



DENVER CENTER FOR THE
PERFORMING ARTS
Theatre Company
40th Season

INSIDE OUT

A STUDY GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS



SWEAT

SYNOPSIS

For the people of Reading, Pennsylvania, work is so much more than a paycheck – it’s the glue that holds the town together. The floor of their central factory is where lifelong friendships are made, where love blossoms and where family members work side-by-side. But as layoffs become the new norm and a cheaper workforce threatens the viability of the local union, the threads that once kept the community together begin to fray.



DENVER CENTER FOR THE
PERFORMING ARTS
Theatre Company
40th Season

INSIDE OUT

Use of study guide materials for publication requires permission from the Marketing Department of the Denver Center for the Performing Arts.

Lynde Rosario..... Editor

Patrick Elkins-Zeglarski..... Contributing Writer

David Saphier Education Contributor

DENVERCENTER.ORG

Administration 303.893.4000

Box Office 303.893.4100

SEASON SPONSORS

**Daniel L.
RITCHIE**

**THE SHUBERT
FOUNDATION INC.**



University of Colorado

**THE DENVER POST
COMMUNITY**



SWEAT

By **LYNN NOTTAGE**

DIRECTED BY **ROSE RIORDAN**

APR 26 – MAY 26
SPACE THEATRE

PLAYWRIGHT

Lynn Nottage is a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright and screenwriter. Her plays include: *Sweat*; *By The Way*; *Meet Vera Stark*; *Ruined*; *Intimate Apparel*; *Fabulation*; or *The Re-Education of Undine*; *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*; *Las Meninas*; *Mud, River, Stone*; *Por'knockers*; and *POOF!*. Nottage is the recipient of a PEN/Laura Pels Master Dramatist Award, Doris Duke Artist Award, American Academy of Arts and Letters Award, MacArthur "Genius Grant" Fellowship, Steinberg "Mimi" Distinguished Playwright Award, Dramatists Guild Hull-Warriner Award, the inaugural Horton Foote Prize,

Obie Awards, Drama Desk Award, Lucille Lortel Award, NY Drama Critics' Circle Awards, Outer Critics Circle Award, Audelco Awards, Lilly Award, Helen Hayes Award, Lee Reynolds Award, NBT Fest's August Wilson Playwriting Award and a Guggenheim Grant. She's a member of The Dramatists Guild and the WGAE. Nottage is the first woman to win two Pulitzers for Drama (*Sweat*, 2017 and *Ruined*, 2009) and the first ever woman of color to win two Pulitzer Prizes in any category.

Source:
<https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/lynn-nottage-0>

IN A 2015 CONVERSATION WITH *AMERICAN THEATRE* INTERVIEWER ROB WEINERT-KENDT, NOTTAGE REFLECTED ON HER EXPERIENCE RESEARCHING IN READING, PENNSYLVANIA WHERE THE PLAY IS SET:

Was Reading a steel town?

It was a steel town and a textile town. And it was a town that invented the outlet mall, because they had all these textile companies and they built these outlets around them to cater to consumers who wanted to buy discounted clothing. As late as the late '80s, early '90s, you could take a bus from Port Authority that would take you directly to the outlet malls in Reading, shop all day. It was a tourist economy, and really robust. There were massive layoffs right after NAFTA, which is the period [*Sweat* is set], which is around 2000. And 2008 was another big wave of layoffs, where a lot of the steel and textile industry moved out of the state. Some of the factories moved further south—to North Carolina, to some right-to-work states. Some of them moved down to Mexico. But there were massive layoffs. And you had this huge swath of working-class white folks who for two or three generations made really good livings—they were solidly middle-class, in union jobs—who suddenly found themselves out of work.

When you do source interviews, as you've done for [*Sweat* and *Ruined*], how do you process what you take in? Do you immerse yourself in the research, then walk away and write the play?

That's usually my process: Sit down, experience it in the moment, then push it aside. Just feel the energy in the space in the moment, and then interpret that and make it into a piece of art. I'm not as interested in absolute verisimilitude, in replicating those moments and those interviews, as sort of capturing the essence of what I experienced in the room, and the essence of those individuals.

How would you describe that essence in Reading?

