

A NOISE WITHIN PRESENTS

# The Madwoman of Chaillot

BY JEAN GIRAUDOUX  
A DRAMATIC COMEDY  
IN TWO ACTS



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Classic Theatre, Modern Magic

<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O85598/martita-hunt-as-countess-aurelia-painting-montgomery-elizabeth>



# STUDY GUIDES FROM **A NOISE WITHIN**

*A rich resource for teachers of English, reading arts, and drama education.*

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A Noise Within's study guides include:

- General information about the play (characters, synopsis, timeline, and more)
- Playwright biography and literary analysis
- Historical content of the play
- Scholarly articles
- Production information (costumes, lights, direction, etc.)
- Suggested classroom activities
- Related resources (videos, books, etc.)
- Discussion themes
- Background on verse and prose (for Shakespeare's plays)

Our study guides allow you to review and share information with students to enhance both lesson plans and pupils' theatrical experience and appreciation. They are designed to let you extrapolate articles and other information that best align with your own curricula and pedagogic goals.

More information? It would be our pleasure. We're here to make your students' learning experience as rewarding and memorable as it can be!

*All the best,*

Alicia Green  
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION



Pictured: Donnlia Hughes, *Romeo and Juliet*, 2016. PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ.

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***Let us presume that under a Parisian district there is a rich oil well. Accordingly, conspirators from large corporations, treasure hunters and all kinds of profiteers plan a secret action. One woman, the loved Aurelie and better known as the Madwoman of Chaillot decides to take a stand against demolition, plunder and conspiracy...***

***The conspiracy theory of large capital is the reality of the modern world and is stopped only by individuals, or to paraphrase Giraudoux: the prudence of a single woman is sufficient to break the teeth of madness of the entire world.***

Taken from: The Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb:  
<http://www.hnk.hr/en/jean-giraudoux-the-madwoman-of-chaillot/>

## CHARACTERS

### "A beautifully comedic play of stark contrasts in human character."

*The Madwoman of Chaillot* is a satire, partly poetic, about greed. A group of men want to drill for oil right under Paris for their own materialistic gain. The Countess Aurelia (the Madwoman of Chaillot) and her cohorts find a way of putting the men on trial in order to hold them accountable for their greed.

The Countess Aurelia is not alone in her madness. She has three mad colleagues, and is surrounded by many other people, all of whom have a few screws loose. In fact, every single character in the play seems to be mad in at least one way. The point is, though, that it is the war-bent men who are the truly "mad" ones; the Countess and her entourage may be completely crazy in a lot of small matters, but they are quite sane in things that matter. The Countess is not only able to get rid of the malefactors, but she is confident that love will conquer greed.

The characters in *The Madwoman of Chaillot* can be divided into three broad categories:

#### THE MAD



The eccentric and creative core of the play. The characters in this group try to stop darkness and greed from taking control of their world.

Countess Aurelia  
The Madwoman of Chaillot

Madame Constance

Madame Gabrielle

Madame Josephine

#### THE BAD



They have discovered oil beneath the streets of Paris and are willing to destroy whatever stands in their way of reaching it.

The President

The Prospector

The Broker

The Baron

#### THE SAD



The poets, musicians, artists, and vagabonds. They want to create, love, and enjoy one another.

Irma

The Ragpicker

Pierre

The Flower Girl

The Deaf Mute

The Doorman

The Street Juggler

The Waiter

The Street Singer

The Shoelace Peddler

The Sewer Man

## SYNOPSIS

**Act I** opens at the Café Chez Francis, a sidewalk café located in Chaillot, a suburb of Paris, where a group of politicians and promoters plot to tear up Paris to unearth the oil which a prospector believes he has located in the neighborhood. These grandiose plans come to the attention of Aurelia, The Madwoman of Chaillot, who is ostensibly not normal in her mind, but soon proves to be the very essence of practical, worldly goodness and common sense. She sees through the crookedness of the Prospector and insists that the world is being turned into "an unhappy place by the thieves and those who are greedy for worldly goods and power." Aurelia invites each of the politicians and promoters to visit her home at 11:00 that night, where she will show them the entrance to the underground of Paris.

**Act II** occurs at 11:00 that same night. Aurelia hosts a tea party for the other "mad" women of Paris. With the help of the Ragpicker—one of Aurelia's friends—Aurelia and the madwomen decide to hold a trial for the oil-seeking politicians and promoters—the despoilers of the earth—who will arrive within moments. This group of bohemians condemns these men to their deaths for their crimes of greed and intent to destroy the environment. In a scene which mounts into the realms of high poetic comedy, the Madwoman sends the culprits one by one, through a tunnel to the underground of Paris. The men are initially lured into the tunnel by the scent of oil and undreamed-of riches. However, as the men descend into the tunnel, they find themselves in a bottomless pit which opens out of Aurelia's cellar. This exodus of the wicked is accompanied by another and more beautiful miracle: joy, justice, and love return to the city again.

"A beautifully comedic play of stark contrasts in human character, *The Madwoman of Chaillot* divides the world sharply between the artists and the men of business. The businessmen, whom are called by their profession rather than by name, are interested only in finding new ways to become wealthier. They do not tolerate anyone but their own kind. On the other hand, the poets, musicians, vagabonds, and artists only want to create and to love and enjoy one another. The bohemians are a vanishing lot; the businessmen are taking over and corrupting everything that is pure and full of life. The Prospector, the Broker, and the President have discovered oil beneath the streets of Paris and seek to destroy whatever they must to get it. It falls to the Madwoman of Chaillot, an eccentric countess who acts as the core of creative thought, and the everyday people of Paris to stop the darkness from taking control of their world. There is no guessing needed to find out which side Giraudoux has taken in this battle of his, yet this dark statement about the world to come has a clearly loving touch and is funny at the same time. Each supporting character has some special purpose within the confines of the play, whether sending a spin of poetic understanding through the audience or bringing about the play's glimpse of restored order." ■

"The Madwoman of Chaillot." Samuel French. Web.

"Madwoman of Chaillot by Jean Giraudoux." The Drama Bookshop, Inc. Web.



## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT: **JEAN GIRAUDOUX**



Giraudoux was born Hippolyte Jean Giraudoux in Belloc, France, on October 29, 1882, the younger of two sons of Léger Giraudoux—a civil servant—and his wife, Anne Giraudoux. Giraudoux was an athlete and did well in school; in his teens, he received a scholarship to attend boarding school in Chateauroux, where he studied literature, philosophy, Greek, and Latin. After completing secondary school, he studied for two more years of pre-college near Paris where he took full advantage of the opportunity to visit the theaters and cafés of the city. In 1903, after completing compulsory military service, he began university study at the Sorbonne and then the École Normale Supérieure in Paris. He focused on German literature and spent a year studying in Munich

and traveling throughout Europe. He taught French at Harvard for one semester in 1907. During his university years, Giraudoux began writing and published his first stories in literary and popular magazines.

