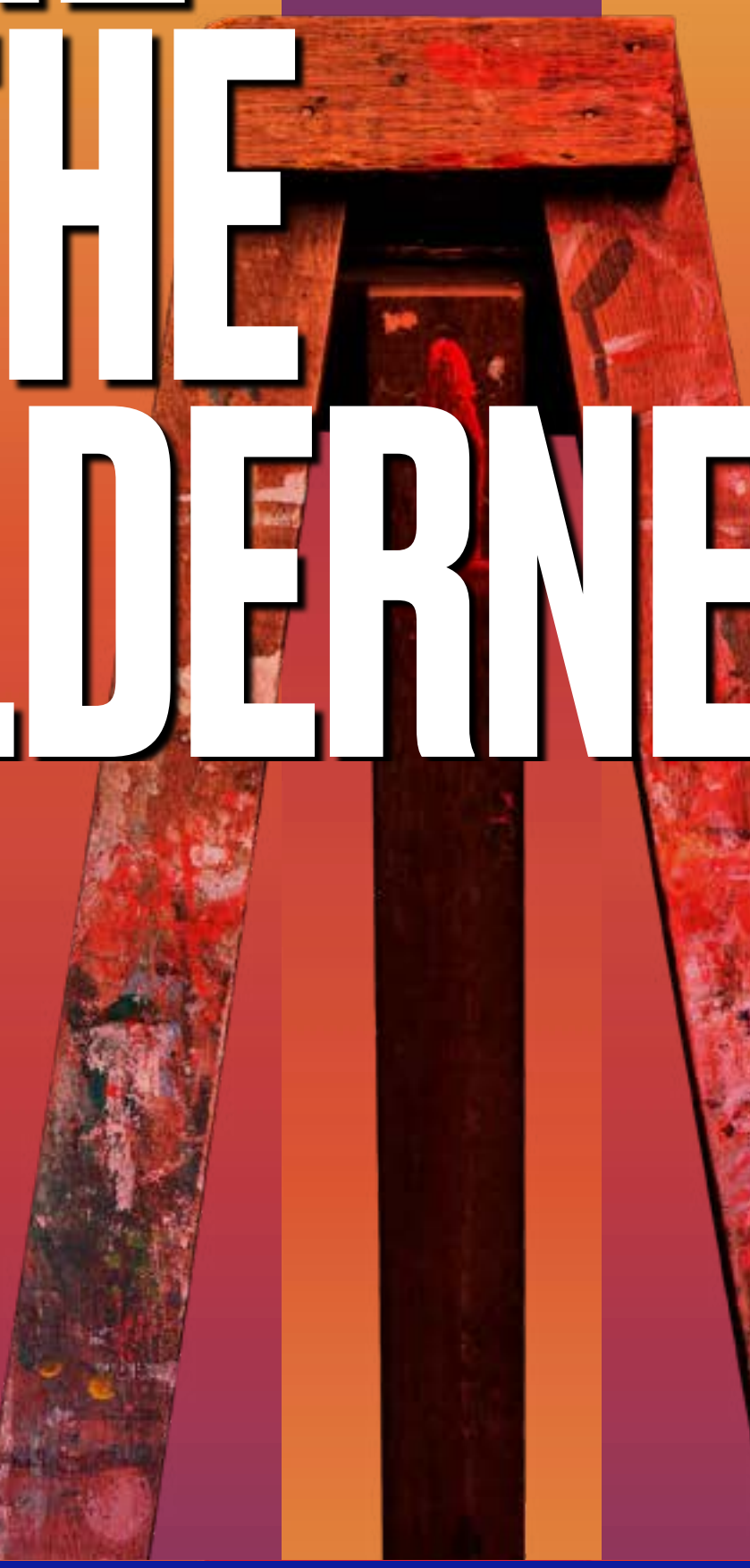
WINE IN THE WILDERNESS



SHOW GUIDE

WELCOME

We're delighted to share this Show Guide for CSC's production of Alice Childress's ***Wine in the Wilderness***, which gives you a deeper look into this production. This show guide has been created in collaboration with the Classix team. Classix works to expand the understanding of the classical canon in highlighting the work and impact of playwrights of African descent. Classix engages artists, historians, students, professors, producers and audiences to launch plays into the public imagination and spark productions worldwide.

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A NOTE FROM JILL RAFSON

CSC PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

In my third season here at CSC, I'm delighted to be sharing a production that shines a spotlight on the incredible playwright Alice Childress, an artist whose work truly deserves to be seen as classic.

Childress was an actress who didn't see roles being written for Black women like her, and she didn't see stories on stage that reflected her world and the questions that her community was facing every day. So she wrote them herself.

I love that this artist saw the upheaval of the 1960s and knew that she had something to say about it, something that needed to be said from her specific point of view. It's in specificity that we find universality and can see each other more fully. It's one of the things that theater does best, creating empathy through a shared experience, and Alice Childress knew how to harness that feeling as deftly as any playwright.

Wine in the Wilderness takes place against the backdrop of a riot, a real event that shook this city and beyond in 1964, yet Childress keeps that riot outside the doors of her play. She knows that change can happen loudly as people take to the streets, but it can also happen quietly, among a few people in a room as they confront their own assumptions, blindspots, and desires.

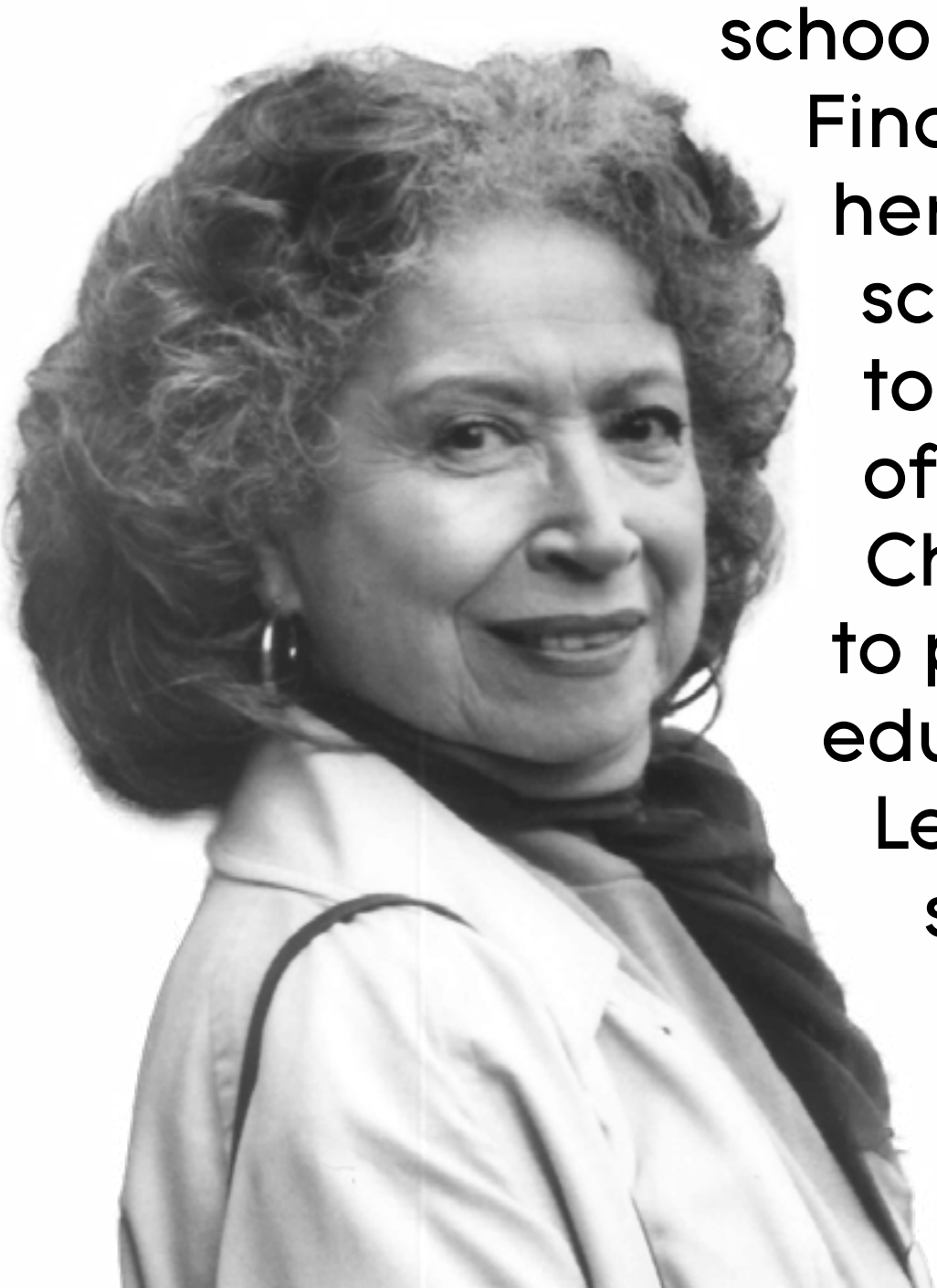
We all deserve to see ourselves in the theatrical canon. Alice Childress knew that a long time ago, and I'm honored to be sharing her work today.

