



INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE

CHRISTEL DEHAAN

STUDENT MATINEE PROGRAM

at the Indiana Repertory Theatre



STUDY GUIDE FOR

THE FOLKS AT HOME

BY R. ERIC THOMAS

February 20 - March 16, 2024 | OneAmerica Mainstage



THE FOLKS AT HOME

BY R. ERIC THOMAS



Content Spotlight

The Folks at Home contains:

Mild profanity; discussions of financial hardship; race, gender, and age are themes of the play.

Roger and Brandon, an interracial couple living in South Baltimore, are doing the very best they can to live their version of the American dream: love, house, solid jobs. Except Roger's been laid off for months, their mortgage is late...and there might be a ghost in the attic. And that was before both sets of parents decided to move in! **This contemporary riff on the beloved family sitcoms of the 70s is a complex yet heartwarming portrait of modern life.**

Recommended for students in grades 6-12

The performance will last approximately 2 hours, including one intermission.

INSIDE

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THE STORY OF *THE FOLKS AT HOME*



The Folks at Home takes place in a small South Baltimore row house. It is the home of Roger, who is Black, and Brandon, who is white. They have concerns that are typical of many young married couples. Finances are tight. The furnace is broken. Taxes are high. The mortgage is late. Roger has been laid off from his job. Brandon feels that they should sell the house, but Roger wants to keep it. Oh, and they may or may not have a ghost.

While Brandon is at work, Roger's parents, Pamela and Vernon, arrive. Vernon has survived his bout with cancer, but in the process he has lost his job. And now he and Pamela are losing their house because they can't meet their mortgage payments. Their plan is to move in with Brandon and Roger.

Brandon's mother, Maureen, arrives with suitcases. Her landlord has evicted her, and Brandon has told her that she can move in with them—without telling Roger. Since Pamela and Vernon have already taken the guest room in the basement, Maureen moves into the room in the attic.

Two weeks later, the parents are settled into the crowded house. Pamela and Vernon are

surprised to learn that Roger and Brandon, with their financial issues, have a maid. Her name is Alice, and they won her services for a year in a raffle. Alice is a dog reiki practitioner who is considering becoming a life coach. Meanwhile, Maureen is trying to get a job as a greeter at Walmart.

Brandon is frustrated that Roger hasn't found a job. Roger is frustrated that he can't figure out what he wants to do. Both are feeling crowded by the extra people living in the house. During an argument, Roger walks out.

Brandon's pregnant sister, Brittany, drops in and offers Brandon some outside perspective. She lets him know that if things go bad between him and Roger, he has a place to stay with her. After being gone for several days, Roger stops by to pick up a change of clothes for a job interview.

Time continues to move forward. Roger finds a job—not one he particularly likes, but one that will do for now. Brandon makes a few repairs around the house. Issues are raised, challenges are faced, decisions are made, and laughs are shared.

WATCHING TOGETHER

BY R. ERIC THOMAS, PLAYWRIGHT



On the evening of May 14, 1992, my mother and I were at Security Square Mall in my home town of Baltimore. This was a problem because May 14 was a Thursday and that meant Must-See TV. On this particular Thursday, *A Different World's* Whitley (Jasmine Guy) was to marry Byron (Joe Morton) even though she was supposed to be with Dwayne Wayne (Kadeem Hardison). It was an event that rivaled the moon landing in importance—and I will defend that point in a court of law. At the mall, we passed by the Baltimore Gas & Electric store, where a bank of TVs in the front window was playing the show. A crowd had gathered, and we joined them. On TV, a minister began the ceremony, and then Dwayne Wayne burst into the wedding, confessing his

love! The crowd at the mall screamed! Dwayne cried, “Please, baby, please!” And then ... the manager of the store turned the TVs off because they were 5 minutes to closing.

Well, we just about rioted. I haven’t paid my electric bill since, out of protest. Got a solar roof for spite.

I was 11 and that was the first time I’d experienced TV as a communal event. What I began to piece together was that these characters and the emotions they provoked were creating a shared vocabulary in tens of millions of homes every night. I later learned that the vocabulary has a name—monoculture—and that we are probably past the age when things like that happen. We are almost never watching the same thing at the same time anymore.

The question that I often ponder about TV from the age of monoculture is this: Did we identify with Whitley and Dwayne, et al., because the TV screen acts as an imperfect mirror in a society determined to erase us? Or was it because art has the power to translate the ineffable? Honestly, I think it's both (and as a writer I'm contractually obligated to do so). Even if you didn't watch *A Different World*, we're all attuned to the rhythms, tropes, and archetypes that made up the TV landscape. This play is animated by the echoes of those archetypes, as well as another monocultural idea: the American Dream.

I wanted to dig into the place where sitcom possibilities don't match up with lived realities. Where the options are few and the math in the budget ain't mathing right. What then? How do these characters find joy, hope, and their own dreams?

The people in this play are struggling against a feeling of invisibility in America. It's connected to what they do for money, how they see themselves reflected in culture, and their proximity to the dream. But it's answered, I hope, by what waits for them at home.

The beauty and the magic of theatre, in an age when so often we're not watching the same thing, is that we don't have to be content to search for our reflections in the mirror of the screen. We get to be in the room with these people and each other. Together.



