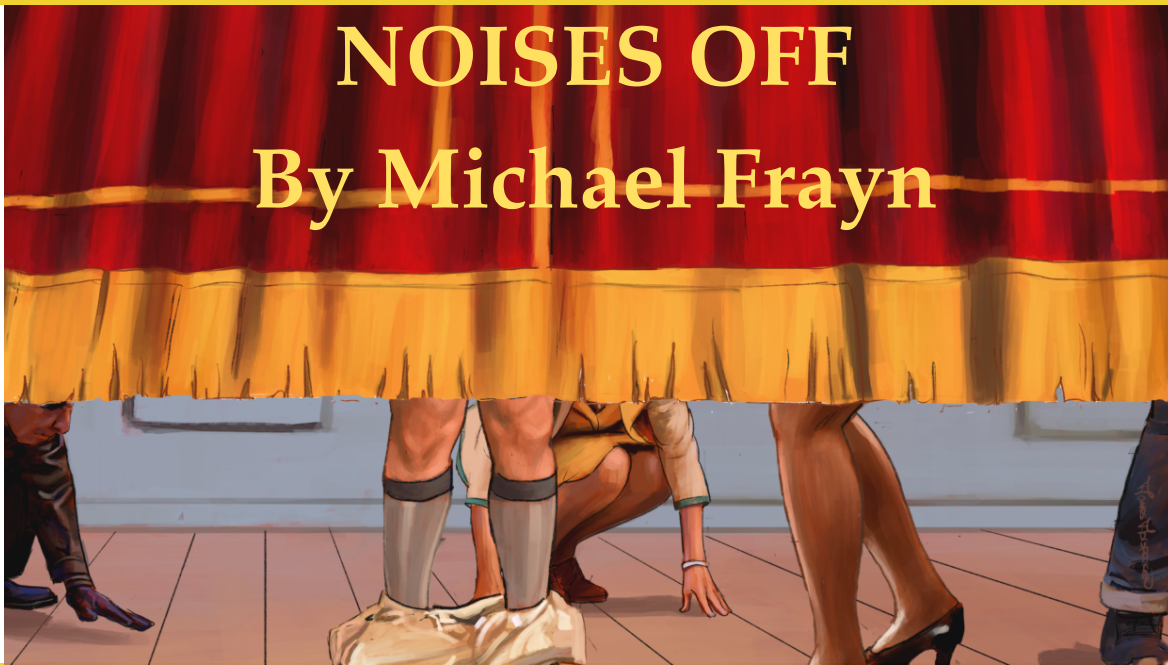


## Study Guide 2022- 2023



### Florida Standards

#### Language Arts

LAFS.910.RL.1: Key Ideas and Details  
LAFS.910.W.1: Text Types and Purposes  
LAFS.1112.RL.1: Key Ideas and Details  
LAFS.1112.SL.1: Comprehension and Collaboration  
LAFS.910.RL.3: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

#### Theater

TH.912.F.2: Careers in and related to the arts  
TH.68.S.1: The arts are inherently experiential.

**PG-13**

Mild Language, Sexual Innuendo, Risque Costumes , Slapstick Violence, Cultural Stereotypes

Most appropriate for Grade 8 and up. Children under 5 will not be admitted to the theater.

# Noises Off

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# Noises Off An Introduction

Educators:

Welcome Home! Orlando Shakespeare Theater is thrilled to be back to full educational offerings at the Lowndes Shakespeare Center and in your school! We can't wait to share the magic of live theater with you and your students once again.

With a Children's Series of older and newer classic stories and a Signature Series with recent hits, traditional favorites and of course Shakespeare, there is something for everyone.

This Study Guide will assist you in preparing for your Field Trip, as well as give you follow up activities and lessons to continue exploring themes when back in your classroom.

We look forward to working with you this year and learning how we can serve you and your students. Thank you for your tremendous work in nurturing our audiences of tomorrow.

Anne Hering  
Director of Education

Jennifer Paxton  
Education Coordinator



# Noises Off

## Enjoying Live Theater

### Theater is a Team Sport

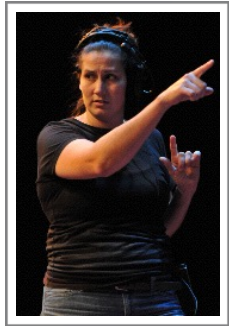
The **Playwright** writes the script. Sometimes it is from an original idea and sometimes it is adapted from a book or story. The Playwright decides what the characters say, and gives the Designers guidelines on how the play should look.

