

INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE

WHAT I LEARNED IN PARIS

by Pearl Cleage

March 17 – April 12, 2015, on the IRT Upperstage

STUDY GUIDE

edited by Richard J Roberts & Milicent Wright
with contributions by Janet Allen, Lou Bellamy
Vicki Smith, Matthew J. LeFebvre, Don Darnutzer

Indiana Repertory Theatre
140 West Washington Street • Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
Janet Allen, Executive Artistic Director Suzanne Sweeney, Managing Director

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What I Learned in Paris

by Pearl Cleage

1973 Atlanta. The politics of race, class, and gender are rapidly transforming as the city elects its first black mayor. What better time to begin a romantic escapade? As our lovers make history, old flames rekindle and new ones ignite in this masterfully funny play by one of the country's leading African-American writers.

Estimated length: 2 hours, 20 minutes, including 1 intermission

Recommended for students in grades 9 through 12.

Themes, Issues, & Topics

The Civil Rights movement coming of age

The Feminist movement

The changing political structure of the old South

The change in American politics brought about by vocal African Americans

Upward mobility of African Americans

Student Matinees at 10:00 A.M. on April 8 & 10

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Pearl Cleage • Playwright

“The purpose of my writing, often, is to express the point where racism and sexism meet.”

Pearl Cleage was born in 1948 in Springfield, Massachusetts, and grew up in Detroit, Michigan. Her father was a prominent minister and her mother was an elementary school teacher. An academically gifted student, Pearl enrolled at Howard University, where she studied playwriting and had two one-act plays produced. She left Howard in 1969 at the age of twenty to marry Michael Lomax, an Atlanta politician. Upon graduating in 1971 from Spelman College, Cleage worked at a number of media jobs including hosting a local, black-oriented interview program as well as being director of communications for the city of Atlanta and press secretary for Mayor Maynard Jackson. Cleage divorced Lomax in 1979 and married Zaron Burnett Jr. in 1994.



Cleage gained national attention as a playwright in 1992 with *Flyin' West*, a play about pioneering black women that premiered at the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta and was subsequently produced at a number of regional theatres across the country (including the IRT in 1994). *Blues for an Alabama Sky* (IRT 2003) is set in 1930 as the creative euphoria of the Harlem Renaissance gives way to the harsher realities of the Great Depression. Cleage's other plays include *Bourbon at the Border* and *A Song for Coretta*. She wrote *We Speak Your Name* for Oprah's 2005 Legends Ball, a celebration of 25 extraordinary African American Women. She has taught drama at Spelman College for many years.

Cleage's first novel, *What Looks Like Crazy on an Ordinary Day*, was a 1998 Oprah Book Club selection, a *New York Times* bestseller, and a BCALA Literary Award winner. Her most recent is 2011's *Just Wanna Testify*. Most of Cleage's eight novels are set in Atlanta, and some characters recur from book to book.

Cleage has long contributed essays to national magazines such as *Essence*, the *New York Times Book Review*, *Ms.*, and *Black World*. In 1990 and 1993 she published collections of her essays entitled, respectively, *Mad at Miles: A Black Woman's Guide to Truth*, and *Deals with the Devil and Other Reasons to Riot*. Frequently focused on topics concerning sexism and/or racism, Cleage writes on such issues as domestic violence and rape in the black community, AIDS, and women's rights. She speaks at colleges, universities, and conferences on these and other topics such as the role of the artist in wartime and the citizen's duty in a participatory democracy.

A Delightful Surprise

Pearl Cleage
circa 1973

by Janet Allen, Executive Artistic Director

One of the most oft-asked questions I receive from our patrons is, “How do you pick the plays in a season?” Truth be told, I’ve never developed a catchy short answer to this, largely because our mission-based production platform is very diverse. Usually I end up bending the questioner’s ear for far too long as I explain the nuance of our play selection process. One mission niche we fulfill each year, amid the classics, literary adaptations, and known titles, is to produce a recent play that has been successfully produced elsewhere that likely otherwise would go undiscovered by Indianapolis audiences. In this endeavor, we’re looking for plays that will fit in well with the work we’ve been doing (either in contrast or complement), and that will provoke delight or conversation (or both!) with our adult audiences.



I’m pleased to have found *What I Learned in Paris*, one of the most surprising and delightful recent plays to come out of the American regional theatre system. One of our greatest “search engines” for locating exciting new work is our very own collective bargaining unit, the League of Resident Theatres (LORT), which provides a natural networking system of 72 similar, not-for-profit theatres located around the country. An artistic director colleague first put *Paris* on our radar a couple of years ago. I learned that it had been commissioned by another sister theatre, the Alliance Theatre Company in Atlanta, where the playwright is a writer in residence.

Because that playwright is Pearl Cleage, whose work we have produced before, I was inclined to interest. Pearl’s voice is always highly theatrical, and she has a great knack for slightly subversively weaving her thematic work just below the surface of very compelling character and plot development. This particular play of Pearl’s is surprising for a number of reasons: with its backdrop of politics, we are conditioned to expect it to principally leverage feelings about race and class. Instead, Pearl’s focus is on affairs of the heart. Using this historic moment within a particular community when great change was taking place not only politically but with gender access, Pearl’s characters principally express concern about what this moment holds for them personally, and how it might create new definitions of happiness.

I was also particularly delighted to find a fellow enthusiast of the play in director Lou Bellamy. Lou led our stirring production of *Radio Golf* a few years ago, and I’m so pleased to have him, and his stellar design team, back with us to explore Pearl’s gentle, funny, hopeful play. And getting you up close to it in the Upperstage will be a key part of the experience: the energy and effervescence of this play is contagious, and will send you out the door with a renewed belief not only in civic engagement, but in listening to one’s heart.

Personal/Political

by Lou Bellamy, Director

The year is 1973. Maynard Holbrook Jackson, only the night before, has become the first African American mayor of a major southern city. His election holds the promise of a direction in southern politics not seen since Reconstruction. The feminist movement, with its emphasis on equality in the workplace, is being felt in both public and private arenas. The movement's catchphrase—"the personal is political"—is calling into question female roles in dress, self-determination, sexuality, and birth control. In almost every aspect of American society established norms are being contested—or, at the very least, re-examined.

