Amos & Boris

South Coast Repertory
STUDY GUIDE

Prepared by Assistant Dramaturg Lena Romano
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## PART I: THE PLAY
- The Characters .................................................................................................................. 3
- The Story .................................................................................................................................. 3
- Meet the Playwright: Sofia Alvarez .................................................................................. 4
- Meet the Composer: Daniel Roland Tierney ........................................................................ 4
- Meet the Author: William Steig ......................................................................................... 4
- An Interview with the Playwright ....................................................................................... 5
- The World of Amos & Boris by director Jessica Kubzansky .................................................. 6

## PART II: CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### BEFORE THE SHOW
- Questions for Discussion and Activities ............................................................................ 7
- Words, Words, Words! .......................................................................................................... 7
- Blue Whale Facts ................................................................................................................ 8
- Did You Know? Blue Whales are Endangered ................................................................. 8
- The Christening of “The Rodent” ..................................................................................... 8

### AFTER THE SHOW
- Discussion About the Theatre ............................................................................................. 9
- Discussion About the Play .................................................................................................. 9
- Activities ............................................................................................................................. 9

## PART III: AT THE THEATRE
- Welcome to the Julianne Argyros Stage ............................................................................ 10
- Theatre Etiquette ................................................................................................................ 10
- Student Tips for Theatre Trips .......................................................................................... 10
- Programs ............................................................................................................................. 10

## PART IV: EDUCATION STATION
- California Visual and Performing Arts Framework ............................................................. 11
- Five Strands of Art Education ............................................................................................ 12
- Basic Theatre Vocabulary .................................................................................................. 13

## PART V: RESOURCES
Part I: The Play

The Characters

Amos: a mouse, unhappy with his life in Mouse Town
Boris: a blue whale and Amos’ new friend
Minden: Amos’ best friend in Mouse Town

The Mice: Carl, Philip, Stacey, George, Katie and Paul

Other Characters: Rainbow Fish, A Postman Fish, A Bookie Fish, An Octopus, Mom fish, Tiny Fish, Seagull

The Story

Amos is a mouse who feels unfulfilled with his life in Mouse Town. He loves the sea and spends his time gazing out over the waves, instead of dancing and partying with the other mice. One day, he decides to build a boat and go live at sea. The other mice help him build it, and he christens it, The Rodent. However, once the other mice realize he is planning on leaving, they make fun of him and laugh at how foolish he is being.

Before he leaves, he goes to see Minden, his best friend in Mouse Town, to say goodbye. When he tells her his plan to live at sea, she worries that he will be in danger, but she does not want to crush his dreams.

Amos is finally living out at sea and he loves it! He writes Minden a letter, explaining how much he loves the ocean and the beautiful fish. He is so happy, but he wishes he had a companion to share in his happiness.

After he sends the letter by way of a fish postman, he leans over the side of the boat to smell the salty air, but a wave knocks him overboard.

As Amos flails in the water, trying to stay afloat and get back to The Rodent, the waves taunt him, saying he is “too small and scrawny to keep thinking [he’s] in charge”. They end their song telling him to accept that he will die. Suddenly, Amos is lifted into the air on the back of a giant whale named Boris, who does not realize he has a guest on his back, and continues to dive in and out of the water, but Amos hangs on for dear life and eventually gets Boris’ attention. They introduce themselves to each other and discover that they both are mammals, even though one lives on land and one lives at sea. Boris lets Amos sit on his back and offers to be Amos’ tour guide and show him around the sea.

Boris shows Amos all the beautiful and dangerous things in the ocean, like the puffer fish. In return, Amos tells Boris all about life on land including elephants and other mammals. Amos tells Boris that he hopes that one day Boris can visit land and Amos can be his tour guide; but Boris tells him that if he went on land he would die of dehydration—Boris needs the water to survive.

As Amos continues to tell Boris about Mouse Town, he realizes he is in love with his friend Minden. He decides to go back home to ask her to marry him, so Boris swims him back to Mouse Town and Minden. They part ways with a tearful goodbye and Amos tells Boris that he will do anything for him if he ever needs a favor.

