

EDUCATION RESOURCE

# CLYBOURNE PARK

— BY BRUCE NORRIS —

*Touring 7 Sep – 12 Oct 2019*  
*#clybournepark*





## A note from our Artistic Director

Rapture Theatre, in association with South Lanarkshire Leisure & Culture, is bringing its new production of Clybourne Park to venues across Scotland from 7 Sep – 12 Oct 2019.

Rapture Theatre, formed in 2000, is one of Scotland's leading touring theatre companies. Rapture creates new and exciting productions of existing traditional and contemporary classic plays. The company's productions entertain and stimulate, creating a compelling modern relevance which highlights the timeless nature of each play's central themes and ideas. Rapture's work is aimed at regular theatregoers, first time attendees, and both young and mature audiences. Rapture regularly works with popular casts and prestigious creative teams, touring the company's work across Scotland.

Rapture Theatre combines its thrilling theatre productions with a strong desire to create positive social and cultural change through its creative learning, education and participation work and has previously worked with Scottish Association for Mental Health, Citizens Advice Bureau, Sense over Sectarianism, the Scottish Government and Show Racism the Red Card to raise awareness and create positive change around social, political and cultural issues.

In 2017, Rapture's Touring and Education Projects were highly successful, engaging over 5000 school pupils and students. The feedback we received was tremendous, with 97% of participants rating their experience 10/10. Teachers also requested that we add their school/college to our mailing list and that we inform them of future workshop/development opportunities:

*"Just wanted to drop a wee note to say a big thanks for coming to do the workshop at Calderside Academy. The pupils found it to be a very enjoyable and beneficial experience. We very much appreciate you taking the time to come and see us. Please keep us informed of further productions as we would definitely come to see them!"*

Maureen Quigley English Teacher Calderside Academy

Our next project sees a continuation and development of our previous collaboration with the anti-prejudice activist organisation, Show Racism the Red Card (SRTRC) whose aim is to challenge all forms of discrimination in our society.

Rapture's latest production is of the multi-award winning, *Clybourne Park* by Bruce Norris, and will be touring throughout the country in September and October 2019. The play focuses on the instance of deep-seated, although frequently well-disguised, prejudice within modern society, and examines the attendant hypocrisy and immorality accompanying it. The play contrasts the widespread, overt racism and prejudice which was prevalent in the 1950s with the more subtle, yet persistently pervasive racism and prejudice of the twenty-first century, and questions whether - despite increased awareness, rhetoric and legality - very much has changed. While principally dealing with racial discrimination, the play also explores prejudice, disadvantage and discrimination in all its forms, (mental illness, class, gender and sexuality), while encouraging audiences to examine and question their own beliefs and attitudes. *Clybourne Park* uses sharp satire to examine all forms of prejudice and, by taking a unique, darkly comedic stance, encourages audiences to become more aware, and to reflect on, their own un-examined prejudices.



FOR SCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENTS, *Clybourne Park* explores a number of challenging ideas and provides a highly motivating platform, which encourages students to reflect both on the external world and on their own individual experience. The play demonstrates that, in real life, there are no easy answers, and the play's complex characters reflect the reality that individuals are never simply "good" or "bad." The audience is taken on a journey which encourages ever more self-reflection as the characters' different, and often questionable, attitudes and points of view are revealed and explored. *Clybourne Park* offers a fantastic opportunity for class discussion as well as for individual reflection, and is a perfect basis for the promotion of debate and discursive or persuasive writing on a number of pertinent, current topics. For audiences, it raises more questions than it provides answers and is all the more exciting and stimulating as a unique piece of theatre, because of that.

The Education and Creative Learning Project, that accompanies the show, is workshop based and was designed in a collaboration between Rapture and SRTRC. It has the following aims:

- To raise awareness and create positive change around the issue of discrimination, in particular the areas of race, gender, sexuality, class and mental health.
- To inspire school pupils (the education project will be targeted at secondary school pupils, 14-18 years) to examine and challenge their own and their peer groups' attitudes to race, gender, sexuality, class and mental health.
- To create a legacy for the project – each workshop and participation session will have a follow - up session 6-8 weeks after the initial session – to ensure a considered and sustainable development opportunity for participants. The workshop materials will be published alongside the project and will be made available on-line. Rapture will also discuss, with each school, ways in which the project can have a sustained legacy.
- To create a lasting impact on all participants that will enable and inspire the participants to be good citizens with a clear sense of fairness, justice and equality

The Education and Creative Learning Project will be made available in the 14 local authority areas that the production of *Clybourne Park* will visit. The project is free to all interested schools attending the production. Availability and booking enquires can be made [here](#).

