

Prime Stage Theatre

presents...

Tuesdays with Morrie

*Written by Jeffrey Hatcher and
Mitch Albom
Directed by Rich Keitel
February 20-28, 2010
New Hazlett Theater*

Generously funded and by the PA Council on the Arts, the Heinz Endowments, the Laurel Foundation,



and supporters like you!

Tuesdays with Morrie

Resource Guide

Western PA Educators— *The Best of the Best*

Dear Educator,

After an extremely successful and critically acclaimed run of *Our Town*, Prime Stage Theatre is back to bring you the modern classic, *Tuesdays with Morrie*. After sailing to the top of the New York Times Best Sellers List, this book about a man who reconnects with his teacher/mentor, Morrie, as he begins the process of dying hits a chord with anyone involved in the education profession. What impact have we made on a young person's life? How often are we—or are students—aware of the powerful influence we have on not only their content education but on their life education? I would argue that while this awareness can get

lost amidst testing and teenage drama, that each of us can remember a teacher who helped us in invaluable ways to become a better student and person. And now Prime Stage Theatre has a way to recognize those educators like you who are making a difference in the field of adolescent literacy. The first annual "Inspiring Teachers—Inspiring Readers" award will be given in honor of one local teacher who continues to inspire his/her students to read. Nomination forms can be downloaded on our website, www.primestage.com, and will be accepted through February 1, 2010. Self-nominations will be accepted. The selected recipient will receive two (2) season



Our Town, PST 2009

subscriptions to the 2010-11 Prime Stage season, a one-year ALAN (Assembly on Literature for Adolescents) membership, and a special gift. The recipient will be honored at a special reception on Friday, February 26.

~ Alyssa Herzog
Education Director

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Did you know...

- **Prime Stage Theatre** has an online networking community for teachers? Check us out at:

<http://primestage.ning.com>

- **Prime Stage Theatre** wants to hear your thoughts about our production! Visit the Education page of our website, www.primestage.com, to access our teacher and student feedback forms!

Check out what's inside!

Show Summary; 2
Mitch Albom

ALS; 3
Meet the People

Before the Show; 4
Vocabulary

House Rules; 5
During the Show

Post Show Activities 6

Discussion Questions; 7
Additional Resources

Curriculum Connections Corner

Prime Stage Theatre is committed to directly correlating our programs to the PDE Academic Standards. *Tuesdays with Morrie* and this resource guide may be used to address the following curriculum content standards:

Arts and Humanities:
9.1-9.4

**Reading, Writing,
Speaking, & Listening:**
1.1-1.8

History: 8.1-8.4

Economics: 6.2

Family & Consumer

Science: 11.2

**Health, Safety, and
Physical Education:** 10.2



Before the Show

Tuesdays with Morrie in 30 seconds...

As a world-famous, jet-setting sports journalist and husband, Mitch Albom kept moving forward with his life at a break-neck pace. He had little time to keep—or for that matter even think about—the promise he had made to his esteemed sociology professor, Morrie Schwartz, on the day of his graduation: “to keep in touch.” Since his graduation from Brandeis University, Mitch tried but eventually gave up his dream of becoming a jazz musician and instead took up writing about sports. He moved to Detroit, met all the people on top of the world, and craved the materialistic lifestyle of those he met. Yet Morrie stayed right in Waltham, Massachusetts. And while Mitch was fail-

ing to stay in touch, Morrie still taught new and fresh faces every fall, changing lives one biting comment at a time. Morrie’s perspective changed drastically, however, when he was diagnosed with ALS, or Lou Gherig’s disease. Since the diagnosis, Morrie vowed to live through the process of dying, recording his wisdom on sheets of paper. His loving attention to dying caught the eye of the media, from newspapers to *Nightline* with Ted Koppel. And it was during one of these television airings that Mitch stumbled upon his old, dear professor. Morrie’s humor and sensibility compelled Mitch to finally keep his promise to Morrie. While he didn’t know it upon his first visit, these returns every Tuesday to the home of his former professor would become private tutoring sessions, a last class—a

class about life. After Mitch loses his job during a newspaper strike, he vows to capture every ounce of wisdom and advice Morrie had about love and marriage, death and grief, and everything in between. Mitch recorded their conversations and wrote the book as a testament to the man who was always “A Teacher to the Last.”

