

# BUNGEE JUMP BEAR TRAP

A VIGNETTE PLAY IN ONE ACT BY  
*Lindsay Price*



**CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDE**

## **Introduction**

Risk comes in many forms (skateboarding without a helmet) and fears (raising your hand in class). There are dumb risks (don't bungee jump into a bear trap) and smart risks. Sometimes you need to leap without knowing what the outcome will be.

## **Playwright Bio**

Lindsay Price is the Vice President of Theatrefolk Inc. and the co-creator of the Drama Teacher Academy. She has been involved with theatre education for over 25 years as a playwright, adjudicator, workshop instructor, resource writer, curriculum supervisor, professional development creator and keynote speaker. Her plays have been performed in schools all over the world with over 1000 productions a year.

## **Synopsis**

In this one-act vignette play, characters face their fears and discover what it means to take risks. They are challenged to take a risk and some may try while others fear the danger that comes with it. Some characters prefer to stay in their comfort zone, fearing what could happen if they take a risk. They may even try to stop others from taking risks. Others thrive when taking risks and are able to see the benefits that could come from it. What does it mean to take a risk? What happens when we take risks? How do we overcome the fear of taking risks? Watch as characters challenge each other when discovering what is a risk and what is a hazard.

## **Characters**

**GAM [A]**

**PLU [A]**

**SIB [A]**

**PIT [A]**

**NESS [A]**

**STAB [A]**

**LYE [A]**

**LIA [A]**

**RIL [A]**

**TUNI [A]**

**INDIGO [A]**

**CERTA [A]**

**PROS [A]**

**DAN [A]**

**HAZ [A]**

**EXPO [A]**

**ALL [A]**

**LOUD OFFSTAGE VOICE [A]**

## **Themes**

Adolescence, Friendship, Gender issues, Happiness, Individuality, Obedience, Overcoming odds, Peer pressure, Personal responsibility, Self-image, Morality

## **Pre-Read Questions**

- ★ Do you enjoy taking risks? Why or why not?
- ★ What is the biggest risk you've taken so far?
- ★ How do you define safety?
- ★ What does it mean to "play it safe"?

- ★ Name a time when a risk paid off.
- ★ Have you ever faced your fears? What did it feel like?
- ★ What does the title of the play make you think of? What images come to mind?

## **Pre-Read Activities**

### **Risk Assessment**

- ★ Tell students to line up in one horizontal line with each student standing next to the other. With this activity students will develop an understanding of their own risk assessment or how they define risk/danger.
- ★ Tell students you are going to call out different scenarios (e.g., throwing snowballs, play fighting, going skydiving). As you call out scenarios, ask students to take a step for each time they think there is danger in the activity. If the student thinks the scenario is super risky or dangerous, have them take bigger steps. If they think there is minimal risk they can take a small step. If the student believes there is no risk to the activity they should stay in their spot.
- ★ Remind students that there are no wrong or right answers and that they should answer each question for themselves, no matter what other students are doing.
- ★ Once you are done calling out scenarios have students look at where they are standing. Then have them reflect. The reflection can be either a group discussion or a journal if students prefer not to share their answers.
  - » What did you learn about your relationship to risk?
  - » How did you determine which scenarios were the riskiest?
  - » How did you feel each time you took a step?
  - » Do you enjoy taking risks? Why or why not?
  - » Do you think there are any benefits to taking risks?

## Breaking Rules

- ★ Tell students you are going to play a series of playground games (e.g., Red Light Green Light, Simon Says, Mother May I).
- ★ As you play the game, tell students they can decide if they want to break the rules, but they have to make sure not to get caught. Only you as the teacher can call someone out. Avoid having students tell you when someone is out. It will be easier to have one judge than to manage everyone shouting out. If a student gets caught they are out of the game.
- ★ Once you play some games discuss:
  - » What did it feel like to break the rules? Did you enjoy it? Why or why not?
  - » How did you decide when to break a rule?
  - » Were you nervous when you broke a rule? Why or why not?
  - » Once you were out did you see anyone break the rules? How did you feel when you saw it happen?

## Taking a Risk

- ★ Put students into pairs and tell them to pick who is Person A and who is Person B. Tell them Person A has to create a scenario where they want to take a risk. Person B is against taking risks.
- ★ Person A must get Person B to agree to take the risk. What tactics do they use? How do they get what they want?
- ★ Once students complete their scenario, have them switch so everyone gets to experience being Person A and Person B.
- ★ After everyone is done, discuss:
  - » What was it like to be Person A? What about Person B?
  - » Which was easier for you? Which was more challenging? Why?
  - » How did you work to get what you wanted?

- » As Person B was it hard to say no to Person A? Did you want to take the risk? Why or why not?