We hope to see you there.

Many thanks,



MICHAEL EMANS  
Rapture Theatre Artistic Director

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1961 film still of *A Raisin in the Sun* starring Sidney Poitier.

### Side Note:

Bruce Norris's *Clybourne Park* was inspired by an earlier play, *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry – a groundbreaking play, written in 1959, during the period of the Civil Rights Movement, which became the first play written by a black woman to be performed on Broadway. Hansberry's award-winning play centres around the lives of a black family and, despite its content being considered controversial at the time, it became a commercial success. Norris refers to some of the characters in *A Raisin in the Sun* in *Clybourne Park* making the two plays inextricably linked.  
(More information on this can be found in the 'An Inspiration' section.)

# The Production

**Production Name:** Clybourne Park  
**Producers and co-producers:** Rapture Theatre in association with South Lanarkshire Leisure & Culture  
**Writer:** Bruce Norris  
**Running Time:** 135 minutes with 15 mins interval  
**Age Recommendation:** 14+

## TOUR DATES:

07 Sep	VILLAGE THEATRE, East Kilbride
10 Sep	THEATRE ROYAL DUMFRIES, Dumfries
12 Sep	BEACON ARTS CENTRE, Greenock
13 Sep	LANARK MEMORIAL HALL, Lanark
17 Sep	FTH, Falkirk
18 Sep	MOTHERWELL THEATRE, Motherwell
20 Sep	THE BRUNTON, Musselburgh
24 Sep	HOWDEN ARTS CENTRE, Livingston
25 Sep	EASTWOOD PARK THEATRE, Giffnock
27 Sep	ADAM SMITH THEATRE, Kirkcaldy
28 Sep	MACROBERT ARTS CENTRE, Stirling
01 Oct	EDEN COURT THEATRE, Inverness
03 - 05 Oct	TRAVERSE THEATRE, Edinburgh
07 Oct	CORRAN HALLS, Oban
10 - 11 Oct	BYRE THEATRE, St Andrews
12 Oct	PALACE THEATRE, Kilmarnock

*NB There will be a post-show discussion lasting 30 minutes at every venue*

**Artistic Team:** Michael Emans - Director  
Ken Harrison - Design  
Laura Hawkins - Lighting design  
Pippa Murphy - Composer & Sound Design

**Cast:** Robin Kingsland, Jackie Morrison, Frances McNamee, Adelaide Obeng, Benjamin Stratton, Jack Lord, Steven Scott Fitzgerald and Vinta Morgan.

**Producton Team:** Tony Peaker - Production Manager  
Steven Scott Fitzgerald - Stage Manager

# Synopsis

## ACT I

It's 1959 and Russ is sitting in his house in Clybourne Park, a neighbourhood of Chicago. In two days time, Russ and his wife Bev who have sold their home, are moving to a suburb outside of the city, where Russ will begin work at a new office. Bev, and their maid, Francine, can be seen packing some final boxes. Since the death of Russ and Bev's son, Kenneth, a Korean War veteran, the house (and the neighbourhood as a whole) has been a source of pain for the couple. Bev hopes the move will be a fresh start. Russ however, is becoming more depressed and angry as time passes. Bev is worried about him and asks their minister Jim to come over and speak with him. Russ is not pleased and tells Jim to leave him alone. Before Jim can leave, Albert, Francine's husband, arrives to collect her. He then volunteers to help with a heavy trunk that needs to be carried downstairs. Later, Karl Lindner, a representative of the neighbourhood community association, arrives with his wife, Betsy. He expresses his concern that Russ and Bev have sold their house to an African-American family. A tense discussion ensues. Jim tries to bring Francine into the conversation by asking her whether her black family would be happy moving into a white neighbourhood? Russ declares the conversation over, the sale of the house is final! Karl continues to make his arguments heard, but Russ refuses to budge. Karl then tries a threat. He says he will scare the buyers away by telling them why they are getting such a good deal on the property (Kenneth's suicide). Russ erupts and shouts that he does not care about the community that turned its back on his son after he returned from war a broken man, then treated his family like "the plague" after their son's suicide. The situation turns violent, and everyone leaves. Russ tells Bev that he will bury the trunk in the backyard.

