World Premiere Play

FIREFLIES
Written by Donja R. Love
Directed by Saheem Ali
with Khris Davis & DeWanda Wise

Performances starting Sept 26!

ATLANTIC THEATER COMPANY
(Artistic Director, Neil Pepe. Managing Director, Jeffory Lawson) present
FIREFLIES written by DONJA R. LOVE with KHRIS DAVIS and DEWANDA WISE.
sets, Arnulfo Maldonado. costumes, Dede Ayite. lights, David Weiner. sound & original music, Justin Ellington. projections, Alex Basco Koch. casting, Telsey + Company: Adam Caldwell, CSA; William Cantler, CSA; Karyn Casl, CSA. press, Boneau/Bryan-Brown. production stage manager, Cody Renard Richard. production manager, S.M. Payson. associate artistic director, Annie MacRae. general manager, Pamela Adams. directed by SAHEEM ALI.

Linda Gross Theater, 336 W 20th St, NYC 866-811-4111 | www.atlantictheater.org

Study Guide: Students & Educators
Heather Baird
Director of Education
Tyler Easter
Education Associate
Fran Tarr
Education Coordinator
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SYNOPSIS
Somewhere in the Jim Crow South, the sky is on fire. A pregnant Olivia's fierce speech writing is the sole force behind her charismatic husband Charles and his successful Movement to galvanize people to march towards freedom. When four little girls are bombed in a church, Olivia and Charles' marriage is threatened – as this tragedy and years of civil unrest leave Olivia believing that “this world ain’t no place to raise a colored child.”

SETTING
Somewhere down South, America; Fall 1963

THEMES
Revolution
Violence
Creation
Explosions
Rights
Women’s Health
Control
Section II: Creative Team
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Characters/Cast List
CAST

DEWANDA WISE 
(Olivia) She’s weary. It’s as if she’s carrying the weight of this fiery world. She writes a lot, smokes a lot, she stares off a lot, she hears bombs a lot.

KRIS DAVIS 
(Charles) Olivia’s husband, he’s a preacher. There is something about him that we like. He makes us feel like he’s the type of man that can lead people through the smoke and into the promised land.

CREATIVE TEAM

DONJA R. LOVE (Playwright) is an Afro-Queer playwright, poet, and filmmaker from Philadelphia. He’s the recipient of the 2018 Laurents/Hatcher Foundation Award, the 2017 Princess Grace Playwriting Fellow, a Eugene O’Neill 2018/2017 National Playwrights Conference finalist, The Lark’s 2016 Van Lier New Voices Playwriting Fellow, The Playwrights Realm’s 2016-2017 Writing Fellow, the 2016 Arch and Bruce Brown Playwriting Award recipient, and the 2011 Philadelphia Adult Grand Slam Poetry Champion. His work has been developed at Manhattan Theatre Club, Rising Circle Theatre, The Lark, and The Playwrights Realm. He’s the co-founder of The Each-Other Project, an organization that helps build community and provide visibility, through art and advocacy, for LGBTQ People of Color. Select stage plays include: a trilogy which explores Queer Love* during pivotal moments in Black History, The Love* Plays (Sugar in Our Wounds; Fireflies; In The Middle), and soft. Select film work: Modern Day Black Gay (web series), and Once A Star (short film). Training: Juilliard, Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program.

SAHEEM ALI (Director) Proud immigrant from Kenya. Recent credits include Dangerous House (Williamstown Theater Festival), Sugar in Our Wounds (MTC), Where Storms Are Born (Williamstown), Tartuffe (Playmakers Rep), Henry V (NYU Tisch), Twelfth Night (Public Theater), Kill Move Paradise (National Black Theater), Diaspora (Gym at Judson), Nollywood Dreams (Cherry Lane), The Booty Call (Inner Voices) and Dot (Detroit Public Theater). He has workshoped new plays at Playwrights Horizons, Playwrights Realm, MCC, New York Stage & Film, Page 73 and The Lark. He is a Usual Suspect and former Directing Fellow at New York Theater Workshop, Sir John Gielgud SDCF Fellow and a Shubert Fellow.
Section III: Your Students As Audience

Theater Vocabulary
*Fireflies* Vocabulary
*Fireflies* in Context
Pre-Theater Critical Thinking Activity
TEACHER OBJECTIVE
To be able to discuss theater through a common, shared vocabulary.

