

DIAL M FOR MURDER



atc

ARIZONA
THEATRE
COMPANY

STUDY GUIDE



WHY LIVE THEATRE IS SPECIAL

Each LIVE performance is a unique and irreplaceable experience. LIVE performances happen in real-time with LIVE actors, providing a common, shared experience with the audience. LIVE performances foster a shared sense of community among performers and the audience. In LIVE theatre, there are no second chances or rewinds, so every moment, every word, every action counts. Everything you see in a LIVE production happens that way ONE TIME ONLY, with that particular audience and that singular performance.

ABOUT ARIZONA THEATRE COMPANY



The Temple of Music and Art, the home of ATC shows in downtown Tucson - 330 S. Scott Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85701

Tempe Center for the Arts, ATC's performance venue in Tempe - 700 W. Rio Salado Parkway, Tempe, AZ 85281

Arizona Theatre Company (ATC) is celebrating its 57th season, under the direction of Kasser Family Artistic Director Matt August and Executive Director Geri Wright. ATC operates in two cities – unlike any other League of Resident Theatres (LORT) company in the country – and it boasts the largest subscriber base of any performing arts organization in Arizona, reaching more than 200,000 people each year attending performances at the historic Temple of Music and Art in Tucson as well as in the Greater Phoenix Area at the incredible Tempe Center for the Arts in Tempe. Each season of carefully selected productions reflects the rich variety of world drama – from classic and contemporary plays to musicals and new works – as audiences enjoy a rich emotional experience that can only be captured through the power of live theatre. Touching lives through the power of theatre, ATC is the preeminent professional theatre in the state of Arizona.

To transform the lives of every Arizonan through the power of theatre.

ATC shares the passion of the theatre through a wide array of outreach programs, educational opportunities, access initiatives, and community events. Through its Student Matinee Series, ATC focuses on teaching Arizona's youth about literacy, cultural development, performing arts, and specialty techniques used onstage, opening their minds to the creative power of dramatic literature. ATC reaches far beyond the metropolitan areas of Tucson and Tempe/Phoenix, enriching the theatre learning experience for current and future audiences.



YOU ... THE LIVE THEATRE AUDIENCE

How to Be an Engaged Live Theatre Audience

Attending a live theatre performance is a unique and interactive experience that involves both the performers and the audience. Unlike television or movies, live theatre allows actors to hear and respond to the audience's reactions and energy. To ensure a respectful and enjoyable experience for everyone, please review these guidelines with your class and chaperones before attending a performance:

Food & Drinks:

- Refrain from bringing food, drinks, snacks, candy, or gum into the theatre.

Be Safe:

- Walk carefully and use railings when navigating stairs.
- Follow the rules and instructions provided by the ushers.
- Avoid leaning over balconies or dropping/throwing items from them.
- Remain in your seat throughout the performance to avoid obstructing others' view.

Cell Phones:

- Turn off or silence all cell phones before the performance begins.
- Recording during the show is prohibited. However, you're welcome to take photos and selfies during intermission after the performance. Don't forget to tag #ATC on social media!

Don't Talk During the Performance:

- The actors can hear you and it will distract them and it will interrupt the experience of the other audience members.

Show Appreciation:

- Feel free to respond with laughter or applause during the performance.
- At the end of the performance, performers will typically bow as a sign of gratitude. Applaud to show your appreciation.

Participate in Talk-Backs:

- Write any questions you have on the 3x5 cards provided.
- If there is a talk-back session after the performance, remain seated and engage respectfully.
- Raise your hand to ask questions, speak clearly, and listen attentively to others.

By following these guidelines, you'll enhance your theatre experience and contribute to the enjoyment of everyone in attendance. Let's make the most of our time at the theatre!

OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

We encourage you to adapt and extend the material in any way that best fits the needs of your community of learners.

OVERVIEW: Ideas/Themes Presented in *Dial M For Murder*

Dial M For Murder delves into themes of betrayal, greed, and the extremities of human manipulation. The plot revolves around a meticulously planned crime, highlighting the intricate dance between justice and deceit. This narrative not only entertains but also provokes thought about the moral dilemmas faced by the characters.

Educational Goals of this Study Guide:

- **Enhance Comprehension:** Help students understand the plot, characters, and key themes of the play.
- **Critical Thinking:** Encourage students to analyze the motivations behind the characters' actions and the moral implications of the plot.
- **Contextual Learning:** Provide historical and cultural context to enhance understanding of the play's setting and its relevance.
- **Engage with Themes:** Facilitate discussions on themes such as justice, betrayal, and manipulation, relating them to real-world scenarios.
- **Develop Analytical Skills:** Guide students in dissecting the play's structure, language, and style to foster a deeper literary appreciation.
- **Encourage Creative Expression:** Inspire students to express their understanding through various forms, including debates, reenactments, and creative writing.



