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### Play Reviews

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## Play Reviews

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Chislett, Anne. *Flippin' In and Then and Now, Two Theatre for Young Audience Plays*. Playwrights Canada Press, 1999. ISBN 0-88754-574-2. \$14.95.

Reviewed by Robbie Stevens

Reviews of the two plays follow:

*Flippin' In*. 58 pp.

**B+ 8+**

If you have ever tried to accomplish something which seemed impossible and failed, you will be able to find strength in this play. This is the story of a group of young people who work for a fast food restaurant. Maria and Lynn come from different backgrounds: one of hardship and work and the other from a privileged home. Both girls work for a fast food restaurant called Kwikbite which has its own way of dealing with its employees. The story follows the girls' struggle to form a union in order to get better treatment, higher pay, and more working hours with decent shifts. We see the power that incentive and greed have on people when the manager of Kwikbite bribes fellow workers to vote against the union. She influences them by portraying the girls in a bad light – as stingy and self-serving instead of wanting the good of the group. After they veto the union, things return to normal and the employees realize their mistake but are not courageous enough to try again. The play ends as Maria and Lynn once more discuss forming a union.

This play would be good for students studying commerce, unions, and employee relations. It would be an excellent lead into the history of how unions are formed and why. The cast requirements are minimal (4 W, 3 M). There are few set requirements beyond those for a fast food

restaurant. Much of the cooking and properties could be successfully mimed.

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*Then and Now*. 70 pp.

**A- 6+**

In this computer generated flashback to history, we are shown how the French and English conflict began. Two young girls, one English and one French Canadian, are playing a Star Wars video game when they and their fathers are assimilated into the computer. They jump into the historic period of conflict between the French and English regarding the American and Canadian colonies. We watch as the girls and their fathers change from one character to another, often switching countries. Even though each set speaks a different language, the play is performed in English because the "Authority" has declared that each person will hear what is said in their own language. Some of the events we witness are the creation of the Hudson's Bay Company, the befriending of the Natives, and the arrival of young girls from France to marry the Coureur Du Bois. The play ends after the group realizes they must stop their hatred for each other to turn the computer off. As they exit the computer, peace is restored and respect for one another is shown.

The author indicates the play was written to acquaint young people with the basics of French rights, which she has done remarkably well. This play requires two female and two males with the "Authority" being either male or female. The costume changes are minimal and quick, as are the character changes. Each actor/actress must be able to assume a variety of characters with the snap of their fingers and make it believable.

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Jennings, Coleman A. *Eight Plays for Children: The New Generation Play Project*. University of Texas Press, 1999. ISBN 0-292-74056-5 cloth, 0-292-74057-3 paperback. \$44.95 cloth, \$19.95 paperback. 479 pp.

A **Reviewed by John D. Newman**

This long-awaited volume represents the final component of the New Generation Play Project which spanned the 1990's.

This half-million-dollar effort was sponsored by the Children's Theatre Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund and Target Stores. The project was realized by the Children's Theatre Company of Minneapolis, the Honolulu Theatre for Youth, the Seattle Children's Theatre, and Stage One: The Louisville Children's Theatre.

The goal of the New Generation Play Project, or NGPP, was to entice recognized playwrights from the adult theatre who would not normally write plays for young audiences to create new works for major professional children's theatre. The eight selected playwrights are collectively credited with almost every major playwrighting distinction offered in the United States. Each of the writers was given a commission which, though modest by adult theatre standards, was princely compared to what children's theatre playwrights have traditionally received. Production budgets were augmented to allow the playwrights access to artists and stagecraft which were somewhat beyond the regular budgets of the producing theatres.

The premiere productions of the eight resulting plays were well received by both audiences and critics. If the primary objective of the project was to produce eight good productions, the project seems to have been a success. However, if the primary objective was to bring adult playwrights into the children's theatre field and to create a body of re-producible plays, the success was mixed. Y York has become a major playwright in the profession and Constance

Congdon is now engaged in another major commission for young audiences. The other eight playwrights have expressed a willingness to write for young audiences if requested but have not indicated independent initiative to pursue such projects. Also, it should be noted that four of the eight selected playwrights had created works for children before the inception of the NGPP.

