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*This Teacher Curriculum Guide*

*for*

***NIXON'S NIXON***

*by Russell Lees*

*was prepared for the  
Huntington Theatre Company*

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## **ABOUT THIS CURRICULUM**

*This Curriculum Guide has been developed for use in conjunction with the Literary Guide for the Huntington Theatre Company's production of Nixon's Nixon by Russell Lees. This guide has also been connected to the Massachusetts State Learning Standards - Grades 6-12 for Language, Literature and Composition and the Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework Theatre and Connections Strands (see Addenda). We recommend that teachers read the Literary Guide for Nixon's Nixon before approaching this curriculum guide, and that they then read the Curriculum Guide in its entirety. This curriculum includes the following sections:*

*Audience Etiquette* introduces students to the concept of drama and audience etiquette.

*Learning Standards - 1,2,3*

Objectives provide teachers with measurable goals.

Preparation offers background information and introduces issues of the play without requiring special knowledge.

*Learning Standards - 1,2,3,8,9,7,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25*

Mastery Assessment of Nixon's Nixon helps students assess the main points of the play.

*Learning Standards - 1,2,9*

Open Response Assessment allows students to explore independently and creatively some of the issues and background of the play. *Learning Standards -*

*1,2,3,8,9,10,11,12,13,15,16,17,18,21,22,23,24,25*

Thinking Level Assessment encourages students to develop independent judgments about the issues and a clearer understanding of complexities of the play, and helps them to relate such issues to their own lives.

*Learning Standards - 1,2,3,8,9,11,24,25*

Writing Assignments affords students opportunities for self-expression and analytical thought and for developing their writing skills.

*Learning Standards - 1,2,3,5,8,9,10,11,12,13,15,17,18,19,21,22,23,24,25*

Questions for After Attending a Performance of the Play encourages students to consider the aesthetic and practical elements of a live performance.

*Learning Standards - 1,2,9,15*

Media Assessment provides hands-on and interactive challenges that can inspire further consideration of the play.

*Learning Standards - 1,2,9,15 Theatre Standards and Connection Strands*

Quotations allows students to approach relevant thoughts from the script on the themes of the play.

*Learning Standards - 1,2,3,5,8,9,10,11,12,13,15,17,18,19,21,22,23,24,25*

Topical References in Nixon's Nixon offers defined explanations to expressions and phrases of the period.

Scene from Nixon's Nixon to analyze.

*Learning Standards - 2,9,15*

Bibliography lists valuable sources used by the Education Department in developing this Curriculum Guide.

Addenda Massachusetts State Learning Standards - Grades 6-12 Language, Literature & Composition

*Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework Theatre & Connections Strands.*

## AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

Because many students have not had the opportunity to view live theatre, we are including an audience etiquette section with each curriculum guide. Teachers, please spend some time on this subject since it will greatly enhance your students' experience at the theatre. If a Huntington education staff member will be visiting your classroom, we will be covering some of this, but you might want to supplement or continue the discussion begun by the Huntington staff member.

1. What are the differences between live theatre and the cinema?
2. How does one respond to a live performance of a play, as opposed to when seeing a film at a local cinema? What is the best way to approach viewing a live performance of a play? What things should you look and listen for?
3. What is the audience's role during a live performance? How do you think audience behavior can affect an actor's performance?
4. How does a play script typically differ from a novel? How are the two similar? How does a stage actor approach preparing for his or her role?
5. What do you know about the theatrical rehearsal process? Have you ever participated in one as an actor, singer, director, or technical person?
6. What are some of the elements involved in producing a play -- set,

costumes, lighting, actors, director, stage management, tech direction, etc.? Depending on your course, here is an opportunity to discuss the various jobs in theatre: set construction, costuming, properties, sound engineering, marketing, program writing and editing, company management, and so on.

7. How do costumes, set, lights, sound and props enhance a theatre production?
8. What is a professional stage actor's life like?

## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- *familiarize themselves with background information about*
  - *Richard Nixon - his life, legacy and the Presidency*
  - *Henry Kissinger - his life and legacy*
  - *American history and culture from 1968-1974*
  - *Political satire*
  
- *identify central themes and issues in Nixon's Nixon including:*
  - *Power: its use, abuse and loss*
  - *Politics and morality*
  - *Loyalty*
  
- *understand the play's themes and issues within their historical and cultural context.*

- *relate the play's themes and issues to their own lives.*
- *compare and contrast their personal values and philosophies with those of the characters.*
- *evaluate the Huntington Theatre Company's production of *Nixon's Nixon*.*

## PREPARATION

### BACKGROUND

*Nixon's Nixon* is a "fictionalized fantasy" of the meeting that took place between President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger the evening before Nixon's resignation speech, August 8, 1974. For students of history and political science the play provides an opportunity to explore American culture and politics of the 1970's, and the roles played by these two powerful men. It is a play about power: its use, abuse and loss; but it is also a satirical comedy that imaginatively portrays two strong, worldly and fallible characters as they banter, role-play and debate one man's inevitable fate.

