**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**PART I: THE PLAY**

The Characters ............................................................................................................................................... 3
The Story ............................................................................................................................................................. 3
Going by the Book: An Excerpt from *Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures* ............................................................................................................................................... 4
Meet the Playwright: John Glore ....................................................................................................... 6
Meet the Author: Kate DiCamillo ....................................................................................................... 6
An Interview with Author Kate DiCamillo ........................................................................................................... 6
An Interview with Playwright John Glore ........................................................................................................... 6
From Page to Stage: Bringing *Flora & Ulysses* to Life ................................................................................. 6

**PART II: CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

**Before the Show**

Questions for Discussion and Activities ............................................................................ 7
Holy Unanticipated Words! ........................................................................................................ 8

**After the Show**

Discussion About the Theatre .................................................................................................. 10
Discussion About the Play .......................................................................................................... 10
Activities ................................................................................................................................................. 11

**PART III: AT THE THEATRE**

Welcome to the Julianne Argyros Stage ....................................................................................12
Theatre Etiquette ...........................................................................................................................................12
Student Tips for Theatre Trips .............................................................................................................12
Programs ............................................................................................................................................................ 12

**PART IV: EDUCATION STATION**

California Visual and Performing Arts Framework ...........................................................................13
Five Strands of Art Education ..............................................................................................................14
Basic Theatre Vocabulary ......................................................................................................................15

**PART V: RESOURCES**

More Information on *Flora & Ulysses* ........................................................................................................ 16
More About Author Kate DiCamillo and Illustrator K.G. Campbell ......................................................... 16
Other Useful Links ........................................................................................................................................ 16
Part I: The Play

THE CHARACTERS

Flora, a 10-year-old girl
Tootie Tickham, her neighbor
Donald Tickham, Tootie’s husband
Ulysses, a squirrel
Phyllis Buckman, Flora’s mother
George Buckman, Flora’s father
William Spiver, an 11-year-old boy

Dr. Meescham, an elderly woman
Rita, a waitress at Do-Nut World
Ernie, a cook at Do-Nut World
Mr. Klaus, a cat
Alfred T. Slipper, a.k.a. The Amazing Incandesto; looks a lot like George Buckman

THE STORY

It all begins with a vacuum cleaner: a Ulysses Super-Suction Multi-Terrain 2000X, to be exact. One day, Flora Belle Buckman, a 10-year-old girl and a natural-born cynic, spots this large device on the lawn of her neighbor Tootie Tickham. The Ulysses 2000X is the crown jewel of vacuums, complete with indoor-outdoor capabilities. So once Tootie turns it on, it sucks up everything in sight, including a nearby squirrel. Flora immediately jumps to the rescue. She frees the squirrel from the belly of the vacuum and performs CPR—a technique she learned in TERRIBLE THINGS CAN HAPPEN TO YOU!, a series that runs in the back of her favorite superhero comic book, The Illuminated Adventures of the Amazing Incandesto!

Once the squirrel is revived, he is terribly hungry. And so he lifts the vacuum off the ground and shakes it until all the crumbs inside the machine fall into his mouth. Holy unanticipated occurrences! A squirrel with super strength! Tootie is shocked, but Flora knows from The Amazing Incandesto that impossible things happen all the time. Flora also knows that this squirrel is no longer just an average squirrel—he’s a superhero. She names him Ulysses and takes him home with her.

At home, Flora hides Ulysses from her mother, Phyllis. Flora suspects that Phyllis, a romance novelist who knows nothing about superheroes, won’t understand Ulysses’ power. After all, Phyllis barely understands her own daughter and seems to love the gaudy Bo-Peep lamp (that she proudly displays at the foot of the stairs) more than Flora. Flora feels closer to her father, George; he loves The Amazing Incandesto, too. But Phyllis and George are divorced, and so Flora only sees her father during scheduled visits.

That night, while Flora is sleeping, Ulysses sneaks downstairs in search of food. In the kitchen, he finds a bag of cheese puffs near Phyllis’ typewriter and devours them all. And then, Ulysses spies the keyboard...

Flora awakens the next morning to the sound of her mother. Phyllis is furious that her typewriter is covered in cheese dust and suspects that Flora is the culprit. What’s more, there’s a piece of paper in the typewriter that says: “Squirtel. I am. Ulysses. Born anew.” Holy bagumba! Ulysses can type.

Phyllis’ rant is interrupted by the doorbell. It’s Tootie, who has come by to see if yesterday’s event was real or just a bizarre hallucination. But just as Phyllis greets Tootie, Ulysses emerges from Flora’s room and jumps on top of Phyllis’ beloved lamp. Phyllis screams and demands that Flora remove the wild animal from her home. The momentary mayhem stops when the doorbell rings again. This time, a
small 11-year-old boy with large sunglasses stands in the doorway. It’s Tootie’s great-nephew, William Spiver.

When Phyllis returns to her writing, Flora brings Tootie and William Spiver—who claims to suffer from a case of temporary blindness induced by trauma—to her room to show them that Ulysses can type. And the squirrel doesn’t disappoint. Using Flora’s laptop, Ulysses writes a poem. Tootie is, again, shocked; but William Spiver is decidedly unimpressed by the poem’s quality. Flora grows suspicious of William Spiver. Could this small, unassuming boy be Ulysses’ arch-nemesis? After all, every superhero must have one.

