Buried Child
by Sam Shepard

an NAC English Theatre Company / The Leanor and Alvin Segal Theatre (Montreal) coproduction

Study Guide

THE NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE ENGLISH THEATRE PROGRAMMES FOR STUDENT AUDIENCES 2008-2009 SEASON

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About This Study Guide
This Study Guide is formatted in easy-to-copy single pages, which may be used separately or in any combination that works for your classes. The costume design drawings on pages 25-27 are intended for classroom display but may also be photocopied for distribution to students.

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Production Credits

Creative Team
Director ................................................. Peter HINTON
Set and Costume Design ....................... Eo SHARP
Lighting Design ................................. Robert THOMSON
Sound Design ............................. Troy SLOCUM
Assistant Lighting Designer ....................... Michelle RAMSAY
Assistant to the Director ................. Elif ISIKOZLU
(University of Ottawa
Masters Degree
program in Directing)

Cast
Halie ...................................................... Clare COULTER
Dodge ..................................................... David FOX
Shelly ...................................................... Adrienne GOULD
Tilden ...................................................... Randy HUGHSON
Bradley ...................................................... Alex IVANOVICI
Father Dewis ........................................... John KOENSGEN
Vince ......................................................... Christie WATSON

Stage Management Team
Stage Manager .............................. Laurie CHAMPAGNE
Assistant Stage Manager ................. Todd BRICKER
Sam Shepard (page 1 of 7)

Introduction to Sam Shepard and his work
“I don’t want to be a playwright, I want to be a rock and roll star…” Sam Shepard, 1971.

Sam Shepard, who once toured with Bob Dylan, has the glamour and rebellion of a rock ‘n roll star, the respect of mainstream American audiences and the academic world, and the admiration of movie fans. He just keeps on growing, experimenting and changing. His latest work is on a documentary in collaboration with Patti Smith.

Sam Shepard, playwright and actor, has been a leader of the avant-garde in contemporary American theatre since his earliest work. Shepard’s plays are difficult to categorize, but in general they blend images of the Old West, fascination with pop culture - rock and roll, drugs and television - and bizarre family problems. Before he was 30, Shepard had had more than 30 plays produced in New York. (http://www.litweb.net/biography)

Shepard repeatedly examines moral and spiritual starvation in his dramas. For decades, his work has shocked, alienated and mesmerized audiences. He has won 11 Obies and the Pulitzer Prize for Buried Child, and has been nominated for an Academy Award.

Sam Shepard’s style is lusty, loud, splashy, populist, jagged; he is the playwright of the Cowboy, of America, of wide-open spaces, of the rock ‘n roll hero, of popular culture; his language is explosive, his plays full of arresting images and monologues; his characters are disconnected and lost; we must always ask what is the truth behind them. His themes are familiar, themes of the family and its decay, the American Dream gone wrong, the quest for identity, themes of alienation and dissociation, and they are rooted in mythology.

All of Shepard’s plays are characterized by a love of language and a flair for visual imagery, constructed carefully for maximum impact. Often the imagery that he creates is of the American West. His characters are dominant, “macho”, lost males in search of home, and submissive, often abused women. The characters are dark, obsessed with the myths and metaphors of “cowboys and Indians”, ranches, deserts, and other wide-open spaces. Often the plots of his plays parallel familiar folk tales or religious parables. Shepard uses metaphor and symbol, mythology and ritual liberally.

Many literary words are used to describe his works, as critics and scholars attempt to categorize it. (See page 9 for definitions):
He uses “Realism” and moves to “Surrealism”;
he is a “Post Modernist”;
he uses “Naturalism” and the “Absurd”, “Expressionism” and the “Neo-Gothic”;
he is “grotesque”, “avant garde.”
It is suggested that overall he uses “Magic Realism”, as his realistic situations and settings are so often suffused by the fantastic. In spite of, or because of, the horrors he unearths his work speaks eloquently to a modern audience. To those analyzing America today, his work has a renewed relevancy, as he records the American heartbeat.
Sam Shepard (page 2 of 7)

Biography
Samuel Shepard Rogers was born in Fort Sheridan, Illinois, on November 5, 1943. His father was a bomber pilot in World War II, and after the war the family moved from base to base before settling on a ranch in Duarte, California to raise sheep and avocados. This is where Shepard developed his love for horses and the outdoors, and also learned to play the drums. Influenced by his dad, he discovered a love for music that found its way into many of his plays.

Shepard’s father gradually became an abusive alcoholic. After a series of violent confrontations with him, Sam left his agricultural studies at San Antonio Junior College at 19 to join a touring repertory theatre group, the Bishop's Company. Later he was made playwright in residence at the Magic Theatre in San Francisco. He arrived in New York in the early 1960s, with a few months of acting experience and a single, un-produced play to his credit at a time when the Off-Broadway theatre scene was just gaining momentum. He supported himself as a waiter at the Village Gate while immersing himself in theatrical interests. In the small playing spaces (studios and renovated churches) of the underground theatre movement, Shepard’s first plays, Cowboys and The Rock Garden were produced by Theatre Genesis at Saint Mark Church-in-the-Bowery in 1964. The Village Voice and other counterculture publications gave him rave reviews and encouraged him to write more. During this time he met his mentor, the actor and director Joseph Chaikin, to whom Buried Child is dedicated. Chaikin’s "transformation" techniques inspired Shepard to act. In 1969, he married an actress named O-Lan Johnson and soon their son Jesse Mojo was born. In 1971, Shepard had a much-publicized relationship with rock singer and poet Patti Smith. Together they wrote COWBOY MOUTH, acting the parts on stage in the first night’s performance.

Over the next few years, Shepard, produced a series of experimental, poetic, musical one-acts and full-length plays that earned him a string of Obie Awards (Off-Broadway's equivalent of the Tony Award) and a cult following in New York and London, where he lived for a while in the early 1970s. Exposed to European drama, the work of Beckett, and of Brecht, influenced his thought and plays.

Shepard’s plays fall loosely into the categories of Experimental works, Hero works, Family works, and more mainstream works. Shepard’s first plays were composed mainly of images and monologues, with no linear narrative. As he gained experience he began to write plays with more conventional narrative lines, more classical structure, more conventional characterization.

