

Roseneath Theatre

LA MALETA (THE SUITCASE)

By Beatriz Pizano

Study Guide

**Updated for 2019
Print-friendly version**

Available online at app.roseneath.ca

Study Guide created by Roseneath Theatre 2013/2014
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(Updated in 2019 by Amna Baig)

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BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

The theatre is a place where many people gather together to enjoy live performance. It is important to remember that theatre is an active experience. The actors want the audience to be responsive to what is happening on stage by laughing, clapping and truly enjoying the experience of live theatre. However, because live theatre is interactive and the performers can be distracted by disruptions from the audience there are a few things to consider when watching any live performance. Students and teachers should be reminded of these simple ground rules before any performance at your school.

Cell Phones: Anything that beeps, buzzes or chimes needs to be turned off completely. The light your phone creates when texting is often just as distracting so that is why you should turn your phone off, rather than just muting it.

Photos/Videos: While it is true that flash photography is distracting, it is also important to know that it is not legal to record or photograph a professional production in any way due to design/copyright regulations. Please do not take photos or videos of the performance at your school.

Food and Drink: Please do not bring any food to the performance. It can be distracting in terms of both sound and smell for the actors and your fellow audience members.

Talking: It is never okay to talk during a show. It is appropriate to laugh when things are funny, gasp when things are shocking and, most definitely, to show your appreciation to the performers by applauding when the play has finished. The sounds we make naturally when we are really listening to a story are great. The sounds we make when we stop listening should be saved for after the show.

More Info for Teachers

Students and teachers should remain seated during the performance. Washroom trips should be discussed as a group and planned prior to the performance. Tell students the length of the performance so they can anticipate when they will be able to get to a washroom after the show.

No one should be allowed to leave the auditorium during the performance unless it is absolutely necessary. When, and if it is really necessary, leaving the performance space should be done as quietly and politely as possible. Exit doors which are often very noisy should be opened and shut carefully so as not to disturb others.

Students need to be supervised during the performance. Please seat teachers in a position where they can respond quickly to disturbances that might arise. Please quietly remove disruptive students that continue to act up, call out or disturb others during a performance.

Enhance your experience. Ask students to prepare one question to ask the actors after the show during the Q&A. Brainstorm with them about possible topics to get the most out of the experience!

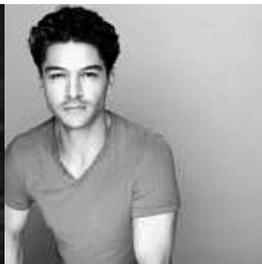
ABOUT ROSENEATH THEATRE

Roseneath Theatre is a not-for-profit charitable organization that has been producing work of the highest quality for children and their families, teachers and communities for over 30 years. Notable productions from over the years include DIB and DOB and the Journey Home, Danny King of the Basement (winner of the Canada Council for the Arts 'Best Theatre for Young Audiences Prize'), The Incredible Speediness of Jamie Cavanaugh, Smokescreen, Wrecked, and Spirit Horse. Our work is presented all over North America and occasionally in Europe and the Pacific Rim, reaching an annual audience of over 100,000 people. We are seen as one of the foremost producing companies of our kind in Canada.

THE CAST (2019):



SOFÍA RODRÍGUEZ
as Roca



OSCAR MORENO
as Paz



JILL HARLAND
as Grandmother



JESSICA ESMERALDA ZEPEDA
as Kogi Girl

THE CREATIVE TEAM (2019):



