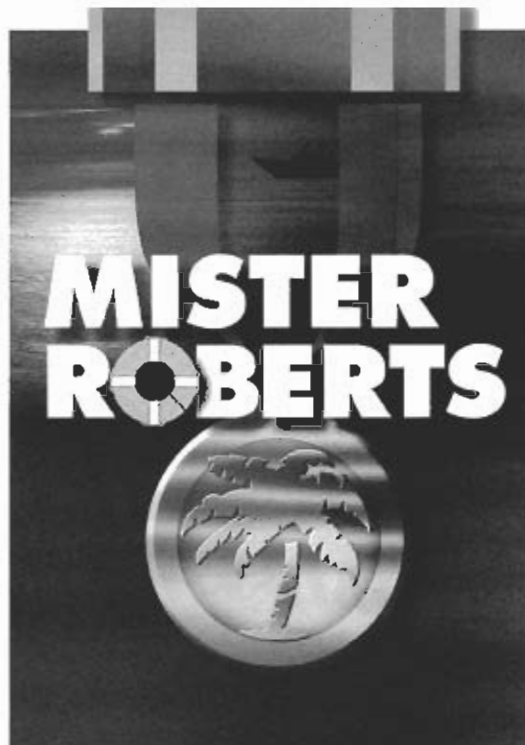


STUDY GUIDE

THE REPERTORY THEATRE OF ST. LOUIS



BY THOMAS HEGGEN & JOSHUA LOGAN
DIRECTED BY EDWARD STERN

C O N T E N T S

- 2. Who's Who?
Words to the Wise
- 3. Bio & Beyond
- 4. What's the Story?
- 5. Read More About It
- 6. Shop Talk
- 8. Propaganda and the Arsenal of Democracy
- 10. Q & A

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Who's Who?

Lieutenant (j.g.) Doug Roberts is the cargo officer of the *Reluctant*. He is often called "Mister" Roberts, as this is the proper way to address an officer in the Navy below the rank of commander. He was in medical school prior to joining the Navy.

Doc is a lieutenant as well as Mr. Roberts' confidant. Like Mr. Roberts, he possesses the trust and admiration of the men aboard.

The Captain received a palm tree from an admiral as a reward for the amount of cargo his crew moved. He desires to be promoted to full commander.

Ensign Pulver spends most of his time in his bunk, daydreaming about girls and dreaming up plots against the Captain, whom he avoids at all costs.

Dolan is the Captain's messenger. He delights in taking Mr. Roberts' transfer requests to the Captain.

Lieutenant Ann Girard is a young, attractive, blond Army nurse that works on the island. She has an unusual birthmark.

Mannion is a large, powerful, enlisted man.

Insigna is a gunner's mate, and he does not get along with Mannion.

Chief Johnson is a large man in his 40s and the chief petty officer.

Dowdy is a petty officer and boatswain's mate.

Stefanowski is a machinist's mate, second class.

Wiley, Lindstrom and Gerhart are all seamen aboard the *Reluctant*.

Words to the Wise

reveille—Reveille refers to the sounding of a bugle early in the morning in order to awaken those in the armed services. The word is also used as a signal to get up and get ready.

LCT—LCT is a U.S. Navy abbreviation for "landing craft, tank." It is the designation of a ship used to land tanks, such as during an amphibious assault. The crafts were not formally named.

liberty—Probably the most important days on a sailor's calendar, liberty is permission to go ashore.

"going Asiatic"—A phrase meaning to go crazy.

master-at-arms—The master-at-arms is the petty officer assigned to maintain order aboard the ship.

rummy—A rummy is a drunk.

"giving me the old needle"—This phrase means to be verbally teased or made fun of.

Emerson—Ralph Waldo Emerson was an American philosopher and writer in the 1800's.

Congressional Medal of Honor—This is the highest U.S. military decoration. It is awarded in the name of Congress to members of the armed forces for gallantry and bravery beyond the call of duty in action against an enemy.

Zeroes—Zeroes are the fighter planes of the Japanese military. In the latter part of the war they often flew kamikaze (suicide) missions against U.S. ships.

B-29's—The Boeing B-29 "Superfortress" was the most widely used bomber by the U.S. in the Pacific War Theater, because its great range allowed it to attack Japan and other targets from bases in China.

AK—AK is the Navy designation for a cargo ship. Cargo ships generally operate far from the battlefield. The designation of the *Reluctant* is AK-601.

Flash Red, Flash White—Flash Red is a warning that an officer is approaching. Flash White means that the officer has gone.



Elysium Island, Limbo

Islands—In the play, these islands are probably somewhere near the American Samoa Islands.

mum—Mum is another term for deodorant.

SHAEF—This is an acronym for the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force. It was the command headquarters of the Allied forces and headed by General Dwight D. Eisenhower.

V-E Day—Victory in Europe Day was May 8, 1945, the day on which the Allies announced the surrender of German forces in Europe.

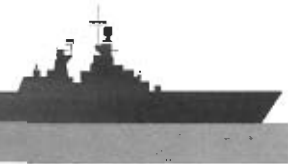
V-J Day—This was August 15, 1945, the day on which the Allies announced the surrender of Japanese forces during World War II. V-J Day was also declared on September 2, 1945, the day after the formal Japanese surrender aboard the USS *Missouri*.

bucket—Bucket is the crew's term for their ship, the *Reluctant*.

can—"Can," or tin can, is slang for a destroyer.



BIO & BEYOND



Thomas Heggen was born in Fort Dodge, Iowa, to Norwegian parents two generations removed from Norway. He developed his affinity for writing in high school, and he graduated from the University of Minnesota School for Journalism. Throughout his writing career, Heggen had a tendency to seek out figures of authority and write rather controversial articles about them. This policy, along with a proclivity for playing practical jokes, got him fired once, almost led to his expulsion from college and made him more than a few enemies.



