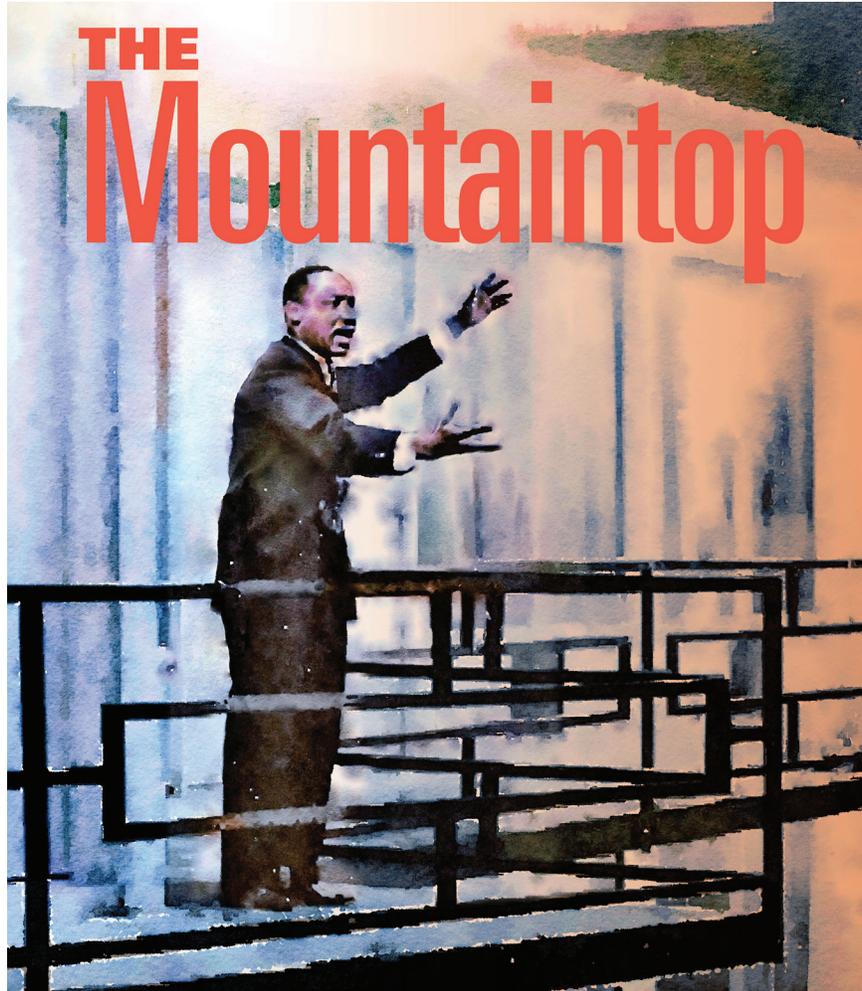


PROJECT DISCOVERY STUDY GUIDE



The Mountaintop
by **Katori Hall**
Directed by **Kent Gash**

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Prepared by Trinity Rep's Education Department, Maggie Seymour, and Camille Shea



trinity **repertory** **company**

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THEATER AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE & DISCUSSION

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY AND GO OVER WITH YOUR CLASSES BEFORE THE SHOW

TEACHERS:

Speaking to your students about theater etiquette is ESSENTIAL. Students should be aware that this is a live performance and that they should not talk during the show. **If you do nothing else to prepare your students to see the play, please take some time to talk to them about theater etiquette in an effort to help the students better appreciate their experience.**

It will enhance their enjoyment of the show and allow other audience members to enjoy the experience. The questions below can help guide the discussions. Thank you for your help and enjoy the show!

ETIQUETTE:

What is the role of the audience in a live performance? How is it different from seeing a film? Why can't you chew gum or eat popcorn at a live theater performance? Why can't you talk? What can happen in live theater that cannot happen in cinema?

Reiterate that students may not chew gum, eat, or talk during the performance. Please make sure all cell phones and pagers are turned off. Recording devices and cameras are strictly prohibited. If there is a disturbance, they will be asked to leave and the class will not be invited back to the theater. Students may not leave the building during intermission.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS BEFORE SEEING THE SHOW AT TRINITY REP:

What are the **differences between live theater and cinema?** (Two dimensional vs. three dimensional; larger than life on the screen vs. life-size; recorded vs. live, etc.) Discuss the nature of film as mass-produced, versus the one-time only nature of live performances. Talk about original art works versus posters. Which do they feel is more valuable? Why?

Observation #1 – When you get into the theater, look around. What do you see? Observe the lighting instruments around the room and on the ceiling. Look at the set. Does it look realistic or abstract? Try to guess how the set will be used during the show.

Observation #2 – Discuss the elements that go into producing a live performance: The lights, set, props,

costumes, and stage direction. All the people involved in the “behind the scenes” elements of the theater are working backstage as the play unfolds before the students’ eyes. Tell them to be aware of this as they watch the show. Observe the lighting cues. How do special effects work? How do the actors change costumes so fast?

Actors in a live performance are very attuned to the audience and are interested in the students’ reactions to the play. Ask the students to write letters to the actors about the characters they played and to ask questions of the actors. Send these letters to: Trinity Repertory Company, c/o Education, 201 Washington St., Providence, RI 02903 or email to: education@trinityrep.com.



Mr. and Mrs. King with their daughter, Bernice

USING THIS STUDY GUIDE IN YOUR CLASSROOM

A LETTER FROM OUR SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS MANAGER, MATT TIBBS

Welcome to Trinity Rep and the 49th season of Project Discovery! The education staff at Trinity Rep had a lot of fun preparing this study guide, and hope that the activities included will help you incorporate the play into your academic study. It is also structured to help you to introduce performance into your classroom through the

- Community Building in Your Classroom
- Inspiration and Background on the Artist
- Entering and Comprehending Text
- Creating Text for Performance
- Performing in Your Class
- Reflecting on Your Performance

Trinity Rep's Project Discovery student matinees help high school students in the following common core areas (for more information on the National Core Arts Standards, visit <http://nationalartsstandards.org/>):



Resident acting company member, Joe Wilson Jr., leading an in-school workshop

- Initiate and participate effectively in a ranges of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively (CCS. ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1)

- Analyze how complex 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 (CCSS.RL.9-10.3)

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (CCSS. RL.9-10.4)

- Investigate how cultural perspectives, community ideas, and personal beliefs impact a drama/theatre work (TH: Cn10.1.I.)

