



# Educator Resources

## CLYBOURNE PARK

BY Bruce Norris

DIRECTED BY Pam MacKinnon

Playwrights Horizons, Inc., New York City, produced the World Premiere of *Clybourne Park* Off-Broadway in 2010.

Jan 11 – Feb 26, 2012 • Mark Taper Forum

# Welcome

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Center Theatre Group is excited to have you and your students join us for *Clybourne Park*.

A great play raises questions about the human condition, and a great educational experience allows students an opportunity to reflect upon those questions and begin to discover their own answers. To that end the material in Center Theatre Group's Student Discovery Guide and Educator Resources raises questions: questions about real estate and race. Questions about the difficulty of communication. Questions about what makes a house a home and a neighborhood a community. Our goal is to provide you with a variety of entry points into *Clybourne Park* so that you can choose what best suits you and your students.

The Educator Resources and Student Discovery Guide are companion pieces, designed to help you prepare your students to see the play and to follow-up the performance with options for discussion, reflection and creativity.

We have organized the Educator Resources into the following sections:

## Student Discovery Guide

The Student Discovery Guide provides students with background information about the play and the subject matter, as well as questions for individual reflection. Written to be student-driven, the Discovery Guide helps prepare your students for the performance.

## About This Play

This section includes a detailed synopsis of the play.

## Comprehension

This section includes background information about the subject matter of the play. We have selected the information that most directly connects to or informs what happens in the play. This section furthers and deepens the background information provided in the Student Discovery Guide. This section can be shared before the play and/or discussed after the performance. It can also be used to provide research topics for your classroom.



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Kirk Douglas Theatre

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## Connection

This section provides ways to explore connections between the ideas presented in the play, the students' lives, and the world we live in. Structured thematically, each section contains questions and exercises that may be used for reflection, discussion, and/or writing prompts both before and after the performance.

## Creativity

This section provides opportunities for your students to use theatre to explore and express. Theatre activities are included that examine both specific artistic aspects of the production, as well as delve deeper into the ideas and questions raised by *Clybourne Park*. The activities and information in this section can be used both before and after the performance.

We know the hard work and dedication that it takes to bring students to see theatre. These materials are designed to support you in making the most of that experience. We applaud your passion for sharing theatre with your students, and thank you for sharing your students with all of us at Center Theatre Group. We look forward to seeing you at *Clybourne Park*!

# About *Clybourne Park*

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## Synopsis

*Clybourne Park* is a play with two acts. The first act takes place in 1959 and the second act takes place in 2009. Playwright Bruce Norris says “In *Clybourne Park*, the First Act is a tragedy and the second part is a comedy because the people in the First Act all understand each other much more than the people do in the Second Act. In the Second Act everyone makes assumptions.”

## Act I: 1959

Bev and Russ are middle class White Americans. They live in *Clybourne Park*, a White neighborhood of Chicago. They grieve the loss of their only son, Kenneth. They can't seem to break free from his memory because the house reminds them of his death. To escape his memory, they have decided to move. When we meet them, we meet a house full of boxes. There's a large trunk upstairs that Russ plans to bring down, but Bev wants their maid to do it.

At the start of the play, Russ sits in the living room listening to music and eating Neapolitan ice cream. Bev and Russ banter and make small talk about the Neapolitan ice cream. They wonder and hypothesize where the name came from and why. The conversation is desperate and trying, but the effort is evident. Meanwhile, Francine, Bev and Russ' maid does much of the packing. Bev attempts to give Francine things that she and Russ wish to discard. Francine politely declines the offers. Bev reminisces on a joke that Russ told the Rotary club the year before, but Russ doesn't care about it. He insists on severing his ties with the community.

Bev and Russ receive a call from Karl Lindner, a representative of their housing association. It's evident that this isn't the first call from him. While Bev is on the phone, Jim, their youthful minister, lets himself in. Jim shares some stories with Russ to open him up to conversation. Bev asks him his thoughts on Neapolitan ice cream. Jim and Russ talk about Russ' new office. Jim eventually turns the conversation to the topic of Kenneth. Russ doesn't want to talk about it, but Jim pushes the issue. Jim's lack of deep, empathetic understanding angers Russ so much that he tells Jim to “go fuck himself.”



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Bev enters just as Russ blows up at Jim. They have a candid, but short, argument about Kenneth. Jim brings up the fact that he also served in the military, but Russ asks him how many people he killed. Russ implies that his son killed many people.

The door bell rings. It's Albert, Francine's husband. He's here to pick up Francine. Against Francine's wishes, Albert offers to help move the trunk for Bev and Russ. Albert opens the door to take some things out to the car before they leave and Karl Lindner is standing there, about to ring the door bell. They're surprised to see Karl. He's left his wife Betsy in the car. Karl is a representative of the Neighborhood Association and Betsy, his wife, is deaf and pregnant. They implore Karl to bring his wife inside. The group of neighbors talks about their problems and concerns. We learn that Karl and Betsy's first pregnancy didn't come to term because the umbilical cord was around the baby's neck.

Karl tries to persuade Russ and Bev to reconsider selling their home revealing that they have unknowingly sold their home to a Black family. Karl's concern is that the neighborhood is going to undergo White Flight and the property values will go down. While never stated explicitly, we realize that the Black family that has bought the house is the Younger family from *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry. A passionate discussion breaks out as the characters sift through their complicated feelings about living next door to a Black family. The White characters attempt to involve Francine, Bev and Russ' maid, and her husband Albert. They are surprised to find that Francine and Albert have their own opinions and feelings towards White communities.

The emotions and the political heat rise until Russ has had enough. He commands everyone's attention as he begins to read the suicide note that Kenneth left. He chastises the community of Clybourne Park for their lack of empathy and support towards his family. He orders everyone to leave his house. When he and Bev are once again alone, the cycle of grief continues. We realize there is no answer for their suffering.

## Act II: 2009

Fifty years pass. Clybourne Park has become a predominately Black neighborhood. The once well-cared for house is in shambles. However, the neighborhood is beginning to undergo gentrification.

Lindsey and Steve, a White couple, are planning to buy the house and renovate it. They plan to completely change the architecture of the house. Before they can change the house, they have to meet with representatives of the Neighborhood Association. Lena and Kevin, a Black couple, are the representatives and they don't want Lindsey and Steve to change the architectural integrity of the neighborhood. The characters go through the legal terms of the contract with the lawyer and real estate agent. Meanwhile, their contractor examines the house. We learn that the proximity of the house to the city, where Steve and Lindsey both work, is a major factor in their decision to move to the neighborhood.

