

GREETINGS!

Soon your students will be seeing The Children's
Theatre Company's

Sleeping Beauty



by
CHARLES WAY
Directed by
GREG BANKS

2005
the Children's
Theatre
company
2006

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CREATOR OF THE SLEEP NUMBER BED

AN AMERICAN PREMIERE

Our goal is that this event is a memorable experience for every person who attends, and that it creates dialogue between students and teachers. As part of that, we have developed this Teacher's Study Guide, designed to be used by teachers in the classroom as they prepare to see the play.

Please make sure that EACH CLASSROOM that will be attending the play has access to the following pages as they prepare to see the show.

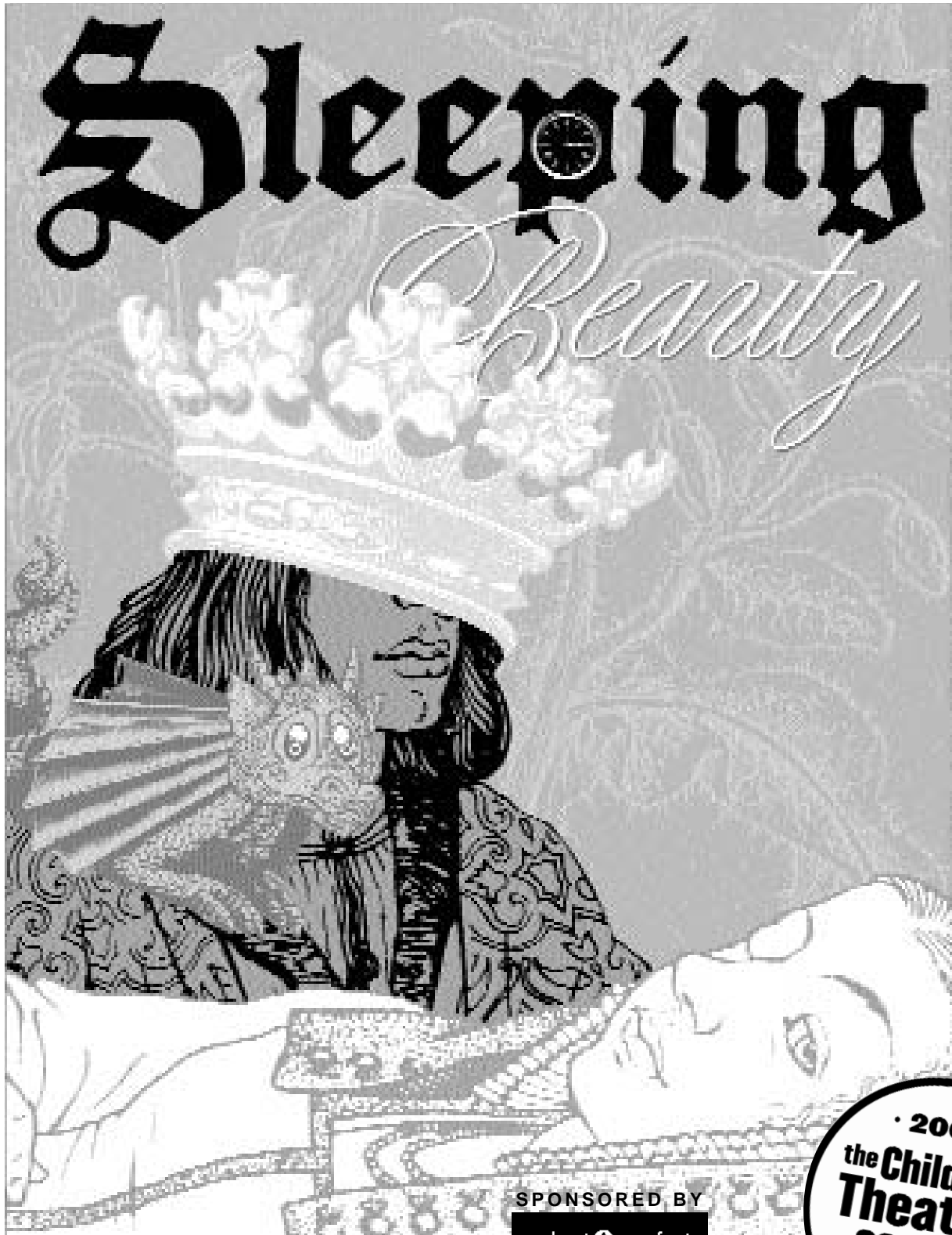
Make copies or refer to: www.childrenstheatre.org

Thank you for making the arts a priority in your school.