- Analyze and compare artistic choices developed from personal experiences in multiple drama/theatre works (TH: Re8.1.I.)

- Respond to what is seen, felt, and heard in a drama/ theatre work to develop criteria for artistic choices (TH: Re7.1.I.)

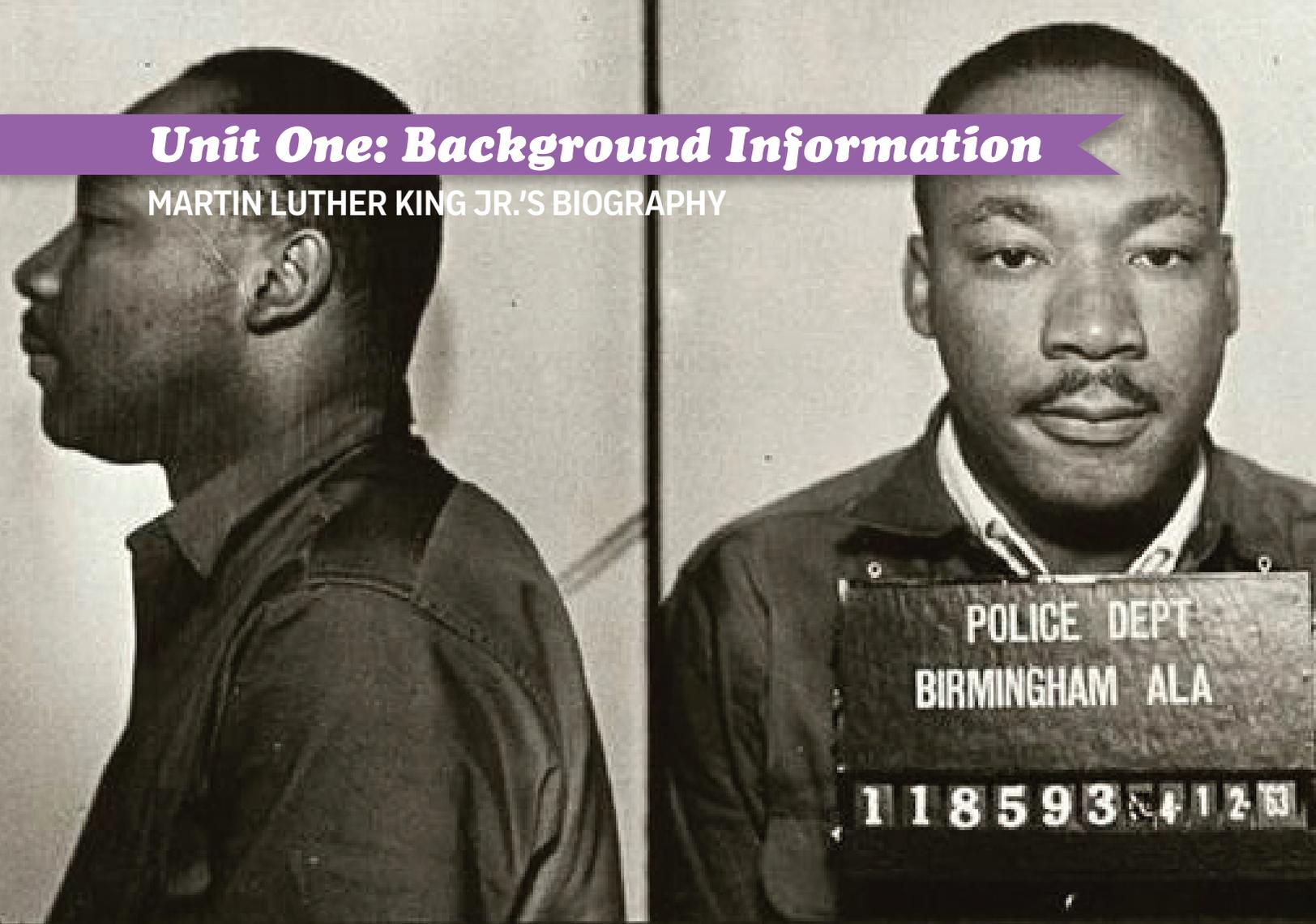
- Evaluate and analyze problems and situations in a drama/ theatre work from an audience perspective (TH: Re9.1.I.)

Enjoy the show!

—Matt Tibbs, School Partnerships Manager

Unit One: Background Information

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.'S BIOGRAPHY



Martin Luther King, Jr., (January 15, 1929-April 4, 1968) was born Michael Luther King, Jr., but later had his name changed to Martin. His grandfather began the family's long tenure as pastors of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, serving from 1914 to 1931; his father served from 1931 to 1971, and from 1960 until his death Martin Luther acted as co-pastor. Martin Luther attended segregated public schools in Georgia, graduating from high school at the age of fifteen; he received his B. A. in 1948 from Morehouse College, a historically black college in Atlanta from which both his father and grandfather had graduated. After three years of theological study at Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania where he was elected president of a predominantly white senior class, he was awarded his Bachelor of Divinity in 1951. With a fellowship won at Crozer, he enrolled in graduate studies at Boston University, completing his residence for the doctorate in 1953 and receiving his degree in 1955. In Boston, he met and married Coretta Scott and together they had two sons and two daughters.

In 1954, Martin Luther King became pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. Always a strong worker for civil rights, King was, by this time, a member of the executive committee of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the leading organization of its kind in the nation. He was ready, then, early in December 1955, to accept the leadership of one of the first great nonviolent civil rights demonstrations in the United States, the bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama. The boycott lasted 382 days. On December 21, 1956, after the Supreme Court of the United States had declared unconstitutional the laws requiring segregation on buses, and the buses were desegregated. During these days of boycott, King was arrested, his home was bombed, he was subjected to personal abuse, but at the same time he emerged as one of the greatest civil rights leaders in the nation.

