The Cleveland Play House

Intimate Apparel Study Guide

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The Cleveland Play House

The Cleveland Play House, America’s first permanently established professional theatre company, is an artist-inspired producing theatre whose core company is comprised of many of the nation’s most accomplished theatrical professionals. The Cleveland Play House serves its community through the unique experience of live performances by telling a story that is entertaining, relevant and thought-provoking. We are the region’s most vital forum for the interactive exchange of ideas about the great truths and mysteries of human existence.

Founded in 1915, the Play House is the oldest professional regional theatre in the United States. Paul Newman, Joel Grey and Jack Weston are among the many actors whose careers began at the Play House, which also operates the nation’s oldest community-based theatre education programming. In the early 1900s, Cleveland theatre featured mostly vaudeville, melodrama, burlesque and light entertainment, but a select group of Clevelanders sought plays of substance on timely topics. Together they formed The Cleveland Play House and founded a home in a farmhouse donated by Cleveland industrialist Francis Drury.

Ultimately, Drury helped fund its permanent home at East 85th and Euclid Avenue. The original Play House was built in 1927 to house two theatres. In 1949 the Play House opened the 77th Street Theatre in a converted church, which featured America’s first open stage – the forerunner of the thrust stage that was popularized in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1983 the 77th Street Theatre closed and Philip Johnson’s addition to the original facility opened, making The Cleveland Play House the largest regional theatre in the country.
LYNN NOTTAGE is a playwright from Brooklyn. Her play, INTIMATE APPAREL (AT&T OnStage Award) most recently premiered at Center Stage and South Coast Rep. Her other plays include A WALK THROUGH TIME (a Children's musical), CRUMBS FROM THE TABLE OF (nominated for an NAACP award), MUD, RIVER, STONE (finalist, Susan Smith Blackburn Prize), POR’KNOCKERS, POOF! (Heideman Award), and LAS MENINAS (AT&T OnStage Award). They have been produced Off-Broadway and regionally by The Acting Company, Actors Theatre of Louisville, the Alliance Theatre, Buffalo Studio Arena, Center Stage, Crossroads Theatre, Freedom Theatre, Intiman, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Playwrights Horizons, Second Stage, San Jose Rep., South Coast Rep, Steppenwolf, Yale Rep., The Vineyard Theatre and many others. She just completed a new play, FABULATION, which was commissioned by Playwrights Horizons and is scheduled to premiere in their 2003-04 season. Ms. Nottage has been awarded Playwriting Fellowships from Manhattan Theatre Club, New Dramatists and the New York Foundation for the Arts, where she is a member of their Artists Advisory Board. She is also the recipient of a NEA/TCG (99/00) grant for a yearlong theatre residency at Freedom Theatre in Philadelphia. An anthology of her plays is slated to be published by TCG in Fall 2003. She is a member of New Dramatists and a graduate of Brown University and the Yale School of Drama, where she is currently a visiting lecturer in playwriting.
Intimate Apparel – synopsis

In 1905 Manhattan, Esther Mills sews beautiful corsets for a living. Her art and talent have earned her economic independence rare for an unmarried woman of color and allows her access to diverse social worlds. In segmented Victorian New York, a black prostitute, a white millionaire matron and an Orthodox Jewish merchant would never meet, but through her work Esther befriends all three. Prostitute Mayme and Esther both enjoy financial independence, but Mayme’s race, class and profession prevent her from becoming a concert pianist. Society matron Mrs. Van Buren will lose her privileged life if she leaves her loveless marriage. Fabric merchant Mr. Marks must choose between his faith and his romantic attraction to Esther.

At thirty-five Esther has no suitors, but yearns for physical and emotional intimacy. Her landlady, Mrs. Dickson, urges Esther to marry respectably, but the seamstress corresponds with George Armstrong, a Barbadian laborer who is helping build the Panama Canal. Esther, illiterate, asks her clients to write in her stead, and as the correspondence grows more passionate, George proposes to Esther and moves to New York to marry her. But each has misled the other, and both are disappointed by the person they’ve married. Race and immigrants bias prevent George from finding work, and he struggles with his role of provider. Desperate, he asks Esther for her entire savings. He gambles away the money and abandons her. Esther moves back to the boarding house and begins to rebuild her dreams.

Cast of Characters

Esther Mills: 35, African American Seamstress.

Mrs. Dickson: 50, African American proprietor of boarding house for unmarried women.

Mrs. Van Buren: 30’s, white, wealthy socialite.

Mr. Marks: 30’s, Romanian Jewish immigrant, textile merchant.

Mayme: 30’s, African American prostitute and dance hall performer.

George: 30’s, black laborer from Barbados.
EXPLORING THE CONTEXT

The Immigrant Experience

*Intimate Apparel* looks at a number of population migration patterns in the United States that occurred at the end of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Let’s study some of them.

**migration:** To move from one place to another (Cambridge Dictionary Definition)

**Immigration to the USA and Ellis Island**

**FACT**
In the late 1800s, people from many parts of the world decided to leave their own country and immigrate to the U.S. Fleeing crop failure, land and job shortages, rising taxes and famine, many came to the U.S. as it was perceived as a land of economic opportunity. Others came seeking personal freedom or were fleeing from religious or political persecution. They mainly came from Britain, Ireland, Germany, Italy, Poland and China. Nearly 12 million immigrants landed in the U.S. between 1870 and 1900.

**FACT**
To centralize the wave of immigration routes, the government funded the opening of an immigration center on Ellis Island, in the New York Harbor, in 1882. Previously, immigrants had arrived in the U.S. via New York, California (especially Asians) and Texas. Under the shadow of the Statue of Liberty immigrants underwent medical examinations, and answered questions about their job, financial situation, and their
eventual destination (a literacy test was later introduced). Potential immigrants were classed as fit or unfit for entry, and were either admitted to the mainland, quarantined, or deported. At its peak, Ellis Island processed 5000 applications a day. The center was closed in 1954.

FACT
Although many stayed within the confines of New York City – others ventured to the other large American cities.

QUESTIONS
1. Discuss your ancestry in class.
   a) Do you know who your ancestors were (race/ ethnicity/ religion)?
   b) Do you know which generation from your family came to the U.S. (e.g. was it your great-great grandfather?)
   c) Try using local records, or www.ancestry.com, and most importantly ask your family!