We look forward to seeing you!

THE CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY - SLEEPING BEAUTY - 2005-2006 SEASON
2400 3rd Ave. S., Mpls, MN 55404 - 612-874-0400 -
www.childrenstheatre.org

TEACHER STUDY GUIDE



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by **CHARLES WAY**

Directed by **GREG BANKS** AN AMERICAN PREMIERE

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A Synopsis of the Play

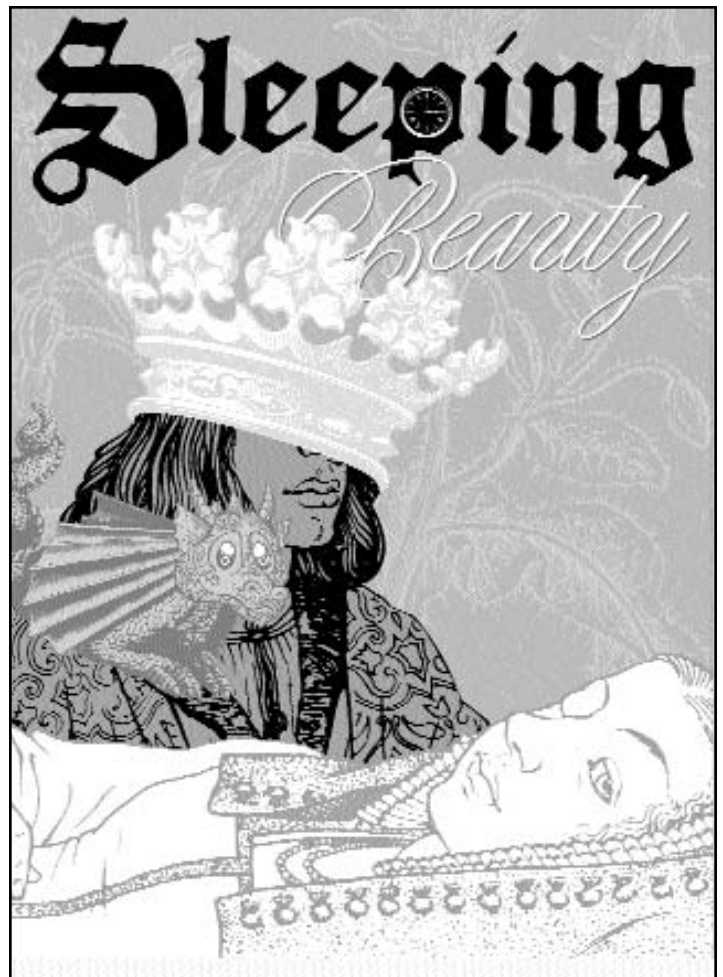
Consider sending this page home with students to share with their families.

This is the once upon a time, happily ever after tale you know - EXCEPT... This princess is nobody's marshmallow, and this prince is her very best friend. The battle between good and evil that rages around them has its roots in the petty jealousies that often shake our world, and its outcome threatens disaster. The kiss on which the story turns happens for all the right reasons. This feisty, muscular and FUNNY version of the fairy tale is one you'll want to see.

Branwen and Modron are sisters and powerful witches. But there the similarity stops. Branwen is as generous and kind as Modron is threatened and vicious, and the two of them are locked in combat. The center of their conflict is a baby girl. Branwen has chosen the orphaned infant for the childless King Peredur and Queen Guinevere, but Modron wants her for her own. With the aid of Branwen, the king and queen find the child. She is everything they've wished for! They are an instant family! Unfortunately, they anger Modron when they don't invite her to the adoption celebrations for Briar Rose, as they've named the girl. Modron curses the child: she will prick her finger on a spindle and die before her sixteenth birthday! Branwen can't destroy her sister's spell, but she can diffuse it. The girl will not die, but instead will sleep for one hundred years, to be awakened only by a kiss.