Thomas Heggen
1918–1949

After college he was hired by *Readers Digest*, but in November 1941 he was notified by his draft board that he would probably be called in December. Shortly after Pearl Harbor he beat the draft—by enlisting in the Navy. After boot camp Heggen was admitted to Northwestern University for training as a midshipman. Therefore, on August 3, 1942, he was commissioned and began his career as an officer.

Heggen served on several ships over the next two years, none involved in battle. One of the last was the USS *Virgo*, where he met many of the sailors who would become the basis for the characters in *Mister Roberts*. After being decommissioned in December of 1945, he spent a year preparing *Mister Roberts* for publication. Although not considered a literary masterpiece, the book was declared by critics and veterans to be a realistic and honest portrayal of Navy life—as well as very funny. The book eventually sold over a million copies. Joshua Logan then turned the book into a play, from which Heggen earned \$4,000 a week.

Financial success, however, did not bring happiness to Heggen. Fellow writer and longtime-friend Bud Schulberg believed Heggen did not know how to cope with a life made easy by money, and once stated that Heggen had “one foot in that gold-plated bear trap.” Thomas Heggen was found dead in the bathtub of his apartment on May 12, 1949. The medical examiner ruled the death a probable suicide, although Heggen's friends believed that Heggen, who suffered from insomnia, had taken sleeping pills to relax and accidentally fallen asleep in the tub. In any case, he never lived to see *Mister Roberts* become the popular, award-winning movie.



Joshua Logan
1908–1988

Joshua Logan was born in Texas and raised in Louisiana by his widowed mother. After attending military school and Princeton University (where he assembled the University Players, including such actors as Jimmy Stewart and Henry Fonda), Logan was granted a scholarship to study acting and directing with Stanislavsky (a world-famous Russian director) in

Moscow. He later stated that the most valuable lesson he ever learned from Stanislavsky was, above all else, to respect the words of the playwright.

In 1932 Logan began working on Broadway as an actor, and then as a writer and director. He left the stage to work for a few years in Hollywood as a dialogue director for David Selznick, and during World War II he served in the Air Force's Combat Intelligence division. Afterward, he returned to Broadway, and his career as a director and writer truly took off.

Logan is best known for *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946), *Mister Roberts* (1948), *South Pacific* (1949) and *Picnic* (1953), but he actually worked on over 30 Broadway productions that spanned four decades. His plays were nominated for 38 Tonys, winning 25, and he personally won 7. He also adapted several of his plays to the screen, including *Mister Roberts* (1955) and *South Pacific* (1958), both of which he also directed. His many films went on to gather 36 Academy Award nominations and 11 wins. In addition, Jack Lemmon always credited Logan with his Best Supporting Actor Academy Award for his portrayal of Ensign Pulver—one of his favorite film roles.

Joshua Logan wrote two autobiographies: *Josh: My Up and Down, In and Out Life* (Delacorte Press, 1976) and *Movie Stars, Real People, and Me* (Delacorte Press, 1978).



WHAT'S THE STORY?

Mister Roberts takes place aboard the AK-601, a Navy cargo ship that provisions other Navy vessels. The official name of the ship is the *Reluctant*, but the crew aboard simply refers to it as “this bucket.” The time is the Second World War. The war in Europe is nearing a conclusion, but the war in the Pacific continues. The *Reluctant* and her crew, however, are about as far from the battlefield as possible.

Act I

Chief Petty Officer Johnson walks past the Captain's palm tree—the embodiment of the crew's despair—and looks around to see if he is being watched. He deliberately spits tobacco juice onto the tree, and proceeds to wake the crew. Mr. Roberts tells Doc about the formation of warships he saw passing the night before, and he explains how fervently he wishes to be aboard one of them. He hands his latest letter requesting a transfer to Doc to read, and Doc informs him that he does not believe the letters will ever get him a transfer, because they are always stamped “disapproved” by the Captain. Dowdy enters and informs Mr. Roberts that the crew is more desperate than ever for a liberty: they have not had one in over a year. Mr. Roberts agrees to ask the Captain for a liberty yet again, but then he thinks of an idea. He plans to go ashore to give the port director—the man who decides where to send the ship next—a bottle of scotch in exchange for sending the ship to a liberty port. He gives the director the scotch with a note reading “Compliments of the Captain.”

Ensign Pulver is rifling through Mr. Roberts locker, trying to find the missing bottle of scotch. He had promised the scotch to a nurse on the island, in order to lure her to the ship. Mr. Roberts and Doc decide to help Pulver by mixing a homemade bottle of scotch. Ingredients: grain alcohol, Coke, iodine and hair tonic with a coal-tar base. After tasting it, they all pronounce their concoction a complete success. Mr. Roberts needles Pulver about how he never finishes anything he sets out to do. Pulver does not follow through on any of his wild plots against the Captain. Instead, he simply lies on his bunk all day. Pulver defends himself by displaying evidence of his efforts: a tin of marbles he intends to put in the Captain's overhead so they roll around all night and keep him awake. Mr. Roberts tells him, “the day you actually put those marbles in the Captain's overhead, and then have the guts to knock on his door and say, ‘Captain, I put those marbles there,’ that's the day I'll have some respect for you.” He leaves, and Pulver reveals his next plot to Doc: a firecracker he is constructing—with fulminate of mercury. He plans to set it off under the Captain's bunk.

