

Lily's Crossing

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ARTSPOWER NATIONAL
TOURING THEATRE

Gary W. Blackman
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Executive Producers

LILY'S CROSSING

Written & Original Direction by
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Music by
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Study Buddy Written by
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ALL OF THE FOLLOWING PAGES.

Based on
Patricia Reilly Giff's
NEWBERY HONOR BOOK





For as long as young Lily Mollahan can remember, she has been spending her summer vacations at Rockaway Beach, New York. She travels there with her father (whom she calls Poppy) and her grandmother (whom she calls Gram). Sadly, she has almost no memories of her mother, who died when Lily was only a few years old. Lily looks forward to summer, where she can enjoy the ocean, see her best friend Margaret and Margaret's older brother Eddie, and relax in a place where it seems as if things have always been the same.

This year, though, everything is different. It's 1944 and World War II is reaching its climax. Eddie is fighting overseas; Margaret and her family also move away. But it is when Lily's father enlists in the army, hoping to help rebuild war-torn Europe, that Lily truly feels all alone.

Her loneliness is lessened when she meets the orphaned Hungarian refugee Albert, who left his younger sister Ruth behind in Europe. Lily and Albert become friends, but Lily tells a lie that may put Albert's life in danger. Now Lily must find the courage to tell the truth and perhaps risk losing Albert's friendship.

ABOUT ARTSPOWER NATIONAL TOURING THEATRE

Founded in 1985 by Gary Blackman and Mark Blackman, ArtsPower is one of America's largest producers of professional Actors' Equity Association theatre for young and family audiences. We produce and tour original musicals and plays across the United States – 40 states in all - in many of our nation's most renowned theatres, cultural centers, university auditoriums, and schools. With more than 800 performances annually, we have amassed an audience of more than six million people.

ArtsPower's mission is to provide young people and adults with outstanding theatre that entertains, moves, and educates. We seek to improve the quality of "character education" among youngsters by creating theatre that encourages sound moral development, allows children to express themselves both in and out of the classroom, and fosters their development as productive members of society.

THE THEME OF FAMILY

"Nothing ever changes around here," Lily's father reassures her as they arrive at Rockaway Beach. Yet one thread which unites the complex tapestry of this story is the idea of change and loss as inevitable parts of life. We seek to explore the different ways in which older and younger people deal with tragedy. Even though the world seems to be falling apart around Lily and her family, their bond confirms that, in the words of Lily's grandmother, "Even in the worst of times, something lovely can happen."

Though adults may use prevarication to protect their children just as Lily's father does, those children do in fact have enough strength - more strength, at times, than their parents - to cope with the undiluted truth. *Lily's Crossing* is based upon the idea that no matter how much trouble there is in the world, friends and family can always provide support, hope, and love.



Setting: Now & Then

Lily's Crossing takes place in Rockaway Beach, New York, in the summer of 1944. Franklin Delano Roosevelt is the President of the United States, and Dwight D. Eisenhower is the supreme commander of the **Allied Forces** (in World War II, a group which included the armies of Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, China, and the United States.) Popular songs include Bing Crosby's "I'll Be Seeing You," Johnny Mercer's "Ac-cent-tchu-ate the Positive," and "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree" by the Andrews Sisters.

During the play, listen for music and speeches from Lily's era. Why do you think the creators of *Lily's Crossing* added sounds and songs from that period? The answer has to do with creating an authentic **atmosphere**, which means "general mood or tone."

Here are some other facts about 1944. Notice how the influence of World War II is seen in many aspects of popular culture.

- A popular movie was *Here Come the Waves*, a musical comedy about a singing star who joins the Navy.
- One of the best-selling children's Christmas gifts was a toy military set with helmet, gun, holster, two bullets, and whistle included.
- Thanks to the war, almost no television stations were active. However, a popular radio soap opera was *Portia Faces Life*, a drama about a successful lawyer. In *Lily's Crossing*, Gram tunes in to this program every day.
- What a few things cost in 1944:*

Car: \$1,220

House: \$8,600

Milk: 62 cents/gal

Average Annual Salary: \$2,600

Gasoline: 21 cents/gal

Bread: 9 cents/loaf

Postage Stamp: 3 cents

Minimum Wage: 30 cents per hour

*source: <http://www.inventors.about.com>



THINK IT OVER:

How do the early 1940s compare to modern times? What similarities and/or differences do you see? Why do you think things are so much more expensive these days?

ACTIVITY:

Research the "Big Band Era" and find some more popular songs from the World War II period. Compare the music and lyrics to a song by one of your favorite artists. How have the words to songs changed over time?

You might want to get a start at www.bigband-era.com.



What was World War II?

Few nations escaped the devastating effects of the second World War, a conflict which lasted from 1939 -1945. The **Allied** powers (France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, China, and the United States) opposed the **Axis** powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan).

War began when Germany, under the direction of **Adolf Hitler** (leader of the **Nazi Party**, a political group that believed that Germans were the perfect “master race” and that other races and religions, especially the Jewish people, were inferior to the Germans) invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Since France and Britain were protecting Poland, they both declared war on Germany.