In 1957, he was elected president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization formed to provide new leadership for

the now burgeoning civil rights movement. The ideals for this organization he took from Christianity; its operational techniques from Gandhi. In the eleven-year period between 1957 and 1968, King traveled over six million miles and spoke over twenty-five hundred times, appearing wherever there was injustice, protest, and action; and meanwhile he wrote five books as well as numerous articles. In these years, he led a massive protest in Birmingham, Alabama, that caught the attention of the entire world, providing what he called a coalition of conscience. This movement inspired his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail", a manifesto of the revolution. He planned the drives in Alabama for the registration of black voters. In addition to directing the peaceful march on Washington, D.C., of 250,000 people to whom he delivered his address, "I Have a Dream. During this time he conferred with President

John F. Kennedy and campaigned for President Lyndon B. Johnson and was arrested upwards of twenty times and assaulted at least four times. He continued to grow and inspire those around him, winning five honorary degrees, and the title of Man of the Year thanks to Time magazine in 1963. King became not only the symbolic leader of American blacks but also a world figure.

At the age of thirty-five, Martin Luther King, Jr., was the youngest man to have received the Nobel Peace Prize. When notified of his selection, he announced that he would turn over the prize money of \$54,123 to the furtherance of the civil rights movement.

On the evening of April 4, 1968, while standing on the balcony of his motel room in Memphis, Tennessee, where he was to lead a protest march in sympathy with striking garbage workers of that city, he was assassinated.

King and his daughter Bernice



Unit One: Background Information

BIOGRAPHY OF KATORI HALL

Katori Hall was born in Memphis Tennessee on May 10, 1981. She graduated from Columbia University in 2003 with a degree in African- American Studies and Creative Writing. During her time at Columbia, she was awarded top departmental honors from the Institute for Research in African-American Studies. After her time at Columbia, she went to graduate school and received her MFA in Acting from the American Repertory Theater's Institute for Advanced Theater Training at Harvard University in 2005. She continued her schooling, graduating in 2009 from the Julliard School's Lila Acheson Wallace playwriting program.

Her playwriting career took off soon after graduating from Julliard, when in 2009 *The Mountaintop* premiered in London with David Harewood as King and Lorraine Burroughs as Camae. The play was beloved by critics, Evening Standard nominated Harewood for Best Actor, and Burroughs was nominated for Best Actress in the Olivier Awards. The production itself was nominated for Best Play in the Olivier Awards and Hall herself made history when she won Best New Play at Laurence Olivier Awards in March 2010, making her the first black woman in history to win the award.

In 2011, *The Mountaintop* premiered on Broadway starring Samuel L. Jackson and Angela Bassett. The play was met with mixed reviews, some people feeling that in humanizing Dr. King, Hall was on the verge of blasphemy. She states in response to these views, "there was no grand plan to snatch him off the pedestal... in their eyes, I'm disrupting so many things. I'm an Uncle Tom; I'm a traitor to my race because I've decided to do my job and be a dramatist and put a human being on stage and not an idea."

From Broadway, Hall was awarded a Residency Five Initiative in New York. This is a new program that guarantees all of its participants three full world-premier productions over a five-year residency. She is currently working on her directorial film debut, directing an adaptation of her own play, *Hurt Village*.

Most recently, in 2014, Hall's play, *Our Lady of Kibeho* premiered at The Pershing Square Signature Theater, telling the story of a group of Rwandan girls claiming to have seen a vision of the Virgin Mary.

Other plays by Hall include *Hoodoo Love*, *Remembrance*, *Saturday Night/Sunday Morning*, *WHADDABLOOCLOT!!!!*, and *Pussy Valley*.



Katori Hall

Unit One: Background Information

A CONVERSATION WITH AN ACTOR

Trinity Rep's Ziyi Yang talks to our resident acting company member, Joe Wilson Jr., about the challenges of portraying America's greatest civil rights leader in Trinity Rep's production of The Mountaintop, which begins on January 12th.

Ziyi Yang: Tell me about your history with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Joe: I have been studying King for quite some time. I was involved in speech and debate and forensics competitions in high school and in college. I was always intrigued by the oratory of the man, and would often use his speeches in competitions. Also, coming from a background where my father is a United Methodist Minister, I have heard my share of fiery sermons. From a very early age, I've had an appreciation for oratory. That's actually how I ended up in acting, not because I wanted to be on stage necessarily as a performer, but because I wanted to be a politician, delivering political speeches. What I've found in my research about this man is that, first and foremost, he was a man, and as with every human being, fallible. I think it's easy to get caught up in the iconography of a person or a time, but King was also a man with a wife and children, who had his own faults and challenges, and that's what a character is. That's what makes us human. Part of what I'm doing, in the act of "dramatizing" a man's life, is to find out about the drama, conflicts, crisis, and shortfalls this character is grappling with in his quest for fulfillment. It's thrilling to explore a piece about someone we know so well historically, that uses a real-life moment as a jumping-off point, and reimagines a time when he is dealing with his humanness in a very immediate way. A married man, away from home, finds himself alone in a hotel room with a beautiful woman, whom he finds attractive. This play is about a man who is tempted, who has fears, a man who is leading a movement, but a man who every single day questions what he does, what would be the outcome of this struggle, and what would become of him? What makes this event even more weighted is that we know

what happens the next day. In a lot of his speeches, King talked about what we as earthly beings should be concerned about, and where, when and how we will find our ultimate reward. Having a chance to be with a person of this stature at this moment in his life — even if it's a fictionalized moment— is an extraordinary opportunity and challenge for an actor.

I'm also excited about this production because it will be opening on MLK Day. We'll be just coming out of an election and it'll be interesting to see what significance this play takes on and how it resonates with us, considering all that continues to happen in America today and all the discussions that we will have had up until this point.

