

MUSEUM THEATRE – SAMPLE SCRIPTS

Back to the Bluegrass (Excerpt)

For: Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History

SETTING: Mary Todd Lincoln House. Lexington, Kentucky. 1854.

Mary Todd Lincoln

It was at one of the coterie balls where Mr. Lincoln first expressed his interest in me. During a lovely Viennese waltz, he approached me rather awkwardly, bowed and said, “Miss Todd, I want to dance with you in the worst way.” And then he did. *(Beginning to dance with an invisible partner. Ends with a curtsy and turns to audience.)* Why if my feet had been one size bigger he would have stomped my toes clean off. But he can’t be blamed. Mr. Lincoln did not have the privilege of learning to dance at the reputable Mentelle School, as I did.

It was there that I perfected the waltz and the cakewalk and my favorite, the polka. I studied all of the basics, as well as art and advanced French. Madame Victoria Charlotte LeClare also taught us the finer points of letter writing and conversation. And, of course we had daily, if not hourly, lessons in etiquette. I do think education is so very important, don’t you? That is why I insisted upon returning from Springfield to study with Bishop John Ward and sit in on discussions with my Papa and the great minds of Kentucky such as Colonel Breckinridge, the Honorable John Adair, John Rowan, and that most handsome Henry Clay. Some called this unladylike ambition. I disagree and further more, am determined to pass on some of it to my dear husband. I am just simply so assured that he would be the finest President this great country has ever seen. You, our fellow Kentuckians, must surely agree. We must stick together, no matter what comes. We have bluegrass in our blood. And once Kentucky gets in your veins, then you are hers forever!

Some of Mr. Lincoln’s earliest memories are of Kentucky.... running along the banks of Knob Creek, exploring the wilds, and helping his dear mother with the household chores. It was so very hard on him when she died. He was but a boy of nine. I feel he must miss her unto this day. When I asked him what she died of, he said ‘heartache and hard work.’ Actually, she passed from what they call “milk sick,” but I feel there was some truth in his answer too. For she had a monstrous amount of chores to do, and only the children to help her. Do you know they didn’t even own one slave? I think that is why Mr. Lincoln was so shocked about the realities of slavery.

I must admit that even I had difficulty understanding slavery as a child. I just couldn’t grasp that some people were not free to come and go as they pleased. And I didn’t know where they would want to go if they could. I asked Mammy

Sally where they would wish to go and she simply said, 'Anywhere they can be free.' I still didn't understand completely until the morning I saw a line of manacled men walking slowly to the auction blocks in the square and I followed. One man refused to climb the stairs to the block and he was tied to the whipping block and lashed and lashed and lashed until his back bled. He looked up...directly at me...and I saw the pain and fear and pride in his eyes. That is when I finally understood slavery. And that is why I never told when I saw Mammy Sally give the runaways on their way to Canada food and clothing from out our kitchen door. Grandma Parker doesn't fancy slavery much either. That is why she has given all of her workers their freedom in her will. She believes all people deserve at least a portion of freedom and I agree.

Hope is a Habit (Excerpt)

For: The Children's Museum of Indianapolis

SETTING: Bedroom of Ryan White, 1988

Ryan White

See, the trouble with being on television is that wherever you go, everyone knows what you look like, and you can't get away with anything. I never wanted to be famous. It's embarrassing to be famous for being sick, especially with a disease like AIDS. I never wanted to be the "AIDS boy" who was always in the news. I just wanted to be like every other kid my age. Besides if you're famous, how do you know whether people like you for yourself?

Seriously, if I suddenly stopped being famous, I'd be so happy. I'd never miss it. I'd rather be Mr. Anonymous and get to do whatever I wanted. That's so much more fun.

But, I do have to admit it's been totally awesome to meet some celebrities. See, many celebrities and sports stars make a point of writing to kids who are sick. The all time coolest one that I've met is—(*pointing to a poster/picture*) Elton John. I always liked him because he wasn't afraid to be different. When I went to New York to a benefit for AmFAR—that's the American Foundation for AIDS Research—anyway, on Good Morning America, they asked me which celebrity I'd most like to meet. I said, "Elton John." That night I met a lot of people at the AmFAR party, but Elton wasn't there. But, get this, the next morning he called. We've been friends ever since. He's even flown my whole family to a few of his concerts and he writes all the time.

I've also gotten to know Greg Louganis, and Max Headroom, and Lyndon King of the LA Raiders.

(Ryan picks up friendship bracelet and swings it front of the audience.)