STUDENT GOAL
To understand that the most effective way to discuss theater and new ideas is through a shared vocabulary.

ACTION: The events that move along the story of the play and which influence the characters within the play.

CHARACTERS: Individuals the audience learns about from their actions and reactions.

ENSEMBLE: A group of performers working together to create a complete production.

DIALOGUE: The exchange of speech between two characters which reveals the feelings of the character as well as the story of the play.

MONOLOGUE: A speech by one actor on stage which is intended to reveal the inner thoughts of the character the actor plays.

CHARACTER ARC: The change produced in a character by the events and other characters in the play.

MUSICAL THEATER: A twentieth century creation where writers and musicians collaborate to create a play which features song, dance and drama.

MOOD: The overall feeling the play evokes.

COSTUME: The clothes, boots, etc., worn by the actors based on their character.

PROP: Objects used by an actor to enhance their character. For example, wine glasses at a bar for drinks.

SET: The constructed environment of a play within which the action takes place.

SOUND: Noises and music used in the play.
VOCABULARY FROM FIREFLIES

COLORED: A person who is wholly or partly of nonwhite descent.

WIRETAPS: An act of using a listening device to conduct surveillance, typically over a phone line.

INCREDOULOUS: Unwilling or unable to believe something.

SHARECROPPER: A tenant farmer who gives a part of each crop as rent.

BEGRUDGINGLY: Reluctantly or resentfully.

HEATHEN: A person who does not belong to a widely held religion (especially one who is not Christian, Jewish, or Muslim).

PULPIT: A raised platform or lectern in a church or chapel from which the preacher delivers a sermon.

TRIFLING: Sneaky, shady, snoopy, and out of pocket.

CHARISMA: Compelling attractiveness or charm that can inspire devotion in others.

MOVEMENT: The Civil Rights Movement, which was a decades-long movement with the goal of securing legal rights for African Americans that other Americans already possessed.

CROSSES BURNING: Also called cross lighting... Is a practice associated with the Ku Klux Klan, although the historical practice long predates the Klan’s inception—as far back as Peter of Bruys, who burned crosses in protest at the veneration of crosses. In the early 20th century, the Klan burned crosses on hillsides or as a means of intimidating people they saw as targets.

MOREHOUSE: (Morehouse College) is a private, all-male, liberal arts, historically black college located in Atlanta, Georgia.

SPELMAN: (Spelman College) is a historically black liberal arts college for women located in Atlanta, Georgia dedicated to the intellectual, creative, ethical, and leadership development of its students.
FIREFLIES IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

From The History Channel: https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/civil-rights-act

CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which ended segregation in public places and banned employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin, is considered one of the crowning legislative achievements of the civil rights movement. First proposed by President John F. Kennedy, it survived strong opposition from southern members of Congress and was then signed into law by Kennedy's successor, Lyndon B. Johnson. In subsequent years, Congress expanded the act and passed additional civil rights legislation such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

LEAD-UP TO THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT

Following the Civil War, a trio of constitutional amendments abolished slavery, made the former slaves citizens and gave all men the right to vote regardless of race. Nonetheless, many states—particularly in the South—used poll taxes, literacy tests and other measures to keep their African-American citizens essentially disenfranchised. They also enforced strict segregation through “Jim Crow” laws and condoned violence from white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan.

For decades after Reconstruction, the U.S. Congress did not pass a single civil rights act. Finally, in 1957, it established a civil rights section of the Justice Department, along with a Commission on Civil Rights to investigate discriminatory conditions.

Three years later, Congress provided for court-appointed referees to help blacks register to vote. Both of these bills were strongly watered down to overcome southern resistance. When John F. Kennedy entered the White House in 1961, he initially delayed supporting new anti-discrimination measures. But with protests springing up throughout the South—including one in Birmingham, Alabama, where police brutally suppressed nonviolent demonstrators with dogs, clubs and high-pressure fire hoses—Kennedy decided to act.

In June 1963 he proposed by far the most comprehensive civil rights legislation to date, saying the United States “will not be fully free until all of its citizens are free.”

CIVIL RIGHTS ACT MOVES THROUGH CONGRESS

Kennedy was assassinated that November in Dallas, after which new President Lyndon B. Johnson immediately took up the cause.

