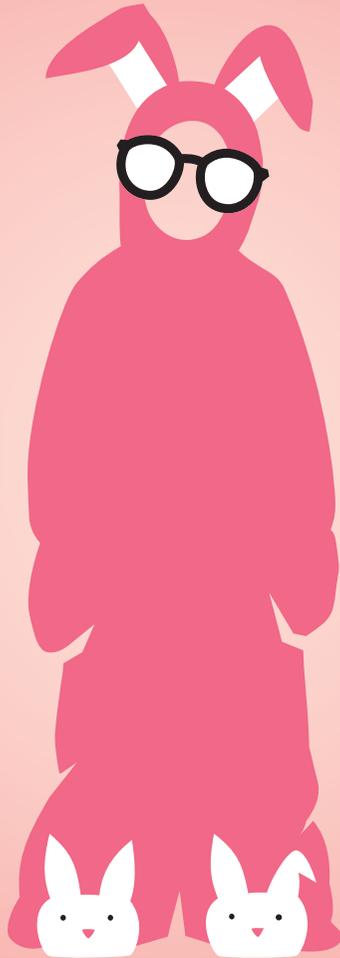


Grades

2 - 5



# A CHRISTMAS STORY STUDENT GUIDE



# TRIPLE DOG DARES (GONE WRONG)

“ So you’re sayin’ if I put my tongue on this post it’ll stick. ”

— FLICK

One of the most iconic moments of *A Christmas Story* is when Ralphie’s friend Flick is triple dog dared to stick his tongue to a frozen pole. It’s so monumental, in fact, the people of Hammond, Indiana (the hometown of Jean Shepherd, co-writer of the original movie) recently put up a statue of poor Flick stuck to a pole!

But Flick isn’t alone! Many others have experienced the embarrassment (and a little pain) of getting their tongues stuck to frozen poles:

- **Oklahoma** – A fifth grade girl’s brothers dared her to stick her tongue to a pole and she did—two years in a row! Her school bus driver left her at the bus stop because he was running late.
- **Indiana** – When police came to free a 10-year-old boy whose tongue had frozen to a pole, the officer said, “You’d think everybody in the country had seen *A Christmas Story* by now.”
- **Idaho** – Fire fighters rescued a middle school boy who’d gotten his tongue stuck, and in addition to the glass of warm water, they brought hot cocoa and cookies for the unlucky student.
- **South Dakota** – A nine-year-old boy wanted to mimic *A Christmas Story*, but couldn’t find any pole, so he got his tongue stuck to a frozen metal dumpster instead. Yuck!
- **Germany** – Sticking tongues to frozen poles isn’t just an American phenomenon. A 16-year-old boy in Germany ripped off part of his tongue this way—OUCH! It’s dangerous!



◀ *Flick (Cole Emerine) accepts the triple dog dare in Cleveland Play House’s 2013 production of A Christmas Story.*

So why do our tongues get stuck to frozen poles in the first place?

Tongues stick to poles when the moisture on your tongue freezes solid. The temperature has to be below 32 degrees Fahrenheit for this to happen. The lower the temperature of the metal, the quicker your tongue will stick.

Please, DON'T stick your tongue to frozen metal! Instead, try the experiment below!

### TO DO:

There are many cool experiments that can only be conducted when it is below 32° Fahrenheit (0° Celsius). For a safe way to see if something will stick to a cold pole, moisten a washcloth with cool water. Take the washcloth outside, make sure your own hands are covered and try to stick the washcloth to a metal pole. Did it stay? If it did stay, how could you remove the washcloth from the pole? If it did not stay, what are other ways you could get the washcloth to stick to the pole?



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## FESTIVAL OF TREES

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sponsored through the generosity of corporate and community leaders, Festival of Trees raises support for CPH's artistic and educational programming, while making the season bright for the Northeast Ohio community.

# CRACKING THE CHRISTMAS CODE

“The most important thing was the decoder pin. My simulated gold decoder pin. Now the door would be opened! Now the mysteries would be solved!”

— RALPH

In *A Christmas Story*, Ralphie has a Little Orphan Annie decoder pin. A **decoder**, like Ralphie’s pin, is a tool that helps you figure out (or “crack”) a code. A code is a system of words, letters, or even pictures that have a secret meaning. Codes are used to keep things secret!

## TO DO:

Use this decoder key to help Ralphie crack the code for this special message from Little Orphan Annie!



A B C D E F G H I J K L M



N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

# ONLY YOU CAN STOP BULLYING!

“ Every neighborhood had them. The bully of legend in Hohman, Indiana was Scut Farkas. ”

— RALPH

In *A Christmas Story*, the bully of Ralphie's neighborhood is Scut Farkas. Scut's behavior and actions might remind you of a when you were bullied. Being bullied is never fun.