And guess where I got this bracelet? You're not going believe it when I tell you. This bracelet was a gift from Alyssa Milano. Seriously, I met her at a party in California. I told her she was my idol. Then, she took this bracelet right off her wrist and gave it to me. Wait, it gets better. When she left that night, she gave me a giant hug and a big kiss. Dudes, I almost fainted.

But even after meeting all those famous people, I never try to be anything but as normal as possible. I certainly don't plan on spending *all* my time with celebrities, even though I'd love to move to California. Once this kid asked me, "Would you give up all your fame to get rid of AIDS?" How dumb can you get! *(Ryan snaps his fingers)* Like that. I give it up like *that*.

I'd kind of like to put that in my speech, but I wouldn't want to make the kid feel like a doofus if it heard about it. What do you think? Should I put it in? *(Ryan elicits a couple of responses from the audience)* I guess I should ask Mom before I make a decision. She'll know what to do; she always does. I know it's not cool to say, but my Mom's great. She holds this family together.

AIDS can destroy a family if you let it. But luckily for my sister, Andrea, and me, Mom taught us to keep going. Don't give up, be proud of who you are, and never feel sorry for yourself. If you feel sorry for yourself, you'll be so down you won't notice anything in life to enjoy. Mom always wants us to remember that we are doing something important—helping people by educating them. And she's taught me how to be thankful for each day, but never stop hoping for the future. I've been doing that for so long now that hope is a habit. A habit I never want to break! I should write that down.

(Grabs notebook and jots it down.)

You know this speech is coming along better than I thought. And now, I'm getting to the good part. You'll like it, it's about all you guys and how my life is better now.

The Loathly Lady (Excerpt)

For: The New York Medieval Festival

SETTING: The enchanted forest on the outskirts of Camelot. Medieval England.

THE GREEN KNIGHT

Where is it?

ARTHUR

Where is what?

THE GREEN KNIGHT

The magic sword, Excalibur.

ARTHUR

Excalibur is at the kingdom of Camelot. I only wield Excalibur in times of war...

The Green Knight roars.

ARTHUR

You sound like a wounded lion. What is it?

THE GREEN KNIGHT

Another word I do not understand. Weild...what is weild?

ARTHUR

It means to carry something so you can use it as protection.

THE GREEN KNIGHT

Why didn't you just say that?

ARTHUR

I did.

THE GREEN KNIGHT

(Holding his helmet) You've made me so angry my head hurts.

ARTHUR

Perhaps it is just from learning so many new words. I trust your brain is not used to such strenuous... *(catching himself)* I mean, hard work.

THE GREEN KNIGHT

I think I have been insulted. But since I am not sure, I will ask you once more.

Where is the magic sword Excalibur? Answer me in plain words.

ARTHUR

The sword Excalibur is at my other castle, Camelot. I only use Excalibur in times of war. This visit to Carlisle was to be a peaceful vacation.

THE GREEN KNIGHT

But I cannot defeat you without your true sword. That is against my orders from the dark

one. And he gets very angry when he is disobeyed.

ARTHUR

So, you cannot kill me?

THE GREEN KNIGHT

No. I cannot do it.

ARTHUR

(Getting up, dusting himself off, and turning to leave.) Good, then I will return to my hunt and we'll pretend this little meeting never happened.

THE GREEN KNIGHT

(Grabbing Arthur by the shoulder) No, it is not so easy. I **will** have thy kingdom. If I cannot defeat you with my strength, I will defeat you with my wit.

ARTHUR

A battle of wits? With you? Now, I have the unfair advantage. You would not kill me, because I did not have my sword, so I should not fight thee, since thou hast no wit. Good-bye. *(Again, turns to leave.)*

No Titles in Texas (Excerpt)

For: The Institute of Texan Cultures

SETTING: Big Spring, Texas. 1883.