Back in town, Amos goes straight to Minden’s house. She is so shocked and happy that he is back and they talk for a while, then much to Amos’ surprise, Minden kisses him.

Time passes and we find Amos and Minden sitting in their living room with two of their children, Katie and Paul. Carl, the Mayor of Mouse Town, comes in to warn them about a big hurricane that is about to sweep through. On his way out, Carl tells Amos how inspired the whole town is by Amos’ adventures at sea.

After the hurricane, Amos takes a walk on the beach to assess the damage. He comes upon Boris, beached and quickly becoming dehydrated. After their quick reunion, Amos reassures Boris that he will save him, but how will a little mouse be able to save his big blue whale friend?
MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT: SOFIA ALVAREZ

Sofia Alvarez wrote her first play in fourth grade and wanted to be a playwright ever since. In high school, she wrote and directed a play inspired by the poetry of Sylvia Plath and went on to study literature and theatre at Bennington College. Her first professional play, *Between Us Chickens*, was produced here at South Coast Repertory in 2011 while she was a playwriting fellow at Juilliard. Since then, she has made her living writing plays, TV shows and movies. She also teaches screenwriting at NYU. She recently wrote the screenplay adaptation of Jenny Han’s best selling young adult novel, *To All the Boys I’ve Loved Before*; it will premiere on Netflix this summer. *Amos & Boris* is an adaptation of one of her favorite children’s books. Theatre and books are her two great loves and she is thrilled to have established a career that combines them both.

MEET THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK THAT WAS ADAPTED: WILLIAM STEIG

William Steig (1907-2003) was a cartoonist, illustrator and author of award-winning books for children, including *Shrek!*, on which the DreamWorks movies are based. Steig was born in New York City, where every member of his family was involved in the arts, so it was no surprise when he decided to become an artist. He attended City College and the National Academy of Design. In 1930, Steig’s work began appearing in *The New Yorker*, where his drawings have been a popular fixture ever since. In 1968, he published his first children’s book, *Roland the Minstrel Pit*. In 1970, Steig received the Caldecott Medal for *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*. In 1971, *Amos and Boris* was published and became a National Book Award Finalist. His books for children also include *Dominic; The Real Thief; The Amazing Bone; and Doctor De Soto* (Newbery Honor Book). On the basis of his entire body of work, Steig was selected as the 1982 U.S. candidate for the Hans Christian Andersen Medal for Illustration and subsequently as the 1988 U.S. candidate for writing. Steig also published 13 collections of drawings for adults, beginning with *About People* in 1939 and including *The Lonely Ones; Male/Female; The Agony in The Kindergarten; and Our Miserable Life*. He died in Boston at the age of 95.

MEET THE COMPOSER: DANIEL ROLAND TIERNEY

Daniel Roland Tierney is a music composer and filmmaker based in Los Angeles, Calif. For more than 10 years he played in two bands, The Mall and Screens. After touring the country and playing music festivals like CMJ, South by Southwest (SXSW) and Noise Pop along the way, he now concentrates on using his musical talents composing for theater and film.
AN INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT SOFIA ALVAREZ

Did you read Amos and Boris as a child? What inspired you to adapt this story into a play?

Sadly, I never read Amos and Boris as a child. I discovered the book while I was working as a nanny in graduate school. Of all the books I read to my charge, Amos and Boris was one that, no matter how many times I read it through, I never got sick of it (nor did he!). I thought it was so beautiful, emotional and moving that it would make a great musical. I inquired about the rights and six years later here we are!

What were your favorite books growing up? Are there other children’s books you would like to adapt?

My favorite children’s book, when I was a child, was this very dark Wilhem Grimm story called Dear Mili. It was illustrated by Maurice Sendak and I just loved it. Like, Amos and Boris, it is also about death and mortality. Although I don’t think I realized how much so when I was a child.

