

ATLANTIC THEATER COMPANY

STUDY GUIDE:
Students & Educators

World Premiere Play

SUNDAY

by Jack Thorne
directed & choreographed
by Lee Sunday Evans



Heather Baird
Director of Education

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SECTION I: THE PLAY

Synopsis

Themes



SYNOPSIS

There is a moment when you want to look ahead to the future, but the past is eating you whole. In *Sunday*, friends gather for a book group, anxious to prove their intellectual worth, but that anxiety gets the better of any actual discussion as emotional truths come pouring out.

THEMES

Coming of age/Search for identity

Privilege

Toxic masculinity

Intellectual Worth

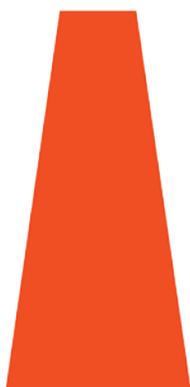
Life Defining Moments

SECTION II: CREATIVE TEAM

Creative Biographies

Characters/Cast List

Behind the Scenes Look



CREATIVE BIOGRAPHIES



JACK THORNE (*Playwright*). His theater credits include *King Kong* (Broadway Theatre), *A Christmas Carol* (Old Vic), *Woyzeck* (Old Vic), *Junkyard* (a Headlong, Rose Theatre Kingston, Bristol Old Vic and Theatr Clwyd co-production), *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (SFP Productions/Harry Potter West End Theatrical), *The Solid Life Of Sugar Water* (Graeae Theatre Company, Edinburgh Festival & UK Tour), *Hope* (Royal Court Theatre), *Let The Right One In* (Dundee Rep / Royal Court Theatre, NTS / Marla Rubin Productions Ltd), *The Borough* (Punchdrunk / Aldeburgh Festival), *Stuart: A Life Backwards* (adapt. Hightide / Sheffield Theatre - Edinburgh Festival & UK tour), *Mydidae* (Drywrite - Soho Theatre / Trafalgar Studios), *The Physicists* (adapt. Donmar Warehouse), *Bunny* (Nabokov - UK tour / NYC), *Red Car Blue Car, Two Cigarettes*, *When You Cure Me* (Bush Theatre), *Greenland* (National Theatre), *2nd May 1997* (Bush / Nabokov), *Burying Your Brother in the Pavement* (NT Connections), *Stacy* (Tron / Arcola / Trafalgar Studios) and *Fanny and Faggot* (Pleasance Edinburgh / Finborough / Trafalgar Studios). On film his credits include *Wonder*, *War Book*, *A Long Way Down* and *The Scouting Book for Boys*. Upcoming releases include *Radioactive*, *The Secret Garden*, *The Aeronauts* and *Dirt Music*. For television his credits include “Kiri,” “National Treasure,” “The Last Panthers,” “Don’t Take My Baby,” “This Is England,” “The Fades,” “Glue” and “Cast-Offs.” In 2017 he won a BAFTA and an RTS Television award for Best Mini-Series (“National Treasure”). He won 2016 BAFTAs for Best Mini-Series (“This Is England ’90”) and Best Single Drama (“Don’t Take My Baby”), and in 2012 won Best Series (“The Fades”) and Best Serial (“This Is England ’88”). Upcoming projects include “The Eddy” and “The Light.”



LEE SUNDAY EVANS (*Director*). Upcoming: *In the Green* by Grace McLean (LCT3). Recent credits: *Dance Nation* by Clare Barron (Playwrights Horizons, Obie, Lortel Award); *The Courtroom* (Waterwell); *Intractable Woman* by Stefano Massini and *Caught* by Christopher Chen (The Play Company); *The Things That Were There* by David Greenspan (The Bushwick Starr); *[Porto]* by Kate Benson (WP Theater/Bushwick Starr); *HOME* by Geoff Sobelle and *Farmhouse /Whorehouse* by Suzanne Bocanegra (BAM Next Wave Festival); *Miller, Mississippi* by Boo Killebrew (Long Wharf, Dallas Theater

Center); *The Winter's Tale* (The Public Theater's Mobile Unit); *Bull in a China Shop* by Bryna Turner (LCT3); *Macbeth* (Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival); *Wellesley Girl* by Brendan Pelsue (Humana Festival); *D Deb Debbie Deborah* by Jerry Lieblch (Clubbed Thumb); *A Beautiful Day in November on the Banks of the Greatest of the Great Lakes* by Kate Benson (Obie, New Georges/WP Theater). Her work has been presented/developed at Baryshnikov Arts Center, Sundance Theater Lab, BAX, CATCH, LMCC, Robert Wilson's Watermill Center, Juilliard among others. She was recently appointed the Artistic Director of Waterwell.

