

# Jake's Gift

April 14th @ 1:15 pm  
April 15th @ 10:00 am and  
1:15 pm  
April 16th @ 10:00 am

Rawlco Radio Hall  
Remai Arts Centre



ISC Youth Series Presented by Persephone Theatre

## Saskatchewan Curriculum Connections:

### English Language Arts:

#### Viewing

- *The students will recognize viewing as an active process that requires viewers to:*
  1. Anticipate a message and set a purpose for viewing.
  2. Attend
  3. Seek and check understanding by making connections, and by making and confirming predictions and inferences.
  4. Interpret and summarize
  5. Analyze and Evaluate
  6. Respond personally, critically and creatively to visual representation

#### Speaking

- *The students will recognize that talk is an important tool for communicating, thinking and learning:*
  1. Speak to clarify and extend thinking
  2. Speak to express and extend understanding
  3. Speak to share thoughts, opinions and feelings.

#### Writing

- *The students will recognize writing as a constructive and recursive process:*
  1. Recognize writing as a process of constructing meaning for self and others.
  2. Practice the behaviours of effective writers.
  3. Write fluently and confidently for a variety of purposes and audiences.



### Arts Education:

#### Foundational Objectives:

- **Examine how various artists have represented or interpreted ideas that relate to those being explored by students:**
  1. Develop an understanding of various ways that human experi-

ence is reflected in their own work and that of their peers.

2. Examine the relationships between their own ideas and those of other artists.
3. Increase awareness of various structures, presentational styles and staging possibilities.
4. Understand the universality of certain themes, characters and

situations in dramatic expression.

5. Continue to demonstrate critical thinking and support opinions using appropriate language and vocabulary when responding to works of dramatic art.
6. Examine, analyze and interpret the work of dramatic artists within the works cultural and historical context.





jake's gift

# STUDY GUIDE

**A supplemental resource for  
intermediate and high school students  
and teachers**

SUMMARY

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

BIOGRAPHY

DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE

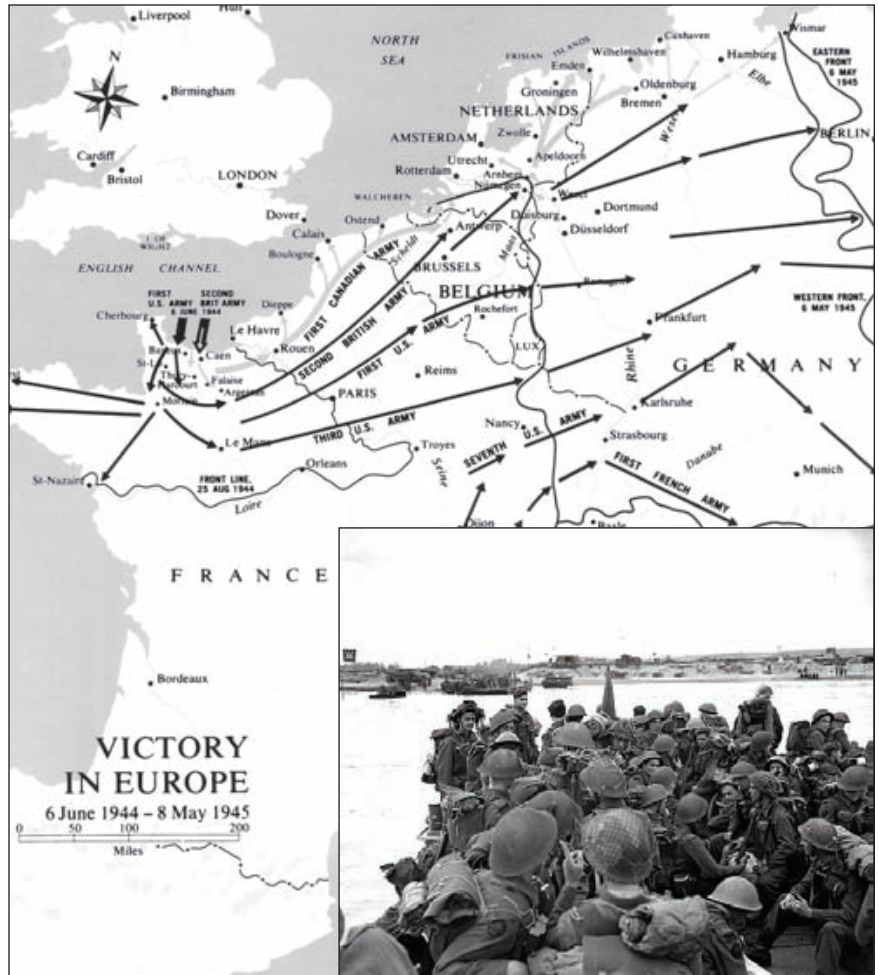
PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

