

STUDY GUIDE

WE ARE NOT ALONE

WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY
DAMIEN ATKINS

2015
22 > 15 MAR


**CENTRE
SEGAL**
PERFORMING ARTS
ARTS DE LA SCÈNE

DIRECTED BY **CHRIS ABRAHAM & CHRISTIAN BARRY**
A SEGAL CENTRE & CROWS THEATRE CO-PRODUCTION



CROW'S 
IDEAS THAT FLY

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ABOUT THIS PRODUCTION

Written by & Starring

Damien Atkins

Directed by

Chris Abraham
&
Christian Barry

Stage Manager

Merissa Tordjman

Apprentice Stage Manager

Angeline St-Amour

Set, Props & Costume Designer

Julie Fox

Lighting Designer

Kimberly Purtell

Assistant Lighting Designer

André du Toit

Sound Design

Thomas Ryder Payne

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

Peter Balov,
Dylan Green,
& Christian Barry



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THE CONSPIRATORS

DAMIEN ATKINS has acted on most of the major stages across the country. He spent four seasons at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, as both actor and playwright. Their 2001 production of *Good Mother*, starring Seana McKenna, made Atkins the youngest playwright to have his work produced by the festival. Damien has been playwright-in-residence at Canadian Stage and Crow's Theatre, as well as a Guest Instructor at the National Theatre School of Canada. He is the recipient of the Toronto Theatre Critics Award for Best Actor for *Angels in America*, as well as nine Dora Mavor Moore Award nominations (and four wins) for acting and writing. He has been on the Segal stage many times before, most recently as Henry James in *Geometry in Venice* (2010).



Photo: Ian Brown

CHRIS ABRAHAM has been the Artistic Director of Crow's Theatre since 2007. Chris is a multi-award-winning theatre and film director, dramaturg, and teacher. He co-founded and was the Co-Artistic Director of Bill Glassco's Montreal Young Company. In 2003, Chris directed the film adaptation of Kristen Thomson's award winning hit *I, Claudia* for which he won a Gemini award. A graduate of the National Theatre School's directing program, Chris later served as Co-Director of the school's renowned directing program. Chris was the recipient of the John Hirsch and Ken MacDougall awards and the Siminovitch Prize for Directing in 2013, as well as the first Protégé Prize. Chris lives in Toronto with his wife, actor Liisa Repo-Martell, their daughter Hazel and son Leo.



Photo: Crow's Theatre

CHRISTIAN BARRY is a director and theatre-maker from Halifax, and a founding member and artistic co-producer of 2b theatre company. Christian is a graduate of the directing program at the National Theatre School of Canada. Christian directed part two of *The Mill* cycle, which won the 2010 Dora Mavor Moore award for Outstanding Production (independent). In addition to numerous nominations, he has won four Theatre NS Merritt Awards for Directing, Lighting, and Outstanding New Play. Christian received the 2008 Halifax Mayor's award for an Emerging Artist, and the 2006-7 Urjo Kareda residency grant at the Tarragon Theatre in Toronto. Christian has directed shows that have toured nationally and internationally.

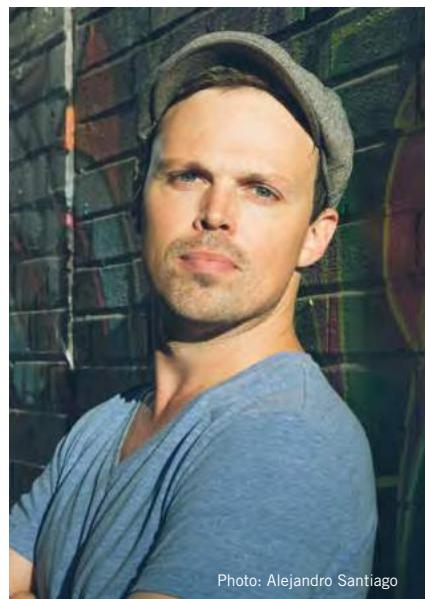


Photo: Alejandro Santiago

*For full credits, see the production program at segalcentre.org/we-are-not-alone/

THE STORY & THE RABBIT HOLE

SYNOPSIS Directed to write a play on the theme of UFOs, the Playwright begins the process of researching with primary source testimonials and case studies. As he digs deeper, he finds experts in the field to interview. He faces criticism and disdain from some, and quietly raised eyebrows from most, until he travels with his Director, Christian, to a UFO conference in Arizona. While there, he meets people who are as welcoming and open-minded as any he has come across before in his life, but their enthusiasm begins to wear on him. As a last resort to get some concrete experience, the Playwright follows a charming young couple to the desert of Sedona, where they seek an experience at energy vortexes in the desert through which energy is supposed to flow. Reflecting on his research and experience, the Playwright comes to realize that belief, like fear, is a choice.

THE RABBIT HOLE In idiomatic language, the “rabbit hole” describes a line of inquiry with no bottom. Like Alice’s journey to Wonderland, the fall down the rabbit hole is a long confusing experience in itself, and at the bottom of the fall are just more puzzles.

A mix of narrative story telling and documentary theatre, *We Are Not*

Alone is one artist’s descent into the rabbit hole of ufology (the study of UFOs) and at the bottom, he finds that the questions of paranormal investigation are limitless. The further down he goes, the farther he has to look up to see where he started. Ultimately, instead of writing a play about UFOs, Damien Atkins wrote a play about the rabbit hole. It is unsettling and unfamiliar, and being at the bottom of it has an effect on his mental state, for better or worse.

This study guide has attempted to choose only background information that will enrich students’ understanding of the play, and as such has had to leave much out. Like many belief systems associated with cover-up and conspiracy, there is a wealth of primary sources, available for free, and a dearth of verifiable facts.

Therefore, this necessarily short guide will provide additional information on the research that the playwright presents in the play. I encourage students to fall down the rabbit hole on their own. Rarely do works of art live so solidly in the present, so this is a unique opportunity for the audience to have a parallel experience to the character.

See page 19 for further reading suggestions.



STUDENT ACTIVITY

- 1) Research a paranormal topic. Favour primary source documents over objective summaries, and record your sources.
- 2) Create a system for noting the reliability of your sources, for example, 1-5 with 5 being the Oxford English Dictionary and 1 being an obvious fraud.
- 3) Submit a bibliography, including each source’s rating.
- 4) Construct an argument as a believer, and another as a skeptic.
- 5) Choose a side to present. Write an opinion piece explaining why you chose one side over the other, using your source material.

