

# ENRICHMENT GUIDE

# NEW

By Pamela  
Mala Sinha

NOV 2 —→ 19, 2022




TOM HENDRY WAREHOUSE

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# New

## Enrichment Guide

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**Edited by Ksenia Broda-Milian for Royal MTC**

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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!

## About the Playwright



**Pamela Mala Sinha** is an award-winning Canadian actress and writer born in Winnipeg, working internationally in theatre, television and film. Pamela was the recipient of Canada's prestigious Dora Mavor Moore Award (Canada's 'Tony') for Outstanding New Play (playwright) and Outstanding Lead Actress for her solo debut play, *Crash*. Published by Scirocco Drama, *Crash* was also included in Bloomsbury Publishing's (UK) anthology *Audition Speeches Anthology*, and also *Love, Loss and Longing* (Playwright's Canada Press). Her second play *Happy Place* premiered to critical acclaim in Toronto in 2015 at Soulpepper Theatre, followed by a sold out run at Vancouver's Touchstone Theatre in October 2017 and Winnipeg's Prairie Theatre Exchange

in 2018. *Crash's* U.S debut at the Signature Theatre, N.Y was in 2017. As one of few artists selected nationally to receive a prestigious Project Imagination commission from Soulpepper, Pamela wrote her third play, *New*; its world premiere here at the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, followed by a second production at the Canadian Stage Theatre (co-produced by Necessary Angel Theatre) for a Toronto run.

Pamela's adaptation of *Happy Place* as a feature film with Sienna Films as producers, directed by Helen Shaver, premiered at VIFF in 2020. She has currently completed development with CBC and Sienna Films on her original one-hour television series *Nirvana* and production has just wrapped on a feature film production of *Crash* directed once again by her long-time collaborator Alan Dilworth (produced by Necessary Angel Theatre and Riddle Films) and starring Pamela.

Selected Acting TV/Film: Hulu's *Y*, *The Last Man* (Recurring) NBC's *ER* (Recurring, 3 seasons), HBO's *Huff* and *Live From Baghdad* (Lead), Series Leads on CTV'S critically acclaimed drama series *Traders* and Ken Finkleman's *The Newsroom* (International Emmy Nomination/Comedy Series), feature films *Happy Place*, *Breakaway* and *What We Have*.

Selected Acting/Theatre: *The Orchard* (Shaw Festival), *CRASH* (Signature Theatre, N.Y), *Happy Place* (Soulpepper Theatre, Toronto), *Nirbhaya* (Assembly, London/ New York), *The Little Years* (Stratford Festival/Tarragon Theatre, Toronto), *The Penelopiad* (Nightwood, Toronto)

## Playwright's Notes

My parents emigrated to Canada in the mid 60's: my mother was a dancer in Uday Shankar's troupe, and my father was recruited from the London School of Economics by the Universities of Hawaii, McGill and Manitoba; he chose Manitoba because he was excited about the snow! They built a family from a small group of bachelors and married couples: Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian--it didn't matter—they celebrated everything together. My cousins are my cousins not by blood but the love that came of those life-long friendships.

If I am honest, the desire to write this play came from a place of rage and sadness. When I hear of an old Indian- or Chinese-born person being yelled at, *go back to your own country!* I want to scream back-- this *is* their country. They came of age here, gave all they had, and we are all beneficiaries of those gifts of knowledge and love. *They were young here once.* But how would people know when there's a gap in the cultural narrative? How are they to know that Indian- or Chinese-born elder helped change that small college into the respected university your children now attend? Or helped build the hospital where you were born?

My Uncle Biswas was one of those bachelors who became my parents' first 'family' here. He called my mother *Bodhi*, sister-in-law, and my father, *Dada*, big brother. When he died, it felt like I lost Daddy all over again. As I looked through my aunt's old albums of them in their early days in Winnipeg, I saw photos of vibrant, cigarette-holding, scotch-drinking couples in filmy chiffon saris and skinny ties that looked way cooler than the depictions of "brown" immigrants that inundate present popular culture. So, with a commission from Soulpepper Theatre, armed with my mother's stories as an 'entry point' (sorry Mummy!), I interviewed those aunties and uncles about marriage and loneliness and home. Though the specifics were different, they were a generation like our own; negotiating sex and love and personal identities the best they could, while helping to shape the political and social ideals of their adoptive country thousands of miles from the country in which they were born.