But before Flora can determine William Spiver’s intentions, her father arrives to pick her up. George is a meek and nervous man—and so it is no surprise that he grows squeamish when Phyllis asks him to kill the squirrel using a sack and a shovel. Although George and Phyllis speak in private, Flora overhears the whole thing. The Criminal Element Is Among Us!, a bonus feature in selected issues of The Amazing Incandesto, instructs readers to “become a Giant Ear.” And by doing just that, Flora has uncovered the truth: William Spiver isn’t Ulysses’ arch-nemesis, Phyllis is.

That afternoon, George takes Flora and Ulysses (carefully hidden in a shoebox) to Do-Nut World. Although George’s trunk contains a shovel and a sack that have Ulysses’ name on them, Ulysses doesn’t care—he’s too busy thinking about poetry…and donuts. He’s so distracted that when Rita, a nosy waitress, opens the shoebox, Ulysses is taken by complete surprise. He leaps into the air and flies across the restaurant. Literally. To everyone’s surprise, Ulysses can fly!

Unfortunately, Ulysses isn’t yet sure how to land, and he crashes into a wall, injuring himself. With Ulysses in her arms, Flora, along with George, runs out of the restaurant. Father and daughter rush back to George’s apartment building, where Flora spies an apartment with a sign that reads “Residing Within: The Doctors Meescham.” An elderly woman opens the door and introduces herself as Dr. Meescham. Flora hopes that the doctor can heal Ulysses.

But Dr. Meescham is a doctor of philosophy. (It was the other Dr. Meescham, her deceased husband, who was a medical doctor.) Nevertheless, Dr. Meescham finds a way to help the ailing squirrel—a little bit of food, specifically a jelly sandwich. While tending to Ulysses, Dr. Meescham tells Flora stories about her childhood in the faraway village of Blundermeecen and even offers the 10-year-old some insight: cynics are those who don’t believe, so how could Flora, who believes wholeheartedly in Ulysses, be a natural-born cynic?

When Flora returns home, Phyllis is furious to see Ulysses alive and perched on Flora’s shoulder, and a fight breaks out between mother and daughter. Ulysses senses Flora’s pain and, in an attempt to help, flies across the room. Phyllis is shocked. But when she learns that Ulysses can type—and, on top of that, write poetry—it’s too much for her nerves to handle. Something snaps in Phyllis.

That night, while Flora sleeps, Phyllis kidnaps Ulysses and leaves the house with a shovel in her hand. Once Phyllis is gone, Flora awakens suddenly and senses that something is amiss. In the kitchen, she finds a goodbye note signed by “Mr. Squirrel.” (Ulysses would never call himself Mr. Squirrel!) Almost immediately, Flora pieces it all together: Phyllis plans to kill Ulysses. This malfeasance must be stopped!

In a panic, Flora runs next door to enlist William Spiver on her mission to find Ulysses. Tootie awakens and agrees to come along, too. Together, they head off in Tootie’s car on a frantic journey to save the superhero squirrel. But with time running out, it might be up to Ulysses to save himself….
In this excerpt from Chapter Eleven: “A Gigantic Vat of Incandesto!,” Flora brings Ulysses to her bedroom and talks to him about superheroes.

She put Ulysses down on her bed, and he looked even smaller sitting there in the bright overhead light.

He also looked pretty bald.

“Good grief,” said Flora.

The squirrel certainly didn’t look very heroic. But then, neither did the nearsighted, unassuming janitor Alfred T. Slipper.

Ulysses looked up at Flora, and then he looked down at his tail. He seemed relieved to see it. He lowered his nose and sniffed along the length of it.

“I’m hoping that you can understand me,” said Flora.

The squirrel raised his head. He stared at her.

“Wow,” said Flora. “Great, okay. I can’t understand you. And that’s a small problem. But we’ll figure out a way to communicate, okay? Nod at me if you understand what I’m saying. Like this.”

Flora nodded.

And Ulysses nodded back.

Flora’s heart leaped up high in her chest.

“I’m going to try and explain what happened to you, okay?”

Ulysses nodded his head very fast.

And again, Flora’s heart leaped up high in a hopeful and extremely uncynical kind of way. She closed her eyes. Don’t hope, she told her heart. Do not hope; instead, observe.

“Do not hope; instead, observe” was a piece of advice that appeared often in TERRIBLE THINGS CAN HAPPEN TO YOU! According to TERRIBLE THINGS!, hope sometimes got in the way of action. For instance, if you looked at your elderly aunt Edith choking on a piece of steak from the all-you-can-eat buffet and you told yourself, Man, I sure hope she’s not choking, you would waste valuable lifesaving, Heimlich maneuver-performing seconds.

“Do not hope; instead, observe” were words that Flora, as a cynic, had found useful in the extreme. She repeated them to herself a lot.

“Okay,” said Flora. She opened her eyes. She looked at the squirrel. “What happened is that you got vacuumed. And because you got vacuumed, you might have, um, powers.”

Ulysses gave her a questioning look.

“Do you know what a superhero is?”

The squirrel continued to stare at her.

“Right,” said Flora. “Of course you don’t. A superhero is someone with special powers, and he uses those powers to fight the forces of darkness and evil. Like Alfred T. Slipper, who is also Incandesto.”

Ulysses blinked several times in a nervous kind of way.

“Look,” said Flora. She grabbed The Illuminated Adventures of the Amazing Incandesto! off her desk. She pointed at Alfred in his janitor uniform.

