



DETROIT '67

Educator's Supplemental Material

by Stori Ayers 11/7/14

Pre-Show Discussion Topics

INSTRUCTIONS: Use the discussion topic below to explore themes and elements from the play, Detroit '67, before seeing or reading the show. Pose the questions to the students giving them at least 10 minutes to journal privately. Then, open up the topic for discussion amongst the class. Encourage students to speak freely and respect the ideas of their classmates. Students may also read their journals aloud. It is important that everyone feels comfortable expressing their ideas in the discussion. Students can also explore the discussion topic in an essay for a homework assignment or possible extra credit.

TOPIC 1: Hometown Demographics



The play Detroit '67 is set in Detroit, MI in 1967 — a time during the Civil Rights Movement where the main goal in the United States was to end racial segregation and discrimination against black Americans. The racial demographics of Detroit has significantly changed over the years due to the first and second Great Migrations of African Americans from the Southern United States. These migrations increased Detroit's African American population by over 100 times. The White population of the city peaked in 1950 and then steadily declined. According to the most recent census, the racial demographics of Detroit, MI are as follows:

Black or African American – 81.55%

White – 12.26%

Hispanic or Latino – 4.96%

Asian - 0.97%

American Indian and Alaska Native – 0.33%

Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islanders – 0.03%

Consider your hometown:

1. How many different ethnicities are represented in your hometown? What are they?
2. What percentage of the population do you fit into?
3. Are you in the majority or minority population?
4. How do you think your daily life at home is affected by the demographics of your town?
5. Are there pros and cons to being in the minority or majority population? List them.
6. Would you consider your hometown to be segregated? Why or why not?

Post-Show Discussion Topics



Instructions: Use the discussion topic below to explore themes and elements from the play, Detroit '67, after seeing or reading the show.

TOPIC 2: Interracial Dating

INSTRUCTIONS: Characters Lank and Caroline have a “thing” for one another. When Lank’s sister Chelle confronts Caroline about her relationship with Lank, the controversy of interracial dating is addressed. Consider both arguments below. Have two students read aloud the following dialogue:

CHELLE: ... You think I don’t see it?

CAROLINE: See what?

CHELLE: The way you slide under Lank’s nose like a perfume. Tease him with your scent so you can play him for the fool. Make him believe you an’ him is the same. But you ain’t the same.

CAROLINE: You don’t know what you’re talking about.

CHELLE: I know exactly what I’m talking about.

CAROLINE: I’m sorry that being here has caused you trouble. Believe me. But that’s not my intention. Lank sees that.

CHELLE: Lank got a lotta blind spots. I got 20/20. I know what it mean to have somebody like you get into his skin. He start believing things in this world is different than they really are. He start believing it’s possible to be you. To live like you. To dream like you. And it ain’t.

CAROLINE: How do it’s know it’s not possible?

CHELLE: Because I do! I been living like this a lot longer than you have. Just cuz you hanging ‘round over here don’t mean you know what it’s like to be us.

CAROLINE: I never said I did. But I know what it’s like to be me! To never have a family or a place to call home. You have that, at least. You have something here...with each other. Something I never had with anyone...until Lank-

CHELLE: You ain’t got that with Lank.

CAROLINE: You don't know what I have with him.

CHELLE: Oh, I know. You and him can pretend to be cut from the same cloth all you want. But outside this basement tell a different story. Lank got his eye on the sky but Detroit ain't in the sky. It's right here on the ground. A ground with a lot of dividing lines. We on one side and you on the other.

CAROLINE: And what about when the lines are blurred? When you feel something that can't be cut up or divided? When you know you belong somewhere even if people tell you you're not allowed? That's where we meet, Lank and me. Somewhere outside of all the zones and restrictions. Some place where we're not stuck. Maybe that's a place you refuse to go, but that's where someone like Lank and someone like me are exactly the same. And if you don't want to see that, maybe you're the one with the blind spot!

CHELLE: I'm the one with the blind spot? (beat) You can run out of here right now. Leave town with these cops chasing you. They can harass you and bruise you and even try to kill you. That may make you the same. But if you survive it, you can leave. You can disappear and reappear wherever else you want, in any zone you choose. Live a new life without permission or boundaries or some kinda limits to your skin. Can Lank do that? Can any of us? Everywhere we go, the lines is real clear. Ain't nothin' blurred about it. You might dream the same. You might even feel the same heartbreak. But til' he have the same title to this world that you got, you and him ain't gon' never be the same! And that ain't blindness tell me that. That's 20/20.

INSTRUCTIONS: Pose the questions below to the students giving them at least 10 minutes to journal privately. Then open the topics up for discussion amongst the class. Encourage the students to speak freely and respect the ideas of their classmates. Students may also read their journals aloud. It is important that everyone feels comfortable expressing their ideas in the discussion. Students can also explore the discussion topics in an essay for a homework assignment or possible extra credit.

Questions:

1. Does race and ethnicity matter when choosing a mate?

2. Is interracial dating only an issue of the past and no longer is a concern today?
3. How significant is someone's color in terms of their individuality?
4. Can people truly not see color?
5. How do you choose your girlfriends/boyfriends?
6. Are you more likely to choose a mate who shares your ideology or your race?



