

# CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDE

## NEBRASKALAND!



Dear Educators –

Welcome to The Rose, where we strive to enrich the lives of children through live theater, dance and arts education. We're pleased you have chosen to make The Rose a part of your students' learning experience, and we will do our best to make it both meaningful and educational. This study guide has been created to help identify the themes and lessons from *NEBRASKALAND!* and move them into your classroom where they can be further developed through discussions, activities and assignments. Please feel free to take the ideas we've suggested here and modify them to match your classroom's grade level and curriculum.

Sincerely,

Brian Guehring, Rose Education Director



### Take A Look Inside!

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### Pre-Show Activities

#### Creating a Character

In-chair activity • 10-20 minutes

**Objective:** This activity will prepare students to take part in the *NEBRASKALAND!* performance as characters who participate in a planning meeting about a soon-to-be-developed theme park. By participating in a short writing exercise, students will invent a character and practice acting as that character in an interview.

**Discussion:** The characters invited to participate in the *NEBRASKALAND!* planning meeting will be modern day historians, investors and politicians. What do historians, investors and politicians do? Why would they be helping to plan the park? Which one would each student like to pretend to be for an hour?

**Activity:** Ask each student to write a short biography about his/her character.

**Drama Extension:** Select one student to sit in an "interview chair" in front of the class and pretend to be their character of choice. The teacher and the rest of the class can then ask questions, which the student in the "interview chair" should answer in character. Students should feel free to take up their character's biography to refer to during the questioning. Remind the interviewers that the goal is NOT to trick the interviewee, but to learn more about the character (i.e. What is your name? What do you do? What do you want in the park?)

**Art Extension:** Make a name tag to wear the day of the performance with name and role (historian, investor, politician, etc.)

Please have the students bring a pen or pencil to the play. Thanks!

# Behind the Scenes Spotlight on Set Design

A 1998 interview with Rich Haptonstall, the original *NEBRASKALAND!* Scenic Designer

## NEBRASKALAND!

### Cast

Natalie Armstrong	— Mari Martinez/ Corinne Christian
Bess Streeter Aldrich	
Willa Cather	
Judi Dahl	
Grace Abbott	
Rose Blumkin	

Bartholomew Hummelsback	— Michael Wilhelm/ Kevin Ehrhart
David (the model)	
Casimir Ziolkowski	
J. Sterling Morton	
Malcolm X	

Jack Linstrom	— Brian Guehring/ Jim Hoggatt
Simon LaFleur	
John G. Neihardt	
Father Flanagan	
John J. Pershing	

### Production Team

Playwright ..... Brian Guehring  
Director ..... Kevin Ehrhart  
Set Designer ..... Rich Haptonstall  
Costume Designer ..... Sherri Geerdes

### Why did you become a set designer?

I have always loved theater, painting, and drawing. My job as a set designer lets me combine all three of these interests and talents. To seriously study design, I went to graduate school at Humboldt State University in California, where I earned my Masters of Fine Arts in directing and scenic design.

### How long have you worked with The Rose Theater?

I have been working with The Rose for two years as the resident scenic designer and properties design. I have designed sets for many shows including *The Challenge*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *The Velveteen Rabbit* and *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*.

### How did you design the set for *NEBRASKALAND!*?

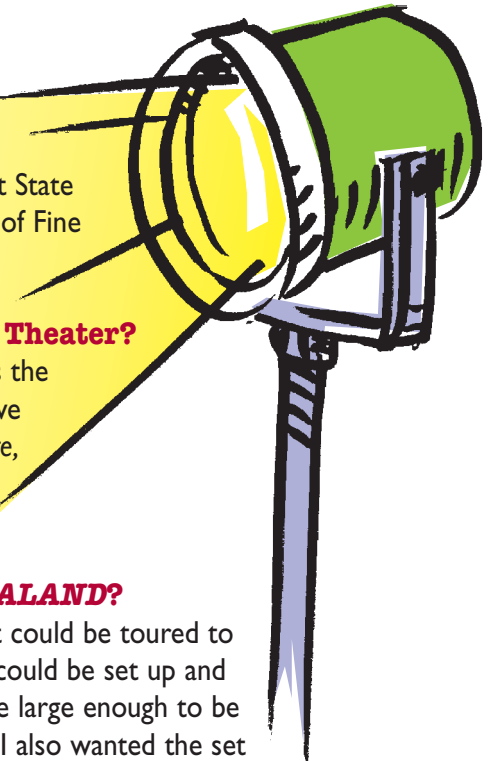
The challenge for this show was to design a set that could be toured to elementary schools. It had to be constructed so it could be set up and dismantled quickly by three actors. Plus, it had to be large enough to be used in a gym, but small enough to fit in our truck. I also wanted the set to serve as a teaching aid that could be used by the actors. That is why I designed the large blue Nebraska-shaped timeline and included photos of famous Nebraskans. Hopefully the timeline helps students put the famous Nebraskans in historical context and provides a visual for each famous Nebraskan's name.

