

EDUCATOR GUIDE

PHILADELPHIA THEATRE COMPANY

at the *Suzanne Roberts Theatre*

THE WOLVES

BY SARAH DELAPPE

DIRECTED BY
NELL BANG-JENSEN
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A black and white photograph of a soccer ball and a cleated boot, splattered with snow and dirt. The background is a dark, textured surface with white and blue splatters, suggesting a snowy or icy environment. The soccer ball is in the foreground, and the boot is positioned above it, as if about to kick it.

PREPARED BY VICTORIA DONNELLY
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INTRODUCTION

The overall goals of this guide are to:

- A. Provide your classroom with the tools to have an engaging and educational theatrical experience
- B. Connect the production to your curriculum with relevant information and activities
- C. Engage the critical and analytical skills of your students

This guide consists of:

- 1. A brief plot summary of *The Wolves*
- 2. Character descriptions
- 3. An introduction to the playwright, Sarah DeLappe
- 4. A summary of major themes and discussion questions based around those themes
- 5. Dramaturgy for *The Wolves*
- 6. Additional discussion prompts and resources

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

National Core Arts Standards

TH Re7.I.a - Respond to what is seen, felt, and heard in a drama/theatre work to develop criteria for artistic choices

TH Re9.1.I.a - Examine a drama/ theatre work using supporting evidence and criteria, while considering art forms, history, culture, and other disciplines

TH Re9.1.I.c - Formulate a deeper understanding and appreciation of a drama/ theatre work by considering its specific purpose or intended audience

TH Cn10.1.I.a - Investigate how cultural perspectives, community ideas and personal beliefs impact a drama/theatre work

PA Arts and Humanities Standards

9.1.12 B - Recognize, know, use and demonstrate a variety of appropriate arts elements and principles to produce, review and revise original works in the arts.

9.1.12 E - Delineate a unifying theme through the production of a work of art that reflects skills in media processes and techniques.

Social Emotional Learning Competencies

Self Awareness: Recognize the impact of one's feelings and thoughts on one's own behavior

Self Management: Identify and apply ways to persevere or overcome barriers through alternative methods to achieve one's goals

Relationship Skills: Identify who, when, where, or how to seek help for oneself or others when needed; Utilize positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others

NJ Arts and Humanities Standards

1.3.12 C1 - Describe the process of character analysis and identify physical, emotional, and social dimensions of characters from dramatic texts.

1.3.12 C2 - Analyze the structural components of plays from a variety of social, historical, and political contexts.

THE WOLVES

PLOT SUMMARY

The Wolves is set in an indoor soccer facility. Each scene depicts the nine teenage girls who make up the Wolves, a competitive high school soccer team, warming up before their game each week.

The first scene opens with discussion of a murderous Cambodian dictator, and conversations stem from there. Overlapping dialogue illustrates an atmosphere where each group of girls have their own, specific conversations while still chiming in on the main topic. These spin-offs include period gossip, talk of boyfriends, their coach's obvious hangovers, and speculations about the new girl, #46, who is said to live in a "yogurt" (a yurt) and repeatedly burst in conversations at the most inappropriate times such as mentioning how the team's striker, #7, had an abortion.

In every scene, the girls are going through a stretching routine led by #25. This is one of the only repetitive actions, besides #7's constant use of the word "fuck" and the goalie, #00, suffering from social anxiety attacks and consequently running outside to vomit. The girls sometimes continue their gossip from the previous week, bringing new drama and topics of conversation. #46 slowly begins to fit in and most girls seem to grow more comfortable with each other as the season progresses.

A ski trip taken by #7 and #14 before the second-to-last game leaves the team suffering from injuries and internal drama. #7 suffers a season-ending injury, which forces #46 to step up. She excels, and is even scouted along with two other girls while the rest watch enviously from the sidelines. #7 and #14 bring their ski trip squabble back to the field as well. #14 expresses her anger towards her friend about her neglect during the trip and being left with a strange guy (#7's boyfriend's friend). They fight, and end the day on a terrible note.

Tragedy strikes before the final game, which causes #00 to break down in the stadium at night, but also overcome her anxiety. The others are grieving, and assume among themselves that the others will ditch the game. With a possible forfeit looming, it feels as though the Wolves' season will end on the lowest possible note, until all of the other girls come to the stadium one by one, allowing them to play. As they rally together, a Soccer Mom suddenly approaches them, giving them a delirious speech about how they have banded together in spite of everything, leaving everyone speechless.

