



# STUDY BUDDY™

# Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great

**A ONE-ACT MUSICAL**

*based on the book by*

**JUDY BLUME**

Funded in part by **The Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation**

ARTSPOWER 271 GROVE AVENUE, BLDG. A VERONA, NJ 07044

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### ARTSPOWER NATIONAL TOURING THEATRE

GARY W. BLACKMAN

MARK A. BLACKMAN

Executive Producers

*Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great*

Play & Lyrics by GREG GUNNING

Music by RICHARD DeROSA

Costume Design & Construction by

FRED SORRENTINO

Sets by TOM CARROL SCENERY

Performance Study Buddy

Writer: ROSALIND FLYNN

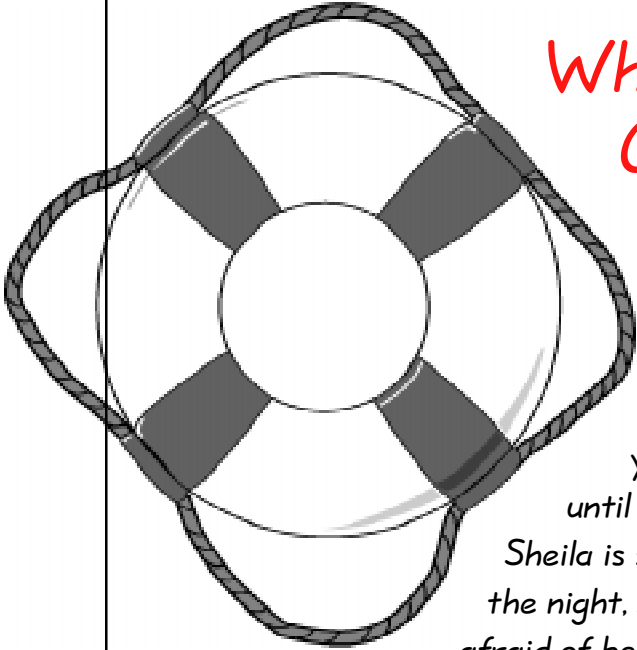
Designer: HOWARD LEVINE

Editor: ANDREA SKERRATT

**PLEASE PHOTOCOPY ANY OR  
ALL OF THE FOLLOWING PAGES  
TO DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS.**

**FOR TEACHERS** Using This Performance Study Guide

This study guide is designed to help you and your students prepare for, enjoy, and discuss ArtsPower's one-act musical play. This guide contains background information and cross-curricular activities to complete both before and after the performance.



## What Happens in Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great?

One summer, **Mr. and Mrs. Tubman** take their two daughters out of New York City to live in a friend's house in the country. Ten-year-old **Sheila** is excited about her vacation until she finds out that the house comes with a dog. Sheila is scared of dogs. She is also scared of noises in the night, spiders, the dark, thunder—in fact, she is even afraid of being afraid.

So, she acts as if she is brave. Her older sister, **Libby**, calls her a chicken. But Sheila is sure no one else knows how frightened she is. After all, she always pretends that she's brave and that she can do all the things that everyone else can.

Unfortunately, she can't pretend that she knows how to swim because **Marty**, her swimming instructor, says she has to pass a test by the end of the summer.

Sheila's new friend, a girl nicknamed **Mouse**, helps Sheila understand that it's okay to have fears and to admit that you don't know something. Sheila discovers that she can work to face her fears and still be **Sheila the Great**.

### RESOURCES

You may want to know more about the author, Judy Blume. Or you may want to read other books that she has written.

#### PRINT

Blume, Judy. [Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great](#). NY: Dell, 1972.

Some other books by Judy Blume:

[Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing](#)  
[Superfudge](#)

[Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret](#)

#### AUDIO

[Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great](#).  
Listening Library; ISBN  
080727276464.

#### INTERNET

**Judy Blume's Homepage:**

<http://www.judyblume.com>

**Judy Blume Teacher resource File:**

<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/blume.htm>

**Interview with Judy Blume:**

<http://www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/tours/Tales.judy.html>

## A Great Cast of Characters

There are six characters or roles in *Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great*. Sheila is the **main character**. Other characters who help tell the play's story are **supporting characters**. But the **cast** (all of the actors appearing in the play) does not have six actors. In theater, "**doubling**" means that one actor plays more than one character. Two actors in *Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great* "double" in supporting roles. The actor who plays **Mouse** also plays **Libby**. The actor who plays **Mr. Tubman** also plays **Marty**.

