

STUDY GUIDE

GAMM
THEATRE

SWEAT



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GAMMEDUCATION

We thank the following foundations and corporations for their support of the GAMM Student Matinee program: Rhode Island Foundation, Fain Family Foundation, Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, Mabel T. Woolley Trust, Carter Family Trust, TACO/White Family Foundation, Nordson Corporation Foundation, and June Rockwell Levy Foundation.

This study guide was prepared by Jon Del Sesto and Sarah Ploskina

ACT I

WELCOME

Welcome back to school and back to the stage! We are delighted that you've chosen to enliven your class and curriculum with live theatre this school year!

The Sandra Feinstein-Gamm Theatre is pleased to offer you this study guide to prepare you and your students for our production of *Sweat*, written by Lynn Nottage and directed by Rachel Walshe. In this guide, you will find background information about the play and playwright, an inside conversation about our production, as well as activities for your classroom and questions for discussion. We recommend using this study guide before your visit to The Gamm, as well as after, to process the theatrical experience with your students.

We offer a pre-show visit with your classroom/school before your visit to help prepare your students for the play. This will stoke students' interest in the performance and encourage them to connect with the play. This visit will last about a half an hour and is offered to your classroom free of charge. Additionally, most student matinees are followed by talkbacks, which offer students opportunities to ask questions of the actors, director, designers or playwright. Talkbacks range in length and content, but we encourage you to stay and participate in these dynamic discussions.

We also offer longer workshops that will get students out of their seats and up on their feet, engaging in the motifs and the language of the play. Kinesthetic engagement with language and literature fosters text-to-self connection that encourages students to invest in the holistic experience of literacy.

Participation in our Student Matinee program addresses State and National Standards in Theatre Arts through Aesthetic Judgment, Cultural Contexts, and Communication; as well as many of the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening. We have included a list of standards that align with attending a performance and using our study guide.

Prior to attending, please discuss with your students the particular demands and benefits of attending a live performance. **In particular, please take special note that this production of *Sweat* contains: strong profanity, staged verbal and physical altercations, and weapons. Sensory-sensitive persons may have difficulty with these moments of the show.** Please contact me if you have particular concerns regarding these moments. Students can prepare for live theatre by brainstorming how live performance is different from film, television, and sporting events. We've included language you can use directly in our "A note on Live Theatre Audience Etiquette" section.

We would love to hear about your experiences with our programming. It is a great help to us as we build our education program from year to year, striving to meet the needs of our school communities. We look forward to seeing you at The Gamm!

Sarah Matczak Ploskina

Director of Education, sarah@gammtheatre.org



THEATRE AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

What is so exciting about attending the theatre - especially in a smaller space such as The Gamm - is that it is live! Live theatre is different from other forms of entertainment; unlike film and television, you are a part of a live, collective group experience. You are expected to pay close attention throughout the performance.

You, the audience, are mere feet (and sometimes inches!) away from the actors; therefore, you play an active role in the experience of both actors and audience. **The actors can see, hear, and sense all distracting behavior such as talking, text messaging, unwrapping candy, and the ringing, or buzzing, of cell phones. This can affect the actor’s concentration, the audience’s concentration, disrupt the performance, and ruin the experience for other audience members.** Because we care deeply about both our audiences and actors, we request that you refrain from using phones, talking or making any noise during a performance. Thank you in advance!

TIP:

Discuss with your students the particular demands and benefits of attending a live performance. Perhaps have them brainstorm how theatre is different from film, television and sporting events.

STANDARDS GUIDE.