R. ERIC THOMAS | PLAYWRIGHT

Playwright: *Mrs. Harrison* (produced by the IRT in 2021), *Safe Space*, *Backing Track*, *Merland*, *The Ever Present*, *Human Resources*, and *Always the Bridesmaid*. Author: *Here for It, or How to Save Your Soul in America*; a biography of Rep. Maxine Waters, *Reclaiming Her Time*, written with Helena Andrews Dyer. Television: AppleTV+'s *Dickinson*, FX's *Better Things*. For four years he was a senior staff writer for *Elle.com*. He won the 2016 Barrymore Award for Best New Play (*Time Is on Our Side*) and the 2018 Dramatists Guild Lanford Wilson Award. He has been published multiple times in the *New York Times*, *TIME*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and others.

TV IN THE PLAY

The Folks at Home is inspired by and reminiscent of vintage family sitcoms. The play features a variety of television references.

BET Founded in 1980, Black Entertainment Television (BET) is a basic cable channel targeting African American audiences. Its spin-off channels include BET Her, BET Jams, BET Hip-Hop, and BET Gospel, as well as a streaming service, BET+. BET offers more than 100 original series in all genres, including news, sports, music, comedy, and drama, as well as specials.



DAHANN CARROLL Diahann Carroll (1935–2019) was the first African American to win the Tony Award for Best Actress in a Musical for her performance in 1962's *No Strings*, written expressly for her by Richard Rodgers. She played the title role in the TV series *Julia* from 1968 to 1971, receiving a Golden Globe Award; the series was the first to star a Black woman. She was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress for her role in 1974's *Claudine*. On *Dynasty*, she played Dominique Devereaux from 1984 to 1987. She is also known for her roles in *Naked City*, *A Different World*, and *Grey's Anatomy*, receiving a total of five Emmy nominations.

DYNASTY *Dynasty* was a prime time television soap opera that aired on ABC from 1981 to 1989. The series, produced by Aaron Spelling, revolved around the Carringtons, a wealthy family residing in Denver, Colorado. It starred John Forsythe as oil magnate Blake Carrington, Linda Evans as his new wife, Krystle, and Joan Collins as his former wife, Alexis. *Dynasty* was a top-ten rated show for six of its nine seasons, and was number one in the 1984-1985 season.

FALCON CREST *Falcon Crest* was a prime time television soap opera created by Earl Hamner Jr. that aired for nine seasons on CBS from 1981 to 1990. The series revolves around the feuding factions of the wealthy Gioberti-Channing family in the California wine industry. It was set in the fictitious Tuscany Valley, located northeast of San Francisco and modeled after the real Napa Valley.

FAMILY MATTERS *Family Matters* was a television sitcom that ran from 1989 to 1997. The series revolved around the Winslow family, a middle-class Black family living in Chicago. The show's breakout character (and eventually the main character) turned out to be the Winslows' nerdy young neighbor Steve Urkel, played by Jaleel White. Running for nine seasons, *Family Matters* became the second-longest-running live action sitcom with a predominantly African American cast, behind only *The Jeffersons* (11 seasons).



GOOD TIMES *Good Times* was a television sitcom that aired on CBS from 1974 to 1979. It was television's first African American two-parent family sitcom. *Good Times* was a spin-off of *Maude*, which itself was a spin-off of *All in the Family*. In the series, Florida and James Evans and their three children live in a public housing project in a poor, Black neighborhood in inner-city Chicago.



THE JEFFERSONS *The Jeffersons* was a CBS situation comedy that ran 11 seasons from 1975 to 1985, making it one of the longest-running sitcoms in history. A spin-off of *All in the Family*, and like that show developed by Norman Lear, *The Jeffersons* focused on George and Louise (Weezy) Jefferson, a prosperous Black couple who move from Queens to an Upper East Side Manhattan high-rise due to the success of George's chain of seven dry-cleaning stores. Their neighbors include Tom and Helen Willis, an interracial couple—the first to be prominently featured in a sitcom—whose daughter married the Jeffersons' son in the second season. The show also featured the building's doorman, who always stalled at the Jeffersons' door with his hand out waiting for a tip. Although primarily a comedy, episodes occasionally focused on serious issues such as alcoholism, racism, suicide, gun control, being transgender, the KKK, and adult illiteracy.



MORTICIA ADDAMS Morticia Addams (née Frump) is a fictional character who first appeared in the *Addams Family* cartoon series created in 1933 by Charles Addams (1912-1988). She is the family's stern, aloof, yet loving matriarch. She has been played by Carolyn Jones in the television series *The Addams Family* (1964-1966), Anjelica Huston in the feature films *The Addams Family* (1991) and *Addams Family Values* (1993), and Catherine Zeta-Jones in the streaming television series *Wednesday* (2022).



ROSEANNE *Roseanne* was a television sitcom that starred Roseanne Barr and aired on ABC from 1988 to 1997. The series reached No. 1 in the Nielsen ratings in its second season and remained in the top four for six of its nine seasons. The series was centered on the Conners, a working-class family struggling to get by on a limited household income in fictional Lanford, Illinois, a small town near Chicago. Many critics considered the show notable as one of the first sitcoms to realistically portray a blue-collar American family with two parents working outside the home, as well as lead characters who were noticeably overweight without their weight being a major target of jokes. Establishing shots were photographed in Evansville, Indiana, the hometown of creator & first-season producer Matt Williams. A spin-off continuation series called *The Conners* (with the original cast minus Roseanne Barr) has been running since 2018.