HISTORY OF D-DAY

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

POST-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

RESOURCE MATERIALS



## SUMMARY

*Jake's Gift* is an award-winning one-person multi-character show that tells the story of a Canadian World War II veteran who reluctantly returns to Normandy, France, for the 60th Anniversary of D-Day. The play was created after Julia Mackey's own journey to Normandy for the 60th Anniversary of D-Day Ceremonies. In June 2004 she spent eight days touring the Normandy coast, attending many remembrance ceremonies and interviewing Canadian veterans and the local French people. The length of the school performance is 45 minutes plus a 5-10 minute Q & A.

## TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

**Set Up Time:** 20 minutes

**Performance Space:** A drama room, or theatre/auditorium. A gymnasium can be used as a last resort, but is not ideal for this performance.

**Technical:** 1 small table and chair and access to an outlet for the audio equipment.



## BIOGRAPHY



Julia Mackey started writing at the age of 15, after she and her friends decided they wanted to perform a comedy piece at their school's carnival talent show. Her short sketch was so well received that she continued writing and eventually realized that she wanted to pursue

acting and writing as a career.

After completing a Bachelor of Education degree at McGill University in Montreal, she moved to Victoria, BC to pursue acting and writing. In 1994, she started training with ground-breaking director Robert Osborne. In 1995, she began writing and performing short plays for Victoria's award-winning Theatre SKAM. Since then Julia has worked as a professional actor in theatres across the country.

In 2004, she was nominated for Outstanding Performance at the Jessie Richardson Theatre Awards for her multi-character work in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. In 2005, she won the CBC's International one-minute play competition. Julia currently lives in Vancouver with her partner, Dirk van Stralen, an award winning actor, cartoonist, graphic designer and the director of *Jake's Gift*.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PERFORMANCE

The students will see a one-person show in which Julia Mackey plays three different characters. *Jake's Gift* is a comedy drama that tells the story of an 80-year-old WWII veteran who reluctantly returns to Normandy, France, for the 60th Anniversary of D-Day to search for the grave of his eldest brother, Chester, a Canadian soldier who was killed during the Battle of Normandy in 1944.

At the beginning of the play we meet Isabelle, a ten-year-old French schoolgirl who is eagerly awaiting the arrival of the

allied soldiers for the 60th anniversary ceremonies. She is swept away with the transformation of her usually sleepy town as the remembrance celebrations approach. Isabelle's grandmother, Grande Isabelle, has taught her much about the war including her own family's tragic loss, and Isabelle's sense of gratitude and remembrance towards the Canadian soldiers becomes evident as the play progresses.

While chatting with her grandmother on the beach in front of her house, Grande Isabelle notices Jake staring out at the water on the shore of Juno Beach. Isabelle begs her grandmother for permission to go and speak with the soldier. Grande-Isabelle forbids this request, not wanting her to bother the soldier with questions about the war.

Isabelle ignores this and once her grandmother is out of sight, Isabelle finds her way over to Jake, whose response to her unabashed greeting is less than inviting. Isabelle is not deterred by this and continues to pester Jake. Her charm and boldness eventually soften the old soldier, and an unexpected friendship blossoms.

At its essence, *Jake's Gift* is about the beautiful moments we can share with strangers, the legacy of remembrance and the healing power of friendship.

