



INDIANA
REPERTORY
THEATRE

January 11 – February 5, 2023

on the OneAmerica Mainstage

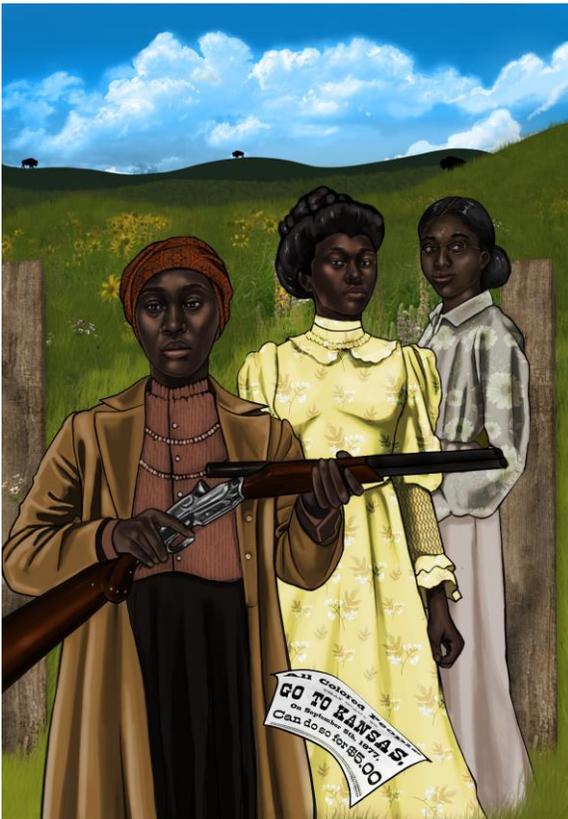
Flyin' West by Pearl Cleage

STUDY GUIDE

Indiana Repertory Theatre
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FLYIN' WEST BY PEARL CLEAGE

Four brave African American women homesteaders and pioneers settle together in the all-Black town of Nicodemus, Kansas. Fighting a harsh and unforgiving wilderness, they work hard to till the soil and build better lives for themselves. Their courage is tested when an unexpected and deadly threat invades their home in this surprising story set in the Old West.

Part of IRT's INclusion Series: Celebrating Diverse Storytelling

Recommended for students in grades 9-12

CONTENT ADVISORY

Flyin' West is a set in turn-of-the-last-century Kansas. It contains profanity, racial and ethnic slurs, domestic violence, and frank discussions about slavery and murder. Smoking, alcohol, and guns are seen on stage.

The performance will last approximately two hours and 20 minutes with one intermission.

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THE STORY OF THE PLAY

Flyin' West is set in the all-Black town of Nicodemus on the Kansas frontier in 1898. As the play begins, Sophie and Fannie are preparing for their younger sister Minnie's arrival from London. Miss Leah, an older neighbor of the sisters, has been living with Sophie and Fannie. Miss Leah and Sophie tease Fannie about her "friendship" with Wil Parrish, a neighbor. Minnie arrives with her husband Frank, the son of an enslaved Black woman and her White master. Frank's condescending and sexist attitude arouses Sophie's suspicions. When Minnie claims that a bruise on her face is the result of an accident, the other women know better but allow it to pass.

The next morning Frank, an urbane and sharply dressed poet, is angry that Minnie has braided her hair, a style he finds embarrassing. He goes to town to meet some men he met on the train—White speculators interested in buying land from the original Black settlers. This is exactly what Sophie has been campaigning against in Nicodemus. She wants to maintain the town as a haven of independence, empowerment, and safety for its Black citizens.

When Frank finally returns late that night, drunk, he tells Minnie that he has lost all of their money in a poker game, blaming his loss on Minnie's "bad luck." When he pushes Minnie to the ground, Sophie pulls her shotgun on him; but Minnie pleads with Sophie not to shoot Frank because she is pregnant.

Frank later apologizes to Minnie, and we learn that Frank is troubled because his father has died and there is some misunderstanding regarding his inheritance. When Frank receives a telegram informing him that he is denied any money from his father's estate, Minnie tries to comfort him. Enraged, Frank forces Minnie to sign over to him her share of the sisters' land, and he beats her unconscious. He then goes into town to find the White speculators.

Fannie and Miss Leah discover the badly beaten Minnie. Sophie is determined to protect her family by killing Frank, but Miss Leah suggests that there are other options. She tells a story about a slave friend of hers from the old days and how she dealt with a cruel overseer on the plantation. By the time Frank returns, the women have a plan for maintaining their freedom and continuing their legacy of sisterhood.

*Early homesteaders in Nicodemus, Kansas.
Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.*



USING HISTORY TO CHANGE THE FUTURE

BY JANET ALLEN, MARGOT LACY ECCLES ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Producing Pearl Cleage’s work this 50th anniversary season is both intentional and celebratory. As one the wisest voices in the African American writing community, and, arguably, our most revered African American woman playwright, Cleage’s work has appeared on IRT stages three previous times. In 1994 we produced the Midwest premiere of *Flyin’ West*; in 2003 we produced her *Blues for an Alabama Sky*; and in 2015 we produced her *What I Learned In Paris*—all very different, memorable, and moving, and all deeply insightful productions. Returning to *Flyin’ West*, 30 years after its writing, is to reinvestigate a work that has now become a classic and has only gained in stature, eloquence, and community need.

Cleage’s voice sings most deeply at the intersection of feminism and racism, lifting stories of African American womanhood and survivorship. She writes:

My response to the oppression I face is to name it, describe it, analyze it, protest it, and propose solutions to it as loud[ly] as I possibly can every time I get the chance. I purposely people my plays with fast-talking, quick-thinking black women since the theatre is, for me, one of the few places where we have a chance to get an uninterrupted word in edgewise.

Flyin’ West is a testament to exactly that thinking. Cleage peoples her play with a group of four strong women whom she places in the historic town of Nicodemus, Kansas, just before the turn of the last century. Thirty-five years after the Emancipation Proclamation, these women fight to make a place for themselves as free citizens and landowners. Through their trials, and the many forces aligned to limit their power, Cleage also reveals a little-known chapter in American history, one shared deeply in Indiana: the creation of all-Black towns. Indiana once was home to at least 30 of these Pan African settlements, established in the decades between 1820 and 1850. Of those, the only remaining community is Lyles Station in Gibson County in southwest Indiana. You may remember this as the birthplace of a storied Indiana personage, Alonzo Fields, the subject of IRT’s playwright-in-residence James Still’s much-loved *Looking Over the President’s Shoulder*.

Elizabeth Van Dyke, Sharlene Ross, Kimberly Hawthorne, & Peter Jay Fernandez (rear) in the IRT’s 1994 production of Flyin’ West.



