

Alliance Theatre



Nick's Flamingo Grill

Study Guide for Grades 9-12

Created by: Grade 10 Student Dramaturgs from Hiram High School

As part of the Alliance Theatre Institute's Dramaturgy by Students Program

Under the guidance of: Ebony Tucker, Teaching Artist
and Mrs. Sarah Denham, World Literature Teacher



By: Phillip DePoy

Directed By: Tinashe Kajese-Bolden

Musical Direction By: Tyrone Jackson

Original Songs By: Phillip DePoy and Tyrone Jackson

Alliance Theatre Hertz Stage

1280 Peachtree Street NE, Atlanta, GA 30309

Saturday, September 29th - Sunday, October 28, 2018

Student Matinee: Thursday, October 11, 2018, at 10:30 a.m.

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Georgia Standards of Excellence

English Language Arts

- 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.)
- ELAGSE9-10SL1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Social Studies

- SS8H9** Describe the role of Georgia in WWII.
a. Describe key events leading up to American involvement in World War II; include the Lend-Lease Act and the bombing of Pearl Harbor.
- SSUSH19** Examine the origins, major developments, and the domestic impact of World War II, including the growth of the federal government.

Theatre Art

- TAHSFTI.1** Analyzing and constructing meaning from theatrical experiences, dramatic literature, and electronic media
- TAHSFTI.8** Examining the roles of theatre as a reflection of past and present civilizations
- TAHSFTI.10** Critiquing various aspects of theatre and other media using appropriate supporting evidence
- TAHSFTI.11** Engaging actively and appropriately as an audience member in theatre and other media experiences

The Playwright: Phillip DePoy



Phillip has been a novelist and playwright for thirty-five years. New York productions include *Lamb on Fire* (Mazur Theatre); his play *Easy* won the Edgar Award in New York (Best Play, 2002). His *Appalachian Christmas Homecoming* just saw its fiftieth national production. Locally commissioned plays include *Turned Funny*, *Christmas at Sweet Apple* and *Stealing Dixie*. Author of five Flap Tucker novels and seven Fever Devilin books, his new series features Elizabethan playwright Christopher Marlowe in *A Prisoner in Malta*. During the 1980s he was composer in residence for the Academy Theatre; in the 1990s he served as Artistic Director of Theatrical Outfit and composed music for such Alliance Theatre productions as *Angels in America*, *A Man for All Seasons*, *The Seagull* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*. He has also been the director of two university theater programs. Mr. DePoy is deliriously married to playwright Lee Nowell.

Synopsis

Two friends, ex-WWII GI's turned jazz musicians, have had great success performing in Paris nightclubs for the past 10 years. Convinced that their mixed-race act will also be a hit in the U.S., they decide to return home to 1950s Georgia. Inspired by the true story of the first integrated nightclub in Atlanta and featuring ten original jazz songs in the style of the era, *Nick's Flamingo Grill* is a story of hope and brotherly love. It's not easy to build a palace of peace and harmony. The trick is to keep trying.

CLAUDINE

You must understand: Nick is the club. He was black, and he was white. He was big and loud. He was in love with life. It was his idea for Bechet and Ben to sing together. It was his idea to have a jazz club. He brought us all together, and he's still doing it now, in this room. It was his faith that this would work. You understand? Faith.

Characters

Ben Davis: A Jewish musician, father, and WWII Veteran. He is of good character because he wants a nightclub with no discrimination during a time of Jim Crow Laws. He is optimistic and a big dreamer.

BEN: *"I'll fix the ceiling. We're going to make it beautiful. It's going to be the best jazz club in the country. It's going to be a palace of peace and harmony."*

Bechet Thompson: Son of a sharecropper, a black singer and World War II Veteran. He wants equality and he is also very encouraging. He is very realistic, unlike Ben. He is married to Claudine Thompson.

BECHET: *"Let me put it to you this way: if it's a black club, then the white people who go there can feel virtuous. Like they're doing us a favor, making a statement, striking a blow for-you know. And we'll get a slightly mixed crowd. If, on the other hand, we start a white club, and a black face shows up at the door? I'm sorry man, but in America that's trouble."*

Claudine Thompson: A French black woman. She is very brave, hardcore, strong willed, educated and motivated; that's why she is the manager at the club. She was also a part of the French Resistance.

