

Teacher's Handbook

by Brigitte Halper (Hon) BA, BEd

Welcome to the study guide for *Jerry Finnegan's Sister*.

In it you will find background information on the play, as well as a break-down of the plot, characters and themes. This guide also offers pre- and post-production discussion questions and exercises that are intended to engage students and prompt them to think creatively about both the form and content of the play. The classroom activities are designed to connect the play to various subjects and reach as many learning styles as possible. Please feel free to use these activities as inspiration and adapt them for your classroom or grade level. Seeing the production will prove to be a rich and captivating theatrical experience for you and your students. Enjoy Brian's stroll down memory lane as he remembers *Jerry Finnegan's Sister*.

We sincerely hope that you find this guide useful and welcome any feedback you may have. We invite you to contact the director Victoria Halper at victoria.halper@gmail.com or 0664 / 318 6191.

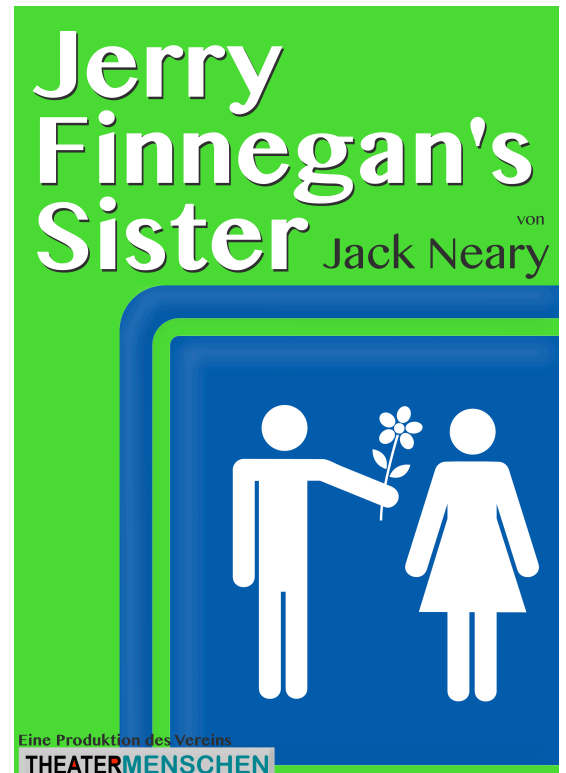


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Jerry Finnegan's Sister

by Jack Neary

Premiere: 23. Oktober 2013
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Eine Produktion der Theatermenschen

Brian Dowd
Doug Andrews

Beth Finnegan
Victoria Halper

Directed by
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Play Synopsis

Act 1

Introduction: Brian Dowd has been in love with Beth Finnegan for as long as he can remember, but he feels that someone as good-looking as her would never go out with someone like him. However, a phone call from Jerry, Beth's brother, has propelled Brian into action. Beth Finnegan is getting married and if he doesn't do something he will miss his last chance.

First Impressions: Brian begins to tell the story of how he got to this point, by reminiscing and bringing the past to life. At the age of seven, Beth moves in next door. Brian is shy at first, but quickly opens up as they get into a 'my dad is better than yours' competition that Beth wins.

Boys & Girls: Following Brian's tenth birthday, things between the two "friends" become strained, as Brian states that he is now too old to play with girls. Beth does not understand how things could have changed from one day to the next. They get into a fight and feelings are hurt. However, Beth decides to get her revenge by making Brian jealous.

Puberty: Brian and Beth are maturing and becoming teenagers. Beth is reading books in school called *Meet Your Body* and telling boys to their faces that she "likes boys a lot". Even Brian tries to orchestrate a scenario where he can look cool in Beth's eyes and maybe get his first kiss.

Dating: Beth has started dating and Brian is not very happy about these turn of events.

Her first two dates don't go too well with both boys trying to get physical. Brian shows his displeasure with Beth's new chapter in her life in two very different ways. First he is so overprotective that he spies on her, but then later he laughs in her face when her date leaves her stranded in the middle of nowhere.