## ACT II

It's 2009, Steve and his pregnant wife, Lindsey are meeting with their lawyer, Kathy (the daughter of Betsy and Karl), in the same Clybourne Park house where Russ and Bev once lived. They are joined by Kevin and his wife, Lena (the great-niece of Lena "Mama" Younger from Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*), and Tom, their lawyer, to discuss a petition that objects to Steve and Lindsey's proposed renovation of the house. They are planning to build a larger house on the property, but the new house's plans are inconsistent with the "historically significant" neighbourhood's aesthetic. While the group attempt to wade through the legalese, they are consistently interrupted by phone calls and Dan, a builder who is digging up a dead myrtle tree in the backyard. Lena tries on several occasions to get her point across and finally loses her patience, feeling that she is the only one taking the matter at hand seriously. She takes great pride in Clybourne Park's history of African-American struggle. This house in particular has personal connection to her, as her great-aunt lived there, and she happened to be the first black person to move



into the neighbourhood. A heated argument about racism, reverse racism, gentrification, sexism, and marginalization ensues, during which Dan enters dragging a trunk he has unearthed beneath the tree. The squabble succeeds in offending everyone, and they all leave. Dan manages to get the trunk open. He finds a letter written by Kenneth to his parents. As Dan reads the letter, 2009 dissolves into the day that Kenneth committed suicide. Kenneth is writing a letter to his parents as Francine arrives to start her work; his mother comes down from bed to reassure her son that the world is going to change for the better.

## \*Classroom Discussion:

### Then and Now

Clybourne Park take place in one house at two different times. The play asks the question: What has changed in 50 years to both the house and the neighbourhood? Discuss.

If you have seen the production, think about visual aids that may have jumped out at you to illustrate the changes that have taken place.

Playwright Bruce Norris was interested in the idea of change throughout time, but he is quoted in saying that he doesn't think "*human nature*" has changed "*in fifty or two thousand or ten thousand years*" Do you agree with him or not? Defend your decision in a class debate.

# Characters



**RUSS/DAN** played by Robin Kingsland

Act 1 – Russ

Russ is a middle-aged man married to Bev. He is selling his home and moving to a new house and a new job. Russ is also struggling with the death of his son Kenneth. He blames the neighbours and their treatment of Kenneth on his return back from the Korean War. Russ has become depressed and moody, which worries Bev.

Act 2 – Dan

A chatty builder who is working on the demolition of the house. At the time of the play, he is digging in the back yard, where he comes across Kenneth's old trunk, and brings it into the house.



**BEV/KATHY** played by Jackie Morrison

Act 1 – Bev

Russ's wife, also in her mid-forties. Bev likes to work on 'projects' (moving home, her husband's mental health). She is worried about Russ's state of mind, since the suicide of their son. She is also very naïve – believing she has a 'friendship' with the maid, Francine, and deludes herself by dismissing her son's war crimes.

Act 2 – Kathy

Steve and Lindsay's lawyer. Kathy is also Betsy and Karl's daughter (from Act 1)

## **FRANCINE/LENA**

Act 1 – Francine

Francine is Bev and Russ's maid. She is in her thirties. She is married to Albert and is working an extra shift to help with the move. She does not think that she and Bev are friends, to her it is only her job. It was Francine who found Kenneth after he committed suicide.

Act 2 – Lena

Lena is married to Kevin. She is the great-niece of the black family who are buying the

house in Clybourne Park in the 1st act. She has a strong personal attachment to the house with lots of fond memories of playing there as a child. She is a strong, confident black woman, who is not afraid to speak her mind.



**IM/TOM** played by Benjamin Stratton

Act 1 - Jim

Jim is in his late twenties and is a minister. At Bev's request he has stopped by to see Russ and enquire how he is doing. His ministrations are ineffectual with most falling by the wayside.

Act 2 - Tom

Lena and Kevin's lawyer. He is also gay.



**ALBERT/KEVIN** played by Vinta Morgan

Act 1 - Albert

Albert is Francine's husband; he is in his thirties. He arrives at the house to pick up Francine. He offers to help bring Kenneth's old trunk downstairs, much to Francine's annoyance. His presence in the house mostly appears unwelcome.