Many of the professional playwrights who have devoted their careers to writing for young audiences felt snubbed by the project, although many have benefitted from the higher commission rates which the NGPP is generally credited with effecting.

It should be noted that the NGPP was not the only means through which adult playwrights could make forays into the children's theatre profession in the 1990's. In the past decade, major adult theatre playwrights, such as Steven Deitz and Robert Schenkkan, have pursued commissions with professional children's theatres of their own volition. It should also be noted that several of the most recognized playwrights in the children's theatre profession, such as Timothy Mason, James Still, and Suzan Zeder, have also found success in the adult arena. Cross-fertilization between the adult and child genres was perhaps an inevitable, albeit delayed, development in the evolution of the American theatre. However, the NGPP has become a catalyst and a visible symbol of that process.

While the initial productions of the plays were generally sound and most of the scripts read fairly well on the page, few of the scripts are likely to transcend their original productions and venues. The two fairy-tale plays produced in Minneapolis and one of the literary adaptations produced in Seattle are dependent on spectacular theatrical effects which few other children's companies in the United States could hope to achieve. The two plays produced in Honolulu depend largely on an understanding of Hawaiian cultures and do not transcend to more universal themes.

There is much to applaud and much to scrutinize in the NGPP. If nothing else, the NGPP has acted as a catalyst to efforts to raise the

respectability of the children's theatre profession among its adult theatre counterparts. It has initiated an on-going dialogue about the inclusion of adult playwrights in the children's theatre profession and the categorization of playwrights into one arena or the other.

In the next decade, this reviewer would like to see the consortium which created the NGPP follow it up with a project aimed at providing established children's theatre playwrights the same theatrical luxuries provided to their more endowed cousins from the adult theatre.

The NGPP anthology is an especially relevant text for a college course on children's theatre. It touches on many of the most crucial contemporary issues in the profession and provides a perfect point of departure for discussing what makes for a good children's play. The volume may also serve as a "crash course" in the contemporary children's theatre profession for those whose primary experience is outside of the field.

Relatively few academicians and children's theatre professionals have been able to see the resulting productions of the NGPP plays and much of their impression of the project may be based on hearsay. This volume provides the evidence for those in the profession to recognize the project's merits and to learn from its shortcomings and controversies. The forward by Suzan Zeder and the introduction by Coleman A. Jennings present both the successes and the disappointments of the project in an honest yet diplomatic manner.

Reviews of each of the plays in the Anthology follows.

Congdon, Constance. *Beauty and the Beast*. 1992. 51 pp.

**A 3-6**

Belle is a cheerful, industrious maiden who takes care of her three selfish, squabbling siblings. When her widower father ventures to another land, he is sheltered in a castle belonging to an

ominous beast who releases him on condition that he send Belle in his stead. Belle, against her father's wishes, goes to the beast and, over the course of time, learns to love the creature whom she originally despised.

The dialogue of this play is rich and poetic and the characters of the father, the heroine, and the beast are resonating. The adaptation retains much the strength of the original tale and would engage the adults in the audience at least as well as the children.

However, the characters of Belle's siblings, are drawn with cartoonish simplicity and while they seem intended as comic relief, their buffoonery seems to belie the emotional reality of the main plot. When Belle returns from the beast's castle, she tries to assert herself and overcome the passivity which has made her a slave to her family's caprices. However, Belle backs away from her new-found power and never fully achieves the transformation which she initiates.

The script demands extensive and expensive costuming, but the demands on other production elements are more modest. While many scenes would probably have benefitted from the high production values of the Children's Theatre Company, the script generally yields itself to simpler theatrical solutions.

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Houston, Velina Hasu. *Hula Heart*. 1996. 28 pp.

**B+ K-3**

Sean "Kilo" Hauptmann is a multi-ethnic seven-year-old boy from Hawaii who moves with his family to Southern California. Although his study of authentic Hula was respected on the islands, he finds that the mainland friends mock him for it. Sean finds a friend in Caleb, who comes from a similar cultural background. Ultimately, Sean finds himself torn between his loyalty for Caleb and his native traditions, and his Californian friend Julian and the pop culture which he embodies.