### NIXON AND KISSINGER; AMERICA 1968 TO 1974

Divide your class into teams to explore the background and life stories of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, as well as the politics and culture of America during the period 1968-1974.

Suggested topics include:

#### Richard Nixon

Youth, family life

College education, entry into politics

Early congressional career (Alger Hiss, HUAC)

1950 Senate race, selection as Eisenhower's running mate

Events as VP; The Kennedy/Nixon race

1962- 1968: Run for California governor; candidate again.

The Nixon presidency:

*Domestic policy and events*

*Foreign policy*

*The re-election campaign, CREEP, Watergate*

*The cover-up and resignation*

*The later years.*

### *Henry Kissinger*

*Youth, family life*

*College education and academic career*

*Political career under Nixon*

*Other political involvement*

*Kissinger today*

### *America 1968-1974: an era of turmoil*

*The Vietnam Conflict*

*Anti-war protests and demonstrations*

*Chicago Democratic Convention*

*Kent State*

*Assassinations: Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King*

*Civil Rights*

*Women's Rights*

*The Environment*

*The Counter-Culture: Hippies, flower children, communes*

*Politics expressed in art: music, theatre, dance, visual arts and fashion*

1. *Have students present their findings to the class in oral presentations. Each group should be encouraged to present their material in creative and fun ways by including visual illustrations, music, or engaging in role-playing,*

storytelling, etc. in order to entertain and inform. Have students compare their findings to today's issues and culture to identify differences and similarities between then and now.

2. Plan a "1970's Day." Decorate the classroom with artwork, banners, photos, newspapers and magazines of the time. Play protest songs and other popular music and encourage students to come dressed in the fashions of the day. Invite a Vietnam veteran or others who remember that time period to describe to the class their feelings, and response to the war, Nixon's resignation, political protest, etc., or have students interview relatives or neighbors and share their stories with the class.

3. Have students research events in their own community during the "Nixon era" by exploring newspapers and yearbooks. What were the important issues for your community? Were there protests or demonstrations? Did your school have dress or hair codes? Were diverse viewpoints expressed in the press? Were there many young men drafted to serve in the war in Vietnam? Did the congressmen from your district support or oppose the war? What was their stated response to the Watergate investigation and Nixon's subsequent resignation?

### COMEDY AND SATIRE

1. Lead a discussion with your class about the nature of comedy. What makes something funny? What kinds of things do we laugh at? Are they always funny? What themes does comedy deal with? What comedies (movies, TV shows, cartoons) are you familiar with that deal with serious issues or ideas, and why do they?

2. Discuss the following elements of humor:

**Verbal humor:** anything from a pun to a sophisticated and witty verbal exchange

**Suspension of natural laws:** i.e., the man who falls flat on his face but doesn't really hurt himself

**Comedy of character:** incongruity between the way a character sees himself or herself, or how he or she pretends to be, as opposed to the way he or she really is.

**Plot complications:** coincidences and mistaken identities.

3. Have students research the characteristics of different styles of comic theatre, such as:

Comedy of Manners, Restoration Comedy, Farce, Satire, Tragicomedy, Black Comedy, Theatre of the Absurd. Students may wish to bring in examples and read out loud or perform scenes as a way to spark discussion.

4. What is satire? What is the difference between satirical writing and comic writing? Molière wrote that "the purpose of Comedy (satire) is to correct the vices of mankind..." Jonathan Swift said, "Satire points to no defect/But what all mortals may correct." How does satire do this? Give examples from satirical comedies you have enjoyed.

5. Have students cite some examples of social criticism on TV or in newspapers, magazines, or cartoons. What is being criticized? Do you agree or disagree with the criticism? Are there topics that are taboo -- beyond criticism? Why? Do those restrictions change over time?

## INTRODUCING KEY ISSUES

### *Power: Its Use, Abuse and Loss*

1. Ask students what we mean when we say someone is powerful. What individuals/groups hold the most political, social, economic power today in America and/or the rest of the world? How do these people gain power? Can someone be weak in some ways and powerful in others? Have students create collages that contain images from the media that represent powerful people or things. Ask students to explain how power is communicated in these images.
2. How can power be abused? Students may draw upon their knowledge of American and world history, as well as literature, to find examples of the ill effects of misused power. Topics to consider may include the practice of slavery, political dictatorships, political revolutions, religious fanaticism, corporate manipulation, etc. Have students consider how much power they possess in their own lives. In what situations do they feel empowered? Do the students like to have power? How does it feel when someone abuses power towards them?
3. How does it feel to lose or relinquish power once held? (Examples for students might be completing their term as captain of a sport or debate team; losing privileges for bad behavior; losing an election.) Make a list of the ways -- good or bad -- people may respond to such situations.

### *Politics and Morality*

1. In a free write session, ask students to comment on the qualities they feel are necessary for an individual to succeed in politics. Have students share their impressions by creating two lists of qualities: positive and negative. Why do we often associate negative characteristics with "Politics?"