“See?” she said. “This is Alfred, and he is an unassuming, nearsighted, stuttering janitor who works cleaning the multilloor offices of the Paxatawket Life Insurance Company. He lives a quiet life in his studio apartment with only his parakeet, Dolores, for company.”

Ulysses looked down at the picture of Alfred and then up at Flora.

“Okay,” said Flora. “So one day Alfred takes a tour of the Incandesto! cleaning solution factory, and he slips (Alfred T. Slipper—get it?) into a gigantic vat of Incandesto! and it changes him. And so now, when there is a great crisis, when malfeasance is apparent, Alfred turns himself into…” Flora flipped through the pages of the comic and stopped at the panel that showed the glowing, powerful Incandesto.

“Incandesto!” she said. “See? Alfred T. Slipper becomes a righteous pillar of light so painfully bright that the most heinous villain trembles before him and confesses!”

Flora realized that she was shouting the tiniest bit.

She looked down at Ulysses. His eyes were enormous in his small face.

Flora tried to sound calm, reasonable. She lowered her voice. “As Incandesto,” she said, “Alfred sheds light into the darkest corners of the universe. He can fly. Also, he visits the elderly. And that’s what a superhero is. And I think you might be one, too.”
MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT: JOHN GLORE

John Glore has been South Coast Repertory’s associate artistic director since 2005. He is an award-winning playwright whose work for young audiences includes *Wind of a Thousand Tales, Folktales Too, Rhubarb Jam, The Day After Evermore* and adaptations of *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* and *The Night Fairy*. His adaptation of Madeleine L'Engle’s *A Wrinkle in Time* debuted at SCR in 2010 and has since moved on to more than a dozen productions nationwide. His plays for adults include *On the Jump, The Company of Heaven, Preludes and Fugues* and *City Sky* (a scenario for a dance piece). With the performance trio Culture Clash, he has co-authored adaptations of two plays by Aristophanes, *The Birds* and *Peace*. His work has been produced at South Coast Repertory, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, The Children’s Theatre Company, The Coterie, Getty Villa and elsewhere. He received a 2000 Playwrights Fellowship from the California Arts Council and occasionally has taught playwriting and related subjects at UCLA and Pomona College.

MEET THE AUTHOR: KATE DICAMILLO

Author Kate DiCamillo was born in Philadelphia, Penn., and grew up in Florida. After moving to Minnesota in her 20s, her homesickness and the bitter winters helped inspire her first novel for young readers, *Because of Winn-Dixie*, published by Candlewick Press in 2000. The novel quickly became a bestseller and received a Newbery Honor.

DiCamillo’s next novel, *The Tiger Rising*, was published in 2001 and selected as a National Book Award finalist. Since then, DiCamillo has written picture books, early chapter books and novels—all of which have been praised by young readers, parents and critics. Her books have been awarded the Newbery Medal (*Flora & Ulysses*, 2014; *The Tale of Despereaux*, 2004), the Boston Globe Horn Book Award (*The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, 2006) and the Theodor Geisel Medal and Honor (*Bink and Gollie*, co-author Alison McGhee, 2011; *Mercy Watson Goes for a Ride*, 2007). She was the National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature, appointed by the Library of Congress, in 2014-15. DiCamillo still lives in Minneapolis, where she faithfully writes two pages a day, five days a week.

Audiences may remember the stage adaptation of Kate DiCamillo’s *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, which South Coast Repertory produced in 2015. The production (with a script adapted by Dwayne Hartford) was directed by SCR favorite Casey Stangl, who will also direct *Flora & Ulysses*. Photo by Debora Robinson.
AN INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR KATE DICAMILLO

In this interview with book publisher Candlewick Press, author Kate DiCamillo talks about her novel’s style and inspiration—and her love of food, too!

Candlewick Press: Candlewick has dubbed Flora & Ulysses “genre-bending” because it features a split narrative format incorporating graphic and comic-style layouts and illustrations. Did you write the book this way purposely? Is this a genre you intentionally wanted to experiment with?

Kate DiCamillo: I love it when you guys dub things. I’ve been going around for the last few weeks saying to myself, “I have written a genre-bending novel.” It makes me feel zippy. Alas, I cannot take any credit for the genre-bendingness. I wrote the novel as straight text. The editorial and design geniuses at Candlewick came up with the idea of doing part of the text as comics. I thought the idea was brilliant, and I said, “Holy bagumba! I will give it a try!”

Candlewick Press: Our entry point into the story of Ulysses is literally and figuratively through a vacuum cleaner. Explain how your own connection to the vacuum cleaner of all vacuum cleaners first inspired this story.

Kate DiCamillo: My mother had an Electrolux tank vacuum cleaner that she was, um, obsessed with. Actually, she loved the vacuum cleaner. And in a weird way, the Ulysses 2000X, and what happens because of it, is an homage to my mother. My mother loved to laugh.

Candlewick Press: Were you a comics reader as a child, like Flora? Do you remember having any favorite superheroes?

Kate DiCamillo: What I read as a child, what I lived in as a child, was Charles Schulz’s Peanuts. My brother and I checked out Peanuts anthologies from the Cooper Memorial Library and read them from front to back and then started over again. My favorite superhero is Charlie Brown.

Candlewick Press: Did you have any kind of strong reactions when you first saw K.G. Campbell’s art for the book? Is it anything like what you envisioned while you were writing?

Kate DiCamillo: I did have a strong reaction. I levitated with joy. It’s nothing like I envisioned. It’s better than anything I am capable of envisioning.