Lena expresses her emotional attachment to this house. Her legitimate concern is considered momentarily before the conversation is derailed again. Lena convinces everyone to keep the meeting moving by turning off their distracting cell phones and sticking to the topic. She's waited patiently to express herself in a respectful way. They discuss the history of the neighborhood that goes as far back as German immigrants. Kevin is offended by how the conversation about the history of the neighborhood becomes an attack on Black people.

Steve asks for everyone to admit that the entire subtext of the conversation is informed by Race. His statement launches the characters into a fueled exchange about whether or not racism is part of the difficulty they are having in addressing the changes to the property. They challenge each other's notions of what is considered offensive. They accuse each other of being racists. The characters jab at each other with racial, sexist and homophobic jokes. They become offended when they feel that their particular group has been belittled.

During the damaging conversation, the contractor drags in a trunk. It was buried in the backyard. He found it while examining the septic tank. The conversation escalates to absurd proportions and matters regarding the house are unresolved. When the trunk is opened, it's revealed that it belonged to Bev and Russ' son Kenneth. When everyone leaves, Dan begins to read the suicide letter he finds in the trunk. The ghosts of Bev and Kenneth return. We realize we are witnessing the moments before Kenneth takes his life.

# Comprehension

Comprehension | Connections | Creativity

This section includes background information about the setting and subject matter of the play.

We have selected the information that most directly connects to or informs what happens in the play. This section furthers and deepens the background information provided in the student Discovery Guide. This section can be shared before the play and/or discussed after the performance. It can also be used to provide research topics for your classroom.

**“THE HISTORY OF AMERICA IS THE HISTORY OF PRIVATE PROPERTY.”**

— *Clybourne Park*

**Property:** that which a person owns; the possession or possessions of a particular owner

The United States has very specific, legal definitions for various types of property. These include:

- **Public Property:** property owned by a government; it commonly refers to parks, playgrounds, streets, sidewalks, schools, libraries and other properties regularly used by the general public.
- **Private Property:** land or belongings owned by a person or group and kept for their exclusive use; land not owned by the government. Different types of private property include:
  - **Real Property:** land and the improvements to it made by human effort (also known as “immovable property”).
  - **Personal Property:** everything that is the subject of ownership that does not come under the definition of real property (roughly speaking, it is private property that is moveable). It is divided into two major categories
    1. **Tangible Personal Property:** refers to any type of property that can generally be moved, touched or felt; includes such items as furniture, clothing, jewelry, art, writing, or household goods.
    2. **Intangible Personal Property:** this refers to personal property that cannot actually be moved, touched or felt, but instead represents something of value such as stocks, bonds, patents, and copyrights
  - **Intellectual Property:** property that results from original creative thought, as patents, copyright material, and trademarks; it can describe a wide variety of property created by musicians, authors, artists, and inventors.

The conflicts that arise in *Clybourne Park* start with a dispute involving **private property**, namely real property, also known as “real estate.”



In the United States, when a person owns a piece of property, he/she holds a set of rights that enable him/her to utilize this land in ways that they see fit. However, these rights are not absolute. Our government also reserves certain rights associated with these lands because it has agreed to protect the property for the owner. Among the government's rights is the right to control the use of private property to ensure the protection of the public's interest.

The central debate taking place in *Clybourne Park* involves private property rights. One couple is fighting for its right to do with their newly purchased property as they please. The other couple is fighting for the preservation of the history and character of their community, which could be viewed as protection of the public's interest.

Other societal aspects come into play as the debate over property ensues. Issues of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation enter the conversation as the couples discuss the plans for the property.

Ethnologist and Harvard professor, Pauline Peters, has stated that property systems are not isolated from the social fabric of a community.

**The following timeline reveals the connection of property ownership to aspects of U.S. history such as the concentration of power, slavery, and women's suffrage:**

**1619:** First African slaves were brought to North American colony of Jamestown, Virginia to aid in the production of lucrative crops such as tobacco. Not only did these slaves help to increase the value of their owner's property, they were viewed as private property themselves.

**1760:** Only white, male property owners have the right to vote. (They constitute about 10 to 16% of the total population.)

**1771:** (New York) Act to Confirm Certain Conveyances and Directing the Manner of Proving Deeds to Be Recorded: required a married man to have his wife's signature on any deed to her property before he sold or transferred it, and required that a judge meet privately with the wife to confirm.

**1787** (Massachusetts): A law was passed which allowed married women in limited circumstances to act as *femme sole traders*.

**1850:** Property ownership requirements for the right to vote are eliminated. Almost all adult white males could vote, regardless of property ownership.

**1863:** President Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that all slaves in the rebellious states “shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.” While the Emancipation Proclamation did not free a single slave, it was an important turning point in the Civil War, transforming the fight to preserve the nation into a battle for freedom.

**1865:** 40 Acres and a Mule: Three months prior to the end of the Civil War, General William T. Sherman issued Special Field Order Number 15, a temporary plan granting each freed slave family 40 acres of land on the islands and coastal region of Georgia. The Union Army also donated some of its mules, unneeded for battle purposes, to the former slaves.

**1865:** In the summer of 1865, President Andrew Johnson ordered all land under federal control to be returned to its previous owners. The Freedman’s Bureau, created to aid millions of former slaves in the postwar era, had to inform the freed men and women that they could either sign labor contract with planters or be evicted from the land they occupied.

**December 18, 1865:** The Ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment legally abolishes slavery in the U.S. (thereby making it possible for freed men to own property).

**1865-1877:** During the Reconstruction Era, after the Civil War, many southern states passed laws known as the Black Codes. Even though some of these laws allowed black citizens to own property, they were extremely restrictive and prevented blacks from improving upon their economic and social status. These remained firmly in place for almost a century, but were finally abolished with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

**1870:** Only around 30,000 African-Americans in the South owned land (usually small plots) compared with 4 million others who did not.

**1900:** Most states give women substantial control over their property.

**1940:** *Hansberry v. Lee*, a famous discrimination lawsuit won by the family of playwright, Lorraine Hansberry, author of *A Raisin In The Sun*. Her family

fought against a covenant that tried to keep African-American families from buying houses.

Currently, any citizen in the U.S. has the right to own private property, regardless of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. Property may be sold or bequeathed to whomever the owner desires.

**Other countries and cultures, past and present, have had different perspectives and approaches to property:**

Emperors of the Incan empire were seen as gods. When they died, it was believed that they still maintained control of their property.

In Africa, certain indigenous groups were driven off of their homelands during times of war. When civil strife ended, they came back home to reclaim their homes, but had much difficulty in obtaining it because their ownership of the land was not legally documented.

In China, there is no such thing as private property.

English common law greatly influenced the formation of private property rights in the United States, with one essential difference. Two hundred years ago, American colonists were not bound by “primogeniture.”

