WCT WESTERN CANADA THEATRE PRESENTS

EDUCATING RITA

Playing February 21 to March 2, 2013
At Sagebrush Theatre

Study Guide

wctlive.ca

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Thank you for participating in Western Canada Theatre's matinee programming! We would like you and your students to get the most out of your experience with us. Included in this package is some inside information exclusive to teachers and students, lesson ideas, discussion questions, and online resources. We hope you find them useful before and after seeing the show.

Please take a few minutes to review appropriate theatre etiquette with your students. While clapping and laughing are most appropriate for the theatre, whispering, talking, and excessive movement during the show is distracting to others in the audience and our actors on stage.

Audience members are encouraged to get comfortable, remove coats, use the washroom and turn all electronic devices OFF before a show begins. Please remind your students that texting is not allowed during the show.

Remembering theatre etiquette makes the show more enjoyable for everyone!

This play includes some coarse language

Curriculum Connections

Course	Strand(s)
English Language Arts Grades 8 to 12	Oral Language (Speaking and Listening) (Strategies)(Thinking)(Features)
Drama 8 to 10	Exploration and Imagination (Expression and Trust) Drama Skills (Body and Voice)(Role) Context (Making Connections)
Theatre Performance 11 and 12	Exploration and Analysis, Performance Skills (Body and Voice) Performance skills, (characterization) Context, Company, Exploration and Analysis
Theatre Production 11	Exploration and Analysis, Production Skills (Design) Production Skills (Technical) Production Skills (Management) (context) (Company)
English Language Arts Grades 8 to 12	Oral Language (Speaking and Listening) (Strategies)(Thinking)(Features)

Educating Rita

Production Personnel

Cast

Frank	**Scott Bellis**
Rita	**Holly Lewis**

Creative Team

Director	**Sarah Rodgers**
Assistant Director	**Heather Cant**
Set and Costume Designer	**Drew Facey**
Lighting Designer	**Gerald King**
Sound Designer	**Cayman Duncan**
Stage Manager	**Kelly Manson**
Apprentice Stage Manager	**Sklyar Nakazawa**

Western Canada Theatre Staff

Staff

Daryl Cloran	Artistic Director
Lori Marchand	General Manager

Administration

Ron Thompson	Financial Manager
Marilyn Zuke	Associate Financial Manager
Catrina Crowe	Marketing & Communications Manager
Kelly Manson	Special Events & Administrative Associate
Lacey Stark	Special Events & Marketing Assistant
Terri Runnalls	Education Coordinator

Production

Ross Nichol	Production Manager
Heather Cant	Associate Producer
Brian Britton	Technical Director
Joel Eccleston	Head Carpenter
Terri Grant	Head of Properties
Cindy Wiebe	Head of Wardrobe
Jessie Paynter	Assistant Technical Director
Dale McRann	Mentor / 2nd Carpenter
Paul Cuthbart	Assistant Carpenter
Eric Maher	Technical Staff
Darren John	Technical Staff
Ryan Pollon	Junior Technician

Facilities

Terri Runnalls	Facilities Manager
Jean Choi	Volunteer Coordinator
Nicole Bremner	Lead Concession Services
Amy Baskin, Allison Chlow, Christine Leroux, Phyllis Mader, Dušan Magdolen, Gabrielle Putoto, Jessica Reid, Carling Ryan, Melissa Thomas	Guest Services Staff
Sharen Michael	Parking Attendant

Kamloops Live Box Office

Geraldine Penny	Box Office Staff
Janet Riggs	Box Office Manager
Judy Day	Box Office Staff

Inside Western Canada Theatre

with Sarah Rodgers

Director, Sarah Rodgers, gives a short description about what being a director is all about.

Type or paste the following link into your browser:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fo-VvZek14&feature=youtu.be

A Sneak Peak at Directing *Educating Rita*

with Sarah Rodgers

Director, Sarah Rodgers, provides a sneak peak at the directing process for *Educating Rita*.

