



INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE

**CHRISTEL DEHAAN**

STUDENT MATINEE PROGRAM

at the Indiana Repertory Theatre



STUDY GUIDE FOR  
*KING JAMES*

BY RAJIV JOSEPH, DIRECTED BY JAMIL JUDE

PRESENTED BY KEY BANK

January 14 - February 9, 2025 | Janet Allen Stage



# KING JAMES

by Rajiv Joseph, directed by Jamil Jude



**King James contains:**

Contains frequent profanity and depictions of alcohol consumption, heated arguments; includes references to racism.

During LeBron James’s rookie season in Cleveland, two young men—one Black, one white—meet and bond over their love for the Cavaliers. Over the next twelve years, their passion for basketball never wavers, even as their lives keep moving in different directions. **A warm, surprising, touching comedy about friendship, loyalty, loss, and the game.**

**Recommended for students in grades 8-12**

*The performance will last approximately 2 hours and 25 minutes, including a 15 minute intermission.*

**For more information, contact:**

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## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

### GOING TO THE THEATRE



**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 after the show.

For student matinees, you are welcome to enjoy food and drinks in the lobby areas. There will be concessions sold for \$1 apiece in the lobby at 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 or at intermission. 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!**

# PLANNING YOUR VISIT

## STUDENT MATINEE ARRIVAL & PARKING INFORMATION

### ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

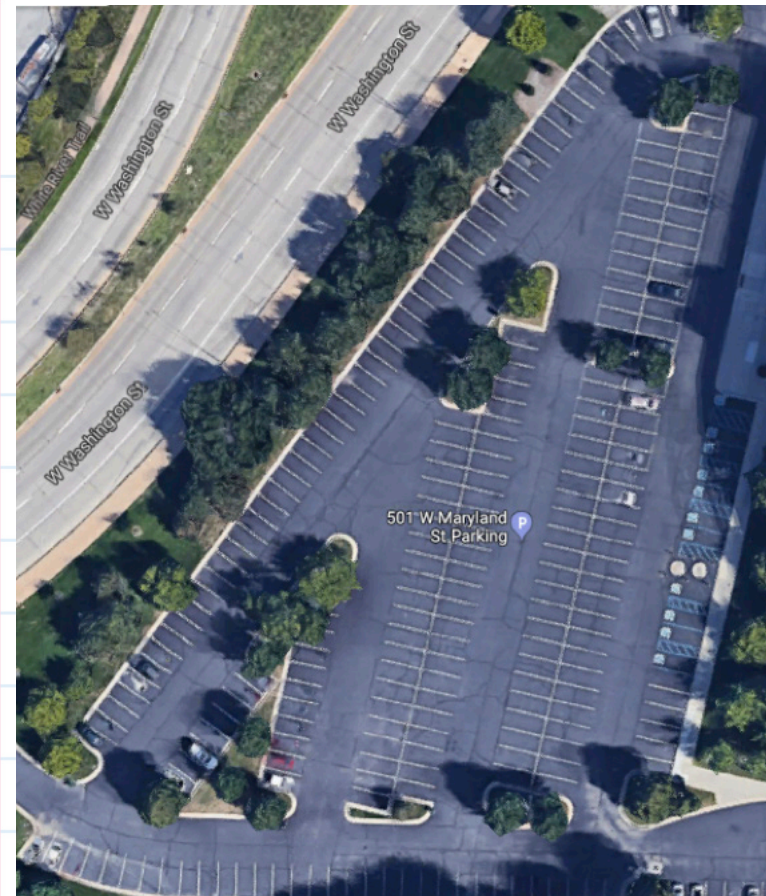
- IRT is located one-half block west of Circle Centre Mall on Washington Street, between northbound Illinois Street and southbound Capitol Avenue
- The physical address of IRT is 140 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204.
- Groups should unload and load directly in front of the Theatre. (Do 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 Janet Allen Stage, 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 House Management at 317.635.5277. Provide 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

Ask a Theatre employee for a voucher that will reduce your parking fee to \$10. This voucher is available at Court Street Garage when attending an IRT show. This is only valid during the IRT's season.

**Address for the Court Street Garage:** 110 West Washington 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.

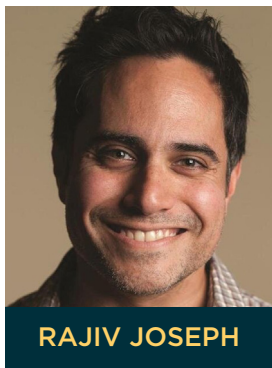
**To plan your trip or for more information about the Red Line and other nearby routes, visit [IndyGo.net](http://IndyGo.net) or call IndyGo Customer Service at 317-635-3344.**

# INDIANA STATE STANDARDS

Seeing a performance of *King James* at 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 can be found by scanning this QR Code:



## PLAYWRIGHT RAJIV JOSEPH



RAJIV JOSEPH

Rajiv Joseph was born and raised in Cleveland, where he attended Cleveland Heights High School. After graduating from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, with a B.A. in creative writing, he served for three years in the Peace Corps in Senegal. He earned an M.F.A. in dramatic writing from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. His first play, *Huck & Holden*, debuted in 2006. The story, about an Indian college student arriving in the United States, is based on his father's experiences as an immigrant. "Being mixed-race has always been a part of my identity," says Joseph. "You are never fully one thing or the other. You always feel a little apart, a little bit of an outsider, even when you are with your own family. That's an interesting perspective for looking at the world." His play *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*, a Pulitzer Prize finalist, played on Broadway in 2010 with Robin Williams in the title role. Joseph wrote for two seasons of the Showtime series *Nurse Jackie*, airing in 2011 and 2012. He won the Obie Award for Best New American Play in 2016 with *Guards at the Taj* and again in 2018 for *Describe the Night*. His other plays include *Animals out of Paper*, *Gruesome Playground Injuries*, *The North Pool*, *The Lake Effect*, *Mr. Wolf*, and *Archduke*. Joseph has been awarded artistic grants from the Whiting Foundation, United States Artists, and the Harold & Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust. He lives in Brooklyn and is a board member of the Lark Play Development Center in Manhattan. He is an ensemble member at the Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago, where *King James* premiered in 2022.

## THE STORY OF *KING JAMES*

*King James* focuses on the friendship between two men over several years, set against the background of NBA superstar LeBron James's career with the Cleveland Cavaliers. The play begins in 2004, during James's rookie season with the Cavaliers. Matt, 21 and white, is working in a wine bar, but he needs money. He has posted an ad to sell the Cavaliers season tickets he and his father have shared for many years. Shawn, 21 and Black, comes to the bar to purchase the tickets. The two haggle about the price, and then the conversation turns to their excitement about James's potential and the importance of the team in each of their lives. Shawn reveals his aspirations to be a writer, and Matt talks about the failed business venture that put him in debt and his dread that he will end up working in his parents' reupholstery store. Eventually Matt sells the tickets to Shawn, but then Shawn realizes he doesn't have anyone to use the second set of tickets with him.

The second scene takes place in 2010, the day after James's announcement that he will leave the Cleveland Cavaliers to play for the Miami Heat. Over the past six years, Shawn and Matt have attended every Cavaliers game together and become best friends. Like thousands of other fans, Shawn is furious about what he considers to be James's betrayal, but Matt claims his allegiance is to the team, not to any one player. When Matt presses Shawn about getting tickets for the next season, Shawn confesses that he is leaving Cleveland to enter a TV writing graduate school program in New York City. Although he won't admit it, Matt is clearly hurt by this move, and the two part awkwardly.

After intermission, the scene moves to Armand's Upholstery and Used Furniture Store, named for a taxidermized armadillo that sits in the window. It is 2014, and Shawn, who finished grad school two years ago, is working for Matt's widowed mother. Matt is a partner in a successful new bar, and because Shawn is in financial straits, Matt has offered to pay for Shawn's plane ticket so he can fly to Los Angeles for meetings with potential producers. Both their phones ding, and they discover that LeBron James has just announced that he is returning to Cleveland.