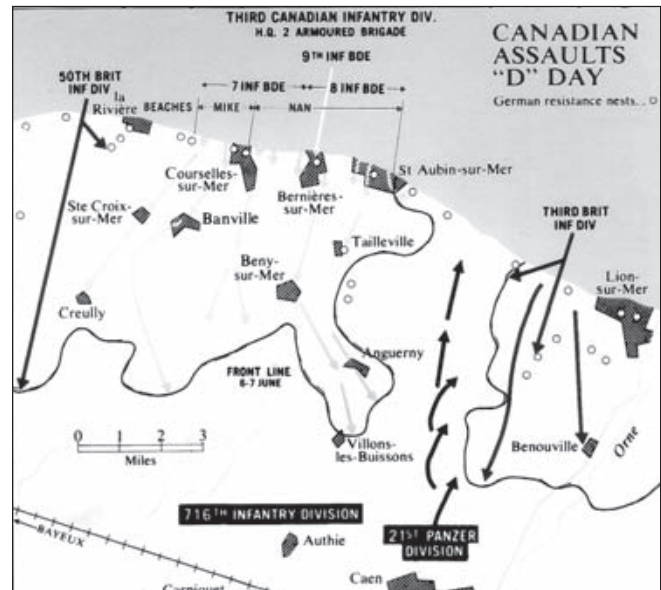
## NOTES FOR THE AUDIENCE

*Jake's Gift* is best performed in an intimate setting. (see tech requirements) The students are expected to sit quietly throughout the performance. Teachers must be present during the performance.

**LANGUAGE WARNING:** The character of Jake periodically uses the expression "god-damn".

## PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS

For the students to get the most out of the play, it is best for them to understand the historical references in the play. Below is an explanation of D-Day and Juno Beach, as well as a glossary of terms/phrases that are used in the play.



## D-DAY AND JUNO BEACH

In the early morning hours of June 6th, 1944, thousands of ships and planes carrying thousands of allied troops left the southern coast of England, crossed the English Channel and arrived hours later on the coast of Normandy, France. What ensued was 'Operation Overlord', the Allied forces invasion to free Western Europe from Nazi occupation. It would be the largest offensive attack in modern day history. 150 000 troops would land on the Normandy coastline, which had been divided into five sections, each given a code name. These were: Omaha Beach and Utah Beach (US Troops), Gold and Sword Beach (British Troops) and Juno Beach, where Canadian Troops landed.





Juno Beach was situated between Sword Beach and Gold Beach. Juno Beach stretched from Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer on the east to Courseulles-sur-Mer on the west. Juno Beach was also known as the Canadian beach, as it was assigned to the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division (with the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade).

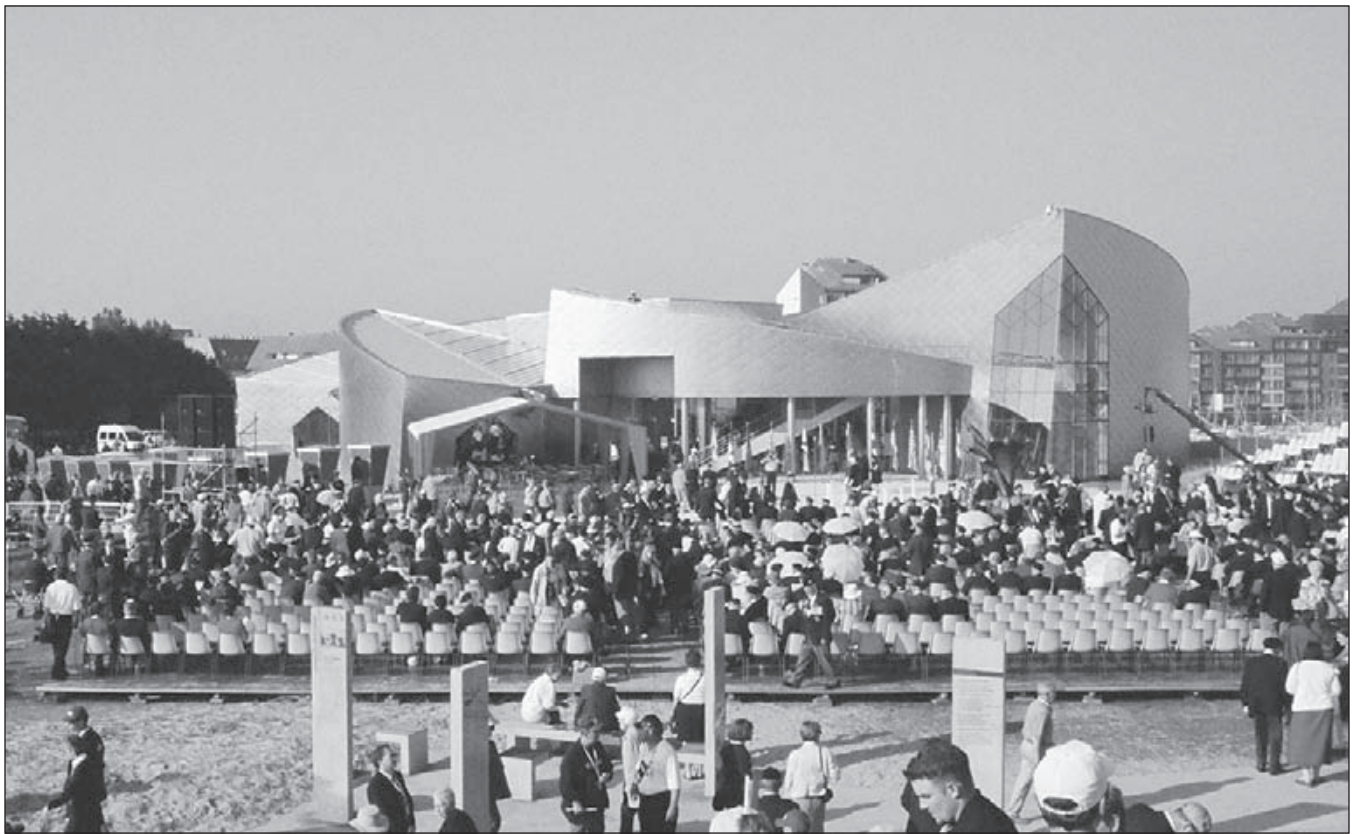
The first wave of Canadian Infantry were comprised of the following regiments: The Queen's Own Rifles, The North Shore, Le Régiment de la Chaudière, The Regina Rifles, The Royal Winnipeg Rifles and The Canadian Scottish.



