

Alliance Theatre

institute

Business Ideas Study Guide

Created as part of the Alliance Theatre's Dramaturgy by Students Program
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and Acting III students at Lithonia High School

By Milo Cramer

Alliance/Kendeda National Graduate Playwriting Competition Winner

Directed by: Matt Torney

November 15 - December 16, 2024

Alliance Theatre Hertz Stage

1280 Peachtree Street NE, Atlanta, GA 30309

BEST ENJOYED BY AUDIENCES AGES 13 AND UP. CONTAINS OCCASIONAL EXPLICIT LANGUAGE.

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Georgia Standards of Excellence

English Language Arts

- ELAGSE9-10RL2: Determine a theme and/or central idea of text and closely analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- ELAGSE9-10RL3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
- ELAGSE9-10RL4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone.)
- ELAGSE11-12RL2: Determine two or more themes or central ideas of text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
- ELAGSE11-12RL3: Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
- ELAGSE11-12RL5: Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
- ELAGSE11-12RL6: Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

Social Studies – Personal Finance and Economics

- SSEF1 Analyze how scarcity affects the choices of individuals, businesses, and governments.
 - c. Define and give examples of productive resources (i.e. factors of production): natural resources (i.e. land), human resources (i.e. labor and human capital), physical capital and entrepreneurship.
- SSEF4 Analyze factors that influence the standard of living of individuals and nations.
 - a. Explain how investments in human capital (e.g., education, job training, and healthcare) can lead to a higher standard of living.
- SSEPF1 Analyze major life decisions using economics-based decision-making skills.
 - a. Apply a rational decision-making model to evaluate the costs and benefits of post-high school life choices (i.e., college, technical school, military enlistment, workforce participation, or other option).

- b. Evaluate costs and benefits of various ways to pay for post-high school life including scholarships, the HOPE scholarship, employment, work-study programs, loans, grants, savings, prior investments, and other options.
- SSEPF8 Describe how the earnings of workers are determined in the marketplace.
 - a. Identify skills that are required to be successful in the workplace, including positive work ethic, punctuality, time management, teamwork, and communication skills.
 - b. Describe the impact a person’s social media footprint can have on their career and finances.
 - c. Evaluate job and career options and explain the significance of investment in education, training, and skill development as it relates to future earnings.

Theater

- TAHSFT.CN.1 Explore how theatre connects to life experiences, careers, and other content.
 - a. Examine how theatre reflects real life
- TAHSFT.CN.2 Examine the role of theatre in a societal, cultural, and historical context.
 - b. Explore the works of milestone playwrights and plays, and the relevance of historical theatre.
 - d. Interpret cultural and historical research for use in a production.



Photo by: Kathleen Covington

Pre-show Questions

The following questions can be used for a class discussion or written responses.

1. Can a hobby be a business?
2. As a general rule, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) sets 14 years old as the minimum age for employment.
 - > What types of skills do younger employees bring to the workplace?
 - > What types of skills do older employees bring to the workplace?
 - > What types of skills or attributes are not connected to age or experience at all?
3. Have you ever experienced or witnessed any dramatic situations in a work/business environment? How was it handled?
4. What are some incentives an employer can offer to make employees feel loyal to a job?
5. What are some reasons someone might elect to quit a job?
6. If food and restaurants are the foundation of a culture, what food or restaurant represents your culture/childhood?

Journal Prompt

What does it mean to “live to work” versus “work to live”?

How much can you learn about an individual based on their employment status and/or what they do for a living? In your opinion, is a job an important part of somebody’s identity, or not?



Photo by: Greg Mooney

Synopsis

Business Ideas by Milo Cramer is a comedic play that delves into themes of wealth, ambition, and the complexities of familial relationships. Set in a charming café, the story revolves around a mother and daughter who are facing financial hardships. The two brainstorm various get-rich-quick schemes. Their motivations range from needing to pay for college to simply trying to make ends meet.

The play's humor emerges not only from their quirky ideas but also from the dynamics of their relationship, showcasing the generational differences of their views on money and success. Interwoven with their narrative is the experience of a server who attempts to network with an eclectic mix of customers.

Cramer's own experiences with his mother serve as a backdrop for this exploration, allowing the play to resonate with anyone who has grappled with the idea of financial success. Ultimately, *Business Ideas* offers a witty and insightful commentary on the value we place on money and the lengths we go to achieve it.