CRISTINA HERNANDEZ
Stage Manager



BEATRIZ PIZANO
Playwright



ANDREW LAMB
Director



LINDSAY ANNE BLACK
Set and Costume



DIEGO MARULANDA
Sound Design

ABOUT THE PLAY

La Maleta (The Suitcase) begins with Roca and her Grandmother packing Roca's suitcase in haste so that she can escape her native Colombia. She must go to North America where she will be safer. Roca refuses to leave without her Grandmother who has to think quickly and tells Roca she'll hide in the suitcase. The Grandmother tells Roca to close her eyes and count to ten. When Roca opens her eyes the suitcase is closed and her Grandmother is no longer there. Believing that her Grandmother is in the suitcase, Roca travels to Toronto where she stays with her Aunt Claudia and is enrolled in a local school. On her first day at school Roca arrives clutching her suitcase and is bullied by the students because she is wearing different clothes and carrying around her suitcase. At recess, Roca escapes to the playground where she meets her imaginary friend the Kogi Girl. The Kogi are an indigenous people of Colombia that her Grandmother had told her stories about. Roca and the Kogi Girl meet Paz, a boy from Roca's class. Paz is an immigrant who was adopted from Colombia when he was very young, so he doesn't remember Spanish very well and only speaks English. Roca and Paz are able to begin to communicate and learn a little more of each other's language. Paz explains to Roca what a refugee is and connects with her through their shared Colombian history. Using their imaginations Roca, Paz and the Kogi Girl enter the suitcase in search of Roca's Grandmother. Paz learns more about Colombia through Roca's eyes. They find her Grandmother, who helps Roca find the courage, hope and strength to adapt to her new home and encourages them to return to school. After returning, Roca and Paz present what they have learned to the class and invite the students to join them inside the suitcase – because if you use your imagination everything is possible.

Curriculum Connections: Language Arts, Social Studies, Drama

Character Education Connections: Empathy, Respect, Integrity

Themes: Bullying, Immigration

DIRECTORS NOTE

La Maleta (The Suitcase) has been developed over a two year period at Roseneath Theatre thanks to a playwright-in-residence grant for Beatriz Pizano from the Ontario Arts Council. Our goal with this piece has been to create an accessible story that follows a young refugee's journey to North America. *La Maleta (The Suitcase)* is told through the eyes of 10-year old Roca who must leave her Grandmother and flee her native Colombia to a place of safety.

Incorporating both Spanish and English, this production really engages students' imaginations. They gain insight into what a new student joining their class, who doesn't speak their language, might be feeling and thinking. As many refugees come to North America looking for a safer place to begin a new life, we feel this production plays a strong role in creating dialogue, understanding and empathy.

As with many young children, Roca has developed an imaginary friend who is a Kogi Girl (the Kogi are an indigenous people of Colombia). The Kogi Girl helps her to make the transition to life in Canada. This important character is created through movement and without sound, adding another layer of insight into what is happening in Roca's mind. Ultimately it is Roca's new friendship with Paz, a boy in her class that begins to help her unpack her situation and truly discover her new home. With the power of their imaginations they go on an adventure inside the suitcase, which leads to important realizations about themselves.

Thank you very much for allowing us to share this special production with your students.

Enjoy the journey!

- Andrew Lamb

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY GUIDE

With this guide, we hope teachers will help their students to consider more deeply the central themes and questions explored in this play.

The pre-show activities encourage students to reflect on issues of immigration and citizenship. Students will have the opportunity to explore why people change where they are living as well as looking into their own family history.

The post-show activities explore further the issues of equity and inclusivity portrayed in *La Maleta (The Suitcase)*.

STUDY GUIDE CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

Through participation in the following activities, students will:

- Demonstrate that Canada is a country of many cultures
- Use a variety of resources and tools to gather, process and communicate information about similarities and differences amongst family traditions and celebrations
- Explain how the various cultures of individuals and groups contribute to the local community
- Demonstrate an understanding that communities may be made up of people from many cultures
- Identify the origins and features of various families (e.g. nationality, culture, size, structure)
- Use primary and secondary sources to locate simple information about family history and traditions
- Use illustrations, key words, and simple sentences to sort , classify, and record basic information about family history and tradition
- Use appropriate vocabulary (e.g. culture, celebrations, heritage, traditions) to communicate the result of inquiries and observations about family traditions and celebrations
- Identify examples that show the participation of various cultures in the community (e.g. restaurants, places of worship, style of dress).
- Demonstrate an understanding that the world is made up of countries, continents, and regions and that people's lifestyles may differ from country to country
- Explain how the environment affects people's lives and the ways in which their needs are met
- Describe some similarities and differences in the ways communities around the world meet their needs
- Identify similarities and differences (e.g. in food, clothing, homes, recreation, land use, transportation, language) between their community and a community in another part of the world
- Ask questions and use factual texts to obtain information about communities around the world
- Use appropriate vocabulary to communicate the results of inquiries and observations about communities around the world
- Present information about children around the world
- Identify concrete examples of how government plays a role in contemporary society and of how the rights of groups and individuals and the responsibilities of citizenship apply to their own lives
- Describe the process by which immigrants become Canadian citizens (e.g. applying, residing in Canada for 3 years, learning English or French, preparing for and writing the test, participating in the citizenship ceremony)
- Identify the relevance to their own lives of individual and group rights (e.g. language rights, equality rights)