...or less!

Morrie Schwartz, a beloved professor at Brandeis University, teaches his former student, Mitch Albom, to “not assume that it’s too late to get involved” in another’s life. Through revisiting his professor every Tuesday until his death, Mitch is given another chance to learn and relearn what is important in life: “love always wins.”

Mitch Albom—The Author

Mitch Albom was born on May 23, 1958 to a middleclass family in Passaic, New Jersey. Interested in the arts, Mitch turned first to cartooning and then to music. He taught himself how to play piano and would perform with numerous bands in high school and college. He attended Brandeis University, and it was here that he was mentored by the man who would later so drastically change his life—Morrie Schwartz. Mitch earned a bachelor’s degree in sociology in 1979. After graduation, he went to New York City where he pursued his dream of becoming a jazz musician. After volunteering for a local newspaper in Queens, however, he discovered yet another passion—journalism. Mitch went back for his masters in journalism and business at Columbia University while still playing the piano to help pay for school. By the mid-1980s with two graduate degrees under his belt, his freelancing work landed him a job at the *Detroit Free Press*. From here, his real-life successes mirror those he tells about in his book. Mitch won several awards



from the Sports Editors of America (APSE) and continues to be a regular on ESPN and other TV shows. He also cultivates his love for

music, having written songs with Warren Zevon and the music for an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie. 1995 was an important year for Mitch. He not only married his wife Janine, but also re-connected with Morrie. Since then, Mitch has written numerous other bestsellers, including *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, *One More Day*, and *Have a Little Faith*. Mitch also puts into practice the lessons he learned from Morrie. He is the founder of three large charities: The Dream Fund, which helps disadvantaged kids become involved in the arts; A Time to Help, which sponsors monthly volunteer project around Detroit; and S.A.Y. Detroit, which funds homelessness initiatives.

Jeffrey Hatcher— The Playwright

Jeffrey Hatcher grew up in Steubenville, OH. First he aspired to be an actor, but after testing his ground in New York City, he decided to turn to playwriting instead.

His work is also regularly featured at City Theatre here in Pittsburgh, PA. His other plays include *Three Viewings*, *Compleat Female Stage Beauty*, *Scotland Road*, *To Fool the Eye*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *The Turn of the Screw*. His screenplays include *Stage Beauty* (2004), *Casanova* (2005), and *The Duchess* (2008).

Here’s why Jeffrey said he was drawn to adapting *Tuesdays*: “My father had died what they call a ‘bad death’ a few years before. I didn’t think I had done for my father what I could have when he was dying...The book’s reminder that there is always the possibility for change, of rebirth and regeneration held great sway” (Seattle Rep Study Guide).



ALS

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that causes motor neurons—which reach from the brain to the spinal cord and throughout the body's muscles—to wither and die. Often referred to as "Lou Gehrig's Disease," named after the famous baseball player who suffered from the disease, ALS leads to the brain's inability to initiate and control muscle movement. In later stages, this loss of muscle movement can make a patient totally paralyzed.

In the U.S., about 5,600 people are diagnosed with ALS each year, or about 15 new cases every day. Diagnosing people can be very hard, however, as the initial symptoms of ALS can be quite varied in different people. Some experience weakness in their hands, trip over the carpet, or notice a change in their speech patterns. But the hallmark initial sign of ALS is some form of muscle weakness, a symptom occurring in about 60% of the patients. Just like how the onset and initial symptoms of ALS may differ markedly from one patient to the next, the progression of ALS is also highly variable. Although the mean survival time with ALS is three to five years, many people live five, ten, or more years.

Scientists are not entirely sure what causes ALS nor can they determine who is most at risk. While 20% more men get the disease than women, 93% of the people in the United States ALS Database are Caucasian. While the average age of diagnosis is 55, ALS can strike any one of any age of any ethnicity. There is not a cure or treatment for ALS; however, there is one FDA approved drug, riluzole, that has been shown to modestly slow the progression of ALS.