Reading has been through an incredibly hard time. There was a level in some rooms of desperation, of profound sadness. In some rooms you could feel the nostalgia for what was and the longing for that to return. I think in some cases, there was genuine confusion: like, we signed with a contract with America, these were the things we were supposed to receive, and somehow we were lied to. So I think that people felt betrayed.

What surprised you the most in Reading?

It's part of the reason I wrote *Sweat*. What surprised me was my ability to empathize with people who I always thought were on the "other side" of the divide. So often when you sit in a room and interview

black and Latino folks, there is a narrative that has existed for the last 50 years of being sort of disaffected from the culture. But I sat in rooms with middle-aged white men and heard them speaking

like young black men in America—they feel disenfranchised, disaffected.

Source:

American Theatre. July/August 2015.

IN 2016, PRIOR TO THE PLAY'S BROADWAY DEBUT, THE BROADWAY PRODUCTION'S CAST AND DIRECTOR PRESENTED A STAGED READING OF THE PLAY IN READING. THE PLAYWRIGHT WAS ALSO IN ATTENDANCE. THE FOLLOWING EXCERPT WAS REPORTED BY *READING EAGLE* REPORTER, GEORGE HATZA, UNDER THE HEADLINE: "HOW *SWEAT* REFLECTS TENSIONS IN READING AND AMERICA"

It's clear that when Nottage listened to the denizens of Berks County with whom she spoke, she heard well, capturing not only inflections and points of view, but those things people keep hidden.

It is not surprising to see how someone could watch *Sweat* and think that Nottage viewed the city as inherently racist. Some in the audience who have lived in Reading for most of their lives did in fact take offense. But if racism is a principal element of the narrative of *Sweat*, it's not peculiar to Reading, even if many residents have encountered it. Responding to the suggestion that *Sweat* presented a racist community, Nottage didn't hold back.

"Then they didn't listen closely enough," she said. "These are a group of friends

who are multicultural. But economic stress frays those relationships. That can happen not only in Berks County, which is a microcosm of the nation, especially after [the 2016] election I can see how people might feel disregarded in that sense. But I believe every character is treated with respect and empathy. Everyone is equally culpable in the play. There are no angels and no villains. Everyone has to take responsibility for where they are."

Nottage has said that *Sweat* was meant as a gift to the community. And the standing ovation and energetic discussion following the performance seem to support that gesture.

Source:

<https://www.readingeagle.com/news/article/how-sweat-reflects-tensions-in-reading-and-america>

LOCATIONS

Berks County, Pennsylvania

Berks County, often times referred to as Berks, is an urban area of 411,442 persons (2010 Census), situated in southeastern Pennsylvania. The County is a diamond-shaped area of 864 square miles. The County seat, which is the City of Reading, is 56 miles northwest of Philadelphia. Berks County is bordered by Schuylkill County to the north, to the west by Lebanon and Lancaster Counties, to the east by Lehigh County, and to the south

by Chester and Montgomery Counties.

Despite its closeness to the Philadelphia Metropolitan Area, it is considered part of Pennsylvania Dutch Country (Berks County Pennsylvania, Economic Resource Profile). Through numerous Federal and State highways and turnpikes, the County is linked to other major cities such as New York (125 miles) and Baltimore (97 miles). Sections of the Blue and South Mountains, which are ridges of the Appalachian

Mountain chain, form its northern and southern boundaries with elevations averaging about 640 feet above sea level.

Source:
<http://www.co.berks.pa.us/Pages/About-Us.aspx>

Reading, Pennsylvania

In 1733, the site of present day Reading (pronounced “REDD”ing) was chosen. It was set at the intersection of two valleys, the east Penn-Lebanon Valley and the Schuylkill River. This site was known as Finney’s Ford until 1743 when Thomas Lawrence, a Penn Land agent, made the first attempt at the layout for Reading.

In 1748, the town was laid out by Thomas and Richard Penn, the sons of William Penn. The name was chosen after Penn’s own county seat, Reading, in Berkshire, England. In 1752, Reading became the county seat of Berks.

During the French and Indian War (1754-63), Reading became a military base for a chain of forts along the Blue Mountains. The local iron industry, by the time of the American Revolution (1775-1783), had a total production that exceeded that of England, a production that would help supply Washington’s troops with weapons including cannons, rifles and ammunition. Reading also provided iron during many wars including the Civil War and World War II.