Candlewick Press: Another common strand in many of your books is the emergence of an unlikely hero. Ulysses is about as unlikely as they get. What drew you to a squirrel for this story?

Kate DiCamillo: Well, there was a squirrel death on the front steps of my house. And I thought, “What if the squirrel didn’t die? What if the squirrel were rescued?” It is that “marvelous what-if” that continues to preoccupy me.

Candlewick Press: Your books have certainly navigated humor writing on many levels, particularly the series for younger readers. Was it a challenge to sustain a humorous, laugh-out-loud sort of narrative of this length?

Kate DiCamillo: All I know is that this book never failed to make me laugh. I did a lot of rewrites, and I laughed my way through all of them. This could be because I am crazy. Or maybe it is because the book is funny. You decide.

Candlewick Press: Many of your characters have very healthy appetites, even food fixations. What is it about food-driven characters that you love to write about?

Kate DiCamillo: Well, obviously, if I write about food-driven characters, then I get to write about food. Which means I get to think about food. Which I love to do. Almost as much as I like to eat food.

Candlewick Press: Flora & Ulysses has a big, bursting heart, and central to that is Flora’s relationship with her parents. She winds up in a very different place with them by the end of the story. Can you talk a little bit about that journey?

Kate DiCamillo: Well, that takes us back to the “marvelous what-if” again. What if things can be put back together? What if there is a way for us to reach out to each other? What if there is a way for us to take hold of the people we love? What if we were brave enough to do that? What would happen then?

AN INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT JOHN GLORE

Before the start of rehearsals, playwright John Glore took a moment to answer a few questions about how he adapted Flora & Ulysses for the stage and why he likes to write plays for audiences who are young at heart.

South Coast Repertory:
How and when did you first come across Kate DiCamillo’s Flora & Ulysses? And after you finished reading the book, what made you want to adapt it for the stage?

John Glore: I heard about the book shortly after it was published, while we were producing The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane, another play based on one of Kate’s books. I really loved that play, so I quickly bought a copy of Flora and read it in one sitting. And as soon as I finished it, I got in touch with Kate’s representatives and asked if they would allow me to write an adaptation of Flora & Ulysses for the stage. I love the combination of humor and seriousness in the story of Flora’s difficult life and her way of escaping her troubles by reading comic books about superheroes. I find the characters charming and funny. And I thought it was really unusual that for much of the story, Flora’s mom is actually kind of the villain—although in the end we find out she means well and only wants to do what’s best for Flora.

SCR: How long did it take you to write this play? Have you continued to work on it since you completed the first draft?

JG: I started working on the adaptation as soon as I got permission from Kate, which was about two years ago. I finished a first draft in about four months and then I asked some of my co-workers here at SCR to help me out by reading the play out loud. Hearing the play out loud helped me learn what was working well and what needed rewriting. I also learned that I had to make it quite a bit shorter, because our shows in the Theatre for Young Audiences series can’t run longer than 70 minutes, and in that first reading the play was more like 90 minutes long. So I went back to work, off and on, for the next year. In the summer of 2016, Oregon Children’s Theatre brought me to Portland to do a workshop of the play because they will also be producing it around the same time that we do it at SCR and they wanted to help me get the play ready for those two productions. I spent three days with some actors and a director. They read the play and investigated the characters, while I listened and learned. I did some more rewriting during and after the workshop; then we had a second workshop here at SCR, where I did the same thing. I’m sure I will continue to work on the script all the way through the rehearsals for the production. I want to make it as good as it can possibly be, before our audiences come to see it.

SCR: The character of Flora loves comic books, and the novel’s use of comic book-inspired illustrations is integral to the storytelling. How did you capture this technique in your stage adaptation?

JG: It’s one of the things I really enjoy in the book, the way some parts of the story are told in comic-book form. So to try to capture some of the feeling of that, we’re going to be projecting things on different parts of the set—words and images—that help show what’s going on in Flora’s mind or what Ulysses is thinking. Flora loves to quote from a comic book feature called “Terrible Things Can Happen to You!,” so we’ll be projecting some of those quotes, too. Also, our set designer, François-Pierre Couture, is working with the director, Casey Stangl, to create a set that has kind of a comic-book look to it.

SCR: The character of Flora loves comic books, and the novel’s use of comic book-inspired illustrations is integral to the storytelling. How did you capture this technique in your stage adaptation?

JG: I do love all the characters, and because Flora is
the hero—or she’s the human hero, anyway—I particularly empathize with her. But I suppose my secret favorite is William Spiver. He’s part exasperating and part adorable. He’s the kind of kid who has a hard time making friends, because he’s a bit odd (or maybe more than a bit), and he’s incredibly smart. I was somewhat like that as a kid (not as smart as William Spiver, but smarter than some of the other kids) and I’ve never found it easy to make friends, so I guess I relate to him. But I also relate to all the characters in one way or another. I have kind of a romantic, poetic heart (which I keep very well hidden most of the time), so in that respect I relate to Tootie and Ulysses and even Phyllis. I wish I were more courageous, so in that way I relate to George. And I admire Dr. Meescham’s ability to hold onto hope and stay optimistic, even though she’s very old and has lived an incredibly difficult life. What’s interesting to me is that every character in the story feels lonely in one way or another, and I think that’s something that happens to all of us from time to time. We feel alone, we feel as though no one understands us. It’s good to be reminded that other people feel the same way and to be shown how they can overcome their loneliness.

