THE ODD COUPLE

WRITTEN BY NEIL SIMON

DIRECTED BY JOHN MILLER-STEPHAN

P.L.A.Y. (Performance = Literature + Art + You)
Student Matinee Series
2013-2014 Season
Dear Educators,

I was first introduced to *The Odd Couple* when, as a freshman in high school, I ran backstage crew for the production at our local community theatre. During pre-show I happily littered Oscar’s bachelor pad with crumpled newspapers, Styrofoam cups, dead plants, hideous trinkets, and one very old, very dehydrated banana peel. At intermission I not-quite-as-happily picked it all back up again and restored the apartment to a precise level of Felix perfectionism. I made more “brown” and “green” sandwiches than I can count, and I spent many a post-show scrubbing spaghetti sauce off a wall backstage left. My friends and I could recite, verbatim, every single humorous line in this play.

When I reopened this script back in March for the first time in over fourteen years, I was not at all surprised that I could still remember every line, joke, and twist in the plot. Jumping back into this story was like meeting an old, familiar, comfortable friend for a blissful lunch date and picking up right where you left off all those years ago, as if no time had elapsed and everything was just exactly the same. Except that everything wasn’t exactly the same. As Walter Kerr put it in *The New York Times* in 1970, “There is a root, as real as a toothache, beneath the grin of Simon’s sunniest work.”

I simply didn’t recall being so affected by this particular old, familiar friend’s humanity, struggle, or darkness fourteen years ago. Sure, I knew that the reason Felix moved in with Oscar was because he was suffering through a divorce he never wanted and had suicidal thoughts. But those toothaches were masked by quite the grin. As I read through the script again this year, I was struck by how much I could appreciate this story, these characters, and their complex lives as so much more than just an exceptional comedy. These guys are real people, dealing with real life things. Who among us hasn’t faced a crisis of identity, a disastrous altercation with a friend, or a life-changing dilemma we didn’t ask for? And yet, life goes on - for them and for us. Things don’t stop being funny just because we have a toothache. Sometimes, that’s how we deal with it. As our production’s director John Miller-Stephany pointed out, the humor in this play doesn’t just sit on top of everything that’s happening, but is inherently layered into the fabric of who these guys are. These characters are relatable – they are us. And there’s so much more to take away from this story than ‘just’ a fantastic comedy.

We hope you and your students enjoy dissecting everything *The Odd Couple* has to offer. We’ll see you at the theatre!

Sincerely,

Lara Rhyner
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**Participation in this production and supplemental activities suggested in this guide support the following NYS Learning Standards:**

- A: 2, 3, 4
- ELA: 1, 2, 3, 4
- SS: 1

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“Twelve years we were married. And now it’s over. Like that it’s over. That’s hysterical, isn’t it?” – Felix
Following the collapse of his marriage, TV newswriter Felix Ungar dejectedly makes his way to the weekly poker game at the apartment of his best friend, Oscar Madison, a divorced sportswriter behind on his alimony payments. Felix tells Oscar and the other poker players (Speed, Murray, Roy, and Vinnie) that his wife has thrown him out of the house and has plans to contact a divorce attorney the following day. He accepts Oscar's invitation to share the apartment so that both men can save money. Felix's hypochondria and his compulsion for order and cleanliness, however, drive the slovenly Oscar to distraction, and the two men are soon quarreling. Oscar suggests they date Cecily and Gwendolyn Pigeon, two giddy English sisters who live upstairs, and Felix agrees on the condition that he be permitted to cook dinner. The evening ends disastrously when Felix's dinner burns, and he breaks down into a sobbing account of his broken marriage that elicits sympathetic tears from the sisters. Felix's refusal to accompany the women upstairs so enrages Oscar that he restores his apartment to its original disorder and throws Felix out. After Felix departs, the poker buddies criticize Oscar for his harsh treatment of their friend. Shortly thereafter, Felix reappears and announces that he is moving in with Cecily and Gwendolyn until he can straighten out his life. Once Felix has left, the group sits down for their weekly poker game, only to be surprised when Oscar rebukes them for spilling ashes on the table.

