

TARRAGON



Marine Life

Written & directed by Rosa Laborde

In collaboration with Aluna Theatre

November 8 – December 17, 2017 in the **Extraspac**e

Education Resource Guide written by EmmaRose MacDonald

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About the Play:

Synopsis

Set in the current or near future, Sylvia an environmental activist meets Rupert, a lawyer. Her passion for environmental justice intrigues Rupert. Sylvia goes to an important meeting with a local politician about environmental change but must leave when her brother, John, attempts suicide. John lives with mental illness and escapes in fantasies of Mexican culture. The three characters wrestle with their various needs from one another, their strong beliefs, and the changing environment around them.

Characters

Sylvia: An environmental activist

Rupert: A man who catches fish

John/Juan: A sometimes Mariachi

About the Playwright

Rosa Laborde is a playwright and actress. Her plays include *The Source*, *Sugar*, *Dish*, *Leo*, *Hush*, *Marine Life*, and *Like Wolves* and have been produced across Canada at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, Tarragon Theatre, The Great Canadian Theatre Company, Neptune Theatre, Touchstone Firehall Theatre and The Belfry Theatre. Her play *Leo* was nominated for five Dora Mavor Moore Awards and was a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Award for Drama.

<https://www.playwrightsguild.ca/playwright/rosa-laborde>

Resources:

Microplastics

Microplastics in the Ocean

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00244-015-0216-x>

Shim, W.J. & Thomposon, R.C. Arch Environ Contam Toxicol (2015) 69: 265. doi: 10.1007/s00244-015-0216-x

This article introduces the special issue of Archives of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology on Microplastics. The article discusses contemporary concerns regarding micro plastics and the environment.

Microplastics in the Marine Environment

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0025326X11003055>

This article discusses where micro plastics come from, their level as pollutants in the oceans, and their impact on marine wildlife.

Microplastics in the Ocean

https://www.nature.com/scitable/blog/saltwater-science/microplastic_in_the_ocean

This blog post discusses the effects of plastic on marine life including how plastic can absorb other pollutants. The article includes link to resources and related concepts.

How Plastics From Your Clothes Can End Up in Your Fish

<http://time.com/3669084/plastics-pollution-fish/>

This article discusses how micro plastics enter the environment and resulting effects on fish and humans.

Seabirds Ingesting Plastic

Threat of plastic pollution to seabirds is global, pervasive, and increasing

<http://www.pnas.org/content/112/38/11899.full>

This academic article provides research on birds ingesting plastic. Methodology is discussed as well as speculations of future levels of plastic ingestion by seabirds. The article includes links to further resources.

Seabirds eat floating plastic debris because it smells like food, study finds

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/nov/09/seabirds-eat-floating-plastic-debris-because-it-smells-like-food-study-finds-algae-sulfur>

This article discusses the results of a study on why seabirds are eating plastic. The findings state that plastic obtains the same smell as seabirds' main food sources.

“Activist Burn Out”

Preventing Burn Out in the New Era

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-idealist/201702/preventing-burnout-in-the-new-era>

This article discusses the concept of activist burn out meaning an emotional exhaustion after working in social movements or environmental causes.

Preventing Burnout: Techniques for Dealing with Overwhelming Stress

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/burnout-prevention-and-recovery.htm>

This website examines the concept of burn out more broadly as are action to long term stress. Signs and symptoms are discussed as well as strategies for managing burn out and links to further resources.

Responding to the Suicide of a Loved One

The stigma of parental suicide: why bereavement is only the beginning of grief

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/news/11159293/The-stigma-of-parental-suicide-why-bereavement-is-only-the-beginning-of-grief.html>

This article from the Telegraph examines the impact on a person when their parent commits suicide. The article includes interviews and resources for talking to children after a suicide in the family.

Suicide Bereavement

<https://www.torontodistresscentre.com/taxonomy/term/28>

This website offers resources for suicide bereavement. Accessible guides and pamphlets are included and address several contexts including family and school.

