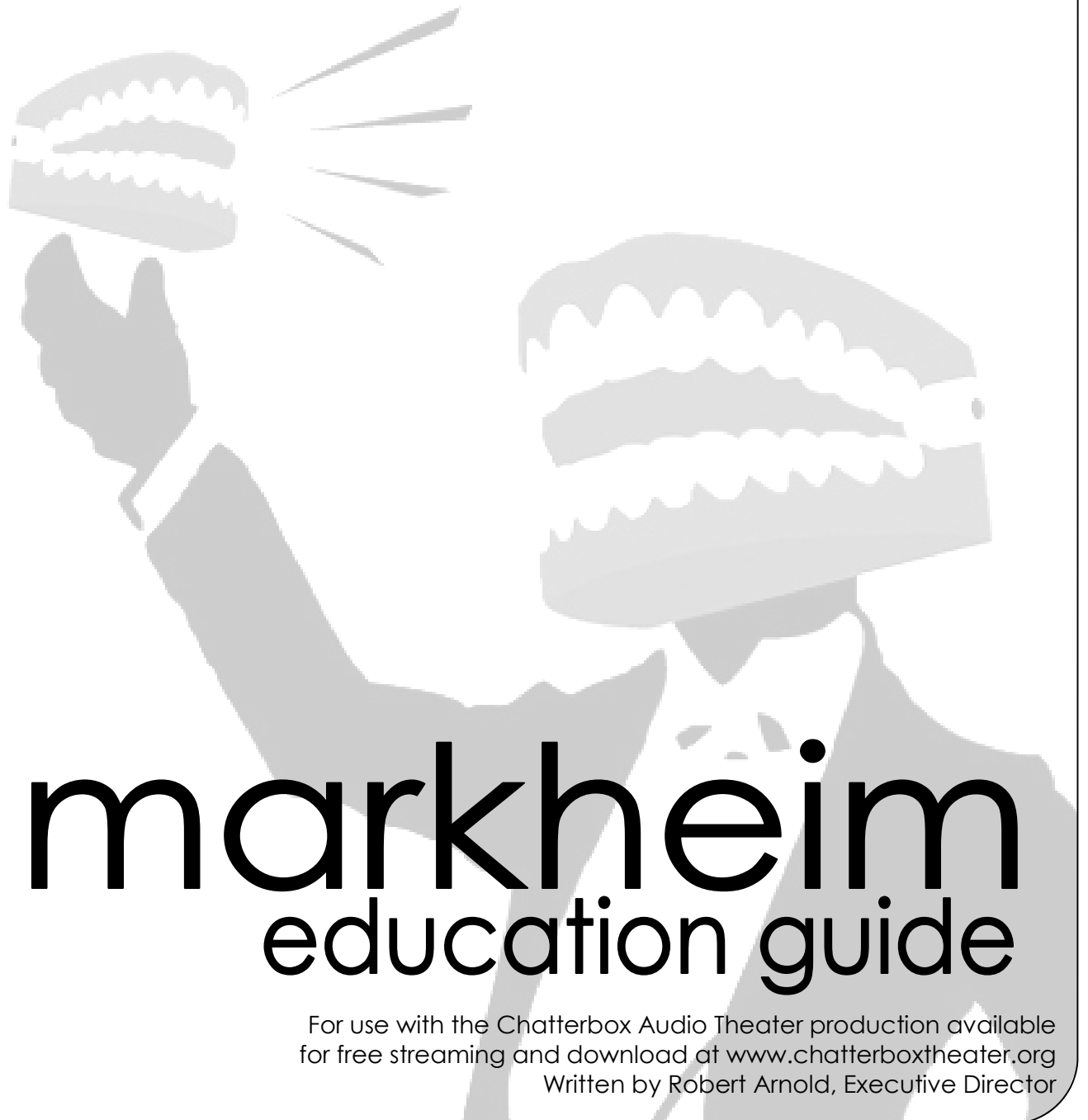


# CHATTERBOX AUDIO THEATER

[www.chatterboxtheater.org](http://www.chatterboxtheater.org)



## markheim education guide

For use with the Chatterbox Audio Theater production available  
for free streaming and download at [www.chatterboxtheater.org](http://www.chatterboxtheater.org)

Written by Robert Arnold, Executive Director



## about chatterbox

Chatterbox Audio Theater was created in 2007 by four friends with a lot of creativity and ambition but very little money. Based in Memphis, TN, Chatterbox creates fully soundscaped audio works for free streaming or download. With rare exceptions, Chatterbox shows are recorded live, with manual sound effects and as little post-production editing as possible.