Awesta Zarif as Margot Wendice and Dan Domingues as Tony Wendice in rehearsal for *Dial M For Murder*.



Lucy Lavelly as Maxine Hadley in rehearsal for *Dial M For Murder*.



Peter Howard as Inspector Hubbard in rehearsal for *Dial M For Murder*. Photos by Tim Fuller.

AUTHORS

About the Playwright: Frederick Knott (1916-2002) was an English playwright and screenwriter best known for his work in the suspense thriller genre. *Dial M For Murder* was Knott's first play, written in 1952. The play's success on the London stage quickly led to its Broadway debut and subsequently its adaptation into a classic film by Alfred Hitchcock in 1954. Knott's ability to craft intricate plots with compelling characters and intense suspense has made *Dial M For Murder* a timeless piece.

Following the success of *Dial M For Murder*, Knott wrote *Wait Until Dark* in 1966, another suspense thriller that was also adapted into a successful film. Despite the relatively small number of his works, Knott's influence in the genre remains significant due to the enduring popularity and critical acclaim of his plays.

About the Adaptor: Jeffrey Hatcher is a distinguished playwright and screenwriter celebrated for his masterful adaptations and innovative original works. Renowned for his talent in reinvigorating classic stories with a fresh, contemporary perspective, Hatcher brings a unique vitality to his adaptation of *Dial M For Murder*. Hatcher's adaptations are not merely retellings; they are insightful reimaginings that offer new layers of meaning and relevance, making timeless tales accessible and compelling for today's audiences

"Fear - jealousy - money - revenge - and protecting someone you love."
– Frederick Knott, Playwright, Dial M For Murder, Dramatists Play Service Inc.

PLOT SUMMARY

Tony Wendice has married his wife, Margot, for her money and now plans to murder her for the same reason. He arranges the perfect murder. He blackmails a scoundrel he used to know into strangling her for a fee of one thousand pounds, and arranges a brilliant alibi for himself. Unfortunately...the murderer gets murdered and the victim survives. But this doesn't baffle the husband: He sees his hireling's death as an opportunity to have his wife convicted for the murder of the man who tried to murder her, and that is what almost happens. Luckily, the police inspector from Scotland Yard and a young woman who is in love with the wife discover the truth, and in a scene of almost unbearable suspense they trap the husband into revealing his guilt, thus freeing Margot.

MEET THE CHARACTERS

Maxine Hadley - A mystery writer trying to unravel the plot of a perfect murder.

Margot Wendice - A wealthy socialite with a few secrets.

Tony Wendice - An ambitious publicist with big plans for his future.

Captain Lesgate - A man of many names with a shady past.

Inspector Hubbard - A detective with a lot of questions...and maybe a few answers.

MEET THE CAST



Awesta Zarif
Margot Wendice



Lucy Lavelly
Maxine Hadley



Dan Domingues
Tony Wendice



Aaron Cammack
Captain Lesgate



Peter Howard
Inspector Hubbard



CURRICULAR LITERARY VALUE & TERMS

Plot: The structured sequence of events centers on Tony's intricate plan to murder his wife, Margot, and the subsequent unraveling of his scheme. The plot includes *rising action*, *climax*, *falling action*, and *resolution*, all carefully designed to maintain suspense.

Setting: The play is set in the Wendices' London apartment, a confined space that enhances tension and claustrophobia, focusing the audience's attention on character interactions and the unfolding plot.

Conflict: The central conflict is between Tony and his wife, Margot, with additional conflicts arising between Tony and Maxine, and Tony and Inspector Hubbard.

Point of View: The play primarily uses an objective point of view, revealing events through character interactions and dialogue without delving deeply into internal thoughts, thereby heightening dramatic tension and suspense.

Literary Elements

Suspense: The play builds suspense through plot twists, character interactions, and the gradual revelation of Tony's scheme, maintaining tension through dramatic irony.

Irony: A literary device where there is a discrepancy between appearance and reality, often highlighting a contrast between what is expected and what actually occurs, creating a deeper or unexpected meaning.

Symbolism:

- Key: Represents control and access, crucial to Tony's plan.
- Telephone: Symbolizes communication and miscommunication, used for connection and manipulation.
- Scissors: Symbolize empowerment and strength.

Foreshadowing: Early discussions and seemingly trivial details hint at key plot developments, such as the importance of the key and the murder setup.

Dialogue: The dialogue in *Dial M for Murder* is sharp, precise, and laden with subtext, revealing character motivations, advancing the plot, and heightening suspense. Confrontational scenes, in particular, are crucial for maintaining tension.

THEMES

Betrayal and Deception: Tony's plot against Margot represents a profound betrayal, illustrating how deception can lead to devastating consequences.

