ENRICHMENT GUIDE

TROUBLE IN MIND

By Alice Childress

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JOHN HIRSCH MAINSTAGE

ROYAL MTC
MANITOBA THEATRE CENTRE

Trouble in Mind

Enrichment Guide

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The Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre is proud to call Manitoba home. Royal MTC is located in Winnipeg on Treaty 1 territory, the lands of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples, and the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. We are thankful for the benefits sharing this land has afforded us, acknowledge the responsibilities of the Treaties, and embrace the opportunity to partner with Indigenous communities in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

The Role of the Audience

Theatre needs its audience! We are happy to have you here. Every staff person, actor, and crew member backstage plays an important part in your experience, and you also have a role in the experience of cast, crew and the people around you.

Arrive Early: Please make sure you give yourself enough time to find your seat before the performance starts. Latecomers may not be admitted to a performance. We ask schools and other groups to arrive at least 20-30 minutes before the show.

Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices: Please **turn off** your cell phone/mp3 player /gaming system/camera/smart watch. Texting, surfing, and gaming during performances is very distracting for the performers and other audience members. Using cameras and recording devices during a performance is **never** allowed.

Talking During the Performance: Even when you whisper, you can be heard by performers and people around you. Unless it is a relaxed performance, disruptive patrons will be removed from the theatre. Please wait until after the performance to share your words with others.

Food/Drinks: Food and outside drinks are not allowed in the theatre. When there is an intermission, snacks and drinks may be available for purchase. There is complimentary water in the lobby.

Dress: There is no dress code at the Royal MTC, but we respectfully ask you not to wear hats in the theatre. We strive to be a scent-free environment and thank all patrons for their cooperation.

Leaving During the Performance: If you leave the theatre during a performance, you will be readmitted at the discretion of Front of House staff. If readmitted, you may be placed in an empty seat at the back of the auditorium instead of your original seat.

Being Asked to Leave: The theatre staff has, and will exercise, the right to ask any member of the audience to leave if that person is being inappropriate or disruptive including (but not limited to): talking, using devices that produce light or sound, and deliberately interfering with an actor or the performance (tripping, throwing items on or near the stage, etc.).

Talkbacks: A short question and answer period with the actors takes place after student matinees, first Tuesday evening shows, and some public matinees. While watching the show, make a mental note of questions to ask the actors about the production or life in the theatre. Our artists deserve to be treated with respect! It's okay to have a negative opinion, but this is your chance to ask questions and understand the performance or process, not to criticize. If you have a concern, see the house manager after the show and they will make sure your feedback gets to the appropriate Royal MTC staff.

Enjoy the show: Laugh, cry, gasp – responding to the performance is part of the nature of theatre! As you get involved in the story, try to balance your reactions with respecting the people around you. The curtain call is part of the performance too – it gives you a chance to thank all the artists for their hard work with applause, and for them to thank you for your attention. We all appreciate when you stay at your seat and join in the applause!

Alice Childress

Alice Childress was born in 1916 in Charleston, South Carolina. Her parents separated when she was 9, and she and her mother moved to Harlem. There they lived with Childress' grandmother who taught her to approach life as an education and encouraged her to tell stories. They would play a game where they would watch passers-by from the window and her grandmother would ask Childress questions that turned them into characters and then have her write these down as stories. Childress spent much time at the public library growing up but did not complete high school nor attend college. Passionate about learning and inspired by her grandmother, she was entirely self-educated. She became interested in theatre after seeing a Shakespeare play as a teenager. Venezuela Jones, who ran the Federal Theatre Project's Negro Youth Theatre and was a Black woman playwright, was her mentor. Childress was also inspired by W.E.B. Du Bois, a leading Black scholar and founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); and his wife Shirley Graham Du Bois who encouraged Childress' writing career.

She married actor Alvin Childress in 1935 and had their daughter Jean later that year. In 1939 the couple became founding members of the American Negro Theatre (ANT) and Childress acted as well as worked backstage, and offstage in many menial jobs. She was even nominated for a Tony Award for Best Supporting Actress in 1944. By 1949, she was frustrated by the limited roles available to her as a Black, light-skinned woman, and turned to playwriting. She wrote *Florence*, her first play, for ANT overnight as part of a bet that a "race play" could be interesting without the central focus being a life-and-death issue like lynching. She said that her work experience informed her writing about "ordinary people."

Childress defied the idea that the only important race drama was sensationalized and male-centric, and featured "ordinary" Black women in her scripts. She also wrote for interracial casts and included confrontation in her plays. Childress was also a political activist, working for a cultural support organization in Harlem and fighting for theatre artists' rights to create a union for Off-Broadway productions. She taught classes at the Jefferson School of Social Science, which was a Marxist institute, and founded a civil rights group with Shirley Graham Du Bois to fight against lynching, Jim Crow laws, apartheid, and sexism. Because of these associations and her connections, she was watched by the FBI for many years and protective of her information even when she was cleared as a member of the Communist Party.

Childress and Alvin divorced – her disapproval of him acting in the television show *Amos and Andy*, which perpetuated Black stereotypes, may have been a factor – and she remarried musician and composer Nathan Woodard in 1957. Through the 1960s and 70s, Childress wrote plays that focused less on interracial conflict and more on Black life, not requiring white actors. She also began to incorporate her intersectional identity as a woman into her writing. Childress

began to write novels, which received more recognition than her plays at the time. They depicted teenagers “faced with finding security, acceptance and selfhood in social environments hostile to their development” hoping to help isolated children feel optimistic. Her book *A Hero Ain’t Nothin’ but a Sandwich* (1973), which explored the struggle of Black youth in the inner city, received multiple awards and was adapted into a successful film for which she also wrote the screenplay. In 1979, she received a Pulitzer Prize nomination for her book *A Short Walk*.

Later in her life, Childress was awarded an Alumnae Graduate Society Medal for Distinguished Achievement in 1984 from Radcliffe College, where she was an Associate Scholar in the late 1960s. She received an Honorary Degree from the State University New York at Oneonta and an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from the State University of New York in 1990, and in 1993, a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association for Theatre of Higher Education. Multiple articles, dissertations, and biographies were written about Childress. She died suddenly of cancer in 1994. At the time, she was working on a story about her great-grandmother, who had been enslaved.

Trouble in Mind’s Journey to the Stage

“I continue to create because writing is a labour of love and also an act of defiance, a way to light a candle in a gale wind.” – Alice Childress

Trouble in Mind was Childress’ first full-length play. It premiered off-Broadway at the Greenwich Mews Theatre in New York City on November 3, 1955. It was directed by Childress with her friend Clarice Taylor, who also played Wiletta Mayor. The play had a good reception from audiences and critics, and Childress was the first Black woman to receive an Obie for Best Off-Broadway Play.


Clarice Taylor and Liam Lenihan in “Trouble in Mind”

Photo from 1955 NYT review.

The Greenwich Mews Theatre, led by Stella Hold, produced the work of many Black writers and was one of the only theatres featuring integrated casts at the time. However, a white male producer threatened to cancel the run of the show if Childress didn’t change the ending. She reluctantly did to keep the show going; the New York Times gave it a positive review except for the new ending which it said contained “impassioned sermonizing.”