Gradually, as Germany began to invade other nations, nearly every major power in Europe had taken arms on one side or the other. Then, on December 7, 1941, Japanese bombers attacked Hawaii's Pearl Harbor, a United States naval base. The United States joined the war on the following day.

On June 6, 1944 – also called **D-Day** – Allied troops landed on the beaches of Normandy, France. Gradually, the German forces lost the upper hand. Although the Germans surrendered (admitted defeat) on May 7, 1945, the Japanese continued to battle. The war finally came to an end with a Japanese surrender on September 2, 1945, after the United States dropped two atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Stars in the Window

During the war, many families had loved ones away from home. A blue star in the window meant that a family member was in the service. A gold star meant that a family member had been killed. Watch for these signals in *Lily's Crossing*.



THINK IT OVER:

Why do you think people put stars in the window? Is there anything similar that people do today? How do you think seeing a star might affect parents who had a son still too young to be in the army?

ACTIVITY:

Pretend you are a member of Congress who opposes some of Roosevelt's views. How might you argue against the idea of creating an American homefront? Debate against a classmate.



Theatre Conventions



We all know that what happens on stage is not real. Yet when we watch a play, we willingly **suspend our disbelief**. In other words, we let ourselves pretend that the characters are real people and not actors, and that the events we see are actually happening. As part of this relationship between the actors and the audience, **playwrights** (people who write plays) often make use of **theatre conventions**. These are accepted techniques that help to tell the story on stage.

DOUBLING: Performers take more than one role. For example, the actor who plays Gram in *Lily's Crossing* also plays Margaret.

FREEZING: When certain characters become motionless during a scene, they are not part of the action even though the audience can still see them. This often happens when we are meant to be inside a character's memory or imagination. For example, Margaret "freezes" when Lily imagines she is talking to Eddie.

DIRECT ADDRESS: Lily often tells her thoughts directly to the audiences. This is a way in which we can hear what she is thinking. She acts both as a character and as a narrator who gives us important background information and provides her own commentary on the action.

SCENE CHANGES: Sometimes actors will move scenery around in order to create a new setting. The audience knows that this action is separate from the story itself.

CHARACTERIZATION: Actors are often not the age of the characters they are meant to portray. For example, the actress who plays Lily is older than Lily is meant to be in the play.

TREATMENT OF TIME: In the few minutes between scenes, any amount of time – even years – can pass. Time can be compressed and "put in fast-forward."

SPECIAL EFFECTS: Lighting and music heighten the drama and get the audience more involved.



THINK IT OVER:

Try to come up with an explanation for each of these theatre conventions. For example, why might ArtsPower have used only four actors and not more? What makes freezing an effective technique?

ACTIVITY:

You run into a spaceship full of aliens while strolling through the park. They have never heard of theatre and want to know why anyone would want to watch a made-up story being acted out. Explain to these misguided creatures why theatre is important and enjoyable.



Memory and Imagination

One major challenge playwrights face is allowing the audience to see into the minds of their characters. Without having Lily say aloud “I am sad” or “I wish the war were over,” how could you let an audience know that she is thinking or feeling these things? One commonly used technique is **flashback**. When a character flashes back, he or she remembers events from the past. These memories are so vivid that we actually relive the event with the character



Look at these lines from *Lily's Crossing*, where Albert flashes back to an experience he had in France, on the way to Europe.

A similar technique is used when Lily thinks back on her friend Eddie. He is away fighting World War II and Lily misses him. When he's in her consciousness, he becomes visible to the audience but not to the other characters. Look at this dialogue:

ALBERT: I...I didn't know what I should do! That night, I fell asleep on a bench in the waiting area. Ruth was still there – burning up with fever. She was so sick. That's when they came...they came for Ruth...I heard them...

OFFICER: The boat sails as scheduled! There's nothing to discuss! Take the girl!

NUN: I agree she should be in hospital but...

OFFICER: Then just do it! Before she infects everyone!

In this exchange, the officer and the nun are not really present, but we see and hear them because they play a part in Albert's memories.

LILY: I wonder why you're in my thoughts so much these days.

EDDIE: I don't know. Maybe it's 'cause you're in my house.

LILY: Yeah, I guess...Hey, what's it like?

EDDIE: What?

LILY: The war.

Here, Lily's concerns are communicated to us in the form of a conversation with Eddie. We learn that she worries about her friend and about the fighting overseas, and also that she has an active imagination.



THINK IT OVER:

Why doesn't the playwright just have Lily say, “I wish Eddie were here?” What are the advantages of using the techniques described above?

ACTIVITY:

Practice saying the lines out loud with a group of classmates. What different tones of voice should, for example, Albert and the officer take? Should they be angry? Frightened? Confused? What other ideas do you have?



Problems to Solve

It takes many people to put a play together. The **producer** oversees all aspects of the play and raises the necessary money. He or she also organizes all the people needed to create the play, and is responsible for paying them. The **playwright** creates the script, the **composer** writes the music, the **director** helps instruct the actors in how to perform and where to move on stage, the **set designer** plans out the props (pieces of scenery, or objects used by performers), the **costumer** finds appropriate clothes for the actors to wear, and the **actors** make the story come to life. Keeping in mind the roles of all these people, imagine how you would overcome these difficulties in staging *Lily's Crossing*.



