

NORTHLIGHT THEATRE

# STUDY GUIDE



PREPARED BY  
NORTHLIGHT THEATRE



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1** TITLE
- 2** TABLE OF CONTENTS
- 3** MEET THE TEAM
- 4** MEET THE CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM
- 5** CREATION OF THE PLAY
- 6** ABOUT THE AUTHOR
- 7** ABOUT MURDER MYSTERIES
- 8** CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES
- 9** RESOURCES



## MEET THE TEAM



**Jeffrey Hatcher (playwright)** is an American playwright and screenwriter. He grew up in Ohio before attending New York University to study acting. After a brief career on stage, he turned his hand to writing. His many award-winning original plays have been performed on Broadway, Off-Broadway, regionally across the United States, and abroad. Hatcher has also written the screenplay for *Casanova* for director Lasse Hallstrom, as well as screenplays *Secretary* and *Boys Don't Cry* directed by Kim Pierce.



**Georgette Verdin (director)** (she/her) is a Cuban-American freelance director, the Associate Artistic Director of Northlight Theatre and a member of Rivendell Theatre Ensemble. Recent directing credits include: the revival of *Night Watch* (Raven Theatre); the U.S. premiere of *The Writer* (Steep Theatre); the world premieres of *A Mile in The Dark* (Interrobang Theatre Project/Rivendell); *Enough to Let the Light In* (Teatro Vista); *Chagall in School* (Grippo Stage Company); and *Spay* (Rivendell). Georgette is a three-time Jeff nominated director and was the 2022 Michael Maggio Directing Fellow at Goodman Theatre. She was profiled in NewCity Magazine's 2023 "Players: Who Really Performs for Chicago Right Now" and in Chicago Reader's "Best of Chicago 2022." Georgette is an associate member with Stage Directors and Choreographers Society. For more, visit [georgetteverdin.com](http://georgetteverdin.com).



## MEET THE TEAM

**Mara Zinky**

Scenic Design

**Christopher Kriz**

Original Music &  
Sound Design

**Katie Klemme**

Stage Manager

**Eric Watkins**

Lighting Design

**Raquel Adorno**

Costume Design

**Lonnae Hickman**

Props Design



## MEET THE CAST



**Elizabeth Laidlaw**

Maxine Hadley



**Felipe Carrasco**

Lesgate



**Lucy Carapetyan**

Margot Wendice



**Ryan Hallahan**

Tony Wendice



**Nick Sandys**

Inspector Hubbard

**Read full  
artist bios**





# CREATION OF THE PLAY

● 1951

## **Play First Premieres on West End**

On June 19, 1952 the play by Frederick Knott first opened in London at the James P. Sherwood at the Westminster Theatre

## **Play First Premieres on Broadway**

On October 29, 1952, the play premiered in New York on Broadway at the Plymouth Theatre

● 1952

## **Studio Recording of Play on BBC**

On March 23, 1952 a live studio recording of the play was shown on television on the BBC

● 1954

## **Film Version Premieres**

On May 29, 1954 the film adaptation directed by Alfred Hitchcock and starring Ray Milland and Grace Kelly was released in the United States

● 2011

## **Jeffrey Hatcher's Adaptation Opens**

A new adaptation written by Jeffrey Hatcher premiered in San Diego, CA in July 2021.

● 2023

## **Dial M For Murder opens at Northlight**

Playing in Skokie, IL from November 30, 2023 - January 7, 2024



[Watch a clip from the 1954 Dial M for Murder film directed by Alfred Hitchcock](#)



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alfred Hitchcock was born in England in 1899. His film career started in London as a title card designer for silent films and eventually grew to become a director. As a director he quickly gained notoriety for his distinctive suspenseful style. He was called the "Master of Suspense" for keeping his audiences at the edge of their seats through his use of dark subject material and twist endings. He moved to Hollywood with his wife and children and rose to become a household name, creating over 50 feature films. Filmmakers were inspired by his innovative camera and editing techniques, dubbing his unique style as "Hitchcockian" which involves camera angles that make the audience uneasy and increase fear. He won many awards and was even knighted by Queen Elizabeth II. After a career spanning six decades, he died in 1980.



[Click here to read a list of nine fun facts about Alfred Hitchcock](#)

## AWARDS

**1 Oscar for Best Picture  
for his 1940 film Rebecca**

**2 Golden Globes**

**8 Laurel Awards**

**5 Lifetime Achievement Awards**

**5 Academy Award Nominations for  
Best Director**

[Watch the opening sequence from the show](#)



Alfred Hitchcock had a television show entitled *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* that ran from 1955 and 1965. It was an anthology series featuring thrillers, mysteries, and dramas.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



As a director, Alfred Hitchcock is known for his distinct suspenseful and dark style

- If you were a film director, how would your fans describe your filmmaking style?
- What nickname (ex. Hitchcockian) would be given to your filmmaking style?

# MURDER MYSTERIES

## AGATHA CHRISTIE

Agatha Christie was born in England in 1890. As a child she taught herself to read and didn't receive any formal education till her teenage years. She enjoyed telling stories and when she became ill with influenza her mother suggested she begin writing them down sparking her lifelong writing career. Her first detective story was written because of a challenge from her sister. Over the course of her career she published 66 detective novels and 14 short story collections, selling over a billion copies. This success made her the best selling novelist of all time to this day.