Here is a list of College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards that align to the information and activities in our guide:

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2] **See 'Digging Deeper' sections**

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3] **See 'Digging Deeper' sections**

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. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4] **See Student Discussion and Writing**

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7] **See examples throughout our study guide.**

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9] **See our Extension Resources**

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3] **See After the Show Discussion Questions**

Activity for the Classroom Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1] **See Themes and Questions for Discussion**

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2] **See examples throughout our study guide.**

ACT II

PLAY, PLAYWRIGHT, & PLACE



ABOUT LYNN NOTTAGE

Lynn Nottage is a playwright and a screenwriter, and the first (and only) woman in history to win two Pulitzer Prizes for drama for *Ruined* (2009) and *Sweat* (2017). Her plays have been produced widely in the United States and throughout the world. Credits include *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark*; *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*; *Intimate Apparel*; *Clyde's*; *Mlima's Tale*; *Las Meninas*; *Fabulation, or the Re-Education of Undine*; *Mud, River, Stone*; *Por'knockers* and *POOF!* Other work includes the libretto for the opera *Intimate Apparel* (Lincoln Center Theater); co-curating the performance installation *The Watering Hole* (Signature Theater); the libretto for the musical adaptation of *The Secret Life of Bees*; and the libretto for the musical *MJ*. She has also developed *This is Reading*, a performance installation in Reading, Pennsylvania. Nottage is the recipient of a MacArthur "Genius Grant" Fellowship, among other awards. She is an associate professor at Columbia University School of the Arts and is a member of the Dramatists Guild.

ABOUT *SWEAT* (FROM LYNN NOTTAGE)

Sweat is about a very close-knit group of friends, who are steel workers. Their relationships begin to fracture along racial lines when they are locked out of their factory. They suddenly find that they are on opposite sides of the divide. I would say that it is a play about America; about how communities come unraveled when they feel threatened... it's about how white privilege has shifted the narratives and strangled the narratives of people of color...

(<https://blackmarketreads.com/2022/08/15/playwright-lynn-nottage-sweat/>)



ABOUT READING, PENNSYLVANIA

Sweat takes place in Reading, Pennsylvania; and Lynn Nottage lived there for two years in order to understand the place, people, and the stories that inhabited this city; the poorest city of its size at the time of writing the play, in 2011.

Article excerpt from: “Reading: The city of last resort” By Jeff Frantz / 2011



In the 1870s, the Reading Railroad was the biggest corporation on the planet. One hundred years later, it went bankrupt.

Around the same time, the first factory jobs started to disappear. Then the Reading Outlets, a brick warehouse of luxury stores in the midst of a working-class neighborhood, closed. The migration really picked up in the last decade.

The Hershey Co. shuttered a plant that made York Peppermint Patties. AT&T, Lucent Technologies, the Dana Corp., Baldwin Brass – they’ve all cut jobs or cut town. Most of the city’s \$20-an-hour paychecks went with

them. Yet many in Reading still pin their hopes on the few factory jobs that remain. Deka, a brand of batteries assembled by East Penn Manufacturing just outside the city, comes up a lot.

“A lot of my friends just say, ‘If only I could get a job at Deka, I’d be set,’” said Benjamin Mathis Jr. between classes at Reading Area Community College. Reading in 2011 is not like Pittsburgh when the steel mills closed or Scranton after the coal industry died. It doesn’t sit in a depressed region. Neighboring West Reading has a strip of charming stores and restaurants. Business along the 422 corridor toward King of Prussia is booming.

“Go into [neighboring] Wyomissing,” McMahon said. “It’s like Beverly Hills.” Reading’s civic and business leaders see no reason why the city must remain trapped in despair. A turnaround will take time, they said, but Reading is primed to prosper.

“Before the factories, we were known for our mills,” said Michael Toledo, the executive director of Centro Hispano. “We were the outlet capital of the world. We changed. Things need to change again.” Reading wants to reinvent itself as a home for green and high-tech companies.

McMahon and business leaders point to an IMAX theater and the Goggle Works, a former factory turned into an arts studio, as anchors for a new entertainment district. It has a beloved minor league baseball team, the Reading Phillies, minor league hockey and a performing arts center.