It is in this milieu that playwright Pearl Cleage places her insightful and often provocative romantic comedy. She intelligently navigates and exposes the personal, political, and social dynamics of the time with dignity and clarity. The humor she engenders in her characters is borne out of genuine human experience. Her language is crisp and ebullient.

The IRT has brought together an outstanding artistic team which I am privileged to lead. In their capable hands, this wonderful script should leap to life before your eyes. Enjoy!

Maynard Jackson and his wife Bunnie celebrating on election night, 1973.

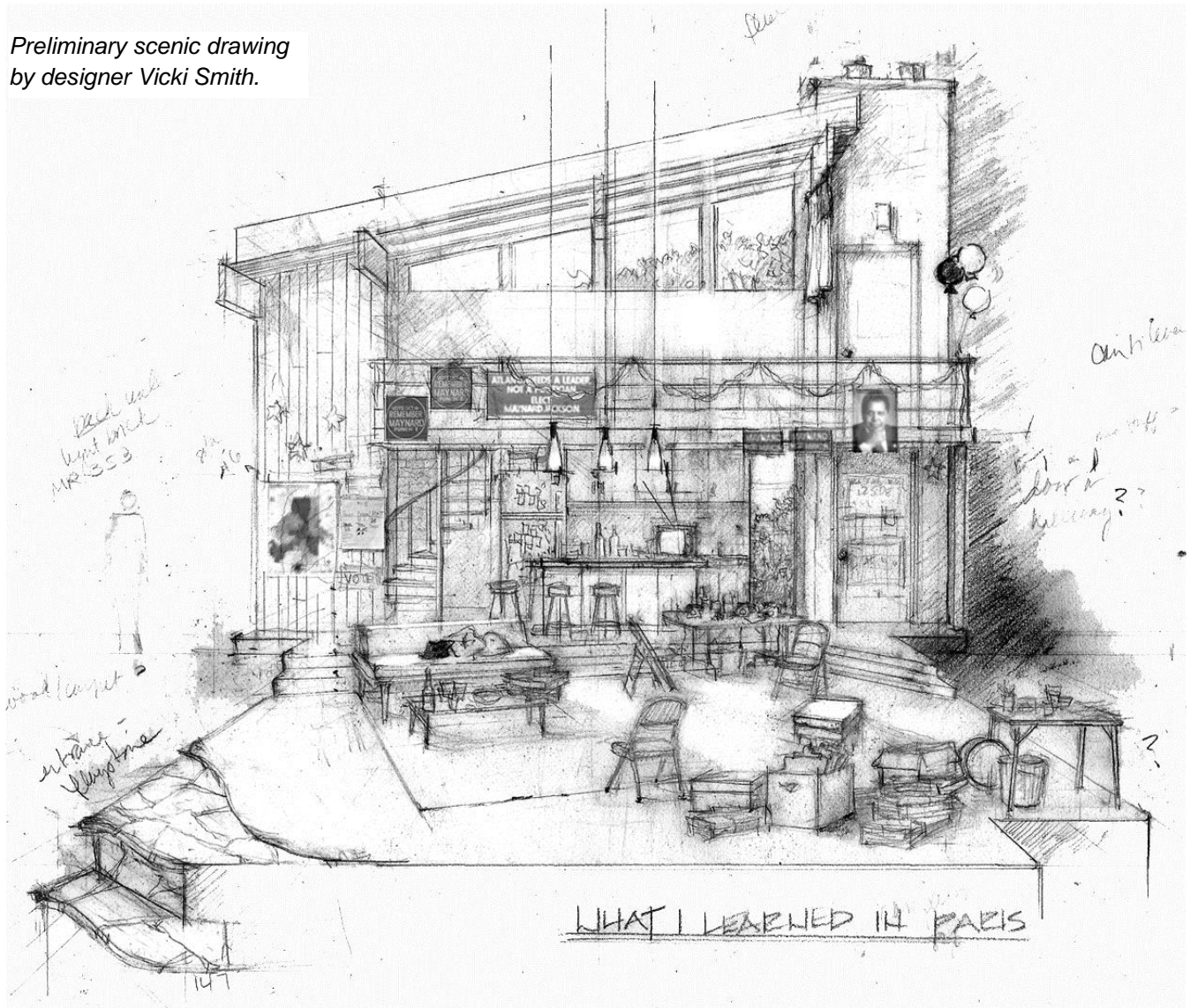


Blast from the Past

Vicki Smith Scenic Designer

For this play, we find ourselves in Evie's upscale condominium in Atlanta in 1973. Evie has moved out, however, and the condo has become a working space: the headquarters for Maynard Jackson's get-out-the-vote campaign. With those two ideas in mind, I researched late-sixties early-seventies architecture and selected some characteristic elements: a warm wood-clad wall next to painted walls in white, beige, or yellow; an asymmetric shed roof with an open-beamed ceiling; a carpeted conversation pit; hanging lights in a group of three. Most of Evie's belongings are in storage, replaced by rental furniture. On top of this, we have as much authentic Jackson signage as I could find, plus general campaign clutter: clipboards, boxes of campaign literature, pizza boxes, pop cans, full ashtrays, a small TV, staff photos on the refrigerator, balloons, crepe paper streamers....

*Preliminary scenic drawing
by designer Vicki Smith.*





Mathew J. LeFebvre Costume Designer

One of the challenges of this design was striking a balance between period authenticity and a look that honors the characters of this smart and funny play. Many of the actual fashions of 1973 are so foreign to contemporary aesthetics that there is a danger of making the characters look like sight gags. Especially in this play, the writing provides a road map for making the right choices. I think we have found a look that resonates with the early 1970s but also supports characterization and doesn't get in the way of the storytelling.

*Costume renderings
for Evie, Act 1—scene 4 (left),
and J.P., Act 1—scene 2 (below),
by designer Matthew J. LeFebvre*



Don Darnutzer Lighting Designer

What I Learned in Paris takes place in a single room over the course of several days. My job is to aid in the storytelling by creating naturalistic lighting. I will set the time of day (night, sunrise, mid-morning, early and late afternoon) for each scene as described by the playwright. I start my design process by reading the script, and then I have discussions with the director and other designers to refine my design ideas and how I can enhance the scenery and costumes. Much like a cinematographer, I help control the focus of the scene and direct the audience's attention to the dramatic moment.