CLAUDINE: *"Mr. Napier, my name is Claudine Thompson. I am a graduate of the Sorbonne, top of my class at Le Cordon Blue, and just before we came to the States I helped to run the place called The Mars Club in Paris. I will be the manager here. I have a more extensive resume in my car if you would like to see it."*

Nick Thibodeaux: A Cajun/Creole cook. He is bi-racial, but he can pass as white. He wanted a place with no discrimination where people can enjoy music. He is a World War II Veteran. He is only in flashbacks.

NICK: *"...You can't get something hot as jazz without mixing it up in some kinda pot. And what do you think America is? See you can't have jazz without African music but you got to have an Irish melody, a little Jewish clarinet, and some New Orleans spice."*

Chi-Chi Lopez: a Cuban singer and songwriter. She is Ben's common-law wife and the mother of his child. She is very hot headed, high spirited, talented and motivated. She went to Paris to become famous.

CHI-CHI: *"Just admit that you're upset because people like me more than you."*

Harold Napier: a gay Episcopalian real-estate owner, who owns the building of the nightclub. He is very dedicated to the club proving to be very trusting and resilient. He is also a World War II Veteran. Since he is gay during a time when it was illegal, he isn't openly expressing his sexuality.

NAPIER: *Lenny Bruce...He finds humor in the fact that it's illegal for a man to love another man. But if he's caught, the punishment is to lock him away with a whole bunch of other men.*

John Hammond: Vice President of Columbia Records who championed minority musicians. He discovered Aretha Franklin, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, and Billie Holiday.

HAMMOND: *When I heard about this place, I didn't believe it. That Atlanta would have an integrated nightclub. I was stationed at Fort Benning during the war. Didn't have that...favorable an impression of the south.*

References

Places:

Atlanta: the “City in the Forest” because it has over 100,000 shade trees planted and distributed throughout the non-profit trees in Atlanta. It has the busiest airport in the world, “Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.” Atlanta has the largest block of exposed granite called “Stone Mountain.”

Fort Benning: A United States Army Base straddling the Alabama-Ga border next to Columbus, Georgia. Supports more than 120,000 active-duty military, family member, reserve.

West End: A neighborhood of Atlanta, Georgia. The part of town where Ben grew up.

Events:

American Independence Day: this is on the fourth of July in honor of the day that the Declaration of Independence was signed the by 56 men from 13 colonies.

Bastille Day: French National day celebrated on the 14th of July.

Foreign Language:

Phrase	Language	Translation
Dios Mio	Spanish	OMG
Mes ami	French	My friends
Mesdame	French	Ladies
La spécialité de la maison	French	The house special
Mon amour	French	My love
Mon petit	French	My little (dear)
Monsieur	French	Mister, Sir
Quiredo	French	Dear
Tres distingue, oui	French	Very distinguished, yes

Vocabulary

Word	Definition
Bordeaux Wine (noun)	Any wine made in Bordeaux, France. 90% of wine made by Bordeaux are red wine.
Cajun (adjective)	Relating to Cajuns, especially with reference to their folk music or spicy cuisine. Cajun is a member of the large communities in the Bayou of Louisiana.
Colmar Pocket (noun)	The area held in central Alsace, France, by the German Nineteenth Army against the US. The place where Nick, Bechet, and Ben met.
Croque Monsieur (noun)	Grilled ham and cheese. A single layer of French ham pressed between two pieces of bread.
Gaudy (adjective)	Extravagantly bright or showy, typically to be tasteless.
Gumbo (noun)	Gumbo is a stew popular in Louisiana and the state's main cuisine. Gumbo consists primarily of a strongly-flavored, roux-based stock, meat or shellfish.
Molotov Cocktail (noun)	A crude device typically consisting of a bottle filled with flammable liquid and with a means of ignition.
Monstrosity (noun)	Something, especially a building, that is very large and is considered unsightly.
Resonance (noun)	The quality in a sound.
Surreal (adjective)	Having the qualities of surrealism; bizarre.
Swastika (noun)	The emblem of the German Nazi party.
Syncopate (verb)	To displace the beats or accents in (music or a rhythm) so that strong beats become weak and vice versa.

Historical Connections

Civil Rights Movement: Nick's Flamingo Grill took place during the 1950's. Jim Crow laws were in effect and segregation was present in the south. Jim Crow laws were state and local laws enforcing racial segregation (racial separation) in the southern United States. Jim Crow laws mandated the segregation of public schools, public workplaces, and public transportation. Additionally, the segregation of restrooms, restaurants and drinking fountains meant the use of these places were different for blacks than white people. The U.S military and federal workplaces were also segregated.