Photo by: Greg Mooney

About the Playwright



Photo Source: <https://www.playwrightshorizons.org/watch-listen/playwrights-perspective-milo-cramer>

Milo Cramer is a writer and performer based in New York City and San Diego. They are known for creating original works of theater and audio-theater such as, *School Pictures*, a solo show that premiered Off-Broadway at Playwrights Horizons in November 2023. It was highly acclaimed and named the best play of the year by New York Magazine. His audio-play, *Boy Factory*, reflects on puberty and the 90s and is available on Playwrights Horizons: Soundstage and Spotify. His play *Cute Activist*, a satire, premiered at The Bushwick Starr. It is an anti-romantic comedy exploring activism's place in the world. Milo is also a MacDowell Fellow and an MFA candidate at UC San Diego. In 2012, He co-founded New Saloon Theater Co with Morgan Green and Madeline Wise and has been involved in various other productions and adaptations. Other plays written by him are *Deep Purple Wiggle*, *Apology Circle*, *Nonna Kills The President*, *Stupid Boy Cookies* and *Barnes and Noble*. The play *Business Idea* was inspired by the playwright's own experiences with his enterprising mom.

Source: www.milocramer.com/ & www.morganclairegreen.com/cute-activist

Business Ideas Characters

LISA: a 15-year-old girl who is the central character in *Business Ideas*. She is portrayed as an ambitious, intelligent, and determined teenager. She represents the younger generation, caught between supporting her mother's wild ideas and dealing with her aspirations and uncertainties. Lisa demonstrates a strong entrepreneurial spirit and often a keen sense of innovation throughout the play. Her character is frequently seen grappling with ethical dilemmas, balancing personal ambition with the impact of her business decisions on others. Lisa's interaction with other characters reveals her complexity. She can be both empathetic and ruthless, depending on the situation.

GEORGINA: Lisa's Mother. She is very different when it comes to her mindset and behavior. She is a young mom who tries to relate to her teenage daughter. She is unhappy with her current economic status. She urgently needs to secure a better future for her daughter. She is constantly brainstorming get-rich-quick schemes. Some of her ideas are absurd and some are somewhat plausible. She seems desperate and is willing to ensure financial stability to give Lisa an opportunity to attend college.

PATTY: She works as a cashier at the coffee shop. She is tired of the struggles of life and wants to live better. She tries to network with a revolving cast of customers. Patty tries to make the best of her job while dealing with battling her need for bettering her life.

RUTH : Patty's eventual co-worker. She is depicted as pragmatic and supportive. Ruth contrasts Patty's perspective on labor and its place in our lives.

The play has a variety of customers like...
(Which one do you relate to the most?)



NOSTALGIC CUSTOMER: reminisces about the "good old days" and is resistant to change. Their presence adds a touch of nostalgia and highlights the generational differences in attitudes towards business and wealth.

SLOW CUSTOMER: one of the many quirky characters that add humor to the play. This character is portrayed as someone who takes their time with everything, particularly making a decision when ordering.

ANXIOUS CUSTOMER: portrayed as being overly worried about various aspects of their life, from personal issues to broader societal concerns.

Vocabulary

In alphabetical order

Term (part of speech)	Definition	Context
Artichoke (noun) 	European plant resembling a thistle cultivated for its large flower heads. People often think it's a vegetable, but it's technically a fruit	Georgina and Lisa discuss a business idea that would involve vegetables.
Cash flow (noun) 	the sum of the after-tax profit of a business plus depreciation and other non cash charges: used as an indication of internal funds available for stock dividends, purchase of buildings and equipment, etc.	Georgina mentions having a cash flow issue. This is due to the fact that she is in the brainstorming phase of starting her business. Hard to have a cash flow from a business that hasn't been started.
Conflating (noun)	Combine two or more things together	Georgina thinks her daughter is combining her political views with basic mental health.
Destitute (adjective)	Without the basic needs of life	Lisa believes it's normal if some of your basic needs aren't met.
Scheming (adjective)	given to making plans, especially sly and underhand ones; crafty	Lisa feels as if she's scheming in comparison to the workers in the cafe.
Signifier (noun)	an object which represents a unit and which communicates meaning	Lisa says that money is a signifier

Allusions

Allusion	Description	Context
LinkedIn	a business and employment-focused social media platform that works through websites and mobile apps	Georgina finds value in the number of connections (friends) she has on LinkedIn.
American Girl Dolls	Founded in 1986, American Girl is a book, doll, and toy company committed to using aspirational characters' stories to inspire girls.	A prominent toy from Lisa's childhood

Source: <https://www.americangirl.com/pages/our-story>

Significant Themes

Attitude & Perspective: The play emphasizes that it is very important to be mindful of what exactly we say, how we use our words, and how the next person may view or take what's being said.

Capitalism and Morality: The play critiques the tension between the drive for profit and ethical considerations in business. It raises questions about how far people are willing to go for success and the moral compromises they make along the way.

Customer Service: Having great customer service may help how people view you as a person, outside of your role at your job.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation: The characters' constant brainstorming and search for the next "big idea" reflect the pressure on entrepreneurs to always be innovative, often at the expense of meaningfulness or ethical responsibility. Some of the ideas between Georgia and Lisa ranged from plausible to absurd. For example, their business ideas were to create a gun app, eggplant for men, and an all-ages bar.

