



FRONT PORCH ARTS COLLECTIVE CURRICULUM GUIDE

KISSING

A funny date-night play
& love letter to **our fair city**



A PLAY BY
LENELLE MOÏSE

DIRECTED BY
DAWN M. SIMMONS

K-I-S-S-I-N-G



K-I-S-S-I-N-G

A play by Lenelle Moïse
Directed by Dawn M. Simmons

MARCH 3 - APRIL 2, 2023

The Huntington

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STANDARDS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

STANDARDS: Student Matinee performances and pre-show workshops provide unique opportunities for experiential learning and support various combinations of the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts. They may also support standards in other subject areas such as Social Studies and History, depending on the individual play's subject matter.

Activities are also included in this Curriculum Guide and in our pre-show workshops that support several of the Massachusetts state standards in Theatre. Other arts areas may also be addressed depending on the individual play's subject matter.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details 1

- **Grades 9-10:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **Grades 11-12:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details 2

- **Grades 9-10:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **Grades 11-12:** Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details 3

- **Grades 9-10:** Analyze how complex characters (e.g. those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the themes.
- **Grades 11-12:** Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop related elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

Reading Literature: Craft and Structure 5

- **Grades 9-10:** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks), create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

- **Grades 11-12:** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

Reading Literature: Craft and Structure 6

- **Grades 9-10:** Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.
- **Grades 11-12:** Analyze a case in which grasping point of view required distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7

- **Grades 9-12:** Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g. recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist).

Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 9

- Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

MASSACHUSETTS STANDARDS IN THEATRE

ACTING

- **1.7:** Create and sustain a believable character throughout a scripted or improvised scene (By the end of Grade 8).
- **1.12:** Describe and analyze, in written and oral form, characters' wants, needs, objectives, and personality characteristics (By the end of Grade 8).
- **1.13:** In rehearsal and performance situations, perform as a productive and responsible member of an acting ensemble (i.e., demonstrate personal responsibility and commitment to a collaborative process) (By the end of Grade 8).
- **1.14:** Create complex and believable characters through the integration of physical, vocal, and emotional choices (Grades 9-12).
- **1.15:** Demonstrate an understanding of a dramatic work by developing a character analysis (Grades 9-12).
- **1.17:** Demonstrate increased ability to work effectively alone and collaboratively with a partner or in an ensemble (Grades 9-12).

READING AND WRITING SCRIPTS

- **2.7:** Read plays and stories from a variety of cultures and historical periods and identify the characters, setting, plot, theme, and conflict (By the end of Grade 8).
- **2.8:** Improvise characters, dialogue, and actions that focus on the development and resolution of dramatic conflicts (By the end of Grade 8).
- **2.11:** Read plays from a variety of genres and styles; compare and contrast the structure of plays to the structures of other forms of literature (Grades 9-12).

TECHNICAL THEATRE

- **4.6:** Draw renderings, floor plans, and/or build models of sets for a dramatic work and explain choices in using visual elements (line, shape/form, texture, color, space) and visual principals (unity, variety, harmony, balance, rhythm) (By the end of Grade 8).
- **4.13:** Conduct research to inform the design of sets, costumes, sound, and lighting for a dramatic production (Grades 9-12).

CONNECTIONS

- **Strand 6: Purposes and Meanings in the Arts** — Students will describe the purposes for which works of dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and architecture were and are created, and, when appropriate, interpret their meanings (Grades PreK-12).

- **Strand 10: Interdisciplinary Connections** — Students will apply their knowledge of the arts to the study of English language arts, foreign languages, health, history and social science, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering (Grades PreK-12).

AUDIENCE COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

Attending live theatre is a unique experience with many valuable educational and social benefits. To ensure that all audience members can enjoy the performance, please take a few minutes to discuss the following topics with your students before you come to The Huntington.

- How is attending the theatre similar to going to the movies? How is it different? What behaviors are and are not appropriate when seeing a play? Why?
- Remind students that because the performance is live, the audience's behavior and reactions will affect the actors' performances. No two audiences are the same, and therefore no two performances are the same—this is part of what makes theatre so special! Students' behavior should reflect the level of performance they wish to see.
- Theatre should be an enjoyable experience for the audience. It is absolutely all right to applaud when appropriate and laugh at the funny moments. Side conversations with your friends during the performance, however, are not allowed. Why might this be? Be sure to mention that not only would the people seated around them be able to hear their conversation, but the actors on stage could hear them, too. Theatres are constructed to carry sound efficiently in both directions!
- Any noise or light can be a distraction, so please remind students to make sure their cell phones are turned off (or better yet, left at home or at school!). Texting, photography, and video recording are strictly prohibited.
- Food, gum, and drinks are not allowed in the theatre. This includes our lobby spaces before, during, and after the performance.
- Students should sit with their group as seated by the Front of House staff and should not leave their seats once the performance has begun.



Learn more about playwright Lenelle Moise by scanning the QR code above!

FIND US ONLINE!

Did you know The Huntington's website provides students and teachers opportunities to more deeply explore the season's offerings and learn about upcoming events in the Education department?

Utilizing the website at huntingtontheatre.org find the answers to the following questions:

1. Who are the Managing Director and the Artistic Director of The Huntington? How long have they been in their positions? What are the primary responsibilities of their jobs? Who are the Producing Artistic Directors of the Front Porch Arts Collective?
2. Your friend broke her foot and needs to use a wheelchair. What accessibility services does The Huntington provide for patrons like her?
3. How often does The Huntington premiere new work? How many titles in the last 5 years have been world premieres on The Huntington's stages?

COME CONNECT!

The Huntington is on Facebook! Like us at [Facebook.com/HuntingtonTheatre.org](https://www.facebook.com/HuntingtonTheatre.org)

We're also on Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok.



Instagram (@huntingtontheatre)



Twitter (@huntington)



TikTok (@huntingtontheatre)

Front Porch Arts Collective is also live on Facebook! Like them at [Facebook.com/thefrontporchartscollective.org](https://www.facebook.com/thefrontporchartscollective.org) and also on Instagram and Twitter.



Instagram (@thefrontporcharts)



Twitter (@PorchArts)

Connect with us for more content on *K-I-S-S-I-N-G* and our **22/23 SEASON!**



Regan Sims, Sharmarke Yusuf and Ivan Cecil Walks in the Huntington and Front Porch Arts Collective production of *K-I-S-S-I-N-G*. Photo by Nile Hawver.

MEET THE ARTISTS!



Lenelle Moïse

INTERVIEW WITH THE PLAYWRIGHT – LENELLE MOÏSE

**Pascale Florestal, Director –
Front Porch Arts Collective**

What inspired you to write this story?

I was inspired by rom-coms, humid summers, mix-tapes, and public displays of affection. *K-I-S-S-I-N-G* is an intentionally romantic, funny, and tender story. Here, pleasure takes center stage.

Why is it set in Boston?