Timeline:

1877: Jim Crow laws were enforced in the South at the end of Reconstruction.

May 17, 1954: Brown v. Board of Education, a consolidation of five cases into one, is decided by the Supreme Court, effectively ending racial segregation in public schools.

August 27, 1955: Emmet Till was a 14-year-old black boy that was kidnapped, beaten, shot, and dumped in the Tallahatchie River because he "flirted" with a white cashier.



December 1, 1955: Rosa Parks arrested in Montgomery, Alabama because she refused to relinquish her seat in the front to a white person.

December 5, 1955: Martin Luther King Jr. lead blacks of Montgomery in a rally, leading the bus boycott.

November 13, 1956: Supreme court rules that segregation on buses is against the law in Montgomery.

December 21, 1956: Supreme court rules that segregation on buses is against the law in Montgomery and the boycott ends.

September 4, 1957: Students known as the "Little Rock Nine," are blocked from going into Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. President Eisenhower sends federal troops.

August 28, 1963: Approximately 250,000 people take part in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Martin Luther King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech.

September 15, 1963: A bomb at 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama kills four young girls.

March 7, 1965: 600 civil rights marchers walk from Selma, Alabama to Montgomery—the state's capital—in protest of black voter suppression. Local police block and brutally attack them. After successfully fighting in court for their right to march, Martin Luther King and other civil rights leaders lead two more marches and finally reach Montgomery on March 25.

August 6, 1965: President Johnson signs the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to prevent the use of literacy tests as a voting requirement.

April 4, 1968: Martin Luther King, Jr. is assassinated on the balcony of his hotel room in Memphis, Tennessee. James Earl Ray is convicted of the murder in 1969.

April 11, 1968: President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1968, also known as the Fair Housing Act, providing equal housing opportunity regardless of race, religion or national origin.

World War II:



Timeline:

January 30, 1933: Hitler Becomes Chancellor of Germany.

September 1, 1939: Germany invades Poland, starting the kickoff of World War II.

April 1940: Hitler defeats France.

December 7, 1941: Japan attacks Pearl Harbor.

December 8, 1941: The United States declares war on the axis powers and joins the allied powers.

December 11, 1941: Germany and Italy, Japan's Axis partners, also declare war on the United States.

June 6, 1944: The Allies land at Normandy beaches and the day is now known as D-Day.

August 25, 1944: Paris is liberated by the Allies from Nazi control.

April 12, 1945: The United States President FDR dies, Truman becomes President of the US.

April 28, 1945: Mussolini is killed by Italian insurgents.

April 30, 1945: Hitler commits suicide in Berlin.

May 7, 1945: Germany surrenders to the Allies.

May 1945: Atomic bomb tested.

August 6, 1945: The United States drops an atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

August 9, 1945: The United States drops an atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

August 10, 1945: Tokyo Petitions for peace.

September 2, 1945: World War II ends.

The Holocaust:

In the play, Ben Davis and Bechet Thompson debate about whose race suffered more from racial discrimination. Ben Davis fought in WWII. The Holocaust was the main reason why Ben joined the army. Here is some background information on the Holocaust.



Photographs taken by British troops on their arrival at Belsen concentration camp
Photo: The Holocaust Centre

- Hitler legally came to power in Germany on January 30, 1933. He wanted to eliminate political opposition to keep control with an iron fist. The assault against Jewish people began on April 1 of that same year to boycott Jewish businesses. Then later Jews were fired from civil services.
- Nazis characterized Jews as Untermenschen, which is German for “subhuman.”
- To concentrate and monitor the Jewish population as well as to facilitate later deportation of the Jews, the Germans and their collaborators created ghettos, transit camps, and forced-labor camps for Jews during the war years.
- The German authorities also established numerous forced-labor camps, both in the so-called Greater German Reich and in German-occupied territory, for non-Jews whose labor the Germans sought to exploit.
- Between 1941 and 1944, Nazi German authorities deported millions of Jews from Germany, from occupied territories, and from the countries of many of its Axis allies to ghettos and to killing centers, often called extermination camps, where they were murdered in specially developed gassing facilities.
- In the aftermath of the Holocaust, many of the survivors found shelter in displaced persons (DP) camps administered by the Allied powers. Between 1948 and 1951, almost 700,000 Jews immigrated to Israel, including 136,000 Jewish displaced persons from Europe. Other Jewish DPs emigrated to the United States and other nations. The last DP camp closed in 1957.

