MONTY PYTHON’S SPAMALOT

BOOK AND LYRICS BY ERIC IDLE
MUSIC BY JOHN DU PREZ AND ERIC IDLE
A NEW MUSICAL LOVINGLY RIPPED OFF FROM THE MOTION PICTURE MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL
FROM THE ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY BY GRAHAM CHAPMAN, JOHN CLEESE, TERRY GILLIAM, ERIC IDLE, TERRY JONES, MICHAEL PALIN
DIRECTED BY LEZLIE WADE
CHOREOGRAPHED BY JESSE ROBB

GRADE RECOMMENDATION

Grades 7 and up.

CONTENT ADVISORY

Explores mature themes. Contains coarse language, sexual innuendo and the depiction of violence and death.

STUDENT MATINÉE DATES

May 14, 15, 18, 20, 26, 28: June 4, 10, 12, 17, 19, 26; September 1, 3, 10, 15, 18, 23, 30; October 9, 13, 21.

FUN FACT!

The musical is adapted from the 1975 film Monty Python and the Holy Grail, an irreverent spoof of the legend of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. The 2005 Broadway production won three Tony Awards, including best musical.

SYNOPSIS

King Arthur and his servant, Patsy, are in search of worthy, brave men to be Knights of his Very, Very Round Table in Camelot. Along the way, Arthur recruits Robin, a collector of plague victims, and the dashing but violent Lancelot.

The Lady of the Lake and her Laker Girls aid Arthur in convincing the radical rebel Dennis Galahad to join Arthur’s cause. Together with Sir Bedevere and Sir Not-Appearing-in-This-Show, the knights head towards a Las Vegas-inspired Camelot. There, God interrupts the knights’ festivities and commands them to go out and find the Holy Grail.

While searching for the Grail, the knights encounter some crude and bawdy French soldiers, silly knights who say “Ni,” and a black knight who refuses to give up fighting despite losing his limbs. The Arthurian knights are then faced with the daunting task of putting on a Broadway musical.

Elsewhere, the Lady of the Lake bemoans her small role on stage. Sir Lancelot comes across a letter from someone in distress. He goes in search of this “damsel,” only to find it is Prince Herbert. The Prince’s father, the King of Swamp Castle, has locked him in a tower to force him to marry a wealthy princess whose father owns huge tracts of dry land. Lancelot saves Herbert from being killed by the King and discovers, in a campy disco musical number, that he is gay.

Meanwhile, King Arthur despair of ever being able to put on a Broadway musical. The Lady of the Lake assures him that he and his knights have been in a musical all this time and his final tasks are to find the Holy Grail and get married.

After battling a killer rabbit (which turns out to be a puppet), Arthur finds the clue that leads him to the Holy Grail and then goes off to marry the Lady of the Lake, whose real name is Guinevere. Sir Lancelot marries Herbert. And...everyone lives merrily ever after!

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

GLOBAL COMPETENCIES:

• Creativity
• Learning to Learn/Self-Awareness
• Communication
• Collaboration
• Critical Thinking

GRADES 7–8:

• The Arts (Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Arts, Media Arts and Multimedia Technology).
• Language/English (Oral Communication, Reading, Writing, Media Literacy).
DISCOVERING DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMEDY STYLES

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: DISCOVERING DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMEDY STYLES

2 class periods (approx. 120 minutes)

OBJECTIVE: Students will identify and explain the different types of comedy found in this musical.

INSTRUCTIONS: Teachers will need to write each of the categories listed below on a separate piece of paper and place them in a hat. Divide the class into six groups.

RESOURCES: Slips of paper, hat, computers, dictionaries, Bristol boards, coloured paper, markers etc.

Before seeing the show:
1. Inform the students that this musical uses a variety of different types of comedy.
2. Place the following categories in a hat (see glossary of terms below):
   - Dark comedy (also known as black comedy)
   - Farce
   - Absurdism
   - Spoof
   - Satire
3. Divide the class into six groups and have each group draw a category out of the hat.
4. Students will create a poster that best captures the type of humour they have picked. To help them get started, have each group look up the definition and list similar examples of this style from TV, film, videos etc.
5. Once the groups have completed their posters, have them come together and share their findings with the rest of the class.
6. Afterwards, debrief with the class and ask the following questions:
   a. What makes things funny?
   b. What style of humour do you find funny? Why?
   c. Why do you think Monty Python’s Spamalot uses a variety of comedic styles?
   d. How do you imagine all these styles will be incorporated into Monty Python’s Spamalot?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY
Have each group create a one-minute scene using their assigned comedic style. Then have each group perform it for the entire class.

TEACHER’S GLOSSARY

Dark comedy: Also known as dark humour/comedy or gallows humour, this is a style that deals with subjects usually considered too serious, painful or vulgar for other forms of comedy, including death, violence, discrimination, disease and sexuality.

Farce: This genre is marked by buffoonery and horseplay, including crude characterizations and improbable situations.

Satire: Humour, irony and exaggeration are used to expose or criticize people’s stupidity, vices or politics.

Absurdism: Comedy that relies on intentionally ridiculous or bizarre behaviours or characters.

Spoof: A humorous imitation in which the characteristic features of another work – typically a film or a particular genre – are exaggerated for comic effect.

Slapstick: An exaggerated form of physical comedy.

EDUCATION ENRICHMENT

Study Guide available at stratfordfestival.ca/studyguides

Workshops and post-show chats may be arranged by calling the Education Department at 519.271.4040, ext. 2354.

Festival Theatre, Costume and Props Warehouse, Archives and Set Changeover tours may be arranged by calling the Box Office at 1.800.567.1600.

THEATRE ETIQUETTE AND THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

Live theatre is a magical experience shared and respected by all: both by audience members and performers. The actors feed off your energy and your response to their work on stage. Here are a few things to help everyone maximize their enjoyment of the performance:

- If you leave the auditorium, you will be re-seated at an appropriate time during the performance.
- Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices during the performance.
- Please refrain from talking or eating during the performance.
- Please do respond to the performance through laughter, tears or captivated smiles.

Here’s some more information on theatre etiquette.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Online: www.stratfordfestival.ca/schools
Email: groups@stratfordfestival.ca
Phone: 1.800.567.1600 or 519.273.1600

Mail:
Stratford Festival
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