Third Time's a Charm: Beth joins the drama club and meets Henderson Pike, who unlike Brian, acts on his feelings and tells Beth that he likes her. Beth is on cloud nine after her first date that did not end in the guy trying to make a move. However, Brian quickly sours her mood when she finds him waiting up for her and ready to give his view of things.

Extracurriculars: Beth practices playing her ukulele for the talent portion of the Miss Teen Chelmsford pageant she has entered and once again Brian is not very supportive. However, Brian decides to turn over a new leaf and help Beth with her tryout for the cheerleading squad.

Sexual Awakening: Brian has now decided to take on the role of Beth's moral guidepost. This involves helping her with her homework assignments, but when this week's topic is "Sex Before Marriage", Brian is rattled. While Beth wants to consider where and with whom, all Brian can think is why.

Model Behavior: Beth gets her first job as a living mannequin at the local shopping mall, but once again Brian feels that it is his duty to protect her.

Characters



Brian Dowd

Played by: Doug Andrews

Young man obsessed with his best friend's sister, Beth Finnegan, who also happens to be his neighbor. Their relationship has developed from childhood playmates to teenage friends, however Brian wants more. He is secretly in love with Beth, but he can't seem to find the right words to tell her how he feels, but if he doesn't act soon, it might be too late.



Beth Finnegan

Played by: Victoria Halper

Pieced together mostly from flashbacks, Beth is an ambitious young woman, who is busting with life. She knows what she wants and is bold enough to go after it. In other words, the quintessential girl next door.

Themes

Inability to Communicate, Love
Courage, Jealousy, Rivalry
Youth, Friendship, Family
Growing Up, Future Plans.

Act 2

Triple Dating: Beth & Henderson + Jerry & girlfriend + Brian & date see a one-man show and Brian makes a fool of himself by revealing the actor's day job as the local Ronald McDonald. Things go from bad to worse when he runs off and can't get into his house because he has lost his keys, but luckily Beth comes to the rescue.

Prom Dates: Beth plays matchmaker and gets Brian to ask Heidi Swenson to his senior prom. Brian's discomfort increases as he discovers that Beth will be there too, with her latest boyfriend, to take photos of the buffet table in order not to repeat any of the food at her prom next year.

Cutting through the Crap: Now at college, Brian comes home for the summer and continues to tease Beth about her boyfriends. However, Beth finally confronts Brian about not saying what he is really thinking. This leads to a 'normal' conversation about school until Brian reverts to his old ways.

President Beth: After Brian tells us about a failed romance at college and how he and Jerry have drifted apart, Beth delivers her acceptance speech as president of her freshman class at college.

The Moment of Truth: Back in the present, Brian has finally put together the words he wants to say to Beth and calls her on the phone. Brian tells Beth he heard that she is going to get married and Beth lets him think that it is true, but then reveals that her brother was lying; she is not getting married. Brian takes his chance and finally manages to ask Beth Finnegan out on a date to her face and she says yes.



Brian Dowd and Beth Finnegan

Regiekonzept:

Amerikanischer Alltag

Österreicher, vom Kleinkind bis zum Erwachsenen, werden mit amerikanischen Mythen und der englischen Sprache überschwemmt. Was sie in Büchern, im Fernsehen und der Werbung zu sehen bekommen sind leider vor allem Klischees und negative Nachrichten, welche wenig mit dem eigentlichen Volk zu tun haben.

In dieser Produktion setzen wir uns vor allem als Ziel, die Essenz amerikanischer Kultur, so wie Doug und ich, Victoria Halper, sie erlebt haben, zu zeigen – echte Menschen in einer amerikanischen Vorstadt, in der sich diese universelle Liebeskomödie abspielt. Durch ein wandelbares Bühnenbild, Kostüme, Dialekte, Rollenarbeit und Musik (Doug Andrews ist amerikanischer Volksmusiker) wollen wir ein neugieriges Publikum durch unser Amerika führen.

