The Little Prince
The Guthrie creates transformative theater experiences that ignite the imagination, stir the heart, open the mind and build community through the illumination of our common humanity.

Guthrie Theater Play Guide
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Cummins and Scoullar’s
The Little Prince
drama by RICK CUMMINS and JOHN SCOULLAR
based on the book by ANTOINE de SAINT-EXUPÉRY
directed by DOMINIQUE SERRAND
December 10, 2022 – February 5, 2023
McGuire Proscenium Stage

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This play guide is designed to fuel your curiosity and deepen your understanding of a show’s history, meaning and cultural relevance so you can make the most of your theatergoing experience. You might be reading this because you fell in love with a show you saw at the Guthrie. Maybe you want to read up on a play before you see it onstage. Or perhaps you’re a fellow theater company doing research for an upcoming production. We’re glad you found your way here, and we encourage you to dig in and mine the depths of this extraordinary story.

NOTE: Sections of this play guide may evolve throughout the run of the show, so check back often for additional content.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Thanks for your interest in The Little Prince. Please direct literary inquiries to Resident Dramaturg Carla Steen at carlas@guthrietheater.org.
As a child, an Aviator became disillusioned with the lack of imagination in grown-up life. He now prefers to keep his own company, which he does until his plane goes down in the Sahara desert. Miles from human habitation, he is surprised to encounter a Little Prince who claims to be from another planet. The Little Prince appears each day at sunset and describes life on his planet and the reason he set out on his journey: a confusing relationship with a Rose. As the Little Prince recounts his travels and the people he encountered, the Aviator’s own situation becomes more dire, with dwindling provisions, hallucinations and a damaged plane. Perhaps among the Little Prince’s story and lessons will be the key to the Aviator’s survival and a renewal of his own imaginative possibilities.

**SETTING**
A thousand miles from any human habitation.

**CHARACTERS**
Aviator, downed in the Sahara desert
Little Prince, from another planet
Rose, also on the Little Prince’s planet
King, Businessman, Conceited Man, Geographer and Lamplighter, the sole residents of their respective planets
Fox and Snake, encountered on Earth
Responses to *The Little Prince*

In all fairy tales ... the writer sooner or later gives away his secret. Sometimes he does it deliberately, sometimes unconsciously. But give it away he must, for that is a law of the fairy tale’s being — you must provide the key. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, in his new book *The Little Prince*, has honorably obeyed the law. He makes us wait for the secret no longer than the second chapter.

“So I lived my life alone,” he says, “without any one I could really talk to.” There it is. A clear and unequivocal statement, a confession as bitter as aloe and familiar as the day. Most of us live our lives alone without anybody we can really talk to. We eat the indigestible stuff of our own hearts in silence, for we have not learnt to find the hidden companion within ourselves. Poets, and writers of fairy tales, are luckier. It may be that the substance of their minds is less dense than that of other men. Or perhaps they are more willing to slough its protective outer husk in order to get down to the essential bone. I don’t know. I am only sure that you have to be bare and naked in some ultimate sense before you can hear the secret princely voice. Moreover, it is imperative that the prince should speak first. The etiquette of fairy tales and the court circles of the heart demand it. You may not command that voice. It will speak only to the ear that is humbly tuned to listen.

“Draw me a sheep!” cried Saint-Exupéry’s prince in the silence of the desert. And so the friendship began. ...

I cannot tell whether it is a book for children. Not that it matters, for children are like sponges. They soak into their pores the essence of any book they read, whether they understand it or not. *The Little Prince* certainly has the three essentials required by children’s books. It is true in the most inward sense, it offers no explanation and it has a moral. But this particular moral attaches the book to the grown-up world rather than the nursery. To be understood it needs a heart stretched to the utmost by suffering and love, the kind of heart that, luckily, is not often found in children.

P.L. Travers, author of *Mary Poppins*

It took many years — and many readings — for this reader to begin to understand that the book is a war story. Not an allegory of war, rather, a fable of it, in which the central emotions of conflict — isolation, fear and uncertainty — are alleviated only by intimate speech and love. But the Petit Prince is a war story in a very literal sense, too — everything about its making has to do not just with the onset of war but with the “strange defeat” of France, with the experience of Vichy and the Occupation. Saint-Exupéry’s sense of shame and confusion at the devastation led him to make a fable of abstract ideas set against specific loves. In this enterprise, he sang in unconscious harmony with the other great poets of the war’s loss, from J.D. Salinger ... to his contemporary Albert Camus, who also took from the war the need to engage in a perpetual battle “between each man’s happiness and the illness of abstraction,” meaning the act of distancing real emotion from normal life. ...