Although this tale is set in two fictional cities, Height Bridge and Covington, I've included gentle references to my hometown. In many ways, *K-I-S-S-I-N-G* is a love letter to my arts teachers in the Cambridge Public Schools. When I was a teenager, they nurtured my creative fire. In the multicultural nineties, my theatre friends “rolled deep” in a wide range of ethnicities, class backgrounds, and gender expressions. This play also reflects that energy.

Who is your favorite character and why?

The central character, Lala, is a budding artist. We peek into her sketchbook to follow her creative and personal evolution. She's learning about sensuality and unconditional love. As a playwright, I aim to have feminist conversations in the theatre that fuel collective responsibility. Lala reminds me to move beyond fear, guilt, and silence into spaces of inquiry, honesty, and respect. I also love Dani's joy, Albert's swagger, Jack's dutifulness, Dot's sensitivity, the Neighbor's wisdom, and Max's mystery.

Why should people come see this show?

I think of *K-I-S-S-I-N-G* as a date-night for revolutionary thinkers. Black love lives matter, too! I became a

storyteller because I am interested in empathy. With this show, I'm inviting the audience to empathize with young people as they explore romance, sexuality, and dignity. It's a whole vibe!

What is your hope for the production?

I really want this to be the kind of play that makes audiences take a deep, cleansing breath between each scene. In *K-I-S-S-I-N-G*, the characters engage in wordplay, double entendres, and repetition. I hope the dialogue sounds like music. Also, coming to the theatre takes big courage these days. We test, mask, and boost ourselves to show up for each other in curiosity and love. So, I hope this production is a life-affirming celebration of our collective courage.



Dawn M. Simmons

CONVERSATION WITH THE DIRECTOR – DAWN M. SIMMONS

**Pascale Florestal, Director of Education –
Front Porch Arts Collective**

Pascale Florestal: Dawn, tell us what you are excited about exploring in this piece.

Dawn M. Simmons: I am really, really excited about telling the story of young love, of first love. I am really excited about telling that story for people that look like me, I'm really excited to explore what this looks like for Black teens because I didn't have that when I was growing up, and the care and the wonder and the romance of this piece, I'm really interested in looking at how we get to just celebrate the joy of being young and falling in love and navigating that world. And with such humor. I cannot wait to play in Lenelle's sense of humor and her imagination. I think there's some incredible scenic things that we're going to be able to do in making the world of Lala's notebook come alive, and now having



Playwright, Lenelle Moïse and Director, Dawn M. Simmons.
Photo by Nile Hawver.

had a few great design conversations and starting to see the storyboard of what this thing is going to be. I'm really excited about healthy, young, Black love.

PF: Boston is a big part of the story. How is the story of Boston in this piece for you? What are you excited about exploring this city that has become your other home now?

DMS: My new home. Well, so what I'm going to clarify and say, it's more than Boston, it is also Cambridge. Lenelle has talked about this as her love letter to Cambridge. When I first landed here, when I first went to grad school and then when I came back, I lived in Cambridge, I lived in Central Square in Cambridge Port, and then moved around, but then came back to the Inman Square area. Her romance and love of Cambridge, even though we don't call it Cambridge, it landed with me. I knew the places she was talking about.

When I think about living in this area, Cambridge is one of the first places I think of. I hate to be like, "I don't think of Boston first, I think of Cambridge first," but that is where in my Boston journey I grew up. I would say I've been here for almost 20 years, and I've probably spent a good 10 of those in and out of different parts of Cambridge which has a high Black population. It was a place [where] I always felt comfortable, that I walked out my door and I saw myself, I saw my people, and I've seen it gentrify and I've seen it change, but I've also seen us stay and be resilient and have those neighborhoods and those pockets that are so lovely and unique to this area. The juxtaposition of the people who have grown up there who live right in between MIT and Cambridge, the schools. I lived close to Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, which is the school that Lenelle attended. I see those kids every day so it's just exploring that love letter to the city I think is really special.

PF: So it's been 20 years since you've come to Boston and you've worked on so many different kinds of shows, and at so many different theaters. This is, I believe, your first show held at The Huntington and I just want to know, how does it feel for you to be bringing this piece to the

stage of The Huntington and with Front Porch and what that process and journey has been since you started it?

DMS: It is the right piece at the right time. I think coming into The Huntington through the Front Porch and having this piece given to us, shepherded to us by a local writer who is so in love with the city, that's our mission at the Front Porch, it's our mission to support this city. I can't think of a more lovely way to partner with The Huntington than to be a part of this, to be a part of this love letter, and to show our respect. The whole reason that we formed this company was we wanted these opportunities to tell these stories in Boston for our audience, and so it is a great honor to be able to shepherd that.

I am excited, I am pinching myself, I can't believe it, and yet at the same time I'm like ... it's work, it's a job. I'm going to do it, I'm going to do it well for you, but also, I don't know, we romanticize art so much and I love that, it's part of why we do this, but at the same time I want to be like, "Y'all, this is my job. This is my work, my traffic in fantasy, my work traffics in storytelling and contextualizing the world," and for some it may be like, "Yeah, but you're not sitting behind a computer." I am. For some it's, "You're not doing manual labor." I am. We are, all of us, and so to that, I also say, "For all the romance of putting up theater, of working in theater, we are doing a job. A job that we have trained to do, a job that we train on the job to do."

PF: Yes, absolutely. What do you want the audience to take away from the story?

DMS: I want them to take away what Lenelle wants them to take away. I want them to feel warm and buzzy at the end of the show. I want them to believe in love in different ways, that love doesn't always look the way that you think; the way that you come about it is different. I want our audience to be open to exploring.

I think one of the things that I have learned as I get older, and you don't know this when you're in high school, love doesn't look the way you think it's going to. Physical expressions of love are not what you think, and I think that this show gives us that. There's a deeper conversation and I don't know how, who, or what the student audience is, but it also shows us a woman becoming in charge of herself, understanding what she wants, but she's in a love triangle with brothers.

I think at the end, Lala actually enjoys the journey of exploring and figuring things out. It is not the rush to, "This is the person I'm going to marry forever and ever," and this super heteronormative, great, have kids, have a baby die. She gets more. She gets that taste of more early on and gets to start to figure out, "What do I want? What do I need?" and she's putting herself at the center in ways that are hysterical where you're like, "Oh girl," and in ways where you see her discover what she wants and then go after it. I love it. I love it.

PF: Love it. I'm so excited. Who needs to come see this show and why?

DMS: Everybody should come see this show. Young people, students, because I think even though Lenelle did this piece a while ago, you will see yourself reflected. I can see myself reflected in it when I was that age. Like I said, it's the show, the story, that I wish I had been able to see. What I love for somebody like me in my age range though, that creeping up middle age kind of place, is also the warm and fuzzy feelings in the memories of first love and when things were innocent and they weren't easy, but they were new and I was not jaded. Also, I grew up in a different time. I don't know, babies might be jaded right now, I don't know, but I think coming and traversing this experience, meeting these people helps.

Also, it's funny as hell! There is also joy...nobody is in trauma. Nobody is in pain. You aren't fearing for somebody. I shouldn't say no one's in pain, there is pain, but it is, the stakes of that are not death. You know that they're going to go on. You get to see us in more fullness, and you get to celebrate being young, being alive, what it's like to be parents of teens.