Chatterbox is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Every Chatterbox production is available for free streaming and download from iTunes or from the group's website, [www.chatterboxtheater.org](http://www.chatterboxtheater.org).

## mission

Chatterbox Audio Theater is a non-profit web-based community theater that advances the exchange of ideas by channeling creativity and artistic collaboration into recorded audio works that enlighten, entertain, and inspire.

## contact

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Education Guide designed with help from Heather Klein, [www.heatherkleindesign.com](http://www.heatherkleindesign.com)

## about audio theater



Robert Arnold

Once known as **radio drama**, audio theater is the production of dramatic performances written and performed specifically for audiences to hear. It had its greatest popularity on radio, before television was introduced, during the period known as the “Golden Age of Radio.”

The development of audio theater began as early as the 1880s, when theatrical performances could be listened to over the telephone! In the next ten years, phonograph recordings were all the rage, and music and comedy acts—like those of the vaudeville stage—were recorded and sold all over the country.

Eventually, the comical “sight gags” that were a part of the hilarious appeal of live vaudeville performances had to be adapted into “sound gags,” and “sound effects” for audiences at home listening to their radios or record players. By the 1920s, these techniques were improved upon—and the art form of audio theater was born.

As “radio drama,” it became the most popular form of mass entertainment from the 1920s through the 1940s, now referred to as the “Golden Age of Radio.” Classic shows such as *Amos ‘n’ Andy*, *The Shadow*, and *The Lone Ranger* kept people of all ages glued to their radios. Some of these shows ran for several decades.



Robert Arnold

## about audio theater (continued)

Television sets began to pop up in American homes in the late 1930s and early 1940s. After WWII, the television started to replace the radio in most American homes as the main source of news and entertainment. By the 1960s, with a few special exceptions, radio networks began shutting down their radio drama productions altogether to make way for television shows, and instead focused on delivering news and popular music.

Since the days that television replaced the radio, audio theater has survived through the efforts of many individual theater groups like Chatterbox. Thanks to technological innovations such as computer software and the internet, audio theater is being resurrected online, and is proving a rapidly growing art form and source of entertainment.

Audio theater also is growing in another way as well. This sensory art form is gaining recognition in educational institutions around the world as an effective teaching method. Audio theater has been employed to teach subjects such as literature, theatre, and technology, but also unexpected fields such as history, social science, and ethics.

## about markheim

“Markheim” is a short story by Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson, who is best known for his novels *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. It depicts an encounter between a first-time murderer (Markheim) and a mysterious stranger who seems to know everything about him. As Markheim debates what to do in the wake of his crime, the two men engage in a philosophical argument about the nature of good and evil. The story was first published in 1884.

## summary

On Christmas Day, a man named Markheim visits the shop and home of a gruff antiques dealer. Markheim has previously sold the dealer several items under suspicious circumstances. This time, Markheim claims, he has come to buy a Christmas gift for a lady. The dealer suggests an antique hand mirror, a suggestion that Markheim rejects with horror. As the dealer searches his shop for another option, Markheim attacks and brutally murders him.

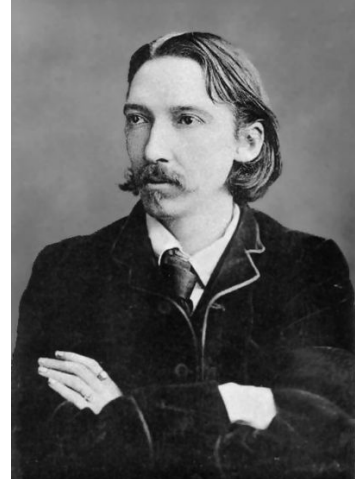
After experiencing a wave of shock and paranoia, Markheim finds the dealer’s keys and begins searching the house for a safe. He hears noises upstairs and ascends to discover a mysterious Visitor. This Visitor claims to know Markheim “to the soul,” apparently having watched him for many years.

The Visitor offers to tell Markheim where the dealer’s money is hidden. He asks nothing in exchange for this information, offering it “as a Christmas gift.” Fearing that the Visitor is the Devil, Markheim refuses his help, claiming that he is not yet ready to give himself fully to evil. The Visitor scoffs at this reasoning, noting that Markheim has just committed the ultimate evil act. From there, the two men argue about whether Markheim’s actions were justified, whether people are judged by their actions or their inherent characteristics, and whether Markheim has any hope of redemption.