2. What are some of the forces at play in the world of politics that could challenge one's moral sensibilities? Discuss some known examples (historical or current) of lapses in politicians' integrity. What determines when such activities become cause for removal from office? Ask students to list some politicians (either national or local) that they admire and explain the reasons for their choices. In their own personal campaigns for student government offices or other positions of power, have students ever been advised or tempted to be less than truthful about themselves or others? Have they made promises in exchange for support?

3. Why is it so difficult for persons in power or in the public eye to admit a mistake or take responsibility for their actions? Consider some recent instances of leaders mired in controversial situations, for example: Jane Swift (babysitters); Bill Clinton, Jesse Jackson. What usually is the best policy? Ask students to cite an instance where they have tried to cover up a misdeed only to find that it mushroomed into something much more significant. Is this just human instinct? Or are we influenced by our culture? Media?

### *Loyalty*

1. Ask students to define "loyalty." Ask them to respond to the phrase, "My country, right or wrong." Would they serve in the military and fight in a war they felt was unjust? Ask whom would they rely on to help them make such a decision. What actions would be open to them?

2. Should one be loyal to a friend or family member, even though they may have done something very wrong? How does it feel to know that someone you love or trust has been dishonest, especially if they have asked you to vouch for them? Consider the dilemma facing Hillary and Chelsea Clinton when the Monica Lewinsky situation came to light.

## MASTERY ASSESSMENT

1. What is the significance of the title of the play, *Nixon's Nixon*?
2. What is the setting of the play? How does it influence the characterization of Nixon and Kissinger?
3. What is Nixon's inner conflict? What is his long-range plan for solving it?
4. Nixon parallels himself to Tchaikovsky because he died poor, but had a soaring spirit. "Few men can control their own destiny, Henry. Only the truly great." What does this statement reveal about Nixon's state of mind? How does it foreshadow future events?
5. Why does Nixon think he was courageous when he was besieged in Caracas?
6. Why is Nixon proud to be the underdog?
7. Nixon recognizes that Kissinger is the only one of his staff who has escaped the Watergate scandal unscathed. Of what is he suspicious?
8. Whom does Nixon think "sold" him out?
9. What does the role-play between Brezhnev and Nixon reveal about Nixon?

10. What does Nixon feel about the way history will treat him? With what other great historical figures does he compare himself?
11. Why does Kissinger insist on retaining his position as Secretary of State?
12. Of what significance to Nixon are the tapes? What does he plan to do with them?
13. Of what significance to Kissinger are the tapes?
14. Why does Kissinger want Nixon to step down rather than face impeachment and trial?
15. What link does Nixon make between himself and Lincoln?
16. Kissinger and Nixon agree that to be in their jobs, they must be actors. They liken themselves to chameleons. What does this mean? Why would it be a credible simile?
17. Kissinger portrays Nixon's situation as a tragedy because he'd be remembered for his fall. A hero who is dominated by a tragic flaw is a necessary element in any tragedy. What is Nixon's tragic flaw? How does it bring him to this point and to the point of tragedy?
18. What's the point of the Kennedy role-play scene?
19. Kissinger says that he can't continue his work until Nixon is gone? Why do you think this is so? What is motivating Kissinger?

20. *"There's no honor in quitting." Says Nixon to Kissinger. Why is this so?*
21. *Why doesn't Nixon "stare in the mirror much?"*
22. *Nixon's great success story turns to tragedy and "Tragedy becomes a farce." Explain the irony of this.*
23. *Why does Nixon bring up the FBI wiretaps of Kissinger?*
24. *What is the final escape fantasy that Nixon and Kissinger create to maintain Nixon in office?*
25. *Explain Nixon's statement, "Sometimes the courageous thing isn't to struggle on. Sometimes, it takes more courage, more honor to, to throw in the towel."*
26. *What's the effect of Nixon's story about his daughter, Julie?*
27. *How do you feel about each of the two characters as the play ends?*

## OPEN RESPONSE ASSESSMENT

1. Director Charles Tower says of *Nixon's Nixon*, "I think of it first and foremost as a comedy..." Poll your students' response to the play. What elements did students find amusing? Which were troubling or serious? Can something be comic to one person and tragic to another? Explore the definition of satire and its relationship to *Nixon's Nixon*.
2. Consider the ways in which power is explored in *Nixon's Nixon*. Cite and discuss instances of Nixon's real or fantasized use or abuse of power. What is the cause of Nixon's downfall? How does Nixon come to deal with his impending resignation and loss of power?
3. What is the relationship between Kissinger and Nixon in the play? Does this relationship evolve? How does the playwright use this relationship to create comedy, satire, or pathos?
4. Which world leaders does Nixon consider as friends? What qualities do they possess that make them appealing to Nixon? Who were Nixon's friends or advisors on the home front? Do you consider Kissinger to be his friend?
5. Explore Nixon's relationship with his daughter Julie. How does he "use" her? Why do you think she remained loyal to him? How do you think you would respond if placed in such a situation?
6. Kissinger, speaking of his youth in New York, mentions his fear at seeing "four blond-haired boys coming toward me." What prompted this

response in him? What does the recollection of this incident say about his loyalty to America?