The **Director** creates the vision for the production and works closely with the actors, costume, set and lighting designers to make sure everyone tells the same story.



Sound Designer -  
Britt Sanducky  
Photo: Rob Jones

The **Actors** use their bodies and voices to bring the author's words and the director's ideas to life on the stage.



Stage Manager  
-Stacey Renee  
Norwood  
Photo: Rob Jones

The **Designers** imagine and create the lights, scenery, props, costumes and sound that will compliment and complete the director's vision.

The **Stage Manager** assists the director during rehearsals by recording their instructions and making sure the actors and designers understand these ideas. The Stage Manager then runs the show during each performance by calling cues for lights and sound, as well as entrances and exits.



Costume Designer -  
Denise Warner  
Photo: Rob Jones

The **Shop** and **Stage Crew** builds the set, props and costumes according to the designer's plans. The Stage Crew sets the stage with props and furniture, assists the actors with costume changes and operates sound, lighting and stage machinery during each performance.



Creative Team of The Merry Wives of  
Windsor  
Photo: Rob Jones

The **Front of House Staff** welcomes you to the theater, takes your tickets, helps you find your seat and answers any question you may have on the day of performance.

The **Theater** is where it all takes place. Orlando Shakespeare Theater In Partnership with UCF is the only professional, classical theater company in Central Florida, reaching students and audiences in the surrounding eight counties.

### Mission:

To enrich our community with engaging professional theater, inspiring educational experiences, and thought-provoking new plays.

# Noises Off

## Enjoying Live Theater

### The Actor/Audience Relationship

The Audience is the reason Live Theater exists. At Orlando Shakes, we cherish the Actor/Audience relationship, the unique give and take that exists during a performance which makes the audience an ACTIVE participant in the event. The actors see the audience just as the audience sees the actors, and every, laugh, snifle, chuckle and gasp the audience makes effects the way the actor plays his next moment. We want you to be engaged, and to live the story with us!



Photo: Rob Jones

There are certain Conventions of the Theatrical Event, like, when the lights go down you know that the show is about to start, and that the audience isn't encouraged to come and go during a performance. Here are some other tips to help you and your classmates be top notch audience members:

- Please make sure to turn off your cell phones. And NO TEXTING!
- Please stay in your seat. Use the restroom before you take your seat and stay in your seat unless there is an emergency.
- Please do not eat or drink in the theater.

### Talkback

After the performance, the actors will stay on stage for about 10 minutes to hear your comments and answer any questions you have about the play, the production and what it means to be a professional actor. We'd love to hear what you felt about the play, what things were clear or unclear to you, and hear your opinions about what the play means. This last portion of the Actor/Audience Relationship is so important to help us better serve you!



# *Noises Off* *About the Play*

## Setting and Synopsis

### SETTING

The action takes place in the living-room of the Brents' country home, on a Wednesday afternoon.

ACT I - Grand Theatre, Weston-super-Mare. Monday, January 14.

ACT II - Theatre Royal, Ashton-under-Lyne. Wednesday matinee, February 13

ACT III - Municipal Theatre, Stockton-on-Tees. Saturday, April 6.

### SYNOPSIS

Act I begins during the final dress rehearsal at the Grand Theatre, Weston-Super-Mare for the regional tour of the new British farce *Nothing On*. The director, Lloyd Dallas, tries to keep his tired and frustrated cast together to pull off the rehearsal, as they forget their lines, blocking and props. To top it off, off-stage personal problems add to the mayhem as they struggle to finish running Act I.

Act II takes place one month later with *Nothing On* up and running, and a performance at the Theatre Royal. The action now takes place backstage, as the cracks and flaws of the begin to surface. As the relationships start to deteriorate, we see backstage squabbles, late entrances, misplaced props and surprising revelations all come forth in a manic fashion.

Act III takes place as *Nothing On* is about to wrap up its run at the Municipal Theatre. The frayed relationships we saw in Act II are now fully flushed out. Things go from bad to worse, with the blocking, lines and concentration of the cast completely out the window. Somehow, the cast manages to pull the show off, but it is a far cry from what it resembled in Act I.



# Noises Off

## Vocabulary

**Technicals** – the rehearsals when lights, sound, set changes, and other technical elements are incorporated into a show.

**Company** – a term used for the people working on a play, sometimes more specifically referring to the cast of the show. At The Rep, all employees are considered company members.

**Weekly rep** – a system of creating theater in which the resident acting company learns a new play, rehearses for a week, and then performs the piece, with the process starting over weekly.