Type or paste the following link into your browser:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7Ub8rR2hDY&feature=youtu.be

About the Play

Written by British playwright, Willy Russell, this witty play features a lively working class woman who aspires to be more. Rita enrolls in a course at an open university where she has a tutor/mentor named Frank. She strives for inner growth and he is a heavy drinker, bored with his life and job at the university. While both experience life struggles, their journey is entertaining, thought-provoking and beautiful.

Characters

Frank

A university professor who reluctantly decides to take on Rita as a student

Middle aged

Drinks a lot

Rita

While her original name is Susan, she is usually referred to as Rita throughout the play

Working class hairdresser who aspires for more in her life

In her mid twenties

Playwright, Willy Russell

William Russell is a well known British playwright, dramatist, lyricist, and composer. His best known works include *Shirley Valentine*, *Educating Rita*, and *Blood Brothers*. *Blood Brothers* was performed at Western Canada Theatre in 1999 and *Shirley Valentine* in 1993 and 2010. All three of these plays have, not surprisingly, won numerous awards (for their play or film format) including: the Lawrence Olivier Award, Academy Award, Golden Globe Award, and Tony Award.

Willy Russell's works often employ the philosophy that "anyone is capable of change whatever obstacles may be in their path."

As a child his parents encouraged him to read. After high school he worked as a hairdresser, and then eventually opened his own salon. While it wasn't his first written play, his first success was a played about The Beatles entitled *John, Paul, George, Ringo…and Bert.* Later *Educating Rita* was written then turned into a film – a story that is deemed semi-autobiographical.

Russell has written songs since the 1960s and usually writes the music to go along with his plays. He has also written television shows and novels.

As of 2008 it is reported that Willy Russell continues to live and work in his home city of Liverpool.

Willy Russell on *Educating Rita*

"I wanted to make a play which engaged and was relevant to those who considered themselves uneducated, those whose daily language is not the language of the university or the theatre. I wanted to write a play which would attract, and be as valid for, the Ritas in the audience as the Franks."

Interview with Actor Holly Lewis

Q: What aspect of this play do you think high school students will be drawn to?

A: *Educating Rita* is a great play for high school students because it is about a young person getting an education. In a way, they are closer to Rita and her life and her problems than adult audiences. She struggles with being stuck in a peer group - a social group - that doesn't value school. She is trying to find meaning in her life. She is making discoveries about herself and her world every minute. I think no group is more aware of this search for meaning and place in the world than teenagers. They are embarking on that struggle every day.

Q: Had you previously read or viewed *Educating Rita*?

I saw the 1983 movie version of *Educating Rita* a few years ago, followed by a production of the play at Theatre Aquarius in Hamilton, Ontario. I remember being blown away by the Rita in the film and looking her up on IMDB. I discovered that she was Ron Weasley's mother in the *Harry Potter* movies! Since finding out I would be performing the role, I have avoided the movie and any other performances of the script. It isn't helpful for me to be thinking of the character from the outside in. To make a believable performance, I come to the character from the clues in the script, building my Rita from the objectives, or motivations, that I find in the dialogue. Watching the movie would bring all my awareness to how Rita looks or moves or talks and not what she is trying to do.

Q: What aspect of your role is the most challenging?

There are a few challenges for me. This is a very big role. There are a lot of lines to learn. We have a short rehearsal period so I have been working on the lines off and on since September so that when I began work this month, I wouldn't have to worry about the words, I can just focus on all the other work. The second big challenge is the dialect. It is very important that Rita sounds like a working class girl from Liverpool England. In England, a person can tell where you come from, where you went to school, how much money you have, what your class is, all from the sound of your voice. Because *Educating Rita* is about 2 characters from very different classes, it is important that the audience can hear it. I have been working for about 3 months to create the right sound for Rita. It is a Manchester dialect with a few distinctive vowel pronunciations to make it sound like she has been living in Liverpool. I have never learned this dialect before. I worked with a dialect coach over the phone from Saskatoon. I watched a lot of the character Daphne Moon (from *Frasier*) and a British soap opera called *Coronation Street*.