Failure and Success: *Business Ideas* explores the fear of failure in a business-driven world and the pressures placed on individuals to constantly achieve success, no matter the cost.

Family and Relationships: The play is also about the relationship between the mother and daughter. Their bond demonstrates the importance of family support and ability to work together to navigate life's challenges. Georgina and Lisa have a special bond that continues to grow throughout the play. Georgina tries to relate to her daughter by using hip phrases, however, she is constantly reminded of the generational difference between herself and Lisa. In the beginning of the play Georgina plays an active role in the brainstorming section. By the middle of the play, Lisa becomes less passive and starts to offer

ideas. Regardless of their strong relationship, their different views of wealth and money create tension between the characters.

Human Connection vs. Profit: The play often compares and contrasts the pursuit of business success with the erosion of genuine human connections. It showcases how personal relationships can become commodified in the world of startups and business ventures.

Millennial Work Culture: It examines the hustle culture prevalent in today's gig economy. Younger generations are encouraged to always be on the lookout for new opportunities, even if it leads to burnout or disillusionment.

Economic Concepts in the Play

Economics 101

The characters mention economics and supply and demand. What is it?

Economics is the science that deals with the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services, or the material welfare of humankind.

Four key economic concepts—*scarcity, supply and demand, costs and benefits, and incentives*—can help explain many decisions that humans make.

- Scarcity explains the basic economic problem that the world has limited—or scarce—resources to meet seemingly unlimited wants, and this reality forces people to make decisions about how to allocate resources in the most efficient way.
- As a result of scarce resources, humans are constantly making choices that are determined by their costs and benefits and the incentives offered by different courses of action.

Source: <https://quizlet.com/43672439/economics-vocab-flash-cards/>



Photo by: Kathleen Covington

What is an LLC?

Let's say you're like Georgina and you want to start a business. Do you know where to start? You could start by creating an LLC.

A Limited Liability Company is a business structure which is allowed by state statute. In simple terms a Limited Liability Company, "LLC" for short, is a type of business entity that a company can form by filing paperwork with the state.

Differences between "Corporation" and "LLC"

The main difference between an LLC and a Corporation is that an LLC is owned by one or more individuals, and a corporation is owned by its shareholders. Another difference between a corporation and LLC is that a corporation provides pass through taxation without having to meet the requirements of subchapter "S." Corporations often offer more flexibility in management and taxation, it generally has fewer recordkeeping requirements than an LLC.

What are the steps to start up a business?

To get a Limited Liability Company you need to choose your business name and must usually include an "LLC" that offers liability protection and tax advantages, among other benefits for small businesses. Regardless of which state you're in, articles of organization are required to establish an LLC. Sometimes referred to as a certificate of organization, this is a document that submits essential information about your LLC.

Source: <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/l/llc.asp>



Photo by: Kathleen Covington

How to Pay for School

What are your post-secondary plans? Do you plan to attend a 2-year collegiate program, 4-year university, apprenticeship, immediately enter the workforce, or something else? What excites you about your options and interests after grade school?

- **Grants and scholarships:** Grants are free money that doesn't need to be paid back. They can be based on need or specific skills. Scholarships can also help make college more affordable. You must apply for both.
- **Work-study:** This program helps students with financial need by funding part-time jobs.
- **Federal financial aid:** This includes subsidized and unsubsidized loans, as well as parent loans. You can apply for federal aid by filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- **Private loans:** These loans can be used to borrow up to the full cost of attendance, but interest starts accruing immediately.
- **Employer tuition assistance:** Some employers may cover a percentage of tuition costs, or even the entire cost.
- **529 College Savings Plans:** These plans offer tax advantages and financial aid.
- **Custodial accounts:** Parents or guardians can save money in an account for their child until they reach legal age.
- **Roth IRA:** This is a tax-free account that can help offset college costs.
- **Income Sharing Agreements (ISAs):** Students borrow money to pay for school and then repay the debt with a percentage of their income after graduation.

Community colleges and technical or trade schools can be more affordable options.



Photo by: Greg Mooney

Post-Show Activities

Post-Show Questions

1. In the play *Business Ideas*, Patty was unhappy with her job as a barista and was looking for other employment. Have you or someone you know had a job in which they were not happy? What made you or them unhappy about the job?
2. Lisa and Georgina were aspiring entrepreneurs. Would you go into business with a family or friend? What business would you start?
3. Georgina told Lisa she has to go to college.
 - a. Is going to college your only option after high school or are your parents open to other plans?
 - b. If you go to college, how will you pay for it? Will you get student loans and grants/scholarships? Will your parents pay for it?
4. *American Girl Dolls* is a toy from Lisa's childhood. What's the first toy that you think of when you remember your childhood? Would you sell it for the right price? Why or why not?
5. What are your future occupational goals? Do you know the field or industry in which you would like to work in your adulthood?
 - a. What are the motivating factors that drive you towards this occupation? (e.g. Work/life balance, salary, location, virtual vs. in-person options etc.)