Giraudoux left academic life in 1909, to join the foreign service. He served in the Foreign Ministry for the next thirty-five years. While he travelled extensively for his work, Giraudoux continued to leave time for his writing. He served in the military during WWI where he was wounded twice and became seriously ill with dysentery. He never fully regained his health. After the war, he began writing in earnest, publishing some twenty novels, literary and political studies, and travel books over the course of ten years. He did not turn to drama until the 1920s; his first play, *Siegfried* (1928) was an adaptation of his earlier novel, *Siegfried et le Limousin*. The play starred and was directed by Louie Jouvet, who collaborated with Giraudoux on most of his plays from that time on.

During the 1930s, Giraudoux wrote nine more plays and more than a dozen other books, and became a major literary figure. When war loomed again, he was named head of wartime propaganda for France, but he retained his affection for Germany and did not recognize the Nazi threat as quickly as his peers. The occupation of France in 1940 ended all doubt that the Nazi regime posed a serious threat, and Giraudoux' writing became less optimistic. Giraudoux completed *The Madwoman of Chaillot* in 1943 during the occupation, but knew that it could not be produced until the occupation had ended. He died in Paris on January 31, 1944 of sudden kidney failure. The exact cause of his death was never discovered, and there was speculation (although never confirmed) that he was a victim of political murder. ■

Gale, Cengage Learning. *A Study Guide for Jean Giraudoux's 'The Madwoman of Chaillot' Drama for Students*. Vol. 28. Gale, Cengage Learning, 2016. Print.

## TIMELINE OF GIRAUDOUX' LIFE AND WORKS

French novelist, playwright, and essayist Jean Giraudoux created an impressionistic form of drama by emphasizing dialogue and style rather than realism. His works typically combine tragedy, humor, and fantasy.

- 1882**—On October 29, Giraudoux is born in Belloc, France.
- 1921**—The poetic novel, *Suzanne et la Pacifique*, is published. Giraudoux becomes known as an avant-garde writer.
- 1922**—*Siegfried et le Limousin* is published. Giraudoux depicts the hostility between two enemies, France and Germany, as a background to his story of a man who suffers from amnesia.
- 1926**—*Bella*, a love that features the rivalry between two statesmen—one, a nationalist, the other an internationalist—is published.
- 1928**—Giraudoux' first play, *Siegfried*, is produced, directed, and performed by Louis Jouvet.
- 1929**—*Amphitryon 38* is published. With this work, Giraudoux begins exploring the relationship between opposite forces as a central theme in his plays. To do this, he begins placing opposites such as man and God, man and woman, Old Testament and New Testament etc. in face-to-face conflict with each other.
- 1931**—*Judith* is published.
- 1933**—*Intermezzo* is produced. It is a play about a school teacher who believes in a ghost.
- 1935**—*La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu* (translated as "The Trojan War Will Not Take Place") premieres. Giraudoux combines tragedy, humor, and fantasy for the first time.
- 1937**—*Électre* premieres. Giraudoux begins writing plays that seek inspiration in classical or biblical tradition.
- 1938**—*Song of Songs* is produced on stage.
- 1939**—*Ondine*—a fairy tale of a water sprite who loves a mortal man—premieres.
- 1939 to 1940**—Giraudoux serves as commissioner of information for the French Government.
- 1942**—Giraudoux writes *La Duchesse de Langeais*, his first film script.
- 1943**—*Madwoman of Chaillot* is written.
- 1944**—January 31, Giraudoux dies in Paris, France.
- 1947**—*The Madwoman of Chaillot* is adapted into English by Maurice Valency.

The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Jean Giraudoux." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 2 Nov. 2015. Web.

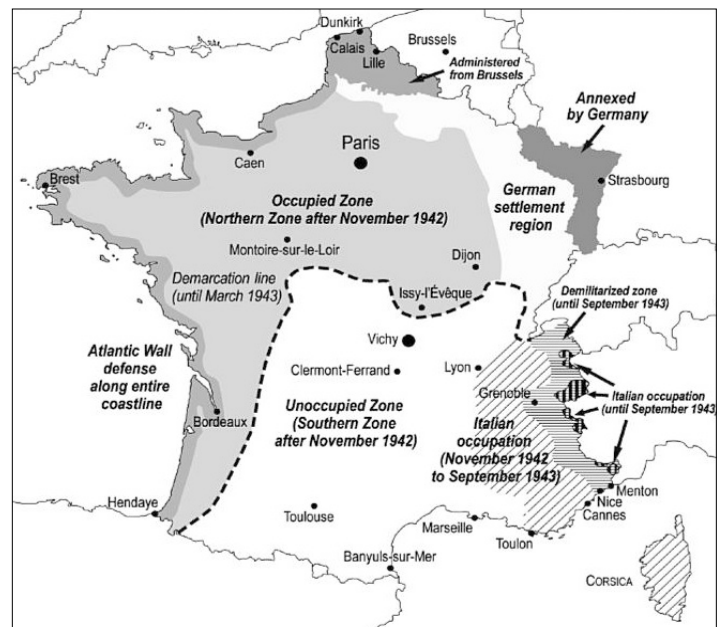
## HISTORICAL CONTEXT: **PARIS, 1940-1944**

Like so much else that happened in France during World War II, the Nazi occupation of Paris was something entirely more complex and ambiguous than has generally been understood. We tend to think of those years as difficult, but minimally destructive in comparison to the havoc the Nazis wreaked elsewhere in Europe. However, France was a place not of peace but of widespread hatred and violence. The Nazi occupation was a terrible time for Paris, not just because the Nazis were there, but because Paris itself was complicit in its own humiliation. Robert C. Rosbottom describes this humiliation in his book, *When Paris Went Dark: The City of Light Under German Occupation 1940-1944*:

“Even today, the French endeavor both to remember and to find ways to forget their country’s trials during World War II; their ambivalence stems from the cunning and original arrangement they devised with the Nazis, which was approved by Hitler and assented to by Philippe Pétain, the recently appointed head of the Third Republic, that had ended the Battle of France in June of 1940. This treaty—known by all as the Armistice—had entangled France and the French in a web of cooperation, resistance, accommodation, and, later, of defensiveness, forgetfulness, and guilt from which they are still trying to escape.”