From an experience that was so dehumanizing and overwhelming — an experience that turns an entire human being with a complicated life history and destiny first into a cipher and then into a casualty — Saint-Exupéry wanted to rescue the person, not the statistic. The statistics could be any of those the men on the planets are obsessed with, the “counting” fetish that might take in stars if one is an astronomer or profits for businessmen. The richest way to see Le Petit Prince is as an extended parable of the kinds and follies of abstraction — and the special intensity and poignance of the story is that Saint-Exupéry dramatizes the struggle against abstraction not as a philosophical subject but as a life-and-death story. The book moves from asteroid to desert, from fable and comedy to enigmatic tragedy, in order to make one recurrent point: You can’t love roses. You can only love a rose.

Adam Gopnik
“The Strange Triumph of The Little Prince,” The New Yorker, April 29, 2014

The Little Prince confirms the surge of Saint-Exupéry’s poetic imagination which was so evident in his two earlier books. One is therefore not surprised to find here a fairy tale for which he has made the most appropriate watercolors; a fairy tale that tells of the loneliness of life. ... It is announced as a book for adults, but children will eventually make it theirs as they have done all the great fairy tales. They will understand it even though its allegory may not be clear to them, because they will approach it and accept its possibilities with the simplicity with which they meet all eternal things.

Maria Cimino
“The Spring Output,” The Saturday Review of Literature, April 16, 1943

It is paradoxical that one of the main reasons The Little Prince deserves its reputation as a children’s classic is also the very reason that it gets very little space in texts about children’s literature: its uniqueness. There are no other books quite like this. Scholars have found it difficult to drop this tale into a neat categorical niche, compare it to other works or include it in their general commentary on works of fancy. It demands closer attention than their scope permits. And when they sometimes limit its audience to only discerning readers, they miss the point of what truly constitutes aesthetic education. How do youngsters grow into discerning readers, if not with the help of a teacher guide? How do they become engaged by a work that entertains at a higher level than amusement?

Saint-Exupéry does not write down to children. He is confident that they have the capacity to reach the literary plateau needed to enjoy and appreciate his story. He puts before them a book, written in simple and straightforward language, that dares them to reach down into their own experiential wellsprings to determine its relevance for themselves. He gives young readers the opportunity to ponder some of those mysteries of life and death, matters of consequence, in the face of which rote learning remains useless.

James E. Higgins
The Little Prince: A Reverie of Substance, Twayne Publishers, 1996
I find that *The Little Prince* can be broken down into three separate acts, each with their own distinct argument. The first act, which is up until the Prince tells the story of his arrival on Earth, lays the philosophical foundation for the rest of the story. The narrator talks of grown-ups, who are deeply concerned with what they consider to be “matters of consequence” — yet, the narrator notes, these matters seem patently trivial to him. ... The Prince shows why, through his journey to the six planets. He visits a king, who is obsessed with power; a vain man, who is obsessed with self-image; a drunkard, who drinks to forget his worldly misery; a businessman, who is obsessed with wealth; a lamplighter, who is obsessed with doing his job; and a geographer, who is obsessed with his (narrow) field of science. These illustrations are examples of man, shackled and constrained by superficial boundaries the world sets upon them, and perhaps, that they have set upon themselves. They presume themselves to be concerned with “matters of importance”; yet this presumption blinds them from seeing the higher, ultimate form of perception and expression. ...

Creative pursuits are inherently personal in nature; it is a portrait of each man as an individual, who should strive to manifest himself through self-actualization. The second act of the book makes the case for another thing which is perhaps equally important, and equally essential to the human condition. ...

Through the encounters with the garden of roses and the Fox, the Prince has now learned the second thing which is essential: love and friendship. ...

In line with the book’s empiricist inclination, the message is that we should not be so pragmatic in love; we should not let rationality have free rein over passion, lest we become sociopathic “homo economicus” with no regard for human feeling. Yet, the pragmatic grown-up tends to view such “matters of the heart” as emotional, irrational, which have become almost dirty words. Despite this, if you had an ounce of feeling in you, you would know that this is not so, and there is no need to explain further.