THE LIFE OF ALICE CHILDRESS

written by Arminda Thomas, Dramaturg

Alice Childress was born October 12, 1916 in Charleston, South Carolina, to Florence White and Alonzo Herndon. Her parents separated soon after Alice's birth, and she was raised primarily by her maternal grandmother, Eliza White, whom Childress later credited with nurturing her creative imagination and inspiring her to become a writer. The family relocated from South Carolina to New York when Alice was a young child, eventually settling in Harlem.

Drawn to be a performer, Childress first attempted to join the drama club at her high school but was turned away. Financial hardships led her to drop out of high school, but even as she took on an assortment of jobs to survive, Childress continued to pursue a theatrical education with the Urban League Players where she studied under director Venzella Jones.



In 1935, Childress married fellow Urban League Player Alvin Childress, and soon after, their daughter Jean was born.

In 1941, Childress joined the American Negro Theater (ANT), which had been founded the previous year by playwright Abram Hill and actor Frederick O'Neal. Though not a founding member, Childress was quickly recognized as one of the group's leaders. Childress took on many administrative positions, such as acting coach and personnel director, and garnered critical praise as a performer, particularly in ANT's Broadway production of *Anna Lucasta.* Even so, Childress was dissatisfied with the quality of the plays, especially of roles available for black women in the company. Challenged by ANT member Sidney Poitier to write a play reflecting the role she wanted to see on stage, Childress quickly returned with the short play *Florence,* which was presented by ANT in 1949.

After the company folded in 1950, Childress (along with some other ANT alumni) became involved with the Committee for the Negro in the Arts (CNA). Under CNA auspices, Childress and Clarice Taylor started a theater at Club Baron, a Harlem nightclub. Childress presented two plays at that venue: *Just a Little Simple* (1950), an adaptation of stories by Langston Hughes, and *Gold Through the Trees* (1952), a dramatic revue highlighting Africans throughout the Diaspora in different eras.

In 1955, Childress had her first full-length

production with *Trouble in Mind,* which appeared Off-Broadway at the Greenwich Mews Theater. A success with critics and audiences, the play was set for a Broadway run, but that was short-circuited when Childress refused the many changes demanded by prospective producers. That experience was repeated with Childress's next play, *Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White,* which was optioned for Broadway in 1964 but didn't appear in New York until 1972, when it was produced by Joe Papp at the Public Theater (the play premiered in 1966 at the University of Michigan).

Along with her plays, Childress was a prolific writer of short stories and novels. She is perhaps best remembered for her young adult novel A Hero Ain't Nothin' but a Sandwich (1973), which she later adapted into a film starring Paul Winfield and Cicely Tyson. Her other plays include *Wine in the Wilderness, Mojo, String, Sea Island Song* (aka *Gullah*), and *Moms.*

Childress died in 1994 at Astoria General Hospital in Queens, N.Y. She was 77 years old.

Black Culture, The New York Public Library

WINE IN THE WILDERNESS

CHILDRESS RETURNS TO HER ROOTS

written by Arminda Thomas, Dramaturg

"There is almost as much injustice in the theater as there is in the rest of the land, but there's no need of begging. Cope! Cope anyhow, anywhere you can, to the best of your ability...Soon we may have to read our works on the sidewalks of inner city and 'mainstream' Broadway. Time is up. I've a play to write that may never be seen by any audience anywhere, but I do my thing."
– Alice Childress, 1969

The 1960s were full of creative frustrations for Alice Childress. She had spent the better part of the decade writing and revising her play, *Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White,* which like her earlier play, *Trouble in Mind,* had been optioned for Broadway only to have those plans fall through. In this case, the *New York Times* reported that the lead actress had been released to take another role, but Childress later claimed that the producers were hesitant to have two Black writers on Broadway in one season (James Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie* had opened that summer). Along with production hassles, Childress had also experienced difficulties in the rehearsal rooms. "I find that white actors pull against what you mean in a script," she later remarked. "I think twice about writing about them now. Because...I need them to express the story that I'm telling, to express the people I'm talking about. And if they want to say 'Oh no, white people aren't like that' then they can't express my play."

In January of 1969, *Wedding Band* was scheduled to have its first non-academic production at Atlanta's Municipal Theatre with actress and singer Abbey Lincoln in the lead role. Just as rehearsals got underway, the board announced that the theatre was bankrupt. Local papers cited overspending as the culprit, but Childress claimed that one board member and large donor reneged on his pledge in order to stop the play from being done in Atlanta – within weeks, the theatre had reformed under a new name, with the same board and artistic staff, and completed its season as advertised, save for Childress. As the door slammed shut on *Wedding Band* once again, a new opportunity arrived via television.

"At the moment, it obviously has been deemed simpler to alleviate a racist situation in the country by providing funds for inner-city than to have hot summers and warm winters."

– Alice Childress, 1969

In the wake of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination and subsequent riots across the country, the Ford Foundation earmarked $5 million for public television stations to develop programming "for minorities and the disadvantaged." One station, Boston's WGHB, was granted $750,000 to air "20 one-hour dramas on contemporary Negro life." The series, "On Being Black," was tentatively

scheduled to begin airing in February 1969; however, the new year found them with only five of the proposed twenty dramas commissioned.

It is unknown whether Childress was one of the original five commissions or a new one, but within weeks of the fiasco in Atlanta, Childress and Abbey Lincoln were in Boston at WGBH's studio working on a new one-act teleplay, *Wine in the Wilderness.* Conceived as a two-character love story – a topic Childress felt was largely ignored in the repertoire of that time – the cast quickly expanded to five. Twenty years before, Childress had written her first produced play, *Florence,* in just a few days to satisfy the needs of the American Negro Theatre. This process was very similar, with the cast and crew "waiting for the last page to come out of the typewriter" and the whole thing completed in time to serve as the series' opening program, which aired March 4, 1969.

If the form and focus owed much to the parameters of its commissioning agent, *Wine in the Wilderness* was also a harbinger of the new turn Childress was taking in her playwriting. While still deeply personal, deeply political, and deeply committed to telling black women's stories, Childress now shifted these women away from the terrain of interracial relations to explore more fully the navigation of class, gender, and racism-related tensions within African American communities.

