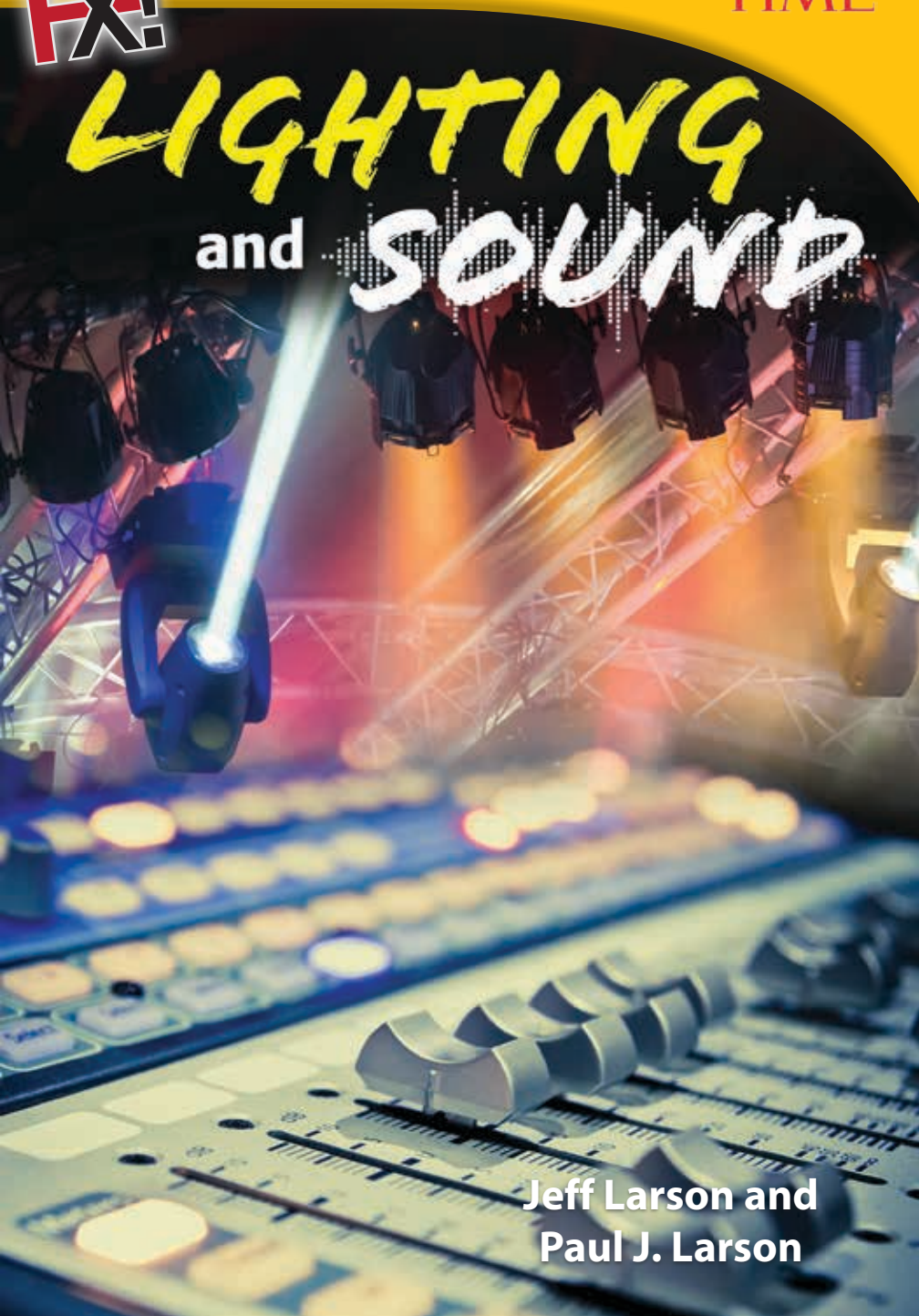
FX!

TIME

LIGHTING and SOUND



Jeff Larson and
Paul J. Larson

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In the Beginning

"All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players."

—*Shakespeare's* As You Like It, *Act II Scene VII*

Imagine this: You have been sent back in time some 15,000 years ago to southwestern France. It is a summer evening, but cool air moves over your skin. Darkness surrounds you, except for the flickering light of a nearby fire, around which a dozen people are gathered.

A deep voice resonates through the cavern. You realize the speaker is telling a story—a story of the hunt that has been captured in earthy tones on a wall of the cave. You glance around and see dozens of paintings: deer, bison, horses, and more. You realize these stories tell the tale of the people of Lascaux.