One of the things I used to ask my parents, when I discovered that they had an interior life, was how [do you exist] in the world? Lala discovers that her parents had this interior life and what they were like before [they grew up and became parents], and what is that moment, and when do you get that journey. I think there is something for everyone, but I hope in this love letter to Cambridge, this love letter to Black youth, that all of us that ever were, or that ever touched that, come through.

PF: What should young people know about Front Porch? What are things they should be looking out for [and] understanding about what we do as a company?

DMS: Sure. I think, again, with the Front Porch, our mission is to advance racial equity in Boston through theater, through the stories that we tell, but also through equitable pay, which I think is part of why our model to co-produce with these larger organizations so that people don't have to take a hit [financially] when they work with us. The Huntington, working here, has allowed us to really live that. You're seeing people who are at the top of their game, working professionally. For some, this is going to be their first professional gig and they hit it out of the park the first time, and you are going to see them alongside professionals who have been grinding it out and have been working at this level for a while. But what we [want] to do, even in the show we did as a solo production, *Chicken and Biscuits*, equitable pay is what we're looking for.

How are we providing those educational opportunities so that people are better situated when they graduate or as they go into the working world to be able to navigate the very tough profession that is theater? It's a trades craft at different points and so everything that you should know about us is that we are trying to give back to the city, we are trying to put money into people's pockets, we are trying to find places where we make ourselves visible to each other and to the city that we live in. Everything we are doing is a love letter to the people of Boston, to the

people in the 495 Belt, Boston, and the suburbs. We're saying, "Black New England, we see you, we love you, we're going to tell your stories, we're going to get you work, you're going to work at a high caliber with great people on juicy scripts." And you're going to have fun and tackle some of our best writers." It is that excellence. We just made *Ebony Magazine* for the second time!

PF: Any final thoughts you want to leave with the young people, teachers, and other patrons who will see the show and might be reading?

DMS: Focus on the joy. Focus on the possibility. Focus on the future. Everybody in this show has a future and it is bright. Everybody gets to turn a corner, so focus on that. What would our lives be if our world, Black, white, everything, could focus on the loving and healthy future that we're all actually trying to go after? That's what I would say.



Pascale Florestal

MEET THE FRONT PORCH ARTS COLLECTIVE

Pascale Florestal, Director of Education – Front Porch Arts Collective

The Front Porch Arts Collective (“The Porch”) is a Black theatre company committed to advancing racial equity in Boston through theater, led by Co-Producing Artistic Directors Dawn Meredith Simmons and Maurice Emmanuel Parent. Pascale Florestal serves as the Education Director and Associate Producer with Donovan Holt as the Artistic Associate and Judi DeJager as the Development Manager. Our apprentices in the 22/23 season are Michelle, Jean Baptiste as the Artistic Apprentice and Oliver Rizzo as the Production Apprentice.





Maurice Emmanuel Parent

The Porch is a *communal gathering place*. For nearly a decade, Boston has existed without a professional Black theatre company employing artists of color and demanding the consideration of the major news outlets in Greater Boston. Boston's reputation as an unwelcoming and racist city, featured prominently in a seven-part Spotlight series in the Boston Globe, highlighted issues of structural racism, including the visible cultural segregation in the arts. As a Black theater company committed to rewriting those narratives, our namesake signifies a communal spirit, inspiring us to serve communities of color and produce art that is inclusive of all communities and welcoming to all audiences, to inspire a more tolerant and inclusive Boston.

Vision

- Examine the interactions between race, culture, economics, ability, gender, and sexuality from the lens of people of color
- Challenge the biased narratives toward people of color in America
- Retain diverse talent by increasing representation on stage, backstage, in the office, and in the boardroom

- Train the next generation of theater artists of color ready to address social change through theater
- Produce exciting theatre with integrity and high artistic standards

In 2021 Front Porch Arts Collective and The Huntington announced a multi-year strategic partnership where the two companies will provide each other mutually beneficial support and services, as well as opportunities for multidirectional learning and growth.

Through a strategic planning process funded by The Boston Foundation, we discovered that being in residence at a larger company was a tenable path of success to becoming a self-sustaining theatre company. Embedding with The Huntington allows us to focus on our artistic goals and institutional priorities so we can build capacity and emerge as an independent organization with a distinct artistic point of view, more highly developed structure and leadership, and robust relationships with donors and audience members. Huntington staff will provide administrative, fundraising, and marketing support, as well as mentorship and expertise around board development, financial management, and organizational structure.

In addition to the leadership and staff of both companies being longstanding colleagues with deep connections and relationships, The Huntington and The Porch share a number of core values: a commitment to presenting a wide range of narratives and perspectives from artists of color and to being anti-racist organizations, a desire to foster opportunities for BIPOC theatre artists and arts professionals, and dedication to making Boston theatre welcoming and inclusive to all audiences. We are now in our second year of the residency with *Chicken & Biscuits* representing our primary goal of self-producing as a mid-size theater. *K-I-S-S-I-N-G* is our last show of the season but our first co-production with The Huntington.



The cast, crew, and staff of the Front Porch Arts Collective's production of Douglas Lyon's *Chicken & Biscuits*

THEMES FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING

TESTIFYING BLACK JOY

**Pascale Florestal, Director of Education –
Front Porch Arts Collective**

Black Joy represents Blackness that inspires, uplifts, and supports Black culture. As Director Dawn Meredith Simmons stated about *K-I-S-S-I-N-G* by Lenelle Moïse “no Black body in this show is in peril and how necessary that is for the community to see that”.

Why is this necessary in theater? Well before the COVID-19 pandemic, plays written by Black playwrights were few and far between on Broadway and regional theaters. The shows that were produced often focused on struggle, slavery, racism, violence, and so many other negative aspects of the Black experience. According to the New York Times, “Broadway’s pre pandemic theater season featured two plays by Black writers, and one of them had been kicking around since 1981. The previous season, there was one such play, and the season before that, zero” (Michael Paulson).

With such little representation of Black stories, the need for shows to portray Black Joy became an important aspect to the Front Porch Arts Collective in planning our current season. We began our season with the laugh out

loud family comedy *Chicken & Biscuits* by Douglas Lyons, which premiered last season on Broadway at The Circle in the Square Theater.

With *K-I-S-S-I-N-G* we shift to a different experience: a much younger and bolder example of Black Joy while also paying homage to the city of Boston we call home. The other side of Black Joy—showcasing Black bodies existing despite the struggles we experience—is just as instrumental to the humor we offer to the culture for the simple reason that Black existence is a form of resistance in a predominately white industry like theater.

