

up for **DISCUSSION**

BIRTHDAY CANDLES

BEFORE THE SHOW

In writing *Birthday Candles*, playwright Noah Haidle was inspired by Thornton Wilder's play *The Long Christmas Dinner*. Consider the following two quotes that appear on the first page of the script for *Birthday Candles*:

"If you wish to make an apple pie from scratch, you must first invent the universe." –Carl Sagan

"All mankind is of one author and is one volume: when one man dies and one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated as God's hand is in every translation, and his hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again for the library where every book shall lie open to one another." –John Donne

- Inspiration is unique to each artist and their process. If you were to create a piece of art based on the above quotes, think about where, when, who, and what it could be about. Share your story impulses with someone!
- What pieces of literature, themes in media, or stories passed down through generations inspire you?

AFTER THE SHOW

A RITUAL is a ceremonial act or action; an act or series of acts regularly repeated in a set precise manner.

A TRADITION is an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior.

- What are some examples of Ernestine's family's rituals that you have noticed during the play?
- Think about some of the rituals and traditions in your own family and culture. Where did they come from and how did you learn them? When and why are they repeated?
- In this play, the characters experience loss in many forms. How can ritual or tradition serve as a way to honor, remember, or pass something on to future generations?

In the play, we see Ernestine's family evolve over 10 decades.

- What are the types of caregiving relationships you noticed in Ernestine's family across generations (e.g. parent to child)? What factors affect who cares for whom in this play (e.g. age and illness)?
- How does the responsibility of being a caregiver affect the characters? Does the effect change depending on who is receiving the care?
- Are you or someone you know a caregiver for a family member? How is that role rewarding and challenging?