Sun Rich Fresh Foods recently opened a processing plant in Reading. Quadrant Engineering Plastic moved in. Carpenter Technologies has said it will stay and expand. New programs are in place to help train and educate workers. If Reading can turn the corner, its leaders say the low cost of living will draw families with higher incomes and better education.

Many of Reading’s revitalization plans are similar to the ones being tried by other small cities to various degrees of success. All those plans take time, an influx of public and private money and the city’s fiscal issues – a parallel obstacle – not swallowing every drop of capital. None is guaranteed to succeed.”

Check out the full article here: https://www.pennlive.com/midstate/2011/10/post_263.html

‘IT’S A PENNSYLVANIA STORY’: ‘SWEAT,’ A PLAY ABOUT READING, EXPLORES POVERTY, CHANGE, ENDURANCE”

“This is a play about people who don’t get plays written about them.” That’s how Marya Sea Kaminski, artistic director at Pittsburgh Public Theater, describes “Sweat.” “To have a play written about the people who are the backbone of this country but don’t often get center stage is really powerful,” she said. “I hope when an audience comes and witnesses this play, that’s what they take away -- that these are the folks who are at the center of what we think of as America.”

Both the Pittsburgh and Philadelphia productions share a director: Justin Emeka. “Our production of this play cannot be an impression of Pennsylvania. It can’t be stereotypes of steelworkers,” she said. “I needed a director who could handle the complex themes of this play and could have a sense of the world.

At the start of the play, Reading is among the poorest cities in the country. By its end, in 2008, it’s on its way to claiming the title...But the story of “Sweat” isn’t just about poverty lines and job loss. The action is instigated by economics, but the play is about relationships, Emeka said.

“The play doesn’t really indicate why these changes are happening or whether they should or should not happen,” he said. “The play takes for granted the economy is changing and people are going to be left behind. “This is what happens to those people that are.” He’s striking a balance in the struggle faced by cities like Reading and the people who live in them.

“I don’t want to sugarcoat the story,” Emeka said. “I don’t want to spare the audience of the hardships of the story, but I also don’t want to leave them with no sense of hope. I want the audience to find rays of sunshine in the story. At its core, there is a tremendous resilience within the American spirit that the play alludes to.”

The play is set in Reading, Berks County, in 2000 and 2008. It follows a group of friends as they navigate relationships with each other, their families and themselves in the midst of an economic crisis. Olstead’s, the steel-tubing factory they work at, is considering moving to Mexico, eliminating their jobs. While the factory is fictional, it calls to mind the numerous factories that left Reading over the years, including the Hershey Co. in 2009 and Dana Corporation around 2010.

It’s a Pennsylvania story, though Reading could very well be a stand-in for any blue-collar town in America... When the play opens, you meet two ex-convicts and their parole officer. The convicts, one black and one white, used to be best friends. Now, the white ex-con has white supremacy tattoos on his face. It’s unclear, at first, what exactly happened to land them in prison and to end their friendship, but you’re assured it was something big and something horrible.

The play then flashes back eight years. The setting is a bar that’s the watering hole for a group of friends, co-workers and ex-lovers. It’s the year 2000. While there are issues at the Olstead steel-tubing factory, where most of the characters either work or aspire to work, those problems all appear to fly under the radar.

When one friend, who is black, becomes part of factory management, relationships with their white friends begin to change. Tensions grow worse as the factory’s future becomes dubious, with rumors that it will move to Mexico and eliminate all the jobs that these characters depend on. Union struggles follow as Hispanic workers come in to take jobs of striking workers. Eventually, the tension reaches a boiling point.

What happens when your way of life is no more? When the job you’ve worked your whole life is gone and there’s nowhere else to go? When the “American Dream” you were promised seems out of reach? How does unemployment -- or the threat of it -- impact how you see yourself and how you see others? How does that, in turn, impact your relationships with friends and family? Those are questions asked in “Sweat.”