Because Cleage is gifted in many writing genres, including fiction, journalism, poetry, and playwriting, she is well attuned to the differences in each. Her craft as a playwright is remarkable and highly theatrical. As a theatre-goer, one is always aware of the intensity of her storytelling, as well as her ability to deliver characters and plot in a way that is utterly captivating—and never to be confused with film or television writing. Award-winning actor Ruby Dee wrote eloquently:

Pearl Cleage is a passionate, challenging playwright whose concerns for the species are unmistakable and profound. As a woman, as an African-American, her artistic objectivity and sensitivity to history combine with, but do not overshadow, her capacity to dig for truth and present it flat out as she sees it—with a finger snap or a shout and sometimes with a wink. Among the most satisfying roles I've undertaken on stage is surely Miss Leah in *Flyin' West*. She brings the bushel nuggets of drama and humor that capture the ear, the heart, and the imagination. She's devilish, too.

As a life-long activist, Cleage uses her voice as a clarion call to action. She urges us to remember our history and use it to change the future. This is a viewpoint that is embraced by the production's director, Raelle Myrick Hodges, whose refreshing approach to the play reminds us that art must always be multi-faceted in its communication: it reminds us of who we have been, who we can be, and how the narrative of this country must change for the better.



(left) Erika LaVonn & Tracy N. Bonner
in the IRT's 2015 production of
What I Learned in Paris.

(below) David Alan Anderson & Michelle Wilson
in the IRT's 2003 production of
Blues for an Alabama Sky.



CELEBRATING —AND CHALLENGING— THE WESTERN

BY RAELE MYRICK-HODGES, DIRECTOR

In 1862 the Homestead Act was passed, allowing for citizens over 21 years of age to claim up to 160 acres of land. This program, of course, came at a cost to Indigenous tribes throughout the Midwest and Western regions of the United States. So first, I wish to acknowledge that these theatre seats rest on the ancestral lands of the Miami, Piankashaw, Wea, Potawatomi, Kickapoo, Delaware, and Shawnee.

More than a century after the Homestead Act, in 1993, playwright Pearl Cleage wrote *Flyin' West*—a tale of the Old West seen through the visionary eyes of Sophie Washington, an African American settler in Nicodemus, Kansas, around the turn of the last century. The characters of Sophie and her two sisters, their elderly “auntie,” their self-loathing brother-in-law, and their loyal neighbor are fictitious. But Cleage’s story elements—struggling to make a home, the desire to protect family and legacy, the need to find love—resonate both with our shared American history and with our contemporary American life.



(above) Abby Fisher (1831-1915) published the second known cookbook by a Black woman in the United States, What Mrs. Fisher Knows about Old Southern Cooking, in San Francisco in 1881.



(left) Bridget “Biddy” Mason (1818-1891) was a nurse, a real estate entrepreneur, a philanthropist, and one of the founders of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church in Los Angeles.



Mary Ellen Pleasant (1815-1904) was an Underground Railroad agent who escaped capture by sailing to San Francisco, where she became an entrepreneur, financier, real estate magnate, and women's advocate.

This iconic depiction of American life is told in the most American of genres: the Western. I grew up watching my father watch Westerns. Honestly, just this past Thanksgiving, there I was, popping into “Dad’s space” to hear the voice of Eric Fleming in *Rawhide* or, an hour later, the opening credits of *Bonanza*. *Flyin’ West* is melodramatic, funny, and the most American play I have ever directed. It transports us to a world that *is* American history. While the play is subtle in its conversation with history, it is an organic portrayal of the American belief in change and the American drive to stand up for what we believe in.

This fictional Western takes place in a very real place: the town of Nicodemus, Kansas. Settled by freed slaves in 1877, it was one of many Black communities established west of the Mississippi River after the Civil War. An almost mythical town to us these days, Nicodemus conjures images of endless plains, tumbleweeds, and a vast night sky with haunting echoes of a howling coyote or a distant train. Nicodemus is a great lens into the beautiful ugliness that is the genesis of any community. *Flyin’ West* shows us violence, gun use, and women making decisions without permission.

The women in Westerns are usually inspired by the Calamity Janes and Annie Oakleys of known history. But what of the brazen lives of other true characters of character who redefined the Old West? Western pioneers such as Mary Ellen Pleasant or Abby Fisher are historically fascinating, as are our beloved Stagecoach Mary or Bridget “Biddy” Mason.

Flyin’ West challenges the Western genre with this building of a Black town, challenges our societal assumptions about women, and challenges our vision of leadership in the middle of America.

Mary Fields (circa 1832–1914), also known as Stagecoach Mary, was the first African American woman mail carrier in the United States, delivering mail across 200 miles of Montana wilderness from 1895 to 1903.



PLAYWRIGHT PEARL CLEAGE

“The purpose of my writing, often, is to express the point where racism and sexism meet.”

Pearl Cleage was born in 1948 in Springfield, Massachusetts, and grew up in Detroit, Michigan. Her father was a prominent minister and her mother was an elementary school teacher. An academically gifted student, Pearl enrolled at Howard University, where she studied playwriting and had two one-act plays produced. She left Howard in 1969 at the age of twenty to marry Michael Lomax, an Atlanta politician. Upon graduating in 1971 from Spelman College, Cleage worked at a number of media jobs including hosting a local, Black-oriented interview program as well as being director of communications for the city of Atlanta and press secretary for Mayor Maynard Jackson. Cleage divorced Lomax in 1979 and married Zaron Burnett Jr. in 1994.

Cleage gained national attention as a playwright in 1992 with *Flyin’ West*, which premiered at the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta and was subsequently produced at a number of regional theatres across the country (including the IRT in 1994). *Blues for an Alabama Sky* (IRT 2003) is set in 1930 as the creative euphoria of the Harlem Renaissance gives way to the harsher realities of the Great Depression. *What I Learned in Paris* (IRT 2015) is a comedy that mixes the personal with the political and the social, set in Atlanta during the 1973 election of Maynard Holbrook Jackson, the first African American mayor of a major southern city. Cleage’s other plays include *Bourbon at the Border* and *A Song for Coretta*. She has taught drama at Spelman College for many years.

Cleage’s first novel, *What Looks Like Crazy on an Ordinary Day*, was a 1998 Oprah Book Club selection, a *New York Times* bestseller, and a BCALA Literary Award winner. Her most recent is 2011’s *Just Wanna Testify*. Most of Cleage’s eight novels are set in Atlanta, and some characters recur from book to book.

Cleage has long contributed essays to national magazines such as *Essence*, the *New York Times Book Review*, *Ms.*, and *Black World*. In 1990 and 1993 she published collections of her essays entitled , respectively, *Mad at Miles: A Black Woman’s Guide to Truth*, and *Deals with the Devil and Other Reasons to Riot*. In 2014 she published a memoir entitled *Things I Should Have Told My daughter: Lies, Lessons, and Love Affairs*. Frequently focused on topics concerning sexism and racism, Cleage writes on such issues as domestic violence and rape in the Black community, AIDS, and women’s rights. She speaks at colleges, universities, and conferences on these and other topics such as the role of the artist in wartime and the citizen’s duty in a participatory democracy.



NICODEMUS, KANSAS

Historians suggest several reasons why the town of Nicodemus was so named. In the Bible, Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin who tried to see that Jesus was treated justly; he later provided embalming spices and assisted Joseph of Arimathea in preparing Jesus's body for burial. The 1864 song "Wake Nicodemus" by Henry Clay Work tells of an old enslaved man whose dying request is "Wake me up for the last Jubilee!" There is the legend of an African Prince Nicodemus who was taken into slavery and later purchased his own freedom.