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The script has its merits. The theme of retaining one's roots is clearly established in the play. Sean's specific cultural conflict achieves a certain degree of universality. The visions of Laka, the Goddess of the Hula, adds an interesting theatrical dimension to the piece.

However, the play paints a complex issue in rather simplistic terms. The plot resolves happily and predictably. Rather than having to make a choice between two cultures, Sean is conveniently allowed to be fully accepted by both cultures without the internal conflict that multi-cultural children must often confront. The play reads like a promising early draft but could have benefitted from more development before it was mounted.

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Howe, Tina. *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*. 1994. 72 pp.

## A 3-6

Tove is a maiden who takes care of her kind, injured father, a pair of sympathetic twins, four nasty siblings, and an unkind mother. One day, Tove is approached by a polar bear who tells her that if she goes with him, her family will become as rich as they presently are poor. Tove accepts the bear's offer and her family's wishes are fulfilled. After a long and arduous journey, Tove finds herself in the bear's palace where against her oath, she listens to the handsome prince who sings beneath the palace. When Tove visits her family, her mother convinces her to shine a light on the singing man. Tove does so, against the bear's injunction, and finds that she has banished her prince to a land east of the sun and west of the moon. Tove bravely undertakes an impossible quest to reach this prison before her prince is forced to marry a troll.

The language and imagery of the play is remarkably strong and the story is well told. With the exception of the polar bear, the characters are sharply dichotomized as either good or evil. Although few children's theatres have the budget or technical means to remount it, the script no

doubt lent itself to a spectacular production in Minneapolis. The play is epic in its scope and covers numerous locations with very specific elements. Complex lighting is crucial to the journey sequences and elaborate costuming is required to realize the vision of the piece. While the play must have been dazzling in its premiere, the script would struggle to find a life beyond its original incarnation.

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Jenkin, Lee, adapted from a story by H.G. Wells. *The Invisible Man*. 1993. 66 pp.

## A 4-8

A bandage-faced stranger checks into a mostly empty motel near a nuclear power plant. Jack Griffin, the mysterious stranger, befriends the caretaker's son, Jim Winters, who has recently lost his father. Jim trusts and assists Mr. Griffin, looking to him as a father figure. Soon, Jack Griffin reveals his secret that, through an accident at the nuclear plant, he has become an invisible man. As the play progresses, Jim begins to realize that Mr. Griffin may not be worthy of his trust and must ultimately decide whether to believe the man's explanations or to turn him over to the authorities.

The play is suspenseful and engaging. Like the young protagonist, the audience must constantly re-evaluate which characters can be trusted and who they hope will succeed. Mr. Griffin, as he is portrayed in this script, is reminiscent of Long John Silver, who betrays the trust of another young Jim in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. The conservative 1950's setting serves the material well and the structure of the piece is tight and economical.

While the play was relatively easy to mount at the Seattle Children's Theatre, the stage magic of the piece could be difficult to achieve. The multiple settings could be easily suggested by simple elements but it would be difficult for all but a handful of professional theatres to execute the invisibility effects as written. The text,

however, is strong enough to stand on its own without the spectacle if simpler theatrical solutions could be devised.

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Medoff, Mark. *Kringle's Window*. 1992. 68 pp.

**B 4-8**

Becka, a twelve-year-old computer whiz, heeds her friend's advice and tells her eight-year-old sister Boomer that Santa Claus isn't real. Becka's father, recently separated from her mother, tries to restore Boomer's belief by coming down the chimney in disguise. The plan fails but a mysterious homeless lady, Mrs. Rosen, is able to convince both Becka and Boomer about the reality of Santa Claus and the magic of Christmas.