2. Imagine you’ve just arrived at Ellis Island. Write a short monologue about
   a) Who you are (age, ethnicity, religion).
   b) What you do (occupation, school grade).
   c) Why you came to the U.S. (avoid persecution/ economic opportunity, came as family).
   d) Which city you hope to end up in.

FURTHER RESEARCH
http://www.ellisisland.org/
http://www.historychannel.com/ellisisland/index2.html
Cleveland and Immigration

FACT
The growth of major industrial centers such as Cleveland was made possible in large part by the migration of people of a variety of origins to provide the labor or entrepreneurial skills demanded by the changing economy.

FACT
In 1900 75% of Cleveland’s population was foreign-born or first-generation descendants of foreign-born. Before 1870, immigrants were mainly British or British descendants (living in New England), Irish, and German. Between 1870-1914 the “new immigration” saw the arrival of many Italian, Southern and Eastern Europeans, particularly Jewish settlers.

FACT
By 1900 the city's German population of 40,648 was larger than that of any other foreign-born community. Further, Cleveland was reported to host the largest Slovak community in the world, and the second largest community of Hungarians.

QUESTIONS
1. Discuss when your family moved to Cleveland.
   a) Where did they move from?
   b) Why?
   c) How many years have your ancestors or family lived in Cleveland?

2. Discuss the ways in which various immigrant populations have affected the neighborhoods of Cleveland. For example Little Italy surfaced in the 1920s, to meet the cultural and religious needs of the Italian community in the city.
Jewish Immigration

FACT
Between 1880 and 1920, two million Jews from Eastern Europe arrived in the United States; most settled in New York City. Many of the new arrivals worked in some area of the garment industry. Adults and children alike worked for long hours at home doing piecework, or in poorly lit, overcrowded sweatshops. Still others sold goods from pushcarts or opened small shops or restaurants. Despite the dismal conditions, Jewish culture and religion thrived.

FACT
Jewish immigration to Cleveland, as elsewhere in America, can be divided into 2 distinct, overlapping periods. Between 1837-1900 a number of Jewish Germans settled in the city, and 1870-1924 saw the increase of Cleveland Jews from 2,500 in 1880 to approx. 85,000 in 1925, as a result of Eastern European (Russians, Poles, Galicians, Romanians) Jewish immigration.

FACT
These Jewish people became mainly shopkeepers and peddlers, although a few were skilled craftsmen. By 1900 Cleveland’s largely Jewish-owned Garment Industry was among the most important in America.

FURTHER RESEARCH
http://www.clevelandjewishnews.com
Western Reserve Historical Archive http://www.wrhs.org/library/template.asp?id=154
Jewish Education Center of Cleveland http://www.jecc.org/jecc.aspx
The Great Migration

FACT
Between the years 1900 and 1960, over 4,809,000 African-Americans fled the South’s oppressive conditions in several major waves known collectively as The Great Migration. The vast majority of these migrants settled in Northern cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Pittsburgh, and New York. The Great Migration stands as the largest internal movement of people in the history of the United States.

FACT
Cleveland's African-American community is almost as old as the city itself. George Peake, the first black settler, arrived in 1809 and by 1860 there were 799 blacks living in a growing community of over 43,000.

FACT
As early as the 1850s, most of Cleveland's African-American population lived on the east side. But black and white families were usually interspersed. Throughout most of the 19th century, the social and economic status of African-Americans in Cleveland was superior to that in other northern communities. By the late 1840s, the public schools were integrated and segregation in theaters, restaurants, and hotels was infrequent. Interracial violence seldom occurred. Black Clevelanders suffered less occupational discrimination than elsewhere. Although many were forced to work as unskilled laborers or domestic servants, almost one third were skilled workers, and a significant number accumulated substantial wealth.

FACT
Between 1890-1915, the beginnings of mass migration from the South increased Cleveland's black population substantially. By World War I, about 10,000 African-Americans lived in the city. Most of these newcomers settled in the Central Ave. district between the Cuyahoga River and E. 40th St. At this time, the lower Central area also housed many poor immigrant Italians and Jews.
FACT
Conditions deteriorated for black Clevelanders. Although black students were not segregated in separate public schools or classrooms, as they often were in other cities, exclusion of blacks from restaurants and theaters became commonplace. By 1915 the city’s YWCA prohibited African-American membership. Hospitals excluded black doctors and segregated black patients in separate wards. Still African-Americans thrived despite the limits put upon them.

QUESTIONS
1. Understanding the difference between migration and immigration
   a) Re-read the section on immigration.
   b) Re-read the section on migration.
   c) Discuss how the experience of migration for African-Americans would have been different from the immigrant experience for those foreign-born (think about changes in language, religion, climate, food, culture).

2. Researching Cleveland’s African-American history
   a) Using the links below for further reading, write a list of five prominent African-Americans to have emerged from Cleveland (you can use famous people from the late twentieth century too).

FURTHER RESEARCH
African American Museum, Cleveland     www.aamcleveland.org
African American Cultural Center, http://www.csuohio.edu/blackstudies/afam.html
A New York Evolution
written by Jess Jung

A little elbow grease can transform a person from rags to riches. This "American Dream" gained traction at the turn of the 20th century when industrial innovations generated thousands of new jobs. People from around the world left their homes to take part in massive new commercial and retail industries in the United States. Their first stop: New York City.

The mass market originated in 1901 when Charles Schwab and J.P. Morgan combined their small steel companies to create the US Steel Corporation. Steel companies that had previously competed individually for business now united creating an **oligopoly** dominating the steel market. As a proven catalyst for economic growth, **consolidation** became a prudent and popular business venture. When the electrical current replaced steam belts in factories, mechanical production increased exponentially. As the market grew, the assembly line was born, and thousands of new jobs were waiting to be filled by eager immigrants.

Between 1900 and 1915 fifteen **million** immigrants flooded into the city. They were from Germany, Ireland, Italy, Greece, Poland, Russia, Hungary, Turkey, and more. Richard Williams of the Wall Street Journal wrote:

"The Flood gates are open. The dam is washed away. The sewer is unchoked. Europe is vomiting."