Content warnings: Language; mention of violence and sexual situations; death.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS



DONOVAN LOCKETT

#11 - Midfield. Brainsy, morbid, budding elitist, thoughtful. Doesn't like to be wrong. A columnist for the high school paper. Seventeen.



TORI LEWIS

#25 - Defense, Captain. Classic (ex)coach's daughter. Well respected by the team. Serious, introvert. Loves a good pep talk. Seventeen.



ANNIKA COWLES

#13 - Midfield. Stoner, older pot dealer brother, into her wackiness, bit of a "bro". She refuses to take anything too seriously. Sixteen.



EMMA LENDERMAN

#46 - Bench. New girl. Skilled. Homeschooled. Awkward, but still endearing when she wants to be. just wants to fit in. Sixteen.



ALISON ORMSBY

#2- Defense. Innocent, unlucky, kind, sincere, skinny. She is generous and often trying to reach out to those in need, Sixteen.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS



HANNA GAFNEY

#7 - Striker. Too cool for school, and has problems with authority. Sarcastic, thick eyeliner, flawed and she knows it. Almost seventeen.

ANNETTE HAMMOND

#14 - Midfield. #7's insecure sidekick. Just switched to contacts. Has a firm understanding of right and wrong, hates liars. Sixteen.



MARGARET MORGAN

#8 - Defense. Plays dumber than she is. Obsessed with making it to nationals in Miami. A whiner, a giggly, excitable girl. Sixteen.

MICHELLE TSAI

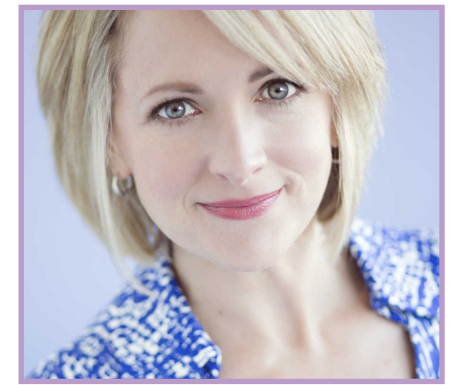
#00 - Goalie - Intense performance anxiety, an extreme perfectionist, high achiever. Losing is not an option. Seventeen.



LEAH WALTON

Soccer Mom- #14's mom. Generous, suburban mom who prides herself on her involvement in her kid's lives; Never misses a game.

LETTER FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR PAIGE PRICE



The Wolves by Sarah DeLappe closes our current season to represent our Kilroys List play choice. The Kilroys List features plays by women, non-binary and trans writers. The Wolves fits into a season in which we are really delving into families of all kinds; even a sports team is a microcosm of a family. The structure of the play is unique and the dialogue is funny and disjointed - like the way teenagers actually talk. What's also great about this play is that it features a team of young women who are wildly entertaining. The truths that spill out and the surprise event that occurs at the end are shattering. It's a deceptively fun play, and lands a huge punch that makes you realize how quickly and completely life can change.

I was also looking for triumph in our plays this season - finding the light at the end of something dark, finding redemption, forgiveness, acceptance. The little acts of kindness that make life bearable. They are all in this play in tiny, fleeting moments.

The Wolves is a Pulitzer Prize finalist and a Relentless Award play finalist and was a huge critical success for Sarah - all this for her first play. Now THAT is triumph.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT SARAH DELAPPE

Sarah DeLappe is the Page One Playwright for The Playwrights Realm and has been a resident artist at the Sitka Fellows Program and SPACE on Ryder Farm. Her play, *The Wolves*, was a Pulitzer Prize Finalist, received the American Playwriting Foundation's inaugural Relentless Award, and was a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and the Yale Drama Series Prize.

Past affiliations: Clubbed Thumb's Early Career Writers' Group, New Georges Audrey Residency. Current: Ars Nova's Play Group, Resident Playwright at LCT3.