SCR: You’ve written quite a few Theatre for Young Audiences plays during your career. What do you like most about writing these plays?

JG: I guess I’m still a kid at heart. I enjoy the same things in a story that young people do. And one of the great things about doing plays for kids is that you can do anything, you can let your imagination run wild. (Of course if you’re adapting someone else’s book, you do have to make sure you stay true to the original story.) The same is true for the directors and designers and actors who work with you on the production: everyone feels free to be completely creative and imaginative. And everyone is having fun. Sometimes when you do plays for adults, you feel you have to be very serious and tell difficult stories about complicated things. But the only real obligation when you write plays for kids is to make sure the kids in the audience won’t get bored. And the best way to do that is to make sure you’re never bored yourself. That doesn’t mean there aren’t serious things in plays for kids. After all, Flora is dealing with her parents’ divorce, and William Spiver has been banished from his own home and shipped off to stay with his aunt, because his mother doesn’t really understand him. But even though those are big problems—the kind of problems that many kids have to deal with in their real lives—the way Kate DiCamillo tells the story, you never stop having fun.
FROM PAGE TO STAGE: BRINGING *FLORA & ULYSSES* TO LIFE

To bring *Flora & Ulysses* to life, director Casey Stangl has assembled a talented and imaginative creative team. Check out the behind-the-scenes look at some of the production’s designs below.

Above: Set designer François-Pierre Couture’s design for *Flora & Ulysses*. Notice the comic-book influence and the panels that can be used as a surface for projections.

Above: Costume designer Sara Ryung Clement’s renderings for Flora and Dr. Meescham, as well as a research collage that helped inspire Dr. Meescham’s look.
Part II: Classroom Activities

BEFORE THE SHOW

Questions for Discussion and Activities

1. Have your students read Kate DiCamillo’s *Flora & Ulysses* independently or aloud in class.
   a. Ask the students to identify the story’s themes and underlying messages.
   b. Ask the students to identify each character’s journey. What do they want to achieve, and what’s standing in their way?
   c. Ask the students to analyze the characters’ personalities and how that affects the way in which they perceive the world around them. For example, Flora is a “self-proclaimed cynic.” What’s a cynic? Why would Flora want to be one? William Spiver says that he feels “much, much older than eleven.” In what ways does that seem true?
   d. Ask the students to think about the novel’s tone. What moments are funny? What moments feel more serious? How does this variety make the experience richer?

2. Before Ulysses came along, Flora’s favorite superhero was The Amazing Incandesto. Ask the students about their favorite superheroes. How did these characters become superheroes (what are their origin stories)? Now ask the students to dream up their own superheroes—perhaps an unexpected one like Ulysses—and to create an imaginative origin story for each one.

3. Discuss the way in which the story of *Flora & Ulysses* is presented to readers. It’s a novel with comic-style illustrations that are integral to the storytelling. Why did the author and illustrator use this technique? What does it add to the storytelling?

   ACTIVITY: After you’ve discussed the novel’s format, have the students write and illustrate their own comic-style stories, perhaps about their unexpected superheroes. It can be an entire story, or one chapter of a longer novel like *Flora & Ulysses*.

   a. Author Kate DiCamillo collaborated with illustrator K.G. Campbell on *Flora & Ulysses*. Give students the option to work together as an author/illustrator team.
   b. Before they begin, ask the students to consider the balance between text and illustrations: how much of the story will be told using prose? How much of the story will be told using illustrations?

4. Ulysses is a poet, and his first effort inspires Tootie Tickham to revisit and recite an excerpt from one of her favorite poems, a piece found in Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke’s *The Book of Hours*. Discuss the genre of poetry with the students—its use of language, sound and meter, and how it differs from prose. Encourage the students to research famous poems and poets and to share a favorite with the class.

   ACTIVITY: Have the students read Ulysses’ poems and then write their own poems in a similar style. Encourage them to think about the simplicity of the poems and how Ulysses uses images from the world around him or his memories in his writing.

   God speaks to each of us as he makes us, then walks with us silently out of the night.

   These are the words we dimly bear:

   You, sent out beyond your recall, go to the limits of your longing. Embody me.

   Flare up like flame and make big shadows I can move in.

   Let everything happen to you: beauty and terror. Just keep going. No feeling is final. Don’t let yourself lose me.

   Nearby is the country they call life. You will know by its seriousness.

   Give me your hand.

   —Rainer Maria Rilke

   Poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926)
5. Discuss all the different jobs involved to bring a production like Flora & Ulysses to life. Have the students research the occupations on this list and share what they find.

- Playwright
- Director
- Actor
- Designer
- Stage manager
- Stage crew

6. Discuss the difference between fiction and drama; then explore what it means to adapt a book into a play.

a. Ask the students to provide examples of an adaptation they are familiar with between literature, theatre, film, television, music, theme parks, video games, etc., and to identify how the story changes between each medium.

b. Ask the students to predict how Flora & Ulysses will come to life on stage. What will the designers do to make the stage look like a comic book? How will Ulysses fly? How will the actors who play multiple roles distinguish one character from another?