Peredur and Guinevere raise Briar Rose with only one playmate, a half man, half dragon, Gryff, who is the result of one of Branwen's spells gone awry. He is invisible to all but Briar Rose, but he is her devoted guardian (and one very funny fellow). They also remove all spinning wheels from their kingdom and will not allow Briar Rose to pass its borders. This brings about two circumstances: first, this is not okay with the restless princess as she grows into a curious and headstrong young woman. Second, it creates a shortage of cloth - what with the lack of spinning wheels - that must be supplied by neighboring kingdoms. The good news is that as a favor to a neighbor (cloth supplying) king, Peredur and Guinevere agree to take in young Prince Owain to be Briar Rose's companion. The two become best friends, and it is this friendship that motivates the prince, who often feels worthless and utterly unskilled in every way, to do whatever it takes to rescue the princess when she finally succumbs to Modron's sleeping spell and is imprisoned by the evil sister witch.

Owain's mission to rescue his friend is a journey through the fairy kingdom and past a hungry, riddle telling, spider king. As the prince goes, and ultimately succeeds, he uncovers resources of strength and loyalty that astonish him as much as anyone else. In the end one has good reason to believe that these young friends do have a good chance at living happily ever after.



A Note from Charles Way

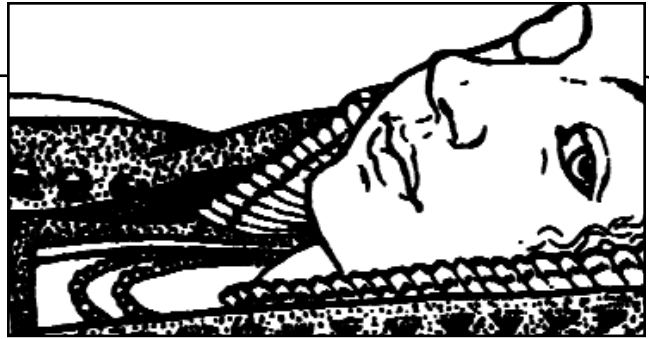
The playwright of **SLEEPING BEAUTY** speaks about his process.

I am often asked where I get my ideas-or where does a play begin? Here is one answer.

I live in Wales near some very old castles, and when I was asked to write a version of *Sleeping Beauty*, I made a quick decision to set the play in a mythical, magical landscape, that had its roots in Welsh literature and landscape.

Standing on the top of a medieval tower at Whitecastle , on the Welsh borders, I began to write the play, not literally, but in my head, in my dreams. I imagined Briar Rose being brought up in such a place, and never being allowed out because there was danger all around. It was in the days when the countryside was mostly covered in trees and I imagined her, standing where I stood, staring out over a sea of green leaves , dreaming of what might live beneath the canopy; giant spiders, dragons, faeries, anything was possible. I closed my eyes and heard her father's voice calling her name, worried that she was lost. And then I heard the sound of dark footsteps slowly coming up the cold stone stairs It was a woman, kind looking, with an old spinning wheel....

Playwright, Charles Way



This note from the playwright can be used as a starting point for several different writing activities for your students.

- Mr. Way mentions that he is Welsh, and that he lives near some old castles. This determined how he wrote the story. Ask your students to write the story based on where they live....not simply in Minnesota, but in a specific neighborhood. What are the nearby landmarks? If not a castle, perhaps a White Castle?! How might using this in the story change and affect the storytelling itself? It might even determine the style in which it is told.
- Underlying this writer's statement is the ability to take a familiar character from a well known story and to imagine in a specific way the circumstance and feelings of that character. Ask your students to choose a character from a familiar story and imagine that character fully and specifically. For example: from the story of Rapunzel comes a princess with very long hair. What color was her hair? Could she comb it? How did she feel about being in that tower? What kind of music did she sing, or did she have an instrument to accompany her? What exactly could she see from the tower window? Share the various descriptions with the class in a way that emphasizes that each of us can imagine our own interpretations of these well known characters, and that our character portraits are not set in stone and can even change from day to day. There is no "right" or "wrong" interpretation.
- The sound of footsteps became a starting point for this author. Have each student pick a story and then experiment with several different first lines. Some ideas to use: have the first line feature one of the five senses, OR feature the description of either a place, a person or a relationship OR describe an action, something happening. See if different beginnings give different energy to the writer.