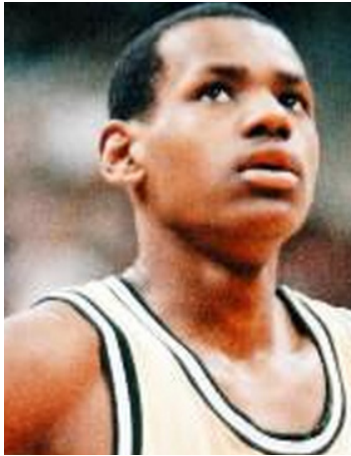
Shawn is ecstatic, but Matt says he doesn't care, stating that James lacks class and that "he should have known his place." Shawn is outraged by this idea, and wonders if Matt also feels that Shawn has a proper "place" where he should limit himself. Matt is angered that Shawn seems to be implying that he is a racist, and Shawn decides it would be better not to accept Matt's help to go to California.

The final scene is set in 2016, three days after the Cavaliers have won the NBA championship over the Golden State Warriors. Matt's bar has gone bust, and for now he is working in his mother's store—which is going out of business because she is getting married. Shawn, now a writer for a hit TV show in Hollywood, arrives unexpectedly. He encourages Matt to go downtown with him for the championship parade, but Matt declines, saying that he did not even watch the final game—a claim that Shawn does not believe. They seem to find a bit of common ground as Shawn relates his story of driving to Oakland to see the final game in person. As the two try to figure out if they can find the way back to their friendship, they crumple a lunch bag and commandeer a trash can for an impromptu game of one-on-one.



Photo by Leah Klafczynski for the Akron Beacon Journal in 2018.

# HIS MAJESTY, **LEBRON JAMES**



LeBron James is widely considered to be one of the greatest, if not the greatest basketball player of all time, earning him the nickname King James. Born in Akron, Ohio, in 1984, he began playing basketball at the age of nine. As a freshman at St. Vincent-St. Mary High School, he averaged 21 points per

game in an undefeated season, and his team won the state's Division III title. The next year, he was the first sophomore ever to be selected as Ohio's Mr. Basketball, and the first sophomore ever selected for the *USA Today* All-USA First Team. The following season, he was the first junior ever named as the Gatorade National Player of the Year, and the first high school basketball player to appear on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. During his senior year, he averaged 31 points per game, had a high game of 52 points, and led his team to their third state championship.

Upon graduating from high school in 2003, James was chosen by the Cleveland Cavaliers as the first pick of the NBA draft. He helped the team to win 18 more games than the previous year, ended the season with a 20-point average, and was the first Cleveland player ever named NBA Rookie of the Year. In his second year, he set a new Cleveland single-game record (56 points) and was named to the All-NBA Team. In 2006, the Cavaliers qualified for the playoffs for the first time since 1998. In 2007, they won their first-ever Eastern Conference championship, but lost in the Finals in a four-game sweep. The following season, James averaged 30 points a game, becoming Cleveland's all-time leading scorer and the NBA's top scorer for the year. In 2009 he was the first Cavalier ever chosen as the NBA's MVP. The next year he received the same award, but James (and the team) did poorly in the playoffs.

In July 2010, on a live ESPN special titled *The Decision*, James announced that he was leaving the Cavaliers to join the Miami Heat. This move, as well as the manner of the announcement itself,

was met with widespread criticism from basketball professionals, analysts, and fans alike. Almost overnight, James went from being one of America's most popular athletes to one of the most disliked, while the Heat came to be seen as the villains of the NBA. Nonetheless, after struggling in the early season, the Heat ended up in the 2011 Finals. James himself played poorly in the Finals, and the team lost in the sixth game. The following two seasons the team won back-to-back championships, and James was named MVP for the third and fourth time.

After one more season with Miami, James returned to Cleveland, a move that was widely praised. In his absence, the Cavaliers had been the lowest ranked team in the NBA. In his first season back, Cleveland made it to the finals, and in 2016 the Cavaliers came back from a 3-1 deficit to win the city's first professional sports title in 52 years. The team made it to the finals the next two years as well, but lost both series.



In 2018 James left Cleveland to join the Los Angeles Lakers. His agent, Rich Paul, told *Sports Illustrated*, "In 2010, when he went to Miami, it was about championships. In 2014, when he went back to Cleveland, it was about delivering on a promise. In 2018, it was just about doing what he wants to do." In his first LA season, James was plagued with injuries, but the following year he won his fourth NBA championship, and his fourth Finals MVP award. In 2022 James became the highest-paid athlete in NBA history. In 2023 he became the all-time leading scorer in NBA history. He played in his fourth Olympics in 2024, winning his third gold



medal. At 40, he is currently the oldest player in the NBA, and he has no plans to stop playing.

James married his high school sweetheart, Savannah Brinson, in 2013, and they have three children. Their eldest son, Bronny, was selected by the Lakers in the 2024 NBA draft, creating the first active father-son player duo in NBA history.

Standing 6 feet 9 inches tall and weighing 250 pounds, James has played the majority of his career as a forward. An athletic and versatile player, he has been compared to Basketball Hall of Famers Oscar Robertson, Magic Johnson, and Michael Jordan. Throughout most of the 2010s, James was annually ranked as the best player in the NBA by ESPN and *Sports Illustrated*. Between 2011 and 2020 he played for three different teams in nine out of ten NBA Finals, winning four titles.

James is widely recognized for empowering players in the NBA corporate structure. Ben Golliver of the *Washington Post* has said that when James moved from the Cavaliers to the Heat in 2010, he "fundamentally flipped the power balance between stars and their organizations," spurring a decade of player movement. Golden State Warriors forward Draymond Green has said, "We've taken control of our destiny. And I think a lot of people hate that.... I think the doors that he's opened for athletes and especially basketball players is his biggest accomplishment."

James is seen by many of his fellow NBA players, the media, and the general public as "the face of the NBA." He has four times been listed by *Time* magazine as one of the 100 most influential people in the world, more than any other professional athlete. He has been awarded 2 NAACP Image Awards. NBA analyst Brian Windhorst has said, "No one has ever had as much hype as James has had to live up to, and James has delivered on every last drop."



# THE TEAMS

Several NBA teams are discussed during the play:

The **BOSTON CELTICS**, founded in 1946 as one of the league's original eight teams, are perhaps the most successful team in NBA history. They hold the records for most championships (18) and most wins. Coach Red Auerbach led the Celtics to eight consecutive championships between 1959 and 1966. Larry Bird, an Indiana State University graduate from French Lick, Indiana, played for the team from 1979 to 1992, leading them to three championships.

The **CHICAGO BULLS** were founded in 1966. They saw their greatest success during the 1990s when they played a major part in popularizing the NBA worldwide, winning six NBA championships between 1991 and 1998 with two three-peats. All six of their championship teams were led by Hall of Famers Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen. Since 1998, the Bulls have failed to regain their former success.



The **CLEVELAND CAVALIERS** began NBA play in 1970. Their first winning season was in 1976. In the early eighties they had a 24-game losing streak, but through the late eighties and most of the nineties, led by such players as Mark Price and Brad Daugherty, they were regular playoff contenders. From 1999 to 2003, however, the team had four losing seasons and no playoff action. During the 2002-03 season, the Cavs bottomed out with a 17-65 record, tied with the Denver Nuggets for the league's worst. Earning the first pick in the NBA draft, they chose high school phenomenon LeBron James and began to rebuild their team around

him. The first part of the 2003-2004 season went poorly; by mid-December, their season record was 6 wins, 19 losses. But from that point forward, they began to win as many games as they lost, and by the beginning of February, at the time of the play's first scene, their record had improved to 17-29. They would finish the season at 35-47, falling just one game short of the playoffs. In 2007, they made it to the NBA Finals but lost to the San Antonio Spurs in a four-game sweep. They won the NBA championship in 2016.

The **DETROIT PISTONS** were founded in 1937 in Fort Wayne, Indiana; in 1957 they moved to Detroit. The team had limited success until 1981, when they drafted Isiah Thomas of Indiana University. They won NBA championships in 1989 and 1990. After Thomas retired in 1994, the team struggled under several different coaches. They began a rebuilding process in 2000, winning the 2004 NBA championship.