I have tried to capture some of the things they told me mattered to them; the complex nature of love and sacrifice, joyful togetherness and piercing loneliness, and what it means to be thought of as 'new'--because of how you look--in a country where you are *not* new, a country that is your home. With thanks to them, instead of rage and sadness, I offer you the story of NEW with my love, and my gratitude.

**“Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers, but to be fearless in facing them. Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain, but for the heart to conquer it.”**

- Rabindranath Tagore, Bengali Nobel Laureate

## Characters

All of the characters except Abby are Bengali speaking of Indian origin.

**Qasim:** a medical doctor who is in his forties. He carries the heavy burden of his family's past tragedies.

**Nuzha:** a new bride in her early twenties. She was married to Qasim in an arranged marriage and worries about her future and discovering who she is and what she wants.

**Sita:** a former dancer who is in her thirties. She is married to Sachin and continues to grieve the loss of her daughter Leela and her country.

**Sachin:** a university professor who is in his mid to late thirties.

**Aisha:** a masters student in her thirties. She is married to Ash and is an active feminist who wishes to be a mother.

**Ash:** a PhD student who is in his thirties. He likes to smoke weed and often regards his wife as more of a friend than a spouse.

**Abby:** a nurse who is in her forties. She was Qasim's lover prior to Nuzha's arrival and is looking for more in her life.

## Content Overview

**This section may contain spoilers.**

Some strong language; mature content including infidelity; marijuana use; discussion of abortion. Mention of a past sexual assault. A stillborn child.

## Plot Summary

*New* is set in 1970. It tells the story of a group of immigrants from India in Winnipeg, through the lens of love, marriage, and belonging. A doctor, a dancer, a professor, two students and a bride are all in search of freedom. Qasim has been married by phone to Nuzha, who he's never met, and she is joining him in a country she's never seen. Sachin and Sita haven't been able to connect since a loss in their past. Aisha struggles with reconciling tradition and feminism, and Ash just doesn't want her to get arrested at a protest. What they all find is much greater than what they had expected.

## Synopsis

### **This section contains spoilers.**

It is 1970, and Qasim, Sachin, Sita, Ash, and Aisha live in the same apartment building in Winnipeg after having left India. When the play opens, Qasim is on the phone with his family in India. He reluctantly marries the young Nuzha during a ceremony that takes place over the phone, then talks to her for the first time. After the phone call, Qasim's lover Abby comes over, but he does not tell her about the wedding.

Three months have gone by. There are tensions between Sachin and Sita as he leaves with Aisha and Ash for the university. On their way out, Aisha runs into Abby in the hall, and invites her to Qasim and Sita's Bhai Phota ceremony.

Later, Abby is with Qasim in his office, and Abby suggests the two of them move in together. Shortly thereafter, Qasim blurts out that he is married. He tells Abby he did it because his 80 year old mother blackmailed him to marry Nuzha by starving herself. He reveals that Nuzha arrives tomorrow, and Abby storms away despite Qasim's pleas that he loves her.

Sachin is at the airport with Qasim to pick up Nuzha, but prior to her arrival, Qasim rushes off, leaving Sachin to greet Nuzha, who then confuses him for Qasim. She finally meets her new spouse, but the exchange is awkward and leaves Nuzha feeling alarmed and alone.

Other conflicts that exist between the other couples continue to come to light. Ash and Aisha do not seem to have a typical marriage and Aisha is upset that they still have not conceived (as is her family), while Sita and Sachin argue over continuing with Bhai Phota, as Sita desires, or celebrating the marriage of Qasim and Nuzha.

Sita shares that she has a close relationship with Qasim because he showed an interest in her pain over losing her daughter Leela. The Bhai Phota ceremony is set to begin, and as Ash struggles to explain the history behind it, Nuzha steps in and surprises everyone by beautifully explaining the story of Yama and Yami. While the ceremony is being performed, everyone seems to relax a little, until Abby shows up, shocking everyone except for Nuzha, who is unaware of her connection to Qasim.

Following the ceremony, Sachin presents the newlyweds with a gift, which upsets Sita. The women go into the kitchen without Nuzha where Sita shares a story about the dance instructor she left behind in India. Afterwards, Abby exchanges words with Qasim, but he is cold to her, so she rushes out.

That evening, Nuzha seems reluctant yet eager to consummate the marriage, but Qasim ignores her silent invitations. Meanwhile, Sita and Sachin argue on the riverbank

outside of the apartment. She feels that her Bhai Phota was hijacked by Nuzha. As they argue, it is revealed that Sita is brokenhearted over Leela's cremation and the disposal of her ashes into a river. Sita has not forgiven Sachin for this and leaves him on the riverbank, telling him he is the cause of her losing everything that matters.