The plot-line of this play is much too thin for its lengthy playing time. The script is replete with pop culture clichés, repetitive dialogue, and static scenes. Mrs. Rosen, while quite charming as a character, serves the un-needed functions as the mediator and moralizer of the story. The ending is predictably sugary and the complex problems that have driven the girls' parents apart are quickly resolved by a single moment of shared laughter. The fault of this script seems to stem from a radical misunderstanding of the dynamics and needs of young audiences.

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Overmeyer, Eric. *Duke Kahanamoka vs. the Surfknappers*. 1993.

**B- 3-5**

A statue of the legendary Hawaiian hero Duke Kahanamoku comes to life and relates his story in contemporary terms to a couple of Hawaiian children. The Duke was credited with restoring surfing and its spiritual virtues to the islands after the activity was discouraged by early missionaries. Duke Kahanamoku was an Olympic gold medalist in swimming and was later

appointed Sheriff of Honolulu. After narrating his background at length, the Duke recounts an adventure in which he thwarted a pair of bad guys from stealing the surf from his islands.

The central character, who lived around the turn of the last century, is given a modern makeover, as are all of the other personages in the story. The hip language and trendy costumes ground the historical/mythical character in a teen pop culture setting. The story unfolds in the style of a Saturday morning cartoon, with one-dimensional characters and a simple, predictable plot.

This play seems to have been created under the assumption that young audiences can only relate to a story if it is told in a language and style which are already familiar to them. While that basic premise has merit, this play was constructed with a narrow view of what children will find familiar and with what elements they can identify. The style and story are more conducive to animation than to stage production and rather than offering audiences a performance which is uniquely theatrical, it reiterates the kind of entertainment which they experience abundantly on television.

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Weller, Michael. *Dogbrain*. 1996. 62 pp.

**A- K-2**

Nick is a six-year-old with an active imagination who refuses to take responsibility for his own misdeeds. When Nick blames an imaginary character named "Dogbrain" for a hitting incident at school, Dogbrain materializes and begins creating mischief. At first Nick enjoys the pranks of his new companion but becomes more and more frightened as he discovers that he cannot control the creature.

This play is likely to be controversial and will evoke strong positive and negative response from academicians, public educators, parents, and children. One of the assets of the play, as well as one of its liabilities, is the painful accuracy of the

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boys' spiteful and "potty-mouthed" dialogue. From one perspective, the play embodies a story and a language which are readily identifiable to the children in the audience. From another perspective, it presents behaviors and actions which no parent or teacher would want their impressionable young children imitating.

The subject matter and characters tailor this play to a K-2 audience, but the treatment of the subject will likely alienate a large sector of its potential audience. At best, the play is reminiscent of the harshly realistic child dialogue in Maurice Sendak's controversial children's musical *Really Rosie*. At worst, the antics of the imaginary creature go unnecessarily far, as Dogbrain rubs Nick's mother's bottom, drives Nick's confused father into a mental hospital, and eats cat "poop" and live rats.

Perhaps the greatest virtue of the story is that Dogbrain is eventually suppressed but not permanently defeated. "Goodybags," Dogbrain's alterego, stuffs Dogbrain back inside of Nick, but Nick discovers that Dogbrain can still reappear if he doesn't control his own impulses. The story's psychological realism provides children with hope without the false expectation that self-control is ever easy.

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York, Y., adapted from the novel by Elizabeth George Speare. *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*. 1996. 85 pp.

## A 7-12

Kit is a well-educated, intelligent, and free-spirited seventeen-year-old who ends up living in a Puritan village in Connecticut. She unwittingly brings the ire and the suspicion of the village upon her as she parades about in fine dresses, reads her secular books, swims in the water, and befriends a banished healer woman who is believed to be a witch.

Kit is one of the most realistic adolescent characters ever created for the stage. Her caprices and charisma will endear her to modern teenagers.

Kit's naiveté and spontaneity unwittingly brings about accusations of witchcraft. Kit is not cruel but she is careless and even childish at times. However, her actions plunge her headlong into adult consequences.