The Tooth of Crime (1972) and Curse of the Starving Class (1977) earned Shepard wider recognition, and larger audiences, but it wasn’t until Buried Child (1978) that he gained mainstream acceptance. The play earned Shepard his tenth Obie Award as well as the Pulitzer Prize for drama. Shepard said, although he had been avoiding doing so, “I wanted to write a play about a family".
**Sam Shepard** (continued)

In 1983 Shepard divorced his wife and began a relationship with actress Jessica Lange. In 1986 his drama *Lie of the Mind*, won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, and Shepard was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Since the success of *Buried Child*, Shepard has produced other popular plays, two of which, *True West* (1980) and *Fool for Love* (1983) have been turned into films. In the 1970s, Shepard himself turned to film, finding his way back to acting. He has appeared on screen in 25 films, such as *Days of Heaven*, *Frances*, *The Right Stuff*, and *Steel Magnolias*, as well as Robert Altman's film version of his play *Fool for Love* (1985). He was nominated for an Academy Award for his work in *The Right Stuff* in 1984. Other films include *Thunderheart* (1992), *The Pelican Brief* (1993) and *Silent Tongue* (1994), which he wrote and directed. His screenplay for *Paris, Texas* won the Palme d’Or award at the Cannes Film Festival in 1984, and he wrote and directed the film, *Far North* in 1988. Shepard has written 45 stage plays, two collections of prose pieces, *Motel Chronicles* and *Hawk Moon* and two of short stories, *Cruising Paradise*, in 1996, and *Great Dream of Heaven: Stories* in 2002. He lives in Minnesota with his wife, Jessica Lange, and their children.

In fact, Shepard himself, on his own endless quest for identity, has turned into an archetypal symbol of the American self-made man, and has been labeled “a true American hero”. In an irony he no doubt loves, from a counterculture rebel he has become an icon of popular culture.
Sam Shepard (page 4 of 7)

Selected Plays
COWBOYS, 1964
ROCK GARDEN, 1964
LA TURISTA, 1966
FIVE PLAYS (Chigaco, Icarus's Mother, Red Cross, Fourteen Hundred Thousand, Melodrama Play), 1967
OPERATION SIDEWINDER, 1970
THE UNSEEN HAND AND OTHER PLAYS (The Holy Ghostly, Back Bog Beast Bait, Forensic and the Navigator), 1970
THE TOOTH OF CRIME, 1972
MAD DOG BLUES AND OTHER PLAYS (Cowboy Mouth, Rock Garden, Cowboys Nr. 2.), 1972
GEOGRAPHY OF A HORSE DREAMER, 1974
KILLER'S HEAD, 1975
ANGEL CITY, 1976
SUICIDE IN B-FLAT, 1976
CURSE OF THE STARVING CLASS, 1977
SEDUCED, 1979
BURIED CHILD, 1979 (Pulitzer Prize)
SEVEN PLAYS (Buried Child, Curse of the Starving Class, The Tooth of the Crime, La Turista, True West, Tongues, Savage/Love), 1981
TRUE WEST, 1981
FOOL FOR LOVE, 1983
PARIS, TEXAS, 1984
A LIE OF THE MIND, 1986 (New York Drama Critics Circle Award)
THE UNSEEN HAND AND OTHER PLAYS, 1986
SIMPATICO, 1994
CRUISING PARADISE, 1996 (stories)
THE LATE HENRY MOSS GREAT DREAM OF HEAVEN, 2002 (stories)

Films (as actor, screenwriter or director):
ME AND MY BROTHER, 1969 (doc. drama, co-script)
BRAND X, 1969
EASY RIDER, 1969 (voice only, dir. by Dennis Hopper, starring Peter Fonda, Dennis Hopper, Jack Nicholson)
ZABRIESKIE POINT, 1970 (dir. by Michelangelo Antonioni)
BRONCO BULFROG, 1970
OH CALCUTTA!, 1972 (co-script)
RENALDO AND CLARA, 1978
DAYS OF HEAVEN, 1978 (dir. by Terrence Malick, starring Brooke Adams, Richard Gere, Sam Shepard)
RESURRECTION, 1980 (dir. by Daniel Petrie, starring Ellen Burstyn, Sam Shepard)
RAGGEDY MAN, 1981 (dir. by Jack Fish, starring Eric Roberts, Sissy Spacek)
FRANCES, 1982 (dir. by Graeme Clifford, starring Jessica Lange, Sam Shepard, Kim Stanley)
THE RIGHT STUFF, 1983 (dir. by Philip Kaufman, starring Scott Glenn, Ed Harris, Dennis Quaid, Sam Shepard (as Col. Chuck Yeager, Academy Award nomination), Fred Ward)
PARIS, TEXAS, 1984 (co-script from his story Motel Chronicles, dir. by Wim Wenders, starring Nastassja Kinski, Harry Dean Stanton, Dean Stockwell) (Palme d'Or Award at the Cannes Film Festival)
COUNTRY, 1984 (dir. by R. Pearce, starring Jessica Lange, Sam Shepard)
FOOL FOR LOVE, 1985 (based on his play, starring Kim Basinger, Randy Quaid, Sam Shepard)
**Sam Shepard** (page 5 of 7)

**Films** (as actor, screenwriter or director) (continued):
- CRIMES OF THE HEART, 1985 (based on the play by Beth Henley, dir. by Bruce Beresford, starring Diane Keaton, Jessica Lange, Sissy Spacek)
- BABY BOOM, 1987 (dir. by Charles Shyer, starring Diane Keaton, Harold Ramis, Sam Wanamaker)
- FAR NORTH, 1988 (dir., script),
- STEEL MAGNOLIAS, 1989 (based on the play by Robert Harling, dir. by Herbert Ross, starring Sally Field, Dolly Parton)
- BRIGHT ANGEL, 1990
- PASSAGIER FABER/VOYAGER, 1990 (based on Max Frisch's novel Homo Faber, dir. by Volker Schlöndorff)
- DEFENSELESS, 1991
- THUNDERHEART, 1992 (dir. by Michael Apted, starring Val Kilmer, Sam Shepard)
- SILENT TONGUE, 1994 (dir. script)
- SAFE PASSAGE, 1994 (based on the novel by Ellyn Bache, dir. by Robert Allan Ackerman, starring Susan Sarandon, Sam Shepard)
- THE GOOD OLD BOYS, 1995 (TV)
- LILY DALE, 1996 (TV)
- PURGATORY, 1999 (dir. Uli Edel, starring Sam Shepard, Randy Quaid)
Sam Shepard (page 6 of 7)

Shepard on Shepard: Quotations
On characters and actors:
“... there are mutually exclusive realities that exist onstage at the same time. The idea of someone being alive and dead at the same time...”