*TOP: Wounded soldiers lying on Juno Beach awaiting transfer to casualty clearing station, Normandy, France, 6 June, 1944.*

*ABOVE: The same bunker as it appeared in 2004.*





*ABOVE: The Juno Beach Centre, opened on June 6th, 2003, at Courseulles-sur-Mer, commemorates the Canadian liberation efforts and is a memorial to the lives lost.*



*LEFT: Canadians who were killed on D-Day and in the initial days of the Battle of Normandy are interred at the Bény-sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery. The grave pictured is Chester Hebner's (Jake's brother in the play); a Canadian student's commemorative card can be seen bottom right of the headstone.*

## **D-DAY OBJECTIVE**

After Omaha Beach, Juno was the most heavily defended of the five landing sites chosen. German General Wilhelm Richter was in charge of the 716th Division guarding the beach, with 11 heavy batteries of 155 mm guns and 9 medium batteries of 75 mm guns at his disposal. Additionally, pillboxes and other fortifications were scattered all along the beach, most heavily concentrated in the Courseulles-sur-mer region. The seawall was twice the height of Omaha Beach's, and the sea was heavily mined.

Aerial bombardment of Juno Beach in the days leading up to D-Day caused no significant damage to German fortifications. Naval bombardment, running from 06:00 to 07:30 and including everything from battleship barrages to fire from tanks and artillery sitting on transport ship decks only managed to destroy 14 percent of the bunkers guarding the beach. Weather delays gave the Germans half an hour to regroup between cessation of bombardment and landing of Canadian troops.

Canadian troops were scheduled to land on the beaches at 07:30, following the bombardment, but were forced to postpone the landing by fifteen minutes because of bad weather. None of the assault divisions, including the 3rd Canadian Division, managed to secure their D-Day objectives, which lay inland, although the Canadians came closer than any other Allied formation. By the end of the next day, the Canadian forces had linked up with the British forces that had landed at Sword Beach.



*Berniers Sur Mer: German prisoners captured by Canadian troops at Juno Beach on D-Day - 6 June 1944.*



## VOCABULARY AND TERMS USED IN JAKE'S GIFT

### The Allies:

The term used to describe the countries that officially opposed Adolf Hitler's invasion of Europe. The main allied forces were comprised of Britain, Canada, USA, Russia, France, Poland as well as another 20 countries world wide.

### Beny Sur Mer Cemetery:

In this beautifully kept cemetery are the graves of Canadian soldiers who gave their lives in the landings in Normandy and in the earlier stages of the subsequent fighting.

### Burlington Teen Tour Band:

A youth marching band from Burlington, Ontario, comprised



of talented brass musicians, ranging in age from 12 to 18 years old. The BTTB often play at official parades and commemorative events in Canada and abroad. In June 2004, they were invited by the Minister of

Veterans Affairs to play at the 60th Anniversary Ceremonies in Normandy, France.