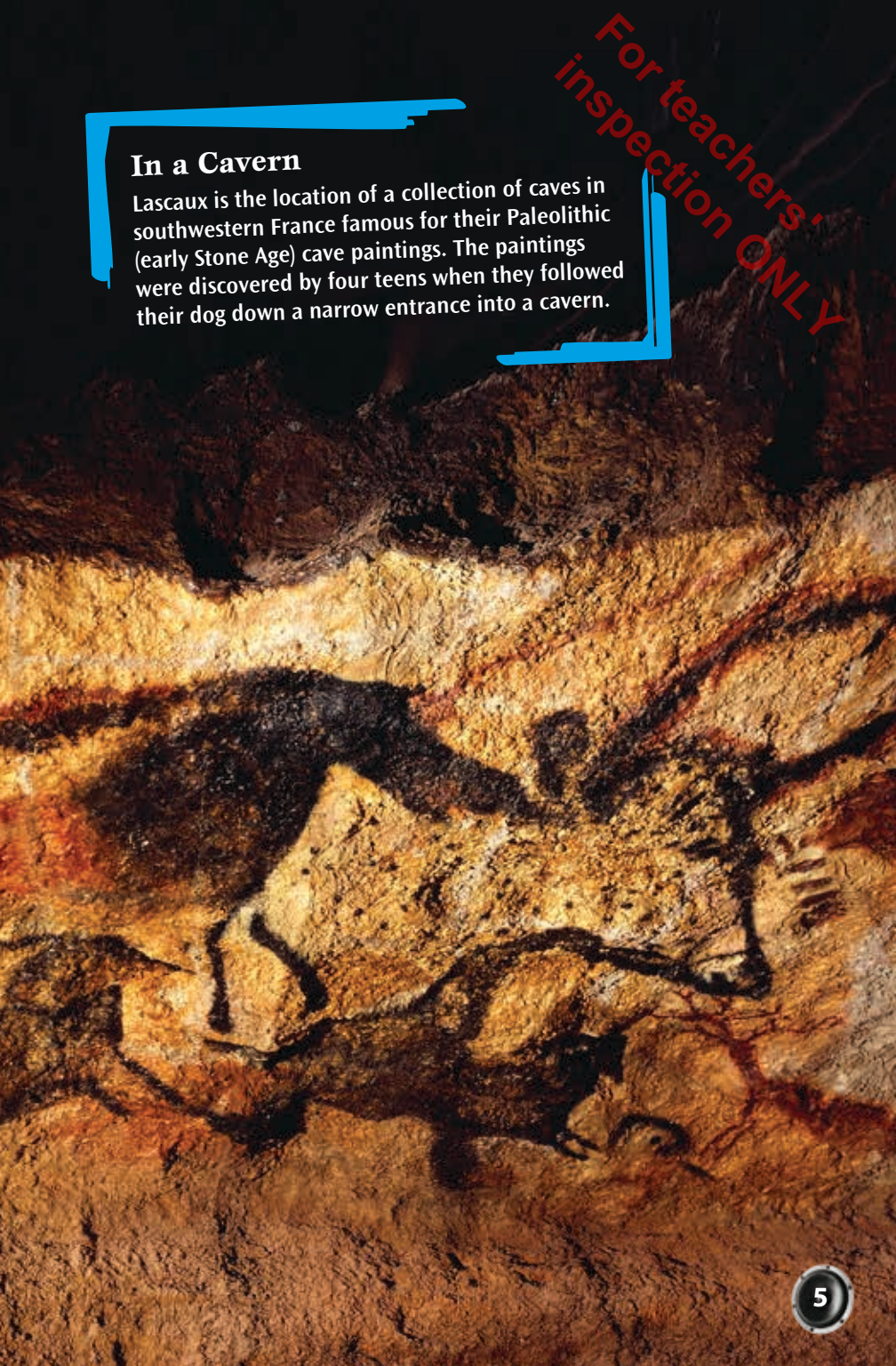
Could a moment such as this have been the origin of theater today? With the echoing voice and fire-lit speaker, were the elements of sound and lighting introduced in the **ritualistic** telling of the story of humankind? As you read on, imagine yourself on such a journey—where light and sound **illuminate** and amplify the stories of our lives.



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In a Cavern

Lascaux is the location of a collection of caves in southwestern France famous for their Paleolithic (early Stone Age) cave paintings. The paintings were discovered by four teens when they followed their dog down a narrow entrance into a cavern.



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Setting the Stage

Can you imagine how lighting and sound affected early theatrical productions? Step back in time, first to ancient Greece and Rome and then to Asia, where the modern idea of theater developed.