Q: Is this role similar to another you have played previously? How have past experiences have influenced how you will play Rita?

A: I can't think of anyone quite like Rita. At their hearts, each role I play is really me - with some aspects magnified, some minimized. Each role I have played has altered me, taught me something

new, expanded me. In that way, the other roles I have played will influence Rita. But I try to approach each character from the text of the playwright. It all grows from there.

Q: What has been your favourite role you have played?

A: It might sound hokey, but it might be playing Rita. I really love her. She is wild and hungry for life. She is braver than I am and I like that. It's fun to be brave. I used to live in Toronto and just before I moved to Kamloops 2 years ago, I played a character named Lyca. (Incidentally, the character's name came from a William Blake poem, one of the poets referred to in *Educating Rita*). Lyca was an undead creature taking the form of a young girl who never seemed to age - she had been 13 for longer than anyone remembered. It was a fantastic, weird, historical horror play set in a haunted Canadian mill. Lyca had super powers so I got to wear a harness. The harness was strapped around my waist and attached to ropes that ran up through the lighting grid near the ceiling. When the 2 men back stage hauled on the ropes it looked like I was leaping from the floor to the ceiling in one jump - a cross between spiderman, the exorcist and Laura Ingalls.

Q: If you could play any character in any show, who/what would it be?

A: *Peter Pan*, because I want to fly again... Viola from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, because she is so funny and smart.

Accents and Dialects

Renaissance Theatreworks in Milwaukee, WI recently featured a production of *Educating Rita*, where they had a vocal coach working with the actors who play Frank and Rita. To provide perspective on the challenges our own local actors are tackling, here are some excerpts from an interview with Dialect Coach, Michelle Lopez-Rios.

> *Rita is a working class woman from Liverpool, England. She will be speaking with a typical Liverpudlian or Scouse (nickname for people from Liverpool) dialect. Then there is Frank. He is an English professor and career academic. He will use an R.P. (Received Pronunciation) dialect that is very common for well educated Brits.*
>
> *Dialects are regionalisms of a language. For example, in the United States we speak English in all parts of the country. Some speak with a drawl or "Southern" dialect others may speak with a a percussive "New York" dialect. But they are all dialects of English. Now, let's say someone comes from another country and is a native speaker of French. As they learn English there sounds are strongly influenced by their native sounds in French (sounds that may not be used in English). They are speaking English with a French accent.*
>
> *So, in Educating Rita we are exploring two dialects of British English.*

Definition of dialect: a regional variety of language distinguished by features of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation from other regional varieties and constituting together with them a single language

Definition of accent: a distinctive manner of expression: as
a: an individual's distinctive or characteristic inflection, tone, or choice of words —usually used in plural
b: a way of speaking typical of a particular group of people and especially of the natives or residents of a region

Sense of Space

While Frank and Rita refer to their lives outside of the university, the entire play appropriately takes place in Frank's office. Just as Rita's first attempts to embrace post secondary education prove challenging, so does her entrance into Frank's office. Upon each of her entries to the office, she brings energy and life to the room. While Frank is usually sitting or following Rita, she explores the office and highlights the many features of the office – all of which Frank has become unaware of. The time he spends in his office fuels his lack of passion in his life. As the play ends, he packs his belongings as he leaves the university and begins a new endeavor. The setting used and the feelings shown are quite closely mirrored to the real issues and problems that both characters face.

Lesson Activity

With the included quotations, inspired from the play, on the following page, cut into strips and place in a jar. Split your students into small groups. Have each group decide who the director will be for the given activity. Have the director choose a quote for their group.

Students create a scene using their quote as inspiration to lead the scene and create a problem and solution.

With your direction, have the class create the criteria and rubric for the assignment. Students can decide the value each criterion should be worth.

Educating Rita Inspired Quotations

"You can never be overdressed or overeducated."
— Oscar Wilde

"You educate a man; you educate a man. You educate a woman; you educate a generation."
— Brigham Young

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."
— Nelson Mandela

"Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation."
— Walter Cronkite

"Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence."
— Robert Frost

"When you know better you do better."
— Maya Angelou

"Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education."
— Martin Luther King Jr.