I’d never written for a young audience before Amos and Boris and I really enjoyed it. Dan [Tierney, composer] and I are already talking about other possible adaptations we could tackle. I love From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E Frankweiler and think that could make an interesting stage piece. There is another book I remember loving in elementary school called Hannah is a Palindrome, about a girl whose family buys a hotel. I searched for this book online for months before discovering the title had been changed to Welcome to Grandview, Hannah. I recently bought that for a re-read so who knows. But I think more young audience shows are definitely in my future.

What was your path to becoming a playwright?

I have been writing for as long as I can remember. Both of my parents are writers, so I always knew that was a career option, and I loved performing in the Christmas musicals my Catholic parochial school put on every year so I guess that’s how I got the idea I could be a playwright. The first play I ever wrote was a spoof on Snow White called Pretty Princess and the Seven Cockatoos. I was in fourth grade and the idea was for me and my friends to rehearse the play at recess and then perform it for our class. I wrote and directed a play about Sylvia Plath called Blue Hours for my senior project in high school and then went to Bennington College, where I studied literature and theatre. After college, I worked in the Blue Man Group costume shop and as an assistant in the theatre department at Creative Artists Agency, a big talent agency.

That job was great because I got to see dozens of plays I never would have been able to afford on my own. The whole time, I kept writing and directing on my own time and applied to everything I could that had an open submission policy. This paid off, as I eventually left that job to attend the Royal Court Theatre’s Young Writer’s Programme in London and then the Juilliard School.

What is the difference between writing a play for children and a play aimed at adults?

When I am writing for adults, I really just try to keep myself interested and the same was true for this project. It was important to me not to try and write down to a younger audience. Based on why I like the original Amos and Boris and also Dear Mili and the other books, I was drawn to as a child—kids are interested in some pretty intense subjects. I figured I would write the script how I wanted to write it and, if there was a problem, someone would tell me. Ideally, we have made a play that both kids and adults will respond to—which was always the goal.

The real difference between this show and my other projects is simply that this is a musical and thus a collaboration with my composer, Daniel Roland Tierney. Writing with a collaborator was very different than how I usually tackle a play. But I think Dan and I were lucky in that neither of us had written a musical before, so we got to create our own way of doing it. I remember at the start of this whole process, I asked Dan how he used to write songs with his band. He told me that he would write various pieces of music and then send them to their singer and lyricist, who would sing over the ones he responded to, creating the lyrics as he went. I had no prior experience as a lyricist for comparison, so I suggested we just work that way as well. That’s actually how Dan and I wrote the first drafts of many of the songs that ended up in the show: him writing a piece of music, emailing it to me, me singing over it and sending it back.
THE WORLD OF AMOS AND BORIS
by director Jessica Kubzansky

The story of Amos and Boris is really a hero’s journey. An adventurous mouse who feels like a misfit in Mouse Town and yearns to go to sea. He builds a boat, sets sail and meets many fascinating sea creatures. But, when his boat disappears, he is rescued by a whale named Boris who becomes a firm friend. Like all heroes who eventually find their way back home, Amos starts yearning for the beauties of the land, specifically Mouse Town, and one mouse in particular, and returns home. Because of the differing life spans of mice and whales, Amos and Boris assume they’ll never see each other again. But, when Boris washes up on the beach one day, Amos and some friends must come to Boris’s rescue.

What’s so exciting about the privilege of directing this new musical are the production puzzles that need to be solved in order to make the musical as exciting a thrill-ride as possible. I have a wonderful design team to help solve the production challenges: François-Pierre Couture designing the set; Susan Gratch designing most of the puppets; Denitsa Bliznakova designing the costumes and several puppets that are worn by actors; Rose Malone designing lights; and John Nobori designing sound.

This production calls for mice, a whale, an elephant and numerous sea creatures. There are seven actors who need to play, puppet or embody all these numerous creatures. We always knew that puppets would have to be a part of the storytelling, partially because of issues of scale. Add to that the limitations of the size of the playing space, the size of the storage space backstage, the number of actors in the musical and how many other sea creatures are called for, to say nothing of an elephant—these are all a part of what has to go into the design brainstorming.