7. Nixon and Kissinger drink large quantities of alcohol during the play. What effect does this have on the action of the play and your response to it? Does the abuse of alcohol parallel the abuse of power? Explain.

7. Read about the playwright, Russell Lees. *Nixon's Nixon* is a work of fiction, yet it is based on historical characters and events. Discuss the challenges (and responsibilities) for a playwright creating historical drama. Was Lees successful? How did the play expand the class's understanding of Nixon? Did the students find the play both entertaining and instructive?

8. In *Nixon's Nixon*, how does Lees use the device of role-playing? What kinds of information do we learn from these role-play situations? Ask students if they ever role-play with friends? What freedom does it allow? What happens when you become another person? Students might enjoy creating role-play scenes involving contemporary politicians, or scenes referred to in the play, such as an interaction between the President and Julie, or Nixon and Haig.

9. Create a word-web of personality traits/characteristics of both Nixon and Kissinger. Which of those characteristics are important for someone in a leadership position?

## THINKING LEVEL ASSESSMENT

1. If you were assigned to be the dramaturg for a production of *Nixon's Nixon*, what research materials would you provide for the director and actors at the first rehearsal (e.g., information on the Vietnam War, the White House, 1970's popular and counter-cultures, etc.)? Consult the "Who's Who in the Nixon White House" included in the Literary Guide or create your own list of terms for the cast. What images, photographic or otherwise, would you display at rehearsal? Bring in some of these pictures and hang them around the classroom.
2. *Nixon's Nixon* has been performed in London and Hong Kong as well as across the U.S. How do you think audiences might respond to the play given their potentially different perspectives on Nixon's legacy? (Have interested students search for press articles or reviews.) As a young audience, ask students how they think their response might differ from an audience who personally experienced that era?
3. Research and read other accounts of that evening's meeting between Nixon and Kissinger. Report to the class on how these accounts vary and how they may have influenced Richard Lees' playscript. (See bibliography.)
4. Explore Nixon's life as a child and young man. What influence did those experiences have on his domestic policies as President? How did they shape his personality?
5. Listen to (or read) Nixon's famous "Checkers" speech. Why did Eisenhower almost drop Nixon from the Presidential ticket?

6. Ask students for their assessment of Nixon's presidency. What were his major accomplishments? Aside from Watergate, were there other failures? How do students think Americans would view Nixon today if the Watergate affair had never occurred?

7. Long after he had resigned from the presidency, Nixon was quoted as saying, "When the President does it, that means that it is not illegal." Why would he think this is true? Do you think the president is "above the law?" Should a president be accountable for every action he takes, even if it is in the national interest or for reasons of national security? What, if anything, should a president be allowed to do that might be outside the law for a private citizen?

8. After researching the evidence, hold a mock impeachment trial for Richard Nixon. See if the class votes to impeach him.

9. Consider the excesses and risks of absolute power in today's world: Castro, Milosovich, Saddam Hussein, the Taliban. What protections does our system of government provide to curb such abuses? Explore the abuse of power in the FBI under J. Edgar Hoover. Should we be concerned about abuses of individual freedom in the current War on Terrorism?

## WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Pretend that you are one of the characters in the play – or a character referenced in the play. Write a letter to an acquaintance detailing your feelings about what is happening to you at the time of the action of the play.
2. Choose a character from the play and create an autobiographical timeline of the ten most important occurrences in his life. Choose only ten events which are most focal for that character, understanding that you must prioritize. One event might be very traumatic, such as the death of a loved one; another may be something as simple as a child's surprise birthday party. Each list should include its character's childhood and conclude with the end of the play. Events should be ordered in sequence beginning with the earliest event. You may draw from information in the play, use research, or incorporate events that you might envision happening. Then write a brief autobiography of the character (write in first person) based on the timeline. (Students may also choose to write their own autobiography in the same manner.)
3. Write a critical examination of one of the actors performing in the Huntington production of the play. Consider how well the character you chose was portrayed through the actor's use of voice, body language, mannerisms (especially a "signature" gesture), and movement. Consider also how well the actor "played off" the other performer. Give examples for each of your criticisms. Remember that being critical does not mean only being negative; be sure to include both the things you believe were well done and those you think were not so well done.