Dolan delivers Mr. Roberts' latest transfer letter to the Captain, who blows his top. The letter mentions “disharmony aboard the ship,” and the Captain feels this will hurt his standing with the admiral. He tells Mr. Roberts that he will never get a transfer and that Mr. Roberts cannot write any more letters. After the Captain leaves, Mr. Roberts assures Dolan that he will indeed be writing more letters, and tells Dolan he may need asbestos paper on which to write them.

Pulver has brought Miss Gerard, one of the nurses from the island, to the ship. While the two are talking, she overhears the crew discussing her unusual birthmark, and she realizes that they can see into the nurses' shower with binoculars. She departs to “hang some curtains.” The crew is devastated and they break into a fight.

The ship arrives at Elysium Island, the liberty port, but the Captain announces that there will be no liberty. Mr. Roberts bursts into the Captain's cabin, and demands that the Captain grant the men liberty. The Captain announces that the only way the men will receive liberty is if Mr. Roberts agrees to never write another letter. He also demands that Mr. Roberts jump to fulfill his every command, and that he never let the crew know about their conversation. Mr. Roberts, desperate to get the crew ashore, agrees, and the crew is granted liberty.

Act II

The crew returns from liberty in groups, each group more disheveled and beaten-up than the last. Most of the men, having been involved in numerous fights and altercations, are brought in by military police and shore patrolmen: they had a fabulous liberty. Mr. Roberts, noting the new-found camaraderie of the crew, tells Doc that before they were just 167 separate men, but now they are a crew.

The Captain enters, livid, and informs the men that the ship has been thrown out of the port. He then publicly announces that Mr. Roberts will be ensuring that the men “toe the line.” He goes on to say that if Mr. Roberts does a good job, he may one day get a promotion. The men, noting that Mr. Roberts is following the Captain's every command, begin to think he is no longer one of them, that he is truly just looking for a promotion.

It is announced on the radio that the war is over in Europe, and Mr. Roberts becomes more desperate than ever to get to the battlefield. He believes it is only a matter of time before the war will be over in the Pacific as well. He is helpless, however, because he has given his word to the Captain that he will request

no more transfers. He, Doc and Pulver decide to celebrate the victory in Europe, and Pulver reveals his masterpiece: a completed fulminate-of-mercury firecracker. He goes to the laundry room (his laboratory) to ensure that it works, and afterward he plans to build another to throw under the Captain's bunk for their celebration.

The ship is rocked by an explosion. The firecracker was far more powerful than Pulver imagined. The halls are full of soap suds from the destroyed laundry room. Pulver regretfully informs Mr. Roberts that all his supplies were blown up in the explosion. He cannot build another firecracker to throw under the Captain's bunk. Mr. Roberts is depressed that the plan has failed, and he goes to listen to the victory celebration on the radio. The speaker is delivering a very patriotic message: "...the rest is up to you. You and you alone must recognize our enemies... You must destroy them, you must tear them out as you would a malignant growth! And cast them from the surface of the earth!"

As the band proceeds to play "The Stars and Stripes Forever," Mr. Roberts marches to the Captain's palm tree, uproots it, and throws it over the side of the ship. He then goes to his cabin. The general alarm is sounded aboard the ship and everyone scrambles to their battle stations. The Captain announces over the loudspeaker that everyone will remain at battle stations until someone reveals who took his palm tree. He calls Mr. Roberts to him and accuses him of destroying it. He also claims that Mr. Roberts broke the vow he made in order to get the crew a liberty. The crew, however, overhears the Captain's tirade, and they realize that Mr. Roberts sacrificed his own dreams for them.

A few days later, Mr. Roberts is informed that he has been granted a transfer—to the destroyer *Livingston*. He is thrilled

but cannot imagine how it happened: he had sent no more letters requesting a transfer. Doc reveals to him that the crew got him the transfer. They had gathered together and taken turns signing the Captain's name until they had created a perfect forgery. They then signed one of Mr. Robert's old letters, marked it "approved," and sent it to headquarters. Each and every one of them could have been court-martialed for their actions, but they had done it in order to get Mr. Roberts his transfer. A few of the crew enter Mr. Robert's cabin, and they present him with an award they have made by hand. It is inscribed, "Order of the Palm. To Lieutenant (j.g.) Douglas Roberts for action against the enemy, above and beyond the call of duty." Mr. Roberts is overwhelmed, and cannot read the words aloud, but he thanks the men and departs for his new ship.

Several days later, there are two new palm trees outside the Captain's door. They are under armed guard. Pulver receives a letter from Mr. Roberts. In the letter, he thanks the crew for his medal, and he tells the men that they are the bravest he has ever known, because they fight against a hidden enemy: the boredom and apathy that plagues a sailor who is behind the frontlines. Pulver then realizes he has another letter from Fornell, a friend of Pulver's who serves on the *Livingston* with Mr. Roberts. The letter informs him that Mr. Roberts was killed in a kamikaze attack.

Pulver rises and tells Mannion, the sailor guarding the palm trees, that he is relieved. Mannion, surprised, thanks him and leaves. Mr. Pulver very calmly jerks the rooted palms from their containers and throws them over the side. He walks to the Captain's cabin and yells, "Captain! This is Ensign Pulver. I just threw your palm trees overboard. Now what's all this crap about no movie tonight?"



Read More About It

We encourage you to examine these topics in-depth by exploring the following books, websites and videos.

Mister Roberts by Thomas Heggen. Houghton Mifflin, 1992. Reprint. This is the novel on which the play was based. This edition includes an introduction by CDR David P. Smith, USN that gives an excellent account of the factual basis for the fictional story.

Mister Roberts. Warner Home Video, 2001. If you would like to see Mr. Roberts and crew on the screen, Warner Home Video has re-released the classic 1955 film starring Henry Fonda, James Cagney, Jock Lemmon and others on VHS and DVD.