[Click here to read more about Agatha Christie](#)

## EDGAR ALLAN POE

Edgar Allan Poe was born in Boston in 1809. He is known for his horror writing and is considered the inventor of modern detective fiction because of his short story "The Murders in the Rue Morgue". His poem "The Raven" is one of the best known poems in national literature.



[Watch "Why Edgar Allan Poe Isn't Just a Sad Boy"](#)

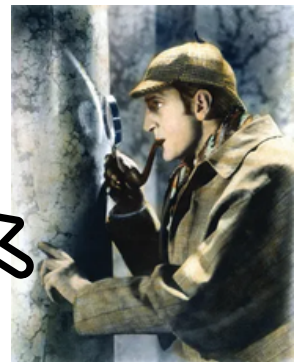
## ALLAN PINKERTON

Allan Pinkerton was born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1819. When a warrant went out for his arrest he fled to the United States, settling in Chicago. The son of a police sergeant, Pinkerton too became involved in law enforcement, eventually becoming Sheriff of Cook County. He decided to leave the police force and open his own detective agency - Pinkerton's National Detective Agency. Inspired by his real life experience, Pinkerton became an author of detective stories. His agency also inspired other authors such as Arthur Conan Doyle.

## ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1859. He is best known for his creation of Sherlock Holmes. The fictional detective went on to become one of the most famous characters in English fiction. Before becoming a writer Doyle attended medical school, the way his professor wrote detailed accounts of his patients later inspired the details in his mystery writing. In total there are 56 short stories and four novels by Doyle depicting Holmes.

[Read "How Sherlock Holmes changed the world"](#)



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



- What genres do you most enjoy in theatre, film, television, and books?
- Why do you think the murder mystery genre so successful across mediums?
- If you were an author where would your inspiration come from?
- What genre would you write in?



# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

## ADAPTING FOR THE STAGE

In a group choose a movie to adapt to become a stage play.

Assign a playwright, director, and designers.

Discuss what will be different from the movie and what will stay the same.

- What challenges will this story present in shifting to a live show?
- What will you keep the same from the film and what will you change? Why?
- Why will this story be a compelling stage production?



Each group can then pitch their play to an imagined theatre producer and convince them to produce it in their next season.

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## CLUE CHARADES

**Step 1:** Have students all write down a person, location, and object on little slips of paper. Gather all the people, locations, and objects in three separate hats/boxes to be randomly selected from.

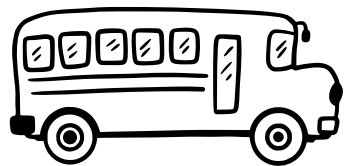
**Step 2:** Choose three students to be the actors and one to be the detective. The rest of the group becomes the audience. Have audience members to select one slip of paper from the people, location, and object boxes and then hand them to the actors. These random slips of paper will become the actors' suspect, location, and weapon. Ex. A dog, the moon, a popsicle stick

**Step 3:** The three actors then act out the three items without speaking. Once the detective guesses all three they have solved the crime!

*Tip: Have another student or teacher keep track of what the detective has gotten so far to keep the group on track and remind them of what clues remain.*

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## BUS ACTIVITIES



### ***On the way to the show...***

Agatha Christie's writing was inspired by the world she knew, the people she observed and conversation she listened to. She was described as a "person who listened more than she talked, who saw more than she was seen."

On the way to the theatre make observations of the world around you and jot them down. These can be things you hear, people and places you see out the window, or anything that sparks your interest. Jot down as many observations as you can. Put stars next to the ones that are most intriguing to you.

### ***On the way back to school...***

Pull out your notes from the bus ride to school and share your favorite observations with the person sitting next to you. Discuss how you can turn the observations you both have gathered into a mystery story. Consider how the elements can be combined, what remains mysterious, and what you can add from your own imagination. Make sure your story has the following elements:

- A mystery that needs to be solved
- Details taken from both partners' bus observations
- A beginning, middle, and end
- The element of suspense (let the suspense of the show inspire you!)





# RESOURCES

[Georgette Verdin's Directing Website](#)

[Northlight Theatre Production Artists](#)

[Agatha Christie's Website](#)

[TCM Turner Classic Movies - Dial M for Murder Film Details](#)

[IMBD - Dial M for Murder](#)

[Alfred Hitchcock Website](#)

[Alfred Hitchcock Presents Opening Sequence](#)

[Rebecca Trailer](#)

[Smithsonian Associates - Alfred Hitchcock Master of Suspense](#)

[Concord Theatricals Dial M for Murder by Frederick Knott](#)

[Concord Theatricals Dial M for Murder by by Jeffrey Hatcher](#)

[New York Times Review of Dial M for Murder Film](#)

[History Hit Alfred Hitchcock Movies](#)

[Jeffrey Hatcher - The Art & Craft of Playwriting Video](#)

[Twin Cities - 10 Questions with Playwright Jeffrey Hatcher](#)

[Court Theatre - Whodunnit First? The Origins of the Murder Mystery](#)

[History.com - 9 Things you may not know about Alfred Hitchcock](#)

[British Universities Film & Video Council - Dial M for Murder](#)

[Bitannica - Arthur Conan Doyle](#)

[Bitannica - Allan Pinkerton](#)

[A guide to Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes books in order](#)

[Writer's Theatre Bio of Jeffrey Hatcher](#)

[Lazarus on Stage - Jeffrey Hatcher Bio](#)

[Why Edgar Allan Poe Isn't Just a Sad Boy Video](#)

[How Sherlock Holmes Changed the World](#)