“Let this session of Congress be known as the session which did more for civil rights than the last hundred sessions combined,” Johnson said in his first State of the Union address. During debate on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives, southerners argued, among other
The bill then moved to the U.S. Senate, where southern and border state Democrats staged a 75-day filibuster—among the longest in U.S. history. On one occasion, Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia, a former Ku Klux Klan member, spoke for over 14 consecutive hours. But with the help of behind-the-scenes horse-trading, the bill’s supporters eventually obtained the two-thirds votes necessary to end debate. One of those votes came from California Senator Clair Engle, who, though too sick to speak, signaled “aye” by pointing to his own eye.

Having broken the filibuster, the Senate voted 73-27 in favor of the bill, and Johnson signed it into law on July 2, 1964. “It is an important gain, but I think we just delivered the South to the Republican Party for a long time to come,” Johnson, a Democrat, purportedly told an aide later that day in a prediction that would largely come true.

WHAT IS THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT?

Under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, segregation on the grounds of race, religion or national origin was banned at all places of public accommodation, including courthouses, parks, restaurants, theaters, sports arenas and hotels. No longer could blacks and other minorities be denied service simply based on the color of their skin.

The act also barred race, religious, national origin and gender discrimination by employers and labor unions, and created an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission with the power to file lawsuits on behalf of aggrieved workers.

Additionally, the act forbade the use of federal funds for any discriminatory program, authorized the Office of Education (now the Department of Education) to assist with school desegregation, gave extra clout to the Commission on Civil Rights and prohibited the unequal application of voting requirements.

LEGACY OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT

Civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. said that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was nothing less than a “second emancipation.”

The Civil Rights Act was later expanded to bring disabled Americans, the elderly and women in collegiate athletics under its umbrella.

It also paved the way for two major follow-up laws: the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which prohibited literacy tests and other discriminatory voting practices, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which banned discrimination in the sale, rental and financing of property. Though the struggle against racism would continue, legal segregation had been brought to its knees in the United States.
TIMELINE: KEY DATES IN CIVIL RIGHTS THE MOVEMENT

From Reuters:

The following are major dates in the modern U.S. civil rights movement:

1948 - President Harry Truman desegregates the armed forces.

1954 - Supreme Court outlaws segregation in public schools in Brown v. Board of Education.

1955-57 - Bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, sparked by seamstress Rosa Parks and organized by King.

1962 - James Meredith enrolls at University of Mississippi after President John F. Kennedy sends in troops.

1963 - Images of Birmingham, Alabama, police using fire hoses and dogs on black demonstrators gain widespread sympathy for civil rights movement.

1963 - About 250,000 people gather for March on Washington. King gives “I Have a Dream” speech.

1964 - President Lyndon Johnson signs sweeping Civil Rights Act, forbidding discrimination in many areas of life.

1965 - King leads march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in support of black voter registration.

1965 - Johnson signs Voting Rights Act.

1968 - King assassinated, sparking riots in more than 100 cities.

1978 - Supreme Court rules in Bakke v. Regents of University of California that fixed racial quotas are illegal.

2003 - In Grutter v. Bollinger, Supreme Court upholds University of Michigan Law School policy that takes race into account for admissions.

2013 - In Shelby County v. Holder, Supreme Court strikes down Section 4 of 1965 Voting Rights Act, which determined if a state or locality required approval before changing voting laws.

Reporting by Ian Simpson; Editing by Scott Malone and Lisa Von Ahn
BIRMINGHAM CHURCH BOMBING

From The History Channel: https://www.history.com/topics/1960s/birmingham-church-bombing

On September 15, 1963, a bomb exploded at the 16th Street Baptist Church as church members prepared for Sunday services. The racially motivated attack killed four young girls and shocked the nation.

BIRMINGHAM IN THE 1960S

The city of Birmingham, Alabama, was founded in 1871 and rapidly became the state’s most important industrial and commercial center. As late as the 1960s, however, it was also one of America’s most racially discriminatory and segregated cities.

Alabama Governor George Wallace was a leading foe of desegregation, and Birmingham had one of the strongest and most violent chapters of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). The city’s police commissioner, Eugene “Bull” Connor, was notorious for his willingness to use brutality in combating radical demonstrators, union members and blacks.

DID YOU KNOW?

By 1963, homemade bombs set off in Birmingham’s black homes and churches were such common occurrences that the city had earned the nickname “Bombingham.”

Precisely because of its reputation as a stronghold for white supremacy, civil rights activists made Birmingham a major focus of their efforts to desegregate the Deep South.