In the 1800s, two canals were created for the least expensive and most efficient method of transporting bulk cargo at the time. The Schuylkill Canal, a north-south canal completed in 1825, paralleled the Schuylkill River and connected Reading with Philadelphia and the Delaware River. The Union Canal, an east-west canal completed in 1828, connected the Schuylkill and Susquehanna Rivers, and ran from Reading to Middletown, Pennsylvania, a few miles south of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Railroads forced

the abandonment of the canals by the 1880s.

The Philadelphia and Reading Railroad (P&R) was incorporated in 1833. The construction of the railroad was probably the single greatest factor in the development of Berks County. During the Long Depression following the Panic of 1873, a statewide railroad strike in 1877 over delayed wages led to a violent protest and clash with the National Guard in which six Reading men were killed. Following more than a century of prosperity, the Reading Company was forced to file for bankruptcy protection in 1971. On April 1, 1976, the Reading Company sold its current railroad interests to the newly formed Consolidated Railroad Corporation (Conrail).

Reading began to go through a precipitous decline in the 1970s, which began with the collapse of the railroad. In the mid-’80s, several key sectors in manufacturing began to falter. In the 1990s and early 2000s, in the wake of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the steel and textile industries began to significantly erode and jobs were sent overseas. States also started to adopt “right-to-work” laws that inhibited union power. In 2015, 40 percent of the people in Reading lived below the poverty line and the city had a 50 percent high school graduation rate. Though the city is beginning to see some economic growth, the 2011 census singled out Reading as “the poorest city in America.”

Sources:
<https://www.readingpa.gov/node/68>
<https://www.osfashland.org/-/media/Support%20OSF/Membership/prologue-f14-articles/prologue-f14-sweat>

Addiction and blue collar workers

The prescription opioid painkillers that helped fuel the surge in U.S. drug overdose deaths were first approved by the Federal Drug Administration in late 1995.

The before-and-after fatality rates tell a shocking story: In 1994, the age-adjusted drug overdose death rate was 4.8 deaths per 100,000 people; by 2015, the rate had more than tripled to 16.3 per 100,000. Since then, the overdose death rate has continued to climb. Provisional estimates for 2016 suggest it reached 19.8 deaths per 100,000, more than quadrupling since 1994. While prescription opioids fueled the initial surge in overdose deaths after 1995, heroin and fentanyl-type compounds—which tend to be illicitly produced—are the main drivers now. “Intense attention and action” is what experts at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) argue is needed to counter the epidemic.

As addiction in the workplace is becoming more and more common, there are unfortunately high rates of substance abuse within blue-collar industries. With easy access and a social aspect to drinking, many workers turn to alcohol after a long and stressful day at work. There could be work-related stress and even injuries that cause these blue-collar workers to drink as a way to self-medicate. For those suffering from work-related injuries, workers are often prescribed painkillers. While a doctor legally prescribes these medications, they have the potential to be extremely addictive if misused.

The U.S. opioid epidemic has taken the lives of rising numbers of people with all levels of education. However, deaths have grown increasingly more concentrated among those with lower levels of education, particularly among non-Hispanic whites. The differences increase in a stair-step pattern by education level, with the widest difference between college graduates and those without high school degrees. This gap has widened over the past two decades, resulting in part from steep increases in drug overdose deaths among those without

college degrees.

Jessica Ho of the University of Southern California published her analysis of life expectancy differences by education level in 2017. Of note in her analysis:

Less-educated individuals tend to work in settings that “increase their risk of workplace injuries, disability, and chronic health conditions, which lead to a greater likelihood of being prescribed opioid painkillers,” raising their risk of addiction.

People with low education levels are more concentrated in rural areas, where the emergency medical response for overdose victims may be more limited.

Less-educated individuals who also have limited incomes may have greater financial incentives to participate in schemes that involve reselling opioids (such as seeking prescriptions from multiple doctors), which also increase their access to these drugs and the likelihood of addiction.

Compared with more-educated people, less-educated people “may have fewer resources to combat drug addiction, including financial resources, access to scarce slots in drug treatment programs, and support from social networks.”