Justice and Moral Order: The play delves into the quest for justice through Inspector Hubbard's investigation, emphasizing that truth and moral order will ultimately prevail.

Greed and Corruption: Tony's motives are driven by selfishness and greed, showcasing how the desire for wealth can corrupt and lead to heinous acts.

Love and Loyalty: The primary relationship in the play highlights genuine affection and loyalty, contrasting with the darker themes of the play.

Appearances vs. Reality: The narrative underscores the disparity between outward appearances and true intentions, urging audiences to look beyond the surface.

Crime and Punishment: The story explores the criminal mind of Tony and the consequences of criminal actions. It also explores the hope that justice will prevail, wrongs will be righted and the desire for punishment of the offenders, reinforcing the theme of justice.

VOCABULARY WORDS

Alibi: Proof or assertion that someone was elsewhere when a crime occurred, establishing their innocence.

Blackmail: Demanding money or favors from someone in return for not revealing compromising or damaging information.

Frame: To falsely incriminate someone by planting evidence or manipulating circumstances to make them appear guilty.

Intrigue: A complex and often secretive plot or scheme designed to achieve a specific outcome, usually through deceit.

Motive: The reason behind a person's actions, especially in committing a crime. In the play, Tony's motive is financial gain.

Premeditated: Planned or thought out in advance, indicating intent, particularly in the context of murder.

Red Herring: A misleading clue or piece of information that distracts from the true issue or culprit.

Self-Defense: Protecting oneself from harm using reasonable force.

Suspense: A state of mental uncertainty or excitement, creating anxiety about what will happen next, key in thrillers.

Testimony: A formal statement made by a witness under oath, used as evidence in legal proceedings.

Thriller: A genre characterized by excitement, suspense, and high stakes, often involving crime or espionage.

Witness: A person who observes an event and can provide a firsthand account, crucial in legal contexts for providing evidence.



WHO CREATES THEATRE

Director: Oversees the entire production, managing the artistic vision and providing guidance to all designers and teams. Manages the execution of their vision. Directs actors by providing blocking and inspiration to help them develop their story.

Choreographer: Designs and teaches all dance and movement sequences for musical numbers and dramatic scenes. Ensures the choreography aligns with the desired style, period, and the production's vision.

Scenic Designer: Creates the physical scenery and structures that establish the setting and backdrop. Designs wall coverings, color schemes, and overall atmosphere in line with the Director's vision.

Actors: Bring characters to life, performing lines and movements as directed. They interpret and embody the story, choreography, and music according to the Director's vision.

Playwright: Crafts the script, creating a compelling narrative with engaging characters and settings. Defines the period, style, and overall story.

Librettist: Writes the lyrics and dialogue for a musical, working closely with the composer and Director to align the text with the musical elements.

Music Director: Teaches and rehearses the music, ensuring it aligns with the Director's vision. Oversees the accuracy, excellence and consistency of musical performances.

Conductor: Leads the orchestra, conducting music for the production to align with the Director's vision. Manages timing, tempo, and coordination with the performers.

Costume Designer: Designs and creates costumes that reflect the characters' personalities, time periods, and settings. Ensures costumes support the Director's vision and are appropriate for the production.

Lighting Designer: Develops and executes the lighting plan, enhancing mood, atmosphere, and visibility. Designs light plots, cues, and programming to complement each scene.

Sound Designer: Manages sound elements, including amplification, sound effects, and microphone systems. Ensures clear and effective sound for actors and musicians.

Stage Manager: Coordinates all elements of the live production, managing cues for stage crew, lighting, sound, and actors. Ensures the show runs smoothly and consistently according to the Director's vision.

Props Supervisor: Designs, sources, constructs, and maintains props needed for the production. Ensures all props are functional and safe for use during performances.

Box Office Manager: Programs and manages all reservations, ticket sales and patron services at the Box Office. Manages Will-Call, comp tickets and media, groups and special needs of patrons.

House Manager: Manages and coordinates ushers and front-of-house staff, overseeing customer experience and ensuring safety and service, venue readiness, as well as handling illnesses, emergencies during performances.