By Julia Hatmaker

<https://www.pennlive.com/life-and-culture/erry-2018/10/Od4269c8c1631/its-a-pennsylvania-story-sweat.html>

FOR DISCUSSION

How does your city compare to what you’ve learned about Reading, PA and Berks County? What seems similar? What is different? What do you think contributes to those similarities and differences?

ACT III

OUR PRODUCTION

SWEAT

by **LYNN NOTTAGE**

directed by **RACHEL WALSHÉ†**

SET DESIGN &
PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT
Jessica Hill Kidd

COSTUME DESIGN
Liza Alexis

LIGHTING DESIGN
James Horban

SOUND DESIGN
Hunter Spoede

DIALECT & VOICE COACH
Candice Brown

FIGHT DIRECTOR
Normand Beaugard

STAGE MANAGEMENT
James Kane*

THE COMPANY

Jason **Conor Delaney**
Cynthia **Kym Gomes***
Oscar **Jaime José Hernández**
Stan **Steve Kidd***
Evan **Jermaine L. Pearson**
Brucie **Jason Quinn**
Chris **Erik Robles**
Jessie **Kelly Seigh**
Tracey **Casey Seymour Kim***

Voiceover by **Jackie Davis**

CREATIVE TEAM

Assistant Director **Kelsey Emry**
Assistant Stage Managers **Jessica Corsentino, Polly Feliciano*,
Jessica Hill Kidd*, MJ Santry**
Costume Shop Manager **Katie Hand**
Technical Director **Max Ramirez**
Assistant Technical Director **Alex Eizenberg**
Technical Production Supervisor **DJ Potter**
Production Assistant **Autumn Jefferson**
Master Electrician **Alex Foley**
Carpenter **Erin Doyle**

†Member of Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a national theatrical labor union.

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

TIP:

Before coming to the theater, discuss with your students the various professions in the theater. It takes more than just actors! When they arrive, ask them to notice evidence of those professions at work.

“COMMUNITY” THEATRE

Q & A BETWEEN RACHEL WALSH AND TONY ESTRELLA

[TONY ESTRELLA, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR]

Working-class theater has a proud tradition in America going back to the WPA Federal Theatre Project, the Group Theater, and the works of Clifford Odets. Likewise, Nottage’s *Sweat* is a celebrated American play about blue-collar labor. So why does this kind of play feel like a rarity now?

[RACHEL WALSH, ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & DIRECTOR OF *SWEAT*]

I wish I had a tidy answer to that! Putting my performance theory hat on, I’ll posit that stories that take up the lives and experiences of blue-collar workers demand a kind of gritty realism that film and television purports to do better than live theater. Of course, this is a pretty flawed theory. But the kind of powerful realism delivered by such films as, say, *Manchester by the Sea*, offers audiences an immersive suspension of disbelief that theater doesn’t provide. What theater provides is a very public experience. We watch stories unfold highly aware that we are watching with other people. This critical ingredient—bearing witness as a community—is what makes plays like *Sweat* so powerful as live events. Also, we’d be naive to suggest that the global widening income gap has no impact on the content we put on stage. If the world economy prioritizes wealth and privilege, I think we have to admit that trend is making its way to our stages. Finally, I don’t think we focus on class nearly as much as other signifiers of privilege, such as race and gender. And yet this core feature of one’s experience—where in the great economic pecking order you find yourself—is a vastly understated dimension of the important, ongoing conversation about power dynamics in this country.

***Sweat* is also a story about how minor divisions among neighbors and friends are exploited and weaponized when jobs disappear and there’s just not enough to go around. When communities fracture, we often blame differences of race, ethnicity, and religion. *Sweat* suggests that they are more often symptoms rather than causes.**

Let’s remember that the characters of *Sweat* are not poor. They are solidly middle class doing work in a labor industry. As you point out, as the economy retracts and they are robbed of financial security, divisions among friends, family, and co-workers suddenly surface. In rehearsals we came up against difficult interactions focused on race and gender that to our 2022 ears and eyes feel utterly impossible to overlook. Yet in the play’s 2000 setting, we watch characters like Tracey and Cynthia repeatedly choose togetherness and friendship over division and rejection. Nottage helps us understand that once resources become scarce and families have to figure out how to survive, our most base instincts are activated. No longer able to see what makes us similar, we focus on what makes us different; or rather what gives us more or less power. I suppose the great tragedy of *Sweat* is not the collapse of the economy but rather the collapse of community.