The **GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS** began as the Philadelphia Warriors in 1946, winning their first league championships in 1947 and 1956. Moving to San Francisco in 1962, they won again in 1975. They won a fourth championship in 2015, defeating the Cavaliers (against whom they would play a record four straight finals). Despite setting a new NBA record for best regular season at 73-9, they lost to Cleveland in 2016. After winning back-to-back championships over the Cavaliers in 2017 and 2018, they lost the 2019 Finals to the Toronto Raptors. They won a seventh championship in 2022, a number only exceeded by the Lakers and the Celtics. At the time of Scene 4, their arena in Oakland, California, was called the Oracle.

The **LOS ANGELES LAKERS** are one of the most successful teams in the history of the NBA, with 17 championships, second only to the Boston Celtics. In the 1970s, they were the team of Wilt Chamberlain and Kareem Abdul-Jabar. In the 1980s, with Magic Johnson and the coaching of Pat Riley, the team won five championships in nine years. The Lakers struggled through the nineties until they hired Kobe Bryant and Shaquille O'Neal in 1996, winning three consecutive championships between 2000 and 2002.

The **MIAMI HEAT** began play in 1988. Pat Riley became head coach in 1995, building the team. Shaquille O'Neal played with the team from 2004 to 2008, and they won their first NBA title in 2006. In 2010, the Heat formed a superteam with LeBron James, Chris Bosh, and Dwayne Wade, winning back-to-back championships in 2012 and 2013. All three departed by 2016, and the team entered a period of rebuilding, returning to the NBA Finals in 2020 and 2023.

The **NEW YORK KNICKS** were established in 1946 as one of the founding members of the NBA. They have won two NBA championships, in 1970 and 1973. They had mixed success in the 1980s but reached playoff level in the 1990s with center Patrick Ewing and coach Pat Riley. Although they made the Finals in 1994 and 1999, they were unable to win. Since 2000, they have struggled to regain their former success. Since 1968 they have played at Madison Square Garden in Manhattan.

The **SAN ANTONIO SPURS** of Texas have won five NBA championships. As of the 2022-23 season, the Spurs had the highest winning percentage among active NBA franchises. From 1999 to 2017, the Spurs set a record of 18 consecutive 50-win seasons. In the 2018-19 season, the Spurs matched an NBA record for most consecutive playoff appearances with 22.



# THE PLAYERS

Several NBA players are discussed during the play:



**CARMELO ANTHONY** (born 1984) was drafted by the Denver Nuggets in 2003. In March 2004 he shot a season high of 41 points, becoming at 19 the second youngest player in league history to score 40 points in a game—after LeBron James (seven months younger). Anthony was second in the NBA Rookie of the

Year voting, after James. Anthony would go on to play for six teams over 19 seasons with the NBA, retiring in 2022. He was the NBA's top scorer in 2013. He played on the US Olympic basketball team four times, winning three gold medals.



**KOBE BRYANT** (1978–2020) spent his entire 20-year NBA career with the Los Angeles Lakers. Widely regarded as one of the greatest players in the history of the sport, Bryant won five NBA championships and was an 18-time All-Star and the 2008 MVP. He led the NBA in scoring twice and ranks fourth in all-time scoring.



**BRAD DAUGHERTY** (born 1965) played with the Cavaliers from 1986 to 1994. He averaged 19 points per game over eight seasons in the NBA and retired as the Cavaliers all-time leading scorer with 10,389 points—a record broken by LeBron James in 2008. Daugherty's career in the NBA was cut short at the age of 28 because

of recurring back troubles. After his retirement, he became a sportscaster and a NASCAR owner.



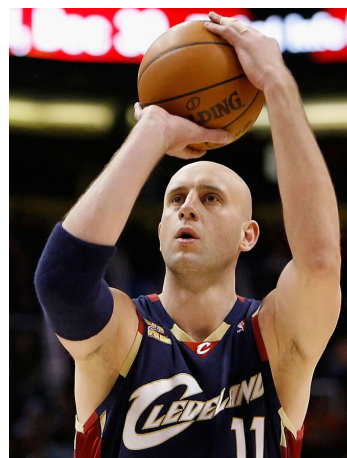
**DRAYMOND GREEN** (born March 1990) has played for the Golden State Warriors since 2012. He is a four-time NBA champion and a two-time Olympic gold medalist. He was considered one of the best passers and defensive players of the 2010s. He has also been criticized for his on-court conduct and

for physically aggressive acts which have been perceived by many as “dirty,” unsporting, and sometimes dangerous. In 2023, he was suspended by the NBA for more than a month.



**ANDRE IGUODALA** (born 1984) started his NBA career in 2004 and played for the Golden State Warriors from 2013 to 2019 and again from 2021 until he retired in 2023. He won four NBA championships with the Warriors and was named the NBA Finals Most Valuable Player (MVP) in 2015. He was a member of the gold-winning U.S.

national team at the 2012 Olympics.



**ZYDRUNAS ILGAUSKAS** (born 1975 in Lithuania), at 7'3" known as Big Z, played center for the Cavaliers from 1997 to 2010. He was a two-time NBA All-Star, known for his accurate jump shot, for his rebounding, and for overcoming difficult injury challenges during his career. He is the Cavaliers' career leader in blocked shots. In 2012,

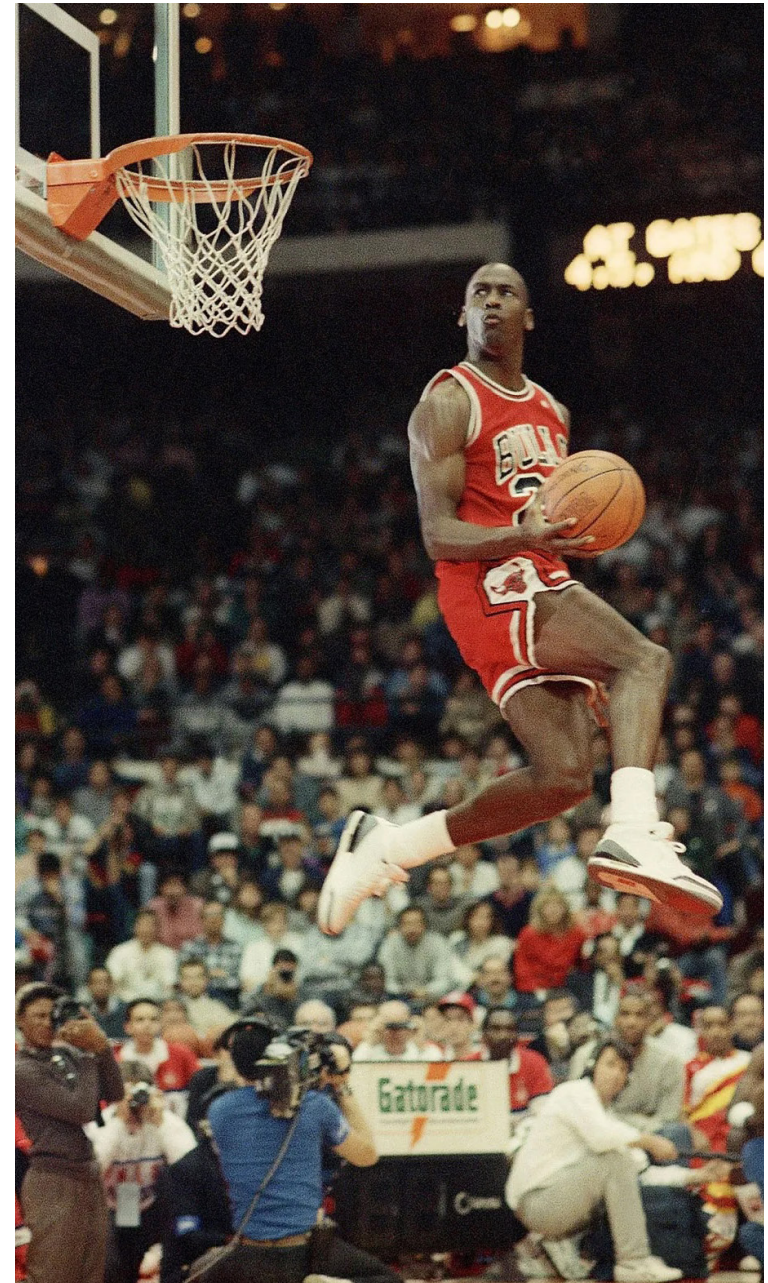
he joined the Cavaliers front office as a special advisor.