4. Write an essay analyzing a major theme presented in *Nixon's Nixon*.
5. What do you think happens to Kissinger or Nixon after the play ends? Write an essay, short story, additional scene or poem revealing either a real or imaginary situation of that person one, five, and/or ten years later.
6. Imagine that you have discovered Julie Nixon Eisenhower's diary from the Watergate period. Write several passages that might be found in it.
7. In prose, poetry or dramatic form, create your own satire based on an historical incident, recent political situation or local controversy. Consider your choice of selection and the devices used to make it a satire, not just a re-telling or re-enactment.
8. Research the role of anti-communism in Nixon's career from his early political campaigns to HUAC to Vietnam. Despite a fervent anti-communist stance, Nixon made history by opening the door to China and Russia. Write an essay explaining this apparent contradiction.
9. Write a critical review of the Huntington production of *Nixon's Nixon* and submit it for publication in your school newspaper. Be sure to send us a copy.

## QUESTIONS FOR AFTER ATTENDING THE PERFORMANCE

Note to teachers: Before your class attends *Nixon's Nixon* in performance, pass out these questions to your students and go over Part I with them. Encourage the students to look for the production elements as they watch the play.

I. Before viewing, discuss this as a class: Above the stage of the Huntington Theatre there is an inscription that states: "To hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature." There is also an inscription in the theatre's entryway that says "All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players; they have their exits and their entrances and one man in his time plays many parts." From what plays are these lines? What do you think they mean? Why do you think the original owners of the theatre had these quotations inscribed? Consider these quotations while watching a performance of *Nixon's Nixon*.

II. After viewing *Nixon's Nixon*, ask the following questions and ask students to explain their responses.

### 1. About the Play and Production

A. What was your overall reaction? Were you moved? Shocked? Empathetic? Was it funny?

B. How was the play structured? Did it build to a single climax? Was it episodic? Did this structure help or hinder your understanding of the play?

C. Was the dialogue interesting? Appropriate? What was the effect of the various role-playing scenes?

D. Was the pace and tempo of the production effective and appropriate?

## **2. About the Characters**

A. Did the characters touch you personally in some ways? Did you care about them?

B. Were the characters three-dimensional and believable?

C. Were the motivations of the characters clear?

D. What qualities were revealed by the actions and speech of the characters?

E. Did the characters change/develop/undergo transformation during the course of the play?

F. In what ways did the characters reveal the themes of the play?

## **3. About the Set**

A. Was the set usable and workable?

B. Was the set compatible with the production as a whole? Were there any features of the set that distracted from the action of the play?

C. Did the design reflect the themes, type and style of play?

D. Were the artistic qualities of unity, balance, line, texture, mass and color used effectively?

E. Did the set provide appropriate environment and atmosphere?

F. Was the set used to present any symbolic images or did it simply represent the space in which the action of the play occurred? Did it contain elements of both a "realistic" and a "symbolic" approach?

## **4. About Lighting and Sound**

A. Did the lighting establish mood and atmosphere? Was the illumination sufficient? Did the lighting harmonize with, and contribute toward, the unity of the production?

B. Were the music and sound effects appropriately conceived? Were they executed effectively?

5. *About Costumes/ Makeup/ Hairstyles*

A. *Were all of the costumes, makeup and hairstyles correct in terms of the period fashion? Were they suitable in terms of character and storytelling for the production?*

B. *Did the costumes and make-up reveal any choices of interpretation in this production?*

## MEDIA ASSESSMENT

These questions and hands-on exercises are interactive challenges in Drama, Music, Dance, Visual Arts and Design that inspire further consideration or understanding of the play. The warm-up exercises in Drama have been adapted from the International School's Theatre Association publication titled *Drama and the Active Study of Literature* by Tim Williams.

- **Creating Characterization**

1. Have each of your students choose a character from *Nixon's Nixon* that he/she would like to portray. (As there are only two characters, you could divide the class into groups, assigning some students the role of Nixon and others the role of Kissinger.) As though they were preparing for the role in rehearsal, have them ask the following questions about their characters:
  - a. What do I want in the play? What is my overall objective?
  - b. What is in the way of what I want? What are my obstacles? Who is/are my obstacles? Does what gets in the way of what I want change throughout the course of the play? How?
  - c. Does my character change during the course of the play? What is my character's journey, or plot of transformations?
  - d. What are the contradictions inherent in my character?
2. Have students imagine that they have been chosen to play either Nixon or Kissinger. Have them make notes individually on how they would approach their role. Consider what research would be needed, what physical and psychological qualities might be best to work on, character movement, and speech patterns (What type of accent does each character have? Do these speech patterns display class/status?).

- **Role Playing/Improvisation**

1. Have students look for parallel situations between the characters' stories and their own lives. Have them recall when they have had power or pride, felt betrayed, been punished, or felt vulnerable. Can they act or portray their own emotions? Do they disguise or hide what really happened? What is difficult to portray, and why? Do you have to have had a similar experience in order to understand what is being said in a play? This is obviously a difficult and sensitive area for most adolescents to deal with, especially in the company of their peers, and it's not productive to push too hard. It's not meant to lead to a psychotherapy session, but if we believe literature to be of value, then we should be stressing the fact that it is about our own personal experiences as much as the writer's; just getting students on their feet to start playing some experience of their own involves much more commitment than almost any seated, abstract discussion.

