

Clybourne Park Script

SETTING

The set is the interior of a modest three-bedroom bungalow, 406 Clybourne Street, in the near northwest of central Chicago. There is a sitting room with front door access, a fireplace with an oak mantelpiece, and a separate dining area with built-in cupboards. At the rear of the dining area, a swinging door leads to a kitchen. A staircase leads up to a second floor, and beneath it, another door leads down to a basement. There is a hallway and a bathroom door as well.

NOTE

In the original production, the actor playing Jim and Tom also played the role of Kenneth. In some subsequent productions a separate actor was hired to play the role of Kenneth alone.

CLYBOURNE PARK

ACT ONE

September 1959. Three o'clock, Saturday afternoon. The house is in disarray. Cardboard boxes are stacked in corners. Some furniture has been removed, shelves emptied. Pictures have been removed from the walls and carpets have been rolled and stowed on end. Not far from the fireplace, Russ sits alone reading a copy of National Geographic. He is dressed in pajama top and slacks, socks, no shoes. On a table next to him sits a carton of ice cream into which, from time to time, he dips a spoon. Music plays softly on a radio next to him.

After some time, Bev descends the stairs carrying boxes to place in a cardboard box. As she packs, the steps in look at Russ.

BEV. You're not going to eat all of that, are you? *(He turns down the radio.)*
RUSS. *(With his mouth full.)* Whaddya say?
BEV. What ice cream is that?
RUSS. Um. *(Looks at the carton.)* Neapolitan.
BEV. Well, don't feel compelled to eat that.
RUSS. *(Shrugs, barely audible.)* Going to waste. *(He turns the radio back up and Francine enters from the kitchen, wearing a maid's uniform. Russ remains in the foreground as Bev joins her.)*
FRANCINE. *(To Bev.)* So, if it's all right I'm just going to put these condiments here in the big box with the utensils.
BEV. That is what I would do, yes, but you do mean to wrap them first?
FRANCINE. Oh, yes ma'am.

BEV. Oh, Now Francine I was wondering about this chafing dish, which we have practically never used.
FRANCINE. Yes, ma'am.
BEV. Do you own one of those yourself?
FRANCINE. No, I sure don't.
BEV. Because I do love to entertain though for the life of me I can't remember the last time we did. But still, it does seem a shame to give it away because it's just such a nice thing, isn't it?
FRANCINE. Oh, yes it is.
BEV. And it just looks so lonely sitting there in the cupboard as I was wondering if this might be the sort of thing that would be useful to you?
FRANCINE. Ohhh, thank you, I couldn't take that.
BEV. *(Re: chafing dish.)* See how sad he looks!
FRANCINE. You don't want to be giving that to me.
BEV. Well, nonetheless I'm offering.
FRANCINE. No, I don't think I should.
BEV. Well, you think about it.
FRANCINE. But thank you for offering.
BEV. You think about it and let me know.
FRANCINE. Yes, ma'am.
BEV. And do put some paper around those.
FRANCINE. Yes, ma'am. *(Francine goes into kitchen. Bev returns with more to pack, pausing Russ.)*
BEV. That's a funny word, isn't it? Neapolitan.
RUSS. *(Turns off radio.)* Funny what way?
BEV. What do you suppose is the origin of that?
RUSS. Uh-hh ... Naples, I imagine.
BEV. Naples?
RUSS. City of Naples?
BEV. Mmm.
RUSS. Or as narrators in

BEV. Because a person from Naples, I mean they wouldn't be called, well, not Neapolitan, obviously. I guess that was already taken! *(Laughs, then serious.)* On the other hand, you do say Italian. But come, though, and specifically ones that end in S, because there must be a rule of some sort, don't you think? Help me think of a city other than Naples that also ends in S? *(Pause.)*
RUSS. Uh-hh ...
BEV. Oh fiddle. Um.
RUSS. Des Moines.
BEV. Not a silent S.
RUSS. Brussels.
BEV. All right. There you go. And how do we refer to them?
RUSS. Belgians.
BEV. But, the people from the city.
RUSS. Never met anyone from Brussels.
BEV. But there has to be a word.
RUSS. Look it up.
BEV. Where?
RUSS. Dictionary!
BEV. But it's not going to say this is the capital of Belgium and by the way the people who live there are called —
RUSS. Give Sally a call.
BEV. She won't know that.
RUSS. She and Ray went to Paris.
BEV. So?
RUSS. Close to Brussels.
BEV. Sally never knows those sorts of things.
RUSS. Oh, Oh.
BEV. What?
RUSS. Parisians.
BEV. What about them? *(Francine returns with more packing.)*
RUSS. *(To Bev.)* ...

Clybourne Park script is a powerful and thought-provoking play that explores themes of race, real estate, and the socio-economic dynamics of neighborhoods. Written by Bruce Norris, this Pulitzer Prize-winning work serves as a sequel to Lorraine Hansberry's classic play, "A Raisin in the Sun." In this article, we will delve into the intricacies of the "Clybourne Park" script, examining its context, themes, characters, and impact on contemporary theatre.

Background and Context

"Clybourne Park" is set in two acts, taking place in the same house in Clybourne Park, a neighborhood in Chicago, but separated by 50 years. The first act is set in 1959, just as a black family is about to move into the predominantly white neighborhood, prompting tensions among the

residents. The second act takes place in 2009, when the area is predominantly black and a group of white developers seeks to tear down the house to build new condominiums.