So, how does *K-I-S-S-I-N-G* demonstrate Black Joy? Much of the play focuses on the love and friendship between the main characters in the play. From the adults to the children, we see them all searching for love and validation, and most of them find those things even if it looks or feels different from what they initially expected. This is a romantic comedy, a genre often depicted from the white, a posture which erases the possibility of the Black experience in the hallmarks of a romantic comedy. The honest, sweet, and loving relationship that Lala shares with her father, Jack, dismantles the absent father stereotype of the Black experience we often see on stage. Jack’s caring and thoughtful way with Lala and



Regan Sims, Sharmarke Yusuf and Ivan Cecil Walks in the Huntington and Front Porch Arts Collective production of *K-I-S-S-I-N-G*.
Photo by Nile Hawver.

Dot show us the complexities of Black and Latine men outside of stereotypical hyper-masculine portrayals. There is also the opportunity to see three distinct portrayals of young Black people as they relate to one another and have honest, vulnerable conversations about their differences. We see Lala, Dani, and Albert move through adolescence while finding ways to heal from trauma without causing additional pain or hurt for one another. There is something so powerful in the way that Lala discovers what she wants from Dani while figuring out what she likes with Albert. Some may say this is not pure joy, but existing through pain and struggle is part of Black Joy and resistance.

In addition to their interactions, each character exemplifies so much of the essence of Black Joy. Lala's joyful experience of the museum in her own city with Dani is a clear example of Black Joy often left out in the media. Lala reminds us that even though she lives near the museum, it's not until Dani's ability to make her feel comfortable in that space that she could enjoy it fully without feeling fear. There is also the joy Dani exudes when he encounters the honeysuckle bush or the way he showed Lala the joy of climbing a tree and not letting the fear of falling stop her from climbing. These moments seem small but they are joy—particularly within nature (ie, woods, water), an area that has historically been a double-edged sword for Black people, representing both freedom and the possibility of death for Black and Brown people. It was not until after the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 that US beaches, parks, pools, and lakes were desegregated. However, the belief that Black people did not belong in certain spaces did not go away when the act was signed. We continue to see, even today, the ways in which Black and Brown people are treated for experiencing joy in ways white people can: Ahmaud Arbery taking a run; Tamir Rice playing with his toy; Trayvon Martin walking home with a drink and some candy—the list goes on and unfortunately may not end.

Having more depictions of Black Joy will have the ability to change people's perspective on Blackness and Black people. According to the NAACP: "A Black person is five times more likely to be stopped without just cause than a white person. A Black man is twice as likely to be stopped without just cause than a Black woman. 65% of Black adults have felt targeted because of their race. Similarly, approximately 35% of Latino and Asian adults have felt targeted because of race." The more we can see representations of Black Joy on stage and in our media, the more the world can better understand the diverse experience of being Black. Instead of negative stereotypes portraying the Black experience, what if Black Joy became the way we see Black people?

Be it in museums, theaters, pools, or just being outside, the joy of seeing a Black body be happy and themselves in spaces they usually fear is liberating; it creates a ripple effect that will be felt by every generation that experiences that joy. A few years back a trend went viral on Tik Tok: Black men frolicking. Many videos surfaced all over the internet of Black men frolicking in open fields

with sheer joy and happiness on their faces. To some this may seem ridiculous, but the activity was actually an act of resistance: a Black body running joyously through an open field, not being chased by police or others who would do them harm, a Black body which is truly free! How often is that seen in film, television, literature, or drama? Black and Brown bodies are not often seen in this joyous and free manner; this trend created space for Black and Brown bodies to feel comfortable in experiencing nature and freedom and is a clear example of the importance of the representation of Black Joy.

QUESTIONS:

1. Before now, had you heard of the concept of Black Joy? If yes, what did you think it meant?
2. Think of the stories you know about Black people. How many of those stories are sad? How many are inspirational? How many are fun?
3. What is the importance of telling Black stories that are joyful—not just for Black and Brown people, but for everyone?

THE EFFECTS OF MEDIA ON SEXUALITY

Frances Hellums, Education Associate – The Huntington

The exploration of the shifting thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that surround our bodies, relationships, gender, and sexual health is complex and universal. Whether someone was born in 1923 or 2023, we all share the experience of being on a lifelong, and completely individual adventure to know ourselves. But while the experience of discovering sexuality may be timeless, the experiences that shape this discovery have significantly shifted over time. One example of this shift is the rise of the internet and mass media, the effects of which will be seen for generations to come.

Historically, the female identifying experience of sexuality has been particularly affected by societal norms and expectations. Before the rise of the media, laws dictating what women could and could not wear, how much skin they could show, and what activities they could participate in, all impacted women's experiences of their body and therefore their experience of their sexuality. Many of these restrictions continue today. Even after the democratization of knowledge brought about by the development of the internet, women have also been discouraged from accessing any information available to them that might help them better understand their own bodies. These negative patterns are only compounded by the Black experience. Black women and girls are disproportionately portrayed in the media as hypersexualized playing roles like "the stripper", the "the prostitute", the seductive and lewd woman. This long-standing portrayal is known as the jezebel stereotype, and it doesn't just affect women's internal perceptions, but also the way that others interact with women. The way women are approached and spoken to is a learned behavior influenced by what is seen in the media and what is modeled by those in one's community.

Although many of the negative messages women receive are not new, the rise of the internet has had a dramatic impact on how often and in what format we receive these messages that then go on to shape our sexuality. Social media is continuing to intensify perceived images of the ‘perfect body’, and the drastic rise in the availability of sexually explicit and pornographic content is creating unrealistic expectations around what sex should look like. A recent survey done by Common Sense Media, a nonprofit child advocacy group, reported that three quarters of teenagers have viewed online pornography by the age of 17 with a majority then reporting that the pornography portrayed negative stereotypes of Black, Latino, and Asian people. This consumption by teens without the context of sexual health education or a nuanced understanding of the harmful stereotypes porn often portrays has an enduring impact on how young people perceive their physical and emotional relationships with themselves and others.

While continuing to recognize the harm done by our developing media landscape, it is important to recognize that these evolutions have also brought about good. Coming to terms with your own sexual identity can be challenging when you feel alone in your experience, and the internet has created a platform for young people to connect over similar experiences and share information that one may not have access to in their immediate community. The prevalence of porn has also created an information stream where sexual education has fallen short. The aforementioned survey reported that 45 percent of teenagers, particularly LGBTQIA+ teens, said that pornography provided them with helpful information about sex and helped them discover things about their sexuality.

In the years to come, the messages we receive in regard to our bodies, relationships, gender, and sexual health will continue to evolve in content and format. This information will then persist into our individual understandings of sexuality, but we don’t have to receive this information blindly. With sexuality as an ever-changing concept we can affect our relationship to it by thinking critically about the media we consume and the places where we seek out information.

QUESTIONS:

1. In *K-I-S-S-I-N-G* each character understands their sexuality in a different way. What influences (media, peers, family, societal standards, etc.) seem to have shaped the characters’ relationships with their sexuality? How are the effects of this influence shown in the play?
2. What is the history of the jezebel stereotype? What can be done to counteract the effects of this damaging image?
3. Think about the content you consume online and the messages you receive from your communities and in the media. How has this content and these messages shifted from what was experienced in older generations? How do you think this evolution has changed the way your generation understands

sexuality as compared to previous generations? How will these evolutions continue to shape future generations’ understandings of sexuality? What evolutions experienced during past generations continue to shape our understanding of sexuality today?