Onward and Upward with Maynard Jackson

On October 16, 1973, Maynard Jackson was elected mayor of Atlanta, Georgia, the first black mayor of a major southern city. The great-grandson of slaves, Jackson had been born in 1938 in Dallas, Texas. The family moved to Atlanta when Maynard was seven years old. His father was a minister. His mother, who taught French at Spelman College, was the first African American in Atlanta allowed to have a library card.

Jackson graduated from Morehouse College at the age of 18, eventually becoming a lawyer. His first child was born on April 8, 1968, the day that the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was buried. Inspired by this confluence of events, Jackson filed to run for US Senator against diehard segregationist Herman Talmadge. With little hope of winning, Jackson ran a grass-roots campaign across the state, attracting support from poor white farmers. He lost by a 3-to-1 margin, but he carried the city of Atlanta. The next year, he ran for the city's vice mayor, a largely ceremonial post, and won in a landslide.

The 1973 mayoral campaign was brutal, with a field of 11 candidates. When Jackson won the racially charged runoff election, he carried not only 90% of the city's majority black population, but also 25% of the white voters. For African Americans who had won the right to vote less than a decade earlier, it was the most significant political gain since Reconstruction.

Jackson saw himself as part of a new generation of the Civil Rights movement, whose job it was to use the legal rights won in the 1960s to secure political power for their constituents. He believed that the way to achieve racial equality for African Americans was to overhaul the government, build economic power, and demand that the nation's white leaders recognize the needs of minorities and the poor.

As mayor, Jackson made affirmative action a priority, hiring more minorities and women, awarding city contracts more fairly to include minority-owned businesses (from less than 1 percent to more than 35 percent), and ending discriminatory business practices. He brought in an outside administrator to reorganize city departments and hired more black police officers. He shifted money from downtown development, insisting that neighborhoods have a say in city planning.

Jackson's biggest challenge was the construction of a new airport. He appointed a black woman to oversee affirmative action practices on the project. Although she was implementing federal law, the white business community opposed these challenges to the status quo. Despite the controversy, Jackson won a second term in office, and he used that time to build bridges with his detractors. In 1980, Hartsfield International Airport opened as the world's largest passenger terminal. The project was completed on time and on budget, and with the required minimum 20% minority participation in all aspects of its construction.

Term limits forced Jackson to step down, but in 1990 he was elected to a third term, during which he assisted in the successful effort to bring the 1996 Olympics to Atlanta. Today Jackson is credited with cementing Atlanta's reputation as the capital of the New South and a center of wealth, political power, business clout, and education for African Americans. Former Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin has praised Jackson's ability to "uplift the average person through the policies of the city."

Jackson transformed Atlanta into a mecca for talented, aspiring blacks from across the country at a time when black women were searching for new opportunities. While black women had borne their share of the work to be done, they had rarely been given positions of power within the Civil Rights movement. Meanwhile, the feminist movement was largely focused on the concerns of white women: the right to work outside the home, for example, was not of particular concern to black women, as they had been doing so for generations.

In 1970, the Third World Women's Alliance had published the *Black Women's Manifesto*, stating that "The black woman is demanding a new set of female definitions and a recognition of herself as a citizen, companion, and confidant, not a matriarchal villain or a step stool baby-maker." Just one year before Jackson's election as mayor, Shirley Chisholm had become the first African American woman candidate for President, and Barbara Jordan had become the first African American woman from a southern state to be elected to Congress.

Pearl Cleage was among the young black women who found a place in the new Atlanta. The aspiring playwright temporarily focused her skills on the realm of politics, serving during Jackson's first term as his speechwriter and press secretary. Near the twilight of the Civil Rights movement and at the dawn of integration, Cleage and her fellow Atlantans looked forward in hope towards a new era of equality and empowerment for both blacks and whites, both men and women.

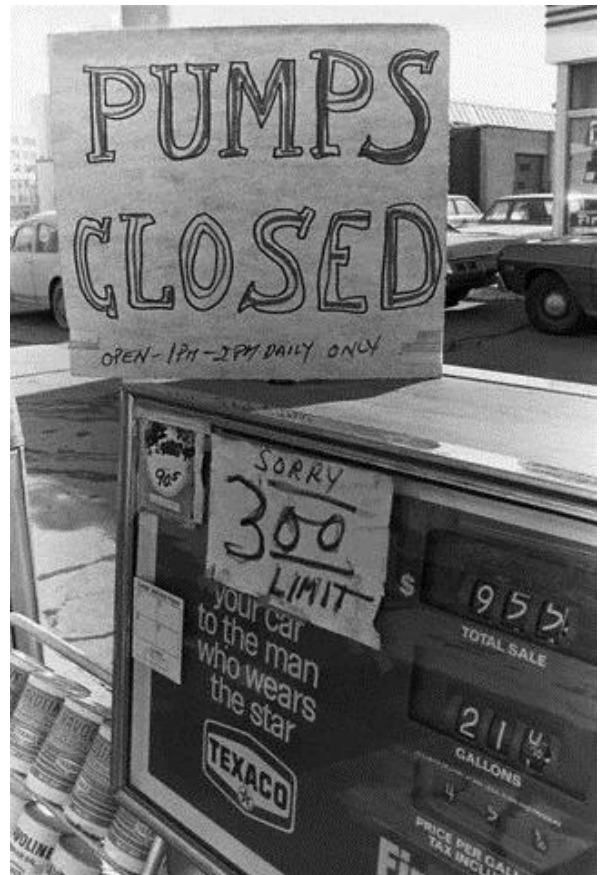
*Maynard Jackson campaigning
on election day, 1973.*



The World in 1973

News Events

Barbara Jordan,
first southern black US Congresswoman,
takes office
Last American troops
withdrawn from South Vietnam
Roe v. Wade, landmark Supreme Court case
on abortion
Vice President Spiro T. Agnew resigns
Senate Watergate Committee begins hearings
Oil Crisis – oil prices quadrupled, >
fuel shortages
Secretariat wins the Triple Crown
Battle of the Sexes tennis match:
Bobby Riggs v. Billy Jean King
Maynard Jackson elected
first black mayor of a major southern city



Movies

< *The Sting*
The Way We Were
Lady Sings the Blues
The Exorcist
American Graffiti
Papillon