1. **Physical bullying:** This is when a person uses physical actions, such as hitting, poking or pushing, to hurt others. Scut does this to Ralphie's friend Flick by twisting his arm.
2. **Verbal bullying:** This is when a person uses their words to hurt others, such as teasing or name-calling. Scut does this by calling Flick a “dirty little chicken” and making Flick repeat it.
3. **Social bullying:** This is when a person hurts someone else by spreading rumors about them or playing mean jokes on them. Scut does not do this to Ralphie or his friends, but it is just as hurtful as punching someone or calling them names.

4. **Psychological bullying:** “Psychological” (Sy-ko-LAH-ji-kal) means that this kind of bullying affects someone's feelings and emotions. This kind of bullying includes threats that make someone feel unsafe. Scut Farkas makes all of Ralphie's friends feel scared and unsafe by threatening them.
5. **Cyberbullying:** Ralphie never had to deal with cyberbullying, but we see it all the time today. This is when a person uses technology like phones, social media or email to hurt others.

Ralphie's way of dealing with bullies was to become a bully. Ralphie used physical bullying to hurt Scut. This is NOT a good way to stand up to a bully! The best way to stop a bully is to tell an adult you trust, like a parent or teacher, and to be kind.

▼ *Scut Farkas (John Cugel) bullies Flick (Cole Emerine) in CPH's 2013 production of A Christmas Story.*

## TO DO:

Show others that bullying is never okay by making an anti-bullying poster! Remember to use both pictures and text and to make it colorful and vibrant. Ask your teacher if you can hang it up in your classroom or somewhere in your school.



# WHOSE STORY IS IT ANYWAY?

“ I began to reminisce about Christmases past. The holidays tend to do that. I found myself remembering another Christmas in another time... another place. ”

— RALPH



▲ *Ralphie (Matthew Taylor) and his older self Ralph (Jeff Talbot) in Cleveland Play House's 2013 production of A Christmas Story.*

Do your parents or grandparents like to tell stories about when they were your age? *A Christmas Story* is just like those stories!

Ralph, who narrates the story, and Ralphie are actually the same person! Ralph is Ralphie all grown up, telling stories about his childhood.

*A Christmas Story* is told from Ralphie's **point of view**. This means that we, the audience, see the whole story through Ralphie's eyes.

When Ralph talks right to the audience about his memories, that's called **first person point of view**. First person means that one person is telling the story the way they saw and experienced it.

When we see and hear characters talking to each other, that is not first person. We are not hearing their side of the story; we are just seeing the story take place.

## TO DO:

Choose your favorite part of the play. Write or tell that part of the story from a different characters point of view (not Ralphie's - we already heard his version of the story!).

# INSIDE INTERVIEW: SKIPPER RANKIN

Our Inside Interview for *A Christmas Story* is with Skipper Rankin. Skipper, a savvy and talented sixth grader, played Randy in last year's *A Christmas Story* and is playing Ralphie this year.

## What are you looking forward to most?

I'm really excited for the first rehearsal—meeting all my fellow cast members, especially the new ones who weren't in the show last year. It's all so fresh and such a good feeling!

## Do you see any similarities between your parents and Ralphie's?

Sure. With families there is always trouble sometimes and it's always “ugh” to see your parents fight, but they love each other and that is all that matters. What I like about the play is how it's not perfect, but everything gets resolved at the end.

## Tell me about your interest in acting.

I like having a new personality and exploring a person's life, being in their footsteps. My first show ever was in 2011, I think, and it was *Oliver*. I had never acted before, and I decided to audition and I got the part of *Oliver*! I have also been in shows like *Ragtime* and *Peter Pan*. Mostly musicals, but I love plays as well.



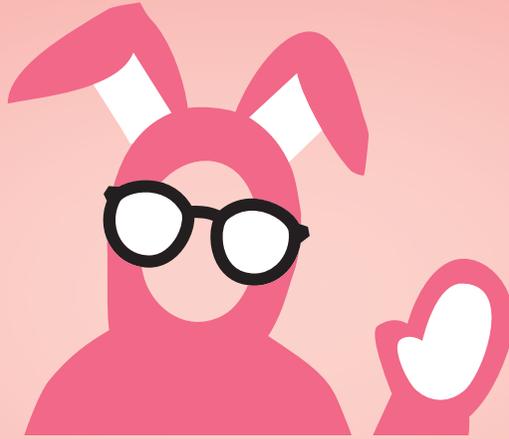
## And finally—the question all adults ask young people—what do you want to be when you grow up?

I want to be three things actually—an actor, of course, a therapist, and I want to rescue animals. At home we have two hedgehogs, three cats and one dog. So, yeah, as you can see, I love animals! An actor, well that's obvious. And I want to be a therapist because I've seen people go down and struggle, and I want to help them.