Trouble in Mind was optioned for Broadway, but this came with more rewrite requests from producers who were concerned about how white audiences would react. Childress worked on these for two years until the script no longer felt like her own, and decided she needed to stop. The conversation about a transfer to Broadway ended. Childress went back to the original ending for publication, but promotion for the show had died down. Instead, the first Broadway play written by an African-American woman would not take place until 1959 with Lorraine Hansberry’s *Raisin in the Sun*.

Trouble in Mind was produced by some universities, but rarely professionally until recently. It likely did not receive its Canadian premiere until 2021 (at the Shaw Festival). Also in 2021, the play finally premiered on Broadway, produced by the Roundabout Theatre Company.

Childress' plays were optioned for Broadway a total of 11 times, but none were ever produced there, because she remained unwilling to revise her work in ways that she thought would compromise her ideals and the integrity of her scripts.

Kathy A. Perkins, who was the lighting designer for the Broadway production as well as a professor, scholar, and friend of Childress, wrote in the introduction to a collection of her works: "I asked Childress if she had any regrets about missing out on Broadway productions of her plays because she refused to make the changes demanded by producers. She admitted that it would have been wonderful to have had her plays on Broadway. But, she told me, it was more important to go to bed each night with a clear conscience and peace of mind" (Perkins xxxiii).

Related Resource Links: Read more about the impact of Childress and Trouble in Mind, including an examination of the genre of anti-lynching plays, in a personal essay by Allan K. Washington. Watch an insightful 30-minute video discussion from the Alabama Shakespeare Festival about Childress' life and *Trouble in Mind* including its relevance to today (from 19 minutes on, it references events in the play, so may be best watched post-show).

Characters

Wiletta Mayer: An experienced Black actor who has performed as a singer and in film.
Millie Davis: A Black actor unsatisfied with her roles but not enough to rock the boat.
Sheldon Forrester: An elderly Black character actor and aspiring songwriter.
Henry: A 78-year-old Irish doorman at the theatre.
Al Manners: The white director of the play being rehearsed for Broadway.
John Nevins: A Black actor making his Broadway debut.
Bill O'Wray: A middle-aged white actor.
Judy Sears: A young white actor who recently graduated and is acting in her first job.
Eddie Fenton: The white stage manager.

Content Overview

This section may contain spoilers.

Occasional strong language; racially sensitive language/slurs used within a historical context. A lynching is described in a brief but impactful way. Incidences of racism may be triggering.

Plot Summary

At a Broadway theatre in 1957, rehearsals are underway for a new play, *Chaos in Belleville*. Behind the scenes, veteran Black actors are dispensing advice to their young counterpart. For them, playing a role is a way of life. Don't be too smart or too outspoken, and don't get too close. Meanwhile, the white director expects raves for showing enlightenment, but his actions in the rehearsal hall fall short. In the play-within-a-play, the Black sharecroppers look for the vote but find nothing but trouble. And the tension in the rehearsal room rises…

Synopsis

This section contains spoilers. *Synopsis adapted from encyclopedia.com*

Act 1

Trouble in Mind opens inside the entrance of a Broadway theater in New York City where the play-within-a-play, *Chaos in Belleville,* is about to start rehearsals. Wiletta Mayer, a middle-aged, African-American actress, bangs on the door and finally lets herself in. She scolds the elderly doorman, Henry, for not letting her in out of the cold, until she sees the stage. While she is enraptured by the sight of the theater, Henry recognizes her from when he was an electrician on a show twenty years ago. When Henry leaves, John Nevins, a young African-American actor, enters. He tries to hide his nervousness. In talking to him, Wiletta realizes that they come from the same town and that she knows his parents. Wiletta gives him career advice about how Black people are perceived by white directors and others who run the show. She tells him that he should lie and say he was in the last revival of *Porgy and Bess*, even though it is untrue. John is skeptical.

Millie, another African-American actress, arrives and soon, a young white actress, Judith Sears, and an elderly African-American actor, Sheldon Forrestor, join the conversation. John tries to approach Judy several times, but the other actors prevent him, talking about this play and previous productions they have been in. Judy reveals that this is her first play, and she hopes it will educate their audience. The other actors do not disagree outright. Their conversation is interrupted by the appearance of the play's director, Manners, his assistant Eddie, and Henry. After greetings are exchanged, Manners shows them the sketches for the production's scenic

design. He compliments each cast member, especially Wiletta, who worked on a movie with him some time ago.

Manners tells the cast about the play and how the production came to be. He says that it is ahead of its time in its depiction of race. The cast has questions about their parts, but Manners insists that they read a scene in the middle of act one. Judy gets up to read, but she is nervous and forgets where downstage is. Manners yells at her. Manners tries to make Wiletta act naturally, to access the emotions of her character by him treating her as subservient, but it shocks her and creates tension in the room. Wiletta becomes very cautious around him. The cast continues with the read. The Black actors question words and situations they object to. Manners tries to smooth things over but does not concede such things are objectionable. He has them read from the beginning of act one.

Henry shows up with coffee and doughnuts. Manners becomes angry when Henry does not bring him the proper pastry, which grows when Eddie informs Manners that his ex-wife is on the phone. Manners takes the call while Wiletta tries to make Eddie more comfortable. Judy invites the cast to visit her family's home in Bridgeport. Wiletta and Millie tell her she better discuss it with her parents before she makes such an invitation because they "wouldn't want it discussed after we got there."

Manners turns the conversation to the script. He asks the cast to give a synopsis of *Chaos in Belleville's* events. When they do, he has Wiletta sing the song at the end of act one. She knows the song and performs it well. Manners demands to know what she is thinking about. She tells him that she knows what he wants and performed the song that way, but he is not satisfied with this answer. Manners makes her play a word association game that makes Wiletta and the rest of the group uncomfortable and ultimately, he prefers her first performance. Wiletta feels lost, and Manners leads Judy offstage to take about her role. Immediately, the Black cast members caution John to not get too close to Judy. While talking about racial topics, they say accusatory things to each other. John, Sheldon, and Millie leave, and Wiletta is left alone. Henry comes in and tries to comfort her. He is still mad about what Manners did to him earlier. As Henry talks about Ireland and the problems there, he grows increasingly indignant. Wiletta shares his anger. She says she will be an actress no matter what is thrown in her path.

Act 2

Three mornings later, Manners and Eddie are rehearsing with a new addition, white actor Bill O'Wray. O'Wray plays Renard, the father figure in the play, and is passionately reading a long-winded speech while Eddie plays sound cues of applause from a tape recorder. When he is done, Bill is unsure about some of the text and offers suggestions to Manners about cuts. Manners goes on about his personal problems, then asks a favor of Bill: to stop leaving at lunch hour because it looks like he does not want to eat with the Black members of the cast. Bill tells Manners that it's true he does not want to eat with them, not because he is prejudiced, but because people in public stare when he does.

Wiletta enters. She tries to tell Manners about problems she has with the script. Manners is dismissive of her concerns, complimenting her every time she tries to say something. Wiletta

finally gets out that the third act doesn't seem a natural outcome after the first, but Manners tells her not to think. When the rest of the cast joins them, Judy looks more sophisticated and John acts more like Manners. Manners starts rehearsal at the beginning of act three. Wiletta has a hard time focusing on her lines. The play soon reaches a dramatic climax, as John's character is to be lynched and Wiletta's character lets him go instead of protecting him. Manners acts like the consummate director.