Why do we ignore class—a shared work ethic and collective economic interest—as a force that can bind us together?

I wish I had the answer to that one. As a kid who grew up pretty poor, I’d say that the stigma associated with poverty runs very deep. Open discussions about class are still fairly taboo, as is talking about wealth and how it impacts your life. I don’t think we like to talk about money and class. It’s uncomfortable, period. To be cynical, I’d say capitalism is rigged to produce that dynamic, too! If we feel secretive and reticent to discuss this personally, how on earth can we count on public discourse to take it up effectively?

Nottage immersed herself in the community of Reading, Pennsylvania to write *Sweat*. But it feels like it could just as easily be set in Warwick or Providence or Boston. I’m reminded of the old maxim, “the more local, the more universal.” How do the specifics of Reading’s story stand in for America at large?

Q&A CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

In rehearsals, we often found ourselves saying this is “America’s story.” Yes, *Sweat* documents the lives of steel workers in Pennsylvania. But working your damndest to make a life against steep odds is a pretty universal experience in my view. Most of us here in Rhode Island have grown up against the backdrop of forgotten industries. Closed textile mills and manufacturing plants dot our landscape. Our generation was not the first casualty of the collapse of those industries. For many of us, our grandparents and great grandparents were. In Reading, we are watching the dissolution of the steel industry and the casualties of that collapse. In watching the characters’ lives evaporate in 2000, we are asked to imagine our own past and, importantly, our future.

You’ll be directing another Nottage play, *By The Way, Meet Vera Stark*, in February at the University of Rhode Island. Her newest play, *Clyde’s*, was on Broadway last year and is the most produced play in America right now, while *Intimate Apparel* is already a classic and was just adapted into an opera. Stunningly, *Sweat* is Nottage’s second Pulitzer-winning play after *Ruined* in 2009. What makes her work such a potent force in the contemporary American theater?

I had the privilege of seeing *Ruined* when it premiered at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago and I remember being utterly paralyzed by its bravery. Nottage pulls no punches in her stories. She cares deeply for her characters; but in caring, she allows them to be fully alive, warts and all. We have become addicted to theater and other art that serves up moralizing messages about right and wrong, power and privilege, “good” people and “bad” people. Nottage rejects this at every turn. She humanizes her characters, especially those who we might reject based on impulsive reactions to their language and behavior. She demands we see ourselves in characters who on their surface have nothing in common with us. But that is the power of a gifted writer like Nottage. She uses her craft to short circuit reactionary judgements, and demands that we discard narrow mindedness for the universal. By turning the heat down on rhetoric and elevating the human experiences of hard-working laborers, Nottage reminds us that we are not alone in our grief and tragedies, nor our successes and joys. We earn them and lose them together.



DIGGING DEEPER

WHY THE NEWS HEADLINES WE HEAR THROUGHOUT THE SHOW ARE SO IMPORTANT TO THE STORY:

“...while people are going through the story, I wanted them to have a real awareness of what was happening in the world - while there was this economic crisis; at the same time people were making pies, there were beauty pageants, and there were all these things that were part of the national conversation...

...there are always two stories that are happening, you know, there’s the big story, and then there is the story of communities that are living their lives, struggling to stay afloat.

I think that’s why I wanted both the national and local headlines to be in conversation; to show that there is that constant tension - is that while people may be struggling to put food on their table, they are still sending their children to school, and going to the movie theater, and they’re still trying to engage with life.”