The crimes committed during the Holocaust devastated most European Jewish communities and eliminated hundreds of Jewish communities in occupied Eastern Europe entirely.

Jazz

Jazz was a very influential style of music in the 50s, when the play took place. The Pink Flamingo Grill is a fictitious jazz club in Atlanta, Georgia. Jazz music originated in New Orleans, but it quickly spread across the country. Jazz in and of itself is a style of music that is usually heavily improvised. The leader of the jazz group would usually come up with a solo on the spot in front of small or large audiences. The Jazz Age was in the 1920's and that was when jazz was the most prominent music around. Even almost 100 years later jazz is still around and still popular and just as influential as ever. Even if it is not pure jazz some artists of this generation infuse jazz into their music like Kendrick Lamar, J Cole and many others. The play showed how the jazz club caused many trials and triumphs and how the club and the music alone impacted the characters' lives individually and as a group.

Presented below are some influential jazz artists:

 <p>Dizzy Gillespie:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● From Cheraw, SC ● Singer, composer, trumpeter, and bandleader ● Known for his swollen cheeks and signature trumpet bell ● Died in Englewood, NJ in 1993 ● Song: <i>Hoochie Coochie Man</i> 	 <p>Duke Ellington:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Born April 29, 1899, in Washington, DC ● Composer, band director, and pianist ● Passed away in 1974 ● Real first name is Edward ● 50-year music career ● Songs: <i>It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)</i>; <i>In a Sentimental Mood</i>; <i>Solitude</i> <i>Eddie DeLange</i>; <i>Caravan</i>; <i>Take the A Train</i>
 <p>Thelonious Monk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Born: October 10, 1917 in Rocky Mount, NC ● Died: February 17, 1982, in Englewood, NJ ● Played with small groups at Milton's Playhouse ● Pianist, Songwriter, Composer ● Signed with Columbia Records in 1962 ● Awarded a Grammy and special Pulitzer Prize ● Songs: <i>Bemsha Swing</i>; <i>Misterioso</i>; <i>Well, You Needn't</i> 	 <p>Billie Holiday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Born on April 7, 1915, in Philadelphia, PA ● Birth name was Eleanora Fagan ● Spent much of her childhood in Baltimore, MD ● Found solace in music; she worked in a house of prostitution in Harlem for a time ● Discovered by producer John Hammond in a Harlem jazz club at the age of 18 ● Died July 17, 1959 of drug and alcohol related complications ● Songs: <i>God Bless the Child</i>; <i>Strange Fruit</i>; <i>Miss Brown to You</i>; <i>I Cried for You</i>

Attire in the 1950s

Women's Clothing

- Unpadded, rounded shoulders, shapely bust lines, closely-defined waistlines, and fully, billowy skirts define the new, more feminine wardrobe
- Blouses, jeans, and long, narrow skirts were also quite popular back in the 50s
- Teenage girls began to sport sweaters, knee-length skirts, and bobby socks during the 1940s. The style held over into the 1950s, but the 1940s skirts were not as full
- By the late 1950s, the long, slim look had returned. Long skirts or dresses were popular, often worn with short jackets



Men's Clothing

- Shape changed little, vests, pocket flaps, trouser pleats and cuffs were removed to conserve material
- Zoot suits are worn by young men with boasted baggy pants and large, wide shoulders
- Men often picked, dark blue, dark brown and charcoal suites, even the ties were uniform and dark



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¹photo from <https://vintagedancer.com/1950s/womens-1950s-pants-history/>

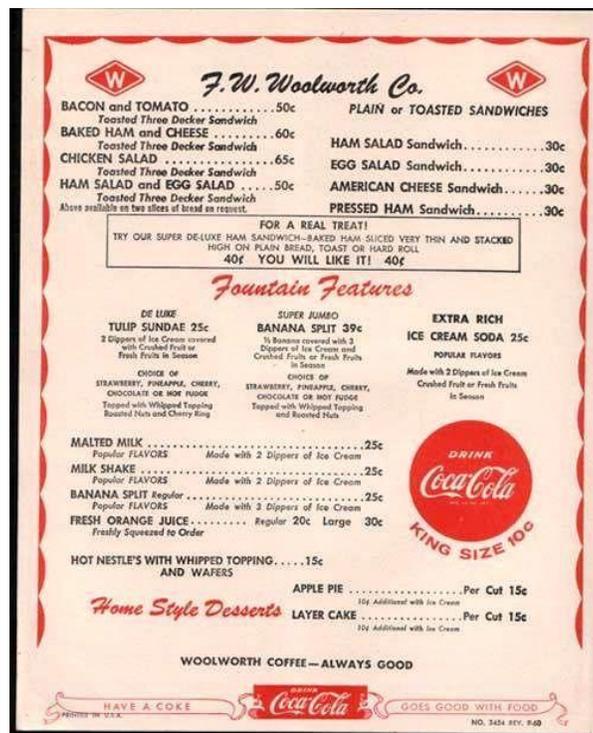
² <https://www.thefashionisto.com/tag/1950s-mens-fashion/>

