

GOODSPEED MUSICALS

AUDIENCE INSIGHTS

chaos... one letter at a time



a new muzical



50th Anniversary

GOODSPEED
MUSICALS®

The Max Showalter Center for
Education in Musical Theatre

LMNOP

The Norma Terris Theatre
July 28 - Aug 18, 2013

MUSIC BY
PAUL LOESEL

BOOK AND LYRICS BY
SCOTT BURKELL

BASED ON THE NOVEL
"ELLA MINNOW PEA" BY
MARK DUNN

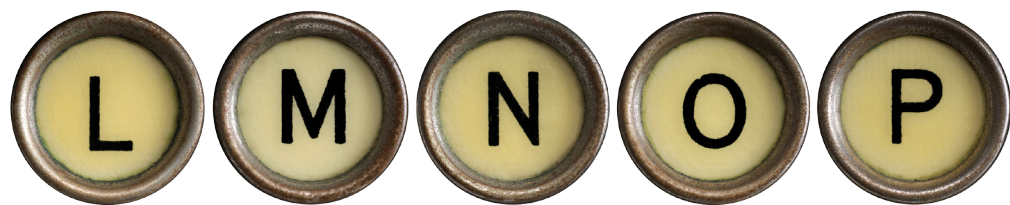
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Audience Insights
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SHOW SYNOPSIS

SETTING: NOLLOP

Nollop is a 63-square-mile autonomous island nation 21 miles southeast of Charleseton, South Carolina. Established as a quasi-communal society by dispossessed southern Americans in the 1840s, the island declared its independence from the United States in 1870. Over the years the country's leadership has sought to uplift its citizens through almost monastic devotion to liberal arts education and scholarship, effectively elevating language to a national art form, while relegating modern technology to the status of avoidable nuisance. Formerly Utopianna, the country's name was changed in 1904 to honor native son Nevin Nollop, the author of the popular pangram sentence "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog."

GLOSSARY

Cenotaph: a monument created in remembrance of a person who is deceased. The remains of the departed are buried elsewhere.

This musical takes place on the fictional island of Nollop, located 20 miles off the coast of South Carolina. Nollop is home to an agrarian, arts and crafts, peace-loving, literate and engaged citizenry, whose ancestors left America in the 1800s prior to the Civil War to start their own island nation. The Nollopian love of language is symbolized by a **cenotaph** in the center of their town square honoring the island's favorite son, Nevin Nollop. Marble tiles on the plaque proudly display a pangram (a sentence which uses all 26 letters of the alphabet with minimal repetition) created by Nevin himself. The saying is: "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog."

The unexpected happens when the tile displaying the letter 'Z' tumbles to the ground. Concern over the fallen tile and its underlying meaning sends the High Island Council into an emergency session. Their conclusion is that Nollop has spoken from the grave, that the fallen tile is a sign that the letter 'Z' must be immediately removed from all spoken and written usage. Not understanding the ramifications of the Council's decision, islanders celebrate the decision with a "Goodbye to Z" party.

The Minnow Pea family, Otto, Gwynette and their 18-year-old daughter Ella attend the party. Ella is a headstrong, bright and restless young woman who just graduated from high school at the head of her class and who is keen to move quickly into adulthood. As her parents and the rest of the island celebrate the banishment of 'Z,' Ella is troubled by the pronouncement and suspicious of the real reasons behind the High Island Council's decision.

The celebration comes to a quick halt when the Council communicates a series of increasingly severe penalties for violating the new law. A first time offender will be marked with a slash of black ink across the face. A second offense will result either in time spent in stocks or a lashing at

the whipping post. A third offense will result in the immediate banishment of the offender from the island with the added penalty of death if the person should refuse to leave or attempt to return.

Nollopians quickly realize that eliminating a letter from their speech and writing, even a letter as seemingly innocuous and unnecessary as 'Z,' is difficult. Soon after, the letter 'Q' falls, and others after it. The Council maintains that each letter represented by a fallen tile must be banished from all oral and written communication. As the alphabet shrinks, all manner of speaking and writing becomes increasingly difficult.

More and more islanders unintentionally violate the law, through both "slips of the tongue and slips of the pen," and suffer the penalties imposed by the Council, throwing the island into fearful chaos. Whistles and sirens pierce the air. Neighbors and friends begin pointing accusatory fingers at one another in the name of "civil duty." Families are torn apart as individuals are banished from the island after committing a third and final offense and many others leave voluntarily to avoid the reprisals and restrictions.

Ella is fearful but courageous. With the support of a handsome young visitor from the University of Georgia, Nathaniel Warren, Ella takes it upon herself to do whatever she can to rally her fellow Nollopians, convince the Council to reverse its decision, and save the island. She offers the Council a unique challenge. Will they accept? And if they do, can Ella and her Nollopian colleagues succeed?