We have learned two distinct aspects of what is essential: the individual and the communal. Now we arrive at the final argument of the story, the one which ties everything together ... that man will find meaning only in relation to the suffering he goes through. And we must remember that this suffering is closely tied to our animal nature — God does not suffer, as God is free from the constraints of the world. This principle is directly applicable to the two “essential things” we have learned thus far: In order to engage in meaningful creative activity, an artist must be prepared to suffer for his craft. In order to partake in meaningful, intimate relationships, a lover must be prepared for the pain that will replace the bliss when loss comes.

*Miftah Amir*

“On the True Essence of Man: An Analysis of *The Little Prince*,” *Economica*, May 9, 2020
A Life in the Sky

By Carla Steen
Resident Dramaturg

In his adventure-packed 44 years, French writer and aviator Antoine de Saint-Exupéry lived multiple lives. But his most enduring legacy is *The Little Prince* — a poetic, allegorical, philosophical little book not entirely (or at least not exclusively) for children about love, loneliness and friendship. As charming as *The Little Prince* is, the story of its author is no less captivating.

Saint-Exupéry was born in Lyon, France, on June 29, 1900, as the third of five children. His father died when he was nearly 4, and the family then relied on the kindness of his mother Marie’s godmother. Antoine’s education was a mix of homeschooling, Jesuit education, boarding school in Switzerland and finally two naval prep academies. His passion for aviation — then in its earliest days — developed during childhood and solidified with his first airplane ride at age 12.

He failed his naval academy entrance exam (on purpose, some biographers suggest), and in 1921, he began his mandatory military service with an aviation regiment in Strasbourg, France. He was assigned to the ground ranks, but through charm and determination, he earned a civilian pilot’s license, with which he entered the student pilot ranks in the aviation corps to complete his service.

Saint-Exupéry spent much of the 1920s in the air. He flew as a commercial pilot between France and West Africa, including as commander of the Cape Juby airport in Morocco in 1927–1928. (He received the French Legion of Honor Award for negotiating peace between Spaniards and Moors while stationed there.) He was a long-distance airmail pilot in South America, where he helped establish Aéropostale’s route between Brazil and Patagonia. During this time, he met Consuelo Suncín in Argentina, whom he would marry in 1931 and with whom he would share 12 tumultuous years. (She is the model for the Rose in *The Little Prince*.)

His experience as a pilot led to his success as a writer; his ability to
capture the exhilaration of flying led to a new genre: the aerial adventure. He fictionalized his exploits in Africa for the novel *Southern Mail*, published in 1929, and, two years later, his dangerous flights in South America were the inspiration for *Night Flight*. Saint-Exupéry was known to read and write in the cockpit while in flight.

In 1935, he and his mechanic attempted to break a flight speed record between Paris and Saigon when their plane went down in the Libyan desert. A Bedouin caravan rescued them after four days, and the experience would later make its way into *The Little Prince*. The plane crash is also described in *Wind, Sand and Stars*, published in 1939, for which the Académie Française awarded him the Grand Prix. In the 1930s, while working as a foreign correspondent, he witnessed the horrors of fascism during visits to Spain and Germany.

When World War II began in 1939, Saint-Exupéry rejoined the air force and flew reconnaissance missions in northeastern France to note the locations of the invading German army. *Flight to Arras*, a harrowing description of aerial warfare, depicts these flights, which earned him the Croix de Guerre military honor for bravery.

When France’s government fell to Germany in June 1940, Saint-Exupéry’s squadron proceeded south, as did thousands of other refugees from the invading forces. He arranged for Consuelo to leave Paris as well. He was demobilized on July 31, and after a summer of writing at his sister’s house, he decided to leave for the U.S., though not without misgivings about leaving his country in its hour of need. He hoped to advocate for the Americans to join the fight for France and that his American publishers could help him financially.

When Saint-Exupéry arrived in New York City, publishers Reynal & Hitchcock welcomed him and found him an apartment. An intended four-week stay grew to more than two years, during which time Consuelo joined him. He wrote, lectured and tried to stay above politics (he liked neither the German-collaborating Vichy government nor Charles de Gaulle, whom he thought was opportunistic) while also endorsing U.S. involvement in the war and calling on the French to resist Hitlerism.

For years, Saint-Exupéry had doodled a little character he called his *petit bonhomme* (little man) — “just a little fellow I carry around in my heart” — and eventually, either a friend or his publisher (accounts differ) encouraged him to draw more sketches and write a children’s book. During summer 1942, he settled down with his watercolors and his pen to write and illustrate *The Little Prince*.