Ziyi: There's this third-person perspective in King that always fascinates me.

Joe: I hate talking about death, but King did not. Near the end of his speech called The Drum Major Instinct, he talks about what he wanted to be said or not said after he died. Even when performing the speech, I still sometimes become uncomfortable and embarrassed by even saying those words in that moment of the text. Maybe because of my own fear of death, but I also don't know what it's like to be caught between leading a dangerous, national civil rights movement, and being just an ordinary preacher from the South, caring for a family. Do people in certain positions have a sense about when they are about to transition, or is there an awareness of that transitioning? Is that part of what makes someone special? A transformational figure? It's a gift to be able to mobilize people on the scale he did, and to have that kind of effect on the dialogue surrounding human rights. In The Drum Major Instinct, Dr. King speaks about "life's final common denominator," as he puts it, "...that something that we call death." He says what he wants to be said at his death, "Tell them not to mention that I have a Nobel Peace Prize... tell them not to mention that I have three or four hundred other awards — that's not important... I'd like somebody to mention that day that Martin

Unit One: Background Information

A CONVERSATION WITH AN ACTOR

Luther King, Jr., tried to give his life serving others." There's a piece in me that is asking: Is that a gift to be that aware? To be at that level of selflessness speaks to this tense change. And when do you stop believing that you belong to you, but that you belong to something much bigger, that you belong to history?

Ziyi: What are the challenges you are facing in this play?

Joe: I am going to be portraying one of the most important, influential, documented, and photographed people ever. Folks will have expectations: How do I look? How do I sound? I will have my own look and sound. But in the end, none of that matters. Of course I'm going to do all I can to channel this man both physically and vocally, but as an actor I'm not looking at it from the standpoint of mimicry. In a beautiful way, this play forces me to dig into Dr. King's humanity. Iconography is something for y'all to recognize, or attach to what you see and hear, it's not for me to play. My job is to create a character, and to make you believe that you are watching Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. trying to work out some personal things in front of you, the audience. Hopefully the person you see in the beginning of the play will be a different person at the end of the play. That's ultimately why we come to see theater — we want to see people transform. I visited the King Memorial when I went to the TCG [Theatre Communications Group] National Conference in DC because of my Fox Foundation Resident Actor Fellowship. It's a huge granite statue with other nearby stones etched with many of his most famous quotes. It was staggering and breathtaking to be in the presence of something so large, but also to be able to see a reflection of myself in someone so great and a reflection of blackness among all those monuments to white people in the Mall. For people of color, it's moving to experience the power of that tribute and feel a connection as deeply as I'm able to feel. On that night at the Lorraine Hotel, King would have never imagined that he would be memorialized in such a way. I kept thinking, would he be embarrassed by that?

Ziyi: The play seems to wrestle with this notion of the past, present, and future. Why do you think this piece is important today?

Joe: My answer's going to be affected by my state of mind about the political climate, but facts matter. History matters. We can't understand how to move forward until we understand what has happened, and pledge not to commit the same mistakes we've made in the past. We live in a time when facts don't seem to matter anymore. I'd rather you not talk at all than make up "facts." For me, the past, present, and future work together, and we can't ignore one part and hope for a better outcome. We can't talk about a social justice agenda — be it poverty, mass incarceration, gender and sexuality, or police brutality — until we acknowledge that this country has had a history of race relations that we have not adequately dealt with. When we ignore the facts, that's painful to people. For five years we have watched one particular person claim that the first African-American man could not be the President of the United States because he wasn't born here. That was painful to people of color. It goes back to a point in history when black people had to present papers to prove who they were claiming to be. A knowledge of history helps people to understand what has happened, listen to what's being said now, and use that information to move forward in a healthy way. I think the play says something very powerful about understanding the connectivity of all those things.

Ziyi: I think you'll have a great time working on this piece.

Joe: I think so too. Mia Ellis and I did *Intimate Apparel* [2004] and *Melancholy Play* [2015] together. We had a wonderful time. She is a wonderful actor, with a big heart. Mia is a beautiful spirit inside and out. She is also not afraid to call "bullshit" when she is confronted with it. But she does so with class. So I'm really really looking forward to being on the boards with her in this production, in these roles.

Unit One: Background Information

MENTIONED IN *THE MOUNTAINTOP*

Assassination

James Earl Ray, fugitive from Missouri State Penitentiary. He was arrested June 8, 1968 in London at Heathrow Airport. On March 10, 1969 Ray entered a plea of guilty and was sentenced to 99 years in the Tennessee State Penitentiary. He died in Prison on April 23, 1998

Although Ray was convicted of the crime, the King family and others believe that the assassination was carried out by a conspiracy involving the U.S. government as alleged by Loyd Jowers in 1993 and that Ray was a scapegoat. The jury concluded that Jowers and "others were part of a conspiracy to kill King", but in 2000, these findings were rejected by the US Department of Justice.

King was in Memphis for a Sanitation Workers strike. The workers were striking because black workers were paid lower wages and received no pay if they stayed home during bad weather, unlike their white counterparts. King's plane had been grounded thanks to a bomb threat, but he made is planned speech that day, known as, "I've Been to the Mountaintop".

Much like the played hinted, after the autopsy Taylor Branch revealed that King had the heart of a 60 year-old man when he died at the age of 39.



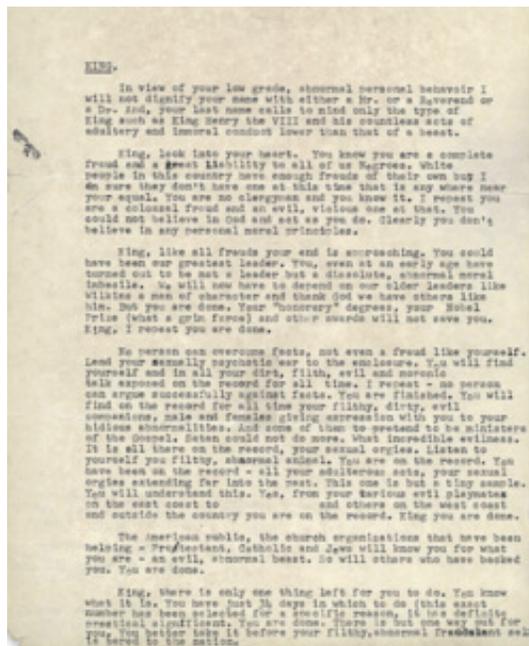
James Earl Ray

Infidelity

Coretta, King's wife, received a letter that was unsigned and was believed to be from J Edgar Hoover's FBI. The letter led King to believe that the FBI had evidence of his infidelity and was trying to break up his marriage, and discredit his name. The letter noted all the women with whom he had had relations and rather than being signed, concluded with, "there is only one thing left for you to do... You know what it is."