The Greatest Generation by Tom Brakow. Random House, 1998. This book includes a cross section of the true

stories of World War II veterans. Tom Brakow compiled the stories after over 15-years of research. There is also a follow-up, *The Greatest Generation Speaks*.

St. Louis at War: The Story of a City, 1941–1945 by Betty Burnett. Patrice Press, 1987. This book contains information about all aspects of life in St. Louis during WWII. It also includes press clippings and photos.

The official website of the Navy is www.navy.mil.

The Best of History has a website for the Second World War, www.besthistorysites.net/WWII.shtml, which includes links to websites that explore nearly every aspect of the war in depth.

www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/index.html is a webpage that links to numerous sites pertaining to the U.S. Navy in the Pacific Theater of Operations during WWII. It features diplomatic and political documents.

WWII information is available in a hyperlinked, searchable and very intuitive format at the website www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/2WW.htm. Additional photos and timelines can be found on the website for The History Place, www.historyplace.com/worldwar2.

For information about the role of women in the Second World War, visit www.teacheroz.com/WWIIHomefront.htm.



SHOP TALK



Building an authentic World War II cargo ship onstage is quite an undertaking. The show's designers and The Rep's lighting department, scene shop, scenic artists, prop shop and costume shop all had their challenges—too many to list—but the following are a few of them.

The first challenges came for Paul Shortt, the scenic designer, during the conception stage. *Mister Roberts* was initially designed for a proscenium stage rather than a thrust stage, so the set design had to account for this. A thrust stage can be seen by the audience from a much wider angle, and therefore the set had to be more three-dimensional. In addition, *Mister Roberts* requires four distinct settings: the ship deck and the cabins for the crew, Mr. Roberts and the Captain. To make the multiple sets possible, Paul incorporated The Rep's turntable.

The turntable is an audience pleaser that adds to the spectacle of most productions, but it is also expensive to assemble and incorporate into a show. For some shows however, it is practical, because it allows multiple scene transitions to be performed quickly. For this show the turntable platform is 19 feet

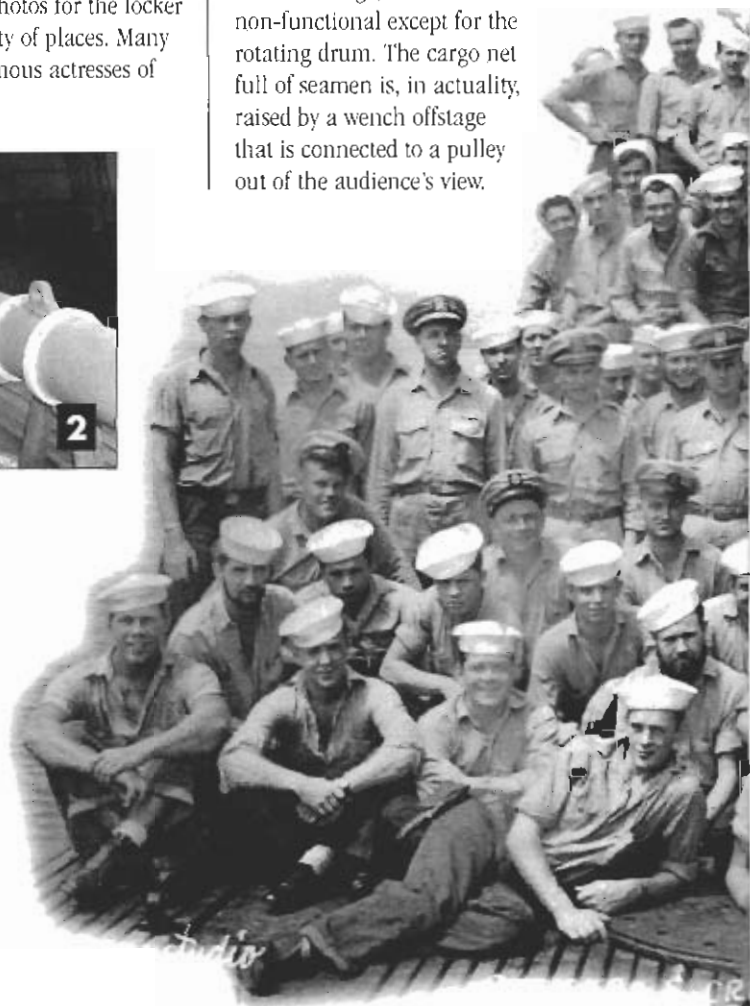
in diameter, and it holds two sets at a time. Therefore the set pieces and props are exchanged on the upstage portion of the turntable—the half that is invisible to the audience.

The props shop constructed the 20mm machine guns with wood bases (invisible to the audience) and PVC barrels. The hoppers, or rounds of ammo, were created from gallon paint cans with wood breakaways glued on the sides to represent the shells. Then, of course, the guns were finished with the all-important paint job.

In addition to a tremendous amount of authentic military-issue gear, the props department had to acquire numerous other items. The pinups and photos for the locker doors came from a variety of places. Many of the posters were of famous actresses of

the period, such as Betty Grable and Rita Hayworth, and the photos were acquired from an antique mall and then blown up on a scanner. The letters used in the show were recreated from authentic "V-mail" of the time. Even the stamps on the letters were recreations of authentic wartime stamps.