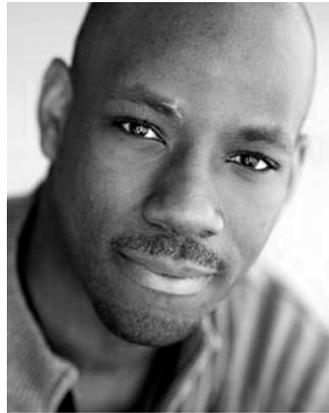
CHARACTERS/CAST LIST



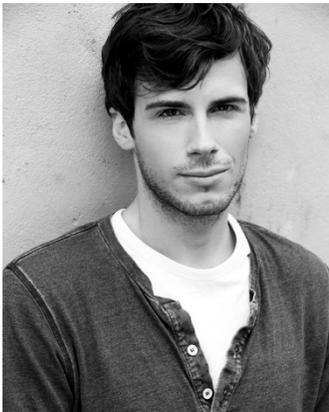
Juliana Canfield
Jill



Ruby Frankel
Alice



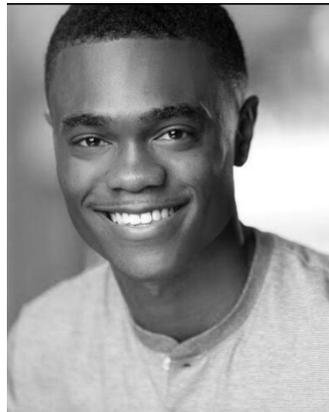
Maurice Jones
Bill



Zane Pais
Milo



Sadie Scott
Marie



Christian Strange
Keith

BEHIND THE SCENES LOOK AT REHEARSAL



Photos by Ahron R. Foster

SECTION III: YOUR STUDENTS AS AUDIENCE

Theater Vocabulary

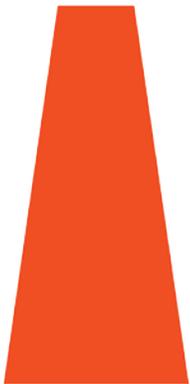
Sunday in Context:

Physical Theatre

From *Playbill*: “Lee Sunday Evans Likes to Get Physical with her Theatre”

From *The New York Times*: “Harry Potter Brought Him to Broadway. Now His Work is Everywhere.”

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THEATER VOCABULARY

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.

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

SOUND: Noises and music used in the play.

***SUNDAY* IN CONTEXT:**

PHYSICAL THEATRE (from BBC.com): Physical theatre shows that you don't have to use words to express ideas. It uses techniques such as movement, mime, gesture and dance and can be used to explore complex social and cultural issues.

Lee Sunday Evans Likes to Get Physical with her Theatre

PLAYBILL

By Olivia Clement

Lee Sunday Evans loves new plays. She's also built a career collaborating with writers who aren't afraid to experiment with form. "I'm interested in compelling, incredible stories being told onstage in surprising ways," says the Obie-winning director. "I tend to gravitate toward scripts that play with that in some way." Her latest project, the world premiere of *Sunday* by Tony-winning playwright Jack Thorne (*Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*) at Off-Broadway's Atlantic Theater Company, is a play about a group of 20something New York City friends who gather for a book club meeting.

Anxious to prove their intellectual worth, their emotional truths come pouring out. "Being where they are in their lives, there's a restless searching, a heat, going on in this group of people," explains Evans. "In this lovely, simple evening that they're having, there's also an undercurrent of something else going on. Jack makes room for that in the script in a really exciting way."

Evans was drawn to the physicality of storytelling in *Sunday*. "Jack has put these amazing proposals into the script: for internal movements and dance breaks," says the director and choreographer. As a former dancer, this is where she thrives. "I have a real passion for the emotionality you can connect to in people's bodies," she says. "The kind of athleticism and dynamism of actors' bodies onstage can be so powerful to experience from the audience. I'm interested in physical language having the widest range of expression onstage and the way that can create an intoxicating magnetism."

Sunday, which plays September 4–October 13, is a return Off-Broadway for Thorne, who has penned the scripts to recent Broadway blockbusters like *King Kong* and *Cursed Child*. “He has a sharpness of insight about relationships that I think is exciting for people to see in a different context,” says Evans. Her collaboration with the playwright is an exciting new one; the two worked together for the first time during a workshop of *Sunday* in London.