- Under primogeniture, land passes only to one heir. In England, this heir was the first-born son of the landowner. If he had no son, the property would go to the closest male relative (father, brother, uncle, cousin, etc.). Often, an eldest daughter would see her father’s property inherited by a much younger male sibling. If the owner had no sons, the land might end up in the hands of her uncle or cousin.
- Many of the American colonists in the New World left their European homelands because they were not heirs to their families’ fortunes. These colonists embraced the right to transfer ownership of property to whomever the current owner wished.

## Suburbia

According to the 2010 Census, 43% of Americans live in the suburbs. But what are they, exactly? The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a suburb as a) an outlying part of a city or town, and b) a smaller community adjacent to or within commuting distance of a city. The word's origin is Latin, from the roots "sub-" (near, below) and "urbs" (city). In the United States, suburbia has long been seen as the embodiment of the American Dream – a detached, single-family home you own, a yard, a garage, and neighbors who you know will loan you a cup of sugar when you need it.

Of course, that dream is not exclusively from this country, or even this time period. It seems part of human nature to crave space, privacy and quiet. A letter written in cuneiform on a clay tablet to the King of Persia in 539 B.C. celebrates, "Our property seems to me the most beautiful in the world. It is so close to Babylon that we enjoy all the advantages of the city, and yet when we come home we are away from all the noise and the dust."

Suburbs around the world are often the most economically depressed areas of a metropolitan area. France's *banlieues*, or Sweden's "concrete suburbs" are examples of these types of neighborhoods. American suburbs started out similarly. Two hundred years ago, living in a suburb meant that work in the city was difficult, if not impossible, to get to. And since most city jobs paid better than rural jobs, the suburbs were often home to the poorest families. That began to change in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Dramatic advances were made in transportation technology, including the 1885 invention of the gasoline-fueled combustion engine, better and wider roads, and electric railway (trolley) systems. These improvements made it possible, for those who could afford it, to commute to work with relative ease.

The growth of American suburbs exploded at the end of World War II. Almost overnight, the demand for housing was extreme. The more than 10 million returning GIs were eager to settle down and start families. After their experiences in war, they wanted quiet and privacy, and needed houses cheaply and quickly. The robust economy, new interstate highways, and newly affordable cars, meant they didn't have to stay in the cramped urban apartments they often shared with the rest of their family.

At the same time, large numbers of African-Americans were migrating out of harshly segregated southern cities to newly desegregated northern cities, in hopes of finding better jobs, schools, and homes. White families who were uneasy about integration, and who could afford to, moved out of the cities. This phenomenon is often referred to as “white flight.”

The first American suburb was built by real estate lawyer and investor, William J. Levitt. Levittown, NY, located on Long Island, began construction in 1947. By 1951, 17,447 homes had been constructed. Land and building materials were cheap at the time. In order to generate large numbers of homes quickly and affordably, Levitt & Sons, Inc. took an assembly-line approach to building that left little room for variety. The homes came in five different models that differed only in shade of exterior paint, roofline, and window placement. These “cookie cutter” houses became one of the most defining characteristics of American suburbs.

Suburbs have other things in common as well. Like Levittown, suburbs are often built by a single real estate developer. In population, suburbs have much lower density than cities, and the homes typically have yards, something virtually non-existent in an urban environment. Local governance is common, often in the form of a Home Owners Association, a community group that makes rules about how a home can look, its size, landscaping, and how it must be maintained. In addition, strict zoning laws clearly separate residential areas from retail and business – hence shopping and strip malls with huge parking lots.

Another common element of suburbs is congested traffic. Suburban living requires longer commutes, in both distance and time. Traffic is typically restricted to a few main through-roads or freeways, so it takes longer to go even short distances. And the lack of public transportation and bike paths means suburbanites don’t often have any other option than their automobile. In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, American suburbs shifted away from the old stereotype of being occupied by only young, white, upper middle-class families. They actually vary in many ways – rich and poor, industrial and residential, new and old. They often reflect a combination of working-class and minority families. Today, Asians and Hispanics combined make up the majority of those living in suburbs. Many suburban households are now also composed of single people living alone or unmarried couples without children.

In the recent economic recession, nationwide, poverty rates in the suburbs rose 53% (versus 26% in cities). Nationwide, 55% of the metropolitan poor live in suburbs. In Los Angeles, the poverty rate in the suburbs averages 20%. Attitudes towards the suburbs, by both those living within and outside them, have also changed dramatically. Now, qualities previously considered positive – quiet, space, uniformity, quality control – are perceived as boring, conformist, oppressive, and often hypocritical. Today’s suburbs are no longer those of *Leave It To Beaver*, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, or *Happy Days*. The modern take on suburbia is reflected in movies like *Edward Scissorhands*, *Nightmare on Elm St.*, *Donnie Darko*; and television programs such as *The Sopranos*, *South Park*, *The Boondocks*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Weeds*, and *Suburgatory*. Although everything looks okay on the outside, in reality it is all far darker.

Writer and satirist Dorothy Parker once quipped, “Los Angeles is 72 suburbs in search of a city.” But Los Angeles is not like other major cities. It’s spread out over a much larger area than the average city, has no single center for suburbs to surround, and is made up of pockets of residential neighborhoods in between urban areas.

If a suburb is “a smaller community adjacent to or within commuting distance of a city,” what areas in Los Angeles are suburbs? Do you consider your neighborhood a suburb?

# Connections

Comprehension | Connections | Creativity

This section provides ways to explore connections between the ideas presented in the play, the students' lives, and the world we live in.

Structured thematically, each section contains questions and exercises that may be used for reflection, discussion, and/or writing prompts both before and after the performance.

## Humans are territorial

*"Not to be too grandiose," Norris says, "but I think in a larger sense, the topic of 'Clybourne Park' is war and territoriality and why we fight over territory. And we do so for incredibly personal, inexplicable, ungraspable, indefinable reasons."* —Bruce Norris

<http://articles.latimes.com/2011/jan/23/entertainment/la-ca-bruce-norris-20110123>

### Take a moment to reflect upon the “tribes” in your own life:

- What different groups are you a part of and how do those groups shape your identity?
- Are there tribes you were born into and/or tribes that you chose?
- What do you gain from being part of those tribes?
- What beliefs do you have about people in tribes different than your own?
- Are there assumptions that are made about your own tribe?
- How do these assumptions impact our actions in the world?
- What drives humans to form tribes?
- Do we need smaller groups to help us know who we are?
- How does your tribe shape who you are?
- What about you isn't shaped by your tribe, but is uniquely you?
- Do you think that human beings are more alike than different, or more different than alike?
- What is the connection between tribes, land and war?