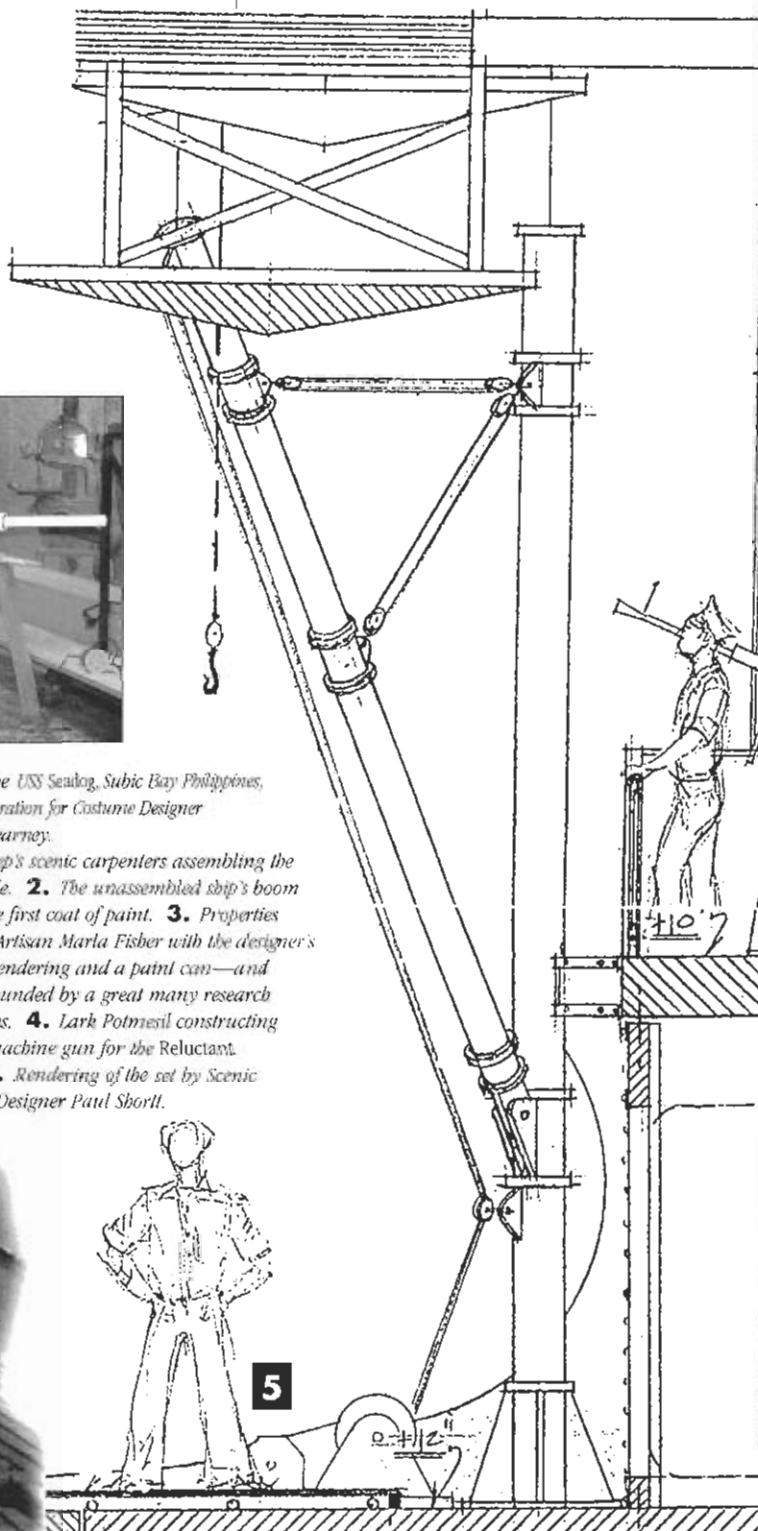
The large boom at stage right was constructed by creating a wood frame and inserting it into a Sonotube (a cardboard tube used for making cement pilings). It was then painted cargo-ship grey by the scenic artists to give it a very authentic look. Four motorized components were also incorporated into the show: the wench, the hatch, the turntable, and the wench onstage, which is non-functional except for the rotating drum. The cargo net full of seamen is, in actuality, raised by a wench offstage that is connected to a pulley out of the audience's view.



Designing the costumes for the show was more of a research project than one of creative design for Costume Designer Kristine Kearney. She used a variety of research sources, from pictures of her father's Navy crew, who served shortly after the war, to military manuals of the period

that detailed military-issue clothing. Although the outfits for the enlisted men were nearly identical, the actors were encouraged to wear their clothes in their own style, both to make them look like a real Navy crew, and to make each character more interesting and distinguishable to the

audience. Two other things were required of the cast that were atypical but very necessary: authentic military haircuts and a nice, dark tan. The means of tanning, however, was optional. It could come from a tanning bed or a bottle, as long as it looked genuine.



The crew of the USS Sealog, Subic Bay, Philippines, 1950, the inspiration for Costume Designer Kristine Kearney.

1. The Rep's scenic carpenters assembling the turntable.
2. The unassembled ship's boom after the first coat of paint.
3. Properties Crafts Artisan Marla Fisher with the designer's gun rendering and a paint can—and surrounded by a great many research books.
4. Lark Potmesil constructing a machine gun for the Reluctant.
5. Rendering of the set by Scenic Designer Paul Shortt.

“IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES, IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES.”

This classic line by Dickens, written about a different time in a different place, could apply to many historical periods, but perhaps to none more appropriately than the years of the Second World War. It was not only an apt description for the soldiers and sailors who participated in the future-altering battles, but to everyone in the United States living on the home front. It was a time of tremendous change and sacrifice for everyone, regardless of age, sex or race. The valiant battles of the war were not only fought at Midway and the Ardennes. Perhaps the most critical battle of all—the battle for the unity, resolve and support of the American people, was fought here at home.

