**A Teacher’s Guide to CALL ME MADAM Interactive:**

**About the Show:**

CALL ME MADAM Interactivecelebrates Oklahoma’s first female ambassador, Perle Mesta, who served as the United States’ official representative to Luxembourg from 1949 to 1952. Students will see songs and scenes from the musical *Call Me Madam,* which opened on Broadway on October 12th, 1950, with music and lyrics by Irving Berlin, and a book by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse.

What students should prepare for**:** Invitations to parties thrown by Perle Metsa, a Washington square dance to settle differences, a trip to the fictional country of Lichtenburg, and a question and answer session with the actors about the show, Perle Mesta, or what life is like as traveling actors.

**Songs in the Show:**

“Mrs. Sally Adams”

The musical opens with a lavish party in Washington D.C., where Sally Adams (based on Perle Mesta), threw parties for the American political elite.

“The Hostess With the Mostes’ On the Ball”

Sally describes how she went from a childhood in Oklahoma to becoming the go-to party thrower in D.C. Perle Mesta was known as The Hostess With the Mostes’ in real life as well.

“Washington Square Dance”

Perle Mesta brought key political players together in social atmospheres who usually wouldn’t dream of associating on a social level. These parties helped people settle their differences by creating a better understanding of common problems. Uniting opposing parties on a social level made it easier to compromise on a political level.

“Can You Use Any Money Today?”

This song is a perfect example of the satire present in *Call Me Madam.* The writers use this number to poke fun at how they felt the United States would throw themselves and their aid at other countries.

“The Ocarina”

No, this isn’t a song about *The Legend of Zelda*. This musical number welcomes us into the fictional country of Lichtenburg (the country used to replace Luxembourg in the musical). The ocarina, a musical wind instrument, became very popular in Europe during the first and second World Wars. Servicemen were often provided with a pocket-sized ocarina to boost morale.

“It’s a Lovely Day Today”

In the musical *Call Me Madam,* Kenneth Gibson, who works on Sally Adams’ staff, falls in love with the Princess of Lichtenburg. Sally encourages this relationship, even though Princess Maria is already engaged to someone else. Sally is later asked to resign for meddling in another country’s political affairs by supporting this relationship. (But don’t worry—Kenneth and Princess Maria do end up together!)

“The Best Thing for You (Would Be Me)”

Sally Adams also gets a little romance in *Call Me Madam.* She and the Prime Minister, Cosmo Constantine, have a flirtatious affair. In real life, Perle Mesta did not become romantically involved while she served in Luxembourg.

“They Like Ike”

President Harry S. Truman appointed Perle Mesta as the ambassador to Luxembourg in 1949. When Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected in 1952, Perle Mesta offered her resignation out of a common courtesy (since Eisenhower was a Republican and Mesta was a Democrat).

“You’re Just in Love”

Kenneth sings about the strange symptoms he is experiencing after falling in love with Princess Maria, and Sally Adams assures him that he is not sick, he is simply in love.

**Other songs from the musical, not included in the Interactive show:**

“Lichtenburg”

“Marrying for Love”

“Something to Dance About”

“Once Upon a Time Today”

**Other Musicals and Song by Irving Berlin:**

*White Christmas*

*Annie, Get Your Gun*

*This Is the Army*

*Ziegfield Follies*

“God Bless America”

“Alexander’s Ragtime Band”

**Terms and Definitions:**

Below is a list of terms and definitions used in the musical that the students can explore on their own.

Satire

Ambassador

Diplomacy

Democratic

Republican

Bi-Partisan

Grand Duchy

**Class Discussion and Exercises:**

After the Show

Discuss with the students what their favorite scene was, who their favorite character was, and what some of the things were that they learned.

Diplomacy

You can’t always agree with everybody on every issue. Perle Mesta used her parties to help people who disagreed come to peaceful solutions. Have the students write a short or long paragraph about a disagreement they have had in the past. How did they solve their difference of opinion? Did someone help them talk through their problems?

Square Dance

Put Perle Mesta’s methods to the test! Have everyone in your class share their favorite TV show/subject in school/sports team/type of ice cream. Then, once it’s clear that there are lots of different opinions, have a square dance with your class! Make sure everyone gets along and dances with everyone else. Then, after the dance, discuss how their differences of opinion affected their dancing. Could they still have fun even though they disagreed?

Ambassadors

CALL ME MADAM Interactive and the student supplement showcase one ambassador and one form of diplomacy. Perle Mesta’s methods may have been effective, but there are lots of other ambassadors out there to lots of countries. Have the students choose an ambassador to a foreign country and do some research on them. Once they have done their research, have them present their findings to the class. This can be done individually or as a group.

**Recommended Links and Reading:**

Mesta, Perle Skirvin. *Perle—My Story.* 1960. Print.

The August 2017 edition of *Oklahoma: Magazine of the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.* The Hall of Fame Spotlight is about Perle Mesta, and includes great information as well as pictures.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Perle-Mesta>

<http://newsok.com/article/1854326>