LMNOP is a unique musical, part romance, part clever word game, part adult fable, that reminds us all of how precious our liberties are; how quickly unbridled extremism can take them from us; and how important it is to have the courage to stand up for what we believe.

CHARACTER SUMMARY



Lilli Cooper as Ella Minnow Pea.
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ELLA MINNOW PEA: An intelligent, resilient, inquisitive, and passionate eighteen year old female who was born and raised in Nollop. She is slightly socially awkward and strives to fight for what she believes in.

GWENETTE MINNOW PEA: Ella's strong and loving mother who is in her early forties. She is loyal, sweet, and cares deeply about setting a good example for Ella. She fights for what she believes in and constantly supports her husband, Otto, despite his flaws.

OTTO MINNOW PEA: A recovering alcoholic who is also a devoted father and husband. Although he struggles to control his former addiction, he is kind, gentle, and cares deeply for his family and his home.

AGNES PRATHER: Agnes is the mother of Eugenia Prather who proves to be a loyal friend and mother. She is cautious, nervous, and devotedly attempts to follow the new laws of Nollop.

EUGENIA PRATHER: The 11-year-old daughter of Agnes Prather. Eugenia is precocious, wise and extremely capable for her age. She joins Ella in the resistance against the High Island Council and is enthusiastic to help in any way she can.

NATE WARREN: An American college student with a charming Southern accent who appears in Nollop in their time of need. Nate is a scientist who studied Nollop, travels there to learn more and, in turn, meets and falls in love with Ella. He is attractive, a bit nerdy and, like Ella, will fight for what he believes

GEORGEANNE TOWGATE: Georgeanne is the single mother of Timmy Towgate. As a result of her husband's abandonment, she is over-protective of Timmy and will do anything to shelter him. She appears to be meek and quiet but is actually a fierce and passionate fighter.

TIMMY TOWGATE: The 11-year-old son of Georgeanne Towgate. He has a reputation for being bratty, a bully, and a tattletale. Timmy is dutiful and follows his mother's example.

SHUBERT GREENLY: The leader of the Nollopian townspeople.

HOUSTON LAGREER: The leader of the High Island Council. LaGreer is conniving and manipulative.



Ming-An Fasquell as Eugenia Prather.
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MEET THE WRITERS



Scott Burkell and Paul Loesel

Scott Burkell and Paul Loesel, a musical theatre writing team, have been working together for a long, long time. It all started when fortune threw them together at a summer stock theatre back in the '90s (yup, that long ago). Scott was an actor in the company and Paul played piano and was music director for the after show cabaret. They weren't really friends. They liked each other and all and had a mutual respect for one another but they really didn't hang out together. Well, one day Scott had this

urge that he'd never really had before—to write a song. He knew that he couldn't do it alone and needed someone to set his blossoming thoughts to music.

He approached Paul, who agreed to help, and the song they wrote was by their own admission "one of the worst songs ever." It was called "Actor's Pet Peeves" and basically it was a formless, wandering, repetitive, 12 minute harangue chastising audiences for all of their bad behavior (you know, unwrapping candy, talking, asking silly questions etc.). It was performed twice in the theatre's cabaret to a rather confused response. The audience had basically been spanked for 12 minutes and weren't sure how to react. The song was put on the bottom of Scott and Paul's trunk and lives on only in legend. The important thing was that a team had been born. Both of the guys lived in Manhattan and when the summer was over they found themselves creatively entangled again. Having written a song, and an epic song at that, the next logical step for Scott seemed to be tackling a book musical.

He approached Paul and that was that. The guys started work on what would become their first book musical titled *Six of One*. They refer to it now as their "training wheel musical." It was the musical that they made mistakes on, ripped apart and rewrote over and over, but most importantly it provided them with the opportunity to learn how to work with one another. The musical was accepted into the ASCAP Musical Theatre Workshop, received a Jonathan Larson grant, had many readings and ultimately was produced by CAP21 in a fully staged workshop in 2004. In the meantime the guys continued to write cabaret songs which they performed in their own original shows, *Love Songs and Other Crap* (which was MAC nominated) and *Hairless and Ripped* both done on the stage of New York's Don't Tell Mama. Their songs started to be recorded, too, by people like Lisa Richards, Marin Mazzie and Jason Danieley.