TV ONE Launched in 2004 and headquartered in Silver Spring, Maryland, 35 miles southwest of Baltimore, TV One targets African American adults with original lifestyle and entertainment-oriented series, documentaries, films, music, and reruns of sitcoms from the 1970s through the 2000s.

WALKER, TEXAS RANGER *Walker, Texas Ranger* was an action crime television series inspired by the 1983 film *Lone Wolf McQuade*. Both the film and the series starred Chuck Norris as a member of the Texas Rangers, a statewide investigative agency. The show aired on CBS from 1993 to 2001 and continues to be popular in syndication. The series was noted for its moralistic tone and its prominent use of martial arts.

BALTIMORE

The Folks at Home was commissioned by Baltimore Center Stage, where it premiered in 2022. The play features many references to Baltimore locations and institutions.

ABRAMS REALTY There is an Abrams Development Group in Baltimore that handles commercial projects, but an Abrams Realty that deals with residential properties would appear to be fictional.

CANTON Canton is a historic waterfront neighborhood located along Baltimore's outer harbor in the southeastern section of the city, roughly two miles east of downtown. It is considered one of Baltimore's trendiest and most vibrant neighborhoods, known for its family-friendly community, urban lifestyle, inclusivity, and hot social scene.

DELMARVA Delmarva is the large peninsula (70 miles wide by 170 miles long) occupied by the state of Delaware & the eastern quarter of Maryland, located across the Chesapeake Bay from Baltimore.



FAIDLEY'S Founded in 1886, Faidley Seafood is still headquartered in its original location in Baltimore's Lexington Market. The restaurant's much-loved crabcakes were featured on Adam Richman's *Best Sandwich in America* on the Travel Channel in 2012, and Nancy Faidley Devine and her family—and their crabcakes—were featured on Andrew Zimmern's *Family Dinner* on Magnolia in March 2023.

GIANT FOOD There are 15 Giant Food stores in the Baltimore area. The company was founded in 1930 and is headquartered in Landover, Maryland, 40 miles south of Baltimore. The chain has 165 stores located in Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

HUNT VALLEY Hunt Valley, Maryland, is located 15 miles north of Baltimore.

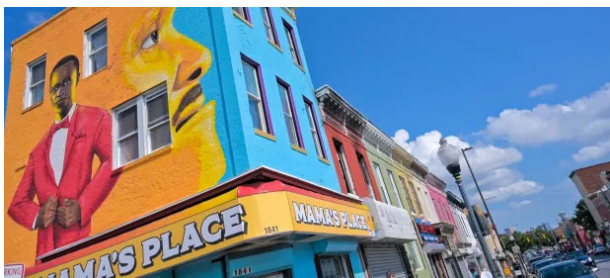
LANSDOWNE Lansdowne, Maryland, is a suburb located 7 miles southwest of downtown Baltimore. It has a population of 8,400.

MONDAWMIN Mondawmin Mall is a three-level shopping mall located about 3 ½ miles northwest of downtown Baltimore.

PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE Pennsylvania Avenue is the principal thoroughfare of Upton.

REC PIER CHOP HOUSE Rec Pier Chop House is located at the Sagamore Pendry Hotel in Fell's Point, just east of downtown Baltimore. It is one of 15 East Coast restaurants co-owned by chef and restaurateur Andrew Carmellini, who has won the James Beard Award and a Michelin star. The restaurant offers a rustic Italian viewpoint on steaks and chops.

SUIT UP As a retail store in Baltimore, this name seems to be fictional. (The name "Suit Up" is often used for programs designed to give college students opportunities to purchase business clothes at a discount.)



UPTON Upton is a neighborhood within the Old West Baltimore Historic District, located a mile and a half west of downtown Baltimore. Upton has historically been one of the economic, political, and cultural centers of the city's Black community. At the turn of the 20th century, Upton was one of the most affluent African American neighborhoods in the United States. Today it is the focus of the city's urban revitalization programs.

LANGSTON HUGHES, POET

Langston Hughes (1901–1967) was a poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist, one of the earliest innovators of the literary art form called jazz poetry. Born in Joplin, Missouri, Hughes is best known as a leader of the Harlem Renaissance. He famously wrote about the period when “the Negro was in vogue,” which was later paraphrased as “when Harlem was in vogue.”



“MOTHER TO SON”

by Langston Hughes

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.
But all the time
I've been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

“DREAMS”

by Langston Hughes

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

NIKKI GIOVANNI, POET

Nikki Giovanni (born 1943) is one of the best-known African American poets. Her work includes poetry anthologies, poetry recordings, and nonfiction essays covering topics from race and social issues to children's literature. She has won numerous awards, including the Langston Hughes Medal. She holds 27 honorary degrees and has been honored with the NAACP Image Award seven times.

"BLK HISTORY MONTH"

by Nikki Giovanni

If Black History Month is not
viable then wind does not
carry the seeds and drop them
on fertile ground
rain does not
dampen the land
and encourage the seeds
to root
sun does not
warm the earth
and kiss the seedlings
and tell them plain:
You're As Good As Anybody Else
You've Got A Place Here, Too



"A POEM ON THE ASSASSINATION OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY"

by Nikki Giovanni

Trees are never felled . . . in summer . . . Not when the fruit . . .
is yet to be borne . . . Never before the promise . . . is fulfilled . . .
Not when their cooling shade . . . has yet to comfort . . .

