

Study Guide prepared by
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Barter Playwright-in-Residence

Wait Until Dark

Adapted by Jeffrey Hatcher from the play by
Frederick Knott

***Especially for Grades 9 and up**

Barter Theatre's Gilliam Stage – Fall, 2019

(NOTE: standards included for completing the study
guide as well as seeing a performance of *Wait Until Dark*.)

Virginia SOLs

English – 9.3, 9.6, 9.8, 10.3, 10.6, 10.8, 11.3, 11.6, 11.8, 12.3, 12.6, 12.8

Theatre Arts – TL.4, TL.6, TL.10, TL.11, TL.13, TL.17, TH.1, TH.6, TH.9, TH.12, TH.15, TH.17, TH.5,
TH.11, TH.12, TH.14

Tennessee/North Carolina Common Core State Standards

English Language Arts – Writing: 7.1, 7.3, 7.7, 7.9, 8.1, 8.3, 8.7, 8.9, 9-10.1, 9-10.3, 9-10.7, 9-10.9, 11-
12.1, 11-12.3, 11-12.7, 11-12.9

Tennessee Fine Arts Curriculum Standards

Theatre -HS1.T.PT, HS1.Cr1.B, HS1.T.R1, HS1.T.R3, HS2.T.PT, HS2.Cr1.B, HS2.T.R1, HS3.T.PT,
HS3.Cr1.B, HS4.T.PT, HS4.Cr1.B

North Carolina Essential Standards

Theatre Arts – B.A.1, B.AE.1, B.CU.2, I.C.1, I.A.1, I.AE.1, I.CU.2, P.C.1, P.A.1, P.AE.1,
A.A.1, A.AE.1

Setting

The basement apartment of an old brownstone in Greenwich Village, New York,
NY, October 1944



Characters

Susan Hendrix – young housewife, blind

Sam Hendrix – Susan’s husband, a photographer

Roat – a criminal mastermind

Carlino – his henchman

Mike Talman – Sam’s friend

Gloria – a young girl, Susan’s neighbor



Synopsis

Sam Hendrix met his wife Susan in the hospital. Susan was recovering from a car accident in which she lost her sight, and Sam was recovering from a nervous breakdown he suffered after photographing some of the horrors of WWII. Now Sam is a working photographer in New York City, where he and Susan live in a basement apartment in Greenwich Village. One afternoon, after returning from a business trip, Sam discovers a child’s doll in his satchel. Later on, a woman knocks on his door. Sam recognizes her as a fellow train passenger. The woman asks if she had dropped the doll into his bag by mistake – but when Sam goes to fetch it, he can’t find it anywhere. He leaves for work, and soon mysterious people start showing up at the Hendrix apartment where the only one at home to deal with them is visually-impaired Susan. It turns out the doll is actually stuffed with diamonds, and a group of criminals led by the ruthless Roat are desperate to retrieve it. Can Susan discover what the truth is and outwit the criminals before they end her life?

Vocabulary Words

negotiate

retrieval

satchel

liberate

femme fatale

conviction

parole

ploy

decapitate

identification

assaulted

intruder

intimate

morgue

insinuation

precinct

valise

repulsive

requirement

orthopedic

facet

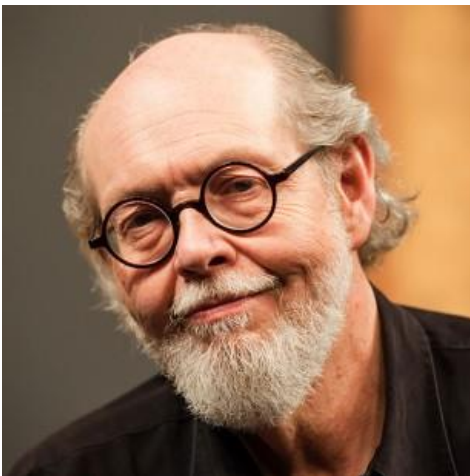
Define the vocabulary words above then write sentences using them. Remember: anyone reading your sentence should be able to understand the word from the context in which it is used.