## Race and Ethnicity

- Name all the races of people that you have ever come in contact with.
- Name all the races of people that you have not come in contact with.
- Name all the races of people that live in your neighborhood (define your neighborhood first).
- Name all the races of people that live on your block.
- Name all the races of people that you have let in your home.
- Share.

### Have each person answer the following prompt in a journal:

- Think of one ethnic group not your own. Name three things about that group that you have noticed that are different from you (customs, appearances, language, etc.).



- Name three questions that if you could ask a member of that ethnic group about without being afraid of being labeled racist.
- What is the ethnic group you identify with?
- Name three things you assume about your ethnic group.
- Name three things that you do that go against the majority of your ethnic group's actions.

Share. How does this discussion make you feel? Capture responses on the board. Any insights, surprises, discoveries? Why is there ethnic stereotyping? Why is it hard to talk about race? Capture all responses.

## Owning Property

1. Have each student in two minutes write down everything that they personally own. Share.
2. Have each student in two minutes write down everything that their family owns. Share.
3. Have each student in two minutes write down everything that they wished they owned. Share.
4. Have each student in two minutes write down everything that their family wished they owned. Share.

What do you find the same from this list? What do you find different?

Go back to each list and locate two things that are the most expensive things on your list. Share.

Go back to each list and decide on two things that you cannot live without and identify them. Share.

Does your 'must-haves' list look similar to what is most expensive? Discuss.

## The American Dream

If the American Dream is owning a house and having a chicken in every pot, have the characters in Act I and Act II of *Clybourne Park* achieved their American Dream? Or has the American Dream changed?

In Act II, it seems the characters all own or are about to move into their home, so they've achieved the American Dream. Even though they seem to have

achieved this dream, is it possible they are still pulled down by their history, their legacy? How does this affect their ability to talk about the building ordinances and issues of their area?

Do you think their ability or lack of ability to talk about race and class issues is due to their inability to let go of these parts of their histories or legacies? Do we need to let go of these parts of our histories and legacies to move the race and class societal conversations forward?

# Creativity

Comprehension | Connections | Creativity

This section provides opportunities for your students to use theatre to explore and express.

Theatre activities are included that examine both specific artistic aspects of the production, as well as delve deeper into the ideas and questions raised by *Clybourne Park*. The activities and information in this section can be used both before and after the performance.

## Cultural Mapping

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will gain knowledge of similarities and differences in their classmates.
- Students will be introduced to *Clybourne Park* and begin to reflect on the play.

### EXERCISE

Ask the students to move the desks to the side and stand in a circle. Describe the room as a map of the world. Identify Los Angeles in the space. Have students who were born in Los Angeles gather in that place. Have the other students group themselves according to their birthplace (north, east, south, or west of Los Angeles). Each group must determine two additional things that they have in common. Report back to the whole class. (Example: The members of the “north” group all like pizza and are the oldest in their families.)

Repeat activity using other divisions such as:

- Oldest, middle, youngest, only child.
- Speak one language, two languages, etc.
- Quotes from the production:  
Ask each student to stand by the quote that most intrigues them.  
Discuss in the group why they chose that quote. What intrigues them about it?

“But you can’t live in a principle, can you? Gotta live in a house.”

“There is power in making people uncomfortable. There is power in provoking.”

“The History of America IS the history of private property.”

“I’m not here to solve society’s problems. I’m simply telling you what will happen, and it will happen as follows: first one family will leave, then another...”

“Can we just come out and say what it is we are actually saying ...instead of doing this elaborate little dance around it.”

## Tableau/Frozen Picture

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will practice using their bodies to communicate an idea or theme.
- Students will reflect on the varied interpretations of the theme.
- Students will reflect on *Clybourne Park* through a physical exploration of its themes.

### EXERCISE

Divide students into pairs. Student A is the artist. Student B is the statue. Have student A create a statue out of B on the theme of “the future”. Examples: Flying cars, world peace, destroying the environment, graduating from college. Statues can be realistic or symbolic, personal or global. Have each student title their statue and present to the class. Repeat exercise with B as the artist and A as the statue.

Repeat with the themes of **tribes, territory, communication, race, home, neighborhood, community, gentrification, change**. Have each student sculpt an image that represents one of these themes. Discuss what these ideas mean to your students and what these ideas meant to the characters in *Clybourne Park*. Are they similar or very different?

## The 5 Senses of Your Neighborhood

Ask students to get a piece of paper and a pen. Have them think about the neighborhood they live in. Ask them to write down:

- 3 things they see in their neighborhood
- 3 things they hear in their neighborhood

- 3 things they smell in their neighborhood
- 3 things they taste in their neighborhood
- 3 things they “feel” in their neighborhood (This can either be things they can feel physically or emotionally)
- 1 change that has happened in their neighborhood and how they feel about that change

Ask the group to share a few responses from each of the 5 senses and the 1 change.

Discuss the emotions that can be present when change occurs. Connect this discussion to *Clybourne Park*. Throughout the play the idea or anticipation of neighborhood change produces great emotion even before the change occurs.

## The Big Chief

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will practice working together as an ensemble through physical movement.
- Students will physically explore the concept of an outsider coming into a group or tribe.
- Students will connect the activity with the theme of tribes and belonging in *Clybourne Park*.

Everyone in the group forms a circle. One person leaves the room.

The group chooses the “big chief,” or leader, who will initiate all the changes in rhythm and all the rhythmic movements in the circle.

The person outside the room is invited back into the room, comes to the center of the circle, and must try to work out who the big chief is. The chief is leading the other players through different motions such as moving hands, tapping feet, and nodding heads. The leader may change motions at any time, sometimes even when the center player is looking directly at the leader. Other members of the circle try not to make direct eye contact with the leader so as not to give away who it is.

Once the big chief is found out, he or she is next to go out of the room and a new 'big chief' is chosen.

#### DISCUSS

- How did it feel to be a part of the group and to be in on knowing who the big chief was?
- Were you rooting for the person trying to figure it out, or was there power in knowing something he or she didn't know?
- How did it feel to be the person who didn't belong, who had to figure out who the chief was?
- When you hear the words "big chief", what images come to mind? Is this person a man or a woman? Does he or she belong to a certain time period or culture? Is this term offensive to you at all? Do you think someone else might find it offensive? The game is also known as "Who started the movement?" How does that title affect your thoughts about the activity?

## Tribes

1. Divide the group into two groups. One group gets a tag that is a lighter shade of the same color. The second group gets a tag that is a darker shade of the same color. Scramble "whites" and "coloreds" on the tags (HEWITS and DOCOLORS).
2. Walk around the room, looking for like-colored tags. You can address each other of the same group but not the other. The darker colored groups cannot speak out loud during the entire exercise. The lighter colored groups have free reign of travel in the room. The darker colored groups can only walk in restrictive directions (right angles, two steps forward-one step back). Have each group wear different colored paper tags on their clothing (two colors, one darker, one lighter). Prompt the lighter groups that if a darker colored paper person gets too close, move away.
3. Change the prompt: if a darker color member is too close to a lighter colored member, they must back away and give room. Debrief and discuss.