“The essence of that for me has always been this acknowledgement, which Brecht and Joe Chaikin and everybody introduced me to, of the actor being the actor first and the character second. It’s not about dissolving into the character, which we do in movies, where it’s no longer Clint Eastwood, it’s the Pale Rider. In theater, the most interesting thing is to sustain the actor, not get rid of him. Keep the actor moving in and out of character, or being able to separate the two. This is one of the most interesting things in theater.” www.donshewey.com

“Instead of a whole character with logical motives the actor should consider a fractured whole with bits and pieces of character flying off the central theme. More like collage construction or jazz improvisation. The actor mixes many underlying elements and connects them through his intuition and senses to make a kind of music or painting in space.” (Shepard, for the actors in Angel City)

On The American Dream:
“I don’t know what the American Dream is. I do know it doesn’t work Not only doesn’t it work, the myth of the American Dream has created extraordinary havoc, and it’s going to be our demise...this notion that not only were we given this land by God somehow, but that we’re entitled to do whatever we wanted to with it, regardless of the consequences, and reap all the fortunes out of the land, much to the detriment of everyone else.... this rampant puritanical class of European colonialism... behind the whole thing is land-hungry Europeans wanting to dominate. The move westward was promoted by advertising, with words like ‘Free land’, ‘Manifest Destiny’... we always prefer the fantasy over the reality.” (Shepard on Shepard: an interview by Matthew Roudané, 2000)

On his plays as emotional territory:
Shepard believes that the world explored by his plays is an "emotional territory" rather than a mundane physical reality; he told New York magazine in 1980 that he believed “theatre’s greatest power to be its ability to make visible a hidden, visceral energy”.

On myth:
In Rolling Thunder Logbook (1977), his chronicle of Bob Dylan's 1975 US tour, Sam Shepard writes: "Myth is a powerful medium because it talks to the emotions and not the head. It moves us into an area of mystery ..."
Sam Shepard (page 7 of 7)

Shepard on Shepard: Quotations (continued)

On imagery:
“An image can be seen without looking at anything - the fantastic thing about theatre is that it can make something be seen that’s invisible, and that’s where my interest in theatre is - you can be watching this thing happening with actors and costumes and lights and set and language and even plot, and something emerges from beyond that, and that’s the image part I’m looking for, that’s the added dimension.” (Metaphors, Mad Dogs and Old Time Cowboys by Kenneth Chubb)

On Brecht:
“He’s my favourite playwright.” (Metaphors, Mad Dogs and Old Time Cowboys by Kenneth Chubb)

What effect would you like a play of yours to have on an audience?
“Hopefully, it would be something that would transform the emotions of the people watching. Hopefully, when they walk out the chemistry’s changed.” (Metaphors, Mad Dogs and Old Time Cowboys by Kenneth Chubb)

On Language and writing:
- “Living, breathing words as they hit the air between the actor and the audience actually possess the power to change our chemistry.”
- “Language is the only ingredient that retains the potential of making leaps into the unknown.”
- “Language can explode from the tiniest impulse. Words are felt.”
- “Something in me writes but it’s not necessarily me.”
- “The real quest of a writer is to penetrate into another world. A world behind the form.”
- “Myth speaks to everything at once, especially the emotions. By myth I mean a sense of mystery. A character for me is a composite of different mysteries.”
- “Writing is born from a need. A deep burn. If there’s no need, there’s no writing.”
- “The more you write, the harder it gets, because you’re not so easily fooled by yourself any more. As you go along writing starts to open up some of its secrets. I’ll never get to the bottom of it.” (Shepard, Language, Visualization and the Inner Library)

On Endings:
“I hate endings. Endings are so weird, because suddenly you’re forced to cut things off. After all this tremendous emotional buildup, just to cut the action off seems crazy. All the action after all, keeps going on.” (Shepard on Shepard: an interview by Matthew Roudané, 2000)

On Family:
“Family is very very resonant now with audiences....Even if you don’t know who your parents were, you are still intimately, inevitably and entirely connected to who brought you into the world—through a long long chain.” (Shepard on Shepard: an interview by Matthew Roudané, 2000)
Literary Definitions

Postmodernism means “after the modernist movement”. It is a reaction to modernism, characterized by a return to traditional materials and forms, or by irony and absurdity (as in literature). Art, architecture, or literature that reacts against earlier modernist principles, by reintroducing traditional or classical elements of style or by carrying modernist styles or practices to extremes.

Avant-garde, used in a broad sense, refers to any trailblazing movement — usually artistic or social — led by a small group of people to open new doors within their realm of interest.

Absurdism is a philosophy stating that the efforts of humanity to find meaning in the universe ultimately fail (and, hence, are absurd) because no such meaning exists, at least in relation to humanity.

Realism is the representation in art or literature of objects, actions, or social conditions as they actually are, without idealization or presentation in abstract form.

Surrealism is a 20th-century literary and artistic movement that attempts to express the workings of the subconscious, and is characterized by fantastic imagery and incongruous juxtaposition of subject matter.

Naturalism is an artistic movement advocating realistic description: in art or literature, a movement or school advocating factual or realistic description of life, including its less pleasant aspects.

Magic Realism, or Magical Realism, is an artistic genre in which magical elements or illogical scenarios appear in an otherwise realistic or even "normal" setting.

A Symbol is something that stands for, represents, or suggests another thing; esp., an object used to represent something abstract (example: the dove as a symbol for peace).

A Metaphor is an indirect comparison in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, as in Shakespeare’s "a sea of troubles" or "All the world’s a stage."

Neo-Gothic relates to a style of fiction that emphasizes the grotesque, mysterious, and desolate.

Glossary

Norman Rockwell is an American artist, famous for his paintings of covers of happy people in a perfect America. Amazingly, Rockwell created 321 magazine covers for The Saturday Evening Post. “The view of life I communicate in my pictures,” Rockwell wrote, "excludes the sordid and ugly. I paint life as I would like it to be."

http://www.normanrockwell.com/about/quotes.htm
Activities: pre-production background

1. Ibsen’s *Ghosts* and O’Neill’s *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, as well as *Buried Child*, are concerned with family secrets. **Read a summary** and a few scenes of each play. **Compare** the way secrets affect a family. **Read the definition** of Realism (see page 9) and **find** the elements of Realism that you see in the plays. How is Shepard different in his use or Realism? (Grades 10 up)

2. **Watch** some scenes from Tennessee Williams’ *The Glass Menagerie*. (In the 1987 version, Paul Newman directs his wife Joanne Woodward as Amanda.) Compare Amanda and Halie. To what extent does each role-play? (Grades 9 up)

3. **Google** “Pulitzer Prize”. **Analyze** the themes and style of *Buried Child* to **discover** the reasons why *Buried Child* might have won the Pulitzer Prize in 1979. (Grades 9 up)

4. What IS the American Dream? **Discuss**. List some aspects of the Dream. **Read** what Shepard has to say about the American Dream (see page 7). What does the play say about the American Dream? **Debate:** *The American Dream is corrupt*. Is there a Canadian Dream? **Discuss**. (Grades 9 up)

5. In groups, do some quick **research** on what it was like to live in the U.S.A in the 1960s 70s 80s 90s and 2000s - under Kennedy, Nixon, Ford, Reagan, Clinton... Bush1, Bush 2... **describe** the tone of the nation in those periods. Mention Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Vietnam, the Iran crisis, the two Iraq Wars, ... the recession, Reagonomics, Afghanistan. (Grades 9 up)

