
Too Heavy For Your Pocket

By Jiréh Breon Holder

Study Guide for grades 6th-12th

Created by South Atlanta High School Theatre Fundamentals II class of Dr. Tia Shaffer

As part of the Alliance Arts for Learning Institute

Dramaturgy by Students Program

Under the guidance of Teaching Artist Ebony Tucker

World Premier and winner of the 2017 Alliance/Kendeda National Graduate
Playwriting Competition



On the Hertz stage

Tuesday- Sunday

February 4 to February 26, 2017

Student Matinee February 16th and February 23rd

SALLY: ...*We will figure it out.*
Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is
success. –Henry Ford

Too Heavy For Your Pocket
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Language Arts Core Curriculum Standards

CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCRA.R.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative and figurative meanings and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCRA.L.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

CCRA.SL.2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

ELACC6-8RH2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions (grades 6-8)

National Core Arts Standards

TH: Pr4.1.6.

- a. Identify the essential events in a story or script that make up the dramatic structure in a drama/theatre work

TH: Re7.1.6.

- a. Describe and record personal reactions to artistic choices in a drama/theatre work.

TH: Re8.1.8.

- a. Recognize and share artistic choices when participating in or observing a drama/theatre work.

TH: Re9.1.8.

- a. Respond to a drama/ theatre work using supporting evidence, personal aesthetics, and artistic criteria.

TH: Cn10.1.8.

- a. Examine a community issue through multiple perspectives in a drama/theatre work.

TH: Cn11.2.6.

- b. Investigate the time period and place of a drama/theatre work to better understand performance and design choices.

The Playwright
Jiréh Breon Holder



Jiréh Breon Holder is currently the Playwriting Fellow of the Department of Theater and Creative Writing at Emory University. He is an Atlanta area playwright, director, and dramaturg. His sharp and often political plays frequently include wild visual metaphors and address the magic of everyday life in the South.

In 2016, he received his MFA in Playwriting from the Yale School of Drama where he studied with Sarah Ruhl. He is a co-founder of Pyramid Theatre Company in Des Moines, Iowa. From 2012-13, he served as the Kenny Leon Fellow at the Alliance Theatre. He graduated cum laude from Morehouse College (B.A. Theatre) where he served as the artistic director of Spelman College Playwrights' Workshop and directed several productions.

His plays have received productions at the Alliance Theatre, the Yale School of Drama and Yale Cabaret. He has also received readings at the Manhattan Theatre Club, the Roundabout Theatre, the Kennedy Center, and the Old Globe Theatre.

As a theater artist with a strong political impulse, many of his plays and projects address the prison industrial complex, human rights, and agricultural/environmental sustainability. He is a firm believer that art changes live, and each project he is involved with seeks to touch people one audience at a time. Jiréh received his motivation for the play, *Too Heavy for Your Pocket*, from his grandparents and his own personal story. He dedicates this production to Nola Holder and Cassandra Holder, the original Sallys.

Too Heavy for your Pocket Synopsis

In rural Tennessee at the height of the Civil Rights Movement two young couples struggle to understand justice, love, and their own responsibilities. When Bowzie gets a scholarship to attend Fisk University, he has the opportunity to improve his family's life. His education goes beyond the classroom, as he becomes a Freedom Rider and joins the fight against racism in the Deep South, leaving his obligations as a husband and friend behind. A beautifully written look at the personal cost and private struggles behind public events, *Too Heavy for Your Pocket* speaks powerfully about the bonds of friendship and what defines true family. The 2017 winner of the Alliance/Kendeda National Graduate Playwriting Competition, the Alliance is thrilled to celebrate one of its own—playwright and former Kenny Leon Fellow Jiréh Breon Holder.