By 1900 Manhattan's heaving city blocks were the most populated in the world. Most immigrants lived on the Lower East Side. Twenty or more bodies crammed into one-bedroom apartments. Children slept four to a bed while many adults were forced to sleep in shifts. However congested, many immigrants found comfort in their tight-knit communities. Pockets of foreign lands bustled within a new atmosphere:

"Though I was in America, I lived in practically the same environment which we brought from home. Of course, there was a difference in our joys, in our sorrows, in our hardships ... but on the whole we were still in our village."

~Rose Chen, Jewish Immigrant

New York evolved. Millions of people and hundreds of cultures meshed together. New faces bubbled together. As the previous image of America faded and a new question surfaced: what is American?

Many "old" New Yorkers were frightened of these vast changes. School became the target institution in which to enforce traditional American **ideals**. By 1909 70% of NYC's schoolchildren had been born abroad. The public school system was determined
to Americanize immigrant children through steady doses of American history, manners, and hygiene. New York School Superintendent William H. Maxwell:

"[The New York Public School System] is the melting pot which converts the children of immigrants ... into sturdy, independent American citizens."

Fresh industry also altered the shape of New York. Instead of buying goods at small private markets, New Yorkers swarmed newly fabricated department stores. Additionally, steel frame construction and the elevator (invented in 1853 by Elisha Graves) paved the way for the skyscraper. The former New York skyline, peaked with the spires of Gothic style Cathedrals, was now dominated by tall corporate edifices.

The first plan for the New York subway system was composed in 1900. 7,700 immigrants, primarily of Irish and Italian decent, dug through their city's soil to construct twenty plus miles of underground train tunnels. On October 27, 1904 the subway became the latest, greatest innovation in public transportation. Within the next four years one million New Yorkers were riding the subway per day.

The combustion of new inventions, markets, and faces produced at the turn of the 20th century was the forefront of the modern city. Power shifted, businesses boomed, thoughts combined, and new innovations in technology rocked the face of the United States. In short, the New York City familiar today was born.

Terms

Oligopoly: A market dominated by a small number of businesses.
Consolidation: To become united into one whole.
Melting Pot: Term used to describe the process of different cultures blending together. It was first coined by Israel Zangwill's play The Melting Pot (1908).
Ideal: A model of excellence.
Steel Frame Construction: Gave buildings a steel skeleton. This skeleton transferred the support of the building from the walls to the inner frame, making it possible to build multiple levels. Steel frame construction was first seen in Chicago and New York in the 1880s.
Edifice: A large building.

Activity

Find one unique quality regarding your heritage to share with your class. It could be a family recipe, historical event, family tradition, or ceremony ... whatever interests you. Have pride in your family history!
Between 1890 and 1900 the black population of New York City tripled, between 1910 and 1920 the population increased another 66%, and between 1920 and 1930 it grew another whopping 115%. At the turn of the century, African Americans of the South left their jobs, homes, and sometimes families to find better opportunities in the North. Their journey has been dubbed the Great Migration and is a landmark in American history. Painter Jacob Lawrence captures the hope, struggle, and determination of this remarkable journey through his “Migration Series.”

After the Civil War, the South became a dangerous place for its black residents. Although slavery had been abolished, discrimination continued to be a harsh fact of life. After WWI, the South was given control of its legal system. This control was greatly abused. Jim Crow Laws (established in 1880) segregated public spaces, including public transportation, bathrooms, and drinking fountains. More blacks were tortured and/or lynched during these years than any other time in history. In the North, industrial production soared and workers were needed to fill the assembly lines. Factory owners pointed towards the South for cheap labor. Many blacks saw the North as a grand land in which to create a better life. The great migration began. New hope swelled within
communities and soon entire families left their homes to create another in the North. It wasn't long, however, before harsh realities of this new environment set in…

*When I was home de
Sunshine seemed like gold.
When I was home de
Sunshine seemed like gold.
Since I cam North de
Whole damn world's turned cold.*

~"Po' Boy Blues" Langston Hughes, 1932

Many Northerners felt threatened by their new neighbors. Black communities or neighborhoods formed within northern cities. Although safe within their communities, hatred still lurked outside. Being caught outside of one's neighborhood at the wrong time of day could lead to fatal consequences. Protection by the police was a fleeting hope as many police officers were just as violent as their civilian compatriots.

Factory work was also brutal. Long hours and unsanitary facilities often made work more dangerous than rewarding. Nevertheless, those who were employed were lucky. Industrial production produced a swell of European immigrants looking for the same opportunities. Many black workers were displaced.

Times were changing and as Northern cities found themselves in a state of flux, African Americans found themselves becoming further and further marginalized. Black culture was turned upside down. Black communities became airtight pouches filled with both the old and new visions of the African American. Southern mixed with Northern, rural with urban expelling dynamic new innovations in the arts.

Born in 1917, Jacob Lawrence was younger than artists of the Harlem Renaissance. He was, however, greatly influenced by their contributions to Black American culture. He has been labelled an "expressive cubist" using strong, abstract form, delineated through strict lines and bold colors.

His signature "Migration Series" captures the journey of the African American from the North to the South. Lawrence began work on the series untraditionally: not in his art studio, but in the library. There he researched the history of the Great Migration and composed a story told through a series of captions. Each caption was then used as inspiration to create the painting it accompanied. When the series was completed a year later, sixty paintings were displayed, depicting a story of great struggle and change.

The story begins and ends in a train station. Fatigue is apparent among a dreary, crowded atmosphere. "The Railroad stations were at times so over packed with people leaving that special guards had to be called to keep order," but, "... the migrants kept coming." Lawrence uses a ladder and other means of vertical movement throughout the work. For example, one painting in the series is a dark, empty staircase. The flight is narrow, brown, bleak; it gives the viewer a sense of claustrophobia. However, a door at the top of
the stairwell provides hope to another passage. In black tradition, a "ladder" represented progression. Here, Lawrence uses these images to link the past with the future — the North with the South. He courageously depicts the harsh realities of each environment, and by doing so, expresses the strength of the migrating generation. An event once overlooked in American history was exposed. It provoked a discussion of culture, class, and heritage — a discussion still relevant today.