When they reach the end of the scene, Sheldon reveals that he has not read the whole play, just the parts that he is in. Manners fills him in on the ending. He also compliments all the actors on their work, except Wiletta. Manners asks her if she will let him help her. Wiletta states that he will not listen to her suggestions, though he does pay attention to the others' thoughts. Manners explains that she must lose herself in the part by relating, but Wiletta does not understand why Job, John's character, does not get away. John tries to intercede, but he acts just like Manners. Manners will not listen to Wiletta, and the cast falls into arguing

Manners attempts to control his cast. He asks them to imagine a lynching. He is surprised when Sheldon says that he has seen one. Sheldon relates the story. Manners and Bill are affected by the story, and the former calls for lunch. The cast decides to go together. Wiletta still tries to make her point about the script, but Manners dismisses her concerns again. Some of the cast leaves, and Wiletta says she will catch up them later.

Time passes. The cast enters without Wiletta. To one side, Manners and Eddie chide Bill for making what could be seen as a racist joke. Wiletta arrives just as Manners begins rehearsal. She tells him she wants to talk to him after rehearsal, but Manners is noncommittal. They begin to read act three. Wiletta ignores Manners's order to keep John on his knees. She challenges Manners about the play: she does not believe her character would send her son out to a lynch mob. Though others try to silence her, she asks Manners if he would do it to his son. He ignores the question and justifies his position. Wiletta accuses him of prejudice and keeps trying to ask her question. Manners finally answers her in an angry outburst. He says that he and his son could not be compared to her and John's character.

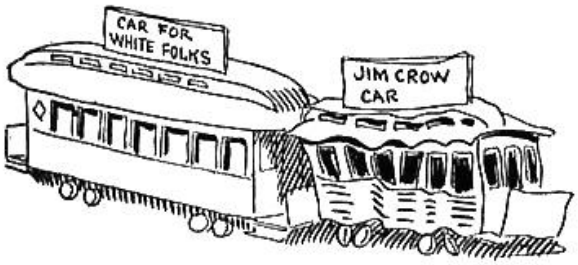
Manners and Eddie quickly leave, and the cast is in disarray. The cast is both accusatory and supportive of what Wiletta said. Sheldon is on her side, but he tells her to apologize to in an effort to keep their jobs. Wiletta is firm in her conviction that the play is a lie. Judy and Bill are resentful of what the Black actors say about white people. Finally, Eddie comes in and informs that rehearsal is over. He will call them about tomorrow's rehearsal. The cast, except Wiletta, leave. Henry sees that Wiletta is upset and tries to calm her. She says that she will show up at rehearsal tomorrow, no matter what, so that Manners has to fire her in person. At Henry's urging to speak something grand, she takes the stage and recites Psalm 133, which is about unity. Henry turns on the tape recorder to play wild applause.

Context and Related Resources

The 1950s in America: Separate but Equal?

Provided by the Milwaukee Repertory Theater

America was coming out of a bleak era: the Depression in the 1920s and 1930s and World War II during the 1940s. As servicemen returned from overseas, the economy expanded. Americans started buying goods that were depleted during the previous decades which created corporate expansion and more jobs. America was starting to rebuild quickly and efficiently.



Above: segregated drinking fountains. Below: political cartoon of rail cars by John T. McCutcheon. Public Domain.

The 1950s was the perfect picture of American society. Imagine a man, working every day to provide for his family. Imagine a woman, cooking and cleaning all day and enjoying it. Imagine the children, frolicking happily during recess and enjoying school. Imagine the house, a small two-storey with lace curtains, a white picket fence and a dog in the front yard wagging its tail. Can you picture it: the epitome of the perfect American lifestyle? However, the 1950s wasn't this picture-perfect story. The 1950s was a time of resistance and struggle for many American citizens. While some may claim that there is only one America, the 1950‘s had two. There was “white America” and “Black America.” The phrase “separate but equal” rang throughout the nation. This doctrine, created in the late 19th century during the Supreme Court case Plessey vs. Ferguson, was the catchphrase of the time. This ruling originated with Homer Plessey, who was jailed for sitting in a “white car” because he was one-eighth Black. Judge Ferguson ruled that separate cars did not conflict with the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery. Thus the phrase “separate but equal” was born. During the 1950s this applied to everything from drinking fountains to schools to buses to hospitals and separate was not truly equal.

This segregated nation became the norm. People accepted it because this was how it had been for so long. However, there were many who felt this was immoral and needed to change. The 1950s was the starting point of the civil rights movement: an initiation of abolishing “separate but equal.” The first groundbreaking event was the Brown v. Board of Education case in Topeka, Kansas. This case focused on the idea of school segregation. It sought to challenge a law passed in 1879 that said racially-segregated schools were acceptable. However, most “Black schools” were much worse than “white schools.” They were smaller, falling apart, had a deficient curriculum, poor teacher training and oftentimes students had to take a school bus for over an hour just to get to school. When 13 parents attempted to enroll their children in a “white school,” they were denied. In February 1951, the Topeka National Association for Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) filed a case on the parents‘ behalf. It took three years for the ruling

of “separate and unequal” in schools and various other public facilities. This ruling paved the road for much other educational and social reform throughout America.

Another event that opened the eyes of Americans took place in 1955. December 1,1955 marks the date that Rosa Parks refused to move from her seat on a bus. While the buses were considered desegregated (Blacks and whites could ride together), Blacks had to sit in the back of the bus. Rosa Parks boarded the bus and sat in the fifth row, the first row a Black person could occupy. A few stops later, the first four rows were filled with white people and one white man was left standing. The bus driver asked Parks to move; she refused and was arrested. This event started the Montgomery Bus Boycott, another initiative to desegregate more public facilities. During this year-long ordeal, Black people refused to use public transportation and worked with each other to create a more fair system. White people tried to end the boycott by using threats, stories to try to divide the Black community, and, eventually, violence. However, Black people continued to stay off the buses until November 13, 1956 when the US Supreme Court ruled that segregation on buses was unconstitutional.

The civil rights movement of the1950s paved the way for Black people and gave hope to a majority of Americans. The two Americas were becoming one through the works of Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr, Charles Houston, Thurgood Marshall and many more. The movement continued into the 1960s, and in 1964 the Civil Rights Act outlawed racial segregation in schools, public places and employment.

Rosa Parks being arrested a second time in February 1956, indicted as one of the boycott leaders. Below: Parks and a reporter on a Montgomery bus immediately following their desegregation in 1956.

Play Within A Play

By Janine Bannier for Milwaukee Repertory Theatre

In *Trouble in Mind*, the playwright Alice Childress uses the theatrical device known as a "play within a play." As you will see, the characters in *Trouble in Mind* are actors who are rehearsing a play about race relations in America. Though the outer play is a comedy, the inner play is a drama which focuses on the African-American right to vote. The characters in the outer play live in the year 1957, and are forced throughout rehearsals to deal with a parallel in their lives to the lives of the characters of the inner play. In this way, Childress uses a "play within a play" to show the parallel of race relations throughout generations of Americans.