It's Greek to Me

The history of Greek theater is rooted in religion. It began with festivals that honored the god Dionysus. From these festivals sprang the desire to share even more stories, and around 600 BC, the Greeks began building *theatrons*—large outdoor **amphitheaters**. These semicircular structures were constructed of stone—nestled on the slopes of hills—and are renowned for their outstanding **acoustics**.



Skene to Scene

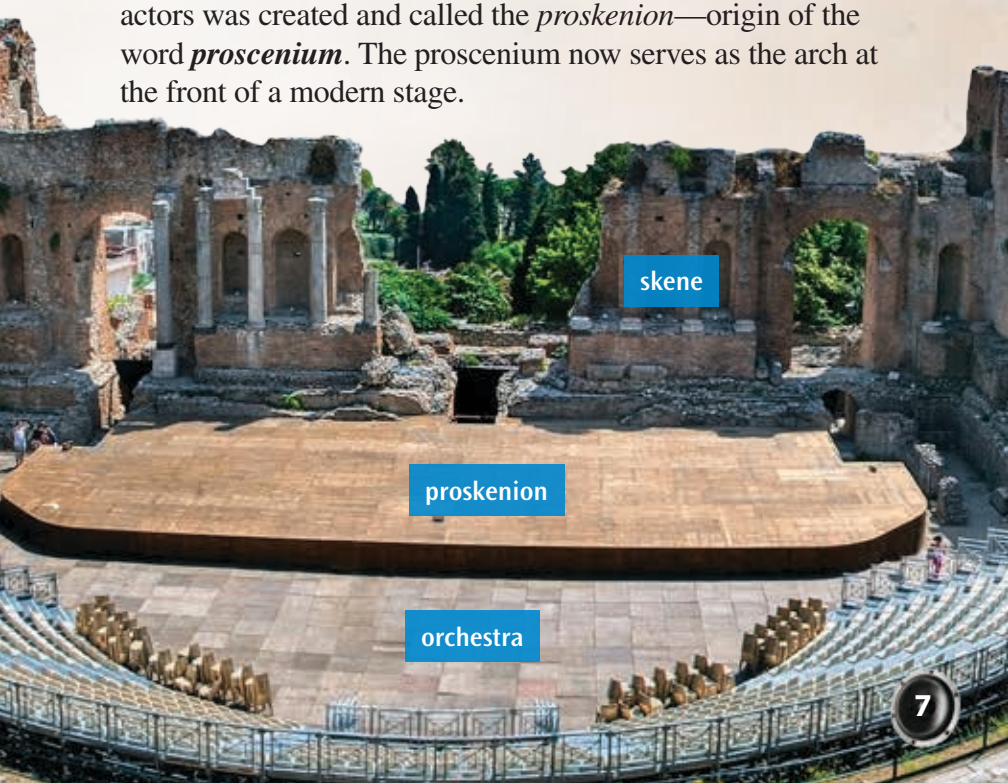
The first skene to appear on the Greek stage was a small wooden hut. The entire cast for those early plays was the chorus, and they recited or sang the lines written by the playwright in unison. The actors changed in the skene. Over time, the skene grew larger.