Yet there are those . . . unheeding of nature . . . indifferent to
ecology . . . ignorant of need . . . who . . . with ax and sharpened
saw . . . would . . . in boots . . . step forth damaging . . .

Not the tree . . . for it falls . . . But those who would . . . in
summer's heat . . . or winter's cold . . . contemplate . . . the
beauty . . .

JAMES BALDWIN, POET

James Baldwin (1924-1987) garnered acclaim for his essays, novels, plays, and poems. His work fictionalizes fundamental personal questions and dilemmas amid complex social and psychological pressures. Themes of masculinity, sexuality, race, and class intertwine to create intricate narratives that run parallel with the struggle for Civil Rights and gay rights in America.



“SOME DAYS”

by James Baldwin

Some days worry
some days glad
some days
more than make you mad.
Some days,
some days, more than shine:
when you see what's coming
on down the line!

Some days you say,
oh, not me never—!
Some days you say
bless God forever.
Some days, you say,
curse God, and die
and the day comes when you
wrestle
with that lie.

Some days tussle
then some days groan
and some days
don't even leave a bone.
Some days you hassle
all alone.

I don't know, sister,
what I'm saying,
nor do no man,
if he don't be praying.
I know that love is the only answer
and the tight-rope lover
the only dancer.

When the lover come off the rope today,
the net which holds him is how we pray,
and not to God's unknown,
but to each other—:
the falling mortal is our brother!

Some days leave
some days grieve
some days you almost
don't believe.
Some days believe you,
some days don't,
some days believe you
and you won't.
Some days worry
some days mad
some days more than make
you glad.
Some days, some days,
more than shine,
witnesses,
coming on down the line!

IT GETS BETTER



Scan here for more information about the It Gets Better Project!

The It Gets Better Project is an Internet-based not-for-profit organization with a mission to uplift, empower, and connect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) youth around the globe. It was founded by gay activist, author, media pundit, and journalist Dan Savage and his husband Terry Miller in 2010, in response to the suicides of teenagers who were bullied because they were gay or because their peers suspected that they were gay. Reflecting on Billy Lucas's suicide in his Savage Love column, Savage wrote, "I wish I could have talked to this kid for five minutes. I wish I could have told Billy that it gets better. I wish I could have told him that, however bad things were, however isolated and alone he was, it gets better."

The organization's goal is to prevent suicide by having gay adults convey the message that gay teens' lives will improve. The project includes more than 70,000 entries from people of all sexual orientations, including many celebrities; the videos have received more than 50 million views. President Barack Obama lent his voice to the project and its anti-bullying message during its infancy, saying in part, "We've got to dispel this myth that bullying is just a normal rite of passage; that it's just some inevitable part of growing up. It's not. We have an obligation to ensure that our schools are safe for all of our kids. And for every young person out there, you need to know that if you're in trouble, there are caring adults who can help."

INDIANA ACADEMIC STANDARDS ALIGNMENT GUIDE

Seeing *The Folks at Home* at the Indiana Repertory Theatre is a great way to help make connections for students and facilitate their understanding of a text. Some key academic standards to consider on your trip would be:

READING LITERATURE

- RL.1 Read a variety of literature within a range of complexity appropriate for one's grade.
- RL.2 Build comprehension and appreciation of literature by identifying, describing, and making inferences about literary elements and themes.
- RL.3 Build comprehension and appreciation of literature, using knowledge of literary structure, and point of view.
- RL.4 Build comprehension and appreciation of literary elements and themes and analyze how sensory tools impact meaning.

READING—VOCABULARY

- RV.1 Build and apply vocabulary using various strategies and sources.
- RV.2 Use strategies to determine and clarify words and understand their relationship.
- RV.3 Build appreciation and understanding of literature and nonfiction texts by determining or clarifying the meaning of words and their uses.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

- SL.1 Develop and apply effective communication skills through speaking and active listening.
- SL.3 Develop and apply active listening and interpretation skills using various strategies.

MEDIA LITERACY

- ML.1 Develop an understanding of media and the roles and purposes of media.
- ML.2 Recognize the purpose of media and the ways in which media can have influences.

THEATRE CREATING

- TH.Cr1 Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

THEATRE PERFORMING

- TH.Pr.4 Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.

THEATRE RESPONDING

- TH.Re.7 Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- TH.Re.8 Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- TH.Re.9 Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

THEATRE CONNECTING

- TH.Cn.10 Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
- TH.Cn.11 Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.
- Many technical theatre standards.

INDIANA ACADEMIC STANDARDS ALIGNMENT GUIDE CONT.

ETHNIC STUDIES

- ES.1 Cultural Self-Awareness.
- ES.2 Cultural Histories within the United States Context and Abroad.
- ES.3 Contemporary Lived Experiences and Cultural Practices.
- ES.4 Historical and Contemporary Contributions.

LANGUAGE HISTORY

- LH.3 Build understanding of history/social studies texts, using knowledge, structural organization, and author's purpose.

PSYCHOLOGY

- P.7 Students discuss the socio-cultural dimensions of behavior including topics such as conformity, obedience, perception, attitudes, and the influence of the group on the individual.