For example, because the main thrust of the story is about the mice in Mouse Town, and it is a very human story of adventure and away versus home and whether it’s right to fit in or stand out, the creators and I decided that humans would play mice. So instead of using puppets, the bodies of our actors will be the bodies of the mice.

In a production in which mice are going to be human-sized, the challenge of how large a whale needs to be—to be many fathoms bigger than the mouse—is one of the most exciting puzzles to solve. A single actor will play Amos and a single actor will play Boris. However, the actor playing Boris will puppet a whale that is 12 feet in length, and over five feet in height. Originally, the puppet designer wanted to make Boris 19-feet long, which would have been appropriate in terms of relative scale. However, backstage storage and movement around the stage were issues that prohibited that size.

In addition, when Amos is at sea, he meets many sea creatures, some of which are smaller than a mouse, some of which are similar sized or bigger. When Amos leaves Mouse Town, the rest of the actors become puppeteers, dressed like the water that sea creatures inhabit. And there are dozens of sea creatures that Amos encounters on the sea. We initially conceived of some of the fish as puppets on actors heads, like fish hats. But the scale proved challenging there, as the fish would have appeared to be flying above Boris’s head, given that most actors are over five feet tall. We also wanted to be able to see fish go in both directions, so the fish and sea creature puppets needed to be designed to that no matter which way they were swimming we would see them as whole creatures.

And then, finally, there is an elephant who needs to be much larger than the mice and smaller than the whale.

For all these reasons, the collaborative work of the entire design team is required in order to solve the design challenges—for instance, what water looks like is a decision made together by the set, lighting, puppet and costume designers. How the space transforms from land to sea and back again depends partially on how much real estate all the puppets take up of the backstage space.

And, in every case, the desire is to solve the challenges of storytelling and scale so that the experience feels truthful, beautiful, whimsical, and magical all at once.

Now THAT’s what I call a delicious design challenge!
Part II: Classroom Activities

BEFORE THE SHOW

Questions for discussion and Activities

1. Have your students read William Steig’s *Amos and Boris* independently or aloud in class.
   a. Identify the main events of the plot and their causes.
   b. Discuss the major characters—their traits, motivations and contributions to the dramatic action.
   c. Ask the students to identify the story’s themes and underlying messages.
2. Discuss the difference between fiction and drama, and explore what it means to “adapt” a book into a play.
3. Discuss the different jobs involved to bring a production like *Amos and Boris* to life. Explain, or have the students research the occupations on this list, and discuss the findings with the class.
   a. Actor  b. Director  c. Playwright  d. Designer  e. Stage manager  f. Stage crew
4. Amos goes on a journey to see more of the world. On his trip, he meets new friends and has exciting adventures.
   a. Ask your students about trips they have taken. Where did they go?
   b. Ask them to tell the class about what they did on the trip. Did they have a good time on the trip?
   c. What kind of adventures did they go on? Did they meet any new people? Or learn anything new?
5. Amos and Boris go on a trip through the ocean, where they encounter ocean creatures, including fish, octopus and seagulls. Have your students brainstorm how the theatre might bring the ocean to life on stage.
   What will the designers do to make the stage look like Amos is perched on Boris’ back, while traveling through the ocean?

