CHILDREN'S THEATER OF MADISON
CTM
2024 • SEASON • 2025

THE TRIALS

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WELCOME Educators, Parents, & Caregivers - this guide is for you!

Filled with conversation starters and resources galore, this guide can be utilized to prepare young audience members for the show, introduce them to the theater, encourage them to reflect on their experience, engage them in an activity, and enrich their overall experience with the play.

We built this guide for you, and we want to hear from YOU! At the end of this guide, there is a link to a survey. Please let us know what you thought - we appreciate your feedback!

THE WORLD OF THE TRIALS

THEMES: ***Climate Change*** ~ ***Responsibility*** ~ ***Loss***

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY:

The near future. The climate emergency is gathering pace, and the older generation is being judged. The jurors are children. But are they delivering justice – or just taking revenge? *The Trials* addresses the climate emergency and intergenerational conflict, as the jury of 12 to 17-year-olds hold the stage alongside three adult defendants. This play will spark discussion and debate on climate change, responsibility, and accountability.

PLAYWRIGHT BIO:

Dawn King - Playwright

Dawn is an award-winning writer working in theatre, film, TV, radio and other forms. Born in Stroud, Gloucestershire and educated in non-selective state schools, she now lives in London, near Epping Forest, where she spends a lot of time with her dog in the woods. Her play *The Trials* had a sold-out English language premiere at the Donmar Warehouse in 2022 after a German production at the Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus and was a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize 2021. *The Trials* has been translated into several langauges and produced all over the world. She is currently adapting *The Trials* for the screen with Firebird Pictures!

DIRECTOR BIO:

Marcella Kearns - Director

Marcella Kearns is a Midwest-based multidisciplinary artist (director, actor, and dramaturg). A member of Actors' Equity Association and former Fulbright Fellow, she also serves on the faculty of First Stage's Young Company, Marquette University, and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The former Education Director of Milwaukee Shakespeare, she annually spearheaded the late company's participation in Shakespeare for a New Generation programming for in-school education and performances for students and held a 2008 TCG Observership to study other companies' approaches to Shakespeare education for teachers. Selected directing credits include projects for Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Third Avenue PlayWorks, First Stage, Door Shakespeare, Marquette University, Carthage College, and UW-Milwaukee, including the world premieres of the verbatim piece *Fighting For Home: Stories of Women Who Serve* and *Alice Austen's Girls in the Boat*. She holds an MFA in Acting from the University of South Carolina and a BA in English from Canisius College.

CLIMATE HISTORY

This content is from Outrider and was developed in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin, Center for Climatic Research, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies.

1842

Fourier proposes a theory of the greenhouse effect

Joseph Fourier, a French mathematician and physicist, is the first to suggest that Earth's atmosphere influences the planet's temperature. He suggests that the atmosphere might insulate the planet, creating a warming effect.

1844

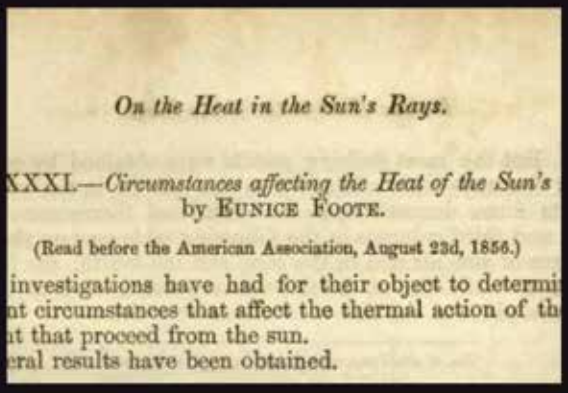
A theory of human impact on climate

Prussian geographer Alexander von Humboldt hypothesizes that humans affect the climate in three ways: "Through the destruction of forests, through the distribution of water, and through the production of great masses of steam and gas at the industrial centres."

1856

First experimental evidence of the greenhouse effect

American scientist Eunice Foote conducts experiments that show a warming effect from water vapor and carbon dioxide. From her measurements, she infers that the concentration of these gases in the atmosphere must affect the Earth's temperature.



On the Heat in the Sun's Rays.

XXXI.—*Circumstances affecting the Heat of the Sun's*
by EUNICE FOOTE.