**KYRIE IRVING** (born 1992 in Australia) was named Rookie of the Year in 2012, his first season with the Cavaliers. An eight-time All-Star and three-time member of the All-NBA Team, he won an NBA championship with the Cavaliers in 2016, throwing the game-winning three-pointer.

He is widely considered one of the best ball handlers of all time. He currently plays for the Denver Mavericks.

**MICHAEL JORDAN** (born 1963) played 15 NBA seasons between 1984 and 2003. In his early career he quickly emerged as a league star. Shortly after he won his third consecutive NBA championship with the Chicago Bulls in 1993, his father, a former semi-pro baseball player who had dreamed of a baseball career for his son, was murdered. Jordan abruptly quit the Bulls to play Minor League Baseball in the Chicago White Sox organization. After one season, he returned to the Bulls and led the team to three more consecutive championships in 1996, 1997, and 1998, as well as a then-record 72 regular season wins in the 1995–96 season. He retired for the second time in 1999, returning for two more NBA seasons from 2001 to 2003 as a member of the Washington Wizards. In his career, Jordan won ten NBA scoring titles (an all-time record) and five MVP awards (the MVP trophy is now named in his honor). He holds the NBA record for career regular season scoring average (30.1 points per game). He was integral in popularizing basketball and the NBA around the world in the 1980s and 1990s, becoming a global cultural icon. His leaping ability earned him the nicknames “Air Jordan” and “His Airness.” Nike's Air Jordan sneakers, introduced in 1984, remain popular today. In 1999, Jordan was named the greatest North American athlete of the 20th century by ESPN and was second to Babe Ruth on the Associated Press list of athletes of the century. In 2016, President Barack Obama awarded Jordan the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The NBA website states, “By acclamation, Michael Jordan is the greatest basketball player of all time.”



**SCOTTIE PIPPEN** (born 1965) played 17 seasons in the NBA, winning six championships with the Chicago Bulls. Considered one of the greatest forwards of all time, he played an important role in popularizing the NBA around the world during the 1990s. He is the only NBA player to have won both an NBA title and

an Olympic gold medal in the same year twice, in 1992 and 1996.

## THE PLAYERS CONT.

Several NBA players are discussed during the play:



**SHAQUILLE O'NEAL** (born 1972), often called Shaq, played for six teams over his 19-year career in the NBA, winning four championships. He is regarded as one of the greatest basketball players and centers of all time. At the time of scene 1, he was playing for the Lakers.



**BOB SURA** (born 1973) started his NBA career playing for the Cavaliers from 1995 to 2000. His best season with the team was 1999-2000, when he averaged 13.8 points; his career average was 8.6. He played for several other teams through 2005.



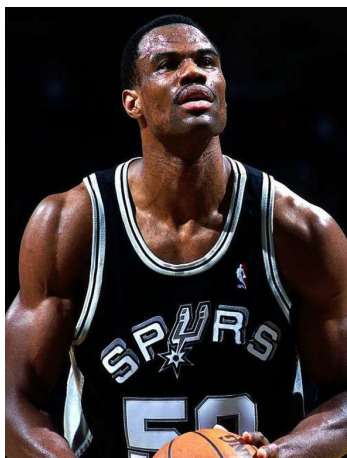
**MARK PRICE** (born 1964) played with the Cavaliers from 1986 to 1995. He was known as one of the league's most consistent shooters, finishing his career with a 90.4% free throw shooting percentage and a 40% three-point field goal shooting percentage. He was plagued by injuries in his later career,

retiring to coach basketball at the high school and college levels and to serve as an assistant coach or consultant for various NBA teams.



**ISIAH THOMAS** (1961) is widely regarded as one of the greatest point guards of all time. As a sophomore at Indiana University, he led the Hoosiers to the 1981 NCAA championship. He played his entire professional career for the Detroit Pistons, leading them to back-to-back NBA championships in 1989 and 1990. Since his retirement

he has been a sports executive, owner, and coach, including three seasons as coach of the Indiana Pacers from 2000 to 2003.



**DAVID ROBINSON** (born 1965) played for the San Antonio Spurs from 1989 to 2003. He was a two-time NBA champion (1999 and 2003), and a two-time Olympic Gold Medal winner (1992, 1996). He is widely considered one of the greatest centers in NBA history.



**DWYANE WADE** (born 1982) is widely regarded as one of the greatest shooting guards in NBA history. He spent most of his 16-year career playing for the Miami Heat, becoming the team's all-time leader in points, games played, assists, steals, shots made, and shots taken. He led the Heat to their first NBA championship in 2006 and won gold in the 2008

Olympics. In 2009, he led the league in both total points (2,386) and points per game (30.2). He helped Miami to win back-to-back NBA championships in 2012 and 2013. He retired in 2019.

## THE ART OF TRASH TALK

*“And one” is a phrase used throughout King James, and it ends both acts. So what does it mean? “And one” is often shouted by a player who is fouled by an opposing team member when taking a shot, giving the player the opportunity to shoot a free throw (hence, the “one” extra point). The phrase is often said out of habit, even when a player isn’t fouled, in order to provoke a reaction, brag about a play, or express frustration.*

*Basketball culture, especially in the NBA, is known for how much players verbalize on the court. Players use the art of trash talk to gain psychological advantage over opponents, and fans love how much drama it adds to the game.*

*Here are just a few classic moments in NBA trash talk:*

**LARRY BIRD**, in the locker room before the three-point contest at the 1986 All-Star Weekend: *“I’m just looking around to see who’s gonna finish second.”* He won.

**CHARLES BARKLEY**, preparing to race 67-year-old referee Dick Bavetta at the 2007 NBA All-Star Game: *“Dick Bavetta and Moses parted the Red Sea together.”* Barkley won.

**MICHAEL JORDAN**, 6’6”, once dunked on 6’1” John Stockton in a 1988 game. A fan called out, daring Jordan to jump over someone his own size. The next possession saw MJ dunk over 6’11” center Melvin Turpin. Jordan asked: *“Was he big enough?”*

**PAT RILEY**, after the Lakers won the 1987 NBA championship: *“And I’m guaranteeing everybody here, next year we’re gonna win it again.”* In 1988, the Lakers were the first team in 19 years to repeat as champions.

**MICHAEL JORDAN** was at the free-throw line in a 1991 game when Dikembe Mutombo started talking trash to him. Jordan proceeded to take a free-throw with his eyes closed, saying, *“This one’s for you, Mutombo.”* He made the shot.

**SCOTTIE PIPPEN** said to Karl “The Mailman” Malone, who was setting up a free throw during the 1997 NBA Finals, *“Remember, the mailman doesn’t deliver on Sundays.”* Malone missed the shot.



**DARRYL DAWKINS**, nicknamed the “Chocolate Thunder” by musician Stevie Wonder, dunked over Bill Robinzine in a 1979 game, breaking the backboard. Dawkins called it *“the Chocolate-Thunder-Flying, Robinzine-Crying, Teeth-Shaking, Glass-Breaking, Rump-Roasting, Bun-Toasting, Wham-Bam, Glass-Breaker-I-Am Jam.”* Three weeks later, Dawkins broke another one.



## ICONIC MOMENTS

Several memorable moments in NBA history are mentioned in the play:

### 1992: THE JORDAN SHRUG

In game 1 of the 1992 Finals between the Chicago Bulls and the Portland Trail Blazers, Michael Jordan shot six consecutive three-point baskets, then an NBA record. (The three-point shot was not one of Jordan's particular strengths; his career average was 32%, and in the 1991-92 season he made just 27%.) After the sixth basket, he happened to glance at Magic Johnson sitting in the stands. He shook his head, grinning, as if to say, "I don't know how I did it either," and then shrugged. The moment has become iconic, known as "the Jordan shrug."