Just as she is drawn to experimental storytelling, Evans has found her own developmental process to be experimental and exploratory in nature. “There’s something about the ‘not understanding’ in the early stages of a play that I think is really important,” says the director. “It leads me to create productions that I didn’t necessarily imagine when I first read the play.”

Harry Potter Brought Him to Broadway. Now His Work is Everywhere.
The New York Times

By Michael Paulson

LONDON — Jack Thorne has no shortage of ways to characterize his own eccentricity. “I’m a slightly deranged adult.” “I’m not very good with other people.” “I’m mental.”

He points out a Ralph Steadman poster on the wall of his book-lined home office, an image grotesque enough to prompt objections from his 3-year-old son. “I like it,” he smiles. “It expresses my self-hatred.”

Mr. Thorne, a 40-year-old English writer, describes much of his life as a succession of dark chapters, including a disabling skin condition that affected him for years.

But now he finds himself in a spot he could never have imagined: a happily married father with thriving stage and screen careers that have made him

one of the most prodigious — and sought-after — storytellers of the moment.

He won a Tony Award last year for his first Broadway outing — writing the script for the global juggernaut “Harry Potter and the Cursed Child.” His movie credits include “The Aeronauts” (with Eddie Redmayne) and, next year, “The Secret Garden” (with Colin Firth).

And this summer he made his first appearance at Comic-Con, promoting “His Dark Materials,” the upcoming BBC/HBO series she adapted from Philip Pullman’s fantasy novels.

Mr. Thorne has been writing for television since he was 25, winning five BAFTA awards (the British equivalent of the Emmy). His mini-series “National Treasure,” about a comedian accused of rape, was widely praised; the first episodes of Damien Chazelle’s “The Eddy,” a musical series written by Mr. Thorne, are to be released next year by Netflix; and he was just commissioned to write a new family drama for the BBC.

In June, *The Economist* described him as the “bard of Britain,” writing, “He is becoming to modern British TV what Charles Dickens was to the Victorian novel — a chronicler of the country’s untold stories and social ills, and the domestic dramas that encapsulate them.”

This summer, “the end of history ...,” a stage drama based on Mr. Thorne’s own upbringing, opened at London’s Royal Court Theater. And this fall, he will have two plays on the New York stage: “Sunday,” about New York 20-somethings navigating the shoals of early adulthood, is having its world premiere Off Broadway this month at the Atlantic Theater Company, and “A Christmas Carol,” his much-lauded stage adaptation of the Dickens classic, will open on Broadway in November.

“I’m working harder than I’ve ever done,” he said during an interview in the townhouse that he shares with his wife, Rachel Mason, and their son, Elliott, in the London borough of Islington. “I’m aware that I will be unfashionable very shortly, and so I want to tell as many stories as I can while I still am interesting to people.”

That kind of self-deprecation helps fuel his work, said Sonia Friedman, a lead producer of “Cursed Child.”

“He has no idea how gifted and how talented he is,” she said. “The amount of success he’s having, and will continue to have — I don’t think he will ever fully believe it, and I don’t think he’ll ever fully understand why it’s happening to him.”

Mr. Thorne’s office is the one room in the house where his career artifacts are displayed, and, although the awards are mostly in the basement, it is packed with other meaningful treasures.

There is the night light from his childhood bedroom and a Tony Blair placard with the now-ironic slogan, “Britain Deserves Better.” (“He was my hero,” Mr. Thorne said. “I still feel the betrayal to this day.”)

There is the drawing of customized wands created for the “Cursed Child” team by the play’s designers, and a framed onesie that reminds him of the birth of his son.

“I quite like being haunted by past things,” he said. “I find it quite useful.”

A jumble of compulsions

At 6 feet 5 inches tall, Mr. Thorne is a gangly bundle of nervous energy. He fidgets with his toes. He’s too distractible to ride a bike, and he dislikes the subway, so he walks long distances. “Sitting on a tube is just like the most upsetting thing you can do,” he said.

He also has a pronounced verbal tic — he calls it a speech impediment — that leads him, quite frequently, to punctuate his speech with the phrase “do you know what I mean like you know?” But it’s smushed together into one word, “doyouknowwhatimeanlikeyouknow.” He finds it exasperating. “It doesn’t even make sense,” he said. “I wish I spoke coherently.”

He notes that, in “His Dark Materials,” people have dæmons, which are animal-shaped manifestations of their inner selves. “I think mine would be a woodpecker,” he said, “because it’s always there, hammering away — ‘don’t say that, do say this.’”

Writing has become a sort of compulsion — a craft that brings him not only joy, but calm. “I find as soon as I start writing other people, I become better,” he said. “It’s that and the sea — those are the two things that sort me out.”