### D-Day:

June 6, 1944, the first day of the allied invasion to liberate Europe from Nazi occupation. Allied forces left the south coast of England at 1 am, crossed the English Channel and by 6 am the first of 150 000 troops were landing on the coast of Normandy. The Battle of Normandy had begun.

### French Resistance Fighters:

The French Resistance played a vital part in aiding the Allies to success in Western Europe, especially leading up to D-Day in June 1944. The French Resistance supplied the Allies with vital intelligence reports as well as doing a huge amount of work to disrupt the German supply and communication lines within France.

### Nazism:

The body of political and economic doctrines held and put into effect by the Nazis in Germany from 1933 to 1945 including the totalitarian principle of government, predominance of especially Germanic groups assumed to be racially superior, and supremacy of the führer (Adolf Hitler).

### The Nazis:

A German fascist party controlling Germany from 1933 to 1945 under Adolf Hitler.

### Normandy:

The northern most province in France, with a 580 km coastline. The capital city is Caen which was the destination of the Canadian troops. The Allies fought for control over Caen for two months before securing it from the Nazis on August 19th, 1944.

### The Queens Own Rifles:

A Canadian Infantry regiment, whose soldiers were among the first assault wave to land on Juno Beach on D-Day, June 6th, 1944. The Queens Own suffered the highest casualties of any Canadian Regiment on D-Day.

### The Tannoy:

"It came over the **Tannoy**." The Tannoy was a wireless mobile communications radio used by the troops in the



battlefields to receive information and orders from commanding officers. It was via this radio (also known as the WS 58) that Canadian troops heard the words, "Empty guns, cease fire."

on May 5th, 1945, letting them know WWII was over. Three days later, May 8th, 1945 was declared VE Day – Victory in Europe Day.



### The War Brides:

The term refers to the thousands of young women who met and married Canadian servicemen during the Second World War. These war brides were mostly from Britain, but a few thousand were also from other areas of Europe, including the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Italy and Germany. During the Second World War, there were an estimated 48,000 war brides and, when the war ended, most of these young women and their children (nearly 22,000) followed their husbands to a new life in Canada.

### Vera Lynn:

Considered one of the major entertainers during WWII, Vera Lynn was a popular British vocalist whose career flourished, when she was nicknamed “The Forces’ Sweetheart.” Her best-loved and most popular songs were *We’ll Meet Again* and *The White Cliffs of Dover*. She was considered one of the major entertainers during the war years.



*The SkyHawks – Canadian Forces Parachute Team – salute a veteran after their landing on Juno Beach during the 60th anniversary D-Day celebrations.*

## POST SHOW

### QUESTION & ANSWER

Julia is happy to have a Q & A period after the show and answer any questions students may have about the play.

As a playwright and actor, Julia is also very keen to discuss the process of creating one's own work – this may be of particular interest to drama students.

### POST SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Did the play affect the way that you think about Remembrance Day?

Did seeing the play peak your interest in learning about WWII? If so, how?

Did the play trigger any questions for you regarding Canada's past and/or present Military service?

How did Canada's involvement in the World Wars create its current global image?

Did you know that the Canadian Army during the WWI & WWII was a Volunteer Army? How does that differ from Canada's military today?

## IN-CLASS POST SHOW ACTIVITIES

What was your favourite part of the play? Discuss or write about the image or section of the play you enjoyed the most and explain why you were compelled by it.

Take a personal or historical event and write a one minute monologue (one-page) about it.

Interview your grandparents and oldest family members to find your own family connection to WWII. Visit the Veteran Affairs website and the virtual memorial to find info on family members who fought and died during WWII.

## USEFUL WEB SITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

**The Juno Beach Centre in Normandy, France:**

[www.junobeach.org/Centre/index.html](http://www.junobeach.org/Centre/index.html)

Canadian Students (age 16 and up) who speak both French and English can apply to work in Normandy, France, at the Juno Centre as Tour Guides.

**Veteran's Affairs Canada:**

<http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/general/>

**CBC Archives:**

<http://archives.cbc.ca/>

**National War Memorial:**

[www.warmuseum.ca](http://www.warmuseum.ca)

**Jake's Gift web site:**

[www.juliamackey.com](http://www.juliamackey.com)