Zielgruppen

ab 15 Jahren

Impressum

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Discussion Questions

PRE-PRODUCTION

1. From looking at the poster, what do you think the play is about? What can you surmise from the title and any graphics? Will it be a comedy or a drama? Will it have a happy ending?
2. Is it possible for guys and girls to just be friends? Or are such platonic relationships between members of the opposite sex always full of sexual tension?
3. Have you ever liked someone and not told him/her how you felt? How did keeping this secret crush make you feel? Why did you decide not to act on your feelings for this other person? What would/did it take for you to confess your feelings?
4. Have you gone to the theatre before? What do you hope to get out of seeing this production?

POSTPRODUCTION

1. Describe the characters of Beth and Brian. Focus on their appearance, personality, demeanor, actions, etc.
2. Where and when does the play take place? Specify what led you to this conclusion. Do you think the story could have taken place in another time and/or place? Why or why not?
3. What do you think of the production? Were the costumes, set, lighting and music what you expected? What would you change?

Blockiert für Preview

TIP All questions could be done in written form, as a discussion, group work or as a think/pair/share activity.

Grammar Lessons

FOR & SINCE

The prepositions for and since are used in sentences where the speaker wants to talk about something that started in the past and continues into the present.

The use of FOR

We use for when we measure the duration – when we say how long something lasts.

For + a period of time

To measure a period of time up to the present, we use the present perfect tense and not the present tense.

I have known her for a long time. (Correct)

I know her for a long time. (Incorrect)

I have lived here for ten years. (Correct)

I live here for ten years. (Incorrect)

The present tense with **for** refers to a period of time that extends into the future.

How long are you here for? (Until when)

How long have you been here for? (Since when)

In reality, we can use all verb tenses with **for**.

Example sentence	Verb tense
They exercise for two hours every day.	Present tense
They are exercising for three hours today.	Present continuous
He has lived in Moscow for a long time.	Present perfect
He has been living in Turin for three months.	Present perfect continuous
I worked at the service station for five years.	Past tense
He will be in hospital for at least a week.	Future tense

However, we don't use for with expressions such as all day or all the time.

I was there all day. (Correct)

I was there for all day. (Incorrect)

Grammar Lessons

The use of SINCE

Since gives the starting point of actions, events or states. It refers to when things began.

Since + a point in time (in the past), until now.

I've been waiting since 7 o'clock.

I have known him since January.

With **since** we use the present perfect tense or the past perfect tense.

I have been here since 5 o'clock and I am getting tired.

I had been working since 5 o'clock and I was getting tired.

Since can also be used in the structure **It has been + period of time + since.**

It has been two months since I last saw her.

It has been three years since the last earthquake.

Practice For or Since with Present Perfect Tense

- _____ as long as he can remember, Brian has loved Beth Finnegan.
- Ever _____ Jerry called Brian and told him Beth was getting married, he has not been able to stop thinking about her.
- Brian did nothing about his feeling for Beth _____ 16 years.
- Brian has known Beth _____ childhood.
- Beth and Brian had not spoken _____ over 2 years; _____ that big confrontation in the shopping mall.
- I haven't phoned home _____ Christmas.
- We've been here _____ nine o'clock.
- I have worked for International House _____ more than eight years.
- I haven't visited my home town _____ I left school.
- I haven't been to the cinema _____ ages.
- I have studied non-stop _____ 9:15am.
- I have had a driving license _____ I was eighteen.
- She hasn't had a day off _____ 1999.
- Michael has been in England _____ more than two weeks now.
- Peter has been my best friend _____ we were nine.

Practice Decide if you need **for** or **since** with these time expressions.