It is a new day, and Aisha protests a beauty competition in the name of feminism. Ash helps her get out, but is concerned about her participation in these events as an arrest could cause her to lose her visa and be deported. She insists on attending another protest to fight for legalized abortion, which he accepts as he leaves her to meet a man he has met at the pool.

Nuzha encounters Sachin and tells him she plans to go to the art gallery. They engage in a light conversation about life in India, until Sachin reveals the story of Leela's death at birth and the pain that has existed between himself and Sita since then.

Nuzha discloses to Aisha and Sita that Qasim has yet to consummate their marriage, and Nuzha worries that she will be sent back to India, which would lead to her being a societal outcast. Aisha continues trying to encourage the women to be more independent when it is pointed out to her that Sita and Nuzha's only role in the country is to be wives.

Qasim has a clandestine meeting with Abby. He explains to her that he owes his mother a great deal, and this limits his life choices. He tries in several ways to alleviate his guilt and to show that he still cares for her, but she rejects what he is saying and leaves.

Nuzha is having a private moment when Sachin interrupts her. Following a brief exchange, the two share an intimate encounter. Sachin tells the story of his sister who was raped by their father's best friend and needed an abortion. She never married and is cared for by another brother. Nuzha tells Sachin he is not that man and they head to the bedroom in the heat of passion.

Sita tells Qasim that his refusal to have a child with Nuzha will be blamed on her. Qasim responds that she is a hypocrite since her refusal to let go of her grief keeps love out of her own life.

There is another argument between Sachin and Sita, but then they finally discuss their shared pain of missing their daughter, though it quickly becomes another fight that ends when Sita slaps Sachin and he tells her to return to India.

Nuzha and Qasim bond over their love of a book and share stories about their family and country. Sachin shows up, clearly surprised that Qasim is there, and leaves shortly after. The couple try to return to their conversation, but Nuzha confronts Qasim about



his previous relationship with Abby, realizing that she is not to blame for his disinterest in her. He tells her that his and Nuzha's relationship is a way for their families to restore the village they lost, but she leaves.

During a New Year's party, the group discusses resolutions. Nuzha reveals that she got a job in the cafeteria at the art gallery. Sachin is upset about this news. Meanwhile, Qasim pledges to dedicate himself more to his marriage in the coming year, which also upsets Sachin. Sachin argues with Qasim, and the affair becomes obvious to everyone. The others leave, and Sachin admits his infidelity to Sita.

Back in their own apartment, Aisha tries to seduce Ash, but he proposes a unique relationship in which they will find their "own way to be happy."

Nuzha asks Qasim for a divorce and has decided she wants to stay in Canada. He does not want her life to be ruined, so he says he will divorce her and encourages her to go to university to discover herself.

## Ruby's Story

Rubena Sinha is the mother of playwright Pamela, and one of the inspirations for New.

I was seven years old when Kelu Nayar, a famous dancer, came to our town. I wanted to take his class, but my family was against it; they thought dancing was for prostitutes. But my mother believed in Gandhi's philosophy: that everyone has a right to be what they wanted. She was a brave woman. I became a dancer. I danced all over India, working with the great Uday Shankar who was creating different interpretations of classical dance with his brother Ravi Shankar's music.

After three years of touring, I had to join my husband in Winnipeg. It was February and I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I was so shocked by the snow I couldn't move for a month. One day there was storm – so heavy I sat at the window and thought my husband will surely drown in the snow. I wanted to go back. We didn't know each other very well, and we worked very hard on our relationship. I soon realized I would have to embrace this country as my own.

Language was a barrier for me, and it took a long time to learn English. But then I discovered ballet - *dance* could go beyond any language. I walked into the Winnipeg ballet school, pointed at myself and said "I - *dance*." And they understood me! They asked me to dance for them and I did. But I was too old for 'real' ballet. And I was an *Indian* dancer, so my tradition moves towards the earth as opposed to ballet, which goes "up and away"! But because I knew my art so well, I started to communicate with the other dancers and slowly, I found my community.

A group from the University of Winnipeg called *Cubiculo Theatre* found me. It was very exciting because they were not just dancers, they were theatre people! I met my best friend, Brian Richardson there. I learned about theatre as well as a 'Western' way of looking at things. And they embraced me as an Indian dancer. Kay Unruh Des Roches directed my first show with them: *Mahadevi Akka*.