2. Have students improvise some moment from *Nixon's Nixon* and then test the effects of changing something – tone of voice, some important trait in a character, or a vital remark. How does such a change affect the selected moment and what follows? What repercussions would such a change have on the shape and balance of the play? Students could improvise what happens before or after some point, or what happens after the play's end. Both these exercises help the class understand how a work of art involves an interrupted process, or a decision to stop what could be endlessly revised. See if the students can identify some of the writer's main points of choice or decision in their story.

3. Have each student select a line from the play that best captures the essence of a particular character. Organizing the class by the two characters, have students present their lines and explain the reasons for

their selections. After each character is completed and all the chosen lines have been read aloud and explained, discuss the rationale for choices.

4. Imagine a chance meeting years after the end of *Nixon's Nixon* between Nixon and Kissinger. Improvise such a scene. What might the two say to each other? Do you think the dynamics of their relationship would have changed with the passage of time?

- **Acting**

1. Define subtext and motivation in the context of performance. Using the scene from *Nixon's Nixon* included at the end of this guide, have students examine the subtext or motivation of the lines and action by discussing the following questions:

- Does the character say precisely what he means, or does he intentionally mislead the other character?
- Are words the character's only expression at this point in the play?
- Why does the character speak at this particular time?
- Why in this way?
- If the character is silent, why?
- Why does the character stop speaking?
- What does he want to accomplish in the scene?
- How does the character's intention determine his action, tone of voice, or facial expressions?

2. Have students act out a scene from *Nixon's Nixon*. They should use props and elements of costumes. Have them consider who stands where, who moves when and where, gestures, tone of voice, music, and intended emotional or comedic impact.

3. Actors often view their roles in terms of journeys. The way their

characters change and the creative tensions between each turning point are potential building blocks for creating any given role. Ask your students to imagine that they are actors playing roles in *Nixon's Nixon*. Have them trace the journey of their characters, addressing the following questions:

- What does my character want in the beginning of the play?
- How does each scene affect the “want” or objective, and how does my character change in response to the events in this particular scene?
- Is there a “pivotal scene” or moment for my character: a scene or moment in which he experiences a “turning point,” or transforms in such a way that he will never be the same again?
- Does the initial objective for my character change by the play’s end? Define what that change may be.

Students should summarize what the overall journey of their character is during the course of the entire play. How can each character’s journey be outlined?

- **Visual Art**

1. Using plates, papier-mache, and other materials, have your students create masks that represent either Nixon or Kissinger -- or one of the role-played characters. Have students perform a scene twice - once with the masks, once without. What impression do the masks make on the audience? How do the masks make the scene different?

2. Pass out art paper, paints, and brushes. Have students create abstract paintings representing a character from the play. Make sure the students do not tell their classmates who their paintings represent. Hang the completed paintings around the room. Ask students to pick out qualities, moods, and feelings of each painting. Next have each artist identify the character his/her painting represents and explain how the various details of the painting depict the character.

\*\*\*\* The concept of abstract imagery may need to be explained to some students. Emphasize that they are trying to capture moods, feelings, and conflicts and that their paintings need not perfectly resemble their character (or anything concrete, for that matter.)

3. Have your students choose a character from *Nixon's Nixon* and create a character collage. The collages should include pictures (hand-drawn or cut from magazines/newspapers) of actions the character performs, images expressing relationships the character has with others, typical moods, feelings, or attitudes, etc. Include quotations from the play that reveal something about the character (these can be quotations from the character as well as quotations about the character).

- **Music/Dance**

1. What do Nixon's musical selections reveal about his character? Have students create or select different background music and/or sound effects to accompany scenes in the play.

2. Conceive a scene from *Nixon's Nixon* as a movement composition without words. Select a choreographer and dancers, as well as a movement style, i.e., ballet, jazz, hip-hop, blues, or modern. Have students develop a performance together for the class. Does the group's presentation accurately reflect the interactions of the characters?

3. Have groups of students bring in tapes or CD's of music or perform and/or compose a piece of music to create a mood for a theme/issue from the play, a character in the play, or an incident/moment in the play. Ask them to play an excerpt from the piece of music and explain what mood

the music creates, why they chose that particular piece, and what others they considered.

- **The Design Process**

1. Director Charles Tower and Scenic Designer Bill Clarke have been involved with a number of different productions of *Nixon's Nixon* in theatres around the world. Specifically for the Huntington's proscenium stage, they have created a whole new approach to the work. Assign students to work in teams to design their own concept for scenery for the play -- appropriate to your school's theatre space or a theatre space of their choice.

Have them build a model of their set design including functional elements of the set. Compare the students' designs with the Huntington production.

2. Discuss the role the lighting design played in the Huntington production of *Nixon's Nixon*. Discuss how color, angle, and intensity helped to suggest time of day, mood focus and action. Students should look for pictures or use watercolors and create their own pictures to illustrate these properties.