Ultimately, the Visitor convinces Markheim that his is a hopeless case, since throughout his life Markheim has only descended further into evil. Finally recognizing his own corruption, Markheim takes a stand, asserting: “If my life be an ill thing, I can lay it down.” Seeing Markheim’s determination, the Visitor relents, telling Markheim he has “done well” before changing shape into someone who looks “familiar.” Markheim returns downstairs and opens the door to the dealer’s maid, ready to confess his crime and face the consequences.

## about the author

### **Robert Louis Stevenson (1850 – 1894)**



Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh, Scotland to a family of lighthouse engineers. From an early age, Stevenson was frequently ill, leaving him unable to attend school on a regular basis. His long hours indoors gave rise to a rich imagination, and he composed stories throughout his childhood.

Uninterested in the family business, Stevenson made up his mind to devote his life to writing. As a young man, he traveled through England and Scotland, where he met many literary figures and began to establish himself. He also adopted a Bohemian look, adorning his thin frame with long hair and unconventional clothes, such as a velveteen jacket.

Though his health remained fragile, Stevenson traveled widely, drawing inspiration from the places and people he saw. In 1879, he set out for San Francisco, California, to reunite with Fanny Van de Griff Osborne, a divorced mother of three with whom he had fallen in love. They wed the following year.

Stevenson and Fanny then returned to England, where between 1880 and 1887 he wrote and published *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. After the death of his father in 1887, Stevenson returned to America with his wife and mother, settling in New York state for a time.

He would spend the later years of his life wandering through the South Pacific in search of an environment that would strengthen his health. He spent time in Hawaii (where he befriended the King) and Samoa, which was under British control. His time in the South Pacific greatly influenced his later writing.

Stevenson died suddenly in 1894 at age 44. The cause of his death was most likely a cerebral hemorrhage. Despite a lifetime of illness, he wrote: "Sick and well, I have had splendid life of it, grudge nothing, regret very little... take it all over, damnation and all, would hardly change with any man of my time."

Source: Wikipedia

## cast & crew

<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>
Markheim.....	Randal Cooper
The Visitor.....	Billy Pullen
The Antiques Dealer.....	Barclay Roberts
Musician.....	Robert Arnold
Sound Effects.....	Karen Strachan
Producer.....	Eric Sefton
Assistant Director.....	Karen Strachan
Adaptation.....	Robert Arnold
Director.....	Robert Arnold
Announcer.....	Tom Badgett
Artist.....	Alla Bartoshchuk

# characters

## **Markheim**

A petty criminal who, as the story progresses, commits his first murder. Markheim deludes himself that his immoral actions are justified, and, more importantly, that they are aberrations—one-time events that do not reflect his true self. Despite his claim that “evil and good run strong in me, compelling me both ways,” Markheim’s actions have only grown worse over time. The painful realization of his own wickedness, facilitated by the questioning of the Visitor, provides Markheim’s character arc and the general arc of the story. This arc culminates in the murderer taking a final, definitive stand against his own nature. By confessing to his crime, Markheim chooses destruction (presumably hanging) instead of living with what he has become. In doing so, he enjoys the only form of redemption left to him.

## **The Visitor**

A mysterious figure who appears in the antique shop and, through relentless questioning, reveals Markheim’s true nature. Markheim—and the audience—initially assume that the Visitor is the Devil. At the story’s conclusion, however, the Visitor’s appearance undergoes a dramatic change, and Markheim recognizes him as someone “familiar.” Ultimately, the Visitor approves of Markheim’s decision to confess his crime, saying Markheim has “done well.” Perhaps the Visitor *is* Satan, but the Satan depicted in the Book of Job: an “adversary” who tempts humans to sin against God, but is nonetheless part of God’s angelic army. Or is he an embodiment of Markheim’s conscience? Or someone else entirely? Stevenson leaves the question open for the audience to decide.

## **The Antiques Dealer**

A gruff, unpleasant man who, until Markheim interrupts him, is spending Christmas Day alone, balancing his books. The Antiques Dealer is greedy, condescending, hateful, and smug. He is comfortable dealing in stolen goods, which is heavily implied through his sarcastic description of Markheim’s wealthy (and almost certainly fictitious) uncle as well as the Dealer’s promise not to ask “awkward questions.” The Dealer’s reprehensible behavior adds a layer of complexity to the story, and to Markheim’s actions. Is murder any more justified when the victim is a bad person?



