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Dramatic Publishing



THE THIRD WAVE

Drama
by Joseph Robinette
and Ron Jones

Based on the true story of a high-school teacher's
disastrous experiment with fascism.



THE THIRD WAVE

Drama. *By Joseph Robinette and Ron Jones. Cast: 5 to 11m., 8 to 14w., extras as desired. The Third Wave is a true story about a high-school experiment in fascism that went out of control. Set in 1967 in Palo Alto, California, during the Vietnam war, racial integration and social revolution, the play centers around a young, popular teacher, Ron Jones, and his world history class. When a student asks how so many people could be led to deny the Holocaust of World War II, Mr. Jones decides to demonstrate by giving his students an exercise in discipline not unlike that of a totalitarian society. To his surprise, the students delight in the order and power of that discipline and relinquish their freedom in favor of the prospect of supposed superiority over other students in the school. The class adopts the name “The Third Wave,” and soon many others, even from neighboring schools, clamor to be part of the “elite” group. Two int. sets. Approximate running time: 1 hour, 40 minutes. Code: TP7.*

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Dramatic Publishing

311 Washington St.
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THE THIRD WAVE

A Full-length Play
by
JOSEPH ROBINETTE
and
RON JONES



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and

RON JONES

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ABOUT THE PLAY

The Third Wave is a true story about a high-school experiment in fascism that went out of control. Set in 1967 Palo Alto, California, during the Viet Nam war and social revolution, the play centers around a young, popular teacher, Ron Jones, and his World History class. When a student asks how so many people could be led to deny the Holocaust of World War II, Mr. Jones decides to demonstrate by giving his students an exercise in discipline, not unlike that of a totalitarian society. To his surprise, the students delight in the order and power of that discipline.

During a five-day period, the students relinquish their freedom in favor of the prospect of supposed superiority over other students in the school. The class adopts the name The Third Wave, and soon many others, even from neighboring schools, clamor to be a part of the “elite” group. What follows has been the subject of books, films, television and a recent documentary. Though a serious drama, the play is sprinkled with humor as it examines the passions and vulnerability of a generation of youths at a critical time in American history. It also follows the trials and tribulations of the popular teacher who is responsible for The Third Wave.

THE THIRD WAVE

CHARACTERS

MR. JONES a high-school teacher
A MAN Mr. Jones' older alter ego
STUDENTS members of Mr. Jones' class

MALE

DOUG
EZC
NORMAN
ROBERT
BOMBER

FEMALE

EVE
ALENE
WENDY
DESHAY
MARIA
ALICIA
GG
BRENDA

*ADDITIONAL STUDENTS from other classes

MALE

DANNY (DANIELLE)
MARCUS (MARY)
TERRY (TERI)

FEMALE

JEAN (GENE)
TONI (TONY)
FREDA (FRED)

EXTRAS: Offstage voices and final scene, if desired.

*May be played by all M or F or any combination thereof.

THE TIME: Fall, 1967.

THE PLACE: A high school in Palo Alto, California.

ACT ONE

SCENE: *An empty classroom—desks, blackboard, teacher's desk and chair, other typical accouterments. Posters of the period, such as The Beatles, James Brown, Peter, Paul and Mary, etc., hang on the wall. A closed door to the classroom is UC.*

AT RISE: *The chattering voices of STUDENTS are heard offstage moving closer to the door. A moment later, MR. JONES, the teacher, about 24, opens the door and leads the students into the classroom.*

MR. JONES. Okay, okay, hurry along. It's almost time for the dismissal bell, and I want to go over what we just—
EVE (*as the STUDENTS enter*). Mr. Jones, can we have class outside again tomorrow. That is, if it's a nice day.

DOUG. Eve, baby, it's *always* a nice day in Palo Alto. Even when it rains.

ALENE. Or snows.

EZC. It *never* snows here.

NORMAN. How about an earthquake?

WENDY. We haven't had an earthquake since 1959.

DESHAY. That was eight years ago. Could happen again.

ROBERT (*somewhat withdrawn*). Don't talk about earthquakes, okay?