Encouraged by the positive response to the televised version, Childress had the play published and sent around to potential venues. The opening of public and private coffers that made WGBH's program possible had also fueled a resurgence of black theaters across the nation. In the latter half of the 1960s, at least five prominent companies sprang up in New York City alone — one of them, the New Heritage Repertory Theatre, was founded by fellow American Negro Theatre alum Roger Furman. In 1970, Furman mounted the first stage production of *Wine in the Wilderness* (on a ticket with her brand new one-act, *Mojo*).

Early in her writing career, Childress had advocated for "a Negro People's Theatre… powerful enough to inspire, lift, and eventually create a complete desire for the liberation of all oppressed peoples," and if her rhetoric tempered, her belief in the necessity of black theaters remained firm. Still, she was frustrated by the constraints of writing to fit into the venues in which those companies operated and expressed more frustration at the inequity of space. "Plays of mine were done on 125th Street up in lofts, had plays done in church basements, up 133rd Street and Lenox at the Club Baron…I mean, this has been the majority of my experience," she lamented. "The majority of black work is done like this."

Childress continued, "A playwright who stays with it for a lifetime must grow. It's got to grow worse or better, something has to happen.

And if there's no place for growth in the theater, I think coffee shops and places like this are very exciting and good for readings and good for certain kinds of plays. What I'm really talking about is real estate." Soon, Childress would satisfy her need for artistic growth and more expansive storytelling opportunities by shifting her focus from theater to fiction.

Announcing her death in 1994, the *New York Times* headline read, "Alice Childress, 77, a Novelist." The full obituary allowed that she wrote some plays, too.

Alice Childress on stage. Image courtesy of New Perspectives Theatre (New Perspective Theatre photo)

WINE IN THE WILDERNESS

A TIMELINE OF ROILING TENSIONS

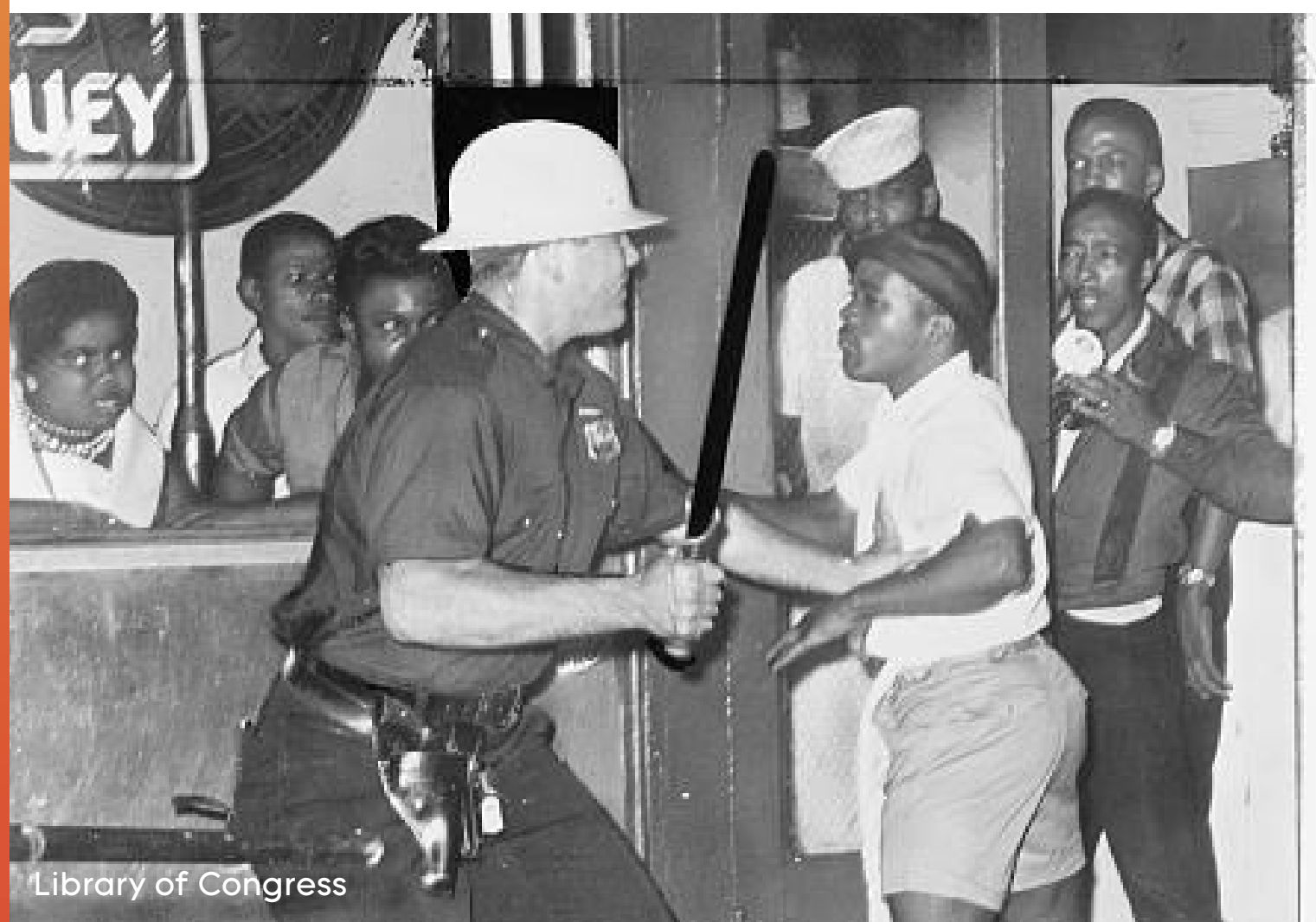
AUG. 1963

New York Times launches a two-part series on "New York's Racial Unrest." The first focuses on "Negroes' mounting anger" that is "sweeping moderation aside." (Additional subtitles: "Years of Resentment Find Outlet in Wave of Protests"; "Few in Sympathy with Moderates"; "Full Equality in Employment, Education and Housing Is Demanded.")

Approximately 250,000 people gather for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

SEPT. 1963

In Birmingham, Alabama, terrorists set off a bomb at the 16th Street Baptist Church, killing four girls. Two Black boys are also murdered in separate incidents. A New York memorial for the victims is arranged by the newly-formed Writers and Artists for Justice (later named the Association of Artists for Freedom), founded by John Oliver Killens, James Baldwin, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, Odetta, and Louis Lomax.



Policeman confronts a group at Seventh Ave. and 126th St. during renewed violence in Harlem

Library of Congress

NOV. 1963

President Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas.

Led by Jesse Gray and the Community Council on Housing, Harlem tenants launch a rent strike demanding building repairs and access to public housing. When tenants appear in housing court, they bring dead rats to illustrate their living conditions. By January, almost 2000 tenants are withholding rent.

MAR. 1964

One week after defeating Sonny Liston to become the world heavyweight champion, boxer Cassius Clay announces that he is a member of the Nation of Islam and changes his name to Muhammad Ali.

APR. 1964

Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) demonstrators picket the World's Fair in Flushing, New York

Incident at 133rd St. and Seventh Ave. 1964, Police clash with members of the public as Harlem was torn by disorder for a second time

Library of Congress

JUNE 1964

Three CORE field workers—James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner (the latter two from New York)—are murdered in Mississippi after investigating a church bombing.

After breaking with the Nation of Islam and going on a pilgrimage to Mecca, Malcolm X announces the formation of the Organization for Afro-American Unity. The OAAU identifies New York Governor Rockefeller's new "No Knock Warrants" and police brutality as its first target for local protest.

The Association of Artists for Freedom hosts a forum at New York City's Town Hall entitled "The Black Revolution and the White Backlash," featuring Lorraine Hansberry, John O. Killens, Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka), Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, Paule Marshall, David Susskind, Charles Silberman, and Jerry Wechsler.