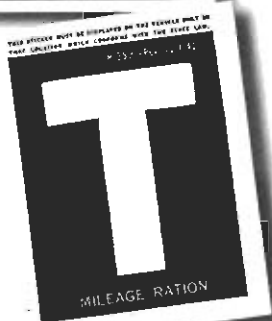
America was first referred to as the Arsenal of Democracy in one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “Fireside Chats.” He used the phrase on December the 29th, 1940—before the U.S. ever entered World War II—in a speech urging the American people to achieve the highest level of productivity in history. In 1940 the United States was not yet a military participant in the war. It did however, supply weapons and vehicles of war to the Allies: especially to Great Britain. Roosevelt’s request was one that would be repeated often over the next five years: five

years that marked one of the largest increases in productivity—and the single most expansive military armament—in the history of the world.

It was certainly not Roosevelt’s rhetoric alone that led to the phenomenal increase in production. There were many factors: the attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent loss of loved ones to the war being two of the largest. Another was the application of the principles of mass production to the manufacture of military ships and planes. Two of the best examples of this were the Willow Run factory of Henry Ford, and the ship-part factories based on the design of Henry Keiser. At its peak in 1944,

Gas rationing stickers. The rationing of gasoline for domestic use was a result of the severe shortage of rubber.

A Sticker—four gallons (later, three) per week;
B Sticker—essential driving, supplemental allowance;
T Sticker—unlimited fuel (truckers, etc.)



PROPAGANDA and the Arsenal of Democracy

BY BRAD WILLIAMS

the Willow Run factory was producing 650 bombers a month: one approximately every 63 minutes. The factories of Keiser, meanwhile, were producing one Victory Class ship every 42 days, and many of those ships were modified into mini aircraft carriers that contributed to the American air-dominance of the Pacific.

All told, the time required to build many military vehicles was reduced to one-third the time it took before the war, and this occurred while the country was under a severe labor shortage. The increased

production required by the war was only partially responsible for this worker shortage: the work force was also depleted by recruitment and the draft. Therefore, this unprecedented increase in production occurred while factories were being staffed with a new workforce. Jobs that were previously closed to minorities were opened. Child labor laws were suspended, and millions of 12- to 17-year-olds entered the work force. And able-bodied women were recruited in droves to work in the war factories.

The most famous symbol of the working women of World War II was undoubtedly Rosie the Riveter. Typically pictured in a hard hat and overalls—and with extremely muscular arms—Rosie represented a radical departure from the traditional American stereotype of the housewife and mother. Rosie was a testament to the indomitable strength of the American spirit during one of the most challenging times in the nation’s history, and today she remains a symbol of women’s strength and equality.

Rosie was only one example of another critical contributor to the country’s productivity: propaganda. Posters urging Americans to support the war blanketed the country. They covered a vast range of topics: recruitment posters urged young men and women to enlist,





This Norman Rockwell painting of Rosie the Riveter was commissioned for the cover of the May 29, 1943 edition of The Saturday Evening Post. Despite her massive bulk, sturdy work clothes and the smudges on her arms and cheeks, Rosie's painted fingernails, lipstick and the tidy arrangement of her bright red curls wittily convey her underlying femininity. A copy of Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf is crushed under her all-American penny loafers. Notice the halo floating just above the visor pushed back on Rosie's head, probably to denote the righteousness of her cause. In 2002 this painting was auctioned for \$4,959,500.



others emphasized the importance of not spreading sensitive information about the war, some supported the purchase of war bonds, and there were dozens in support of rationing and recycling/collection efforts. Children and families collected a vast array of materials to be recycled for use in the war: used cooking grease was saved for the manufacture of bullets, aluminum (coming from sources ranging from old pots to the foil on gum wrappers) was collected to build new military equipment and vehicles, paper was collected and recycled for military needs, and every scrap of rubber—from rubber bands to the cores of baseballs to old tires—was accumulated at collection stations all over the country. The propaganda campaign produced more advertising and publicity than any other campaign by any agency in American history.

Rationing programs were also instituted throughout the nation. At many times during the war, meat consumption was restricted to once per week. Because of the need for rubber, car tires were used in conditions that would today be considered extremely unsafe. Gasoline was not only rationed, but people were discouraged from making long trips, and in many cases had to obtain permission before making one. But rationing was not only endured, it was strictly adhered to by the vast majority of Americans.

While the World War II generation was undergoing rationing, they were also paying taxes driven extremely high by the needs of the war. The government, however, knew those taxes would never match the tremendous deficit spending that would be required throughout the war. Therefore, the government planned several war-bond propaganda campaigns that were designed to stir the conscious of Americans, and to invoke their financial and moral stake in the war. It worked. By the end of the war, over 85 million Americans had invested in the bonds, and the War Finance Committee had sold over \$185 billion dollars in securities. It was a funding campaign unmatched by any other country at any time in history.

The Second World War was won through the efforts of our soldiers and sailors, and it was won through American ingenuity. It was won because of the tremendous sacrifice of the people at home, and through their unfailing resolve and unity. The world was shocked by the tremendous rapidity of America's transition to a wartime economy, as well as the strength of that economy. Air Marshall Goering of Germany, who in 1940 had stated that, "the Americans only know how to make razor blades," changed his opinion by the end of the war, revealing that he knew the war was lost when he saw American B-51 Mustangs flying over Berlin.



These questions and activities are designed to help students anticipate the performance and then to build on their impressions and interpretations after attending the theatre. The activities and questions are divided into “**Before the Performance**” and “**After the Performance**” categories. While most of the exercises provide specific instructions, please feel free to adapt these activities to accommodate your own teaching strategies and curricular needs. To assist you in incorporating these materials into your existing curriculum, we have provided the numbers of some of the corresponding Missouri Knowledge Standards and Illinois Learning Standards. In addition, the majority of the content integrates or allows demonstration of the following Missouri Performance Goals: 1.5, 1.9, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and 4.1.