What do writing and ocean swimming have in common? “I think it’s being completely on your own,” he said. “When I’m swimming in the sea, I go way out. And I think writing is quite similar.”

He estimates that he has written about 40 plays, and is often creating three things simultaneously, switching from one to another whenever he gets stuck. “I can’t cope with doing only one thing at once,” he said. “As soon as I hit that block where you go, ‘This is awful! Why would you consider yourself a writer?,’ it’s really nice to be able to swap onto another project and go, ‘Well, this is all right.’”

Of course, not everything succeeds. He was dropped as the writer of the forthcoming film “Star Wars: Episode IX” when the director was replaced. And he wrote the book for the big-budget stage adaptation of “King Kong,” which was poorly reviewed and closed as a flop on Broadway, although the producers are hoping to revivify the musical in Shanghai.

“It was really, really hard,” he said. “I felt like there was a sort of presumption that we were commercial sellouts — you were aware that you were walking into a town that didn’t like you very much.”

But he is also self-critical. “There were things about the show that didn’t work,” he said. “I think that I panicked, because the first previews didn’t work at all, and I didn’t stay true to what I was trying to do. Probably I should have done something more radical and clever.”

‘I was quite seriously ill’

He grew up in Bristol and Newbury, England; his father was a town planner, and his mother worked with adults who had learning disabilities. His parents were politically active Laborites. “We were always going on marches,” he said.

“The end of history ...” is about an argumentative family with zealously left-leaning parents who are not happy with their children’s lack of political engagement. Mr. Thorne, who as a younger man was active in the Labor Party but is now disenchanted and uninvolved, called the play “a complicated love note.”

He was, by his own description, an unhappy child, but he was a voracious, and precocious, reader, who tore through so many books that at 8, after reading all the age-appropriate material his mother brought for him on a family vacation, he read her copy of “The Color Purple.”

His parents were also heavily into what the British call amateur dramatics — both of them performed in community theater, and his father wrote pantomimes and directed. Young Jack dreamed of being an actor, before concluding that he was not good at it. (Among his last appearances: in the mini-series “This Is England,” which he wrote with Shane Meadows, “I played a part called Carrotbum, so-called because he once had a carrot stuffed up his bum, and Shane said he couldn’t find anyone else lonely or weird enough to do it.”)

He describes writing as an accidental discovery. While a student at Cambridge, he had wanted to direct, but couldn’t afford the stage rights to plays, so he decided to write his own material. “It was drivel,” he said. “I was quite seriously ill, and I was very self-absorbed in my self-pity.”

The illness was diagnosed as chronic cholinergic urticaria, a skin ailment triggered by heat, and at first it was debilitating and defining. “It became an allergy to body movement, basically, because every time I moved, I generated heat, and so I would get a reaction, and it was very, very painful,” he said.

He spent about six months flat on his back until medication enabled him to function; the condition remained with him for about another decade. He identified as a disabled person, and wrote for a theater company that champions people with disabilities. “They taught me a lot of things about how to make drama,” he said. “It’s informed every aspect of my work.”

Ms. Friedman said Mr. Thorne’s work is populated with “strange outsider characters” who “are quirky, and gawky, and get through life with humor, and that’s been Jack.”

“His best work is when he puts himself into it,” she said. “Because he had complicated and challenging experiences growing up, he floods his work with those feelings, and therefore the work feels authentic and real and truthful and often beautiful and sad.”

For years he was a committed loner, working in coffee shops and libraries. “I lived on my own in Luton in a place where I knew like three people and spent six and a half days of the week on my own, very happily writing and watching TV and occasionally going to the theater,” he said. “That was my life. I didn’t think I’d have kids, and I certainly didn’t think I’d get married.”

He was introduced to Ms. Mason, who is a talent agent, on a train to Cornwall, and his life changed. Having a child was frightening, but life-changing. “I was enormously scared because I wasn’t a particularly happy child, and I’m a slightly deranged adult, and I didn’t want my stuff to sit heavy on my kid.

Elliott is named for the boy in “E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial.” For his 40th birthday Mr. Thorne had “be good,” E.T.’s parting words to Elliott’s sister, tattooed on his right wrist. “I remember seeing ‘E.T.’ as a sort of slightly lonely kid and going, ‘Brilliant, there’s an extraterrestrial out there that’s going to make it all O.K.,’ ” he said.

Fatherhood has prompted Mr. Thorne to write at home, “because I want to be near him, and we see each other all the time.” Inspired by a radio interview

in which Zadie Smith described how she balances writing and parenting, he established an open-door policy — Elliott comes into the work space whenever he wants to, and is free to scrawl in Mr. Thorne’s writing notebooks, which he often does.

