

Wild and Wonderful Niagara Falls

In this activity, you will produce a short play about Niagara Falls. Your audience will learn about Niagara Falls and some of the notable events that have happened there. Your play can have one performer or many; give parts to as many people as you have participating. Ask someone to be the narrator and read the lines. Think about how to make your play run smoothly and entertain and educate your audience. Practice several times so everyone knows what to do, including a bow at the end. You might want to make tickets and programs. Even if you have only one person in the audience, put on a great play! Visit notgrass.com/ablinks for a link to a printable script.

In the script below:

Red words—names of scenes

Blue words—stage instructions

Black words—narrator's lines



Script

Welcome! *While line is read, an actor sprays the audience with a light mist of water from a spray bottle. An actor dressed as a tour guide or tourist smiles and enthusiastically holds up a sign that says "This way to Niagara Falls!"*

Narrator: Welcome to Niagara Falls! Niagara Falls is between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario on the border between Canada and the United States of America. The beautiful falls send 194,940 cubic feet of gushing, rushing water 188 feet over the edge every second!

First Description of the Falls: *One or two actors, dressed as explorers, walk around the stage silently looking, pointing, and exclaiming. One of them pulls out a pad and pencil and furiously writes on the paper.*

Narrator: Louis Hennepin made the first known description and drawing of the falls. He visited Niagara with French explorer René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle and wrote about it in his book *A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America* published in 1698.

Bridges: *One or more actors walk across the stage, pretending to walk on the lower deck of the suspension bridge. They wear helmets and cover their heads with their hands, walking in a crouched, fearful position, continually looking up with frightened faces.*

Narrator: The first bridge across Niagara Falls was made of oak planks hung from iron cables. The first bridge was replaced by the Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge in 1855. The suspension bridge had an upper deck for trains and a lower deck for carriages and pedestrians.

Honeymooners: *Someone dressed up as a bride or a groom (or two people dressed as both) walks across the stage carrying suitcases. They look very, very happy.*

Narrator: Niagara Falls is a popular destination for honeymooners. This tradition goes back to the early 1800s. Aaron Burr's daughter and Napoleon's brother are reported to be some of the first Niagara Falls honeymooners.

Hurricane Deck: *One or more people stand as if they are being blown by furious winds and can barely remain standing. Meanwhile, they point and silently admire the scenery.*

Narrator: Platforms that allow visitors to reach Hurricane Deck are built every spring and removed every November. On Hurricane Deck, visitors can stand less than 20 feet from the waters of Bridal Veil Falls, which is part of Niagara Falls. At Hurricane Deck, winds can reach 68 miles per hour!

Maid of the Mist: *One or more people hold a donut-shaped life-preserver (cut out of poster board) that says MAID OF THE MIST in large letters. They duck under umbrellas and rock back and forth as if they are on the deck of a boat.*

Narrator: In 1846 a steamboat began taking tourists across the Niagara River. It was called *Maid of the Mist*. Since then, seven different boats have been used, all called *Maid of the Mist*. On the boat, visitors can get close to the bottom of the falls where they get drenched from the rising mist.

Jumpers and Divers: *One or more people stand in a silly diving position, wearing inflatable floaters, goggles, and towels wrapped around their waists.*

Narrator: In October 1829, Sam Patch jumped over Niagara Falls and survived! He earned the nickname "Yankee Leaper." People have tried going over the falls in various ways, including a kayak and a jet ski. Today, going over the falls is illegal in Canada and the United States, and an attempt could earn you a \$10,000 fine.

Annie Edson Taylor: *Someone stands in a large empty garbage can in a dress, carrying a purse, with a pillow tied on his or her head. The actor looks scared and keeps his or her eyes closed.*

Narrator: In 1901 a Civil War widow named Annie Edson Taylor who had fallen on hard times went over Niagara Falls in a barrel, hoping to gain attention and make money from her fame. She claimed to be 40 years old, but was really 63! She fixed up a wooden pickle barrel with accessories suited for the stunt, and over the falls she went. She survived the exciting journey, but didn't make much money for her trouble.

Charles Blondin: *A rope or jump rope is laid across the floor. An actor walks across it, gingerly taking one step at a time and wobbling precariously, all the while waving to the audience with confidence.*

Narrator: Charles Blondin got started in the acrobat trade when he was only six years old. In 1859 he made his first trip across Niagara Falls—not on a boat or a bridge, but on a tightrope! His tightrope was 1,100 feet long and hung 160 feet above the falls. That was the first of many trips across the falls. On his various trips across the falls, Blondin pushed a wheelbarrow, carried a man on his back, and walked on stilts. Once he crossed blindfolded!

Come see Niagara Falls! *An actor walks across the tightrope, this time wearing a blindfold. He or she holds a sign facing the audience that reads "Follow me to Niagara Falls!"*

Narrator: We invite you to see for yourself one of America the Beautiful's most famous attractions! Catch the mist, hear the roar, feel the wind, and see a rainbow! THE END