JULY 1964

President Johnson signs the 1964 Civil Rights Act into law, ending legal discrimination in the United States

After 15-year-old James Powell is killed by an off-duty officer, protests in Harlem give way to violence, sparking the first Harlem race riot in over 20 years. Within the week, rioting erupts in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn and upstate in Rochester.

The fatal shooting of Powell stirred Negro rioters to race through Harlem streets carrying pictures of Lt. Gilligan

Library of Congress

1964

THE FIRST OF THE LONG HOT SUMMERS

written by Arminda Thomas, Dramaturg

"So, last week, the long hot summer of Negro discontent began."
New York Times, July 26, 1964

On the morning of July 16, two weeks after President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act into law, 15-year-old James Powell arrived early at school, about 25 minutes before classes began. The school was located on East 76th Street, in a predominantly white neighborhood, but many of the students attending the summer session, like James, were minorities from other parts of the city. While waiting for school to open, James and some of his classmates had a confrontation with the superintendent of a nearby building, who allegedly sprayed them with a water hose. An off-duty police officer intervened and shot James twice, killing him. Both the building superintendent and the officer claimed that James had a knife, a claim that was disputed by multiple witnesses. Students took to the streets in protest.

Two days later, local branches of the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) held a rally on 125th Street, near the funeral home where James's body was being prepared. Originally organized to protest the presumed murders of three CORE volunteers in Mississippi, the rally quickly

shifted focus to protest Powell's shooting and the ongoing issue of police brutality. When the protesters moved to a nearby police station, tensions escalated rapidly, leading to what would become Harlem's first riot in over 20 years.

Though press accounts varied on who was to blame for the uprisings and what might follow, a common theme emerged: the inability of established Black leaders to stop the violence. "Hundreds of demonstrators chanted 'We want Malcolm X,'" wrote *Jet* editor Allan Morrison. "So-called moderate leaders like CORE's James Farmer and Bayard Rustin, who had helped organize the historic March on Washington, were powerless." No sooner had the violence subsided in Harlem than it erupted in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn. In total, the upheaval in New York City lasted six days, resulting in one death, over one hundred injuries, about 450 arrests, and nearly $1 million in damages. Perhaps more ominously, before that week had ended, violence erupted 300 miles upstate, in Rochester.

ALICE CHILDRESS'S REVOLUTIONARY THEATER

written by Soyica Diggs Colbert

Leading spokes*men* (for the most part they were men) of the Black Arts Movement (1965–1975) frequently asserted that the attainment of revolutionary consciousness required the complete upheaval and demolition of Eurocentric values. The impulse to upset the status quo by redefining beauty standards and dismantling commodity culture drove the proliferation of urban uprisings in black communities across the nation during the 1960s. Alice Childress's *Wine in the Wilderness* (1969) opens in the midst of an uprising. She uses the backdrop, however, to question the breadth of political critique, a question she also had for her fellow black contemporary artists. Did the demolition of Eurocentric values include patriarchy?

With upheaval unfolding offstage, *Wine in the Wilderness* stages a verbal altercation that results in a shift in consciousness. An argument between street-smart, high-spirited Tomorrow Marie, known as Tommy, and condescending, bourgeois artist Bill Jameson occurs over their class and gender differences. The play follows the development

between Tommy—a woman driven from her home by rioting—and Bill—a visual artist raised in the suburbs who aspires to educate the masses through his triptych titled "Wine in the Wilderness." The triptych's three paintings consist of "Black Girlhood," "'Wine in the Wilderness' . . . Mother Africa, regal, black womanhood in her noblest form," and the "Messed-up Chick."

At the start of the play, Bill has finished the first two parts of the triptych and needs a model for the third part. His friends Sonny-man and Cynthia meet Tommy in a bar and think she will serve as the perfect model for the final painting—the messed-up chick. The turning point in the play occurs when Tommy learns what role she has been cast to represent in the triptych.

From the beginning, the play draws attention to how black feminism addresses a blind spot within the rhetoric of the Black Arts Movement. With Bill as the prototype of the movement, *Wine in the Wilderness* exemplifies the potential and shortcomings of the revolutionary artist: promoting Black Nationalist rhetoric while simultaneously disparaging women and the working class.

A quick overview of other Black Arts Movement texts helps to situate Childress's play. In "The Revolutionary Theatre" (1969), an essay central to the idea of revolution as an artistic endeavor, Amiri Baraka (then Leroi Jones) calls for a shift in consciousness in

order to affect not only the liberation of black people, but also the liberation of black manhood. He contends that "[p]eople must be taught [that] . . . the holiness of life is the constant possibility of widening the consciousness. And they must be incited to strike back against any agency that attempts to prevent this widening." He argues, moreover, for a theatre of assault. He writes, "The play that will split the heavens from us will be called *The Destruction of America*. The heroes will be Crazy Horse, Denmark Vesey, Patrice Lumumba, and not history, not memory, not sad sentimental groping for warmth in our despair; these will be new men, new heroes, and their enemies most of you who are reading this."

Given the universal rhetoric of "widening consciousness," early on, specifying only male heroes is instructive. Almost four decades later, in the revised introduction to Black Fire, Baraka recalls: "The Black Arts Repertory Theater School self- (and FBI) destructed because 'Black' is not an ideology and so the unity gained under that finally nationalist but reductionist label, though it was an attempt to locate & raise the National Consciousness, could not hold". Baraka's revised introduction amidst the artists attempted to make blackness a single identity. In this case, male. Baraka reflects in hindsight the multiple ways blackness functions.

In *Wine in the Wilderness,* Bill's triptych calls attention to a long history of struggle; the Black Arts Movement artists also empowered readers and viewers to claim that history.
This reclamation, as Childress's play makes clear, requires intersecting understandings of race, class, and gender struggle. Bill initially tells Tommy that the only worthwhile activities for a black woman are being a good wife and mother. When Tommy reminds him that she is not married, Bill finds another role for her to play; he tells her she may serve as the object of his artistic inspiration: she may model for his painting. The limitation of black women's roles: girl, mother or messed-up chick, assumes a heterosexual privilege Bill does not question, but one that Childress brought into question alongside the women who contributed to the Black Women Writers Renaissance of the late 20th century.

Alice Neel, *Alice Childress,* 1950,
© The Estate of Alice Neel

LaCHANZE ON...

In her own words, director LaChanze gives her insight into what makes ***Wine in the Wilderness*** and Alice Childress foundational to the American canon.

ON ALICE CHILDRESS'S EVOLUTION FROM ACTOR TO DRAMATIST :

Alice Childress started writing plays because she wasn't getting hired as an actor as a fair-skinned black woman because fair-skinned women were only hired for love interest roles, and there were very few of those. Those parts were going to Lena Horne or Diahann Carroll, and Childress could not get hired. In her generation of actors, the roles for black women were mostly domestics, and those roles are always portrayed by darker skinned people. So she really had an issue with the fact that was her reality. She started working in other capacities behind the scenes, building sets and working with the crews, and trying to find some way to be involved in the theater, since she couldn't really participate at the level that she wanted to as an actor. So then she started writing. She started writing about her experiences in Harlem and in the industry. And she wrote stories that were not really told from the dominant gaze. It was purely from her point of view, her specific experiences in Harlem and her experiences in the arts.

ON THEMES OF THE PLAY:

Alice Childress writes for her culture, which is one of the reasons why *Wine in the Wilderness* is so powerful to me. Because it doesn't necessarily have to be about black people. Really the story is about the idea of "don't judge a book by its cover." That's the core of it -- how we have our internal biases and how they show up. And so the play deals with misogyny, but it doesn't deal with racism. It doesn't deal with issues that the dominant culture has put on black people in America. But it also is taking place during a race riot, which was very clever of Alice to write. It deals with how we look at each other and how we see each other and how we value each other.