The history of this theatrical device can be seen as far back as ancient India, where layered stories known as a "frame story" were popular. In these stories passed down through generations of storytellers as an oral tradition, the outer story served only as a vehicle to the inner story. For instance, the popular tale of *Scheherazade* is still told to this day. The outer story of *Scheherazade* is that of a king and a storyteller who saves her own life by telling a new tale to the king each night. The inner stories contained lessons, morals and what can be considered the "guts" of the tale. The inner stories were known to change often throughout the generations but were able to provide similar morals. One of the most infamous Indian tales that uses a story within a story is *The Mahabharata,* which was written in the ancient language of Sanskrit. This tale is that of two rival tribes, who fight a war through their family stories. Famous stories in this series include *Arabian Nights*, *Ramayana*, and the *Seven Wise Masters*.
"A story within a story" can be seen across cultural history. In France, the device is known as *Mise en abyme* which translates into "placing into infinity."

The first play to use this device was *The Spanish Tragedy* written in 1587 by Thomas Kyd. In this production, a play is presented in front of two "audience members" who commentate on the action. In this show, a play within a play was used to clearly convey the author's inner monologue about a social issue. Play within a play became very popular in western playwriting with William Shakespeare, who used the device in several of his works including *The Taming of the Shrew, Love's Labours Lost*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as well as tragedies, most notably *Hamlet*.

A play within a play has continued to be used in western playwriting throughout modern history. From realistic works such as Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* to the revolt of realism as seen in Bertolt Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and into more recent popular Broadway hits such as *Kiss Me Kate* and Mel Brooks' *The Producers*, a play within a play can be used in many ways. In some cases, the inner play exists for no other reason than to entertain. However, it can also be used to convey morals, lessons, social commentary, or to show a parallel between two worlds as seen in Alice Childress' *Trouble in Mind*.

A History of Black Theatre in America

By Laura Lynn MacDonald for Milwaukee Repertory Theater; updated by Ksenia Broda-Milian

Black Theater rose out of a rich history in Africa where stories were often dramatized using music and masks. As migration and slave trading moved Africans to other continents, vestiges of their storytelling traditions eventually made it onto the stage. Susan Croft in *Migrating Histories* notes that in Britain, "Black performers can be traced back to the time of Henry VIII, who employed a 'Black trumpet.'" The first Black actor to achieve major recognition was Ira Aldridge (1804-1867), who was heralded for his portrayal of great Shakespearean roles, most notably Othello.

In the United States, around the time of the American Civil War, Minstrel Shows (disparaging comedies featuring white actors wearing greasepaint to caricature Black people) were all the rage. After The Civil War, Black people were finally allowed to participate in the Minstrel Shows themselves. Some embraced the opportunity to perform and expanded the shows to include dancing, singing and skits. However, this was still a show format born of a racist structure and did not necessarily allow Black performers to tell their authentic stories.

. The first known play by an American Black playwright was James Brown's *King Shotaway* (1823). William Wells Brown's *The Escape*, also known as *A Leap for Freedom* (1858), was the first Black play published, but the first real success of a Black dramatist was Angelina W. Grimke with *Rachel* (1916). By the turn of the twentieth century, Black musicals were being produced

Miss Angelina Grimké

Black theater flourished during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 30s. Experimental groups and Black theater companies emerged in Chicago, New York City and Washington, D.C. The Ethiopian Art Theatre, which started in Chicago, launched the career of one of the most influential and charismatic actors of his day, Paul Robeson, known for his low voice.

Early ANT advertisement.

In 1925, Garland Anderson's play, *Appearances,* was the first play authored by a Black playwright to make it to Broadway. When Langston Hughes' *Mulatto* opened in 1935, Black theater could celebrate a true hit on Broadway. In that same year, the Federal Theatre Project was founded, providing a training ground for Black actors. In the late 1930s, Black community theaters began to appear. Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee began their careers in community theater. By 1940, two major Black theater companies had formed: Negro Playwrights' Company and The American Negro Theater (ANT) which would have members such as Sidney Portier and Harry Belefonte.

Lorraine Hansberry in 1955

After World War II, Black theater in the United States became more established. Black playwrights wrote plays that realistically told the stories of their lives. These stories asked hard questions about race, identity, and stereotypes. Out of that time came the groundbreaking plays of two remarkable women - Alice Childress (*Trouble in Mind*, 1955*)* and Lorraine Hansberry (*A Raisin in the Sun,* 1959). Ms. Childress was the first Black female playwright to win an Obie Award for best original play. Hansberry's play that followed a few years later inspired a generation of Black writers and actors and "changed American Theatre forever" (*The New York Times). A Raisin in the Sun* was the first play written by an African-American woman to be produced on Broadway. It premiered in 1959, with Lloyd Richards directing a cast that included Sidney Poitier and Ruby Dee. The show ran for 530 performances and won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Play. In 2004, it received a Broadway revival featuring Phylicia Rashad and Grammy winning Sean (Puffy) Combs. Ms. Rashad won a Tony Award for her performance.

From the original cast of *Raisin,* three revolutionary minds came together to create a new company devoted to Black theater. Douglas Turner Ward, Robert Hooks and Gerald Krone opened the doors of The Negro Ensemble Company in New York City in 1965. Its mission was to provide a home for Black actors, writers and directors to freely explore their talents beyond the confines of racial barriers. The Negro Ensemble Company has produced more than 200 plays both on and off Broadway, winning numerous Tonys, Obies and Pulitzers. One of their first plays, Day of Absence, featured Black actors in whiteface in "reverse minstrel show" style. NEC has been the starting ground for many famous Black performers. Actors such as Denzel Washington, Samuel L. Jackson, Phylicia Rashad, Laurence Fishburne and Angela Bassett all began their acting careers on the NEC stage.

NEC Members pose with Hooks, Ward, and Krone (front, L-R).

The 1960s and 70s were a volatile period when creative expressions were directly influenced by the hope and energy of the Civil Rights Movement. The plays written by Black playwrights at that time often focused on the social turmoil of the day. As racial barriers were being challenged, more Black plays and Black theater companies, like The New Federal Theatre, emerged. NFT was founded by Woodie King Jr as an outgrowth of a theatre program called Mobilization for Youth.

In 1989, Larry Leon Hamlin founded the National Black Theatre Festival with the support of Dr. Maya Angelou. In its first year over 10,000 people attended to see thirty performances by seventeen of America's best professional Black theater companies. According to The New York Times, "the 1989 National Black Theatre Festival was one of the most historic and culturally significant events of Black theatre and American Theatre in general."

In recent history, many Black playwrights' works have been produced to great acclaim. For example, August Wilson has won a Pulitzer Prize and a Tony Award for his play *Fences* (1987). He won another Pulitzer in 1990 for his play *The Piano Lesson.* Wilson's cycle of 10 plays, *Pittsburgh Cycle*, sketch the Black experience in the 20th century and aim to "raise consciousness through theatre." The first in this series was revived in 2017 and won a Tony for Best Revival of a Play.

Black works on Broadway in the 2021-22 season included: *Skeleton* by Dominique Morisseau, a revival of *Slave Play* by Jeremy O. Harris, *Clyde's* by Lynn Nottage, *Thoughts of a Colored Man* by Keenan Scott II, *Chicken & Biscuits* by Douglas Lyons, *Pass Over* by Antoinette Chinonye Nwandu, and of course, *Trouble in Mind*.

Related Resource Links: Roundabout Theatre Company has a detailed timeline of Black American Theatre from 1921-1979, which includes internal links to further reading about plays, people, and companies. Watch Douglas Turner Ward speak about the founding of the Negro Ensemble Company in this video (28 minutes). Explore Black Work Broadway, a website keeping a record of all works presented in Broadway houses by Black creators.