## **Title Tableaux**

- ★ Put students into groups of four and tell them they are going to be creating three tableaux based on the title of the play. The first tableau will illustrate Bungee Jump. The second tableau will illustrate Bear Trap. The third tableau will combine the two tableaux into one.
- ★ Remind students that they can be metaphorical with the tableaux. It should not showcase literal bungee jumping, but rather what Bungee Jump and Bear Trap mean to them.
- ★ The final tableau can include elements of both tableaux or what inspires the students about both tableaux but should be its own unique creation. It should not be the students doing the same tableau they did for Bungee Jump and Bear Trap.
- ★ Once students are done creating their tableaux, have them showcase their work to the class.
- ★ After everyone presents, discuss:
  - » What did you notice about the tableaux you saw? What is something that stood out?
  - » Was it difficult to interpret what Bungee Jump and Bear Trap meant for you? Why or why not?
  - » What challenges did you face when creating tableaux? How did you overcome them?
  - » What was it like working in a group to combine all your visions into the tableaux?
  - » What was your favorite part of this activity? Why?

## Hazard Improv

- ★ Tell students they are going to come up one at a time and you are going to give them an object. Once the student knows their object they must improv for 30–60 seconds about why that object is a hazard.
- ★ Objects should be silly and fun (e.g., pool noodle, feather, cotton ball). If you do not have examples of the physical objects you can say the object and have students imagine they are holding it.
- ★ Along with this, if you run out of objects you can repeat objects, but remind students not to preplan what they are going to say.
- ★ After each student does their improv discuss:
  - » Do you enjoy improv? Why or why not?
  - » Why is it important to make big choices in improv?
  - » What stood out to you about any of the improvs you saw?
  - » Was there any improv that made you believe that object was hazardous? How so?

## **Close Reading Analysis Questions**

Close reading is an analysis tool. Students read a text multiple times for in-depth comprehension, striving to understand not only **what** is being said but **how** it's being said and **why**. Close reading takes a student from story and character to drawing conclusions on author intention. Close reading prompts students to flex their thinking skills by:

- ★ Teaching students to engage with a text.
- ★ Teaching students to be selective. We can't highlight everything in the text, only the most important elements.
- ★ Teaching students to make educated decisions. All conclusions and opinions must be backed up with a text example.

Have students analyze *Bungee Jump Bear Trap* individually or in groups, using the following text-dependent questions:

**Read One: What is happening?**

1. Why is a pool noodle considered a hazard?
2. How does Lia define her life?
3. What are Tuni and Ril scared of?
4. How does Indigo describe adventure?
5. Who is the most excited to bungee jump?
6. What color does everyone like?
7. Why is a puddle dangerous?
8. What is the protection pad?
9. Why don't Ness's parents like Lia's mom?
10. What dance do Indigo and Expo do together?
11. What does Tuni confess to Haz?
12. What risk does Indigo get the whole group to be a part of?

**Read Two: How does it happen?**

1. What is hyperbole? Do you think any of the scenarios the playwright uses are hyperbole? Why or why not?
2. How does the first scene set the tone for the rest of the play?
3. Lia uses metaphors to describe her life. In one or two sentences use a metaphor to describe your life.
4. How does the playwright break the fourth wall? Cite an example from the text to support your answer.



5. How do you think the playwright decided the order of the vignettes? Would you order them in a different way? Why or why not?
6. Pick one of the scenes. How do the characters contrast one another? How does this contrast help forward the text?
7. How does the playwright use music/sounds to create transitions in the play? Why do you think the playwright chose certain music/sounds?
8. Why do you think Gam and Pit are the characters to always do the risk assessment?
9. The playwright allows students to change their characters' names, except for Indigo. Why do you think Indigo must remain the same actor and the same name?

### **Read Three: Why does it happen?**

1. Why do you think the playwright named the play *Bungee Jump Bear Trap*? Would you come up with a different title? Why or why not?
2. How does the author want you to respond to the play?
3. What is the playwright trying to say about taking risks? Cite the text to support your answer.
4. After reading this play, do you believe it is possible to play it too safe? Why or why not?

### **Post-Read Questions**

- ★ What is one question you still have about the play?
- ★ Which character resonated with you the most and why?
- ★ Do you recognize yourself in any of the characters?
- ★ Why is it important to take risks?
- ★ What did you learn about yourself after reading this play?

- ★ Did any of the scenes make you think about how you play things safe?
- ★ What was your biggest takeaway from the play?

## **Post-Read Activities**

### **Risk Original Monologue**

- ★ Using the format of the vignette monologues used in the play, like in scenes two and six, have students write their own original monologue about taking risks. What risks do they dream of taking? What scares them? What stops them from taking risks? What risk did they take that paid off?
- ★ Monologues should be about half a page.
- ★ Once students are done writing, take volunteers who would like to share their monologue with the class.

### **Exploring Tone**

- ★ Put students into groups of four and assign each group a vignette.
- ★ Tell them they are going to read and analyze the vignette in their group. Ask students to focus on the playwright's tone and voice in the vignette.
  - » How does the playwright's voice come through the text?
  - » What tone is the playwright using? How does that affect how you read the vignette?
- ★ After analyzing the vignette, have students go up and perform it. As they perform, tell them that you are going to shout out different tones for the vignette and they should change the way they portray their character based on the tone. For example, the vignette might have a dramatic tone and you can tell them to switch it to happy.

