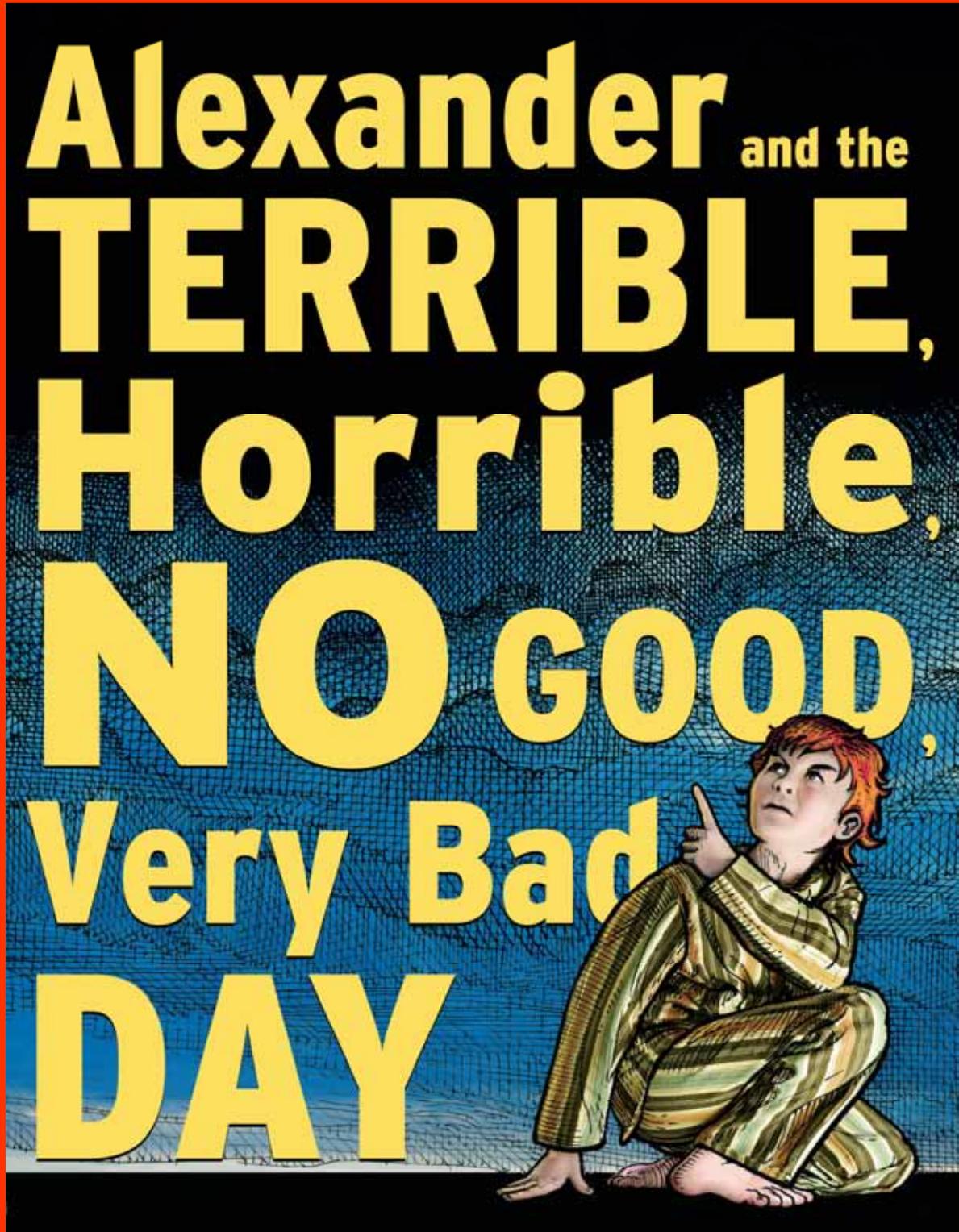


Educational Guide



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HOW TO BE A GOOD AUDIENCE

The Audience is an important part of live theater performance. Without the audience there would be no one to laugh when the show is funny, to gasp when it is scary, or to applaud at the end. It is important to be a good audience.

If you have been to the theater before, you know it is different from watching television or going to the movies. The actors will be right in front of you. It is important to be quiet and attentive. You can't hit the rewind button if you miss something an actor says, and noise can be distracting for other people in the audience.

Here are some things you can do to make this a great experience for everyone:

- Stay in your seat. Make sure you use the bathroom before the show starts.
- Listen quietly. Save comments and questions for later.
- Keep your feet on the floor. It will keep the seats clean for the next audience, and nobody likes having the back of their seat kicked when they're trying to watch the play.
- Save snacks and treats for after the show. Food and drinks aren't allowed in the theater, and crinkling candy and gum wrappers can sound loud.
- Sit quietly during the performance. Don't pass notes, wrestle with your friends, wriggle around, or stand up. Your movements could distract or annoy others.
- Please don't take photographs. We don't allow photos during the performance.
- The house lights (the lights in the theater) dim to signal that the show is about to start. That is your cue to settle down and get quiet so the play can begin.
- Stay in your seat when the performance ends. The actors will return to stage for the curtain call (when the actors bow and you clap). Wait until they exit for the last time and the lights come up before you leave your seat.
- Turn off all cell phones, pagers and electronic devices.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo Credit: Milton Viorst

Judith Viorst was born and brought up in New Jersey, graduated from Rutgers University, moved to Greenwich Village, and has lived in Washington, D.C., since 1960, when she married Milton Viorst, a political writer. They have three sons—Anthony and Nick (who are lawyers) and Alexander (who does community-development lending for a bank) and seven grandchildren—Miranda, Brandeis, Olivia, Nathaniel, Benjamin, Isaac, and Toby. Viorst writes in many different areas: science books, children's picture books, adult fiction and non-fiction, poetry for children and adults, and three musicals, which are still performed on stages around the country.