A Brief Look at Black Canadian Theatre

While the playwright and setting of *Trouble in Mind* are American, there is a long presence of Black theatre in Canada. Since the early 19th century, Black theatre groups have existed in Vancouver and Halifax and small communities, including North Buxton and Amherstburg in Ontario. Many performers began within their local church. Historically, the church was not only a religious institution, but a social institution that served a wide variety of purposes. However, some of the earliest Black theatrical performances in Canada were put on by secular organizations such as those by The Toronto Coloured Young Men's Amateur Theatrical Society which advertised their second performance in 1849 (records of their first performance have not yet been found). In the early 1900s, several Black Canadian actors from Southern Ontario made an impact on the theatre and film scenes in Canada and the United States, including Richard B. Harrison and Shelton Brooks.

During this same period, there was also theatrical activity that the Black community was fighting against. American Minstrel troupes frequently travelled to perform in Canada, and Canada had its own such as the Saskatoon Minstrels and the Ardrossan Snowflake Amateur Minstrels.

> "On four separate occasions in 1840, 1841,1842, and 1843, members of the Black community petitioned the mayor's office to restrict the presentation of traveling minstrel shows which came up from the U.S. and toured widely in Canada. These crude and vulgar presentations were advertised as portraying 'the life of the Negro in song and dance.' In truth they were base and dehumanizing depictions that exploited every racist stereotype of the period. During this pre-American Civil War period, the minstrel show was very popular with the pro-slavery lobby because it justified the South's most 'peculiar institution'. Although there were some Black minstrels who performed in these shows, the overwhelming majority of the actors were white who would 'Black up' with burnt cork or greasepaint and proceed to swagger across the stage in the grossest form of caricature and mimicry. Even Toronto had its 'burnt cork' specialists, the most famous being 'Cool' Burgess who enjoyed a North American reputation" (Breon).

Blackface was also a favourite form of Canadian entertainment for local amateurs at fund-raisers for schools, police forces, community groups, churches, and charitable organizations.

In 1942 there was a major breakthrough for professional theatre by and for Black people in Montreal, with a production by the Negro Theatre Guild. Breon notes "it was probably not by accident that the organization was founded in the basement of the Union United Church." Their production of Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* won a prize in 1949. In the 1960s, they "began to produce plays that reflected the interests of immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean. A press release from the Guild published in the Montreal *Star* helps outline the mandate of the organization: 'To utilize the enthusiasm, sincerity and native talent of colored youth, in the presentation of plays of social value, is the principal aim of our organization. We feel that in the common struggle against fascism and Hitlerism, the Negro has not only his blood and his labor to contribute, but has a distinct cultural contribution to make'" (Breon).

A wave of immigration from the West Indies that began in the mid-1960s contributed new artistic and cultural influences to Canada's Black diaspora, and several Black theatre companies were formed in the late 1960s-early 1970s. The Drama Committee of the Trinidad and Tobago

Association became the Black Theatre Workshop (BTW) which premiered its first show in 1970. BTW alternates “between the presentation of contemporary Black Canadian work and works from the international Black theatre repertoire.” In 1999 it received a grant from the Canada Council and revitalized its Youth Performers Initiative. Over its long history BTW has helped to develop hundreds of Black theatre artists across Canada and “been the artistic home for recognized artists” (Lewis). By telling stories by and for Black people, says Phillip Akin, "It gave you an opportunity to actually work on shows that hooked into your culture, your life…To bring those kinds of shows to the stage was huge."

Other significant companies include Toronto's Theatre Fountainhead, founded by Jeff Henry in 1974, and Black Theatre Canada (BTC), founded in 1973 by Trinidadian immigrant Vera Cudjoe, which operated through the late 1980s. They produced award-winning plays, took productions to schools, ran workshops, and toured the country. In 1990, b current was founded “with the mission to develop new works rooted in the cultural, social and political experience of the Canadian and international Black diaspora.” This was followed by AfriCan Theatre Ensemble established in 1998, and Obsidian Theatre, established in 2000 (Akin, quoted above, was one of the founders).

In 1997, Ahdri Zhina Mandiela directed the documentary on/Black/stage/women to celebrate the past 30 years of contributions of Black women to Toronto’s theatre scene, several of whom are still active in the community today.

Black theatre groups exist outside of the hubs of Montreal and Toronto, including Caribbean Theatre Workshop, We Are One Theatre Productions, Theatre Wum, and Voices Black Theatre Ensemble. Feminist Nightwood Theatre develops emerging women playwrights as part of its mission, including producing several works by Black playwrights. Groups such as RISE Musical Theatre Company in Winnipeg offer training that prioritizes BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) youth.

Recently, there has been much discussion in the Canadian theatre community about being more inclusive and honouring BIPOC artists, as institutions recognize that the attitudes presented in *Trouble in Mind* are not totally a thing of the past. In June 2020, the hashtag #InTheDressingRoom circulated on Twitter. From the saying “what happens in the dressing room stays in the dressing room,” artists used the hashtag to address that “it’s hard to be backstage and Black” by sharing their experiences of microaggressions and overt racism while working in theatre. The Stratford Festival, North America’s largest classical repertory theatre company, gave the reins of their social media accounts to Black artists for 72 hours, culminating in a moderated panel discussion called “Black Like Me” in which artists shared their stories. This panel discussion is available to watch on YouTube (2 hours, 15 minutes).

Related Resource Links: Read the articles quoted in this section: The Canadian Encyclopedia entry on Black Canadian Theatre and Robin Breon’s piece on the growth and development of Black theatre in Canada; a recent article from CBC features interviews with Black artists; read introductions to Black Canadian Female Playwrights. You can read an article summarizing the 2020 events of #InTheDressingRoom and Black Like Me – incidents mentioned may be triggering to BIPOC, please take care.

Vocabulary from the script

Buttering up – praising or flattering someone excessively

Flop – A show that is a flop is one that has failed completely; generally it has bad reviews, low or no ticket sales, and the run of performances ends before it was scheduled to. Wiletta thinks that *Chaos in Belleville* is bad, but that that doesn't mean that it will be a flop.

Herculean Trial – Something very hard to perform, requiring great strength like Hercules (of Greek mythology).

Home Rule – self-government in local matters by a city, province, state, colony, or the like. In British and Irish history, refers to the movement for Ireland to secure internal autonomy within the British Empire. Home Rule bills led to great political tension in Ireland from 1870-World War I.

Lynch – Broadly, to put to death (as by hanging) by mob action without legal approval or permission. There is usually a public aspect to the killing, and while the definition deals with lawless mobs, police officers have participated under the pretext of justice. The NAACP says "Lynchings were violent public acts that white people used to terrorize and control Black people in the 19th and 20th centuries, particularly in the South. Lynchings typically evoke images of Black men and women hanging from trees, but they involved other extreme brutality, such as torture, mutilation, decapitation, and desecration… A typical lynching involved a criminal accusation, an arrest, and the assembly of a mob, followed by seizure, physical torment, and murder of the victim. Lynchings were often public spectacles attended by the white community in celebration of white supremacy. Photos of lynchings were often sold as souvenir postcards."

Throughout the late 19th century, racial tension grew throughout the United States. More of this tension was noticeable in the South. After the Civil War, many white people felt that the formerly enslaved people were getting away with too much and needed to be controlled. Lynchings were becoming a popular way of expressing some of the anger in relation to free Blacks. Some say that more recent shootings of unarmed Black people should also be labelled as lynchings. Read more in this NAACP article and from Cambridge University Press.

