

 THE OLD GLOBE

ACE

★ A NEW MUSICAL ★

Study Guide
An activity pack for
teachers and students

Produced by
The Old Globe
Education Department



Music by Richard Oberacker
Book and Lyrics by Robert Taylor & Richard Oberacker

The Story

It's 1952, and Billy Lucas is a troubled ten-year-old boy about to be placed in a foster care home. Billy's mother is suffering from severe depression and can no longer care for him properly. She's told Billy that his father abandoned them before he was born.

Billy is initially resentful of his foster family and new school, where he is taunted by several of the other children. One day, Billy's foster father, searching for a way to connect with the boy, brings home a model airplane. That night, while falling asleep, Billy tugs the plane into bed with him. Suddenly, the door to his room swings open and, in a flood of light, Ace steps through. A young man in his early 20s dressed in a full World War II Air Force pilot's uniform, Ace calls out to Billy to come with him in his dreams.

In doing so, Ace unlocks the door to a fantastic new world. He takes Billy on a series of heroic and haunting adventures, beginning in 1917 at a small military airstrip in Texas. Billy witnesses the courtship of a brash young pilot named John Robert and a beautiful young woman named Ruth, the daughter of his commander.

At school in the morning, Billy confides his secret to his friend Emily, another new kid and fellow outcast. Emily tells Billy that Ace's reasons for showing him these scenes have inspired the perfect mystery, and she offers to help Billy investigate.

As Ace's nightly visits to Billy continue, the United States enters the First World War and John Robert inevitably is sent to France. While there, he gets happy news from Ruth: She is expecting their first child. The news turns tragic, however, when John Robert's plane is shot down by a German pilot during a surprise dogfight. Billy witnesses the event and tries to comfort the man as he dies.

Upset and scared by this sad turn, Billy puts the plane away, barring future visits from Ace. But Emily convinces him that there must be more to the story, and Billy agrees to find the ending.

That evening, Ace visits Billy again, but this time the two jump forward in time. Ruth's son Charlie has been groomed from a young age with the stories of his father's glory, and already he shows an interest in flying. As the scene continues, Ace steps in to this flashback, and it becomes apparent that he *is* Charlie, nicknamed "Ace" like his father before him. Billy realizes that he now will be following Ace's story. A mystery is revealed and Billy has a choice to make.



The History



1900
 1910
 1915
 1920
 1925
 1930
 1935
 1940
 1945
 1950
 1955
 1960



The Wright brothers make the first controlled, powered, heavier-than-air human flight on December 17

1903



The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria signals the beginning of the First World War.

1914



The sinking of the RMS Lusitania by a German submarine crystallized public opinion in the United States which indirectly led to entry into the World War.

1915



1917

Wilson requested that Congress declare war on Germany. The United States officially declares war on Germany in April and on Austria-Hungary in 1917. The war was over by 1918.



1941

The "Flying Tigers", a volunteer group, is established as a civilian organization, shortly before the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor.



1941

After attacks on Pearl Harbor and on the U.S.-controlled Philippines by Japan, the U.S. enters World War II.



Germany surrenders in May. In August, two atomic bombs are dropped by the U.S. on two Japanese cities. Between 100,000 and 200,000 Japanese die. It is the only time in history that a nuclear weapon has ever been used. Five days after the last was dropped, the Japanese surrendered.

1945



1954

In Brown v. Board of Education, the Supreme Court outlawed segregated public education facilities at the state level. It would not be until The Civil Rights Act of 1964, however, that most discrimination at all levels would be outlawed.



1959

Hawaii becomes a state.

The Production

Director: Stafford Arima
Choreographer: Andrew Palermo
Musical Director: David Kreppel
Set Designer: David Korins
Costume Designer: Marie Anne Chiment
Sound Designer: John H. Shivers, David Patridge
Lighting Designer: Chris Akerlind

Quick Facts:

The Old Globe Theatre's production of "ACE" used 13 Equity Actors, 4 children, 1 Stage Manager and 1 Assistant Stage Manager and 1 Studio Teacher.

The set for "ACE" was built in St. Louis by the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis as part of a co-production with the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. The set is designed to evoke a plane flying through the sky. The large 2 story structure upstage represents the wings of a biplane, the grey floor, the tarmac of a landing strip.

Scenic effects include 2 pop-up doors and a bed pallet that tracks downstage and rotates.

The "ACE" costumes and wigs arrived in boxes in November 2006. We had 6 new actors in our cast here at The Old Globe. Most of them fit into the existing costumes; however, we needed to purchase shoes for three actors and needed to rebuild one of the costumes.

When we rebuild a costume, we make a pattern from the existing costume and alter the pattern to fit our new actor.

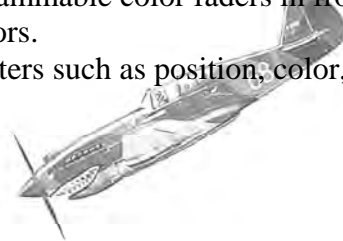
"ACE" has 18 actors wearing 20 wireless microphones. The actors playing Ace and Billy are wearing 2 mics, in case one should fail.