Letter from a Birmingham Jail

In the spring of 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. had been arrested there while leading supporters of his Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in a nonviolent campaign of demonstrations against segregation. While in jail, King wrote a letter to local white ministers justifying his decision not to call off the demonstrations in the face of continued bloodshed at the hands of local law enforcement officials.

His famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” was published in the national press, along with shocking images of police brutality against protesters in Birmingham that helped build widespread support for the civil rights cause.

16TH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

Many of the civil rights protest marches that took place in Birmingham during the 1960s began at the steps of the 16th Street Baptist Church, which had long been a significant religious center for the city’s black population and a routine meeting place for civil rights organizers like King.
KKK members had routinely called in bomb threats intended to disrupt civil rights meetings as well as services at the church.

At 10:22 a.m. on the morning of September 15, 1963, some 200 church members were in the building—many attending Sunday school classes before the start of the 11 am service—when the bomb detonated on the church’s east side, spraying mortar and bricks from the front of the church and caving in its interior walls.

Most parishioners were able to evacuate the building as it filled with smoke, but the bodies of four young girls (14-year-old Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley and Carole Robertson and 11-year-old Denise McNair) were found beneath the rubble in a basement restroom.

Ten-year-old Sarah Collins, who was also in the restroom at the time of the explosion, lost her right eye, and more than 20 other people were injured in the blast.

The bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church on September 15 was the third bombing in 11 days, after a federal court order had come down mandating the integration of Alabama’s school system.

**AFTERMATH OF THE BIRMINGHAM CHURCH BOMBING**

In the aftermath of the bombing, thousands of angry black protesters gathered at the scene of the bombing. When Governor Wallace sent police and state troopers to break the protests up, violence broke out across the city; a number of protesters were arrested, and two young African American men were killed (one by police) before the National Guard was called in to restore order.

King later spoke before 8,000 people at the funeral for three of the girls (the family of the fourth girl held a smaller private service), fueling the public outrage now mounting across the country.

Though Birmingham’s white supremacists (and even certain individuals) were immediately suspected in the bombing, repeated calls for the perpetrators to be brought to justice went unanswered for more than a decade. It was later revealed that the FBI had information concerning the identity of the bombers by 1965 and did nothing. (J. Edgar Hoover, then-head of the FBI, disapproved of the civil rights movement; he died in 1972.)

In 1977, Alabama Attorney General Bob Baxley reopened the investigation and Klan leader Robert E. Chambliss was brought to trial for the bombings and convicted of murder. Continuing to maintain his innocence, Chambliss died in prison in 1985.

The case was again reopened in 1980, 1988 and 1997, when two other former Klan members, Thomas Blanton and Bobby Frank Cherry, were finally brought to trial; Blanton was convicted in
This week’s confirmation hearings for President Donald Trump’s Supreme Court Justice nominee Brett Kavanaugh have been met with mourning from supporters of reproductive rights and the dignity of women more generally. Should Kavanaugh be successfully confirmed, the majority of justices could favor the recriminalization of abortion at some point when the Court resumes again.

I’m a historian who studies the history of reproductive rights in the US. To envision what our future holds should Roe v. Wade be successfully overturned is not hard — we only need to look to the decades before the nationwide legalization of abortion to get a sense for how the status of women could radically change.

The first thing to know about life when abortion was still a criminal act is that massive numbers of women resisted the law. In the 1950s and '60s, just before the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973, medical and law enforcement experts estimated that between 1 and 2 million girls and women every year had secret abortions. Women resisted because they decided they were too poor, too young, too alone, or too vulnerable to have a baby. They also resisted because they simply didn't want the pregnancy.
We think of the criminal era as a time when getting an abortion meant a furtive trip into the back alley, where, as likely as not, an unskilled person — maybe a drugstore owner or beautician or medical quack — would sexually assault, maim, or even negligently kill a desperate woman. But public health records do not bear this out.

Of course, some women suffered greatly — but most women lived in cities and towns where they had a decent chance of finding competent doctors, midwives, chiropractors, and others who did abortions outside of the law. Many performed this procedure day in and day out, often with the full knowledge of police who understood the public health benefits of having a decent provider in town.