4. What experiences and influences have shaped your own relationship to sexuality?

DADDY’S GIRL: CONSIDERING THE RELATIONSHIP OF FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS

***Michelle Jean-Baptiste,
Front Porch Arts Collective Apprentice***

Relationships between fathers and daughters can be tricky, especially during a daughter’s teenage years. A father is the first man in a daughter’s life, and this connection can set the precedent for how a young girl engages with male relationships in the future. I can confidently say my relationship with my dad gave me a framework for what to expect; my dad was always honest about preparing me for the awkward realities he knew I’d face as a young woman.

Similarly, Jack has some honest yet awkward conversations with his daughter as gracefully as he can. He’s very determined to be a part of his daughter’s life, despite circumstances only allowing him to see her once a week; both are dedicated to building and maintaining their bond. This is further highlighted juxtaposed to the strained relationship between Dot and her father, who abandoned and disowned her after she became pregnant.

It is important that we see a deep, realistic relationship between Jack and Lala; Moise makes a point to show them engaged in recognizable, yet meaningful activities, such as going to the movies. It is a simple activity, but its consistency makes it profound; no matter how dysfunctional their relationship may seem to those on the outside looking in, they will always find their way back to each other, they will continue to show up. Jack tells Lala that “this thing we do once a week means a lot to me”, and it does.

As Lala navigates her relationships with Dani and Albert, her relationship with her father hovers close. Both offer her new and different personal and romantic experiences, but only one reassures her of his love and determination. Only one truly sacrifices his comforts for her. His time with her may be limited, but Jack’s love and effort has impact; that impact on his daughter in her formative years, will help to shape her life in ways both big and small, simple and profound. It is an undeniable foundation of love.

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you agree that Lala’s interactions with her father influence her interactions with Dani and Albert?
2. What do you think is the most important lesson a father can teach their child?

GUIDED COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS



Regan Sims, Sharmarke Yusuf and Ivan Cecil Walks in the Huntington and Front Porch Arts Collective production of *K-I-S-S-I-N-G*. Photo by Nile Hawver.

Prologue

1. When and where is the play set?
2. What does the audience see as the lights come up?
3. What is Dot doing when Jack arrives?
4. What does Dot want to eat?
5. Where does Jack run to?

Act 1

6. What is being projected on the screens?
7. What sport does Dani play?
8. Why did Albert want to drive 15 minutes out of their neighborhood to get fries?
9. How old is Lala?
10. Who is Max?
11. Why had Lala stayed home from school that week?
12. What is Jack's job?
13. Where are Jack and Lala going?
14. What did Jack and his friends call Dot when they were teenagers?
15. What does Lala add to her drawing of a building?
16. Where do Dani and Albert go to school?
17. What is Lala drawing?
18. What does Lala not like to draw?
19. Why was Lala at the bus stop in town?
20. Did Lala or Dani ask for the other one's number?
21. When is 'free night' at the museum?
22. What style of art does Dani dislike, but Lala is interested in looking at?
23. What artist do Lala and Dani talk about on the phone?
24. What is Lala making for dinner?
25. What do all the projected art pieces have in common?
26. What does Dani buy from the ice cream truck?
27. Who are "Lisa, Angela, Pamela, and Renée"?
28. What is Lala's full name?
29. Why is Albert awake at 3am?
30. What does Dani agree to watch with Albert?
31. What scene is being projected?
32. Who does Lala dance with?
33. Where does Lala bring Dani?
34. What does Lala hope that Dani will do?
35. How does Dani define his sexuality to Lala?
36. Why hasn't Dani wanted to bring Lala to his house?
37. What piece of art does Lala sketch her interpretation of?
38. How long has it been since Dani and Lala spoke?
39. Where has Dani brought Lala? Why?
40. When is Dani leaving for Stanford? What else is happening on that day?
41. Where is Lala speaking?

Act 2

42. How does Lala usually get to the movie theatre?
43. What does Dani find on their walk to the movies?
44. What is Lala's gift to Dani?
45. What classes are Dani taking at Stanford?
46. What does Lala compare Albert and Dani's living room to?
47. Who suggests that Albert and Lala kiss?
48. What is Albert surprised to find out?
49. What piece of art does Lala sketch her interpretation of?
50. What is Jack surprised to see Lala wearing?
51. What news does Jack share with Lala?
52. Where is Dani headed when Albert calls?
53. What news does Albert share with Dani?
54. What places do Lala and Dani rolls through?
55. What has Lala done with Dani's postcards?
56. What artists exhibit has Lala just come back from? What style of art does she create?
57. Where did Lala get her new phone?
58. Why did Dani call Lala?
59. What does Dani share about his sexuality?
60. What drink does Albert bring Lala?
61. Why has Albert stopped going to therapy?
62. Why did Jack leave Dot?
63. How old were Jack and Dot when they had Lala?
64. What did Dot say after they had sex?
65. What does Dot ask Jack to do with Lala?
66. Who does Jack take to the park?
67. What is different about the art Lala is making?
68. Who does Lala create portraits of?
69. What first are Lala and Albert having?
70. What does Albert say Lala does too much?
71. Who leaves the restaurant, Lala or Albert?
72. What does Max say to Lala?
73. How does Dani feel about Lala? What does he tell her?
74. What does Lala tell Dani that she will need eventually? How does Dani respond?



Regan Sims, Sharmarke Yusuf and Ivan Cecil Walks in the Huntington and Front Porch Arts Collective production of *K-I-S-S-I-N-G*. Photo by Nile Hawver.

MEET THE DESIGNER



Jason-Ardizzone-West

JASON ARDIZZONE-WEST is an Emmy award winning scenic designer & production designer whose work spans many genres including live theater, concert design, tv, film, events, and theater architecture. Jason's work has been seen across the country in theaters from coast to coast including Actor's *Theatre of Louisville*, *The Old Globe*, *The 5th Avenue Theatre*, *Berkeley Rep*, *Cincinnati Playhouse*, *Cleveland Playhouse*, *The Vineyard Theatre* and *The Public Theatre*. Some of Jason's notable projects include *Jesus Christ Superstar Live* (NBC), *Amend: The Fight for America* (Netflix), *Adele - Live in New York City* (Radio City Music Hall), *Blue Man Group* (tour), world premieres of the musicals *Bliss & Grace*, and arena concert tours for *Florence + The Machine*, *Pentatonix*, *Lana Del Rey & Dermot Kennedy*. Jason has designed events for *Cornell*, *Princeton*, *Duke*, (Herson Group Ltd) and *The New 42nd Street*. Prior to focusing on set design, Jason was an architect, working with Mitchell Kurtz Architect PC to design theater and cultural arts spaces including: *Playwrights Horizons*, *The Chautauqua Institution's Bratton Theater*, & *El Teatro Heckscher*. Jason received a Bachelor of Architecture from *Cornell University, College of Architecture, Art & Planning*, a Master of Fine Arts from *New York University, Department of Design for Stage & Film*, and is a member of USA 829.