### 2003: LEBRON'S CHALK TOSS

During his first year with the Cleveland Cavaliers, James began a pre-game ritual in which he chalked up his hands, threw some powder in the air, watched it disappear, and then clapped. This quickly became a popular moment with fans, and he continues to do so today.

### 2007: "HE CAME TO THE TRIBE GAME WITH A YANKEES HAT ON"

On October 5, 2007, LeBron James attended a playoff game between the Cleveland Indians and the New York Yankees at Jacobs Field, the Indians' home stadium located just across a plaza from what was then the Quicken Loans Arena, the Cavaliers' home. Sitting behind home plate, James, a long-time avowed Yankees fan, wore a Yankees hat, causing a great deal of controversy. Fans had previously tolerated James's support of the much-hated Yankees, who had been the Indians' foil since the 1950s. But this appearance caused an uproar. Although Cleveland routed the Yankees 12-3, most of the commentary after the game focused on James's disloyalty.

### 2016: CLEVELAND COMES BACK FROM A 3-1 DEFICIT TO WIN THE NBA CHAMPIONSHIP

Golden State defeated Cleveland decisively in the first two games of the 2016 NBA finals, 104-89 and 110-77. Cleveland won the third game at 120-90, but the Warriors pulled away late in Game 4 to win at 108-97, taking a decisive 3-1 series lead. Then the Cavaliers won Games 5 and 6 (112-97 and 115-101), leading to a climactic Game 7. With the score tied at 89-89 and 53 seconds remaining, Kyrie Irving made a 3-point field goal, giving Cleveland the lead. At 10.6 seconds, LeBron James was fouled. He hit one of his two three throws, and the Warriors missed two follow-up shots, making the final score 93-89. Previously, no team had ever recovered from a 3-1 deficit in an NBA Finals series.



### 2016: THE BLOCK

In Game 7 of the 2016 NBA Finals, with 1:56 remaining and the score tied at 89-89, Warriors forward Andre Iguodala rebounded the ball off the Cavaliers backboard and charged down the court, guarded by Cleveland's J. R. Smith. Iguodala passed half court and threw a chest pass to teammate Stephen Curry, who immediately bounced it back. Iguodala powered past Smith and shot. LeBron James, who had been trailing Iguodala and Smith the entire length of the floor, sprung at the ball from behind Iguodala and knocked the missed layup off the glass with 1:50 left. Smith rebounded the ball, and the Warriors failed to score another basket for the rest of the game, while the Cavaliers added 4 points to their total. James's block is cited as a key moment in deciding the outcome of the game, and is considered to be one of the greatest clutch defensive plays in James's career and in NBA history. Today it is still referred to as "The Block."

### 2016: THE CLEVELAND CHAMPIONSHIP PARADE

On Wednesday, June 22, 2016, three days after the final game on Sunday, June 19, 1.3 million fans flocked to downtown Cleveland for what is still the largest championship celebration in NBA history. There were 77 units in the parade, which featured the Cavaliers, former Cleveland Browns star Jim Brown, Ohio State football coach Urban Meyer, the Buckeyes' marching band, and more. Scheduled to begin at 11:00 am, the parade started late because of the huge crowds and lasted more than four hours. It was followed by a rally in Public Square with speeches from the mayor and LeBron James.

## THE DECISION

LeBron James played the first seven seasons of his professional career with the Cleveland Cavaliers. He was twice named NBA Most Valuable Player and six times an NBA All-Star, but he had yet to win an NBA championship. When he became an unrestricted free agent on July 1, 2010, he was courted by several teams, including the New York Knicks, Chicago Bulls, New Jersey Nets, Miami Heat, and Los Angeles Clippers, as well as the Cavaliers. On July 8, 2010, ESPN broadcast a 75-minute live TV special called *The Decision*, during which James told journalist Jim Gray:

“In this fall ... this is very tough ... in this fall I’m going to take my talents to South Beach and join the Miami Heat. I feel like it’s going to give me the best opportunity to win and to win for multiple years, and not only just to win in the regular season or just to win five games in a row or three games in a row. I want to be able to win championships. And I feel like I can compete down there.”

The Cavaliers had been informed of James’s decision minutes before the show began. It was later reported that James wanted to no longer be responsible for carrying the offense night after night as he did playing with Cleveland.

*The Decision* program drew high ratings, with an average of 10 million U.S. viewers, rising to 13 million at the time of the announcement. It was the most watched cable show of the night. The program raised \$2.5 million for the Boys and Girls Club of Greenwich, Connecticut. An additional \$3.5 million from advertising revenue was donated to various other charities. But the program drew widespread criticism for its format, its length, and its overall spectacle. In particular, the phrase “I’m going to take my talents to South Beach” was mocked and derided. During the aftermath, many angry fans posted videos of them burning their LeBron James jerseys.

On Thursday, July 9, 2010, the day after the announcement, Cavaliers owner Dan Gilbert posted a heated response on NBA.com, denouncing James’s decision as a “selfish,” “heartless,” “callous,” and “cowardly betrayal.” The content of his rant has since been praised as a juicy piece of sharp anger, but at the time of the events, all attention went to his choice of



Comic Sans font. Since its appearance in the 1990s, Comic Sans font, intended to be “fun” and to mimic comic book lettering, has been widely mocked by typographers and graphic designers as uneven, illegible, and childish. It has been described as “a staple among six-year-olds and grandmothers” and “the worst font ever to grace the computer screen.” There are websites like *bancomicsans.com* and *comicsanscriminal.com* that campaign against its use. Gilbert’s font choice, criticized not only for being inappropriate for the message but also for showing poor taste, received far more attention than his actual content.

## THE RETURN



In the July 11, 2014, issue of *Sports Illustrated*, LeBron James published an essay, as told to Lee Jenkins, about his decision to return to Cleveland. In contrast to *The Decision*, the choice and the manner of his announcement were widely praised.

*USA Today* said, “His 965-word letter in *Sports Illustrated* was pitch-perfect, addressing his love of the game, clearing the air about his departure, and setting expectations about what his return means for the Cleveland Cavaliers. It was everything the original *Decision* wasn’t. James was introspective, honest, and up-front. He talked about the joys of going home. He explained why he went to Miami in the first place (equating it to going away to college) and expressed no regret about that move, other than the manner in which he made it. This time, James seemed to understand that one city’s excitement would be another city’s regret, which he didn’t seem to grasp in 2010.... The sincerity of his convictions will resonate. Not only does James let down Miami easy, not only does he invite Cleveland to welcome him back with open arms, he does with an openness that makes it almost impossible for those who turned on him after *The Decision* to still bear that grudge. This letter wipes the slate clean.”

# BASKETBALL TERMS

A number of basketball terms are used in the play:

The expression **“and one”** means that the defending player committed a foul while the basket was being scored, and the shooter has earned a free throw shot, potentially adding one more point.

The term **bucket** is slang for a successful shot.

A **crossover** | a way for the ball handler to secretly change the ball’s direction while misleading the defender. It involves bringing one knee up towards the chest to increase momentum towards the off-hand side (usually away from the defender), and then passing or dribbling with the other hand.

**chalk up** | It is common practice for NBA players to rub chalk or talcum powder on their hands before a game to improve grip.

**check** | After a basket, out-of-bounds, violation, or foul, the offense must “check” the ball: they pass the ball to the opposing defender, and then the defender passes it back to start play.

The NBA **draft** is the process used to allocate new players who have recently become eligible to play in the league. Each team takes a turn selecting from the pool of eligible players.

To **dribble** is to bounce the ball on the floor continuously with one hand at a time. It is the only legal way that a player may maintain possession of the ball while walking or running.

A **foul** is an infraction of the rules. Most fouls occur as a result of illegal personal contact with an opponent and/or unfair play.

A **free agent** is a player or manager who is not under contract to any specific team and therefore eligible to sign with other teams.