In my life as an artist, I've met some wonderful people. But two that stand out are Daphne Korol and her husband, the designer Ted Korol. Daphne's *Children's Dance Theatre* became a part of me. She gave me a free hand to use my imagination with children: to experiment with different interpretations of movement and create *dance dramas*. I also became involved with the Indian community's newly formed School of Dance around which time I met Eugene Kostyra, Minister of Culture. When he invited me to take over as chairperson of the Centennial Corporation, I resisted at first (I was an *artist*) but I realized this was an opportunity to help make meaningful change that would benefit our artistic community. I was there 5 years. I decided to create my own company *Fusion Dance Theatre*. One of the thoughts behind creating the company was "what does Canada look like?" Canada is multicultural - we had (and have) access to so many cultures in the city. We all talk to each other; about our way of life and our ways of making art. But Canada has her own story and I wanted to know it. When the *Artist in the Schools* program sent me to northern reserve schools, my eyes opened to the injustices suffered by First Nation's people. An elder asked me some very hard questions one visit. He must have been pleased with my answers because he invited me to come back and learn

from him. From that point the relationships I developed with Manitoban Indigenous elders and artists became a strong thread in my work and my understanding of what it means to be 'Canadian'. With their support and collaboration, I mounted my next show *Quest*: a dance drama told by Indigenous dancers and musicians with Indian Classical dancers and musicians. Rehearsals for *Quest* were almost more important than what happened on stage; understanding each other's point of view and unique artistic process was intense and beautiful. We learned from each other, creating a single story that had space for everyone.

A commission from the Winnipeg Art Gallery followed. I choreographed a multi-media dance drama based on the painting *The Rape of Lucrece*. The last show I performed under Fusion was called *Patterns in Snow*. It was created with my friends; a quartet of immigrant artists that included musician Phoebe Man and actor/writer Brian Richardson. It was about how 'snow' impacted us all, and the story of how we each found a sense of home in our new country.

Winnipeg gave me the chance to express myself as an artist. It embraced all that I had to offer, and I have had a very deep and fulfilling life here. It is so lovely to come back in this way with my daughter.

- Rubena Sinha, storyteller



Rubena and her children Pamela and Debashis, first Bhai Phonta.



Rubena on tour with Uday Shankar's dance troupe.

## Contextual Background and Related Resources

Contributed by Arindam Sarkar

### Partition

This play has reference to 'partition' (between India and Pakistan) in the discussion between Qasim and Abby. This particular discussion highlights the psychological scar the characters have inherited resulting out of the partition. In August 1947, when, after three hundred years in India, the British finally left, the Indian subcontinent was partitioned into two independent nation states: Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan.

Across the Indian subcontinent, communities that had coexisted for almost a millennium attacked each other in a terrifying outbreak of sectarian violence, with Hindus and Sikhs on one side and Muslims on the other — a mutual genocide as unexpected as it was unprecedented. Seventy-five years ago, Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a British lawyer, was commissioned to draw the borders that would divide British-ruled India into two new, independent nations: Hindu-majority India and mainly Muslim Pakistan. Radcliffe was asked to base his lines on the population of Muslims and Hindus, in addition to “other factors”. These additional factors were never officially defined but are believed to include economic and communication resources, such as irrigation channels and railway lines.

The lines he drew triggered one of the largest forced mass migrations in modern history. Approximately 15 million people were uprooted and were forced to move. Approximately 2 million people died in the violence during migration. The boundary between the two nations became known as the Radcliffe Line and was officially announced on August 17, 1947, days after the independence of India and Pakistan.

The partition was deeply scarring and traumatic, changing the lives of people dramatically, uprooting them from places and communities where they had lived for generations. They lost languages, ways of life, property, heirlooms, people. It shaped their attitudes toward government, minorities and the concept of home.

Trauma like this has lasting consequences – it affects what is shared with and what is concealed from future generations. Habits formed through trauma are also passed on – the discussions between Qasim and Abby subtly reflect the same in this play.

**Related Resource Links:** Haimanti Roy and TED-Ed have produced an excellent [video for students](#) on the background and legacy of the partition of India (5:49); [On Canada Project](#) created a succinct yet thorough overview for social media; you can read personal stories of those affected by partition at the [1947 Partition Archive](#) (which includes its own resource library) and the [Kolkata Partition Museum](#) blog and see one woman’s story as a [short animated video](#) (2:35).