- _____ last weekend
- _____ ten seconds
- _____ Christmas Eve
- _____ a decade
- _____ I finished school
- _____ a couple of days
- _____ my birthday
- _____ a long time
- _____ ten centuries
- _____ the 70s

- _____ I was a boy
- _____ August
- _____ the last month
- _____ fifteen years
- _____ then
- _____ we bought this house
- _____ last month
- _____ a millennium
- _____ I met you
- _____ the accident

Grammar Lessons

THE APOSTROPHE – POSSESSIVE NOUNS

To form the possessive, simply add 's ('apostrophe -s') to the noun.
If the noun is plural, or already ends in -s, just add ' (an apostrophe).

For names ending in -s:

In speaking we add the sound /z/ to the name, but in writing it is possible to use either 's or just ' .
So both **Thomas's** book and **Thomas'** book are correct.

For Example:

- The car of John = John's car.
- The room of the girls = The girls' room.
- Clothes for men = Men's clothes.
- The sister of Charles = Charles' sister.
- The boat of the sailors = The sailors' boat.

There are also some fixed expressions where the possessive form is used:

Time Expressions	Other expressions
a day's work	For God's sake!
a month's pay	the water's edge
today's newspaper	a stone's throw away (= very near)
in a year's time	at death's door (= very ill)
	in my mind's eye (= in my imagination)

Practice Put the apostrophe + s (' , 's) in the correct place, to denote ownership.

1. Brian Dowd best friend is Jerry Finnegan.
2. Jerry Finnegan sister name is Beth.
3. Beth boyfriends manners were always scrutinized by Brian.
4. Every one of Beth boyfriends was the president of a school club.
5. After listening to Brian memories of Beth, the audience reaction to the outcome of the play should be very positive.

Practice Circle all of the possessive nouns in the narrative below.

For Brian it wasn't love at first sight. The Finnegans had just moved in next door and Brian had already met Jerry when Mrs. Dowd made her son say "Hi" to Jerry's kid sister, Beth. While Brian thought the whole situation stank, Beth's attitude was the complete opposite. She was happy to have someone her own age to play with. Due largely to Beth's determination, Brian and Beth became playmates who bombed anthills together. But everything changed when Brian turned ten years old. According to his friends' rules, Brian was now too old to play with girls. Beth, however, didn't quite understand what someone's age had to do with killing ants.

Appendix

EXCERPT 2

BRIAN. I thought it'd be a good idea to chill and relax. Better for me, better for Beth. Better for humanity. And I tried. I did. But then she went and took that modeling job at the shopping mall, and...I guess you could say we just didn't see eye to eye on it. She saw the job as an easy way to make a few bucks. I saw it as a stupefying roller coaster ride to the depths of degradation.

(BETH appears in lab coat and stethoscope; she holds a tongue depressor, and she prepares)

BRIAN. See...it wasn't really a modelling job. She was one of those living mannequins. In a store called The Medical Bazaar. (At the mall; to BETH) What are you supposed to be?

BETH. (without moving anything, including her lips) Brian! What are you doing here?

BRIAN. I wanted to see if it was true.

BETH. Don't talk to me! I'm not supposed to move a muscle!

BRIAN. Come home with me, Beth.

BETH. Brian!

BRIAN. Put this little setback behind you.

BETH. If Dr. Simpson sees me talking, he'll fire me.

BRIAN. Dr. Simpson?

BETH. Brian...

BRIAN. Who's the assistant manager, Mr. Burns?

BETH. Sssssh!

BRIAN. And the head cashier—let me guess—Smithers!

BETH. (Subtly tapping him with her stethoscope). Go away!

BRIAN. Where's your sense of humor?

BETH. What?

BRIAN. Look at yourself.

BETH. Get away from here!

BRIAN. You're standing stiff in a mall with a stethoscope around your neck.

BETH. Brian, if you lose this jobs for me....

BRIAN. (rolls up his sleeves) In the years to come, when you remember this day and what I am about to do...

BETH. Brian!

BRIAN. I know you'll think kindly of me.

BETH. I'll kick your ass.

BRIAN. And you'll be forever grateful. (He lifts her; she remains frozen)

BETH. Brian! Put me down or I'll scream!