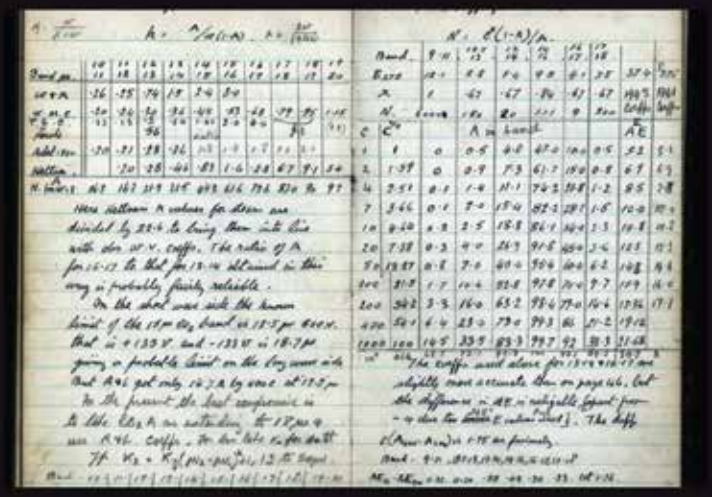
(Read before the American Association, August 23d, 1856.)

investigations have had for their object to determi
nt circumstances that affect the thermal action of th
it that proceed from the sun.
eral results have been obtained.

1890s

Arrhenius calculates the climatic effect of CO_2

Swedish chemist Svante Arrhenius attempts to put numbers to carbon dioxide's climatic impact. He estimates that if the carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere were to double—due to further industrialization—the global temperature would rise by about 6°C.



1938

Observed connection between global warming and CO_2

English steam engineer and amateur meteorologist Guy Callendar ties the observed global warming trend to carbon dioxide levels. He uses a simple climate model to show that the 10% increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide coincided with the 0.25°C increase in global temperature.

AUGUST 1965

Scientific conference on the causes of climate change

The U.S. National Academy of Sciences holds a conference called "The Causes of Climate Change." The conference report says, "We are just now beginning to realize that the atmosphere is not a dump of unlimited capacity."

APRIL 22, 1970

First Earth Day celebration

The first Earth Day is the largest demonstration in American history, with 20 million participants around the country. The event was conceived as a "teach-in" by Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson. Thousands of schools across the country joined in.

JUNE 23,1988

NASA testifies to Congress on global warming

During an exceptionally hot and dry summer, NASA climatologist James Hansen testifies to Congress. He tells them that NASA is 99% sure that the observed global warming trend is not a natural variation but is attributable to the buildup of atmospheric greenhouse gases caused by human activity.

DECEMBER 11, 1997

Kyoto Protocol signed

Following up on the UNFCCC, the protocol negotiated in Kyoto, Japan establishes mandatory targets for major developed countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to at least 5% below 1990 levels by 2012. The Clinton administration signs it, but the U.S. Senate refuses to ratify.

2006

An Inconvenient Truth premieres

The climate change documentary, produced by former Vice President Al Gore, is a huge success. It wins two Academy Awards and helps bring climate change into the broader public conversation. It also politicizes the topic—for some, Gore's participation in the film marked it as a liberal issue.

DECEMBER 2015

The UN Climate Change Conference in Paris

The conference results in the Paris Climate Agreement—the most comprehensive international response to human-caused climate change in history. The accord has since been signed by every nation in the world.

OCTOBER 31, 2021

UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow

The COP26 summit will bring parties together to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Climate Events from *The Trials*: What the characters experience and why

Climate change is the long-term shift in the Earth's average temperatures and weather conditions. The world has been warming up quickly over the past 100 years or so. As a result, weather patterns are changing.