More than 50 years later, a Marseille fisherman found a bracelet inscribed with “Saint-Ex.” In 2004, the French government announced that a salvage team had located Saint-Exupéry’s P-38 plane. More answers have come from Horst Rippert, a member of a German squadron stationed in southern France. He is convinced that the P-38 with French colors he shot down near Marseille in 1944, days before he learned of Saint-Exupéry’s disappearance, was that of the writer. He said if he’d known the pilot was Saint-Exupéry, he wouldn’t have shot him down. Like so many readers, he, too, was a fan of the Frenchman’s writing.
Responses to Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Saint-Exupéry in all he tells us speaks as one who has “been through it.” His personal contact with ever-recurrent danger seasons his book with an authentic and inimitable tang. We have had many stories of the War or of imaginary adventures which, if they showed the author as a man of nimble wit, brought smiles to the faces of such old soldiers or genuine adventurers as read them. I admire this work not only on its literary merits but for its value as a record of realities, and it is the unlikely combination of these two qualities which gives *Night Flight* its quite exceptional importance.

*André Gide*
Preface to Saint-Exupéry’s *Night Flight*, originally published by Reynal & Hitchcock, 1932

Saint-Exupéry was as striking a personality as he was a writer. Nothing is more difficult for someone condemned to write at “second hand” than to convey a particular human being’s charm or spell, above all when exercised by someone who was literally a magician. A magician whose heavy peasant hands could execute card tricks on a level with the great Houdini’s. André Mauroix once compared his storytelling gift to that of Scheherazade. ... Others have likened him to Leonardo da Vinci and the omni-curious if not omniscient men of the Renaissance. “Saint-Ex?” General René Bouscat one day said to me, handing me a caricature “Pépino” had drawn of himself. “Mais il savait tout faire” — there was nothing he couldn’t do. One of his closest friends, Dr. Georges Péliissier, wishing to write an appreciation of him after his death, could find nothing better than the pentagonal title, *Les Cinq Visages de Saint-Exupéry* — the five “faces” or facets of his personality being Saint-Ex the Flyer, Saint-Ex the Writer, Saint-Ex the Man, Saint-Ex the Inventor and Saint-Ex the Magician. Even so, the spectrum could have been extended and he could just as justifiably have entitled his book, *Les Sept Visages de Saint-Exupéry*, throwing in Saint-Ex the Humorist and Saint-Ex the Thinker, for good measure.

For Saint-Exupéry, who “read little but understood everything” (to quote Péliissier), was in the deepest sense a thinker who used card tricks, word puzzles, chess games and comic drawings to mask his innermost preoccupations.

*Biographer Curtis Cate*
*Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: His Life and Times*, Heinemann, 1970
Nothing could have been better suited to the courageous, intransigent Saint-Ex than the life of a pilot with Aéropostale. The work was dangerous and demanding, the discipline rigorous and the solitude unbroken. In his books, the descriptions of the hours spent alone in the cockpit are intensely evocative, as he recalls piloting his craft from Toulouse to Casablanca and Dakar, at the mercy of sandstorms, snow and freak winds, flying low through mountain passes and over mile after mile of desert, where Moorish tribesmen shot at the tiny planes as though they were partridges.

Although the Breguet 14 was the most reliable aircraft of the time, it was pitifully frail by current standards, with a wooden propeller, an open cockpit and a range of well under 400 miles; it had no radio, no suspension, no sophisticated instruments and no brakes. Planes regularly broke down or crash-landed, and airmen were taken captive and held hostage for weeks at a time by tribesmen. Maps were crude, and pilots navigated by following landmarks — a row of trees, a farmhouse, a field, a river. It was easy to get lost in heavy rain or fog, or just in the dark, and weather predictions were often fatally unreliable.

Selina Hastings
“The Courageous, Intransigent Antoine de Saint-Exupéry,” The New Yorker, November 27, 1994

Saint-Exupéry did not so much live fast as die early. Our fascination with him has grown as a result, as it does with all things that end before their time, from the Titanic to Marilyn Monroe. The mystery surrounding his death — so neatly presaged in The Little Prince, whose hero witnesses 44 sunsets — has further enhanced the myth. To it have been added the eulogies: Saint-Exupéry’s generation comes to an end only today, when he has been dead for 50 years. Survived by a great number of eloquent friends, he has been flattened under the collective weight of their half century of praise. That avalanche has naturally provoked a second one: Those who have labored to remind us that Saint-Exupéry was a man, not a god, have delighted in doing so vitriolically. The detractors have done no more than the keepers of the cult to reveal Saint-Exupéry himself; they have tangled only with the legend, of which the writer is now twice the victim.