TV

All in the Family
Sanford and Son >
*M*A*S*H*
Hawaii Five-O
Maude



Theatre

The Good Doctor by Neil Simon
The River Niger by Joseph A. Walker
A Little Night Music by Sondheim & Wheeler
< *Raisin* by Woldin, Brittan, Nemiroff, & Zaltsberg

Books

Breakfast of Champions by Kurt Vonnegut Jr. >

Burr by Gore Vidal

Sula by Toni Morrison

Dr. Atkins' Diet Revolution by Tober C. Atkins

How to Be Your Own Best Friend

by Newman, Berkowitz, & Owen



Music

"Bad Bad Leroy Brown"

– Jim Croce

"Killing Me Softly with His Song"

– Roberta Flack

"Crocodile Rock"

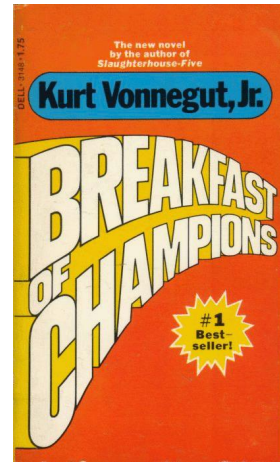
– Elton John

< "Midnight Train to Georgia"

– Gladys Knight & the Pips

The Dark Side of the Moon

– Pink Floyd



New in 1973

World Trade Center, NYC >

< Skylab, first American space station

Sears Tower, Chicago

Sydney Opera House

Lite Beer



What Things Cost in 1973

loaf of bread: 27¢

dozen eggs: 45¢

gallon of milk: \$1.31

< postage stamp: 8¢

candy bar: 10¢

Quarter Pounder 55¢

6-pack of soda, 88¢

gas: 40¢

car: \$3,200

rent: \$175

minimum wage: \$1.60

average income: \$12, 900



Interactive Civil Rights Timeline

When we hear the term Civil Rights, many of us often think exclusively of African Americans. But Civil Rights is a broad term that covers people of all races, genders, and sexualities.

- 1863 Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln**
http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/

- 1865 13th Amendment ratified—slavery abolished**
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/13thamendment.html>

- 1865 Reconstruction begins (through 1877)**
<http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/exhibits/reconstruction/timeline.html>
<http://www.shmoop.com/reconstruction/timeline.html>

- 1868 14th Amendment ratified—equal protection under the law**
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/215201/Fourteenth-Amendment>

- 1875 Civil Rights Act of 1875 (ruled unconstitutional in 1883)**
<http://history.house.gov/HistoricalHighlight/Detail/35889>
<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/turnerbd/summary.html>

- 1876 First Jim Crow laws**
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/civil-rights/>

- 1896 Plessey v. Ferguson—separate but equal ruled constitutional**
<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=52>
http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0163_0537_ZS.html

- 1870 15th Amendment ratified—right to vote**
<http://www.crf-usa.org/black-history-month/african-americans-and-the-15th-amendment>
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/grant-fifteenth/>

- 1909 NAACP founded**
<http://www.naACP.org/pages/naACP-history>

- 1948 President Harry Truman desegregates the armed forces**
<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/anniversaries/desegblurb.htm>
<http://afroamhistory.about.com/od/civilrightsstruggle1/a/order9981.htm>

- 1954 Brown v. Board of Education—separate but equal ruled unconstitutional**
<http://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/get-involved/federal-court-activities/brown-board-education-re-enactment/history.aspx>
<http://www.naacpldf.org/case/brown-v-board-education>
http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0347_0483_ZO.html

- 1955 Montgomery, Alabama begins year-long bus boycott**
<http://www.montgomeryboycott.com/>

- 1957 Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) founded;
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. elected president**
<http://sclcnational.org/our-history/>
- 1957 Civil Rights Act of 1957**
http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/civil_rights_act.html
- 1957 Nine Black students integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas**
<http://life.time.com/history/little-rock-nine-1957-photos/#1>
<http://littlerock9.com/History.aspx>
- 1960 Lunch counter sit-ins in Greensboro, Nashville, and elsewhere**
<http://americanhistory.si.edu/brown/history/6-legacy/freedom-struggle-2.html>
- 1963 Medgar Evers killed on his front porch**
http://www.everstrIBUTE.org/house_tour.php
- 1963 President John Fitzgerald Kennedy assassinated**
<http://www.dallasnews.com/news/jfk50/photos/20130326-nov.-22-1963-the-day-jfk-was-assassinated.ece>
- 1963 March on Washington—Dr. King’s famous “I Have A Dream” speech**
<http://www.archives.gov/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf>
- 1964 Civil Rights Act of 1964**
<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/civil-rights-act/>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q11kvbJy0cs>
- 1964 Affirmative Action**
<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1970.html>
- 1965 Voting Rights Act is signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson**
http://www.core-online.org/History/voting_rights.htm
- 1966 The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense founded in Oakland**
http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/calcultures/ethnic_groups/subtopic1c.html
http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/black-panther-party-founded
<http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/BPP.htm>
- 1968 Dr. King’s speech, “I Have Been to the Mountaintop”**
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDl84vusXos>
<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/martin-luther-kings-final-speech-ive-mountaintop-full/story?id=18872817>
- 1968 Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated**
<http://history1900s.about.com/cs/martinlutherking/a/mlkassass.htm>
http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_kings_assassination_4_april_1968

1968 Senator Robert F. Kennedy is assassinated

<http://history1900s.about.com/od/1960s/a/Robert-Kennedy-Assassination.htm>

1968 Shirley Chisholm becomes the first African-American woman elected to Congress.

<http://history.house.gov/HistoricalHighlight/Detail/37113?ret=True>

<http://atyourlibrary.org/culture/shirley-chisholm-her-historic-run-congress-and-president-influenced-generations>

he Civil Rights movement beyond the 60s

<http://abhmuseum.org/2012/06/turning-the-tables-on-civil-rights-the-1970s-and-1980s/>

http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld/timeline/modern_01.html

Black Women in the Civil Rights Movement: 1960-1970

http://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/FreedomNow/tiffany_joseph_thesis.html