Hear more of this interview here: <https://blackmarketreads.com/2022/08/15/playwright-lynn-nottage-sweat/>

ACT IV

STUDENT DISCUSSION & WRITING

TIP:

Assign these questions for homework or in-class writing and then discuss your students' answers before and after the show.

WHAT IS DOCUMENTARY THEATER?

- Documentary Theater is theater made when a playwright interviews real people and weaves their words and stories into a play. The degree to which playwright utilizes the interviewees words, stories, and actions can vary widely.

Check out this video that shows a Documentary Theatre process:

<https://americantheatrewing.org/working-in-the-theatre/working-in-the-theatre-documentary-theatre/>

- Lynn Nottage lived in Reading, Pennsylvania for 2 years. She met and talked with many people there, often in bars after their shifts in the factories. These conversations and specific atmospheres formed the backdrop and subject matter of *Sweat*, as well as another of Nottage's plays, *Clyde's*.

Anna Deveare Smith is the pioneer of Documentary Theatre. Read more about her work here:

<https://howlround.com/death-and-disenfranchisement>

THE GREAT RECESSION

- What was the Great Recession of 2008? Why did it impact people in cities like Reading so deeply?
Below is a snippet from "PANIC" a VICE Documentary about the financial crisis of 2008:

BEN BERNANKE: Subprime lending, which was lending to potential homeowners with lower credit scores, was broadly popular because it was helping more people become homeowners and expanding access to homeownership. But the problem was that things went too far and lenders, including many lenders who were invisible to the federal regulators - they weren't regular banks, they were mortgage originators located in strip malls - were making very, very bad loans, packaging them up into securities and then selling them off to investors who didn't really know what was in the packages they were buying.

And what was really disastrous was not the subprime loans themselves because, overall, the subprime mortgages were a pretty small amount of money compared to the whole economy but rather the fact that like mad cow disease, when you find out that a few cows in some western state have mad cow disease and you stop buying any kind of beef, by the same token, when investors began to find out that some of the assets that were linked into the subprime mortgages were going bad, they became very distrustful of all kinds of credit. And it was the run on all kinds of private credit that really created the tremendous crash.

Cross-curricular Connection: How were cities like Reading, and perhaps your city, impacted more by the 2008 Recession? How might that impact have shaped the political landscape that we have now?

THE ROLE OF UNIONS

- A labor union or trade union is an organized group of workers who unite to make decisions about conditions affecting their work. The United Steelworkers Union is the largest industrial union in the United States. This is the union referred to in *Sweat*.

Here are some highlights of Rhode Island's Labor History:

First Trade Organizations - In 1752, maritime workers in Providence formed the "Fellowship Club of Rhode Island" to provide relief for distressed workers, their widows and children. In 1760, masons in Newport published rules of work. In 1796, carpenters in Providence revised their rules of work. On March 24, 1757, six cabinetmakers in Providence updated an agreement that set prices for their work.

Providence Association of Mechanics and Manufacturers - On February 27, 1789, a group of workers in different trades came together to form an organization to protect their crafts and improve their way of life. The Providence Association of Mechanics and Manufacturers was chartered by the Rhode Island General Assembly on March 16, 1790. The group consisted of hat makers, tinsmiths, cabinetmakers, printers, blacksmiths, coppersmiths, store clerks, clothiers and hairdressers. The organization promoted home manufacturing, created a fund for the distressed, favored public education and temperance, and lobbied the General Assembly over work issues.

Industrial Revolution and Child Labor - In 1790, Samuel Slater built the first factory in the United States on the Blackstone River in Pawtucket. His cotton mill was run by nine workers, seven boys and two girls, who were all under age 12.

Pawtucket Turnout of 1824 - In the Spring of 1824, a week-long strike closed 8 cotton mills in Pawtucket. The strike was the first known strike in Rhode Island and the first strike in the country that was led by women.

Granite Cutters - In July, 1887, Granite Cutters organized a union in Westerly. The 500 members belonged to the Granite Cutters National Union. The organization provided a \$125 funeral benefit. In the 1890s, quarry workers were paid \$2.50 / day for a ten hour, six day workweek.