But debunking the “back-alley” myth doesn’t mean the criminal era was not profoundly harmful to women. The social and economic impacts of making abortion illegal cannot be overstated. In those decades before Roe v. Wade, roughly from the mid-19th century until the early 1970s, women could not be full citizens. If they had heterosexual sex, they could not reliably plan their education or their work lives. Many women did not know where to find help, were too ashamed or afraid to ask, had no money, or were scared off by stories of the back alley. Many attempted self-abortion.

Employers and school officials drew on these vulnerabilities to treat females as unreliable employees who deserved lower pay. Given the likelihood that women would have children and drop out of the workplace, men argued that women had limited use for education. Girls were steered away from career tracks and advanced study and pushed toward preparation for “women’s” work, including low-skill office jobs and domestic labor.

Employers expected women workers, who might (it was thought) become pregnant at any time, to be only suited for jobs with fewer responsibilities that could allow them to cycle in and out without unduly disrupting the workplace. Unexpected and unwanted pregnancies robbed women of personal opportunities, economic security, and civic independence.

When district attorneys and police departments periodically decided to mount crusades of moral purity against “vice,” thousands of women were hauled into courtrooms and forced to testify against practitioners who had helped them and were now being tried for performing abortions.

Newspapers covered these public spectacles, where women in court would be pressed to answer such questions as “How many men did you have sex with?” and “Why did you have sex if you weren’t willing to have a baby?” and “During the abortion, how far apart were your legs spread and what tools were put into which of the holes in your body?”

Many hospitals set up “abortion boards,” where women went to beg panels of male physicians to allow them to terminate a pregnancy, which was only possible if granted an exception due to extraordinary circumstances. Many of these women had to plead insanity or say their pregnancy was causing them to consider suicide — two of the few permissible justifications for obtaining permission. Public humiliations like these were common in the pre-Roe era.

Without the right to choose, women were subordinate citizens. In the decades before Roe, authorities took upon themselves the right to punish girls and women for not managing their
sexuality and fertility in ways the government approved — and the punishments and social control varied by race. Authorities forced hundreds of thousands of unmarried, unwillingly pregnant white women to give up their babies for adoption; meanwhile, poor women of color were evicted from public housing, lost their welfare benefits, and, in some states, were threatened with jail if they had another baby outside of wedlock.

Women were forced to reproduce under a regime that dictated moral, racial, and religious rules for them, thus denying them moral autonomy, a political voice, and true religious liberty.

Most fundamentally, the government mandated forced maternity and defined women first and foremost as mothers. When women could not manage their reproductive capacity — even contraception was not legal in all states until 1965 — women's special subordination to government and specifically to men on whom women were dependent for economic support, for employment, and other resources shaped every aspect of women's intimate familial and socio-political lives.

Eventually, a critical mass of women rebelled against this regime as too dangerous and demeaning to be tolerated. The movement for reproductive freedom was a movement for full citizenship status for women.

Today's technological advancements will provide alternatives to the back alley and other degradations of the pre-Roe era, although women with economic resources will continue to have more options and access than others. As before, though, women will be forced to flout the law to achieve personal dignity and safety. Such treatment of women ought to be an intolerable idea in a modern democracy.

Rickie Solinger is a historian and the author of many books about reproductive politics, including Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race before Roe v. Wade; The Abortionist: A Woman Against the Law; and Reproductive Justice: An Introduction, with Loretta Ross.
PRE-THEATER CRITICAL THINKING ACTIVITY

TEACHER OBJECTIVE
To engage students in critical thinking around a pre-conceived social issue.

STUDENT GOAL
To engage in forming a new Point-of-View of a familiar social issue.

MATERIALS
The hand-out attached, a large white tablet, markers.

STEP ONE
Review the image/graph attached.

STEP TWO
Ask the students to share their ideas and responses to the graph. The teacher records each idea.

STEP THREE
Review the entire list of ideas, ask if the students have any more ideas to add.

STEP FOUR
Ask the students to predict how the concept presented in the graph will be presented in Fireflies. Record their ideas on a second large white sheet of paper.

NOTE: This activity can also be done as a “Parking Lot” activity. See the follow up activity in Section 5: Your Students as Artists POST-THEATER CREATIVE RESPONSE ACTIVITIES
Section IV: Your Students As Actors
Reading a Scene for Understanding Practical Aesthetics Exercise Scene Analysis Worksheet
READING A SCENE FOR UNDERSTANDING

TEACHER OBJECTIVE
To introduce the Practical Aesthetics “tools” for breaking down a scene. To understand the character and the story of the scene by relating the character’s actions to the student’s own life.

