is, helping foster environments in which learning can occur for every child, regardless of challenge.

"I consulted many websites...that presented stories of people with ADHD told in their own words. I also spoke to parents struggling with the issue."

Chris Craddock • Playwright

## The Artists

Who has *produced* this text for study?



If you're doing theater, chances are you will need a playwright and a director. This particular play is the opus of Chris Craddock, a prolific actor and writer. One of his plays, *Wrecked* (also created for Roseneath) won the Canada Council's \$10,000 award for outstanding TYA play 2007. Listen to what he has to say about writing Jamie:

"The play *The Incredible Speediness of Jamie Cavanaugh* is not a play about ADHD; it does not provide answers to all those questions you may have about the disorder. It is however, a play about an eleven-year-old girl named Jamie who has ADHD. It is about her thoughts and feelings and day-to-day struggles with life and with people in her life, both at home and school. There are few classrooms today where teachers are not dealing with children with ADHD, like Jamie. We hope this play will put a human face and a touching story to a condition that too many people know simply as a label or a stereotype that makes these children 'different'.

The issues are complex, and I believe theater and the discussion it engenders is an excellent way to start to unpack the arguments and put a human face to the disorder."

Since the days when director Richard Greenblatt studied acting at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London, he has maintained a steady diet of roles in film and theater, while branching out into directing as well. He has this to say about the current production:

"I believe the purpose of theater (and all art) is to tell stories that keep our inherent feelings of isolation and separation at bay. For young people approaching puberty, these feelings are extreme. Most everyone at this age feels like a freak, an outsider, and ostracized in some way. These feelings are manifested in a myriad of ways, of course; from being a bully, to being bullied; from putting others down, to being put down; from fighting back, to accepting our situations as unchangeable; and from making connections with others, to remaining isolated and alone. Jamie Cavanaugh is a fascinating heroine – smart, charismatic, feisty, and fiercely determined. She is also suffering from a physiological condition not of her making, which affects her behavior.

The decision to design the show based on cartoon artwork seemed a serendipitous confluence of form and content in this play. Jamie tries to explain her feelings of differentness – her speediness – as a superhero asset. Many young people connect to this metaphor as a mythic explanation for the great forces of conflict in their lives. Like the X-Men, whose genetic abnormalities are manifested as super powers, Jamie has to find a way to interpret and understand her "specialness" as an asset, as opposed to a "disability". This is the very definition of the conflict between individuality and conformity with which we all grapple. It is all part of the process of growing up."

What about Roseneath Theatre? Well, they've been around for some twenty years. Equally committed to serving family audiences and mounting live performances informed by integrity, they give over three hundred performances each year both at home and on tour. They strive to offer entertainment that stimulates thinking and develops citizenship.



## Contexts

• What *information* surrounds this text for study & could help make students' engagement with it more powerful?



Not every child who runs around and knocks things over has ADHD. It's important to keep that in mind. On the other hand, the phenomenon is remarkably wide-spread. Has its incidence increased dramatically in recent years – or have we simply grown more alert to its existence? Around thirty-five percent of youngsters referred for mental health treatment are ultimately diagnosed with the disorder. Every teacher encounters them. At present, there is no sure-fire way to determine if someone has ADHD or not. Instead, a diagnosis is carefully arrived at through a series of procedures enacted by a specialist in the field of behavioral disorders. The child's history is taken; the child receives a physical exam and is asked to perform certain test tasks, among other things. Science's best estimation at this point says that ADHD is neurological in nature. Treatment involves an intricate dance between medical experts, education professionals, parents, and child. The good news is that progress is being made. Increasingly, children with ADHD are living positive, functional lives.

## To get ready for the performance, students could research these:

- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Children's theater
- Bullying
- Socially responsible drama



**Here's a 60 minute lesson\* in collaboration & problem-solving you could teach to help prepare students for this work:**

**Line of Inquiry – LOI is an essential question that generates a lesson:**

How does Roseneath Theatre use plot, dialogue, characters, and theatrical movement in *The Incredible Speediness of Jamie Kavanaugh* to explore childhood challenges?

Generate a discussion about the challenges of being a kid. For greater focus, you may want to suggest the following topics: learning challenges, intolerance, disrespect for differences and bullying.

Then, in small groups students create a skit – or a story for telling – in which one of the challenges above is explored and given some sort of solution.

These are then shared with the rest of the class. If acted out, the skit is examined for its theatrical elements. How has voice been used? What gestures or movement around the stage space? What was the theatrical climax moment, and what made it so? What emotions were acted out and how?

If instead stories are told, the use of language is examined – as well as the vocal qualities and inflections with which the text is delivered.

### ASK STUDENTS

What's dialogue?

Pass out a sheet on which dialogue appears. Example:

*(Rabbit rushes onstage.)*

Turtle: You're out of breath.

Rabbit: I seem to be running all the time.

Turtle: *(grabs him by shoulders)* Slow down.

Gazelle: Easy for you to say. *(tosses her mane)*

*(All laugh.)*



Individual students then each create a page-long play on paper based on their skit/story.

Each student reads another student's play.

### ASK STUDENTS

What value do you see in writing a play about an issue like this?