Sources:

<https://www.prb.org/people-and-places-hardest-hit-by-the-drug-overdose-epidemic/>

<https://www.banyantreatmentcenter.com/2018/10/15/the-most-common-drugs-abused-by-blue-collar-workers/>

American Factories

Four decades after the first predictions of “post-industrial society,” industrial factories have once again returned to Americans’ collective consciousness. Where they once symbolized power, pride, and progress, they are now icons of decline: jobs lost, communities decimated, a period of prosperity that turned out to be all too brief. In the American Midwest and in pockets across Europe, voters who once supported left-leaning parties have increasingly turned to candidates

who promise industrial revival wrapped in nationalism.

The romance of the factory is more likely based on the sense of dignity and purpose that unionized workers gained in factory jobs. It is unsurprising that some Americans would be nostalgic for a period when they could more easily place themselves in a history of progress as the heirs to a heroic struggle for an improved working-class lot. As Amy Goldstein has poignantly illustrated in her book *Janesville: An American Story*, when factories close, an entire world collapses—a source of self-worth, a basis of solidarity and trust. Many of the laid-off General Motors workers in Janesville, Wisconsin hated the work they spent most of their days performing. But the factory—and the whole network of factories it sustained—contained memories of personal independence, friendships, political solidarity, company game days and picnics, connection to previous generations, and a strong economic basis for participation in family and community life.

Source:
<https://newrepublic.com/article/147720/meaning-american-factories>

American Unions

In the United States, early workers and trade unions played an important part in the move toward independence. The ideas they introduced, such as protection for workers, became part of our American culture.

In the history of America's trade and labor unions, the most famous union remains the American Federation of Labor (AFL), founded in 1886 by Samuel Gompers. At its pinnacle, the AFL had approximately 1.4 million members. The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) under John L. Lewis and the larger AFL federation underwent a huge expansion during World War II. The AFL-CIO merger occurred in 1955.

Union membership and power peaked around 1970. At that time, private sector

union membership began a steady decline that continues today. However, membership in public sector unions continues to grow consistently. According to the Department of Labor, the 2015 union membership rate was 11.1% and the number of workers belonging to unions was 14.8 million.

Relevant to the characters in *Sweat*, the work of Steelworkers Organizing Committee began in 1942 with a set of founding principles - values that still apply today:

1. To unite in one organization, regardless of creed, color or nationality, all workmen and working women eligible for membership.
2. To increase the wages, and improve the conditions of employment of our members by legislation, joint agreements or other legitimate means.
3. To endeavor to obtain by joint negotiation or legislative enactment a six-hour day and five-day week.
4. To strive for a minimum wage scale for all members of our organization.
5. To provide for the education of our children by lawfully prohibiting their employment until they have reached eighteen years of age
6. To secure equitable statutory old-age pension, workman's compensation and unemployment insurance laws.
7. To enforce existing just laws and to secure the repeal of those which are unjust.
8. To secure by legislative enactment, laws protecting the limbs, lives and health of our members; (laws) establishing our right to organize; (laws) preventing the employment of privately armed guards during labor disputes and such other legislation as will be beneficial.

Sources:
<https://www.usw.org/union/our-founding-principles>
<https://www.unionplus.org/page/brief-history-unions>

The 2000 Election

No work of fiction could have plausibly captured the extraordinary twists and turns of the 2000 U.S. presidential election. After mistaken television network projections on election night leading to a concession call by Al Gore to George W. Bush that was withdrawn an hour later, and the ensuing 36-day political and legal war over how to resolve what was essentially a tie, Bush ultimately garnered the presidency when a sharply divided... Supreme Court ended the manual recount in Florida that might have produced a different outcome. It was the closest presidential election in American history, with only several hundred votes in Florida determining the winner out of more than 100 million ballots cast nationwide.

Source:

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/reflections-on-the-2000-u-s-presidential-election/>

White Supremacy and Hate Crimes

Who or what is a white supremacist, exactly? Are white supremacists considered so because they consider themselves so? Or is the definition something more slippery and subtle? The school of critical race theory, championed by scholars such as bell hooks, has been around in academic circles for at least 30 years, and its definition of white supremacy has long animated black

activism. To quote scholar Frances Lee Ansley:

“By ‘white supremacy’ I do not mean to allude only to the self-conscious racism of white supremacist hate groups. I refer instead to a political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings.”