**HOLY UNANTICIPATED WORDS!**

Many of the characters in Flora & Ulysses have big vocabularies, especially William Spiver—he says all sorts of things that take Flora by surprise. Try to match these words with their definitions and then listen for them during the performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cynic</td>
<td>a. Bulky or fat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Righteous</td>
<td>b. Having a pleasing musical sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Unassuming</td>
<td>c. To suggest (a theory or idea)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Stout</td>
<td>d. Someone who believes that people are selfish and only interested in serving themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Multiplicity</td>
<td>e. Unusually large and daunting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Melodious</td>
<td>f. A unit of time equal to one billion years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Hinder</td>
<td>g. So full of life, power or bright color that it leaves a lasting mental image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Posit</td>
<td>h. To slow down or make difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Neurotic</td>
<td>i. Literally a sugary syrup but also used to describe writing or phrases that are sentimental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Humane</td>
<td>j. Morally good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Current</td>
<td>k. A continuous movement of water or air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Monstrous</td>
<td>l. Sympathetic and considerate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Malfeasance</td>
<td>m. Not standing out or trying to get attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Euphemism</td>
<td>n. Intense and fiery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Eon</td>
<td>o. Illegal or dishonest activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Vivid</td>
<td>p. Reluctant or unwilling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Loath</td>
<td>q. A mild word or phrase that is used in the place of one that is offensive or unpleasant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Treacle</td>
<td>r. Suffering from constant worry or fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Facility</td>
<td>s. A large number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Incandescent</td>
<td>t. Skill and ease in doing something</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is your brain capacious? If so, find the definitions for these other words you’ll hear during the performance of Flora & Ulysses.

1. Pillar
2. Hallucination
3. Treacherous
4. Preoccupied
5. Mesmerizing
6. Vanquished
7. Retract
8. Banished
9. Heft
10. Traumatized

Answers on page 19.
AFTER THE SHOW

Discussion About the Theatre

Hold a class discussion when you return from the performance and ask the students about their experience attending live theatre.

1. What was the first thing you noticed about the theatre? What did the stage look like?

2. Discuss the technical elements of the production—the set, the costumes, the lighting, the sound, the puppets and the projections. Ask the students what they liked best and why. How did these elements help to tell the story of Flora & Ulysses?

3. Discuss the ways in which the play was surprising. Was the story told in the same way that you imagined it would be?

4. Discuss the role of the puppeteer, the different kinds of puppets he used and the ways in which he manipulated them. How often were you watching the puppet, and how often were you watching the puppeteer?

5. How is attending a live performance different from attending a movie? How is the experience different when you know that the story is happening in the same room as you and that the actors can see and hear you?

Discussion About the Play

Now guide the discussion through the content of Flora & Ulysses.

1. What was your favorite moment in the play? What was the funniest? What was the strangest?

2. In what ways was the look of the stage production different from the look of the illustrations in the novel? In what ways was it similar?

3. Beyond his super strength, ability to fly and skill for poetry, what makes Ulysses a superhero? In what ways does he help the other characters?

4. In the play, Dr. Meescham says to Flora, “Cynics are people who are afraid to believe. You are not so.” Ask the students when they discovered that Flora was not a cynic. Was it before Flora did? Discuss the way in which the play looks at the importance of believing. When does each character begin to believe in Ulysses’ powers? When does each character start to believe in herself or himself? And when do the characters begin to believe in each other? How do these moments affect the plot in ways both large and small?

5. For most of the play, William Spiver claims to suffer from “temporary blindness induced by trauma,” although some (like his Great-Aunt Tootie) think he’s lying. Why do you think William Spiver “regains” his eyesight at the end of the play?


7. At the end of the play, Phyllis promises not to “care about normal anymore.” What do you think “normal” means to Phyllis? And why was it hurting her relationship with Flora?
**ACTIVITIES**

1. Have the students reimagine their comic-style stories as a piece of theatre. Give the students a choice to write a theatrical adaptation, or to design the play’s physical world (sets and costumes) or to think of other creative ways to bring the story to life, perhaps through puppetry or music.

2. Flora likes comic books. William Spiver likes science fiction. Phyllis likes romance. What’s your favorite literary genre? Now pick your favorite scene from the play, and rewrite it in a different style. Don’t be afraid to let your imagination run wild!

3. What’s the title of the sequel to *Flora & Ulysses*? If you were to introduce a new character in the sequel, who would this person (or animal, or superhero) be?

---

**LETTERS OF THANKS**

Give students the opportunity to write thank-you letters to SCR describing the most memorable aspects of attending a performance of *Flora & Ulysses*, and what they enjoyed most about their visit to SCR.

South Coast Repertory  
Attn: TYA  
PO Box 2197  
Costa Mesa, CA 92628-2197

---

**THE LONELIEST OF ALL GOD’S CREATURES**

“T”he giant squid is the loneliest of all God’s creatures. He can sometimes go his whole life without seeing another of his kind,” Dr. Meescham tells Flora. That may be true. After all, only single specimens of the large invertebrates—which can grow to over 40 feet long—have been caught in fishing nets. But because these creatures live so deep in the ocean, scientists still aren’t completely sure about their feeding and social habits.

Perhaps the giant squid, as Dr. Meescham points out, is simply misunderstood. What other animals can you think of that might have earned an unfair reputation because of their look or mysterious nature? Pick one and do some research. Share what you learned with the class, especially the facts that surprised you.

Draw a picture of another painting that could hang on Dr. Meescham’s wall and have it feature the animal you researched. What would the painting show the animal doing?

Food for Thought: When Flora calls the giant squid a villain, Dr. Meescham says, “Yes. Loneliness sometimes makes us do terrible things.” What do you think she means by that? Which characters in *Flora & Ulysses* are lonely? How does loneliness affect their behavior?
Part III: At The Theatre

WELCOME TO THE ARGYROS

The 336-seat Julianne Argyros Stage opened in 2002 and we are delighted that thousands of Orange County school children fill this state-of-the-art facility each season to enjoy our Theatre for Young Audiences productions. The Argyros is a proscenium theatre designed to provide audiences a feeling of intimacy; no seat more than 39 feet from the stage.