**“my board!”** | *Board* (from the backboard of a basketball hoop) is a colloquial term for *rebound* (see below).

The **National Basketball Association (NBA)** was created in 1949, with the merger of the Basketball Association of America and the National Basketball League. The NBA later adopted the BAA’s history and considers its 1946 founding as its own.

The **point guard**, also called the point, is one of the five positions in a regulation basketball game. Point guards are expected to run the team’s offense by controlling the ball and making sure that it gets to the right player at the right time.

To **post up** is to establish a position in the low post, the area near the basket below the foul line, usually in order to take advantage of a smaller defender.

To **rebound** is to retrieve the ball after a missed shot, usually after it has bounced off the rim or backboard.

A **referee** enforces the rules and maintains order in the game. Basketball is among the most difficult sports to officiate due to speed of play, complexity of rules, and instantaneous decisions required.

The term **rock** is sometimes used as slang for a basketball.



The **tip-off** or jump ball is how play begins in basketball, similar to a face-off in ice hockey or field lacrosse. A referee tosses the ball into the air between two opposing players who jump as high as they can in an attempt to either grab the ball with both hands or to tip it to a teammate.

NBA **trades** involve teams exchanging players to improve their rosters or financial flexibility. A number of websites and sports commentators develop trade value rankings to simulate a team’s evaluation process, based on talent, statistics, age, current contracts, future prospects, etc.

**travel** | It is illegal to carry the ball without dribbling (see dribble, above). In high school and college games, a player is allowed only one step. In the NBA, a player is allowed two steps. If a player travels, their team loses possession of the ball.

A **three-point basket** is shot from beyond the three-point line, a designated arc surrounding the basket at a distance of 6 to 8 yards, depending on the level of play. A successful attempt is worth three points, in contrast to the two points awarded for field goals made within the three-point line, and one point for a free throw.

## turnaround fadeaway jump shot:

In a **jump shot**, a player leaps up into the air, ball in hand above the head, and launches the ball in a high arc towards the basket.

**turnaround** | When a player with the ball establishes a position in the area near the basket below the foul line, (see *post up*, above) they usually face away from the basket to protect the ball from being stolen by the defender. In order to shoot, they have to turn around to face the basket. In a turnaround jump shot, the player jumps, spins around in mid-air 180 degrees, and shoots the ball.

A **fadeaway** shot is a jump shot in which the shooter attempts their shot leaning backward, creating the effect of “fading away” from their defender. While this move makes it more difficult for the defender to block the shot, it is also one of the most difficult shots with which to hit the basket.

In a **turnaround fadeaway jump shot**, the player jumps, spins around in mid-air, leans back, and then shoots the ball.

# CLEVELAND

*King James is set in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland.*



Founded in 1796, **Cleveland** was among the top 10 largest U.S. cities by population for much of the 20th century. By the 1960s, however, the national decline of the steel and auto industries began to hurt the region's economy. From a high of 915,000 in 1950, by 2000 the city's population had sunk to 475,000.

**Cleveland Heights** is located eight miles east of downtown Cleveland. In 2010, the population was 50% white, 42% Black, 4% Asian, 2% Latinx, and 2% mixed or other. Between 2016 and 2020 the median household income was \$60,000, placing the area in Ohio's middle class. Cleveland Heights includes Coventry Village, a neighborhood associated with Cleveland's artistic, musical, bohemian, hippie, and hipster communities.

*The play includes a number of references to locations and institutions in the Cleveland area:*

**Akron**, Ohio, is located about 40 miles south of downtown Cleveland. Founded in 1825, Akron was the fastest-growing city in the nation in the 1910s, thanks in large part to the Goodyear, Firestone, Goodrich, and General tire companies working with the growing auto industry. During the 1950s and 1960s, Akron surged as use of the automobile did. But like many other industries of the Rust Belt, both the tire and rubber industries experienced major decline. By the early 1990s, Goodyear was the last major tire manufacturer based in Akron. At that time, when LeBron James was growing up there, the city's population was around 220,000.

**La Cave du Vin** (French: The Cave of Wine, i.e. The Wine Cellar). La Cave, as it is often called, opened in Cleveland Heights in 1997. In 2023 it moved to Tremont.

**Cleveland Heights High School** is a coed public high school. The student body is largely African-American (75%), with 15% white, 6% mixed, 3% Latinx, and 2% Asian. The school has a ranking of B- from Niche.com.

## "Fifty years Cleveland hasn't had a championship"

At the time of scene 3, in 2014, there were many who believed that Cleveland had a sports curse. The Cleveland Browns have not won an NFL championship since 1964. The Cleveland Indians have not won a world series since 1948. At the time of the scene, the Cavaliers had never won an NBA championship. They would win in 2016, breaking the city's 52-year streak.

**Great Lakes Brewing Co.** sells their craft beers in 14 states, as well as at their brewpub south of downtown Cleveland. The Great Lakes Experience is located on the main concourse in the South Neighborhood of Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse, where the Cavaliers play.

**Majic 105.7** first aired as WTAM-FM in 1948, and after several intermittent call signs became WMJI in 1981. In 1990 the station adapted a rock oldies format developed by John Gorman, former program director of legendary Cleveland rock station WMMS, which is widely regarded as one of the most influential rock stations in America.

**Nighttown** opened in Cleveland Heights in 1965. It has become a premiere jazz destination, booking top acts and hosting impromptu performances by such stars as Wynton Marsalis and Stevie Wonder.

**The Rapid** | RTA Rapid Transit is a rapid transit rail system owned and operated by the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority.

**Saint Ignatius High School** is a private Jesuit boys' high school located in the Ohio City neighborhood, about ten miles west of Cleveland Heights. The school's minority student enrollment is 22% and the student-teacher ratio is 12:1. The school has a ranking of A+ from Niche.com.

**TavCo** | This 2010 reference is anachronistic. While there has been a tavern at 2299 Lee

Road in Cleveland Heights since 1991, it wasn't called the Tavern Company (TavCo) until 2014.

**The Tribe** was a nickname for the Cleveland Indians, a Major League Baseball team founded in 1894 that played under several names before settling on the Indians in 1915. (In response to the Native American mascot controversy, the team adopted the name the Guardians following the 2021 season.)



# TIMELINE

King James has scenes set in 2004, 2010, 2014, and 2016. What was happening in the world then?

## 2004

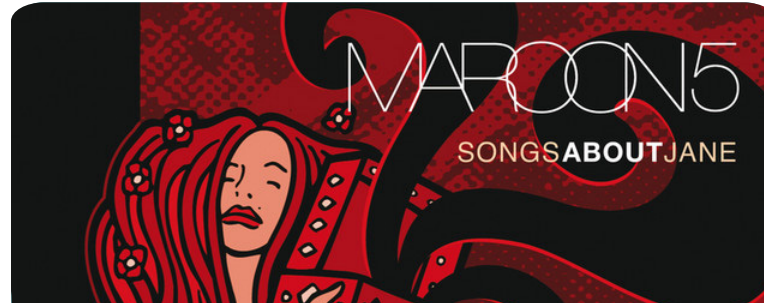
### HISTORIC EVENTS

President: George W. Bush | The Pistons defeat the Lakers for the NBA championship. Massachusetts is the first state to legalize same-sex marriage. | **LeBron James chosen as Rookie of the Year.** | Barack Obama delivers the Keynote address at the Democratic convention. | The Boston Red Sox win their first World Series in 86 years. | Ken Jennings wins a record 74 consecutive games on Jeopardy, earning \$2.5 million. | A 100-foot tsunami devastates Indonesia, killing 225,000 people.



### MOVIES

*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* | *Million Dollar Baby* | *Mean Girls* | *Napoleon Dynamite* | *The Notebook*



### SONGS

“Yeah”—Usher f/Lil Jon & Ludacris | “Burn”—Usher | “If I Ain’t Got You”—Alicia Keys | “This Love”—Maroon 5 | “American Idiot”—Green Day



### TV

*Friends*, *Frasier*, *Sex in the City*, and *Hollywood Squares* air their final episodes. *Deadwood*, *Lost*, *Desperate Housewives*, *House*, and *Project Runway* premiere.