Act 2 - Kevin

Kevin is a laid back, easy going guy, married to Lena. However, he loses his temper when Steve insults his wife.



**KARL/STEVE** played by Jack Lord

Act 1 - Karl

Karl is in his thirties and is married to Betsy. He calls Bev and invites himself over to the house; because he has something important to discuss (the selling of the house to the Younger family, "who just happen to be" black).

Act 2 - Steve

Married to Lindsey. They are trying to buy the house in Clybourne Park and plan to tear it down. Steve is quite blunt and not very politically correct. He causes a lot of tension.



**BETSY/LINDSEY** played by Frances McNamee

Act 1 – Betsy

Betsy is in her late twenties and is married to Karl. She is deaf and is eight months pregnant.

Act 2 – Lindsey

Married to Steve, and like her character in the 1st act, she too is pregnant. She is the antithesis of Steve and tries very hard to underplay the tensions he causes. She is very politically correct and tries a bit too hard to be sweet and polite.



**KENNETH** played by Steven Scott Fitzgerald

(Act 2)

Russ and Bev's son who has (prior to Act 1) committed suicide. He was accused of war crimes after fighting in the Korean War.

## \*Classroom Discussion:

### Double Casting

When an actor plays more than one role in a production, this is known as Double Casting. Often this is the choice of the director to cut down on cast members, however in this instance, the writer Bruce Norris wrote *Clybourne Park* to specifically be played double cast.

What does this achieve? What effect does it have? Explore the relationship or connection between the characters that some of the actors play. (E.g Russ and Dan or Francine and Lena).

## Bruce Norris

Bruce Norris is an American actor and playwright who lives in New York. He is the author of *Clybourne Park*, which premiered at Playwrights Horizons in New York, in 2010, before transferring to the Royal Court Theatre and the West End in London. A darkly playful response to Lorraine Hansberry's seminal drama,



*A Raisin in the Sun*, *Clybourne Park* is the only play to date to have received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the Tony, Olivier and Evening Standard Awards for Best Play.

His other plays include *The Infidel* (2000), *Purple Heart* (2002), *We all Went Down to Amsterdam* (2003), *The Unmentionables* (2006) and *A Parallelogram* (2010) which were all first produced by Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago; *The Pain and the Itch* (Playwrights Horizons, Steppenwolf, 2004, Royal Court Theatre, 2007; winner of Chicago's Jefferson Joseph Award for Best New Work); *The Low Road* (Royal Court Theatre, 2013) and *Domesticated* (Lincoln Center, 2013).

Bruce Norris is the recipient of the Steinberg Playwright Award (2009) and the Whiting Foundation Prize for Drama (2006). As an actor he can be seen in the films *A Civil Action*, *The Sixth Sense* and *All Good Things*.

Source: Drama Online



Below are a few excerpts from an Interview with Bruce Norris during the run of *Clybourne Park* at the Royal Court Theatre. Copyright: *Royal Court Education Background Pack*, compiled by Rebecca Manson Jones.

**Where did the idea of recreating Karl Lindner and the characters of Lorraine Hansberry's play as off-stage shadows come from?**

*A Raisin in the Sun* was one of the first important American plays I was exposed to - via the movie - and it wasn't long after that experience that I started working as a child actor. I was fascinated by how plays work, not only structurally but also with sets, costumes, and so forth. The Hansberry play is so solidly built a play that it was a good starting point. My problem, though, was that since I was a privileged little white boy in Houston, TX, I didn't have any easy way to relate to the characters... except the character of Karl, the antagonist. At the same time, as I became an actor I quickly found that the best parts, perversely, are always the ones that arouse the audience's negative reactions. So, since my access to the story of *Raisin* was only through the side door, so to speak, I thought it would be interesting to allow this character to escape from the play, like a refugee, and run off to drop in on another story - one intimately connected with *A Raisin in the Sun*.

**Do you think you would always have been a “political” or socially engaged writer or you think these particular times we live in have compelled you to write/choose these subjects?**

I'm not really sure I am politically or socially engaged, by which I mean, I don't think that plays lead to political change of any profound kind. I often write about people within a given political milieu (or affected by one), because I find the questions raised to be interesting to me personally. But I certainly don't think that the plays I write foment change, but I do like to ask myself why we believe certain things about ourselves, politically speaking, usually self-flattering things. But that's just part of my argumentative nature. So I think I probably would be the same kind of writer no matter what political era I was born into.