Prime Stage Theatre is partnering with the local Pittsburgh chapter of the ALS society. Staff from the local chapter will be attending rehearsals to ensure the authenticity of the actor's portrayal of the illness. For more information, please visit the national ALS Association Website at www.alsa.org or the Pittsburgh chapter's website at www.cure4als.org.



Western Pennsylvania Chapter

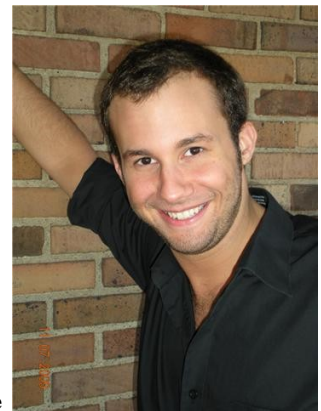
Meet the People

Character: **Morrie Schwartz**

Actor: **Robert Haley** has appeared at many regional theaters in Canada and the US, including the Stratford and Shaw Festivals. He was awarded Best Actor recognition by the Toronto Theatre Alliance for performances in *Death and the Maiden* and *Singer*. Here in Pittsburgh he has been seen in productions by Quantum Theatre, Pittsburgh Irish and Classical, Jewish Theatre of Pittsburgh, and the Playhouse Rep. Feature film credits include: a co-starring role with Lou Diamond Phillips in *Hangman*; *Fast Company* directed by David Cronenberg; and *The Shawshank Redemption*. On TV, Robert has appeared in featured roles in the miniseries *Joan of Arc* and the series *Street Legal* and *The Avro Arrow*. Recently he worked on the films *Smart People* and *The Homecoming*, which was filmed in Pittsburgh.

Character: **Mitch Albom**

Actor: **Justin Fortunato** is a Junior at Point Park University pursuing his BFA in Musical Theatre. Point Park Credits include: Gordon Miller in *Room Service (Point Park Conservatory)* Creon in *Antigone (PPC)*, Luther Rosser in *Parade (PPC)*, Boris Adziniznadze in *Can-Can (PPC)*, Father Frog in *A Year With Frog and Toad (Playhouse Jr.)*, Gander in *Charlotte's Web (Playhouse Jr.)*. Other roles include Man # 2 in *Songs for a New World (Seton Pioneer Theatre)*, Javert in *Les Mis (Seton Pioneer Theatre)*, Sweeney Todd in *Sweeney Todd (Carnivale Theatrics)*.



Post Show Chat Session—come with questions!

After each matinee, audience members will be given an opportunity to chat with both the characters in the show—Morrie and Mitch—and with the actors themselves. Students should come prepared with questions for both, or they can submit them to the Education Director at aherzog@primestage.com. Please include first name and school in email.

Pre-Show Activities

Prime Stage's mission, *bringing literature to life*, encompasses not only students' interaction with a literary piece of theatre, but also with the text itself. Prime Stage encourages all teachers to incorporate our production's text (in its original or dramatized form) into the curriculum. The activities below presume that students have read the text.

- Adapting a fiction or a non-fiction text to a play can be a tough task. How do you **show** a character's journey instead of **tell** about it? Have students try their hand at adapting a small section of the book, *Tuesdays with Morrie*. Choose one of the books "lessons," and have students identify the following: the most important information that is relayed in that lesson, the pre-existing dialogue of that particular lesson, the conflict, (man v. man, man v. self, man v. society), the characters, and the setting. After finding this information, students should then re-write the lesson in dramatic format using dialogue and stage directions only. Students should feel free to add additional dialogue as they see fit in order to convey necessary information. Then ask students to share aloud their adaptations with one another and discuss the different choices made by different students and how it affected the meaning of the scene they created. Also discuss the consequences of adapting a novel or book to a play—how "true" does it stay to the book and should it even have to stay true? What is lost and gained through adapting a story to a play?
PDE Academic Standards 1.2-1.4, 9.1
- Discuss with students the idea of an **aphorism**: a short saying embodying a general truth or astute observation. Have students hunt through the text for some of Morrie's many aphorisms. Next, students should choose one aphorism and write a 1-2 page essay on why they personally connect to it, why they believe in that aphorism, and how it has or could impact their life. *Extension activity*: students use an aphorism as inspiration for a piece of poetry or artwork. *PDE Academic Standards 1.2-1.4*
- Have students research the Kubler-Ross stages of grief (www.grief.com). Students can present their findings in a desired format: poster, essay, diagram, oral presentation, etc. Next have students go through the book *Tuesdays with Morrie* and identify different stages that Morrie and Mitch go in and out of. Discuss with students their findings. How accurate are these stages? How do the characters move from one stage to another? *Extension Activity*: Have students write about a time when they have grieved and to think about what stages they went through in dealing with their loss. How did they behave and why? *PDE Academic Standards 1.3-1.5, 1.8*