Biography of Frederick Knott, playwright

Federick Knott was born on August 28, 1916 in China to English missionary parents. He was educated in England and eventually earned a law degree from Cambridge University. From 1939 to 1946, he served in the British Army, rising to the rank of Major. After he left the military, he began writing what would be his most successful work, *Dial "M" for Murder*. Initially, theatre producers rejected the play until the BBC aired a production of it on television to rave reviews. It finally received a wildly popular London production in June of 1952, followed by a successful transfer to Broadway that same October. Knott also wrote the screenplay for the 1954 Hollywood movie directed by Alfred Hitchcock and starring Ray Milland and Grace Kelly. Knot followed up this success with two more plays: *Write Me a Murder* (1960) and *Wait Until Dark* (1966). Knott died in New York City in 2002.



Biography of Jeffrey Hatcher, playwright



Jeffrey Hatcher is an award-winning writer for stage, screen, and television. Born in Steubenville, Ohio, he graduated from Denison University in 1980. After moving to New York, he shifted from performing to writing. In his career, he has had dozens of plays, both original and adaptations, produced on Broadway, Off-Broadway, and in theaters around the world. They include: *Three Viewings*, *A Picasso*, *Scotland Road*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Tuesdays with Morrie* (with Mitch Albom), *Ten Chimneys*, *Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Suicide Club*, *Compleat Female Stage Beauty*, *Mrs. Mannerly*, *Murderers*, *Ella*, *Mercy of a Storm*, *Smash*, *Armada*, *Korczak's Children*, *John Gabriel Borkman*, *Brand*, *An Enemy of the People*, *Pillars of Society*, *The Government Inspector*, *The Good Soldier*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Critic*, and *A Confederacy of Dunces*.

He is a member and/or alumnus of The Playwrights Center, the Dramatists Guild, the Writers Guild, and New Dramatists.



A Brief History

Barter Theatre was founded during the Great Depression by Robert Porterfield, an enterprising young actor. He and his fellow actors found themselves out of work and hungry in New York City. Porterfield contrasted that to the abundance of food, but lack of live theatre, around his home region in Southwest Virginia. He returned to Washington County with an extraordinary proposition: bartering produce from the farms and gardens of the area to gain admission to see a play.

Barter Theatre opened its doors on June 10, 1933 proclaiming, “With vegetables you cannot sell, you can buy a good laugh.” The price of admission was 40 cents or the equivalent in produce, the concept of trading “ham for Hamlet” caught on quickly. At the end of the first season, the Barter Company cleared \$4.35 in cash, two barrels of jelly and enjoyed a collective weight gain of over 300 pounds.

Playwrights including Noel Coward, Tennessee Williams and Thornton Wilder accepted Virginia ham as payment for royalties. An exception was George Bernard Shaw, a vegetarian, who bartered the rights to his plays for spinach.

Today, Barter Theatre has a reputation as a theatre where many actors performed before going on to achieve fame and fortune. The most recognized of these alumni include Gregory Peck, Patricia Neal, Ernest Borgnine, Hume Cronyn, Ned Beatty, Gary Collins, Larry Linville and Frances Fisher. The list also included James Burrows, creator of *Cheers*, Barry Corbin, and the late Jim Varney.

Robert Porterfield passed away in 1971. His successor, Rex Partington, had been at Barter in the 1950s as an actor and in the 1970s as stage manager. Rex returned as chief administrator from 1972 until his retirement in 1992. In March 2006, he passed away.

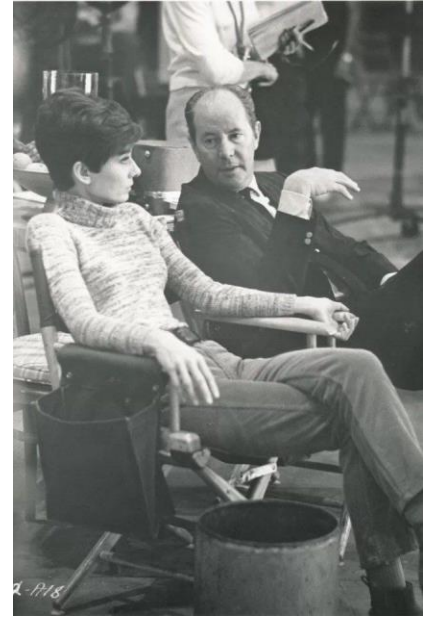
Richard Rose was named the producing artistic director in October 1992. In that time, attendance has grown from 42,000 annual patrons to more than 163,000 annual patrons. Significant capital improvements have also been made. Including maintenance to both theatres, and in 2006, the addition of The Barter Café at Stage II and dramatic improvements to Porterfield Square.