The Nicodemus Town Company was founded in 1877 by W. H. Smith, an African American minister, and W. R. Hill, a White land developer from Indiana. They hoped to create a community where Black people could live in peace and prosperity. They located their community along the northern bank of the Solomon River, an area suitable for farming. Flyers touting the area's resources and benefits were distributed across the South.

By 1880 Nicodemus had a population of 600, served by a local bank, two hotels, three churches, three general stores, a pharmacy, and a newspaper. By 1887, the town had a literary society, a baseball team, a band, and an ice cream parlor. When a plan to bring the railroad to Nicodemus failed, however, businesses began to close, and the population began to dwindle. The Great Depression and the Dust Bowl brought further challenges, and today, Nicodemus has a population of only 20. Nonetheless, Nicodemus is the only remaining Western community established by African Americans after the Civil War.

Washington Street in Nicodemus, Kansas, year unknown. Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.



THE KANSAS FRONTIER

KANSAS

The land that is today Kansas was part of the Louisiana Purchase (1803). The Missouri Compromise (1820) intended that Kansas would be a territory in which African Americans would be free. The 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act, however, allowed popular referenda to determine whether Kansas and Nebraska would be free states or slave states. This sense of uncertainty discouraged many potential settlers. Political tensions deeply divided Kansas and led to a series of bloody conflicts over slavery in Kansas before the new state adopted an anti-slavery constitution in 1861. The conclusion of the Civil War ended the debate over slavery and opened the West, including Kansas, to many settlers who saw it as a land of opportunity.

HOMESTEAD ACT OF 1862

The Homestead Act of 1862 allowed applicants to acquire ownership of government land or the public domain, typically called a homestead. In all, more than 160 million acres (250 thousand square miles) of public land—nearly 10 percent of the total area of the United States—was sold to 1.6 million homesteaders for only \$1.25 per acre (\$1.25 in 1896 is worth \$42 today). Most of the homesteads were west of the Mississippi River. The Homestead Act was driven by Northerners, who wanted individual farmers to own and operate their own farms, as opposed to Southerners, who wanted to buy up large tracts of land and use slave labor. Any adult who had never taken up arms against the Federal government of the United States could apply. Women and immigrants who had applied for citizenship were eligible. There was no provision mentioning race.

SETTLERS/PIONEERS

A settler is a person who has migrated to an area and established a permanent residence there, often to colonize the area. A settler who migrates to an area previously uninhabited or sparsely inhabited may be described as a pioneer. In this usage, pioneers are usually among the first to an area, whereas settlers can arrive after first settlement and join others in the process of settlement. Settlement sometimes relies on dispossession of already established populations within the area, and can be a very violent process.

HOMESTEADERS

Homesteading is a lifestyle of self-sufficiency. It is characterized by subsistence agriculture and home preservation of food, and may also involve the small-scale production of textiles, clothing, and craft work for household use. Homesteading is not defined by where someone lives, such as settled or unsettled territory, but by the way they live. Historically, homesteading was used by the United States government, while engaged in national expansion, to help settle what were previously unsettled (though not unpeopled) areas. Many such homestead acts were instituted in the 19th and 20th centuries and targeted specific areas, with most being discontinued after a set time-frame or goal.

ALL-BLACK TOWNS

By 1881 African Americans had established twelve agricultural communities in Kansas. Others developed in Nebraska, New Mexico, and Colorado, as well as 55 in Oklahoma. These farming communities sheltered self-governed economic and social institutions, including businesses, schools, and churches. Entrepreneurs set up every imaginable kind of business, including publishing concerns whose newspapers advertised in the South for settlers. In Oklahoma and Kansas, African Americans lived relatively free from the prejudices and brutality common in racially mixed communities of the Midwest and the South. Cohesive all-Black settlements offered residents the security of depending on neighbors for financial assistance and the economic opportunity provided by access to open markets for their crops. Immediately after statehood in 1907, however, the Oklahoma legislature passed Jim Crow laws, and many African Americans became disenchanted with the new state. The collapse of the American farm economy in the 1920s and the advent of the Great Depression in 1929 spelled the end for most all-Black communities. Residents moved further west or migrated to cities where jobs might be found. Black towns dwindled to only a few residents or disappeared altogether.

EXODUS OF 1879

The Exodus of 1879 refers to a large group of African Americans who migrated from states along the Mississippi River to Kansas in the late nineteenth century. This was the first general migration of Black people following the Civil War. As many as 40,000 so-called Exodusters left the South to settle in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Colorado

LAND OFFICE

The General Land Office was an independent agency of the United States government created in 1812, responsible for public domain lands in the United States. The General Land Office administered the Homestead Act and oversaw the surveying, platting, and sale of public lands in the Western United States. All transactions were handled through district land offices. In 1890, the peak year for land offices, there were 123 in operation. The frantic pace of public land sales in the 19th century led to the idiomatic expression “land-office business,” meaning a thriving or high-volume trade.

NATIVE AMERICANS

Most scholars today estimate that there were about 50 million Native Americans prior to European arrival in 1492, although some historians argue for an estimate of 100 million or more. European colonization of the Americas resulted in a precipitous decline in Native American population because of new diseases, wars, ethnic cleansing, and enslavement. After its formation, the United States, as part of its policy of settler colonialism, continued to wage war and perpetrate massacres against Native American peoples: removing them from their ancestral lands and subjecting them to one-sided treaties and to discriminatory government policies, later focused on forced assimilation, into the 20th century. Today, there are only five million Native Americans in the United States. (In the play, Frank refers to “gangs of wild Indians” as a potential threat in Nicodemus. In fact, the last Indian raid in Kansas was the Cheyenne raid of Decatur County in 1878—twenty years before the play is set.)

THE MEMPHIS RIOTS OF 1892

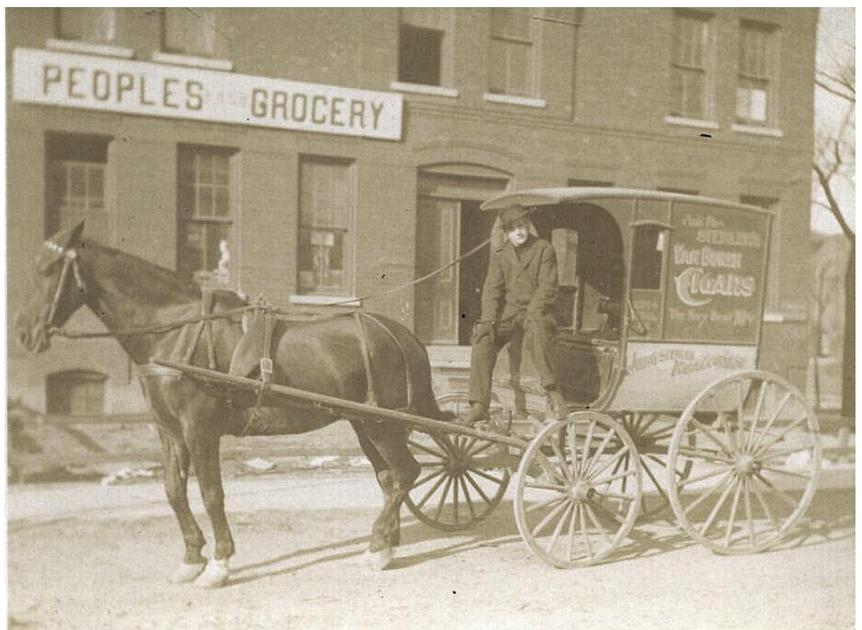
Six years before Flyin' West takes place, Sophie, Fannie, and Minnie were living in Memphis, Tennessee. Playwright Pearl Cleage has used a real historic event in Memphis to motivate her fictional characters to make the move to Nicodemus, Kansas.

MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

Memphis, situated along the Mississippi River, is the second most populous city in Tennessee, after Nashville. In 1890, its population was 65,000. Today, the Memphis metro area has the highest percentage of Black population among the nation's large metropolitan areas. At least four Black newspapers circulated in the city between the 1870s and the 1890s. The most famous was the *Free Speech and Headlight*; Ida B. Wells wrote for this paper and later purchased a one-third interest in it.

1892 LYNCHING AND RIOT

On March 9, 1892, in the Curve neighborhood of Memphis, Black grocery owner Thomas Moss and two of his workers, Will Stewart and Calvin McDowell, were lynched by a White mob while in police custody. The lynching occurred in the aftermath of what started as a fight between a White boy and a Black boy over a game of marbles and escalated into a series of attacks, riots, ambushes, and two shooting incidents in which two White police officers were wounded and one Black man was killed. The lynching led to increasing grief and unrest among the Black population, along with rumors that Blacks planned to take revenge against Whites. Judge Julius DuBose, a former Confederate soldier, ordered the sheriff to dispatch a hundred men to "shoot down on sight any Negro who appears to be making trouble." Gangs of armed White men rushed to the Curve and began shooting wildly into any groups of Blacks they encountered, then looted Moss's grocery. In the play, Sophie describes these events: "Memphis was full of crazy White men acting like when it came to colored people, they didn't have to be bound by law or common decency. Dragging people off in the middle of the night. Doing whatever they felt like doing. Colored women not safe in their own houses." The lynching sparked national outrage, and Ida B. Wells wrote of Moss's dying words, which encouraged Blacks to strike out for the West and "leave a town which will neither protect our lives and property, nor give us a fair trial in the courts, but takes us out and murders us in cold blood when accused by White persons." This event sparked an emigration movement that eventually saw 6,000 Blacks leave Memphis for the Western Territories.



Peoples Grocery in Memphis, where the 1892 riot began.

IDA B. WELLS

Ida B. Wells (1862–1931) was an investigative journalist, educator, and early leader in the Civil Rights movement. She was one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. She dedicated her lifetime to combating prejudice and violence, and to the fight for African American equality, especially that of women. She was arguably the most famous Black woman in the United States of her time. In 1892, Wells was writing for the Memphis *Free Speech and Headlight*. Her writing on the Memphis lynching drew national attention.



BENJAMIN “PAP” SINGLETON

Benjamin “Pap” Singleton (1809–1900) was an activist and businessman best known for his role in establishing African American settlements in Kansas. A formerly enslaved man from Tennessee who escaped to freedom in Ontario, Canada, in 1846, he soon returned to the United States, settling for a period in Detroit, Michigan. He became a noted abolitionist, community leader, and spokesman for African American civil rights. Returning to Tennessee during the Union occupation in 1862, he soon concluded that Blacks would never achieve economic equality in the White-dominated South. After the end of Reconstruction, Singleton organized the movement of thousands of Black colonists, known as Exodusters, to found settlements in the free state of Kansas. A prominent voice for early Black nationalism, he became involved in promoting and coordinating Black-owned businesses in Kansas and developed an interest in the Back-to-Africa movement.

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906) was a poet, novelist, and short story writer. Born in Dayton, Ohio, to parents who had been enslaved in Kentucky before the Civil War, Dunbar began writing stories and verse when he was a child. He published his first poems at the age of 16 in a Dayton newspaper, and he served as president of his high school’s literary society. Dunbar became one of the first African American writers to establish an international reputation. In 1897 he traveled to England for a literary tour, reciting his works on the London circuit. Much of Dunbar’s more popular work in his lifetime was written in a “negro dialect” associated with the antebellum South. Dunbar also wrote in conventional English, and he is considered the first important African American sonnet writer. Since the late 20th century, scholars have become more interested in these other works. Dunbar died of tuberculosis, which then had no cure, at the age of 33.

Dunbar married Alice Ruth Moore (1875-1935), herself a poet, journalist, and political activist, in 1898. Their marriage proved stormy, exacerbated by Dunbar’s declining health due to tuberculosis, alcoholism developed from doctor-prescribed whiskey consumption, and depression. Before their marriage, Paul raped Alice, which he later blamed on his alcoholism. Alice often forgave him for this behavior, even when he beat her. In 1902, after he beat and kicked her nearly to death, giving her peritonitis, she left him. They never divorced.

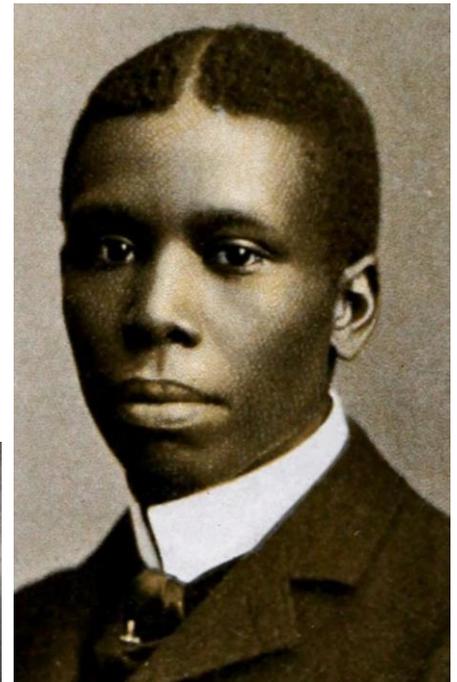
In the play, Minnie recites the first verse of one of Dunbar’s poems:

“A SONG”:

Thou art the soul of a summer’s day,
Thou art the breath of the rose.
But the summer is fled
And the rose is dead;
Where are they gone, who knows?

Thou art the blood of my heart o’ hearts,
Thou art my soul’s repose
But my heart grows numb
And my soul is dumb;
Where art thou, love, who knows?

Thou art the hope of my after years—
Sun for my winter snows;
But the years go by
`Neath a clouded sky.
Where shall we meet, who knows?



(above)
Paul Laurence Dunbar

(left)
Alice Ruth Moore Dunbar

EVOLUTION OF A NAME

The word **negro**, literally meaning “black,” was used in the 1400s by Spanish and Portuguese explorers as a simple description to refer to the Bantu peoples that they encountered in southern Africa. In the Colonial America of 1619, John Rolfe used *negars* in describing the slaves who were captured from West Africa and then shipped to the Virginia colony. Later American English spellings included *neger* and *neggar*. Etymologically, *negro*, *noir*, *nègre*, and *nigger* ultimately derive from *nigrum*, the stem of the Latin *niger* (black).