Under it all is buried one man, by no means ordinary, but not extraordinary either for the reasons we have come to believe. A pilot of indisputable audacity, Saint-Exupéry was anything but a disciplined flyer. He flew the mails only briefly, less than six years in all. He played a role in the pioneering age of aviation without having been one of its illustrious practitioners. …

Relatedly, he was not much dedicated to routine. He displayed a stunning lack of personal ambition and was a resolute nonjoiner. Disobedience was often to his mind the better part of valor. His friendships were solid but composed of equal parts loyalty and squabbling. His sentimental history is a thorny one. At the same time, Saint-Exupéry was a man of tremendous, towering personality, of certain genius. Little of it crept into the tempest-tossed life, however; only a portion crept into the work. He was perhaps at the height of his powers recounting the tale of his near-death by thirst in the Libyan desert at the dinner table, over which his enchanted listeners plainly slumped with sympathetic dehydration. No one who met him ever forgot him.

Biographer Stacy Schiff
Saint-Exupéry: A Biography, Alfred A. Knopf, 1994

“To live is to be slowly born. It would be a bit too easy if we could go about borrowing ready-made souls.”

— Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
In His Own Words

He bent down into the cockpit; the luminous dial hands were beginning to show up. The pilot read their figures one by one; all was going well. He felt at ease up here, snugly ensconced. He passed his fingers along a steel rib and felt the stream of life that flowed at it; the metal did not vibrate, yet it was alive. The engine's five-hundred horse-power bred in its texture a very gentle current, fraying its ice-cold rind into a velvety bloom. Once again the pilot in full flight experienced neither giddiness nor any thrill; only the mystery of metal turned to living flesh.

So he had found his world again. ... A few digs of his elbow, and he was quite at home. He tapped the dashboard, touched the contacts one by one, shifting his limbs a little, and, settling himself more solidly, felt for the best position whence to gage the faintest lurch of his five tons of metal, jostled by the heaving darkness.

From *Night Flight*
Reynal & Hitchcock, 1932

Germany cannot be explained by means of reasoned ideologies. She does not follow definable goals. Germany's goals are nothing but a succession of tactical advances, of publicity stunts. The real aim of Germany is to expand.

That is why for us today it is not merely a question of fighting against Nazism, or for Poland, or for the Czechs or for our civilization, but to fight in order to survive. Those who have left their farms, their shops, their factories, fight in order not to become mere fertilizer for German prosperity. They have gone out to gain the right to live and to live in peace.

From “The Propaganda of Pan-Germanism”
Broadcast on October 18, 1939

A pilot in trouble who buried himself in the white cotton-wool of the clouds might all unseeing run straight into a peak. This was why, that night, the deliberate voice repeated insistently its warning:

“Navigating by the compass in a sea of clouds over Spain is all very well, it is very dashing, but — ” And I was struck by the graphic image: “But you want to remember that below the sea of clouds lies eternity.”

And suddenly that tranquil cloud-world, that world so harmless and simple that one sees below rising out of the clouds, took on in my eyes a new quality. That peaceful world became a pitfall. I imagined the immense white pitfall spread beneath me. Below it reigned not what one might think — not the agitation of men, not the living tumult and bustle of cities, but a silence even more absolute than the clouds, a peace even more final. This viscous whiteness became in my mind the frontier between the real and the unreal, between the known and the unknowable. Already I was beginning to realize that a spectacle has no meaning except it be seen through the glass of a culture, a civilization, a craft. Mountaineers too know the sea of clouds, yet it does not seem to them the fabulous curtain it is to me.

From *Wind, Sand and Stars*
Harcourt Brace & Company, 1939

I loved my crash landing in Libya and the necessity that forced me to walk and the desert that was swallowing me bit by bit. I was changing into something else, something that wasn’t too bad, ... At night I felt lost in the sands and I loved that wide navigation among the stars. Wasn’t it my duty? I’m ready to believe that what we call duty is what renders the greatest service, but this is no longer so when we are speaking of contemplative truths. And contemplation is greater than charity. It is on a higher level.

From a personal letter
December 22 or 23, 1939
I’d like you to know what in fact you know already; I very much need you, because first of all I think you’re the one I love best of all my friends, and also because you’re my conscience. I think I apprehend things as you do and you teach me well. I often have long discussions with you and — I’m not being partial — I nearly always agree that you’re right. But also, Léon Werth, I like drinking a Pernod with you on the banks of the Saône while munching a sausage with country bread. I cannot say why that moment leaves me with a feeling of such perfect fulfillment, but I needn’t say this since you know it better than I. I was so content that I’d like to repeat it. Peace is not something abstract — it is not the end of danger and cold.