STUDENT GOAL
To understand that an important part of creating a simple, honest character involves knowing what that character wants.

MATERIALS
Pens, pencils, copies of the following scene from Fireflies, and copies of the Literal, Want, Action, As-If worksheet and/or Mini-Lesson.

PRACTICAL AESTHETICS EXERCISE

STEP ONE
Divide the students in pairs. Ask the students to select which character they want to portray.

STEP TWO
Allow the students time to read the scene silently to themselves.

STEP THREE
Ask the students to read the Introduction to the Practical Aesthetic Acting Technique sheet and have the students answer the four questions on the Scene Analysis Worksheet.

NOTE: The four questions and the students’ answers to them form the basis for the Practical Aesthetics scene analysis; and enables the actor to create a simple, honest character. They’re simply being honest to their own experiences!

STEP FOUR
After the students have completed the question worksheet, ask each pair of actors to read the scene in the front of the class room for an audience. The students should incorporate the ideas from the worksheet as they read the scene.
A SCENE FROM FIREFLIES

CHARLES
I know. It's just... it's hard, Liv. When I go on these trips, I'm not thinking about food. My mind is too busy entertaining death. It's always there. Somewhere. Lurking. It seems like death is always greeting a colored person at their front door. It doesn't matter if we change our address or put up a sign that flat out say Death You Ain’t Welcome Here – we ain’t got no choice, but to let it in.

OLIVIA
We have a choice, Charles.

CHARLES
Do we? It’s greeting us at church now. Our place of worship? (Beat) Those four little girls woke up this past Sunday morning, put on their prettiest of dresses, wore the biggest smiles they could find, thinking they were going to praise the Lord. I bet it ain’t cross their minds that that would be the day they’d meet Him. (Pause) I never thought white people would get so low as to bomb churches.

OLIVIA
They aren’t getting low. We just so high. And we get higher and higher each time death come knocking on our door and we still find the strength to fight it off; and each time we tell it, “Death, you have no business on our front porch.”

CHARLES
But I’m tired of fighting this fight, Liv.

OLIVIA
So am I, but I do it.

CHARLES
The bombing was so bad that you couldn’t even recognize one of the girls.

Olivia says nothing.

CHARLES
The only way they knew who she was was because of the clothes on her back and the ring on her finger they said.

OLIVIA
Lord.

CHARLES
And the mothers...

OLIVIA
I can’t even imagine.

CHARLES
They showed me photographs of them. They were the prettiest little girls.

OLIVIA
That’s enough.
PRACTICAL AESTHETICS INTRODUCTION

ANALYSIS
Script analysis is the process of breaking down a beat within a scene. We ask four questions in order to do this.

1. What is the character literally doing?
2. What does the character want?
3. What is the essential ACTION?
4. What is that action like to me? It is AS-IF...

Literal: In this step, the actor determines what the character he or she is playing is literally doing according to the text.

PURPOSE: An actor has to travel far—think of this preparation as the road map.

WANT: In this step, the actor identifies the goal of the character in the scene, specifically what the character wants from the other character/s in the scene. The given circumstances of the story inform the WANT.

PURPOSE: To focus the actor on the characters’ interaction.

ACTION: Playing an ACTION is the physical pursuit of a goal. Defining the ACTION of the scene allows the actor to determine what result or CAP he or she is looking for from the other actor/s in the scene.

EXAMPLES:
• Put someone in their place |
• Beg someone for forgiveness. | • Get a favor.
• Get someone to let me off the hook. | • Force someone to face the facts.
• Inspire someone to greatness. | • Get someone to see the light.

PURPOSE: Using an action gives the actor a task and a specific point of view. The Atlantic Theater Company teaches that the Action creates character.

AS-IF: In this step, the actor personalizes the action by finding a real-life situation in which they would behave according to the action they have chosen for the scene.

EXAMPLE: Get a favor.

It’s AS-IF I forgot to do my science homework and I’m asking my teacher for an extra day to hand it in.

PURPOSE: To gain personal insight and urgency to the scene or beat.

TACTICS & TOOLS: Different ways an actor goes about getting his action.

EXAMPLE: Plead, flirt, demand, inspire, challenge, level, threaten.