**Stalls** – a British term for the seats of the theater.

**VAT** – “value added tax”, a tax levied on the difference between the cost of materials and the selling price of a commodity or service.

**Quick change** – when an actor must change costumes rapidly, often without the time to go back to the dressing room.

**Beginners** – British term for the American phrase “Places”, which tells actors that they are close to the show’s start and need to be in their spots, ready to go on stage.

**House** – house can refer to the area of the theater where the audience sits, the audience itself, or the entirety of the show, as in “The first house finishes just after five, yes?”

**Front of house calls** – the announcements the Stage Manager or House Manager makes to notify the audience to take their seats.

**On the corner** – this phrase refers to the corner where a Stage Manager may sit and feed lines to actors if they miss a cue. We at The Rep, of course, do not need such a thing.

**Green room** – the room in a theater where actors wait to make their entrances. Contrary to popular belief, all green rooms are not painted green.

**Love** – British term of endearment that is used both genuinely and sarcastically in the play.

**Fruit machine** – Cha-ching! Cha-ching! A fruit machine is Brit-speak for a slot machine.

**Posset mill** – posset is an old British drink made from mixing milk, ale, and spices that later became the inspiration for egg nog. The word also refers to a baby’s spit-up after drinking milk.

**Bloody** – an expletive adjective used in Great Britain and former commonwealth countries.

**Airing cupboard** – the linen closet, also a place to hide lovers / phony house buyers.

**Postprandial** – after dinner.

**Inland Revenue** – the British equivalent of the IRS.

**Pigeonhouse** – a small compartment in a desk or cabinet.

**Bullion vault** – a bank vault.

**Berk** – a disparaging term to imply that someone is a fool or stupid.

**Boiled sweets** – hard candy.

**Telly** – short for a television or television program.

**Pensioners** – the British term for retirees or those who are collecting pensions.

**Cost a bomb** – to cost a large sum of money.

**Brassy** – an adjective to describe something or someone trashy.

# Noises Off

## Meet the Characters

### **Dotty Otley / Mrs. Clacket:**

(Off stage Dotty) A late-middle-aged British actress. Dating Garry, though she attempts to make him jealous by meeting with Freddy.

(On Stage Character: Mrs. Clackett): A Cockney Housekeeper for the Brent's home in England.

### **Brooke Ashton / Vicki:**

(Off Stage: Brooke) A young inexperienced British actress. Pays no attention to other performers, either in performance or backstage.

(On Stage Character: Vicki): An English woman who works for Inland Revenue and is trying to woo Roger.

### **Belinda Blair / Flavia Brent**

(Off stage Belinda): Cheerful and sensible, a reliable British actress. She may have feelings for Freddy.

(On Stage Character: Flavia Brent): Phillip Brent's English wife. She is dependable, though not one for household duties.

### **Poppy Norton-Taylor:**

Stage Manager. Emotional and over-sensitive, and envious of Brooke, whom she understudies. Carrying Lloyd's child.

### **Lloyd Dallas:**

The director of the play, Nothing On.

### **Garry Lejeune / Roger:**

(Off stage: Garry) An British actor who never finishes a sentence. Dating Dotty.

(On Stage Character: Roger): An English Real estate agent who is attempting to rent Flavia's and Phillip's home, but uses it for his own personal benefit.

### **Frederick Fellows /Phillip Brent / Sheikh :**

(Off stage: Freddy) An British actor with a serious fear of violence and blood.

(On Stage Character: Phillip Brent): An Englishman who lives out of the country with his wife Flavia to avoid paying taxes.

(On Stage Character: Sheikh): A Middle-Eastern, Interested in renting Flavia's and Phillip's home and is the spitting image of Phillip.

### **Selsdon Mowbray / Burglar:**

(Off Stage: Selsdon Mowbray): An elderly alcoholic Englishman who hides his bottles onstage.

(On Stage Character: Burglar): Old Cockney man in his seventies, breaking into the Brent's home.

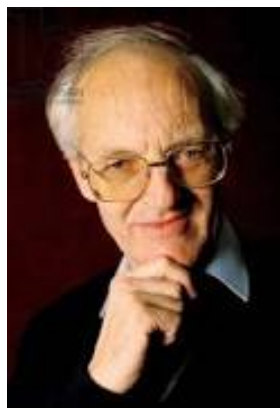
### **Timothy Allgood:**

An over-worked Assistant Stage Manager. Understudies Selsdon and Freddy.