SOCIOLOGY

- S.2 Students examine the influence of culture on the individual and the way cultural transmission is accomplished. Students study the way culture defines how people in a society behave in relation to groups and to physical objects. They also learn that human behavior is learned within the society. Through the culture, individuals learn the relationships, structures, patterns and processes to be members of the society.
- S.3 Students examine the process by which people develop their human potential and learn culture. Socialization will be considered as a lifelong process of human social experience..
- S.6 Students explore the impacts of social groups on individual and group behavior. They understand that social groups are comprised of people who share some common characteristics, such as common interests, beliefs, behavior, feelings, thoughts and contact with each other.
- S.9 Students analyze a range of social problems in today's world. Social problems result from imbalances within the social system and affect a large number of people in an adverse way.
- S.10 Students examine the role of the individual as a member of the community. They also explore both individual and collective behavior.

UNITED STATES HISTORY

- USH.9 Students examine the political, economic, social, and cultural development of the United States during the period after 9/11.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before Seeing the Play

1. Who is in your immediate family? Who is in your extended family? Who do you live with? What are the different generations of your family? How do these different groups interact in your family? Who among your friends do you consider family? Why?
2. Where do you live? An apartment, house, mobile home, or ... ? How do you feel about your home? Does the space itself mean something to you, or is it just a place? What makes you feel that way? What is your dream home? What would be necessary for you to achieve your dream home?
3. What family sitcoms (past or present) do you and your family watch on TV? How do you relate to these TV families? What have you learned from them? What do you feel they could learn from your family?

After Seeing the Play

1. Why is keeping their house important to Roger? Why is moving from the house important to Brandon? How do these two impulses conflict with each other? What underlying feeling for both men might connect these two ideas?
2. Why does Maureen want to work at Walmart? Besides a job, what does she want to get out of the experience?
3. Discuss the significance of the ghost. Do you believe in ghosts? Do you believe the ghost in the play is real? Why or why not? How much do the various characters in the play believe in the ghost? Why do you suppose the playwright put a ghost in the play?
4. Compare Roger and Brandon's marriage to Pamela and Vernon's marriage. How are the couples different? How are they similar?
5. Compare the play to your favorite sitcom(s). What sitcom elements do you see in the play? How do these "TV" factors enhance or detract from the experience of watching a live play?
6. Compare Roger and his family to Brandon and his family. How are they different? How are they the same? How do the two families interact with each other?
7. Why do you suppose Alice and Brittany are played by the same actor? What do these characters bring to the play? How would it be different without them?
8. Maureen buries St. Joseph statues upside down to help the house sell. Although St. Joseph is a Catholic saint, this practice is not officially endorsed by the Catholic church. It is, however, a popular superstition. Do you believe in superstitions? Which ones do you believe, and which do you ignore? Why?

WRITING PROMPTS

1. Roger and Brandon are in disagreement with other about what to do with their house. Take one of their sides & write a persuasive letter to the other to convince him to understand your side of the argument.
2. Write a short scene in the style of a sitcom based on your family. Give your parent a fun catch phrase or give your sibling a zany problem to deal with.
3. This play takes place in Baltimore in current times. Would the play be different if it were set in another location or a different time period? Rewrite a scene of the play where the action takes place in a different place or time.
4. Suppose that Roger and Brandon found a diary in their attic that was written by the ghost before they died. Who are they? When did they live? What is their connection to the house? Why has the ghost lingered in the house? Write a few diary entries that tell the ghost's story.
5. Write a review of the play. A well-rounded review includes your opinion of the theatrical aspects—scenery, lights, costumes, sound, direction, acting—as well as your impressions of the script and the impact of the story and/or themes and the overall production. What moments made an impression? How do the elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound work with the actors' performances of the text to tell the story? What ideas or themes did the play make you think about? How did it make you feel? Did you notice the reactions of the audience as a whole? Would you recommend this play to others? Why or why not? **To share your reviews with others, send to: education@irtlive.com**



ACTIVITIES



1. Design the floor plan of Roger and Brandon's house. It might be similar to what you saw on stage, or it might be your own vision. Be sure to include the spaces that are not shown on stage. What else is on the first floor? What does the second floor look like? What does the attic look like? Is there a basement? How has an old, historic house been renovated for modern life? What does the outside of the house look like?
2. Get a group of friends together to act out and record your favorite scene from a TV sitcom.
3. Brandon and Roger don't have a car. Does your family have a car? Do a search of your city's public transportation offerings. Do you think you could get around without a car?
4. Poet Langston Hughes is quoted in the play. (*See page 9 of this study guide*). Hughes was a leader of the Harlem Renaissance. Research that period and create a bulletin board display focusing on the people and culture of that era.
5. Write a song that the ghost might sing.
6. Imagine that your family is a TV sitcom. Make a playlist of theme songs for your family's soundtrack.