Bio courtesy of Simon & Schuster



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ASK JUDITH

We know that *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* is based on the experiences of your son. What was it that influenced your decision to write a children's book about Alexander?

Alexander, the youngest of my three sons, seemed to be having A LOT of bad days. He fell out of trees, fell off of chairs, broke his wrist, knocked out his front teeth, and, in addition to these breaks and bruises, was involved in a variety of non-physical disasters and disappointments. I thought that the notion of "a bad day," could serve for him, and for all kids, as it does for adults, a "container" function, suggesting that this day—this bad news—would (honest and truly!) come to an end. I was also tacitly suggesting in the book that everyone, just not our hapless hero, sometimes has bad days and that neither the fictional nor the real-life Alexander has been singled out for a unique fate. Furthermore, these bad days happen everywhere, even in Australia, and since we can't escape them we might as well muddle through them and maybe even try (at some point) to laugh about them.

Explain the process you used to adapt *Alexander* the book into *Alexander* the play.

I went through the book episode by episode as the narrator told his sad story. I wanted to keep that narration virtually word for word, which I did, while fleshing out the events Alexander describes. And so I gave dialogue to his brothers, parents, friends, etc., and put in a lot of dramatic action, *showing* as well as *telling* Alexander's story.

When did you know that *Alexander* should not be a play, but a musical?

As long as I was opening up Alexander's story, I decided it would be fun to also have his story told through songs. And since I love writing lyrics, the thought of making this a musical was irresistible.

How did you team up with Shelly Markham? How did the two of you work together on the music? Did you write the music and the lyrics together, or was one part written before the other?

At first—because Shelly lives in L.A. and I live in Washington, D.C.—we worked over the phone (he played the piano and sang to me) and with tapes. Later he came to D.C. and we finished our work in a room at the Kennedy Center. Shelly indulges me by letting me, in most instances, write the lyrics first, after which he composes the music to fit my works. But there are exceptions. With one song THE SWEETEST OF NIGHTS AND FINEST OF DAYS, he added a musical "bridge" between the second and third verses, after which I needed to write lyrics to fit that music. I also changed lyrics when we found that though they were easy to read they were hard to sing. For instance, in SHOES, I changed *Won't fall off when you cough shoes* to *Stay on when you cough shoes*, and *Won't get soaked when you wade shoes* to *Stay dry when you wade shoes*. The first versions were a real mouthful—too hard to sing and to understand.

Interview thanks to Kennedy Center for Young Audiences Educational Guide



Shelly Markham and Judith Viorst

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Who Plays Who?

Alexander.....	Henry Martin
Mom/Mrs. Dickens.....	Meredith Ott
Dad/Dr. Fields/ Shoe Salesman.....	Timothy Strauhal
Anthony.....	Martin Tebo
Nick.....	Ari Bluffstone
Paul.....	Barrett Kent
Becky.....	Annie Barnicle
Albert.....	Niko Jacobson
Audrey.....	Olivia Rentz
Philip.....	Nathan Artman
Pianist.....	Tracy Ross
Drummer.....	Tim Paxton

Behind the Scenes

The production crew is made up of the people who do lights, sound, build the set, and manage the whole play. Here is a list of people who have worked hard to make the play what it is, but don't make it onstage.

Director.....	Lucas Welsh
Music Director.....	Ezra Weiss
Choreographer.....	Elizabeth Gibbs
Set Designer.....	Jeff Seats
Costume Designer.....	Shana Targosz
Lighting Designer.....	Roger Monroe
Sound Designer.....	Rodolfo Ortega
Properties Designer.....	kollodi

GET TO KNOW THE ACTORS

What was the first play you were ever in?

“I took a class when I was 5 years old. It was Winnie the Pooh. I played Kang.”

Annie

“Charlotte’s Web. I played Templeton the rat.”

Ari

“A performance of Alice in Wonderland in my living room.”

Tim

What is your least favorite food to eat?

“All vegetables”

Nathan

“Pork chops.”

Lucas

“Lobster or crab.”

Martin

How many brothers and sisters do you have?

“1 twin brother and 1 little sister.”

Annie

“One 22 year-old sister.”

Martin

“One half-brother.”

Meredith

What is your favorite dessert?

“A hot fudge sundae.”

Ari

“Lava cake.”

Niko

“Chocolate anything.”

Tracy

What’s the worst day you ever had?

“Trekking in Nepal.”

Ari

“I failed a test, lost my puppy, missed the bus, and had to eat pork chops for dinner.”

Lucas

“I performed an outdoor play in a snow storm dressed as a Spaghetti Yeti. Seriously.”

Elizabeth

What was your favorite book to read as a child?

“Diary of a Wimpy Kid.”

Nathan

“The Little Mouse, The Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear.”

Martin

“Anne of Green Gable.”

Elizabeth

If I was in charge of the world...

“There’d be no waking up at 7:00 in the morning just to go to school.”

Annie

“Your friends would always be free to play with you.”

Olivia

“I’d make pens that never ran empty.”

Lucas