THEATRE ETIQUETTE

Theatre is an art form that depends on both the artists and the audience. A performance is influenced by an audience, just as an audience is influenced by a performance. The artists and staff of South Coast Repertory are creating a special new world for you to visit. When you walk into the theatre, you will have a sense that behind the curtain is the secret of that new world that is about to come to life before your eyes. Sometimes it’s so exciting that you can barely hold still. But remember: once the play begins, you have a very important job to do. Everybody in the theatre is a part of the play. You are connected to all the other people in the audience, as well as to the actors on the stage because you’re all in the same room. The actors can SEE you, HEAR you and FEEL you, just as you can SEE, HEAR and FEEL them. Your attention, involvement, responses and imagination are a real part of each and every performance. The play can actually be made better because of you!

STUDENT TIPS FOR THEATRE TRIPS

• Stay with your group at all times and pay attention to your teachers and chaperones.
• Listen carefully to the SCR staff member who will board your bus with last-minute tips.
• Take your seat in the theatre before going to the bathroom or getting a drink of water.
• Make yourself comfortable while keeping movement to a minimum.
• Do not stand up, walk around or put your feet on the seat in front of you.
• Absolutely no chewing gum, eating or drinking in the building.
• No backpacks, cameras or electronic devices are permitted in the theatre.
• Feel free to talk quietly in your seats before the show.
• Show your appreciation by clapping for the actors at the end of the play.
• After the lights come back up, wait for the ushers to escort your group out of the theatre.

PROGRAMS

Everyone who attends a Theatre for Young Audiences performance at SCR receives a program, also called a playbill. Patrons at weekend public performances receive their programs from the ushers upon entering the theatre. At the conclusion of each weekday matinee, teachers will be given programs for their students which can be distributed back in the classroom. In addition to the customary information about the play and the players, the program contains features and activities that students will have fun working on after the show, either in class or at home on their own.
Part IV: Education Station

Here are some of the California state standards that apply to attending this performance of *Flora & Ulysses* and doing the activities in this study guide.

**FROM VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS:**

**Theatre Content Standards for Grade Four**

For other grades, see [http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/.asp)

### 1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

**Processing, Analyzing and Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to Theatre**

Students observe their environment and respond, using the elements of theatre. They also observe formal and informal works of theatre, film/video and electronic media and respond, using the vocabulary of theatre.

**Development of the Vocabulary of Theatre**

1.1 Use the vocabulary of theatre, such as plot, conflict, climax, resolution, tone, objectives, motivation and stock characters, to describe theatrical experiences.

**Comprehension and Analysis of the Elements of Theatre**

1.2 Identify a character’s objectives and motivations to explain that character’s behavior.

1.3 Demonstrate how voice (diction, pace and volume) may be used to explore multiple possibilities for a live reading. Examples: I want you to go. I want you to go. I want you to go.

### 2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

**Creating, Performing and Participating in Theatre**

Students apply processes and skills in acting, directing, designing and script writing to create formal and informal theatre, film/videos and electronic media productions and to perform in them.

**Development of Theatrical Skills**

2.1 Demonstrate the emotional traits of a character through gesture and action.

2.2 Retell or improvise stories from classroom literature in a variety of tones (gossipy, sorrowful, comic, frightened, joyful, sarcastic).

2.3 Design or create costumes, props, makeup or masks to communicate a character in formal or informal performances.

### 3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

**Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of Theatre**

Students analyze the role and development of theatre, film/video and electronic media in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting diversity as it relates to theatre.
Role and Cultural Significance of Theatre
3.1 Identify theatrical or storytelling traditions in the cultures of ethnic groups throughout the history of California.

History of Theatre
3.2 Recognize key developments in the entertainment industry in California, such as the introduction of silent movies, animation, radio and television broadcasting and interactive video.

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING
Responding to, Analyzing and Critiquing Theatrical Experiences
Students critique and derive meaning from works of theatre, film/video, electronic media and theatrical artists on the basis of aesthetic qualities.

Critical Assessment of Theatre

4.1 Develop and apply appropriate criteria or rubrics for critiquing performances as to characterization, diction, pacing, gesture and movement.

4.2 Compare and contrast the impact on the audience of theatre, film, television, radio and other media.

Derivation of Meaning from Works of Theatre
4.3 Describe students responses to a work of theatre and explain what the scriptwriter did to elicit those responses.

5.0 CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, APPLICATIONS

Connecting and Applying What Is Learned in Theatre, Film/Video and Electronic Media to Other Art Forms and Subject Areas and to Careers
Students apply what they learn in theatre, film/video and electronic media across subject areas. They develop competencies and creative skills in problem solving, communication and time management that contribute to lifelong learning and career skills. They also learn about careers in and related to theatre.

Connections and Applications

5.1 Dramatize events in California history.

5.2 Use improvisation and dramatization to explore concepts in other content areas.

Careers and Career-Related Skills

5.3 Exhibit team identity and commitment to purpose when participating in theatrical experiences.
## Basic Theatre Vocabulary

**Acting** The process by which an individual interprets and performs the role of an imagined character.

**Action** The core of a theatre piece; the sense of forward movement created by the sequence of events and the physical and psychological motivations of characters.