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR NELL BANG-JENSEN



I fell in love with theater when I saw *Les Miserables* on Broadway in my early teenage years. I was sucked into the spell of the dark theater so much that it felt like an abrupt, rude awakening when the lights came back on and the audience applauded. I felt that something had unlocked within me. Regular life was mundane but the spectacle of theater matched the depths of feeling that existed in my teenage heart and mind. The soccer field is that space for the young women who are *The Wolves*. Sports provide a spectacle where we tolerate emotions far more than we do in other spaces. Sports provide one of the only occasions deemed acceptable by our society for a grown man to cry. Athletic fields are one of the only spaces where these teenage girls, culturally expected

to be polite and without desire or anger, can scream, sweat, bleed and yell at each other; where their bodies can tell stories when words may fail them.

On the first page of the script, playwright Sarah DeLappe quotes Gertrude Stein by saying, "We are always the same age inside". Though the concerns, topics of conversation, and historical acumen of these young women may change as they get older, I hope that the emotional space they've found on the field remains; that they give themselves permission to cry, scream, feel anger, celebrate, weep, and most of all, hold one another in solidarity even beyond stadium lighting and darkened theaters.

MAJOR THEMES

Coming-of-Age

The Wolves takes place as the nine young women of the team navigate the transition from childhood to adulthood.

What do you think “coming-of-age” is?

Do the journeys of the characters in *The Wolves* fit into your understanding of that concept?

What are some markers of “coming-of-age”?

Identity

Each of the characters are struggling to find their individual identities, while also fitting into the group.

How does each character’s distinct personality fit into the larger group?

What do the characters do to distinguish themselves as individuals?

Do you feel the characters’ experiences relate to your own experiences as a young person?

Status

Each team member plays a different role on the team and has certain “rank” within the group socially.

What is the status of each girl within the group? How do their roles relate to this status? Do the statuses of the characters ever switch?

Loss

A tragedy redefines the ending of *The Wolves*.

How does the team deal with this loss as a group?
How does each character deal with it individually?

DRAMATURGICAL CONTEXT

Dramaturgy is the study of the world in which the play resides. It provides a context for all the social, political, and economic factors, as well as everything in between, that influence the world that the play lives in.

A dramaturg for a new play assists a playwright in a way similar to an editor, helping ensure that the story is shaped and the characters are well-drawn, for maximum dramatic effect.

SOCCKER IN THE UNITED STATES AND AROUND THE WORLD

All around the world, soccer is undeniably the biggest sport, and its popularity only continues to grow. Though soccer is not very popular in the United States compared to football, most other countries revere the sport of soccer, commonly known as “football” outside the US, or “American football” to the rest of the world. According to a survey done in 2006 by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association, 265 million people across the globe play soccer, with that number expanding every year, making it the number one sport in the world. One of the largest factors of growth for soccer is women. More women, both adolescent and adult, are playing soccer than ever before, with a significant portion of female players located in the U.S.

An important factor for women’s participation in sports in the U.S. is the federal law known as Title IX. Under the Education Amendments Act of 1972, Title IX guaranteed equal opportunity for men and women for any educational program or any program that receives federal funding. The benefits of Title IX are not limited to sports, and also help protect students from bullying and sexual harassment. For sports, this means that all schools and universities who want to receive financial assistance from the government must have women’s teams on par with their men’s teams in regards to access to equipment, sports scholarships, training, and facilities. This radically changed things for women’s teams all across the US, and helped increase participation in women’s sports on both the amateur and professional soccer.

THE RULES OF THE GAME

Simply put, the objective of soccer is to score more points than the other team by putting the ball into the other team’s goal. The game is played on a soccer field, known as a pitch, which can be outdoor or indoor, which is featured in *The Wolves*. The pitch has two designated goal areas and penalty areas, on the far ends of the pitch. Like most other sports, soccer is regulated by a referee, who makes final decisions on things such as penalties. A soccer team is usually comprised of seven to eleven members, who all, except for the goalie, utilize all parts of their body except for their hands to manipulate the ball, and have different roles to help their team win.