6. **Research** the term “Magic Realism”.
   a) **Watch** the recent movie *Pan’s Labyrinth* to understand how Magic Realism works. **Discuss** in class.
   b) On Youtube, **watch** the commercial for Barclay’s Bank, where a man undresses in the office, steps into the bathroom, and goes home on a long waterslide around the town. **Write** a commercial or a scene that begins realistically, and smoothly transcends to surrealism. (Search for “Barclaycard advert”) (Grades 9 up)

7. Sam Shepard loves to write about cowboys and the American West – he is a cowboy, himself. He says he was influenced by John Wayne movies when he was growing up. **Watch** a John Wayne western. What are the characteristics of cowboys, of westerns? What elements of this type of movie may have influenced Shepard, as seen in *Buried Child*? **Discuss** in class, make a list on the board. (Grades 9 up)

8. **Trace** the journey of each character in the play. To what extent have any characters changed by the end? (Grades 9 up)

9. **Write** the monologue that could have come from Sam Shepard’s mouth after a confrontation with his father. (Grades 9 up)

10. **Watch** one of the films written and/or directed by Shepard (see pages 5-6). Discuss the writing, the imagery, the themes, the setting, the influence of the land, the loneliness, the roles of men and women, the language. (Grades 9 up)

11. **Read** some biographical material on Shepard, followed by his play *True West*. What biographical elements may be in *Buried Child* and *True West*? (Grades 9 up)
The Play (page 1 of 9)

Since its first appearance in 1978, Buried Child has been universally acclaimed as a work of extraordinary vision and force. In 1979, the play won the first Pulitzer Prize ever awarded to a work premiering off-Broadway. Kevin Kelly of The Boston Globe spoke in 1980 of the play’s "full, dazzling, almost blinding glare," and Ben Brantley, reviewing Steppenwolf Theater Company’s production of the revised play in Chicago in 1995 affirmed Buried Child’s status as "a bona fide classic: a work that conveys the mystical, cannibalistic pull of family ties even as they unravel.”

The play represents the best of an iconic American playwright.

Plot Summary

Act 1 opens in the near dark, with the sound of rain and the blue light of a silent television flickering on the face of the old man, Dodge, who is seated on a sofa, swigging sips of verboten whiskey. We see the shapes of trees outside, behind a staircase with no landing, and a porch up left. Dodge is hostile to his off-stage wife, Halie, and she is oblivious to his criticism as she alternately nags him about his cough and speaks of the rain and the happy days of her past before Dodge. She laces her comments with references to religion. Halie is getting ready to go out with Father Dewis, and says their son, Tilden, will look after Dodge while she is gone. They argue over Tilden and Bradley, and the haircut Dodge doesn’t want. Bradley is a snake, says Dodge. They worry about who in the family will look after whom.

With the entry of Tilden, burnt out, displaced, carrying an armload of corn, the tone changes. Dodge orders Tilden to put the corn back where it came from, and Tilden dumps it all over Dodge’s lap. He sits on a stool and husks the corn as Dodge says nothing has been planted since 1935. In complicit silence, they ignore the voice of upstairs Halie as they hide Dodge’s drinking from her. We learn from Halie that their second son, Bradley, has lost his leg, cut it off with a chain saw, and can hardly look after himself, that Tilden was an all-American football player, and that their third and youngest son, Ansel, died.

Halie enters, all in black, dreaming of honours for Ansel. She threatens to throw Tilden out for stealing the corn. He cries, and Dodge defends him. In the ensuing argument, Halie tells Dodge he is spiteful, decomposing, stinking and mean, and Dodge says that that Bradley belongs in a hog wallow. That Bradley is not his flesh and blood. Dodge mystifies us with his cryptic statement, “my flesh and blood’s out there in the backyard”. Halie leaves for her visit with Father Dewis, telling Dodge to keep Tilden inside.

The two men discuss Tilden’s reasons for coming home, and Dodge tells Tilden to stay inside. Dodge wants protection from Bradley and says there is nothing outside and never has been. He falls asleep, lulled by a baseball reverie. Tilden drinks from his bottle and then gently buries his father with cornhusks and leaves, in the silence of only the rain. Bradley’s horrifying silhouette looms on to the stage, as he enters, soaking wet, and staggers. We see and hear his wooden leg. He sees his dad sleeping, says, “harvest’s over, Pops,” and violently throws away Dodge’s cap and begins to cut his hair with clippers. The stage darkens and we are left with the sounds of clippers and the incessant rain.
The Play (page 2 of 9)

Plot Summary (continued)

Act 2
As the lights come up, it is still night, the cornhusks have been removed, but the sleeping Dodge’s scalp is cut and bleeding. Over the rain we hear a girl’s laughter, and the beautiful Shelly and Vince, Tilden’s musician son, enter the porch. Shelly is delighted with the “Norman Rockwell” style house, surprised that the home of her cool boyfriend is so traditional. Vince is annoyed at her reaction, wanting to show his family respect, and uneasy that he hasn’t seen them for six years. He tells her angrily to control herself after she laughs uncontrollably at hearing him call, “Grandma!”.

When they enter the house itself, Vince heads upstairs, Shelly picks up Dodge’s hat, and then notices him asleep on the couch. He wakes as she touches a cut on his head, and angrily grabs his hat from her as she tries to explain why she and Vince came. Vince is looking at family photos upstairs. When he comes down Dodge doesn’t recognize him, confuses him with Tilden, and accuses him of abandonment. Shelly wants to leave, and Vince holds her there, as Dodge calls for Tilden.

Tilden enters, this time with an armload of carrots. Shelly tries to get him to say he knows Vince. Tilden says only, “I had a son once but we buried him”. Shelly takes the carrots as Tilden says the back yard is full of vegetables. He avoids answering the questions about Vince. Shelly protects her armful of carrots and tells Vince to go get the whiskey his grandfather keeps asking for. Although Shelly is nervous to be left alone in this house, she says she will stick to the vegetables as Vince leaves, saying he has to be by himself for a while.

Tilden tells Shelly he thought he recognized something about Vince – a face inside his face. He walks slowly around Shelly like an animal, staring at her coat and hair and telling her he could tell her something “awful”. When Tilden tries on her rabbit fur coat she tells him he can keep it. And Tilden remembers driving in his car, having a sensation of himself. He tells Shelly that they had a little baby once, who “just disappeared. Nobody came”. Dodge tries to stop him from talking, saying Shelly is an outsider, and Tilden says Dodge is the only one who knows where the baby is.

Bradley enters through the rain, and frightens off his brother, talking of Tilden’s past glories. He then bullies Shelly into opening her mouth and thrusts his hand into it. He takes her coat and drops it over Dodge’s head. Black out.

