Adapted by Cheryl West, *Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy* is based on the Newbery Honor book by Gary D. Schmidt. It follows the story of Turner Buckminster, the son of a reverend, who moves to Phippsburg, Maine, with his father. Feeling like an outsider in the small town, Turner soon makes friends with Lizzie Bright Griffin, a young black girl who lives on Malaga, an island just off the coast of Phippsburg. Because of their mixed-raced heritages, the families on Malaga are outcasts in Phippsburg, and Turner soon finds himself caught in the middle of conflict as the citizens of Phippsburg try to force the families, including Lizzie’s, off Malaga. Capturing the racial tension of the time, *Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy* is a moving story about growing up, fitting in, and standing up for what you believe in.

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION #1**

In the play, Lizzie and Turner become friends despite what appear to be insurmountable differences. How do people build relationships when faced with significant personal differences? How can people look past immediate/initial differences or separations and build friendships?

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION #2**

Many of the characters in *Lizzie Bright* are struggling to find a place to belong. What does it mean to belong somewhere? Why is it important for people to find a place they feel they belong?

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION #3**

Turner faces several different losses, both before and throughout the play. What does it mean to lose someone or something that is important to you? How is loss and learning to live with change part of growing up?
Malaga Island is located just off the coast of Phippsburg, a small fishing town 20 miles north of Portland, Maine. Though Native Americans inhabited the island for thousands of years prior to European settlers, the first settlers our story focuses on is Benjamin Darling. Rumored to be a freed slave after heroically saving the captain of a shipwreck, Darling bought the neighboring Bear Island in 1794. His son, Issac, later sold the island and moved to the unoccupied Malaga.

By the early 1860s, the island began seeing permanent residents, with Henry Griffin settling on the east side of the island. In the next few years, other small families began moving to the welcoming sanctuary, including the Murphys, Dunnings, Johnsons, Easons, Marks, McKenneys and Tripps. By 1900, the island was called home to more than forty people, many of whom would have been outcast for their race or poverty in the other small fishing towns on the Maine coast. The community was a racially mixed one, some African-American, some white, some both, but these families shared the sense that Malaga was a haven for people struggling to get by. These people survived off the land, fishing and harvesting marine life to sell and eat. When food and work got scarce for the islanders, the Phippsburg pauper relief fund would donate money to keep the people of Malaga fed during the winter.

For the people of Phippsburg, the island brought a bad reputation to their town, and they hoped the squandered view of Malaga Island would not deter wealthy summer vacationers from bringing money to the struggling city. The town hoped to establish Phippsburg as the epicenter for wealthy tourism in Maine, after struggling to survive off of a failing shipbuilding and fishing industry. After some debate between Phippsburg and a neighboring town, the state of Maine declared Malaga Island to be under the control of the governor and its people “wards of the state”. This left the fate of Malaga not with Phippsburg, but with the governor, Frederick Plaisted. On July, 11, 1911, the governor and other state representatives visited the island to access the conditions of its people and their homes. After the visit, the State declared Eli Perry, a well-respected resident of Phippsburg, the heir of Malaga, though no deed was ever discovered to be under his name. After just three weeks of the Governor’s visit to Malaga, Perry placed eviction orders on all the people of Malaga, and demanded they vacate the property by July 1st of 1912.

After the Governor’s visit, the people of Malaga were accessed for mental and physical health by the state of Maine to determine if they could care for themselves. The state declared eight of Malaga’s residents to be “feeble minded” and were forcibly detained in the Home for the Feeble-Minded in New Gloucester. The remaining families were paid a small sum and asked to leave. The residents of Malaga moved to the mainland or other islands, though many of these families could never forget Malaga as their home. The state then purchased the island off of Eli Perry to keep people from resettling Malaga after the eviction.

When July of 1912 arrived, the island was abandoned, and the remaining structures, besides the newly built school, were razed. The school was relocated to Lounds Island in Muscongus Bay. Once the island was cleared of structures, the graves of Malaga were exhumed, and the deceased moved to the cemetery behind the Home for the Feeble-Minded. Nothing of Malaga’s people remains on the island and its history was nearly forgotten. For the decades following the Malaga eviction of 1912, surrounding communities remembered the island as an eyesore, and shamed its people. After 100 years, the story is finally being told. The Maine State Museum held an exhibit entailing the truth of Malaga in 2012, and the Maine Coast Heritage Trust purchased the island to keep the land and its history protected. Descendants of Malaga residents have come forward and have shared the stories they were told of the island. Malaga’s future looks bright, and the story of Malaga’s people will continue to be told to those who will hear it.
Pre-Show Activities
Use these activities to spark your students’ imaginations in anticipation of the show!

**The Sounds of Maine**
*Common Core Standards:*
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.5

In the world of *Lizzie Bright*, the sounds of the coast of Maine are very important to the experience of living on or near Malaga. Brainstorm different sounds that students think they might hear if they lived in Phippsburg or on Malaga Island, and how they might reproduce those sounds themselves. Have them break into small groups and create a 10-15 second soundscape with their voices and simple sound effects such as tapping a desks or rustling paper.