Kit embodies the adolescent virtue of being able to look beyond things that the adult society has come to accept. Against the dire warnings of the villagers, Kit meets and befriends Hannah Tupper, the alleged "witch" who lives at Blackbird Pond. Kit's lack of foresight in using her knowledge of herbal medicine to alleviate a plague of scarlet fever provides redemption for the superstitious villagers but peril for Kit and for Hannah who taught her the cures.

In the past action of the play, Kit made one very selfish mistake: she sold her bondswoman in Barbados in order to pay her passage to Connecticut. Kit redeems herself at the end of the play, deciding to fill her bondswoman's term herself. Forces intervene which release her from that necessity, but it is important to note that Kit has grown from expedient egoism to ethical empathy and that she is committed to taking actions which benefit not only her but others around her.

While Kit is able to escape from death, the dangers she faces and the risks she takes are very real. Despite the intense pressure to conform, Kit remains true to her crystallizing personality while learning to comprehend, if not accept, a world view that runs contrary to her own. Kit could well become a model for the next generation of adolescent protagonists.



Rubin, Janet E. *Voices: Plays for Studying the Holocaust*. Scarecrow Press, 1999. ISBN 0-8108-3655-6. 308 pp.

## A

Reviewed by Robbie Stevens

This book is a compilation of selected plays and excerpts from plays about the Holocaust. Some of the plays included are: *Can You Hear*

Some of the plays included are: *Can You Hear Them Crying?* by Virginia Stringer; *Angel in the Night* by Joanna Kraus; *T-Money & Wolf* by Kevin Willmott & Ric Averill; and an excerpt from *Kindertransport* by Diane Samuels. Each play focuses on a different aspect of the Holocaust – the children, those who hid the Jews, concentration camps, and a connection between modern gangs and Hitler's Youth. Each piece brings us closer to understanding the horrors of what happened and the reasoning behind it. One play, *Hitler's Childhood* by Niklas Radstrom, gives an intimate view into what Hitler must have endured while growing up in Austria with his parents.

Part I of this book gives us a background of the Holocaust. The author also tells of the challenges in portraying the Holocaust and bringing the information to the reader and viewer. A chronological time line is included from 1914 until 1946, along with the important events and landmarks which occurred during these years.

Prior to each play or excerpt, there is a synopsis of the events occurring in Germany and the countries it occupied. This history varies for each play, and gives us a complete, if brief, history of the events leading up to Hitler's power, the invasion of each country, what was happening to the people in the countries, and the aftereffects of the war. Following each play are suggestions of how the play might be incorporated into the curriculum. Teachers, or the public, are given ideas, off-shoots, and activities which will bring the theme of the play closer to the viewers.

This book also includes a bibliography and three appendices. These appendices include other plays, playwrights, and publishers of theatre about the Holocaust, resources and references for those interested in further study, and other works by the book's contributors.

Although some of the plays would be successful with elementary age children, most of the material might be more appropriate for older students and adults. Discussion with the young people is important in both preparation and following the presentation. Overall, this is an excellent book which has incorporated both the

history and plays of the Holocaust in a succinct and meaningful way.

Reviews of the plays in this work:

Stringer, Virginia Burton. *Can You Hear Them Crying?* Meriwether Publishing, 1994. 14 pp.

A- 5+

Children view the horrors of the Holocaust in a different light than adults. They are the innocent and unprotected. This one act play portrays the children's struggles and search for understanding in their situation. It is set in a concentration camp which was said to be the Jewish ghetto "Theresienstadt" and was praised openly by the world for its excellent treatment of Jews. This was all Hitler's ploy to hide his atrocities from the world. The children find beauty in remembering the outside world. The art and reading teachers help the children escape these horrors. We follow the children through the flight of the last butterfly in the camp as they watch fellow friends be killed before their eyes. A train load of children is brought into the camp and kept separate from them because they are on their way to the showers. The play ends with one of the survivors of the ghetto telling us how many children were killed and urging us to never forget.

One suitcase of the original poetry from these children survived the war and is intertwined within the play. This play would require strong actors to give the full impact of the war. Cast would include 13 females (six of which could be played by men), one male, and numerous butterfly dancers.

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Kraus, Joanna H. *Angel in the Night*. Dramatic Publishing, 1996. 33 pp.