Act 3
The rain is over, the sun is bright, and the stage is clean. Bradley, the bully, sleeps on the sofa in Dodge’s place, his wooden leg leaning near the pillow, and Dodge sits on the floor, wearing his cap and Shelly’s coat, and seeming very weak. Shelly brings a healing broth to Dodge. He refuses it, nastily, asks for a back rub, complains that Vince has run off with his two dollars, and accuses Shelly of being “a hoper”. He tells Shelly not to fear Bradley – all she need do is throw out his leg. Shelly feels at home today. She spent the night in Halie’s room with the family photos and crosses on the wall. Dodge denies the photos and his past, and caring about anyone, living or dead. “Who gives a damn about bones in the ground?” Hearing Halie returning, he begs Shelly not to leave him alone.
The Play (page 3 of 9)

Plot Summary (continued)
Halie appears in a bright yellow dress, her arms full of yellow roses, with the good-looking Father Dewis. Both are slightly drunk. Dodge hides beneath the fur coat, and reminds Shelly that she promised not to leave him. Halie is embarrassed to see the state the men are in when she enters, and she immediately whips the coat off Dodge to hide the wooden leg and the blanket off Bradley to cover Dodge. Bradley cries for his blanket and Halie tells him to “shut up”. She giggles with Dewis as she searches in his pocket for a whiskey flask, smells the roses, and talks of Ansel. She says, “we have to believe in something or we end up dying”, as she throws a rose gently on to Dodge’s blanket.

Halie isn’t interested in Shelly’s story of how she and Vince came to visit, and how Vince has been in search of his past, but she very is worried about Tilden. She kicks Dodge and ignores Shelly. Bradley snatches the blanket from Dodge, Dodge complains, Halie yells at Bradley and, in the chaos, Shelly suddenly smashes the cup and saucer against the door. Everyone freezes and Dewis cowers. Bradley denies harming Shelly and Dewis tries to leave. Shelly removes Bradley’s leg and the coat, and Bradley cries to his mum, who tells him again to “shut up”. Dewis attempts to reason with Shelly, asking her for respect. She tells of her shock at what she has found in the house, and reminds them all of their secret. Over Bradley’s protests, Dodge tells the dreadful secret of the baby born to Halie. Dodge was not this baby’s father. He calls the baby “it.” “Everyone knew,” says Dodge. “Tilden better than any of us. It was a mistake, a weakness,” says Dodge, “I killed it, drowned it”.

Halie cries, “where are the men?? What has happened to the men in this family?” And in answer Vince crashes drunkenly through the screen door. He smashes empty liquor bottles on the porch, throwing them like bombs, singing a war song. Dodge calls for his bottle, “it’s your grandfather,” and Halie recognizes Vincent: “Vincent what’s got into you!” Shelly wants to leave, Vince cuts a hole in the screen, Dewis takes Halie up the stairs while she tells of the sweet baby he used to be, and Dodge gives Vince his house and possessions. Vince pushes the leg outside. And accepts his role in the family - “I’ve gotta carry on the line”. He tells how he almost got away, but saw the faces of his ancestors in his rearview mirror, saw them dissolving one into the other, all the faces starting with his face.

Shelly makes her escape, and Bradley crawls after his leg as Vince dangles it above his head and throws it off stage. “I am getting rid of some vermin,” he says. Dewis leaves too, admitting he is out of his depth.

Dodge, lying on the floor has died. Vince covers his head, places the roses on Dodge’s chest and then, wearing Dodge’s cap, lies down on the sofa in the same position Dodge is in. The play ends as Halie sees the corn outside, the miracle of the vegetables’ growth, like a paradise. “Maybe it was the rain,” she says. The play is ending as it started, with a Dodge on the sofa and Halie’s voice floating from upstairs. Tilden enters, having tilled the soil, with the remains of a baby in his arms, and slowly mounts the stairs. Vince is oblivious, as Halie says, “you can’t force a thing to grow - it’s all hidden until it pops out of the ground. Maybe it’s the sun”. Tilden continues towards his mother, their baby in his arms. The lights go black.
The Play (page 4 of 9)

Characters
“Characters in Shepard’s plays tell us about themselves, rather than having other characters tell us about them. Shepard’s main characters already have an inner life. So the actor is free to play the moments of the play. The typical realistic character has to play the lines of the dramatic text, whereas in Shepard’s radical transformation of Realism the character plays fragments, gaps, transformations. The Shepard character has several selves, which are continually changing.” (Bonnie Marrance, in Alphabetical Shepard)

The characters in Buried Child are mostly one-dimensional and nightmarish, although Dodge and Vince are more complicated, sometimes realistic. Shelly is a character from Realism. Characters are metaphors, archetypes.

Shepard’s comments on his dad have bearing on his male characters: “I grew up in a condition where the male influences around me were primarily alcoholics and extremely violent, and at the same time like lost children, not knowing how to deal with it. Slowly they began receding further and further away - receding from the family, receding from society. These wars had something to do with the psychological state that my father’s generation (coming out of World War II) came back in. This happened across the country, but my dad came from an extremely rural farm community – and next thing he knows he’s dropping bombs and killing people. It’s extraordinary. This monster appears.” (Shepard on Shepard: an interview by Matthew Roudané, 2000)

Dodge (in his 70s)
Dodge is the centre of the story, the patriarch. He is sick, a grandfather, annoyed by his watchful and nagging wife, sometimes concerned for Tilden and protective of him, sneaking his whiskey and cigarettes, remembering his joy in baseball; sometimes he dissociates from his present and his past, and is full of caustic bitterness. He has a divisive relationship with his wife, and he denies his son, Bradley, whom he fears. He admires Shelly’s life force at the same time as he makes fun of her for being a “hoper” like his wife. He deliberately dissociates himself from his family, and all affection, saying, “you think just because people propagate they have to love their offspring?” He seems to be a stereotype. But Dodge has committed a mortal sin and has kept it secret for many years. It has poisoned him and his whole family. He passes on his possessions and values to his grandson Vince and, in so doing, his past becomes Vince’s present.

Halie (Dodge’s wife, mid-60s)
Halie, as woman and mother, keeps herself apart from her family, maintaining a pleasant facade most of the time, ignoring the harshness and nastiness around her and reliving or imagining a better past, dreaming of the past glories of her sons. She represents the old-time chauvinistic portrayal of women being part whore, part saint. She is a hypocrite, wearing a veneer of religion, yet having affairs, with the minister and at least one other man. She is particularly good at jabbing her family, as we see her bring both her sons to tears, kick Dodge, and tell him that he is “putrid and stinking” in all ways. She has been crippled by the murder of her baby, and the dreadful secret.
The Play (page 5 of 9)

Characters (continued)

Tilden (their oldest son)
Tilden, an idiot-savant, has had a complex relationship with both his mother and his father. Once possibly a sports star, and the pride of his parents, he is now burned out, a husk of a man, almost a child. He got himself into trouble in New Mexico, was banned from the state, and has come home, where he is safe, but restless, drawn to the back yard where the body of his son is buried. He has apparently had an incestuous affair with his mother. He tries to care for his father now. He likes to drive through open spaces because he can find himself then. He brings into the house the fruitfulness of the earth and, at the end of the play, the dead of the earth.