INTERVIEW WITH SCENIC DESIGNER JASON ARDIZZONE-WEST

Pascale Florestal: How would you describe the set and how it functions?

Jason Ardizzone-West: The design for *K-I-S-S-I-N-G* was a deeply collaborative process that included director Dawn M. Simmons & playwright Lenelle Moïse, associate set designer Baron Push, as well as the rest of the creative team. Conceptually, we want to evoke a psychological space that feels like the interior of Lala's creative soul. The context of the scenic design is as if Lala - now as a mature artist - has created an art installation piece that focuses on the span of time in her youth when she realizes that she is going to be an artist. It is an abstract space that plays with the Western-European gilded-proscenium form of the Wimberly Theater, and explores ideas of framing, definitions of art, as well as iterative sketching and layering.

PF: What from the play inspired your design?

JAW: Lala's artistic personality inspired the design as did the episodic structure of Lenelle's script, which grounds the story in many ways through Lala's point of view, and that of her actual sketch book as she develops her artistic voice alongside her personal journey discovering and coming to terms with a variety of different kinds of love.

PF: What is some of the magic we can expect from the set (without spoilers)?

JAW: Lighting, video, and scenery all work together in this production to explore a nostalgic series of memories and vignettes. The physical design is simple and leaves room for a fluidity of movement and a mutability of place, acting as a conceptual and literal canvas to be activated by the actors and by the other tools of the creative team.

PF: What element of the scenic design are you the most excited about?

JAW: I'm most excited about the activation of the overall design by the humans who are sharing and receiving this story. The scenic design doesn't exist until all the elements are working together - most importantly, the people!

ADVENTURES IN S.T.E.A.M.



Sven Ortel

Art is a major theme in *K-I-S-S-I-N-G*, not just because Lala likes it, but because it is a large part of who she is. Art is what she does. The design team, as explained by the Jason Ardizzone-West, wants to make that aspect a prominent, interactive part of the play. One way to do that is through projection design. Projections in theatre are not new. In the last decade, many shows on Broadway, tours, and in regional theatres across the country have made use of projections as design element to build the world of a production and enhance audience experience. It's highly collaborative; a projections designer must work closely with the scenic, sound, and lighting designers as well as have some working technical knowledge of those disciplines. It's a complicated bit of theatre magic, and more and more it is becoming a staple of some of the most memorable theatre experiences currently on stage.

From Projection Design as Design Discipline **(Sven Ortel, Projection Designer)**

“Projection Design is concerned with creating and integrating film, motion graphics, and video technology utilizing cameras, projectors, LED walls or monitors into the fields of theatre, opera, dance, fashion shows, concerts, and other live events. It adds a layer of visual information that conventional design components (sound, lighting, scenery, costume) cannot realize. Significantly, projection design is in conversation not just with the other design disciplines, but it considers the sequencing of looks, the relationship with live performers, the presence of live audiences, and its relationship to physical spaces.

The imagery production process usually includes the following activities: research, storyboarding, acquisition of images or moving footage, editing, and compositing. The specifics of each activity are very diverse and differ from project to project. The same is true of the installation component of the design, namely the specific choices made on playback equipment, projectors, LED screens, monitors, and cameras ...”

From The Prevalence of Projections **(American Theatre, 2011)**

“...Projection technology dates back to the 1650s, when the magic lantern box was reportedly invented by Christiaan Huygens. In its earliest incarnation, the device was used to project images of the devil. Used as a tool in the 18th century for duping the credulous at séances and for creating ghostly effects at “phantasmagoria”

shows, the magic lantern was eventually picked up for more respectable uses, providing instruction and entertainment in the form of illustrated lectures in the 19th century. As a popular art form, it was put out of business in 1895, when the Lumière Brothers began screening their motion pictures...

With the invention in the early 1900s of the Linnebach projector, projections became a theatrical tool. Erwin Piscator, the German director and producer, began working with them as early as 1925. Michael Hall, an authority on the history of lighting, cites technical articles dealing with projections that date back to the '20s; he notes that projections were used in West End shows such as *Tobias and the Angel* and *Waltzes from Vienna*, both staged in 1931...”

From Projection Design: A New Focus for Theatre Departments **(Private University Products and News, 2020)**

“...Specific computer programs allow designers flexibility as they create visual effects. Images can be projected onto something as simple as a sheet or a cyclorama, or as specific as a projector screen or LED wall. With the use of projectors, special screens and specific software, a live action play or musical can look almost like a movie. In 2007, the United Scenic Artist's Union Local 829 added Projection Design to its membership category. According to the USA 829, projection design is ‘the use of image as a means of enlightening or complimenting the text of a production.’

The Projection Designer is ‘responsible for overseeing the design of the system, specifying equipment, sequencing the material in co-ordination with the other design departments and the production at large, and supervising the production of original content.’ Recent Broadway hits such as *Frozen* and *Anastasia* are examples of how projection design can take live action visual effects to another level. Projections increasingly are becoming part of plays, musicals, ballets, operas, and music concerts and the demand for people with specific training in projection design has increased.

Performing arts companies and venues include specific skills and education in job descriptions related to projection design. Proficiency in projection, video, and editing technology must be combined with the ability to create original art. An understanding of the stage action, whether it be dance, drama, or music provides context for the holistic nature of producing a live stage show. Therefore, the ability to collaborate with the team of designers, directors, and technicians is also important.

The projection designer must know how to use specialized software tools such as QLab, Final Cut, Avid, ProTools, Vectorworks, and the myriad of Adobe products available today. The designer must also know the functions, specifications, rigging, cabling and set up of projectors, screens, and computer networks. Often, the projection designer is also responsible for the maintenance, repair, replacement, and upgrading of equipment over time...”

FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION



Pride Flag. Photo by Shutter Judge on Shutterstock.

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX(UALITY)!

Sexuality:

Sexuality is a broad term encompassing our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors surrounding our bodies, relationships, gender, sexual health, and reproduction. Sexuality is unique to every person, and self-defined. For all, our understanding of our own sexuality will change over time as our thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and experiences evolve.

Sexual Identity:

Sexual Identity, like sexuality, is a broad term encompassing many elements. Sexual identity is informed by the recognition and understanding of oneself as a sexual being. It is informed by sexual orientation but is a larger term describing how one chooses to *identify* oneself. Some may choose to use labels such as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or asexual to express this identity, but these terms do not have to be a part of one's sexual identity. Like sexuality, sexual identity can evolve as we find new and deeper understandings of ourselves.

Sexual Orientation:

Sexual orientation is the presence or non-presence of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction that one feels towards others. This may include a sexual preference for people of the same, different, or all gender identities.

Terms include: heterosexual (Straight); homosexual (gay, lesbian, queer, bisexual); asexual (ace); pansexual (pan)

Romantic Orientation:

Romantic orientation is a term created in the Split Attraction Model. The Split Attraction Model separates sexual desire from romantic desire to create terms that more accurately express a person's orientation and make it clear what relationships they may be looking for. Similar to sexual orientations, romantic orientations are generally expressed in what gender identities a person is attracted to in relation to their own. Romantic orientation is frequently associated with those who feel minimal or no sexual attraction to others but is not exclusive to this community.