GLOSSARY

In Brief

Clairaudient / Clairvoyant

A person with the power or faculty of hearing / seeing something not present but regarded as having objective reality. Paranormal.*

Extra-terrestrial

Prefix “extra” from the Latin meaning outside or beyond + “terra” from the French meaning earth. Describes anything taking place or originating somewhere other than the surface of the earth.

Geiger Counter

An instrument for detecting the presence and intensity of radiations (as cosmic rays or particles from a radioactive substance).*

Hybrid

The offspring of two different species or varieties.

Interface

“A surface forming a common boundary of two bodies, spaces, or phases.”*

Iridology

The study of the iris of the eye for indications of bodily health and disease.*

Jitterbug

A two-step dance in which couples swing, balance, and twirl in standardized patterns and often with vigorous acrobatics.” *

Klaxon

A sound generated or the action of generating sound from an electrically operated horn or warning signal.*

Lightship

Ambiguous. “Ship equipped with a brilliant light and moored at a place dangerous to navigation.”*

Mediocrity principle

The premise that the planet Earth is, on balance, normal in the universe, or that the sequence of events that made the Earth like it is were inevitable and / or likely.

Paradigm

An example or pattern considered normal, from which a model or guideline can be constructed.

Paranormal

Prefix “para” from the Greek meaning altered and alongside + normal. Describes events that are contrary or opposed to the normal and explained operations of the universe.

Rare Earth Hypothesis

The premise that the planet Earth is unique in the universe, or, at least, that the sequence of events that made the Earth like it is, is very unlikely.

Regression Therapy

A form of therapy that endeavors to open the mind to returning to a younger chronological age in order to access more vivid or accurate memories.

Swamp Gas

The decay of biological material in swamps creates a large amount of gaseous compounds, such as methane and phosphine. Though exactly what mechanism causes it is unknown, faint flame-like illuminations occasionally appear over the surface of the swamp, a phenomenon called “will-o’-the-wisp” in some folklore.

Telex

A system of communication in which messages are sent over long distances by using a telephone system and are printed by using a special machine called a teletypewriter.*

UFO

Abbr. Unidentified Flying Object.

USAF

Abbr. United States Air Force

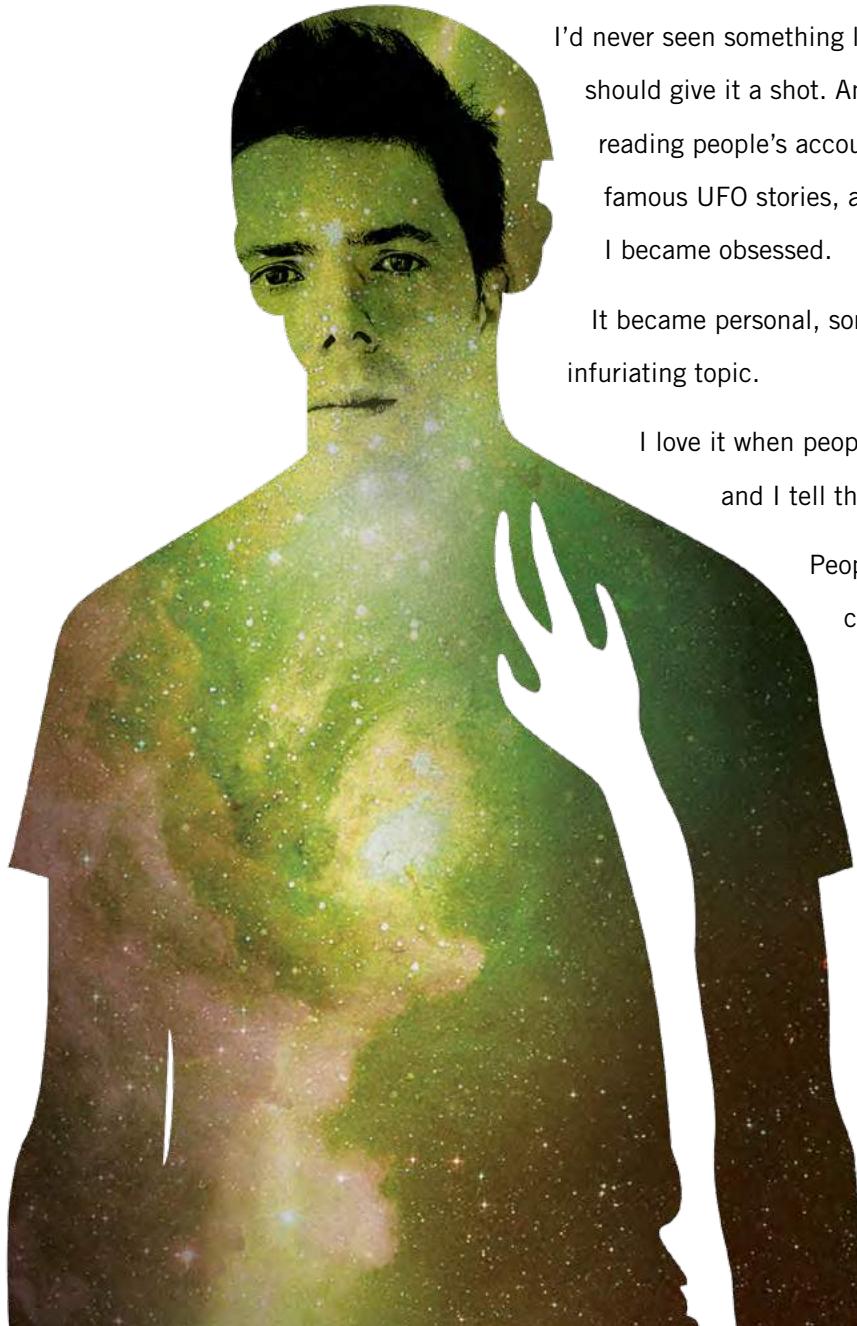
Ufologist

A person who studies UFOs and related phenomena.

* Merriam-Webster dictionary

** National Archives

DEAR AUDIENCE



I had an idea that I wanted to write a play about UFOs. I've always been fascinated by space movies and extraterrestrial stories, and I'd never seen something like that onstage, so I thought I should give it a shot. And then I started looking into it, reading people's accounts, reading about some of the famous UFO stories, and I became more than fascinated, I became obsessed.

It became personal, somehow. It's a disturbing, exciting, infuriating topic.

I love it when people ask me what I'm writing about, and I tell them, "Oh, I'm writing about UFOs."

People get excited, sometimes they come out of the closet as believers, sometimes they gently start to berate you for wasting your time. Is it all a hoax? Or is it the most important story in history? The tension between those two possibilities makes for an interesting play.

I hope.

Enjoy the Show.