Connection to "A Raisin in the Sun"

The script of "Clybourne Park" directly responds to the events of "A Raisin in the Sun," highlighting the racial tensions and conflicts that arise when communities undergo demographic changes. In Hansberry's play, the Younger family faces opposition from their white neighbors, particularly from a character named Karl Lindner, who represents the fears of white residents regarding integration. Norris's script extends this conversation, questioning whether real progress has been made in the 50 years since the Younger family's struggle.

Structure and Format of the Script

The "Clybourne Park" script is structured into two acts, each divided into several scenes that focus on the interactions among the characters. The dialogue is sharp and often laced with humor, despite the serious themes tackled throughout the play. The format adheres to traditional playwriting conventions, including:

1. Character names in bold before dialogue
2. Stage directions italicized
3. Clear scene headings to indicate location and time

This structure not only aids in the clarity of the narrative but also enhances the comedic and tragic elements of the dialogue.

Key Characters

"Clybourne Park" features a small cast of characters, each representing different perspectives on race, class, and homeownership. The principal characters include:

- **Russ and Bev Daldry:** The white couple selling their home in 1959, grappling with their own prejudices and fears.
- **Karl Lindner:** A representative from the "Clybourne Park Improvement Association," who embodies the community's resistance to integration.
- **Beneatha Younger:** The daughter from "A Raisin in the Sun," who is referenced in the play and represents the aspirations of black families.

- **Steve and Kathy:** The white couple in the 2009 act, who wish to gentrify the neighborhood, reflecting contemporary issues of urban development.
- **Dan and Lena:** African American residents who confront the changes in their community in the second act.

Each character serves to illustrate the complexities of race relations and the impact of gentrification on communities.

Themes Explored in the Script

The "Clybourne Park" script delves into several poignant themes that resonate with audiences, including:

1. Race and Identity

The play examines race relations in America, demonstrating how deeply ingrained prejudices can influence interactions among neighbors. The dialogue often highlights the discomfort surrounding discussions of race, showcasing how characters navigate their identities amidst societal expectations.

2. Gentrification and Change

In the 2009 act, the conflict revolves around the desire for development and the consequences it has on existing communities. Norris critiques the notion of progress, questioning whether it genuinely benefits the original residents or simply displaces them in favor of wealthier newcomers.

3. The Concept of Home

Homeownership is a central theme throughout the play, representing stability, belonging, and community. The struggles of the Daldrys in 1959 and the developers in 2009 highlight the emotional connections people have to their homes and the lengths they will go to protect or change them.

4. Humor in Seriousness

Despite its heavy themes, Norris infuses the script with humor, utilizing wit and irony to engage the audience. The comedic elements serve to underscore the absurdity of the prejudices and conflicts portrayed, allowing for a more nuanced exploration of serious issues.

Impact and Reception

Since its debut in 2010, "Clybourne Park" has received critical acclaim and numerous awards, including the Tony Award for Best Play. It has been staged in various theatres around the world, sparking discussions about race, community, and the legacy of segregation. The play's relevance continues today as cities grapple with gentrification and the complexities of multiculturalism.

Audience Reactions

Audiences have responded to "Clybourne Park" with a mix of laughter and discomfort, often reflecting on their own experiences with race and community. The play encourages viewers to confront their biases and consider the implications of their actions within their neighborhoods.

Educational Significance

The "Clybourne Park" script is also significant in an educational context, often being studied in high school and college theatre courses. It provides a rich text for discussions around race, identity, and the role of art in social commentary. Teachers and students alike can analyze character motivations, thematic elements, and the historical context that informs the narrative.

Conclusion

The "Clybourne Park" script stands as a vital contribution to contemporary theatre, challenging audiences to reflect on their perceptions of race, community, and progress. Bruce Norris's incisive dialogue and the play's dual-structured narrative create a compelling exploration of issues that remain pressing in today's society. As we continue to navigate the complexities of urban life, "Clybourne Park" serves as a reminder of the ongoing conversations about race and identity that shape our communities. Through its blend of humor and poignancy, the play invites all of us to reconsider our roles within our neighborhoods and the legacies we inherit.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 'Clybourne Park' about?

'Clybourne Park' is a play by Bruce Norris that explores themes of race, real estate, and community dynamics through two acts set in the same house in Chicago, one in the 1950s and the other in the present day.

Who wrote the script for 'Clybourne Park'?

The script for 'Clybourne Park' was written by Bruce Norris, who is known for his incisive exploration of social issues.

What are the main themes addressed in 'Clybourne Park'?

The main themes of 'Clybourne Park' include racial tensions, gentrification, and the shifting nature of community identity over time.

How does 'Clybourne Park' relate to Lorraine Hansberry's 'A Raisin in the Sun'?

The play serves as a response to 'A Raisin in the Sun,' particularly addressing the aftermath of the Younger family's decision to move into a white neighborhood, and the community's reaction to that change.

Has 'Clybourne Park' won any awards?

'Clybourne Park' won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2011 and has received several other accolades for its sharp writing and social commentary.

What is the structure of the 'Clybourne Park' script?

The script is divided into two acts; the first act focuses on the 1950s, while the second act jumps to the present day, showcasing the same location but with different characters and societal issues.

Are there notable productions of 'Clybourne Park'?

Yes, 'Clybourne Park' has been produced in various prestigious theaters worldwide, including Broadway, and has been praised for its engaging performances and relevant themes.

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