### How long did it take to design the *NEBRASKALAND!* set?

It took approximately three weeks.

### What is the best thing about being a set designer?

It's very rewarding when the audience leaves a play talking about the set design.



## Explore the Job of a Set Designer

### Designing a Ride

In-chair activity • 20-30 minutes

**Objective:** This activity will challenge students to think like a set designer and to create a design that could be used in the *NEBRASKALAND!* play.

**Discussion:** What are some of the rides the playwright mentioned in *NEBRASKALAND!*?

**Research:** For this activity, we are going to focus on the Lewis and Clark Water Flume Ride. In small groups, ask students to research the Lewis and Clark expedition. Ask them to also research water flume rides.

**Brainstorming:** In small groups or as an entire class, brainstorm ideas for a new Lewis and Clark Water Flume Ride.

**Activity:** Ask each student to design a poster that promotes the Lewis and Clark Water Flume Ride. They can draw their ideas or cut-and-paste images from the Internet to create a collage.

**Extension:** Design your own ride for *NEBRASKALAND!* based on Nebraska's history.

# Post Show Activities

These activities are designed to help students further explore themes from the show through discussion, drama, art, and writing.

## Native American Leaders (Debate)

Out-of-chair activity • 10-15 minutes

**Objective:** Students will be challenged to compare and contrast different Native American leaders and to formulate strong arguments that defend their positions.

**Discussion:** Two famous American Indians from Nebraska were nominated for an honor in the interactive museum exhibit. Who are they? (Answer: Standing Bear and Crazy Horse). Who else might make a good nominee? (Answer: Sulette LaFlesche Tibbles, Red Cloud, Sitting Bull, etc.)

**Research:** Ask each student to research a famous Native American from Nebraska.

**Activity:** Ask each student to then make an argument as to why they should be honored in the Animatronic Hall of Heroes.

**Extension:** Take a new vote, which includes YOUR new nominees, and select two Native Americans from Nebraska to honor.

## Sports Hero Statues (Acting)

In-chair and out-of-chair activity • 10-20 minutes

**Objective:** This activity will challenge students to use their bodies to depict a famous Nebraska sports hero.

**Discussion:** Which statues did the character Simon Lefleur show as part of the play? (Answer: Bob Gibson, Grover Cleveland Alexander, Gale Sayers, Tom Osborne, and Louis Pound). Are there other sports stars from Nebraska who could be nominated? (Answer: Johnny Rodgers, Richie Ashburn, Bob Boozer, Val Skinner, Allison Weston, etc.)

**Research:** Ask each student to research a famous Nebraskan sports hero of their choice.

**Activity:** Working in pairs, ask one student to “sculpt” the other student into a statue of a famous Nebraskan sports star. Emphasize that the students don’t have to physically mold their partners. The sculptor can instruct his or her partner how to stand and can even model it themselves so the other person understands what they want.

**Side Coaching:** What expression does your statue have? How does the famous Nebraskan feel at this moment in his/her life?

**Extension:** Create statues of other famous Nebraskans who are not athletes.

## Robotic Statues (Acting)

Out-of-chair activity • 10-15 minutes

**Objective:** Students will be challenged to create a short autobiography for a famous Nebraskan and to use movement to create an animatronic statue for the famous Nebraskan.

**Discussion:** A final group of seven leaders was nominated for the Nebraska Hall of Heroes. Who were the seven leaders? (Answer: Rose Blumkin, Malcolm X, General Pershing, Grace Abbott, J. Sterling Morton, and Father Flanagan). Are there other historical Nebraskans who would make good nominees? (Answer: Edward Babe Gomez, William Jennings Bryan, President Gerald Ford, Ben Kuroki, etc.)