### THEATRE

*Caroline, or Change* | *I Am My Own Wife*

### NEW IN 2004

Facebook | Gmail | iPod Mini | LiveStrong bracelets | World of Warcraft



## 2010

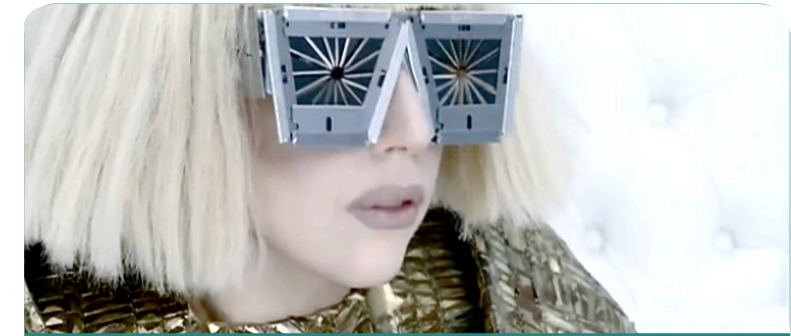
### HISTORIC EVENTS

President: Barack Obama | The Lakers defeat the Celtics in the NBA championships. Snowmageddon—40” of snow in less than a week. | The Affordable Care Act signed into law. Deepwater Horizon oil spill. | **LeBron James leaves the Cleveland Cavaliers for the Miami Heat.** WikiLeaks releases 39,000 U.S. Military documents about the 2003 Iraq War. | Arab Spring—a series of anti-government protests—begins.



### MOVIES

*Toy Story 3* | *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 1* | *Inception* | *The Twilight Saga: Eclipse* | *Despicable Me* | *How to Train Your Dragon* | *The King’s Speech*



### SONGS

“Tik Tok”—Kesha | “Need You Now”—Lady A | “Hey, Soul Sister”—Train | “California Gurls”—Katy Perry f/Snoop Dogg | “Bad Romance”—Lady Gaga



### TV

As the result of a fan campaign, Betty White hosts *Saturday Night Live*, earning an Emmy Award. *Law & Order*, *Larry King Live*, *Scrubs*, *King of the Hill* air their final episodes. *Downton Abbey*, *Hot in Cleveland*, *Boardwalk Empire*, and *Sherlock* premiere.



### THEATRE

*American Idiot* | *Next to Normal* | *Red*

### NEW IN 2010

Burj Khalifa in Dubai: tallest building in the world | iPad | Instagram



# 2014

## HISTORIC EVENTS

President: Barack Obama | Colorado is the first state to legalize the sale of recreational marijuana. Drinking water in Flint, Michigan, is contaminated with lead and *Legionella* bacteria. | The Spurs defeat the Heat to win the NBA Championship. | Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa. | **LeBron James returns to the Cleveland Cavaliers.** | Racial unrest in Ferguson, Missouri, following the police shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown. | US airstrikes against ISIS in Syria. | New York is the first state to totally ban fracking. | The United States officially withdraws from Afghanistan.



## MOVIES

*Birdman* | *Boyhood* | *Selma* | *The Grand Budapest Hotel* | *Big Hero 6*



## SONGS

“Happy”—Pharrell Williams | “Dark Horse”—Katy Perry f/Juicy J | “All of Me”—John Legend  
 “All about That Bass”—Meghan Trainor  
 “Shake It Off”—Taylor Swift



## TV

After 22 years, Jay Leno steps down as host of *The Tonight Show*. *How I Met Your Mother* airs its final episodes. *Chicago P.D.* and *Black-ish* premiere.



## THEATRE

*Fun Home* | *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

## NEW IN 2014

One World Trade Center in New York City.



# 2016

## HISTORIC EVENTS

President: Barack Obama | 50 people shot at Pulse nightclub in Orlando. | **The Cavaliers defeat the Warriors for the NBA championship.** | Mother Teresa is named a saint. | Hillary Clinton is the first woman presidential candidate. | Donald Trump loses the popular vote but wins the Electoral College to become President. | Brexit—British voters choose to leave the European Union. | The Chicago Cubs win their first World Series in 108 years.



## MOVIES

*Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* | *Deadpool*  
*Zootopia* | *Moonlight* | *La La Land*



## SONGS

“Love Yourself” & “Sorry”—Justin Bieber  
 “One Dance”—Drake f/Wizkid & Kyla  
 “Work”—Rihanna f/Drake | “Hello”—Adele



## TV

*The Good Wife* and *Castle* air their final episodes. *This Is Us* and *Stranger Things* premiere



## THEATRE

*Hamilton* | *Dear Evan Hansen* | *The Humans*

## NEW IN 2016

Airpods | Ultra HD Blu-Ray



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## Before Seeing the Play

1. Are you a basketball fan, or a fan of any sports teams? Why or why not?
2. How did you meet your closest friend? Were you friends right away, or did it take some time? How important is that friendship to you?
3. What is a subject or activity that you feel passionate enough about to follow it for your whole life? Why is it important to you? What do you get out of it?

## After Seeing the Play

1. Shawn tells the story of Matt and his dad building a time machine. If you had to choose, would you go back to the past or would you visit the future?
2. What do you think is the significance of the taxidermized armadillo to Matt? What does the store represent to Matt? To Shawn?
3. In Act 2, Matt says, “Social media will be the end of us all.” What do you think he means? Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. This play spans 12 years. How has your life changed in the last 12 years? What about the place you live? How has that changed? What changes do you anticipate in the next 12 years?
5. Matt says, “Being a fan is like having a religion.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
6. Matt asks Shawn what the difference is between being alone and being lonely. What do you think?
7. Matt and Shawn have very different reactions when LeBron James leaves Cleveland, and again when he returns. Why do you think that is?
8. When Shawn stops working on his novel and decides to try writing for television, do you think he is selling out or making a smart career choice? Why?
9. Matt calls LeBron James the Prodigal Son. Read the parable in the Bible’s Luke 15: 11-32. Is it a good comparison? Why or why not? How might either Matt or Shawn be seen as a Prodigal Son?
10. Why do you think Matt tells Shawn that he didn’t watch the NBA championship game, when in fact he did?
11. The play ends with Shawn and Matt playing a game of one-on-one. How is one-on-one a metaphor for the play as a whole?

# ACTIVITIES

1. Shawn and Matt are always shooting hoops (even if it’s shooting trash into a wastebasket). Get outside and play a game of Horse with friends. If you don’t have enough time, play Pig!
2. The Cleveland Cavaliers were named through a contest in the city’s newspaper in 1970. Research the NBA’s different mascots (Cavaliers, Pistons, Pacers, etc.) and their meanings/significance. Or learn about the mascots of your hometown schools. Create a bulletin board display showing your findings.
3. Matt designs a logo for his café. Design a logo for an organization you belong to, or for an imaginary business. Draw it or use a computer, but be creative!
4. Create a playlist to reflect the time period, mood, and energy of the play. How would your list be different for the different years of the play, and for the two different characters?
5. Visit a curiosity shop or antique store like Armand’s. Hunt for treasures and keep an eye out for a stuffed armadillo!
6. Go to a basketball game—any level of skill! Support a team, a player, or the sport itself!
7. In sports broadcasting, play-by-play announcers describe the action of a basketball game as it is being played, while color commentators add interesting facts and statistics. Find a basketball game on TV, turn the sound off, and with a partner choose one person to be the play-by-play announcer and one to be the color commentator. After a few minutes, switch roles. Which job is harder? Can you keep the dialogue up? Can your audience understand what is going on in the game?

## 8. Assessing Value

In this play, there are numerous references to specific amounts of money:

In Scene 1, set in 2004, Matt wants \$6,500 for the rest of his Cavaliers season tickets. Face value on each ticket is \$150. Shawn ends up paying \$2,000.

In Scene 2, set in 2010, Shawn says that his tuition for graduate school is \$50,000.

In Scene 3, set in 2014, Matt invites Shawn to a Cleveland Indians game with \$400 tickets.