Montgomery, Alabama – The capital of Alabama is an important place in the Civil Rights Movement. In 1955, just before this play is set, Claudette Colvin, a 15-year-old Black girl refused to give up her bus seat to a white man. Later that year Black woman Rosa Parks refused to sit in the back 10 rows of the bus as per segregation laws and was arrested. This sparked a 385-day bus boycott by the Black community, led by community members including Dr Martin Luther King Jr that became a very tense situation and led to King's arrest and jailing. The controversy ended with a ruling prohibiting racial segregation on all Montgomery public buses. Read more about the bus boycott and civil rights movement from History.com

Organdy – A fine, thin cotton fabric usually having a durable crisp finish, usually white, dyed, or printed.

Porgy and Bess – An opera written by George and Ira Gershwin in 1935, about a beggar and an unmarried mother who are plagued by her violent former boyfriend, and a cynical drug dealer. For its debut, Gershwin insisted on casting Black actors as opposed to the usual white actors in Blackface, which created opportunities for classically trained Black performers, but it is controversial as a show about the Black experience by white writers and the stereotypical nature of the characters and culture. More about this in the Smithsonian Magazine article about Porgy & Bess.

Sardi's – A famous restaurant in New York in the theatre district; "the centre of Broadway's upper class."

Sharecropper – During the Reconstruction era (reorganizing of the American South following the Civil War), sharecropping was the dominant system of labour. In this system, wealthy whites - former enslavers - owned farmland, and Black farmers (and some poor whites) were permitted to lease some land by paying a portion of their profit from their crops. All supplies were given to them by the owner who also took that cost out of the farmers' profits. Some landowners would determine every year that the farmers were a few dollars short of what they owed, and debt would accumulate until it was so great there was no hope of it ever being repaid, keeping sharecroppers tied to the land and forcing them to work it in a variation on slavery.

Smug – Overly self-satisfied; contentedly confident of one's ability, superiority, or correctness; complacent.

Stage Manager – A role on a theatrical production involving organizing the rehearsal process, facilitating communication, keeping records, integrating technical elements, prompting technical cues, and assuming responsibility for the stage during a performance.

Subpoena – A formal order issued by a court of justice that requires a person to appear before the court at a specified time. (Manners says that if he doesn't answer his wife's phone call, she'll issue a subpoena.)

Uncle Tom – A character in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a book by Harriet Beecher Stowe published in 1852. Tom is a gentle, humble, Christian enslaved man killed when he refuses to give information about two women who have run away. Stowe intended to show how slavery was incongruous with Christianity. Depictions of Tom on stage and screen distorted the character to a docile, loyal, contented "model slave" who prioritized his captors. As such, "in many African American communities 'Uncle Tom' is a slur for a Black person who is humiliatingly subservient or deferential to white people." There are two variations, a loyal servant who accommodates himself to a lowly status, or the ambitious Black person who "subordinates himself in order to achieve a more favorable status within the dominant society. In both instances, the person is believed to overly identify with whites, in Version A because of fear, in Version B because of opportunism" (Ferris State University). When Wiletta advises John to agree with the director and "laugh when it ain't funny at all," John counters that this "sounds kind of Tommish" and then backtracks when Wiletta is insulted. Read more about the Tom caricature and depiction in various media in an article by the Jim Crow Museum at FSU and listen to or read a transcript of an NPR interview about this character's impact.

Discussion Prompts

Questions with a * are reprinted with permission from Roundabout Theatre's Upstage Guide

Before the Show

*Feeling like you belong is a natural human desire. What does it mean to "belong"? What signifies to you that you belong or don't belong somewhere? Why?

What comes to mind when you think of "theatre?" What are your expectations for the show?

While Trouble in Mind is an overtly anti-racist piece of theatre, it does include racist language. In a review, Aleks Sierz asks "A racial slur spoken on stage might help galvanise an audience into objecting against a racist character, but maybe it also normalizes the use of the offensive word." What are your thoughts about this?

After the Show

*Intersectionality is defined by Merriam-Webster as "the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups." In what ways did you see intersectionality in the play's characters and/or story?

*Think about the character of Henry. As an Irish-American, he struggled to find a place to belong with the different cultural groups in the show. How do Henry and Wiletta find common ground? In what ways have you been able to relate to others who were not necessarily from the same cultural background as you?

*What influences your decision to stay or leave a job or a situation?

Think back to the pre-show discussion. [This question can also be discussed post-show without having explored it before.] Now that you have seen the show and how racial slurs were used in the script by Alice Childress, do you think this is an effective choice? How did the audience around you react? Does seeing the play change your opinion about whether racist language has a place onstage in an anti-racist production?

The song *Trouble in Mind* is a Blues standard that has been recorded since the 1920s. Listen to some versions (available on YouTube) and read the lyrics of this song. Discuss or write about: How do the themes in the lyrics connect to the themes in the play? Do the choices of musical arrangements evoke the same moods of the play? Why might Childress have chosen to have her play share a title with this song?

Read Psalm 133 and identify themes that you notice in it. Why do you think Childress had Wiletta recite Psalm 133 to close the play? Why might she have wanted to leave the audience with that message?

Reviewer Aleks Sierz also writes “Childress’s point is that white people in positions of power… might think that they are progressive, but that doesn’t mean that they are prepared to listen to Black people, or take their arguments seriously. Although Childress writes with a very fair sense of balance, giving every character room to express their individuality, the result is clear: Black people cannot rely on the good will of the whites to get justice.” What are some examples of this that you noticed in the play? What are your thoughts on this point?

What does it mean to be “colour blind” in terms of race? Should we strive for this? Is it important to have conversations about privilege and prejudice?

Suggested answers: People should recognize their own and others’ ethnicity. Prejudice and privilege affect all of us in different ways. Having discussions about these concepts when they occur can help the world respond and work to end prejudice and privilege. [Suggestions from NASP]

Some people might think “I don’t discriminate against anyone,” “slavery and Jim Crow happened a long time ago” or “it didn’t happen in Canada.” Why should we continue to talk about how privilege affects us?

Notes: The On Canada Project has an Instagram post about slavery in Canada, and the Canadian Museum of Human Rights explores that history in this article. *Suggested answers from NASP include: Everyone experiences receiving privilege or the negative outcomes of not receiving privilege. Privilege impacts everyone in today’s society. The end of slavery does not mean that individuals do not continue to experience its negative effects. Communities around the country are still segregated. Wealthy families tend to live in wealthy communities, impoverished families typically live in poor communities. Understanding privilege will help society provide equitable supports to help everyone succeed. Prejudice and privilege still impact our society today. Conversations like this help everyone learn how to end it.*

Judy hopes that the audience watching the play will learn that “people are people.” She is well-meaning, but she isn’t a particularly effective ally. What are some examples of this? *[answers could include: being “colourblind,” crying at Millie’s disapproval, not recognizing the potential ramifications of inviting Black castmates to her home, speaking over John when outraged about prejudice…]*

How could Judy and the other white people in the room have recognized their privilege and been allies to their castmates?

