



**Lights Up! Library  
Classroom Activities**

***Queens***

By Martyna Majok  
Directed by Trip Cullman



## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for bringing Manhattan Theatre Club's *Lights Up! Library* initiative into your classroom! We're thrilled to provide you and your students these classroom activities and the performance recording of *Queens* by Martyna Majok.

Our goals for this initiative are:

- To help students better understand themselves and the world through the medium of theatre
- To help develop a knowledgeable, perceptive new audience for the theatre and for the arts in general
- To stimulate participants' imaginations, creativity, and critical thinking skills through engagement with challenging theatre works

The activities are divided into three sections:

- **Preparing Students to View the Play** — activities may include classroom discussion prompts, writing prompts, and theatre games or improvisations
- **Viewing the Play** — including questions for classroom discussion after students watch the performance
- **Follow-Up Activities** — further activities intended to deepen students' personal and intellectual interactions with the play

Additionally, [click here](#) to access supplemental resources which may include links to articles and videos meant to bring further context to this experience, and [click here](#) for a historical supplement.

Our hope is that you will have the time to activate all the activities in this document; however, we understand that time is among the scarcest resources in a high school classroom. One could maintain a rich experience by engaging in the framing questions, one preparatory activity, post-show questions, and one follow-up exercise. And, of course, please modify these activities — or devise your own — in any way necessary to meet the needs of each student in your classroom.

Some of the activities you'll find on these pages align to the [National Core Arts Standards for Theatre](#), and most can be linked to your local benchmarks and standards.

MTC's Learning and Community Engagement is grateful for the work completed by our teaching artist faculty in New York City high school classrooms and community spaces which led to the creation of this classroom activities guide: Claudia Acosta, Raquel Almazan,



Dominic Colón, Kate Long, Elia Monte-Brown, Carmen Rivera, Ashley Thomas, Camille Thomas, Cándido Tirado, Marilyn Torres, and Joe White.

We hope that this experience will be enriching and educationally beneficial to your students!

## **ABOUT MANHATTAN THEATRE CLUB**

**Manhattan Theatre Club** is one of New York's preeminent not-for-profit cultural institutions and a premier destination for both the most talented artists and discerning audiences to return to time and again. We produce seasons of bold, entertaining and thought-provoking new plays and musicals at our Samuel J. Friedman Theatre on Broadway and on our two off-Broadway stages at New York City Center.

For over 50 years, MTC has been acclaimed for identifying, fostering and supporting extraordinary artists at all stages of their careers and for the consistent quality, range and originality of our over 600 premieres, which include nearly 20% of all of the new plays on Broadway since we opened the Friedman in 2003. Much of this work has gone on to be mounted around the country and the world, appearing frequently on annual "most-produced" lists and amounting to a significant contribution to the American theatrical canon. MTC productions have earned 7 Pulitzer Prizes, 31 Tony Awards, 52 Drama Desk Awards, and 49 Obie Awards, amongst many other honors.

## **ABOUT THE PRODUCTION**

Manhattan Theatre Club's off-Broadway production of Martyna Majok's *Queens* opened at New York City Center Stage I on November 5, 2025. It was directed by Trip Cullman. The cast included Brooke Bloom, Anna Chlumsky, Sharlene Cruz, Marin Ireland, Julia Lester, Nadine Malouf, Andrea Syglowski, and Nicole Villamil. The scenic design was by Marsha Ginsberg; costumes were by Sarah Laux; lighting was by Ben Stanton; sound was by Mikhaal Sulaiman.



## **CHARACTERS**

Renia: female. Polish.  
Inna: female. Ukrainian.  
Pelagiya: female. Belarusian.  
Aamani: female. Afghan.  
Isabela: female. Honduran.  
Agata: female. Polish.  
Lera: female. Ukrainian.  
Glenys: female. Honduran-American.

## **SETTING**

Primarily, one summer night in a subdivided basement apartment in Queens, which hosts memories of the past.

2001-2017. Specifically, three months after 9/11 into the first summer of the first Trump administration.



## PREPARING STUDENTS TO VIEW THE PLAY

### Framing Questions

Ask students to reflect upon the below questions. This may be done through individual journaling, turn-and-talks, and/or group discussions.

- What are the different ways in which people navigate your local community? America?
- What are our immigrant roots that tie us to culture and/or cultures of interest?
- What history lives in a room?
- What stories do objects tell? What do these say about people and their journeys through life?
- What do people take with them when moving? What do they leave behind?

### Minute Lists

Ask students to create lists which respond to each of the below prompts. Allow one minute for each prompt.

- Places in the world your ancestors have touched
- Objects that hold memories
- Places where communities gather

Ask students to share their responses. Write the responses for the objects that hold memories onto a set of index cards (one object per card) and write onto a separate set of index cards the responses to places where communities gather (again, one place per card). These will be revisited during an upcoming improvisation activity.

### Odes to Objects

In *Queens*, each character possesses objects of great importance to them. These may be things they brought with them on their journey to America or everyday items they've acquired as a result of hard work once in the country. The ode is one creative way that students can explore the importance of objects in their own lives as a way to connect with the themes and ideas of this play.