“I’m silly Daddy most of the time,” he said. “We’re just normal father and son who build sand castles — but I’ve also got a writing life, and he’s part of that writing life, and I hope that works.”

Five friends and a book

Mr. Thorne has often written perceptively about young people — children, adolescents, and early adults — and his latest project, “Sunday,” is set among a group of New Yorkers just starting their grown-up lives.

The play, which is now in previews, is set during the meeting of a boozy book club at which a group of five friends discuss Anne Tyler’s “Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant.” The gathering turns into an increasingly revealing conversation about ethical choices, toxic masculinity, and what is now sometimes called adulting.

“He’s got an incredible ear for the small ways that old friends talk to each other — his ability to capture the different layers of history that are present between this group of friends is astounding,” said the play’s director, Lee Sunday Evans. Ms. Evans was paired with Mr. Thorne by the Atlantic, which had commissioned the play, and in June she flew to London to oversee a workshop with British actors before further developing the show in New York with an American cast.

“I was struck by the small changes that he made based on what he heard the actors doing,” she said. “Little moments of people asking questions translated back into these really smart, very subtle but palpable changes in the script.”

Mr. Thorne said the play emerged from his fascination with the Aziz Ansari situation — a much-debated instance in which a woman accused a comedian of inappropriate behavior on a date — but that it had changed as it grew.

“I hope what it is now is about something simpler,” he said, “a group of young people looking at a future which they don’t quite understand anymore — morally, sexually, professionally.”

The Problem with a Fight Against Toxic Masculinity

The Atlantic

By Michael Salter

The popular term points toward very real problems of male violence and sexism. But it risks misrepresenting what actually causes them.

Over the past several years, toxic masculinity has become a catchall explanation for male violence and sexism. The appeal of the term, which distinguishes “toxic” traits such as aggression and self-entitlement from “healthy” masculinity, has grown to the point where Gillette invoked it last month in a viral advertisement against bullying and sexual harassment. Around the same time, the American Psychological Association introduced new guidelines for therapists working with boys and men, warning that extreme forms of certain “traditional” masculine traits are linked to aggression, misogyny, and negative health outcomes.

A predictable conflict has accompanied the term’s rise. Many conservatives allege that charges of toxic masculinity are an attack on manhood itself, at a time when men already face challenges such as higher rates of drug overdose and suicide. Many progressives, meanwhile, contend that the detoxification of masculinity is an essential pathway to gender equality. Amid this heated discourse, newspaper and magazine articles have blamed toxic masculinity for rape, murder, mass shootings, gang violence, online trolling, climate change, Brexit, and the election of Donald Trump.

Masculinity can indeed be destructive. But both conservative and liberal stances on this issue commonly misunderstand how the term *toxic masculinity* functions. When people use it, they tend to diagnose the problem of masculine aggression and entitlement as a cultural or spiritual

illness—something that has infected today’s men and leads them to reproachable acts. But toxic masculinity itself is not a cause. Over the past 30 years, as the concept has morphed and changed, it has served more as a barometer for the gender politics of its day—and as an arrow toward the subtler, shifting causes of violence and sexism.

Despite the term’s recent popularity among feminists, *toxic masculinity* did not originate with the women’s movement. It was coined in the mythopoetic men’s movement of the 1980s and ’90s, motivated in part as a reaction to second-wave feminism. Through male-only workshops, wilderness retreats, and drumming circles, this movement promoted a masculine spirituality to rescue what it referred to as the “deep masculine”— a protective, “warrior” masculinity—from toxic masculinity. Men’s aggression and frustration was, according to the movement, the result of a society that feminized boys by denying them the necessary rites and rituals to realize their true selves as men.

This claim of a singular, real masculinity has been roundly rejected since the late 1980s by a new sociology of masculinity. Led by the sociologist Raewyn Connell, this school of thought presents gender as the product of relations and behaviors, rather than as a fixed set of identities and attributes. Connell’s work describes multiple masculinities shaped by class, race, culture, sexuality, and other factors, often in competition with one another as to which can claim to be more authentic. In this view, which is now the prevailing social-scientific understanding of masculinity, the standards by which a “real man” is defined can vary dramatically across time and place.

Connell and others theorized that common masculine ideals such as social respect, physical strength, and sexual potency become problematic when they set unattainable standards. Falling short can make boys and men insecure and anxious, which might prompt them to use force in order to feel, and be seen as, dominant and in control. Male violence in this scenario doesn’t emanate from something bad or toxic that has crept into the nature of masculinity itself. Rather, it comes from these men’s social and political settings, the particularities of which set them up for inner conflicts over social expectations and male entitlement.