## **Immigration and the Bengali Community**

The play is also based on characters who immigrated from West Bengal in the 1970s. The year is also significant as it marked the 100th Anniversary of the Province of Manitoba. The migration of Bengalis (people from West Bengal, as they are commonly known) of Indian origin to Winnipeg started as early as mid 1960s. With a points-based immigration system in play since 1967, a large number of Bengali professionals from India and Bangladesh arrived in Canada, often accompanied by their families. The Bengali immigrant community in Winnipeg is generally characterized as a highly educated, skilled workforce. They came to Winnipeg as civil servants, physicians, and engineers. A section of them arrived as students at two Winnipeg-based universities and a number of technical colleges, as well as Brandon University.

By the mid-1970s, such families and individuals got introduced to each other, and in 1978, laid the foundation of the oldest and largest Bengali Association of Manitoba called 'Bichitra'. A brief history of the organization and its objectives can be referenced at <https://bichitrabengaliassociation.com/>

Bengali migration and diaspora eventually fitted into the process of nation building in Canada and particularly in Manitoba. Bengali immigrants remain one of the fastest growing diaspora communities in Manitoba.

**Related Resource Links:** See [8mm film video](#) of downtown Winnipeg in the 1970s; the [First Photo Here](#) project collects the first picture that new immigrants took in Canada and shares the story behind it, which you can see on their [Instagram](#).

## Winnipeg in the 1970s

Some images of the sights the characters in *New* would have experienced!



Winnipeg Civic Centre, home of the Art Gallery in 1970



Strip mall at Jefferson and Main St.



Views of Portage Avenue in the 1970s



Mannequins at Sears, 1970.



Winnipeg Civic Centre Complex (City Hall) in the 1970s.  
Photo: Henry Kalen



Skating at St. Vital (left) and Assiniboine Park



Photograph of the last trolley bus operated in Winnipeg. The bus was on route to north Main Street and McAdam Avenue, and bears the face of transit's "Transit Tom" mascot, as well as text advertising it as the last trolley bus. Left to right are Transit Division employees Don Morrison (Special Projects Officer), Robert M. Simister (Superintendent, Electrical Distribution Branch), Walter Marshal, J. A. (Tony) Painchaud (Assistant Superintendent of Transportation Operation), Roy W. Church (Manager of Transit Operations), Robert G. Ferguson (Superintendent of Schedules), and C. E. ("Ed") LaForme (Superintendent of Transportation).



## Glossary

With contributions from Arindam Sankar

**Allah** - The name of God among Muslims and Arab Christians.

**Bhai Phota** - The festival of siblings in Bengal. Sisters pray for their brothers' long and happy lives, and brothers promise to protect their sisters at all times.

**Caste** - The system of dividing society into hereditary classes.

**Didi** - "Older sister," a term of respect.

**Diwali** - A Hindu festival of lights that symbolizes the spiritual victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance.

**Dowry** - Money and/or property that, in some societies, a person or their family must pay to their spouse when they get married.

**Kali** - A goddess in Hinduism whose name translates to "She Who Is Death." Though often associated with sexuality and violence, she is also strongly linked to maternity.

**Kashmir** - A region on the northern border of India and northeastern Pakistan. Formerly a princely state of India, it has been disputed between India and Pakistan since partition in 1947.

**Ladakh** - A high-altitude region of northern India. One branch of the

ancient Silk Route crossed by Marco Polo ran through Ladakh.

**Lengha** - A form of ankle-length skirt from the Indian subcontinent.

**Puja** - The act of worship in Hinduism and Buddhism.

**Qabool hai** – accepted.

**Quranic** - Relating to or contained in the Koran, which is the Islamic sacred book.

**Salaam Alaikum** - The Arabic greeting meaning "Peace be unto you."

**Sari** - A stretch of woven fabric, usually 4 to 9 yards in length, that mostly women wrap themselves in as a symbol of pride and tradition - an ethnic wear in the south-east Asian subcontinent.

**Sharia'ah** - Islamic canonical law based on the teachings of the Koran, prescribing duties and sometimes penalties for lawbreaking.