# Noises Off

## Meet the Playwright



Michael Frayn, (born September 8, 1933, London, England), British playwright, novelist, and translator whose work is often compared to that of Anton Chekhov for its focus on humorous family situations and its insights into society. Frayn is perhaps best known for his long-running, internationally successful stage farce *Noises Off* (1982; film 1992), a frenetic play-within-a-play about the antics of an English theatrical company touring the provinces and its inept attempts at performing a typically English sex farce.

Frayn graduated from the University of Cambridge in 1957 and worked as a newspaper reporter, columnist, and critic for the *Manchester Guardian* and *The Observer*. In the early 1960s several collections of essays from his newspaper columns were published; his later travel writing for *The Observer* was collected as *Travels with a Typewriter* (2009). A wide-ranging and prolific author, Frayn wrote novels, plays, documentary films, and teleplays. He also translated and adapted several plays by Chekhov.

Frayn's own plays are primarily comedies or tragicomedies. *Alphabetical Order* (1976) concerns the dehumanization that occurs when a chaotic newspaper office is transformed by an overly efficient employee. In *Make and Break* (1980) a salesman loses his humanity though he gains business success. Frayn's other plays included *Donkeys' Years* (1977), *Benefactors* (1984), *Here: A Play in Two Acts* (1993), *Copenhagen* (1998), *Democracy* (2003), and *Afterlife* (2008).

Among Frayn's novels were *The Tin Men* (1965), *The Russian Interpreter* (1966), *A Very Private Life* (1968), *The Trick of It* (1989), *Now You Know* (1992), *Headlong* (1999), *Spies* (2002), and *Skios* (2012). *My Father's Fortune* (2010) was a memoir.

# Noises Off

## What is Farce?

### The Origins of Farce

Stemming from the French word meaning 'stuffing,' or 'padding', farce has been a source of theatrical comedy entertaining audiences for generations. The first farces were short comic sketches to pad the short breaks in long, often very sombre plays – a welcome respite from five hours of serious drama. These farces were usually performances of one act in length but towards the end of the 18th century, any piece that closed a play bill was labelled as farce and soon the definition of this comic genre became blurred until actor manager, David Garrick began to revolutionise farce on stage.

18th century farce often revolved around the arranged marriages of the old school and the romantic love-matches of the new, thriving on social upheaval. These stock plotlines and stock characters were being developed throughout European Theatre at this time. In Renaissance Italy, a very physical and acrobatic style developed, incorporating old performance traditions that dated from the Roman Empire and the comedies of Plautus. This became known as Commedia dell'Arte. The professional touring troupes of Commedia performed outdoors at fairs and markets on makeshift stages. The style was broad, exaggerated, burlesqued, as it had to be to be seen and heard over the noise of a market fair. The dialogue was improvised around a short sketch whilst the physical action was a series of well-rehearsed, often acrobatic comic moments.

By 1650, the travelling troupes practising Commedia had infused French culture too, but plays were no longer improvised and the literary side of farce began to be emphasized, as the actors switched languages from their native Italian to French. This influenced many farce writers from Moliere to Marivaux, to Goldoni who began to establish farce as we know it. The plays were now being sponsored by the nobility, were performed indoors and audiences had to buy a ticket. Entertainment in eighteenth-century Paris was far more than mere light hearted diversion and socialising though. The public's subliminal search for sex, pathos, brutality, and absurdity through entertainment was often satisfied through this theatrical genre and shows how the lower classes often used entertainment to mock the elite.

By the end of the 17th Century, France had developed the two principal styles of comedic farce that we still have today: the older Italian style, very broad and physical and acrobatic, and the newer French style, where the acrobatics are verbal, and quick wit dominates over slapstick. This amalgamation continued to evolve until the end of the 19th century, when they were brought to their ultimate form by Eugene Labiche, and then Georges Feydeau up to and including Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter, whose plays are indebted to another inheritor of Commedia – the British music hall.

The fashion of criticizing and laughing at the political establishment was seeping into British theatres at this time as well, but of course, did not go on forever. The Walpole administration initiated the infamous Theatrical Licensing Act of 1737 heavily censoring British stages. After the Act had been passed, all plays were censored and adapted before they could be staged in one of the only two 'licensed' playhouses, Drury Lane Theatre or Covent Garden Theatre. Both *Miss in Her Teens* and *The Lying Valet* were first performed in these establishments after the act was passed; a suggestion as to why any 'debauchery' within the text is coquettish and discreet, left instead to actors to extract then heighten through physicality on stage.