A quick quote from Morrie to ponder:

Have you ever really had a teacher? One who saw you as a raw but precious thing, a jewel that, with wisdom, could be polished to a proud shine? If you are lucky enough to find your way to such teachers, you will always find your way back. Sometimes it is only in your head. Sometimes it is right alongside their beds (192).

CARPE DIEM (or Seize the Day)

The little bluebird on his shoulder that Morrie refers to many times in the book is a reflection of the ideal "Carpe Diem". The Latin phrase originated in the poem *Odes 1.11* by the Roman poet Horace. In what ways do you "seize the day?"

Say that again?

On average, a high-school graduate has a vocabulary of 12,000-20,000 words. A college graduate might have closer to 25,000. One can only guess how many words someone like Morrie—a wise old college professor—had in his brain.

Have students record unfamiliar words as they encounter them in reading the book. Students should then look up definitions in a dictionary. Vocabulary activities could include a word wall, word ball, or new sentence generation.

PDE Academic Standards 1.1, 1.7-1.8



- Biopsy
- Aphorism
- Atrophied
- Insidious
- Imminent
- Antidote
- Lavalieri

- Laurels
- Revel
- Mogul
- Stagnated
- Alabaster
- Stoic
- Innately
- Façade
- Buoyant
- Demise
- Insatiable
- Atrophied
- Teeming
- Agnostic
- Egotistical
- Ambivalence
- Clamoring
- Nostalgia

House rules (...and we don't mean your mama's house!)

It goes without saying that when most children today hear the word “theatre” they think “oh, MOVIE theatre.” And with that thought comes all of those things that we do at movie theatres: eat popcorn, drink noisily from soda cups, put feet on the seat, text message—and the list goes on from there. But live theatre is just that: it's LIVE with LIVE HUMANS who react and respond to the audience, something that we at Prime Stage think is the beauty of the theatre experience. Because of this, live theatre requires a higher level of respect between the audience and performer in order for the experience to be a positive one.

Please review the following “house rules” with your students prior to attending *Tuesdays with Morrie*:

—Please stay together with your group and wait for the ushers to help you all find your seats.

—Please turn all cell phones and pagers **completely off** before the performance. If you are texting during the performance, you will be asked to leave.

—No photography or video taping.

—No eating, drinking, or chewing gum during the performance or inside the theatre house.

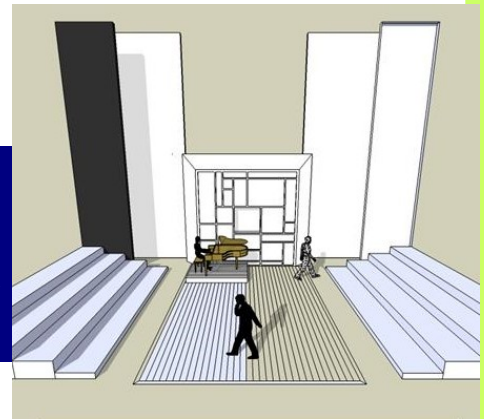
—While we encourage active listening and appropriate responses to the play such as laughing or clapping, please do not talk to your neighbors during the performance.

—Please stay in your seat until the intermission or the end of the show.

—Be polite and attentive. Show your appreciation by clapping—the actors love to see how much you enjoyed the show!

