

SCARY PLACES

# Tragic Theaters



by Natalie Lunis

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by **Natalie Lunis**

Consultant: Paul F. Johnston, PhD  
Washington, D.C.

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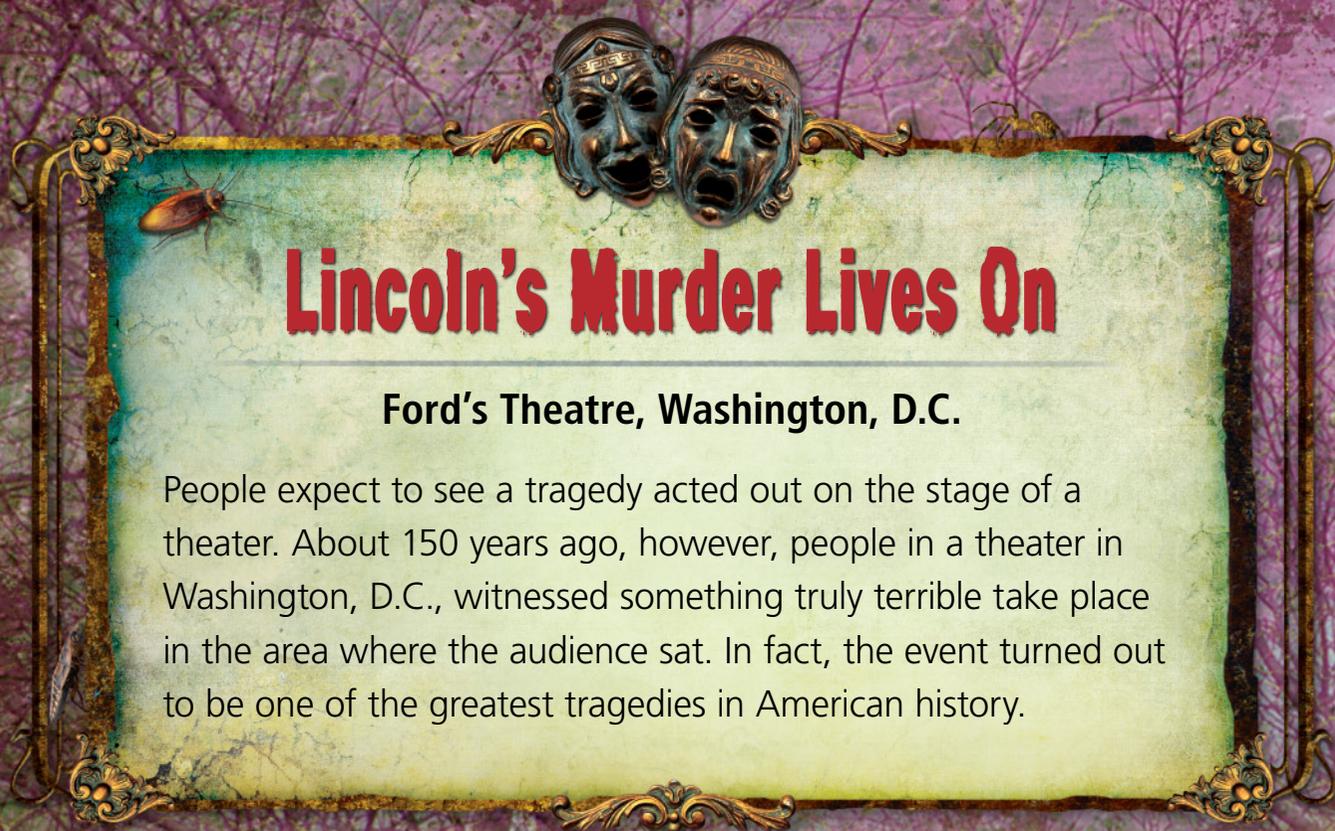
# Tragic Theaters

Theaters are fun places to visit—most of the time. These grand-looking buildings are usually filled with entertaining comedies, dramatic **tragedies**, and exciting musicals. Yet what happens when the most dramatic and exciting events aren't happening on the stage? Many theaters have been the scenes of shocking murders, deadly accidents, and unsolved mysteries. As a result, they are said to be the homes of ghosts and spirits.



Within the 11 tragic theaters in this book, you will discover the ghost of the man who shot President Abraham Lincoln, a dangerous costume that chokes anyone who tries to wear it, and an actor who wouldn't allow the fact that he was dead to keep him off the stage. As you'll see, theaters can be spooky places—but don't let stage fright keep you out!





# Lincoln's Murder Lives On

## Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C.

People expect to see a tragedy acted out on the stage of a theater. About 150 years ago, however, people in a theater in Washington, D.C., witnessed something truly terrible take place in the area where the audience sat. In fact, the event turned out to be one of the greatest tragedies in American history.

Ford's Theatre



On the night of April 14, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln was watching a play in Ford's Theatre. His wife, Mary, sat next to him. Around 10:15 p.m., a shot rang out. A man named John Wilkes Booth had just fired a gun at the president. A famous actor and a Southerner, Booth was acting in revenge. He blamed Lincoln for the defeat of the South in the **Civil War**.

Lincoln died the next morning, and Ford's Theatre remained closed for more than a hundred years. Since its reopening in 1968, some people have claimed to see a ghostly version of Lincoln's **assassination** acted out. Audience members say they have heard footsteps rushing to the area where Lincoln sat—followed by a gunshot and screams. Mary has been seen pointing at the stage, which Booth crossed as he made his escape. She cries out, "He has killed the president!" Onstage, Booth has sometimes been seen running away. At other times, actors have felt an icy chill—a sign that Booth's spirit may still lurk among the theater's shadows.



Today, part of Ford's Theatre is a museum. People who visit can see objects having to do with Lincoln's presidency and his assassination. Among them are the clothes Lincoln wore the night he was shot and the gun that John Wilkes Booth used.



An illustration of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theatre

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## About the Author

Natalie Lunis has written many nonfiction books for children. She lives in New York’s lower Hudson River Valley—the home of the Headless Horseman.



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**Abandoned Amusement Parks**

**Abandoned Insane Asylums**

**Creepy Castles**

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