The word **nigger** was commonly used in both England and America by the seventeenth century; at that time, it was considered nothing more than an alternate pronunciation of *Negro*. By 1825, however, both abolitionists and Blacks found the word offensive and began to object to its use.

The term **colored** appeared in North America during the colonial era. The first twelve Census counts in the United States counted “colored” people; beginning in 1900 the census counted “negroes.” The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded in 1909.

Eventually, the word **negro** returned to fashion, as some began to see the word *colored* as generic and demeaning. The United Negro College Fund was founded in 1944.

In the 1960s, many favored the word **Black** (at that time, usually spelled with a lower case *b*). Malcolm X and others objected to the word *negro* because they associated it with the long history of slavery, segregation, and discrimination that treated African Americans as second class citizens, or worse. Martin Luther King Jr. used both *negro* and *Black*.

While there was a brief vogue of **Afro-American** in the late sixties and early seventies, *Black* continued as the favored word until the 1990s, when **African American** became popular.

In today’s diverse world, many different terms are used. Recently, there seems to be a drift away from *African American* and back to *Black* (now capitalized).

Some today even use the word *nigger*, often spelled as *nigga* or *niggah*, without irony, either to neutralize the word’s impact or as a sign of solidarity. Often when a word is employed as a slur against a certain group, members of the group will use that word among themselves to rob it of its negative power. The word *nigger* is still controversial. While it may be heard frequently in rap songs and in conversation among younger African Americans, many older African Americans are deeply offended by it. Even within generations, not everyone agrees whether the word should be used within the African American community. Society at large, however, has condemned the word as a racial slur; its use by other races against Black people demonstrates an ignorance and hatred that should not be imitated.

“WE SPEAK YOUR NAMES”

BY PEARL CLEAGE

Because we are free women,
born of free women,
who are born of free women,
back as far as time begins,
we celebrate your freedom.

Because we are wise women,
born of wise women,
who are born of wise women,
we celebrate your wisdom.

Because we are strong women,
born of strong women,
who are born of strong women,
we celebrate your strength.

Because we are magical women,
born of magical women,
who are born of magical women,
we celebrate your magic.

My sisters, we are gathered here to speak your names.
We are here because we are your daughters
as surely as if you had conceived us, nurtured us,
carried us in your wombs, and then sent us out into the world to make our mark
and see what we see, *and be what we be*, but *better, truer, deeper*
because of the shining example of your own incandescent lives.

We are here to speak your names
because we have enough sense to know
that we did not spring full blown from the forehead of Zeus,
or arrive on the scene like Topsy, our sister once removed, who somehow *just grewed*.
We know that we are walking in footprints made deep by the confident strides
of women who parted the air before them like the forces of nature that you are.
We are here to speak your names
because you taught us that the search is always for the truth
and that when people show us who they are, we should believe them.

We are here because you taught us
that *sisterspeak* can continue to be our native tongue,
no matter how many languages we learn as we move about as citizens of the world
and of the ever-evolving universe.

We are here to speak your names
because of the way you made for us.
Because of the prayers you prayed for us.
We are the ones you conjured up, hoping we would have strength enough,
and discipline enough, and talent enough, and nerve enough
to step into the light when it turned in our direction, *and just smile awhile*.

We are the ones you hoped would make you proud
because all of our hard work
makes all of yours part of something *better, truer, deeper*.
Something that lights the way ahead like a lamp unto our feet,
as steady as the unforgettable beat of our collective heart.

We speak your names.
We speak your names.

**—“We Speak Your Names” was written for Oprah’s 2005 Legends Ball,
a celebration of 25 extraordinary African American Women.**

WOMEN'S RIGHTS & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE 1890S

In *Flyin' West*, Sophie says, “there are no laws that protect a woman from her husband.” In 1898, when the play is set, her statement is accurate in many ways.

Prior to the mid-1800s, most legal systems implicitly accepted wife beating as a valid exercise of a husband's authority over his wife. Early settlers in America based their domestic abuse laws on an Old-English common-law that explicitly permitted wife-beating for correctional purposes. Under the Puritan legal system, excessive violence was forbidden, but men were still allowed to physically punish their wives and children—as long as the violence did not become so extreme that the neighbors were disturbed. In 1824, Mississippi's Supreme Court ruled that a husband was allowed to administer “moderate chastisement in case of emergencies.”

But as the 19th century moved forward, political agitation led to changes in both popular opinion and legislation regarding domestic violence. In 1871, Alabama and Massachusetts were the first states to rescind the legal right of men to beat their wives; but Maryland was actually the first state to make wife-beating a crime (punishable by 40 lashes or a year in jail) in 1882. On the other hand, in 1886, North Carolina courts declared that a criminal indictment could not be brought against a husband unless the battery was so great as to result in permanent injury or to endanger the woman's life.

Wife beating was not made illegal throughout the United States until 1920.

The 1859 original state constitution of Kansas allowed all people regardless of gender or marital status to own property. However, most people believed that men had divine right over women and that they should be responsible for all financial, legal, and property matters, so while a woman was allowed to have her own property, a man would often win most legal battles. In addition, the first woman juror was not selected until 1870, and women did not secure the right to be jurors in all 50 states until 1973. This made it more difficult for women to receive equal protection under the law.

ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Abuse means treating someone with violence, disrespect, cruelty, harm, or force. When someone treats their partner in any of these ways, it's called an abusive relationship. Abuse in a relationship can be physical, sexual, or emotional. Or it could be all of these.

An abusive partner might use mean words, threats, or shaming. They might act with jealousy or controlling behavior, or with physical or sexual violence. These things can start small and build over time.

If you think you're in an abusive relationship, it's time to get help. There are people to help you get to a safe situation. There are people to help you sort out all the emotions of partner abuse.

AM I IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP?

Here are some warning signs. You might be in an abusive relationship if someone:

- harms you physically in any way. This includes hitting, pushing, shaking, or kicking
- threatens to harm you if you leave the relationship
- threatens to harm themselves if you leave the relationship
- forces you, or tries to force you, into any type of sexual act that you don't want
- tries to control parts of your life, like how you dress, who you hang out with, and what you say
- often shames you or makes you feel unworthy
- twists the truth to make you feel you are to blame for their actions
- demands to know where you are at all times
- often acts jealous or angry when you want to spend time with your friends
- makes mean or rude comments on social media
- demands or asks for your sign-in information for your social media accounts

Get help from a therapist or someone at a helpline if you feel unsure of whether you're in an abusive relationship.

HOW CAN I GET OUT OF AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP?

- **Know that you have the right to be safe.** You have the right to be treated with respect. Knowing this is the first step.
- **Confide in someone you know.** Tell a parent, trusted adult, health provider, or friend what you're going through so they can help. Many adults know how to help in this situation. An adult might be able to get you to safety faster than a friend can.
- **Get help and support from experts.** Going through abuse can leave you feeling confused, scared, or exhausted. [Find a therapist](#) to help you get your emotional strength back. They can help you sort through the many emotions you might be dealing with.
- **Get advice from someone at a helpline too.** Learn more about how to get out of an abuse relationship safely. The helpline advisors also can talk to you about other things that might help you move forward.