- ★ After each group performs, discuss:
  - » How does tone help tell a story? How does the tone of the vignette inform your character choices?
  - » Was it hard to switch into different tones for the story? Did switching tones affect the mood? How so?

### Write Your Own Scene

- ★ Put students into groups and tell them they're going to write their own 1–2-minute scene that they would include in *Bungee Jump Bear Trap* as a vignette.
- ★ Once students finish writing, have them perform their scenes.
- ★ After the performances discuss:
  - » What was it like writing a scene for *Bungee Jump Bear Trap*? How did you create your own scene? What inspired your scene?
  - » What stood out in the other scenes you saw?
  - » What was the hardest part of this process? How did you overcome it?
  - » Did you enjoy being a playwright? Why or why not?
  - » What did you learn about yourself as you wrote the scene?

### Poster Design

- ★ Based on what you've read, design a poster for the play. How would you visualize the play in a single image that would attract an audience? Would you use a box? What box would it be? What font would you use for the title? What information other than the title would you include?

### Character Costume Design

- ★ Choose a character and design their costume.

- ★ Based on their personality, what would they wear? What pieces of clothing define them? What colors and textures would they choose?

## Staged Scenes

- ★ Divide students into small groups and assign each group a scene from the play, or a short moment within a scene.
- ★ Give students time to rehearse.
- ★ Each group will present their moment.
- ★ Discuss the scenes afterward.
  - » How did seeing the scenes acted out differ from reading them?
  - » Why is it important to act a scene as well as read it?
  - » Did any of the presentations offer a different interpretation of the characters than yours?

## Safety vs. Risk Teams

- ★ Put students into two teams. One team will be the safety group that tries to make everything safe. The other group will be the risk group that creates danger.
- ★ Have the risk group go first by presenting the safety group with a risky scenario. They can present the scenario in a scene, tableau, drawing, etc. Allow students to get creative when creating their risk.
- ★ Then have the safety team go over and try to make the risk safer. For example, they can add or adjust things to the risk to make it safer.
- ★ Once each team goes, have them work together to develop a compromise between the risk and the safety. Remind students that there is no winning team, but rather, they should be working together so that each team is happy.
- ★ Once you have done this once you can have students switch teams to experience what the other side is like.

- ★ After the activity is done discuss:
  - » Which team did you enjoy more? Why?
  - » What challenges did you face when trying to compromise? How did you overcome these challenges?
  - » What was the biggest disagreement between the teams?
  - » How did you feel when the other team added to or adjusted what you did to make it safer or riskier?

## **Character Backstory**

- ★ Assign students one of the characters in the play. Because there are only 15 characters you can give out a character more than once.
- ★ Tell students they are going to create a backstory for their character. How did their character become the way they are? How do they feel about safety and risks? What is their home life like? Who influenced the way they view safety and risks?
- ★ Once students are done creating a backstory, pick volunteers to share.

## **Playwright Process**

*Playwright Lindsay Price talks about her process writing Bungee Jump Bear Trap. Have students read and then discuss/reflect on how their perception of the writing process compares to the Playwright's.*

### **What was the inspiration for writing this play?**

I was seeing and hearing about a lack of risk-taking in schools — students not wanting to take risks (say in a scene or with a character) because of the fear of not presenting as right and adults not wanting to have available any opportunities for students to take any risks because they feared the consequences more. Add to that, risk and the fear of risk is excellent for character development.

## **What challenges did you encounter during the writing process?**

There's a fine line between making light of risk-taking activities that are dangerous and downplaying all risk to the point that it's neutralized. Finding a balance was important and what I spent the most time on.

## **As a playwright, what is your favourite moment/character in the play and why?**

I think Lia's monologue is very poignant. I think Indigo is inspiring and someone I want to be when I grow up. But Stab's monologue mid-jump with a bike is my most favourite moment. It's a philosophical take on someone who continues to take risks, even though they know the inevitable conclusion is crashing.

## **Which is harder for you, first drafts or rewrites?**

I adore first drafts. The act of getting everything on the page without judgement is freeing and fun. I fully embrace messy first drafts with lots of plot holes and things that need to be solved. And then you actually have to solve those problems in the rewrites which is always more a challenge for me.

## **What's your writing process like?**

I love to write initial ideas down in notebooks. I always start with pen and paper. I keep writing notes and ideas and characters until I feel that pen and paper is actually getting in the way of my progress. That's when I know I'm ready to move to the computer and start compiling a first draft. I often start my writing process thinking about the play and letting it roam in my head for a while. So after thinking and taking notes I'm ready to dive into something more tangible.

## **What engages you about playwrighting?**

I love seeing characters live a story and I love watching it happen right in front of me (rather than be distant from the experience through a movie screen). It's an intimate experience and that is very engaging!