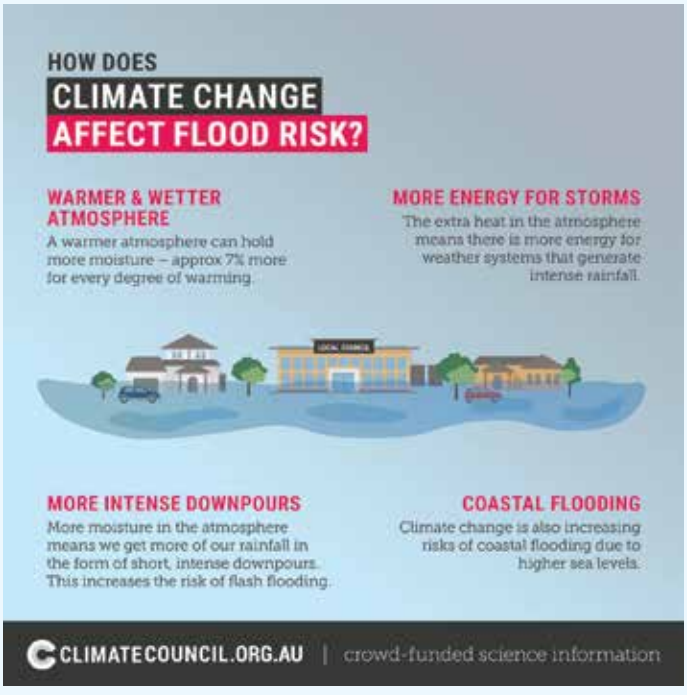
The characters in *The Trials* experience the results of those weather events. Below are explanations of why weather and life are different for these characters, based on their lines from the play:

ZOE: I wish I could see snow. That would be cool.

Two basic conditions are needed to produce snow: both freezing temperatures and moisture in the atmosphere. How are these conditions affected by climate change?

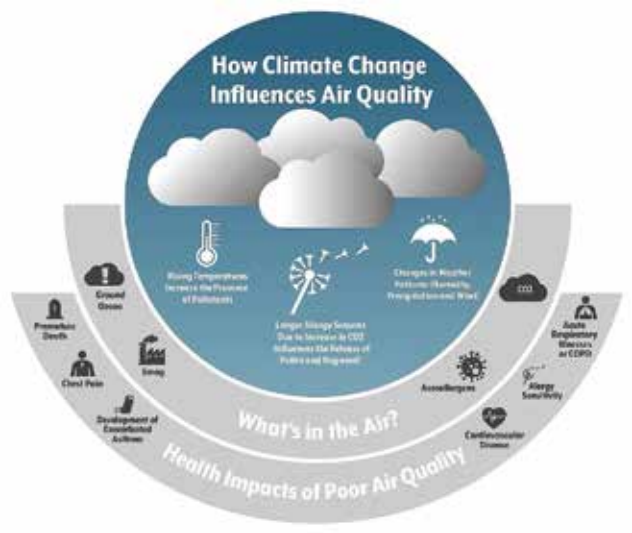
- **Fewer freezes.** Winter is the fastest warming season for most of the U.S., and the number of days with temperatures below 32°F is expected to continue to decline over the coming decades.
- **More moisture.** Our warming atmosphere holds about 4% more moisture per 1°F of temperature rise. But where that moisture falls, and whether it falls as rain or snow, is largely based on the season and region. (source)

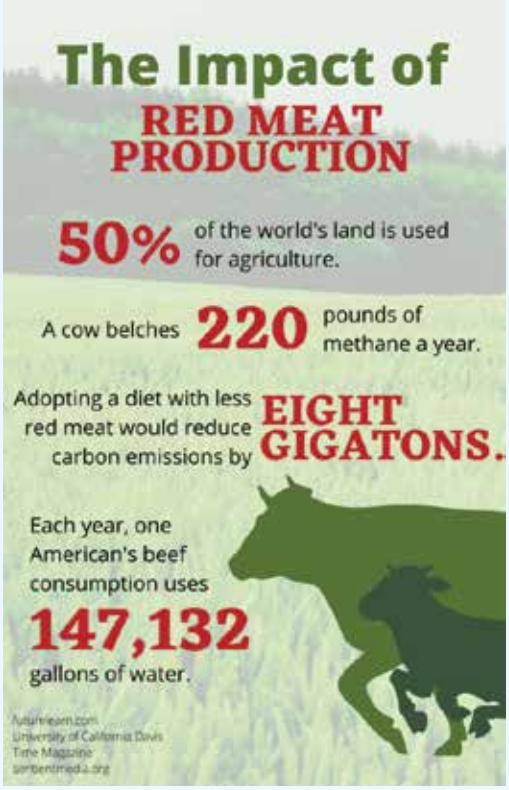
XANDER: Last week we were helping, after some floods. It was…bad.



AIDEN: The pollution is aggravating my asthma.