DAMIEN ATKINS

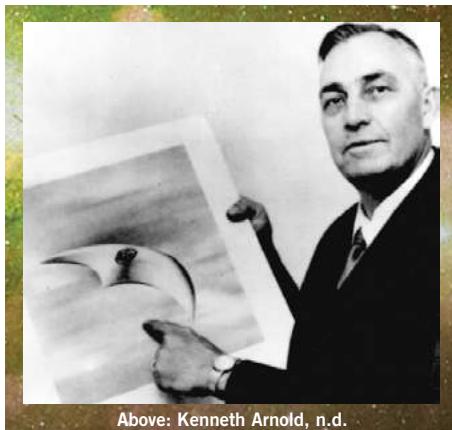
THE CLAIMS

U.F.O.S

Kenneth Arnold (1915-1984)

was an American salesman and an experienced pilot with the Idaho Search and Rescue. On **June 24, 1947**, while on a brief detour over the Mount Rainier area of Washington State, his attention was drawn to a bright flash of light near his plane. While watching for more information, more flashes appeared, and he was able to track them somewhat. Their speed, maneuverability, and intentionality, in Arnold's expert opinion, were evidence that their level of technology far surpassed anything that could be built at that time.

Upon landing, Arnold immediately shared his story. As the first sighting of the modern age, he did not anticipate the incredulity that he was met with, nor the number of new sightings that were reported in the following years. By the 1960s, he became exhausted by the lack of investigation, and he was relatively silent for the rest of his life.



Above: Kenneth Arnold, n.d.

1) Attributed in Bessie Brazel Schrieber's affidavit (Washington, 1994?). Web.
<http://ufologie.patrickgross.org/rw/w/bessiebrazel.htm>

2) Gildenberg, B D. "A Roswell Requiem." *Skeptic* 1 (2003): 60. eLibrary. Web.

3) "1947 Roswell UFO Incident." *International UFO Museum Research Center*. Web.
<http://www.roswellufomuseum.com/incident.html>



Above: USAF portrait of Gen John Samford

General John Samford (1905-1968)

was a Major General in the US Air Force, stationed in Washington, DC in **1952**, when a rash of sightings occurred around the National Airport. Samford held a press conference at the Pentagon, in which he said that most of these reports can be explained, but some cannot. This conference came to symbolize the size and importance of the trend and conspiracies surrounding UFOs and extra-terrestrials.

Watch the video of this testimony here:

1952 SAMFORD TESTIMONIALS*

William "Mac" Brazel (1899 -1963) was managing a ranch about 50 km north of the **Roswell**, New Mexico Air Force Base in **1947**. In June of that year, he witnessed something large crash onto a field, and cleaned up the debris a few days after. Later, military

employees came to his home, and because they behaved suspiciously Mac speculated that he might have found something more interesting than garbage.

A popular theory is that the Air Force was testing nuclear weapon detection technology and covered that up with the claim that it was a weather balloon, which in turn inspired wider speculation. Though he is now associated with the apocryphal rural abductee, he is alleged by his daughter to have called the whole frenzy "one hell of a hullabaloo out of nothing." [1] Indeed, it has been called "the world's most famous, most exhaustively investigated, and most thoroughly debunked UFO claim."²



Above: A New Mexico Ranch

A major point of speculation is that Brazel was apparently taken to the Air Force Base and held there for an extended period of time. Taken in conjunction with vague anecdotes by a nurse and a mortician about strange looking hominid bodies, theories of a military cover-up have gestated for more than half a century.³

THE CLAIMS - U.F.O.S

U.F.O.S



Left: Lt. Robert Salas. Right: Lt. Fred Meiwald.

Lt. Robert Salas was the Deputy Mission Combat Crew Commander (DMCCC) In Roy, Montana in the morning of **March 16, 1967**. His team reported to him that they had witnessed points of light moving in the sky, like shooting stars except they were numerous and would change direction erratically. They drew little more than casual interest until an officer called him to report that one of "them" was glowing red and hovering in front of the main gate. A man approached it and according to some reports was injured,⁴ and according to others was emotionally traumatized.

He called his commander, **Lt. Fred Meiwald**. Neither of these men witnessed what the guards called a UFO, but from the adjacent building they watched as all of their missiles, which were not networked, deactivated one by one. An explanation for this was never found. Lt. Salas still speaks about the phenomenon, including a 2011 phone call to Lt. Meiwald.⁵

The Rendlesham Forest Incident

occurred just after midnight on December 26 or 27, 1980, in a forest in Suffolk, England, in-between two US Air Force bases. Two guards witnessed an aircraft descend into the trees. According to one account, Airman **John Burroughs** and a team went to investigate and found an object standing on three legs, covered in lights. Every time they approached it, it would silently levitate and move away. In this way, they followed it for approximately one hour before it sped away. The next morning there was no evidence, except, by one account, a three-cornered indentation in the earth.

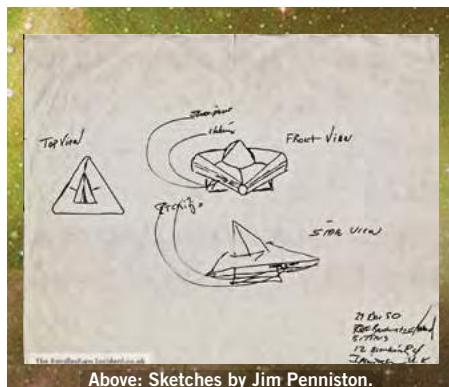
Sargent Jim Penniston, Burroughs' immediate superior, made sketches of what he saw. In later testimony, Penniston claims to have touched the surface of the object, and noted glyphs etched into the surface. **Lt. Col. Charles Holt and Col. Ted Conrad** were also at the base that evening, and the all four testimonials differ by a wide margin.



Unidentified: For 106 minutes on March 13, people saw something like this V-shaped object flying over Arizona. UFOs? The only thing certain is that it still haunts them. 4A.

Above: An artist's rendering of the first event of the "Phoenix Lights," from USA Today, 1997.

On the evening of **March 13, 1997**, thousands of people over a thousand kilometers of the southwest US and Mexico report seeing five lights in a V-formation moving slowly over the land over the course of several hours, disappearing above the clouds before 9 PM. At around 10 PM the same night, nine lights appeared to hover over Phoenix for a period of time. News and media reported extensively on both events, with both skepticism and belief. Some witnesses report that the closer the formation got, the more evident it was that it was a single, enormous craft. Another witness who happened to be out with his telescope, said it was clearly five distinct planes, and that the illusion of connectedness is an optical phenomenon called illusory contours. The later event was attributed to a coordinated flare launch by pilots, only one of whom came forward to corroborate that version of events.