GLOSSARY

Assimilation: The act of becoming part of a group, or a different/dominant culture

Asylum: Protection that is offered to persons with a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group, as well as those at risk of torture or cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.

Citizenship: The status of a citizen, with its attendant duties, rights, and responsibilities

Culture: Learned behaviour of people, which includes their belief systems and languages, social relationships, institutions and organizations, and their material goods (i.e., food, clothing, buildings, tools, and machines)

Discrimination: Treating people differently based on prejudices or negative opinions

Emigration: The act of leaving one country or region to settle in another

Immigrant: A person who has come to a different country in order to live there permanently

Immigration: The act of entering a different country in order to live there permanently

Integration: The process of accepting someone, or of someone being accepted, as a member of a group or community

Migration: The act or process of moving from one region or country to another

Multiculturalism: The preservation of distinct cultural identities among varied groups within a unified society.

Passport: An official travel document that identifies the person who holds it and shows their citizenship. A passport gives the holder the right to leave and return to the country that issued it. A passport is the only reliable travel document that all countries accept.

Pull factors: In migration theory, the social, political, economic, and environmental attractions of new areas that draw people away from their previous locations

Push factors: In migration theory, the social, political, economic, and environmental forces that drive people from their previous locations to search for new ones

Refugee: Somebody who seeks or takes refuge in a foreign country, especially to avoid war or persecution

Settler: A new resident of a place, especially a place that is unpopulated or populated by people of a different race or civilization

PRE-SHOW QUESTIONS

1. Can you think of a time when you had to go somewhere you've never been before and you didn't know what to expect? A new school, a new house? On a vacation? What are some things you would need to think about before going there? How did it make you feel?
2. Imagine you woke up one day and you were speaking a different language than everyone else. What would you do to communicate with other people?
3. What are some special traditions that your family has? Do you eat special foods or always go to the same place for a holiday? What makes your traditions special to you and your family?
4. La Maleta means 'The Suitcase' in Spanish. Based on the title, what do you think this play is going to be about?
5. What does 'Bilingual' mean? Multilingual? Do you speak more than one language? Do you know someone who is bilingual/multilingual? How might speaking more than one language affect your life?
6. What are some different ways that we learn to speak a language? Did you or someone you know learn a new language? How did you/they do it? Why do people learn to speak new languages? What languages are spoken in your class and in your families and communities?

Activity 1

PUSH AND PULL FACTORS

Objective: Encourage students to think about how immigration and integration has impacted their communities and families.

Materials:

- Chart paper, markers

Directions:

- Discuss Canada's background as a nation of immigrants with the students, explaining that most Canadians can trace part of their family tree to recent immigration.
- Ask the students to brainstorm reasons why people move from one neighbourhood to another.
- Introduce them to concepts of "Push" factors and "Pull" factors - reasons why people would choose to leave one place and why they would choose to go to another.
- Begin by asking why they might move homes or change neighbourhoods, and move on to why they might move or change countries.
- Record responses on a T-Chart on the blackboard or chart paper.
- Next, ask students about challenges that they can imagine immigrants might face when settling into a new place. This time, ask students to take out a piece of paper and draw their own T-Chart, with two categories: Challenges and Solutions. Explain that solutions can and should include initiatives that the community can take to help newcomers settle.
- Individually, the students are given time to brainstorm some of the challenges that come along with immigration. Then, they will come up with as many solutions as possible in a Think-Pair-Share.
- After students have discussed their challenges and solutions in groups of four to eight, take up their findings with the class.