Neil Simon is one of the most popular playwrights in the history of the American theatre. Simon was raised in the Bronx and studied at New York University before working as a comedy writer for various television shows throughout the 1940s and 50s. His autobiographical play Come Blow Your Horn became a smash success on Broadway and ran for two years after opening in 1961. The plays that followed all enjoyed long runs on Broadway. They include Barefoot in the Park, The Odd Couple (for which Simon won a Tony Award), The Sunshine Boys, California Suite, a trilogy of autobiographical plays (Brighton Beach Memoirs, Biloxi Blues and Broadway Bound) and Lost in Yonkers, for which he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize. Simon has penned all of the screenplays for motion-picture adaptations of his plays as well as screenplays for a number of original motion pictures. He has also written the books for a number of musicals, including Sweet Charity and The Goodbye Girl. In addition, Simon has authored two volumes of memoirs, Rewrites and The Play Goes On.

The original idea for The Odd Couple grew from the divorce of Neil Simon’s older brother, Danny, and his decision to live with, Roy Gerber, a friend who was also divorced, in order to save money. In his memoir, Rewrites, Simon recounts how the story developed.

“The two men had alimony and child support to pay. Money was going out and the drain weighed heavily on Danny. He proposed, in a manner of speaking, that he and Roy move in together to cut down on their rent, utilities, and all other expenses. This union didn’t prosper any better than either of their first marriages. To me and to anyone else seeing it, the situation was hilarious. I told Danny it was the premise of a brilliant comedy, whether as a film or a play. He agreed and told me he intended to sit down and write it. [But] try as he might, he gave up on it. [He said] ‘You know how to write plays. I don’t. You write it instead.’ ”

The rest, as the saying goes, is history.
Oscar Madison and Felix Ungar are both newsmen. Oscar is a long-time sportswriter for *The New York Post* and Felix pens the news reports for the CBS television network. As a result, both men would have been very attuned to what was happening in the world during the summer of 1965. Below are just a few of the stories that either Oscar or Felix (or, perhaps, both) would have covered. What other stories may have been on their respective radars?

### News

- **Jan 30th**: State funeral of Sir Winston Churchill
- **Feb 4th**: US performs nuclear test at Nevada Test Site
- **Feb 7th**: US begins regular bombing & strafing of North Vietnam
- **Mar 3rd**: USSR performs nuclear test at Eastern Kazakh/Semipalitinsk USSR
- **Mar 21st**: Martin Luther King Jr. begins march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama
- **Mar 30th**: Vietnam War: A car bomb explodes in front of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon
- **Mar 31st**: US ordered the 1st combat troops to Vietnam
- **May 24th**: Supreme Court declares federal law allowing post office to intercept communist propaganda is unconstitutional
- **Aug 6th**: LBJ signs Voting Rights Act, guaranteeing voting rights for African-Americans
- **Aug 11th**: Watts riots begin in Southeast Los Angeles

### Sports

- **Apr 9th**: 1st game at Astrodome, Houston beats Yankees 2-1 in exhibition as Mickey Mantle hits 1st indoor homerun
- **Apr 25th**: 19th NBA Championship: Boston Celtics beat LA Lakers, 4 games to 1
- **May 1st**: Stanley Cup: Montreal Canadiens beat Chicago Blackhawks, 4 games to 3
- **May 4th**: Willie Mays 512th HR breaks Mel Ott’s National League record
- **Jul 20th**: NY Yankee pitcher Mel Stottlemyre hits an inside-the-park grand slam
- **Aug 16th**: AFL awards its 1st expansion franchise (Miami Dolphins)
- **Aug 28th**: Bob Dylan booed for playing electric guitar at a concert in New York’s Forest Hills

### Arts & Entertainment

- **Jan 28th**: The Who make their 1st appearance on British television
- **Apr 5th**: Lava Lamp Day celebrated
- **May 18th**: Gene Roddenberry suggests 16 names including Kirk for *Star Trek* captain
- **Jun 4th**: Rolling Stones release “Satisfaction”
- **Jun 7th**: Sony Corp introduced its home video tape recorder, priced at $995
- **Aug 15th**: Beatles play to 55,000 at Shea Stadium
- **Aug 28th**: Bob Dylan booed for playing electric guitar at a concert in New York’s Forest Hills

### Cost of Living

When Felix points out that he pays $120.00 a month in rent for his half of an eight-room apartment in New York City, it sounds like a great deal. Until you realize that a single dollar of American currency in 1965 would be equivalent to nearly $7.00 in 2014. In other words, Felix’s rent today would be $840.00 a month for his portion of the nearly $1,700.00 in rent. The dinner that Felix cooks for his and Oscar’s date with the Pigeon sisters costs him $9.34 - but today, that would be a $65.00 meal and the $6.25 bottle of wine that Oscar buys to accompany dinner would now cost almost $45.00. Here are some other prices for 1965:

* a loaf of bread - 21¢  * a gallon of milk - 95¢
* a gallon of gas - 31¢  * a new car - $6,450
* a dozen eggs - 53¢  * a new house - $21,500

### Movies

* *Our Man Flint* (January)
* *Girl Happy* (April)
* *The Great Race* (July)
* *Help!* (August)

“Don’t tell me where to go. I pay a hundred and twenty dollars a month.” – Felix
When Neil Simon wrote The Odd Couple, he thought it was “a grim, dark play about two lonely men” that “would probably be the end of my career.” But, in fact, it’s a story we all know: Two protagonists with opposite styles or demeanors are paired up in a stressful situation where they bicker and clash but, ultimately, learn to appreciate one another. By empathizing with someone different than themselves, they are able to understand themselves and the other person better, and they might even rub off on each other.

The Odd Couple can be seen as the template for a staggering number of buddy cop, doomed roommate, and rom-com love stories since 1965. Think The Heat, Shrek, Beauty and the Beast, Toy Story, The Parent Trap, The Breakfast Club, 10 Things I Hate About You, Lethal Weapon, 48 Hours, Sixteen Candles, You’ve Got Mail, How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days, What Happens in Vegas, Baby Mama…you get the picture. Even within The Odd Couple itself lies an impressive handful of spinoffs:

- 1965: The original play and Broadway debut (Walter Matthau and Art Carney)
- 1968: The original film (Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon)
- 1970-1975: TV sitcom series (Jack Klugman and Tony Randall)
- 1975-1976: Animated cartoon TV series
- 1985: The staged adaptation of The Female Odd Couple (Rita Moreno and Sally Struthers)
- 1998: The Odd Couple II sequel film
- 2002: Oscar and Felix updated stage adaptation
- 2005: The Broadway revival (Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick)
- 2014: CBS TV sitcom in the works (Matthew Perry and Thomas Lennon)

Where did this comedic formula come from? In his memoir, Rewrites, Neil Simon explains: “Since we were still in the days of three-act plays, I thought in terms of triangles. Connect point A to point B at the top, down to point C, and C connects back across to point A again. The final connection is not the end, but rather the beginning of a new triangle, one that we never see but know that it’s there in the future.” And a future is truly what this blueprint has had. “As in many classic comedies,” said director and theatre professor Peter Hackett, “Oscar and Felix cling tenaciously to the comforting fallacy that they are in total control of their lives. We delight in their desperate but fruitless attempts to keep everything in their world exactly the same” – despite the fact that everything has changed. And therein lies the dilemma. “Dilemma is the key word,” Simon said of writing character-driven comedy.

“It’s always a dilemma, not a situation.” Actor Jack Lemmon also articulates why this template is so timeless and funny: “Neil has the ability to write characters – even the leading characters that we’re supposed to root for – that are absolutely flawed. They have foibles. They have faults. But, they are human beings. They are not all bad or all good; they are people we know.” And what we often find funny are characters and dilemmas that we can relate to – predicaments and people that we have experienced or care about. “When people care, even the slightest joke will get a big laugh, for they’ll be so caught up in what’s going on,” concludes Simon.

“Fate has played a cruel and rotten trick on you ... so enjoy it!” – Murray
The Odd Couple is, in large part, a story of identity. It begs the questions: How do we see ourselves? How do we perceive that others see us? Does that awareness make a difference? And should it?

Oscar Madison possesses a bold sense of confidence and esteem. Sloppy, seemingly carefree, and indulgent, sure! But he proudly owns his quirks and cuts himself generous slack just for being the guy he is. He is not without care or worry, Neil Simon is careful to point out, but he embodies an awareness and general acceptance of his identity. Oscar's mantra, when we first meet him, could be that in spite of our best and worst qualities, life still goes on, so you might as well enjoy the ride.

ROY: You don’t take any of this seriously, do you? You owe money to your wife, your government, your friends…

OSCAR: What do you want me to do, Roy, jump in the garbage disposal and grind myself to death? (phone rings) Life goes on even for those of us who are divorced, broke, and sloppy. (into phone) Hello? Divorced, Broke, and Sloppy!

Felix Unger is also altogether aware of his own precise, fastidious, and somewhat overwhelming nature, but unlike Oscar, Felix uses his identity as a tool for self-blame and shame. We get the sense that instead of recognizing any of the positive qualities that he surely has, Felix wishes he could wipe his slate clean and become someone else entirely.