3. Other students might design costumes for the play. Research the clothing styles of the 1970's. Exhibit the students' costume designs for each character and have them explain to the class how they are correct for the period and appropriate for each. Have the class compare designs with those used in the HTC production.

4. Have students design a poster for the play. Encourage them to consider what message about the play they want to convey to the public in order to sell tickets. Which people should be acknowledged on the poster, and what other information should be included (price of tickets, dates, and so on)?

## QUOTATIONS

Use the following quotations to discuss specific events from *Nixon's Nixon* in context, or to discuss the universal ideas expressed by the quotations. You might use the quotations as springboards to role-playing, or as the first lines of letters, poems, or short stories. Develop any theme you choose. Also, search for pictures, paintings, other visual images or music to which you might apply one of these quotations as a title.

### KISSINGER

Everyone's quit, fired, indicted. It's a tragedy. But you must, we all must come to terms with it.

### NIXON-AS-BREZHNEV

Tell, me Nixon, do you contemplate what the history books will make of you? Do you wonder about your place in history?

### KISSINGER

The true statesman, he's a chameleon. He shades his opinions, even facts, to draw in and seduce his opponents. ...You've got to wear the proper Greek mask .... You've got to be larger than life

### NIXON

That's it exactly. Because you've got to play the great man of state. You've got to play the wise leader, the brilliant schemer. The ruthless murderer. But with no backstage. There's no backstage. The mask gets stuck. You end up asking, "What color are my goddamn eyes?"

### KISSINGER

If you're remembered, it'll be for what I did.

### KISSINGER

It's the great American story: Requited Ambition. The son of a grocer

*and an immigrant boy rise to the highest levels of power, change the world.*

**NIXON**

*I set myself up. Ambitious people like us, Henry, once we reach our goal, we should just blow our brains out.*

**KISSINGER-AS-BREZHNEV**

*One day a scientist will write the equations of politics. Power equals Force times Time. We'd like the personal to be a factor in the equation, but ultimately, it is no factor.*

**NIXON**

*Now look here, Henry. I pulled you off the Harvard shitpile, I gave you power you never dreamed of, I made you a world figure. Now, here, at this historic moment, at least you can fight for me. And for you. I'm President, those tapes disappear.*

**NIXON**

*They gave me so much power, why are they surprised I used it?*

**NIXON**

*Sometimes it takes more courage, more honor to, to throw in the towel.*

## TOPICAL REFERENCES IN *NIXON'S NIXON*

*Note:* Please refer to the “Who’s Who in the Nixon White House” in the *Literary Guide for Nixon’s Nixon*. Teachers may wish to use the following lists to help students research the various references.

### I. PEOPLE

|                        |                      |                  |
|------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Alexander              | Dobrynin             | Julie (Nixon)    |
| Allende                | Dubcek               | Eisenhower)      |
| Archduke Ferdinand     | Eisenhower (Ike)     | Kennedy (JFK)    |
| Bebe                   | Emperor Huang-Ti     | Khan             |
| Bobby (Kennedy)        | Erlichman            | Krushchev        |
| Brandt, Willie         | Ford, Gerald (Jerry) | LBJ              |
| Brezhnev               | Gandhi               | Lenin            |
| Buchanan               | Golda (Meir)         | Machievelli      |
| Caesar                 | Goldwater            | Marilyn (Monroe) |
| Castro                 | Gray                 | Mitchell         |
| Chairman Mao           | Grover Cleveland     | Napoleon         |
| Checkers (Julie’s Dog) | Haig                 | Pat (Nixon)      |
| Chou-en-lai            | Haldeman             | Pompidou         |
| Colby                  | Hiss, Alger          | Ravel            |
| Colson                 | Hussein              | Ron (Ziegler)    |
| David (Eisenhower)     | J. Edgar (Hoover)    | Sadat            |
| Dean                   |                      | Sakharov         |

Svoboda  
Tchaikovsky  
Tricia (Nixon)

Protests  
The Imperial City  
The Long March  
The Tapes  
The War (Vietnam

**II. GEO-POLITICAL  
REFERENCES**

Arms Pact  
Beardos and  
weirdoes  
Berlin  
Cambodia  
Chile  
China  
Breakthrough  
CIA  
Debates  
Dusseldorf  
(Germany)  
FBI  
Gobi  
Irkutsk  
Kent State  
Kremlin  
Laos  
Lenin Medal  
Mideast Business  
Peaceniks  
Prize (Nobel Prize)

War)  
Tun-shen  
Viet Cong  
Waterloo

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Please refer to the Bibliography included in the *Nixon's Nixon Literary Guide for Teachers*.

Bernstein, Carl and Bob Woodward. *All the President's Men*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974.

Haldeman, H.R. *The Haldeman Diaries*. New York; G.P. Putnam, 1994

Hoobler, Dorothy & Thomas Hoobler. *An Album of the Seventies*. New York: Franklin Watts, 1981.

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Sheehan, Neil. *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*. New York: Random House, 1988.