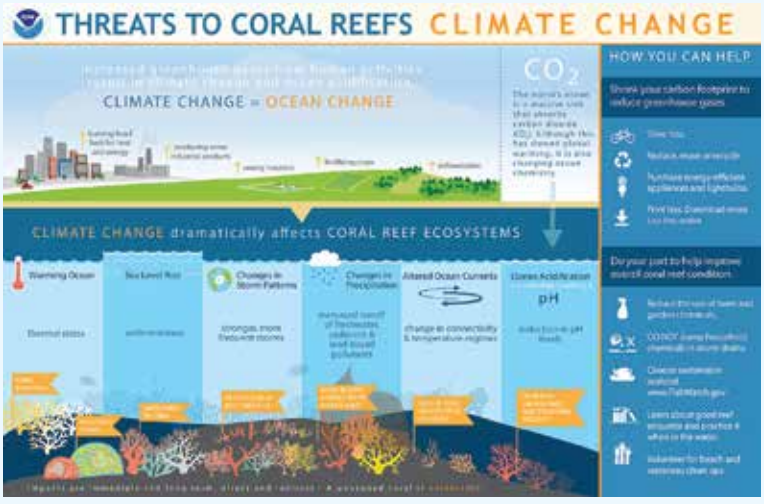
TESHI: Do you remember eating meat, Ren?

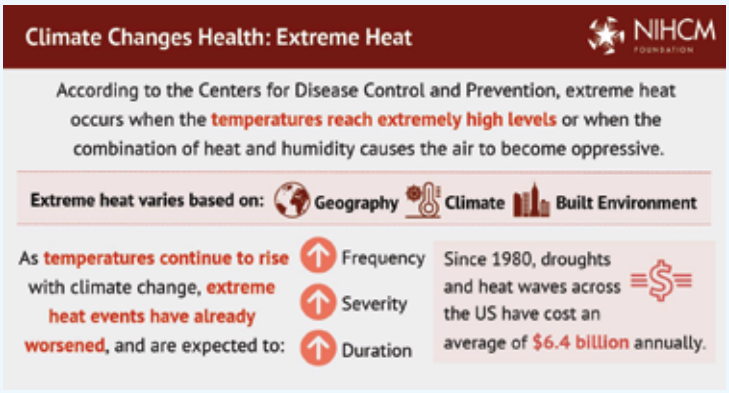




KIT: It's in Australia. Past the Great Barrier Reef, I mean, what's left of the Great Barrier Reef.

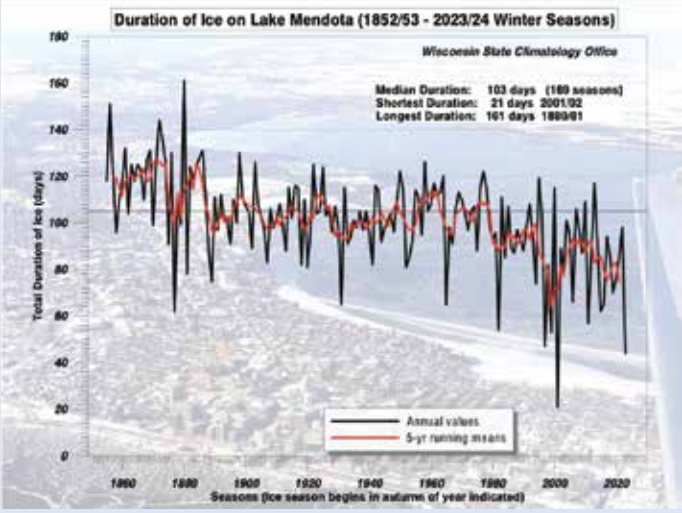
TESHI: I can't breathe in here.
CHRIS: It is really, really hot.