Above: Sketches by Jim Penniston.

4) Salas, Robert, and Klotz, Jim. "The Malmstrom AFB UFO/Missile Incident." *The Computer UFO Network*. Web. <http://www.cufon.org/cufon/malmstrom/malm1.htm>

5) Hastings, Robert. "Echo Flight UFO Incident Not Unique: Retired Col. Frederick Meiwald Says "Bright Object" Also Sighted During OSCAR Flight Missile Malfunctions." *The UFO Chronicles*. Web. <http://www.theufochronicles.com/2011/06/echo-flight-ufo-incident-not-unique.html>

THE CLAIMS

Continued

Sasquatch.

Kewaunee Lapseritis appears in Act Two of *We Are Not Alone*. He is, like most of the characters in this play, a real person. Watch him speak about Sasquatch below:



From YouTube.com by McMenaminsVIDEOS.
Published June 14, 2014*

In his case, Sasquatch are interdimensional beings who are at one with nature, and visit humans in order to save the environment.

Different conceptions of Sasquatch abound, from simple "wildmen" to enormous, ape-like bipeds. The study of "bigfoots" can fall under mythology, paranormal investigation, or entertainment. Depending on the origin story being held to, they are variably dangerous (like the cannibalistic Skoocooms of Washington state) and benevolent (as in Lapseritis' account). There are a number of incidences in which costumes or sculptures were used to prove the existence of the creatures, but the perpetrators have all confessed to the hoax. Other evidences, such as bones, fossils, and footprints, are generally explained with the misattribution of other animal traces.

Crop Circles

Crop circles have enjoyed a kind of celebrity for the last 40 years, though there are parallels in a number of different cultures' folklore. Enormous shapes and designs are formed by the bending of stalks, such as wheat or maize, appearing overnight without witnesses in farmed areas, usually with medium population densities. The intricacy, speed, and accuracy of the formations lead many to the supposition that they are created in a single moment, as opposed to the hours it would take a single human to walk through a field and carefully press all of the stalks in turn.



Above: Colour sketch sent to the Ministry of Defence of a 'spaceship' creating crop circles.
From the National Archives UK

Many people have come forward to claim crop circles as their own work, including a team in the UK whose work could be said to have began the craze⁶. In ufolgy, they are presumed to be landing sites, recording the footprint of alien spacecraft.

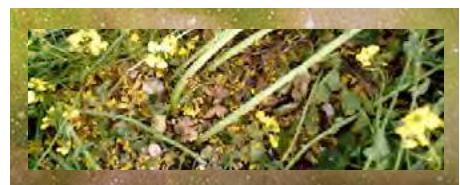
Right: Rapeseed stalks bent instead of broken at their base in a 2009 crop circle.
Photo by Robert Armstrong.



Above: David Bowie photographed by Masayoshi Sukita in 1973

Alien Influencers

Any inquiry into extra terrestrial intelligence raises the question: what is the message? what are they trying to communicate? Inquirers who are open to abstract concepts of communication are attracted to the rhythms, lyrics, and patterns of music and the hidden meanings they could contain. Compounded with the access that modern celebrity grants popular artists, as well as the freedom to experiment with new sounds, pop music would be an effective way to communicate subliminal messages to a wide public.



6) Schmidt, William E. "2 'Jovial Con Men' Demystify Those Crop Circles in Britain." *The New York Times*. 10 September 1981. Web.

<http://www.nytimes.com/1991/09/10/world/2-jovial-con-men-demystify-those-crop-circles-in-britain.html>

* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRJDIMwz5oY>

THE CLAIMS

VORTEXES & NEW AGE TOURISM



Anita and Tom, who act as tour guides in *We Are Not Alone*, are part of a growing movement in the tourism industry, called “New Age” or “Metaphysical” tourism, in which participants travel to places that are considered auspicious for one reason or another. Not unlike religious pilgrimages, the locations frequented by these guided tours are considered to have site-specific properties.

The great pyramid of Egypt, for example, may be built on a location where the ancients of the original civilization (often called Atlantis) stored their wisdom as energy before they disappeared. The idea is that by holding on to an open mind and being aware of a paranormal flow in that environment, the essential material of that wisdom could enter the tourist’s own essence so that they can access it.⁷

Sedona, Arizona is one of these

auspicious places because it is said to have a prevalence of energy vortexes.⁸ New-age oriented businesses, such as the one pictured to the right, abound in this area.

An energy vortex, like a whirlpool or tornado, is basically a spiral in motion. The spiral is particular in geometry because everything about its directionality is subject to the position of the viewer. This means, for example, that a tornado that is moving clockwise from the top will be moving counter-clockwise from the bottom; it may appear to be moving up from the outside but down from the inside; and entropy (the tendency of things to break apart) and inertia (the tendency of things to stay as they are) act in unison. Theoretically, a vortex could continue to have motion infinitely (see *Fibonacci and Golden Mean vortex*).

The North and South Poles, as well as the magnetic poles, are the four largest on the planet, due to magnetic energy and the kinetic energy of the steady motion of the planet.

Other vortexes vary in size and strength all over the world, and have effects on trees (as the juniper pictured above left), people’s perception of gravity, and distinct changes in mood.

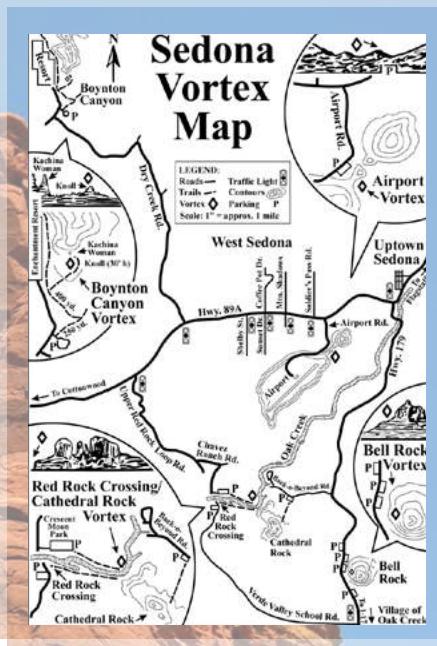
Guided tours to vortexes, like the one offered by John and Micki of



Above: Center for the New Age, 341 State Route 179, Sedona, AZ

lovesedona.com (who created the map below) prescribe different vortexes for different ailments or ambitions.

The airport vortex, for example, is a masculine vortex that would be prescribed for someone experiencing self-doubt, while the Boynton Canyon vortex, which is featured in *We Are Not Alone*, is prescribed by John and Micki as beneficial for seeking more balance between the inward and outward.