Gay Rights Movement

<http://time.com/184/gay-rights-timeline/>

Latino Civil Rights Movement

<http://www.tolerance.org/latino-civil-rights-timeline>

1970 The Women's Strike for Equality organized by NOW

http://womenshistory.about.com/od/feminism/a/strike_for_equality.htm

1971 Congressional Black Caucus is formed from the Democratic Select Committee

<http://reportingcivilrights.loa.org/timeline/year.jsp?year=1971>

https://books.google.com/books?id=YKkF8vQRcp0C&pg=PA103&lpg=PA103&dq=Democratic+Select+Committee&source=bl&ots=uDQS_XFKIY&sig=vwZ0CX0IQPMADxC8OKGCPmdGsS4&hl=en&sa=X&ei=52kJVc62Gs23yASYzoKwCw&ved=0CEAQ6AEwCA#v=onepage&q=Democratic%20Select%20Committee&f=false

1972 Barbara Jordan becomes the first African American woman from a Southern state to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives

<http://history.house.gov/People/Listing/J/JORDAN,-Barbara-Charline-%28J000266%29/>

1972 Andrew Young

<http://www.cnn.com/2013/07/26/us/andrew-young-fast-facts/>

1973 Maynard Jackson, first African American mayor of a major southern city

<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/government-politics/maynard-jackson-1938-2003>

<http://reportingcivilrights.loa.org/timeline/year.jsp?year=1973>

<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/civil-rights-movement>

1973 Woman's right to Privacy – Roe vs. Wade

http://www.pbs.org/wnet/supremecourt/rights/landmark_roe.html

The Women's Rights Movement 60s and 70s

<https://tavaana.org/en/content/1960s-70s-american-feminist-movement-breaking-down-barriers-women>

Indiana Academic Standards Alignment Guide

Reading – Literature

RL.1 – Read and comprehend a variety of literature independently and proficiently

RL.2 – Build comprehension and appreciation of literature by analyzing, inferring, and drawing conclusions about literary elements, themes, and central ideas

RL.3 – Build comprehension and appreciation of literature, using knowledge of literary structure and point of view

RL.4 – Build comprehension and appreciation of literature by connecting various literary works and analyzing how medium and interpretation impact meaning

Sample: 9-10.RL.2.3: *Analyze how dynamic characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.*

Lena Jefferson serves as a proxy for the audience throughout the show; she is often the only one who knows everything the audience knows. Explain how this knowledge changes her motivations throughout the play, citing evidence from the script.

Reading – Nonfiction

RN.2 – 11-12.RN.4.2: Synthesize and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Read [this obituary](#) of Maynard Jackson, the Atlanta mayor whose campaign forms the backbone of *What I Learned in Paris*. Based on what you learn, how is Jackson's real-world influence foreshadowed in the play? What lines or moments predict the types of legislation and action Mayor Jackson became famous for?

Reading – Vocabulary

RV.3 – Build comprehension and appreciation of literature and nonfiction texts by determining or clarifying figurative, connotative, and technical meanings

Sample: 9-10.RV.3.1: *Analyze the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in works of literature, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings.*

Throughout the play, Evie speaks very differently from the rest of the characters. What do Evie's speech patterns and word choices say about her character? Why would she choose to speak this way?

Cross-Curricular Connection: US Government

USG.3.13 Explain the electoral process in terms of election laws and election systems on the national, state and local level.

Think about the role each character in *What I Learned in Paris* played in the fictionalized version of Maynard Jackson's mayoral campaign. Research and learn more about those roles in current campaigns at the local, state, or national level. Explain the duties of various types of campaign operatives and the function they serve in the election process.

Resources

By Pearl Cleage

Plays

Late Bus to Mecca (1992)

Chain (1992)

Flyin' West (1992)

Blues for an Alabama Sky (1995)

Bourbon at the Border (1997)

We Speak Your Names: A Celebration, with Zaron W. Burnett (2005)

A Song for Coretta (2007)

*The Nacirema Society Requests the Honor of Your Presence
at a Celebration of Their First One Hundred Years* (2010)

What I Learned in Paris (2012)

Fiction

The Brass Bed and Other Stories (1991)

What Looks Like Crazy on an Ordinary Day (1997)

I Wish I Had a Red Dress (2001)

Some Things I Never Thought I'd Do (2003)

Babylon Sisters: A Novel (2005)

Baby Brother's Blues (2006)

Seen It All and Done the Rest (2008)

Till You Hear from Me (2010)

Just Wanna Testify (2011)

Non-fiction

Mad at Miles: A Black Woman's Guide to Truth (1990)

Deals with the Devil and Other Reasons to Riot (1993)

Things I Should Have Told My Daughter: Lies, Lessons, & Love Affairs (2014)

YouTube: Pearl Cleage

Creativity Conversation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exh1Q8IMVI8>

Alice Walker & Cleage for a Creativity Conversation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01GqEaPr5Ok>

An Interview

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zS6w2BXuodg>

We Speak Your Names

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xe4cFHBI580>

Other Books

A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration by Steven Hahn

Atlanta: Race, Class And Urban Expansion (Comparative American Cities) by Larry Keating
B. Smith: Rituals & Celebrations by Barbara Smith

Cooking with Love: Comfort Food that Hugs You by Carla Hall and Genevieve Ko

ESSENCE: A Salute to Michelle Obama by Editors of Essence Magazine

I Dream a World: Portraits of Black Women who Changed America by Brian Lanker

Inspiration: Profiles of Black Women Changing Our World by Crystal McCrary and Nathan Hale Williams and photographer Lauri Lyons

Jewels: 50 Phenomenal Black Women Over 50 by Michael Cunningham and Connie Briscoe

Maynard Jackson: A Biography by Robert A. Holmes

Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta (Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies) by Ronald H. Bayor

The Age of Conversation by Benedetta Craveri

The Black List by Timothy Greenfield-Sanders and Elvis Mitchell

The Timetables of African-American History: A Chronology of the Most Important People and Events in African-American History by Sharon Harley

White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism (Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America) by Kevin M. Kruse

DVDs

The Black List: Volume One (2008), *Volume Two* (2009) & *Volume Three* (2010)

Boycott (2001)

Chisholm '72: Unbought & Unbossed (2004)

Coffy (1973)

The Cosby Show (1984–1992)

Eyes On the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years 1954-1965 (2010)

For Love of Ivy (1968)

Ghosts of Mississippi (1996)

The Great Debaters (2007)

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner (1967)

The Help (2011)

How Stella Got Her Groove Back (1998)

Lackawanna Blues (2005)

Love & Basketball (2000)

A Raisin in the Sun (1961)

Sing Your Song (2011)

Something's Gotta Give (2003)

Sugar Hill (1974)

Waiting to Exhale (1995)

Pre-Show Questions

A great way to immerse into a period in history is to listen to the music of the time. Actors do this constantly. The year of the play is 1973. You can play some of the music of that year for the students, or have the students listen to some of the music on their own, and then have a class discussion on the commonalities of the songs of that year. How have the themes in song lyrics changed since 1973? How have lyric styles changed? How have music styles changed? How many of the recording artists from that era are still making music today? What songs are still being played today by the original artists and what songs have been covered or sampled? Why do you believe some of these songs have withstood the test of time?