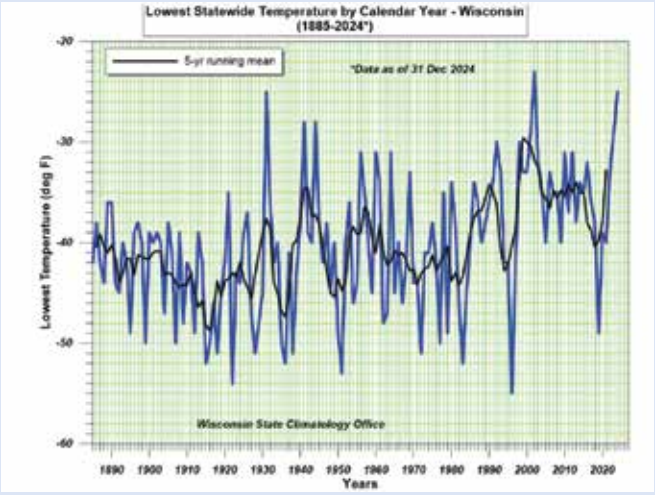
Climate Change and Wisconsin

Our production of *The Trials* is taking place in Wisconsin. We reached out to Steve Vavrus, director of the Wisconsin State Climatology Office and senior scientist for the Nelson Institute Center for Climatic Research, for more context on climate change in Wisconsin.



"One of Wisconsin's iconic features has been diminishing as temperatures rise, especially during winter. Lake ice is not nearly as long-lived from late fall through early spring as it used to be. Despite the absence of extensive historic data on ice cover on Wisconsin's 15,000 lakes, Madison's **Lake Mendota** has a very long-term, continuous record of ice formation and melt-off dates for every winter back to 1852. Those dates clearly show that the warming climate has caused reduced the average duration of ice cover from four months in the early years to less than three months in recent years. These changes have affected recreational use of the lakes (ice fishing, skating, ice sailing, etc.), as well as their ecology. If current trends continue, Mendota will likely experience its first documented ice-free winter sometime during the next few decades."

"Along the same lines, Wisconsin as a whole has been **losing bitterly cold air** during the past 30 years. Long-term records kept by the State Climatology Office show that the state's lowest annual temperature used to regularly reach the minus 40s and often dip below minus 50 degrees. But those extremely cold air masses aren't nearly as intense anymore. Only once since the middle 1990s has Wisconsin been colder than minus 40 degrees."



Judging the Unthinkable:
Trials and Truth Commissions from History

By Nate Ferguson
PhD Student, Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies, UW-Madison
MFA in Dramaturgy & Literary Translation, University of Iowa

The jury in *The Trials* struggles with finding an example for how they should judge the accused. As a result, they are left to act on their own opinions, informed by their backgrounds and personal motivations. While we don't have a system like that today, the history of the past 80 years gives us some similar situations where people have tackled the question of how to invent and judge new types of crimes. The biggest examples are the war crimes trials after the Second World War, mentioned by Kit in the play, as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that South Africa established in the 90s.

1945-1948: THE NUREMBERG AND TOKYO TRIALS

After the Axis powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan were defeated in 1945, the first question on peoples' minds was who should be held accountable for the lives lost in the war and the Holocaust that went with it. The Allied Powers of the USA, the Soviet Union, and the UK, having won the war, were in a difficult position. They couldn't attempt to put every citizen of these three countries on trial; the courts would take longer than anyone's lifetimes to get through it all, and if most were found guilty, how could a country even function with most of its people in prison? At the same time, they needed some way to establish that the murder of millions was something that you could be punished for. The result was the Nuremberg trials of 1945-46 and the Tokyo trials of 1946-48, where legal experts from the Allied powers debated how to define a new form of international law.

The result was the definition of new crimes, for which the leaders of countries and armies could be held accountable:

- **Crimes against peace**, where someone could be held guilty for starting a war against a peaceful country
- **War crimes**, where if soldiers intentionally harmed non-soldiers, both the people giving the orders and those following them could be guilty of the action
- **Crimes against humanity**, representing mass violence towards a country's own citizens, or towards another country's citizens outside of war

Because these were such new concepts, and there was no precedent for how to try them, the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials were very controversial at the time. Were they going too far, or not far enough? Are these definitions too broad, or too weak? If things like the Holocaust happen again, should the same people be responsible for carrying out the trials? Some of these questions were not fully answered until as late as 1998, with the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in response to the wars in the former country of Yugoslavia.

1996 - 2002: TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION (TRC)

Around the same time as the ICC was being formed, another method of judging violence against millions of people emerged in South Africa. In 1994, the country officially ended its system of legalized racial discrimination, called apartheid, after decades of violence. Two years after, in 1996, the South African government sponsored a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), an organization of politicians, religious leaders, and legal experts with a mission to document all of the human rights violations that had occurred during the previous period of struggle, and determine what could be done for the victims and perpetrators.