**Ad-Lib** To improvise stage business or dialogue; to make it up as you go along.

**Apron** The area of the stage that extends toward the audience, in front of the main curtain.

**Audience** The people who come to see a performance.

**Backstage** The space behind the acting area, unseen by the audience.

**Balcony** An upper floor of seats projecting out over the main seating area of a theatre.

**Blocking** The movement and stage business, designed by the director and performed by the actors.

**Boxes** Seats separated from the main seating area located on the upper level near the stage.

**Box Office** A windowed space at the front of the theatre building where tickets are sold.

**Business** Any action performed on stage.

**Character** The role played by an actor as she or he assumes another's identity.

**Choreography** The art of creating and arranging dances onstage.

**Conflict** The problem or incident that creates the action and is resolved by the end of the play.

**Costume** The carefully selected or specially designed clothing worn by the actors.

**Cross** The actor's movement from one stage location to another.

**Cue** The last words or action of an actor immediately preceding the lines or business of another actor.

**Dialogue** The stage conversation between characters.

**Diction** The clarity with which words are pronounced.

**Director** The person who oversees the entire process of staging a theatrical production.

**Downstage** The part of the stage closest to the audience. At one time stages were raked, or sloped, with the lower (“down”) part closest to the audience, and the higher (“up”) part further away.

**Ensemble** A cast of actors working together effectively to present a theatrical performance.

**Flats** Canvas or wood-covered frames that are used for the walls of a stage setting.

**Green Room** A room near the stage where actors await entrance cues and receive guests. The room's name comes from Elizabethan times, when actors waited on a real “green” (or patch of grass).

**Improvisation** The spontaneous use of movement and speech, made up by an actor to create a character.

**Lobby** The public waiting area outside the theatre space.

**Matinee** An afternoon performance of a play.

**Mezzanine** Lower level seating area beneath the balcony overhang.

**Monologue** A solo speech during which the character reveals personal thoughts.

**Narrator** A character who tells the story of the play directly to the audience.

**Orchestra** Lower-level seating area immediately in front of the stage.

**“Places”** Direction given by the Stage Manager for actors to be in position before each act begins.

**Plot** The “what happens” in a story: beginning (the setting, characters, and problem); middle (how the characters work to solve the problem); and the ending (resolution of the problem).

**Project** To speak loudly so the entire audience can hear you.

**Props** All the stage furnishings, including furniture, that are physically used by the actors.

**Proscenium Stage** A traditional theatre with the audience seated in front of a proscenium arch framing the stage. SCR’s Argyros Stage is a proscenium stage.

**Rehearsal** Time performers use to practice privately before a performance in front of an audience.

**Run** Length of time the play will be presented (i.e two weeks, two months, two years).

**Script** The text of the play, including dialogue and stage directions, all written by the playwright.

**Set** All of the scenery that makes up the physical environment of the world of the play.

**Stagecraft** The knowledge and skills required to create the physical aspects of a production; i.e. scenery, lighting, costumes, props and recorded sound and music.

**Stage Left** That part of the stage to the actor’s left when the actor faces the audience.

**Stage Manager** The person who supervises the physical production of a play and who is in charge of the stage during the performance.

**Stage Right** That part of the stage to the actor’s right when the actor faces the audience.

**Strike** Dismantling the set, costumes and props at the end of the run of a show.

**Theme** The central thought, idea or significance of the action of a play.

**Upstage** The area of the stage farthest way from the audience and nearest to the back wall.
**Part V: Resources**

**More Information on Flora & Ulysses**

- A teacher’s guide to the novel: [http://www.floraandulysses.com/media/fu_teachersguide.pdf](http://www.floraandulysses.com/media/fu_teachersguide.pdf)
- A video interview with Kate DiCamillo, in which she talks about writing *Flora & Ulysses*: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQymCUPGl0Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQymCUPGl0Q)
- A book trailer created by Candlewick Press: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i6cdkkJvgaA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i6cdkkJvgaA)

**More about Kate DiCamillo and Illustrator K.G. Campbell**

**Other Books by Kate DiCamillo**

**Novels:**
- *Raymie Nightingale* (DiCamillo’s newest novel, released in April 2016)
- *Because of Winn-Dixie* (2001 Newbery Honor book)
- *The Tiger Rising* (2001 National Book Award Finalist)
- *The Tale of Despereaux* (2004 Newbery Award)
- *The Magician’s Elephant*

**The Mercy Watson Series:**
- *Mercy Watson to the Rescue*
- *Mercy Watson Fights Crime*
- *Mercy Watson, Princess in Disguise*
- *Mercy Watson Thinks Like a Pig*
- *Mercy Watson: Something Wonky This Way Comes*

**The Bink & Gollie Series, co-written with Alison McGhee:**
- *Bink & Gollie* (2011 Geisel Award)
- *Two for One*
- *Best Friends Forever*

- For more information about author Kate DiCamillo, as well as a complete listing of her books: [http://www.katedicamillo.com/](http://www.katedicamillo.com/)
- For more information about illustrator K.G. Campbell: [http://www.kgcampbell.com/](http://www.kgcampbell.com/)

**Other Useful Links**

- Check out this information on giant squids from the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History: [http://invertebrates.si.edu/giant_squid/index.html](http://invertebrates.si.edu/giant_squid/index.html)
- More information about poet Rainer Maria Rilke: [https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/rainer-maria-rilke](https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/rainer-maria-rilke)