The number of hate crimes in the United States in 2017 topped a previous high, with law enforcement reporting 7,175 incidents — an uptick of 17 percent over the five-year high reached in 2016. As defined by the FBI, a hate crime is a violent or property crime — such as murder, arson, assault or vandalism — that is “motivated in whole or in part by an offender’s bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity.”

Sources:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/10/the-language-of-white-supremacy/542148/>

<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/11/16/fbi-hate-crime-numbers-soar-7106-2017-third-worst-year-start-data-collection>

VOCABULARY

Albright

Albright College is the oldest institution of higher learning in Berks County and is located on a 118-acre suburban campus nestled at the foot of Mount Penn in Reading, PA.

Arepas

An arepa is the daily bread of Venezuela made of white cornmeal, water and salt. The tasty cornmeal cakes — grilled, baked or fried and filled with everything from avocado to braised meat to quail egg salad — are a cornerstone of Venezuelan nutrition.

Bill Bradley

Bill Bradley served in the U.S. Senate from 1979-1997 representing the state of New Jersey. In 2000, he was a candidate for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States. Before serving in the Senate, he was an Olympic gold medalist in 1964 and a professional basketball player with the New York Knicks from 1967-1977, during which time they won two NBA championships.

Black History Month

Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing the central role of blacks in U.S. history. The event grew out of “Negro History Week,” the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month. Other countries around the world, including Canada and the United Kingdom, also devote a month to celebrating black history.

The box (re: felony convictions)

Getting in the door to obtain an interview can be difficult for individuals who have a conviction or arrest on their record, because many job applications ask people to check a box if they have been convicted of a crime. “Ban the box” is a nationwide effort to remove inquiries about criminal history from employer job applications. Supporters argue that the question should be deferred until later in the interview process and not used as an automatic bar to employment at the application stage.

Buena suerta

Spanish: good luck or good fortune

Carhartt

A specific manufacturer of work clothes

Catching shade

The term ‘shade’ refers to the act of insulting someone. Catching shade is to receive an insult.

Chum the waters

Chum the waters, or chumming, means dumping bait or something into the waters to attract fish. The phrase can also be akin to stirring up or looking for trouble.

Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a learning disorder that involves difficulty reading due to problems identifying speech sounds and learning how they relate to letters and words. Dyslexia affects areas of the brain that process language.

Banger

Shorten form of ‘gang banger’: a member of a violent group of young men, especially ones who use guns and commit crimes.

Gimlet

The gimlet is a cocktail typically made of 2 part gin, 1 part lime juice, and soda.

Green stamps

A forerunner to today’s customer-loyalty rewards programs, the popular green colored Sperry & Hutchinson stamps were commonly distributed by U.S. retailers, such as supermarkets and gas stations, into the 1980s and were redeemable for items such as housewares.

Locked Out

A lock out is work stoppage initiated by the employer during a labor dispute. A strike is work stoppage by employees. One practical legal difference between lockouts and strikes: striking workers may be replaced with permanent workers but locked-out workers can only be replaced with temporary workers. This appears to be a way to balance leverage between management and workers.

NAFTA

The North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, is a trade pact signed by the U.S., Canada and Mexico, which made it easier for companies in those three countries to move goods and supplies across North America’s borders. The agreement took effect on Jan. 1, 1994, and essentially eliminated tariffs on most goods traded among the three nations.

Off-coast rig work

The majority of entry-level jobs in the petroleum industry are in the “oil production” sector. Generally, oil production is the process of drilling and extracting oil from underground (or underwater) reservoirs. The world’s oil production takes place both onshore and offshore. In U.S. controlled waters, thousands of oil platforms are either floating or attached to the ocean floor off the shores of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. Many of these platforms are huge structures that house multiple drilling rigs and also house workers.