**Shiva** - The great Hindu god.

**Talaaq** - Divorce

**Trunk call** - A long distance call for which the caller must pay an extra amount of money.

**Visa** - A travel document required for entry into some countries.

## Explore More: Recommended Library Reading List

### Explore More Immigrant Lives

*The Namesake*, Jhumpa Lahiri. This classic portrait of the immigrant experience follows the Ganguli family from their traditional life in India through their arrival in Massachusetts in the late 1960s and their difficult melding into an American way of life. Mira Nair directed a feature film adaptation released in 2007. *FICTION LAHIRI*

*No One Can Pronounce My Name*, Rakesh Satyal. Lonely forty-something Harit dresses up in his dead sister's saris to comfort his grief-stricken mother and befriends a woman worried that her husband is having an affair. A funny and insightful look into the lives of people reconciling culture and tradition with their own dreams and desires. *FICTION SATYAL*

*This Red Line Goes Straight to Your Heart*, Madhur Anand. An experimental memoir about Partition, immigration, and generational storytelling from the perspective of a first- and second-generation Indo-Canadian family that weaves together imagined voices of the past with the vital authority of the present. *B ANAND 2020*

### Explore More Social Change

*The Archer*, Shruti Anna Swamy. As Vidya comes of age in 1960s and 70s Bombay, her pursuit of artistic escape through dance becomes the most important thing in her life, even as she leaves home for college and falls in complicated love with her best friend. With an uncertain future looming, she must confront the tensions between romance, art, and the legacy of her own imperfect mother. *FICTION SWAMY*

*Free Love*, Tessa Hadley. Although 1967 London may be alive with the youth revolution, the suburban Fischer family belongs to an older world of conventional stability. But when something in pretty, dutiful Phyllis catches fire, she makes a choice that defies all expectations of her as a wife and a mother. *FICTION HADLEY*

### Explore More Complicated Relationships

*Little Disasters*, Randall Klein. Two couples who became friends in the delivery room of a Brooklyn hospital must deal with the fallout of the affair that split them apart as a mysterious crisis shuts down Midtown Manhattan. An engrossing story of the bonds of love and family and our unending urges to test them, even when we need them most. *FICTION KLEIN*

*Monogamy*, Sue Miller. Derailed by the sudden passing of her husband of 30 years, photographer Annie struggles to pick up the pieces of her life. While still in mourning, she discovers a ruinous secret that will force her to question whether she ever truly knew the man who loved her. *FICTION MILLER*



*There are 1.4 million books, movies, audiobooks, eBooks and more at the Winnipeg Public Library, and all you need to borrow them is your library card. There are 20 locations throughout the city and there's an online catalogue for requesting items for pick-up at your library of convenience. An e-Library has thousands of eBooks, eAudiobooks and more! All free with your library card.*

*Visit us at [Winnipeg.ca/library](http://Winnipeg.ca/library)*

## Suggested Classroom Activities

### Before Seeing the Show

Students should be made aware before attending the play that it includes sensitive content as outlined earlier in this guide and on our website. Support is available at the phone numbers and links at the end of this document.

Have students decide whether they “agree” or “disagree” with the following statements. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers, but students should be able to defend their position during the class discussion that follows. The statements reflect themes in the play and can be a way to help students better connect to the material.

- Family should influence the choices we make for our lives.
- It is important to hold on to cultural traditions.
- Some forms of employment are more prestigious than others.
- Women have fewer possibilities available to them than men.
- Children owe a debt to their parents.
- It is easy to move to a new place.
- It is possible to find happiness, even if you are not true to yourself.
- There is a correct way to mourn after losing someone.

### After Seeing the Show

The following questions can be used for class discussion, responses, or in some cases, essay topics. Several of the questions focus on sensitive topics and should not be used if you are uncomfortable discussing these issues. Possible answers or examples have been provided for several questions.

1. During the play, the performers sometimes speak using an Anglo-India accent. Why do you think the playwright made this choice? *All characters speak WITHOUT an accent because they are speaking their own language, which is Bengali. They use an Anglo-Indian accent when they are speaking English.*
2. Qasim goes to meet Abby in Act two. Discuss whether or not you think he is trying to make amends to her, or if he is trying to relieve his own guilt.
3. The International Centre is mentioned throughout the play. What is its role in the community? Discuss Sachin’s comment about the small room at the Centre contributing to them being seen as “just an ethnic ‘side note.’” How do centres like these contribute to Canadian society?
4. Discuss Sita’s statement: “If we don’t do our rituals right, there’s no point doing them. But maybe that’s the problem - this idea that there is a “right” way. If we have the desire to do it - especially so far from home - how could it ever be wrong?”
5. Why is Sachin upset about Nuzha working at the art gallery?
6. At the end of the play, Ash suggests to Aisha that they “find our own way to be happy.” What do you think he means by this?