A 5+

As a young woman, Marysia Pawlina showed extraordinary courage in the face of horrendous

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brutality and consequences. She hid four Jews for over a year during the Holocaust. This play is the story of her brave act and its consequences. The story opens in a Chicago suburb as Pawlina prepares to receive the Righteous Person award for bravery in saving the lives of others. We then fly back in time to May of 1942. Pawlina is 18 years old and finds her neighbor Golda, whose husband has just been murdered, and her children hiding in a mound of hay. We then follow these people through the next year and a half as they struggle to remain alive.

Mania joins the trio of fugitives at a later date and struggles to stay with them. She has seen her entire family murdered before her eyes and yearns for the sunshine instead of the darkness of the tunnel they hide in. Because of Mania's desire to see the sun, Pawlina is discovered and sent to prison camp for hiding Jews. The people she hides escape safely and Pawlina, Mania, and Friedza reunite after the war.

Because of the nature of this play, the actors would need to be very strong. Nine women and men are needed for this play (4 M, 4 W, 1 girl with doubling). Since there are thirteen scenes (several in different locations) settings would only be suggested.

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Samuels, Diane. *Kindertransport*. Penguin Putnam, 1995. 17 pp extract.

A 6+

Rubin whets our appetite for the rest of this play by only giving us the first scene of Act One. In this scene, we are introduced to the young Eva and her older self, Evelyn, along with Eva's mother, adopted mother, and daughter, Faith. Throughout the scene, we flip between Evelyn and Faith in the present, and Eva and her mother, Helga, in the past.

Faith prepares to move into her own apartment, much to the sorrow of her mother even though she hides it well. They go through Evelyn's things in the attic and decide what Faith

will need to establish her own household. In the same attic, and at the same time, we watch as Helga prepares Eva for her journey to England on the Kindertransport. They manage to get her a passport and she teaches Eva how to sew buttons while trying to prepare them both for the upcoming separation.

After Evelyn leaves the attic, Faith finds a box which contains a whistle and other items which Eva brought with her from Germany. At this same time, Eva leaves her parents with their promise to join her shortly ringing in her young ears. We watch as Eva enters the train, encounters other children longing for their parents, and faces an SS guard. The scene ends with the children entering England and Helga finishing the story of the Ratcatcher.

Five women and one man are needed for this scene. The props would include a suitcase or trunk, items found in an attic, and the Star of David. This play would do best if the cast were strong actors who could portray the sorrow and heartache felt by those parting ways forever.

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Willmott, Kevin and Averill, Ric. *T-Money and Wolf*. Dramatic Publishing, 1994. 35 pp.

A 9+

Wow. This powerful piece takes us from the 1930's into the 1990's and shows us the similarity between two cultures in a unique and impacting way. We watch as two young boys of similar age are drawn into a life unlike what they have known before. T-Money, or Terry, is a black youth living in Newark, New Jersey, in the 1990's while Wolf is a white German youth in Munich, Germany, in the 1930's. T-Money is anxious to earn money, buy things, and be someone even though he knows he will never be "someone." Wolf wants to follow in his older brother's footsteps even when he doesn't agree with some of the violence Stefan commits.

T-Money becomes involved with Daddy Mack who has him dealing drugs, running

errands, and doing his work. He earns lots of money and finds he likes the power money gives. Through the course of this play, T-Money loses his brother through violence, shoots and kills a Nun, and watches as Daddy Mack turns up shot to death. T-Money turns to violence and drugs to forget what has happened.

Hitler's youth groups were a powerful draw to those who wanted to belong and were willing to try anything to follow their peers. Wolf was drawn to this group through Stefan's influence. By joining the group, the boys and girls are given special privileges and more rations. Wolf has a Jewish friend and a friend who was hiding her and her family. By trying to get more rations for his friend, Wolf inadvertently betrays him. When he takes the food to Tim and Sarah, part of Stefan's group follows him. When confronted, Sarah admits she is a Jew but that Tim and Wolf had no idea she was there. Tim backs Wolf up but Wolf turns the story around so that he is innocent. In the end, Wolf shoots Tim and then Stefan shoots Sarah. This occurs simultaneously with T-Money shooting the Nun.