... Peace means that biting into a sausage with country bread on the banks of the Saône with Léon Werth isn’t meaningless. It depresses me that the sausage no longer has any flavor.

From a personal letter to his friend, the writer Léon Werth, to whom he would dedicate *The Little Prince* and *Letter to a Hostage*

February 1940

You are at war. You are young. You are prepared to work and fight for your country. But there is more at stake than your country; it is the world’s fate that is at stake. And you are ready to work and fight for freedom the world over.

If you were just soldiers, I would speak to you as soldiers. I would say: “Put aside all your other problems, there is only one that counts: fighting.” But you are young and your responsibility is greater even than that of soldiers. Yours is a dual responsibility: You are ready to fight for liberty, but you must also explain it and build it.

Words too much used lose their meaning. Social formulas wear thin. That is the price of humanity’s advance. If you do not want to live by dead ideas, you have to rejuvenate them constantly. But liberty is not a problem you can separate from others. In order for human beings to be free, they must first be human.

From “A Message to Young Americans”

Delivered at the request of journalist Dorothy Thompson in December 1941 after the attack on Pearl Harbor and the U.S.’s entry into World War II

I shall say a few words about the quarrels which have divided Frenchmen in the hope of doing something to remove them. For there has been a grave spiritual disorder among French people. The souls of many among us have been torn; these have been of peace of mind, and they should find it. By the miracle of American action in North Africa, all our different roads have led us to the same meeting-place. Why now should we get bogged down in the old quarrels? It is time to unite, not to divide, for opening wide the arms, not for exclusions.

Were our quarrels worth the hate we wasted on them? Who can ever maintain that he alone is absolutely right? Man’s field of vision is minute; language is an imperfect instrument; the problems of life burst all the formulas.

We were all in agreement as to our faith. We all wanted to save France. France had to be saved both in flesh and in the spirit. Of what use is the spiritual heritage if there be no heir? What good is the heir if the spirit be dead?

From “An Open Letter to Frenchmen Everywhere”

*The New York Times*, November 29, 1942

This is really ridiculous because I don’t know anything about drawing or painting. I am doing a story about a little prince. My publishers have persuaded me that it will go over better if I do the illustrations myself, even if they are simple. Like that of most people, my training goes back to childhood days in school. I assure you that my talent never attracted attention. I was like any other child, doing more or less what he is told. I don’t even remember if I liked it. But now the dabbling is amusing. I reject a drawing because the lines do not bring out what I want. Sometimes the color strikes a wrong note and I throw the sheet away.

From Adèle Breaux’s *Saint-Exupéry in America, 1942-1943: A Memoir*

As quoted by Breaux, who tutored Saint-Exupéry in English, upon visiting him in his studio and seeing drafts of *The Little Prince*
Rick Cummins is an author and composer originally from western Pennsylvania. He went to Philadelphia for formal education, earning his B.S. and M.D. degrees at the University of Pennsylvania. He has lived in Marshalls Creek, Pennsylvania, and on the Upper West Side of Manhattan since 1975. He is a member of ASCAP and the Dramatists Guild. Cummins’ favorite work, *Half the Sky: True Stories of Women Around the World*, is based on the Chinese quote “Women hold up half the sky.” This unusual theater piece is a compilation of true stories from various news media around the world, documenting shocking gender bias still in practice today through song, dance, humor and pathos. This project was chosen to headline the Festival of New Musicals at Theatre Building Chicago. As a longtime member of New York’s BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop, Cummins had the opportunity to develop his theater craft under the leadership of its founder, Lehman Engel. His music, lyrics and librettos are represented in productions of *The Little Prince* (New Victory Theater), *That’s Life!* (Outer Critics Circle Award nominee), *Sherlock Holmes and the Red-Headed League* (Promenade Theater, published by Samuel French), *Amos & Olgia* (Playhouse by the River), *Tiny Tim’s Christmas Carol* (BAM) and *Pets!* (Theatre East, published by Dramatic Publishing). Cummins has written incidental music for many Shakespeare plays and American classics performed at theaters across the U.S., Canada and Europe. He has written television scripts, movie theme songs, children’s songs and cabarets.