Too Heavy For your Pocket Director



Margot Bordelon (Director) is a New York based director who specializes in new work. Upcoming: *peerless* by Jiehae Park at Marin Theater Company, and *T.* by Dan Aibel at American Theater Company. Recent projects: *The Pen* by Julianne Wick Davis and Dan Collins for Premieres NYC (NYT's Critic's pick), *peerless* at Yale Rep, *A Delicate Ship* by Anna Ziegler for The Playwrights Realm (NYT's Critic's pick), and *Okay, Bye* by Joshua Conkel at Steppenwolf Theater. She's developed new plays with Ars Nova, Atlantic Theatre, Berkeley Rep, Cherry Lane, Juilliard, NYTW, PlayPenn, Portland Center Stage, Primary Stages, Rattlestick, Roundabout, and the Wilma, among others. Margot moved east after spending six years in Chicago working as a director, writer and performer. She is a founding member of Theatre Seven of Chicago, and spent four seasons at Lookingglass Theatre as Literary Manager and Company Dramaturg. M.F.A.: Yale School of Drama, B.F.A.: Cornish College of the Arts. www.margotbordelon.com

Too Heavy For Your Pocket Cast



Stephen Ruffin as Bowzie

Stephen is honored to be returning to the Alliance Theatre. Recent credits include *Beyond Reasonable Doubt: The Troy Davis Project* (Synchronicity Theatre), *Romeo & Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Atlanta Shakespeare Company), *A Christmas Carol*, *The Tempest* (Hippodrome State Theatre), *Tell Me My Dream* (Alliance Theatre). TV/Film: "Sleepy Hollow," "Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul." Thank you Jody for believing in me, Margot for leading us, and Jiréh for trusting me with this beautiful character.

Mad love to my family, friends, pets, and my alluring WIFE!



Rob Demery as Tony

Rob is thrilled to make his Alliance debut as Tony. Stage credits: *Fetch Clay*, *Make Man* (Muhammad Ali); *Lombardi* (Dave Robinson); *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* (Byron); *SARAFINA* (Silence); *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men* (Theo); *To Kill A Mockingbird* (Tom Robinson); *A Christmas Carol* (Fred); *Othello: The Remix* (Othello); *A Soldier's Story* (Corporal Cobb); *The Waiting Room* (Riley Innes); *Robert Johnson: Trick The Devil* (Lem); *No Land's Man* (Dred Scott); *Twelfth Night* (Sea Captain/Priest). Film/Television credits: *Get On Up*, *90 Minutes in*

Heaven, *Devil's Knot* and *2nd Generation Wayans*. Rob is the Founder/Artistic Director of Red Light Arts located in Riverdale, Ga. www.RedLightArts.com



Nicolette Robinson as Sally-Mae

Off-Broadway: *Invisible Thread* (Second Stage Theatre), *Brooklynite* (Vineyard Theatre). Regional: *Witness Uganda* (A.R.T.), *A Little More Alive* (Barrington Stage Company). TV: Nicolette plays Jane on Showtime's Golden Globe Award winning series "The Affair"; "Hart of Dixie," "Unforgettable," "Perfect Couples," "Cold Case." Princess Grace Award Winner for Theater and a graduate of UCLA's School of Theater, Film, & Television. Twitter/Instagram: @NicoletteKloe

Eboni Flowers as Evelyn



Miranda Childers (U/S Evelyn) is beyond excited to make her debut at the Alliance Theatre! Recent credits include Nina in the MXAT/Harvard A.R.T. reworking of *The Seagull* (Moscow), *3 Days In Savannah* (Manhattan Repertory Theatre), Rosa Parks/Doña Louisa in *The Roberto Clemente Story* (Teatro Sea's bilingual theatre) and Sarah in *Ragtime* (Cape Fear Regional Theatre). Professionally trained in theatre at the University of Evansville she holds a B.A. in Spanish from Methodist University and University of Buenos Aires in Argentina. Humble thanks and appreciation to friends, family, and the entire *Too Heavy For Your Pocket* team!



