

Teacher Quick Reference Guide

07/08 Children's Theatre Company Season

The Play

Fashion 47

Created by Diane Paulus and Randy Weiner
Most enjoyed by ages 13+



A Brief Synopsis of the Play

It's about Fashion! Or is it? Intrigue, sabotage, revenge take to the catwalk as the final taping of *Fashion 47* unfolds and envelopes you in the machinations. The story is a vehicle to explore bigger issues facing us as a society; we see how in the fashion world honor is avenged, good triumphs over evil and models stomp in high heels. *Fashion 47* is guaranteed to be unlike any other theatre event you have ever seen.

Special Ingredients: The Big Ideas in This Play

- Honor and loyalty
- Revenge vs. justice
- Idolatry in modern society

Examples of Classroom and Standard Connections

Activity: Compare and contrast American and Japanese culture in terms of the concept of loyalty.

Standard (Grades 9-12): Social Studies: III. World History: G. Age of Empires and Revolutions, 1640 A.D.-1920 A.D.: The student will demonstrate knowledge of the integration of large territories under regional and global empires.

Have students research a specific time frame in Japanese and American culture, i.e. Samurai culture under Shogunate rule and the American patriots during the American Revolution. Determine the role of **loyalty** in both these cultures. What does loyalty mean for a Samurai warrior? How does loyalty to one's clan or newly developing country supercede personal wants? How is Samurai culture different or similar to American revolutionary culture?

Create an identity wheel by drawing one large circle in the center of a paper and connecting it to five smaller circles around it, like attached spokes. Have students write their names in the center circle. Then ask them to think about groups to which they identify. Do they think of themselves as girls, boys, students, dancers, actors, scientists, Asians, African Americans, etc.? Have them choose five groups and write those names in the outer circles. Now tell them they must choose one circle to cross out, meaning they can no longer identify with that group. After they've made a choice, have them cross out another circle. Then another and another, until there is only one circle left. You may go around the group and have each member say what group they chose as the final one and why. Ask them how it felt to have to choose only one group to which they must remain loyal. Then ask them if they would be ready to stay so loyal to that group that they would have to give up their own personal freedom for the needs of the group. This gives us an idea of the notion of loyalty to Samurai. Do you think you could have been a loyal Samurai? What are some advantages to a strong sense of group loyalty? What are some disadvantages?

Activity: Research and organize a class debate on justice vs. revenge.
Standard (Grades 9-12): Social Studies: VII. Government and Citizenship: B. Beliefs and Principles of United States Government: The student will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the principles upon which the U.S. government is based.

In *Fashion47*, a character vows to avenge the disgrace of the fashion designer to whom he has pledged allegiance. To him, this act of revenge is the only way to achieve justice. Ask the students if they have seen other plays, movies, television shows, or heard popular songs in which revenge is portrayed as a form of justice. Is revenge the same as justice? Organize a class debate on this question. Encourage students to do extensive research on issues related to this question, such as war and the death penalty. Be sure to enforce a safe space in the classroom, where differences of opinion are respected and accepted. Try to get students to form a definition of justice for themselves. Once that definition is formed, challenge them to define ways in which they can pursue and promote justice in their own lives.

Activity: The role of the media in promoting idolatry

Standard (Grades 9-12): Speaking, Listening, and Viewing: C. Media Literacy: The student will critically analyze the messages and points of view employed in different media, including advertising, news programs, web sites, and documentaries.

A google search for Paris Hilton contains approximately 2,420,00 results, Hilary Clinton, 899,000; Indira Ghandi, 126,000; and Coretta Scott King, 62,000. What does this say about how popular culture and the media focus attention on celebrities vs. people who set out to bring about change? What does this say about us as a society and what role the media plays in this phenomenon? Have students research the manner in which the media covers popular culture and why we as a society buy into what the media is putting forth for our consumption. How do we realize the difference between what is factual, relevant, and of actual news worthiness? Does the media promote a sense of false idolatry by focusing so much attention on people like Paris Hilton? Have a debate on who deserves more news coverage, Lindsay Lohan or Michelle Bachelet, the first woman president of Chile?

Pre- and Post-Show Discussion Questions

Here are some questions that may add to your students' understanding of the play:

- 1) Have each student write a personal manifesto addressing how their clothing choices help to define who they are as a person
- 2) Can revenge ever be just? Discuss and debate under what circumstances.
- 3) To whom in your life do you feel most loyal? How do we show loyalty to each other? Do you think loyalty is valued in American culture as much as it was to the Japanese?