

SEATTLE
REP



PRIMARY TRUST

BY EBONI
BOOTH

Youth Guide

Welcome to Seattle Rep!

You know that scene in *Clueless* (or *Mean Girls*, or *Heathers*, or *High School Musical*) where the characters walk through the high school common area and explain each clique? Why do so many movies do that? It's actually a literary element called **exposition**: providing essential background information about the characters, their relationships, the setting, and any relevant historical context, setting the stage for the main plot to unfold.

Exposition is a common element of plays, too. It's the first thing you'll hear in today's performance of *Primary Trust*, a quirky and moving new play by Eboni Booth that won the 2024 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare sets the characters, setting, and conflict as the Chorus begins, "Two households, both alike in dignity, in fair Verona where we lay our scene." In *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder, the exposition is introduced by the Stage Manager, who welcomes the audience to the fictional town of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire on a May morning in 1901.

As you watch *Primary Trust*, look for the moments of exposition and make note of them in the "What Do You Know After the Show" section on the back page of this Guide. In this Guide you'll also find an interview with the Director and more information to augment your viewing experience.

We are so happy to have you in our audience. Check out other youth programs here at Seattle Rep and follow our socials! We hope you join us for more shows this season and consider Seattle Rep your home theater.

And now, I've finished the exposition for this Youth Guide.



Deanna Martinez
Education & Community
Programs Director

The Story

Kenneth is a 38-year-old man living in a small town outside of Rochester, New York. For 15 years his life has been the same: he works at the bookstore during the day and enjoys mai tais (cocktails) with his friend Bert at night. However, when the bookstore owner closes shop, it forces Kenneth to make changes and push past his comfort zone—sometimes that means making new friends and sometimes that means reconciling with the past. In Kenneth's own words, *"This is the story of friendship. Of how I got a new job. A story of love and balance and time. And the smallest of chances."*

The Setting

Primary Trust takes place in the fictional Cranberry, New York during a time before cell phones.

Town Motto:

"Welcome friend, you're right on time!"

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On Point of View

This play is told specifically from Kenneth's point of view (POV). Sometimes, *how* he sees things is just as important as *what* he sees.

For example, Kenneth goes to Wally's regularly—a tiki bar full of culturally appropriated objects and ideas—and never questions their existence in his Northeastern town. His perspective doesn't consider the history of tikis or Aloha shirts, or that they might have cultural significance to anyone else. He doesn't notice that the music is bossa nova (a style of music originating thousands of miles away from the Pacific Islands). We only feel what he feels: a place where he finds comfort.

Similarly, Kenneth is only aware that French = Fancy. The accent of the waiter at Le Pousselet is stereotypical, only because we are hearing it through Kenneth's ears. The "French" words are meaningless (even the restaurant's name), because they are meaningless to him.

Even the set is designed to show us that we are in Kenneth's POV. The only places represented in Cranberry are places that mean something to Kenneth. If the play was from an objective POV, we would see other houses and businesses. Instead, we see only what Kenneth sees and cares about.

POV PROJECT: Kaytlin McIntyre and An-lin Dauber, the director and scenic designer for *Primary Trust*, found inspiration for the set in postcards—images of cities with just the most prominent locations represented. Seattle postcards might have Pike Place Market, the Seattle Great Wheel, the Space Needle, and Mount Rainier (Tahoma). But are these locations most prominent to *you*? What would *your* hometown postcard look like? What locations would you include? Use a 4×6" index card and layer cut-outs on it to represent your own version of Seattle or your home city.

Go Beyond the Show

Scan here for additional show content, including words from our Artistic Director Dámaso Rodríguez and playwright Eboni Booth, a show-inspired list of books, music, and films curated by librarians at Seattle Public Library, and more!



A Comedy About Loneliness

We sat down with director Kaytlin McIntyre to talk about all things *Primary Trust*.



Seattle Rep: *Primary Trust* is on its way to becoming one of the most popular plays of the year at regional theaters across the country. Why do you think the play and its themes resonate so deeply with audiences right now?

Kaytlin McIntyre: *Primary Trust* is about a man who must face his fears and embrace change, even when the future seems uncertain. While Eboni Booth started writing this play before COVID, it touches on so many emotions that we recognize from a global pandemic—isolation, anxiety, and the coping mechanisms we develop to just get through the day. So, I think audiences connect with it because it feels recognizable and deals with big, complicated themes but in a subtle, surprising, and humorous way. I often describe it as a “comedy about loneliness.”

SR: As the former lead of Seattle Rep's new works program, you had a lot of scripts come across your desk. What made playwright Eboni Booth's work stand out to you?

KM: If a stack of plays includes a work by Eboni Booth, I always prioritize reading it because I know I will find something to love. Booth lifts the stories of mundane spaces: grocery stores, tiki bars, banks. She writes about small towns and unseen people and, in doing so, she exposes surprising and profound truths living right under our noses. There is a quietness and restraint to Booth's work that I find very compelling. She trusts the artists and, ultimately, the audience to fill in the gaps and gives them space to draw their own conclusions about the characters and story. Booth is also an actor, and you can feel that in the richness and playfulness of her characters—she writes roles you want to sink your teeth into.

SR: You are an alumna of Seattle Rep's Winky Hussey Professional Arts Training Program as a Directing Intern and eventually took on the post of Seattle Rep Artistic Producer before your current role as Director of Repertory Producing at Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF). What advice would you give to young and emerging directors that want to make a life in theater?

KM: Don't wait for someone to give you permission to do your work! Find a space, whether that's a living room or a park or a traditional theater space, and make the art happen yourself. Start cultivating your collaborators now and you'll be amazed at what other hungry artists are willing to create with you in their spare time. I'm not saying it's easy, but it gives you agency over your career and art instead of placing the control in the hands of someone else.

SR: What do you hope audiences take away from this show?

KM: Again, I think the beauty of Eboni Booth's writing is that she leaves the audience space to have different takeaways and experiences. One audience member may feel the need to call their mom, another one may crave a mai tai. Both of those are great. My personal wish is that audiences will walk away feeling less alone and more eager to extend compassion towards the outsiders in their own communities.

SR: Anything else you'd like the audience to know?

KM: I like to think of *Primary Trust* as psychological magical realism. It adheres to an emotional logic more than it adheres to rational logic. What feels real is real. Just go with it!

What Do You Know After the Show?

WARM UP In which moments of the show did you feel yourself having some sort of emotional reaction (laughter, sadness, surprise)? What was the reaction and how did the play help create that reaction within you?

THINKING ABOUT IT Exposition provides essential background information about the characters, their relationships, the setting, and any relevant historical context, setting the stage for the main plot to unfold.

1. What are some moments of exposition in *Primary Trust*? What information did you learn in that moment? Why was that information important to your understanding?

2. In writing, you are often told to "show, don't tell." But often, exposition is "telling" rather than "showing." When is exposition the most effective? How should a writer decide the best way to provide background information? Can exposition be both "showing" AND "telling"?

WRITING ABOUT IT

1. Choose a well-known tale and write an EXPOSITION MONOLOGUE for the character of your choice. Make sure it is written in first-person language and includes relationships, the setting, and any relevant historical context, setting the stage for the main plot to unfold.

- Little Red Riding Hood
- Goldilocks and the Three Bears
- The Tortoise and the Hare
- The Three Little Pigs
- Cinderella

2. How would the monologue change if you wrote it from a different character's point of view?