Summers, Anthony. *Official and Confidential: The Secret Life of J. Edgar Hoover*. New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1993.

Summers, Anthony. *The Arrogance of Power: The Secret World of Richard Nixon*. New York: Viking, 2000.

Woodward, Bob. *Shadow: Five Presidents and the Legacy of Watergate*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1999.

**WebSite:**

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/presidents/indexjs.html>

An extensive site with resource materials for teachers and links to other sites.

## *Massachusetts State Learning Standards – Grades 6-12 Language, Literature, and Composition*

- #1 Students will use agreed-upon rules for informal and formal discussions in small and large groups.*
- #2 Students will pose questions, listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussions and interviews in order to acquire knowledge.*
- #3 Students will make oral presentations that demonstrate appropriate consideration of audience, purpose, and the information to be conveyed.*
- #4 Students will acquire and use correctly an advanced reading vocabulary of English words, identifying meanings through an understanding of word relationships.*
- #5 Students will identify, describe, and apply knowledge of the structure of the English language and Standard English conventions for sentence structure, usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.*
- #6 Students will describe and analyze how oral dialects differ from each other in English, how they differ from written standard English, and what role standard American English plays in informal and formal communication.*

- #7            *Students will describe and analyze how the English language has developed and been influenced by other languages.*
- #8            *Students will decode accurately and understand new words encountered in their reading materials, drawing on a variety of strategies as needed, and then use these words accurately in speaking and writing.*
- #9            *Students will identify the basic facts and essential ideas in what they have read, heard, or viewed.*
- #10          *Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the characteristics of different genres.*
- #11          *Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of theme in literature and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.*
- #12          *Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.*
- #13          *Students will identify, analyze and apply knowledge of the structure, elements and meaning of nonfiction or informational material and provide evidence from the text to support their meaning.*
- #14          *Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the structure, elements, and themes of poetry and provide evidence*

- from the text to support their understanding.
- #15 Students will identify and analyze how an author's choice of words appeals to the senses, create imagery suggests mood, and sets tone.
  - #16 Students will compare and contrast similar myths and narratives from different cultures and geographic regions.
  - #17 Students will interpret the meaning of literary works, nonfiction, films, and media by using different critical lenses and analytic techniques.
  - #18 Students will plan and present effective dramatic readings, recitations, and performances that demonstrate appropriate consideration of audience and purpose.
  - #19 Students will write compositions with a clear focus, logically related ideas to develop it, and adequate detail.
  - #20 Students will select and use appropriate genres, modes of reasoning, and speaking styles when writing for different audiences and rhetorical purposes.
  - #21 Students will demonstrate improvement in organization, content, paragraph development, level of detail, style, tone, and word choice (diction) in their compositions after revising them.
  - #22 Students will use knowledge of Standard English conventions to edit their writing.

- #23 *Students will use self-generated questions, note-taking, summarizing, precis writing, and outlining to enhance learning when reading or writing.*
- #24 *Students will use open-ended research questions, different sources of information, and appropriate research methods to gather information for their research projects.*
- #25 *Students will develop and use rhetorical, logical and stylistic criteria for assessing final versions of their compositions or research projects before presenting them to varied audiences.*

## Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework

### Theatre and Connection Strands

Theatre is an art form concerned with the representation of people in time and space, their actions, and the consequences of their actions. Theatre education expands the ability to understand others and communicate through language and actions, and provides a unique opportunity for integrating the arts, linking dance, music, and visual arts elements in performance and production. Theatre includes acting, improvisation, storytelling, mime, playmaking and playwriting, directing, management, design and technical theatre, and related arts such as puppetry, film and video.

#### Theatre Standards:

- I. **Acting.** Students will develop acting skills to portray characters who interact in improvised and scripted scenes.
- II. **Reading and Writing Scripts.** Students will read, analyze, and write dramatic material.
- III. **Directing.** Students will rehearse and stage dramatic works.
- IV. **Technical Theatre.** Students will demonstrate skills in using the basic tools, media, and techniques involved in theatrical production.
- V. **Critical Response.** Students will describe and analyze their own theatrical work and the work of others using appropriate theatre vocabulary. When appropriate, students will connect their analysis to interpretation and evaluation.

#### Connection Strands:

- VI. **Purposes and Meanings in the Arts.** Students will describe the

- purposes for which works of dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and architecture were and are created, and, when appropriate, interpret their meanings.
- VII. **Roles of Artists in Communities.** Students will describe the roles of artists, patrons, cultural organizations, and arts institutions in societies of the past and present.
- VIII. **Concepts of Style, Stylistic Influence, and Stylistic Change.** Students will 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.
- IX. **Inventions, Technologies, and the Arts.** Students will describe and analyze how performing and visual artists use and have used materials, inventions, and technologies in their work.
- X. **Interdisciplinary Connections.** Students will apply their knowledge of the arts to the study of English language arts, foreign languages, health, history and social science, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering.

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