Fate came into play when one of Scott's good friends gave him a book, Mark Dunn's *Ella Minnow Pea*. The title reminded Scott's friend of a particular song in *Six of One* where a character references the alphabetical sequence, "Imnop." The book went on the shelf in the "to be read" section. Then a particularly dark day arrived when the guys got news that an idea they had for their next musical had just been usurped by a well-established theatre writer. It seemed like maybe the universe was saying, "hang it up, this writing thing just isn't working out." Depressed and beaten Scott went to the shelf and picked up *Ella Minnow Pea*. He started reading: the characters grabbed him, the story compelled, the plot sang! This was it! This book was crying out to be musicalized. Scott gave it to Paul and waited anxiously for word on whether it would have the same inspirational effect on his partner. You see, they had looked at many a story, many a book to adapt and had never been able to agree. But Mark Dunn's "little fable" proved to be the tale the guys were looking for. They agreed! They would turn this book into a musical! But how? Well, after a bit of junior sleuthing the guys figured out where Mark lived and sent him a letter. Mark, graciously agreed to meet and the three had coffee together. Long story short: Mark heard their material, liked it, lawyers got involved (that added a year, no lie!) and finally work was started on *Ella Minnow Pea* the musical.

The musical, after readings in New York, had it's premiere at the University of Michigan in the Fall of 2008. The guys then went back to take a look at *Six of One*. So much about the piece was good but they had never gotten it to exactly where they wanted it. After extensive rewriting during the spring and summer of 2009 *Six of One* reemerged, revamped and retitled: *The Extraordinary Ordinary*. A reading of this new version was scheduled for the Fall of 2009 with a probable production in Houston to follow and then back to New York for a production in the Fall of 2010 planned. In the meantime the guys continued to write more stand alone songs which have been recorded, "Invention" and "Life Starts Clapping" (for which Paul set a poem by Hafiz to music: more on how the guys deal with "cheating on one another" creatively at another time) on Stephanie J. Block's CD, "This Place I Know" and "Ohio, 1904" on Rebecca Luker's *Greenwich Time*. The guys were also invited to be part of the prestigious *Broadway, the Third Generation* series on the Millennium Stage at Washington, D.C.'s Kennedy Center. The February, 2009 evening had Scott and Paul performing their songs with Stephanie J. Block singing and Alison Seidner accompanying on the cello. The fall of 2009 saw the debut of Scott and Paul's musical revue, *Sorta Love Songs* at New York's Birdland. Their material was performed by a starry cast which included Marin Mazzie, Stephanie J. Block, and Jason Danieley. At present the guys continue to write and plan on starting work on a new musical soon (that is if they can agree on what that musical is going to be).

AUTHORS' NOTES BY SCOTT BURKELL & PAUL LOESEL



Scott Burkell.
Photo by Diane Sobolewski

I first picked up Mark Dunn's novel because a friend thought it might appeal since I love wordplay, religiously work the New York Times crossword (is there any other?) and have been known to correct bad grammar on the street. I read it having no idea it would affect me like it did. I found its deceptively simple story of a peaceful island whose colorful inhabitants are suddenly forced to deal with the gradual loss of the language they love one letter at a time incredibly compelling, unique and entertaining.

And most importantly I felt like it wanted to sing! I immediately passed the book to Paul as we had unsuccessfully been trying to find something to adapt for the musical theatre. I held my breath and crossed my fingers as he read it hoping it would have the same effect on him and that he would also feel inspired enough to want to musicalize the book. Thankfully he did.



Paul Loesel
Photo by Diane Sobolewski

Our whole experience with *LMNOP* has been an exciting one. (And yes, Mark's book is titled [Ella Minnow Peg](#) and if you want to know why we changed it for the musical stop us in the lobby or shoot us an email. We'd love to share!) The first production was at the University of Michigan followed by extensive rewrites and readings and finally a 3 week Lab production in New York in the fall of 2012.

Now, here we are at the next step... and what a step! We are honored and humbled to be here in beautiful Connecticut working with such a ridiculously talented group of people on our musical. We hope our time at Goodspeed gives us the chance to look at the show with creative and critical eyes, rewriting and honing and hopefully moving ever closer to our goals. We are also so thankful for the chance to take advantage of one of Goodspeed's most incredible

resources; its supportive and intelligent audiences. You are indeed one of our most valuable assistants in this very important developmental process and we thank you for your support.

This timeless tale resonates on many levels as any good fable will and hopefully its message of remaining optimistic, even in the darkest of times, and standing up for what you believe no matter the odds, will speak to you as well.

(By the way, these author's notes were written without the use of the letter 'J'... we challenge you to pick a letter and try to live without it for a spell. Don't pick a 'D' though... it's too difficult!)

DIRECTOR'S VISION BY JOE CALARCO



Joe Calarco

When I first came across the musical *LMNOP* several years ago I was immediately struck by how smart it was, smart and entertaining. And it has a score that simply soars.