"Study without desire spoils the memory, and it retains nothing that it takes in."
— Leonardo da Vinci

"Children must be taught how to think, not what to think."
— Margaret Mead

“Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.”
— Aristotle

“It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.”
— Confucius

“Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today.”
— Malcolm X

“Educate a boy, and you educate an individual. Educate a girl, and you educate a community.”
— Greg Mortenson, *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace … One School at a Time*

“He who opens a school door, closes a prison.”
— Victor Hugo

“The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.”

“Where there’s a will there’s a way.”

“All that glitters is not gold.”

Lesson Activity

Below are a variety of excerpts from the play. Have students create short scenes with or without dialogue in which all scenes end with their chosen excerpt.

We'll, that depends upon you, on how committed you are. Are you sure that you're absolutely serious about this?

I'm gonna have a room like this one day; there's nothin' phoney about it; everything's in its right place. It's like wherever you've put something down…it's grown to fit there.

I'm honoured that you chose me.

'Cos they would have thrown me out of the theatre

This room does not need air, thank you very much.

Maybe they did it for your own good.

You can't go. I want to talk to you about this.

Assonance means getting the rhyme wrong.

Are you capable of recognizing what does and does not matter?

Lesson Activity

Have students place their chairs in a circle – the largest circle you can create in your space. Choose one person to be "it" to begin. Have them stand in the centre of the circle, where the other students are seated in their chairs. You should have enough chairs in the circle for all but one student.

Use the following statements below to read aloud one at a time. You will read one statement out and the students listen to what you read. If the statement applies to them (ie. They've seen that movie or that occurrence has happened to them before), they must quickly find a new seat. The person standing in the middle (without a seat) needs to run to find a seat as soon as someone gets up. The statement does not need to apply to the person in the middle. Once the movements for that round have settled and one student is left in the middle, you read the next statement.

After reading through all of the statements, read the explanations of the statements to the students so they learn the connections to *Educating Rita.* This will allow for some connections to the play even before seeing it.

See if students can predict the connection before you read it aloud.

Statements:

1. **If you've ever read or seen *My Fair Lady*…**
   Connection*:* Both plays (*Educating Rita* and *My Fair Lady*) feature a young woman who struggles to move to a higher class and achieve more in her life.

2. **If you've ever seen a show at the Sagebrush Theatre…**
   Connection: This show will be playing at the Sagebrush theatre from February 21 to March 2, 2013.

3. **If you've ever read or seen *Shirley Valentine*…**
   Connection: This show is written by the same playwright, Willy Russell.

4. **If you have ever thought about going to university…**
   Connection: The play begins with Rita beginning a course at an open university

5. **If you've ever been to a hairdresser…**
   Connection: Rita is a hairdresser. Also, the playwright was a hairdresser earlier in his life.

6. **If you like to read literature…**
   Connection: Literature is often spoken about in the play and a definition of the word is spoken about.

7. **If you've ever heard a British accent…**
   Connection: This play will feature two different dialects of British accents.

8. **If you've ever read or seen *Blood Brothers*…**
   Connection: *Blood Brothers* was written by Willy Russell, the playwright of *Educating Rita*.

9. **If you've ever watched Bob the Builder…**
   Connection: Playwright Willy Russell believes in the philosophy that anyone is capable of change whatever obstacles may be in their path – just like Bob the Builder!