ON CLASSISM IN THE PLAY:

This is a story about classism within the black community, because of the judgment that the other characters put on Tomorrow Marie, how they perceive this everyday working woman and don't see that this is not all of who she is. But that is something that also prevails in our community, like there's an unspoken opinion of the class structure in our culture. You have women that work at the DMV [Department of Motor Vehicles], and then you have women that work on Wall Street. As black women, we are always connected. That's just something that we have. If we see one across the room, we acknowledge each other. But there is a level of classism there we see from everyone, though it's through the men that the sexism element of classism becomes really prevalent in this.

EDUCATION SECTION

FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

This section was developed by CSC to help students and teachers prepare to see *Wine in the Wilderness*. **Feel free to share it!**

SUMMARY

Fortune has smiled on artist Bill Jameson – his friends just introduced him to a model for the final piece of his triptych on Black womanhood. But this woman, Tomorrow Marie, is no mere muse, and she's about to give Bill much more than he bargained for. Set against the backdrop of the 1964 Harlem riot on a hot summer night, *Wine in the Wilderness* is a rarely-seen play from the brilliant mind of Alice Childress, whose *Trouble in Mind* recently took Broadway by storm. That production's star, Tony winner LaChanze, brings her deep connection to Childress's work to her New York directing debut.

ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

TOMORROW MARIE (AKA TOMMY): A factory worker.

BILL JAMESON: An artist.

OLDTIMER: An old roustabout character.

SONNY-MAN: A writer.

CYNTHIA: A social worker. She is Sonny-man's wife.

THIS SECTION CONTAINS SPOILERS!

THE STORY

On the night of a riot in Harlem, a 33-year-old Black artist, Bill Jameson, is in his apartment drawing when he receives a phone call from his friend Sonny-man letting him know that he has found a model for Bill's latest art project, a triptych called "Wine in the Wilderness," three canvases on Black womanhood.

Oldtimer, an older Black man and neighbor, arrives with looted goods from the riots and needs a place to store them. Bill explains to Oldtimer about his triptych: the first part is "Black Girlhood"; the second part is "Mother Africa, regal, black womanhood in her noblest form"; the third unfinished part is about "the lost woman...what the society has made of our women...she's as close to the bottom as you can get without crackin' up."

Bill's friends, Sonny-man and his wife Cynthia, arrive at Bill's with Tommy (short for Tomorrow Marie), a 30-year-old dress factory worker in mismatched clothes and an ill-fitting wig whom Sonny-man claims kept the whole bar entertained in the middle of a riot. Tommy castigates the rioters, who have almost burned down her home and destroyed her belongings, and the firemen, who prevented

her from retrieving money that she saved in her room. When introduced to Oldtimer, she insists on learning his real name, Edmond L. Matthews, something the others had never thought to ask.

Tommy believes that she has been brought to the apartment as a potential romantic interest for Bill, but he explains that he wants to paint her that very night. Though tired and concerned about not looking her best, Tommy agrees to be Bill's model in exchange for a substantial food order from the Chinese restaurant. When the men leave to buy the food, Tommy reveals to Cynthia that she likes Bill and seeks Cynthia's help to woo him. Cynthia suggests that Bill is not a good match for Tommy, who sees through Cynthia's deflections and asks what is wrong with her.

Cynthia says Tommy is too strong and too brash, that she has to learn to let men take the lead. The men return, explaining they were unable to buy Chinese food, offering instead a single hot-dog and drink. Cynthia, Sonny-man and Oldtimer depart, leaving Tommy and Bill alone.

A tense moment ensues as Bill orders Tommy to pose so that he can begin to paint the triptych, dismissing her hesitation and insecurities in an almost openly disdainful manner. During their argument, Tommy accidentally spills a drink on herself. Bill gives her an African throw cloth so that Tommy can

change into it. Bill receives a phone call about the triptych, and Tommy overhears Bill describing the gorgeous woman in the triptych he has painted. Thinking that Bill is referring to her, Tommy gains confidence and even removes her wig. Bill returns to find Tommy self-assuredly wearing the African throw cloth and her own natural hair. While Bill begins painting, Tommy reveals personal information about her family and ancestors, and Bill shares about his family. A moment of closeness develops between Tommy and Bill, and they ultimately spend the night together.

The next morning, while Bill is in the bathroom, Oldtimer arrives looking for the loot he stored the night before. At first, he doesn't recognize Tommy. Once Oldtimer realizes his loot is gone, he becomes agitated, and Tommy attempts to calm him down. Oldtimer asks Tommy how the triptych "Wine in the Wilderness" is going and inadvertently reveals that Tommy was supposed to be posing for the "messed up chick" portion of the painting. At that moment, Cynthia and Sonny-man arrive. Tommy confronts Bill, Cynthia, and Sonny-man about their duplicity. Tommy lashes out at the group by calling them the n-word, and Bill looks up the meaning of the n-word in the dictionary in an attempt to get Tommy to stop using the word.

Tommy confesses to Bill that she loves him and declares she is leaving a changed woman.

Bill stops Tommy from leaving and admits that the real beautiful people are in the room and not what he had previously imagined. He decides to scrap his original idea for "Wine in the Wilderness" to paint a brand-new triptych with Oldtimer, Cynthia, and Sonny-man as models and Tommy to be the centerpiece of the triptych.

FOUNDATIONS

Historic figures referenced in *Wine and the Wilderness:*

ADAM CLAYTON POWELL, JR.
AMERICAN LEGISLATOR (1908-1972)

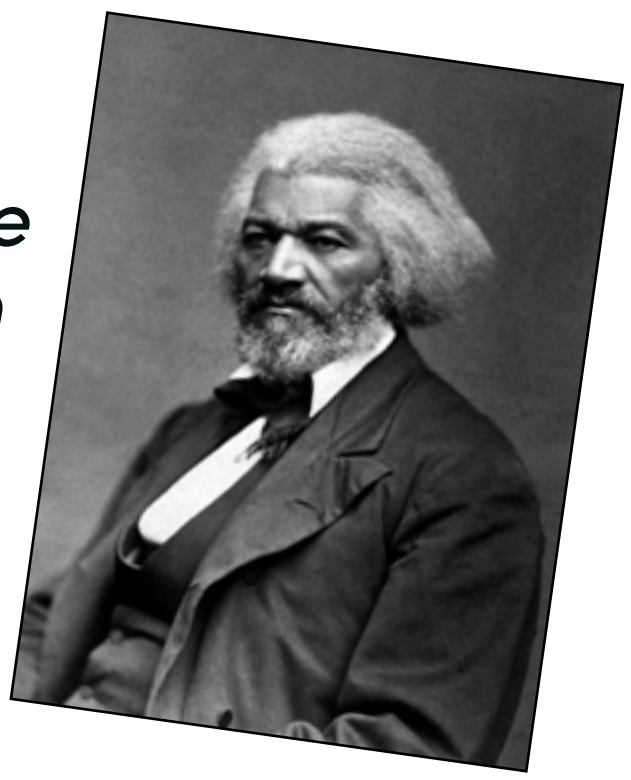
Powell was a black American public official and pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, who became a prominent liberal legislator and civil-rights leader.