What do we as individuals and as a community owe to the past, present, and future when it comes to issues such as voting, schooling, housing, employment, dating, religion, and enrichment? Who has been denied their rights on any of these issues in the 21st century? Cite historical examples of inequality. Which, if any, of these have been resolved? Do you foresee a time when such equalities will be eliminated? Why or why not?

Before and after the play, discuss with the students what they believe makes a mentor. How do we choose our mentors? How do mentors influence us, in both positive and negatives ways? After seeing the play, talk about these same issues, citing the characters and actions of the story. In what ways are our lives enriched by both having and/or being mentors?

How do communities benefit from having people of various, cultures, races, religions, and backgrounds holding political office?

Explore the America of the 1970s. Have your students research various topics like politics, dress, pop culture, inventions, etc. See “The World in 1973” on pages 10 and 11.

Post-Show Questions

This play looks at traditional male and female roles in the home and society. What was happening during the 1970s that makes this a weighty issue for the characters in the play? How have the actions taken by women and men during the 1970s affected male and female roles in 2015? What still remains the same? What are your feelings when you hear your elders say they miss some of the customs and manners of the past?

How much of changing our selves can be seen as a positive step, and in what instances could this be seen as damaging?

Ask the students to define linguistics. How is this field useful to various types of institutions and professions globally? Share with them some of the areas of linguistic study:

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/linguistics> .

Discuss phrases used by characters in the play that today would be considered politically incorrect. Are any of these phrase or variations of them prominent in our language choices today? When you hear someone using language that you consider inappropriate, how does this make you feel? What actions do you take, if any, to counteract the language of the other person?

In the play Evie says, “Think of my house as the vanguard!” Have the students look up the meaning of *vanguard*. What could the playwright be saying about this issue with the use of a word that has military connotations? Who are our vanguards today, and where do they meet to facilitate difficult conversations and concerns? What types of people and skills are necessary for conversations on topics that bring about fear, tension, anger, discomfort, and/or defenses?

The play confronts us with the historical significance of entering the front and/or the back door of homes and businesses. Discuss with the students what this means and how this symbol of social status and segregation still permeates cultures today, locally, nationally, and globally. What other status issues are part of the play, and how do they play out?

Why are there repercussions for past and present actions? Discuss this in terms of the actions of the characters in the play and for us today. Cite similarities and evolutions in social culture. Evie says, “Once people figure out a way to mix and mingle, everything else will be a breeze.” Why or why not is this statement valid? Cite actual events for either viewpoint.

J.P.’s response to Evie’s actions on the house brings up some concerns and questions. There is a cost to doing business with varying people. Do we or should we curtail our actions and desires in order not to offend those supporters we need and want? What price do we pay taking either stance?

What are the health benefits of deep breathing? What does each character do to take care of him or her self, both physically and mentally? How do they harm themselves? What do you do to protect your physical, mental and emotional health?

What is the gathering center of your neighborhood, town, or city? What makes it an exciting place to be? What community events have you celebrated there? What family or private events? What makes that place memorable?

Why or why not are growth and change vital for a city, a culture, a family, a person? Why do some of us hold onto traditional ceremonies, rituals, and lifestyles, and why do others choose alternatives?

Which character did you enjoy the most and why? Discuss how the actor's depiction of the character brought the playwright's creation to life for you.

How did the scenery, costumes, and music evoke the historic period of the play? What was familiar to you? What surprised you?

Writing Prompts

Write about what you believe a "true" friend should do for you. Should boundaries exist in a true friendship? How has friendship played out in your life? How have you been a true friend to someone? What can be the costs and gains in friendship for all involved?

Do you think it is possible to tell the truth 100% of the time about everything? Explore the internal and external challenges in this. What personal and social obstacles exist in telling the truth 100% of the time about everything? Should this be everyone's goal? Are there exceptions to this idea, and if so, what are they, and why? Is there a price humanity and society pay for both telling and not telling truths?

What do you want to change in your life or about yourself and why? How would you want go about making this change? Comment on the changes the characters make in the play and why you believe they made them. How do age, gender, and education factor in?

Are being alone and being lonely two different things? What is society's viewpoint on loneliness? If you are comfortable being alone, what things do you do? And if you are not, what actions do you take?

Write a review of the play. What moments made an impression on you? How do the elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound work with the actors' performance of the text to tell the story? What ideas or themes did the play make you think about? How did it make you feel? Post your review on the IRT website: <http://reviews.irtlive.com/>

Activities

Nowhere is gender bias more prevalent than in salaries for the same type of work and positions. Have the class create a list of professions and then complete a chart of salary differences between men and women. This project will be more interesting if the jobs listed vary in status, power, etc. Have the class find news reports on gender salary discrimination to share with the class. Discuss "the glass ceiling" and how it is apparent in the play. How does it manifest itself in the world today.

Get involved in an election campaign. This can be a school election, a local election for town council or mayor, or go grand scale and investigate what you can do for the next presidential election. Perhaps you have been thinking about running yourself for student council. Get a team together and start working on your campaign platform.