PDE Academic Standards 1.6, 9.1

Johnmichael Bohach, the scenic designer for *Tuesdays with Morrie*, drew upon one prevailing image from the book—the Japanese Maple. This led him to investigate Eastern aesthetic traditions, including meditation rooms and the Shoji screen, which gained prominence and popularity in the United States after renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright brought them back from Japan and began using them as a vital element in creating a “whole living environment”. From the rendering to the right, how does the set make you feel? Does it fit with your interpretation of the book?



I would rather be attacked than unnoticed. For the worst thing you can do to an author is to be silent as to his works. An attack upon a town is a bad thing; but starving it is still even worse. ~author Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

Read the following questions before the show.

Think about the questions as you're watching the show and write your answers in a notebook or journal during intermission or on the bus ride home.

Write a critique of the show based on your responses.

PDE Academic Standards 9.1-9.4, 1.4-1.5

1. **Actor choices**—How did they move and speak? Did they seem like people we know? How did they relate to other characters?
2. **Designer choices**—What design element captured your attention the most—the set, costumes, lights, or sound—and why? How did the design elements work together to support the entire production? What choices did the designers make in materials, colors, intensity, detail, etc.? Were the design elements more descriptive or suggestive? What symbols did you find in the design elements?
3. **Director choices**—What was the style, pace, and rhythm of the play? What stage pictures helped to tell the story? How did the

During the Show

- director unify all the elements of the production?
4. **Interpretation**—Did the director make a statement about life now? How did the characters, design, and play make you feel? What did the play mean to you? What might it mean to others?
5. **Evaluation**—Why do you suppose the playwright wrote the play? Why was the play produced now? When were moments where the storytelling was very clear? When were moments you were confused about the story? Who would enjoy the play and why?
6. ***Tuesdays with Morrie* specific questions**—How did the stage adaptation successfully reflect the book? How were the transitions between scenes shown?

Post-Show Activities

1. **The Varieties of Death:** The view of death in different cultures and religions varies widely, from a finite end point to a beginning of everlasting life. Have your students investigate the philosophy of death in different world religions, such as Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, Humanism, Sikhism, and Hinduism. Students should conduct research on both the beliefs about death and the rituals which surround death. Students can then report on their findings in numerous ways—essay, handbook, pamphlet, etc. *PDE Academic Standards 1.5, 1.8, 8.1-8.4*
2. **Bridges:** Morrie often referred to himself as a bridge, a person who is in between life and death, which makes him useful to others as a tool to understand both. Have students brainstorm other literary, historical, political or religious figures who have also served this purpose, who have left a legacy through both their life and their death. Next, have students choose one figure and research that person, focusing on their words and actions that still live in people's memories. Students can present their research in numerous ways—essay, poster, webpage, etc. *PDE Academic Standards 1.5, 1.8, 8.1-8.4*
3. **Dying in America:** Surveys indicate that, if given the option, over 70% of Americans would choose to die in their homes surrounded by family and friends. The financial and emotional burden on family members can sometimes not make this viable. Have students investigate end-of-life care options here in America for “anticipated” deaths, including at-home family care, hospice care, and nursing homes. Students should focus on finding statistics about each and should generate a list of pros and cons for each. *Extension Activity 1:* Break the students up into groups and hold a debate that lobbies for each type of care. *Extension 2:* Have students write a personal essay on which option they would like for themselves and/or their parents and the anticipated effects on themselves and their family members. *PDE Academic Standards 1.6, 1.8, 11.2*
4. **Create Your Own Culture:** Morrie believed, “You have to be strong enough to say if the culture doesn't work, don't buy it. Create your own.” First discuss with students how can people do this and in what ways, if any, this book helped to do that. Then ask students to brainstorm parts of their culture that work and don't work. What aspects of your culture would you change if given the opportunity? How could these changes be implemented? Lastly, ask student to do exactly what Morrie said: using the parts of their own culture they don't like, they should create their own. Have students write about what they have learned from Morrie's teachings and outline a new set of cultural values by which they will begin leading their lives. *Reflection questions:* How can culture be individualistic, and how is it shared? How do you participate in “buying” culture? Are you what you “buy”? *PDE Academic Standards 6.3, 8.3*
5. **Conflict Resolution Role-Play:** Discuss with students the practical side of Morrie's advice: “Only an open heart will allow you to float equally between everyone.” How can we allow ourselves to have an open heart? What does Morrie mean by “floating equally” between everyone, and is this an attainable goal? How could this advice be useful the next time you're in a social or other situation where you feel out of place or uncomfortable? Next, have students role-play in partners one of the following scenarios while taking into consideration Morrie's “open heart” rule. *PDE Academic Standards 10.2*