Pomeroy's

Larger than the city's two other major department stores, Whitner's and Read's, Pomeroy's epitomized Reading at the height of its time as Berks County's economic and cultural center. Reaching its peak in 1955, when downtown Reading was still the county's shopping mecca, Pomeroy's symbolized post-World War II prosperity. Its distinctive "Pomeroy's" sign, resting atop a seven-story building at Sixth and Penn streets in Reading, could be seen throughout the city and beyond. The Reading store closed in 1985.

Rhythmic gymnastics

Rhythmic gymnastics is a women-only Olympic event in which gymnasts perform on a floor with a rope, hoop, ball, clubs or ribbon accompanied by music, in individual or group events.

Scab

Another term for 'temp' or a person employed to work during a lockout. The term purposefully connotes disease or infection.

Sixers

Short for the Philadelphia 76ers basketball team.

Steel Tubing

Long, hollow tubes that are used for a variety of purposes. They are produced by two distinct methods which result in either a welded or seamless pipe. In both methods, raw steel is first cast into a more workable starting form. It is then made into a pipe by stretching the steel out into a seamless tube or forcing the edges together and sealing them with a weld.

Temps

Persons employed to work during a lockout.

Wharton MBA

In 1881, American entrepreneur and industrialist Joseph Wharton established the world's first collegiate school of business at the University of Pennsylvania. The Master of Business Administration

(MBA) is an internationally-recognized degree designed to develop the skills required for careers in business and management.

White Hats

Workers in manufacturing and construction are required to wear a hard hat. Here are the roles commonly associated with each color:

White: Managers, engineers, foremen or supervisors

Brown: Welders and workers for high heat applications

Green: Safety inspector, but occasionally used for new workers

Yellow: General laborers and earth-moving operators

Blue: Carpenters, technical advisers, and temp workers

Orange: Road crews, new employees, or visitors.

Sources:

<http://www.billbradley.com/bill-bradley-bio/>
<http://www.madehow.com/Volume-5/Steel-Pipe.html>
<http://www.oiljobfinder.com/oilrigjobs.php>
<https://find-mba.com/what-is-an-mba>
<https://mba.wharton.upenn.edu/>
<https://www.csamidwest.org/policyresearch/1113banthebox.aspx>
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/dyslexia/symptoms-causes/syc-20353552>
<https://www.olympic.org/rhythmic-gymnastics-equipment-and-history>
<https://www.readingeagle.com/life/article/book-recalls-glory-days-of-pomeroy>
<https://www.thedenverchannel.com/money/consumer/surprise-sh-green-stamps-can-still-be-redeemed>
<https://www.thenation.com/article/when-corporations-lock-out-their-own-workers/>
<https://www.triumphbancorp.com/newsfeed/hard-hat-color-mean/>
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/08/23/nafta-seven-things-you-should-know-free-trade-agreement/1063956002/>

STUDY QUESTIONS

Pre-Performance Questions

1. What are the responsibilities of a company to their employees? What are the responsibilities of the employees to the employer? In what ways, positive and negative, can job promotions impact the work environment?
2. How are individuals able to keep their sense of identity within a community?
3. What happens when our dreams and aspirations are not fulfilled due to a choice or action that we made? What happens when the dream is destroyed by the actions of someone else?

Post-Performance Questions

1. How do the technical elements of set design, lights, sound and costume give a sense of place and time?
2. What do we learn about the relationship between Jason and Chris? How do the choices of one person effect the other person?
3. What does the play tell us about the town of Reading? How is the town reflected in the cast of characters and their behavior?
4. Do you find the community in the play to be inclusive and multicultural or divisive and racist? Support your answer by choosing a character and his or her words and/or deeds that illustrate your answer.
5. How does Cynthia's promotion affect her relationship with her peers? How do her friendships fare? How do the other characters' views toward her change?
6. How is addiction treated in the play?
7. How does the character Oscar fit into the community? How does his story intertwine with the workers in the factory?
8. How would you characterize the factory where the people work? How does the sense of loyalty from the employees change over time? How does the employers' sense of loyalty change over time? What do you think is the driving force behind the change?
9. How do the characters feel about the union and what has become of the power of the union?
10. How are familial relations represented in the play? How are generations represented?
11. What does this play say about second chances?

