

GOOD PEOPLE

By **David Lindsay-Abaire** | Directed by **Kate Buckley**
Executive Producers **John & Connie Kordsmeier**

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

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SUGGESTED TEACHING TOPICS

- 1.) Neighborhood Cultural Identity
- 2.) Power & Privilege
- 3.) Community Engagement

This Teacher Guide is designed to be used in the classroom along with The Rep's Play Guide for *Good People*. These are some suggested activities for your classroom. The Play Guide is available online at <http://www.milwaukeeep.com/Tickets/2014-15-Season/Good-People-Play-Guide/>

NEIGHBORHOOD CULTURAL IDENTITY

DISCUSS: Pre-Show Question

- What elements do we use to define a neighborhood? What people, places, nationalities, traditions, or cultures define the neighborhood in which you live? Compile a group list from individual experiences. Why are these elements or characteristics important to your area or to you in particular?

DISCUSS: Post-Show Question

- Have students recall the lists they previously made about what characteristics or elements they believe define their neighborhoods. How do these elements compare or contrast to the neighborhoods depicted in *Good People*—South Boston and Chestnut Hill?

PERFORM: Creating an Environment/Soundscape

Have students choose an environment with which they are all familiar—for example, their school or a shared neighborhood. Tell the students that together they will be creating the environment of this location using their bodies and voices. Have students form a circle and invite two or three students to start off the scene. Students should enter the space and take on a role in the environment. These roles can be either human (such as a teacher or janitor) or nonhuman (such as a school bell or school bus), but whatever they choose should be representative of the environment. Students should include actions and sound effects to complete the role, but should have limited interaction with each other. Encourage students to create their own roles rather than copying another student's idea.

To debrief, have students recall what roles they performed or saw performed in the scene. *Why did they choose to include these in the environment? Why are they important for defining the environment? Were there any roles or images that should have been included but were not? What inferences can students make about the people, jobs, economy, etc. of this space?*

See the *Good People* Play Guide pages 7-9 for more information on South Boston's culture.



Laura T. Fisher, Laura Gordon, and Tami Workentin. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

POWER & PRIVILEGE

DISCUSS: Pre-Show Questions

- How do we define the word power? Who do we consider to be powerful people in our world today? What makes them so? What gives people power and how do they use that power?
- Do you as students and young adults feel powerful in your day-to-day lives? What gives you power? What makes you feel powerful?
- How do we define privilege? In what ways are you privileged? Do you find others more privileged than you? How might you deal with these statuses?

DISCUSS: Post-Show Questions

- Based on your previous discussion, which characters in *Good People* have privilege or power, what gives them this privilege or power, and how do these shift throughout the play?
- Do you think the play's comments on power and money are relevant? What lessons can audiences members take away from the show?
- Do you believe that the course of your life is shaped by fate or by choice?

See the *Good People* Play Guide page 11 for more information on socio-economic issues in South Boston and Milwaukee.

PLAY: Chairs and Power

Each student should have a chair. One at a time the students place their chairs and bodies in positions somewhere in the room to obtain the maximum amount of power for themselves. This means students should not limit themselves to just sitting in the chair. Each student takes a turn until all students have placed a chair.

To debrief, *what were they keeping in mind when they placed their chairs? Why did they choose the positions they did for both their chairs and their bodies? What made these positions powerful in their minds? When a student placed a chair after them, did they feel as if their power was being usurped or diminished, or did they feel they still maintained power? Relating to our everyday lives, how do we or others try to assert power with our body language or in our environments?* Have students recall instances from the show where characters used their bodies or the environment to assert power over others.

Once students feel comfortable with the Chairs and Power game, they can move on to playing the Status game. Instructions can be found at the Folger Shakespeare Library website, here: <http://bit.ly/1sWB2TT>

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

DISCUSS: Pre-Show Questions

- What would you do if someone you had not seen in years came to you for help? Would you ever seek out help from someone you used to know, but have not seen in a while?
- Do you think it is important to help others? What are different ways we can lend a hand to those in need?

DISCUSS: Post-Show Questions

- Do you think it was right or wrong for Margie to come to Mike for help? If you were Mike, how would you have responded to Margie's request?
- Do you think theater has the power to help people? In what ways?

CREATE: Pay It Forward

To start, have students create a flow chart where they explore how paying it forward works. If each of them helps three people one day who in turn help three people the next day, how many people can be help in a week? A month? Six months? As a class, how many people can they help in total?

Then have students brainstorm ways they can use theater to help others, whether it be through public performance, studying a text, workshop, games, etc. In groups have them choose a local issue (poverty, environment, substance abuse, etc.) and create a plan of action of how to use theater to aid or make people aware of their issue. Students will present their plans to the class as a creative project (Powerpoint, performance piece, poster board, etc.) educating their classmates both on the social issue and their creative solution to the problem.

To debrief, *discuss with students the importance of getting involved in social action in their communities. How can art be an effective way of discussing or engaging people in these complex topics? Do you think Good People is an inspiring work of theater? Can it or other art forms move people to take part in social change?*



Michael Elich, Jennifer Latimore, and Laura Gordon. Photo by Michael Brosilow.



Laura T. Fisher, Tami Workentin, Laura Gordon, and Bernard Balbot in *Good People*. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

TOPICS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

- 1.) Loyalty in Families & Communities
- 2.) Goodness & Humanity

STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards:

English Language Arts

RL.8-12.2 THEMES

SL.8-12.1 COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSIONS

W.8-12.7 INFORMATIVE WRITING

W.8-12.7 RESEARCH

Wisconsin Model Academic Standards: Theater

A.12.1 ATTEND & EVALUATE THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE

B.8.1 CREATE A CHARACTER

C.8.3 CULTURAL/HISTORICAL DISCUSSION

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