BRIAN. Just don't move your lips! (She screams, without moving anything, including her lips; BRIAN carries her off; then re-appears) She didn't get fired. She was back in position the next day. What's the bottom line on this? With everything I'm telling you here? The bottom line is that I did what I did for her own good. Every time I came in contact with her, something inside me just said "Do something to help this woman!" So I tried. In my own way. And what do I get in return?

Appendix

GRAMMAR TIP - REPORTED SPEECH PART 2

Modal verb forms also sometimes change:

Direct speech	Indirect speech
will She said, "I'll teach English online tomorrow."	would She said she would teach English online tomorrow.
can She said, "I can teach English online."	could She said she could teach English online.
must She said, "I must have a PC to teach English online."	had to She said she had to have a computer to teach English online.
shall She said, "What shall we learn today?"	should She asked what we should learn today.
may She said, "May I open a new browser?"	might She asked if she might open a new browser.

Note - There is no change to; could, would, should, might and ought to.

SONG LYRICS

[If you were the only girl in the world](#)

Songwriters: MEEDER, STEF / AYER, NAT D.

If you were the only girl in the world
And I were the only boy
Nothing else would matter in the world today
We would go on lovin' in the same old way
A Garden of Eden just made for two
With nothing to mar our joy
I would say such wonderful things to you
There would be such wonderful things to do
If you were the only girl in the world
And I were the only boy
I would say such wonderful things to you
There would be such wonderful things to do
If you were the only girl in the world
And I were the only boy

Appendix

IDIOMS – FOOD IDIOMS

Apple of his/her eye: something or someone you like a lot.
He was the apple of his teacher's eye.

Bite off more than one can chew: to try to do or eat more than you can manage
I bit off more than I can chew when I started babysitting.

Bite the hand that feeds you: to harm someone who does good things for you
I do not want to make my company angry because I do not want to bite the hand that feeds me.

Bring home the bacon: have an income
My husband brings home the bacon in our house.

Butter someone up: be extra nice to someone (usually for selfish reasons)
We'll have to butter Angie up before we tell her the bad news.

Compare apples and oranges: to compare two things that are not similar and should not be compared
It was like comparing apples and oranges when we compared our new boss to our old boss.

Couch potato: someone who spends a lot of time on a couch watching television
My cousin is a couch potato and he never wants to leave his house.

(Don't) cry over spilled milk: get upset over something that has happened and cannot be changed
The mirror is broken and we can't fix it. There's no need to cry over spilled milk.

Eat one's words: to take back something that one has said, to admit that something is not true
I told my boss that I would soon quit my job but later I had to eat my words and tell him that I wanted to stay.

For peanuts: for very little money, for almost nothing
I was able to buy a used computer for peanuts.

(Have something) handed to someone on a silver platter: receive without working for something
The professor's daughter had her college diploma handed to her on a silver platter.

Hot potato: a controversial or difficult subject
Choosing a location for our new store is a hot potato right now.

Like two peas in a pod: very close or intimate with someone
The sisters are like two peas in a pod and they do everything together.

In a nutshell: in a few words.
We were told in a nutshell that our project would not be considered.

To spill the beans: to reveal a secret to someone who is not supposed to know.
The project was top secret but he spilled the beans.

Piece of cake: a task that is very easy.
Stealing the key was a piece of cake for him.

Take with a pinch of salt: when one believes only a small part of what one is being told.
He spoke highly about his company and its success but I took it with a pinch of salt, because he was a bit of a liar.

Not my cup of tea: something you either don't like much or can't do.
I didn't enjoy the movie. I guess it just wasn't my cup of tea.

Sell like hotcakes: something that is very successful and selling extremely well.
The new book by J.K Rowling sold like hotcakes.

Use your noodle: use your brain
You're going to have to really use your noodle on this crossword puzzle. It's an extra difficult one.

Walk on eggshells/eggs: to be very cautious and careful around someone so that he or she does not become angry
I must walk on eggshells when I ask my boss a question.