In *The Madwoman of Chaillot*, Giraudoux appears to equate the oil-seeking politicians with the German forces that occupied France. Both groups—the politicians in the play, and the German forces—appear to be concerned with power and riches, and they are willing to destroy a city rich in art and culture in order to obtain their materialistic goals. The German occupation is almost certainly a unique event in human history, one in which a vicious and unscrupulous invader occupied a city known for its sophistication and liberality, declining to destroy it or even to exact physical damage on more than a minority of its citizens yet leaving it in a state of “embarrassment, self-abasement, and guilt.”

It is difficult to visit Paris today and conjure up much sense of the city in the early 1940s. It is indeed, as it is called throughout the world, the City of Light, but it was “a darker city—gray and brown, not to mention *noir* (black), were required adjectives to describe the absence of ambient light.” It was a quiet city as well: “The cacophony of daily urban engagement—passersby, hawkers, street minstrels and performers, construction work, and especially traffic noise—was severely diminished” writers of the period, such as Colette, emphasize how quiet Paris became during those years. Sometimes the silence brought benefits, when pleasant sounds—birdsong, music—were able to reach Parisians’ ears. But mostly, the new silence in such a vital capital



must have been confusing and intermittently frightening. Police sirens were more menacing, airplane engines meant danger, a shout or scream demanded a more nervous response.”

The sirens must have been especially terrifying because those who usually sounded them, the French police, were no friends to the ordinary citizens of the city: “Though the French police have spent years trying to dodge their reputation as enablers, there is no doubt, now that the archives are almost all freely open, that the French forces of order were active, not reluctant, collaborators with the Germans. Indeed, there is no way the Germans could have succeeded as well as they did in rounding up ‘illegals’ if it had not been for the help of the local police forces. The Germans quite simply did not have enough personnel to track and keep files on Jews or plan and carry out raids, arrests, and incarcerations. Nor did they know as intimately the labyrinth that was the city of Paris.”

Eventually Paris did resist the Nazis (just as Countess Aurelia resists the politicians), but the effects were limited—the most to be said is that the Resistance there “did keep the Reich and their Vichy allies on the alert and did send a message to the world that Paris was not being benignly held prisoner”—and the myths about the effectiveness of the Resistance that the French have derived from it are only tangentially related to reality. “French resistance against the Nazis has been asked to serve critical functions in that nation’s collective memory.” The myth “served to postpone for a quarter of a century deeper analyses of how easily France had been



beaten and how feckless had been the nation's reaction to German authority, especially between 1940 and 1943. Finally, the myth of a universal resistance was important to France's idea of itself as a beacon for human liberty and as an example of the courage one needed in the face of hideous political ideologies." ■

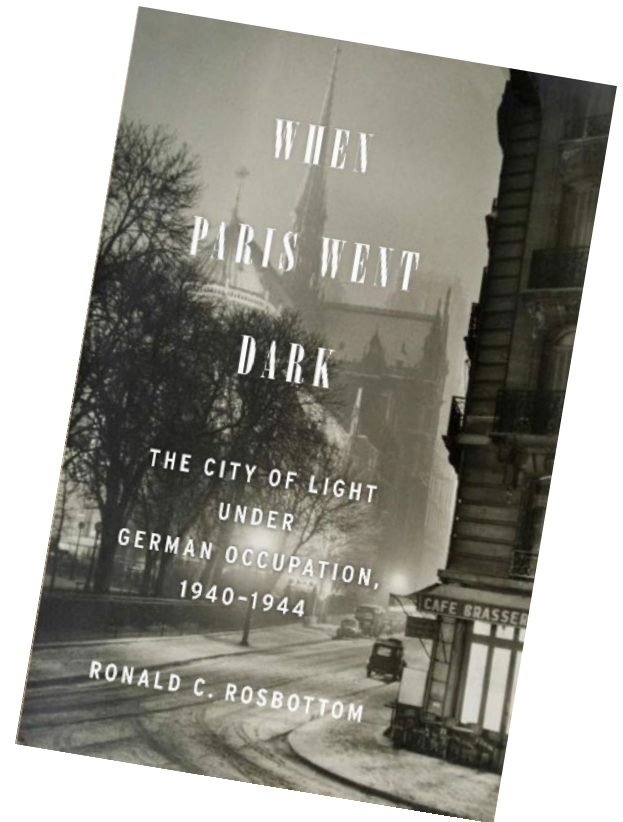
Yardley, Jonathan. "A History of Paris During Nazi Occupation." *The Washington Post*. 29 Aug. 2014. Web.

"Map of Nazi-occupied France" taken from: <http://www.theartblog.org/2011/01/alan-riding-on-cultural-life-in-nazi-occupied-paris/>

"Guernica, 1937" taken from: 'When Paris Went Dark: The City of Light Under German Occupation, 1940-

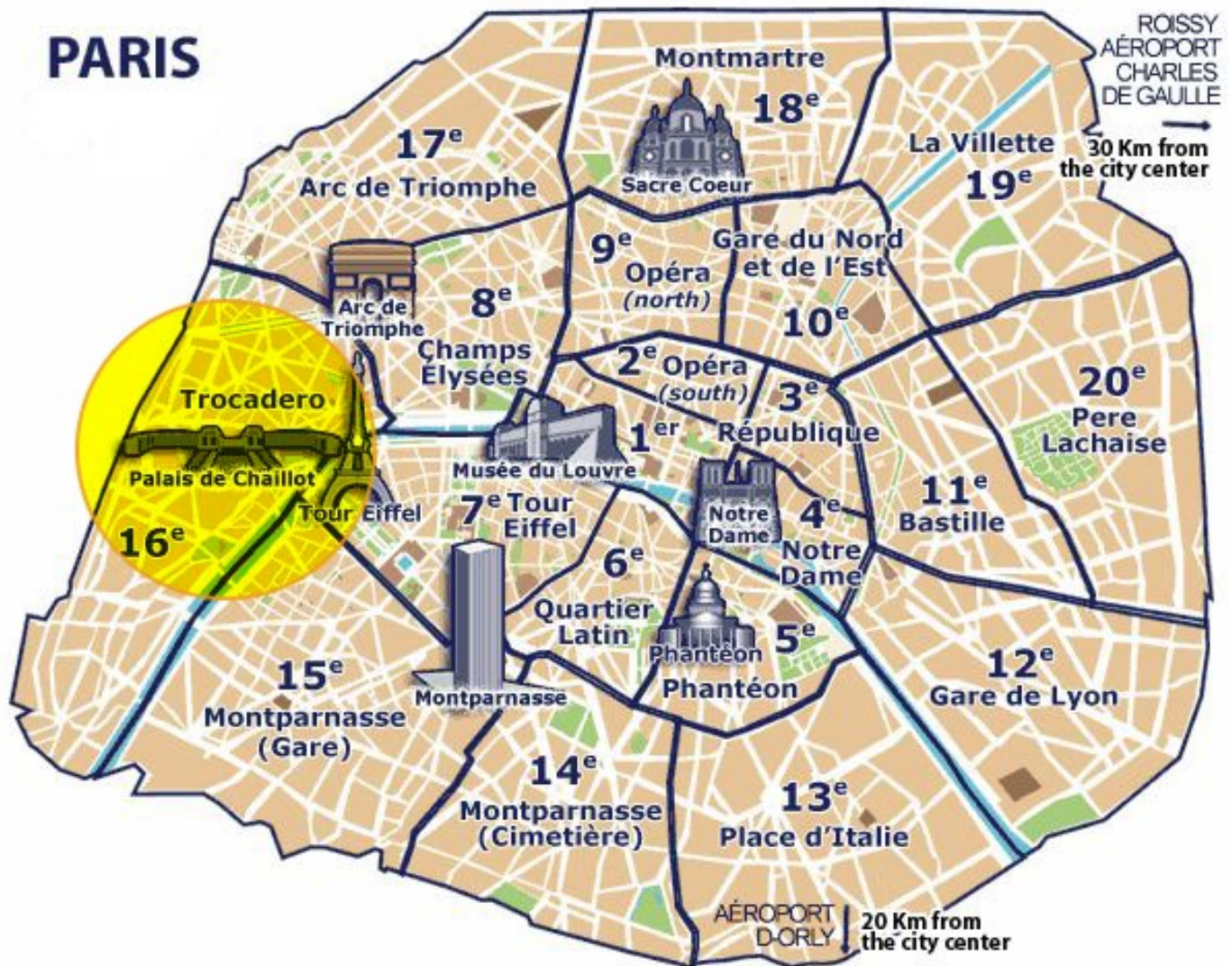
1944' by Ronald C. Rosbottom (Little, Brown)

