BROADWAY 101

A Comprehensive Study Guide
covering everything that is Broadway.

Technical Theater

Student Activity #1

In groups of 2
• Using the Internet, research the technology elements of the following productions. Whether on Broadway or not, all of the shows listed below have had been recognized as notable successes due largely to their ingenious use of new technology.

Show title	New technology used in the production
Peter Pan (in Kensington Gardens)	
The Woman in White	
The Blue Man Group	
Wicked	
Cirque du Soleil	
Sunday in the Park with George (2008 Broadway revival)	
With your partner, select another production	

• Share your findings with the class. Discuss similarities and differences.

Student Activity #2
Explore the dimensions of sound effects (SFX) by participating in the following activities that focus on "theater of the mind" otherwise known as radio drama.

The 1930s and 40s was considered the golden age of radio. Families would set aside evenings to huddle around their radio to catch the greatest and latest on their favorite shows or news flashes.

In groups of 5
Below is a simple, short radio play with plenty of opportunity to include sound effects.
• Select one person in your group to be the narrator for the radio play.
• The narrator reads the play and pauses after each set of underlined words.
• When the narrator pauses, the other players in the group create applicable sounds effects.
Note: Select a sound effect from the list below or create your own SFX using recorded sounds or live music (e.g., keyboard, drums, bells, strings, etc.).
• Once you've perfected the narration and sound effects, perform it for the class.

Here are some simple yet effective examples:

Thunder: shake or wobble a cookie sheet.
Waves: swish popcorn from sided to sided in a large plastic bowl.

Door slam: slam shut the hinged top of a wooden box adding in various sounds from racket-making chains, latches, and bolts.

Window breaking: carefully smash a pane of glass inside a padded crate.

Ripping: pull apart two strips of Velcro.

Boiling water: place a straw into a glass of water and slowly blow bubbles.

Fire: crunch, rub, and twist a piece of cellophane or newspaper together.

Rain: swirl a cup of dried beans or large pieces of grain around a container, a cone of wax paper, or kitchen sieve.

Sound of walking: walk briskly across a tray filled with gravel.

Horse's hooves: cut an empty coconut into two halves and clip-clop them together.

Squeaky car breaks: turn a drinking glass upside down and slide it along a pane of glass.

Gun shot: bend and abruptly release a plank of wood allowing it to forcefully slam down creating a bang.

Did You Know…

A popular story by H.G. Wells called *War of the Worlds* was a radio play in which Martians invade the earth. In 2005, *War of the Worlds* was made into a movie starring Tom Cruise, but the most famous version is the 1938 radio play by Orson Welles. It was brilliantly adapted to sound like a late-breaking news item, cutting into regular programming. When it aired it was mistaken as a true story and caused huge public alarm and panic across the country. What helped create this panic were the clever and realistic sound effects. Audiences must have been breathless with horror as the sound of a metal hatch on a Martian spacecraft slowly opened, rotating over a hollow, mysterious interior as aliens began to emerge. If only they had known that the chilling sound was created by a sound

It was a dark and stormy night on an autumn eve. <u>The wind was howling</u>. It was the perfect night to visit the old haunted house on the hill. I <u>opened the door</u> to start my venture and a <u>gush of wind</u> swirled around me as I stepped out. Suddenly, <u>it started to rain</u> and a bolt of <u>lightning crashed</u> sending a spectacular flash through the sky. <u>Thunder roared</u> in the near distance. Just then <u>a crow screeched</u> sending shivers up and back down my spine.

Upon reaching the old house, <u>I walked down the gravel driveway</u>. When I reached the house, I <u>climbed up the creaky old front porch steps</u> and stopped just inches from the decaying door. Slowly, <u>I opened the front door</u>. A gaggle of <u>bats flew out in a panic</u>. The <u>door slammed shut</u>.

Everything was pitch black. I reached into my pocket and found some matches. I tried to <u>light a match once, twice, three times</u> but it didn't work. Then I remembered I had a small flashlight attached to my keychain. I pulled out my keys and used the mini-light. In the distance, I thought I could hear someone's eerie laughter – it sounded like an old goblin cackling and teasing. As I listened, it seemed to get <u>louder and louder</u>. All of a sudden, something jumped out at me. It was only <u>a stray cat</u>.

I then heard a terrible sound coming from a closed door at the end of the long hallway. Someone or something was <u>groaning, muttering, moaning</u>. I slowly and carefully <u>tiptoed up to the door</u>. It had to be a ghoul of some kind! I cracked opened the door. It was nothing for out jumped a harmless <u>cricket</u>.

Upstairs, on the floor above me, I could hear <u>footsteps</u>. Not normal footsteps but <u>big footsteps</u>. They were <u>GIGANTIC</u> thuds! I turned around and <u>ran as fast as I could</u> back to the front door. I stopped at the doorway to catch my breath. I was leaning against a rickety old grandfather clock. It was still working 'cause as soon as I touched it, the clock struck – <u>one, two, three</u>.

Then I heard loud ringing in my ears. I turned my head, opened my eyes and discovered I was in bed. My alarm was ringing and it was already 7:15 a.m. It was time to get up. <u>I yawned</u> and said, "Phew! That was one of the best nightmares yet!"

Did You Know…
Superman, the comic-book character, began in 1938 and just two years later in 1940, the series hit the radio airwaves and popularized the now famous line, "Up in the sky, look: It's a bird; it's a plane... It's Superman!"