There are 11 musicians in the pit playing almost under the entire show, as there is a lot of underscoring in "ACE". There are 34 speakers used in the show. "ACE" takes three sound engineers to run the show: one to mix the microphone sound levels, one to tend to anything else needed for the microphones, and one to trigger sound effects.

328 lights with a combined total of 188,000 potential watts are used in "ACE". There are twelve lighting fixtures with fiber optic strands stuffed into the front of them that are used to create a full-stage star scape.

To create the various explosion effects, we use six strobe lights. Effect loops are used with lights to project moving clouds. Forty lights have special programmable color faders in front of them, allowing them to project almost an endless palette of colors.

5 moving lights, with over twenty programmable parameters such as position, color, beam size, and projected pattern, are used throughout the show.



Discussion



“It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance. But the right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts.”

- Woodrow Wilson

Who determines what is “right”?

How does a nation decide when to fight a war?

**What’s different or similar between
World War I and World War II?
World War II and the current war?**

“Ace was born from my fascination with parenting – one of the most basic human experiences. Even those who have not had children of their own experience it because we experience parenting from the second we are born. It is a fragile and perilous phenomenon. Things can go wrong. Dreams can be shattered. Mistakes can be made. But always, always, there is the opportunity for great things to come..”

- Richard Oberacker

Define “Family”.

Describe several different types of families.

What does it mean to be a parent?

*“...And as years go by, I’ll have a choice
I will choose to fly”*

- Billy, from ACE

Think about a choice you’ve made recently.

Who influenced your decision?

What else influenced your decision?

What kinds of choices will you have to make in the future?

Vocabulary



- **ACE:** A pilot earns the title of “ace” after successfully downing five enemy aircraft.
- **AERODROME:** An airfield equipped with control tower and hangers as well as accommodations for passengers and cargo.
- **BELLIGERENCE:** Hostile attitude or disposition, quarrelsome.
- **FOKKERS:** Planes named for Dutch-born aircraft designer and manufacturer. In “ACE” the name refers to German fighter aircraft.
- **HUN:** a barbarous or destructive person. Also used as a disparaging term for a German Soldier in World War I.
- **MENCKEN:** Henry Louis Mencken, better known as H. L. Mencken, was a twentieth-century journalist, satirist, social critic, cynic, and freethinker, known as the "Sage of Baltimore" and the "American Nietzsche". He is often regarded as one of the most influential American writers of the early 20th century.
- **PYLE:** An American journalist, who wrote as a roving correspondent for the Scripps Howard newspaper chain. With the entry of the U.S. into World War II, Pyle became a war correspondent, applying his intimate style to the war. Pyle generally wrote from the perspective of the common soldier, an approach that won him not only further popularity but also the Pulitzer Prize in 1944. His wartime writings are preserved in three books, *Brave Men*, *Here is Your War*, and *Ernie Pyle in England*.
- **R.F.C.:** The Royal Flying Corps was the over-land air arm of the British military during most of World War I.
- **WINCHELL:** An American newspaper and radio commentator, invented the gossip column at the New York Evening Graphic. He broke the journalistic taboo against exposing the private lives of public figures, permanently altering the shape of journalism and celebrity.
- **“THE YELLOW GAS”:** The sulfur mustards, of which mustard gas is a member, are a class of chemical warfare agents with the ability to form large blisters on exposed skin. When used as warfare agents they are usually yellow-brown in color and have an odor resembling mustard plants, garlic or horseradish. At very high concentrations, if inhaled, it causes bleeding and blistering within the respiratory system, damaging the mucous membrane and causing pulmonary edema. Blister agent exposure over more than 50% body surface area is usually fatal. Mustard Gas was widely used in World War I, and their use, along with the use of any poison gas, was prohibited by the Geneva Protocol of 1925.

ACE Going to the Theatre

Remember that anything that you see at a theatre is live. That means there are real actors and real musicians working very hard to entertain you. Here's how you can respect them and the other audience members that have come to enjoy the show:

- Turn off cell phones before the show starts. That goes for anything else that might go beep unexpectedly: watches, PDA's, or pagers (if you still have a pager, please visit your local time machine as the twentieth century wants it back).
- Do not bring food or beverages into the theatre, and do not eat the food or drink the beverages that you did not bring into the theatre... If you must have a cough drop (or a "throat lozenge"), please unwrap it before the show begins.
- Do not talk during the show. Talking prevents the people around you from hearing what's happening on the stage, and is distracting to the actors or musicians.
- Do not take photos or videos during the performance.
- There will be an intermission about halfway through the show, so if you must go to the bathroom, please wait.





This Study Guide was produced by The Old Globe Education Department for use by teachers and students in preparation for and reflection on the 2007 production of ACE.

For information about the use of this guide or to learn more about The Old Globe's Education programs contact:

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