4. The HEWITS should eventually group up during this exercise and deliberately exact control of the room and make the DOCOLORS give room. Discuss and debrief the exercise.
5. Someone from the lighter group should come up and get instructions from an envelope on the objective in handling the darker color. Some instructions should be “ignore completely” “demand that they do something for you” “get them to move out of your way” “ask them questions about their family” “try to give them something that you can’t use anymore”. The darker color members should pick objectives from another envelope. There should be three directives: “try to appease/get along” “demand equal treatment” and “question everything.”
6. Pair up a lighter and a darker tagged person and give them a task of having to do something (plan a party, plan a trip, rearrange furniture, etc.) and let it play out according to the instructions given.
7. Ask students if they know where the made-up tribal names HEWITS and DOCOLORS came from. Can they unscramble the words?

Discuss and debrief. What happened with the dominant lighter color people? The darker colored people? What emerged from the scenarios of trying to perform a task with the knowledge that you are higher status/lower status?

**Materials:** light and dark shades of paper, pins, envelopes of instructions.

## Password

In today’s society, we have a difficult time actually saying what we mean, and the problem is exacerbated when the subject matter is uncomfortable. This is particularly true when it comes to issues of race, politics, and beliefs that may come up as a result.

The following exercise (based on the classic game show the \$10,000 Pyramid), is designed as a metaphor for the way we “dance around” saying what we really mean. The game will force students to actually consider definitions, context, and associations that come up for them and their partners when faced with certain words and phrases.

In some cases, students may have to use certain words to describe something that is very specific to a particular group of people or culture. The discussion following the game should be ripe with the realization that it is tricky to talk



about such things, but the silliness and fun of the game itself serves to keep the environment safe. It may even aid in starting a new dialogue about how a little laughter can help when ignorance or carelessness may cause some friction.

**Materials needed:** A set of vocabulary cards selected from and inspired by *Clybourne Park* (samples provided below). The words should be ordered in a way that allows students to succeed with easier words appearing early in the game and more difficult ones used later on.

Suggested words for use in this game:

Hanukkah	Husband	Suburbia	Suicide
Quanza	Father	City	Prejudice
Christmas	Struggle	Segregation	Stereotype
House	Race	Ghetto	Culture
Home	Ignorance	America	Love
Family	Racism	Africa	Negro
Happiness	Wealth	American Dream	Colored
Satisfaction	Poverty	War	

## It's A Fight, It's A Fight!

Whether an actor, director, or playwright, being a part of a fight on stage is very satisfying and fun! Sometimes it is the most alive an actor can feel while in performance.

In *Clybourne Park*, the actors don't get to have just one good fight, but two—one at the end of each act. And, by the way, these are great fights. They are well written and the characters are well drawn which makes these fights better situations to gain understanding about societal issues than a real life fight.

In each act of *Clybourne Park*, the characters have a difficult time really communicating with each other about difficult topics; in Act I, suicide and grief, acceptance within a community and conversely, when a community ostracizes a person and their family. To this end, the family (Russ and Bev) end up leaving in an unacceptable way according to the standards of the community (selling to a black family). In Act II, fifty years later, the difficulties in communicating are around race, changing neighborhoods and what this means for fitting in and getting along when the people involved don't know their place with each other.

This set of vocal and physical exercises invites you and your students to learn how to prepare and work your voices and bodies into a great fight. Actors need to perform as if they are really fighting and technique helps us to do so within character and without hurting our voices. Even though the characters appear to be having trouble connecting and communicating, actors must learn to take care of their voice.

### **Exercise 1: Every Fight Needs A Good Warm-up!**

**Aim:** To improve breathing, breath support for vocal projection, vocal range, and the holistic physical connection of body to voice.

**Skills:** Listening, teamwork with a partner, vocal and physical practice routines for voice, physical and overall confidence and presentational development and/or actor presence and skill development.

Whether in your classroom or a theater, multi-purpose room or gym, know that open space for the students to move freely is needed. Also, if you have

classroom neighbors, you will be making loud sounds so you may want to plan accordingly by notifying the other teachers and classrooms around you.

1. To warm up the spine and connect to your breathing, start by forming a big circle so the students can follow you as you lead the warm-up.
2. Starting by tucking the chin downward, roll down the spine, vertebrae by vertebrae, as your head moves towards the floor. Feel the stretch in the back of your legs as you hang and allow your arms to dangle freely.
3. Then, roll back up vertebrae by vertebrae, and your chin will be the last to come up.
4. Then, tuck the chin again and repeat this two more times to warm up the spine.
5. The last time you roll up, knees bent, tuck your hips forward to protect the small of your back. (opposite direction of sway back)
6. Clasp your hands in front of you and with your elbows bent, slowly bring them up above your head.
7. Make your neck long and then bring your gaze upward so your eyes are looking at the ceiling.
8. Relax your jaw open and breathe through your mouth.
9. Breathe down into your belly and feel the long open channel that is your throat and windpipe. Take a good inhale and exhale on an “ah” sound to begin to make sound and warm up the vocal chords. Repeat this eight eight times.
10. Slowly twist out of this position and roll back down the spine and hang with arms dangling to rest your back. Slowly roll back up again, vertebrae by vertebrae.

**Exercise #2: Y-Buzzing by Arthur Lessac**

1. This is a version of “Y-Buzzing” from the Arthur Lessac Voice Method.
2. Model for the students saying, “ye, ye, yes.”
3. Have the students join you as you say, “ye, ye, yes” repeatedly to get their voices focused in the mask of their faces. This will protect their voices when they increase their volume later.
4. Add massaging their cheeks with two fingers next to the sides of their noses as they crinkles their noses and say, “ye, ye, yes” repeatedly.

**Exercise #3: We Have All The Sounds Of the World In Our Mouths!**

**Next, warm up your articulators knowing that we have all of the sounds of the world in our mouths. Warming up this way prepares us to speak in all languages and accents.**

1. First, have fun with making sounds with just your lips; fluttering, popping, etc. There is no right or wrong, just playing to see what sounds you can make.
2. Next, play with making sounds with your lips, and also your tongue, and front teeth. Let the students know that this is jibberish and not to worry about making sense. Have fun being silly. This creates safety in the room and prepares the students to be more uninhibited later.
3. Add making sounds with the sides of your teeth and the middle of your tongue.
4. In addition to all of the sounds you've explored already, now add making sounds with the back of your tongue and mouth.
5. Remember to breathe and ask the students to increase their volume which will allow a natural sense of breath support. There is a wonderful relationship between the articulators and the amount of breath utilized. Really activating the articulators activates the breath support system and vice versa—so send plenty of breath to support sound making and the watch the student's diction improve!