LIVING IN THE MOMENT. Reacting impulsively to what the other actor in the scene is doing, from the point of view of the chosen action.
Here are your “tools” for understanding your character:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is my character literally doing?</th>
<th>IF YOU’RE PLAYING CHARLES...</th>
<th>IF YOU’RE PLAYING OLIVIA...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charles is telling Olivia how the brutality of the church bombing and murder of the four young girls proves how death is always threatening him and his fellow “colored people.”</td>
<td>Olivia is telling Charles that though their struggle against “death” may seem hopeless they still have a choice to keep fighting and going higher.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does my character want?</td>
<td>Charles wants Olivia to understand how the constant threat of death makes their fight feel hopeless.</td>
<td>Olivia wants Charles to stay hopeful and empowered so they can keep fighting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the action I’m going to play?</td>
<td>To get someone to admit defeat</td>
<td>To get someone to stay in the race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The As-If...</td>
<td>It’s as if you are trying to convince your friend that there’s no point in advocating for changes at your school because the teachers and school board won’t listen.</td>
<td>It’s as if you are talking to a friend who is failing some classes about how they need to keep trying and studying so they can graduate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section V: Your Students As Artists
Post Theater Creative Response Activity
Pre-Theater Critical Thinking Activity Follow Up
Common Core & DOE Theater Blueprint
PRE-THEATER CRITICAL THINKING ACTIVITY FOLLOW UP

TEACHER OBJECTIVE
To engage students in critical thinking around pre-conceived social issues.

STUDENT GOAL
To engage in forming new opinions of a familiar social issue.

MATERIALS
A large white tablet, markers, ideas gathered during the pre-theater activity.

STEP ONE
Divide the students into working partners of two. Have each partnership review and discuss the ideas gathered prior to the performance of Fireflies. Have the students opinions on the social issue of a women's right to choose changed? If yes, why? If no, why not?

STEP TWO
Ask the students to share their ideas old and new as the teacher records each idea.

STEP THREE
Review the entire collection of ideas for each term, ask if the students have any more ideas to add.
ENDURING UNDERSTANDING STRAND BENCHMARKS
Theater conveys the significance individuals place on their life choices. For example: Playing God, Innocence, Morality, Culpability, Good vs. Bad, and Mistrust.
Theater conveys the meaning behind an individual’s struggle to have his or her life choices validated by family, friends and community.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS
Do the direction and staging reinforce the theme of “bleak morality” which is prevalent in FIREFLIES?
Do you accept the concept put forward in FIREFLIES that “struggle between right and wrong” can be both empowering and destructive?

Strand Benchmarks
THEATER MAKING: ACTING
Benchmark: Students increase their ability as imaginative actors while continuing to participate as collaborative ensemble members. Students demonstrate the ability to reflect on and think critically about their own work.

THEATER MAKING: PLAYWRITING/PLAY MAKING
Benchmark: Students refine their ability as playwrights to express point of view and personal vision.

DEVELOPING THEATER LITERACY
Benchmark: Students develop skills as critics by analyzing the critical writings of others.

MAKING CONNECTIONS THROUGH THEATER
Benchmark: Students demonstrate a capacity for deep personal connection to theater and a realization of the meaning and messages of theater.

WORKING WITH COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL RESOURCES
Benchmark: Students invigorate and broaden their understanding of theater through collaborative partnerships with theater professionals.
Inspired by the Group Theater, Stanislavsky, and a passion for ensemble acting, David Mamet and William H. Macy formed the Atlantic Theater Company with a select group of New York University Undergraduate drama students. Since its inception in 1985, Atlantic has produced more than 100 plays and garnered numerous awards, including: 12 Tony Awards, 15 Lucille Lortel Awards, 16 OBIE Awards, six Outer Critics Circle Awards, seven Drama Desk Awards, three Drama League Awards, three New York Drama Critics Circle Awards and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Noted productions include: Spring Awakening, Port Authority, The Lieutenant of Inishmore, The Beauty Queen of Leenane, Boy’s Life, and American Buffalo. The Atlantic Theater Company’s mission is to produce plays simply and truthfully, utilizing an artistic ensemble. Atlantic believes that the story of the play and the intent of its playwright are at the core of a successful theatrical production.

The Atlantic Acting School fosters new generations of actors by passing on the tools learned from Mamet and Macy and by preparing students for all aspects of a career in film, television and theater. The Atlantic offers studies through New York University, a full-time conservatory program, part-time programs and summer workshops. Atlantic for Kids offers acting