ELIJAH P. LOVEJOY
AMERICAN ABOLITIONIST (1802-1837)

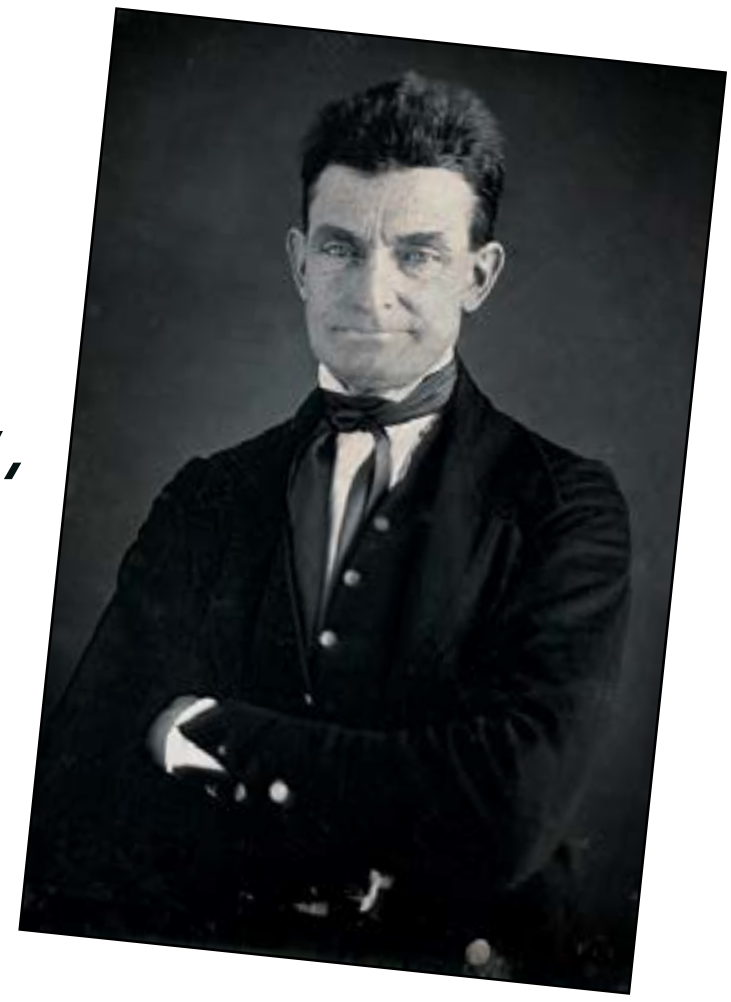
Lovejoy was an American newspaper editor, Presbyterian minister, and martyred abolitionist, who died in defense of his right to print antislavery material in the period leading up to the American Civil War.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS
UNITED STATES OFFICIAL AND DIPLOMAT (1818-1895)

Douglass was a black abolitionist, orator, newspaper publisher, and author who is famous for his first autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*. He became the first Black U.S. marshal and was the most photographed American man of the 19th century.



JOHN BROWN
AMERICAN ABOLITIONIST (1800-1859)



Brown was a militant American abolitionist whose raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia (now in West Virginia) in 1859 made him a martyr to the antislavery cause and was instrumental in heightening sectional animosities that led to the American Civil War.

HARRIET TUBMAN
AMERICAN ABOLITIONIST (1820-1913)

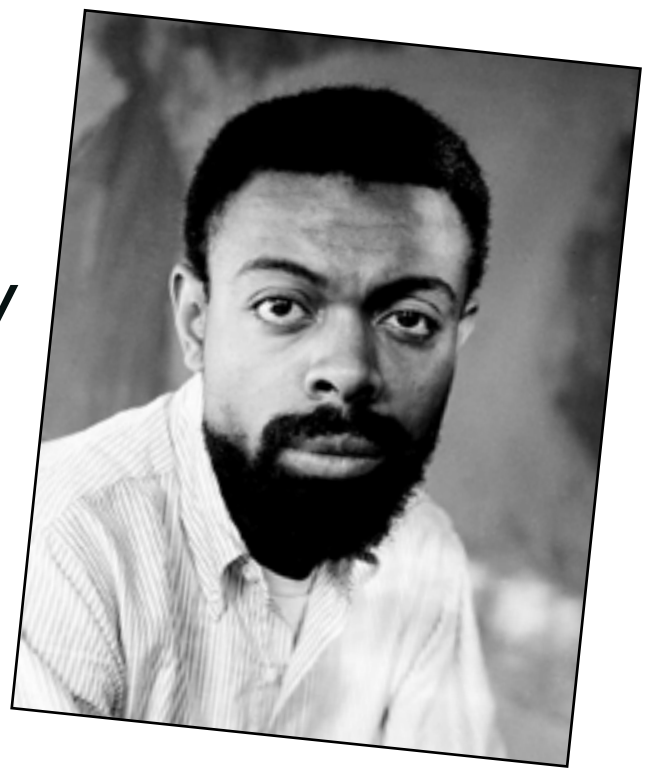
Tubman was a bondwoman who escaped from slavery in the South to become a leading abolitionist before the American Civil War. She led dozens of enslaved people to freedom in the North along the route of the Underground Railroad—an elaborate secret network of safe houses organized for that purpose.

LANGSTON HUGHES
AMERICAN POET (1902-1967)

Hughes was an American writer who was an important figure in the Harlem Renaissance and made the African American experience the subject of his writings, which ranged from poetry and plays to novels and newspaper columns.

LEROI JONES *ALSO KNOWN AS AMIRI BARAKA*

AMERICAN WRITER (1934-2014)



Jones was an American poet and playwright who published proactive works that assiduously presented the experiences and suppressed anger of Black Americans in a white-dominated society.

MALCOLM X

AMERICAN MUSLIM LEADER (1925-1965)

Malcolm X was a black leader and prominent figure in the Nation of Islam who articulated concepts of race pride and Black nationalism in the early 1960s. After his assassination, the widespread distribution of his life story—*The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965)—made him an ideological hero, especially among Black youth.

MARGARET WALKER

AMERICAN AUTHOR AND POET (1915-1998)

Walker was an American novelist and poet who was one of the leading black woman writers of the mid-20th century. She wrote *For My People* (1942), a critically acclaimed volume of poetry that celebrates black American culture. In the title poem, originally published in Poetry magazine in 1937, she recounts black American history and calls for a racial awakening.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

AMERICAN RELIGIOUS LEADER AND CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST (1929-1968)

MLK Jr. was a Baptist minister and social activist who led the civil rights movement in the United States from the mid-1950s until his death by assassination in 1968. His leadership was fundamental to that movement's success in ending the legal segregation of black Americans in the South and other parts of the United States.

MUHAMMAD ALI

AMERICAN BOXER (1942-2016)

Ali was an American professional boxer and social activist. Ali was the first fighter to win the world heavyweight championship on three separate occasions; he successfully defended this title 19 times. In addition, he was known for his social message of black pride and black resistance to white domination.

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

AMERICAN WRITER (1872-1906)

Dunbar was a U.S. author whose reputation rests upon his verse and short stories written in black dialect. He was the first black writer in the U.S. to make a concerted attempt to live by his writings and one of the first to attain national prominence.

WILLIAM MONROE TROTTER

AMERICAN JOURNALIST AND CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST (1872-1934)

Trotter was a black journalist and vocal advocate of racial equality in the early 20th century. From the pages of his weekly newspaper, *The Guardian,* he criticized the pragmatism of Booker T. Washington, agitating for civil rights among blacks. Along with W.E.B. Du Bois and others, Trotter helped form the Niagara Movement and create the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Source: Brittanica Biographies

TRIVIA

"Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow..."

Bill quotes William Shakespeare in a scene with Tommy. Can you guess in which Shakespeare play the line appears?