ACTIVITIES

Historic Timeline

1. Ask students to research significant events in the United States and the world leading up to, during and following the play *Sweat* and to place them in chronological order. The play takes place in 2000 and 2008.
2. Create a timeline using the information gathered.
3. Discussion Questions: What changes or innovations were happening during these times? How was the world changing? How are these historical events included in the play *Sweat*? How did these significant events affect the characters in the play?

Sweat Character Timeline

1. Ask students to chart the events of a certain character's life before and after the events in the play of *Sweat*.
2. Add other historical/social developments, both national and international during the time of the play.
3. Discuss: Why were these events important to the individual character? How did these events effect the character's life?

History PG: Develop an understanding of how people view, construct, and interpret history.

History PG: Analyze key historical periods and patterns of change over time within and across nations and cultures.

Personal Narrative Interview

1. Interview a parent or a grandparent about the town, city or neighborhood where they grew up.

Were there any places in the town that most of the town gathered, such as a store, post office or church? What do they remember about these places and the people that gathered there? How did these places change over time? How did these people and places impact you and your relationship with the town, city or neighborhood?
2. After the interview, have the students identify key themes and character choices that they will adapt into a monologue or scene of dialogue for the stage.
3. After writing the first draft, have students read the draft aloud.
4. Discuss the differences between theatrical adaptations. What did the playwrights do to convey the characters and their story?
5. Ask the playwright in what ways did they have to invent, delete, or change anything within the source material for the monologue or dialogue?
6. Raising the bar: Following the first theatrical adaptation, instruct the playwrights to change a point of view. What changes would have to be made to clearly show that the events found in the first draft are now being described from a different character's perspective?

History PG: The historical method of inquiry to ask questions, evaluate primary and secondary sources, critically analyze and interpret data, and develop interpretations defended by evidence from a variety of primary and secondary sources.

Writing PG: Articulate the position of self and others using experiential and material logic.

Perspective Writing – Character Narrative

1. Have students select an important moment from *Sweat*. This should be a moment that has more than one person in attendance. For example, the birthday party for Tracey or a meeting between Jason and Chris.
2. From this moment, the students are to pick a character from the story and, in their own words (paraphrase), provide the character's perspective and attitude of what transpired. Specifically, emotions, behavior, and how the moment affects the character should be explored.
3. From the exploration of a moment from the play, each student will write a short monologue describing the moment from the character's perspective of what they experienced.
4. Compare the monologues about the event from other characters that were involved. Discuss the similarities and differences that arose during the writing process. Was there general agreement of what happened or marked differences? Why were the moments similar or different? Were they subtle or obvious variations? Did students agree on what was important to include and why? If not, how would the elimination of some elements change the way the moment would be understood or remembered by the character?

Writing PG: Articulate the position of self and others using experiential and material logic.

Writing PG: Write with clear focus, coherent organization, sufficient elaboration, and detail.

Persuasive Argument

1. The goal of this activity is to have students create a persuasive argument to support their decision. They can work individually or in small groups.
2. Research a historical strike to find information about what initiated the strike, the choices that were made and consequences of those decisions. This could be miners in the gold mines of Colorado, sweatshop workers during the Industrial Revolution, auto workers in the 1970s or a recent teacher strike.
3. Establish the situation: employees of a manufacturing company have a decision to make. Their union has called for a vote to either continue working or to go on strike for better working conditions. Students must decide if they are employed as a manager or as a floor employee. Students then decide how they feel about the decision to go on strike.
4. Students now create a persuasive argument to either stay or to walk off the factory floor and strike – steps 5 through 7 below outline building a persuasive argument.
5. Create an opening statement. This statement should include the position for staying on the floor or for going on strike.
6. List three reasons that support the position. From these three reasons, find three facts to support each reason. Try to avoid opinionated personal conclusions.
7. Write a concluding statement. Include the original position statement and incorporate the strongest reason from the three to support the concluding statement.
8. Have students share their work with each other: to the whole group, in pairs or in other small groups.
9. EXTENSION OPTION: If students have seen or read the play, have them select a character (Cynthia who is in management, Tracey who is on the floor, or another character from the cast) and make the argument from that character's perspective.

Civics PG: Research, formulate positions, and engage in appropriate civic participation to address local, state, or national issues or policies.

Research and Reasoning PG: Independent research designs articulate and defend information, conclusions, and solutions that address specific contexts and purposes.