**Exercise #4: Building Conflict, Building A Fight!**

Part I:

1. **Pair the students up** and ask one to be "A" and the other to be "B". Once they are in their pairings, have them choose a character from the play to explore.
2. "A" will say "yes" and "B" will answer "no."
3. "A" will start and stage whisper a "yes" and "B" will answer back "no" in a stage whisper.
4. Start the partners alternating their responses to each other. Encourage them to see where the meaning and the volume and intensity goes as they experience the conflict of not agreeing. Explore the characters they've chosen. Are there gestures that come out or particular ways they find themselves holding their tensions as the fight heats up? Are there

particular inflections in the voice that emerge as this character expresses her/himself? As the partners get louder, encourage them to crinkle their noses to find the “ye, ye, yes” placement/focus of their voices as they keep breathing and keep their throats open, as in the warm up.

5. Bring them to a close after one minute and have them switch so that “B” starts with “yes” in a stage whisper and “A” responds with “no” in a stage whisper. They continue to build in volume and intensity, again, crinkling their noses for the “ye, ye, yes” placement/focus of their voices while breathing and keeping their throats open.
6. Come to a close and offer them time to share their experiences with each other and/or with the group.

Part II:

1. This next level brings the use of the body into the exercise. Being physically engaged helps actors to connect emotionally to a fight. It also helps them to activate their breath support much more fully, therefore protecting their voices as scenes grow with volume and intensity.
2. Again, encourage the students to explore the characters they’ve chosen. Are there gestures that come out or particular ways they find themselves holding tension as the fight heats up? Are there particular inflections in the voice that emerge as this character expresses her/himself?
3. Place students in pairs of approximately the same size/height. Have the partners face each other arms length away.
4. Establish that safety of your partner always comes first.
5. Each one extends their left arm to the other palms down.
6. Then, they extend their right arms towards each other palms up.
7. Next, each moves in close enough to grasps each other’s forearms.
8. Each partner puts their right foot forward to form a strong stance.
9. Then, the partners should now experiment with a slow pulling back forth motion.
10. Establish one partner as “A” and the other as “B.”
11. “A” starts by stage whispering **“I know I will.”** “B” responds in a stage whisper, **“I know you won’t.”**
12. Start the partners alternating their responses to each other and experimenting with pulling their partner.
13. Encourage the partners to crinkle their noses for the “ye, ye, yes” placement/focus of their voices while breathing deep and keeping their

throats open as they increase in volume and intensity while physically pulling their partner.

14. After a few minutes, switch and “B” starts by stage whispering “I know I will.” “A” responds in a stage whisper, “I know you won’t.” They continue as above.
15. Bring them to a close and offer them time to share their experience with each other and/or the group.

Part III:

1. **With the same partner, now use lines from *Clybourne Park*.** Continue to explore the characters they’ve chosen or perhaps choose new ones from the play. Are there gestures that come out or particular ways they find themselves holding their tensions as the fight heats up? Are there particular inflections in the voice that emerge as this character expresses her/himself?
2. “A” starts in a stage whisper, **“Stop it. Russ. Don’t.”** “B” responds in a stage whisper with, **“I know you’ll probably blame yourselves for what I’ve done.”** (From Act I)
3. As before, have the partners, with safety always first, begin to pull each other as they speak their lines. Encourage them to improvise with the lines as they explore the emotional life of the exchange. As needed, remind them to consider the “ye, ye, yes” placement/focus of their voices while breathing deeply and keeping their throats open as they play with volume and intensity.
4. After several minutes, bring them to a close and have them share about their experience with their partner and/or group.
5. Next, have them switch and have “B” start in a stage whisper, **“Wait a second – what’d you say?”** “A” responds in a stage whisper, **“Back off, man. I didn’t do anything to you or her so why can’t you chill?”** (From Act II)
6. As before, encourage the partners, with safety first, to pull each other as they speak the line. Encourage them to improvise with the lines as they explore the emotional life of the exchange. As needed, remind them to consider the “ye, ye, yes” placement/focus of their voices while breathing deeply and keeping their throats open as they play with volume and intensity.
7. After several minutes, bring them to a close and have them share their experience with their partner and/or group.

As you monitor the various stages of the exercises, feel free to change the length of the exchanges based on how the students are doing vocally. If their voices sound tired, bring the exercises to a close and let them know you can return to them. These exercises can serve as tools to build their voices and stamina over time. It is important that their voices aren't strained and that they have fun and look forward to repeating the exercises at a later time. Feel free to play with the lines and/or bring in other lines from the "Discovery Guide" or from the show as a post-show follow-up.

***Have fun building your voices through the fun of a good fight!***

## Truth Telling or The Elephant In The Room

Do you know the meaning of the phrase "the elephant in the room?"

It is an idiom describing an obvious truth that no one is willing to discuss. To directly acknowledge its presence would make everyone involved extremely uncomfortable, therefore the topic is avoided.

Why is it sometimes difficult for us to speak frankly about issues that deeply affect us?

In Act One of *Clybourne Park*, we discover that the character of Russ suffered the tragic loss of his son, Kenneth. This happened two years prior to the start of the play and Russ is still visibly affected by this event.

Russ' family and friends are eager for him to move beyond his depression and return to a version of his former self. Russ' wife, Bev, hopes that humor will lift his spirits. Jim, their friend and minister, believes if he can get Russ to talk about his feelings, this will help him to move on with his life.

Initially, Russ resists their attempts at easing his grief. It seems as though Russ is uncomfortable with speaking to Bev and Jim about his depression.

However, an event in the story unleashes a torrent of rageful truth-telling from Russ. During his tirade, we come to realize that Russ' wife and friends have their own resistance to speaking about difficult subjects.

Russ begins to express about the ramifications of Kenneth's participation in the Korean War and his suicide. He speaks about the lack of real support from the Clybourne Park community after his son returned home from serving in the Army:

*Well, you go right ahead and you tell those folks whatever you want, Karl. And while you're at it why don't you tell 'em about everything the community did for my son. I mean Jesus Christ, Murray Gelman even goes and hires a goddamn retarded kid, but my boy? Sorry. No work for you, bub. (Russ, Act I, –Clybourne Park)*

He demands that Bev fully confront the atrocities that their son committed while serving in Korea. Finally, Russ attempts to read aloud Kenneth's suicide note. This is unbearable for the others, and, because he dares to speak this truth aloud, one character accuses Russ of being mentally unstable.

#### WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS:

Grief, suicide, race, and class are some of the issues that the characters in *Clybourne Park* find it difficult to talk about.

- Why is it sometimes extremely difficult to talk about these and other important topics in life?
- Is it necessary to address difficult subjects openly? Why or why not?
- What are the benefits of talking frankly about “elephants in the room?” What are the drawbacks?
- Who do you feel the most comfortable addressing important issues with? Friends, family member, teacher, other? Why?
- Have you ever experienced a time when friends or family members found it difficult to accept certain feelings you were having? Why?
- Have you ever experienced a time when you found it challenging to accept someone else's difficulty? Why?

#### POST-SHOW WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS:

How do we know that Russ is still profoundly affected by the death of his son?

##### Answers might include:

- He shows no interest in getting dressed for the day. According to the stage directions, he is to be dressed “in pajama top and chinos, socks, no shoes.”



- He angrily interacts with the friend and minister who have come to lift him out of his despair.
- He demonstrates no real interest in participating in the move to his new home.
- Why is it difficult for Russ' family and friends to tolerate his grief, depression, and anger?
- What is the event that triggers Russ' tirade? Why does this set him off?

In Act Two, we have a similar unfolding of truths within a conversation. The characters have gathered to discuss the razing of a newly purchased home and the replacement of it with another, larger structure. The Clybourne Park Homeowners Association is objecting to these plans because the new home will not be in alignment with the aesthetics of other houses in the community. In this act we meet the new homeowners, the homeowners association members, and lawyers representing each party participating in this dialogue.

The group is having a difficult time focusing on the task at hand. The subject matter makes the characters uneasy; therefore they let themselves become easily distracted by cell phone calls and small talk. Finally, one of the characters, Lena, attempts to focus the group:

*I'm sorry, and I don't meant to keep interrupting but can somebody please explain to me what it is we're doing here?....*

*I mean, I know I'm not the only person who takes the situation seriously and I don't like having to be this way but I have been sitting here for the last fifteen minutes waiting for a turn to speak...*

*—and meanwhile it seems like nothing is even remotely getting accomplished.*

Lena, Act II, *Clybourne Park*

Her expression of frustration with the conversation and her honesty about getting nothing done refocuses the group. During the discussion of the plans for the property, Lena addresses the community's desire to preserve the look of the neighborhood. She also reveals her own personal connection to the house. Eventually, Steve, one of the new homeowners, feels compelled to offer

his view of where the conversation is going:

*No. I'm sorry, but can we just come out and say what it is we're actually-? Shouldn't we maybe do that? Because if that's what this is really about, then...jesus, maybe we oughta save ourselves some time and and and and just...say what it is we're really saying instead of doing this elaborate little dance around it...*

*Okay. Okay. If you really want to – It's...(tries to laugh, then, sotto)...it's race. Isn't it?*

*You're trying to tell me that that...(to Lena) that implicit in what you said – That this entire conversation...isn't at least partly informed – am I right? (laughs nervously, to Lena) by the issue of ... (sotto) of racism.*

*Act II, Clybourne Park*

Steve's statements launch the characters into a fueled exchange about whether or not racism is playing a part in the difficulty they are having in addressing the changes about to take place on the property. They challenge each other's notions of what is considered offensive. They accuse each other of being racists. They become offended when they feel that their particular group has been belittled. Acknowledging the elephant in the room opens a Pandora's box for this group.

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS:

- Why is it sometimes difficult to remain calm when a taboo subject has been brought into a conversation?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to speak about issues of race, class, and socio-economic status?
- What other issues do you find it difficult to talk about?
- Is there someone in your life that you can address difficult issues with? If not, who do imagine yourself going to?
- How have historic events over the last fifty years shaped how we view race and class in this country today? From your point of view, have these areas been improved upon or worsened? Explain.

POST-SHOW WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPT:

- In both acts, when the difficult topics are finally spoken aloud, the discussion becomes heated. Why do the characters find it difficult to conduct their dialogue in a calm, reasonable, compassionate manner? Is this true to real life? Explain.

## Money Or Memory?

**Value:** that quality of anything which renders it desirable or useful.

**Worth:** usefulness or importance, as to the world, a person, or for a purpose.

The characters in Act Two are debating whether the house in *Clybourne Park* should be torn down or preserved. This building contains value for the characters in differing ways.

Lena and Kevin grew up in Clybourne Park and know this house as a place where Lena's family lived. It is also a symbol of breaking the color line in Chicago. The worth they see in it comes from historical significance and personal connection:

*That's just a part of my history and my parents' history – and honoring the connection to that history – and, no one, myself included, likes having to dictate what you can or can't do with your own home, but there's just a lot of pride, and a lot of memories in these houses, and for some of us, that connection still has value, if that makes sense?*

*For those of us who have remained...*

Lena, Act II - *Clybourne Park*

Lindsey and Steve have no personal ties to the house itself, and have decided to tear it down and build a new one in its place. This is purely a financial investment for them. Legally, they have the right to do this because they own the property:

*We talked about renovation. We discussed it. Because these houses are so charming and I know it's a shame – but when you figure in the crack in the sub-floor and the cost of the lead abatement – and in a market like this one? It just made more sense to start from scratch.*

Lindsey, Act II - *Clybourne Park*

*But what I mean is – So, you don't literally mean...monetary value. Right?*

Steve, Act II - *Clybourne Park*

The members of the Clybourne Park community, represented by Kevin and Lena, are challenging Lindsey and Kevin's decision to raze the house. Kevin and Lena may have legal power to stop the destruction of the house because of its historical value in the neighborhood. The two parties have come together to discuss their differing perspectives regarding the value of the house and property.

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS:

- What do you value most in life? People, experiences, money, relationships, school, religion, community? Why?
- Is there a time when money should outweigh personal and societal concerns? Explain.
- Is there a time when personal and societal concerns should trump financial consideration? Explain.
- What kind of connection do you have to your neighborhood? What kinds of experiences are you having there? What kinds of memories are being created there? Would you want to see it change? If so, in what way? If not, why keep it the way it is?

POST-SHOW WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPT:

- When it comes to the house in *Clybourne Park*, do you think Lindsey and Steve should be able to tear it down and do whatever they want with the property because they own it? Or do you think it should be preserved because of its historical and personal significance?

- Have students conduct a debate over the situation with the *Clybourne Park* house. Should the house be demolished or preserved? Some groups explore Lena and Kevin's perspective, and other groups explore Lindsey and Kevin's point of view.

## Dramaturg

*Clybourne Park* takes place in two acts, one set in 1959, and the other in 2009. The script does a time-jump of fifty years, and the audience is expected to go along for the ride. This is a common occurrence in theatre, but it is most effective through the hard work of the designers involved with the show.