While this was not the first time a government sponsored an investigation into the crimes of its previous leadership under the title of a 'truth commission,' the South African TRC was notable for recording all of its activities for television, and for including reconciliation, and not just truth; specifically that their powers included an ability to award reparations to victims and assign punishments for perpetrators.

Despite being allowed to, the TRC did not set up any trials. Instead, they focused on the televised hearings, where survivors would describe what happened to them and their families, and the people responsible would confess to doing those things. After these events, a committee behind the scenes would determine what the victims would get in reparations, and whether the perpetrators should be punished or forgiven.

The impact of the world seeing the TRC live on television cannot be understated, and South Africa's way of dealing with the actions of its previous government became the standard for countries that had violent pasts to reckon with. Even countries with long histories of stable government, such as Canada and Australia, have undertaken truth commissions as recently as 2017, in order to make amends for violence against indigenous peoples.

TRIALS VS TRUTH COMMISSIONS

Whether war crimes trials or truth commissions are more effective tools for dealing with the past is still an active debate, as both processes are still practiced today. While a trial is more decisive, and its punishment more severe, the time and effort it takes to ensure that every perpetrator of violence has a full and fair trial makes it difficult to keep going. At the same time, a truth commission might make the facts of the crimes more available to the public, but can be seen as going easy on people who should not be allowed to rejoin society. The government in The Trials instead takes a third option, one clearly inspired by both processes, with its own difficulties and questions to grapple with.

HOW CAN YOU HELP LEAD CLIMATE ACTION IN SCHOOLS?

Students play a crucial role in driving climate action in their schools. You can:

LEARN.

Learn how climate change is impacting your school and community and about solutions that other students are implementing across the country.

ENGAGE.

Engage others—including other students, family members, and community members—in talking about climate change and participating in climate and environmental activities.

VOICE.

Voice your opinions, concerns, and priorities to other students as well as parents, guardians, teachers, and elected officials such as school board members.

ORGANIZE.

Organize your fellow students and community around shared climate goals.

EDUCATE.

Educate others about what you learn and share your success stories.

ADVOCATE.

Advocate for the changes you want to see in your school and community.

This article is from the Youth Climate Action Toolkit. It was designed with young leaders from across the country to share climate solutions that students can advocate for in schools. For the full Toolkit, click here.

Building Better Communities

A design thinking activity

There are many contributing factors to rising global temperatures. We as humans can impact this change through how we build and maintain our cities. Through this activity, you will collect data and use your findings to consider how we might build more sustainable cities.

Materials needed: Notebook/ paper & something to write with, touchless thermometer (you can also use a hand if you do not have access to one of these!).

- For this activity, head outside to a place where you can observe several different natural and manmade materials (a playground is a great option!). This is best completed on a day with lots of sun!
- Using either a touchless thermometer or your own hand, record the temperature of several different manmade and natural materials (Wood, plastic, concrete, grass, etc.). If you are using your own touch, pay particular attention to how the various temperatures differ.
- Once you have collected your data, notice what materials have higher temperature ratings. What is similar about the materials with the highest temperatures? You may notice that generally, natural materials like wood and plant matter do not reflect as much heat as man made ones like metal, plastic, and concrete.
- In a notebook or on a piece of paper, reflect on the following question about your findings: Considering the data you observed, what changes might we make to help create cities that contribute less to rising global temperatures?

A World Worth Protecting

An art activity

Being connected with the natural world is an important way that we can activate ourselves and others to take action to address the climate crisis. Through this activity, you will intentionally connect with the world around you and create art that demonstrates why our natural environment deserves to be protected.

Materials needed: Notebook/ paper, something to write with, various art supplies!

Part 1: Observe

- Find a place where you can observe nature. This could be a playground down the street, at a state park, or even in your own backyard. Set aside some time to go there and bring along something to write with.
- Set a timer for 10 minutes and then put your phone and other technology away. Spend 10 minutes just noticing what kind of nature you can observe. Maybe you notice the grass blowing in the wind, or birds and squirrels chattering in the trees above. Notice what things you see make you happy, or curious.
- After 10 minutes, spend some time documenting what you observed in your notebook or paper. You can write as a journal or as a list. Try to document as many things that you noticed as possible.