IF YOU NEED HELP RIGHT AWAY

If you have been physically hurt, **get medical care or call 911.**

Helplines can give advice on how to get out of an abusive relationship safely:

- [Love Is Respect Helpline](#): 1-866-331-9474
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#): 1-800-799-7233
- Visit the global [NO MORE Directory](#) to find resources near you.

How Can I Deal With the Emotions I Have?

- **Learn how partner abuse affects people.** Partner abuse can cause harm you can see — things like bruises, sprains, or marks. But it also can cause deep emotional hurt that you can't see. Deep emotional stress that makes you feel unsafe is called trauma.
- **Notice how relationship abuse has affected you.** Abuse by a partner can leave you feeling shaken or scared. You might feel angry, sad, anxious, or depressed because of what you've been through. It's natural to have many different emotions after going through abuse. Sometimes the deep stress lasts even after the abuse has ended. Notice what it's been like for you.
- **Get help from a trauma therapist.** There is therapy to help people deal with this deep stress. It is called trauma therapy. It is a type of talk therapy that counselors and therapists use. It helps people who have been through trauma — like abuse. Find a therapist to work with.
- **Learn to cope, and share your story.** Trauma therapy can help you feel safe and supported. In therapy, you can learn coping skills and have support. This helps you face difficult memories, tell your story, and find healing. Find the words to talk about what you've been through.
- **Move forward toward healthier relationships.** Sharing your story with a trauma therapist can ease the emotional hurt of partner abuse. It also can help you find your inner strength and move toward healthy relationships that add to your wellbeing.

—*article courtesy of Nemours KidsHealth for Teens*

<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/abuse.html>

INDIANA ACADEMIC STANDARDS

ALIGNMENT GUIDE

Seeing *Flyin' West* at the Indiana Repertory Theatre is a great way to help make connections for students and facilitate their understanding of a text. Some key literature standards to consider on your trip would be:

READING LITERATURE

- RL.1 Read a variety of literature within a range of complexity appropriate for one's grade.
- RL.2 Build comprehension and appreciation of literature by identifying, describing, and making inferences about literary elements and themes
- RL.3 Build comprehension and appreciation of literature, using knowledge of literary structure, and point of view
- RL.4 Build comprehension and appreciation of literary elements and themes and analyze how sensory tools impact meaning

READING--VOCABULARY

- RV.1 Build and apply vocabulary using various strategies and sources
- RV.2 Use strategies to determine and clarify words and understand their relationship
- RV.3 Build appreciation and understanding of literature and nonfiction texts by determining or clarifying the meaning of words and their uses

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

- SL.1 Develop and apply effective communication skills through speaking and active listening
- SL.3 Develop and apply active listening and interpretation skills using various strategies

MEDIA LITERACY

- ML.1 Develop an understanding of media and the roles and purposes of media
- ML.2 Recognize the purpose of media and the ways in which media can have influences

THEATRE CREATING

- TH.Cr1 Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work

THEATRE RESPONDING

- TH.Re.7 Perceive and analyze artistic work
- TH.Re.8 Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work
- TH.Re.9 Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work

THEATRE CONNECTING

- TH.Cn.10 Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art
- TH.Cn.11 Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding

LANGUAGE HISTORY

- LH.3 Build understanding of history/social studies texts, using knowledge, structural organization, and author's purpose

ETHNIC STUDIES

- ES.1 Cultural Self-Awareness
- ES.2 Cultural Histories within the United States Context and Abroad
- ES.4 Historical and Contemporary Contributions

PSYCHOLOGY

- P.6 Students explore the common characteristics of abnormal behavior as well as the influence culture has had on that definition. Students also identify major theories and categories of abnormal behavior. Students discuss characteristics of effective treatment and prevention of abnormal behaviors.
- P.7 Students discuss the socio-cultural dimensions of behavior including topics such as conformity, obedience, perception, attitudes, and the influence of the group on the individual.

SOCIOLOGY

- S.2 Students examine the influence of culture on the individual and the way cultural transmission is accomplished. Students study the way culture defines how people in a society behave in relation to groups and to physical objects. They also learn that human behavior is learned within the society. Through the culture, individuals learn the relationships, structures, patterns and processes to be members of the society.
- S.3 Students examine the process by which people develop their human potential and learn culture. Socialization will be considered as a lifelong process of human social experience.
- S.4 Students identify how social status influences individual and group behaviors and how that status relates to the position a person occupies within a social group
- S.6 Students explore the impacts of social groups on individual and group behavior. They understand that social groups are comprised of people who share some common characteristics, such as common interests, beliefs, behavior, feelings, thoughts and contact with each other.
- S.7 Students identify the effects of social institutions on individual and group behavior. They understand that social institutions are the social groups in which an individual participates, and that these institutions influence the development of the individual through the socialization process
- S.8 Students examine the changing nature of society. They explain that social change addresses the disruption of social functions caused by numerous factors and that some changes are minor and others are major
- S.10 Students examine the role of the individual as a member of the community. They also explore both individual and collective behavior

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY OF THE WORLD

- GHW.3 Students examine the physical and human geographic factors associated with population characteristics, distribution and migration in the world and the causes and consequences associated with them.
- GHW.4 Students examine the physical and human geographic factors associated with the origins, major players and events, and consequences of worldwide exploration, conquest and imperialism.
- GHW.6 Students examine physical and human geographic factors that influenced the origins, major events, diffusion, and global consequences of new ideas in agriculture, science, culture, politics, industry, and technology.
- GHW.7 Students explore the physical and human geographic factors affecting the origins and the local, regional and supranational consequences of conflict and cooperation between and among groups of people.

UNITED STATES HISTORY

- USH.1.3 Identify and tell the significance of controversies pertaining to slavery, abolitionism, and social reform movements.
- USH.2 Students examine the political, economic, social, and cultural development of the United States during the period from 1870 to 1900.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BEFORE SEEING THE PLAY

What have been your experiences with racism? How does racism affect you and/or your family and friends in your daily lives?

What have been your experiences with sexism? How have you and/or your family and friends been treated differently because of gender?

AFTER SEEING THE PLAY

In today's world, a woman with Sophie's community vision and passion for leadership might be elected mayor of her town, or an even higher office. How does the play show that opportunities for women have expanded in the last 125 years? How does it show what further challenges remain?

Wil grew up among the Seminole tribe and lived in Mexico for a time. How have these long-term experiences with other cultures affected him?

At first glance, Fannie seems to conform to many traditional female stereotypes: she loves cooking, and flowers, and fine dishes; she is sentimental about family; she wants to marry a man and take care of his home. Does Fannie seem limited by these interests? Why or why not? How does Fannie defy traditional roles for women?

Frank is the son of an enslaved Black woman and her White master. How does this situation affect Frank's view of relationships? of family? of society? of the United States? of the world? How much of Frank's attitude is a reaction to how the world sees him and treats him, and how much of it is a product of his own viewpoint?