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

Some of the words in *Amos and Boris* are pretty tricky. Try to match the words with their definition and then listen for them during the performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Butt joint</td>
<td>a heavy device that is attached to a boat or ship by a rope or chain and that is thrown into the water to hold the boat or ship in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Nocturnal</td>
<td>A flat piece, usually of wood, metal or plastic, hinged vertically near the back (stern) of a boat or ship for steering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Keel</td>
<td>A joint formed by two surfaces put together at a right angle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rudder</td>
<td>A hole at the top of a cetacean’s (whale, dolphin or porpoise) head through which the animal breathes air. As whales reach the water surface to breathe, they forcefully expel air through this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Anchor</td>
<td>An animal that breathes air, has a backbone and grows hair at some point during its life. In addition, all females have glands that can produce milk and they (typically) give birth to live young.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mast</td>
<td>Belongs to or is active at night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Telescope</td>
<td>A vertical pole for supporting sails on a boat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Compass</td>
<td>Countless tiny living things that float and drift in the world’s oceans and other bodies of water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Mammal</td>
<td>These living things, or organisms, include plants, animals and other kinds of organisms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Puffer fish</td>
<td>A large rotating storm with high speed winds that form over warm waters in tropical areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Plankton</td>
<td>An instrument that allows people to see distant objects. Important tools in astronomy, or the study of planets, stars and other objects in outer space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Blowhole</td>
<td>One of the main longitudinal beams of the hull of a ship or boat; can extend vertically into the water to provide stability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Hurricane</td>
<td>Can fill their elastic stomachs with huge amounts of water (and sometimes air) and blow themselves up to several times their normal size to evade predators. Some species also have spines on their skin to ward off predators. Most contain a toxic substance that makes them foul-tasting and potentially deadly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A device having a magnetic needle that indicates direction on the Earth’s surface by pointing toward the north.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BLUE WHALE FACTS

- Amos rides on the back of a giant blue whale named Boris Blue. This excerpt from a National Geographic Kids article explains some fascinating facts about these amazing creatures.

- The largest animals to have ever lived on Earth, blue whales can grow to more than 30m long and weigh more than 130,000kg – that’s longer than three buses and heavier than three trucks!

- Pretty much everything about the blue whale is massive. It’s tongue weighs as much as an elephant, its heart is the size of a car and its blood vessels are so wide you could swim through them!

- Blue whales can be found in all of our planet’s oceans, except the Arctic, usually swimming alone or in groups of two to four. But in areas where there’s lots of food available, as many as 60 whales may come together.

DID YOU KNOW? BLUE WHALES ARE ENDANGERED

Blue whales, like Boris, are endangered species, which means they are at a high risk of going extinct. During the 18th, 19th and even into the 20th centuries whales were hunted for their meat and blubber, which was used in oil, cooking, clothing, and in various other items. Climate change also has a huge impact on whales, because global warming and associated ocean acidification may impact krill populations (see next column to learn about krill).

As the whale populations continued to decline, many organizations, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services and World Wildlife Fund regulate and are working to stop the extinction of whales and other animals.

THE CHRISTENING OF “THE RODENT”

Before Amos departs on his journey, he cracks a bottle of champagne on the bow (front) of his boat, while all the mice watch and cheer. This is a tradition that dates back centuries and continues to this day.

By Robert McNamara

The ceremony of christening new ships began in the distant past; Romans, Greeks, and Egyptians all held ceremonies to ask the gods to protect sailors.

By the 1800s, the christenings of ships began to follow a familiar pattern. A “christening fluid” would be poured against the bow of the ship, though it was not necessarily wine or champagne. There are accounts in the U.S. Navy records of 19th-century warships being christened with water from significant American rivers.

The christening of ships became great public events, with large crowds assembled to witness the ceremony. And it became standard for champagne, as the most elite of wines, to be used for the christening. The tradition developed that a female would do the honors and be named the sponsor of the ship.

Maritime superstition held that a ship that wasn’t properly christened would be considered unlucky. A champagne bottle that didn’t break was a particularly bad omen.

- Despite their humongous size, blue whales eat tiny shrimp-like crustaceans called krill. But they gobble up a quite few of these seafood snacks—up to 40 million each day, in fact!

- These marine marvels are a species of ‘baleen’ whale. Instead of teeth, they have baleen, or a fibrous material used to filter their food. When eating, the whale lets a huge volume of water and krill into its mouth. It then pushes the water through its 300-400 baleen plates, which trap the tasty grub to be swallowed. Gulp!