³ <http://www.rummypages.com/1950s-fashion-black-men/1950s-fashion.html>

The Economy: Then and Now

Indicator	1950s	2018
Income	Average income in the 1950's for the middle class was \$2,992 - the modern-day equivalent is: \$29,000 (approximately)	The average modern-day income is; \$51,000
Cars	Cars cost \$1,510 A Chevrolet Corvette was \$3,631	\$14,000 (The price has gone up because of safety and electronic features.)
Food	The average families spent \$814 on food in the (50's) {about 22% of earnings}	Current families spend on average \$8,034 a year on food alone.
Gas	The cost of gas in the fifties was .27 cents	The cost of gas currently is: \$2.38 ⁸ (August 2018)
Bread	A loaf of bread in the 1950s was .18 cents	and now is \$2.33
Cigarettes	The cost of cigarettes was .25 cents and now is now is	average \$4.25

⁴ F.W. Woolworth Co. Menu



⁴ <https://nostalgia049.wordpress.com/2010/01/06/1950s-prices/>



Pre-Show:

1. The characters in the play come from diverse backgrounds. The world we live in is very diverse in people and cultures. Imagine a world without it. How would your life change?
2. If you lived during the time of 1950s segregation, what do you think your life would be like?
3. One of characters in the play has a dream or goal that his friends bring to fruition. Are there dreams and aspirations your friends or family have for your life? Do you share those dreams or have dreams of your own?
4. How would you encourage a friend who has lost hope?
5. Describe your community. Is it one that reflects the world we live in or is it segregated? How does that make you feel?
6. What are your thoughts on women in leadership roles, such as women as managers or women in the military?
7. Nick's Flamingo Grill is a bar and grill decorated with pink flamingos. It's described as a place with a foolish sign that is "gaudy and neon." Draw a picture of how you imagine the bar looks.

Post-Show:

1. How did Napier feel about hiding his sexuality?
2. Who was Nick, and why was he important to this story?
3. What is success? In your opinion, which character would ultimately be the most successful? What do you imagine would happen?
4. Think about the plot of the play. Finish this statement. *Nick's Flamingo Grill* is a story about _____.
5. Chi Chi made a difficult decision concerning her career that affect the members of her group. Do you think she made the right choice? Why or why not?

Creative Writing Prompts

1. Is it important for everyone to believe in your dream? Do you need anyone to believe in your dream/goals? Why or why not?
2. Napier had to hide his sexuality because it was illegal to be a homosexual in the 1950s. How would you feel if you had to hide who you were?
3. What are some things that can break up groups? Name some famous musical groups that dissolved. What led to the group's demise? Use a search engine to create a list.
4. How does music connect and bring people together? How does music make you feel?
5. Have you ever written music or poetry? If so, what was it about and how did writing it make you feel?

Word Dump



Wordart.com

Individually or as a class, write poems based on the themes of *Nick's Flamingo Grill*. Brainstorm using a Word Dump.

Word Dump Instructions:

- A Word Dump unpacks the curriculum's text by encouraging in depth reading that demonstrates and reinforces students' understanding of the content collaboratively.
- Students must have read or heard the source text.
- Students begin calling out words that are significant to them "popcorn style," with text in hand.
- The words can relate to the theme, character, emotions, or action.
- Any response is accepted.
- Leader writes all the words down to be kept for reference throughout the writing process.
- If a word is repeated, place an X or check next to the word to track its significance.
- Once the word dump is completed, students select the nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. The leader circles each in a different color.
- Additional options:
 - The most significant words can be utilized in the tableau drama activity. Use one word that morphs into different tableaux, building a mini-story from words from the Word Dump.
 - Revisit Word Dump during the writing process, including additional words on sticky notes.

Word Dump Example

Created by Mrs. Denham's Class at Hiram High school



Wordle.com

Resources

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