

Alliance Theatre

YOUR STORY. YOUR STAGE.

HOST YOUR OWN PLAY CLUB

SWEAT
BY LYNN NOTTAGE

Welcome!

Thank you for hosting a virtual Play Club with your community around the Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Sweat*, by Lynn Nottage. Join other organizations and groups of friends across Atlanta, during the week of April 27 to May 1 as we explore *Sweat* through various virtual theater events.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- **A virtual destination** // a place to gather your group online via a platform like Zoom, Google Hangouts, etc.
- **An audience** // invite your friends, colleagues, members of your meet-up or local organization

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Step 1: Choose a date and time for your event and create an invitation to guests using Facebook, Evite or any other platform. In your invite include a link to receive [access to a copy of the script](#) to read in advance and a link to the video How To Read A Play.

Step 2: Gather the week of April 27 to May 1. This guide is a resource to help you host an interactive and creative discussion. Feel free to share any images or thoughts from your book club to social media using hashtag [#allianceplayclub](#)

Optional:

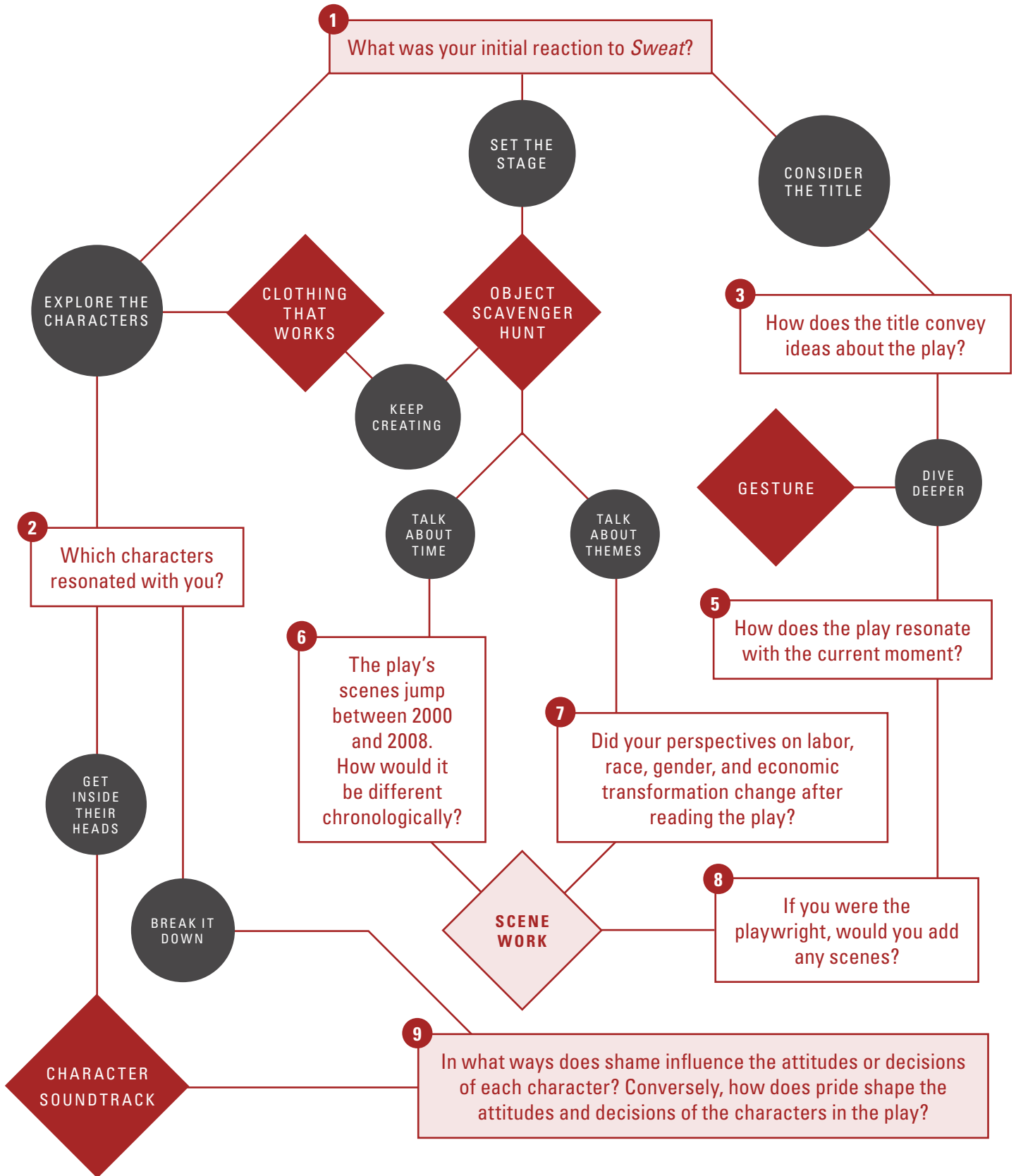
- Attend a virtual discussion about race, labor, and immigration hosted by Alliance Theatre and the National Center for Civil and Human Rights at 6:00 PM on April 30.
- Attend a virtual discussion about *Sweat* and community storytelling hosted by Tinashe Kajese-Bolden (director of *Sweat*) and Pearl Cleage (Mellon Playwright in Residence) at 6:00 PM on May 1.
- Visit alliancetheatre.org/sweat for materials to further dive into the world of the play, featuring exclusive commentary on *Sweat* from artists and civic advocates.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT SWEAT BEFORE YOU BEGIN