Debriefing Questions:

- Did this exercise make you think about anyone you know? Does it make you feel differently about them or make you more curious about their story?

Extension:

- Journal Response: Ask students to write a journal entry reflecting on "What was the biggest move or change in your life? How did it affect you and your family, and how did you adjust to your new situation?"

Activity 2

IDENTITY- CULTURES OF THE WORLD

Objective: To encourage students to give thought and to research the varying cultures that make up their identity and the identities of those around them.

Materials:

- Chart paper and Markers

Directions:

- Start by preparing a short presentation of Canada as a country (language(s), traditions, culture, food, etc.) for the students.
- Divide the students into groups of 4-6 students and let them pick a country (different than Canada) of their choice
- Instruct the students to research the language, food, symbols, traditions and celebrations that reflect their specific country
- Give students time to draw the flag of their country on chart paper as well as any symbols and/or images that represent their chosen country. See if they can identify where their country is located on the map of the world
- After students have been given sufficient time to complete their chart papers, ask them to briefly present to the classroom.

Extension:

After the activity, encourage the student to further explore their culture/heritage and compare and contrast with the country of their choice. Ask them to look for similarities and differences in their identity/culture to those of others in the classroom.

Activity 3

PACKING SUITCASE

Objective:

To facilitate teamwork and discussion while students experience the planning that goes into moving.

Materials:

- Chart paper and markers

Directions:

- Group students into partners or groups of four.
- Explain that each group needs to imagine that they are moving to a new country and will need to pack a suitcase.
- Together, they need to develop a criteria for what they would include, up to a maximum of ten items. Give students one or two sample criteria like "a favourite piece of clothing to wear" or "something to remind you of your friends back home." As a group, they need to agree upon the criteria for what to include.
- After they have reached a consensus on their criteria, they can individually select their items according to that set of criteria.
- Once the students have selected their items for inclusion, they can get back into their groups and share their choices and rationales.
- Discuss some of the choices that students have shared and note the similarities and differences in which things are most important to all of us.

Debriefing Questions:

- What might help someone to adjust to their new life without the people, places and things they have had to leave behind? Do you know someone who has done this?
- How could you make someone feel welcome when everything is strange and unfamiliar to them?
- What would be the hardest thing for you to leave behind? What could make it easier for you to accept living without that person/ place/thing in your new home?

Extension:

- Students can be asked to write a reflection on the item they have selected that is most important to them, to explain why it is significant.

After the Play

POST-SHOW QUESTIONS

1. How did the play *La Maleta* (The Suitcase) make you feel?
2. Do you know someone that has immigrated to Canada? What was it like for them? Why did they come here?
3. What similarities of experiences might immigrants and refugees share?
4. What is the difference between "assimilation" and "integration"?
5. What is the difference between pioneers, settlers and colonizers? Are there similar challenges that these three groups of people might face in a new land?
6. What was your impression of the set? What things helped you to know what location each scene happened in? Were these effective?
7. What sounds did you hear during the play? How did the sounds or music help to tell the story?
8. How was Roca's costume different from Paz's? Why might this be important and how does this help you to understand the characters and the story?
9. How would you feel if you were in Roca's shoes?

Activity 1

COMMUNICATING WITHOUT SHARED LANGUAGE

Objective:

In small groups or pairs, students will experiment with communicating without a shared language to empathize with the experience of integrating into a different culture and practice making connections with English Language Learners.