Joseph Heneage Finch

(Finch, dressed in lean pants, a vest, a frockcoat, and colorful scarf enters carrying a bottle of whiskey, a notepad, and pencil. He is singing a Victorian parlor song such as: Sigh No More, If Doughty Deeds, Where the Bee Sucks, or I Heard the Nightingale.) Beer—three hundred twenty-two bottles, Rum—sixty bottles, and whiskey—one hundred thirty... *(Opens the bottle and pours a drink, marks out number and writes over it.)* Make that one hundred twenty-nine bottles. *(Looks to audience)* I'm ever so sorry to have kept you chaps waiting, but I've been in the back taking stock of our spirits. You see I'm hosting a bit of celebration this evening as a little farewell for all my cowboy friends before they embark on that Long Ride that will take them from here all the way to Kansas City through some of the wildest terrain in the land. I do envy their adventures, but not their lack of luxuries. I'm afraid when it comes to creature comforts, I'm hopelessly old-fashioned in my sentimentality toward strong potables, soft bedding, and steaming leg of lamb. That is why when I first found myself in this 'burg of Big Spring, I straight away purchased this saloon, next I readily bought the Cosmopolitan Hotel—even though I had to pay through the nose for it—and then I had a proper butcher shop built to insure that my table would always be laden with a suitable cut of meat. This evening I plan on serving a feast the likes of which you have never seen with a bountiful spread of my

favorites from back home in Britain. Cook is going to prepare stewed veal, rack of lamb, creamed potatoes, roast ribs, applesauce, smoked turkey, savories of all varieties, and even a Yorkshire pudding. My mouth waters just to think about it. I had to send to St. Louis for many of these rare commodities, but it will be well worth it. What has a man if he hasn't generosity?

But before this night's jollifications get underway, I would most certainly like to take the time to bend an elbow with you. *(Holds up glass)* It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this establishment and to offer my deepest congratulations on locating the most reasonably priced saloon in a town—which is a commendable feat considering that saloons in Big Spring are as plentiful as stars in the clear, night sky. You have chosen well, I say, for it is hard to find a drink more aptly priced than free. You see, all of my friends imbibe on the house and by friends, my fine fellows and lovely ladies, I mean you. *(Yells backstage)* Benham, my good man, bring out several more bottles.

A toast, "May we never want a friend, nor a bottle to share with him."

You might think it quite presumptuous of me to assume you all friends. But trust me, in time you will see that I am indeed a jolly good man to know. I am the man who everyone must treat right for someday they might want to borrow some of my tobacco. But, by Jove, how are you to know that when you have no earthly inkling who I am?

You must forgive my impropriety, in all my excitement at making your acquaintance I have neglected to thoroughly introduce myself. I am Heneage Finch, the Earl of Aylesford and seventh member of my illustrious family to enjoy the distinction of the title. It was first bestowed on Heneage Finch, the Baron of Guernsey, in 1714. The second Earl Heneage Finch married the daughter of Sir Clement Fisher and thus my family acquired Packington Hall in Warwickshire, an estate with a one-hundred room lodging and a full sixteen thousand acres of lush land and stocked streams. The third Earl served as a member of Parliament for Leicestershire and Maidstone. The fourth Earl served as Captain of the Yeoman of the Guard. The fifth Earl served as a Tory Member of Parliament. I, on the other hand, as the Seventh Earl of Aylesford, have served as nothing but an embarrassment to the title.

Welcome to the World: An Egyptian Birth Ritual (Excerpt)

For: The Children's Museum of Indianapolis

SETTING: An Egyptian Village, Present.

Mirah/Mahlik enters through the crowd audience, saying "Excuse me, I'm in quite a hurry. Pardon me, but I am late." When she gets to the front of the crowd she turns.

Mirah/Mahlik

I'm sorry for pushing my way through, but today is a very important day and I am very nervous. You see, today we are having a Sabou'. It's a big party to welcome my newborn nephew into the world. And they gave me the job of buying the Sabou' candles. It's the first time I've ever been given such a big responsibility. I hope I bought the right ones. There were so many to choose from.

Hanem

(Entering from home) Mirah, who are you talking to? Did you get the candles?
(Spotting the audience) *Salamo Alaykom!* Greetings. You must be the school children who have come all the way from America to explore Egypt. My son-in-law Khalil heard of your visit. News travels fast in our village. Welcome. You have come on a very exciting day.

Mirah/Mahlik

I told them today was our Sabou'.

Hanem

But did you tell them what a Sabou' was?

Mirah/Mahlik

No, I did not get around to explaining it. Besides, you would be much better. You have been at many Sabou's throughout the years. Perhaps more than anyone in the village.

Hanem

Mirah, you make your mother sound as old as the pyramids. Besides, why should we simply tell them about the Sabou' when can show them. *(To audience)* Would you like to come and join in our Sabou' celebration? There is much work to be done and also much rejoicing. We would welcome your help with both. Wonderful. Would you like to choose a present to bring to the baby? It is tradition to give the newborn gifts such as clothing, toys, powder, jewelry, and even medicine. How would you feel about getting medicine as a present?