# themes, motifs, and symbols

Literary works often use **themes** (unifying or dominant ideas), **motifs** (recurring subjects, ideas, or other patterns), and **symbols** (an object or image used to represent a larger idea). Below are just a few examples and suggestions of these literary devices to explore in your classroom discussions.

## **THEME: Actions vs. essence**

Most of the debate between Markheim and the Visitor concerns the nature of evil. What makes a person evil? Is it his *actions*—what he does—or his *essence*—who he is? Markheim begins his own defense by claiming that he is good at heart, but the Visitor argues otherwise. When asked why he has appeared to offer his help, the Visitor responds chillingly: “Because *you are Markheim.*” In other words, the Visitor sees Markheim as evil by nature. Evil actions, he explains, are limited in scope, and may ultimately even lead to something good. But an evil *person* will continue to cause evil throughout his life, as Markheim has done. Unable to change his essence, Markheim eventually realizes that only death will save the world from his influence.

## **MOTIF: Doubles and doppelgangers**

Throughout the story, Markheim is confronted with images of himself, suggesting the self-examination he will be forced to undergo in the story. He recoils from his own reflection in the hand-mirror given to him by the Antiques Dealer. In the original text, the antique shop is filled with other mirrors that reflect Markheim’s image back at him; these reflections take on an ominous, accusing quality in the moments after the murder. Additionally, the Visitor’s transformation into someone “familiar” may imply that Markheim recognizes himself in the other man’s changing face. If the Visitor symbolizes Markheim’s conscience, it is fitting that this transformation—and recognition—occurs after Markheim has rejected evil and, at long last, made peace with himself.

## themes, motifs, and symbols (continued)

### **Motif: Inside and Outside**

Stevenson's tale has a strong focus on *interiority*. Most of the drama in the story comes from Markheim's struggle with his own conscience. (In fact, it could be argued that the entire exchange with the Visitor does not take place in reality, but only inside Markheim's head.) Fittingly, this personal interiority is mirrored in the structure of the Antiques Shop, which is closed for Christmas and shuttered against outside eyes. The crime that occurs inside the shop is hidden from public view, just as Markheim's moral decay has been hidden in his own heart. At the story's end, Markheim throws open the door to the street, revealing his crime to the world and thus baring his soul and acknowledging his guilt.

### **Symbol: The Money**

Stevenson uses the Antiques Dealer's money as a symbol of Markheim's dilemma. If Markheim accepts the Visitor's help in finding the money, he will have made a clear choice to continue along the path to evil. Completing his crime would mean acknowledging that the Visitor is correct: that Markheim is inherently wicked with no hope of redemption. By the story's end, Markheim has refused the Visitor's assistance, and he makes his way out of the shop without ever locating the hidden money.

## entry points for teachers

1. Robert Louis Stevenson
2. 19th century life
3. Character creation and description
4. Short story format
5. Behavioral Psychology
6. The ethical frameworks of consequential and non-consequential thought
7. Theological theories of Good and Evil
8. Audio theater
9. Narrative theater
10. Music in a story
11. Sound effects in a story

# curriculum connections

## **English/Language Arts**

1. Literary forms—fiction
2. Rhythmic nature of language found in the play
3. Recurring themes
4. Observation
5. Compare and contrast
6. Cause and effect
7. Outcomes, conclusions
8. Figurative Language
9. Make predictions about stories
10. Draw, dictate, or write stories that include settings, characters, problem/solution situations, a series of events, and a sense of sequence
11. Participate in group discussions
12. Express personal opinions about the play/story
13. Identify the main idea, describe main characters, re-enact or map major plot elements, draw conclusions, and make inferences
14. Dramatize or re-enact story events
15. Describe the plot, characters, and setting in the play
16. Explain a speaker's message and purpose
17. Speak to express an opinion, persuade, or entertain

## **Social Studies**

1. Show how society defines its moral and ethical codes
2. Show how social perceptions of morality affect individual behavior
3. Show how personalities are similar and different
4. Explain and respect the diversity of people, their worldviews, and their experiences

## **Science**

1. Report on the technical process of recording and reproducing sound
2. Examine the psychological connection between experience and behavior
3. Discuss or research areas of abnormal psychology, such as paranoid schizophrenia

## shorter activities

1. Write short, original narratives that include characters, settings, and a sequence of events.
2. Write about a real-life experience that can be fictionalized through exaggeration.
3. Compare/contrast “Markheim” with other works by Stevenson.
4. Write about or discuss relationships between music, story, and literature.
5. Adapt a familiar story into play form.