“The popular discussion of masculinity has often presumed there are fixed character types among men,” Connell told me. “I’m skeptical of the idea of character types. I think it’s more important to understand the situations in which groups of men act, the patterns in their actions, and the consequences of what they do.”

As this research was popularized, however, it was increasingly mischaracterized. By the mid-2000s, despite Connell’s objections, her complex theories were being portrayed in ways that echoed mythopoetic archetypes of healthy and destructive masculinity. In a 2005 study of men in prison, the psychiatrist Terry Kupers defined toxic masculinity as “the constellation of socially regressive male traits that serve to foster domination, the devaluation of women, homophobia, and wanton violence.” Referencing Connell’s work, Kupers argued that prison brings out the “toxic” aspects of masculinity in prisoners, but that this toxicity is already present in the wider cultural context. (Kupers told me that he believes critics of his study incorrectly assumed that he claimed masculinity itself is toxic, though he acknowledged that the article could have explained his position in greater detail.)

Since then, the return to toxic masculinity has leaked from academic literature to wide cultural circulation. Today the concept offers an appealingly simple diagnosis for gendered violence and masculine failure: Those are the “toxic” parts of masculinity, distinct from the “good” parts. New proponents of the concept, sometimes unaware of its origins, tend to agree that men and boys are affected by a social “sickness” and that the cure is cultural renewal—that is, men and boys need to change their values and attitudes. Former President Barack Obama is championing mentoring programs as the solution to a “self-defeating model for being a man” in which respect is gained through violence. A range of classes and programs encourage boys and men to get in touch with their feelings and to develop a healthy, “progressive” masculinity. In some educational settings, these programs are becoming mandatory.

Certainly, these programs can have a positive impact. Research consistently shows that boys and men who hold sexist attitudes are more likely to

perpetrate gendered violence. Connell herself notes that “when the term *toxic masculinity* refers to the assertion of masculine privilege or men’s power, it is making a worthwhile point. There are well-known gender patterns in violent and abusive behavior.”

The question is: Where do these sexist attitudes come from? Are men and boys just the victims of cultural brainwashing into misogyny and aggression, requiring reeducation into the “right” beliefs? Or are these problems more deep-seated, and created by the myriad insecurities and contradictions of men’s lives under gender inequality? The problem with a crusade against toxic masculinity is that in targeting culture as the enemy, it risks overlooking the real-life conditions and forces that sustain culture.

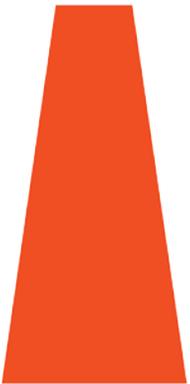
There’s genuine danger in this misperception. By focusing on culture, people who oppose toxic masculinity can inadvertently collude with institutions that perpetuate it. For example, the alcohol industry has funded research to deny the relationship between alcohol and violence, instead blaming “masculinity” and “cultures of drinking.” In this regard, the industry is repeating liberal feminist arguments about toxic masculinity. However, there is strong evidence that the density of liquor shops in a given geographic area increases the local rate of domestic violence. Any serious framework for preventing violence against women will address alcohol availability as well as masculine norms and sexism.

The concept of toxic masculinity encourages an assumption that the causes of male violence and other social problems are the same everywhere, and therefore, that the solutions are the same as well. But as Connell and her cohort have spent years demonstrating, material realities matter. While themes of violence, entitlement, and sexism recur across communities, they show up differently in different places. In one Australian Aboriginal violence-prevention program that I evaluated with colleagues, Aboriginal educators worked in partnership with men and boys to identify the key drivers of gendered violence and inequality. Solutions were rooted in cultural pride, tailored to local contexts, and underpinned by recognition of the intergenerational impacts of racism and trauma. The program understood that masculinity itself isn’t toxic, and instead sought to understand and change the roots of toxic gendered behavior.

Those roots are quite different than, for example, the roots evident in majority white, wealthy communities, where male violence and sexism are commonplace. Responses to gender inequality in professional workplaces, such as programs to stamp out sexism in employment culture and practices, have particular purchase in middle-class communities. They're not universal solutions—and they don't have to be. Recognizing differences in the lives of men and boys is crucial to the effectiveness of efforts to resolve gender violence and inequality.

SECTION IV: YOUR STUDENTS AS ACTORS

Reading a Scene for Understanding
The Atlantic Technique 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 *Sunday*, and copies of the Literal, Want, Action, As-If worksheet and/or Mini-Lesson.