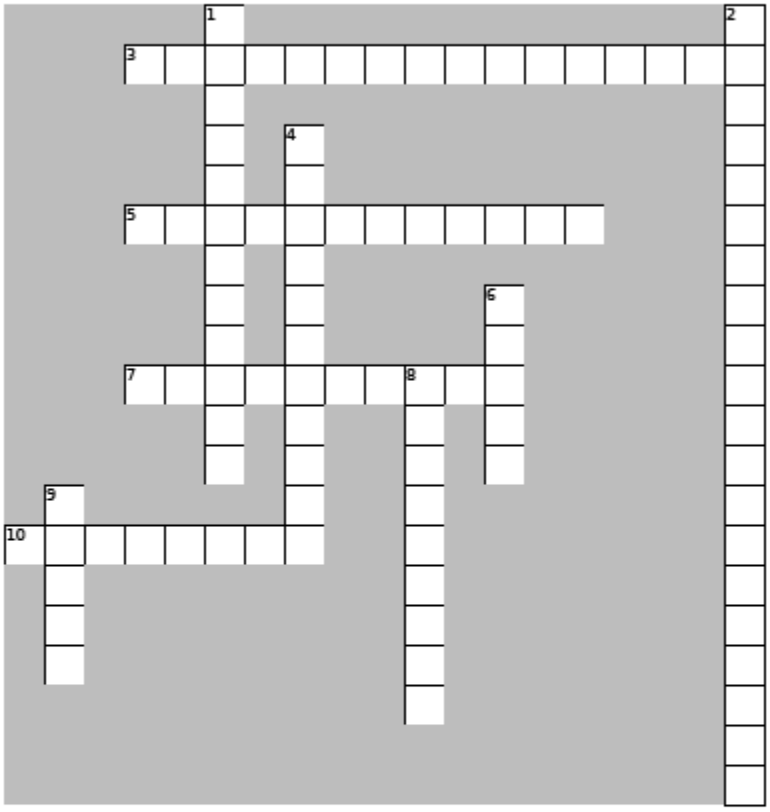
10. **If you've ever watched the movie *Pretty Woman*…**
    Connection: Resembling some similarities to the *Pretty Woman* movie, *Educating Rita* is an entertaining story that follows a woman who aspires to be more.

Lesson Activity

Photocopy the sheets: “About the Play” and “About the Playwright” for students and a copy of the crossword. Depending on the age of your students, read through the information pages together, then have students work in partners to solve the crossword.

Educating Rita

Western Canada Theatre



Across

3 This Russell play has been featured at Western Canada Theatre twice

5 Rita's social class can be described as this

7 His first successful play was about this well known band

10 Not just a lyricist, playwright, and dramatist, Willy Russell is also one of these

Down

1 The name of British playwright who wrote Educating Rita

2 Educating Rita is oddly deemed in this category of plays

4 After high school, this was Russell's first job

6 When Russell writes a play, he often writes this to go along with the play

8 The city in which it is suspected Russell currently lives

9 The emotion Frank feels about his job and his life

Educating Rita
Western Canada Theatre

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8 The city in which it is suspected Russell currently lives

9 The emotion Frank feels about his job and his life

Lesson Activity

As a class, read though the “Characters,” “About the Play,” and “About the Playwright” sheets, then distribute a wordsearch for students to complete. There are two available sheets with differing levels of difficulty.

Educating Rita
Western Canada Theatre

s	f	k	s	c	b	s	a	r	e	t
k	t	d	r	t	r	y	o	h	o	r
o	t	n	e	d	u	t	s	c	f	t
o	d	a	i	a	u	i	i	l	f	k
b	e	e	t	t	t	s	t	a	i	e
s	t	a	s	i	n	r	u	s	c	f
h	a	i	r	d	r	e	s	s	e	r
p	c	b	o	c	r	v	c	e	a	a
s	u	o	o	o	u	i	o	c	a	n
r	d	r	f	a	i	n	n	t	a	k
t	e	o	p	s	r	u	r	k	k	o

