

# INTRODUCTION

## Why This Book?

Miss, where is my script? As experienced drama instructors who love the theatre and all its possibilities, we have heard this question many times. We want to give our students scripts, but only those that speak to them with authentic voices. And once they have such scripts, we want to bring those authentic voices to life with tools and strategies to draw out the meaning of important themes and issues, and to build quality performances to share either in a classroom or in a theatre.

*Truth in Play* provides students with an abundance of scripts that cover a range of voices, each paired with tools and strategies to guide instructor and student alike into the text and to draw meaningful performances out. These sixteen scenes and monologues are divided into three different sections:

**Truth in Heart** includes scenes and monologues that explore matters of the heart, such as relationships, trust, identity, teen parenting, and orientation.

**Truth in Justice** includes scenes and monologues that explore matters of parental and community authority, social justice issues, and generational tensions.

**Truth in Adversity** includes scenes and monologues that explore the matter of rights and freedoms, both of personal and global significance. Included in this section are two monologues in French, presented in the original language and in English translation.

All of the pieces have been chosen and developed by two experienced authors and curriculum leaders, Debbie Nyman and Jill Lloyd-Jones, with David S. Craig, a professional playwright; director; and actor, adding his perspective in the Notes to the Actors and Directors sections. Bringing the educational voice and perspective

together with the playwright and actor's unique skill set has resulted in a rich and multi-layered book for the classroom and theatre.

## **Who Is This Book For?**

This book is designed for instructors to create a shared collective drama experience with both veteran and novice theatre students. But it is also intended as a resource students can use to find a wide variety of contemporary Canadian scenes. The suggested strategies can be used by instructor and student alike to build meaningful interpretations and presentations, allowing students working across curriculums to use this text.

## **How Do You Use This Book?**

Visit any group of students working with scripts and you will see them struggling to find meaning in the text. While compiling this book, we asked ourselves, How can a student come to care about a character with whom they can find no personal connection?, How can they make sense of their cultural experience and identity?, and How can they make an audience care about a world that they themselves don't understand? Students need strategies and techniques to deconstruct, step inside the text, and empathize with what the characters are feeling. This process will lead them to create and share meaningful work. To help achieve this, we have created a set of teaching and learning activities tailored to each piece that we have called Digging Deeper Into the Scene, as well as a map of similar activities designed for the monologues (found on page 179). Accompanying the activities you'll find additional notes for teachers to help guide student learning. The Digging Deeper sections are divided further into four subsections: Exploring Meaning, Building Authentic Characters and Relationships, Rehearsing/Presenting, and Reflecting. Each subsection is meant to invite the student further into the text, building towards more developed understandings and performances.

## ***Exploring Meaning***

This section invites students to explore, experiment, and revisit the text to continue to find new meaning in the words. Each time the students engage with the text in a new way they apply a fresh understanding that works towards a multi-layered interpretation of the scene and the characters.

## ***Building Authentic Characters and Relationships***

Challenging students to move beyond stereotypes in their portrayal of characters in a scene requires deepened understanding and authenticity. Role-playing from a variety of modes and perspectives will give students a backstory and, in turn, empathy for the characters they are playing.

## ***Rehearsing/Presenting***

The exploration and presentation of a scene need not always culminate with a performance. Sometimes rehearsal and presentation can be part of the analyzing, revising, and editing process to work towards a richer performance. We encourage students to share their work in a variety of ways, including those found on page 177. The Notes to the Actors and Directors section that follows Digging Deeper will be helpful to the students as they move towards performance.

## ***Reflecting***

Reflection is encouraged throughout the exploration and presentation of the scene. Reflecting in each section informs the work and leads the students to new and deeper understandings of the material. The use of probing questions is designed to trigger thinking, activate creativity and imagination, and stimulate thoughtful, in-depth responses.

In working through Digging Deeper, instructors and students may choose to tackle only one subsection, but attempting all four, layering understanding as you go, will result in the strongest performances. We understand, however, that you may want to use only

certain sections and not work through the entire process, or necessarily work towards presentation every time. For these reasons it would make sense to use the Building Authentic Characters and Relationships section if this is the focus of your work, or to only use the Exploring Meaning section if you are concentrating on text and language work. We also encourage instructors to transfer strategies from one scene to another and build their own plan for Digging Deeper.

Preceding every scene, and intended as preparation for Digging Deeper, is Connecting Experience. Best practice amongst educators suggests that students must be given an opportunity to think about and connect with the themes and issues before they embark on the scene. The activities in this section include personal narrative, critical thinking, discussion, and collaboration for students to arrive at a personal and collective understanding of the issues before reading the play text. Activating prior knowledge and experience gives students a meaningful pathway to the scene.

Every scene in the book is also accompanied by a summary of the play in its entirety, background for the scene and characters, further readings and research, and notes to the director and actors. These sections provide practical insights into the scenes and monologues and clues or questions that will help students dig deeper into the material.

Discovering the layers of meaning in a character's dialogue is one of the great joys of the rehearsal process. At the Shaw Festival, actors sometimes spend three weeks doing nothing but analyzing the script so that when blocking begins they are fully aware of all that hidden history, meaning, and feeling that is affecting the character in that moment. Whether working through this book scene by scene or using it to find just one performance piece, we hope that students and instructors take the lessons and strategies learned here into every text exploration, finding the connections that build better understandings and performances. At the very least, we hope that you find the scenes and monologues, all written by contemporary Canadian playwrights, worthy of this attention to find the "Truth in Play."