Diasporic Experiences and Multi-Racial Identities

People Get Real About Multiracial Identity In This Powerful Video

http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/people-get-real-about-multiracial-identity-in-this-powerful-video_us_569e7247e4b0cd99679b75ab

This Huffington Post article discusses a Buzz Feed video on multiracial identity. People speak from their experience about discrimination, finding their identity, and how people respond to them on a daily basis.

I'm Latino, I Didn't Speak Spanish, But I Was Still 'Latino Enough'

<http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/09/latinos-who-dont-speak-spanish/>

This blog post gives an account of one person's experience of searching for their Latino identity when they do not speak Spanish. The post discusses the feeling of not being "Latino Enough" and pressures to fit into a racial category.

Don't Erase My Race:

4 Affirmations to Remember When Reclaiming Your Multi-Racial Identity

<http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/02/affirming-multiracial-identity/>

This blog post examines challenges multiracial people can face and affirmation for feeling grounded in one's own identity.

Multiracial college students' experiences with multiracial microaggressions

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13613324.2016.1248836>

This academic article examines multiracial students' experience of racist microaggressions. The article includes the perspectives of 10 multiracial college students.

Discussion Questions:

Pre-Show Questions

1. Why do you think the play is called *Marine Life*?
2. How does the environment someone lives in affect who they are as a person?
3. What does burnout mean?
4. How do you decide when to put your needs first or the needs of a larger cause?

Post-Show Questions

1. Which moment from the play stood out for you and why?
2. What do you think is the main idea of the play?
3. How do the human relationships in the play mirror what is happening in the environment and vice versa?
4. Why do you think John is drawn to romanticized stereotypes of Mexican culture?
5. How do Sylvia and John each relate to their multi-racial heritage? Are they comfortable with their identity? What challenges do they face?
6. What does each character want?
7. How do Sylvia, Rupert, and John change over the course of the play?
8. Sylvia and John both have strong belief systems. How does this limit them? What possibilities does this allow them to follow?
9. How are Sylvia and John impacted by their family history?
10. What do you think the flood represents?

Activities:

Activity 1: Animal Bodies

In this activity participants embody animals and then incorporate elements of that animals physicality into a human character. In Marine Life parallels are created between what is happening in the human characters' lives and in the environment.

1. Walk around the room. Fill the spaces of the room. Try to have an equal distance between your self and the people around you.
2. Move like a fish. What body part do you lead with? How big a fish are you? What do your senses tell you? Imagine your environment.
3. Now move through the space 70% fish and 30% human. How does the movement change? Try 50% fish 50 % human. Now 30% fish and 70% human. How do the fish characteristics inform this persons's movements?
4. Repeat the exercise with other animals such as a seabird, crab, turtle, whale...etc.

Activity 2: Collective Poetry

In this activity we will each write a third of a poem and then pass the poem on to be completed by two other people.

1. Go around the room and each say one word for a theme or idea that appears in the play.
2. Take out a large piece of paper and a writing utensil. On the top third of the paper write a response in poetry to the following quote from the play.

John: "I am swimming down deep by the seabed and it's so dark. There's no light but I don't miss it because I can see in the dark and how could I miss what I've never known."

3. After 3 minutes finish your last phrase. Try not to judge your work and keep writing until the 3 minutes are up.
4. Fold back the part of the paper you have written on and pass the paper over three people from where you are sitting. The goal is to not know who had the paper before you. Now in the middle section continue the poem in response to a second quote from the play.

Rupert: "You wanted to pretend you were perfect just like I did. Everybody's hiding something."

5. After 3 minutes finish your last phrase.

6. Fold the paper back again and pass the poem along. Respond in poetry to a third quote from the play.

Sylvia: “ There should be a word for that.

A word for home that isn’t home.

‘Cause are we ever home?

Since we first swam up out of the sea, have we ever been home?

Or are we always, all of us, fish, out of water.”

7. Fold the paper up and place all the poems in a bowl. Have a volunteer choose a poem at random and read the poem out loud. Read as many poems as time permits.