Bradley (their next oldest son, an amputee)
The incomplete one-legged bully, Bradley, the second son, is another caricature, vicious, incapacitated, and in his helplessness, abusive toward those whom he can hurt. He bullies Tilden, metaphorically rapes Shelly, and attacks his father as he sleeps with the shears. He buries Dodge with the coat and cuts his hair, perhaps a Sampson and Delilah allusion. He, however, cries weakly for his mother’s help, when others remove his blanket or his leg, and he lies about his interaction with Shelly.

Vince (Tilden’s son)
Vince is the Prodigal son, looking for his roots and meaning, returning to find himself unrecognized and unacknowledged. He is the rock and roll cowboy, with a beautiful girlfriend, and is in need. He makes a pilgrimage home, stopping at all the places that hold his memories. He finds a nightmare at home, tries to humour his family and finally escapes. On his trip, as he flees he has a vision of generations of his family in his rearview mirror, comes to understand his place in the family, and returns drunk, and violent, unable to communicate, to inherit the home and possessions of his secretive and distant grandfather. By the end of the play, he is the new, but old, Dodge.

Shelly (Vince’s girlfriend)
The audience needs Shelly as an anchor to reality. Shelly is the outsider in the play, representing Everyman and normalcy. She is at first amused to discover the Norman Rockwell painting-like promise of Vince’s ancestral home, but discovers that the charm of the home is a veneer. The home is filled with secrets and sin, misery and the grotesque. Although she tries to help both Dodge and Tilden, and confronts Halie in particular with some truths, in the end Shelly escapes.

Father Dewis (a Protestant minister)
Father Dewis represents organized religion, and is a hypocrite, having an affair with Halie. He is inept, cowardly, immoral, unable to cope with the outbursts and needs of the family, and unwilling to even try. He represents the immorality and helplessness of the church. Halie attempts to escape the house with him, to have some of her dreams, like honouring Ansel, come true, but he brings no real escape to her, nor to anyone.
The Play (page 6 of 9)

Setting
The setting is seemingly idyllic. Agricultural, hardworking folk, with a solid morality, where life is simple, values are strong and life is good. When Vince arrives, urban America meets rural America.

The play is set in Illinois, in the Corn Belt, in the heart of America, in a farmhouse in the country. Corn is one of the play’s major symbols. The house looks to Shelly at first as though it is out of a Norman Rockwell painting. This house has actually become dilapidated, although it was prosperous, once. Dodge tells us, “we were well established. The farm was producing enough milk to fill Lake Michigan twice over.... Nothing has been planted here since 1935."

The set is dominated by the couch, the television, the stairs and the porch. The television and the porch suggest the America of the 1950s, and the staircase with no landing suggests Halie’s mystery, perhaps her unknown past. Her monologues and entrances from the heights off-stage contribute to the strangeness of the play. The porch suggests the outside, and perhaps an escape from the house. We are made very much aware of life outside, though, by the constant sound of rain in the first two acts, the references to the sun, the entrance of characters soaked with rain, and by the vegetables that are growing in profusion and brought in by Tilden.

Time is used classically in the play, as the events cover 24 hours. However, the land outside produces crop after crop in the same 24 hours, eventually producing the body of a baby. Time is surrealistic outside, and Shepard meshes the surrealistic with the realistic, as Tilden carries in each crop, and then the “buried child”.

Style
The play deals with murder and its effects on a pain-filled, dysfunctional family in the American mid-west. It combines many post-modern elements using known stories, myths and symbols. Shepard uses the stories of Oedipus, the return of the Prodigal son and a murder mystery to create story in Buried Child, as he melds realism and surrealism. Buried Child has the initial appearance of traditional Realism; but expressionistic elements build so that by the third act the surreal is dominant.

As always, Shepard leaves many questions about plot unanswered in the play. Some of these are: What really happened to Bradley’s leg? Who fathered the baby? Was Ansel really a hero, of any sort? Was Tilden? Is the baby really Vince? Shepard’s endings are also uncertain. Is there a happy ending to Buried Child?

Visual images are notable, often shocking. They include that of an old man, with the blue television light flickering on his face in the dark; Tilden shucking corn in the middle of the stage, and burying his father with it; hulking, violent Bradley, on one leg, attacking his father’s head with clippers as the stage goes dark; thrusting his hand into Shelly’s mouth; Tilden circling Shelly and the carrots, like a feral animal; Bradley crying for Halie’s help, and squirming after his leg; Halie’s sunny yellow arrival on the arm of the preacher; Vince, violently smashing the bottles against the wall, and cutting, falling through the screen; Tilden’s inexorable march up the stairs with the rotted body of the baby in his arms.
The Play (page 7 of 9)

**Style** (continued)

**Characters** are dark, unhappy, terse, alienated, secretive, violent, and often one-dimensional. Characterization includes role-play, and sudden transitions - whom do we believe and when? Is Halie telling the truth when she remembers her happy past and trips to the racetrack in the sunshine? Is Ansel really a hero? Does Dodge remember Vince or not?

The **Structure** is a traditional three-act structure: the characters and conflicts are established in the first act, the conflict gets worse and the antagonist gets stronger in the second act, and the conflict is resolved in the third act. *Buried Child* combines the main stories of the prodigal son, whose protagonist is Vince, and a murder mystery, whose protagonist is Dodge, and uses real and surreal events. The play ends with circular movement as we come back to a Dodge-like figure on the sofa and a monologue from upstairs.

**Dialogue and Language** are natural, filled with repetition, fragments, and emotion. Shepard says, in his introduction to this revised version of his 1978 play, that the language now fits the characters. There are “fewer gaps” between the characters and their words.

**Symbols and Metaphors** add another level of meaning to a work. Rain and water are symbols of cleansing, particularly biblically. At the beginning of *Buried Child*, rain falls heavily on the family’s farmhouse and all its visitors, washing away the filth of the past. By the third act, a new day has dawned. The lie has been exposed, the murderer has died, Vince has become the new family head and the buried baby has been unearthed and brought inside. Some other symbols are the buried child, the vegetable crops, the baseball cap, the blanket, the flowers, the wooden leg, the clippers, the yellow dress and roses -- even the characters are archetypes.

**Rituals** are repeated patterns of behaviour, with details followed scrupulously, performed as custom. They are often religious. The most important in *Buried Child* are the burial and corn rituals.

**burial ritual**

Dodge, who is dying, is buried several times. Tilden first buries his father with corn, and then later carefully covers him with cornhusks. Later Bradley covers him with the fur coat belonging to Shelly, and at the end, after his quiet unnoticed death, Halie drapes a blanket over his face and drops the roses on his chest.