Old wives' tales and superstitions are curious things. Some have disappeared over time, some are steeped in one particular culture or country, and a number of them take different forms in different places among different peoples. The theatre is full of superstitions. What other groups in life are prone to superstition? Have a discussion with the students about the superstitions they practice or ignore. Have they found any truth in these superstitions? Is it a generational thing? Are those from certain faiths or denominations more or less likely to believe in superstitions? You might have the students work in pairs on this topic. Here are a few websites to help the class get started:

<http://www.corsinet.com/trivia/scary.html>

<http://www.almanac.com/content/house-and-home-superstitions>

<http://www.nkayesel.com/2014/02/25/32-bizarre-superstitions-and-old-wives-tales-in-singapore/>

Evie is all about personal style. Have the students explore their personal style in fashion, interior design, architecture, and automobiles. They can create a style binder, board, PowerPoint, or Pinterest page on their style. What current and/or historic figures are associated with this style? What are the dominating colors, shapes, and textures of this style? Have the students write about their choices, in conjunction with the images they have chosen.

Have a visitor come and talk with the students about neighborhood expansion (positive and negative), redevelopment, revitalization, restoration, and gentrification. Put up a neighborhood map in your classroom. How are your students' various neighborhoods similar to each other, and how are they different? Have students answer these questions on post-it notes and place on the map you created.

Where do you currently reside and why?

Where would you like to reside and why?

Where would never want to live and why?

The map you create and post can open these questions broader to places across the United States and/or beyond. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of living in various nations around the world. Use three colors of pushpins to symbolize the three questions, and then have students put the results into statistical data. What can you learn from this data?

Conduct your own salon! Create cards with topics that will bring about deep conversation. Or use the many card sets that have been created to stimulate conversations for families, teens, couples, etc. If done at school, try to find a way to change the classroom space to something more comfortable and conducive to conversation.

Atlanta Vocabulary

Although the characters in the play are fictional, almost all the other names, places, and events mentioned in the play are real names of people, places, and events in Atlanta, Georgia.

an Atlanta moment

Today in Atlanta, WXIA-TV, 11 Alive, features a web page of feel-good stories under the heading “Moments.” This line may be a reference to such a local news feature in 1973, when that station was WQXI-TV.

Black Image Theatre

The Black Image Theatre was founded in the late 1960s by a group of Clark, Morehouse, and Spelman graduates. The company focused on political theatre.

Buckhead

Buckhead is an affluent uptown district of Atlanta, featuring large single-family homes situated among dense forests and rolling hills.



A home in Buckhead.

Cascade Heights

Cascade Heights is an affluent neighborhood in southwest Atlanta. Its white population moved out in the 1960s as affluent African Americans began buying homes there. Today it is, in many ways, a black mirror of the white neighborhoods in northwest Atlanta, with notable celebrities in residence, several gated communities, and two golf courses.

City Attorney

The chief legal advisor for the city of Atlanta.

city sanitation workers decided to go out on strike

Atlanta sanitation workers went on strike in March and April 1970.

Columbus, Georgia

Columbus is the county seat of Muscogee County, located on the west central border of Georgia, 100 miles southwest of Atlanta. In 1940, Columbus had a population of 53,280.

Coronet

The Coronet movie theatre specialized in the new spate of black movies that Hollywood was beginning to produce but that mainstream cinemas were reluctant to show in the early 1970s.

Fair Street

Fair Street ran from Stone Mountain, Georgia (located East of Atlanta) to downtown Atlanta. Today it is known as Memorial Drive.

Fort Benning

Fort Benning is a United States Army post outside Columbus, Georgia. During World War II, the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion, an all-black airborne unit, trained at Fort Benning.

Habersham Road

Habersham Road runs through the Tuxedo Park neighborhood, where the Georgia Governor's Mansion is located, in the Buckhead district.

Henderson, Jake

Jake Henderson Jr. (1944-2010) was the manager of Henderson Travel Service Inc., the nation's oldest black travel agency. He was active in Maynard Jackson's campaigns for mayor.

Hunter Street

Today known as Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.

Inman Park

Inman Park is a neighborhood on the east side of Atlanta, a rural oasis of grand Victorian mansions.

Jackson, Bunnie

Bunnie Jackson-Ransom, married to Maynard Jackson from 1965 to 1976.

Jackson, Patterson, Parks and Franklin

Maynard Jackson was a partner in the first black law firm in Georgia's history.

Little Five Points

Little Five Points is a district 2.5 miles east of Downtown Atlanta (which is centered around its own Five Points). Both neighborhoods feature intersections of five streets. Famous for the alternative culture it brings to Atlanta, Little Five Points is a melting pot of sub-cultures.

Matador Room

The room at Paschal's where Martin Luther King and the SCLC frequently held meetings and planning sessions.

Midtown

Midtown is the second largest business district in the city of Atlanta, situated between the commercial and financial districts of Downtown to the south and Buckhead to the north. The district is the center of the city's arts scene.

Morehouse-Spelman Players

The Atlanta-Morehouse-Spelman Players was active from the mid-1930s to the 1980s, utilizing men from Morehouse and women from Spelman as well as graduate students from Atlanta U.

north side

The north side of Atlanta includes Buckhead and other affluent, historically white areas.

Paschal's *(pictured at right)*

A restaurant in Atlanta, gathering place the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement.

Peachtree Street

The main street of Atlanta.

Rich's

Rich's was Atlanta's top department store, located downtown from 1929 to 1976.



Southwest Atlanta

Southwest Atlanta features many African American neighborhoods, including Adams Hill, Ben Hill, Cascade Heights, and Collier Heights.

Sweet Auburn

The Sweet Auburn Historic District is a historic African-American neighborhood, site of Ebenezer Baptist Church, where Martin Luther King Jr. and his father preached. In 1956, *Fortune* magazine called Sweet Auburn "the richest Negro street in the world."

Talmadge, Herman

Herman Talmadge (1913–2002) served as Governor of Georgia from 1947 to 1955 and as a U.S. Senator from 1957 to 1981. In 1968, Maynard Jackson ran against Talmadge, a diehard segregationist. Jackson lost by a 3-to-1 margin, but he carried the city of Atlanta.

Virginia Highlands

Virginia-Highland is a neighborhood just east of Midtown, famous for its bungalows and other historic houses. It is regularly voted as Atlanta's most desirable neighborhood.

Other Vocabulary

Bunker, Archie

Archie Bunker was a fictional character in the top-rated American television sitcom *All in the Family* (1971-1979), a reactionary, conservative, blue-collar bigot.

Chinaman's chance

The origin of this phrase, meaning little or no chance at all, is in the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad (1863-1869). Chinese migrant workers carrying unstable bottles of nitroglycerine were often killed in accidental explosions

Democrat in the White House.