accent
poet
british
rita
susan
frank
drink
university
tutor
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class
educated
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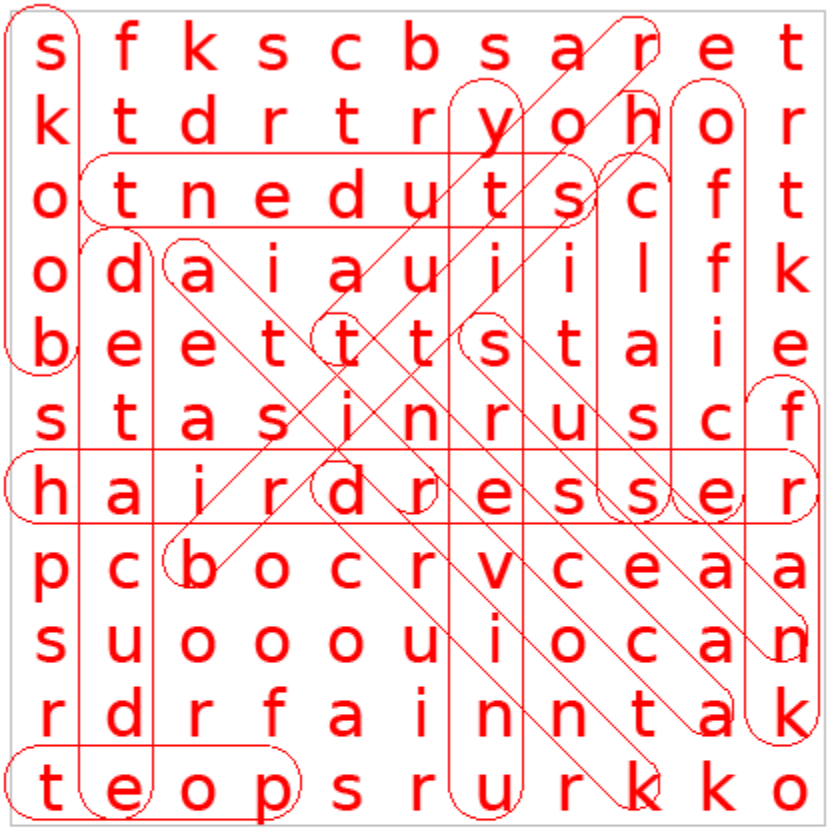
office
hairdresser

Educating Rita
Western Canada Theatre



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Educating Rita
Western Canada Theatre

accent
liverpool
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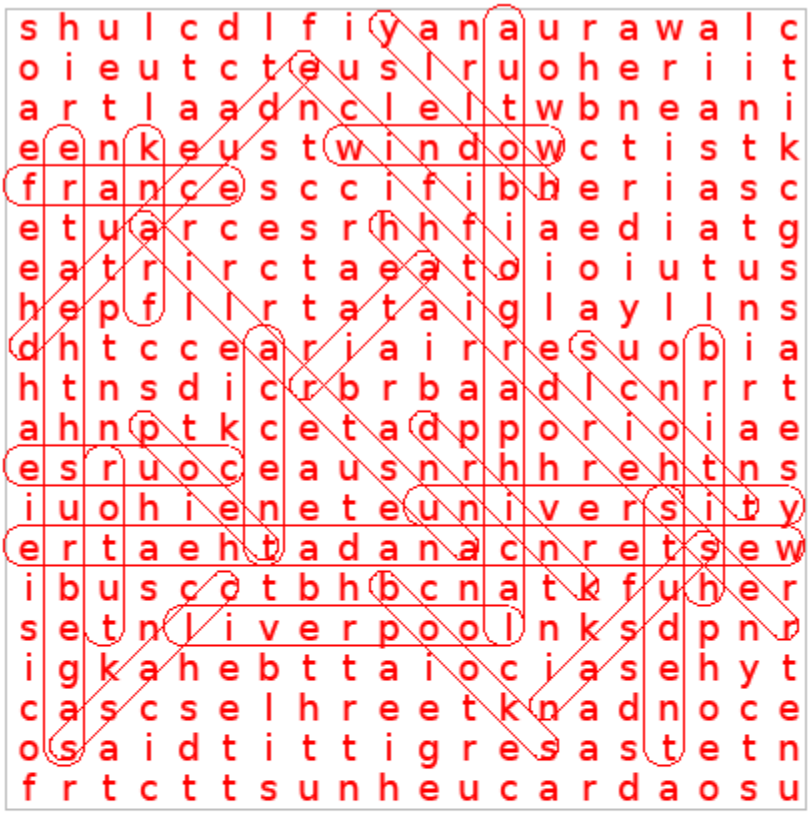
rita
susan
frank
drink
course
university
tutor
student
class
westerncanadatheatre
sagebrushtheatre
educated
books
office
window
hairdresser
autobiographical
france
australia
poet
Holly
Scott