Suggested Classroom Activities

Read this article about 31 Black Canadian female playwrights you need to know by Amanda Parris. Have students select a playwright, or choose one or a few as a class. Research more about the playwright and read one of their key works. This can be expanded into writing papers or creating posters about different playwrights for the classroom, and performing monologues or scenes from their works.

[Note: one script mentioned, *Better Angels* by Andrea Scott is available as a podcast from PlayME – warning for some sexual content.]

In the stage directions, Alice Childress denotes playing blues music at the beginning of the show, the end of Act 1 where she specifies a woman singer, and beginning of Act 2, though she doesn't dictate particular songs.

How did Royal MTC's production use music, and how did that reinforce a mood or set the tone?

Explore blues music and other types by Black artists that would have been around in the 1950s. If you were director or sound designer of this play, which songs would you select for the points requested in the script? Would you have preshow music playing before the show, and what would those songs be? Would you follow the playwright's directions or defy them?

The Smashing Times Theatre Company has developed a series of Drama for Change drama workshops. One of these is a three-hour workshop on addressing diversity through drama, with a series of games and activities that they suggest in sequence. Their full Anti-Racism workshop model is available online here and a few of the games are highlighted below as stand-alone activities.

Identify your name: to introduce the concept of identity, pairs explore and storytell how they got their name.

- Each person tells their partner about their first name – who they were called after and what their name means.
- The facilitator then selects two or three pairs to repeat back to the whole group with A telling the group what B's name means and who B is named after and then B telling the whole group about A's name.
- In pairs, each person then tells their partner what their surname is and where it originates.
- At the end the idea of one's name is linked to the term identity.

Discuss as a group:

- Is your name important?
- Why is it important?
- How do you feel when someone cannot remember or pronounce your name?
- Is your name linked to your sense of identity?
- What is "identity" to you?

Fruit Bowl/Anyone who….: to explore aspects of identity as fixed or fluid in a fun way.

- All sit on chairs in a circle or stand in a circle with one person standing in the middle.
- Give each person on the chairs a name, either apple, pear or banana. The person in the middle also gets the name of one of the three fruits.
- Person in middle calls out one of the fruits, for example 'apple' and all apples must change places, and they cannot go to the seat directly on either side of them, directly to their right or to their left.
- Person in middle also tries to sit on a chair and so one person will be left standing once everyone has found a chair. That person now goes to middle and calls a fruit, such as bananas, all bananas change place and so on.
- The person in the middle can also call 'fruit bowl' and when 'fruit bowl' is called, everybody changes places.
- We now link the game to 'identify' as the person in the middle calls out categories to do with a person's identity for example anyone who has…black hair, blue eyes, lives outside Ireland, etc. The categories to cover are (a) appearance, (b) family, (c) place, (d) likes and dislikes, (e) something you have done or love that no one else has done/loves, I like you because…This can be used to discuss what we may have in common with each other.
- Introduce the term ***identity*****:** A person's identity is who a person is and what makes them who they are. A person has an individual identity and an identity based on the groups he or she belongs to. Parts of a person's identity are fixed: other parts are fluid, they can change or alter. In relation to the term identify, introduce ideas of fixed and fluid, what can be changed, do we judge people based on fixed identity, etc.

The Orange Exercise: Exploring stereotyping and prejudice, and introducing storytelling. You will need oranges, potatoes, lemons, or similar.

- Participants sit in a semi-circle around the flipchart and the facilitator asks them to brainstorm the question 'What is an orange like?' As participants call out words to describe an orange the facilitator writes a list of them up on the flipchart (for example 'round', 'orange', etc).
- Then divide the participants into groups of four and ask each group to pick an orange from a pile on the floor (have a large bunch of oranges, more than the number of groups involved). Each group has ten minutes to create a story about their orange.
- After ten minutes each group shares their story with the rest of the participants.
- The facilitator then takes back the oranges and places them together on the floor. Make sure to mix up the oranges. One member from each group is asked to retrieve their orange. It usually happens that each group will have no problem identifying their own oranges, as the oranges are no longer generic specimens but individuals with characteristics.
- The participants then discuss what made each of their oranges unique for example individual markings, names, personalities, stories, histories, etc.
- Then ask the participants to consider what they can learn from this activity in terms of how we view other human beings (for example do we tend to categorise rather than take on more meaningful ways in which we can know an individual).

- Introduce the two definitions of stereotyping and prejudice:
    - ***Stereotyping:*** Labels or categories people use to define or describe others, particularly those they perceive to be from a different grouping to themselves. Stereotyping applies generalised characteristics to a group. Although these can be positive or negative, stereotypes always have the potential to do harm because if they are accepted as 'the truth' they lead to sweeping assumptions about entire groups.
    - ***Prejudice***: A negative judgement against a group or people often stemming from stereotyping.
- Discuss the concepts. Here are some potential prompts: What groups do we stereotype and what labels are attached to these groups? What are the consequences for each group due to labels? Are you treated differently? Where do stereotypes come from? Why do we stereotype? What are the dangers of stereotyping? Do we all stereotype? What causes prejudice? What can prejudice lead to? How do people show 'hate' in our society? Does hatred always lead to a crime? What else can it lead to?

The following activities are adapted from Milwaukee Repertory Theater:
Read the Play Within A Play section of the Contextual Background in this guide. In small groups, research the plays mentioned, or think of another example. Choose one and discuss: What is the purpose of the inner play? What is the purpose of the outer play? Do you think this theatrical device works for the chosen play?

Character Identities*: Trouble in Mind* focuses on several characters. Each has their own way of doing things, beliefs, and values. This is who they are – their self-identity. Each character has come from somewhere and had different experiences to make them who they are. For example:

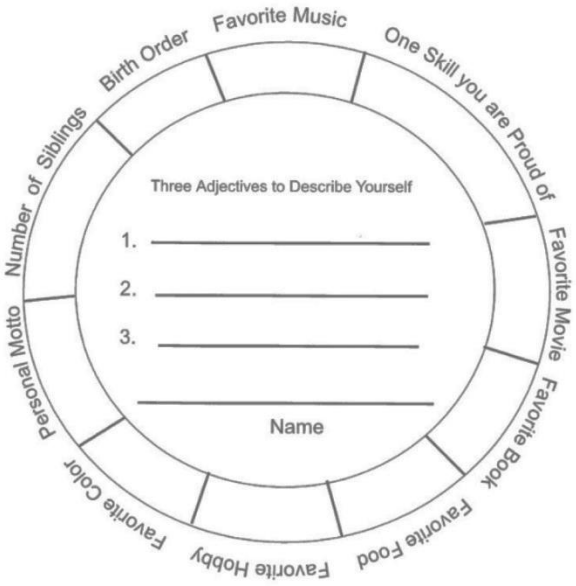
Wiletta Mayer – Wiletta is a middle-aged actress who grew up during the heart of segregation. She has seen many confrontations between Black and white people. Her experience in theatre is quite extensive and she holds it more as a business rather than an art. Wiletta believes that you must behave nicely and properly in order to get along: she laughs when necessary and holds back her true feelings because she doesn't want to cause any problems. Wiletta is cast in many "character" roles and is manipulated by directors.

Millie Davis – Millie is a thirty-five year old actress. She is married and says she does not need to work, and displays more wealth than the other characters. Like Wiletta, she is conscious of how she acts and what she says around white people. Millie does not like the kind of roles she must play because of her race, but wants to act. At one point she says that she did not tell her relatives about the last production she was in because of a stereotypical line she repeated. Though Millie expresses her objections about a couple of things, she is not willing to put her job on the line.