**corn ritual**

In *Buried Child*, “sacrificial rites” parallel primitive harvest rituals to bless the earth and the seeds, and to appease various gods. Society has always worried about food. The ancient Greeks worshiped Demeter, American Indians developed Corn Dances, the Jewish community celebrates “Sukkot,” a harvest celebration, and Americans and Canadians observe Thanksgiving in the fall.
The Play (page 8 of 9)

Style (continued)

One of the most important sacrificial rites dramatized in *Buried Child* is the death of the old Corn King and the birth or resurrection of a new Corn King. Outside the farmhouse lies a fallow field, which hasn’t been planted in years. Inside lies Dodge, near death. He is the symbolic Corn King, helpless, waiting for a young, strong new Corn King to replace him. The play reaches its climax when the old Corn King dies and a new one, Vince, assumes the throne.

Early in the play, Dodge’s disturbed but potent son, Tilden, covers his sleeping father with the husks of the corn he has mysteriously brought in from the field. He once had the youth and virility that his father once had, and was a threat to the old Corn King. He showed that he could reap more than just crops from an empty field. Years earlier, he had managed to impregnate his own mother. “We weren’t planning on havin’ any more boys”, Dodge admits to Shelly late in the play. “We had enough boys already. In fact, we hadn’t been sleepin’ in the same bed for about six years”. Tilden, however, is now burnt out, displaced.

Dodge’s middle son, Bradley could perhaps be the new Corn King, but Bradley has already been symbolically castrated. Standing over the sleeping Dodge, Bradley mutters, “harvest’s over, Pops,” and proceeds to savagely cut his father’s hair, as if he were scything the corn. With this act, the old Corn King falls even closer to his death.

Vince appears in Act 2 to signal the arrival of a potential new Corn King, young, and strong. Perhaps recognizing the seriousness of the threat Vince represents, Dodge and Tilden claim not to recognize him. Later Vince returns home, after driving through the purifying rain, cuts his way through the porch’s locked screen door and bursts through, like a baby emerging from his mother’s womb. “Clearly, Shepard has used this dramatic moment as a symbolic rebirth, calculated to correspond to the exact moment when Tilden, alone in the rain, must be pulling the decayed corpse of the buried child from the mud of the cornfields.”

Vince has returned just in time for the new season. With his dying words, the old Corn King (Dodge) wills the house and fields to the new Corn King (Vince). Outside, after the cleansing rain and nourishing sunshine, the crops are bursting through the fields and, soon the buried child is carried upstairs for a homecoming with its mother, as a new Corn King reigns from his throne on the sofa.

(adapted from Glenn Lane, *Drama for Students*, Gale, 1999)
The Play (page 9 of 9)

Themes
A major theme of the play is family corruption. Alienation and dissociation are experienced by all the family members as they suffer for the sin of their father, Dodge, all denying reality, and therefore their true identity. All the characters are crippled in one way or another. Their dissociation is so extreme they are incapable of recognizing Vince, one of their own, who has arrived seeking his own truth, his own identity. All the characters need the purifying rain and action that takes place. Dodge (dodging the truth) dies as Tilden (the tiller) tells the truth of the past, and the earth gives up its dead.

Another theme is that of the American Dream – this heartland of America holds corruption; the values of the Dream, that include independence and a belief in might taking the law into its own hands, have ruined this family. The play is also a cautionary tale for America and its use of land and force.

A third explicit theme is that organized Religion has no answers for man’s troubles. Father Dewis is shown to be weak and cowardly, immoral, totally unable to help with the dire needs of the family.

Another theme is that of the past and present. The problems of the past are always with us in the present, and we pay for the sins of our fathers forever. Because the past has made the present, the past is in some way the present. It would appear that Vince, lying like Dodge on the sofa at the end of the play, now aware and choosing his family will be like Dodge. The play’s ending, a return to the beginning of the play, suggests that the past will always be with this family.
Activities: based on the script, pre- or post-production

1. a) Read what Shepard says about characters and actors (page 7). For each character, note the sudden shifts in their behaviour. Shepard’s characters role-play, and make sudden transformations.

b) Drama exercise: Text exploration: Working from a copy of the published script (either the Dramatists Play Service or Vintage Books edition), read the monologues of Shelly (Act 2, page 30 or 46-47 respectively) and Vince (Act 3, pages 71-72 or 117-118 respectively). Perform a monologue, playing it with more and more intensity. Then perform it with sudden shifts. Change your emotions within it. Or change the characters speaking it, as you role-play. What do you learn? (Ways in which you can shift: characters (e.g. Superman, TV’s Dexter, your best friend, Robin Hood, your mum) or different characteristics (selfish/generous, happy, mean), or different moods (anxious, shocked, contented, tired). (Grades 9 up)

2. Drama exercise: Status Shift. Working from a copy of the published script (see above), play the following scene to achieve a shift in status: pages 28-31 or 43-49 depending on the edition used, starting from the beginning of Act 2 through Dodge’s line: “Well that’s good. That’s good. It’s much better not to know anything. Much, much better”. In other words, play Vince and Shelly as super cool, totally hip, urban, “gangsta”, perhaps. Have Dodge be pure country. Then midway through the scene create a status shift so that urban, smart, on top of it all is knocked off their feet.
Purpose: To show that the Urban is meeting Rural and Urban can’t handle it. (Grades 9 up) (exercise provided by Paul Griffin, Canterbury High School)

3. Drama exercise: Text Exploration: To make the scene as genuine as possible, try it different ways. Take a section of the scene and:
   a. Try it far apart from each other.
   b. Sit across from each other.
   c. Try whispering in each other’s ear.
   d. Find a new way to touch each other with each line.
   e. Or Dodge has to find a new way to touch Shelly – always infringing on her freedom.
   f. Try pushing or pulling with each line - while you say the lines, set up a tension.
   g. Try saying the lines with one trying to avoid eye contact, the other trying to make eye contact - then switch.
   h. Try it in slow motion.
   i. Try singing the lines.
   j. Try it in different settings – e.g. a restaurant, a gym, a bus stop, the elevator.
See what happens to the text. Discuss the different possibilities for interpretation that you have learned. (Grades 9 up)

Solutions for Crossword Puzzle on page 22:
ACROSS: 1 paradise, 6 prodigalsong, 7 chaikin, 9 rockwell, 10 desert, 13 symbol, 14 hopers, 16 realism, 17 ghosts, 21 corn, 24 monologues, 28 duarte, 29 dewis, 30 sevenplays, 31 tilden;
DOWN: 2 agriculture, 3 surreal, 4 london, 5 therighthstuff, 8 cowboys, 9 rogers, 11 jessica, 12 foolforlove, 15 illinois, 18 beckett, 19 alcoholic, 20 absurdism, 22 pulitzer, 23 truewest, 25 oedipus, 26 thesun, 27 ansel
**Activities: post-production**

1. **Read** the short story, *The Lottery,* by Shirley Jackson.
   a) What does it tell us about ritual?
   b) Do you have a ritual – e.g. at holidays or weddings? Or Sunday dinners? Rituals around grocery shopping or Friday evenings, or going to the movies or sharing the computer? Or the beginning of a drama class? Or exams? **Create** a scene around a ritual. (Grades 9 up)

2. **Read** the story of the Prodigal son and/or the story (play) of Oedipus. Tell how the events and ideas influence this play. (Grades 9 up)

3. **Show how** the use of nature in the play (rain, sun, crops...) ties the events in the play to bigger, universal events and rhythms. (Grades 9 up)

4. Visual imagery: in groups, **choose** a nursery rhyme or a well-known poem, or a current news story and **tell** it in a series of striking visual images (tableaux). Only two words allowed. (Grades 9 up.)