John Scoullar grew up in Providence, Rhode Island, and began a performing career at age 12, touring with the Bolshoi Ballet in the U.S. He eventually entered seminary but left to pursue acting and dance. Moving to New York City in the early 1970s, he appeared in several original off-Broadway casts (*The Hot L Baltimore*, *The Crazy Locomotive* and *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*) as well as on Broadway (*Candide*, *Over Here!* and *King of Hearts*). He then turned to playwriting and penned *Old Fashioned Bargain Days* (Playwrights Horizons), *Fitzy and Bucko* and *Canticle* (Hartman Conservatory Theatre). With Rick Cummins, he wrote the various stage adaptations of *The Little Prince*, many television scripts, cabaret songs and a musical about reincarnation titled *Sojourn*. At the time of his death in 2011, he was working with Joseph Kavanaugh on *The Legend of Finn McCool* and *Hello, Dears*, in which he played an endearing waitress at a Manhattan diner. After moving to New York City, Scoullar married his sweetheart, actor Linda Robbins, who in 1981 appeared on Broadway in *Amadeus*. Months later, their son, Nicholas, was born and given the middle name Amadeus. Nicholas (joined by his wife, Faryl) continues in Scoullar’s footsteps as a screenwriter under the name Nick Amadeus.
Since it was published in 1943, *The Little Prince* has defied categorization. Is it a children’s story? A fairy tale for adults? An autobiographical story, or at least an allegory, drawn from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s own life? A story that prompts these questions is worth a deeper dive as literature. Below are some literary terms and definitions to help put *The Little Prince* in context (the categories aren’t mutually exclusive).

**Fairy Tale**
A story of wonder, often with fantastic elements like magic or fictional creatures (but not always fairies). Sometimes from a literary origin; sometimes evolving from folk tales. Examples include “Hansel and Gretel,” “Beauty and the Beast” and “Rumpelstiltskin.”

**Folk Tale**
A story within an oral tradition, often capturing and passing along knowledge and beliefs of its culture and representing the experiences of ordinary people. Frequently, the stories will show the person (or animal) protagonist learning a lesson. Examples include “The Pied Piper of Hamelin,” “The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor,” Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox, and the Coyote stories of the Sahaptin people.

**Fable**
A story, usually featuring animals that behave like people, that conveys a lesson or moral. Aesop’s Fables are among the most popular in Western tradition; others include stories by Lewis Carroll, Beatrix Potter and Rudyard Kipling.

**Allegory**
A fictional story filled with symbols that provide a second narrative understanding that may not be explicitly stated in the text. The story may be understood on multiple levels with multiple meanings. Examples include Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* and Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*.

**Parable**
Similar to a fable but with human characters. In the Bible’s New Testament, Jesus told several parables, including the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan, to illustrate a religious moral.

“A children’s fable for adults, *The Little Prince* was in fact an allegory of [Antoine de] Saint-Exupéry’s own life — his search for childhood certainties and interior peace, his mysticism, his belief in human courage and brotherhood, and his deep love for his wife Consuelo but also an allusion to the tortured nature of their relationship.”

Barry James
TAKING FLIGHT

The story of *The Little Prince* began in 1943 when French author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and his co-pilot crashed their plane in the Sahara desert. They were stranded for four days and experienced many hallucinations due to lack of food and water. Years later, after moving to New York City, Saint-Exupéry began writing this soon-to-be global phenomenon. Since 1943, *The Little Prince* has been translated over 400 times, connecting people across the world and sharing the themes of love, friendship, fear and responsibility.

**Discussion Questions**

- What similarities can you find between Saint-Exupéry’s experiences and the plot of *The Little Prince*?
- Why do you think Saint-Exupéry wrote this story?
- Do you believe this book is meant for children or adults or both? Why or why not?
- Why do you think this story is so relatable and easy to comprehend?

**Classroom Activity**

Invite the students to imagine they have been stranded in a desert. Have them write down or draw three things, practical or imaginary, they would want to bring with them, and invite them to share with a partner. Then discuss the following questions as a group: How would these items influence their time in the desert? Would they help them survive? Would they make them feel more comfortable? If they had to turn their desert experience into a story, how would these objects influence their tale? Is it a drama? A thriller? A comedy? Would their story be better told as a poem? A book? An action-packed film? A play?

THE BEAUTY OF SYMBOLISM

Many characters in *The Little Prince* are specific archetypes, which are representations of well-known motifs, symbols or characters. These characters are based on real people from Saint-Exupéry’s life, and many moments in the show are based on real-life events.