## Heard, But Not Seen

Another important character in this play is **JENNIFER THE DOG**. You will hear her barking, but you will not see a real dog. You and the actors will use your imaginations to pretend that there is a dog on stage.

### LEARNING ACTIVITY

#### Doubling Dilemmas

How can one actor play two different characters?

What would you do to change your

...looks?

...movements?

...voice?

Why do you think theater companies like ArtsPower have actors who double in roles?

### LEARNING ACTIVITY

#### Imagining a Dog

Pretend that you are an actor in *Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great*.

Pair up with a partner and show that you are...

...petting the dog

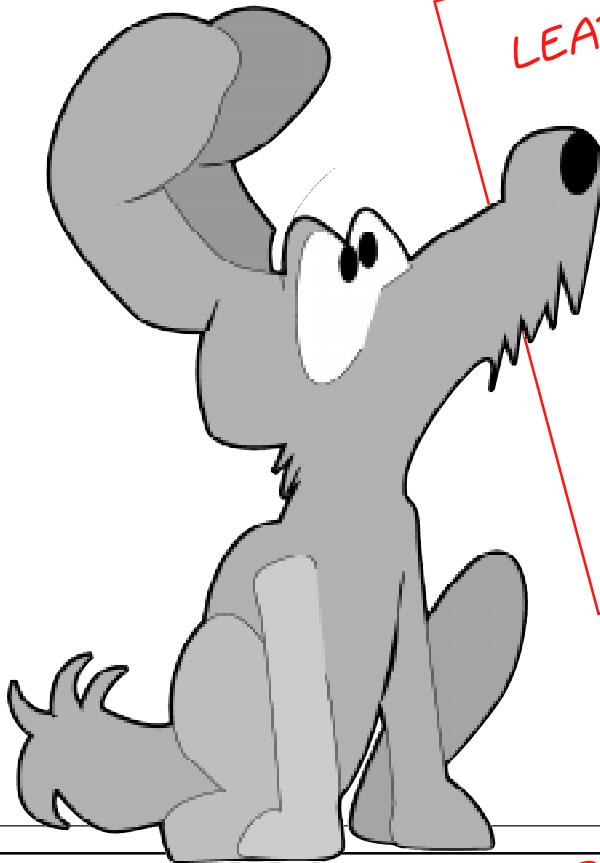
...giving the dog a treat

...frightened when the dog jumps up on you

...playing with the dog?

When you attend the performance, watch how the actors pretend that Jennifer is a real dog.

Why do you think ArtsPower does not use a real dog in the performance?



## Learning about Sheila

**PLAYWRIGHTS** are people who write plays. They write lines of **DIALOGUE** for actors to speak. The lines give information about the **PLOT** (story) and the characters. Read Sheila's lines below. What do you learn about her? Answer the questions below each line and discuss your thoughts with a friend.

### Fears

*"Sometimes I wonder why I was born like me instead of like Libby who isn't afraid of anything. It doesn't seem fair."*

What fears do you have? How do people overcome fears?

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### Embarrassment

*"They give new students swim suits with big letters attached announcing to the whole world that you're a beginner. It's so embarrassing. I'll have to explain to Mouse that I'm not really a beginner. It's just that I'm out of practice."*

Why do people make excuses for not being good at something?

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### Friendship

*"If a person is sorry for saying stupid things to her best friend, she should just admit it, don't you think?"*

What makes a good friend? How can friends make up after they fight?

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### Trust

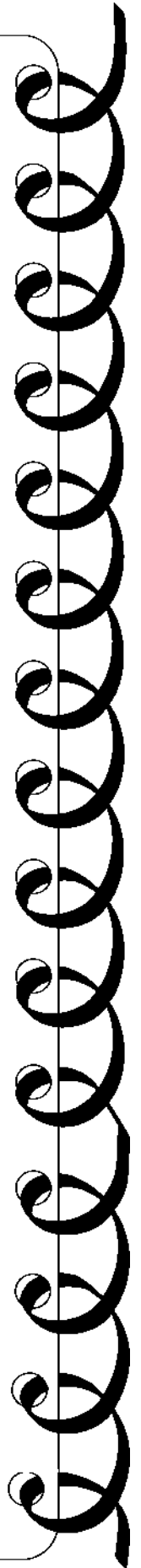
*"You promise nothing bad will happen?"*

Why is it hard to trust someone who encourages you when you are scared? How do you know that you can trust someone?