According to [The Poetry Foundation](#), an ode is “a formal, often ceremonious lyric poem that addresses and often celebrates a person, place, thing, or idea. Its stanza forms vary.” As an example, you may consider sharing Pablo Neruda’s [“Ode to My Socks.”](#)

Ask students to refer to their minute list for the prompt “Objects that hold memories.” They should select one object and write an ode to that object. While specific lyrical forms may be used, allowing students to write in an irregular form with no set rhyme or meter is likely the best choice for time.

Encourage students to elevate the object to something worthy of reflection, to use vivid sensory details using imagistic language, and to make a strong decision about the tone of the piece.

Ask students to share their odes with the class. Perhaps the students listening to their classmates’ work can snap their fingers when they hear a particularly vivid sensory detail.

### **Improvisation: Objects and Places**

*National Core Arts Standards: TH:Cr1.1-II.c., TH:Cr2-III.b., TH:Cr3.1-I.a., TH:Cr3.1-I.b., TH:Pr4.1-I.b., TH:Pr6.1-I.a., TH:Re7.1-I.a.*

For the improvisation activity, you will use the index cards created when students’ shared their minute lists for objects that hold memories and places where communities gather.

Place students into groups of three or four. Each group selects one object card and one place card. Give students two minutes to discuss their scene which must incorporate the information on the index cards and include a conflict between the players.

Remind students of some of the key “rules” of improvisation: quickly define who the characters are, where they are located, and what they are doing; accept the premise or information provided by a scene partner and add new information on to it; do not block or deny information provided by a scene partner; make statements more than asking questions; be specific with details; listen actively; and, make bold choices.



Allow each scene to play for a few minutes. Reflect in group discussion about how the importance of the object was demonstrated by the players. How did the conflict develop? How did it resolve?

### **Scene Writing: Objects in Time**

*National Core Arts Standards alignment: TH:Cr.1.1.II.c., TH:Cr2-II.b., TH:Cr2-III.b., TH:Cr3.1.I.a., TH:Cr3.1.I.b., TH:Pr.4.1.I.a., TH:Pr4.1.I.b., TH:Pr4.1.II.a., TH:Pr6.1.I.a., TH:Re7.1.I.a., TH:Re8.1.I*

Ask each student to write a short play around the object from either the ode they wrote or an object from the improvisation activity. The plays should be no more than 2-3 pages.

The scene should:

- Take place in one location
- Have no more than 3 characters
- Explore a moment in the present, a moment in the past, and a flashforward to the future
- Include the object in each of the three different moments in time

Students can work on their plays over the course of a few class periods. If assigned as homework, be sure to implore students that they should view this as a creative assignment and should not utilize large language models to generate the work for them.

Ask students to cast their plays using their classmates. Provide students with the opportunity to rehearse each play so that they feel confident presenting staged readings.

Watch readings of each scene now or, if you'd like to offer more preparation time, wait until after viewing the performance of *Queens*.

After each play is shared, ask observing students to share what lines of dialogue, images, or conflicts resonate with them. At the conclusion of all sharing, ask your playwrights what it was like to hear their words brought to life and how they might revise the work based upon hearing it performed.



## VIEWING THE PLAY

You'll receive a link and password to the performance recording of the play on the first weekday of the semester for which you registered to view the play. The recording may be viewed only during regularly scheduled class time in classrooms or assembly spaces on your campus. Viewing credentials may not be shared with students for individual viewing at home or on social media.

You may wish to assign each student to "track" a character during the performance using a [Character Profile Form](#).

### **Class Discussion**

*National Core Arts Standards: TH:Re7.1-I.a., TH:Re8.1-I.c., TH:Re9.1-I.b, TH:Re9.1-I.c.*

After viewing the play, use these questions to facilitate a class discussion about the theatergoing experience:

- What moments in the production were particularly vivid and powerful?
- What was surprising?
- What was confusing to you?
- What were the pivotal moments?
- Why do you think the playwright wrote this play?

### **Drawing Connections**

*National Core Arts Standards: TH:Re7.1-III.a., TH:Re8.1-I.b., TH:Re8.1-II.b, TH:Re8.1-III.b, TH:Re9.1-III.c., TH:Cn10.1-I.a., TH:Cn11.1-I.a.; TH:Cn11.2-I.b.*

*How does this play connect to the world around us?*

Individually or in small groups, ask students to find an article, news feature, interview, or other recent artifact from current events that reflects one of the play's themes or ideas. Then, have students share and discuss:

- Why is this theme or idea relevant today?



- Have they encountered the theme or idea in other artistic mediums or media?
- Does this new information alter your personal response to the production? If so, how?

*What did we discover?*

Ask each student to identify a topic in the play with which they were previously unfamiliar. The student should gather as much information as they can on this subject and share with the class. Sources could include articles, news features, videos, interviews, or other relevant artifacts. Guide students through the compilation of research and the structure of the sharing as best appropriate for your subject area and curricular goals.

## **FEEDBACK FOR MTC**

We appreciate that you chose to bring Manhattan Theatre Club's production of *Queens* into your classroom, and we hope that your students had a great experience with these activities and the play.

Please complete the *Lights Up! Library* Feedback Form previously provided to you via email so that we can continue to improve this initiative.