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The Theater at Epidaurus

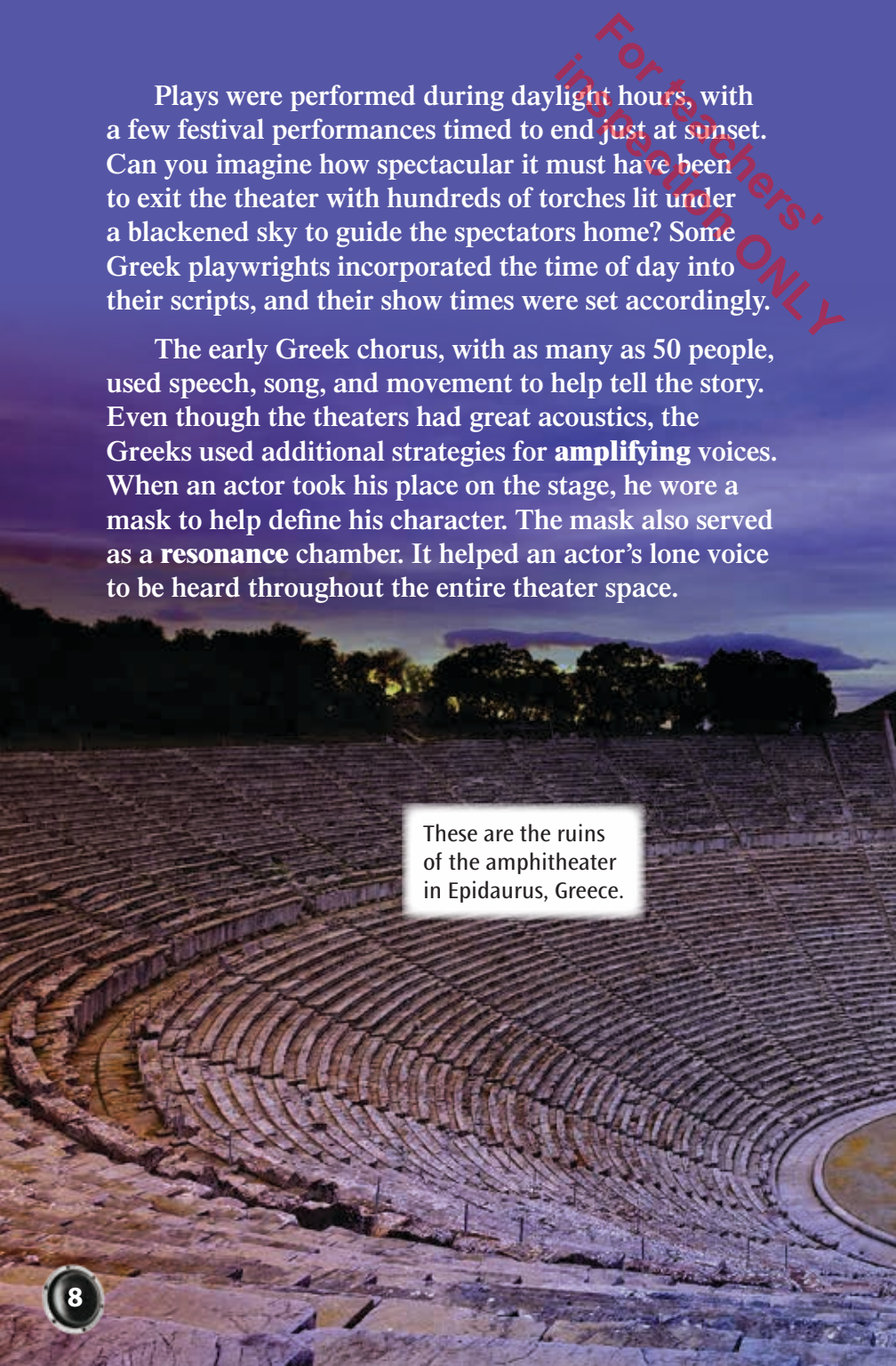
When you search for the most beautiful and well preserved of the ancient theaters, you can do no better than the Theater at Epidaurus. With a capacity of 13,000 spectators, its acoustics are so superb that if a person standing in the orchestra tears a sheet of paper, it can be heard throughout the entire seating area!

Eventually, a two-story stone building called a *skene*—origin of the word *scene*—was built at the rear of the circular orchestra pit and stage. The skene usually had three doors on the front as well as doors on each side. These doors were used for entrances and exits. The skene served as a changing room for actors as well as a **resonator** for projecting the actors' voices toward the audience. Eventually, it served as the scenic background for the play. A narrow stage area for actors was created and called the *proskenion*—origin of the word ***proscenium***. The proscenium now serves as the arch at the front of a modern stage.



Plays were performed during daylight hours, with a few festival performances timed to end just at sunset. Can you imagine how spectacular it must have been to exit the theater with hundreds of torches lit under a blackened sky to guide the spectators home? Some Greek playwrights incorporated the time of day into their scripts, and their show times were set accordingly.

The early Greek chorus, with as many as 50 people, used speech, song, and movement to help tell the story. Even though the theaters had great acoustics, the Greeks used additional strategies for **amplifying** voices. When an actor took his place on the stage, he wore a mask to help define his character. The mask also served as a **resonance** chamber. It helped an actor's lone voice to be heard throughout the entire theater space.



These are the ruins of the amphitheater in Epidaurus, Greece.

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To Put on the Mask

Greek masks were probably made of lightweight materials such as linen hardened with glue, leather, wood, or cork. Their wigs were most likely made of human or animal hair.

The Playwright's the Thing

Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides are three of the best-known Greek playwrights. Aeschylus is called the Father of Tragedy. Sophocles was the most successful playwright of his time. Euripides was known as the "stage philosopher" and was heavily influenced by Socrates.

Reader's Guide

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1. Look back at the sidebar "Foley Sound" on page 45. Provide at least three more examples of ways to make sound effects using common objects.
2. In what ways do light and sound work together to create mood for a scene in a play or a movie?
3. Explain what type of lighting and sound you would use to create a feeling of suspense in a theater or film production.
4. What was the most important advancement in lighting in theater or film? Why? How did it improve the visual experience for the audience?