RESOURCES

Books:

Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda by Becky Albertalli

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe by Benjamin Alire Saenz

Heartstopper: Volume One by Alice Oseman

Juliet Takes a Breath by Gabby Rivera

Everything, Everything by Nicola Yoon

Eleanor & Park by Rainbow Rowell

The Sun Is Also a Star by Nicola Yoon

Jay's Gay Agenda by Jason June

The Inheritance Games by Jennifer Lynn Barnes

Excuse Me While I Ugly Cry by Joya Goffney

Bridge of Clay by Markus Zusak

iAy, Mija! by Christine Suggs

Movies:

The It Gets Better Project, begun in 2010, website with videos

The Jeffersons, 1975-85 TV Series

Dynasty with Diahann Carroll, 1984-87 TV Series

Good Times, 1974-79 TV Series

The Help, PG-13 2011

My Big Fat Greek Wedding, 2002 PG

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, NR 1967

Yours, Mine & Ours, 2005 PG

The Hundred-Foot Journey, 2014 PG

Crazy Rich Asians, 2018 PG-13

Instant Family, 2018 PG-13

Love, Simon, 2018 PG-13

The Prom, 2020 PG-13

Encanto, 2021 PG



GLOSSARY

AC/DC | Refers to the two different types of electrical power, alternate current or direct current. Attention Cessation/Deficit Condition (AC/DC) is very occasionally used as an alternate term for Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD). AC/DC is also the name of an Australian heavy metal band formed in 1973.

The Art of War by Sun Tzu | An ancient Chinese military treatise attributed to the strategist Sun Tzu (c. 544-c.496 BCE). During the twentieth century, readers began to apply its teachings to business, culture, espionage, politics, and sports.

bed rest | A medical treatment in which a person lies in bed for most of the time to try to cure an illness. The practice is still used, although a 1999 systematic review found that bed rest offered no benefits for any of the 17 conditions studied.

black socks with the gold toes | Gold Toe Brands, Inc., is the third-largest United States producer of socks, selling 140 million pairs of socks annually.

blood diamonds | Diamonds mined in a war zone and sold to finance an insurgency, an invading army, terrorism, or a warlord. The term is used to highlight the negative consequences of the diamond trade in certain areas.

Choco Taco | The Choco Taco was an ice cream novelty resembling a taco: a waffle cone disc folded like a taco, vanilla ice cream, fudge, peanuts, and a milk chocolate coating. Klondike discontinued the Choco Taco in July 2022.

Church of God in Christ | The Church of God in Christ (COGIC) is an historically African American Holiness-Pentecostal church.

Bill Clinton | President of the United States from 1993 to 2001, known for his ability to talk with anyone.

Daddy Warbucks | Oliver “Daddy” Warbucks is a fictional millionaire from the comic strip Little Orphan Annie. For much of the 20th century, the name Daddy Warbucks was used as a metonym for any man of great wealth.

Diana, Princess of Wales | First wife of King Charles III and mother of Princes William and Harry. She was known for her philanthropy and glamor.

Celine Dion | Canadian singer known for her power ballads.

dog reiki | Reiki is a Japanese form of energy healing, a type of alternative medicine. According to reiki practitioners, a “universal energy” (*qi*—“chi”) is transferred through the palms of the practitioner to the patient, to encourage emotional or physical healing. There are many practitioners of animal reiki. Clinical research does not show reiki to be effective as a treatment for any medical condition; scholarly texts and academic journals often use reiki as an example of pseudoscience.

EBT | Electronic benefit transfer (EBT) allows welfare departments to issue benefits via a magnetically encoded payment card.

GLOSSARY CONT.

eight ball | In the drug world, the term eight ball refers to one-eighth of an ounce of cocaine.

Ellen | A daytime TV talk show hosted by Ellen DeGeneres that ran from 2003 to 2022.

field visits | During a field visit, a foster parenting caseworker will tour the home, checking for cleanliness, safety features, and appropriate sleeping arrangements; assess yards and play spaces for safety and accessibility; discuss family routines, values, and parenting practices; and observe family interactions and communication.

Hamburglar | A character created by the McDonald's restaurant chain who is always trying to steal hamburgers.

hang your shingle | To hang one's shingle is to open an office, especially a professional practice. This American colloquialism dates from the first half of the 1800s, when lawyers, doctors, and other business offices used shingles for signboards.

"Hell is other people" | Quoted from *No Exit*, an existentialist play by French philosopher and playwright Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). Premiered in 1944, the play depicts three deceased characters who are locked in a room together for eternity.

The Help | A 2011 film based on Kathryn Stockett's 2009 novel of the same name. Set in 1963, the film and novel recount the story of a young white woman and aspiring journalist and her relationship with two Black maids.

Inception | A 2010 science fiction action film written and directed by Christopher Nolan. The film won an Academy Award for its special effects, which include a city that melts like a glacier and a street in Paris that folds over onto itself.

Jakarta | The capital of Indonesia. It is the largest metropolis in Southeast Asia.

Thomas Jefferson | Third President of the United States. Although he condemned the slave trade in his initial draft of the Declaration of Independence and signed the Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves in 1807, he was a lifelong slave owner. According to scholarly consensus (and DNA testing), he fathered at least six children with Sally Hemings, one of his enslaved women on his property.

Jude Law | Critically acclaimed English actor who is known for his versatility in movie genres and his good looks.

life coaching | The process of helping people identify and achieve personal goals through developing skills and attitudes that lead to self-empowerment.

mace | The brand name of an early type of aerosol self-defense spray invented in the 1960s. The first commercial product of its type, its popularity led to the name "mace" being commonly used for other defense sprays or pepper sprays.

mortgage | An agreement between you and a lender that allows you to borrow money to purchase a home and gives the lender the right to take your property if you fail to repay the money you've borrowed.