Viewing Jacob Lawrence's "Migration Series" is not simply viewing a compilation of artworks. Instead, it is viewing a piece of American history…

"Crossroads, bus stations, and train stations — moments of transition — it certainly was a moment of transition in the history of America and for the race ... And I want to say this too: I don't think the blacks in making a movement just contributed to their own development. It contributed to American development."

~Jacob Lawrence

Terms

Harlem Renaissance: A great flourish of African American art, writing, and music that developed in Harlem, New York during the 1920's. Also known as the "New Negro Movement."

Activity

Visit the following website to view the "Migration Series" http://www.columbia.edu/itc/history/odonnell/w1010/edit/migration/migration.html

Choose your favorite painting. Now pretend you can step into the artwork. Use your five senses to journal this experience. What do you see, hear, smell, taste, and feel? Where are you? Are their other characters in the scene? Who are they? Finally, take a moment to reflect on the images you encountered. What would it have been like to be a part of the Great Migration?
The Panama Canal

Approximately 800,000 ships have passed through the Panama Canal since its completion in 1914. Fifty-one miles in length, the canal's path pushes through Central America's Isthmus of Panama, connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Its construction was a long, dangerous process plagued by fatal landslides and disease. However, the canal's completion is celebrated as one of the most successful engineering feats in history. A ship sailing from the East to the West coast of the United States will save over 13,000 miles!

For more info and pictures of the Panama Canal go to:
www.pancanal.com
www.canalmuseum.com
www.ared.com/kora/java/pcc/javaani.html
Esther, the seamstress in *Intimate Apparel*, creates beautiful corsets and underclothes for the ladies of Manhattan – from the Fifth Avenue socialite to the Harlem prostitute providing her a singular opportunity to learn about the lives of other women of her era. The corset, too, has a life of its own – one of beauty, sex and pain.

Corset stems from the French word “corps” for body. It is a cinching garment that wraps around the torso to either push up or flatten the chest, and tighten and shape the waist. The conception of the corset dates back much further than one may suppose. Drawings depicting women wearing laced up animal hide bodices were discovered at a Neolithic archaeological site in Brandon Norfolk, England. Anthropologists suggest that primitive corsets were formed to the body with freshly warm animal skins.

Esther embroiders the bodices of her corsets with exquisite flowers and beads, a practice which is rooted in the 17th century. The piece of wood, whalebone, ivory, horn or steel slotted into corset stays to hold the torso erect is known as the busk. This integral front section of the 19th century corset was shaped to control the abdomen. The removable busks of the 17th century could be fashioned into daggers and used as weapons, and were commonly given as gifts of endearment by a suitor to his sweetheart, often adorned with words of poetry.

During the 1800s, Dr. Daube, a French army doctor, invented a tiny little object that changed the undergarment forever: the metallic eyelet. The eyelet allowed the corset to be cinched tighter than had been previously possible without damaging the fabric or outer clothing. Corsets could get tight – and they did.

Tightlacing, the practice of applying corsetry to achieve as small a waist as possible, became the norm during the mid to late 1800s. Young unmarried women were expected to have a waist size in inches smaller than their age in years. Since most women married around the age of 20-22, one can expect that the popular 18-inch corsets were a daily struggle. Women were forbidden to show pain or discomfort, especially when being laced
up by the maid. The dual identity of the virtuous female figure during the Victorian time was embodied by her severe daily pain contending with the necessary mission to the most delicate of waists.

Popular in the late 19th century, figure training was the custom of sending young girls to finishing school where part of the curriculum was reduction of waist size. The student would be forced to constantly wear a corset, even when sleeping. The result was a woman who was incapable of sitting or standing without the use of her corset, as the abdominal muscles and organs were deformed and women uncorseted were described as “appearing to snap in half.” In time, doctors advised against tightlacing, but to little avail. The Straight Front Corset, or “S” shape corset was made famous by the 1904-05 images of the “Gibson Girls,” with their rears lifted and protruding, their lower backs arched and their busts pushed forward and up by a straight and unbending busk. Intimate Apparel’s Esther would have been pressured to make such corsets by her most wealthy of clients. This type of corset was marketed as a cure for tightlacing, but proved to be even more injurious because of its unnatural configuration, and disappeared by the beginning of the first World War.

Mrs. Van Buren in Intimate Apparel confesses that her corset makes her feel “a bit naughty,” especially if she wears it under her gown. The concealment of corsets and skin projected both virtuousness and a hint of mystery about a lady’s appearance, thus creating an erotic dichotomy in the feminine presence. Victorian women wore an average of 11 pounds of undergarments, and undressing for sex took an extremely long time and was very complicated; perhaps the most historically effective mood killer. Prostitutes, like Mayme in Intimate Apparel, had many fewer garments to remove, and intimate relations with a stranger were more accepted and respected than finding sensual pleasure with one’s wife.

While corsetry was most popular during the Victorian era, recently there has been a resurgence of interest. The modern corset is often associated with fetish wear in sadomasochism, but can also be a simple fashion statement. The pop star Madonna has a celebrated history of making undergarments and corsets part of her wardrobe. There are also many groups in both moralistic and aesthetic support of contemporary tightlacing, despite the medical effects. Since the evolution of spandex and other stretch fabrics, the corsetry worn by the female characters in Intimate Apparel may seem archaic, but the preoccupation of the perfect figure is deeply embedded in our society.
Writing and Discussion Topics

**Personal Writing:** How do you see yourself? How would you like others to see you? Pretend a high school student from another country wants to be your pen pal. Write your first letter describing yourself to this person. Consider your personal attributes and make sure to include what is important to you.

**Literary:** Is there an article of clothing you cannot live without? Write a monologue concerning an article of clothing important to you. Describe the clothing in great detail. What does it feel and look like? Does it have a certain smell? What has this clothing item seen? What stories can it tell? Capture your audience by making them care about this piece of clothing just as much as you do!

**Post-Show Discussion Questions:**

1. The idea that there is something wrong with a woman if she is not married resonates throughout “Intimate Apparel.” Consider Esther, Mrs. Van Buren and Mayme. How does each of these women either accept or reject this idea? Is this opinion still relevant in today’s society?