FELIX: I can’t help myself. I drive everyone crazy. It’s impossible to be married to me.

OSCAR: We’re not perfect. We all have faults.

FELIX: I can’t stand it, Oscar. I hate me. Oh, boy, do I hate me.

One might wonder how two such opposite people, dissimilar in attitude, environment, and practically everything else including matters of self identity, might have a relationship of any kind in the first place. ‘Opposites attract’ may be the phrase that comes to mind. But why do opposites attract? Paul Cutright, author of You’re Never Upset for the Reason You Think explains: “Relationships are about getting our own needs met, often on an unconscious basis. In other words, we try to find someone who is complementary to us and can help us learn, heal, and grow.” Perhaps ‘complements attract’ is actually the phrase that fits the bill. Oscar is the life of the party and Felix is a great cook. Without Felix’s food, we get the impression that Oscar might be downright lucky to subsist on greasy takeout and moldy bread. And without Oscar’s inviting charm and humor, Felix’s social life would probably be non-existent at best. What one lacks, the other makes up for and visa versa, and – in theory – with a bit of give and take, it should all equal out quite nicely, right?

Not exactly. With complement also comes conflict. A relationship with someone opposite of yourself can broaden your horizons, but it also might drive you nuts. Conflict exists in every relationship, no matter how similar or different the parties involved are. The takeaway is, what do we do about it? How do we manage conflict? Like Oscar and Felix, we can choose to let it build up, and then flaunt our differences until we are irrationally irritated and the situation explodes, putting the relationship at risk, or we can live, learn and find a better way.

Felix will probably never abandon his tidy or obsessive ways entirely, but he no longer despises himself for them, and his social life is looking up. Thanks, in part, to Oscar, he can recognize his own value and worth, and accept himself for who he is. Oscar will probably always be a little messy and reckless, but he’s also all caught up on his alimony and is more open to the people around him, thanks – in part – to Felix. Ultimately, our ‘odd couple,’ through a combination of self-acceptance, acceptance of other, and compromise find themselves in an arguably better place in their friendship and in their own lives.

“What do you mean, nothing? You’re something! You’re not a buffalo. You’re you! You’re-the-only-one-of-its-kind-in-the-world!” – Oscar
“I thought The Odd Couple was a black comedy. I never thought it was going to be popular, ever. I thought it was a grim, dark play about two lonely men.” – Neil Simon

The stage directions for The Odd Couple tell us that Felix Ungar is 44 years old and that Oscar Madison, his best friend, is 43. Since the play is set in 1965, a little quick math lets us know that they were born, respectively, in 1921 and 1922. Each man would have been raised during the Depression and, most likely, spent time in the armed services during World War II. They came of age, then, during a period when most Americans, not too far removed from the devastation of warfare and economic instability, were very optimistic about the future and their places in it. Oscar and Felix were, in short, living The American Dream. Until, that is, each of their wives decided that the marriage was over and filed for a divorce.

GWENDOLYN: Just you two baches live here?

FELIX: Baches? Oh, bachelors! We’re not bachelors. We’re divorced. That is, Oscar’s divorced. I’m getting divorced.

CECILY: Oh. Small world. We’ve cut the dinghy loose, too, as they say.

GWENDOLYN: Well, you couldn’t have a better matched foursome, could you?

While Felix and Oscar each dealt with the abrupt end of their marriages in their own ways (“I drank for four days and four nights,” Oscar tells Felix), they certainly were not alone in learning to acclimate to a new life following their spouse’s decisions. By the mid-1960s, divorce rates throughout the country were rapidly increasing due, in large part, to the advent of the “no-fault” divorce. In the past, a person had to prove that they had been severely mistreated by their spouse in order to petition for an end to the union – and even then, there was no guarantee that the divorce would be granted. “No-fault” divorces, however, allowed for either spouse to decide to terminate the marriage and begin court procedures to make it official. Women, in particular, considered the “no-fault” divorce a long-sought-after solution for years spent in unhappy marriages. This may explain, for example, the quickness with which Felix’s wife moves from declaring the marriage over and on to her plans to hire a divorce lawyer the following day.