PERSPECTIVES

Make your time at the theatre unforgettable when you join us for one of these added experiences:

Pre-Show Creative Team Perspectives

Fri, Apr 26 at 6pm | The Jones

Get an exclusive insider's perspective before the show when you join us for a free, professionally moderated discussion with the creative team.

Post-Show Discussions

May 4 – May 26 | Post-show

There will be a discussion following each performance of *Sweat* with local members of workforce initiatives, Unions, and other community leaders moderated by a DCPA staff member (unless otherwise noted on the DCPA website). All audience members are invited and encouraged to attend.

Higher Education Perspective

Wed, May 15 at 6:30pm

Participate in a topical discussion led by members of our academic community after the performance.

Cast Perspective

Sun, May 19 at 1:30pm

Join a fun and engaging discussion with the actors after the matinee.

PATRON SERVICES

Personal Captioning Devices

May 7 – 26

These handheld tablet devices configured with closed captioning software enable users to enjoy private captioning services in any seating location. The devices will be available at the performances listed above and may be checked out with a photo ID at the Patron Services desk in the lobby (subject to availability, first-come first-served).

Accessible Performance

Sun, May 19 at 1:30pm

Before selecting seats, use the appropriate code noted below for the services you require in the Promotional Code box when purchasing online. For optimal service, call the box office at 303.893.4100.

Sign Language Interpretation: **ASL**

Audio Description: **AUDIO**

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

The Denver Public Library recommends:

Read!

Voices from the Rust Belt edited by Anne Trubek. Written from a diverse array of viewpoints, this collection of compelling essays delves deep into the identity of the post-industrial Midwest. Tackling social, economic, and personal elements of life in the Rust Belt, the authors paint a hopeful, nostalgic, and sometimes heartbreaking picture of declining industry and aging factories. Covering a wide range of topics from poverty and racial tension to childhood bicycle rides and the natural beauty of the land, each essay offers a unique experience that helps give shape to a place that so many call home.

Watch!

Inside Job (2011) While the meltdown in *Sweat* occurs in 2000, the most recent one Americans experienced was in 2008. This Oscar-winning documentary dives into the crisis that caused millions of people to lose their jobs and houses. Matt Damon narrates this comprehensive explanation of the piles of bad debt that were passed along like a game of hot potato while making financial institutions money with each pass. You'll find a well-researched film driven by anger, like many people felt, directed at the banks that recklessly gambled with the livelihoods of many people who were just trying to get by.

Listen!

Janesville by Amy Goldstein read by Joy Osmanski. Pulitzer-winning author Goldstein spent six years researching and studying the aftermath in Janesville, WI after the GM factory shuttered its doors in 2008. She chronicles the ways that the community struggled to survive from 2011-2015. Those that stayed couldn't afford to sell their houses in the depressed market, many children were essentially abandoned, left to couch surf with friends and family. Just as *Sweat* tells the tale of what happens to the people in a town who's industry shutters, *Janesville* explores the long-term aftermath of corporate abandonment.

Download!

Hand to Mouth by Linda Triado. Tirado gives an unflinching account of what life is like when one is poor: bad situations, bad food, soul sucking jobs, cheap cigarettes, and the knowledge that working hard will only earn you a bad back. These unapologetic essays have a lot in common with that other famous work in this field, *Nickeled and Dimed*, by Barbara Ehrenreich, but with one important difference: Ehrenreich was a tourist. The book itself manages to be funny and full of deep insight. This is real life on the other side of the bootstrap: men and women who are bitter, bone-tired and despondent.



Denver Public Library
Books and Borrowing
Department
Books@denverlibrary.org

COMMIT TO YOUR CRAFT

REACH YOUR
POTENTIAL
WITH
SERIOUSLY
FUN THEATRE
TRAINING



ALL SKILL LEVELS. ALL AGES. ALL YEAR LONG.

**ACTING • IMPROV • MUSICAL THEATRE
AUDITIONING • PUBLIC SPEAKING • PRIVATE COACHING**

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

[DENVERCENTER.ORG/EDUCATION](https://denvercenter.org/education) • 303.446.4892



DENVER CENTER FOR THE
PERFORMING ARTS
Education