7.) Todras-Whitehill, Ethan. “Touring the Spirit World.” *The New York Times*. 29 April 2007. Web.

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/29/travel/29spirituality.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

8.) Although “vortexes” is the standard plural of “vortex,” the new age community distinguishes with the plural “vortexes.”

THE COVERUP

Or lack thereof

“ And then they will look puzzled - or they will pretend to look puzzled - and say ..I can't, really believe the government would keep something like that from us. How could they? , ”
....they haven't.

Project Blue book

Project Blue Book began in 1947 as the list of the multitude of UFO sightings that began to be reported in after Arnold and Roswell. Any call that came in to the United States Air Force was logged and archived. A total of 12,618 cases were logged by the time the program was terminated in 1969.

The files were held at the Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama and available for viewing until 1975, when they were transferred and redacted.

In January 2015, however, they were released into the internet age, and now there are a number of databases where the reports can be read in their entirety, such as this one:

bluebookarchive.org/

The Condon Report

The Condon Report is the informal name of a 1968 book titled *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects* that reached the mass market. It was compiled by the University of Colorado UFO project, which was funded by the USAF.

In 1965, following a surge in UFO reports that brought with it great controversy, the Air Force decided that the only solution was to hire

an objective, civilian committee to go over the more than 12 thousand sightings reported to project Blue Book, committing to 80 hours of investigation per case.

Dr. Edward Condon, a well-respected physicist at the University of Colorado, agreed to lead this committee, which also included Dr. J. Allen Hynek. After one year of researching, Condon is reported to have called the pursuit “nonsense,” but qualified that opinion by saying “but I'm not supposed to reach that conclusion for another year.”⁹

The full text of this report is available online here:

files.ncas.org/condon/

The conclusions of the report are more an editorial on the potential of UFO investigation to yield benefits to pure science, which Condon himself was not very optimistic about. Based on these findings, the USAF closed Project Blue Book for good.

However, a small number of cases studied had no conclusions, such as a woman whose car was mechanically damaged after a light-emitting craft hovered over it: “The case remains interesting but unexplained;” Another famous case contained in the report is a 1956 incident in Greenwich, England, in which it is stated that

“The preponderance of evidence indicates the possibility of a genuine UFO in this case.”

The Cometa Report

The French committee that Leslie Keane refers to in *We Are Not Alone* is the 1999 COMETA report, which can be read in full, in English, here:

archive.org/details/TheCometaReport

In it, the former Chairman of the French National Center for Space Studies, Professor Andre Lebeau, states, “This report is useful in that it contributes towards stripping the phenomenon of UFOs of its irrational layer. When all is said and done, the question of determining whether or not those who created this layer believe in the existence of extraterrestrial visitors, concealed in a variety of phenomena that are surprising in their appearance but commonplace with respect to their cause, is of no real importance.”¹⁰

It goes on to summarize a number of witness testimonies and a critical analysis of them, including one judge's ruling that “There is no flaw or inconsistency in these ... that allow us to doubt the sincerity of the witnesses. ... I think that they actually observed them.”¹¹

9.) Wikipedia contributors. “Condon Committee.” Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. 5 Feb. 2015. Web.

10.) LeBeau, André. “Stripping the UFO phenomenon of its irrational Layer.” From the introduction to *The Cometa Report*. Archive.org. P 3.

11.) Ibid. P 21.

SKEPTICISM

Debunkers go no further.

Believer : Someone who believes things that are not legitimized as true by the scientific establishment, that is scientific bodies who have contributed to the basis of fundamentally true facts on which other theories can be built. These areas are vast but often connected, as belief in God, the Devil, black mass, the occult, sacred knowledge, etc.

Skeptic : Originally from the Greek “to doubt; to inquire,” skepticism has been school of philosophy since the 4TH century BCE. A skeptic resists calling anything a fact until any evidence to the contrary has been explained. It is materialistic in that proof takes the form of a perceivable, material thing. Modern skeptics place the burden of proof on the individual making extraordinary claims.

Debunker : A debunker is a reactionary who uses ridicule to shame the person who holds the belief that they find false. As in, “Ha! Only stupid people believe in aliens.” Not to be confused with skeptics.

You do not need to be a believer to find the claims outlined thus far extraordinary, and you do not need to be a skeptic to find them suspect.

A tenet of skepticism is that “the burden of proof is on the person asserting a positive claim, not on the skeptic to disprove it.”¹² The scientific method is a procedure that keeps proof at bay until it is

EXTRAORDINARY CLAIMS REQUIRE EXTRAORDINARY EVIDENCE

-Slogan of the Centre for Inquiry Canada's Extraordinary Claims Campaign¹⁵

close enough to irrefutable as to be taken as fact:

- 1) Ask a question.
- 2) Establish the context in which the question is being asked.
- 3) Construct a hypothesis or claim.
- 4) Perform experiments to test your claim.
- 5) Analyze the information you have collected from step (4).
- 6) Include that analysis in step (2) and repeat.

Skeptics call the claim a “null hypothesis,” which is a way to describe a thing that has no properties of trueness or untrueness until rigorous testing has established it.¹³

Bertrand Russell famously asked, “If I were to suggest that between Earth and Mars there is a celestial teapot... no one would be able to disprove my assertion. ... But if I were to go on to say that, since my assertion cannot be disproved, it is intolerable assumption on the part of human reason to doubt it, I should rightly be thought to be talking nonsense.”¹⁴

In the case of this claim, no inherent truthfulness would ever be attributed to it, and the investigation could continue ad infinitum.

Why then do people believe in things that might be as exhausting and futile to investigate as a teenie orbiting teapot?

In *We Are Not Alone*, we come across clear answers in the experiencer sessions. Feeling special and chosen, and feeling part of a community, not just in spite of but because of its outsider status, has given them a context for their own suffering.

In his book *The Believing Brain*, Michael Shermer says the human brain evolved to recognize patterns, that “people believe weird things because of our evolved need to believe nonweird things.”

He gives the example of a homo-neanderthal collecting wood. A sound of rustling grass might be the wind, or it might be a predator. If she attributes that noise to the wind and does nothing, she might be killed. If she attributes it to a predator and it was just the wind, she will be fine. Therefore it is beneficial to proceed as though every noise is a potential threat.

Superstitions are based on this tendency of naming random occurrences “causes,” like unshaved beards causing hockey wins.

Patternicity appears in extraordinary claims in phenomena with no obvious explanation or reason, such as markings on the skin, mechanical failures, or, more tragically, the loss of a child.

12.) Shermer, Michael. *The Believing Brain*. Times Books: 2011. P 318

13.) Shermer, 315.

14.) Dawkins, Richard. *The God Delusion*. Transworld Publishers: 2006. P 52.