Part 2: Create

- Using your observations from your 10 minutes in nature, now it is time to create!
- Consider the type of art that speaks to you most, maybe you are interested in painting or drawing, making a collage or a sculpture, maybe you'd rather explore poetry, or even write a song!
- Gather the materials you need for your art and consider the following question as you create your art: What makes our world worth protecting?
- We would love to see what you create! Please feel free to share your art with us at education@ctmtheater.org

PRE SHOW QUESTIONS:

- How much pollution do you think one person should be allowed to cause before they need to make up for it somehow?
- Should the victims of a crime be allowed to determine a punishment for the perpetrator?
- What kind of crimes, if any, warrant a death penalty?
- Are there any experiences that you've missed out on because you were born after they were available?
- What would it take for you to be willing to sit on a jury like this?
- If you could set goals for humanity as a whole to address climate change, what would they be?

AUDIENCE MEMBER GUIDE

Just like the actors, you have a very important role to play as an audience member. The story of the show and everything you see onstage was created especially for YOU! Your energy and attention will not only be noticed by the actors, but by your fellow audience members as well. So do your best to give all of your attention to what is happening on stage!

GUIDELINES FOR YOUR ROLE AS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER

BEFORE THE SHOW:

- Leave cell phones, electronics, and any noise-making devices at home or turned off.
- Food and gum are not allowed in the theater.
- Consider using the restroom before the show begins.
- When the lights begin to dim, the play is about to begin!
- **NEED MORE INFORMATION?** CLICK HERE to access our Social Story, which will walk you through seeing a performance.

DURING THE SHOW:

- Notice the many ways that the story is being told - the characters' journey, the dialogue, costumes, scenery, sounds, lights, and more.
- Give the actors and the play your attention - there will be time to talk to the people sitting next to you after the show.
- The story might make you laugh, cry, or gasp - your reactions let the actors know that you are engaged in the story!
- Texting, taking photos, or recording videos is not allowed.
- **NEED MORE SUPPORT**? Ask for a sensory kit! These are perfect if you are sensitive to sound / lights or need a fidget to focus.
- **NEED A SENSORY BREAK**? Just outside our theater is a monitor that streams the show. Students can watch the show this way as they regulate.

AT THE END OF THE SHOW:

- The actors will come onstage to take a bow - you can show your appreciation by giving them a round of applause!
- When you leave, be sure to take your belongings with you. If you borrowed a Sensory Kit, please return it to us.

TALKBACKS:

- After Student Matinees (and some public shows), there will be a talkback, which is Q&A with the actors. Look to your adult to know if you are staying for the talkback.
- If you do stay for the talkback, think of questions that you want to ask the actors about the show - the design elements, the process of putting on a show, what it's like to be an actor, and more. Then raise your hand and someone may choose you to ask your question!

WHO'S WHO IN THE THEATER!

RUN CREW
set up the stage before the show and track props and set pieces during the show

ACTORS
perform the show for the audience

DIRECTORS
bring a unique vision to a production and stage the show

DESIGNERS
create the look and feel of the world of the show through Costumes, Scenery, Sound, and Lights

STAGE MANAGERS
coordinate communication with all roles in the theater and call technical cues during the show

PLAYWRIGHTS
write or adapt the show for the stage

(Young Playwrights from CTM's 2024 Festival)

CTM THEATER REVIEW

NAME _____

Title of Play _____

Date _____

What are three words to describe what this play is really about / its themes?

_____

_____

Which character is most like you? Which character is most unlike you?

_____

_____

How did the technical aspects (set, costumes, lights, sound, etc) help tell the story?

_____

_____

How did the play make you feel? Why?

_____

_____

What is the most important reason why people your age should see the play?