Then again this musical is so many things. It is a show that crossword puzzle lovers will adore hanging on every word a character speaks dreading that they may use an “illegal” letter. It is set in a totally original world unlike any I have seen on stage. It is also a romantic love story where two very quirky outsiders start out haltingly, afraid to risk two broken hearts, but who end up fully committed, invaluable to one another, and vowing to love each other no matter what. It also has a bona fide heroine in its lead character. She's smart, she's unsure, she questions, she demands, she believes, and she acts.

Watching rehearsals I have more than once thought about *The Hunger Games* another story about a young woman who fights for what's right in a world that's gone mad. And it's very much about our world today and about the country that we live in.

LMNOP is set on a fictitious island off the coast of South Carolina. Well, that “fictitious” scene plays itself out every day on the very real mainland of this country. As I said, *LMNOP*, is smart.

“I have more than once thought about *The Hunger Games*—another story about a young woman who fights for what's right in a world that's gone mad.”

The other day in rehearsal I was struck by the fact that there was a moment where I realized that both characters are “wrong,” even our heroine. Or I should say that both characters are so set in their belief system that they can't communicate with each other effectively. The characters' knee jerk reactions to each other, to someone whose belief system is different than their own, are not allowing them to hear one another or to come to any place where they might share common ground.

A CONVERSATION WITH MARK DUNN



Mark Dunn

Mark Dunn, the author of the novel Ella Minnow Pea, the source material for the musical *LMNOP*, took the time to sit down with Random House and explain his process of writing the novel. Below are some interview questions that Dunn answered that provided insight into his complex story and writing process.

RANDOM HOUSE: You're a playwright and this is your first novel. What inspired you to try a different form? How do you compare the writing of plays with that of a novel?

MARK DUNN: This is actually the third novel I've written. I couldn't find a publisher for the first two. I've been writing plays and novels since the early eighties. My first love is the theater; I've written many plays and enjoy telling stories through dialogue. And that's a strong component in each of the three novels I've written. And I think that's true of Ella Minnow Pea; I look at letter writing as a form of conversation, you just have to wait a little longer to get the answer back. It allows me to use the voices of my characters in a very conversational style, albeit in this particular book I do put some pretty formal language restrictions on the characters. But dialogue, I think, is one of the strengths of my writing.

RH: What challenges did you face as a novelist that surprised you?

MD: I think every day working on that novel presented a new challenge. I expected that because of the odd, progressively lipogrammatic format, and I have to say progressive because people conjure a book written without one letter of the alphabet, and they don't realize that this is almost like the ultimate challenge. There are specific challenges that revealed themselves. I'll give you one example. I decided early on that I had to remove an important letter from the alphabet, so I thought the least amount of damage

would be done by removing the letter 'D', not realizing how important it is for creating past tense. And just how many words in our language use that letter, there's just no getting around it. All of a sudden I went from having a pretty easy time finding the right words to having to really dig in to the thesaurus to find substitutory ways to tell my story. And there are a lot of other examples about the way things really surprised me.

RH: Where did the inspiration for this particular story come from?

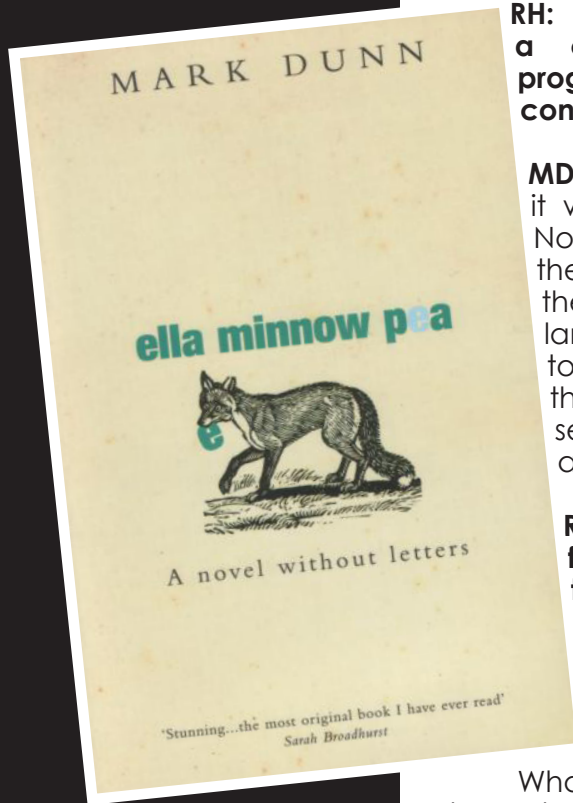
MD: I have some major concerns about people who impose their beliefs upon others, and by doing so rob others of their civil liberties. And that was an area that I explored in some other work and that I really wanted to take to an extreme, but in such a way that it didn't repulse readers. It was almost like I wanted to have it both ways. I wanted to employ some really high stakes, but I didn't want to have a blood bath like a lot of dystopian novels do. I wanted it to be something that high school kids could read and think about what the book was trying to say without being disturbed by its presentation. And I think that's why a couple of people have compared it to a "kinder, gentler 1984."