"Book Cover Photo" taken from: [https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/I/51rQfpl4rpL\\_SY344\\_BO1,204,203,200\\_.jpg](https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/I/51rQfpl4rpL_SY344_BO1,204,203,200_.jpg)



## GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT: **WHERE IS CHAILLOT?**

Chaillot is a neighborhood, or quarter, in central Paris. It is located in the 16<sup>th</sup> arrondissement (district) of Paris which is considered one of the wealthiest districts in the city.



## GIRAUDOUX' STYLE

### Use of Paradox

In his plays, Giraudoux tries to resolve conflict between opposite forces by bringing the opposites into contact with each other. In doing so, he explores such fundamental dualities as war and peace, life and death, man and woman, and finally the meaning of human destiny. However, Giraudoux handles these serious themes not through the realistic depiction of psychological conflict but rather through a process of investigation, discussion, and reflection that is communicated to the audience through his characters' recitatives and banter. Giraudoux' language is lyrical, poetic, and rich with metaphors, paradoxes, and allusions. The sense of humor so evident in his plays is marked by brilliant wit and a devastating sense of the absurd.

**Use of Allegory**—Allegory is a figure of speech in which abstract ideas and principles are described in terms of characters, figures, and events. It can be employed in prose, poetry, drama, and visual art to tell a story with a purpose of teaching an idea and a principle or explaining an idea or a principle. The objective of its use is to preach a moral lesson.

In *The Madwoman of Chaillot*, Giraudoux uses allegory to explore the relationship between human purity and human corruption—two forces he saw come in contact with each other during the German occupation in Paris. The Madwoman and her friends represent the citizens of Paris just as the profiteers represent the Nazis and their French collaborators. Ultimately, the Madwoman sends the profiteers to the bottomless pit, symbolically ridding the world of greedy exploitation and restoring the city to its former beauty and purity.

## ALLEGORICAL CHARACTERS



### Countess Aurelia as Love

Countess Aurelia's belief in all that is good and beautiful makes her an advocate for love. Her words and actions are meant to inspire the best in others. At a sidewalk café in Paris, she eavesdrops on the conversations of men who are plotting to destroy the beautiful city, and gently woos them to her home where she spoils their plot. However, in her efforts to save the city, Aurelia does not resort to brutal force but uses the financiers' own greed against them.



### Pierre as Despair

Pierre is a young assassin hired by the materialists to kill the city architect, who is opposed to the drilling of oil beneath the streets. When the young man finds himself unable to carry out his task, he plans to jump in the river. However, Countess Aurelia rescues him and convinces him that life is worth living.



### The Prospector as Materialism

The Prospector is the representative of the forces of materialism—the destroyers of beauty and the enemies of humanity. Armed with a plan to drill for oil beneath the streets of Paris, the prospector and his financiers directly oppose Countess Aurelia and her gentle friends (the champions of beauty and humanity).



## THE PLAY AS **POLITICAL SATIRE**

**“the purpose of comedy is to instruct, profit and delight” —Horace**

**Satire** is a device that uses humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people’s stupidity or vices.

**Political satire** is a significant subset of satire that specializes in creating entertainment from **politics**; it has also been used with subversive intent where political speech and dissent are forbidden by a regime as a method of advancing political arguments where such arguments are expressly forbidden.

### **Satire in *The Madwoman of Chaillot***

When Giraudoux wrote *The Madwoman of Chaillot*, he had already seen the world start to drown in capitalism—the quest for treasure and greed announced a period of socio-economic inequality and debts. In Giraudoux’s view, capitalism is problematic environmentally, culturally, and socially. His work suggests that capitalism’s problems can only be stopped by individuals who strive to preserve the beauty of the world. To paraphrase Giraudoux: “the prudence of a single woman is sufficient to break the teeth of madness of the entire world.”

Satire is a literary term that uses humor or ridicule to point out human weaknesses, and typically works toward justice. *The Madwoman of Chaillot* satirizes the way that financial interests have worked against social harmony by exploiting or harming poor people and by risking the health of the environment. The exaggerated

characters are one element that make the play satirical: the President and his colleagues, for example, are drawn much larger than life (or are they?); the Little Man is so excited about the possibility of riches, that he hands his total life’s savings over without knowing a single detail about the new company; and The Broker speaks long sentences about numerical nonsense while others pretend to understand him. And these men strive to keep the “crazy women” silent.

The Prospector proposes blowing up a large building full of workers, and others accept this idea as a “modern method.” Everything that the men say and do sounds so outrageous that it becomes funny—and scary. The height of the satire comes in Act 2 when the Ragpicker pretends to speak like the evil men. He promises to “distort and conceal everything” and delivers a testimony that is heartless and self-absorbed, far too similar to the words spoken by The President and the The Baron. Giraudoux satirically points out the evil in these men through exaggeration, forcing the audience to examine and reject the very evil they represent. ■

“Jean Giraudoux’s *The Madwoman of Chaillot*.” Croatia National Theatre in Zagreb. Web.  
Gale, Cengage Learning. A Study Guide for Jean Giraudoux’s ‘*The Madwoman of Chaillot*’ Drama for Students. Vol. 28. Gale, Cengage Learning, 2016. Print.