A Note on Greg Banks

The following is from an article written by Dominic P. Papatola and published in the Pioneer Press about Greg Banks, director of **SLEEPING BEAUTY**.

"This play is about having children and wanting children and wanting everything to be perfect for them but knowing that, at some point, they've got to walk out into the dark forest all on their own," says Banks.

"I started in theater because I wanted to make some difference in the world," he said. "I wanted to talk about people and relationships and politics in the best way I could. And young audiences are very open in what they'll watch. You can give them any style or form, and they won't say, 'Oh, that's too weird.' They want information, and they want us as adults to talk about the world."

Banks says the Children's Theatre is one of the best places in the world to pursue such work. Theaters in his native England, he said, are less likely to divert money toward theater for young people, unless it addresses a specific issue: Banks, for example, found support in his native country for a show about children with autism and Asperger's syndrome but less for trying to develop new stories for a more general youth audience.

The other challenge, he said, lies in finding "material that you think is worthy of young people."

"It's crucial not to patronize," he said. "I'd rather err in the other direction, maybe giving them a little too much to think about. I think young people can handle provocation but not patronage."

Which is not to say CTC's season-opening production is some kind of dark, deconstructed "Sleeping Beauty." It has, Banks said, your usual lineup of characters: a king and queen, a prince and princess, witches and a baddie, in this case, a wicked spider king. Beauty — or in this case a spunky, mouthy princess named Briar Rose — is, in fact, enchanted. And she is eventually awakened by a handsome (if somewhat hapless) prince.

But like the best fairy tales, this version of "Sleeping Beauty" operates on several levels. Youngsters may simply engage in the story on its surface. Somewhat older audiences will empathize with the prickliness of Briar Rose — a teenager fighting against her parents' constraints to test the limits of her freedom.

And grown-ups are likely to see a somewhat more complicated tale — one about how the hearts of parents, though well intentioned, can also be stifling, and about how sibling rivalry (the two witches are sisters) can be a destructive thing.

Banks said it's a sign of an old tale that's still resonant — and a play that has been successfully developed — when audiences of different ages find entertainment and meaning.

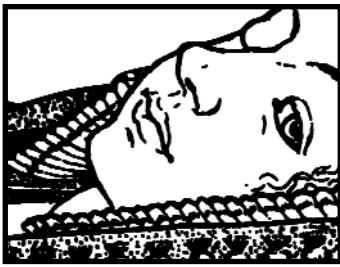
"I like a family audience," he said. "Sometimes, a mom and dad get upset because a child on stage is in trouble. The children are just watching the show. But if they ask why mom and dad are upset, that starts a conversation. So I don't think of what I do as 'children's theater.' I think of it as theater that's absolutely suitable for young people."

And the grownups who bring them.



Dean Holt and Sonja Parks as Prince Owain and Briar Rose






**GOING TO
THE THEATRE**

Theater is an art form that depends on both the artists and the audience. Every performance is affected by the audience - how people respond and how they act. When you are the audience, it depends on YOU. Each time you come to the theater, it is like making a promise to come inside the world of the play we have made for you. We agree to create a theatrical world for you to visit, and you agree to step inside it for awhile. That agreement is the last step in the process of making a play come to life each performance.

So, when you walk into a theater, you can feel that sense of impending discovery. Something important is about to happen. It's exciting to be in the room. The stage holds the secret of what is about to come to life as you find the seats reserved for you. Sometimes it is so thrilling you want to get wiggly, laugh, and shout. But remember that once the play begins, everybody in the theatre has a responsibility. Everybody is part of the play - including you. You are connected with the other people in the audience as well as the ones on stage. They can SEE you, HEAR you, and FEEL you; just as you see, hear, and feel them. Your laughter, your responses, your attention, your imagination, and most especially your energy, are important. They are a real part of the performance, and the wonderful truth is that the play can be better because of YOU.