**Something I particularly like about the play is that it doesn't tell us what to think - and anytime you might think “oh I agree with him/her” something else happens to question it. How did you manage to get yourself into so many heads at once? Is this the actor background coming through again?**

Yeah, again, it's multiple improvisation, and a deep aversion to preaching to people. Whenever people come to hear "politics" in the theatre it is inevitably to reconfirm their pre-existing beliefs and pat themselves on the back - which for me is not that interesting.

## **There are a lot of laughs in the play – but is it a comedy? Do you want audiences to take anything else from it?**

Without trying to sound too precious - I think a play is whatever it is. We don't ask whether a book or a painting is a comedy or a tragedy - those are just some categories that a critic named Aristotle made up. And I think people take away whatever they put in - I've had a more profound experience watching certain Bugs Bunny cartoons than I have at some Shakespeare plays.

## **BRUCE NORRIS ON CLYBOURNE PARK**

*"I saw A Raisin in the Sun as a film in probably seventh grade. Interestingly our Social Studies teacher was showing it to a class of all white students who lived in an independent school district, the boundaries of which had been formed specifically to prevent our being integrated into the Houston school district and being bussed to other schools with black students. So I don't know whether our teacher was just obtuse, or crafty and subversive, but she was showing us a movie that basically in the end -- because Karl doesn't come in until the second act -- is really pointing a finger at us and saying we are those people. So I watch it at twelve years old and I could realize even then that I'm Karl Lindner. To see that when you're a kid and to realize that you're the villain has an impact. For years I thought I wanted to play Karl Lindner but then as time went on I thought it's really an interesting story to think about the conversation that was going on in the white community about the Younger family moving into Clybourne Park. It percolated for many years and that's how I ended up writing this play."*

Bruce Norris in an interview with Rebecca Rugg, Artistic Producer at Steppenwolf Theatre Company

*"It was very important to me to depict the people in 1959 as people with good intentions. They're not racists in the KKK way - they're people who think that they're doing the right thing to protect their neighbourhood and their children and their real estate values. But that's a form of self-interest that has as its unfortunate byproduct a really racist outcome."*

Bruce Norris in an interview with Kurt Andersen at Studio 360

*"Audiences have this sort of childlike need to identify who their hero is in a story and to root for them and get behind them, and one of my favourite things to do as a writer is to confound that impulse."*

Bruce Norris in an interview with Kurt Andersen at Studio 360



## \*Classroom Discussion:

### Integration

In many of his interviews Bruce Norris questions why American's don't voluntarily integrate. In "The Freedom to Provoke" he states, "I think it has to do with discomfort - with feeling like you're the minority. It's uncomfortable to live in an area where you are that minority, no matter which way it works." Do you agree or disagree? Are there areas like this in the community where you live? "What do you think could be done to make things better for minority families?"



## Lorraine Hansberry - An inspiration.

Bruce Norris's inspiration behind *Clybourne Park* comes from the groundbreaking play *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry. Given the time period within the Civil Rights movement, *A Raisin in the Sun* was cutting-edge not only in terms of its content depicting

the inner life of a black family, but it was a commercial success with audiences alike, and most importantly its writer was the first black female playwright to have her work performed on Broadway, as well as being only the fifth woman in history to win the New York Critics Circle Award.

*A Raisin in the Sun* depicts the Younger Family and their struggle to make a better life for themselves. Set in Chicago, Lena (Mama) buys a house for her family with the insurance money she has received through the death of her husband - a house in an all-white neighbourhood, a neighbourhood called Clybourne Park.

The play, importantly, contains only one white character, and he is called Karl Lindner. Karl tries manipulation, patronisation and bribery to stop the Younger family from moving into their newly purchased home. Having failed to persuade them he leaves with the parting shot "*I sure hope you people know what you're doing?*" Karl is the only character who directly appears in both *A Raisin in the Sun* and Norris's *Clybourne Park*. Others are mentioned or alluded to, but it is the imagined scenario of what Karl does after leaving the Youngers that sets up the premise for what he does next (he goes to the couple selling the house to now try to persuade them not to sell).

Hansberry's inspiration for *A Raisin in the Sun*, came for her own childhood experience of moving into an entirely white neighbourhood at a young age. At the time, many areas in the US had restrictive covenants written into their property deeds - making it illegal for property owners to buy or rent to specific minority groups.