RH: You manage to explore a topic as weighty as totalitarianism with an impressively light touch. Did you set out intending to find a balance between these diametrically opposed qualities?

MD: Which you think would be difficult, but once you get used to the light touch, you can sort of keep it going and be a little bit dark, a little bit ironic, and a little satirical in places, but not do it to such an extreme that it's going to put people off. I think I achieved a balance that I'm comfortable with.

(Continued)

A CONVERSATION WITH MARK DUNN



CLICK HERE
to read excerpts from
[Ella Minnow Pea](#)

RH: It must have been quite a challenge, as the book progressed, to write with an ever-contracting palette of letters.

MD: I call it a challenge, but it was also incredibly fun. The Nollopian people also create their own words, and later in the book, their own sound-alike language, and that continued to be fun for me throughout the writing process and didn't send me tossing the book across the room.

RH: Did you use the "Find" function on your computer to make sure you were not using a "banned" letter by mistake?

MD: I would be dead without the "Find" function!

What I would do, periodically, is to go back through the chapters I'd done before and run the "Search" feature on each of the letters that had been outlawed. And the biggest fear of my original editor was that the book would be finished and we'd all breathe a sigh of relief and a few days later someone would come out of the woodwork and alert us to a letter that shouldn't be there. I think we caught them all, though. So far nobody has come forward. .

RH: Was this story as much fun to write as it was to read?

MD: That was the big question that I had. I enjoyed writing it so much that I thought there's no way people will have this much fun reading it. I felt like I was on this journey and I didn't realize that there would be so many people who would want to take this journey, too.

RH: Do you have any advice for aspiring novelists and playwrights?

MD: I have some great advice. I just turned 46 years old, and I've just in the last two years established myself as a writer. You just have to be really patient. I enjoyed some success in the theater, but never reached the level of success where I could support myself strictly by writing plays. And, of course, few playwrights do. But if you're confident that you've got talent and you write from your heart and you're not in it for the money, perseverance is the main thing that I would tell people. Hang in there and eventually things are going to fall into place, though sometimes it takes twenty or thirty years to happen.

EXPLORING A DYSTOPIAN SOCIETY

THE LAWS OF NOLLOP

DEFINING DYSTOPIA

A Dystopia is a fictional community or society that is characterized by dehumanization, totalitarian or authoritarian governments, environmental disaster, or other characteristics associated with a cataclysmic decline in society.

Most often found in literature and film, dystopian societies usually feature different kinds of repressive social control systems, a lack or total absence of individual freedoms and expressions, and a state of constant warfare or violence.

Dystopian societies have culminated in a series of sub-genres of fiction and are often used to raise real-world issues about society, environment, politics, religion, psychology, spirituality, or technology that may become present in the future.

Many fictional works combine both Dystopia and Utopia (a perfect society) as a metaphor for the different directions humanity can take in its choices, ending up with one of the two possible futures.

LMNOP is set on the fictional island of Nollop, located 20 miles off the coast of South Carolina. The story tells the tale of a dystopian society that is governed by a group of elected officials called the High Island Council. Under the High Island Council is a group of Nollopian citizens who are omnipresent and enforce the laws of Nollop. They are called the Letter Usage Guard, LUGs for short.

In the late 1830s, a group of discontented Americans were at sea seeking a place of refuge that lacked the industrial excess and slavery that was commonplace in their home country. They found an unclaimed island and severed all remaining ties with the United States. The group began a civilization that focused on language, compassion, and a healthy respect for the liberal arts. On Monday, July 17, 1871, in a landslide vote, the island was named after Nevin Nollop, who loved language in all of its forms. His greatest achievement was the creation of a pangram that consisted of just 35 letters. Scene One of *LMNOP* begins with the townsfolk standing by Nollop's cenotaph on the town square.

When the 'Z' falls from the pangram, the High Island Council institutes a new law and continues to enforce it as more letters fall.