 The Children's Theatre Company presents
SLEEPING BEAUTY
2005-2006 SEASON


COPY AND CUT INTO BOOKMARKS



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Related Resources

If you like fairytales, traditional and/or contemporary retellings, look in your school library for what's available. For stories similar to CTC's SLEEPING BEAUTY, check out some of these.

Enchantment, by Orson Scott Card. An American boy finds a sleeping princess in a Russian forest. When he kisses her they are transported to the 9th century. Adventures and a happy ending. (ages 10–14)

Shrek, by William Steig. An ogre, Shrek leaves home and terrifies everyone he encounters in his search for his equally ugly bride. Also a film based on the book, which takes the story in a whole different direction: **Shrek**, DreamWorks Pictures. Once upon a time a big, green, smelly ogre met a beautiful princess and they fell in love! (any age)

Sleeping Ugly, by Jane Yolen. When beautiful Princess Miserella, Plain Jane, and a fairy fall under a sleeping spell, a prince undoes the spell in a surprising way. (ages 10–12)

FOR TEEN/ADULT READERS: Briar Rose, by Jane Yolen. In this grim re-telling, the wall of thorns becomes a barbed-wire prison, while the sleeping princess is both victim and heroine.

SLEEPING BEAUTY is a story that has been told so many ways over so many years that in a way it belongs to all of us to tell as we wish. The more different ways you can read, see, or hear the story, the more you can enjoy a new telling. You can appreciate the choices the artists involved make.

- Ideas contained in stories, particularly fairy tales, are important enough to last through many generations. Discuss with your students how a story like this one can be told to emphasize different aspects of living and maturing. Together try to sort out which messages are universal and last through time, and which ones are contemporary and are most important for a specific group of people at a specific time.
- Also, take two stories, for example the movie *Shrek* and the play SLEEPING BEAUTY and together discuss what the similarities and differences are. Each story has a princess, for example. How are the princesses alike? There are many ways. How are they different? What about the person who fills the role of the "prince" in each? Are they traditional princes? Why? Why not?

A **Google** search for Sleeping Beauty will turn up over 3,000,000 results in about half a minute!! 22,000 or so of those are images -- many of them Disney. That translates into a story that has significant impact on our thinking and imagining.

Older students might be interested in delving deeper into the story and various interpretations of the original tale at a site from Carlton college: <http://www.gwu.edu/~folktale/GERM232/sleepingb/>

You might devise another online research project on the subject as well. For example, how far does one have to go down the list to find a picture of the princess, Briar Rose, which is not a Disney image? Or what can you find out about the ballet *Sleeping Beauty*? The materials are vast.

The classic **Charles Perrault** telling of the story is available online (and annotated) at: <http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/sleeping-beauty/>

This site might inspire some interesting explorations. Simply following the annotations of some of the vocabulary in and of itself leads to a discussion of the use of language. There are other versions of the story highlighted on the site as well.



Your Feedback

Did this Study Guide work for you?
Please fill out the questionnaire on the next page and mail it to us!

THE CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY 2005-2005 SEASON IS THE BIGGEST SEASON EVER!



- CTC's 40th Anniversary!
- The opening of a new performance space for preschool and teen audiences.
- The opening of newly remodeled classroom and performance spaces throughout.
- Don't miss CTC's Grand Opening Gala, coming September 24!



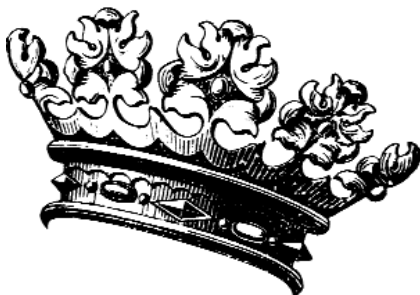
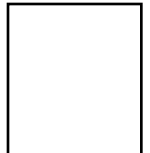
FOR INFORMATION AND TICKETS CALL 612-874-0400
OR VISIT: WWW.CHILDRENSTHEATRE.ORG

THE CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY, WHICH WAS AWARDED THE 2003 REGIONAL TONY AWARD FOR SUSTAINED ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE, IS NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED AS AMERICA'S FLAGSHIP THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES. EACH YEAR, THE CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY'S PUBLIC PERFORMANCES, SCHOOL MATINEES, REGIONAL TOUR PERFORMANCES, AND THEATRE ARTS TRAINING PROGRAMS SERVE NEARLY 330,000 PEOPLE. **PETER BROSIUS**, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR **TERESA EYRING**, MANAGING DIRECTOR

This Study Guide was developed and written by Chris Kliesen Wehrman, August 2005.