Muslim | Muslims are people who adhere to Islam, a monotheistic religion belonging to the Abrahamic tradition. They consider the Quran, the foundational religious text of Islam, to be the verbatim word of the God of Abraham (or Allah) as it was revealed to Muhammad (c. 570-632 CE), the main Islamic prophet. Judaism and Christianity are regarded by Muslims as earlier versions of Islam. Muslims comprise around 25% of the world's total population.

Neanderthal | Neanderthals were an extinct species or subspecies of archaic humans who lived in Eurasia until about 40,000 years ago.

Orion | A constellation visible during winter in the northern celestial hemisphere. It is named for a hunter in Greek mythology. Various clusters of stars in the constellation are said to represent Orion's belt, sword, club, and shield.

Pagliacci (*literal translation: Clowns*) | An Italian opera premiered in 1892 with music and libretto by Ruggero Leoncavallo. The opera tells a tale of marital infidelity and murder in a commedia dell'arte theatrical company.

paralegal | A professional who performs tasks that require knowledge of legal concepts but not the full expertise of a lawyer with a license to practice law.

Putting on airs | Describing someone who acts superior or as if they are more important than others.

reconciliation | In real estate, the process of appraising the value of a home through several valuation and comparison methods.

repass | A repass or repast is a meal for family and friends after a funeral.

Rite Aid | Rite Aid Corporation is a drugstore chain founded in 1962, based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It is the third-largest drugstore chain in the United States, with more than 2,000 stores.

sharecroppers | People (often Black people) who worked and lived on land they did not own for a share in the profits of the crops they grew. White land owners often abused the system, creating unfair practices to keep Black farmers in debt.

sheisty | Sheisty is slang, defined by Urban Dictionary as "shady or sneaky in nature."

Sometimes the mountain doesn't come to Muhammad. Sometimes Muhammad has to go to the mountain. | This expression has been traced back to Francis Bacon's Essays (c1625). Bacon may or may not have invented this tale himself; there is no source for it in the Quran or any other Islamic teachings.

St. Joseph | In the Catholic tradition, St. Joseph, the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus, is known to be the patron saint of home and family. Over the years, this role has evolved to also include home sales and real estate.

surf and turf | A menu option that includes both seafood and steak.

GLOSSARY CONT.

swingers | Couples who engage in group sex or the swapping of sexual partners.

vertigo | Vertigo is a medical condition in which a person has the sensation of movement or spinning when they are not moving.

Vitamix | Vitamix blenders have consistently been highly ranked. They range in price from \$350 to \$650.

whiskey tango foxtrot | Whiskey, Tango, and Foxtrot are the words for the letters W, T, and F in the NATO phonetic alphabet.

“Yes we can” | “Yes We Can” was a slogan used by the Barack Obama presidential campaign in 2008.

your stomach is high | It is a popular myth that you can tell a baby’s gender by whether the mother is carrying high or low. If she is carrying low, some think that she is having a boy. Carrying high means that it’s a girl. (In the play, Vernon has it backwards.) The truth is, how a pregnant mother carries depends on her body type and personal situation.



THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE



You, the audience, are one of the most important parts of any performance. Experiencing the theatre is a group activity shared not only with the actors, but also with the people sitting around you. Your attention and participation help the actors perform better, and allow the rest of the audience to enjoy the show. Here are a few simple tips to help make each theatre experience enjoyable for everyone:

Please leave mobile phones, cameras, and other electronic devices at home or switch them off in your bag. While texting might seem private, the light and motion can be distracting for those nearby and on stage. Please wait to text until intermission or after the show.

For student matinees, you are welcome to enjoy food and drinks in the lobby areas. Concessions are sold during intermission.

When you notice the house lights dimming and going out, it is a gentle signal to settle into your seats before the start of the play.

While the play unfolds, please refrain from chatting with your neighbors. Listen closely to the dialogue and sound effects, and look at the scenery, lights, and costumes. Your focus on the play helps ensure an uninterrupted experience for both the audience and the actors.

For the safety of everyone in the room, please remain in your seat and keep all hands, feet, and other items to yourself and away from the actors onstage or in the aisles.

To minimize disruptions, please remind yourself to use the restroom before the show. You don't want to miss any exciting moments!

We encourage you to express your emotions during the play: laugh, cry, sigh, gasp! The more emotionally involved you are, the more you will enjoy the play.

Lastly, please remain at your seat and join in the applause during curtain call. This is a moment to show your appreciation for the performance, and it allows the actors a chance to express their gratitude for your attention.

Thank you for being part of our theatre community, and enjoy the show!