Black Bridget Strikes - On May 9, 1858 workers at the Georgiaville Mill in Smithfield joined a regional strike at textile mills. The strike reduced prices by 25% at the company stores that workers were forced to use. The workers at Georgiaville settled nine days later without a pay raise. On March 24, 1859 eight Irish women, led by one known as "Black Bridget", led a strike for higher wages. They were fired and Black Bridget and her sister were thrown out of the company housing.

America's First Labor Day Parade - On August 23, 1882, a thousand union members paraded through downtown Providence. This parade pre-dates the September 5, 1882 parade by 10,000 workers in New York City.

Streetcar Strike - On June 4, 1902 700 workers went on strike against the Union Railroad Company owned by U.S. Senator Nelson Aldrich. They struck for a union shop, the arbitration of grievances, and a ten hour day. Riots broke out.

1922 Textile Strike - On January 23, 1922, textile workers at the Royal Mills in Warwick struck to protest an increase in hours and a 20% pay cut.

Pawtucket Teacher Strike - A sixteen week teacher strike ended on August 31, 1951 in Pawtucket. Teachers sought an increase in pay, and won higher wages as part of the strike settlement. The contract also prohibited a walk-out over wages for a four year period while permitting the Pawtucket Teachers' Alliance to strike over unresolved grievances over the summer and into the new school year.

Warwick Teacher Strike - On September 12, 1992, Judge Pederzani ordered 18 striking Warwick teachers to jail for failing to obey his back-to-work order. The strike occurred after the School Committee failed to live up to a tentative agreement and later unilaterally imposed contract changes.

AFTER SEEING THE SHOW

Why is the role of the union important in *Sweat*?

- How did the play extend your understanding of unions?
- In the play, what were the benefits that the characters could gain from being in the union?
- What were the drawbacks of being in the union?
- How did the union both strengthen and weaken relationships in the play?

Lynn Nottage has said that as she writes plays, she continuously embraces and seeks complexity. This makes it difficult for the audience to pinpoint a typical “Hero” and “Villain” in her plays.

- Which characters are “Heroes” in which moments?
- Which characters are “Villains” in which moments?

In *Sweat*, the environment of the bar is almost like its own character in the play.

- What could you tell about these characters’ lives based just on the physical appearance of the bar?
- If you were to write a play about a single place where you and your friends connected on a daily basis to relax and connect after your day, where would it be? Create a Mood Board or Collage using digital tools that considers these questions:
 1. What would the outside and inside of the space look like?
 2. What items, colors, sounds, and textures would be in that place?
 3. How would this place reflect the types of connection you and your friends experience within it?



Required Reading: The Five Books That Changed Lynn Nottage's Life

<https://www.vogue.com/article/required-reading-lynn-nottage>

Playwright: Lynn Nottage

<https://blackmarketreads.com/2022/08/15/playwright-lynn-nottage-sweat/>

Playwright Lynn Nottage gives back to the people of Reading

<https://why.org/articles/playwright-lynn-nottage-gives-back-to-the-people-of-reading/>

'It's a Pennsylvania story': 'Sweat,' a play about Reading, explores poverty, change, endurance"

<https://www.pennlive.com/life-and-culture/erry-2018/10/Od4269c8c1631/its-a-pennsylvania-story-sweat.html>

'Panic': The Documentary That Discusses The 2008 Financial Crisis And Today's Economy

<https://www.npr.org/2018/12/08/674918669/panic-the-documentary-that-discusses-the-2008-financial-crisis-and-today-s-econo>

The installation Lynn Nottage curated in Reading, PA

<https://www.americantheatre.org/2017/07/26/this-is-reading-this-is-home/>

<https://www.marketroadfilms.com/this-is-reading> (trailer)

Interviews with Lynn Nottage:

<https://www.americantheatre.org/2022/09/27/offscript-most-produced-with-lynn-nottage-lauren-gunderson/>

<https://www.americantheatre.org/2022/05/31/the-subtext-lynn-nottage-learning-from-every-job/>



MEDIA RESOURCES & EXTENSION ACTIVITIES



READ “CLYDE’S” OUT LOUD, NEXT!