THANKS TO: Kevin Casey, Jen Clough, Mary Anna Culligan, Rachel Flynn, Michael Gutierrez, and Gregory Smith.

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THE CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY
2400 3RD AVENUE SOUTH
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55404-3597

ATTN: EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Your Feedback SLEEPING BEAUTY

1. Did using this Study Guide add to your theater experience? Yes Some No

2. How much of the Study Guide did you read? Didn't have time About a quarter All

3. What do you think of what you read? Mark as many as apply.

- Useful
- Enjoyable
- Nothing new
- Not for my students because _____

4. Did you get the Study Guide in time to prepare your students to see the play?

- Yes
- No
- Comment _____

5. What sections of the Study Guide did you find most important? _____

6. How did the experience of preparing for and then seeing the play impact you students? _____

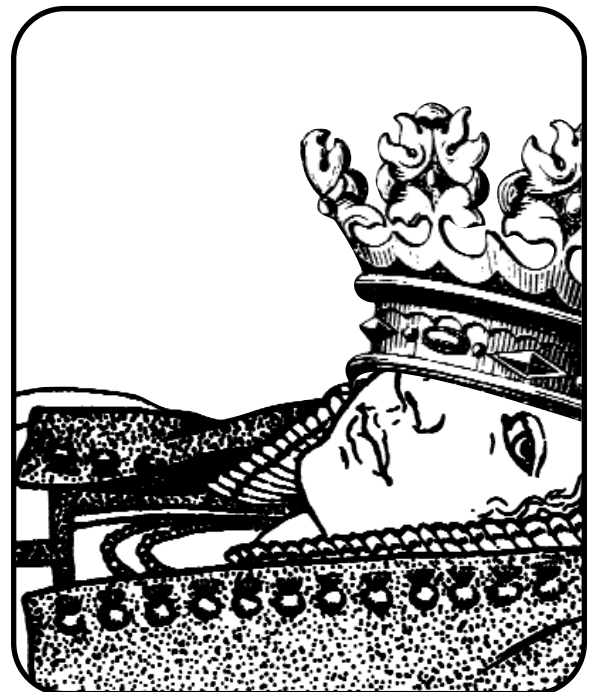
7. Did you spend more time working with the material BEFORE or AFTER you saw the play?