MR. JONES. All right. All right. Enough of the weather reports. Yes, if it's a nice day, we *might* go back out again. That is *if* were you paying attention. I saw a couple of you that were more interested in watching the falling leaves *and* looking at the stray dog that was watering the dandelions. (*ALL laugh.*) All right. Let's review quickly. Name the Axis powers. (*MARIA's hand goes up.*) Maria.

MARIA. Germany, Italy and Japan.

MR. JONES. And who were the good guys? (*NORMAN half-raises his hand.*) Norman.

NORMAN. Us—of course, uh—Britain and France. China and—Russia.

MR. JONES. Close. (*ALICIA raises her hand.*) Alicia.

ALICIA. The USSR which *included* Russia.

NORMAN. Yeah, but everybody knows what you mean when you say Russia.

MR. JONES. Technically, Alicia's right, Norman, but we'll let you off with only a week at hard labor in the Gulag this time. (*ALL laugh.*) Okay, the month and date of the surrender of the enemies. I'm not waiting for hands this time. Let me hear it.

BOMBER. Germany, March 1945.

GG. Japan—uh, uh 1945, too. But—May—May.

MR. JONES. And what about Italy? Brenda.

BRENDA. They quit—two years earlier, I think.

MR. JONES. They quit?

BRENDA. You know. Gave up.

MR. JONES. She needs a little help, somebody. (*EVE raises her hand.*) Eve.

EVE. The, uh, what-do-you-call-'em—allies, that's it—took over Sicily and got rid of Mussolini. Then a new government declared war on Germany.

MR. JONES. Okay, looks like you were paying attention pretty well out there. (*DOUG holds up his hand.*) Yes, Doug?

DOUG. I have a correction to make.

MR. JONES. Oh?

DOUG. The dog peed on the daisies—not the dandelions.
(*ALL laugh.*)

MR. JONES. You guys *were* paying attention, weren't you? All right, we'll go outside tomorrow. (*ALL approve vocally.*) I'll tell Principal Morris in the morning... Any questions about what we covered today?

ALENE. I have one. How could so many of the German people be so easily led to—deny the Holocaust?

MR. JONES. It's not hard to lead people when you instill in them a herd mentality, make that herd feel superior, then structure its every move... Good question, Alene. We'll discuss that more tomorrow—or the first of next week.

(*The school bell rings. ALL gather up their belongings.*)

WENDY. Mr. Jones, are you sure you never taught school before?

MR. JONES. Just student teaching in college.

WENDY. We all think you're just great.

NORMAN (*jokingly*). Speak for yourself, Wendy. (*General chuckling.*)

MR. JONES (*pretending to write in his grade book*). All right, that's an "A" for Wendy and an "F" for Norman. (*ALL laugh.*)

NORMAN. Okay, I admit you're *pretty* good.

MR. JONES (*again pretending to write*). Make that a "C" for Norman. (*General laughter as ALL begin to leave.*) Okay, remember—chapter five for tomorrow. *And* keep working on your posters, drawings, poems—including your own. Be creative.

DESHAY. I'm having fun with the poster.

MARIA. Me, too.

MR. JONES. Oh, and don't forget—tomorrow is Roll Call Friday.

ALICIA. What's the topic this week, Mr. Jones?

GG. He's not going to tell us till tomorrow—like always.

MR. JONES. GG's right. Have a good trip home, everybody. Be safe out there. (*ALL leave, chattering, some turning to say "Bye" to MR. JONES who muses to himself after they leave.*) Yeah...maybe we *will* deal with Alene's question—in a very unique way.

(He begins to straighten the room, erasing the board, etc., as an older MAN walks slowly down an aisle of the theatre, looking at MR. JONES who is unaware of his presence.)

MAN. First-year teacher. Only six weeks on the job. Beginning the career he's always wanted. Already popular with his students. Envied, though respected, by his colleagues. Well-liked by his principal—even at this early stage.

(MR. JONES picks up his briefcase and starts for the door. He stops, looks back at the classroom and smiles, then exits as the MAN climbs up a narrow step at the side of the stage, just out of the playing area.)