COMMUNICATION ARTS

Before the Performance

1 What is heroism? Think of your favorite Hollywood movie that involves a hero, such as Arnold Schwarzenegger or Sylvester Stallone, and list the characteristics that they exhibit in the film. Be sure to list all their characteristics—not just the positive or admirable ones. Then think of a person you know personally that you feel is heroic. Make a list of their characteristics as well. How are the two lists similar and different? Save your list for “After the Performance.” (MO: CA1, CA2, CA4, CA6, FA1, FA2 IL: 1, 3, 4)

2 Read “Propaganda and the Arsenal of Democracy” earlier in this study guide. There are a few propaganda posters on the page that are examples of the hundreds that the government produced during the Second World War. What specific methods of persuasion are used in the posters? Why are they used? Do you believe they are effective? Are these methods used in advertising today? (MO: CA1, CA3, CA6, SS2, SS3, SS4, SS5, SS6 IL: 1, 4, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18)

3 Examine the rhetoric and propaganda of World War II further, and answer the following questions. What were the “Fireside Chats?” What was their purpose? Were they effective? What are the “Four Freedoms,” and what impact did they have on the American public? In what other ways did the

United States use propaganda to unify the American people behind the war effort? (MO: CA1, CA3, CA6, SS2, SS3, SS4, SS5, SS6 IL: 1, 4, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18)

4 Design your own propaganda poster. Pick an issue that is important to you, and create a persuasive advertisement that attempts to sway people to your own point of view on the issue. (MO: CA1, CA3, CA4, CA5, CA6, SS2, SS3, SS4, SS5, SS6 IL: 1, 3, 4, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18)



After the Performance

5 Make a list of the character attributes of Mr. Roberts, and compare the list to ones you made from “Before the Performance.” How is the list similar and different from the other two? Are any characteristics present on all three lists? Does Mr. Roberts have more in common with the Hollywood hero or the one you know personally? (MO: CA1, CA2, CA4, CA6, FA1, FA2, FA4, FA5 IL: 1, 3, 4, 25, 27)

6 Mr. Roberts was certainly the hero of the play, but did you also find Ensign Pulver to be heroic? Why or why not? What did the rest of the crew do that was heroic? What aspect of the crew’s action made it so? Did the crew’s heroism share anything in common with Mr. Roberts’ and Pulver’s? If so, what was it? Does this say anything about the nature of heroism in the larger sense? (MO: CA1, CA2, CA6, FA1, FA2, FA4, FA5 IL: 1, 4, 25, 27)

7 The veterans of WWII are a unique group of individuals. They not only defended the freedom of the world; they shaped the direction and values of our nation. They are also a group that is leaving us all too quickly. Conduct an anecdotal interview with a veteran of WWII. If you do not know one personally, there are many veteran's organizations listed on the Internet that meet on a regular basis. Ask questions in your interview that will give insight into how life was different then: how war was different, how the American public was dissimilar and how the government has changed. Also ask what he or she considers heroic. (MO: CA1, CA4, CA5, CA6, SS2, SS3, SS4, SS6 IL: 1, 3, 4, 5, 14, 15, 16, 18)



FINE ARTS



Before the Performance

1 Earlier in this Study Guide, "Shop Talk" mentions the four primary settings in the play: the ship deck, the crew's cabin, the officer's (Mr. Roberts') cabin and the Captain's cabin. Research Navy ships of the 1940's, and decide how you would design and decorate the four sets. Create sketches of each, and save them for comparison with the play after the performance. Ensure that your sketches clearly differentiate each set from the others. (MO: FA1, FA2, FA3, FA4, FA5, CA1, CA2, CA4, SS2, SS6 IL: 1, 3, 4, 5, 16, 18, 25, 26, 27)

2 One additional challenge arose during casting for *Mister Roberts*: it was exceedingly difficult to find actors who could move and hold themselves in the proper way. Men of the 1940's simply did not walk the same, sit the same or hold themselves in the same manner that we do today. If you were faced with the challenge of training actors to emulate the posture of that time period, how would you do it? What resources could you use to instruct them? (MO: FA1, FA2, FA3, FA4, FA5, CA1, CA2, SS6 IL: 1, 4, 5, 16, 25, 26, 27)

3 *Mister Roberts* is a play (and movie) about quiet heroism. The story of such a hero would be unlikely to sell in Hollywood today, as modern film heroes typically need to be involved in great danger and tremendous conflicts. This is not the case with modern theatre. Why do you believe this is not required? How might this add to the effectiveness of theatre in portraying historical events and periods? (MO: FA1, FA2, FA3, FA4, FA5, CA1, CA2, SS6 IL: 1, 4, 5, 16, 25, 26, 27)

After the Performance

4 Look at your sketches of the sets for *Mister Roberts* from "Before the Performance." How was the actual production different from your drawings? Was it similar in any aspects? (MO: FA1, FA2, FA3, FA4, FA5, CA1, CA2, CA4, SS2, SS6 IL: 1, 3, 4, 5, 16, 18, 25, 26, 27)

5 The "Order of the Palm" that the crew presented to Mr. Roberts was inscribed: "To Lieutenant (j.g.) Douglas Roberts for action against the enemy, above and beyond the call of duty." Who or what are the enemies to which the medal refers? What larger concepts does the palm tree aboard the ship represent? (MO: FA1, FA2, FA3, FA4, FA5, CA1, CA2, SS6 IL: 1, 4, 5, 16, 25, 26, 27)