Hanem and Mirah lead the group through choosing gifts and then into the space.

Hanem

Khalil. I have brought help.

Khalil

Salamo Alaykom! Greetings to you. Where did you find such a fine looking group?

Hanem

They are school children visiting Egypt. They have been so kind as to agree to help us with the preparations for our party.

Khalil

Marhaban! Welcome! And I see you have even brought gifts. How generous. Please place them here with these others. As you can see, we've collected many things for the baby over the past few weeks. In our culture, we believe the arrival of all children is occasion for celebration, and the entire community comes together to welcome them. But this child brings even more happiness than most. You see, this is the first baby that my wife, Faten, and I have welcomed to the world. He is a strong and handsome boy. I would love for you to meet him now, but it is considered bad luck for the baby to be looked upon before he is officially presented at the Sabou'. You will meet him soon, but in the meantime, we have much to do before the festivities can start. I am so glad you are here to help.

Hanem

Before we begin the preparations, I must tell you the story of Sabou, so you will know how important each task is. Here in Egypt, it is believed that when a baby is born seven angels surround the child. They remain close to the infant protecting it from harm for seven days. On the seventh day, we hold a Sabou'. This is an occasion that both welcomes the new child into our family honoring his birth and gives us a chance to send the angels on their way so they can go and protect another child. On this day, the baby is officially introduced to our relatives, friends and neighbors and becomes a full-fledged part of our community. There are many interesting aspects of the Sabou' celebration and each has a special meaning.

The Longest Night- EXCERPT
For: The Children's Museum of Indianapolis

SETTING: Amsterdam, Anne Frank's Annex, 1944

Miep Gies

In order to present visitors with the opportunity to feel the constant sense of anxiety and anticipation that the residents of the Annex felt, Miep Gies will speak to the audience as if they are the Franks, van Daans (van Pels), and Mr. Dussell (Fritz Pfeffer).

(Miep Gies enter, carrying a bag of supplies. She rushes to the front of the room.)

I'm so sorry I'm late. I'm sure you were very worried, but I had a little run in with the German guard—literally. As usual, I was carrying quite a load on my bike. I was just about to make a turn when a motorcycle with a sidecar, carrying two German soldiers, barreled around the corner and collided with my bicycle. I jumped off before I fell off. Then, something boiled over inside of me. You all

know that it's unlike me to lose my temper, but I did. I looked right at them and said, "You contemptible, vile, vile, men." Even though I knew that Dutchmen had been shot for less, I couldn't stop myself. I was a woman possessed. The words just shot out of my mouth. I had no concern for consequences. I was just finally fed up to my brim with these oppressors of ours.

There I stood, straddling my bicycle, shouting at the soldiers. Both Germans just gave me a laugh and rode off. I realized that the engine on their motorbike was so loud that they hadn't understood a word that I'd said.

At the moment of the collision a streetcar had come by and the driver and all the passengers saw the whole thing. They all saluted me. Can you imagine?

Oh Anne, I knew you'd laugh. I'm glad my account has brought some amusement. But I can also see by the look on your father's face and the faces of the others, that my careless tirade has caused concern. Don't worry, Mr. Frank, you may trust that I will never again let my tongue get away from me. After all, if I were arrested, who would take care of all of you here in hiding? I know that if anything happens to me, you will all suffer. I vow that I won't let that happen...I won't let you down ever. See, I've brought supplies.

(Miep unloads kale and potatoes from her grocery bag.)

I'm sorry. I couldn't find any soap to buy. Nor any coffee for you Mrs. Frank, not even the bad imitation kind. There wasn't any butter either, or thread to mend your socks, or any bread. So it's mostly kale greens, again. I did manage to get some potatoes, but they have several rotten spots that you'll have to slice out. It's getting harder and harder to find decent food. I went to eight different shops today and this was the best I could do. And I'm afraid it's going to get worse.

Here's the last of it. *(She finishes unloading a small sausage.)* It may not be a feast—but it's enough to keep you healthy and that is the important thing. For you know we can't risk any of you getting anything greater than a cold. We can't go out to a doctor and I don't know any that I trust enough to bring them here to see you.

(Miep removes a few books) I did manage to get some new books for you. Ah...how nice to see you smile. I thought these would please. I know how important it is for your minds to escape from these tiny rooms since your bodies cannot. I bet it would horribly difficult for those on the outside to understand just how much reading means to you all in here. But, I do. So, I'll keep the books coming—no matter what it takes.