Cyrah Hill (U/S Sally) is thrilled to make her Alliance Stage debut! Recent TV/Film credits include "Hashtags, Heels and Happiness" and commercials for Harris Teeter and the NBA App. B.A. in Theater with a Dance Concentration at Spelman College with additional training at NYCDA. Cyrah is the owner and operator of Fehree Performance Atlanta, an after school performing arts program serving Atlanta Public Schools. Deepest gratitude to family, friends and fellow artists.



Kameron Neal Kierce (U/S Bowzie) was last seen in Alliance's *Collision Project X*, and is now grateful to work on the mainstage! Favorite credits include, *Hairspray* (Suwannee Ampitheatre), *Peter & The Starcatcher*, *Mamma Mia*, *The Wiz* (Weathervane Rep), *Yeah I Said It!* (The Rialto), and *The Color Purple* (Viola Turner Theatre). TV Credits: "Fatal Attraction," "StartUp," and "Murder Chose Me." Kameron is an August Wilson Monologue Competition Finalist, student of Rob Mello, and a soon to be Junior at Carnegie Mellon's School of Drama. Kameron's goal is to continue tell stories that inspire change and encourage love. Follow his journey at kameronkierce.com



Asante Williams (U/S Tony) A native Californian, Asante earned his bachelor's degree in Theatre from the University Of Nevada Las Vegas. He is a humble, versatile actor who has the ability to bring both a comedic and a dramatic expertise to each role, with an interest in both film and stage. His goal is to continue to study the craft and keep competing at a high level to one day grind his way on to Broadway or a major movie/TV sitcom. Recent credits include: *Miss Evers Boys*, *Fabulation*, *The American Play* and *Local Celebrity*, which appeared in the Las Vegas Fringe Festival.

Too Heavy For Your Pocket

Character Descriptions

Sally-Mae Carter

Sally Mae is the peacemaker of the ensemble and a recent graduate from Beauty School. She is a God-fearing woman expecting her first child with her husband Tony.

Tony Carter

Tony is the husband of Sally Mae. He is an uneducated yet hardworking man. He has made some mistakes in his marriage that have him trying to regain his wife's trust.

Evelyn Brandon

She is a talented singer and the wife of Bowzie Brandon. She made a poor decision, which led to the betrayal to one of her friends

Bowzie Brandon

He is the husband of Evelyn. An intelligent man who seeks to fulfill his purpose and while maintaining support from his wife.

The playwright on the character names---

"There's a character named Tony in every play I write. I'm infatuated with Toni Morrison. My grandmother's best friend growing up, who passed away several years ago, was named Evelyn. So, Ms. Evelyn is homage to her and her presence in my childhood.

Bowzie is just a cool name. No one is saying Bowzie anymore. My grandmother was telling me about someone named Bowzie once. Sallie Mae felt like the quintessential homemaker name.

Any of the other names mentioned are base off of real people."

Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee (SNCC)



Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee is one of the most important organizations of the American civil rights movement in the 1960s. SNCC (pronounced snick) was created two and a half months after student sit-ins were launched in Greensboro, NC at lunch counters. Ella Baker organized the group after seeing a need for student activism. With the monetary help of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (SCLC), Ella formed SNCC. Diane Nash, Stakely Carmichael, Fannie Lou Hamer, James Meredith, Medgar Evers, and Cesar Chavez were some of the members.

SNCC gave younger blacks a voice in the civil rights movement. The members embraced nonviolence as a means of effecting change but some members challenged this principle. Some members were radical with their views. In 1967, H. Rap Brown, the successor of Carmichael, was arrested for inciting a riot. SNCC was disbanded shortly after.

Important SNCC participation in the Civil Rights Movement

- Summer of 1961 Freedom Rides:** As a team with the congress of the racial equality, the freedom rides sought to desegregate public transportation.
- 1963 March on Washington:** Members assisted with the organization and staging of the march for jobs, freedom, equality.
- Voter registration** in Selma, AL. SNCC faced resistance in registering blacks to vote and sought the help of Dr. Martin Luther King. After tragedy struck during a demonstration led by SCLC, a protest march from Selma to Montgomery was scheduled. March 7, 1965, the day of the march, over 50 people were hospitalized including numerous SNCC members on the day known as Bloody Sunday.