Why does Minnie remain in an abusive relationship with Frank? In 1898, what are her options? What would her options be today? Why do people today still remain in abusive relationships? What can we do to help friends or relatives who we see in this situation?

Compare the relationship of Fannie and Wil to that of Minnie and Frank. How are they different? How are they the same? How does the playwright use the relationship of Fannie and Wil to counterpoint the relationship of Minnie and Frank? How does the playwright use the character of Wil to counterpoint the character of Frank?

Sophie's hope for Nicodemus is that it should remain an all-Black town—that Whites should not be allowed to buy land there. What are the merits of such a plan? What are the liabilities? Is this plan fair? Why or why not? How are questions of discrimination different when they are looked at from the viewpoint of the minority rather than the majority?

What are Frank's wrongdoings in the play? What legal recourse do the women have against him? What other actions might they attempt against him? Are the women justified in what they do? Why or why not? If this story had a contemporary setting, would you feel differently? Why or why not? How was the practice of justice different in the Old West than it is today? Discuss the ethical questions raised when considering the idea of taking the law into your own hands.

WRITING PROMPTS

Choose one of the characters from the play. Think back to the details given in the play, and write a journal for that character. Choose one significant day or a series of days—for example when the sisters decided to leave Memphis, or when they arrived in Nicodemus.

Imagine the time when Minnie was away from Nicodemus at the music conservatory, or living in London with Frank. Write a letter from Fannie or Sophie to Minnie, or from Minnie to her sisters. What stories would they share? What would they conceal?

Take what you know about Miss Leah from the play, and make up a backstory for her. Fill in the blanks that the playwright has left. Think forward beyond the play and imagine the end of her life. Write a short story or an encyclopedia article that is as detailed and creative as you can make it.

Write a review of the play. A well-rounded review includes your opinion of the theatrical aspects—scenery, lights, costumes, sound, direction, acting—as well as your impressions of the script and the impact of the story and/or themes and the overall production. What moments made an impression? How do the elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound work with the actors performance of the text to tell the story? What ideas or themes did the play make you think about? How did it make you feel? Did you notice the reactions of the audience as a whole? Would you recommend this play to others? Why or why not? To share your reviews with others, send to: education.irt@gmail.com

ACTIVITIES

ORAL HISTORIES

Fannie is collecting oral histories from the elders in the town. Interview someone older than you are to find how life in your town has changed and how it has stayed the same. Here are some sample questions for your oral history:

- Please tell me your full name, date of birth, and where you were born,
- What is your relationship to me?
- What is the very oldest memory you have?
- What did your kitchen smell like when you were growing up?
- How did you get to school?
- How diverse was your school?
- What was your favorite present you ever received?
- Who took care of you when you were little?
- What was your favorite meal you remember eating?
- Who was (is) the best cook you know?
- What is your most frightening memory?
- Did you have any pets growing up?
- What has changed the most since you were a child?
- What was your favorite game, movie, singer, when you were my age?
- What has changed since you were a child? What has not changed?
- What advice would you give to me?
- Who is the teacher you remember most? Why?
- What was the first job you had?
- Where is the farthest from home you have been?

BAKE AN APPLE PIE

In the 19th century, women often learned to cook by learning from the elders in their house, as Miss Leah learned from Ella when they were both enslaved at Colonel Harrisons. Try your hand at making an apple pie using this recipe from *The Complete Cook* by JB Lippincott, 1864:

Wipe the outside of some apples, pare, and core them; boil the parings and cores in a little water till it tastes well; strain, and put a bit of bruised lemon, a little sugar and cinnamon, and simmer again. Put a paste round the edge of the dish; place the apples in it; when one layer is made, sprinkle half the sugar, shred lemon peel, and squeeze some juice, or a glass of cider. Put in the liquor that you have boiled. Cover with paste. Add butter when cut, if hot. To flavor the pie you may add quince, marmalade, orange paste, or cloves, to flavor.

How is this recipe different from recipes today? What information is missing? What ingredients are unknown to you? Who do you know that might help you learn to make an apple pie?

SCENIC DESIGN

This play takes place in many scenes. Make a diorama or set design of the stage and show how you would stage each scene if you were doing the play at your school.

MAP YOUR DREAM TOWN

Draw out a map of your own dream town as Sophie and Fannie have done. Include town rules.

Things to think about:

- Sources of income for your town
- Transportation to and from your town
- Public services (police, fire, libraries, schools, etc.)
- Natural environment (bodies of water, mountains, etc.)

IDIOMS AND SLANG

Slang terms and interesting idioms are used throughout the play. Make a display with the terms listed below and their modern counterparts

- “countin’ chickens”
- “butter won’t melt in my mouth”
- “they’re all the rage”
- “I bumped my head so hard I saw stars”
- “aren’t worth two cents”
- “as regular as a clock”
- “long-winded people”
- “by the time her [Fan] and Wil stop dancin’ around each other”
- “Fan’s gonna skin you about her ribbons, Missy!”
- “six of one, half dozen of another.”
- “pack mule out in a some backwater town”
- “speechifyin’ and caryin’ on”
- “high and mighty”
- “lookin’ like somethin’ the cat dragged in”
- “seal the deal”

RESOURCES

BOOKS

Nicodemus: Post-Reconstruction Politics and Racial Justice in Western Kansas by Charlotte Hinger

A Kansas Sunrise: Captured by Seven Women Profound and Ageless...a collective narrative of kinship, life, and a celebration of memories by Earlice Switzer-Rupp

The Black Towns by Norman L. Crockett

Follow Me Down to Nicodemus Town by A. LaFaye; illustrated by Nicole Tadgell (for ages 5 to 7)

Going Home to Nicodemus: The Story of an African American Frontier Town and the Pioneers Who Settled It by Daniel Chu and Bill Shaw

Journey to a Promised Land: A Story of the Exodusters by Allison Lassieur (for ages 8 to 12)

In Search of Canaan: Black Migration to Kansas, 1879-80 by Robert G. Athearn

Freedom's Path series by Judith McCoy Miller: *First Dawn*, *Morning Sky*, and *Daylight Comes*

Promised Land on the Solomon: Black Settlement at Nicodemus, Kansas—National Park Service