STUDENT MATINEE ARRIVAL & PARKING INFORMATION

ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

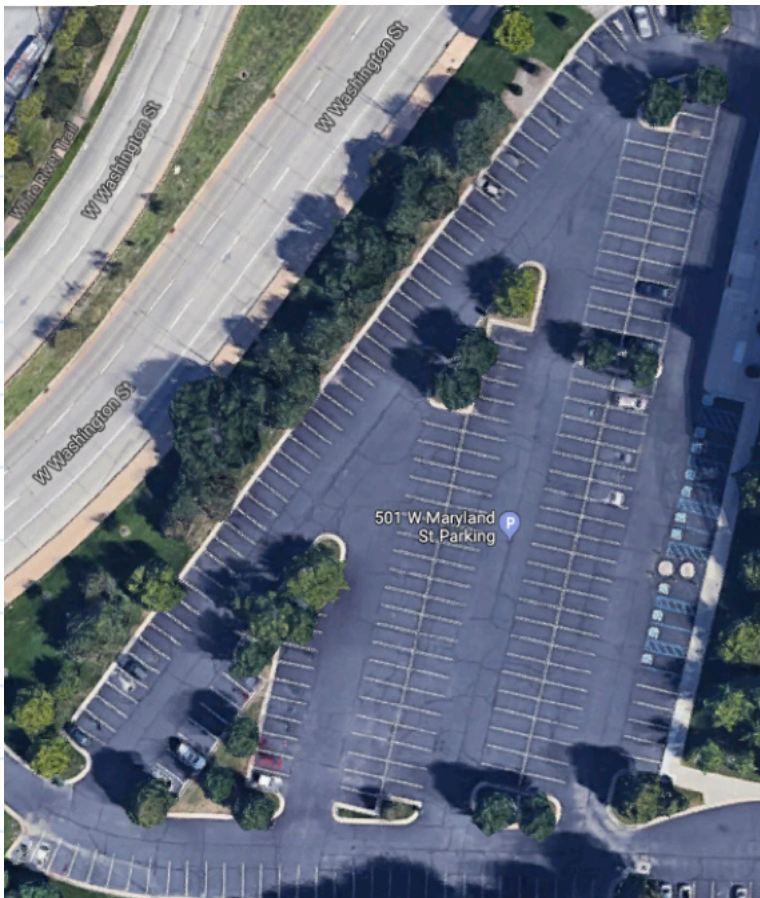
- IRT is located one-half block west of Circle Centre Mall on Washington Street, between northbound Illinois Street and southbound Capitol Avenue
- The physical address of IRT is 140 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204.
- Buses should unload and load directly in front of the theatre. (Do not block the entrance to Embassy Suites garage.) Please plan to arrive 20-30 minutes before your performance is scheduled to begin.
- You will be greeted at the curb by an IRT Staff Member and directed to the correct entrance.
- For shows on the IRT Upperstage, students and teachers will take the stairs to the 4th floor.
- The teacher named on the reservation should check in with the IRT Education staff member stationed in the lobby.
- Your group will be ushered to your assigned seats.
- Students and chaperones should follow instructions of all IRT Staff for your safety.

LATE ARRIVAL

- If you believe that you are going to be late, please contact the IRT Main Office at 317.635.5277. Provide the receptionist with a phone number and the name of the school so that Education staff may be in contact with you.
- You can contact IRT Education (education@irtlive.com) with non-emergency information on the day of the show.

PARKING

- Buses may park for free at Victory Field unless they are having an event - we will inform you if that is the case. The House Manager will give you a parking pass for each bus when you arrive. It should be displayed in the windshield.
- Continue east on Washington Street past the JW Marriott and turn left across Maryland Street into the Victory Field lot.
- **PLEASE NOTE that Victory Field no longer has public restroom spaces available. We apologize for any inconvenience.**
- See the map on the next page for full details.
- Additional parking options are located on the next page.
- **While IRT will make every effort to communicate parking information in advance, it is the responsibility of schools and drivers to make alternate arrangements.**



VICTORY FIELD PARKING MAP

Victory Field parking lot is located on the West side of the stadium. From IRT, continue west on Washington Street past the JW Marriott. Turn left on Schumacher Way, and cross Maryland Street into the Victory Field lot.

Some buses may need to double park in the lot. The image is of the Victory Field parking lot.

PLEASE NOTE that Victory Field no longer has public restrooms available to drivers. This is a change from years past. We apologize for any inconvenience.

Thank you,
Indianapolis Indians and
Indiana Repertory Theatre

ADDITIONAL PARKING OPTIONS

In the event that Victory Field is unavailable for free parking, here are some other potential options. **While IRT will make every effort to communicate parking info in advance, it is the responsibility of schools and drivers to make alternate arrangements.**

White River State Park: Paid surface parking is located on Washington Street, across from Victory Field. May require advance notice; event rates may apply. *(Approximately .6 mi from IRT.)*



Indianapolis Zoo: Paid parking is available on Washington Street, west of White River State Park. First come, first served. *(Approximately 1.2 mi from IRT.)*



Downtown Indy: Explore all available parking options at the Downtown Indy website. Buses are welcome to utilize street parking if all used spaces are paid.

CAR AND VAN PARKING OPTIONS

CIRCLE CENTRE MALL PARKING

Ask a Theatre employee for a voucher that will reduce your parking fee by \$6 This voucher is available at select garages when attending an IRT show. This is only valid during the IRT's season.

Addresses for the Circle Centre Mall Garages:

RED GARAGE | 28 West Washington Street or 48 West Maryland Street

BLUE GARAGE | 26 West Georgia Street

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

IndyGo's Red Line, the city's rapid bus transit system, connects Broad Ripple and Fountain Square to the heart of downtown and other neighborhoods in Indianapolis. With buses running every 10-20 minutes and a stop directly next to the IRT on Capitol Avenue, the Red Line provides another convenient option for your transportation to the Theatre.

To plan your trip or for more information about the Red Line and other nearby routes, visit IndyGo.net or call IndyGo Customer Service at 317-635-3344.