- Before
- After
- About the Same

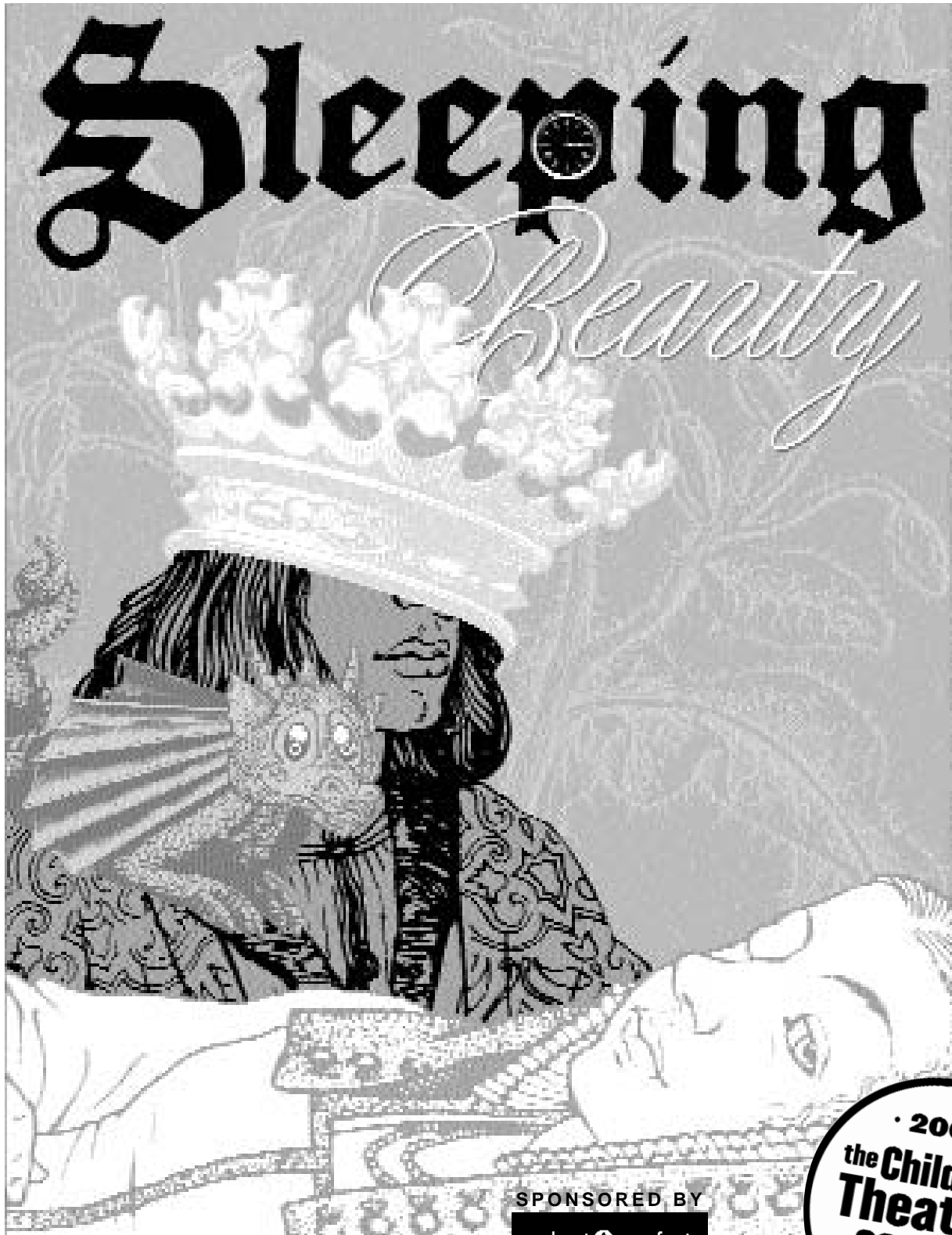
8. Which of the following best describes you?

- I teach:
- preschool
 - primary grades
 - middle school
 - high school
 - home school
 - other _____

Comments: _____



STUDENT STUDY GUIDE



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Princes and Princesses

Is anybody ever what you expect them to be? Just when you assume a princess will be meek and mild, she's bound to be explosive. Ask Briar Rose. Count on a prince to be charming, and he'll very likely stumble over his own two feet. Owain can tell you that. Almost nobody fits a mold, and it's frustrating to try. Growing is all about shattering expectations and finding the true edges of your self. And that's no fairy tale.

Choose ten words – only ten – from the collection below, and write them here to describe a prince and princesses you would like to know or be. Share these with the class and discuss why you made the choices you did.

Your Prince:



Your Princess:



What If...?

Pick one or more of the questions below and write your answer.

What if you were half dragon and half human?

What would you look like? What would you feel like?

Gryff is a wonderful character, a friend to both Briar Rose and Owain, and yet he is the product of a spell gone awry. Neither man nor dragon, but both dragon-ish and man-like, his quest is to somehow make peace with what he is – and isn't. Frustrating! But maybe it's not all bad.

- On a separate piece of paper draw your own version or versions of a half dragon, half human. Are any of them beautiful? Funny? Kind? Terrible?
- Write about what it must feel like, being half one thing and half another. Have you ever felt that way or known anyone who has?
- Imagine and write some of the advantages of a double identity like Gryff's.



• **Princess Briar Rose** wants to leave her kingdom and see the world, but when she finally has the chance to walk outside of the walls she is afraid. Why might she feel that way? What might you say as a word of advice to her?

• **Prince Owain** has no idea of how important he will be in this story because he has always been told he is worthless. Can you think of anyone you know that is more important than they feel? Write a note you'd like to send them.