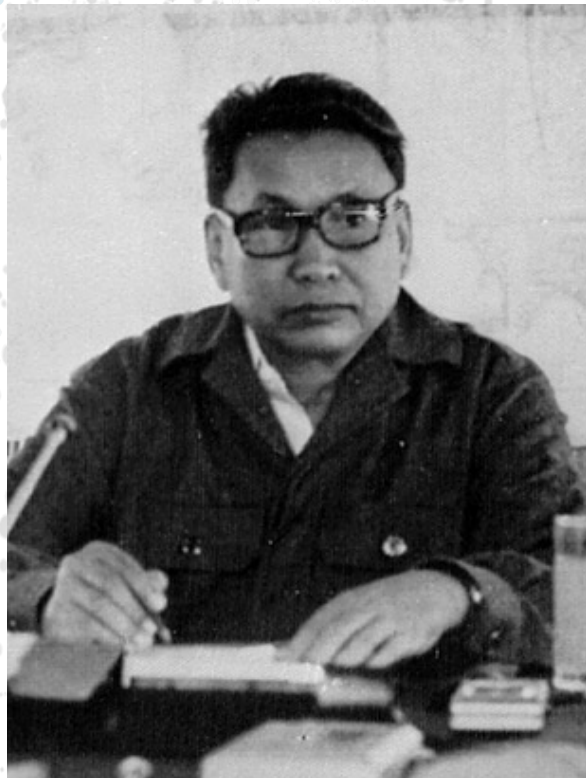
The goalie (#00 in *The Wolves*) defends the net and prevents the ball from getting into their team’s goal. They can utilize their hands, as well as the rest of their body parts, but must stay within the penalty box area if they want to use their hands.

Defenders, like #25, #2, and #8, assist the goalie in protecting the goal. They are positioned in front of the goal area and help to stop attacks from the opposing team.

Forwards or strikers mainly focus on shooting the ball into the opposing team’s goal. They are typically positioned the farthest forward of their team members, so that they are closest to the other team’s goal. #7 plays this position, as does #46 when she takes over for #7.

Midfielders are a combination of defense and forwards. They have one of the most active roles on the team, as they balance helping out the other positions. As their name suggests, midfielders usually stay in the middle of the field, in front of defense but behind strikers. On the team, #11, #13 and #14 are all midfielders.

THE KHMER ROUGE AND CAMBODIA



The Khmer Rouge was a communist political party in Cambodia that was responsible for one of the worst genocides of the 20th century. This regime, under their leader Pol Pot (pictured to the left), reigned in the country from 1975 to 1979, taking the lives of almost 2 million Cambodians. The Khmer Rouge began in the 1960s, predominantly in the remote northeastern region of the country, near the Vietnam border. The Vietnam War was occurring at this time, and Cambodia became entangled in the war, creating instability within the country. After a military coup in 1970 ousted the reigning monarch, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the Khmer Rouge joined forces with him, leading to a rise in popularity of the political party. In 1975, the Khmer Rouge overtook the capital, Phnom Penh, and gained control over the whole country. Once in control, the leader of the party, Pol Pot, renamed the country Kampuchea and quickly started work to transform the country into an “agrarian utopia,” or a society based largely on agriculture. Pol Pot made rapid changes,

abolishing money, religion, and private property, and declaring that the country was starting again at “Year Zero.” Pol Pot took inspiration from the hill tribes he had observed in the jungle and mountains, who lived communally and had no use for money. Thousands of people living in cities were forcibly relocated to rural agricultural communities, where they began to suffer and die from

overwork and starvation. The Khmer Rouge also imprisoned, tortured and executed “enemies of the state,” who were usually educated, middle class citizens or potential leaders of a rebellion. When Pol Pot tried to extend his reign to Vietnam in 1979, the Vietnamese army invaded Cambodia and removed Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge from power. It’s estimated that nearly 1.7 to 2.2 million Cambodians died during Pol Pot’s reign, according to History.com. After retreating into the remote regions of Cambodia, the influence of the party quickly declined. In 1997, Pol Pot was placed on trial for his crimes against the state, and died while under house arrest.

UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE CHILDREN FROM CENTRAL AMERICA IN THE UNITED STATES

Written in 2016, *The Wolves* briefly touches on the issue of the detention of refugee children from Central America, primarily Mexico, in the United States. At the time *The Wolves* was written, this issue had not yet become as visible in the United States as it is today, though it was still a major issue. In June of 2014, the Obama administration declared the influx of unaccompanied migrant children into the United States a humanitarian crisis. Even at that time, there was a divide between those who believe the U.S. needed stronger immigration laws and enforcement and those who urged the US to put more resources towards helping the children who have come here. The increased volume of refugee children coming from Central America hit a peak in 2014 that caused the Obama Administration to declare the crisis, but the actual increase began in 2011. Most of these children and their families are fleeing gang violence in their home countries. Often, gangs will try to recruit teenagers, and if they refuse, the gang will retaliate against their families and friends, which explains why so many of the people seeking asylum are younger. At the time, the law required Border Patrol to take child migrants who weren’t from Mexico into custody, screen them, and transfer them to the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Since 2016, the issue of migration at the southern U.S. Border has become incredibly complicated. From July to October of 2017, President Donald Trump enacted a test period for a “zero tolerance” policy at the southern border, which separated families at the border and classified children as “unaccompanied,” though there was no plan in place to reunite them with their families. This led to a fully implemented “zero tolerance” policy from April to June of 2018. While the policy of family separation was reversed in June, due to it being wildly unpopular, there have been some reports that the policy is still in effect. Visits to the detention centers by members of Congress revealed unsanitary conditions, overcrowding, and reports from the detained men and women that they had been separated from their children.

This issue continues to evolve in the United States, and this summary is by no means comprehensive of its extensive history and nuances. This guide was written in August 2019, so there may very well be several updates to the policy towards migrant children in the United States. For the most up-to-date and accurate information, visit your local news site and utilize the internet and trusted news sources to research this topic.

PLAN B AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS FOR WOMEN

As the players gossip about #7's personal life, they fumble around the topic of Plan B, abortions, and birth control. Like many young people their age, they are confused by what the "morning after" pill exactly is; is it an abortion or a form of birth control? The answer is neither. Emergency contraception methods such as Plan B are their own form of birth control and function in a different way than abortions or birth control methods like condoms or the pill.

Emergency contraception are different methods of birth control that help prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex. After unprotected sex, pregnancy does not happen straight away, so these methods help stop a pregnancy from happening, rather than ending an existing pregnancy. This is what makes them different from abortions. There are a few different forms of emergency contraception, and some are more effective than others.

The Paragard IUD (also known as the Copper IUD) can be put in up to five days after having unprotected sex and is considered the most effective form of emergency contraception. However, it must be inserted by a doctor or a nurse, so it can be more difficult to access. Once inserted, this IUD (or Intrauterine Device) can also function as birth control for up to twelve years.

Emergency contraception pills, such as Plan B or ella, are often known as "morning after pills" and are more popular than the IUD, as they are more easily accessible. The more common version of these pills are brands like Plan B One Step, Take Action, or My Way. These brands are available over-the-counter, without a prescription, at most pharmacies, and come in a variety of prices. They work best when taken up to three days after unprotected sex, but can be taken up to five days after. With these types of contraception, the sooner you take it, the more effective it is.

The ella pill contains ulipristal acetate, and it is the only emergency contraception pill available like this. It must be prescribed by a doctor or nurse, but you can easily access a medical consultation for these pills online. The ella is the more effective version of emergency contraception pills. It can be taken up to five days after unprotected sex and it's effectiveness does not decrease with time like the other version on the pill.

No matter what type you take, emergency contraception is a safe, reliable option for preventing pregnancies. You can use these methods as often as you need, with no risk of serious side effects, though it is considered best by medical professionals to utilize

Other methods as your regular, go-to birth control. These include the IUD, birth control pills, or a barrier method such as condoms.

For more information:

1 (800) 230-7526

PlannedParenthood.org

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Why do you think the playwright chose to only refer to the character's by their jersey numbers? What effect does this create?

How does the movement in the play, i.e. the drills and warm ups the team does in every scene, help to shape the scenes, and the play as a whole? How would the play be different if this movement were not there?

Do you think any of the characters have "come-of-age" by the end of the play? If so, who? Why do you think that? At the end of the play, the only adult character enters into the story. How does her presence change the established dynamic of play? What do you think the playwright was trying to create with this character?

How did the other theatrical elements of the production - sets, costumes, lighting, sound - help tell the story?

Were there any particular uses of these elements that stood out to you?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

More plays by women about young women: *Dry Land*, *The Tall Girls*, *Milk Like Sugar*, *How to Make Friends and Then Kill Them*, *Dance Nation*, *School Girls*; *Or, the African Mean Girls Play*.

More information about soccer around the world: FIFA.com

More information about sexual and reproductive health: PlannedParenthood.org

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