THE ATLANTIC TECHNIQUE 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 Introduction 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 front of the classroom for an audience. The students should incorporate the ideas from the worksheet as they read the scene.

SCENE FROM *SUNDAY*

Jill

You OK?

Marie

I'm great.

GIL flicks the top of MARIE's head in an affectionate way.

Jill

Good news is, I remembered to get guac.

Marie

Cool.

Jill

Bad news is I forgot to get anything to go with it.

Marie

OK.

Jill

And I'm pretty sure we don't have chips.

Marie

We don't have chips.

JILL exits for the kitchen.

Jill

(shouting through)

We don't have chips. But we have got cornflakes.

Marie

OK.

JILL pokes her head back through from the kitchen.

Jill

We could sort of mix the cornflakes and guac together.

Marie

Do we have bread?

Jill

Maybe in the freezer.

JILL exits.

Marie

I'm thinking like one of those - like we do them in strips.

Jill

Strips of toast?

Marie

To eat with the guac.

Jill

I get it. It could work.

Marie

Or we could call someone get them to bring chips. Or we could go out and get some.

THE ATLANTIC TECHNIQUE 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, joke, demand, inspire, challenge, reason, encourage.

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.

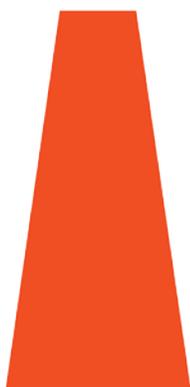
SCENE ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Here are your “tools” for understanding your character:

| | IF YOU'RE PLAYING MARIE... | IF YOU'RE PLAYING GIL... |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| WHAT IS MY CHARACTER LITERALLY DOING? | Marie is trying to figure out what to do since they don't have any chips for the guac. | Gil is telling Marie that she bought guac but forgot to buy chips. |
| WHAT DOES MY CHARACTER WANT? | Marie wants Gil to help solve the no chips problem. | Gil wants Marie be ok with the fact that she forgot chips. |
| WHAT IS THE ACTION I'M GOING TO PLAY? | To get someone to take responsibility. | To get someone let me off the hook. |
| THE AS-IF... | It's as if your friend was supposed to meet you to study for an important test but forgot to show up. | It's as if you are talking to a teacher about why they should accept an important assignment you want to turn in late. |

SECTION V | YOUR STUDENTS AS ARTISTS

Post Theater Creative Response Activities
Common Core & DOE Theater Blueprint
Sources



POST THEATER CREATIVE RESPONSE ACTIVITY

Developing a Personal Creative Response

TEACHER OBJECTIVE

To develop critical thinking skills through examining a theme in *Sunday* and relating that theme to an individual creative response.

STUDENT GOAL

To understand that an important theme from *Sunday* portrays the truths and messages of the play.

MATERIALS

Pencils, pens, writing paper.

STEP ONE

Discuss the impact of each character's search for their identity plays in *Sunday*.

STEP TWO

Ask the students to respond to the Writing Trigger ... A person or situation that influenced my life for better or worse. NOTE: Allow 7-minutes for this free write.

STEP THREE

Ask the students to share their writings, offering positive feedback after each share.

COMMON CORE & DOE THEATER BLUEPRINT

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

Theater conveys the significance individuals place on their life choices.

For example:

Theater conveys the meaning behind an individual's struggle to have his or her life or life choices validated by family, friends, community, and the broader world.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Do the direction and staging reinforce the theme of "defining moments" which is of significance in *Sunday*?

Do you accept the concept put forward in *Sunday* that a person's intellectual worth can be affected by the people they surround themselves with?

SOURCES:

- BBC, BBC, www.bbc.com.
- "Lee Sunday Evans Likes to Get Physical with Her Theatre." *Playbill*, PLAYBILL INC.
- Paulson, Michael. "Harry Potter Brought Him to Broadway. Now His Work Is Everywhere." *The New York Times*, The New York Times
- Salter, Michael. "The Problem With a Fight Against Toxic Masculinity." *The Atlantic*.

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.