MAN *(cont'd)*. How do I know? I *was* that teacher way back in 1967. If you don't mind, I think I'll go pull up a chair. Even though I know how it all turns out, I like to revisit it every once in awhile. I'll be right back. *(He exits in the direction of backstage.)*

(A moment later, MR. JONES enters, sets his briefcase down and writes on the blackboard: "A secret that none of us knows, except you." The bell rings and VOICES are heard approaching the classroom. The STUDENTS enter chatting loudly.)

BRENDA. So, how do we answer Roll Call Friday today, Mr. Jones?

DESHAY. How about pet peeves?

DOUG. First-ever memory.

MARIA. Favorite movie.

EZC. We did that three weeks ago.

MARIA. Oh, yeah.

MR. JONES. No. Today, something a little more thought-provoking and personal. *(He points to the blackboard.)* Something about yourself that the rest of us don't know. And keep it clean.

BOMBER. There goes mine already. *(Laughter.)*

(The MAN reenters at the side of the stage. He carries a folding chair on which he sits.)

MR. JONES (*opening the roll book*). Okay, here goes. Eve. EVE. I want to star in a Broadway musical. (*Singing.*) “The hills are alive...” (*A few groans are heard.*)

ALICIA. Eve, it’s supposed to be something we *don’t* know about you.

EVE. Oh, right... Okay, sometimes I snore when I’m asleep at night. (*A few giggles.*)

NORMAN. If you’re asleep, how do you know?

EVE. My sister tells me. We sleep in the same room.

MR. JONES. GG.

GG. My boyfriend, Freddy—

ALENE. We know who your boyfriend is.

GG. I’m not finished. My boyfriend, Freddy, calls me—
“Little One.” (*A few “ooo’s.”*)

MR. JONES. Doug.

DOUG. I’m going to try out for the JV basketball team that Mr. Jones coaches.

ROBERT. That’s not a secret.

DOUG. It is to Mr. Jones.

EVE. Not anymore. (*Laughter.*)

MR. JONES. I’ll look for you, Doug... Wendy.

WENDY. When I was a little girl, I told my mother I liked horses. Now she gives me a little toy horse every birthday and Christmas. I don’t even like horses anymore.

BRENDA. Why don’t you *tell* your mother?

WENDY. I don’t want to hurt her feelings.

MR. JONES. Jerry.

BOMBER. I like it better when you call me Bomber.

MR. JONES. You’re still Jerry in the roll book. But, okay—Bomber.

BOMBER. Every once in a while I bring a gun to school.
(*“Ooo’s” are heard.*)

EZC. Have you got one today?

BOMBER. That's still a secret.

MR. JONES. It'd better be a water pistol, or you're outta here. (*ALL laugh as BOMBER uses his hands as "water pistols" and mimes shooting with "swishing" sounds.*)
DeShay.

DESHAY. When they opened up the high school here to kids like me who went to Palo Alto East, I didn't want to come.

GG. Then why did you?

DESHAY. My mama thought I'd be safer here.

BOMBER. Maybe you should still be at Palo Alto East.

MR. JONES. Hold on there.

DESHAY. Hey. NRA-man. I don't like finding myself here any more than you do.

MR. JONES. Let's not get personal... Norman.

NORMAN (*glaring at BOMBER*). I wanna protect people from other people they might need protecting from.

MR. JONES. Was that your original secret?

NORMAN. No. But this one's even better.

MR. JONES. Alene.

ALENE. I want to be a famous writer—

MARIA. We know that.

ALENE. —of murder mysteries! (*She pretends to choke MARIA.*)

MARIA. Hey, cut it out.

ALENE. They say to write what you know about. I'm just practicing. (*ALL laugh.*)

BRENDA. Why don't you tell us your other secret.

ALENE. What other secret?

BRENDA. Well, it's not *really* a secret since she told it to me and DeShay.

ALENE. Shut up, Brenda.

