

Touchstone Theatre presents...  
**The Talisman: The Fairy Tale Life of Hans Christian Andersen**  
A Study Guide



This study guide addresses skills outlined in the Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening and in the Pennsylvania Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities.

Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening:

- 1.1 Learning to Read Independently
- 1.2 Reading Critically in all Content Areas
- 1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature

Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities

- 9.1 Production, Performance and Exhibition in Theatre Arts
- 9.2 Historical and Cultural Contexts
- 9.3 Critical Response
- 9.4 Aesthetic Response

### SUMMARY

Touchstone Theatre's *The Talisman* begins with a look inside the young, creative mind of Hans Christian Andersen, the famous storyteller and writer from Denmark. After proving to his mother he is capable of taking care of himself in the capital of Denmark, Copenhagen, he leaves his small, country town to pursue a life of fame and fortune. Soon, he realizes life is not so easy. Along his journey, he meets a wise bishop, a clever duck, an intimidating newspaper editor, a caring teacher, a focused Maestro, his gentle mother, and the elusive nightingale. Through a series of triumphs and mishaps, Andersen discovers that a life of fame and fortune is not so desirable; in fact, all he truly desires is the opportunity to share his stories with the world, to make the world a little more beautiful than he left it.

*After the performance...write your own summary. Write a review of the play. Write a fairy tale version of this play. Write a monologue of one of the secondary characters from the play; what might that character want to share with the audience?*

### STORIES THAT INSPIRED THE PLAY

*The Ugly Duckling*  
*The Nightingale*  
*The Red Shoes*  
*The Talisman*

And Hans Christian Andersen's autobiography, *The Fairy Tale of My Life*.

*After the performance...describe how each story was told through the play. Compare the story to its on-stage re-telling. Why do you think the playwright chose these stories? Why do you think the playwright changed the stories? What details would you include if you were the playwright? How do you think Andersen was like the main character in each story?*

## VOCABULARY: FROM THE PLAY AND THE THEATRE

(definitions adapted from the Oxford English Dictionary, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition, revised)

*Nightingale*: a small brownish bird, whose beautiful song can usually be heard at night

*Quill*: a pen made from a bird feather.

*Journey*: the act of traveling from one place to another.

*Pride*: having an extremely high opinion of oneself

*Vanity*: caring too much about one's appearance

*Maestro*: great conductor or performer of classical music

*Destiny*: the events that will happen to a particular person in the future

*Soprano*: a singer with the highest singing voice

*Potential*: ability to develop something in the future

*Improvise*: create and perform spontaneously or without preparation

*Playwright*: a person who writes plays

*Script*: the written text of a play

*Plot*: the main sequence of events in a play or story

*Actor*: a person whose job is performing in plays

*Director*: the person who supervises and controls a play

*Set*: a collection of scenery and furniture used for a play

*Props*: an object used in a play

*Puppet*: a moveable model of a person or animal, controlled by string, rods, or a hand

*After the performance...did you hear each vocabulary word used in the performance? If not, how would you imagine it was used?*

*Use the theatre vocabulary to talk about the performance you just saw. Use it to write a summary or review. Improvise a scene from the play or from a story. How do you think improvisation is used to create a play? Try it yourself!*

## RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND WEBSITES

Andersen, Hans Christian. The Complete Fairy Tales and Stories. Trans. Erik Christian Haugaard.

Anchor Press/Double Day: Garden City, New York, 1974.

A full compilation of Andersen's fairy tales. Excellent translations.

----- The Fairy Tale of My Life. Cooper Square Press: New York, 2000.

A republication of the original 1871 publication with an added introduction by Naomi Lewis. One of Andersen's autobiographies (he wrote three), and the one which is most widely read and referenced.

Burst, Beth Wagner. The Amazing Paper Cutting of Hans Christian Andersen. Ticknor & Fields Books for Young Readers: New York, 1994.

When Andersen told his stories aloud, he often created these truly amazing paper cuttings as he spoke.

The Hans Christian Andersen Center. Ed. Johan de Mylius. 2006

<[http://www.andersen.sdu.dk/index\\_e.html](http://www.andersen.sdu.dk/index_e.html)>

A Comprehensive resource for all things Andersen.

Portraits of Hans Christian Andersen – From the Royal Library. Ed. Det Kongelige Bibliotek. 2005.

<[http://www.kb.dk/web\\_udstillinger/hca-portraits-en/](http://www.kb.dk/web_udstillinger/hca-portraits-en/)>

Over 85 portraits of Andersen.