**Research:** In pairs, ask students to research a famous Nebraskan.



**Writing:** Ask the students to work together in pairs to write a two paragraph autobiography about their famous Nebraskan’s life.

**Warm-up:** Ask each student to stand and to practice pantomime (acting without words and props) as if they are a robot. Have them pantomime writing, reading and eating.

**Side Coaching:** Make sure you move stiffly and slowly. Try to move just one body part at a time. Keep it simple!

**Activity:** Have one student read the first paragraph of the autobiography in character as their partner does robotic movement to pantomime one activity from the paragraph. Switch roles for the second paragraph.

**Extension:** Take a new vote, which includes YOUR new nominees, and select seven new Nebraska leaders.

## Johnny Carson Talk Show (Acting)

In-chair activity • 10-20 minutes

**Objective:** This activity will challenge students to use their imaginations, acting voices, and body posture to become a famous Nebraskan.

**Discussion:** Who is Johnny Carson? (Answer: The former host of the “Tonight Show”). Who were the authors we met in today’s play? (Answer: Willa Cather, John G. Neihardt, and Bess Streeter Aldrich). Name some other famous entertainers and artists from Nebraska. (Answer: Chip Davis, Mari Sandoz, Henry Fonda, Conor Oberst, Buffalo Bill Cody, John Beasley, Aaron Douglas, Marg Helgenberger, Marlon Brando, etc.)

**Research:** Ask each student to research a famous entertainer or artist from Nebraska.

**Activity:** Have five volunteers sit in front of class as the famous Nebraskan they have chosen to research. The teacher, in character as Johnny Carson, can interview the guests on this talk show about famous Nebraskans. Encourage the audience to applaud and to participate in asking questions.

**Teacher’s Hints:** Questions about how the famous Nebraskans felt during a specific moment in history help the students stay in role and encourage them to see the famous Nebraskans as regular human beings.

# Bibliography

**Did you enjoy NEBRASKALAND!? If you did, then you may want to check out these other great reading materials.**

**Please feel free to contact us!**

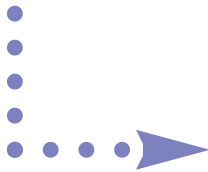
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Please contact James Larson at 502-4618 or jamesl@rosetheater.org for information about all our educational offerings.



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## Resources for Students and Teachers

### Web Sites:

**Nebraska Studies:** [www.nebraskastudies.org](http://www.nebraskastudies.org)

This is a great site! It features timelines and notes about famous Nebraskans.

**Nebraska State Historical Society Home Page:** [www.nebraskahistory.org](http://www.nebraskahistory.org)

**Nebraska History Resources:** [www.nde.state.ne.us](http://www.nde.state.ne.us)

This site includes a good Notable Nebraskans Index.

**Nebraska Press Association: 700 Famous Nebraskans:**  
[www.nebpress.com/700/entrants.php](http://www.nebpress.com/700/entrants.php)

The famous Nebraskans are grouped both alphabetically and by category.

### Books That Are Featured In The Play Or Feature Famous Nebraskans:

*My Antonia* by Willa Cather

*Troll Garden: Short Stories* by Willa Cather

*Black Elk Speaks* by John G. Neihardt

*Lyric and Dramatic Poems* of John G. Neihardt

*Journey into Christmas and Other Stories* by Bess Streeter Aldrich

*A Lantern in her Hand* by Bess Streeter Aldrich

*Heart of a Husker: Tom Osborne's Nebraska Legacy* by Mike Babcock

*What it Means to be a Husker* by Tom Osborne

### DVDs:

American Masters - *Willa Cather: The Road is All* (PBS Home Video)

## Educational Outreach Programs for Students in Grades 3 - 8

The Rose offers 3-10 day in-class residencies that use theater to teach grade-specific curriculum. Our educational staff will work with teachers to focus the residency to fit your group's needs. Popular topics include:

**The American Revolution**  
**Shakespeare**

**The Civil War**  
**Playwriting**

**American Indians**  
**And many more!**

The Rose Educational Outreach department also offers **drama workshops** at The Rose, **dance workshops** at The Rose or at your school, **teacher enrichment workshops** on using drama in the classroom, and **touring productions**.