- The play takes place in Rockaway Beach, which is close to the Atlantic Ocean. Since you cannot actually have water on stage, how would you handle this problem?
- Gram and Margaret are played by the same actress. If you had to play both roles, how would you act out each character so that they look different to the audience?
- An important scene in the play occurs in Albert's memory. How would you portray this?
- After the play, decide whether the ArtsPower actors solved these problems in the same way you would have.

Discussion Questions

- How did the play mix fact with fiction? Could you always tell the difference?
- Which characters did you find most convincing? Least convincing? Why?
- At what points, if any, did you get a sense of how the playwright himself felt about the events happening on stage?
- Do you think the playwright meant to inject his own opinions?
- ArtsPower's *Lily's Crossing* is an **adaptation**, since it takes the plot directly from Patricia Reilly Giff's book and then changes a few details of that plot. What do you think could have been challenging about turning a book into a play? You might try reading the book in class and discussing how and why certain changes were made.

DURING AND AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

After a play is ready to go on stage, it still needs one very important group of people: the audience. If you are quiet and attentive, the actors will be free to perform without distraction. Help make it the best show possible by being a wonderful audience!



Share Your Thoughts

Write a letter to ArtsPower giving your opinion of the performance.
Use the following questions as starting points:
What did you like or dislike about the performance? Why?

How did the performance affect you?

How do you think the performance could have been improved?

Write to:
ArtsPower National Touring Theatre
39 South Fullerton Avenue
Montclair, NJ 07042-3354

OR visit us online at
www.artspower.org and click on
"Contact Us."



Books About World War II:

- Colman, Penny. *Rosie the Riveter: Women Working on the Homefront in World War II*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1995.
- Dolan, Edward F. *America in World War II, 1941*. Brookfield, Connecticut: Millbrook Press, 1991.
- Morimoto, Junko. *My Hiroshima*. New York: Viking Press, 1990.
- Stanley, Jerry. *I Am an American: A True Story of Japanese Internment*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1994.
- Sullivan, George. *The Day Pearl Harbor Was Bombed: A Photo History of World War II*. New York: Scholastic, 1991.

World War II/Holocaust Fiction:

- Giff, Patricia Reilly. *Lily's Crossing*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1997.
- Lowry, Lois. *Autumn Street*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980.
- Hest, Amy. *Love You, Soldier*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2000. (reprint edition).
- McSwigan, Marie. *Snow Treasure*. New York: Scholastic, 1958.
- Williams, Laura. *Behind the Bedroom Wall*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 1996.

Selected Works by Patricia Reilly Giff:

- *Pictures of Hollis Woods*
- *All the Way Home*
- *Nory Ryan's Song*
- *The Kids of Polk Street School Series*
- *The Gift of the Pirate Queen*
- *Matthew Jackson Meets the Wall*
- *Shark in School*
- *Poopsie Pomerantz, Pick Up Your Feet*
- *Love, from the Fifth-Grade Celebrity*
- *Fourth-Grade Celebrity*
- *The Girl Who Knew It All*
- *Left-Handed Shortstop*
- *The Winter Worm Business*
- *Rat Teeth*
- *Have You Seen Hyacinth Macaw?*
- *Loretta P. Sweeny, Where Are You?*
- *Tootsie Tanner, Why Don't You Talk?*

Biographies of Patricia Reilly Giff Online:

- www.edupaperback.org/authorbios/Giff_PatriciaReilly.html
- www.bcplonline.org/kidspage/kids_pgiff.html#Biography
- www.lib.usm.edu/~degrum/findaids/giff,pr.htm#bio



The Last Word

Here's what author Patricia Reilly Giff had to say about her book *Lily's Crossing*:

"Lily's Crossing was about my childhood. I was inspired to write that because for years, I thought about my childhood during the Second World War, in Rockaway, New York, which I loved. We didn't sleep in Rockaway, we didn't have a cabin there, but we went there almost every day in the summertime. I loved the water. I was clumsy out of the water, but in the water, I could swim. I was good around boats, so I always felt good about it. So I thought one day that I would write Lily, and it took me about four years to finally do it.

The book is fiction, but it's based on so much that I did do. I am Lily; I am the grandmother. The bakery really existed, but it was in St. Albans, where I grew up. And Albert is a composite of many boys in my life when I was growing up.

Certainly, we went to the bakery alone-- and during the war, when the baker couldn't get eggs or sugar, the offerings were pretty slim in the bakery. There were signs up, like "loose lips sink ships." It was wartime and when I went to bed at night, I'd look out the window

and see the search lights and always worry that the German planes were coming. I was afraid a lot, and so the time period is real, the story is fiction, but the setting, the background, is true.



When my sister, Anne, was born, my mother put stars up on her bedroom ceiling, over the windows, and they were beautiful.

Eventually, they dried a little in the back and once in a while, a star would float down from my sister's ceiling onto the bed or onto the floor and we called them "falling stars," we thought they were magic. So, putting the stars on the ceiling reminded me of my childhood, my sister's childhood of that time, during the Second World War."