

Teacher Quick Reference Guide

07/08 Children's Theatre Company Season

The Play

Average Family

By Larissa FastHorse

Most enjoyed by ages 9+



Synopsis

Time: The Present. The IPOD, text message, Xbox generation; two incomes; overscheduled; disconnected; latch key kid families; is this the image of an average family that our forefathers had in mind? Nathan Roubidoux struggles as he watches his family drift further and further apart. In a desperate act to reclaim his family, he involves them in a reality TV show with the hope that by having them go back to their roots they can learn to appreciate the true spirit of the word "family". Journey with the Roubidoux's as they compete to win an RV by surviving three months on the Minnesota prairie 1840's style. Can they survive the three months without killing each other... or starving to death? What do they learn about themselves as individuals, a family, and how do they reclaim their culture as part of the Dakota tribe? What does it mean to win?

The Big Ideas

- Family
- Reconnecting with your heritage
- Life in 1840's Minnesota

Classroom and Standard Connections

History and Social Studies

Grade level 4-8

Standard I. US History — Growth and Westward Expansion, 1801-1861: The student will demonstrate knowledge of western expansion, conflict, and reform in America.

Standard II. MN History — Civil War and Dakota War 1860-1864: The student will know and understand Minnesota's role in the Civil War and the impact of the Dakota War of 1862. 3. Students will compare the different perspectives of settlers and Dakota people on the causes and the effects of the Dakota War of 1862.

Activity: Life on the Great Plains

This is a fantastic, multi-layered lesson plan developed by the National Endowment for The Humanities. The lesson plan is geared for high school students but can easily be adapted for grades 4-8. It is constructed in four parts that may be platformed or used independently of each other. The primary focus is an examination of the concept of geographic region by exploring the history of the Great Plains. Of particular interest to this production may be part IV where students compare images of two cultures that made their homes on the Great Plains, Native Americans and "sodbusters," and summarize their distinct ways of life and the distinctive regional identity each brought to the Great Plains by writing imaginary letters from a Native American and a sodbuster homesick for the land they have left behind.

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The National Endowment for the Humanities
http://www.edsiteement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=265

Activity: The Great Debate

Have students research the establishment of reservations in the US. Divide them into groups to debate whether or not it was just to force Native Americans onto reservations?

Activity: Native Americans and Sodbusters

After researching the time period and living conditions of both groups, have the students create a scene to depict life on the MN prairie during the 1840's?



Pre- and Post-Show Discussion Questions

1. What does the word “family” mean to you? How have families changed and remained the same from the time of your parents or care givers?
2. Why does Mr Roubidoux resort to such a drastic measure to reconnect with his family? Could he have found other ways of achieving the same outcome?
3. Why and how were reservations first established? What impact did the establishment of reservations have on Native American culture and way of life?
4. Why do you think the Roubidoux’s lose their cultural identity? How does this concept of losing one’s cultural identity apply to other ethnic groups? Have students interview their families concerning their cultural heritage.
5. How has the families’ definition of “winning” changed by the end of the play?