Barter represents three distinct venues of live theatre: Barter Theatre Main Stage, Barter Theatre Stage II and The Barter Players. Barter Theatre, with over 500 seats, features traditional theatre in a luxurious setting. Barter Stage II, across the street from Barter Main Stage and beyond Porterfield Square, offers seating for 167 around a thrust stage in an intimate setting and is perfect for more adventurous productions. The Barter Players is a talented ensemble of actors, producing plays for young audiences throughout the year.

History is always in the making at Barter Theatre, building on legends of the past; Barter looks forward to the challenge of growth in the future.

Wait Until Dark Movie Trivia

During World War II, 16-year-old Audrey Hepburn was a volunteer nurse in a Dutch hospital. During the battle of Arnhem, Hepburn's hospital received many wounded Allied soldiers. One of the injured soldiers young Audrey helped nurse back to health was a young British paratrooper – and future director – named Terence Young who more than 20 years later directed Hepburn in *Wait Until Dark*.



Audrey Hepburn and Terence Young on the set of *Wait Until Dark*.



The role that eventually went to Alan Arkin (Roat) was difficult to cast because the producers couldn't find actors willing to be cast in such a villainous role; not only terrorizing a

blind woman, but terrorizing beloved Audrey Hepburn to boot! Alan Arkin later went on to say how easy it was for him to get the role because of the reluctance of other actors to take it.

During the film's credits there is no mention of a costume designer. This is because Audrey Hepburn herself picked the clothes she wore from the stores in Paris.

Each of the products in the refrigerator (an all-important prop) was carefully angled so that no brand names were recognizable.



Audrey Hepburn and director Terence Young visited a school for the blind to learn more about the visually impaired. Hepburn learned enough Braille to appear to be reading and writing it, although she really isn't. Susy's use of Braille is a change from the original Broadway script (written by Frederick Knott), where she uses things like sugar cubes to keep track of phone numbers.

Word Search

Find the following words in the puzzle below:

Susan Hendrix, Greenwich Village, blind, photographer, doll, Roat, cane, Gloria, police, phone booth, milk truck, knife, Carlino, Sam, icebox, murder, Frederick Knott, diamonds, Mike, New York City, basement

F	D	B	A	S	E	M	E	N	T	M	Q	R	O	A	S
T	R	O	I	N	O	D	F	X	L	Q	T	E	O	B	U
K	R	E	L	E	K	I	M	G	U	C	L	D	S	G	S
E	V	Q	D	L	I	U	Y	Y	Y	N	D	R	L	N	A
U	P	Q	K	E	C	Y	T	P	Z	C	E	U	W	S	N
R	E	H	P	A	R	G	O	T	O	H	P	M	C	K	H
G	R	E	E	N	W	I	C	H	V	I	L	L	A	G	E
N	E	W	Y	O	R	K	C	I	T	Y	Y	Y	R	K	N
K	N	I	F	E	G	S	A	K	O	B	W	S	L	C	D
P	D	X	R	L	R	G	D	S	K	O	D	D	I	U	R
H	T	O	O	B	E	N	O	H	P	N	N	C	N	R	I
F	T	R	A	B	C	A	C	E	O	I	O	C	O	T	X
L	I	S	T	A	E	M	A	M	L	Y	A	T	W	K	C
A	F	U	N	B	K	C	A	B	D	W	J	U	T	L	C
B	D	E	U	O	N	I	I	S	K	J	R	T	D	I	E
Q	A	E	V	O	D	E	C	I	L	O	P	S	W	M	Q

True and False

Write **T** if the statement is **True** and **F** if the statement is **False**.