<https://loversandliarsmedley.wordpress.com/about/a-dramaturgs-perspective/the-origins-of-farce/>



# Noises Off

## Modern Farces

After attending, compare these modern movies with *Noises Off*. How are they similar? How are they different? Can you think of any other movies or series that have these elements?



In the 1930s, the Grand Budapest Hotel is a popular European ski resort, presided over by concierge Gustave H. (Ralph Fiennes). Zero, a junior lobby boy, becomes Gustave's friend and protege. Gustave prides himself on providing first-class service to the hotel's guests, including satisfying the sexual needs of the many elderly women who stay there. When one of Gustave's lovers dies mysteriously, Gustave finds himself the recipient of a priceless painting and the chief suspect in her murder.



Annie (Kristen Wiig) is a single woman whose own life is a mess, but when she learns that her lifelong best friend, Lillian (Maya Rudolph), is engaged, she has no choice but to serve as the maid of honor. Though lovelorn and almost penniless, Annie, nevertheless, winds her way through the strange and expensive rituals associated with her job as the bride's go-to gal. Determined to make things perfect, she gamely leads Lillian and the other bridesmaids down the wild road to the wedding.



Jojo is a lonely German boy who discovers that his single mother is hiding a Jewish girl in their attic. Aided only by his imaginary friend -- Adolf Hitler -- Jojo must confront his blind nationalism as World War II continues to rage on.



As the holidays approach, Clark Griswold (Chevy Chase) wants to have a perfect family Christmas, so he pesters his wife, Ellen (Beverly D'Angelo), and children, as he tries to make sure everything is in line, including the tree and house decorations. However, things go awry quickly. His hick cousin, Eddie (Randy Quaid), and his family show up unplanned and start living in their camper on the Griswold property. Even worse, Clark's employers renege on the holiday bonus he needs.

## Noises Off

### Activity: Think On Your Feet!

Timing is essential to comedy! Many comic actors practice improvisation to learn how to think and react quickly. Try this improv game to sharpen your reaction skills.

#### What Are You Doing!

Rules: Player 1 begins miming some action.

Player 2 shouts, "What are you doing?"

Player 1 responds with some action other than that which he or she is miming.

Player 1 stops performing the action and watches Player 2 perform whatever action Player 1 suggested.

After several seconds (just long enough for Player 2 to establish the action he or she is performing), Player 1 shouts, "What are you doing?"

Player 2 responds with some action other than that which he or she is miming.

Player 2 stops, and Player 1 performs this action.

Repeat.

1. "What are you doing?" should be shouted loudly and clearly.

2. It should sound more like a command than a question: WHATAREYOU DOING! The purpose of this game is not to make a joke of the question ("So, uh, what are yooooooooo doin'?" ), nor is it to be funny. It is meant to train quick thought and action.

3. Action suggestions should be stated loudly, clearly, and directly. Do not say, "I'm... baking a cake." Skip directly to the verb. "Baking a cake!"

4. It is important to start immediately with the new action. For example, when you brush your teeth, you don't open the tube first and smear toothpaste on the toothbrush, but start immediately. No preparatory actions should be taken to delay or prepare for the start of the actual action.

#### Variant

The exercise can also be done with several players. The action does not switch back and forth between two players, but you form a circle and the action always moves one person forward. But this is rather a preliminary exercise to the Variant with two players. Players have the ability to plan ahead, which is much more difficult with the two-person variant.





## *Noises Off* *Discussion*

All farces have certain characteristics. Discuss the "Seven Elements of Farce" as they relates to *Noises Off*.

: [https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/play\\_analysis/farce.htm](https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/play_analysis/farce.htm)

### **Identity Centered:**

Revolves around the mistaken or threatened identity of the characters.

### **Attitude towards the Plot:**

The plot mocks social codes, is clue based, involves 'funny' violence, has a shock resolution, and a happy ending.

### **Wit and Manners:**

The plot toys with the concept of what should be done (is proper) and the rebellions against that code. It is the witty approach to these issues that creates farce.

### **Reversal of Expectations:**

The element of surprise can happen anywhere in the action and usually does. The resolution always includes a comic reversal.

### **Velocity and Speed:**

Things happen quickly. It's comedy: timing, timing, timing.

### **Multiple and Fragile Substructures:**

Structure is based on social satire and it follows rules that we can see and which guide the characters. It is the written guide by which the characters are trapped.

### **Use of Character Roles:**

Young lovers, witty servants, hen pecked husbands, misers, and rising socialites. A loosened, yet enhanced, commedia cast.