7. Qasim and Nuzha are in an arranged marriage that ultimately ends in divorce. What could they have done differently to have changed their outcome? Can an arranged marriage end in happiness?
8. Discuss the ways in which the characters feel pressure from their families. *Employment, having children, choosing a life partner, upholding traditions and reputations, etc.*
9. Discuss the foreshadowing used in the play. *Nuzha mistaking Sachin as her husband foreshadows the affair, Ash avoiding contact with Aisha foreshadows their difficulties, etc.*
10. Illegal abortion is brought up twice in the play. Discuss the impact on women when legal abortion is not available to them.
11. Aisha involves herself in protests and we learn that Qasim's mother protested with Gandhi. Discuss the ways people can create social change.
12. Discuss the play's message about finding one's purpose. *Aisha attends protests, Nuzha goes to work to be with friends, Sita seems to have lost purpose and is lost in grief...*
13. Discuss how the play could change in a different setting (time and place). Think of whether or not this would impact the position of the women in the play.
14. The plays script includes two epigraphs that can be found below. An epigraph is a short quotation or saying at the beginning of a work, intended to suggest its theme. Discuss why the playwright might have chosen to include these two particular epigraphs:

*The World was all before them, where to choose  
 Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:  
 They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow,  
 Through Eden took their solitary way.*

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

*"Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers,  
 But to be fearless in facing them.*

*Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain, but  
 For the heart to conquer it."*

Rabindranath Tagore, Nobel Laureate

**Ceremonial Cultural Connections:** Throughout the play, various cultural traditions and ceremonies are mentioned, including Diwali, Bhai Phota, and New Years Resolutions. Ask students to think of a tradition or ceremony from their own life that they would want to continue, regardless of where they find themselves in the world. Ask students who are comfortable sharing with the class to describe the tradition and ceremony and its importance to them.

**Write a Review:** When preparing to write, think about your initial reaction to the play. You can also explore the purpose of the play and the effectiveness of the production for the audience.

Your review should have an introduction, body, and conclusion that include the following information:

Your text's introduction should include information from the program, such as the title, the actors, director, and writer.

Your text's body should summarize the plot, give the setting, and comment on the characters and content.

Your conclusion should clearly state whether you liked or disliked the play and whether or not you would recommend seeing it to others.

Finally, edit and revise your writing prior to submitting your work. You can also do this with a partner. Think of the following:

Is the information complete and easy for my audience to understand? Is the information I referenced from the play accurate?

Have I used a variety of words and sentences?

Have I used correct grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation?

**Act it out:** Work with a small group to create scenes that could have occurred off stage or at another time. Think of the following for scenes inspiration:

Divide the list of allusions amongst students to research. Once they are done, discuss what Sinha might have wanted to call to mind for the audience.

- Abby talking with a friend, deciding to go to Qasim and Sita's Bhai Phota
- Nuzha's interaction with the manager of the cafeteria when she got the job at the art gallery
- Aisha at the protest against the criminal code restricting legal abortion
- Ash meeting Trevor at the pool
- Sita talking to the little girl on the trolley
- Qasim phoning his family to tell them he is no longer married to Nuzha
- Nuzha meeting with a university counsellor to sign up for classes
- An interaction between the couples or friends in 5 years' time

**Visitor Visas in the Real World:** Have students conduct research to find out what is necessary to obtain a visitor visa to Canada or other countries and share their findings with the class. They could also research how someone might have their visitor visa revoked. Have them discuss the pros and cons of the visa process.

**Allusions: Deepen your Understanding:** An allusion is a brief reference to a person, place, or thing in history in other literature that is designed to call something to mind without mentioning it explicitly.

Divide the list of allusions amongst students to research. Once they are done, discuss what Sinha might have wanted to call to mind for the audience.

- *Milton's Paradise Lost*
- *Rabinadranth Tagore*
- "LA Woman" by The Doors
- "The Changeling" by The Doors
- "Riders on the Storm" by The Doors
- Uday Shankar
- Kanthapura
- E.M. Forster
- Gandhi
- Virginia Woolf
- "Dum Maro Dum"
- Yama and Yami

## Curriculum Connections

Attending Royal MTC's production of *New* and discussing it, or participating in some of the suggested or similar activities, will fit into the following curricula:

### Music and Dance (Senior Years)

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

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

### Drama/Theatre (Senior Years)

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.
- DR-CR3: The learner revises, refines, and shared drama/theatre ideas and creative work.