1. ____ Terence Young wrote *Wait Until Dark*.
2. ____ This play is set in a basement apartment in London, England.
3. ____ *Wait Until Dark* was a film before it was ever produced on stage.
4. ____ Frederick Knott was born in China.
5. ____ Susan lost her eyesight in a car accident.
6. ____ Greenwich Village is located in New York City.
7. ____ Carlino used to be a priest.
8. ____ Sam Hendrix was a photographer in WWII.
9. ____ Gloria has an unhappy home life.
10. ____ Frederick Knott also wrote the play *Dial M for Murder*.
11. ____ Roat pretends to be Sam's friend.
12. ____ The criminals use a flashlight to signal each other.
13. ____ Diamonds are hidden inside the doll.
14. ____ Frederick Knott was a Major in the British Army.

Matching

Draw a line connecting the noun in the 1st column with its corresponding description in the 2nd.

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Mike Talman | a. State Theatre of Virginia |
| 2. Barter Theatre | b. suffered mental breakdown |
| 3. Greenwich Village | c. train station |
| 4. Gloria | d. Sam's friend (supposedly) |
| 5. Audrey Hepburn | e. played Roat in film version |
| 6. Grand Central | f. New York neighborhood |
| 7. Sam Hendrix | g. Susan's upstairs neighbor |
| 8. Alan Arkin | h. played Susan in film version |

Questions/Activities

1. Susan Hendrix lost her eyesight in a car accident. As a result, she had to learn to navigate the streets of New York using a cane. **Using the internet, research the history of the “white cane”** and how it came to be used by the blind. Why is it white? How is it used? What role did the Lions Club play? What sort of laws have been written supporting its use? **Present your findings to the class.**



2. In the play, Susan’s husband Sam insists that Susan listen to determine where something fell. Why does he do this? Sam also insists that Susan practice finding her way in the neighborhood. How important is independence to the visually impaired community? How important is it to *you*? **Discuss.** When a person loses one of their senses, do their other senses compensate? What other devices have certain cities put in place to aid the visually impaired? **Discuss.**

EXTRA CREDIT: Susan was born seeing but lost her sight in a car accident. Imagine the same happened to you. Put on a blindfold, then try to find your way around your classroom. What obstacles do you encounter? Does the room seem bigger or smaller than what you’re used to? How do you use your sense of touch to navigate? Your sense of hearing? Your sense of smell? **Discuss.**

3. Watch the film version of *Wait Until Dark*, then **write a paper comparing and contrasting** it to the play. Which did you like better? Why?

4. This play is set in New York City in 1944. **How does time and place affect this story?** Would the criminals be able to signal each other the same way if it was set on a farm? How would cell phones change the story? What role did World War II play? **Discuss.**

***Suspense:* a state or feeling of excited or anxious uncertainty about what may happen**

5. How were the sound design, lighting design and set design in this play useful in creating suspense? **Discuss.** Are things scarier in the dark? Think of a movie that frightened you; what role did the musical underscoring play? What role does imagination play in suspense? **Discuss.**

6. The entire play takes place in a basement apartment. There are many things a set designer needs to consider in order to serve the play: the audience needs to see people coming and going on the street, the blinds are used to signal the criminals, the refrigerator gives off the only light at one point, a woman is seen hanging in a closet... to name a few. Below is a rendering of the set designed by Barter's Resident Scenic Designer Derek Smith:



Pick a scene from your favorite play and **design a set for it**. Keep in mind the actors' entrances and exits, what information the audience needs to follow the story, the year the story is set, etc. Create a rendering like the one above and **present it to your class**.

7. **Write a critique** of Barter's production of *Wait Until Dark*. Include the production values (set, costumes, lights, props, sound, etc.), each actor's performance and the script. What did you like? How would you have designed/directed/acted it differently?

8. In the play, Susan's husband Sam was a WWII photographer. Using the internet, research other WWII photographers. Who were the most famous? What photographs from WWII are the most iconic? **Present your findings to the class**.

ADAPT IT

9. Read Edgar Allan Poe's suspenseful short story *The Tell-Tale Heart*. Breaking into groups, adapt it into a short play or film. Be sure to incorporate technical elements to create suspense: sound effects, music, lights, etc. Rehearse it, film it (if appropriate) and present it to your class!