A) *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

B) *Macbeth*

C) *Romeo and Juliet*

D) *Hamlet*

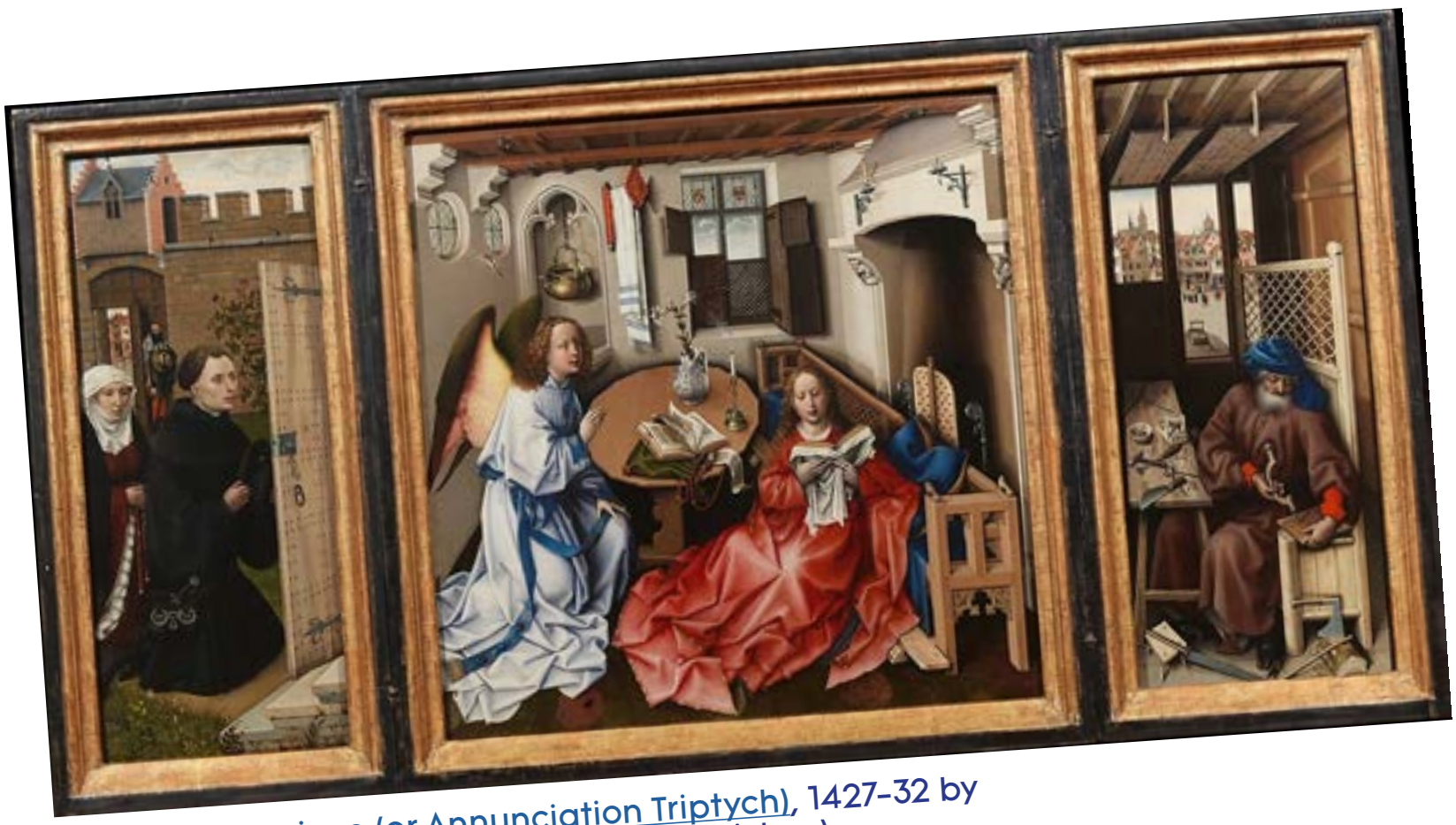
ACTIVITY (TRIPTYCH)

BILL: It's three paintings that make one work... three paintings that make one subject.

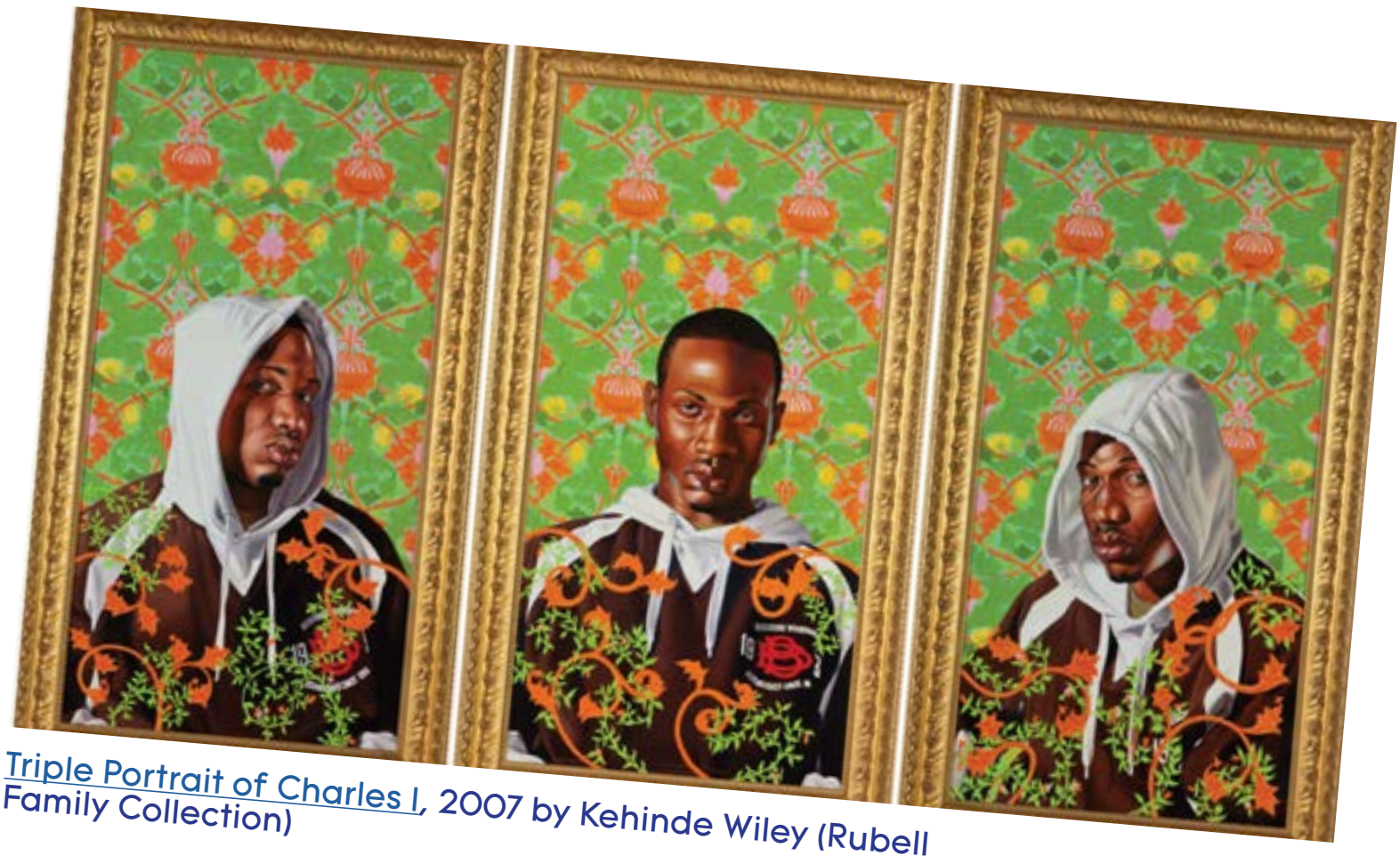
OLDTIMER: Goes together like a new outfit... hat, shoes, and suit.

OLDTIMER: [proud of his knowledge] Well, I tell you...a trip-tick is a paintin' that's in three parts... but they all belong together to be looked at all at once.

The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) defines a triptych as a work of art consisting of three sections or panels, usually hinged together. Derived from the Greek '*triptykhos*' meaning "three-layered," each individual panel is essential to making the artwork whole.