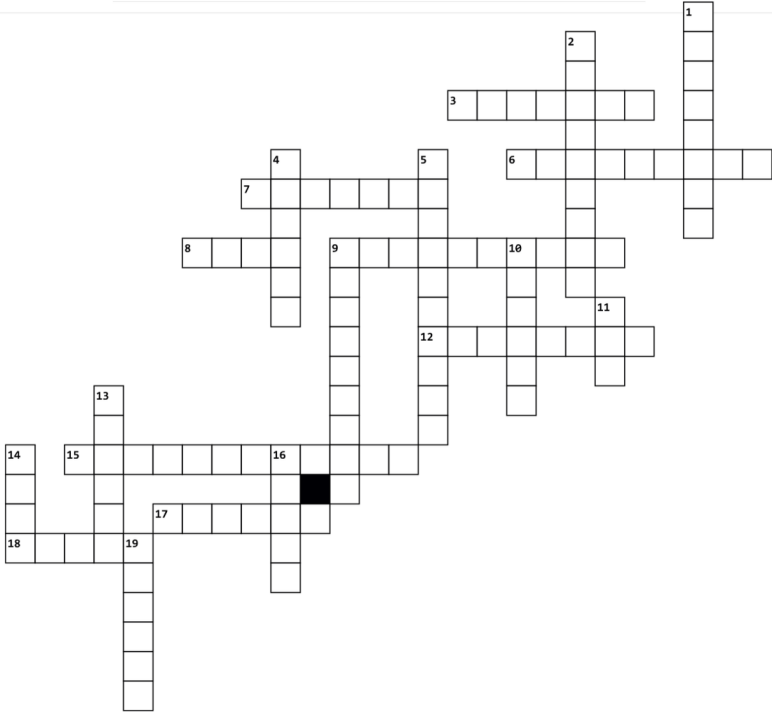
Which career interests you?

Take a moment to reflect on which career most appeals to you and why. Jot down some questions you may have. For example:

- What does training and/or certification is required for each of these jobs? What are average salary expectations and opportunities for advancement? What areas of the country are these jobs most prevalent? Will I have to tour to make a living?

These are valuable questions and important to ask about any possible career.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Across

3. The character who ultimately proves Margot's innocence.
6. The famous director who adapted "Dial M for Murder" into a film.
7. The character who Tony blackmails into carrying out the murder.
8. The emotion that Tony claims to feel upon learning of Margot's affair.
9. The method Tony initially suggests for carrying out the murder.
12. The crime genre known for its focus on mystery and suspense.
15. The term for a murder that is planned in advance.
17. Tony's scheme to murder his wife is based on his discovery of her _____.
18. The playwright of "Dial M for Murder."

Down

1. The object used by Margot in self-defense.
2. The main setting of the play, where much of the action takes place.
4. The type of evidence Tony manipulates to frame Margot.
5. The legal term for a false accusation intended to harm someone's reputation.
9. The occupation of Tony's wife, Margot.
10. ROOM The room in the apartment where the murder attempt takes place.
11. The symbol of control and access.
13. The protagonist's name, the target of the murder plot.
14. The first name of the crime writer who helps unravel Tony's plot.
16. The legal process that determines the guilt or innocence of a defendant.
19. PLAYER Tony's former profession.



ARIZONA THEATRE COMPANY

2024/2025 STUDENT MATINEES



DIAL M FOR MURDER

Recommended for Grades 7+

Tucson:

Thursday, October 3 – 10 AM

Tempe:

Thursday, October 24 – 10 AM

Thursday, October 31 – 10 AM



SCROOGE!

Recommended for Grades 2+

Tucson:

Thursday, November 14 – 10 AM

Tempe/Phoenix:

Thursday, December 12 – 10 AM



BLUES IN THE NIGHT

Recommended for Grades 5+

Tucson:

Thursday, February 6 – 10 AM

Tempe/Phoenix:

Thursday, February 27 – 10 AM

Thursday, March 6 – 10 AM



BOB & JEAN: A LOVE STORY

Recommended for Grades 5+

Tucson:

Thursday, April 3 – 10 AM

Tempe/Phoenix:

Thursday, April 24 – 10 AM

Thursday, May 1 – 10 AM

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Sign up today at atc.org/education



ARIZONA THEATRE COMPANY

2024/2025 TEACHER PREVIEWS

2 free tickets for all registered teachers!*



DIAL M FOR MURDER

Recommended for Grades 5+

Tucson:

Sunday, September 22 – 7 PM

Tempe/Phoenix:

Saturday, October 19 – 12 PM



SCROOGE!

Recommended for Grades 2+

Tucson:

Sunday, November 3 – 7 PM

Tempe/Phoenix:

Saturday, December 7 – 12 PM



BLUES IN THE NIGHT

Recommended for Grades 5+

Tucson:

Sunday, January 26 – 7 PM

Tempe/Phoenix:

Saturday, February 22 – 12 PM



BOB & JEAN: A LOVE STORY

Recommended for Grades 5+

Tucson:

Sunday, March 23 – 7 PM

Tempe/Phoenix:

Saturday, April 19 – 12 PM



MS. HOLMES & MS. WATSON - APT. 2B

No Student Matinee, however please join us!

Tucson:

Sunday, May 18 – 7 PM

Tempe/Phoenix:

Saturday, June 14 – 12 PM

atc.org/education

*Instructions to redeem free tickets are sent via email, sign up for ATC Educator emails today at atc.org/education