

THE WAR BETWEEN THE KATES

A Play in One Act
for Young People

by

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SYNOPSIS

The War Between the Kates is about a rift that develops between two girls named Kate, set thematically against the War Between the States. In a modern day school, two girls, Katelyn Grant and Katherine Lee, return from summer camp to begin another year of school, including study of the American Civil War. Thanks to the malicious intervention of one of their schoolmates, Bethany, and some unfortunate misunderstandings, the Kates become at first distrustful of one another, and eventually downright hateful. As their conflict grows and their class delves deeper into the Social Studies curriculum, their schoolroom battles take on the language and trappings of the Civil War itself. Eventually, the Kates see the war that swells around them, and decide to call a ceasefire. As they reestablish their friendship, the world of the play returns to the ordinary classroom, and all have learned lessons about both American History and the challenges of communication and friendship.

The action of the play spans several weeks. The settings are numerous, including a classroom, a school playground, a school pick-up area, two homes, and some locales -- including Civil War Battlefields -- that exist purely on the metaphorical level.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

The War Between the Kates was produced for two studio performances by the Junior Players of the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, GA, in the spring of 2001. The performances took place in the Rich Auditorium of the Woodruff Arts Center. The show was presented free of charge, and it was not reviewed.

CAST LIST

The War Between the Kates can be presented with a cast of 14 (8f, 6m) to 22 (12f, 10m) actors. For smaller casts, eight of the students double as school officials and family members. If necessary, some of the student roles could be combined or divided for even smaller or larger casts; and the School Official roles could easily switch gender.

<u>Students (Union)</u>	<u>Students (Confederate)</u>	<u>Grant Family</u>	<u>Lee Family</u>
Katelyn Grant	Katherine Lee	Ms. Grant	Mr. Lee
Bethany	Maya	Hanna Grant	Mrs. Lee
Becca	Rochelle	Brett Grant	Aunt Rona
Candace	Tami		
Justin	Parker	<u>School Officials</u>	
Derek	Wesley	Mr. Price, an Elementary teacher	
Andre	Shane	Dr. Dennison, an Elementary Principal	

SET AND TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

The War Between the Kates can, as it was in its original incarnation, be produced with a minimum of set or technical needs, using simple props, neutral stage pieces, and ordinary sound effects to establish the various settings. Conversely, the play could also be presented with more elaborate sets, costumes, lights and sound to evoke the dramatic locales and the transformation into the metaphorical Civil War.

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SCENE 1. End of summer. KATE G. and KATE L. appear on opposite sides of the stage, writing letters.

KATE G. and KATE L: Dear Kate: Hi-how-are-you-I-really-miss-you!

KATE G: You would have really loved the hike that we did last week. I think that was after my last letter, wasn't it?

KATE L: California is so beautiful! You would absolutely love it here. I kinda hope my dad does this summer thing at the university here every year. But I kinda miss camp too. Are there as many mosquitoes as there were last summer? I hope so.

KATE G: We got to sleep out under the stars, and I swear I heard a bear. No kidding! Anyway, Pamela's Pink Ladies are really the greatest. That's our group. You would love them. And guess what? I'm the best swimmer of all the girls our age. I also scored three aces when we played the one of the boys' groups in volleyball.

KATE L: Wait! I didn't mean that I hoped you had a lot of mosquito bites. I meant that if the mosquitoes are worse this year, then I won't feel as bad about not being there. Anyway, my cousins have been kinda fun. Soon, we'll be back in school, and we'll be Kate G. and Kate L. again.

KATE G. and KATE L: Well, gotta go. I can't wait to see you. Remember: 2 Kates -- 1-derful friends -- 4-ever! Love, Kate.

KATE G.: P.S. The mosquitoes are even worse than last year. Ugh!

KATE L.: P.S. I kinda got sunburned at the beach last week. Ugh!
(*A school bell rings.*)

SCENE 2. An upper elementary classroom. The first day of school. All the students come out and take seats in the classroom. MR. PRICE comes to the front of the class. JUSTIN is standing.

JUSTIN: . . . And then when I got home from soccer camp, I started training with my Dad for this 5K that we're going to run in a couple of weeks. I also got to go over to the high school and watch the football team workout, because my brother is their #1 receiver this year. I guess that's all.

MR. PRICE: Well, thank you Justin. That sounds like an exhausting summer. Has everybody had a chance to share?

STUDENTS: Yes, Mr. Price.

MR. PRICE: Well, I'm very impressed. We had two people go on vacation to other countries; and at least five of you visited National Parks in the U.S. It sounds like you all attended about a hundred camps combined; you read a lot of good books; and you had plenty of fun with your friends. *(Looking at the Kates)* And sometimes you missed each other a lot. *(The Kates smile and gesture: 2-1-4.)*

Well, we have an exciting year ahead of us. We'll be doing our regular math and spelling and science, of course. But starting next week, we are going to immerse ourselves in our Grand Theme for the first half of the year: The Civil War. As you may know, the War Between the States, as it was called, was one of the most difficult periods in our country's history . . .

(He continues gesturing and mouthing, as students stand and directly address the audience.)

DEREK: The Civil War! Cool! My grandfather has a real live bayonet! I'll bring it in.

PARKER: The Civil War! Cool! Um, is that the one with George Washington?

MAYA: The Civil War! Ugh! Why can't we do something like the Middle Ages?

BETHANY: The Civil War! Ugh! Is that the one with Richard Nixon?

CANDACE: It sounds fascinating!

ROCHELLE: It sounds truly boring.

ANDRE: It sounds very unusual.

TAMI: It sounds very un-civil!

KATES *(with a look to each other)*: The War Between the States-- what does that have to do with anything?

BECCA: Um, what in the world does 'Civil' mean?!?

SHANE: Um, when in the world is lunch?!?

(The students are all seated again and paying attention to MR. PRICE.)

MR. PRICE: . . . and we will top it off with a big project that will be a large portion of your Social Studies grade for the whole semester -- but we'll talk about that in a few weeks. Now, let's go over some Rules and Expectations that we follow here in Mr. Price's room . . .

(A school bell rings.)

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[From the middle of the play, as the action transitions into the metaphorical world]

SCENE 10. The Playground. Later that day.

JUSTIN: Take it back!

MAYA: No! What are you afraid of?

PARKER: Go play on another part of the playground!

DEREK: No! It's a free country! We can play wherever we want!

SHANE: This country isn't big enough for all of us!

KATE L.: Go somewhere else if you don't like it!

PARKER: You tell them, General Lee!

KATE G.: No, you losers are free to leave!

KATE L.: Happily! I secede from you and from any friendship we ever had!

KATE G.: Good! Our union is hereby forever dissolved! You and all your geek friends can secede to another planet!

BECCA: You tell her, General Grant!

MAYA: Who are you calling geeks? You're just a bunch of brainless jocks!

BETHANY: Teacher's pets!

MAYA: Class failures!

JUSTIN: That does it! General Grant, alert the President. We are at war!

PARKER: General Lee, we must fight to protect a cherished way of life!

(Civil War Music: perhaps "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," or a military drumbeat. All run off shouting: "Preserve the Union at all costs! A House divided against itself cannot stand! Put down the Rebels! Freedom for all!" -- or -- "Freedom from Tyranny! Preserve our cherished way of life! Cotton is King! Yankees Go Home!")