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## Sheila and Judy:

### The Character and the Author

Many authors base their stories on people and events from their own lives. Sheila Tubman has all of Judy Blume's childhood fears—dogs, swimming, spiders, and more. The author remembers how scared she was when she had to take her beginner's swimming test. She uses her own memories and feelings when she creates the characters in her books. When you watch *Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great*, remember that Sheila is a lot like the author was when she was a child.

### The Play and the Novel

ArtsPower playwright Greg Gunning based his one-act play on Judy Blume's novel. "Based on" means that the playwright used the original story as a starting point. He kept some of the novel's characters and problems, but he also made some changes. If you have read *Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great*, watch for differences between the novel and the play. After the performance, discuss how characters and events were similar to and different from those in the book.

#### LEARNING ACTIVITY

##### Reading Compared to Acting

Some things which are easy to describe in writing are difficult to show on a stage. Before the performance, imagine and predict how the actors will perform the following actions:

Mouse does amazing yo-yo tricks.  
Sheila takes swimming lessons in a pool.  
Jennifer the dog chases Sheila.

During the performance, notice how ArtsPower chose to show these actions on stage.

#### LEARNING ACTIVITY

How did the playwright decide which parts of the book to put in the play? Pretend that you are a playwright. Think of a book that you've read. Pick a part of that book to make into a play. How many characters will you need? What type of scenery? Do you want music? What type?

# Dealing with Fears

*“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”*

That sentence is very famous.

It was said by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1933, when many people in the United States had lost their jobs. Even people who had not lost their jobs were afraid of losing their money and their homes.

The President wanted people to know that bad times happen, and you may become afraid things will get even worse. But, he said, if you trust in the people around you, the fear will go away, and things will get better.

**How does Sheila behave when she’s afraid and feels that she’s having a “bad time”?**

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**What does Sheila do that makes her fears begin to go away?**

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## **A Great Audience**

The company of *Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great* is ready to perform. All they need now is you!

You are the audience. You play an important part in the performance of *Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great*. You need to listen carefully and watch closely. It’s great to laugh or applaud if you enjoy the play, but remember that you and the actors are in the same room. **You can hear the actors talking, and they can hear you!** Talking, whispering, or making noise during the performance makes it hard for them to say their lines and sing their songs. These kinds of noises disturb other audience members, too. **Please help ArtsPower present the performance by being a great audience.**



# Letter to Families

Dear Family,

Today I saw a live musical theater performance of ***Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great***. It was presented by ArtsPower National Touring Theatre. ArtsPower is a theater company from Montclair, New Jersey.

This musical play was based on the book by **Judy Blume**. Sheila Tubman, who often calls herself "Sheila the Great," is a ten-year-old girl. She pretends to be brave, but she is really scared of things like dogs, darkness, and being embarrassed. The performance was full of songs that helped to tell how Sheila learned to deal with her fears.

The four ArtsPower actors and a stage manager travel with the set, costumes, lights, and sound equipment. Sometimes, they present 12 performances in a week.

Attending a live performance is a lot different from watching a television show or a movie. Please ask me about my favorite characters and parts of the play. I can tell you all the things I remember best.

Love,

**We welcome your comments!**


Contact ArtsPower at 973-744-0909 or visit us on the web at [www.artspower.org](http://www.artspower.org)

ArtsPower  
Would Like to  
Hear from You!  
You may complete the  
business letter on this page  
or write your own letter.  
ArtsPower Online  
www.artspower.org  
and click on "Contact Us."


# What did you think?

Teacher's Name 


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Your School 

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City, State 

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Date 

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ArtsPower National Touring Theatre  
271 Grove Avenue, Bldg. A  
Verona, NJ 07044

I attended a performance at (name of theatre or venue)

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My favorite part of the play was

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Another thing I remember about the performance is

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That's because

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The best adjective I would use to describe the performance is

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Sincerely,

Your Name 

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PLEASE PRINT!