Woolworth lunch counter Greensboro 1960

Too Heavy for Your Pocket Places and Locations

Montgomery, Alabama

Montgomery, Alabama, played an important role in the American civil rights movement. During the early years of the movement African Americans began pushing for equal rights. Dr. Martin Luther King was a Montgomery resident and King's presence often put Montgomery in the national spotlight. Many scholars consider the city to be the epicenter of the civil rights struggle because of the importance of the 1955-1956 Montgomery Bus Boycott and its role in launching Dr. King as the national leader of the civil rights movement. The atmosphere of segregation coupled with attempts to change the status quo remained in the city in the early 1960s when civil rights activists and students organized the Freedom Riders throughout the South.

On May 4, 1961, 13 activists in Washington, D.C., chosen by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), climbed aboard Greyhound and Trailways buses bound for New Orleans. As the group moved deeper into the South, hostility from local citizens and law enforcement officials increased. In South Carolina, an angry mob beat the riders. Martin Luther King Jr., meeting the group in Georgia, warned, "You will never make it through Alabama." However, they continued their journey.

Arriving early in Montgomery with only a lone motorcycle patrolman escort, the Freedom Riders soon discovered that a crowd of approximately 200 angry protestors crowded the streets and the arrival bay area at the bus station.

20 people were seriously injured, including John Seigenthaler, who was a personal representative of the President. President Kennedy, realizing the State officials would not help the Freedom Riders, dispatched Federal marshals to Alabama. Reporters and photographers recorded the attack, but much of their equipment was destroyed. The Freedom Riders, desperate, called on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for help. On Sunday, May 21, 1961, more than 1,000 people, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and other prominent civil rights leaders, gathered at the First Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama to show their support for the Freedom Riders. The attacks in Montgomery garnered worldwide attention and forced the federal government to intervene to solve civil rights issues.

Fisk University is a private historically black university founded in 1866 in Nashville, TN. The founding member of SNCC, Diane Nash, W. E. B. Dubois, Ida B. Wells just to name a few, are famous Alumni. In the play, Fisk is the university where Bowzie enrolls.



Parchman Penitentiary



Parchman Farm early 1900s

Mississippi Governor James Vardaman who was elected in 1903 was an avowed racist but also virulently against convict leasing. His critique was that the lease system enriched specific individuals at the expense of the state. He advanced a proposal to create a state-run penal farm, which led to the establishment of Parchman Prison Farm in 1904. So Parchman Farm was conceived as a reform project. Instead, it became notorious as one of the most racist, violent, and brutal prisons in America.

In the summer of 1961, hundreds Freedom Riders including James Farmer, James Bevel and Stokely Carmichael were imprisoned at Parchman. They had rejected paying a \$200 fine and chose prison instead. This was part of the vaunted Jail No Bail strategy developed by SNCC. Considered troublemakers by prison administrators and many of the convicts at the State Penitentiary, the Freedom Riders were placed in sweltering cells in the maximum-security section isolated from other prisoners. According to Oshinsky, "Governor Barnett left explicit instructions to keep the Freedom Riders safe. Break their spirit, he suggested, but not their bones (p.235)." Oshinsky describes how the Freedom Riders spent their days at Parchman:

"Life was hard and monotonous for them, but the danger had passed. The protestors lived two to a cell in stifling eight-by-ten compartments, segregated by sex and race. They left only to shower twice a week. There was no fresh air or exercise time, no cigarettes or reading material except the Bible and a racist tract about the inferiority of blacks. The food was bug-ridden and drenched in salt. The women wore striped prison dresses; the men ill-fitting underwear...To ease the boredom, the Freedom Riders did calisthenics and sang freedom songs. Their loud, energetic voices grated on the guards, who warned them to pipe down. When the prisoners refused, their bedding was taken away. One of the memorable scenes from Parchman involved a tall, reed-thin Howard University student named Stokely Carmichael being dragged along the cell-block floor on his mattress, singing 'I'm Gonna Tell God How You Treat Me.' (p.235-236)"

After serving an average of 39 days at Parchman (some like Carmichael had spent 53 days there), the Freedom Riders were released.