Educating Rita
Western Canada Theatre



accent
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sagebrushtheatre
educated
books
office
window
hairdresser
autobiographical
france
australia
poet
Holly
Scott

Further Information

A youtube video – one on one interview with Playwright, Willy Russell (part 1 of 4)
http://youtu.be/yMdwbObl-C4

A youtube video – one on one interview with Playwright, Willy Russell (part 2 of 4)
http://youtu.be/yVlYQFC63mw

A youtube video – one on one interview with Playwright, Willy Russell (part 3 of 4)

http://youtu.be/QANjI_ZHIjE

A youtube video – one on one interview with Playwright, Willy Russell (part 4 of 4)

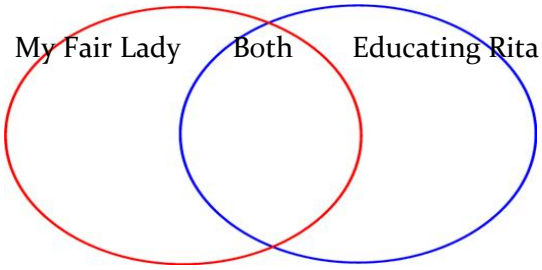
http://youtu.be/XAveiX-Z5Y4

Youtube video – the film version of *Educating Rita*
Please note: the film differs quite a bit from the play
The link below is to clip 1 of the entire film. All parts are available on youtube.

http://youtu.be/smKTxgQp8So

Post Show Discussion Prompts

- Compare this play to other shows/stories you have seen/read and explain the similarities.
- If your students have been to the production of *My Fair Lady* (December 2009) or read the story, create a venn diagram outlining the similarities and differences between *My Fair Lady* and *Educating Rita*.



- When Rita asked her mom why she was crying during a song playing at a pub and her mom responded, "Because – because we could sing better songs than those," why did her mother say that?
- What is the significance of Rita cutting Frank's hair at the end of the show?
- Why does Rita end up not going to Frank's house when she was invited?
- What does this play imply education is all about? In what sort of light is education portrayed?
- What theme or lesson can be applied to your lives?
- As the play neared its conclusion, were you expecting a different ending?
- In our society, what are some examples or situations where one can be educated, yet not attend any further post secondary education?
- What are the significance in name choices in both *Educating Rita* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*?
- What do you consider literature?
- Read the following excerpt, taken from the play, when Rita is speaking about her customers at the hair salon. Then relate her comments from below to Frank's character and the significance of the hair cut at the end of the play.

They walk into the hairdresser's and expect to walk out an hour later as a different person. I tell them, I'm just a hairdresser, not a plastic surgeon. See, most of them, that's why they

come to the hairdresser's – because they want to be changed. But if you wanna change y'have to do it from the inside don't y'? Know like I'm doin'...tryin' to do. Do you think I will? Think I'll be able to do it."

- How does the entire play taking place in Frank's office (no set changes) impact the play for you as an audience member?
- What specific aspects of the play made it humorous? *Answers will vary, of course, but perhaps might lead to a conversation on dialect, accents, or different knowledge bases from one class to another*
- What is the symbolism of Frank's office and window to the outside?
- How does Frank's life change throughout the play?
- How does Rita's life change throughout the play?
- Why does Frank's opinion of Rita change as the play unfolds?
- What purpose does Trish, Rita's flat mate, serve in the play?
- Which theme do you think is the most prominent in this play, and why? (Education, class, or choice)

Resources Used

http://www.goodreads.com

www.wikipedia.org

www.wctlive.ca

http://www.willyrussell.com/

http://www.r-t-w.com

http://www.mtc.mb.ca/PDFs/Outreach/Study-Guides-2009-10/MTC-Study-Guide---Educating-Rita.aspx

http://www.thepublictheatre.org

www.m-w.com

Educating Rita script