## longer activities

1. The students will write letters about the play to specific people, depending on the content of your class. Students may write letters to the characters within the story, discussing their choices and motivation and/or making predictions about what may occur to them in the future. Students may write letters to the actors, discussing choices the actor made in bringing his or her character to life, or techniques used within the play. Other students will write a letter to a newspaper as a play critic, describing the play he or she heard, the production elements (sound effects, voices, music, etc.) and what he or she thought was effective (or ineffective).

2. The students will write reactions to specific questions and/or prompts relating to the story. Some examples are: (a) In your opinion, does the Visitor Markheim encounters represent the devil, or his own conscience? Could the character be representative of something else? Explain. (b) Write a short essay in which you use personification to represent psychological feelings, such as guilt, fear, or desire. (c) Markheim uses a myriad of tactics and excuses to justify his behaviors and actions. Pretend that you are a defense lawyer arguing his case in a modern day murder trial. What defense might you make on his behalf?

3. The students will write original short stories based upon the themes of moral and ethical dilemmas and their frameworks, sin and crime, or punishment and/or redemption.

4. The students will listen to samples of sound effects used in the audio theater piece. They will discuss the role of sound in audio theater, and in theater in general. Students will speculate on what objects or devices were used to create sound effects in the audio theater piece, and will create their own sound effects using everyday objects.

## vocabulary

**Blench.** To shrink, flinch, or quail. *"Fifteen years ago you would have cringed at a theft. Three years back you would have blenched at the name of murder."* (20:11)

**Board.** A table on which food is served. *"Please yourself more amply! Spread your elbows at the board!"* (14:43)

**Cataract.** A waterfall. *"The bad man is dear to me—not the bad act, whose fruits, if we could follow them far enough down the hurtling cataract of the ages, might yet be found more blessed than those of the rarest virtues."* (16:47)

**Compound.** To settle or adjust by an agreement. *"I tell you, for your greater comfort, that you will find it even easy to compound your quarrel with your conscience, and to make a truckling peace with God."* (14:51)

**Compulsion.** A strong, usually irresistible impulse to perform an act. *"I care not in the least by what compulsion you may have been dragged away, so long as you are carried in the right direction."* (12:51)

**Curios.** An unusual object, a curiosity. *"I have no curios to dispose of—my uncle's cabinet is bare to the wainscot."* (01:59)

**Flint.** A hard stone, usually used for striking fire. *"And when I looked into that face, which had been set as a flint against mercy, I found it smiling with hope."* (15:10)

**Hard Favored.** With harsh facial features; unattractive. *"Your future lady, sir, must be pretty hard favored."* (03:53)

**Horoscope.** A prediction of the future, often based on a diagram of the heavens. *"I will propound to you one simple question, Mr. Markheim. And, as you answer, I shall read to you your moral horoscope."* (20:46)

**Lax.** Careless or negligent. *"You have grown in many things more lax. Possibly you do right to be so—and at any account, it is the same with all men."* (20:54)

## vocabulary (continued)

**Overlaid.** Covered. *"I am worse than most. My self is more overlaid."* (11:30)

**Sophistry.** Reasoning that sounds logical but is actually flawed. *"Can you not see within me the clear writing of conscience, never blurred by any willful sophistry, although too often disregarded?"* (12:27)

**Tares.** A weed. The Parable of the Tares is a Biblical parable from the Book of Matthew in which Jesus likens evil people to weeds. *"The man has lived to serve me, to spread black looks under color of religion, or to sow tares in the wheat-field, as you do, in a course of weak compliance with desire."* (14:13)

**Timorous.** Fearful, timid. *"He can add but one act of service: to repent, to die smiling, and thus to build up in confidence and hope the more timorous of my surviving followers."* (14:22)

**Truckling.** Submissive or yielding. *"I tell you, for your greater comfort, that you will find it even easy to compound your quarrel with your conscience, and to make a truckling peace with God."* (14:51)

**Wainscot.** A wooden lining. *"I have no curios to dispose of—my uncle's cabinet is bare to the wainscot."* (01:59)

Source: Dictionary.com