In Scene 4, set in 2016, Shawn says that he paid \$10,000 for a ticket to the Cavaliers Final game. Using [usinflationcalculator.com](http://usinflationcalculator.com), or a similar website, learn how much \$1 was worth in 2004, 2010, 2014, and 2016, and calculate what equivalent dollar amounts would be today. How do those amounts compare to the actual prices of similar goods and services today? What else could you buy for those amounts of money? What would you choose to do with that much money?

# WRITING PROMPTS

1. LeBron James is known for making long, essay-like announcements about his career. Imagine you either (A) are leaving your hometown for new opportunities or (B) have left your hometown and are coming back. What sort of letter would you write to explain it to people? How would you try to make them understand your decision?
2. Shawn's journey to be a writer takes many forms throughout the timeline. Write a short story, TV pilot, or a screenplay!
3. Shawn and Matt spend several years apart while they are making their way in the world. Write a letter to your best friend, even if they live down the street.
4. 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](mailto:education@irtlive.com).



# RESOURCES

## Articles

Why LeBron James has excelled for so long



The Sports Report: Why LeBron James is the greatest basketball player in history



How LeBron James became the culture of Cleveland



LeBron: I'm coming back to Cleveland

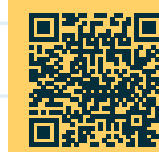


## Videos

The Decision



Final moments of Game 7 of NBA Finals:



How to Play HORSE:



30 for 30, a series of ESPN documentaries (2009–present)

## Books

*Religion of Sports: Navigating the Trials of Life Through the Games We Love* by Gotham Chopra and Joe Levin

*Fans: How Watching Sports Makes Us Happier, Healthier, and More Understanding* by Larry Olmsted

*The Book of Basketball: The NBA According to the Sports Guy* by Bill Simmons and Malcolm Gladwell

*Basketball for Dummies* by Richard Phelps with John Walters and Tim Bourret

## Films

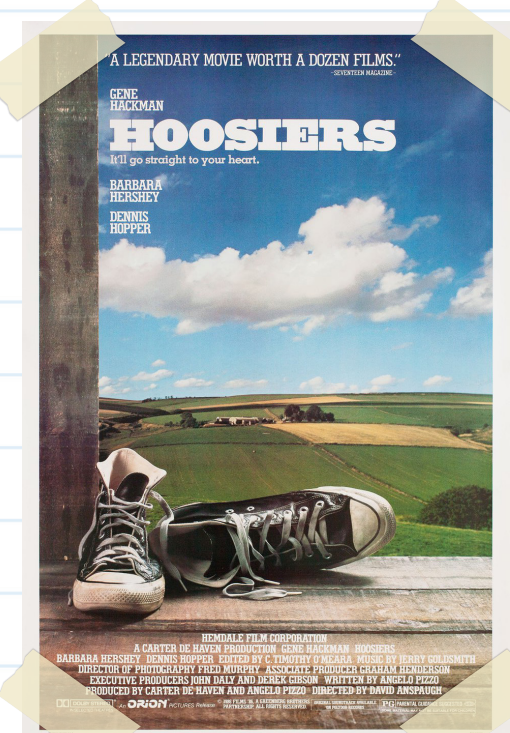
*Basketball: A Love Story* (2018—NR)

*More Than a Game* (2008—PG)

*Love and Basketball* (2000—PG-13)

*Hoop Dreams* (1994— PG-13)

*Hoosiers* (1986—PG)





# GLOSSARY

**angst** | A feeling of deep anxiety or dread.

**armadillo** (Spanish for “little armored one”) is a mammal related to the anteater and the sloth. They originated in South America, but have been found as far north as southern Indiana. Armadillos are characterized by a leathery armor shell and long, sharp claws for digging.

**bandwagon fan** | In nineteenth century America, a bandwagon was a horse-drawn wagon with a group of musicians in a circus parade. The word is most often used today in reference to an activity or cause that is currently fashionable or popular and attracting increasing support.

In Buddhism, a **bodhisattva** is a person who is on the path towards bodhi (awakening or enlightenment).

**Bottle service** typically includes a reserved table, liquor sold by the bottle rather than by the glass, and dedicated wait staff. The cost of such a bottle is often marked up by 1,000 percent or more.

**Budapest** is the capital of Hungary. The city attracts around 12 million international tourists per year, making it a highly popular destination in Europe.

**The Chronicles of Narnia** is a series of seven portal fantasy novels by British author C. S. Lewis originally published between 1950 and 1956, beginning with *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

The **Dallas Cowboys** have won five Super Bowls. Between 2002 and the end of the 2023 season, they sold out 190 consecutive regular and post-season football games, both home and away.

The **Danube** is the second-longest river in Europe. Originating in the Black Forest of southwest Germany, it flows southeast, eventually emptying into the Black Sea.

**Ducats** were coins used throughout Europe from the Middle Ages to the 1800s. Today the word is used as slang for cash or money.

The **general meeting** is a frequent occurrence in Hollywood. It is an initial meet-and-greet between producers and a writer who has demonstrated talent through a spec script (see *spec script below*). It is not an opportunity to pitch that script, but it is an indication that the producers like the writer’s work, and that they want to get a sense of what the writer is like as a person, and how they might be to work with in the room.

**G.O.A.T.** | In 1992, Lonnie Ali, Muhammad Ali’s wife, incorporated Greatest of All Time, Inc. (G.O.A.T. Inc.) to consolidate and license her husband’s intellectual properties. But the acronym was not widely used until rapper LL Cool J released *G.O.A.T.* in 2000.

**Grey Goose** was developed by an American businessman and a French cognac producer in 1997. By 2004 it was the best-selling premium vodka in the United States.

A **hiatus**, literally, is a pause or gap in a sequence, series, or process. In television, the term refers to the break between seasons, when no new episodes are being filmed or broadcast.

**hologram** | Physicist Dennis Gabor invented holography in 1948. A major development occurred in 1968 when Stephen Benton invented the rainbow holograms, which can be viewed with natural light instead of lasers. This is the type of hologram we see today on credit cards and courtside tickets.

**Hyperacusis** is an increased sensitivity to sound and a low tolerance for environmental noise. It can be a highly debilitating hearing disorder. Loudness hyperacusis is characterized by an increased perception of the loudness of sounds. It is often associated with certain volumes and/or frequencies.

**Motorola Razr** | The original Razr model, the Razr V3, was a flip phone released in 2004 with a remarkably thin aluminum body for its time. It cost \$449 (about \$750 today).

**Multiple sclerosis (MS)** is an autoimmune disease in which the insulating covers of nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord are damaged. This damage disrupts the ability of parts of the nervous system to transmit signals, resulting in a range of physical and sometime neurological disabilities.

The **New York Yankees** are arguably the most successful professional sports franchise in the United States. They have won a record 27 World Series. The team has garnered enormous popularity and a dedicated fan base, as well as widespread enmity from fans of other professional baseball teams.

**Nirvana** (Sanskrit: literally, “blown out,” as an oil lamp) is a concept in Indian religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism). It is a state of perfect quietude, freedom, and highest happiness, as well as liberation from attachment and worldly suffering, and the ending of the round of existence.

**Barack Obama** (born 1961) served as the 44th president of the United States from 2009 to 2017. A Democrat, he was the first African American president in U.S. history.

**salacious** | Arousing or appealing to sexual desire or imagination; lecherous, lustful.

A **spec script** is written independently by the screenwriter under speculation that it will sell.

In football, a **spike** is the act of intentionally throwing the ball to the ground, usually to celebrate after a score, but sometimes to stop the clock and give the team time to set up the next play.

**ticket scalping** | The first known reference to ticket scalping—reselling tickets for more than their face value for profit—dates back to 1869. This original use refers to theatre tickets, but the term “scalper” was also used in the late 1800s for brokers who sold unused portions of railway tickets.

The **Sony Walkman** was first sold in 1979 as a portable cassette player. The Walkman became so popular in the 1980s that “walkman” became a generic term applied to any portable music player.

A **writers’ room** is a space where TV writers gather to write and refine scripts. The television industry has long had a collaborative model for writing shows. Historically the rooms were physical spaces, but increasingly these collaborations are done through video-conferencing.