15.) *Extraordinary Claims Campaign* by the Centre for Inquiry Canada (CFI). Web. <https://extraordinarybus.wordpress.com>

UFOLOGY

In Our World

A frequent criticism of ufologists is that their evidence is largely, if not entirely, anecdotal; but much discovery began as anecdotes. Indeed, it is anecdote that fulfills step (2) in the scientific method.

A potential counter to the burden of proof argument from the previous page is well articulated by Jill Tarter of SETI:

The absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence.

¹⁶

Ufology can function in harmony with the scientific establishment, as in select inconclusive reports by J. Allen Hynek of the Condon Committee.

Richard Dawkins, one of the most influential skeptics of our time, wrote, "I think it is likely that there is intelligent life out there."¹⁷

Dr. Carl Sagan has remained unaligned, but I think there is little doubt that he hopes for contact.

Albert Einstein, on the other hand, does not concern himself with it, as is evident when you read a 1952 letter to his friend, in the midst of the sightings boom: "These people have seen something. What it is I do not know and am not curious to know."¹⁸

At the present time, ufology concerns itself primarily with collecting data, basically picking up where the USAF left off in 1969 with the cancellation of Project Blue Book. A number of organizations exist to collect images and accounts of sightings, that are easily accessible on the web.



Photo submitted by an anonymous Atlanta, Georgia woman to the National UFO Reporting Centre from a February 3, 2015 sighting.

The Canadian UFO Report collects the data from 20 different sources, including those listed here, and compiles a master list every year since its beginning in 1989. In 2014, they published a comprehensive 25TH Anniversary Report.

survey.canadianuforeport.com

MUFON. In *We Are Not Alone*, the playwright meets an investigator for the Mutual UFO Network at the conference in Phoenix. With

chapters throughout 35 different countries, it has an extensive record of sightings. In addition to collecting testimonial accounts, they also endeavor to spread awareness of the impact of ufology on society.

mufon.com

GARPAN offers resources to individuals who have been traumatized by experiences, as well as collecting reports of sightings and experiences that they compile into an annual report that is sent to government organizations.

garpan.ca

The Association Québécoise d'Ufologie

d'Ufologie provides a safe place for people to share their beliefs without fear of mockery, including regular general meetings that take place at restaurants. Reports that come in are posted on their website, and classified according to Jacques Vallée's system, from his 1990 book.

ovni-expert.com

The National UFO Reporting Centre

Centre has been "dedicated to the dissemination of objective UFO data" since 1974. Data is uploaded regularly and is sortable by date, location, or type of craft seen.

nuforc.org

16.) Tarter, Jill. Interview. "Episode 203 - Jill Tarter on SETI Funding." *Within Reason Podcast*. Web. <http://withinreason.podbean.com/e/episode-203-jill-tarter-on-seti-funding/> Jill Tarter Podcast. For More information on SETI...

17.) Dawkins, P 138.

18.) Donderi, Don. "Some UFOs are Extraterrestrial: The Evidence, the Arguments, and the Consequences." Sigma Xi McGill, Montreal. April 11, 2014. Lecture Notes.

LOCAL SIGHTINGS

Select testimonials from Quebec

1) Blainville, QC. December 29th, 2014.

~ 1:00:00

In the parking lot of the Walmart, a couple saw a large circular object with red and white flashing lights fly away towards a Hydro pylon, over a highway. They heard honking as it moved over the highway. The entire vision lasted less than three minutes.

A.Q.U.

2) Gatineau, QC. January 20, 2015. ~ 2:15:00.

Witness reports an unusual light pattern in the night sky. Retrieved binoculars and perceived a cylindrical shape, with red lights on the top and bottom and white, blue, and green lights in the centre.

MUFON

3) Saint-Felix-De-Valois, QC. Reported February 6, 2015.

In overcast or dark weather, "false stars" that move with intention and silently, flashing blue, white and red. When a white sphere of light appears, as it occasionally does, the false stars react, moving out of its way.

A.Q.U.



4) (Pictured above, Witness rendering) Montreal, QC. January 3, 2015. ~ 0:00:00.

Reports a glowing orange ball that approached and hovered soundlessly over the home of the witness, at which point a triangular shell could be made out.

MUFON

5) St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, QC. November 15, 2007. ~ 0:00:00.

In peripheral vision, witness saw a bright light. After a moment of looking at it, the object glowed to the point that a halo formed around it and it shot into the sky with extreme velocity.

MUFON

6) Prévost, QC. September 26, 2014.

Driving northbound along a lonely highway at dusk, the witness sees a stationary bright light, like a star, but brighter than any star could be. A few seconds after it was seen, it propelled itself away in a northerly direction.

MUFON

7) Saint-Janvier, QC. Mid 1960s.

The young witness sees two silhouettes outside and then in the room, in the witness' peripheral vision. The witness could listen to their thoughts, and they were surprised at that. They approached, and touched the forehead of the witness, rendering the witness unconscious while offering reassurance that there would be no harm done. After some lost time, the witness recalls the sensation of a nose-tube which was not there, although there was blood. The figures are described as 4'3", medium skin, dark eyes, small mouths, and nostril holes.

MUFON

7 →



*Reports are paraphrased and translated (where applicable) from primary source testimonies.

Click the bar beneath each report to view the original online.

THE UNIVERSE

Big and Old

1

$\times 100,000,000,000$

One star, called Sol. Within this solar system there is one planet, called Earth, that supports life.

Yellow dot: Sol
Ring: The Kuiper belt contains the farthest bodies within the gravitational pull of Sol.
Red dot: Voyager I, launched in 1977, is the farthest that any man made object has ever been from Earth. It is less than $\frac{1}{2,000}$ THS of the distance from Earth as the nearest star.



$\times 30$

$\times 100$

$\times 100,000,000,000$

The Milky Way is part of a local cluster of about 30 galaxies.

Orange circle: The Milky Way is one of the larger, brighter galaxies in the cluster, second only to the Andromeda Galaxy (lower right.)

The Virgo supercluster contains at least 100 galaxy clusters.

Red circle: The Milky Way local cluster.

The observable universe contains about 100 million superclusters.

Pink circle: Sol is at the exact centre of the observable universe if we assume that the behaviour of the light that we observe is generally constant.

The farthest we have ever seen is just over 13 billion light years from Earth, meaning that we are seeing that object, a dwarf galaxy called Z8_GND_5296, as it was over 13 billion years ago, when the universe, according to our closest estimates, was not even a billion years old.

30,000,000,000,000,000,000,000*

* Or 30 Sextillion stars in the observable universe, conservatively.