Hansberry's father was an estate agent who was also an active member of the NAACP. In 1937 he purchased a home in a 'restricted' neighbourhood which prohibited the sale of property to African Americans. The covenant stated, "*no part of said premises shall in no manner be used or occupied directly by a negro or negroes.*" The dispute against this injunction became a landmark

case going all the way to the Supreme Court (Hansberry Vs Lee). The Court sided with the Hansberrys, but it wasn't until 8 years later that they eventually ruled restrictive covenants a violation of the 14th amendment.

*"My father was typical of a generation of Negroes who believed that the "American way" could successfully be made to work to democratize the United States. Thus, twenty-five years ago, he spent a small personal fortune, his considerable talents, and many years of his life fighting, in association with NAACP attorneys, Chicago's "restrictive covenants" in one of this nation's ugliest ghettos.*

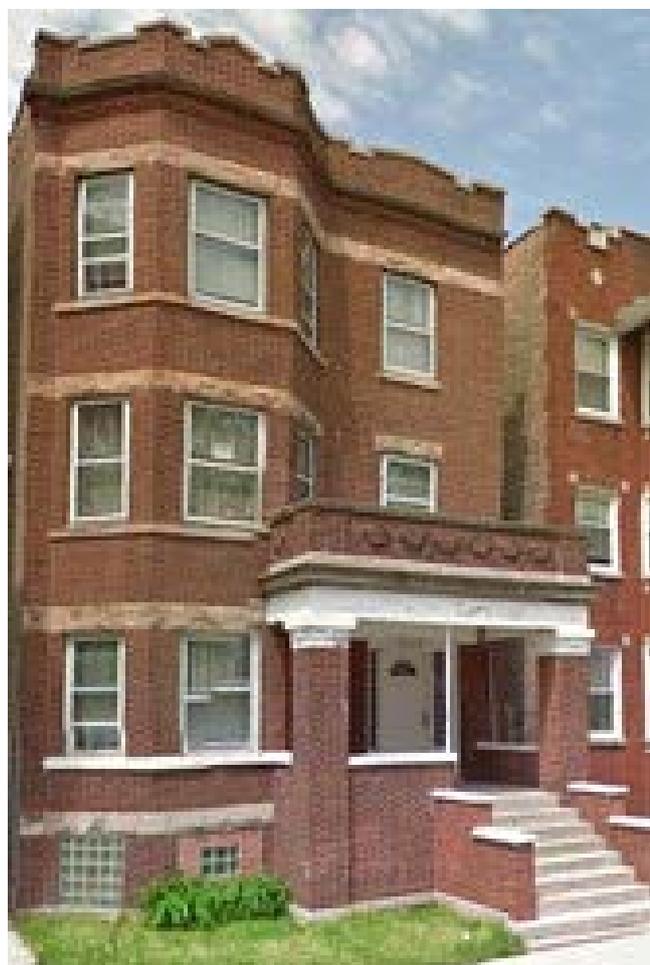
*That fight also required our family to occupy disputed property in a hellishly hostile 'white neighbourhood' in which, literally, howling mobs surrounded our house. One of their missiles almost took the life of the then eight-year-old signer of this letter. My memories of this 'correct' way of fighting white supremacy in America included being spat at, cursed and pummelled in the daily trek to and from school. And I also remember my desperate and courageous mother, patrolling our house all night with a loaded German Luger, doggedly guarding her four children, while my father fought the respectable part of the battle in the Washington court."*

Lorraine Hansberry, Letter to the Editor, New York Times, April 23 1964

*"The history  
of America is  
the history of  
Private Property"*

- Clybourne Park

Real-life home of Lorraine Hansbury,  
now part of a dedicated museum to  
the writer



## \*Classroom Discussion:

### Themes and other Areas of Study

- COMMUNITY
- GENTRIFICATION
- DISCRIMINATION
- RACE AND RACISM
- POLITICAL CORRECTNESS
- WAR & PATRIOTISM
- MENTAL HEALTH
- DISABILITY, CLASS and GENDER

- THE 3RD ACT -

If you had to write a third act to Clybourne Park. What would it look like?

Ideas to consider -

What will it be like in another 50 years time?

What happens to the house/neighbourhood in the interim between 1959 and 2009?

Create an additional scenario between some of the characters.

Or choose an idea of your own to explore.



# CLYBOURNE PARK

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