## “HEAR YE—HEAR YE” THE IMPORTANCE OF TRIAL SCENES

In *The Madwoman of Chaillot*, Jean Giraudoux makes use of a trial scene before he effects resolution. Playwrights often resort to a discussion or debate to make a point, but rarely do they put an actual trial scene into a play unless that trial scene is the overriding issue. But in Giraudoux' play, the trial materializes from nowhere. At Josephine's suggestion, Aurelia considers trying the evil men of the world:

JOSEPHINE. Your criminals have had a fair trial, I suppose?

COUNTESS. Trial?

JOSEPHINE. Certainly. You can't kill anybody without a trial.

Giraudoux does little to prepare us—the audience—for a trial, and this lack of preparation could be considered a fault, if the trial brought about reversals or discoveries that affected the outcomes of the play. But the trial is fixed: the defendants, guilty from the outset, endure the machinations of the legal system.

Giraudoux' trial serves two obvious purposes: to point up the absurdity of the system of jurisprudence and to move the focus of guilt from the individual to the society in general. However, the trial scene also plays a less obvious, but more important role: the trial scene acts as the chief destructive force within the play and as such, it elevates the play to nihilistic and agonistic stages of the avant-garde. To point out the inequities in the legal process, Giraudoux employs a theme of mendacity as a means of exposing absurdities in the trial system:

THE RAGPICKER. I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

JOSEPHINE. Nonsense! You're not a witness. You're an attorney. It's your duty to lie, conceal and distort everything, and slander everybody.

THE RAGPICKER. All right. I swear to lie, conceal and distort everything, and slander everybody. ■

Pilkinton, Mark C. "The Significance of the Trial Scenes in *Ondine* and *The Madwoman of Chaillot*." *Modern Drama* 22.2 (1979): 109-14. *Project Muse*. Web.

## WHY TRIAL SCENES **WORK IN THE THEATRE**



The legal system, itself, is pure theatre and always has been. Many lawyers stand accused of being failed actors and vice versa. Judges love dressing-up, sitting in the box, and having the opportunity to give their gavel a good bang. With murmuring galleries, shocking verdicts, swooning witnesses, cries of “all rise” and “take him down,” the flummery and drama of the courtroom has always supplied theatre with a rich genre and playwrights with a way to get to the truth.

*Twelve Angry Men*—originally written for the screen and directed by Sidney Lumet, *Twelve Angry Men* is about a New York jury who must decide the fate of a young man of color who is accused of stabbing his father. If guilty, the young man faces the electric chair. There’s racism in the air as 12 men sweat it out in a heatwave, keen to get their verdict returned and to go home. Eleven of the men are convinced that the defendant is guilty. However, one juror is not as confident. In order to make a verdict on the case, the jury needs a unanimous vote.

*A Tale of Two Cities*—Three separate trials seal the fate of our hero, Charles Darnay in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Relying upon witness testimony, Charles’ is acquitted twice, only to be found guilty of treason, and sentenced to death by guillotine at his third trial. Alas, he is saved in the most famous “Dickensian coincidence” as Sydney Carton—a lawyer who happens to look a lot like Darnay—takes his place.\* ■

Gore-Langton, Robert. “‘You can’t handle the truth!’ — the greatest courtroom dramas of all time.” *The Spectator*. N.p., 9 Nov. 2013. Web.

“Charles Darnay on Trial in England” taken from:  
[www.spectator.co.uk/2013/11/favourite-courtroom-dramas-on-tv-film-and-in-the-theatre/#](http://www.spectator.co.uk/2013/11/favourite-courtroom-dramas-on-tv-film-and-in-the-theatre/#)

\*Did you know, A Noise Within is also performing *A Tale of Two Cities* this fall. For more information, please call (626) 356-3104



## THEMES



### CAPITALISM

One of the central issues present in *The Madwoman of Chaillot* centers on who has money and who does not—where does money come from and what do those who have wealth do with it? In Chaillot, there is a clear divide between “the haves” (The President, the Baron, and the Prospector, who have tremendous wealth yet are greedy for more) and the “have nots” (The Ragpicker, the Flower

Girl, and the Street Vendor, who seem content in their simple, yet impoverished, lives). According to the Ragpicker, the men who have money—whom he calls “pimps”—have taken over the world. The President, for example, controls dozens of companies and corporations which have made him one of the wealthiest men in the world (or so he claims). He is so influential, that the value of the stock in his companies goes up rapidly before he even names his companies or decides what the companies will do. He disdains street vendors and artists for their “raf-fish individualism.”

Clearly, the play condemns capitalism, which places value on money and produces disparity between the wealthy and the poor. In the end, the greedy are condemned to the sewers of Paris and are never to be seen again.

### ENVIRONMENTALISM

While the greed and love of materialism the politicians exhibit in *The Madwoman of Chaillot* have many catastrophic effects, the play also touches on the politicians’ shameful disregard for the environment. In their quest for oil, the men of the International Substrate of Paris are willing to destroy Paris and cover it with “derricks and drills” if it means that they can advance their personal wealth. These men love industry: Prospector asks, “What would you rather have in your backyard, an almond tree or an oil well?” For him, the choice is easy: an oil well.

By contrast, The Countess—the center of goodness in the play—appreciates the natural world: she feeds the stray cats, pets dogs (both real and imagined), and waters the plants. She loves flowers: she calls attention to the irises in her buttonhole and the flowers along the streets. When she hears of the plan to drill for oil, she says, “I never heard of anything so silly!” When the Countess does away with the “pimps”, she is thanked by disembodied voices who are “friends of the people... friends of the animals...friends of friendship.” She succeeds in stopping the threats to the environment posed by the drilling of oil. ■

Gale, Cengage Learning. *A Study Guide for Jean Giraudoux's 'The Madwoman of Chaillot' Drama for Students*. Vol. 28. N.p.: Gale, Cengage Learning, 2016. Print.

## GLOSSARY: LIFE IN FRANCE

**Arrondissement:** A neighborhood or district in Paris. The city of Paris is comprised of twenty arrondissements.

**Chaillot:** A region of Paris located in the 16<sup>th</sup> arrondissement.

**Passy:** A neighborhood on other side of the Eiffel Tower from Chaillot. Passy is located in one of the wealthiest arrondissements.

**Saint Sulpice:** A neighborhood on the Left Bank of the Seine in the 6<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris.