THE UNIVERSE

Has a Lot to Look at

Once numbers get as large as what is calculated on the previous page, the likelihood of a life-supporting planet is significant. If, in fact, there is just one, then that statistic (One in 30 sextillion) is so minute that it is essentially impossible; but it is not impossible, as we know from the fact that we exist to do these calculations and ask these questions.

If it is unlikely that a planet would form in a way conducive to life, and if "unlikely" means a one in a trillion chance, that still leaves **30 billion** stars with life-supporting planets in their system.

All of that leads one to the optimism of some science fiction. In the celebrated *Star Trek* franchise, created by Gene Roddenberry, less than a quarter of the Milky Way has been explored, and in that small area there live 380 intelligent species. In the *Star Trek* universe, then, there is a 19-in-five-billion chance that a star will have a life-supporting planet.

It is clear, though, that the calculations are not that simple.

Human beings are the only one of an estimated 8.8 million species on Earth who have evolved into animals with anything like the technology necessary to visit space.

We have that technology through a sequence of discoveries that built (and continue to build) on one another, which required circumstances that allowed certain events to take place and be amenable to those discoveries.

Before that, biological evolution had to occur to make our minds sophisticated enough to have an extraneous idea (one that wasn't solely about survival) at all. Before that, our genetic ancestors had to leave the water, and our cells had to be complex enough to differentiate themselves. The specificity of these events goes all the way back to the joining of amino acids into proteins.

Now if everything that followed was inevitable from the first event, then that doesn't change our calculations very much. If, however, each of these infinitesimal steps is absolutely necessary to create intelligence, the conclusion is very different.

Scientists are narrowing down the search field in a number of different ways that consider all of these calculations in turn.

One working theory is that the primary asset of Earth that makes it amenable to life is its relative position to the sun, where it is the right temperature to have liquid water, also indicating a strong enough atmosphere to provide protection from the vacuum of space.

These are called **goldilocks planets** because they're *just right*.

An old assumption stated that it was more likely for a rocky planet like Earth (as opposed to a gas planet like Jupiter) to exist closer to the sun, but this has proven not to be the case.

The importance of liquid water to these investigations is primary. Research on Mars has revealed dried up sea beds and possible evidence of extinct bacteria. A current mission to Europa, the icy moon of Jupiter, is based on the hope that her tectonic plates are evidence of a vast liquid ocean underneath the planet surface.

Why are they looking for bacteria? Because if it turns out that that first event that created complex cells is even minutely more likely, then that final division that makes life seem impossible gets taken away.

A number of different ground-based organizations are watching stars intently for the slight dimming of the light they produce when a planet passes in front of it. Our

- telescopes see deeper and
- deeper into space each day, like eyes adjusting to the dark, but at these distances, stars show up as little more than a single point of light, and planets are even smaller.

The yellow circle on this page represent our sun, and Earth is here, as an illustration of this extreme scale.

Nevertheless, when a planet blocks the light from a star, that light dims an infinitesimal amount, and a huge amount of information can be extrapolated from it.

CLASS ACTIVITIES

Writing a documentary play with primary sources

Write a short story, play, or poem based on primary source testimonies found online, such as those on the previous page.

Extrapolate character traits from the writing and the experience.

Turn in the finished product as well as a record of your extrapolation, and the original testimonial.

Example, from MUFON:

Sighting Details

1 My wife and I were coming home from McDonalds with dinner around 5:55 PM and my wife saw the bright white circle in the sky. We had seen one a couple weeks prior and it seemed to follow us home. There were 2 in the sky this time one followed us and hovered above the tree line and stayed there. My mother and stepson saw it this time too because I ran in the house to get my binoculars. My stepson noticed it was diamond shaped, his eyesight is better than mine. It was very bright but looked like a circle without the binoculars. Before we got home one of the bright white ones was on my left side, driver side of the car. My wife and I were watching and a reddish orange one appeared out of nowhere and appeared to crash to the ground at high speed. After we all watched the hovering one for around 30 minutes-ish we went in and had dinner and watched a movie. We decided to go drive towards the one that crashed and the hovering white one was gone. We also couldn't trace exactly where the other one went down. It was exciting and scary at the same time. We will continue to watch for them. Unfortunately my camera was not charged but I will have it on stand by now.

The Characters

Writer

Writer's Wife

Writer's Stepson

Writer's Mother

The Context

This family eats McDonald's take out for dinner.

They eat dinner at around 6 PM.

They own a car.

Their house is surrounded by trees.

The Event

Two light-emitting objects.

One is white.

It is diamond-shaped.

The white one is mobile.

One is orange.

The orange one appeared and then crashed.

The white one hovered above the trees.

The white one remained for at least 30 minutes.

There was no evidence of either object after the event.

Fill in the Blanks

How old is everyone?



Does it make a difference if the writer is 20 years older than the wife, or vice versa? If the stepson is a child or an adult? If the mother is elderly, infirm, or healthy?

Where does this story take place?

What could the type of tree say about the environment of the house? Is it a forest, or a loosely-planted cul-de-sac? Is it a northern climate, where 6 PM could be dark, or a southern climate, where it would be light out? What is the weather like on this evening? Clear, overcast, raining, snowing? What kind of noises are normal around this house?

How did everyone react to the object?

Do you imagine the writer being the only interested party, or do you imagine chaos and excitement? What aspects of the characters' relationships could affect the way that the experience is perceived by each of them?

Documentary Theatre Bonus

Keep notes of your experience of your research and speculation. How did you feel, reading this testimonial? What judgements did you find yourself making about this family? Did the degree to which your mind was open change?

CLASS ACTIVITIES

Questions on the theme

ON BELIEF

Ask students what they believe. In act I, the playwright breaks the fourth wall to ask the audience a series of questions:

Who arrived already believing the Earth is being visited by extraterrestrials?

Who arrived not believing, but has been convinced?

Who believes but is too shy to admit it in public?

Try an anonymous poll and see if the answers are different.

Why might that be?

Add the option: Who *wants* to believe? Why?

ON THE COMFORT OF AVERAGENESS

Engage students in a discussion on mediocrity and rarity. Ask them to contribute synonyms for each, such as *normal*, *alone*, *weird*, or *common*, and ask them to attribute qualities to those.

ON OPENNESS AND FEAR

The playwright says he wanted to write a play about getting older, and the result is *We Are Not Alone*. How do the concepts of fear and aging relate to each other?

How does the playwright's childhood obsession with *Star Wars* fit in to the story of the mature search for evidence?

ON THE OOGA BOOGA

How do aliens relate to crop circles?

How do crop circles relate to technology?

How do energy vortexes relate to clairvoyance?