This letter was sent to King and received by his wife in 1964. It was an attempt to take down and reveal King, to put a stop to his growing power. Some believe it was simply to push him out of his leadership position and some believe it was pushing him to take his own life, but either way, when the news was leaked to the press, it made little to no difference to his rise in power. King continued on to win the Nobel Peace prize that year and become one of the most revered civil rights leaders.

Malcolm X was a human rights activist and Muslim minister. He was a leading member of the Nation of Islam, a new religious group pushing for black self-reliance and ultimately, a return of black Americans to Africa.



Unit One: Background Information

MENTIONED IN *THE MOUNTAINTOP*

Malcolm worked to promote the Nations beliefs until his break with the religion in 1964. Some of those beliefs were that black people are the original people of the world, white people are "devils", black people are superior to whites and that the demise of the white race is imminent. He also believed black Americans should defend and advance themselves by any means necessary.

His views and speeches were widely popular for African Americans in the north and west of the U.S. who felt that they were tired of waiting for freedom and Malcolm X better articulated their complaints than the civil rights movement.

Black Panthers, or The Black Panther Party, originally named Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, was an African American revolutionary party, founded in 1966 in Oakland, California, by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. Many believe that Malcolm X's rhetoric and theories helped found and popularize the party, whose original purpose was to patrol African American neighborhoods to protect residents from acts of police brutality. Huey Newton did stress that he did not believe the party had done things the way Malcolm would have, had he still been alive.

The Panthers eventually developed into a Marxist revolutionary group that called for the arming of all African Americans, the exemption of African Americans from the draft and from all sanctions of so-called white America, the release of all African Americans from jail, and the payment of compensation to African Americans for centuries of exploitation by white Americans. At its peak in the late 1960s, Panther membership exceeded 2,000, and the organization operated chapters in several major American cities.

Larry Payne was a 16-year-old African American was killed by Patrolman LD Jones following a march in support of the Memphis Sanitation Strike on Thursday March 28 in 1968. He was the only fatality that day, but reports surfaced of 60 injured and 276 arrested. He was killed by a shotgun blast.

Jesse Jackson was a leader of the civil rights movement, ran for president twice. He served as a shadow U.S. senator for the District of Columbia.

Ralph Abernathy was a leader of the civil rights movement and one of MLK's closest friends.



Malcolm X



Jesse Jackson



Ralph Abernathy

Unit One: Background Information

CASTING THE MOUNTAINTOP

One of the most infamous productions of *The Mountaintop* was performed with the Department of Pan-African Studies' African Community Theatre Kent State University in Ohio in 2015. This production chose to double-cast a white and black actor to play the role of Dr. King and a black actor to play Camae. An interesting choice that has stirred up a great deal of controversy. Director Michael Oatman explains his choices stating, "I truly wanted to explore the issue of racial ownership and authenticity. I didn't want this to be a stunt, but a true exploration of King's wish that we all be judged by the content of our character and not the color of our skin". He further explains his decision stating, "I wanted the contrast . . . I wanted to see how the words rang differently or indeed the same, coming from two different actors, with two different racial backgrounds."

Katori Hall, author of *The Mountaintop*, published her response online. Hall stated that she had not been contacted regarding this casting choice and she did not approve. She has since changed the licensing of the play to state, "Both characters are intended to be played by actors who are African-American or Black. Any other casting choice requires the prior approval of the author."

She had the chance to discuss Oatman's choices with him after the close of the play and was disappointed that there were no talkbacks scheduled to explore this choice further and although many stayed to see the production,

a great number of people stormed out halfway through. She argues that if this had been a true exploration, this production missed the feedback opportunity to understand the impact of their choices further. Hall states that she has been a proponent of "race-revolutionary casting" but that she has also committed herself to "articulating a certain skin experience" in her plays and that this play in particular, she felt, required two black actors. She describes Oatman's choice as "disrespectful... especially to a community that has rare moments of witnessing itself, both creatively and literally, in the world."

She goes on to describe the black authorial experience saying, "We are using theater to demand a witnessing. Our experiences have been shaped by a ragged history, and dark skin has proved to be a dangerous inheritance." She closes out her article stating, "I suppose this is what breaks my heart most of all. We live in a world where a director wants to measure the impact of King's words coming from a black body versus a white one. Does this director think that an audience wouldn't accept them from a black body?... Even in the theater, we are still fighting silencing, erasure. But our experiences and the brown skin that shapes them need to be witnessed. Our stories are worthy of that pedestal we call the stage, and our black bodies must stand unaltered in that spotlight, so that our skin, like King's, can reflect back our humanity and we can all see ourselves in it."



Christal Christian and Robert Branch rehearsing at Kent State

Unit Two: Entering the Text

SYNOPSIS

The show opens with Martin Luther King Jr. calling after a friend to pick him up some Pall Malls. As he reenters the room, he attempts to write a new speech. He soon calls down to room service for a cup of coffee. Attempting to write his speech, there is a knock at the door and Camae enters the scene. King invites her into the room and they chitchat about the storm, God, and Mason Temple. He asks her for a cigarette and she pulls out a Pall Mall and lights it for him. King convinces Camae to smoke just one cigarette with him, much to her chagrin as it is only her first day and she doesn't quite know the workplace protocol on smoking with guests.