**Place de la Concorde:** The largest square in Paris. Louis XVI was executed here..

**Chez Francis:** A café. In the play, it is owned by the titular madwoman, Aurelia.

**La Seine:** The primary commercial river that runs through Paris—its mouth is in Honfleur, a town just northeast of Normandy.

**Place de l'Alma:** A square in Paris on the bank of the Seine, across from the Eiffel Tower.

**Champs-Élysées:** (pronounced "shom-sellizay"). The Avenue de Champs-Élysées (which means "Elysian Fields" in English) holds the most expensive real estate in Europe. The street begins at the Place de la Concorde and ends at the Arc de Triomphe.

**Louvre:** Originally a palace, this is now the most famous art museum in Paris—it houses the Mona Lisa.

**Notre Dame:** A famous Parisian gothic cathedral, located on the Seine in the 4<sup>th</sup> arrondissement.

**Galleries Lafayette:** A luxury department store established in 1912.

**Le Gaulois:** A French newspaper that ran until 1929.

**Mazurka:** A popular dance in France. This dance was performed violently in the streets of Paris during the executions of French royalty.

**La Belle Polonaise:** A mazurka written by John R. Sweeney in 1873.

**The Can-Can:** This dance is regarded today primarily as a physically demanding music hall dance. It is often performed by a chorus line of female dancers who wear costumes with long skirts, petticoats, and black stockings. The dance harkens back to the fashions of the 1890s.

**Sou:** (Pronounced "soo") A piece of former French currency: we can think of it as an American nickel. A Sou is 5 centimes.

**Rice powder:** Flakes of rice powder transform into an exfoliating cream when combined with water. Infused with red rice, the cream eliminates excess surface oil, impurities and dead skin cells that can clog pores.

**Toque:** A narrowly brimmed or un-brimmed hat.

**Amaryllis:** A type of flower. Usually has red, white, or pink petals.

**Lorgnette:** A pair of eyeglasses mounted on a handle.

## GLOSSARY: **BUSINESS JARGON**

**Pitchman:** A hawker of knick-knacks and wares.

**Commodity:** An article of trade or commerce; a product; something of use, advantage, or value.

**Corporation:** An association of individuals, created by law or under authority of law. This association is its own entity and has a continuous existence independent of the existences of its members.

**Phosphates:** A fertilizing material used in agriculture that contains compounds of phosphorus.

**At par:** Equal to; the legally established value of the monetary unit of one country in terms of the monetary unit of another country that uses the same metal as a standard of value.

**Northern Refineries:** One of the 6 largest oil companies worldwide.

**Net profit:** Often referred to as the bottom line, net profit is calculated by subtracting a company's total expenses from total revenue, thus showing what the company has earned (or lost) in a given period of time (usually one year). Also called net income.

**Amalgamated:** To mix or merge to make a combination; blend; unite; combine.

**Collateral:** Security pledged for the payment of a loan.

**Schneider Creusot Munition:** Industrial kings of 19th and 20th century France. They were the first to build locomotives in France, as far back as 1838.

**Bearish:** Declining or tending toward a decline in prices; characterized by or reflecting unfavorable prospects for the economy.

**Lignite:** A soft coal, usually dark brown, often having a distinct wood-like texture.

**Derrick:** The tower-like framework over an oil well or the like; a jib crane having a boom hinged near the base of the mast to rotate about the mast, for moving a load toward or away from the mast by raising or lowering the boom.

**Free enterprise:** An economic and political doctrine holding that a capitalist economy can regulate itself in a freely competitive market through the relationship of supply and demand.

**Frigidaire:** An American brand of consumer and commercial appliances. This company developed the first self-contained refrigerator in 1916.

**The Golden Calf:** According to the Hebrew Bible, the golden calf was an idol of pure gold made by Aaron to satisfy the Israelites during Moses' absence, when he went up to Mount Sinai. A metaphoric interpretation emphasizes the "gold" part of "golden calf" to criticize the pursuit of wealth.



## DOES ART IMITATE LIFE **OR** LIFE IMITATE ART?

Nearly 40 years ago, one of our local universities, University California Irvine scheduled a production of *The Madwoman of Chaillot* in its season. Because of the tensions at UC Berkeley and the Vietnam War, UCI was ordered to cancel the production. Below is the response the director of the production, Robert Cohen issued:

Read to audience before final three performances

May 28, 1969

My name is Robert Cohen. I am the director of the Irvine Repertory Theatre, and I am speaking now in the name of the repertory theatre and of all of its members.

Our campus is in a state of crisis, and has been under conditions of general strike for the last three days. We want you to be aware that the members of the repertory theatre, the cast and crew of the play you are going to see tonight, share unanimously in the concerns of the striking students and professors.

We have even considered carrying the strike so far as to cancel tonight's performance of *THE MADWOMAN OF CHAILLOT*, but we are not for two reasons.

First, because we are artists, or studying to be artists, and we believe that our particular art, the theatre, is one of community interaction, and that this interaction is never more needed than in times of community crisis.

Secondly, because the play we are producing is one of mankind's most powerful appeals for the protection of individual expression and creativity in the face of a potent, but soulless bureaucracy, and the sooner that people all over this country respond to this appeal, the faster this strike and strikes like it will be settled.

Jean Giraudoux wrote this play in Paris in 1942, in the midst of the German Occupation. As he wrote, armed Nazi storm troopers were stalking the streets, and innocent men and women were arbitrarily and brutally incarcerated.

At this moment one of our campuses is under a similar state of armed occupation, and students are going to classes in the glitter of naked bayonets. To that extent, we are all in occupied territory--right now.

We feel that the Occupation of Berkeley must be ended, and the forces of blind destruction, whichever side they come from, must be disarmed and sent away. It is because we believe this that we are presenting *THE MADWOMAN OF CHAILLOT* tonight.

Thank you.

## DRAWING CONNECTIONS: **MADWOMAN THEMES IN US POLITICS**

While, Giraudoux wrote *The Madwoman of Chaillot* in 1943, the impetus of his play—capitalist forces threatening to destroy a city's environmental and cultural landscape—is an issue still at the forefront of politics in the United States today. Since Giraudoux wrote *Madwoman*, the oil industry has only grown in size and power.

In 2016, tensions surrounding the oil industry's destruction of the environment escalated as the construction plans Dakota Access Pipeline were approved. The Dakota Access Pipeline is a project that involves the construction of a pipeline that would transport crude oil drilled in North Dakota to Illinois. It is a largescale, \$3.8 billion project that would bolster local economies in North Dakota and Illinois as well as in South Dakota and Iowa. However, part of the pipeline would have to be built under the Missouri River which serves as a drinking water supply for many communities. As with any project that involves transporting oil through or near bodies of water, oil leaks and water contamination are concerns. This concern has prompted some backlash against the project.

