

Who was Gil Eastman?

Name _____

Class · period _____

Date _____

THE SHORT VERSION

Gil Eastman (1934–2006) created Gallaudet University's drama department and was a founding member of the National Theatre of the Deaf. He was an actor, playwright, and author, and he won an Emmy Award as co-host of the news program *Deaf Mosaic*.

EDUCATION AND FOUNDING WORK

Two degrees, a new department, and the first professional Deaf theatre company

01 SCHOOLING AND DEGREES

- 01 Gil attended the American School for the Deaf, and earned a Bachelor's degree in Art from Gallaudet University.

He then went on to earn a Master's of Fine Arts in Drama from the Catholic University of America.

02 BUILDING DRAMA AT GALLAUDET

- 01 Gil created Gallaudet University's Department of Drama, which is now named *Theatre Arts*.
- 02 He also created *Visual Gestural Communication* (VGC), which is a means of communication where people use gestures instead of voice, and which has had a lasting impact in and out of the university.

03 THE NATIONAL THEATRE OF THE DEAF

- 01 Gil Eastman was a founding member of the *National Theatre of the Deaf* (NTD), which was started in Waterford, Connecticut in 1965.
- NTD was the first professional Deaf theatre company, although actors are both Deaf and hearing. ASL and speech are used during performances.

HIS OTHER WORKS

A playwright, an author, and an Emmy for a news program

04 STAGE AND WRITING

01 Gil also worked as an actor, director, stage manager and playwright.

He wrote a play about Laurent Clerc, and wrote a story inspired by the classic *Pygmalion* entitled “Sign Me Alice.”

02 Gil was also an author, and penned many books in his lifetime.

05 DEAF MOSAIC AND RECOGNITION

01 Eastman also received an Emmy Award for his role as co-host on Gallaudet University’s news program, *Deaf Mosaic*.

He also received an honorary doctorate from Gallaudet, and was inducted into the American School for the Deaf Hall of Fame for his exceptional leadership.

GIL’S IMPACT

What he left behind, for Deaf and hearing people alike

06 WHAT HE LEFT BEHIND

01 Gil Eastman passed away in his early 70s, leaving behind a wife, two daughters, four grandchildren and a long list of admirers.

02 Because of his many contributions to the arts and beyond, many Deaf individuals have opportunities they may not have had otherwise.

He also helped many hearing people become exposed to aspects of the Deaf experience.

07 NAMES AND TERMS TO KNOW

NAME OR TERM	WHY IT MATTERS IN THIS STORY
American School for the Deaf (ASD)	The school Eastman attended as a student, and the Hall of Fame that later inducted him.
Theatre Arts	The current name of the Gallaudet department Eastman created as the Department of Drama.
Visual Gestural Communication (VGC)	The gesture-based means of communication Eastman created, used in and out of the university.
National Theatre of the Deaf (NTD)	The first professional Deaf theatre company, founded in Waterford, Connecticut in 1965 with Eastman among its founders.
<i>"Sign Me Alice"</i>	Eastman's story inspired by <i>Pygmalion</i> , one of his best-known works for the stage.
Deaf Mosaic	The Gallaudet news program Eastman co-hosted, and the work that earned him an Emmy Award.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Answer in complete sentences using what you read

08 WRITTEN RESPONSE

01 Where did Gil Eastman go to school, and what two degrees did he earn?

02 What is Visual Gestural Communication, and who created it?

03 What made the National Theatre of the Deaf different from other theatre companies?

04 Name three different jobs Eastman held in the theatre.

05 What did Eastman win an Emmy Award for, and why would that program have mattered to Deaf viewers?

06 The reading says Eastman's work created opportunities for Deaf people and exposed hearing people to the Deaf experience. Using two things he built or wrote, explain how.

09 WHERE THIS INFORMATION COMES FROM

Deaf Network	deafnetwork.com
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Deaf People	deafpeople.com
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Encyclopedia Britannica	britannica.com
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National Theatre of the Deaf	ntd.org
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Rochester Institute of Technology	rit.edu
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