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*Randy (Skipper Rankin) “eats” his breakfast in CPH’s 2013 production of A Christmas Story.* ▲



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## WRITTEN BY

*Pamela DiPasquale and Rachel Lerner-Ley*

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## WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY

*Emily Goodridge, Nate Sayatovich, and Laura Winkelmann*

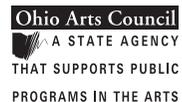
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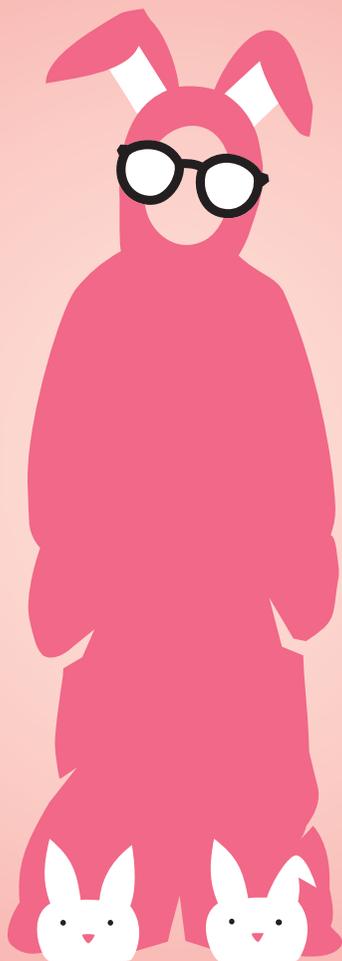


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Grades  
6 - 12



# A CHRISTMAS STORY STUDENT GUIDE



# THE GOLDEN AGE OF RADIO

The “Golden Age of Radio” was from the end of WWI (1918) to the end of WWII (1945). The radio was an important part of the lives of millions of Americans as they tuned in and invited the most trusted news casters, finest actors and freshest musicians into their living rooms. There were hundreds of programs to choose from every day including comedies, news stories, and science-fiction adventures.

To keep their faithful audiences, many shows were aired with a cliff-hanger ending to ensure listeners would return for the next show. Due to the continuously evolving plot and rotating cast of characters, these shows were difficult to follow if listeners missed even one show. Other shows, like *Little Orphan Annie*, gave out a secret code at the end of each show that fan club members could decode. Radio programs also had sound effects made from household items like pots and pans or a zipper on a jacket. Just like Ralphie, millions of kids would run home from school to hear *Little Orphan Annie*, *The Adventures of Superman*, and *The Green Hornet*. One of the most popular radio programs of the era was *The Lone Ranger*. With his band of trusty sidekicks, the half-hour cowboy radio show was a thrilling western and action packed adventure!



▲ Children listening to the radio in the 1930s.

## TO DO:

Create a radio program with friends! As a group pick a story you all know and practice telling the story “over the radio.” How many characters are there and who will play them? What sound effects do you need and how will you make them? Who will narrate the story? Once you and your friends have practiced, perform your story in front of others, or record it!

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# WHY IS THAT MAN TALKING TO HIMSELF?

“ I began to reminisce about Christmases past. The holidays tend to do that. I found myself remembering another Christmas in another time... another place. ”

– RALPH



If you've ever seen a play, movie or T.V. show before, you are probably used to watching two or more characters having a conversation on stage or on screen. This play is a little bit different. Characters do talk with one another, but you will often see one character, the narrator, talking seemingly to himself. What is this, you ask? Is he crazy? No! One of two things is going on: a monologue or a soliloquy.

In theatre, a **monologue** is when a single character expresses their mental thoughts aloud to another character. The expression often lasts more than one minute.

A **soliloquy**, however, is when a character speaks to himself or herself, relating thoughts and feelings, thereby also sharing them with the audience. Other characters are not aware of what is being said.

◀ *Ralph (Jeff Talbot) narrates Cleveland Play House's 2013 production of A Christmas Story.*

## TO DO:

Choose your favorite part of the play. Write a monologue or a soliloquy about this part of the play for a character involved in the event, other than Ralphie/Ralph.

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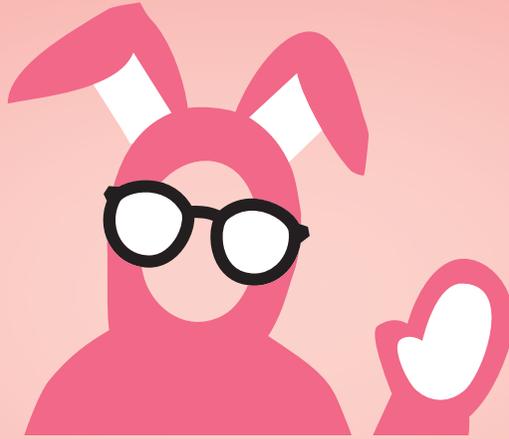
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