**Music Through the Ages**
*Common Core Standards:*
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.1c
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.2

As separate as Lizzie and Turner’s worlds are, one of the common threads between the two is a shared musical history. In this staging of *Lizzie Bright*, music plays an integral part in tying the play together. Some of the songs student may recognize, while others may be new to them. Have students listen to several different versions of *Amazing Grace*. What do they have in common? What makes them different? Why do they think so many different people have recorded this song? What do the different versions tell us about what music means to different people? Have students write about or discuss their thoughts.

Check out page 7 for another pre-show activity where your students can contribute to the lobby display at the show!
Meet the Characters of

Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy

In Phippsburg

Turner Buckminster
A young boy, Turner feels out of place after moving to Phippsburg with his father. Turner’s high strung nature makes it hard for him to make friends, until he meets Lizzie.

Reverend Buckminster
Turner's father, and the new preacher for Phippsburg, Maine. Having recently lost his wife, Reverend Buckminster is struggling to build a relationship with his son while establishing himself in a small town.

Mrs. Cobb
An old woman, Mrs. Cobb teaches Turner piano lessons. She refuses to cow to the pressures of the townspeople, and sees the potential in Turner and Lizzie.

Willis Hurd
Deacon Hurd’s son. About Turner’s age, Willis doesn’t like Turner’s “big city” attitude. He struggles to decide which side is the right side on the Malaga question.

Deacon Hurd
One of the leaders of Phippsburg, Deacon Hurd is heading the movement to clear Malaga of its inhabitants in order to build a resort in town. Thinks the people of Malaga are dirty, stupid, and should be removed.

Sheriff
Working with Deacon Hurd, is trying to clear Malaga of the families that live there so the town can build a resort. Shares similar feelings with Deacon Hurd.

Continued…
On Malaga Island

Lizzie Bright Griffin

A young black girl, Lizzie has lived on Malaga her entire life. She isn't sure what to think of Turner at first, but her bright spirit and feisty attitude soon spark a friendship with Turner and Mrs. Cobb. Lizzie is fighting to protect her home and family from being taken from Malaga.

Reverend Griffin

Lizzie's grandfather, Reverend Griffin is a black man and a spiritual leader on Malaga Island. Old and of somewhat failing health, he helps Turner learn understand Malaga and what it means to the families that live there.

The Tripps

One of the families that lives on the island, the Tripps are a wild bunch that Turner meets when he visits the island. If Malaga is cleared, the Tripps will have nowhere to go.

If you liked Lizzie Bright, you may also like:

- Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, by Mildred P. Taylor
- Elijah of Buxton, by Christopher Paul Curtis
- A Long Way from Chicago and A Year Down Yonder, by Richard Peck
- A Single Shard, by Linda Sue Park
- Moon Over Manifest, by Clare Vanderpool
- Crispin: The Cross of Lead, by Avi
- Hope Was Here, by Joan Bauer

Post-Show Activities
Use these activities to reflect and expand upon your theatre experience!

“Dear Lizzie…” (Reflective Writing-in-Role)
Common Core Standards:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.3
In the play, Turner never gets a chance to say goodbye to Lizzie. Have students write a letter from Turner to Lizzie, telling her the goodbye he never gets to say in the play. What might he want to say to her? Which of their memories might he think is important? Have the students think about how Turner’s relationship with Lizzie changed him, and how he might reflect on that in his letter.

Will You Save Malaga Island? (Poster Campaign/Persuasive Speech/Writing)
Common Core Standards:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.1
In 1912, there was a lot of public and political movement to remove the people living on Malaga Island. Governor Frederick Plaisted even suggested that the island would be best served by burning the buildings down and clearing the island of inhabitants. Have students choose a side of the argument: to protect the settlement or to clear the island. Remember, it doesn’t have to be what they really believe; they can step into role as one of the Phippsburg townspeople and give that perspective! Have them create a poster or series of posters trying to convince the public to support their side. This can even be expanded to a debate between the two sides, with students writing letters or giving speeches from their perspective in the argument.
LEARNING FROM Lizzie Bright: WHAT ARE THE LESSONS OF MALAGA ISLAND?

**Common Core Standards:** CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.2

Although the story about Turner and Lizzie Bright told in this play are fictional, many of the events in the story were real for the people who once called Malaga Island home. What lessons can we learn from the story of Lizzie and Turner, and from what happened to the people on Malaga Island?

Come ready to share your ideas at our post-show talkback, or submit your thoughts on our educational blog (see the URL on the bottom half of the page)!

For more electronic resources, check out our educational blog at:
<http://web.emerson.edu/lizziebright-ed/>

Please direct questions and comments regarding these materials to Sarah Beth (Bee) Weinberg at sarah_weinberg@emerson.edu

Ticketing and field trip questions can be directed to Megan Wygant at megan_wygant@emerson.edu

**THANK YOU FOR JOINING US AT**

**EMERSON STAGE!**