

CLASSROOM
ACTIVITIES

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SUGGESTED TEACHING TOPICS

- 1.) Institutional Racism
- 2.) Boxing
- 3.) Identity and Legacy

THE ROYALE

Written by **Marco Ramirez** | Directed by **Kevin Ramsey**
September 28 - November 6, 2016 | Stiemke Studio

This Teacher's Guide is designed to be used in the classroom along with The Rep's Play Guide for *The Royale*. These are some suggested activities for your classroom. The Play Guide is available online at <https://www.milwaukeeep.com/Tickets-Events/201617-Season/The-Royale/The-Royale-PlayGuide/>

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

DISCUSS: Pre-Show Questions

The Royale centers around the internal and external conflicts of Jay Jackson, a Negro Boxer in the early 20th century who dreams of becoming the heavyweight champion of the world.

- What factors contribute to social dissonance and disparity, specifically race-based discrimination and prejudice?
- What social structures exist or have existed in the United States to keep different groups of people separate? How do the above-mentioned factors contribute to or affect these social structures?
- Compare and contrast the race-based social structures of the early-to-mid 1900s with contemporary race-based social structures. How have race relations evolved over the past century?
- How does segregation affect a society? Does segregation still exist today? If so, how and/or where?
- Do you believe that hatred can be passed down from generation to generation?

DISCUSS: Post-Show Questions

- How do Jim Crow laws affect the characters in the play? Site specific evidence.
- How do individual characters in the play intentionally or unintentionally cause change in their lives and the lives of others around them?
- How does Jay's attitude toward the racial social structure affect his family and the black community? How and why might Jay's actions impact those Jay cares about?
- How do Jay's actions create hostility and fear among the white community? Where is this evident in the play?

EXPLORE DIVISIONS

Invite the students to stand in a circle. Describe the room as a map of the world. Identify Milwaukee in the space. Have students who were born in Milwaukee gather in that place. Have the other students group themselves according to their birthplace (north, south, east, or west of Milwaukee). Each group must determine two additional things that **they have in common**. Report back to the whole class. (Example: The members of the "north" group all like pizza and are the oldest in their families.) Repeat activity using other divisions. (Example: The members of the "wearing sneakers" group are all on a dance team and like to swim.)

Debrief: Reflect on the characters in *The Royale* and the similarities they may share.

What do Bixby and Jay have in common? Wynton and Max? If segregation did not exist do you think these characters would be friends? Why or why not?

Extend: Using the provided quotes, ask students to draw quotes from *The Royale* out of a hat and read them out loud. Ask each student to raise their hand when they hear a quote that intrigues or resonates with them. Discuss. How do these quotes extend beyond the play to reflect the human condition?

Read more about Jim Crow Laws on Page 8-9 of the Play Guide.



Photo by Michael Brosilow.

QUOTES FROM *THE ROYALE*

FOR USE IN "EXPLORE DIVISIONS" ACTIVITY

"We want a good, clean fight."

"That's somebody son's face."

"It's about bein' champion, period."

"Know why I like boxing? The man most likely to kill you is standing right in front of you."

"I know you're ready to win. You were ready to take over the world the day you were born. I just don't think the rest of us are."

BOXING

DISCUSS: Pre-Show Questions

- Discuss **symbolism**. How does it affect a story? Why do authors or playwrights use it to enhance their stories? Based on the brief context provided, how do you think boxing will serve as a literal and figurative symbol in *The Royale*?

DISCUSS: Post-Show Questions

- Why do you think the character of Nina portrayed Bixby in the final scene? How did it impact your response to the story?
- How did the staging of the boxing influence the telling of the story? Stylistically, how did it coordinate with the other theatrical elements? How did it impact your experience as an audience member?

SCULPT THE FUTURE

Divide students into pairs. Student A is the artist. Student B is the statue.

Have student A create a statue out of B that portrays the theme “the future.”

Examples: Flying cars, world peace, destroying the environment, graduating from college.

Statues can be realistic or symbolic, personal or global. Have each student title their statue and present to the class. Repeat this exercise with B as the artist and A as the statue.

Themes to use: *Champion, Fight, Racism, Audacity, Swagger, Sports, Rhythm, Pace, Siblings.*

Debrief: Compare and contrast what these ideas mean to your students and what these ideas meant to the characters in *The Royale*.

IDENTITY AND LEGACY

DISCUSS: Pre-Show Questions

- Consider the term “legacy”. What does it mean? Who do you think of when you hear this term? What legacy do you hope to leave behind? If you could speak with someone from the future, how might they view the legacy of 2016 Milwaukee?
- What does legacy refer to when discussing athletes or influential public figures? How do their legacies affect their communities? Do their legacies inspire change? Why or why not?
- What is an “identity”? How do identities define our actions? Is your personal identity different from how others identify you? How do other people’s perception of your identity affect how you view yourself?

DISCUSS: Post-Show Questions

- What is the legacy Jay is trying to create for himself? How might this legacy affect the African American community at that time? Why do you think Jay tries to hide his background, family, and hometown?
- How did real life boxers of this era create a legacy for boxers today?
- What is the importance of creating a positive legacy for yourself and your community?

“It’s a sport that’s so brutal, but like jazz, it’s improvised. It distills the human struggle. Sports are in general a good metaphor. . . Boxing is very clear: two elements, and one is going to win. That struggle is human, and it’s such a simple skeletal framework to hang meat on.”

- From the *Miami Herald’s* interview with playwright Marco Ramirez



“Boxers”, political cartoon by Theodore Gericault Courtesy of Wiki Art, Public Domain.

FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS: Guided Visualization

Invite students to stand in a circle. Instruct students to close their eyes and breathe deeply and calmly. As they breathe, speak the following questions out loud slowly, allowing students time to reflect. Tell them to reflect on these questions silently.

*What is a freedom, privilege or right that you have because someone else crossed a barrier based on gender, race, religion, ethnicity, or something else? Was this someone you know personally? Someone from history? What did they do to cross that line, chip away at that barrier? What did they sacrifice? Are there ways in which you personally still face or encounter that barrier? How do you cross it? Fight it? Chip away at it? Or do you not know how to make change? Is it a different barrier that you encounter today? What is that barrier? Think about “fighting” and the fight(s) underneath the literal boxing matches/fights in *The Royale*. What would you fight for? What do you fight for? Who would you fight for? Who do you fight for? What does “fighting” look like for you?*

Wrap up by asking students to open their eyes and share their reflections if they feel so inspired. What is the importance of fighting for your beliefs? What type of “fighting” is most effective? What type of considerations need to be made when “fighting for what you believe in” to keep communities safe?



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Common Core State Standards: English Language Arts

RL.6-10.1 LITERACY COMPREHENSION
RL.6-12.3 ANALYZE DIALOGUE
SL.8-12.1 COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSIONS
SL.8-12.3 POINT OF VIEW
SL.6-12.4 PRESENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS
L.8-12.5 FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

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