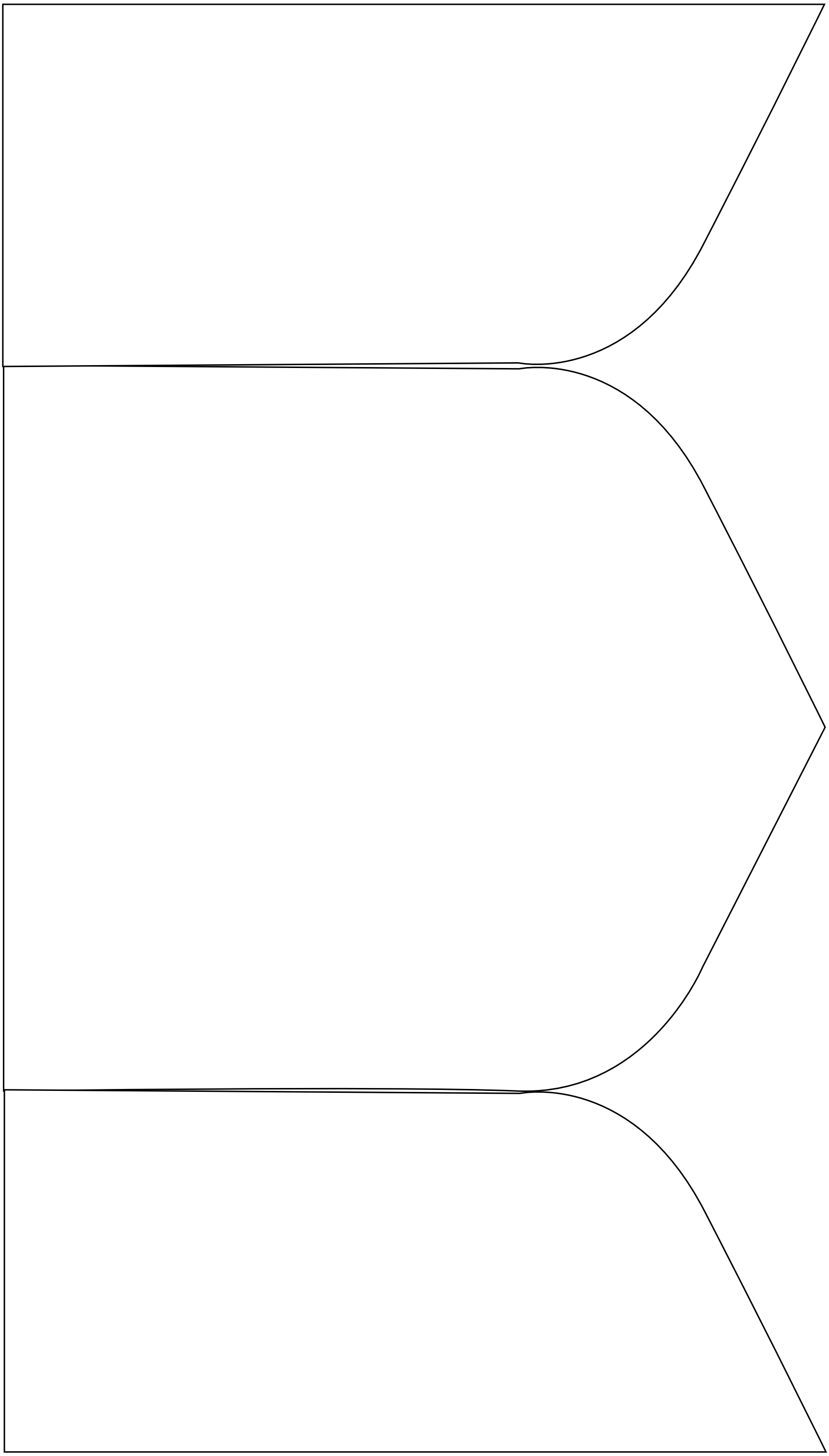


Merode Altarpiece (or Annunciation Triptych), 1427-32 by Workshop of Robert Campin (The Met Cloisters)



Triple Portrait of Charles I, 2007 by Kehinde Wiley (Rubell Family Collection)

Prompt: Draw 3 individual interests in your life that all together make you YOU.



Share your artwork with us!
Email education@classicstage.org
or tag @classicstage on Instagram.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION QUESTIONS

"The story is about the idea of 'don't judge a book by its cover.' That's the core of it -- how we have our internal biases and how they show up. It deals with **how we look at each other and how we see each other and how we value each other."** – LaChanze

THEMES

Wine in the Wilderness deals with many themes. Choose the theme LaChanze speaks about above or identify your own, then talk with a partner about how that theme is revealed over the course of the play. How does this theme impact the characters?

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

CLASSIX'S *(RE)CLAMATION* PODCAST: ACT 2, EPISODE 1 "IN SEARCH OF ALICE CHILDRESS"

Host Dominique Rider connects with dramaturg and CLASSIX team member Arminda Thomas to talk through the biography and legacy of Alice Childress

(re)clamation is an intervention in the current conversation around theater history. This podcast from CLASSIX and Theatre for a New Audience recenters and uplifts the Black writers and storytellers of the American theater – both the celebrated and the forgotten.

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY GUIDE: AMERICAN NEGRO THEATRE

From 1940–1945 the American Negro Theatre (ANT), founded by playwright Abram Hill and actor Frederick O'Neal, was in residence in the basement of the 135th St. Library, and the original home of the Schomburg Collection. One of the goals of the ANT was to produce plays that illuminated and examined African American life and the concerns of Black people, especially the Harlem community where the company was based. The ANT is responsible for launching the careers of artists including Alice Childress, Harry Belafonte, Sidney Poitier, Ruby Dee, Earle Hyman, William Greaves and many others.

Scene from the American Negro Theatre's production of *On Striver's Row* – Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, The New York Public Library. (1941).

135th Street, Schomburg Room, Readers – New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library. (1940).

PBS:
EXPLAINING "THE MOYNIHAN REPORT"

In 1965, Daniel Patrick Moynihan released his report on the Black family, titled "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action." Through structural and cultural analysis, the "Moynihan Report," as it was known colloquially, detailed that "the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family." The report caused controversy upon its release.

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

Language

The n-word is used liberally in Wine in the Wilderness. *Note that the word is not used by any non-Black characters.*

- "Teaching & the N-word: Questions to Consider" (korithamitchell.com)

  Specific strategies and considerations for classroom teachers. Additional links and further reading in article.

- "Straight Talk about the N-Word" from Teaching Tolerance (Southern Poverty Law Center)

  Specific strategies for classroom teachers.

- "In Defense of a Loaded Word" by Ta-Nehisi Coates (*New York Times*)

  Thoughts about the complexity of calling a moratorium on the n-word. If you do not have access to NY Times *articles, use THIS link for a recap.*

  (Note that strong language is used in this video)

- "Why it's so Hard to Talk about the N-word"

  A compelling 19:21 minute TED Talk by Historian Elizabeth Stordeur Pryor, who leads a thoughtful and history-backed examination of one of the most divisive words in the English language: the n-word.

Talking About Race

- "Creating the Space to Talk about Race in Your School" (National Education Association)

  Extensive resource for classroom teachers.

- "The Five Essential Practices for Teaching the Civil Rights Movement" (Learning for Justice)

  Civil Rights Movement focused, with specific advice for talking about race in the classroom.

Articles to Get Students Talking

Wine in the Wilderness *takes place against the backdrop of a riot during the Civil Rights Movement. Bill and Oldtimer discuss Oldtimer's looting early in the play.*

- "In Defense of Looting" (NPR)
- "How American Power Dynamics Have Shaped Perceptions of Looting, From the Boston Tea Party to Today" (Time)

This list of resources is from the curriculum guide for Two River Theater's 2022 production of *Wine in the Wilderness,* written by curriculum consultant Gina L. Grandi, PhD.
www.tworivertheater.org

Trivia Answer: B.) Macbeth (Act 5, Scene 5)