_____

_____

_____

Send us your theater reviews!
- Scan them and email them to matinees@ctmtheater.org
- Mail them to us at Children's Theater of Madison, 1055 E. Mifflin Street, Madison, WI 53703

Suggested Reading From our friends, the Youth Service Librarians, at

MADISON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Nonfiction: Elementary
We are Better Together by Bill McKibben
Change Is in the Air: Carbon, Climate, Earth, and Us by Debbie Levy
No World Too Big: Young People Fighting Global Climate Change by Lindsay H. Metcalf, Keila V. Dawson, and Jeanette Bradley
Our Planet! There's No Place Like Earth by Stacy McAnulty
Old Enough to Save the Planet by Loll Kirby

Nonfiction: Middle Grade
Climate Action: What Happened and What We Can Do by Seymour Simon
Climate Action: The Future is in our Hands by Georgina Stephens
Breaking the Mold: Changing the Face of Climate Science by Dana Alison Levy

Fiction: Picture Books
One Plastic Bag: Isatou Ceesay and the Recycling Women of the Gambia by Miranda Paul
To Change a Planet by Christina Soontornvat
We are Water Protectors by Carole Lindstrom

Fiction: Middle Grade
Global by Eoin Colfer and Andrew Donkin
Paradise on Fire by Jewell Parker Rhodes
Two Degrees by Alan Gratz
Haven Jacobs Saves the Planet by Barbara Dee
See the Cat: Three Stories About a Dog by David LaRochelle
Hi, Jack! by Mac Barnett
The Doghouse by Jan Thomas
What About Worms!? by Ryan T. Higgins
We Are Growing by Laurie Keller
Jack Blasts Off! by Mac Barnett
Problem Solved! by Jan Thomas

You can check out these books and more at your local library!

POST SHOW QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of government do you think the people in this play live under?
2. Which juror's judgements do you most agree with?
3. Do you see yourself, your friends, or your relatives in any of the defendants?
4. Is Gabi justified in her reasoning, or is she too extreme?
5. Do you think the main purpose of the trials is for moral, political, economic, or popular reasons?
6. Which jurors, if any, have been compromised too much in their biases?

ACT Now!

Are you inspired to do theater after seeing a play at CTM? There are many ways that you can begin your journey as a performer or theater artist! Here are some ideas:

1. Take a theater class

Build your skills! In an acting class, you will learn how to use your actor's tools of body, voice and imagination to tell stories and work as an ensemble with other actors. Do some research to see if there are any acting or drama classes offered at your school, or take a class at CTM during the school year or in the summer. You can learn more about our class offerings by visiting our website ctmtheater.org. (We have financial support available!)

2. Audition for a play

Ready for the stage? To participate in a play, you may need to audition / try out first. The director may tell you ahead of time specific scenes or songs to prepare, or they may ask you to bring one you chose. You can audition for plays through your school, at community theaters, or even at CTM!

3. Create your own show

Feeling inspired to create? Find a story that inspires you, or write your own story! Gather friends and practice acting your story out. Think about how you can use costumes, props, or lighting to make your story more clear and interesting for an audience. Invite friends and family to watch your performance and take the stage!

4. Start a drama club at your school

Do you think theater would make your school a better place? Find a teacher who would be excited to support your idea and start sharing your love of theater to inspire other students to join!

Remember, there are many ways to be involved in theater beyond just performing on stage. Theater needs directors, designers, playwrights, run crew, and more. Whatever skills or interests you bring, they have a place in theater!

We'd Love to Hear from You!

EDUCATORS & FAMILIES! Send us feedback on this study guide! What was useful? What wasn't in here that you would like to see? **Please email us at education@ctmtheater.org.**

STUDENTS! Send us your theater reviews! You can:

- Scan them and email them to matinees@ctmtheater.org
- Mail them to us at Children's Theater of Madison, 1055 E. Mifflin Street, Madison, WI 53703

Attention, Teachers!

Seeing this show at CTM addresses **Wisconsin Common Core Standards** in Theatre Education, World Languages, Environmental Literacy and Sustainability, English Language Arts, and Social Emotional Learning! **CLICK HERE** for a full list of standards addressed.

ABOUT CHILDREN'S THEATER OF MADISON

MISSION STATEMENT: CTM's mission is to spark imagination and build community through the creation and experience of theater

VALUES: Inclusion • Collaboration • Learning • Joy

SPONSORS for THE TRIALS

Lead Sponsor

Co-Associate Sponsor

Enrichment Guide Created by: CTM Education Department - Erica Berman Thompson and Lindsay Gleason; Nelson Institute Center for Climatic Research - Steve Vavrus; Nate Ferguson - PhD Student in Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies at UW-Madison.

Enrichment Guide Designed by: Erika Sjoblom