2. At the end of the play Esther is left smiling at her sewing machine. Why is this image important? What do you think the future holds for Esther?

3. Mr. Marks speaks of his family and religious tradition. Share a story or tradition that is unique to your family, race or religion.

**Further Reading:**

*Inventing the American Woman: A perspective on Women's History 1865 to the Present*  
Glenda Riley  

*The Corset*  
Valerie Steele

*The Black New Yorkers: 400 Years of African American History*  
The Schomberg Illustrated Chronology

*A Tyranny of Change: America in the Progressive Era: 1890-1920*  
John Whiteclay Chambers II

*A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era*  
By Steven J. Diner

*Journey to Freedom: The African-American Great Migration*  
By Maurice Isserman

*Jacob Lawrence: The Migration Series*  
Introductory Essay by Henry Louis Gates
**Activity Sheet**

**Who Makes the Show?**

It takes a lot of people to put together a theatrical production. It is very similar to the many people needed to put on a sporting event, like a basketball game. Below are two lists of only some of the people who are integral parts to either a theatrical production or to keeping a basketball team in working order. Using the internet and what you learned from your visit to The Cleveland Play House, write a brief description of each person’s responsibilities. Then, draw a line matching the person in column A (theatrical production) to column B (basketball team).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A-Production Team</th>
<th>B-Basketball Team</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Director:</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. Fans:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>2. Stage Manager:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>3. Actor:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>4. Producer:</strong></td>
<td><strong>4. Players:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>5. Audience:</strong></td>
<td><strong>5. Assistant Coach:</strong></td>
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Characters in movies, plays, books, and stories have a basic similarity. They all have OBJECTIVES.

An objective is: SOMETHING A CHARACTER WANTS, NEEDS OR DESIRES throughout the story. They usually spend the entire time pursuing this objective.

Think about the movie “Napoleon Dynamite.” What is the objective, or basic want of the following characters? (Answers may vary.)

Example: Napoleon: to find a friend he thinks is cool.

Kip:
Uncle Rico:
Pedro:
Summer Wheatley:
LaFawndu:

Each character in “Intimate Apparel” has an OBJECTIVE as well. What is the primary desire of the following characters?

Esther Mills:
Mrs. Dickson:
Mrs. Van Buren:
Mr. Marks:
Mayme:
George:
**Activity Sheet**

**Theme**

Every play has a THEME. Every book and movie does, too. **Theme:** the main idea or ethical precept of the play. Theme is the same as topic, subject matter, premise or thesis.

Lynn Nottage’s play *Intimate Apparel* focuses on the theme of independence. Each character strives to escape from something that holds them back.

*Examples of how the theme is illustrated:*

- Mrs. Van Buren is held back by her dependence on her husband.
  - Mr. Marks is held back by his traditions.
  - Mayme is held back by her position in society.
  - George is held back by his inability to earn a living and get ahead.

**Question:** What is holding Esther back from achieving independence? Isn’t she already independent?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Think about your favorite movie. Answer the following questions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title:</strong> ____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the theme:</strong> ____________________________________</td>
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<td><strong>List examples of how the theme is illustrated:</strong> ............</td>
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</table>

**Discussion question:** What would happen if a story had no theme?
Activity Sheet

A Good Plot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plot:</th>
<th>what happens in a play; the story/stories being told as revealed by what the characters say about themselves or each other; the action of the play.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A good plot keeps you guessing. A good plot will have multiple themes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A good plot builds on a strong central conflict. A good plot surprises you.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here are 17 plot points from the script of *Intimate Apparel*. Put them in the order they take place in the script by placing a number (1 to 17) in the space at the left.

____ George borrows money from Esther.
____ Mrs. Dickson expresses her mistrust of George’s letters.
____ Esther reveals her age.
____ Esther returns to Mrs. Dickson.
____ George asks Esther to marry him.
____ Esther decides to answer George’s letter.
____ George visits Mayme.
____ Esther gives George the smoking jacket.
____ Esther receives her first letter from George.
____ Esther gives the smoking jacket to Mr. Marks.
____ Mr. Marks talks of traditions.
____ Mayme shows Esther the smoking jacket she received as a gift.
____ Esther and George admit they did not write their letters.
____ Esther confronts Mayme.
____ Esther and George meet and wed.
____ Mrs. Van Buren kisses Esther.
____ Esther gives George all the money she has saved.
Writing Activity
Score Your Future

**Objective:** something that one’s efforts or actions are intended to attain or accomplish; purpose, goal; target, desire; dream.

**Obstacle:** something that obstructs or hinders progress.

Before the curtain goes up, actors do homework. Part of that homework is to score their script. Part of scoring a script involves discovering your characters desires, or overall objective.

*Example:* Esther, an independent woman, has a dream of opening a beauty shop. When she starts a correspondence with George her objective becomes to share her life with him. As the play continues, she goes back to her original dream.

Something to think about: What is your current objective for this school year? What materials do you need to obtain your desire?

Assignment: Write a detailed essay explaining your objective for this school year. Discuss your objective. What actions you plan to take? What obstacles do you think you will come up against? How do you think you will overcome these obstacles? What materials will you need to help you obtain your objective?

A hint to good dramatic writing: Plays are written with really high stakes. High stakes make for a great theater experience. When writing your essay, make the stakes high. Dream big, and don’t settle for mediocrity.

Use the space provided below, and continue on the back if you need more room.
Writing Activity
Be a Theatre Critic

A very strong element in the success or failure of a new production is the Theatre Critic. Use the following outline to write a review of the Cleveland Play House’s production of “Intimate Apparel”.

Paragraph 1: ABOUT THE PLAY
1. What was the title or the play?
2. Who wrote the play?
3. Which theatre company produced it?
4. What was your overall reaction to the play?
5. Give a brief synopsis of the plot of the play.

Paragraph 2:
1. What aspects of the production (i.e. sets, costumes, lights, sound, acting), were similar to how you envisioned them? What aspects were different? What aspects would you like to have changed and why?
2. What scenes in the play did you find most/least interesting, entertaining, and enjoyable? What about these scenes made you like or dislike them so much?
3. Did the production move too slowly, quickly, or at the right speed?

