

Amaze Curriculum Guide

GRADES 9–12 | Media literacy, theatrical design, and the century from Houdini to Amaze

How To Use This Guide

Amaze runs 2 hours 15 minutes including intermission and is suitable for all ages. This guide is built for a single field-trip visit: one pre-show lesson, structured observation during the performance, and one post-show discussion or written task. Every section is optional — take what fits your unit.

Before The Show

- Read a short primary source on Houdini's 1920s campaign against fraudulent spiritualists.
- Define the difference between deception with consent (theater) and deception without it (fraud).
- Assign design lenses: lighting, sound, staging, performer-audience relationship. Each student watches through one.

Key Vocabulary

- **Suspension of disbelief** — the audience's voluntary agreement to accept the fiction.
- **Framing** — how presentation shapes interpretation of identical information.
- **Confirmation bias** — favoring information that supports what we already believe.
- **Dramaturgy** — the structure and logic of how a performance is built.
- **Provenance** — the traceable source of a claim or artifact.
- **Consent** — the ethical line between performance and manipulation.

While You Watch

- Log the running order and note where the show places its peaks and its quiet moments.
- Record one specific design choice through your assigned lens and its effect on the audience.
- Note every moment an audience member is invited on stage and what that does to credibility.

After The Show: Discussion

- Amaze asks you to be fooled willingly. Where else in daily life are you asked the same, without being told?
- How do lighting and sound function as arguments rather than decoration?
- Compare Houdini's self-promotion with a contemporary creator's. What tactics carried over?

- Take a position: is stage magic a rehearsal for skepticism or a demonstration of how easily we are misled?

Activity: Design or Debunk

- Option A (Design): storyboard an original three-minute illusion, specifying the effect, the audience's assumed method, lighting and sound cues, and the moment of reveal.
- Option B (Debunk): write a 500-word media-literacy analysis of one illusion, identifying the specific perceptual or cognitive shortcut it exploits, with cited evidence.
- Peer review against a rubric: clarity of effect, plausibility of method, and quality of evidence.

Standards Alignment

Connects to NYS Learning Standards for Theater, ELA Reading for Information and argumentative writing, and media-literacy instruction.

Booking: school groups of 10 or more save 30%. Request dates at amazemagic.com/schools. Jamie Allan does not perform at all shows; select performances star Harry De Cruz.