EXERCISE A

The Search for Identity

Chelle, Lank, Bunny, Sly, and Caroline each make choices and take actions that identify and define who they really are and want to be. “Identity” is defined as the qualities, beliefs etc. that make you different from someone else. After seeing or reading the play, Detroit '67, each student should work independently to answer the 15 questions below. Allow students at least twenty minutes to answer all of the questions. Then follow the instructions for individual and group reflections.

1. What do you find deeply satisfying/enjoyable? What are your spiritual beliefs?
2. What is your moral code? (i.e., where do you draw the line between right and wrong, ethical and unethical, bad and good?)
3. What kind of a career do you desire?
What area of the country or world do you desire to live in?
4. Do you desire to marry? If so, to what type of person and when? Are you already married? If so, to what type of person and when did you marry?

5. Do you desire to have children? If so, how many and when? Do you already have children? If so, how many and when did you have them?
6. What kind of an image do you want to project to others?
7. What do you enjoy doing with your leisure time?
8. What type of people do you enjoy being with and why? Where could you meet these types of people?
9. What kind of a relationship do you desire to have with your relatives? friends? neighbors? people you meet for the first time?
10. What do you do to ensure the type of relationships described above?
11. Do you desire to improve the quality of your life and that of others? If so, in what ways, and how do you hope to achieve these goals.
12. What are your thoughts about death and dying?
What do you hope to be doing 5 years from now
(career, family, leisure, geography, etc.) 10 years from now?



INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION: After the students have had sufficient time to answer the questions, they are ready for their individual reflection. Based on their answers, each student should make a list of 20 characteristics that most define them as a person. Then, put an X by those characteristics they would like to delete or modify. Finally, the student should list any characteristics they would add to their personality if they could. Encourage the students to be honest with themselves, as this portion of the activity will best serve them if they're honest. Also, the students should feel secure in knowing that their answers are confidential and they will not be required to share this reflection.

GROUP REFLECTION: Gather the students for a class discussion. The students should find out how similar or different their answers to the 15 questions are from their classmates. Ask the students the following questions: Who else shares a similar identity to you? Are you surprised by the results? Why or why not?

EXERCISE B

The Need for Self-Expression

As a homework assignment, students should choose one of the activities listed below to express how they were feeling after having seen or read Detroit '67. What did the play leave you thinking? What questions did you have after seeing or reading the show? Perhaps you don't have the words, but you know how it looks, sounds, feels, or smells. Use one of the activities below express your response to the show.

1. **Move Your Body.** Choose a song that resonates with you and dance! Allow the words of the song to speak and your movement to express your feelings.
2. **Use Your Words.** Write a poem. Not sure how to write poetry? Start with a haiku . A haiku is a short poem that uses sensory language to capture a feeling or image. They are often inspired by an element of nature, a moment of beauty or a poignant experience. There are 3 lines to a haiku poem that follow a 5-7-5 syllable rule. The first line of the poem contains 5 syllables, the second line has 7 syllables, and the third line has 5 syllables. For example:

Eyes wide shut hear me Resonating my false truth In a world denied.

As you write your haiku remember that a haiku uses sensory language, the use of the five senses in a poem: touch, smell, taste, sound, vision. Also, a Haiku is usually able to be expressed in one breath.



3. Complete a Art Project. Break out the art supplies. Any arts and crafts activity is will do. Almost all crafty activities inspire you to convey ideas without restraint.
4. Celebrate Style. Survey your wardrobe. What do you primarily wear? Colors? Solids or Prints? Pants? Dresses? Shorts? Jeans? Slacks? Choose an outfit to wear with intention. Make a statement with your clothes that express who you are. Today you're the premiere fashion designer.
5. Support Sports. Do you usually play sports? If not, here's the chance. Sports are a healthy way for passionate people to express determination and release stress. Solo activities like biking, surfing, or martial arts help gain focus and confidence. Team sports foster a sense of camaraderie through cooperation and fair play. Depending on how you feel, choose a sport to play that will help your self- expression.
6. Be the Teacher. Mentoring someone younger than you is a helpful way for one to foster healthy relationships while learning to articulate concepts in elementary terms. These encounters launch dialogue, require give and take, and allow you to express yourself while helping others.
7. Capture Snapshots. Use your camera phone to create a photo album with images that tell a story. When you get tired of taking selfies, flip your phone around and start snapping. Experimenting with light, shadows, color, and subject will allow you to convey distinct moods and build an album of self- expression.
8. Go Outdoors. Whether urban or rural, your environment offers opportunity for creativity. Plant a garden, and watch it grow from seed to supper or sapling. Hike to the top of a mountain or the roof of your apartment building, and sketch the skyline.

9. Take a Tour. Give a friend a tour of your school, home, bedroom, workplace etc. It will make you feel knowledgeable, while giving the inside scoop. Then reflect on yourself as a tour guide. How did you describe things? What does it say about how you feel? Clue in on the things you overlooked as well as those you shared. Why did you overlook certain things? Was it a conscious or subconscious choice to share?
10. Go Digital. Most cell phones today have recording capabilities. Use your phone to make your own video documentary. Then stage a screening for classmates or relatives.

Adapted from 10 Activities to Encourage Self-Expression from www.scholastic.com.