5. In what ways is this play like rock and roll? What **music** would be effective in this play? Where? **Create a soundscape** for a scene or an act. Or **choose or create music** to represent the different characters. (Grades 9 up)

6. **Write** the scene that occurs when Tilden arrives at the top of the stairs and Halie sees what he is carrying. (Grades 9 up)

7. Be Tilden. **Write a monologue** in his voice telling why he was banned from New Mexico. (Grades 9 up)

8. Pretend you are Shelly and have arrived back home without Vince. **Tell** what happened at the farmhouse. Make your story horrifying. Tell it again and make it funny. (Grades 9 up)

9. **Write or improvise** a scene between Tilden and Bradley when they are teenagers. (Grades 9 up)

10. **Improvise or write a script** reporting on the accident that took Bradley’s leg. (Grades 9 up)

11. Have the family in the play get ready for a social gathering. Give each member of the family a 30-second scene. **Then play the gathering,** showing how each family member interacts with the guests and each other. (Grades 9 up)

12. **Write a monologue** for Halie on the death of her child. (Grades 9 up)

13. **Write a review of the performance,** choosing one of these areas to analyze in detail: acting, design, directing, or writing. Share your thoughts in class. (Grades 9 up)

14. A director presents his or her vision of a play. **Write a review** in which you discuss Peter Hinton’s interpretation of, and direction of, the play. (Grades 9 up)

15. What feelings were you left with after seeing the performance of *Buried Child?* **Write a journal entry** for yourself. (Grades 9 up)
Activities: Sam Shepard and *Buried Child* crossword puzzle

ACROSS

1  "Cruising ..."  
6  Biblical parable.  
7  Mentor.  
9  Norman.  
10  His father lived here later.  
13  Represents something else.  
14  "You're all alike, you...."  
16  Magical........  
17  Ibsen's play.  
21  important crop.  
24  Important speeches in his plays.  
28  Shepard's childhood ranch was here.  
29  Father  
30  Anthology, 1981.  
31  The father, probably.

DOWN

2  Shepard studied this subject in college.  
3  Not Realistic.  
4  City he lived in when he left the U.S.A.  
5  Earned him an Academy award nomination.  
8  His first play.  
9  Sam Shepard's original surname.  
11  He is married to her.  
12  Kim Basinger acted with him in this film.  
15  Home state.  
18  Literary influence.  
19  His father became one.  
20  There is no meaning in the universe.  
22  A major award.  
23  Popular play.  
25  Greek tragedy.  
26  Final line: "Maybe it's ..."  
27  Youngest son.

See page 20 for solutions.
Study Resources

Film
Pan’s Labyrinth – an example of Magic Realism.
Paris, Texas written by Sam Shepard.
Fool for Love written by Sam Shepard.
Curse of the Starving Class written by Sam Shepard.
True West written by Sam Shepard.
Far North written by Sam Shepard.
The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford, 2007 - Shepard plays Frank James.
Frances – Shepard co-stars with wife Jessica Lange.
The Right Stuff – Shepard earned an Academy Award nomination for his portrayal of Chuck Yeager.

Books
Ghosts. Henrik Ibsen.
The Glass Menagerie. Tennessee Williams.

Internet
http://www.sam-shepard.com/
http://www.guardian.co.uk-stage/2003/oct/11/theatre.music A good biography of Shepard that describes his wild side.
http://www.uta.edu/english/wbfaris/MagicalRealism.html
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9D67tGjJc-c Jason Alexander discusses Sam Shepard
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P88Zlj-hUOq&feature=related Sam Shepard’s True West Part 9 – with John Malkovich
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWO4WmC0jOo&feature=related Vince’s monologue - an audition.
Theatre Etiquette

Please take a moment to prepare the students for their visit to the National Arts Centre to explain what good Theatre Etiquette is, and why it will enhance the enjoyment of the play by all audience members.

1. *Buried Child* will be performed in the Theatre of the NAC. Matinées at the NAC are for students and the general public. It is important for everyone to be quiet (no talking or rustling of materials) during the performance, so that others do not lose their immersion in the “world of the play”. Do not unwrap candy, or play with zippers, or your programme. Unlike actors in movies, the actors in live theatre can hear disturbances in the audience, and will give their best performance when they feel the positive involvement of the audience members. The appropriate way of showing approval for the actors’ performances is through laughter and applause. For the enjoyment of all, people who disturb others during the show may be asked to leave the Theatre.

2. Do not put your feet on the back of the seat in front of you. If someone needs to pass you in the row, it is courteous to stand and allow that person to pass you. Do not climb over seats. Avoid wearing scented products such as perfume or cologne or aftershave, as many people are sensitive or even allergic to these.

3. If you plan to make notes on the play for the purpose of writing a review, please do not try to write them during the performance. Seeing you do this can be distracting for the actors. Wait until intermission or after the performance is finished to write your reflections, please.

4. It is important that there be no electronic devices used in the Theatre so that the atmosphere of the play is not interrupted and others are not disturbed. **Cell phones, pagers, and anything that beeps must be turned off.** Cameras and all other recording devices are not permitted in the Theatre.

5. Tickets with assigned seats will be distributed by your teacher, and to avoid problems it is important to sit in your own assigned seat. In the Theatre all even-numbered seats are on one side and all odd-numbered seats are on the other. This means, for example, that seats 10 and 12 are actually beside each other.

6. Programmes may or may not be distributed at this student matinée. Information on the artists who put this play together, however, can be found in this Study Guide for those who wish to use it in writing a review. Some programmes can be made available to teachers if desired as a teaching aid, to show how a programme is put together.

7. The running length of the play is currently estimated at 2 hours 40 minutes including one 15-minute intermission. It is advisable to make a trip to the washroom before the performance starts, as anyone leaving while the play is in progress runs the risk of not being allowed back into the Theatre.
Costume Design Drawings

“Halie”
designer: Eo Sharp
Costume Design Drawings

“Dodge”
designer: Eo Sharp
Costume Design Drawings

“Vince”
designer: Eo Sharp
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