Too Heavy For Your Pocket
Vocabulary, People and Phrases

Afflicted (v):

Cause pain or suffering to

A month of Sundays-

A very long, seemingly endless period of time.

Chiggers

A bug or trombiculid mites. Their favorite spots are moist, grassy areas like fields, forests, and even your lawn. Chigger bites result in itching, bumps, rash, or blisters that take a week or two to heal. In the play, Tony mentions chigger bites.

Commies

Derogatory slang for a person who favors the eventual creation of a classless society in which goods are equally shared between all citizens. This word was most common in the 1950s, during the strongly anti-communist era of the US.

“Freedom Riders”(n):

A person who challenged racial laws in the American south in the 1960s.

I reckon

To be of the opinion. To believe or think.

“Leave him be”:

Leave him alone

“Let’s play some bones”

Let’s play a game of dominoes

“Let sleeping dogs lie”

Allow inactive problems to remain so, as in *Jane knew she should report the accident but decided to let sleeping dogs lie*. This injunction to avoid stirring up trouble was already a proverb in the 13th century. It alludes to waking up a fierce watchdog and has been stated in English since the late 1300s.

Nuisance (n):

A person, thing, or circumstance causing inconvenience or annoyance.

Ruckus (n):

A disturbance or commotion

Stone Cold Fox (n):

Describing someone as really pretty or super fine.

Summer Revival

In Baptist life, it is usually used to describe a series of worship services in which a visiting preacher, and sometimes a visiting choir director, come to a church to lead special worship services. These services have a special emphasis placed on leading people, who do not yet have a relationship with Him, to Christ.

“Sweet threads”:

Nice clothing

“Uppity”(adj.):

Self-important; arrogant

Yonder (adv.):

At some distance in the direction indicated

The Cost of Living Then and Now....

1960s

2017

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gas: \$0.25• Movies: \$0.25• Min. Wage: \$1.25• Cars: less than \$3,000• Public Phones: \$0.10• Clothes: Women- \$14.50 & Men \$9.90• Oven ready turkey: \$0.39• Stamps: \$0.05	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gas: \$2.36• Movies: \$10.00• Min. Wage: \$7.25• Cars: \$30,000• Public Phones: \$0.50• Clothes: Women's dress \$42 (high street store) & Men's jeans \$48• Oven ready turkey: \$11.62• Stamps: \$0.47
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1960s Fashion

1960s fashion was bi-polar in just about every way. The early sixties were more reminiscent of the 1950s — conservative and restrained; certainly more classic in style and design. In 1961, fashion was all about the costume look. The fashionable woman liked to go out in the evening dresses in an expensive but simply cut dress known affectionately as “little nothing.” She never left home without an elegantly styled bouffant hairdo.

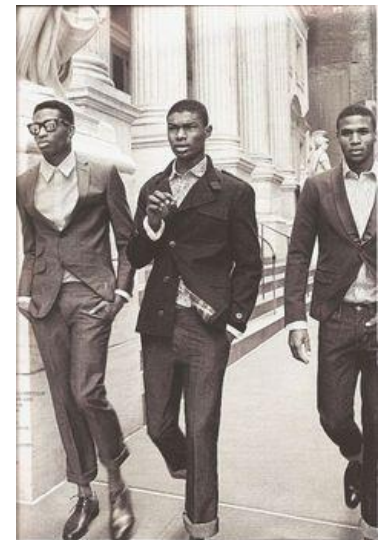
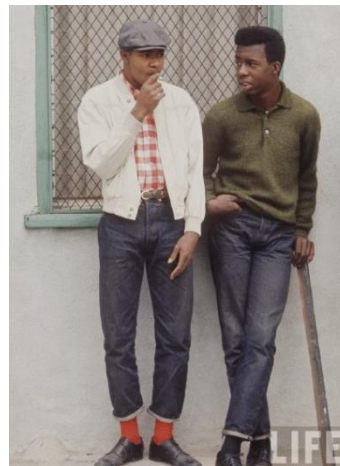


Oval shaped shoulders and straighter, wider shoulders, accompanied by a gentle inward curve at the midriff and a flare at the hem, were replacing tapered hemlines.