Directions:

- Divide students into small groups or pairs
- Introduce the premise that one person in the group does not speak the same language as the others (students can take turns playing this role). Present a number of different scenarios in which both those who speak the language and those who don't must find a way to communicate. Explain that the goal is to communicate as much as possible without speaking, to try and get to know each other or get one's message across clearly. Encourage them to experiment with different movements, sounds, gestures, body language and hand signs.
- Possible scenarios to use: What if you noticed that someone dropped their hat while they were walking? What if you noticed smoke coming out of your neighbour's window and needed to tell an adult? What if you felt sick at school? What if your friend was injured? What if you couldn't find your family at the grocery store?
- After they have had time to experiment with the scenarios, the groups can share their discoveries or re-enact their scenes with the class.
- The teacher can guide discussion by asking students to explain what was communicated in the scenes. The students can then ask questions and make suggestions for how they could have better communicated with one another.

Debriefing Questions:

- Did you find it difficult to communicate without using language?
- What might it be like to encounter situations like this every day?
- What are some ways that you can help someone who doesn't understand the language everyone else is speaking? • How did this exercise make you feel?

Activity 2

DIVERSITY VENN DIAGRAMS

Objective:

Students will establish an understanding of who they are and what distinguishes them from those around them.

Students will learn the value of respect for others.

Students will learn how differences can create positive relationships between themselves and others.

Materials:

- Venn Diagram Graphic Organizer (Appendix 2)

Directions:

- Ask students to choose three people who are in their lives to describe. Have each student create a separate 'mind map' for each person. Draw a picture of the person in the center and, using lines from the center, write or draw three unique qualities that person has. Explain the word diversity and reinforce the idea that our unique qualities in life create diversity in our class, school and the world beyond.
- Have the students complete the Venn Diagram Handout (see Appendix 2) placing themselves in one circle and one person they select from their Mind Maps in the second circle. The second person does not have to be a classmate. The student's own unique qualities will go in the first circle, the unique qualities of the person you're comparing with will go in the second circle and the qualities they have in common will go in the center where the circles overlap.
- Ask students to stand up and share their Venn Diagrams about the people they chose. After each student has shared, reinforce the idea of uniqueness and diversity in our classroom, our community and the world.

Debriefing Questions:

- Did anything you learned surprise you?
- If you know what qualities you share with another person, could that help you to understand them better?

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Social Justice Classroom Mandate

In My Classroom, I:

- Work to provide classroom materials and activities that represent the diversity, backgrounds, and experiences of students;
- Use "teachable moments" to address non-inclusive, disrespectful, or discriminatory classroom behaviours;
- Use inclusive and respectful language and approaches in all interactions with students, parents and families;
- Demonstrate a belief that all students can learn and a commitment to meeting the needs of all students in diverse ways;
- Communicate and work effectively with a diverse range of parents and families;
- Understand that equity and inclusive education principles apply to every student and not just to a group of certain students;
- Assume responsibility for examining and taking steps to modify personal beliefs and biases that are inconsistent with equity and inclusive education principles.

More Than a Play (a publication of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario)

"All aspects of the school environment... Should draw on and validate the linguistic and ethno-cultural diversity of the community".

"Even schools that serve predominantly white English-speaking communities need to help all students and parents to value diversity and interact effectively with people whose background is different from their own, because multilingualism and multiculturalism are realities in Canadian society and in the world."

Sources

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Canadian Diversity. (2017). Refugee Children and Families in the Canadian Context. Retrieved from
<https://www.ciim.ca/img/boutiquePDF/canadiandiversity-vol14-no3-2017-qtw2f.pdf>

Resources

UNHCR | Canada- <https://www.unhcr.ca/>

Caring for Kids New to Canada- <https://www.kidsnewtocanada.ca/>

Volunteer Toronto- <https://www.volunteertoronto.ca/page/HelpingRefugees>

Amnesty International- <https://www.amnesty.org/en/>

ELL resource for educators, Many Roots, Many Voices -
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/manyroots/manyroots.pdf>

Save the Children- <https://www.savethechildren.ca/>

Mercy Corps- <https://www.mercycorps.org/>

Mosaic- Refugees- <https://www.mosaicbc.org/services/settlement/refugees/>

Refugee Council- <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/>

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CBC- How thousands of asylum seekers have turned Roxham Road into a de facto border crossing-

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