Scenario #1: Partner A is in the “popular crowd” at school. Partner B is the new kid at school. B says something that, while acceptable back at his old school, is not acceptable to the “popular” kids. A's friends want to put B in his place, but A feels uncomfortable. What does A say to his friends and to B? How does B respond?

Scenario #2: Partner A is a student riding home from school on public transportation. Partner B is an elderly person who sits down next to A on the bus. A notices that B has been crying. B notices that A is sighing a lot. Then, as people are clamoring to get on the bus, someone knocks into B and B begins to cry again. How does A respond? How does B respond?

Scenario #3: Partner A and Partner B are two students who are rushing to get to their next period, and they bump into each other in the hallway. A apologize profusely, but B gets very angry and is about to throw a book at A. How does A respond? What is done to defuse the situation?

Discussion Questions

1. Did your opinion about Mitch change as the book went on? In what way?
2. Who do you think got more out of their Tuesday meetings, Mitch or Morrie? In what ways? How do you think each would answer this question?
3. Discuss Morrie's criticisms of Mitch throughout the book. Do you think Morrie should have been tougher on him? Easier?
4. Does this book make Morrie's death a public event? If so, how is it similar to other public deaths we've experienced as a society? How is it different?
5. Mitch made a list of topics about which he wanted Morrie's insight and clarity. In what ways would your list be the same or different?
6. To the very end, Mitch arrived at Morrie's house with food. Discuss the importance of this ritual.
7. Would Morrie's lessons have carried less weight if Mitch and Peter hadn't resumed contact by the book's end?

PDE Academic Standards 1.3, 1.6

Resources for your Classroom

BOOKS and RECOMMENDED READING

- Albom, Mitch. *The Five People You Meet In Heaven*. Hyperion, 2003.
- Angelou, Maya. *Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now*. NY: Bantam, 1994.
- Didon, Joan. *The Year of Magical Thinking*. NY: Knopf, 2005.
- Fulgham, Robert. *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. NY: Ballantine, 2003.
- Gaines, Ernest. *A Lesson Before Dying*. NY: Random House, Inc., 1993.
- Kubler-Ross, Elizabeth. *On Death and Dying*. London: Routledge, 1969.
- Schwartz, Morrie. *Morrie: In His Own Words*. Delta, 1997.

VIDEOS

- **Videos can be found in the Carnegie Library system.****
- Morrie: Lessons on Living*. 59 minutes. ABC News Productions, 2005, VHS/DVD.
- Tuesdays with Morrie*. 89 Minutes. Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2003, DVD.

WEBSITES

- www.alsa.org
- www.foronemoreday.com
- www.seattlerep.org/Learn/Youth/StudyGuideArchives.aspx
- <http://repstl.org/studyguides/>
- <http://www.randomhouse.com/features/morrie/guide.html>

Prime Stage Theatre

Where Literature Comes to Life

new hazlett theater
center for the performing arts

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Words of Wisdom from Morrie

- Don't assume that it's too late to get involved (18).
- The most important thing in life is to learn how to give out love and to let it come in (52).
- Sometimes you can't believe what you see; you have to believe what you feel (61).
- Be compassionate. And take responsibility for each other. If we only learned these lessons, this world would be so much a better place (163).

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK!

Teacher and students can now fill out their own feedback forms on Prime Stage's website: <http://www.primestage.com/education.htm>. Fill out a survey and be entered to win 2 free tickets to the next Prime Stage production!