- To communicate with each other, blue whales make a series of super-loud vocal sounds. Their calls are the loudest of any creature on the planet, in fact, and can be heard underwater for hundreds of miles.
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 and the sound. Ask the students what they liked best and why. How did these elements help to tell the story of Amos and Boris and their journey?

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. What did the songs in the play add to the storytelling?

5. How is attending a live performance different from attending a movie? How does your experience change 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 Amos and Boris.

1. What was your favorite moment of the play? What was the funniest? What was the saddest?

2. Did you notice anything different between the book and the musical adaptation? How did that change your understanding of the story?

3. Describe Amos at the beginning of the play. Why was he unhappy? What did he want out of his life?

4. What lessons do Amos and Boris learn over the course of the play?

5. Amos loves to learn about the sea from Boris, and Boris loves to learn about life on land from Amos. What is your favorite thing to learn about? Do you like learning about the ocean like Amos? Or maybe you like history? Or music? What is your favorite subject?

6. In the beginning of the play, all the mice make fun of Amos for being different and wanting to leave Mouse Town. At the end, however, everyone calls him an inspiration. Can you think of a time when you or someone you know was misunderstood? What was that like? How did you react?

ACTIVITIES

1. Have the students draw or write where they would go if they could go anywhere, real or imagined. Would they sail on a boat or on a whale like Amos, or would they fly in a plane or take a train? What would they do when they get there? Who would they meet?

2. Have your students draw their own boat. What would they bring on their long journey and what would they name it?

3. The story of Amos and Boris deals a lot with friendship. Over the course of their journey, Amos and Boris become best friends and before they meet, Amos writes his best friend from home, Minden.

   a. Write a letter to someone you love—your best friend, a parent, grandparent, teacher, etc. and tell them all about why you love them and enjoy spending time with them.

LETTERS OF THANKS

Give the students the opportunity to write letters of thanks to SCR describing the most memorable aspects of attending a performance of Amos & Boris, and what they enjoyed the most about their visit to SCR.

South Coast Repertory
Attn: TYA
PO Box 2197
Costa Mesa, CA 92628-2197
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 is 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. With this play, the artists and staff of South Coast Repertory have created 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 boards 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. At weekend public performances, patrons 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 *Amos and Boris* and doing the activities in this study guide.

FROM VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS:

**Theatre Content Standards for Grade Three**

For other grades, see [https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/thmain.asp](https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/thmain.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 character, setting, conflict, audience, motivation, props, stage areas, and blocking, to describe theatrical experiences.

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

1.2 Identify who, what, where, when, and why (the Five Ws) in a theatrical experience.

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 Participate in cooperative script writing or improvisations that incorporate the Five Ws.

Creation/Invention in Theatre

2.2 Create for classmates simple scripts that demonstrate knowledge of basic blocking and stage areas.

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 Dramatize different cultural versions of similar stories from around the world.

Ella Saldana North and Erika Schindele in SCR’s 2017 Theatre for Young Audiences production of *Ella Enchanted*. 
History of Theatre

3.2 Identify universal themes in stories and plays from different periods and places.

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 evaluating a theatrical experience.

Derivation of Meaning from Works of Theatre

4.2 Compare the content or message in two different works of theatre.

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 Use problem-solving and cooperative skills to dramatize a story or a current event from another content area, with emphasis on the Five Ws.

Careers and Career-Related Skills

5.2 Develop problem-solving and communication skills by participating collaboratively 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 away from the audience and nearest to the back wall.
PART V: Resources

• William Steig information
  https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Steig
  https://us.macmillan.com/author/williamsteig/

• Sofia Alvarez information
  https://newplayexchange.org/users/3119/sofia-alvarez
  http://www.imdb.com/name/nm7107864/

• Daniel Roland Tierney official website
  http://www.danielrolandtierney.com/about

• More info on blue whales
  Blue whales and extinction
  http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/endangered_species/cetaceans/about/blue_whale/
  http://www.whalefacts.org/why-are-blue-whales-endangered/

• More info on christening ships