However, the risk of water contamination is not the only issue surrounding the pipeline to face some resistance from communities nearby the pipeline's construction sites: the Dakota Access Pipeline is set to pass through a piece of land that holds historical, religious, and cultural significance for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.

Just as Countess Aurelia protests the financier's

willingness to dig up and destroy the city of Paris in order to obtain oil, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe protested the Dakota Access Pipeline project's willingness to tear up land that is sacred to them.

According to North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum, the Dakota Access Pipeline is an "important infrastructure project, which has faced months of politically driven delays and will allow for safe transport of North Dakota product to market."

On the other side of the issue, attorney Nicole Ducheneaux said that the "construction activity violates the tribe's and its members' constitutional rights, and will result in immediate and irreparable harm to the tribe and its members."

### Discussion Question:

Read the article on the next page from October 2016. Compare and contrast opinions surrounding the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline with the opinions that different characters in *The Madwoman of Chaillot* express about the plan to drill for oil in Paris. ■

# WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE **DAKOTA ACCESS** PIPELINE PROTESTS

BY JUSTIN WORLAND | OCT 28, 2016

The Standing Rock Sioux tribe has opposed the Dakota Access Pipeline since first learning about plans for the pipeline in 2014. But it's only been in recent months that the issue has gained national attention, as thousands of protesters—including many Native Americans—have gathered in North Dakota in attempt to block the 1,200-mile project. And, with both supporters and opponents vowing to fight through the harsh North Dakota winter, the battle shows no signs of ending anytime soon.

Here's what you need to know:

## What is the Dakota Access Pipeline?

The pipeline is to be built by Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners and is designed to transport as many as 570,000 barrels of crude oil daily from North Dakota to Illinois. The pipeline would be a key conduit connecting oil wells in the state's Bakken Shale, where the development of fracking has opened billions of gallons of new oil to recovery, to other valuable consumer markets, including the Gulf Coast, Midwest and East Coast. The nearly \$4 billion project was first proposed in 2014 with an anticipated completion of this year.

## Why are the Sioux and others protesting the project?

The pipeline has united a number of different interest groups with a variety of objections, but Native Americans have been at the center of the opposition. The pipeline would travel underneath the Missouri River, the primary drinking water source for the Standing Rock Sioux, a tribe of around 10,000 with a reservation in the central part of North and South Dakota. Builders of the pipeline insist that they have taken extraordinary measures to safeguard against disaster, but opponents point out that even the safest pipelines can leak. The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) has reported more than 3,300 incidents of leaks and ruptures at oil and gas pipelines since 2010. And even the smallest



spill could damage the tribe's water supply. The Standing Rock Sioux also argue that the pipeline traverses a sacred burial ground. And while the land being used for the pipeline is not technically on its reservation, tribal leaders argue that the federal government did not adequately engage the Standing Rock Sioux during the permitting process—a requirement under federal law.

More broadly, environmental activists say the pipeline would contribute man-made climate change by building up the country's oil infrastructure. They insist that fossil fuels—including the vast reserves in the Bakken Shale—need to be kept in the ground to protect the world from the worst effects of climate change. Proponents of the pipeline argue that oil producers would likely ship the oil by rail line if construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline was halted, as much of the oil produced in North Dakota already is—and argument that was also used in favor of the now canceled Keystone XL pipeline.

Native American veterans carry U.S. and tribal flags before entering the "Rocking the Rez" Pow Wow on Oct. 1, 2016 in Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, Texas, expressing support for protesters that have blocked construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. ■

John Moore—Getty Images

Worland, Justin. "What to Know about the Dakota Access Pipeline Protests." 28 Oct. 2016. Web.





## ACTIVITIES

The purpose of these activities is to help enrich the overall experience students have with this work through discussion, debate, and reflection.

### Before the Play:

1. Brainstorm with your students and create list of their concerns about the current state of the oil industry and the environment. Discuss the importance of each and rank order the list in terms of impact on society and the world.
2. "Tragedy is for those who feel—Comedy for those who think". Do you agree with this statement? As you watch the play, decide if you think it is more of a comedy or a tragedy.
3. A significant subgenre of satire specializes in gaining entertainment from politics. Watch a sketch from Saturday Night Live or an opening monologue from one of the late-night talk shows (network shows have limits on language) and analyze its effectiveness in its use of humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people's actions or vices.

### During the Play:

1. Pay attention to how the set helps to create the fantasy world in contrast to the realities of the time.
2. Think about how the characters are portrayed. Is there anything realistic about their portrayal? How do the characters' costumes underscore the allegorical ideas each character represents? Do they fit the archetypes discussed in the study guide?
3. What are you (as a theater-goer) being asked to think about as the dialogue unfolds?
4. Pay attention to your own reactions—are you "thinking" or "feeling" more?

### After the Play:

1. Imagine you have been asked to write a review of A Noise Within's production of *The Madwoman of Chaillot*. What is your reaction to the production? Is it a comedy or a drama? Why should people today go to see this play?
2. Watch the 1960 film version of the play starring Katherine Hepburn. Take note of the artistic changes made in characters from the stage to the play version. Why do you think these character roles were revised for its day and political scene of the time? <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0064621/>
3. Imagine you are the casting director for a contemporary production of ***The Madwoman of Chaillot***. Who would you cast in each of the major roles and why would this actor be great for the role?

## ESSAY/DEBATE OPTIONS

1. **PERSUASIVE**—In a thesis-driven essay, discuss the importance of satire as a form of free speech and analyze its role in the public's understanding of political issues and policies.
2. **EXPOSITORY**—Define "Madness" as it is presented in the *The Madwoman of Chaillot*. Considering the dichotomy of world views presented in the play, which set of characters are the truly "mad ones"? Using your definition of madness, character examples and quotes from the play, discuss "madness" in relation to the overall message of the play.
3. **COMPARE AND CONTRAST**—Create a Venn Diagram that cites political and environmental events of 1943 and the political and environmental events of today. Where do those events overlap?
4. The Countess believes that "the world is not hopeless; that there are actions to be taken and choices to be made." Discuss, debate, or write your response to this world view.



## QUOTES TO **EXPLORE AND DISCUSS**

Consider these questions when examining the following quotes:

Which theme or themes do these quotes touch upon?

Why are these quotes important? Think about each quote in relation to the play as a whole.

What do the quotes say about the characters who speak them?

What do the quotes say about Giraudoux' view of the world?

**The Ragpicker:** The people are not the same. The people are different. There's been an invasion. From another planet. An infiltration. The world is not beautiful any more. It's not happy.