## After coming to the theater, students could research these:

- Inclusive learning
- Canada
- Super heroes



## Here's a 45-60 minute lesson you could teach after students have experienced the work:

Generate a discussion about the performance. What was noticed? How did the actors use their voices? Their bodies? Gesturing? Movement in the stage space? What was the most powerful moment? What made it so? How was language used? What were the issues addressed?

Students return to their small groups. The page-long plays from the prior session are shared. The group decides which one they will act out. (Or will they combine 2 of them into a single presentation?) Students are reminded to think about Roseneath Theatre's production, and to make vocal and movement choices based on what they noticed.

Encourage students to rehearse several times.

These presentations are shared with the whole class. Questions after each presentation focus on elements of theater and language.

### ASK STUDENTS

What positive things come out of our creating and performing these short plays?

**“A theatrical experience allows all of us to disappear inside the lives of the characters for a moment in time and have a chance to understand the joys and woes of their day to day existence.”**

Liane Shaw



## What's *your* read of this non-print text?

How would you answer these questions – and how could they be adapted as Guiding Questions to spark student discussion?

- How would you characterize the stage set? Which colors predominated? What stylistic elements?
- How were posture, gesture, and movement used by the actors to convey character?
- What vocal qualities stood out for you? How do you think the actors have adapted their own ways of speaking to create character voices?
- What interesting use of the stage space did the director and the actors make?
- Which were the moments of greatest conflict, and how did the performers achieve this?
- Was humor used effectively? When and how? Can you think of other ways in which humor might be used in this presentation?
- In which ways does this production reach out effectively to young audiences, in your view?
- How were sound effects and/or music employed?
- In which ways did lighting enhance the presentation?
- Were the scenes short, long, or a combination of both? Was there a rhythm to the scenes? A climax? A denouement?
- What are the themes explored?
- How was emotion conveyed – and used?
- How is a production like this valuable in the discussion of what it means to be a youngster?
- What would be lost if this story were told in some other way than through theater?





## Internet

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

[www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/)

People with ADHD may have trouble paying attention, controlling impulsive behaviors (may act without thinking about what the result will be), or be overly active. Although ADHD can't be cured, it can be successfully managed and some symptoms may improve as the child ages.

### **National Institute of Mental Health**

[www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/index.shtml](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/index.shtml)

Another government site devoted to ADHD, specifically symptoms, causes, and treatments, with information on getting help and coping.

### **KidsHealth from Nemours**

[www.kidshealth.org/en/teens/adhd.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/en/teens/adhd.html)

ADHD information for teens.

### **Children's Theatre: An Annotated Bibliography of Internet Sources**

[www.cwu.edu/~robinsos/ppages/resources/Childrens\\_Theatre/Childrens\\_Theatre\\_Biblio.htm](http://www.cwu.edu/~robinsos/ppages/resources/Childrens_Theatre/Childrens_Theatre_Biblio.htm)

Lots of links concerning children's theater.

## Books

### ***The Survival Guide for Kids with ADD or ADHD***

By: John F. Taylor

Reading level: Ages 9 and up

Publisher: Free Spirit Publishing, 2006

ISBN-10: 157542195X

### ***Learning To Slow Down & Pay Attention: A Book for Kids about ADHD***

By: Kathleen G. Nadeau

Reading level: Ages 9 and up

Publisher: Magination Press, 2004

ISBN-10: 1591471559

### ***Cory Stories: A Kid's Book about Living with ADHD***

By: Jeanne Kraus

Reading level: Ages 4 – 8

Publisher: Magination Press, 2004

ISBN-10: 1591471540

### ***The "Putting on the Brakes" Activity Book for Young People with ADHD***

By: Patricia O. Quinn

Reading level: Ages 9 – 12

Publisher: Magination Press, 1993

ISBN-10: 0945354576

# Books

## ***80HD: A Child's Perspective on ADHD***

By: Dr. Trish Wood

Reading level: Ages 4 – 8

Publisher: Tate Publishing, 2008

ISBN-10: 1604624450

## ***Kids Take the Stage: Helping Young People Discover the Creative Outlet of Theater***

By: Lenka Peterson & Dan O'Connor

Reading level: Ages 9 and up

Publisher: Back Stage Books, 2006

ISBN-10: 0823077462

An indispensable guide to getting young people on stage and helping them create their own shows with an introduction by Paul Newman.

## ***25 Just-Right Plays for Emergent Readers***

By: Carol Pugliano-Martin

Reading level: Ages 4 – 7

Publisher: Scholastic Teaching Resources, 1999

ISBN-10: 059018945X

A delightful collection of short, simple plays on themes kids adore.

## ***Break a Leg! The Kid's Guide to Acting and Stagecraft***

By: Lise Friedman & Mary Dowdle

Reading level: Ages 9 and up

Publisher: Workman Publishing Company, 2002

ISBN-10: 0761122087

## ***Stop Bullying Bobby! Helping Children Cope with Teasing and Bullying***

By: Dana Smith-Mansell

Reading level: Ages 9 – 12

Publisher: New Horizon Press, 2004

ISBN-10: 0882822535

Learning Links have been created by:

**Mark Almy**

Research and text unless otherwise noted

**Mark Duebner Design**

Design

**Michael Flannigan**

Field Trip Series Coordinator

**Kajsa Thuresson-Frary**

Director of Education

**"I believe theater and the discussion it engenders is an excellent way to start to unpack the arguments and put a human face to [ADHD]."**

**Chris Craddock • Playwright**