1. The play was co-commissioned for Oregon Shakespeare Festival's series, American Revolutions: The United States History Cycle (an initiative to commission 37 new plays about America's history).
2. While researching the de-industrial revolution, playwright Lynn Nottage became interested in Reading, Pennsylvania after it was named the poorest city of its size in the 2010 Census.
3. The steel workers who inspired the story of *Sweat* had been locked out of their factory for 93 weeks when Nottage first met them.

Share creative interpretations and photos from your play club on social media using [#allianceplayclub](#). We can't wait to hear from you!

Use this flow chart for ideas on moderating your discussion of *Sweat*. Instructions for the activities (◆) are on the next page, followed by the full text for the question (□). There are three potential starting points on the chart below (□), but feel free to start where you like, go in any order, or add your own questions and ideas for your group!



ACTIVITIES

Practice the act of creative interpretation with your group by using these activities as entry points for acting, directing and design. Pick and choose your activities.

Object Scavenger Hunt

Set designers create a 3-dimensional world of texture, color, and image that captures a design concept for the play.

Objective: Draw on your interpretation of *Sweat* to create a group object collage.

To Play: Have everyone in your group go on a 1-minute scavenger hunt in their immediate surroundings to find an object that evokes the world of the play. Look for an object with a telling shape, texture, material, color etc. When you reconvene as a group, ask everyone to hold up your their object: How would you describe your group's design concept?

Tip: Objects do not need to be realistic set pieces but evocative of a mood or environment found in the play.

Gesture

A lot happens before a character even says a word! Stage directors work with actors to create movements that capture a character's individual mood but also the larger socio-economic dynamics in the play.

Objective: Draw on your interpretation of *Sweat* to create gestures for key stage directions in the play.

To Play: As a group, read the stage direction that begins Scene 5 in *Sweat*. If you were a director, how would you interpret those stage directions in the first sequence of the scene before the dialogue even begins? Ask everyone in the group to create a gesture using their body that expresses something about the actual temperature and the temperature of the economic condition and occasion indicated in the stage directions.

Clothing That Works

What you wear says a lot about who you are. Costume pieces in *Sweat* can indicate important information about life transitions as character's go from their work life to leisure time, and to job promotions or being laid off.

Objective: Reflect on your own work/off-work transition through the lens of clothing.

To Play: Ask each person in the group to think of themselves as a "character" and describe how they physically transition from work to leisure time in their life. What does your work uniform entail? How is your off-work uniform? As a group, discuss what the differences in costume say about the different members.

Character Soundtrack

Lynn Nottage created a Spotify playlist for the play that captures the feeling of the historic moment and location of the play. Similarly, sound is used to bring out a character's emotional life.

Objective: Create an audio portrait for a character in *Sweat*.

To Play: Ask each member of your group to choose a character in *Sweat* and find a piece of music that expresses the character's internal world. Go around and ask each person to play 20-seconds of their song for the group WITHOUT saying anything else about their character. Have the group guess the character.

Scene Work

Choose a two-character portion of your favorite scene in *Sweat* and double cast it in the group. Listen to each other's reading and discuss how the text comes to life in different ways when different readers interpret the text.

HOST PRO TIP! Get a head start on setting by asking your guests to join the event with snacks and beverages inspired by the bar environment in *Sweat*. Peanuts or popcorn anyone?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question suggestions to help start the discussion.

1. What was your initial reaction to *Sweat*?
2. Did any of the characters resonate with you and why?
3. How does the play's title convey the ideas of the play?
4. What questions do you still have about *Sweat*? If you had a chance to ask the playwright, Lynn Notttage, any question, what would you ask and why?
5. How does the story of *Sweat* resonate with or depart from our current moment? Are there other historical moments or time periods that you thought of while reading this play?
6. The play's scenes jump in time between 2000 and 2008. How would *Sweat* be different if it were told in chronological order?
7. *Sweat* touches on several important themes like labor, race, gender, and economic transformation. Did your perspective on these subjects or themes change after reading *Sweat*?
8. If you were the playwright, would you add any scenes? What would they be and why?
9. At the end of the play, in Act 2 Scene 7, Evan tells Jason that shame is "not a productive emotion." "Most folks think it's the guilt or rage that destroys us in the end," Evan says, "but I know from experience that it's shame that eats us away until we disappear." In what ways does shame influence the attitudes or decisions of each character? Conversely, how does pride shape the attitudes and decisions of the characters in the play?

HOST PRO TIP! Have a set moderator for the discussion.

HOST PRO TIP! Make sure everyone in your group has a voice in the discussion. What about asking the person who spoke last to choose the next person to respond!