King comments on her beauty and Camae begins cussing, immediately after feeling very guilty for having cussed in front of a preacher, when the phone rings. It is King's wife, Corrie. He chats with her and lies about drinking tea. The phone is passed to his daughter Bernice, who has been having trouble sleeping. Wishing her a goodnight, he hangs up the phone and returns to Camae.

She reprimands him for lying, they discuss her name, and King asks her for her advice on his mustache. They share her last cigarette and King pulls out tomorrow's paper, reading the date, April 4. Reading, King reveals that people are worried for his safety and his own home has even been bombed. As the thunder cracks, King jumps and his breath becomes labored. He reveals the sound of thunder does scare him quite deeply, because it sounds like...fireworks.

King calls Camae pretty a second time as they begin to discuss the state of Detroit and the people there. Camae reveals she believes that walking or marching is not making any difference and it is about time people started making moves that are more serious. King asks her if she is an honorary Panther and expresses his frustration over the exploitation of riots for colored televisions. He tells her about the Sanitation March and how this peaceful protest, turned into an opportunity for looting. He talks about how he was whisked away, but badly wanted to stay and he mentions a young man, Larry Payne who had been recently killed.

King begins to why his best friend, Ralph, has not yet returned. Camae teaches him how to smoke and soon shows him exactly what she would do if she were in his position. Her message for her imaginary crowd is for the black man to build his own life and community outside of the white society. She states that there is nothing that the white man has, that the black man needs, so "Fuck the white man". He hears what she is saying and recognizes how tired he is and Camae asks how it is that we are all the same. King responds saying, we are all scared.

King worries about Ralph and Camae pulls out an entirely new pack of Pall Malls. They begin to talk about the differences in the black community and the social hierarchy. King tells Camae if she were a man she would be Malcolm X and that prompts her to call to the heavens and tell Malcolm X what King thinks of him. She laughs and King is terrified. King tells her he doesn't like the way she talks about God and she responds saying God doesn't mind. Camae reveals that Malcolm is in heaven and that King will see him there soon, that God is a woman, and that God likes King. Thunder rolls and King grabs at his heart exclaiming, "I can't breathe". Camae gets very worked up as King also begins to lose his cool. She calls him Michael and tries her best to calm him, but this only agitates him more. He accuses her of being in the CIA and stalking him. He attempts to throw her out, opening the door to his hotel room, but a wall of snow barricades him in. Camae reveals that she is in fact an angel who has been sent to help King to the other side. She tells King his daughter had prayed that he should not die alone. Camae was God's way of answering those prayers.

King begs to stay. He claims his work is not yet finished, that he has too much left to do on this earth and is not ready to die. He recognizes that he had begged for a break, for sweet release, but when faced with the prospect of death he retracted those pleas. He talks about plans and begs for more time. Camae agrees to call God and puts King on the phone with her. King begins talking with God and soon devolves in to yelling at her and God hangs up. King and Camae have a pillow fight and king begins to cry as he asks Camae to hold him.

Unit Two: Entering the Text

SYNOPSIS & CHARACTERS



The King Family

King and his daughter Bernice

Camae reveals her back-story as King attempts to call his wife or leave directions for his followers. He asks when it will happen, if it will hurt, and if she will be there. She takes care of everything and brings King to "the mountaintop" as she reveals the future to him. She shows him each person who carries on the baton, each world event and painful time. Camae puts her hand on his shoulder as he takes a breath and blackout.

CHARACTERS

Dr. King: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
Camae: maid at the Lorraine Motel

Unit Two: Entering the Text

IMPORTANT THEMES & THEIR MEANINGS

Religion

King believed that we are all children of God and we should all treat each other as such, regardless of race, creed, or sexuality. This play interrogates that thought process by challenging King's understanding of God as Camae tells him that God is a woman, that God liked Malcom X, that God even enjoys a dirty joke now and then. This play encourages the audience to consider their own opinions of God and how those opinions shape our behavior. What happens when we change what we think of God, what happens if we open our minds to a new understanding of God? How do we individually define God and what does that say about our own value systems and beliefs?

Forgiveness

Camae's reluctance to forgive the man who stole her breath offers an interesting foil to King's assassination and the fact that the audience does not get to see him after he is killed. He never asks who it was that killed him; he never asks if the person will suffer consequences for his actions. Since the audience is not given the satisfaction of seeing King forgive this man nor seeing King refuse to forgive him, the play pushes the audience to consider for themselves whether or not they think King would forgive. Was King's heart big enough to forgive even that? What are clues that made you think he might have forgiven his killer, and clues that lead you to believe he might not have?

The King Family



Unit Two: Entering the Text

IMPORTANT THEMES & THEIR MEANINGS



Mr. and Mrs. King and their daughter Bernice

Fear

Hall worked to humanize King throughout this play and one of the most human things she offers her character is fear. King is afraid of being shot, he is afraid of spies, he is afraid for his friend, he is constantly afraid. Hall even writes that fear is what makes us all human; it is what brings us together. Camae, King, Malcolm X, even Camae's killer all show the audience shades of fear and illustrate a common thread between humans. Is there anything else that might bring us all together? Can we relate to another part of our humanity to overcome fear? What happens when people succumb to their fears?

Love vs. Hate

Camae repeatedly states the idea that if you live by love you will die by hate. Although hate and love elicit very similar responses and are generally very similar emotions, we view them very differently. King offers up love to every individual and this makes people hate him. King attempts to bring people together out of love and yet, this makes people kill him. Interestingly, Camae acts as a stand in for Malcolm X and his more separatist views on the Civil Rights Movement. When put in the same room, there are things on which these two ideas can come together, and yet places where they will never meet. Which side wins at the end of this play, love or hate? How do you see this battle played out today?

Unit Two: Entering the Text

KNOW IT ALL: IMPROV EXERCISE

For this exercise, the group must stand in a circle and one person will step into the middle of the circle. This person will then be given an absurd thought/ belief/ statement from the outside circle and must defend that statement with as much thought and logic as possible.