The announcement of the first law is as follows:

*In the matter of this rather odd situation
This unprecedented letter detachment
We in complete totality agree
This wasn't some accidental arbitrary act
But ration and this we feel is fact
Nevin Nollop is speaking beyond the
grave
The fall of the letter was a signifier
Of Nevin Nollops distinct desire
That the freshly fallen Z
Should be removed from our current
phraseology
We must give Nollop the respect he is
owed
So Z shall be officially heave-hoed*

*Tonight at midnight from its usage please
abstain
And use only the 25 letters that remain*

The punishment for speaking, writing, or possessing the letter "Z," or any other letter to fall, in any form of communication is as follows:

- 1. First Offense:** An inky slash to mark the blame as a public symbol of their shame
- 2. Second Offense:** If the offender is male he will receive a flogging of the body for his deceit. If the offender is female, she will have her hands and feet locked in the public stock
- 3. Third Offense:** The violator will most swiftly be banished from the island. If a three-time offender refuses to leave, they will be put to death

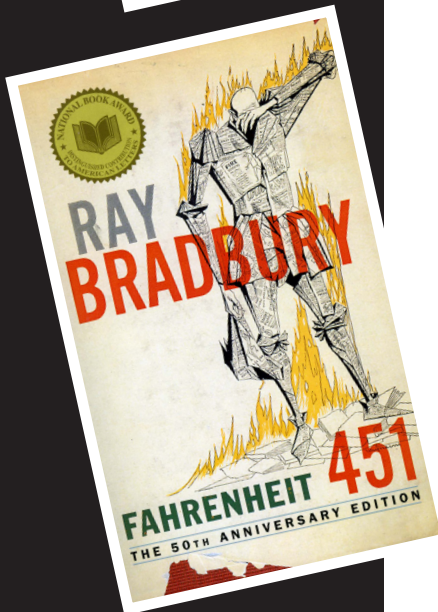
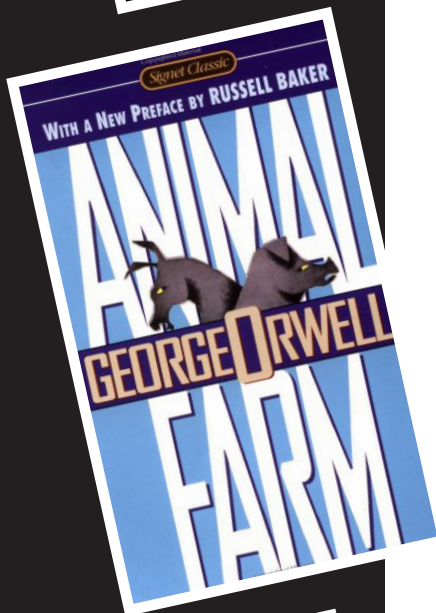
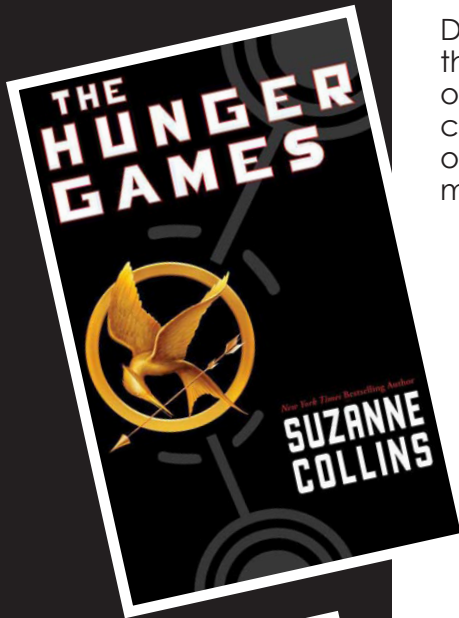
Additional rules and laws for Nollopians include:

1. The exemption of all punishments for children under the age of eleven
2. Library books must be inspected, dissected, and burned if the forbidden letter exists in its text
3. LUGs are not always in uniform and thus can execute their duties while undercover
4. As letters detach from the pangram, they are eliminated from Nollop's vocabulary
5. When homes are left unoccupied, the council will confiscate all such properties

Many feel that these new laws and punishments are too harsh, especially as letters continue to fall. Those who have read [Ella Minnow Pea](#) and/or seen *LMNOP* are quick to notice the governmental control of Nollop and the growing authoritative presence on the island. The musical reminds audiences how valuable their freedoms are and the importance of fighting for what they believe .

DYSTOPIAN FICTION

Dystopia is a community, usually presented in fictional stories, that represents the opposite of utopia. The location is typically characterized by some form of totalitarian government, dehumanization, and a disastrous attempt at control which leads to a decline in society. *LMNOP* is the perfect example of a dystopian society. Below are some examples of books, films, plays, and musicals that are similarly based on dystopian societies.