**Countess Aurelia:** Not happy? Is that true? Why didn't you tell me this before?

**The Ragpicker:** Because you live in a dream, Countess. And we don't like to disturb you.

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**Countess Aurelia:** There are people in the world who want to destroy everything. They have the fever of destruction. Even when they pretend that they're building, it's only in order to destroy. When they put up a new building, they quietly knock down two old ones. They build cities in order to destroy the countryside—They destroy space with telephones, and time with airplanes. Humanity is now dedicated to a task of universal demolition!

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**The Ragpicker:** I remember well the time when a cabbage could sell itself just by being a cabbage. Nowadays it's no good being a cabbage—unless you have an agent and pay him commission. Nothing is free any more to sell itself or give itself away. These days, Countess, every cabbage has its pimp.

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**Countess:** Trial?

**Josephine:** Certainly. You can't possibly kill anybody without a trial. That's elementary. No man shall be deprived of his life, liberty or property without due process of law.

## ADDITIONAL **RESOURCES**



Additional Study Guide – Gale Centage for Learning - [https://books.google.com/books/about/A\\_Study\\_Guide\\_for\\_Jean\\_Giraudoux\\_s\\_The\\_M.html?id=Qtz2DAAAQBAJ](https://books.google.com/books/about/A_Study_Guide_for_Jean_Giraudoux_s_The_M.html?id=Qtz2DAAAQBAJ)

WWII in Paris - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FG5eVT7Jr3I>

More about Jean Giraudoux - <https://www.discoverfrance.net/France/Theatre/Giradoux/giradoux.shtml>

Famous Quotes written by Jean Giraudoux - [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/j/jean\\_giraudoux.html](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/j/jean_giraudoux.html)

Madwoman of Chaillot Hepburn Film - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2vnu4hrX04>

"Giraudoux" taken from: [http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/110567.Jean\\_Giraudoux](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/110567.Jean_Giraudoux)

## ABOUT THEATRE ARTS: **KEY THEATRICAL TERMS**

Today, movies and television take audiences away from what was once the number one form of amusement: going to the theatre. But attending a live theatrical performance is still one of the most thrilling and active forms of entertainment.

In a theatre, observers are catapulted into the action, especially at an intimate venue like *A Noise Within*, whose thrust stage reaches out into the audience and whose actors can see, hear, and feel the response of the crowd.

Although playhouses in the past could sometimes be rowdy, participating in the performance by giving respect and attention to the actors is the most appropriate behavior at a theatrical performance today. Shouting out (or even whispering) can be heard throughout the auditorium, as can rustling paper or ringing phones.

After *A Noise Within's* performance of *The Maids*, you will have the opportunity to discuss the play's content and style with the performing artists and directors. You may wish to remind students to observe the performance carefully or to compile questions ahead of time so they are prepared to participate in the discussion.

**blocking:** The instructions a director gives his actors that tell them how and where to move in relation to each other or to the set in a particular scene.

**character:** The personality or part portrayed by an actor on stage.

**conflict:** The opposition of people or forces which causes the play's rising action.

**dramatic irony:** A dramatic technique used by a writer in which a character is unaware of something the audience knows.

**genre:** Literally, "kind" or "type." In literary terms, genre refers to the main types of literary form, principally comedy and tragedy. It can also refer to forms that are more specific to a given historical era, such as the revenge tragedy, or to more specific sub-genres of tragedy and comedy such as the comedy of manners, farce or social drama.

**motivation:** The situation or mood which initiates an action. Actors often look for their "motivation" when they try to dissect how a character thinks or acts.

**props:** Items carried on stage by an actor to represent objects mentioned in or implied by the script. Sometimes the props are actual, sometimes they are manufactured in the theatre shop.

**proscenium stage:** There is usually a front curtain on a proscenium stage. The audience views the play from the front through a "frame" called the proscenium arch. In this scenario, all audience members have the same view of the actors.

**set:** The physical world created on stage in which the action of the play takes place.

**setting:** The environment in which a play takes place. It may include the historical period as well as the physical space.

**stage areas:** The stage is divided into areas to help the director to note where action will take place. Upstage is the area furthest from the audience. Downstage is the area closest to the audience. Center stage defines the middle of the playing space. Stage left is the actor's left as he faces the audience. Stage right is the actor's right as he faces the audience.

**theme:** The overarching message or main idea of a literary or dramatic work. A recurring idea in a play or story.

**thrust stage:** A stage that juts out into the audience seating area so that patrons are seated on three sides. In this scenario, audience members see the play from varying viewpoints. *A Noise Within* features a thrust stage.

## ABOUT A NOISE WITHIN

**A NOISE WITHIN** produces classic theatre as an essential means to enrich our community by embracing universal human experiences, expanding personal awareness, and challenging individual perspectives. Our company of resident and guest artists performing in rotating repertory immerses student and general audiences in timeless, epic stories in an intimate setting.

Our most successful art asks our community to question beliefs, focus on relationships, and develop self-awareness. Southern California audiences of all ages and backgrounds build community together while engaging with this most visceral and primal of storytelling techniques. ANW's production of classic theatre includes all plays we believe will be part of our cultural legacy. We interpret these stories through the work of a professional resident company—a group of artists whose work is critical to their community—based on the belief that trust among artists and between artists and audience can only be built through an honest and continuing dialogue. Our plays will be performed in rotating repertory, sometimes simultaneously in multiple spaces, and buttressed by meaningful supporting programs to create a symphonic theatrical experience for artists and audience.

In its 25 year history, A Noise Within has garnered over 500 awards and commendations, including the Los Angeles Drama Critics' Circle's revered Polly Warfield Award for Excellence and the coveted Margaret Hartford Award for Sustained Excellence.

More than 40,000 individuals attend productions at a Noise Within annually. In addition, the theatre draws over 15,000 student participants to its arts education program, *Classics Live!* Students benefit from in-classroom workshops, conservatory training, subsidized tickets to matinee and evening performances, post-performance discussions with artists, and free standards-based study guides. ■

## STUDY GUIDES

A Noise Within creates study guides in alignment with core reading, listening, speaking, and performing arts standards to help educators prepare their students for their visit to our theatre. Study guides are available at no extra cost to download through our website: [www.anoisewithin.org](http://www.anoisewithin.org). The information and activities outlined in these guides are designed to work in compliance with the California VAPA standards, The Common Core, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Skills.

Study guides include background information on the plays and playwrights, historical context, textual analysis, in-depth discussion of A Noise Within's artistic interpretation of the work, statements from directors and designers, as well as discussion points and suggested classroom activities. Guides from past seasons are also available to download from the website.

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