“Clyde’s” is the companion play to “Sweat” -
Can you spot the connections between the two plays?

CLYDE’S: ZESTFULLY TASTY NEW PLAY FROM LYNN NOTTAGE, WITH CILANTRO AND DILL

By Steven Suskin

Clyde’s, the new Lynn Nottage play at the Helen Hayes, begins with a cartoon panel-like closeup through a take-out window of a sandwich being garnished. Food—or, rather, the noble sandwich—is very much on the metaphoric menu.

“Maine lobster,” one character fantasizes, “potato roll gently toasted and buttered with roasted garlic, paprika and cracked pepper with truffle mayo, caramelized fennel and a sprinkle of...of...dill.” Are you hungry yet?

The sandwiches—and these kitchen dreamers continually play at conjuring up ultra-tasty-sounding delights while filling less exalted orders rifled through the counter window by the cigarette-smoking dragon of a proprietor—are not sandwiches, per se. They are metaphors for life, specifically the life faced by these ex-cons struggling along the halfway-house treadmill to life outside.

Clyde (Uzo Aduba), an ex-con herself, encourages her crew by giving them work at her truck-stop sandwich joint outside Reading, Pennsylvania...

Is change possible for this “bunch of felons making sandwiches,” the others being short order cook Rafael (Reza Salazar) and prep chef Leticia (Kara Young)? Is there hope? Not apparently so, at Clyde’s Café. But Nottage is dealing in mystic symbols here, from figurative onstage evidence of fiery hell to the notion of these kitchen prisoners actually “escaping” from the play. Nottage seems to go out of her way to be purposefully imprecise; her intention, perhaps, is to force viewers to think, and consider, and involve themselves.

Clyde’s is something of an upbeat, other-side-of-the-coin companion to Nottage’s brutally riveting *Sweat*. The playwright devised them simultaneously, on an extended research trip to blue-collar Reading. When violent newcomer to the kitchen Jason (Edmund Donovan)—just out of jail, with threatening prison tats on his face—recounts the crime for which he was incarcerated, he pretty much describes the brutal attack we witnessed in the climactic scene of the earlier play. Both characters, in fact, are named Jason; he here mentions in passing two other *Sweat* characters.

Furthering the ties, we find that when *Clyde’s* was first produced at the Guthrie in 2019—under the title *Floyd’s*, which seems to have been changed for reasons understandable—the tough-as-nails title character was played by Johanna Day, who was mesmerizing as Jason’s mother in *Sweat*. Which leads one to wonder just how much Nottage’s play was impacted by the alteration—also understandable—of the race of the domineeringly sadistic sandwich-shop proprietor. Or was this merely a casting choice, given the wide audience which might be attracted by the multiple Emmy-winning Aduba from *Orange Is the New Black*?

Find the whole article here: <https://nystagereview.com/2021/11/23/clydes-zestfully-tasty-new-play-from-lynn-nottage-with-cilantro-and-dill/>

ACT VI

EPILOGUE

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THANK YOU!

Thank you for joining us for *Sweat* and for working with this Study Guide to expand your theatrical and educational experiences. Please be in touch if you would like us to visit your classroom before or after you attend *Sweat*.

Our Education Department provides classes and camps for students and adults. We hope you will join us for more student matinees at The Gamm!

To book a matinee, contact Brittany at brittany@gammtheatre.org 401-723-4266 ext. 112. To learn more about Gamm Education, find us on the web at www.gammtheatre.org or reach Sarah Ploskina at 401-723-4266 ext. 111.



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MASTERPIECE OF A PLAY.”**

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FAITH HEALER

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