Many designers created “the look” by designing not just the dresses, but also the hats, shoes and even makeup of their mannequins.

Skirts had risen to the middle of the kneecaps, but by the end of 1961 only the very young continued to wear them short. The high rounded hat and the low, square-toed shoe were the accessories of choice. The simple pump of calf, alligator, crepe or satin was worn morning and night.

The hairdresser was of extreme importance in 1961. Beehive coiffures adorned by the likes of Princess Margaret, Jacqueline Kennedy and Brigitte Bardot were imitated by women of all ages.



Music References

- Save The Last Dance by The Drifters

<https://youtu.be/n-XQ26KePUQ>

- There's a Leak in this Building

Written in 1941 and performed by The Southern Sons.

https://youtu.be/bSbVB4NmR_w

Meaning: The leak refers to the sin or the wrong committed by the body. Because of sin, in the Christian faith, the soul has to eventually leave the body.

Lyrics:

Lead: There's a leak in this old building and my soul

Choir: has got to move

Lead: My soul

Choir: has got to move

Lead: My soul

Choir: has got to move

Lead: There's a leak in this old building and my soul

Choir: has got to move

Lead: to another building

Choir: A building not made by man's hands

Read more: [Brother Claude Ely - There's A Leak In This Old Building Lyrics | MetroLyrics](#)

Another rendition

There's a Leak in this Old Building performed by Lashaun Pace

<https://youtu.be/0qGLTjY0obc>

- Letter Full of Tears by Gladys Knight and the Pips

<https://youtu.be/-VifwJXgYSM>

- I Have A Father Who Can by Dr. Morgan Babb

<https://youtu.be/Z62F7ed2o1U>

Too Heavy For Your Pocket Pre and Post Show Discussion

Pre-show questions

1. The playwright did research and gathered information from his grandmother to write this play. What do you know about your family genealogy and history? Is there someone in your family you could talk to and learn stories about your family's past?
2. What does college or working mean to you? How do your parents value college after high school versus entering the work force or the military?
3. If you were given the choice, education or justice, which would you choose?
4. "A flower getting a little rain", what do you think that phrase means?

Post-show questions

1. Evelyn thinks Bowzie is selfish. Was Bowzie selfish or selfless in his decision to leave?
2. Do you feel that Evelyn is justified for kissing Tony? Why or why not?
3. If you were Sally and Evelyn was your friend, could you forgive Evelyn for her actions?
4. If you were in Bowzie's position, would you continue your studies in college or would you sacrifice everything to become a Freedom Rider? Explain.
5. Why did the playwright name the play "Too Heavy for Your Pocket"?
6. Compare and contrast the Freedom Riders' movement and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Writing prompt

1. Write a letter to Bowzie as Evelyn or to Evelyn as Bowzie. Express what has been going on since the last time you have seen one another.
2. The playwright, Jiréh Holder, ends his play indefinitely; leaving us in suspense as to what comes next. In a well-organized essay, create your own ending to the play.
3. Could you see yourself doing something of purpose even if your parents or friends disagreed? What would it be?

Too Heavy for Your Pocket Themes

Quotes from the play

BOWZIE: ...It'll all be worth it. Because my son will ride a bus and sit wherever he wants to...my daughter will be able to visit her girlfriends and not worry about if the police are going to harass her!"

TONY: Grief so deep, you can't give it nothing but compassion.

SALLY: I shouldn't be fighting for freedom in my house!

Word Dump

Make a list of the words that come to your mind when think of about the events in the play. These are some of the words from the Theatre Fundamentals II students at South Atlanta High.



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