How does clairvoyance relate to abduction?

Where does Sasquatch fit in?

These extraordinary topics always seem to come up in the same conversations. Is the relationship one of content? Or in the psychology of belief?

“
**We are all
different
but we
share
the same
human
spirit.**
—Stephen Hawking
”

FURTHER READING

Resources for an introduction to the Rabbit Hole

UFOLOGICAL RESEARCH

- The Canadian UFO Report** survey.canadianuforeport.com
- The Mutual UFO Network** mufon.com
- Groupe d'Assistance et de la Recherche sur les Phénomènes Aérospaceaux Non-identifiés** garpan.ca
- Association Québécoise d'Ufologie** ovni-expert.com
- National UFO Reporting Center** nuforc.org
- The Computer UFO Network** cufon.org
- Canadian Crop Circles Research Network** cccrn.wordpress.com
- The UFO Chronicles** theufochronicles.com
- International UFO Museum Research Centre** roswellufomuseum.com
- Project Blue Book** bluebookarchive.org
- The Condon Report** files.ncas.org/condon/
- The Cometa Report** (Translated to English) archive.org/TheCometaReport/
- John and Micki's Metaphysical Site** lovesedona.com
- Coast to Coast AM with George Noory** Podcast. coasttocoastam.com (Some episodes available on youtube.com)
- Belzer, Richard. *UFOs, JFK, and Elvis: Conspiracies you don't have to be crazy to Believe*. The Ballantine Publishing Group: 1999.
- Donderi, Don, PhD. *UFOs ETs and Alien Abductions: A scientist looks at the Evidence*. Hampton Roads Publishing Company: 2013.
- Keane, Leslie. *UFOs: generals, pilots, and government officials go on the record*. Three Rivers Press: 2010

SKEPTICAL INQUIRY

- The Committee for Skeptical Inquiry** csicop.org
- The Centre For Inquiry Canada** centreforinquiry.ca
- Within Reason Podcast** withinreason.podbean.com
- Fondation Humaniste du Québec** fondhum.org
- Sceptiques du Québec** sceptiques.qc.ca
- Skeptic** Magazine. Available on e-Library Canada
- Shermer, Michael. *The Believing Brain*. Times Books: 2011.
- Dawkins, Richard. *The God Delusion*. Transworld Publishers: 2006.

SPACE SCIENCES

- The SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) Institute** seti.org
- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration** nasa.gov
- Commander Chris Hadfield** twitter.com/cmdr_hadfield
- Hawking, Stephen. *A Brief History of Time*. Bantam: 1988.

GET INVOLVED

#IWANAbelieve



facebook.com/segalcentre



youtube.com/user/segalcentre



twitter.com/segalcentre



instagram.com/segalcentre



segalcentre.tumblr.com



llederhendl@segalcentre.org

SEGAL +

We invite you to our bold and engaging public programs, where you can hear first-hand from the ufology, science, and skeptical thinking.
Sunday, February 22; 11 AM

*Sunday @ the Segal: Approaches to Thinking About the Unknown
With Dr. Joe Schwarcz and Dr. Mikhail Iossel **

Tuesday, February 24; 7 PM

Class Act Theatre Club with Christian Barry, Director.

Monday, March 2 and March 9; after the performance

Monday Night Talkbacks with Damien Atkins

Sunday, March 15; 4 PM and 5:30PM

The Evidence that Are Not Alone, a talk by Dr. Don Donderi

THE THEATRE AND YOU:

Encouraging critical participation from your students.

Encourage students to think about the idea of engagement with a work of art. Upon attending the theatre, notice the demographics of the audience. Think about how the theatre is different from a concert, a movie, or a comedy show. Do you attend performances often? Which kind?

Are there art forms that you relate to more than others?

What does it mean to you to “relate” to something?

Theatres in particular often struggle with rejuvenating their audience, focusing much effort on bringing a young audience in, through choices in programming, activities, and partial or even total price reduction. What do you think the reason is that theatre audiences are older, and what would you do to counter that?

[Click here](#) to send an email to the Educational Programs Manager at the Segal Centre, or [here](#) to ask directly through our Tumblr blog.

If your students would like to address a specific member of the Segal staff or of the *We Are Not Alone* production team, please specify to whom the communication should be forwarded.

The Segal Centre for Performing Arts

c / o Lucie Lederhendl

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* Sunday @ the Segal lectures are available through the Edge of the City Podcast, and posted on the Centre Stage Tumblr blog (see above.)

THEATRE ETIQUETTE

1. *We Are Not Alone* will be performed in the Studio theatre of the Segal Centre. Performances at the Segal are for both groups and the general public. It is important that everyone be attentive (no talking or rustling of materials) during the performance, so that others do not lose their immersion in the “world of the play”. Please do not unwrap candy, play with zippers, or play with your programme.
2. Do not put your feet on the back of the seat in front of you and please do not climb over seats.
3. If you plan to take 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. Please wait until intermission or after the performance is finished to write your reflections.
5. **Absolutely no photos or video may be taken** without the express consent of management. Violators’ devices will be seized and they will be removed from the theatre.
5. Use of cell phones, iPods, tablets, or other self-illuminating electronics is **strictly prohibited** in the theatre. The light from these devices is visible from the stage and in the audience. It is extremely distracting to the artists on stage and inconsiderate to your fellow audience members. Composing or reading text messages is **forbidden**.
6. Your seat is only guaranteed until the moment the theatre doors close. Late entry is very disruptive; if a patron is tardy we ask that they please follow the instructions of our front-of-house staff.
7. ENJOY THE SHOW!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

Please take a moment to tell us about your experience organizing an educational outing at the Segal Centre. Use the form below or contact me at any time with any comments or concerns you might have.

Thank you,



Reply to:
Lucie Lederhendler,
Educational Programs Manager
Segal Centre for Performing Arts
llederhendler@segalcentre.org
groups@segalcentre.org
Tel: 514.739.2301 ext. 8360
Fax: 514.739.9340

1. How would you rate your experience?
Extremely positive 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely stressful
2. How much do you feel your group benefited from the experience?
Very much 1 2 3 4 5 Very Little
3. Would you recommend the experience to other group leaders?
Wholeheartedly 1 2 3 4 5 Never
4. Will you consider bringing a group to the theatre again?
Wholeheartedly 1 2 3 4 5 Never
5. What did you enjoy most about coming to see the play?

6. What aspect of coming to the theatre did you find problematic?

We welcome all additional comments.

This Study Guide was compiled by Lucie Lederhendler for the Segal Centre for Performing Arts, with contributions from Jess Fildes and Andrea Elalouf. It may be used solely for educational purposes.