DESHAY. She said she thinks Mr. Jones is cute. (*ALL react with “ooo’s” and “aaah’s.”*)

ALENE. DeShay!

MR. JONES. Thank you, Alene. That makes two people who think I’m cute—you and Mrs. Jones. (*ALL laugh.*)
Let’s move along. We’ve got lots to do today. Alicia.

ALICIA. I know I’m usually quiet (*softly*) but when I get real excited I can be very—LOUD! (*ALL cover their ears and laugh.*)

MR. JONES. Brenda.

BRENDA. I know I don’t really fit in, but my secret is—I don’t care if I fit in or not. (*A few “aah’s.”*)

MR. JONES. EZC.

EZC. My secret is brand new...I want Wendy to give me all her little horses. (*ALL laugh.*)

MR. JONES. Robert.

ROBERT. I—I don’t have any secrets—that I want to share.

OTHERS. Come on, Robert... Just one... He’s so shy, etc.

MR. JONES. That’s enough now. I think Robert *did* just share a secret. And that is—he’d rather *not* share one. (*ROBERT seems relieved.*) Maria.

MARIA. I—love—tomatoes. I even eat them for breakfast. (*Laughter.*) My mother let’s me grow them in our garden. And they’re the best in the world. Yea, tomatoes! (*ALL laugh.*)

MR. JONES. All right. We got through that pretty well, even though it *did* take a lot of time. I think for next Friday’s roll call, I’ll ask you to name your favorite one-syllable word. (*ALL laugh.*) Now, on to business.

(He mimes teaching as the STUDENTS open their books.)

MAN. Pretty good stuff, huh? Things were running smoothly in the early going. There was no reason to think it wouldn't last forever. Oh, sure, I knew there would be a few speed bumps along the way. But this job seemed about as perfect as possible in the early days.

MR. JONES *(as the bell rings and all close their books)*. Okay, for Monday, review chapters three through five. Study the map on page thirty-one and answer the question: If you were invading Czechoslovakia, which way would you enter and why? At least one hundred fifty words. Have a good weekend, everybody.

WENDY. Hey, Mr. Jones, you didn't tell us your secret.

MR. JONES. My secret is—I'm not going to tell my wife one of my students thinks I'm cute. *(ALL laugh and start to leave.)* Oh, and Alene—your question about why so many of the Germans were led to disavow the Holocaust—we'll deal with that on Monday. *(The STUDENTS leave as MR. JONES tidies up the room.)*

MAN. Oh, yes. We would deal with it, all right. I couldn't let an opportunity like this go by. But being the ever-cautious first-year teacher—

MR. JONES *(turning to the audience, as though talking to the principal)*. So, I thought I'd run it by you, Principal Morris, before I went ahead with it.

MAN *(as PRINCIPAL MORRIS, standing and cross-focusing with MR. JONES)*. Sounds like a pretty good idea, Ron.

MR. JONES. I just want to try and make it real for them—let them experience it—so they can understand it better.

MAN. I like your methodology, Ron. Good luck with it.
Let me know how it turns out.

MR. JONES. Thanks. I will. *(He picks up his briefcase and exits.)*

MAN *(now himself again, turning to the audience)*. I would spend several hours over the weekend planning the lesson—which would be more like an event. Instructive, illuminating, dynamic. And the genius who put it all together—would be fired by the end of the year. *(He sits.)*

(MR. JONES enters and begins taking down several posters of contemporary icons: James Brown, the Beatles (“Sergeant Pepper”), Peter, Paul and Mary—as well as a couple of sports posters: the San Francisco Giants [baseball] and ’49ers [football].)

MAN *(as MR. JONES works)*. It wasn’t an easy question to answer—or to build a lesson plan around: How could a large part of the German populace claim ignorance of the wholesale slaughter of Jewish people? How could doctors, teachers, railroad conductors, townspeople—even friends and neighbors of Jewish citizens—deny what was happening?

(MR. JONES begins rearranging the desks into distinct rows.)

MAN *(cont’d)*. I had decided to take two days—maybe even three—to let the experiment play out. In the end, it would last a full week.