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.

### Social Studies

9-S-302 Critical and Creative Thinking

9-KH-032 Human Rights

9-VH-009 Pluralism and Integration

9-VI-004 Expressing Who We Are in Canada

9-VP-016 Democratic Ideals in Canada

## **English Language Arts (Senior 1 through 4)**

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

Express ideas 1.1.1

Express preferences 1.1.4

Explain opinions 1.2.2

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

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

Vocabulary 2.3.3

Experiment with language 2.3.4

General Learning Outcome 3: Manage ideas and information.

Access Information 3.2.4

Make sense of information 3.2.5

Record information 3.3.2

General Learning Outcome 4:

Enhance and Improve 4.2

Attend to Conventions 4.3

Present and Share 4.4

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



## Support for Sensitive Content

For immediate help in a crisis:

**KLINIC Crisis Line:** Winnipeg 204-786-8686; toll-free Manitoba 1-888-322-3019 (24/7)

**Manitoba Suicide Prevention and Support Line:** 1-877-435-7170

**Manitoba Farm, Rural, and Northern Support Services:** 1-866-367-3276 (24/7)

**Hope for Wellness Indigenous Peoples Helpline:** 1-855-242-3310 (24/7)

**Domestic Abuse Crisis Line:** 1-877-435-7170 (24/7)

**Sexual Assault Crisis Line:** (204) 786-8631 or 1-888-292-7565 (24/7).

**Winnipeg Mobile Crisis Service:** 204-940-1781 (24/7)

**Seneca Warm Line:** 204-942-9276 (24/7)

**Kids Help Phone:** 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868 24/7

**KLINIC Community Health** - <http://klinik.mb.ca>

Provides health care, counselling, and education as well as a crisis line for people of every age, background, ethnicity, gender identity, and socio-economic circumstance. Klinik's line is open to people of all ages, genders and backgrounds. **You do not have to be in crisis or suicidal to call.** Pregnancy options consultation can be accessed through Klinik by calling (204) 784-4001 where a confidential message can be left and a nurse will return the call within two business days.

**Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba** - <http://www.mooddisordersmanitoba.ca>

Support groups, resources, education, and other services.

**Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba** - <http://www.adam.mb.ca>

**Manitoba Suicide Prevention and Support** - [www.reasonstolive.ca](http://www.reasonstolive.ca)

A project of Klinik Community Health, this website has resources for getting help, helping someone else, and dealing with loss as well as running a crisis and support line.

**Mental Health Education Resource Centre of Manitoba** - <http://www.mherc.mb.ca>

A provincial resource promoting the exchange of knowledge including reducing mental illness stigma. Electronic resources, an online catalogue and free library, and links to various specialized services within Manitoba and across Canada.

**MB Farm, Rural and Northern Support Services** offers free, confidential, non-judgemental counselling for anyone living on a Manitoba farm or in a rural or northern community. Live chat and resources online at <https://supportline.ca>

**Mental Health America** - <https://www.mhanational.org/live-b4stage4>

Information and tips on living a mentally healthy life, recovery and support for yourself and others, and mental wellness tools.

## Sources

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Vintage Winnipeg: <https://www.facebook.com/VintageWinnipeg>

Winnipeg in Focus: City of Winnipeg Archives:

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Manitoba Transit Heritage Association: <https://www.mtha.ca/transit-history.html>

Winnipeg Architecture: <https://winnipegarchitecture.ca/winnipeg-civic-auditorium/>

## Enrichment Guide Contributor Biographies

**Desirée Pappel** has been teaching English Language Arts in Manitoba high schools since 2008. During that time, she has also taught the occasional dramatic arts class and been involved with improvisation, both inside and outside of school. In 2010, she began her involvement with Royal MTC's Winnipeg Fringe Theatre Festival and started working as a volunteer team leader at venues soon after. Creating enrichment guides for Royal MTC fuses her love of education and theatre. She has written multiple guides for Royal MTC.

**Arindam Sarkar** is an active volunteer in the community and sits on the executive and advisory board of various not-for-profit organizations. He is a technology enthusiast, a contemplative speaker, an avid reader and a die-hard fan of San Antonio Spurs. Apart from his volunteering activities, he is a management consultant by profession – a day job that helps for his daily survival! :-)