

Study Guide

Bad Dates

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for your interest in Salem Repertory Theatre, and for bringing a group of your students to our show! We look forward to seeing you, talking with you about your experience, and receiving your feedback about how to make our programs even more useful to you.

Attached is the Study Guide for our next production – Theresa Rebeck’s ***Bad Dates***. Please use the study guide in any way you see fit. It could be just a discussion starter, or you could use some of the questions for a teaching section in your class. The guide is divided into two sections: the first part can be used before you come see the show to generate discussion and interest in the play, and the second can be used after your students have seen the production.

We are assuming that all of your students are web-savvy, and will know how to find answers to the questions we provide. However, here are some handy web sites that can be used to find some of the material. (There are other sources out there, both on the web and in print. But, doing a simple Google search on any of these topics will provide helpful information.)

About Theresa Rebeck

www.theresarebeck.com (Rebeck’s home site)

www.doollee.com/PlaywrightsR/rebeck-theresa.html (play info)

www.playbill.com/news/article/83844.html (an interview)

About *Bad Dates*

www.curtainup.com/baddates.html (an online review of the play)

About Tibetan Buddhism

www.tibet.com/eco/eco8.html (a site which helps explain Buddhists’ view of the environment, including insect life)

Once again, thanks for your interest in Salem Repertory Theatre, and we’ll see you at the show!

Michael Phillips
Literary Manager
Salem Repertory Theatre

Salem Repertory Theatre

Study Guide for *Bad Dates*, by Theresa Rebeck

Before you See the Play...

- 1) Who is Theresa Rebeck? Research her life and work. What other plays has she written? Read descriptions of her plays. What common themes does she seem to deal with in her writing?
- 2) If you have time, watch the film *Mildred Pierce* on DVD. Given the title of Rebeck's play, how do you think the film might relate to the play?
- 3) One way to define drama is that it involves a conflict between characters. However, *Bad Dates* has only one on-stage character. Imagine, and then discuss, how conflict might be present when there is only one character in a play. In what ways might the character create or experience conflict?
- 4) Do a web search on "Joan and David" and "Jimmy Chou." What do these names refer to? How might these relate to the play?
- 5) Research Tibetan Buddhism. In particular, what do Buddhists believe regarding the animal world, and specifically about insects? What does Buddhist philosophy say about all life, whether human or animal?

After you See the Play...

- 1) Rebeck is known for her keen ear for language. How specifically does she use language in this play? How does the way Haley talks (as opposed to what she says) give the audience information about her?
- 2) What do you make of all the clothes and shoes in the play? How does Rebeck use these as metaphors? Also, what is the importance of Haley dressing and undressing in front of the audience? What is this meant to say about her character?
- 3) Go back to the question about conflict above. Now that you've seen the production, do you think there was conflict in the play? If so, how was this accomplished? If not, why not?
- 4) A one-character play is, by its very nature, more about talking than action. How does Rebeck keep the audience's interest throughout? What techniques does she use in terms of unfolding the story? What surprises were there in the story (things that happened that were unexpected)?
- 5) The play is full of images and metaphors about the genders. How does Haley talk about women (including herself)? How does she talk about men? What are some of the images used for each of the genders?