6 The challenges faced by the *Reluctant's* crew are very different than those faced by the heroes in most war movies. Specifically, what are the challenges the crew faced? How did they deal with them? What are some of the themes dealt with in other war movies and plays? (MO: FA1, FA2, FA3, FA4, FA5, CA1, CA2, SS6 IL: 1, 4, 5, 16, 25, 26, 27)

7 Which scenes in *Mister Roberts* did you find the most memorable? Were some of the parts you thought of humorous? *Mister Roberts* is very comedic, yet it deals with a serious topic: the life of sailors in World War II. How does the comedy in the play add to the impact of the story? (MO: FA1, FA2, FA3, FA4, FA5, CA1, CA2, SS6 IL: 1, 4, 5, 16, 25, 26, 27)

8 In reading "Shop Talk" earlier in this Study Guide, you will see that the cast was required to have a tan of some sort. However, before rehearsals began Director Edward Stern also told the cast that if they could present a valid argument that the character they portray would not necessarily have a tan, they could be excluded from the requirement. Which characters do you believe could make such an argument, and what would their reasons be? (MO: FA1, FA2, FA3, FA4, FA5, CA1, CA2 IL: 1, 4, 5, 25, 26, 27)

9 The name of the ship in the play is the *Reluctant*. Discuss the significance of this name. Does it allude to anything else? (MO: FA1, FA2, FA3, FA4, FA5, CA1, CA2 IL: 1, 4, 5, 25, 26, 27)

10 If you were to set a play aboard a modern Navy vessel, many things would be different than in *Mister Roberts*, which is set in 1945.

Read about today's Navy, and decide how the scenery, props, costumes and casting would need to change. What aspects of the production would remain similar? If someone were to write a current *Mister Roberts*, about sailors aboard a modern vessel behind the front lines of battle, do you think it would have the appeal of the original? Why or why not? (MO: FA1, FA2, FA3, FA4, FA5, CA1, CA2, CA3, CA4, SS2, SS6 IL: 1, 3, 4, 5, 16, 18, 25, 26, 27)



SOCIAL SCIENCES

Before the Performance

1 Split the class into five groups. Each group will examine one war from U.S. history. The first group will examine World War I, the second will look at World War II, the third the Korean War, the fourth the Vietnam War and the fifth the Gulf War. Each group will create a collage that gives a general impression of the war they are assigned. Each collage should include elements that shed light on the following questions: How was the war fought? How was it won (or lost)? What were the individuals that fought in the war like? What vehicles and weapons were used? What was life like for those on the home front at the time? What was the public's opinion of the war? Excellent sources for the collages include letters from and to the soldiers, war propaganda posters, war photos and newspaper articles about the war. After the collages are complete, have each group present their work to the class. In the presentation, have them discuss the pieces included in their collage, why they chose each and what each says about the war. (MO: SS1, SS2, SS3, SS4, SS5, SS6, SS7, CA1, CA3, CA4, CA5, CA6 IL: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18)

2 Have a class discussion of the following questions: How has war changed over the years? Has the public view of war changed? If so, how is public opinion different today? What do you feel caused the changes? Do you believe there is such a thing as a justified war? Was World War II? Why or why not? (MO: SS1, SS2, SS3, SS4, SS5, SS6, SS7, CA1, CA6 IL: 1, 4, 5, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18)

3 Discuss the transition from a peacetime economy to a wartime economy that occurred in the United States during World War II. What role did the attack on Pearl Harbor play in changing American attitudes on the war in Europe? Do you think the country could be mobilized in such a fashion today? Many families were allowed meat only once per week: in fact, it was during this time that the consumption of Spam became widespread, because fresh meat was so scarce and difficult to obtain. Gas, food and textiles were also rationed. Do you think the American public would make such sacrifices today? What do you believe would have to happen in order to make the public willing to accept such sacrifices? (MO: SS1, SS2, SS3, SS4, SS5, SS6, SS7, CA1, CA6 IL: 1, 4, 5, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18)

4 Compare Pearl Harbor to the attack of 9/11. How were the events similar and how were they different? Was our country's response different or the same? Explain and support your answer. (MO: SS2, SS3, SS4, SS5, SS6, CA1, CA6 IL: 1, 4, 5, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18)

After the Performance

5 Lieutenant Girard, the only female that appeared in the play, was an Army Nurse. What other roles did women play in World War II (at home as well as abroad)? What caused the transition from their traditional roles? Was there resistance to the changes? The symbol of the American woman used on the home front was Rosie the Riveter, yet the symbol for the sailors overseas was typically Betty Grable. What is the propaganda value of each symbol, and how did it relate to the environment in which each was displayed? (MO: SS2, SS3, SS4, SS6, CA1, CA3, CA6 IL: 1, 4, 5, 14, 15, 16, 18)



6 *Mister Roberts* is about a Navy crew. Each member of that crew, as individuals within the Navy, must live by the rules and guidelines of that institution. Also, they rely heavily upon one another to do their jobs, because in many cases their mission and their lives depend on it. As a student, you are also part of an institution. How is the portrayal of the Navy in *Mister Roberts* similar to your school? Do they have similar rules and guidelines? Is the hierarchy of leadership similar or different between the two? Compare the crew of the *Reluctant* to your group of friends. In what ways are they alike and different? Do you face any of the same challenges that the crew faces in the play? If so, how do you deal with them? (MO: SS2, SS3, SS6, CA1, CA3, CA6, FA2, FA3, FA4, FA5 IL: 1, 4, 5, 16, 18, 25, 27)



7 Ships in the AK series were usually named after stars or counties in the United States, but if you look at "Words to the Wise" earlier in this Study Guide, you will see that the LCTs were not formally named. Why do you think this was the case? (MO: SS2, SS3, CA1, CA3, CA6 IL: 1, 4, 5, 14, 16, 18)