BOOKS

The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins
Cloud Atlas by David Mitchell
The Giver by Lois Lowry
Animal Farm by George Orwell
1984 by George Orwell
Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

FILMS

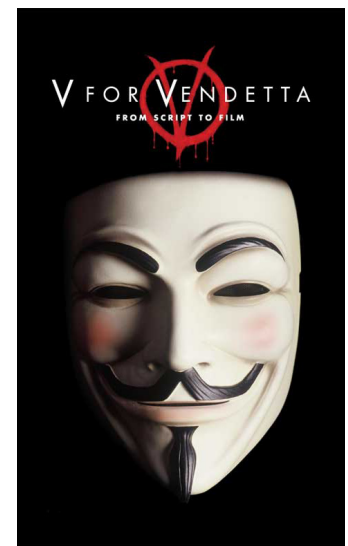
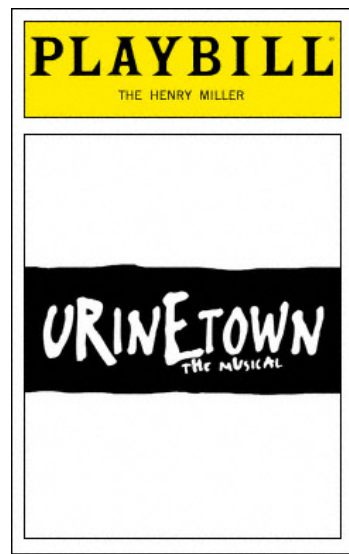
The Island
V for Vendetta
12 Monkeys

MUSICALS

Urinetown by Mark Hollmann and Greg Kotis
The Cradle Will Rock by Marc Blitzstein

PLAYS

Falling Petals by Ben Ellis
Peter Panic by James Baldwin



GOVERNING BODIES

Before and after the letters begin to fall, the rulers of Nollop enact laws and rules reminiscent of other real-world governments. Like other nations, Nollop uses a combination of governing styles. Below are some of the most common forms of government in the world today with examples of nations that share similar political ideologies. After reading through each, consider which forms of government are similar to the fictional Nollopian government:



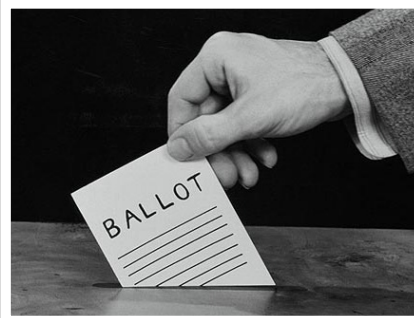
COMMUNISM: A government often based on the economic control of the state in which an authoritarian party holds the power. Citizens have no private ownership of property or capital and all goods are shared equally by all the people. A classless society, Communism offers its people healthcare, education, and welfare.

- Examples: China, Laos, Vietnam

PRESIDENTIAL DEMOCRACY:

A government in which the people elect individuals into office. Citizens are free to organize competing political parties, engage in political campaigns, and hold elections.

- Examples: United States, Mexico, Brazil



MONARCHY: A government in which rule of the people is given to a king, queen, emperor, or empress and can only be passed down to the ruler's heirs.

Constitutional Monarchy:

A monarchy that is guided by a constitution. The rights, duties and responsibilities of the monarch are written out in the constitution.

- Examples: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Jordan



Parliamentary Monarchy:

A monarchy in which the members of the executive branch are chosen by parliament.

- Examples: Malaysia, Luxembourg, Oman, Swaziland, England

REPUBLIC: A government that has elected representatives who create and enforce laws for the people. Each representative is chosen to represent under a set period of time.

- Examples: France, Tanzania, Uganda

TOTALITARIAN: A government that is operated by one political party. People are forced to abide by all that the government requires. All politics, economics, values, and beliefs are government-controlled, and the people may be prevented from leaving the country.

Authoritarianism: A government in which state authority is enforced onto many, but not all, aspects of its citizens' lives.

Dictatorship:

A subcategory of totalitarianism in which the government is controlled by an unelected absolute ruler or small faction who often comes from a military background.

- Example: Libya

Theocracy: A government that is operated by a religious authority in which the laws are interpreted and created based on a Deity, who is identified as the supreme ruler.

- Example: Iran

The characters in *LMNOP* lose their rights and suffer an extreme form of oppression. Unfortunately, many people face similarly unthinkable injustices and oppressive laws on a daily basis. It is important to understand the value of our liberties and the systems we have in place to protect them.

CENSORSHIP

NOLLOP LOSES THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Nollopian lose many of their liberties as letters continue to fall from their beloved pangram. One of the most devastating rights lost by the people is the freedom of speech. In order to increase their power, the High Order Council establishes a heightened degree of censorship and tears away the freedom of expression from their citizens one letter at a time. Though they strictly enforce the letter usage laws and attempt to maintain control over the people, the governing leaders fail to follow their own regulations and are seen using the illegal letters in private. In turn, they ultimately turn on each other and nullify their own rules just before Ella successfully finds a pangram that will bring the freedom of speech back to her people.



FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN THE U.S.

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution declares that, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."



Freedom of speech, or freedom of expression, is instrumental to the United States democratic government. It is believed that this right enriches the social stability of the country and understanding between its citizens. There are several exceptions, however, to freedom of speech in the United States. These exceptions include the harmful use of obscenities, hate speech, and true threats. Freedom of speech is rooted in the idea that the best way to fully discuss issues is through ample conversation rather than the elimination of differing opinions.

CENSORSHIP IN THE U.S.

In *LMNOP*, Nollop's governing body attempts to enforce regulations that ban certain letters from all means of communication. This policy derives from a strong belief that Nevin Nollop is spiritually ordering his people to stop using these letters. The High Order Council chooses to strictly implement the language restrictions through censorship and a punitive system.

Censorship is the suppression of words, images, or ideas that are considered to be questionable or threatening. It most commonly appears in a society when a group of people aim to enforce personal, political, or moral values on others. Under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, every person has the right to read, view, listen to, and disseminate constitutionally protected ideas, even if a censor finds the ideas to be disagreeable. Thus, censorship enforced by the government, is unconstitutional in the United States.



CENSORED

A WAY WITH WORDS

PANGRAMS

A pangram, or a holoalphabetic sentence, is a sentence that includes each of the 26 letters of the alphabet while using as little repetition as possible. The word pangram comes from the Greek terms meaning “all” (pan) and “letter” (gramma).

When creating pangrams, the goals are to keep the sentence short and ensure it makes sense.

The most famous pangram of the English language is “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.”

LMNOP takes place on a fictitious island which is said to be the birth place of the phrase.

Examples of Pangrams:

- Pack my box with five dozen liquor jugs.
- My girl wove six dozen plaid jackets before she quit.
- The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

Can you come up with a shorter pangram?

In *LMNOP*, Nevin Nollop taught his people to revere language and extend its perimeters by authoring the pangram “the quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.” Yet in enforcing Nollop’s perceived wishes the Council actually ends up shrinking the perimeters of their beloved language.

This paradox found in *LMNOP* mirrors the French literary movement called Oulipo.

In 1960, Raymond Queneau and François Le Lionnais founded the Oulipo (*Ouvroir de littérature potentielle* or Workshop of Potential Literature) literary movement. The group of writers, mathematicians and writer-mathematicians who considered themselves Oulipians aimed to devise a system to guarantee that writers would not run out of innovative formal possibilities. They were intent on achieving the seemingly paradoxical freedom that came from setting themselves near-impossible rules and limitations and then writing their way out of them.

It was the Oulipian belief that poets with writers’ block could explore the use of “language play” in its various forms instead of agonizing over the blank page. Ironically, many of the techniques used in Oulipian works actually restrict creativity to a mathematical formula instead of allowing for unlimited possibilities.

If you’re a lover of word games, try employing one of these Oulipian forms in your next writing project:

LIPOGRAMS deny the writer the use of a particular letter or letters. *LMNOP* is a progressive lipogram – starting off with no restricted letters and eventually progressing to 21 restricted letters.

PERVERBS are obtained by crossing proverbs. If you join the first part of “All roads lead to Rome” to the second part of “A rolling stone gathers no moss,” you obtain the perverb “All roads gather no moss.” The remaining parts yield a second perverb, “A rolling stone leads to Rome.”

ANTONYMIC TRANSLATIONS consists of replacing each word in a text with its antonym or the closest word to its opposite.

HOMOPHONIC TRANSLATIONS renders a text in one language into a near-homophonic text (or text that sounds the same) in the same or another language, usually with no attempt to preserve the original meaning of the text. For example “recognize speech” becomes “wreck a nice beach.”

SPOONERISMS are words or phrases in which letters or syllables get swapped. This often happens accidentally in slips of the tongue (or tips of the slung as Spoonerisms are often affectionately called).

CENTOS are poems comprised of lines from other poems, by other poets.

HETEROGRAMS are words, phrases, or sentences in which no letter of the alphabet occurs more than once.

S+7 or N+7 requires the writer to replace every noun in the original piece with the seventh noun after it in the dictionary.

SNOWBALL is a poem in which the first line is one word long, the second line has two words, and so on. A snowball poem can also be made up of lines comprised of progressively longer words.

RESOURCES

THE WRITERS, SYNOPSIS, AND CHARACTERS

"All About Scott and Paul!" *Scott Burkell and Paul Loesel, Composing Team.*
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CENSORSHIP AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH

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