Paragraph 3: ABOUT THE CHARACTERS/ PERFORMERS
1. Did any characters touch you personally? Who was your favorite?
2. Were the character's motivations clear? In other words, could you understand what each character wanted?
3. Which actor do you think gave the best performance? What did this actor do that made you think s/he gave the best performance?
4. How did the way the actors used their bodies onstage enhance their performances?

Paragraph 4: ABOUT THE SET
1. Did the set provide the right environment/atmosphere for the production? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. Did the set reflect the themes and style of the play?
3. Were there any interesting details in the set? If so, what?

Paragraph 5: ABOUT THE LIGHTING AND THE SOUND
1. Did the lighting establish the right mood and atmosphere for the production? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. Did the music/sound add to the mood and atmosphere of the production or take away from it? How?

Paragraph 6: ABOUT THE COSTUMES
1. Were the costumes appropriate for the mood and style of the production? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. Did any of the costumes reflect a character's personality or wealth? What clues did the costumes give about the characters?

Paragraph 7: CONCLUSION
Would you recommend this production to someone? If so, to whom? If not, why not?
Glossary of Theatre Terms

Here is a list of theatre terms and definitions that anyone in the theatre profession uses on a regular basis.

ACOUSTICS: qualities that evaluate the ability of a theatre to clearly transmit sounds from the stage to the audience.

ACT: main division of a drama, ACTS may be further divided into SCENES.

ACTOR: a performer in a play; may be male or female.

ADAPTATION: a reinvention of an existing story or play; includes turning novels into plays, plays into musicals, or making changes in language or plot.

AD-LIB: making up a line not originally in a play, usually done when an actor forgets a line or someone misses an entrance.

ANTAGONIST: the opponent or adversary of the main character (protagonist); provides the obstacle the protagonist tries to overcome.

ARENA STAGE: stage placed in the center of a room with audience seating surrounding it, also known as theatre in the round.

ASIDE: a brief remark made by a character and intended to be heard by the audience but not by other characters.

ATMOSPHERE: tone or mood established by events, places, or situations.

AT RISE: refers to the action taking place as the curtain rises.

AUDITION: a brief performance of either a monologue or a short scene done by actors for the director of a play in order for the director to decide which actor he or she wants to cast in a particular role.

BACKSTAGE: refers to the areas not a part of the actual stage, but restricted for actors and crewmembers. It usually includes the green room and the dressing rooms, and frequently offices and scenic shops as well.

BOOTH: the small room set up for the management of the technical elements needed during a play, usually set behind the audience with a window facing the stage. The Stage Manager calls the show from there. The sound and light board operators run the audio and lighting equipment from there as well.

BREAK A LEG: a superstitious good luck wish exchanged by actors who feel that saying "good luck" is a jinx.

CALL: the time at which an actor is supposed to be at rehearsal or performance.

CALLBACK: a second or third audition used to further narrow the field of actors competing for a particular role in a play.

CAST: (verb) to assign parts to the actors in a play.

CAST: (noun) group of actors in a particular play.

CASTING CALL: notice to actors of an audition for parts in a play.
CHARACTER: a person in a play created by the playwright and represented by an actor.

CHOREOGRAPHER: the artist in charge of creating the dances and/or movements used by actors in a play.

CLIMAX: (of a script or play) the moment of highest tension or suspense in a play; the turning point after which all action moves to a resolution.

COMEDY: a story where the protagonist (main character) achieves his/her goal.

COMIC RELIEF: a humorous moment, scene or speech in a serious drama which is meant to provide relief from emotional intensity and, by contrast, to heighten the seriousness of the story.

COSTUMES: the clothes worn by actors in a play designed to fit the era, mood, and personality of the characters as well as enhance the overall design look of the production.

COSTUME DESIGNER: the artist in charge of creating the look of the costumes for a play.

COSTUME SHOP MANAGER: the person in charge of realizing the vision of the costume designer in actual clothes, responsible for maintaining the costumes and wigs during the course of the production.

CRITIC: a writer who reviews plays.

CROSSOVER: a hidden passage, often behind the scenery, through which actors can go from one side of the stage to the other without being seen by the audience. It is used if actors need to exit on one side and make their next entrance from the opposite side.

CUE: the last words or actions that come before another actor's speech or entrance; a light, sound or curtain signal.

CURTAIN: end of a scene; closing of a curtain to depict the end of an act or scene.

CURTAIN CALL: the process of actors taking their bows, receiving applause, and/or being reintroduced to the audience at the end of a play.

DANCE CAPTAIN: member of the cast in charge of working with the dancers to maintain the quality of the dance numbers, make sure dancers are properly warmed up before performance, and teach understudies and new cast members existing numbers.

DESIGNER: a person who conceives and creates the plans for scenery, costumes, lighting, sound, makeup, hairstyles, props and other visual aspects of a performance.

DIALECT: a speech pattern which is distinctive, or the use of a cultural accent on stage.

DIALOGUE: conversation between two or more actors in a play.

DIALOGUE COACH: person responsible for working with a cast on correct pronunciation and dialect usage.

DIRECTOR: a person responsible for initiating the interpretation of the play, enhancing that interpretation with the concepts of the designers and making all final decisions on production values; tells the actors where to move and how best to communicate the interpretation of the play to the audience.

DOWNSTAGE: front area of the stage, nearest to the audience.
DRAMA:  the playscript itself; the art of writing and staging plays; a literary art form different from poetry or other fiction.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:  cast of characters in a drama or, more generally, participants in an event.

DRESSER:  a person in charge of assisting actors with their costumes, wigs, and makeup during a production.

DRESSING ROOM:  the place where actors take their costumes, wigs, and makeup on and off. Sometimes dressing rooms are communal, one for men, one for women, sometimes actors have a dressing room all to themselves or to share with just one or two other actors. Dressing rooms often contain (or are in close proximity to) toilets, sinks, showers, lighted make-up tables and sleeping areas.

EXEUNT:  stage direction meaning "they exit."

EXIT:  stage direction telling an actor to leave the stage.

EXPOSITION:  dialogue which gives the audience the background information it needs to follow the action of the play; most will occur early on in the play.

ENTRANCE:  the movement of an actor onto the visible areas of the stage.

FALLING ACTION:  (of a script or play) the acceptance of the situation derived from the climax; the conflict is worked out or resolved.

FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER:  the artist in charge of staging fight scenes, can include swordplay, other weapons, or barehanded combat.

FORESHADOWING:  a hint of what is to come in the story. This is often used to keep the audience in a state of expectancy.

GHOST WRITER:  person hired by an author to write on his or her behalf; receives no public credit.

GREEN ROOM:  a small lounge backstage where actors can relax and get ready to go on.

HALF-HOUR:  the usual call for actors to be at the theatre, thirty minutes before curtain.

HOUSE:  the audience or the theatrical building.

HOUSE MANAGER:  the employee in charge of the audience during a performance, trains ushers, runs the concessions, and troubleshoots seating problems.

IMPROVISATION:  to make up as you go along; often used as a rehearsal technique to make actors more comfortable with their characters; may be a part of some performance situations.

INCITING INCIDENT:  (of a script or play) the launching pad of the play; the action or short sequence of actions that constitute the point of attack.

IRONY:  a contrast between what is and what appears to be. Two types of irony are--- VERBAL IRONY when a character says one thing and means another; DRAMATIC IRONY when the audience knows something that the character does not

LIGHTING DESIGNER:  artist in charge of creating the lighting effects for a play.

MAKEUP:  cosmetics, wigs, hair colorings, or other items applied to the actors to change or enhance their appearance.
MELODRAMA: play with exaggerated plot and emotion.

MONOLOGUE: long speech spoken by one actor without interruption.

MOTIVATION: a character's reason for saying or doing something; actors search for this in studying their role and use voice and movement to relay it to the audience.

MOVEMENT COACH: a person familiar with the ways people physically relate to one another in different historical periods, as well as general historically and culturally accurate movements. (How to properly use a fan, how women walk while corseted, where and how men and women might stand in relation to one another, etc.)

NARRATOR: one who tells the story; speaks directly to the audience.

OBJECTIVE: what the character wants/needs/desires.

OFFSTAGE: areas on the stage which are not seen by the audience, like the wings or the crossovers, where action can take place and be heard by the audience, or where actors can wait for their entrances.

PLAYWRIGHT: author of a play.

PLOT: the story of the play.

PROP: any moveable item used on the set of a play or handled by an actor.

PROSCENIUM: a form of staging in which an arch frames the stage; the stage is at one end of a room and the audience sits in front of it, watching the play through an arch which frames the action.

PROSCENIUM ARCH: opening in the proscenium through which the audience views the play.

PROTAGONIST: the main character; the person whose success or failure the audience is most concerned.

PUT-IN REHEARSAL: a special rehearsal called when an understudy is going to go on, so that the rest of the cast has an opportunity to get used to the presence of a different actor.

REHEARSAL: the time period before a play opens involving the practice of the dialogue, movement, rhythms and interpretations of the play.

RISING ACTION: (of a script or play) the sequence of action and events that leads to the climax of the play; the conflict becomes clear and tension builds as obstacles are presented.

RUN CREW: people in charge of moving scenery and props onstage during a performance, and helping create live audio or visual special effects.

SCENE: a small unit of a play in which there is no shift of locale or time.

SCENIC ARTIST: a painter or machinist who reproduces the scene designer's drawings in full scale on the stage.

SCRIPT: the written words and stage directions created by a playwright.

SET: the scenery of the play; depicts time, place and mood.

SET DESIGNER: the artist in charge of creating the physical world in which the play will live; usually creates in drawings and scale models.
SOLILOQUY: a speech given by a character alone on the stage where the audience gets to know the inner thoughts and feelings of the character.

SOUNDBOARD OPERATOR: the person who discharges the correct sounds or music at the appropriate moment in the play.

SOUND DESIGNER: the artist responsible for the creation of the sounds heard during a performance, including music and special effects.

STAGE BUSINESS: small pieces of physical action put into a scene to heighten its appeal, suspense or sense of reality.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: information written into a script which tells the actors when and where to move, or describes the intent or mood of action, may also describe scenery or props.

STAGE LEFT: side of the stage on the actors' left as they face the audience.

STAGE RIGHT: side of the stage on the actors' right as they face the audience.

STAGE MANAGER: person who coordinates all aspects of the production during production and performance, runs or calls the show.

SUBTEXT: the thoughts behind the words the actor speaks.

THEME: the main idea or ethical precept the play deals with.

THRUST STAGE: a stage set at one end of the room which extends out into the audience area; audience surrounds the stage on three sides.

TONY: awards given annually by the American Theatre Wing for outstanding contributions to the theatre; officially the Antoinette Perry Awards.

TRAGEDY: a story where the protagonist does not achieve his/her goal.

TRANSLATION: taking a play in one language and converting it into another.

UNDERSTUDY: an actor who has memorized all the lines and action of an actor in a play, so that if the original actor falls ill or cannot perform, there is someone prepared to take his or her place at a moment's notice.

UPSTAGE: the part of the stage farthest from the audience. Also, to steal the scene from another actor by moving upstage, forcing the downstage actor to turn his or her back on the audience.

WINGS: the areas offstage right and left, hidden from the audience, where actors can enter or exit, do quick costume changes, receive or discard props, or speak lines meant to be heard as if from another room.

Use the Glossary of Theatre Terms to complete the following Crossword Puzzles
Theatre Terms Beginner Crossword Puzzle

Across
2. Clothes worn by characters.
4. Creator of plans for costumes, props, lights, etc.
6. Actors represent a _______ in a play.
11. In charge, interprets the play, "the boss".
12. The story of a play.
13. Person who coordinates the show for the director.
14. Any moveable item used by an actor.
15. People who move scenery or props during a show.