It also helps us to understand the wide variations in the time that Oscar and Felix get to spend with their children – Oscar’s ex-wife and children have been in California for the past several months while Felix sees his children every night after work, and has an arrangement for time with them on weekends, holidays and summers. For many years, only a man could decide to divorce his spouse and maintain absolute say in the custody of their children. Gradually, the role of the female as the prime custodian in cases of children of divorce assumed prominence and, eventually, became the accepted practice in the United States up through the 1950s. By the mid-1960s, however, views regarding the rearing and care of children of divorce were once again reexamined.

The wide acceptance of the “no-fault” divorce and re-consideration of the custody of children affected by these separations can be seen as part of a much larger cultural shift which encouraged the questioning of many long-held assumptions and beliefs, not the least of which was the rapidly-changing nature of accepted gender roles, marital or otherwise. Note, for example, the way that the poker players in The Odd Couple taunt one another and how often the mockery is based on behaviors that some would consider more typically feminine, such as Vinnie’s concern that he be home in time to leave for a vacation with his wife, or Felix’s insistence on cleanliness and home-cooked meals. Conversely, there are the Pigeon sisters, Oscar and Felix’s upstairs neighbors. The sisters, relocated from England and both divorced, are openly flirtatious and slyly sensual in a ways that would have been considered much more masculine in the not-too-distant past. What will it mean for Oscar and Felix to be single once again in a society that is so quickly changing around them?

“What twelve years doesn’t mean you’re a happy couple. It just means you’re a long couple.” – Murray

What do you think marriages were like in the 1950s and 60s? How are they similar to marriages in 2014? How are they different?

Research the development of “no-fault” divorces. Why do you think they may have appealed to some people? What are the positive and negative aspects of their arguments?

Consider the differences in the “gender roles” of the 1960s. Do we still have accepted “gender roles” today? If so, how do these roles affect how we interact with one another?
Did you know that Geva’s costume shop employs six full-time artists (plus apprentices, wardrobe crew, and over-hire) to costume our productions? Geva’s Costume Shop Manager, Head Draper, First Hand, Stitcher, Craftsperson, and Wardrobe Manager all work together, along with each production’s Costume Designer, to craft truthful and inspiring costumes for all of Geva’s actors. Our costume shop’s First Hand, Katherine McCarthy, shared the process our costume shop explores for every production we produce:

**First:** We receive renderings from the Costume Designer. The designs often arrive in the form of sketches and renderings, but are also sometimes accompanied by inspiration and research photos, such as the images in the collage above.

**Second:** The Designer, Costume Shop Manager and Head Draper meet to discuss logistics like budget, timeline, fabric type and quantity, and which costume pieces and accessories will be built from scratch at Geva, purchased, pulled from stock and altered, or borrowed.

**Third:** Acquire detailed actor measurements from the actor, their agent, another theatre the actor has worked at recently, or schedule a time for the actor to come in and have their measurements taken.

“Damn it, I have feet and they make prints. What do you want me to do, climb across the cabinets?” – Oscar
**Fourth:** Based on each actor's measurements and the costume designs, the Head Draper designs and constructs the patterns that will be used to sew the costumes.

**Fifth:** Mock-ups of each costume’s pattern are created and then fitted to the actor in the first of three fittings.

**Sixth:** Based on the mock-up fitting, patterns are adjusted as necessary.

**Seventh:** Costumes are cut from the fabric, according to the adjusted pattern, and sewn together to create a “first fabric” of each costume, which is simply the basic costume and includes no finishing details such as hems, lining or fasteners.

**Eighth:** The first fabric costumes are fit to the actors in a second fitting, called the first fabric fitting.

**Ninth:** Any necessary adjustments or alterations are made and finishing work, including hems, linings, fasteners, and additional detailing are added to the costumes.

**Tenth:** A third and final fitting is done for each costume.

While this process is unfolding, wigs, shoes, hats, jewelry, and other costume pieces or accessories are being designed, purchased, built, pulled, or borrowed, and then fit and altered by the Costume Shop Manager, Craftsperson, and Designer. The costume budget for Geva’s *The Odd Couple* is $11,500. For reference, just one custom wig that an actor wears in a single scene can cost about $1,500. Costumes for our production of *The Odd Couple* were designed by Pamela Scofield. Of the designs, McCarthy said, “They’re not hyper-realistic. They’re a little stylized – especially the Pigeon sisters. The men in the show live in a realistic world, but with a very 60s color palette, and the challenge with the women’s clothing, since both of the actresses playing the sisters are tiny, was to design costumes that wouldn’t make the actresses look like little kids. The build of an actor is something a designer needs to take into consideration.”