Using the above character identities as examples, create a short identity sketch for the rest of the characters in *Trouble In Mind* individually, in small groups, or as a class. They can use the script as well as imagination to give the character an identity. How does their history affect who they are in their present life? How do these things affect their interactions with other people?

Self Identity: Have students think about their own identity - who you are as a person. Jot down some ideas, experiences and beliefs that make you who you are. If you need inspiration, begin with this Personal Identity Wheel. (Available for download from https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/personal-identity-wheel/)

Create a short monologue discussing one or multiple aspects about you. Share these monologues with your classmates.



Additional Materials and Resources

Diversity in Theatre

Howlround Theatre Commons is a free and open worldwide platform that "amplifies progressive, disruptive ideas about the art form and facilitates connection between diverse practitioners." There you can find many articles, videos, and podcasts about various aspects of theatre. Some that may connect to *Trouble in Mind* are:

- Podcasts – Recent podcasts (scroll down to select a category) and episodes focused on Black theatre
- Topic search for Anti-Racist Theatre
- Topic search for Diversity, Inclusion, and Visibility
- Lesson plans for post-secondary classes

Black Theatre Matters podcast "highlighting the achievements and issues of Black theatre artists in the US and across the diaspora."

Privilege and Anti-Racism

Manitoba Education has put together an extensive collection for educators on Black History and Anti-Racism in Canada encompassing books and films for various age groups, internet resources, and ways to integrate these topics into curriculum. You can explore it on the website or download a PDF. This also includes a support document on Creating Racism-Free Schools through Critical/Courageous Conversations on Race.

Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties offers classroom workshops as well as tools for teachers to facilitate activities in their own classrooms. All teacher tools are here: http://www.marl.mb.ca/pages/26-teacher-tools
Additional Resources here: https://tinyurl.com/PrivilegeResourcesMARL

The See Different in-school program from the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion offers free teacher toolkits for classroom or extra-curricular programming. Each of the five toolkits contains:

- Professional development learning resources
- A facilitator manual for each activity
- Student handouts, and
- A corresponding PowerPoint presentation that includes embedded multi-media resources (e.g. videos and images).

The toolkit topics range from early introductions to diversity and identity, to exploring privilege, to becoming an ally. More information is available here: https://ccdi.ca/campaigns/see-different/ and the kits can be downloaded for free here: https://ccdi.ca/toolkits/

Teaching While White: Audio and resource lists for all episodes available at https://www.teachingwhilewhite.org/podcast/

Microaggressions are a recurring theme in *Trouble in Mind*. Here is a mini-lesson from the Anti-Defamation League and one from Teaching Traveling. Activities to introduce the concept and recognize implications of your words are available from Breaking the Prejudice Habit and Epoch Education.

Strong and Free podcast from Historica Canada is a 6 part series of Black Canadians thriving and contributing to building the country.

Curriculum Connections

Attending Royal MTC's production of *Trouble in Mind* and discussing it,or participating in some of the suggested or similar activities, will fit into the Manitoba curricula in Drama, English Language Arts, Social Studies, History, Global Issues, and Music.

Drama/Theatre

Making: The learner develops language and practices for making drama/theatre.

DR-M1: The learner develops competencies for using the tools and techniques of body, mind, and voice in a variety of contexts.

Creating: The learner generates, develops, and communicates ideas for creating drama/theatre.

DR-CR1: The learner generates ideas from a variety of sources for creating drama/theatre.

DR-CR2: The learner experiments with, develops, and uses ideas for creating drama/theatre.

Connecting: The learner develops understandings about the significance of the dramatic arts by making connections to various times, places, social groups, and cultures.

DR-C1: The learner develops understandings about people and practices in the dramatic arts.

DR-C2: The learner develops understanding about the influence and impact of the dramatic arts.

Responding: The learner uses critical reflection to inform drama/theatre learning and to develop agency and identity.

DR-R1: The learner generates initial reactions to drama/ theatre experiences.

DR-R2: The learner critically observes and describes drama/ theatre experiences.

DR-R3: The learner analyzes and interprets drama/ theatre experiences.

DR-R4: The learner applies new understandings about drama/ theatre to construct identity and to act in transformative ways.

English Language Arts (Senior 1 through 4)

General Learning Outcome 1: Explore thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences.

Express ideas 1.1.1

Consider others' ideas 1.1.2

Experiment with language and forms 1.1.3

Develop understanding 1.2.1

Explain opinions 1.2.2

Combine ideas 1.2.3

General Learning Outcome 2: Comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print, and other media texts.

Prior knowledge 2.1.1

Experience various texts 2.2.1

Connect self, texts, and culture 2.2.2

Appreciate the artistry of texts 2.2.3

Forms and genres 2.3.1

Experiment with language 2.3.4

General Learning Outcome 3: Manage ideas and information.

Make sense of information 3.2.5

General Learning Outcome 5: Celebrate and build community.

Cooperate with others 5.1.1

Work in groups 5.1.2

Share and compare responses 5.2.1

Appreciate diversity 5.2.3

Social Studies

All Grades - Social Studies Skills

Critical and Creative Thinking

Communication

Grade 9 Cluster 1: Diversity and Pluralism in Canada

9.1.2 Human Rights

9.1.3 Living Together in Canada

9.1.4 Integration and Pluralism

Grade 10 American History Units II and V

Grade 11 History of Canada

While the content of *Trouble in Mind* is different than that studied in the Grade 11 curriculum, attending, discussing, and/or doing an activity about the play could correlate with Key Concepts of Historical Thinking:

- establish historical significance
- identify continuity and change
- analyze cause and consequence
- take historical perspectives
- understand ethical dimensions of history

Grade 12 Global Issues: Citizenship and Sustainability

Attending, discussing, and/or doing an activity about the play, particularly in regard to privilege and power, could correlate with Pillars of Learning and Enduring Understandings:

Learning to Know

Seek knowledge from diverse sources and perspectives.

Use creative, critical, and systems thinking to address complex questions.

Explore alternative approaches to issues without fear of challenging status quo.

Learning to Do

Cultivate and share personal skills, talents, and gifts.

Demonstrate care and respect through language and actions.

Be an empowered and committed agent of change.

Learning to Be

Be willing to contribute to the present and future well-being of all.

Be introspective and self-aware.

Acquire a strong sense of self-knowledge and personal identity.

Accept and express multiple identities, allegiances, and influences.

Know how to be and how to live with others in shared spaces.

Learning to Live Together

Respect diversity and value equity.

Respect the inherent, inalienable, and universal nature of human rights.
Understanding: Political systems distribute power, privilege, and wealth in different ways, some more justly than others.
Understanding: A just society respects human diversity and recognizes universal, equal, and unalienable human rights.

Music

Connecting: The learner develops understandings about the significance of music by making connections to various times, places, social groups, and cultures.

M-C1: The learner develops understandings about people and practices in music.
M–C2: The learner develops understandings about the influence and impact of music.
M–C3: The learner develops understandings about the roles, purposes, and meanings of music.

Responding: The learner uses critical reflection to inform music learning and to develop agency and identity.

M-R1: The learner generates initial reactions to music experiences.
M-R2: The learner critically listens to, observes and describes music experiences.
M-R3: The learner analyzes and interprets music experiences.

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