

## Come From Away Student Guide

### Come From Away

*Come From Away* tells the true story of Gander, Newfoundland, the small town that suddenly welcomed nearly 7,000 stranded passengers after 38 planes were redirected there following the September 11th attacks. Built from hundreds of interviews with the people who lived through those events, the musical is a powerful example of oral history brought to life. Rather than simply retelling history, it honors lived experiences and reminds us that every person carries a story worth hearing. The show transforms a moment of crises into one of connection, compassion and hope. Even in the darkest times, stories have the power to bring people together, inspire change and remind us of our shared humanity.

#### Gander, New Foundland, Canada facts:



Population: Around 9,600–10,000 residents lived in Gander in 2001.



Nickname: Gander was once known as the "Crossroads of the World." Before long-range jets became common, nearly every transatlantic flight stopped there to refuel.



The Newfoundland phrase "come from away" refers to anyone who wasn't born there—a fitting title for a story about strangers becoming neighbors.

### Documentary Theatre

Documentary theatre is a style of performance that transforms real events and lived experiences into theatrical storytelling. Using interviews, oral histories, letters, news articles and other primary sources, these productions invite audiences to connect with history through the voices of the people who lived it. Productions such as *Come From Away*, *The Laramie Project* and *Fires in the Mirror* show that there are many ways to tell true stories on stage. Some rely on music, others on verbatim interviews, movement or ensemble storytelling. As artists continue to experiment with new forms, documentary theatre reminds us that there is no single way to bring history to life—every creative choice shapes how a story is experienced and understood.

### Test Your Knowledge!

**Why was Gander chosen as a landing site for so many airplanes on September 11th?**

- A It was Canada's largest airport.
- B It had some of the longest runways in North America.
- C It was closest to New York City.
- D It was a military-only airport.

B. It had some of the longest runways in North America.



## **It's your turn to become a documentary theatre artist!**

Every great documentary play begins with someone asking questions and listening to another person's story. With a partner, think of a recent event that has made an impact on your school, community, family or the world. It could be something as historic as the Artemis missions, or simply a memorable event at your school or your neighborhood. Interview your partner using the questions below and note their responses. Document the details, emotions and moments that stand out, those are the building blocks of great theatre.

**What recent event did you choose and what do you remember most about that day?**

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**What sights, sounds or emotions stand out when you think back to that day?**

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**How did this experience change you?**

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**If this memory had a title, what would it be? Why?**

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Now, bring your interview to life through a monologue. A monologue is a speech performed by one character that shares their thoughts, feelings or experiences with an audience. Choose the moment from the interview that stood out to you the most. Then, using the information you gathered, write a short monologue from the perspective of the person you interviewed. Focus on capturing their voice, emotions and memories while sharing the heart of their experience.

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## **Congratulations!**

You've have dramatized someone's real life experience. Keep listening, keep writing and most importantly, keep telling stories.