In October 1973, President Richard Nixon, a Republican, had been in office since 1969, when he succeeded Democrat Lyndon Johnson.

Evers, Medgar

Medgar Evers (1925–1963) was an African-American civil rights activist involved in efforts to overturn segregation at the University of Mississippi. Although he was assassinated in 1963, his killer was not convicted of the murder until 1994. Evers's murder and the resulting trials inspired civil rights protests, as well as numerous works of art, music, and film.

Georgetown

Georgetown is a historic neighborhood in northwest Washington, D.C., home to many famous politicians and lobbyists, one of the top 20 wealthiest counties in the nation.

Gillespie, Dizzy

Dizzy Gillespie (1917-1993) is considered one of the greatest jazz trumpeters of all time. Among his many skills, he was an expert at circular breathing.

Harriman, Pamela

Pamela Harriman (1920–1997) was an English-born socialite. Her Georgetown townhouse was a gathering place for many notable Washington, D.C., figures in the 1970s.

Howard

Chartered by Congress in 1867, Howard University is a private, coeducational, nonsectarian, historically black university located in Washington, D.C.

“It was the best of times ... It was the worst of times”

The beginning of the first sentence of Charles Dickens's novel *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859).

Kennedy, Bobby

Robert F. Kennedy (1925–1968) was U.S. Attorney General from 1961 to 1964, serving under his older brother, President John F. Kennedy. He was a leading candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in the 1968 election when he was assassinated on June 5, 1968.

Marshall, Thurgood

Thurgood Marshall (1908–1993) was an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, serving from 1967 until 1991. Marshall was the Court's first African-American justice. Before becoming a judge, Marshall argued the winning case in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

new age

The New Age movement is a spiritual movement that developed in Western nations during the 1970s. The movement is generally characterized by a holistic view of the cosmos, an emphasis on self-spirituality, a focus on alternative therapies, and a belief in channeling.

salon

A salon is a gathering of people under the roof of an inspiring host, to amuse one another and to refine the taste and increase the knowledge of the participants through conversation.

Stein, Gertrude

Gertrude Stein (1874–1946) was an American writer of novels, poetry, and plays. A literary innovator and pioneer of Modernist literature, Stein's work broke with the narrative, linear, and temporal conventions of 19th-century.

Left Bank

The Left Bank is the southern bank of the River Seine in Paris. The term generally refers to the Paris of such artists, writers, and philosophers as Gertrude Stein, Picasso, Matisse, Sartre, Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. The phrase implies a sense of bohemianism, counterculture, and creativity.

Gertrude Stein's

Left Bank apartment

In the early decades of the 20th century, a renowned Saturday evening gathering place for expatriate American artists and writers and others noteworthy in the world of vanguard arts and letters. The gatherings brought together confluences of talent and thinking that would help define modernism in literature and art..

Gertrude Stein's Paris apartment.



Steinem, Gloria

Journalist Gloria Steinem was one of the founders of *Ms.* magazine. Throughout the 1970s she was perhaps the most well known leader of and spokeswoman for the feminist movement.

student riots in 68

A leftist movement that quickly grew from a peaceful student sit-in to a nationwide strike involving 11 million workers. Although events sometimes turned violent, they also had artistic and festive aspects, with songs, imaginative graffiti, posters, and slogans. “*Mai 68*” is considered to this day as a cultural, social, and moral turning point in the history of France.

Mai 68



Toklas, Alice B.

Alice B. Toklas (1877–1967), Gertrude Stein’s confidante, lover, cook, secretary, muse, editor, critic, and general organizer. The two were a couple from 1907 until Stein’s death in 1946.

the Alice B. Toklas recipe

Toklas published a literary memoir, a 1954 book that mixed reminiscences and recipes under the title *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook*, famous for its recipe for marijuana brownies.

Walker, Madam C. J.

Sarah Breedlove (1867–1919), known as Madam C. J. Walker is regarded as the first female self-made millionaire in America. She made her fortune by developing and marketing a successful line of beauty and hair products for black women.

Madam C. J. Walker’s place on the Hudson River

Villa Lewaro, located in Irvington, New York, was commissioned by Madam Walker from Vertner Tandy, the first registered African-American architect. Madam Walker lived there for one year before her death in 1919. During the time they lived there, both Madam Walker and her daughter made the house a center for music, art, and African American culture.

Villa Lewaro.



Works of Art – Kyle Ragsdale & the IRT

Last summer the IRT initiated a unique collaboration with one of Indianapolis's most prolific artists, Kyle Ragsdale. IRT executive artistic director Janet Allen worked with Kyle to create an original piece of art to represent each of the IRT's nine plays that make up the 2014-15 season. The IRT has used these images throughout the season and displayed them in the theatre. The IRT hosted a First Friday event in October to unveil these original pieces as well as some of Kyle Ragsdale's other pieces.

"This was such a fun play to read, and interesting, because I didn't do research. I started reading it, not quite sure what kind of play it was. Finally I realized, oh, this is a romantic comedy, but you don't figure that out right away. I guess when you're watching you do, but it was really fun to play with those seventies costumes in Atlanta. I really enjoyed working on that one."

—Kyle Ragsdale

What I Learned in Paris by Kyle Ragsdale



Going to the Theatre: Audience Role & Responsibility

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:



Leave mp3 players, cameras, mobile phones, and other distracting and noise-making electronic devices at home.

You may think texting is private, but the light and the motion are very annoying to those around you and on stage. Do not text during the performance.

Food and drink must stay in the lobby.

The house lights dimming and going out signal the audience to get quiet and settle in your seats: the play is about to begin.

Don't talk with your neighbors during the play. It distracts people around you and the actors on stage. Even if you think they can't hear you, they can.

Never throw anything onto the stage. People could be injured.

Remain in your seat during the play. Use the restroom before or after the show.

Focus all your attention on the play to best enjoy the experience. Listen closely to the dialogue and sound effects, and look at the scenery, lights, and costumes. These elements all help to tell the story.

Get involved in the story. Laugh, cry, sigh, gasp—whatever the story draws from you. The more emotionally involved you are, the more you will enjoy the play.

Remain at your seat and applaud during the curtain call because this is part of the performance too. It gives you a chance to recognize a job well done and the actors a moment to thank you for your attention.