SECTION VI | THE ATLANTIC LEGACY

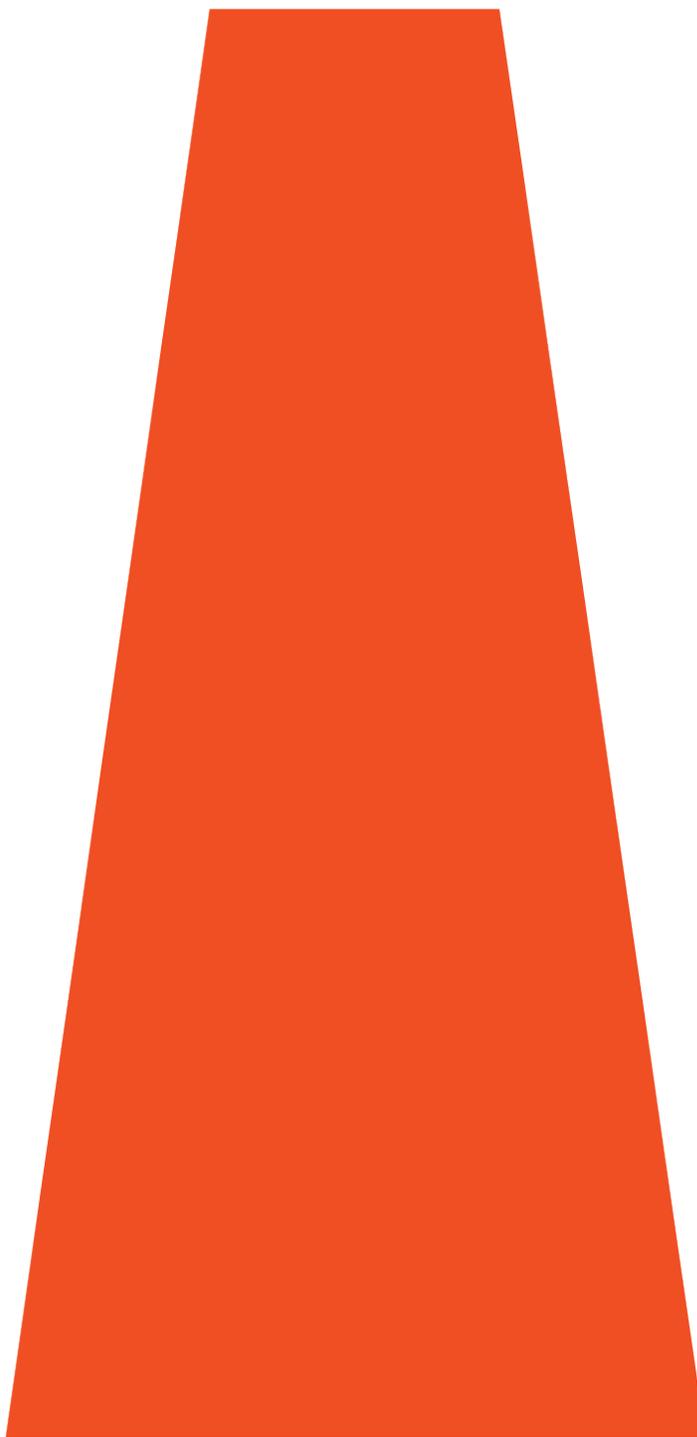
Atlantic Theater Company & Atlantic Acting School



Founded as an ensemble of impassioned student artists in 1985, Atlantic Theater Company has grown into a powerhouse off-Broadway company. We challenge, inspire, and awaken audiences with truthful storytelling presented across our two venues, the Linda Gross Theater and the intimate Stage 2 black-box. As a producer of compelling new works, we are committed to championing the stories from new and established artists alike, amplifying the voices of emerging playwrights through our deeply collaborative programs and initiatives.

At Atlantic, our aim is singular—to empower simple and honest storytelling that fosters greater understanding of our shared world. We are a family of artists dedicated to exploring essential truths onstage, be it a show at Atlantic Theater Company or a class at Atlantic Acting School. As a producer, presenter, and educator of theater, we are driven by the belief that theater can challenge and transform our ways of thinking and urge us to reflect on our role in society. From our Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize-winning productions to our community-based education programs, we are committed to uncovering and celebrating the stories of our varied human existence.

At Atlantic Acting School, we equip our students with the physical, emotional, and tactical tools of acting to discover their truths, and prepare them for success beyond our doors. From our full-time and evening conservatories to our NYU Tisch studio, and our after-school and summer programs for kids and teens, our immersive, learn-by-doing approach is central to an Atlantic Acting education. We have mentored and trained outstanding artists for more than 30 years. No matter their age or background, our students learn to break through their creative comfort zones in service to bringing essential human stories to life.



LINDA GROSS THEATER: 336 W 20th St. New York, NY, 10011 | ATLANTIC STAGE 2: 330 W 16th St. New York, NY, 10011 | ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES & ATLANTIC ACTING SCHOOL: 76 Ninth Ave., Suite 313, New York, NY 10011 | ATLANTICTHEATER.ORG