Post-Show Activity: Make a Connection

- Facilitate a word dump and ask students to write down words that come to their mind that relate to the events in the play.
- Identify common threads amongst the students' word choices. Write down common elements on the board.
- Students should choose three words that make them think of a related story in their own lives. Students write down one sentence descriptors to stories in their own lives that connects to each of the three chosen words.
- Finally, students turn and share with a partner to share one of their words, the personal story and any other connective tissue they've discovered between their story and the play.

SHARK TANK

Shark Tank - Business Ideas

The reality show, Shark Tank, features a panel of investors called "sharks," who decide whether to invest as entrepreneurs make business presentations on their company or product. The entrepreneur can make a handshake deal (gentleman's agreement) on the show if a panel member is interested. However, if all of the panel members opt out, the entrepreneur leaves empty-handed.

Introduction

1. In small groups of three you are going to come up with an idea that you would like to design a business plan around.
2. Work together to **create a business plan**. The business plan should include a **description of your product or service**, the **cost of the product** or service, and identify your **target audience**- who is your ideal customer.
 - a. Describe your **product offerings** in detail.
 - b. Discuss how your products or services help your customers.
 - c. Explain how they solve specific problems or fulfill the needs of your target market.
 - d. What makes them stand out? What are their unique features and benefits?
 - e. Why would your target customers choose your products over others in the market? Be clear about what sets you apart.
 - f. How will you create awareness and interest in your products? This can include advertising, public relations, content marketing, social media campaigns, and more.
3. Students will **pitch** their business ideas to the sharks (The first sharks will be the teachers by default). Your pitch should be a 45-second brief, engaging presentation of your product or service, reason on why you think your business should get a loan and how you plan to use the money to help your business.
4. If their business idea is successful then they become one of the sharks and get rewarded with a "check". If their business idea is not selected, then they'll not be rewarded at all.

Name: _____

Business Ideas

N X C C N S E H A G Y S S N O T Y R M M
C G G A U G N A C T E C O N N T I E E G
S H L A C I L O B A I D C E E O A K E S
S G C U G T B D O A G E C I N U A S Y K
N R R M N C M G E L I S A T S L C M S B
N O T R I E O S A S E C C L L R U E F A
E B O B L G R R P R T S N T T B S O L P
O U O T D I E T O S T I E U C A T I I T
R S F S D M N U M N A I T S E H O S U C
S T S P O B L I I A S L C U O E M S N P
N C N A C F I N A N C E S H T Y E O N A
B T O T E L C M I G E E H L O E R T Y O
U N I T I A S R C R C C N S O K S I C O
C T S Y S E S O I Y I E A C A T E S R E
B I S R K L C T G R E O A O L A C S A R
G A E L T Y H S L R G F O N N I F E U N
N N C L E E E N A M E C N I E C C N B C
G L C A S X M I T M L I G E A G K I S K
G S U L I T E A S R L R L S C E O S R T
N B S S E G S R O E O E E T I M U U S O
T O U A I N L B N E C M O N E Y T B R T
E S U O I X N A G S A C N C M H S O O O

College
Boss
Patty
Cafe
Robust
Ruth
Money

Brainstorm
Georgina
Rascal
Artichoke
Business
Destitute
Rich

Schemes
Fluorescent
Diabolical
Anxious
Finances
Successions

Customer
Coddling
Nice
Lisa
Angry
Nostalgic

Solution

N X C C N S E H A G Y S S N O T Y R M M
C G G A U G N A C T E C O N N T I E E G
S H L A C I L O B A I D C E E O A K E S
S G C U G T B D O A G E C I N U A S Y K
N R R M N C M G E L I S A T S L C M S B
N O T R I E O S A S E C C L L R U E F A
E B O B L G R R P R T S N T T B S O L P
O U O T D I E T O S T I E U C A T I I T
R S F S D M N U M N A I T S E H O S U C
S T S P O B L I A S L C U O E M S N P
N C N A C F I N A N C E S H T Y E O N A
B T O T E L C M I G E E H L O E R T Y O
U N I T I A S R C R C C N S O K S I C O
C T S Y S E S O I Y I E A C A T E S R E
B I S R K L C T G R E O A O L A C S A R
G A E L T Y H S L R G F O N N I F E U N
N N C L E E E N A M E C N I E C C N B C
G L C A S X M I T M L I G E A G K I S K
G S U L I T E A S R L R L S C E O S R T
N B S S E G S R O E O E E T I M U U S O
T O U A I N L B N E C M O N E Y T B R T
E S U O I X N A G S A C N C M H S O O O

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