- *Heteroromantic (heteroromantic):* one is romantically attracted to/desires romantic relationships with the opposite gender
- *Homoromantic romantically:* one is attracted to/desires romantic relationships with the same gender
- *Biromantic:* one is romantically attracted to/desires romantic relationships with multiple genders
- *Panromantic:* one is romantically attracted to/desires romantic relationships without gender being a factor
- *Aromantic:* one is not romantically attracted to or desiring of romantic relationships at all

Biological Sex:

Biological Sex is a label assigned by a doctor and placed on one's birth certificate based on the genitals and chromosomes they are born with.

Gender Identity:

Gender identity is our internal understanding of ourselves as male, female, both, or neither. It is how one feels inside as well as how one expresses their gender through personal appearance and behavior. One's gender identity is different from biological sex and the two can be different or the same, but it is usually a feeling that begins early in life.

- *Cisgender* - someone's assigned biological sex and gender are aligned with each other.
- *Transgender* - someone's assigned biological sex is of a different gender from their own gender identity. (Not all transgender people share the same identity.)
- *Non-binary* - also known as gender queer, is a term for gender identities that fall outside of the male/female gender binary. The term non-binary generally falls under the transgender umbrella as non-binary people typically identify with a gender different from their assigned sex, but some non-binary people do not consider themselves to be transgender.
- *Agender* - someone who does not have a gender; also known as gender-neutral
- *Gender Non-conforming* - someone who's presentation does not conform to expected societal norms

Intimacy:

Intimacy is a level of closeness between two people. Intimacy takes many forms and intimate relationships can involve multiple types of intimacy. Physical, emotional, intellectual, are just a few different forms of intimacy. Becoming one type of intimate does not guarantee another. Although an intimate relationship is commonly understood to be a sexual relationship, it does not have to be. We can have intimate relationships with romantic and sexual partners, but also with family and friends.

Asexual:

Asexual is a term that, like most things, exists on a spectrum. Someone who is asexual may not experience any sexual attraction towards others, but they also may identify as experiencing sexual attraction just on a much lower level than others. Asexuality can be understood as a sexual orientation, but can also be used as an umbrella term for a wide range of sub identities.

Gray asexual:

Also known as 'grace' 'graysexual', or 'gray ace', this term is intentionally vague to apply to anyone who falls between the spectrum of asexual and sexual. These folks might experience sexual attraction every once in a while, but don't for the most part.

QUESTIONS:

1. What terms described above are referenced in the play?
2. How does having a deeper understanding of these terms change your experience of the play?
3. What are some examples of different types of intimacy experienced by the characters in the play?

Learn more about LGBTQIA+ resources in Massachusetts:

<https://www.glad.org/overview/youth-organizations/massachusetts/>

Learn more about these terms and more:

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/>

IT'S A BLACK FAMILY AFFAIR!

The 90s was a great time for Black film, television, and music. Black Identity, Black joy, Black families, Black art, Black cool wasn't just a gimmick, but true Black representation—in all its glorious possibilities. Today, we see more representation of the LGBTQIA community, and it is a similar moment of progress and representation.

Below is a sampling of what Black kids growing up in the 90s got to see and hear in their world as well as what young LGBTQIA people have and are seeing of themselves today.

90s sitcoms that highlight Black families including father/daughter relationships



The cast of *Family Matters*. Photo by Craig Sjodin via GettyImages.

Family Matters

A show centered around policeman, Carl Winslow, his family, and his next-door neighbor Steve Urkel. The story follows the family and their crazy misadventures mostly caused by Urkel. Throughout the entire series we see the relationship between Carl and Laura go through the typical growing pains. Carl, like most fathers, doesn't want to see his daughters grow up too fast. Laura, like most daughters, wants to grow up and become her own person.



The cast of *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*. Photo provided by Getty Images.

Fresh Prince of Bel-Air

In this iconic sitcom, the working class and upper-class clash as Will Smith is sent to live with his wealthy aunt and uncle, Vivian and Philip Banks. The series follows the misadventures of Will as he tries to navigate adolescence in Bel Air while trying to remain true to himself and his Philadelphia-hood roots. Throughout, we see how Will influences Phil and Vivian's kids, especially the youngest, Ashley; over time, that influence affects the dynamic between father and daughter.



The cast of *Moesha*. Photo provided by EOnline.

Moesha

This show follows the adventures of adolescence through the lens of a 16-year-old Moesha as she tries to discover who she is as she juggles romance, friendship, family dynamics, and school. Through all her ups and downs, her friends stick by her and support her.

Moesha and her father, Frank have a difficult relationship, especially around Frank remarrying after her mother's death; communication between the two is almost non-existent. It is a constant battle of will between parent and oldest child, often resulting in clashes which affected the entire family.



The cast of *One on One*. Photo provided by IMDB.

One on One

Flex Washington suddenly becomes a full-time dad to his daughter, Breanna when his ex-wife Nicole takes a job out of the country. Flex's life is flipped upside down as he tries to juggle fatherhood and dating. Father and daughter must learn to live with each other which forces them to grow up and truly connect to each other.

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you have a favorite family sitcom that you enjoy watching? Why do you enjoy it? Does it look and feel like the world you live in everyday?



Grant Halliburton Foundation-LGBTQ Students. Photo by granthalliburton.org.

QUEER REPRESENTATION IN FILM AND TV

representation today—especially LGBTQIA youth. In many of these films/show, the presence of young people exploring and learning who they are and who they love is centered and celebrated, even when the path is difficult and painful. What is always clear is that these young people have a place in their communities—whether given or found—and that place is sacred.

Below are some titles to potentially add to your watchlist:

- *Straight*
- *BoJack Horseman*
- *Big Mouth*
- *Heartstopper*
- *Atypical*
- *Sex Education*
- *Never Have I Ever*
- *Brother to Brother*
- *Black./Womyn.: Conversations with Lesbians of African Descent*
- *Saturday Church*
- *Feel Good*
- *Shera*
- *Black Is ... Black Ain't*

QUESTIONS:

1. What are some films or TV shows in which you have been able to see parts of yourself represented?
2. How does more representation of LGBTQIA people—particularly young people—enhance media or art?



Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gallery. Photo provided by Pinterest.

LOOKING AT ART: THE ROLE OF THE DOCENT

Lala is on a journey of discovering she is an artist. With a shared passion for art, it is not surprising that Lala and Dani visit the museum often. Art museums typically provide extensive learning opportunities for visitors like them. Docents, or museum guides, are individuals who help museumgoers explore the exhibits through tours and lectures. A great docent will help art-enthusiasts fully experience what a museum has to offer. Docents need to be good listeners who ask questions which help individuals make a personal connection to the artwork they have come to see. Docents are well-informed and educated on the topics they are tasked with teaching.