Amanda Doherty, Geva’s Costume Shop Manager added, “We’re using a lot of vintage clothing in this show. The men are wearing predominately vintage and we’re building most the women’s clothing due to the size of the actresses. And the reason we can use so much vintage clothing in this production is because synthetic fabrics were really coming into vogue around this time. And, unlike silks, chiffons and other delicate fabrics - which dry rot over time - synthetic fabrics of the 1960s are more durable, so they’re widely available. The actors are taking possession of their vintage costumes and using the clothing as a basis for their characters. The vintage clothing for this production fits very differently than modern clothing does and comes in fun patterns, textures, colors, and prints. The actors are really embracing the vintage clothing and how they look and feel in it as a way to help them develop their characters. It’s fun to use vintage, when we can.”

“**Sounding Off**

“Not every play has such a well-known and well-scored movie associated with it. The challenge with *The Odd Couple* is to design interesting music - music that is familiar and suits the time and the story, but without it sounding too much like the film. This play takes place at such an iconic time – 1965. A lot of people were writing comedic scoring and jingles for film, for television, for commercials in the 1960s, and so a lot of that style of music sounded somewhat alike. We didn’t want to use music that was too recognizable, like the Top 40 Hits of 1965, but we wanted some scoring that sounds like it belongs in a comedy, like it’s of that time. I think we’d identify it as ‘lounge music’ today...a sound with a lot of horns.” – Dan Roach, Sound Designer

“**What do you think goes better with London broil, Mancini or Sinatra?” – Oscar
“Look, I’ve been sitting here breathing Lysol and ammonia for four hours! Nature didn’t intend for poker to be played like that.” – Roy

The weekly poker games in Oscar’s apartment play a prominent role in *The Odd Couple*. What is so important about these games that we encounter them three separate times? Firstly, it affords us a glimpse into Oscar and Felix’s lives outside of the apartment by allowing us to meet several of the men that they’ve known for years and who probably know them best. It also lets us develop a sense of these friends as individuals – how is Murray different from Speed? Is Vinnie similar to Roy in any way? Not unlike our own circle of friends sometimes, they complement and aggravate one another in equal measures.

The poker games, as Simon points out, also give the men an opportunity to bond with one another and briefly shed their everyday duties and obligations. When the other players begin to bicker over trivial matters during one of the games, Speed, believing that the arguing too closely mirrors their own domestic situations, says that he won’t play poker with them anymore, since “I get all the aggravation I need at home.” Phone calls from wives and unexpected visits from neighbors only seem to reinforce the importance to these men of spending time with one another each week.

And, finally, the poker games function metaphorically as well. Oscar, Felix and the others have all taken the risk of marrying another person and learning to navigate the particulars of that decision. The metaphor also encompasses the notion of understanding how to make the most of a less-than-ideal situation. “Life is not always a matter of holding good cards,” said the writer Jack London, “but sometimes, playing a poor hand well.”

**Discussion Questions**

* Research Neil Simon, his body of work, and his impact on the American Theatre and entertainment industries. Prior to *The Odd Couple*, had you read any of Simon’s other work? Is *The Odd Couple* what you expected it would be? Why or why not?

* *The Odd Couple* has been adapted for a variety of mediums, times, and types of characters. If this play were to be rewritten for 1536 or 2014, what do you imagine would change? What could stay the same?

* *The Odd Couple* has also been adapted to a female staged version. How do you think having two women as the main characters would change the play?

* Consider the ideas of self identity, acceptance, and conflict management explored in *The Odd Couple*. Do you identify more with Felix or Oscar? Does your identity bother you in any way? How accepting are you of yourself? Of others? How do you handle your relationships with people who are very different from you? Do you prefer to have relationships with people who are like or unlike you?

* Comedy is sometimes defined as tragedy that happens to other people. In a play where the main characters face so many struggles and difficult dilemmas, does this explain why the play is so funny? If we didn’t want the audience to think this play is funny, what would have to be taken out?

* How do characters in *The Odd Couple* use humor in various ways (as a defense mechanism, an insult, to display affection, etc.)?

* *The Odd Couple* was written nearly 50 years ago. Do you think the humor in this play is still relevant today?

* If you were to write *The Odd Couple* today, what two real people would make the best ‘odd couple’ and why?
You’re right, Oscar. Thanks a lot. Getting kicked out twice is enough for any man.” – Felix
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