For example, Person A steps into the circle and the group decides he must defend the idea that all pants

should be made of tinfoil. Person A must then explain how tinfoil is easier to recycle, how this will simplify clothing options and breakdown the social hierarchy, how tinfoil is more economically efficient. Person A can develop any reasoning they choose and must pick only one. They must sell it wholeheartedly and it must have logic to it, even if that logic is false.

Unit Two: Entering the Text

ONE PHONE CALL: WRITING REFLECTION

In this play, Dr. King gets to have a telephone call with God. He talks with her about her plans, her choices, and his future.

For this exercise, each student will write a silent reflection on one phone call. They are given the chance to make one call to someone they truly admire. This person can be living, dead, historical, fictional, whomever, but encourage the students to choose someone they idolize and with whom they would not otherwise have a chance to talk.

The students can develop both the questions they might ask this person, as well as the responses they might receive. Encourage the students to think about why they chose this person, what they hope to get out of the conversation, and how they might end the call. Encourage the students to think deeply as this is a personal exercise and does not need to be shared with the class.

Did this person live up to your expectations? How was this person different from what you had expected? Would you and this person be friends? What do you and this person have in common? What surprised you about your conversation?



Unit Two: Entering the Text

CREATE YOUR OWN ANGEL

Hall's angel, Camae, looked like an average person and yet, had popcorn in her dress, cried flowers, and breathed fire. For this exercise, develop your own angel. Think outside the box and illustrate what your angel's wings might look like, what your angel's voice might sound like, what your angel's special powers might be, how tall your angel might be, or even what your angel might wear. Feel free to write, draw, or physicalize your own personal angel.

Encourage the class to share their angels and discuss what makes an angel. What do we think of when we think of angels? Are there angels around us today? What does angel mean for society today? What historical figures have been cast as angels and why? Whom would your angel protect? Who needs the most protection? How would your angel help those people? Why is your angel needed?

Unit Two: Entering the Text

HUMANIZING HISTORY: WRITING REFLECTION



The King family

Much like the style of *Hamilton*, this play attempts to humanize a figure that history has cast in a singular light. For this exercise brainstorm another historical figure and find a way to humanize them as well. It can be any historical figure, but the goal is to find/create/develop a side of this person that society might not have seen. This play gives a historically courageous man a bout of deep-seated fear. When picking a figure consider how this person might be more dimensional than the history books have room to describe.

Pick any historical figure and write a behind the scenes, when the curtain goes down side of them. They could be an evil figure who really loved their wife, a hero who had no time for his childhood best friend.

Encourage the class to share their ideas. How does this change your understanding of what this person is most well known for? What is the most important thing to know about this person? How would this person feel if they knew you were telling this story? Why has history kept this side of the person hidden for so long?

Unit Two: Entering the Text

SINNERS VS SAINTS: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physicality is a huge part of acting and of developing a character. This exercise is meant to lead the students through what it is like to develop a character physically, as well as explore their own perceptions of a sinner and a saint.

Have the class get on their feet and move about the classroom. Read these questions and encourage the class to explore the answers physically, keeping in mind their feet, their fingers and their shoulders. Remind the class between questions to focus on different body parts. Start with either hero or monster and allow the class to fully embody one character and then move onto the next, keeping the first in mind.

Encourage the class to physically explore the answers to each of these questions, try different things, try crazy things, try silly things, try ANYTHING!

- How does a saint walk?
- How does a saint speak?
- Where does a saint look? is their gaze at the sky, at their feet, do they look you in the eye, do they look you in the throat?
- Can a saint pick things up- how do they do it, is everything really light or heavy?
- At what speed does a saint move?
- What is the saint's strongest sense?
- Does the saint have a catch phrase?
- Does the saint have a side-kick?

Once the class has explored both the sinner and the saint, have them switch back and forth quickly between the two, walking as a sinner, then switching to walking as a saint, then switching back to walking as a sinner. All the while encouraging the students to feel the differences and similarities between the two.

Discussion Questions: How did gender play into your version of the sinner and the saint? What gender were they? Did you consider gender when creating each of them? What stereotypes did you have in your mind when creating the characters? Is there a difference between a saintly deed and a saintly person? How were these two images different and how were they similar? If you were to see someone on the street moving this way, what would you assume if anything? Is there such a thing as a universal sinner or saint?

Unit Two: Entering the Text

DESIGN IS IN THE DETAILS

This production involved a great deal of technical troubleshooting and detail in production to create a real life space that allowed an angel to cry flowers. There are a number of interesting tech points in this show and this exercise will allow your students to explore them for themselves.

Split the class into groups, preferably three people in each group, but can change depending on class size and needs. Give each group a budget of \$2000. Then assign and have the students design the set, costumes, props, and sounds for that moment. Encourage the students to consider what little things go into making a hotel room feel real. What are the sounds you can hear in the room, what does each object look like and what does it need around it to make it fit in the room and time period. Encourage them to stay as true to budget restraints as possible, perhaps taking time to Google how much a bed might cost and getting that on stage, how much a fake phone might cost and how you make it ring.

At the end of class have each group present their own design. Encourage the students to consider the cuts they had to make based on their budget, the things they felt were key to their design and what they would have loved to do but couldn't.

Unit Two: Entering the Text

GET THEM ON THEIR FEET

For this exercise, encourage the students to read the following speeches, one from Shakespeare's Henry V, one from President Obama in 2008, and the last one from Camae in The Mountaintop.

Encourage the students to pick a topic of their own on which to write a motivational speech of their own. The topic can be as simple as burnt grilled cheese sandwiches to something as serious as civil rights. The speeches can be 30 seconds, however they should chose a specific topic and work to get the entire audience on their side. They should then perform their speeches for the class.

Interrogate what makes a motivational speech. How does it start? How does it end? How does it build? What were the most important moments? When did you feel most engaged? What moments stood out to the audience? How do you keep the energy moving forward? Who are some of the greatest motivational speakers and what do they all have in common?



Unit Two: Entering the Text

GET THEM ON THEIR FEET

Obama 2008: <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/11/04/obama.transcript/>

Shakespeare King Henry V:

What's he that wishes so?