Art of course does not exist exclusively in museums; you may see art in your local library, in your home or on your walk to school. Street art, art which is created in public spaces for open viewing, is an important part of Boston's character and culture. In 1991, the city's local government began a campaign to encourage student muralists to help "cover" graffiti on walls and buildings. This effort gave way to some of the most beautiful street art in the United States.

Select one of the following murals from the list below. Imagine you are a docent, responsible for giving a school tour at one of these local sites. Create an outline of talking points highlighting important information about the art and the artist who created the piece. Why did you select this mural to share? How is it important to the city of Boston?

Love Thyself

Artist: Victor "Marka27" Quinonez
Location: 199 Quincy Street, Dorchester

Sangre Indigena

Artist: David "Don Rimx" Sequveda
Location: 75 Malcolm X Boulevard, Roxbury

Breathe Life 3

Artist: Rob "Problak" Gibbs
Location: 808 Tremont Street, Roxbury

QUESTIONS:

1. Define the roles of curators and docents. How do they compare and contrast?
2. Do you think Lala or Dani would make good docents? Why or why not?



Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gallery. Photo provided by Conde Nast Traveler.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

MAKE A 90S PLAYLIST!

Lala has been described as an “Around the Way Girl” who spends the summer with her eyes on Dani, a boy who shares her passion for 90s music. R&B artist L.L. Cool J released his single, “Around the Way Girl” in 1991 and it made its way to the top of the Billboard charts. The song is L.L. Cool J’s anthem to the young women he remembers from his youth:

““ She can walk with a switch and talk with street slang
I love it when a woman ain’t scared to do her thing
Standing at the bus stop sucking on a lollipop
Once she gets pumping it’s hard to make the hottie stop
She likes to dance to the rap jam
She sweet as brown sugar with the candied yams
Honey-coated complexion
Using Camay
Let’s hear it for the girl, she’s from around the way””



Boyz II Men. Photo provided by Ron Galella via IMDB.

Of course, there are many great artists from this era of music, including Usher, Boyz II Men, and Jodeci. But the 1990s gave rise to some of the greatest female performing artists of all time, “around the way girls” ushering forth a decade of R&B brilliance. An “Around the Way Girl” is someone described as strong, independent, and street smart. The Urban Dictionary further defines this term as someone who “knows how to get hers in a man’s world, all while leavin men droolin”.

Create a playlist of songs from **female performing artists of the 1990s** which you think best represents this era of music and could be utilized in a production of *K-I-S-S-I-N-G*. Select your top 10 songs on Spotify [www.spotify.com] or another music platform and create a QR code to share your playlist easily with others.

1. Compare your playlists with the class.
2. Did most individuals agree on the top 10 artists?
3. Create a new list of top 10 songs (also of female artists from the ‘90s) representing the choices made by the group. If there is disagreement, the class should vote on who should make the top 10 songs performed by female 1990s R&B artists.
4. Now select your favorite top performer and create an artist profile. What was this performer or group’s most popular song? Provide a brief biographical summary and an overview of the performer(s) career.
5. Extra Credit: What is a “mixtape” and how was it created in the 1990s?



TLC. Photo provided by IMDB.

SAMPLE R&B 90s PLAYLIST (for teacher’s reference)

- *All My Life* – K-Ci & Jo Jo
- *Almost Doesn’t Count* – Brandy
- *Before you Walk Out of My Life* -Monica
- *Can’t Take My Eyes of You* – Lauryn Hill
- *Cupid* – 112
- *I Like*- Guy
- *I Wanna Know* – Joe
- *Nobody (feat. Athena Cage)* – Keith Sweat
- *I Gotta Be* – Jagged Edge
- *Can We Talk* – Tevin Campbell
- *No Scrubs* - TLC

CREATE A *K-I-S-S-I-N-G* SHOW POSTER

Lala and Dani have many mutual interests including their love of art. Creating and appreciating art is an important part of the play; with this in mind, design a show poster for The Huntington's production of *K-I-S-S-I-N-G*. You can see examples of show art on the Huntington's website and by researching your favorite production titles.

What is a show poster?

Show art posters are used to help promote a show (play, concert, other performances). These attention-getting posters display important details about the event, such as the date, time, location, the producer/promoter, and how to get tickets. Show posters can also invoke the mood(s) or themes of the show/event through its design. These posters are then displayed in places where they will catch as many eyes as possible—cafes, school bulletin boards, bare walls along city sidewalks.

Consider the play, *K-I-S-S-I-N-G* and think about the context of the show:

- In what historical period is the play set?
- What influences in art and music can be incorporated into the design?
- What are the major themes of the play?

Once you have determined the imagery best suited to promote this play, get started!

1. Use an 8×11 sheet of paper.
2. With the paper vertically oriented (portrait), create an outline for the artwork (rough sketch.)
3. Decide on a medium (crayon, paint, pencil, collage etc.) for the poster.
4. Create your show poster!
5. Share your poster with the class and explain your design process.
6. Discuss as a group. Does the poster have all required elements? What mood does the poster convey?
7. Hang all the show posters up in the room and compare them visually. Are there recurring images or themes across designs? How similar or different are the class creations?
8. Vote on one class favorite and share it with the Huntington's Education Department by emailing it to education@huntingtontheatre.org with the subject line "Our class's show art for *K-I-S-S-I-N-G*". Be sure to include what school you are from when you send it along

WRITE A CRITICAL REVIEW!

Art critics often review the productions showing at local theatre companies. Reviews can help theatregoers decide whether they want to see a particular performance. You are attending a *K-I-S-S-I-N-G* student matinee and have been asked to write a critical review

for other students following the performance you attend. To appropriately evaluate the production, consider the following guidelines to complete this assignment:

1. Before you begin your review, do a search online for other play reviews to get a sense of how various writers critique plays.
2. Read the play in its entirety before attending the student matinee. You will be best prepared to view the production if you understand what you will be seeing; having this context will help you get the most out of the performance.
3. Attend the production and keep an open mind. You might want to take notes on various aspects of the production. What surprised you? Notice the costumes, set pieces, props, lighting, and sound designs. Consider both the acting and directing? Which elements of the show did you like most?
4. After reading the script, did anything surprise you when you saw the story brought to life on stage?
5. Write your review. Provide your reader with a brief overview of the production, including the title of the play, the playwright, and name of the director. Include information about the cast and crew, particularly if there are any notable figures involved in the production. Then you must interpret, analyze and evaluate what you saw. Give the audience your general impression and your final recommendation. Do your best to avoid spoilers to leave room for the audience to also make discoveries for themselves. Make sure to send The Huntington a copy by emailing your review to education@huntingtontheatre.org.

DID YOU KNOW?



The **Front Porch Arts Collective** is dedicated to fostering the next generation of arts critics in the theatre industry. With facilitation by some of the top arts reviewers in New England, the **Young**

Critics Program seeks to cultivate and develop the skills of writing and critique in a diverse and inclusive cohort of participants, broadening the reach of theatre in all communities as well as multiplying the perspectives engaged in industry conversations.



To learn more about Young Critics Program, use this QR code!



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