



**September 18, 19, 25, 26, 27 and Oct 1, 2 & 3 2015**

The performance on Sunday Sept. 27th at 2pm will be followed by a discussion with the artists.  
All other performances at 8pm.

**All performances are held at Penelope's Venue, 12219 Dix Toledo Road in Southgate, MI**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Michael Cristofer never reveals the illness from which his characters suffer. Why do you think he purposefully chooses not to reveal their illness?
- 2) The perspectives on death offered by three terminally ill patients define the plot of *The Shadow Box*. Voices of the patients and family members alike illuminate many aspects of death. How does each character give the audience a glimpse of death and dying that is different from the next? Which character do you identify with the most and why?
- 3) All of the characters must face the reality that death is part of the human condition. Depending on the characters themselves, this process of acceptance is expressed in a wide range of emotions. The reality of their situations is sometimes at odds with their view of their situation. Find one character who is unable to accept the reality of their situation and discuss the way they view their situation. Find one character who is able to accept their reality and discuss how they come to terms with their situation.
- 4) How has terminal illness had a dehumanizing effect on the characters? Have you experienced a terminal illness having a dehumanizing effect on people in your own life?
- 5) All of the characters reminisce about their lives before illness. What purpose does the reminiscing serve for the characters? For the story?
- 6) Taking an inventory of one's life and accomplishments is an understandable response to terminal illness. What is left unsaid and undone becomes of primary importance to several of the characters during the course of the play. Find and discuss an example of remorse or regret from each of the three storylines.
- 7) Frank discussion about terminal illness have become more commonplace. However, when Cristofer first wrote *The Shadow Box* in 1975, the idea of a hospice was still experimental and no prior play had dealt with this topic in such an unapologetic manner. The play also experienced a great deal of controversy, primarily as a result of some of the language and the openly homosexual couple. What are some differences in how this play might be received by readers and audience members today versus when it was written in 1975?
- 8) The work's unifying force is its subject matter. Although the inhabitants of Cottages One, Two, and Three are separated physically, their voices come together in the end of the play in a sort of collective resolution. How does the ending collection of storylines and voices affect the reader or audience? Do you think that blending the storylines together at the end is an effective climax? Why or why not?

**Suggested companion books:** *On Death and Dying* by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, *My Sister's Keeper* by Jodi Picoult, *The Fault in our Stars* by John Green

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