**Discussion Questions**

- What is symbolism?
- What does the Little Prince character symbolize? The Rose? The King? The Snake? The Fox?
- The characters are not the only symbolic elements in the play. What do you think the painting/art and the baobabs symbolize? Which set pieces or lighting choices are symbolic and how?
- What do these characters and other elements tell you about the life of Saint-Exupéry?
Classroom Activity
Invite the students to think about current events in the world and different people who are meaningful to them (parents, guardians, friends, pets, etc.). Have the students list these relationships and events on a sheet of paper and write down the qualities they notice about each one. Then ask them to think about different objects that could potentially share the same qualities.

Example: Brother = Lazy, is sometimes mean and sometimes nice, sleeps a lot = Cat

When they have determined a few symbols, instruct them to write a five-minute scene that includes some of these symbolic characters. Encourage them to get creative! Then ask the students to share these new stories with each other in small groups. Finally, bring the discussion of symbolism back to the play with the following questions: Do you think that symbolism is a useful literary device? How do these symbols help fuel your own imagination? How do they allow you to make the story more personal?

MONEY LINES
Have you ever watched a play, movie or TV show and heard a line that resonated with you deeply or summarized the story perfectly? These lines are referred to as “money lines.” Read the following lines from The Little Prince, and ask the discussion questions that follow.

Discussion Questions
Aviator: “Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them.”
• What is the significance of this line?
• Do grown-ups struggle to use their imaginations more than children do? Why or why not?

King: “It is much more difficult to judge oneself than it is to judge others.”
• Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
• Can you recall a time when you judged someone harshly for behaving in a way that you have also behaved? What happened?

Fox: “You only understand the things when you become acquainted with them.”
• Do you think it is possible to understand something that you haven’t become acquainted with? Why or why not?
• After this line, the Fox tells the Little Prince that in order to make his acquaintance, he needs to be patient. Why is patience an important step to understanding something?

Fox: “It is only with the heart that one can see rightly.”
• What do you think it means to see with your heart?
• Do you think our eyes can deceive us from seeing the truth of a situation? Why or why not?

Little Prince: “Where are the men? It is very lonely in the desert.”
Snake: “It is also lonely — among men.”
• Have you ever felt lonely while in a group of people? What was that experience like?
• Have you ever felt in good company while spending time alone? Why did you enjoy your own company?

Classroom Activity
Write each line from The Little Prince listed above on a small piece of paper and place all five in a bowl. Divide the students into groups of five, and have each group pick a line from the bowl. Invite each group to create a pitch for a new film based off the line, including a title, key characters, plot and a new “money line.” Ask a representative from each group to present their film pitch to the class. After all presentations are complete, discuss the pitches as a group with the following questions: What worked well? What could have used more development? How did the new film idea represent the line they were initially given?
For Further Reading and Understanding

BOOKS BY ANTOINE de SAINT-EXUPÉRY

Flight to Arras. Reynal & Hitchcock, 1942.

BOOKS ABOUT ANTOINE de SAINT-EXUPÉRY

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: His Life and Times by Curtis Cate. Heinemann, 1970.

BOOKS ABOUT THE LITTLE PRINCE


STAGE ADAPTATIONS OF THE LITTLE PRINCE

The Little Prince, libretto by Chris Mouron and music by Terry Truck. 2018. International productions in France, Dubai, Australia and the U.S.

FILM ADAPTATIONS OF THE LITTLE PRINCE

The Little Prince (animated), screenplay by Irena Brignull and Bob Persichetti, directed by Mark Osborne. Featuring the voices Jeff Bridges as the Aviator, Mackenzie Foy as the Little Girl, Marion Cotillard as the Rose, James Franco as the Fox and Riley Osborne as the Little Prince. 2015. 108 minutes.
The Little Prince (live-action musical), screenplay and lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner, music by Frederick Loewe, directed by Stanley Donen. Starring Richard Kiley as the Aviator, Steven Warner as the Little Prince, Joss Ackland as the King, Donna McKechnie as the Rose, Bob Fosse as the Snake and Gene Wilder as the Fox. 1974. 88 minutes.

WEBSITES

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. A biographical website curated by the writer’s estate and represented by his heirs and nephews. Available in French and English.
www.antoinedesaintexupery.com

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry Youth Foundation. A nonprofit organization that carries out various projects around the world to improve the everyday lives of youth and help them attain better futures. Available in French and English.
www.fasej.org

Le Petit Prince. Official website for the licensing of The Little Prince that shares resources, videos, news and events inspired by the beloved story.
www.lepetitprince.com