This play will bring the parallels between Hitler's youth and the youth of today closer to our understanding. The cast is quite large - 11 men and 9-11 women with extras if desired. At times, both story lines are on the stage at the same time. We also flip between the two pasts and the present of a jail cell.

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Shaw, Robert. *The Man in the Glass Booth*. Samuel French, 1969, renewed 1996. 11 pp.

**B+ 9+**

Also included is an excerpt from *The Man in the Glass Booth*. We witness the fictional trial of a Nazi impersonator named Arthur Goldman. Until the trial, he is thought to be Adolf Karl Dorff, a notorious and heartless killer in the concentration camps. Through several witnesses and Arthur's own confession, we piece together a picture of a man with no conscience who had an

utter disregard for human life. As it turns out, Arthur Goldman was a prisoner in a concentration camp run by Dorff. Goldman felt he would be taking the emotional baggage from the Jews who survived and would be the target for the hatred of the Nazi concentration camp officers. This excerpt would require five men and three women.

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Kushner, Tony. *A Bright Room Called Day*. Joyce P. Ketay, 1987. 36 pp.

**B+ 9+**

Because this play uses only excerpts, explanations are required for us to follow the story line. This play covers the last part of the Weimar Republic just as Hitler comes to power. The given scenes follow the struggle of Gotchling and Agnes. Gotchling tries to convince Agnes to either flee the country or hide others on their way out of Germany. We witness Agnes' struggle to choose between the safe and easy way and the way her conscience dictates.

Paulinka and Baz discuss when they should leave. Both decide to flee Germany and Baz tries to convince Agnes to flee with one of them. In the end, Agnes does not flee but allows Gotchling to persuade her to hide others trying to escape.

If the entire play were performed, the audience would have a great insight into the thoughts and lives of those in pre-Hitler Germany. For this excerpt, a cast of three women and two or three men would be required. The playwright has also left room for modernization of certain lines and monologues.

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Greenspan, Hank. "Voice" in *Remnants*. 1991. 2 pp.

**A 9+**

This short piece from *Remnants* is told from the point of view of a child survivor of the war.

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The young girl has been so terrified that she could not speak for two years after the SS came and killed or took most of the people from the ghetto she lived in. After the war, when she is placed in a D.P. Camp for displaced persons, a doctor finds her. Through the help of the doctor she is able to find her voice. This is done by running in the hills and opening her mouth to feel the air. She then progresses to screaming as she runs which leads to other sounds, which eventually leads to her ability to speak. The monologue comes to a close as she, very poignantly, tells of her view of the different words used to describe the Holocaust. She says "to me all our words, whatever we say about the Holocaust, are just so many different refinements of a cry. And the cry is just barely salvaged from a scream. And the scream is just barely salvaged from the silence." Through plays like this, the silence will never be allowed to rule over the truth.

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Radstrom, Niklas with translation by Frank Gabriel Perry. *Hitler's Childhood*. Alan Brodie Representation, 1983, Translation: 1995. 55 pp.

**B+ 7+**

This play gives us an intimate view into what Hitler must have endured while growing up in Austria with his parents. While this play does not attempt to explain away or excuse Hitler's actions and atrocities, it does help the reader and viewer see why he might have become who the world later saw as the leader of the Third Reich.

We follow Hitler's family from his birth until he is about 10 years old. Throughout this play, he is abused by his father mentally and beaten with a belt at whim. Hitler holds various conversations with a Jew during which we watch his acceptance of the Jew turn to hatred. Asides to the audience remind them of what Hitler was to become. The play ends after Hitler tries to run away from home and is caught in the act. His parents mock him and

force him to accept a punishment which he finally realizes is the making of him.

This play would require three men and two women and could take place in a typical early 1900's home. Because of its nature, students viewing this play should discuss the Holocaust and the events leading to it prior to going to the theatre. They should also have a discussion following their experience with the play.

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