Down
1. Takes over when an actor gets ill.
2. Verb or Noun, refers to actors in a play.
3. If an actor want's a job he/she must______.
5. An area "behind the scenes" of the stage.
7. One who tells the story.
8. Scenery of the play.
9. Actors bow to an audience to thank them for watching during the ______ ___..
10. "Practice" for the actors.
12. The author of a play.
13. Written words and directions of the playwright.
Theatre Terms Intermediate Crossword Puzzle

Across

3. The events of a play before the climax.
6. The story of a play.
9. A part for an actor in a play.
10. If something happens that the audience can't see we say it happened ____ ____.
12. People who move scenery or props during a show.
15. Creator of plans for scenery, costumes, props, etc...
16. Area offstage right and left.
17. Scenery of the play.
18. To make up a line not originally in a play.
19. Single unit of a play with no shift of place or time.
21. Person who coordinates the show for the director.
23. An area "behind the scenes" of the stage.
25. A performer in a play.
26. Person in charge, interprets the play, "the boss".
27. "Practice" for the actors.
29. The main character in a play.
30. Turning point of high tension in a play.
31. The character who is an obstacle to the protagonist of a play.
32. One who tells the story.
33. Part of the stage farthest from the audience.

**Down**

1. Creator of dance and movement.
2. Writer who reviews plays.
4. If an actor want's a job he/she must______.
5. Conversation between actors.
6. Any moveable item used by an actor.
7. The author of a play.
8. Clothes worn by characters.
11. Instead of "good luck".
13. At the end of a play actors bow to the audience during the _____.
14. Takes over when an actor gets ill.
15. Front of stage nearest the audience.
17. On the actor's left as they face the audience.
19. On the actor's right as they face the audience.
20. Verb or Noun, refers to actors in a play.
22. Signals the time for an actor to speak.
24. Opens at the beginning of an act and closes at the end.
28. Written words and directions of the playwright.
31. Main division of action in a drama.
Theatre Terms Advanced Crossword Puzzle

Across
1. Verb or Noun, refers to actors in a play.
3. Actors take a bow during the ____ ____.
8. On the actor's right as they face the audience.
11. The story of a play.
12. The Antoinette Perry Awards.
17. Writer who reviews plays.
21. The protagonist achieves his/her goal in a____.
22. Written words and directions of the playwright.
24. Speech pattern or cultural accent on stage.
25. If an actor want's a job he/she must______.
27. The events of a play before the climax.
29. Signals the time for an actor to speak.
31. An area "behind the scenes" of the stage.
34. Creators of plans for scenery, costumes, lights, etc...
35. Part of the stage farthest from the audience.
36. This closes at the end of an act or scene.
37. Instead of "good luck" people who work in the theatre say "___ _ ___.
38. Small room set up for technical elements of a play.
40. A play converted from another language.
41. A character's reason for doing something.
44. Physical action in a scene to heighten reality.
46. Person who makes all sound effects happen.
51. These are represented by the actors in a play.
53. Person in charge, interprets the play, "the boss".
55. Reinvention of an existing story.
57. On the actor's left as they face the audience.
58. A character's remark heard only by the audience.
60. Single unit of a play with no shift of place or time.
62. Announcement of auditions.
63. The author of a play.
64. A performer in a play.
65. A character's inner feelings told to the audience.
66. Areas onstage not seen by the audience.
67. Front of stage nearest the audience.

**Down**

2. Reproduces the scenic designer's drawings full-size.
4. People who move scenery or props during a show.
5. Area offstage right and left.
6. Action as the curtain rises.
9. The protagonist does not achieve his goal in a _____.
10. "Practice" for the actors.
13. A funny moment in a drama.
14. The main idea of the play.
15. A specialist in historical styles of movement.
16. The stage extends into the audience.
18. Creator of dance and movement.
20. A stage in the center of the audience.
22. Script information about movement.
23. The main character in a play.
26. A cast member in charge of dance quality.
28. Conversation between actors.
30. A frame around a particular kind of stage.
32. Sees that costumes are made for the designer.
33. Obstacle to the protagonist of a play.
41. One actor's long speech.
42. Main division of action in a drama.
43. Exaggerated plot and emotion.
44. Person who coordinates the show for the director.
45. Quality of sound in a theatre.  
54. Time to be at rehearsal or performance.
47. Takes over when an actor gets ill.  
56. The second or third time to audition.
48. Helps actors with pronunciation of words.  
57. Scenery of the play.
49. Turning point of high tension in a play.  
59. Thoughts behind the actor's words.
50. One who tells the story.  
61. To make up a line not originally in a play.
52. What a character wants/needs/desires.  
63. Any moveable item used by an actor.
“The Immigrant Experience”
Lower Manhattan, 1905. Esther, an African-American seamstress, has a gift for creating exquisite lingerie, and sees her talent as a way to a better life. Yet she is willing to risk it all for a mail-order man of her dreams. A classic story of American immigration, Lynn Nottage’s award-winning new romance is a Cleveland Play House co-production with Actor’s Theatre of Louisville.

Social Studies Focus: Immigrants

People in Societies Standard
Students use knowledge of perspectives, practice and products of cultural, ethnic and social groups to analyze the impact of their commonality and diversity within local, national, regional and global settings.

By the end of the 10 program:
A. Analyze the influence of different cultural perspectives on the actions of groups.
B. Analyze the consequences of oppression, discrimination and conflict between cultures.
C. Analyze the ways that contact between people of different cultures result in exchanges of cultural practices.

By the end of 11-12 program:
A. Analyze how issues may be viewed differently by various cultural groups.
B. Identify the causes of political, economic and social oppression and analyze ways individuals, organizations and countries respond to resulting conflicts.
C. Explain the role of diverse cultural institutions in shaping American society.
Answers to: A Good Plot

Here are 17 plot points from the script of *Intimate Apparel*. Put them in the order they take place in the script by placing a number (1 to 17) in the space at the left.

9 George borrows money from Esther.
4 Mrs. Dickson expresses her mistrust of George’s letters.
1 Esther reveals her age.
17 Esther returns to Mrs. Dickson.
6 George asks Esther to marry him.
3 Esther decides to answer George’s letter.
11 George visits Mayme.
8 Esther gives George the smoking jacket.
2 Esther receives her first letter from George.
16 Esther gives the smoking jacket to Mr. Marks.
5 Mr. Marks talks of traditions.
12 Mayme shows Esther the smoking jacket she received as a gift.
14 Esther and George admit they did not write their letters.
15 Esther confronts Mayme.
7 Esther and George meet and wed.
10 Mrs. Van Buren kisses Esther.
13 Esther gives George all the money she has saved.
Theatre Terms Beginner Crossword Puzzle

Theatre Terms Intermediate Crossword Puzzle