My cousin Westmoreland? No, my fair cousin:

If we are mark'd to die, we are enow

To do our country loss; and if to live,

The fewer men, the greater share of honour.

God's will! I pray thee, wish not one man more.

By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,

Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;

It yearns me not if men my garments wear;

Such outward things dwell not in my desires:

But if it be a sin to covet honour,

I am the most offending soul alive.

No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England:

God's peace! I would not lose so great an honour

As one man more, methinks, would share from me

For the best hope I have. O, do not wish one more!

Rather proclaim it, Westmoreland, through my host,

That he which hath no stomach to this fight,

Let him depart; his passport shall be made

And crowns for convoy put into his purse:

We would not die in that man's company

That fears his fellowship to die with us.

This day is called the feast of Crispian:

He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,

Will stand a tip-toe when the day is named,

And rouse him at the name of Crispian.

He that shall live this day, and see old age,

Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,

And say 'To-morrow is Saint Crispian:'

Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars.

And say 'These wounds I had on Crispian's day.'

Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,

But he'll remember with advantages

What feats he did that day: then shall our names

Familiar in his mouth as household words

Harry the king, Bedford and Exeter,

Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,

Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd.

This story shall the good man teach his son;

And Crispian Crispian shall ne'er go by,

From this day to the ending of the world,

But we in it shall be remember'd;

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;

For he to-day that sheds his blood with me

Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,

This day shall gentle his condition:

And gentlemen in England now a-bed

Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,

And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks

That fought with us upon Saint Crispian's day.

Camae The Mountaintop:

Church! We have gathered here today to deal with a serious issue. It is an issue of great paponderance you like that? Paponderance! It is a matter of importance more serious than my overgrown mustache: how to we deal with the white man? I have told you that the white man is our brother. And he should be treated as such. We touch our brother with the softest of hands. We greet our brothers with the widest of smiles. We give our brother food when he is hungry. But it is hard to go this when our brother beats his fist upon our flesh. When he greets is with 'Nigger' and 'Go back to Africa', when he punches us in our bellies swelling with hunger. Abel was slain by his brother Cain and, just like the Biblical times, today the white man is killing his Negro brethren, shackling his hands, keeping us from rising to the stars we are booooouuuuund to occupy. We have walked. Our feet swelling with each step. We have been drowned by hoses. Our dreams being washed away. We have been bitten by dogs. Our skin forever scarred by hatred at its height. Our godly crowns have been turned into ashtrays for white men at lunch counters all across the South. To this I say, my brethren, a new day is coming. I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired, and today is the day that I tell you to KILL the white man! But not with your hands. Not with your guns. But with your miiind! We are fighting to sit at the same counter, but why, my brothers and sisters? We should build our own counters. Our own restaurants. Our own neighborhoods. Our own schools. The white man ain't got nothin' I want. Fuck the white man! Fuck the white man! I say, FUCK'em.

Unit Two: Entering the Text

LOVE, HATE, AND AMBIVALENCE

Have the class walk around the room neutrally. Try to keep the space balanced. Do not touch each other, or talk to each other. As the class walks around, give them directions on how to change and alter their movements. Encourage them to stay with the directions and listen carefully. Have the class walk as love, not interacting with anyone. How does love walk, where are loves eyes, how does love breathe? From there have the class walk as hate and ambivalence with the same directions.

Once you have gone through these, choose one student to walk as love in a sea of hate. The students can now interact, encourage them not to touch, but they can look at each other and communicate. All the hate should hate the should hate the same thing, encourage them to follow the movement of the group and for the one love to explore the group. From there, have:

- 1 student as love walk in a sea of hate
- 1 ambivalence walk in a sea of hate
- 1 hate walk in a sea of love
- 1 ambivalence walk in a sea of love
- 1 love walk in a sea of hate
- 1 love walk in a sea of ambivalence

Explore how the relationships change as you add more students to the minority side. What happens to the group if there are 2 students walking as love in a sea of hate. What happens if the group is split in half, 50% are love and 50% are hate?

Discussion Questions: What did your body tell you? Which felt the most comfortable? Which was the hardest to keep up? Which was the hardest to stay in it? What was the difference in numbers and how did that change your relationships? What does this tell you about the power of each of these things? How do you see these relationships played out today? What interactions were the most interesting? What were the differences physically between these feelings and the differences in interactions between these feelings?

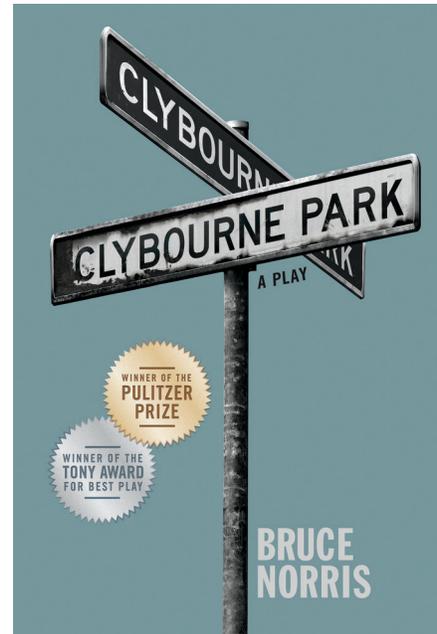
Unit Two: Entering the Text

FURTHER READING & WATCHING

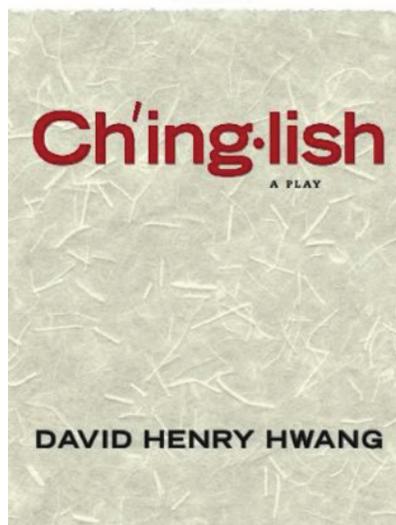
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