Through set, lighting, sound, costume, hair and make-up design, the audience is signaled as to where and when they are in the story. The designers of a production are responsible for telling the playwright's story through their own medium.

The Dramaturg works in conjunction with the designers and the director. They are responsible for doing research about the particular era, geographical location, and trends of the time the play is set in. The Dramaturg serves as a source of information for all of the people working on the show. They may also help to gather art, music, architecture, clothing, and style samples to enhance the authenticity of the design.

The following exercise is designed to help students experience the job of a Dramaturg and, as the work goes on, to work as a designer in one or more departments in the theatre.

Students will gain a deeper understanding of the work involved behind the scenes of a theatre production, as well as be exposed to some of the techniques and ideas that went into the designing of *Clybourne Park*.

### **Dramaturgical Search:**

NOTE: You may choose to have students work in pairs or even small groups for this exercise. There may be more than one group assigned to the same time period. This can be useful as the differences in the materials gathered by each group may serve to highlight the opportunities that the Dramaturg has to exercise individuality and artistic expression.

PART 1

- Define Dramaturg:
  - A professional position within the theater that primarily deals with research and development of a given play production, assisting each of the design departments with inquiries of historical and geographical relevance and accuracy.
- Discuss the different aspects of research that might benefit the different departments of a play and give examples.
  - Ask the students what they would include if they were designing a show about themselves. Be sure to get examples of what the set would look like, how the lighting might affect the mood of the piece, what music would be playing, what clothes the actors should wear, and how they should do their hair and make-up.
- Assign individual students or small groups a specific time period in history and a geographical location. Have students do an Internet and (if possible) a full periodical search to discover all they can about the assigned time period and location.
- Ask students to collect images, songs, and any other materials they can find from the assigned time period, as well as current images that might be influenced by the same period.
- Have students create a collage to represent their time period.
- Have each student or group share their collages and lead a discussion on the time period, using their own work as inspiration.

The rest of the class should consider the following questions as each group presents:

What do we see?

What do we know about the time period and location based on this presentation?

Is anything missing?

When each student has presented, discuss the process:

- What sources were most effective in helping with the research and why?
- Did any part of the work inspire deeper thought or interest?

- How did you know when you found something that must be included?

#### PART 2

- Using the dramaturgical evidence they have already collected, have each student choose a department and create a design plan for a play that takes place in the given time period and geographical location previously assigned.

## Map your Territory

Create groups of students (2 to 3 in a group). Give each group a large piece of paper and have them draw a map of their school. Identify where certain groups of students hang out, eat lunch, play sports, and socialize (based on ethnicity, age, language, gender et cetera). Post and discuss: are they similar? Are their differences in the perception of where tribes hang out?

Hand them another sheet of paper and have them sketch various places in the city (if you like, bring a map of Los Angeles to the classroom as a guide). Identify where certain groups hang out (Koreatown, Beverly Hills, Compton, Watts, East Los Angeles, Santa Monica). What are we discovering from this exercise about tribes of people? Discuss.

## Discrimination

Think of a time when you felt discriminated against because of your race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, or age.

And/Or...

Think about a time when you discriminated against another, in either thought or action, because of his/her/their race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, or age.

Express the above by....

- Writing about the circumstances.
- Or
- Drawing a picture depicting the situation.

Once this has been completed, divide the students into small groups.

Each student will present his/her work to the members of their group. Students offer as much detail as they are comfortable with about their story/stories.

After everyone who is willing to share has done so, the group chooses one story to depict utilizing a tableau, or frozen picture. All group members must participate in the creation of the tableau.

Each tableau is presented to the class. Teachers solicit responses from the audience members about what they are seeing (gestures, images, interaction, mood, emotions, etc.). Students are also asked about what stories they see happening onstage.

The students in the tableau will reveal what they hoped to communicate.

**Time permitting, teachers can utilize the following variation:**

The tableaux in the exercise above will be used as springboards for creating poetry. Each student will play the role of “poet” and each small group will create a poem together.

- Before the tableaux are presented, all students will be given large strips of paper (about 2”x8”). Each student will receive two strips for each tableau that they will witness. For example, if there are five small groups, then each student receives 8 strips of paper (4 groups, 2 strips for each group).
- After the first group presents its tableau, each audience member is to think of two words that describe his/her reaction to the presentation. This is where everyone becomes a poet. Then he/she is to write each word on the paper strips, putting only one word on each strip.



- The students will now work in their small groups. They will share the words that they came up with. They are to create a poem utilizing all of the descriptive words.
- All new poems will be shared in class.
- Poems will be created for each tableau that is presented.
- Make sure to document the poems that are created.
  - Designate one student in each group to write the poem down.  
Take a digital photo of each poem and transcribe the poems later.
  - Make copies of all poems and pass out to the students.

The poem exercise was adapted from an exercise conducted during the Inner City Arts professional development series, "Creativity in the Classroom."

## HOME POEM

At \_\_\_\_\_ years old, I live in \_\_\_\_\_,  
(age) (location)

with \_\_\_\_\_  
(relative)

In a house made of \_\_\_\_\_  
(building materials)

I see \_\_\_\_\_  
(3 things you see from a window)

I hear \_\_\_\_\_  
(3 sounds you hear in/around the house)

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
(2 words to describe your feelings living in the house)

I fear \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 thing you fear in the house)

I hope \_\_\_\_\_  
(something you hope for)

I am \_\_\_\_\_  
(describe yourself)

At \_\_\_\_\_ years old,  
(age)

I live in a house made of \_\_\_\_\_

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## Credits

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**Center Theatre Group's mission** is to serve the diverse audiences of Los Angeles by producing and presenting theatre of the highest caliber, by nurturing new artists, by attracting new audiences, and by developing youth outreach and education programs. This mission is based on the belief that the art of theatre is a cultural force with the capacity to transform the lives of individuals and society at large.

Education and Community Partnerships Theatre is an enduring and powerful tool for communicating ideas, stories, emotions and beliefs that fuel the intellect, imagination and creative spirit. Center Theatre Group believes that stimulating awareness, creativity, dialogue and an inquisitive mind is integral to the growth and well-being of the individual and the community; and that nurturing a life-long appreciation of the arts leads inextricably to an engaged and enlightened society.

Center Theatre Group's education and community partnership programs advance the organization's mission in three key ways:

**Audiences:** Inspiring current and future audiences to discover theatre and its connection to their lives;  
**Artists:** Investing in the training, support and development of emerging young artists and young arts professionals who are the future of our field; and  
**Arts Education Leadership:** Contributing to the community-wide efforts to improve the quality and scope of arts education in Los Angeles.

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