African American Women of the Old West by Tricia Wagner

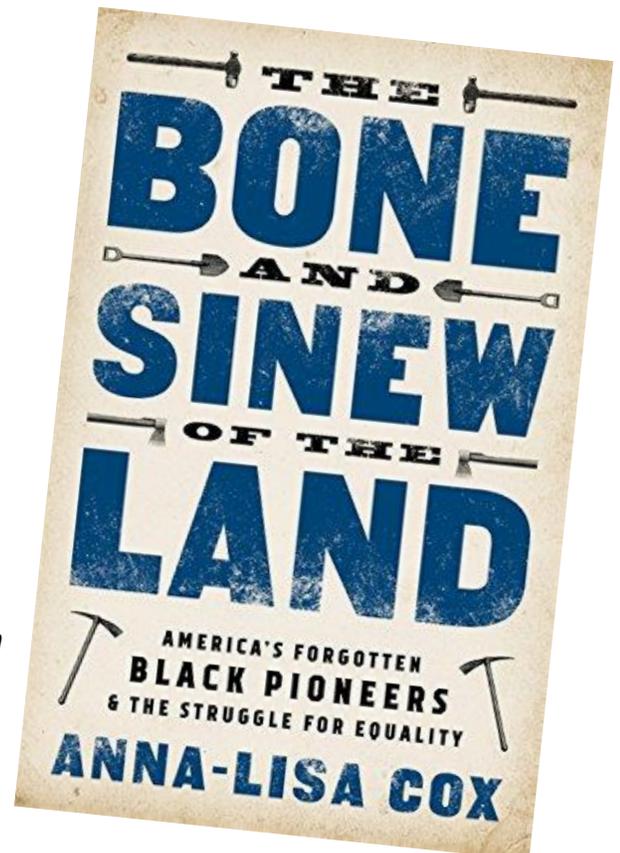
The Black West: A Documentary and Pictorial History of the African American Role in the Westward Expansion of the United States by William Loren Katz

The Bone and Sinew of the Land: America's Forgotten Black Pioneers and the Struggle for Equality by Anna-Lisa Cox

A Black Woman's West: The Life of Rose B. Gordon
by Michael K. Johnson

Black Pioneers: An Untold Story by William L. Katz

Black Pioneers: Images of the Black Experience on the North American Frontier by John Ravage



WEBSITES

<https://www.nps.gov/nico/index.htm>

website of Nicodemus National Historic Site, part of the National Park Service

<https://www.legendsofamerica.com/ks-nicodemus/>

an article about the history of Nicodemus

<https://www.travelks.com/places-to-visit/cities/nicodemus/>

Nicodemus page from Kansas Tourism, with links to other local sites

[Nicodemus, Graham County - Kansapedia - Kansas Historical Society \(kshs.org\)](http://www.kansapedia.com/nicodemus)

Nicodemus page from the Kansas Historical Site

<https://www.tpl.org/our-work/nicodemus-national-historic-site>

Nicodemus page from the Trust for Public Land

<https://kansassampler.org/8wondersofkansas-history/nicodemus-national-historic-site>

Nicodemus page from the Kansas Sampler Foundation

<https://www.nicodemushistoricalociety.org/nicodemus-kansas-settlers>

Nicodemus Historical Society and Museum, with links to other pertinent sites

<http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.afam.004>

African American Pioneers in the Encyclopedia of the Great Plains

<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/pearl-cleage-b-1948/>

Pearl Cleage in the New Georgia Encyclopedia

GLOSSARY

bastard

Today the word *bastard* is most often used in reference to an unpleasant or despicable person, but its original meaning was a person whose parents were not married—an illegitimate child.

blacksmith

A blacksmith was essential to every community in the Old West. In addition to shoeing horses, they repaired wagons and carriages, as well as plows and other farm tools.

Chautauqua Literary Society

Chautauqua was an adult education and social movement in the United States, highly popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Chautauqua assemblies spread throughout rural America until the mid-1920s; a few still exist today. Named for Chautauqua Lake in New York, the site of the first such event in 1874, Chautauquas brought entertainment and culture for the whole community, with speakers, teachers, musicians, showmen, preachers, and specialists of the day.

Civil War

The American Civil War (1861–1865) was fought between the United States (the “Union”) and eleven Southern states that seceded and formed the Confederate States of America. The Union, led by President Abraham Lincoln, opposed the expansion of slavery into territories owned by the United States. The war accounted for 970,000 casualties (3% of the population), more than all other U.S. wars combined. At the end of the war, the Union was restored and about 4 million enslaved Black people were freed.

conservatory

In this context, a conservatory is a college for the study of classical music or other arts.

forum

A forum is a meeting where ideas and views on a particular issue can be exchanged.

Jim Crow laws

After the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in America in 1865, racial discrimination in the South became regulated by so-called Jim Crow laws, which mandated strict segregation of the races. (Jim Crow was the name of a stereotypical minstrel show character.) Though such laws were instituted shortly after the Civil War ended in many cases, they only became formalized after the end of Reconstruction in the 1870s and 80s. This legalized segregation lasted up to the 1960s.

mulatto

The term *mulatto* is a racial classification to refer to people of mixed African and European ancestry. Today its use is considered outdated and offensive.

overseer

The overseer on a plantation, usually White, managed the enslaved laborers according to the master's orders. The overseer attended to the day-to-day farming activities of the plantation for the owner and was sometimes a more active participant in the running of the plantation's daily operations than the master himself. The overseer was often responsible for disciplining the workers; many formerly enslaved persons recounted harsh memories of cruel overseers.

pack mule

A pack mule is used by humans to transport materials on its back. The term is often used as a metaphor for someone who works hard for little reward.

passing

Racial passing occurs when a person classified as a member of a racial group is accepted or perceived ("passes") as a member of another. Historically, the term has been used primarily in the United States to describe a Person of Color who assimilates into the White majority to escape the legal and social conventions of racial segregation and discrimination

paternity

In this context, legal acknowledgement of a man's fatherhood of a child.

peckerwood

The term *peckerwood* is used in the South as a derogatory epithet for White people, especially poor rural Whites. The term originated in the early 1800s.

picaninny

The term *picaninny* originated in the Caribbean, meaning a baby or small child. In contrast to this neutral meaning, the word has been used in the United States as a derogatory racial slur referring to Black children. Today it is considered offensive and inappropriate.

Piccadilly Circus

Piccadilly Circus is a circular open public space in London's West End, the junction of Piccadilly, Regent Street, Shaftesbury Avenue, the Haymarket, Coventry, and Glasshouse Street. It might be considered the Times Square of London.

plaits

braids

plantation

In the past, a plantation differed from a farm in that, typically, the focus of a farm was subsistence agriculture, while the primary focus of a plantation was the production of cash crops. Since 1800, the term *plantation* in the United States has generally referred to large-scale operations in the South where enslaved Africans or African Americans were held captive and forced to produce crops to create wealth for a White elite.

pneumonia

Pneumonia is an inflammatory condition of the lung. Symptoms typically include cough, chest pain, fever, and difficulty breathing. Pneumonia is usually caused by infection with viruses or bacteria. In the 1890s, pneumonia was one of the leading causes of death.

Puccini

The time of the play is very early in the career of Italian opera composer Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924), whose most popular works include *La Bohème* (1896), *Tosca* (1900), *Madama Butterfly* (1904), and *Turandot* (1924).

pure D

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, using “D” as a minced oath for “damn” or “damned” goes back to the mid 1800s. The expression “pure D” or “pure-dee,” an intensifier meaning extremely, thoroughly, or entirely, seems to have originated in Texas and/or Louisiana. The first known published use of “pure d—” is from *The Weekly Gazette* of Colorado Springs, Colorado, in 1906.

Samson

Samson is a Biblical figure in the Book of Judges. He was given immense strength to aid him against his enemies and allow him to perform superhuman feats including slaying a lion with his bare hands and massacring an entire army of Philistines using only the jawbone of a donkey.

Seminoles

After migrating to northern Florida to escape conflicts with English colonists to the North, most of the Seminole Tribe was forcibly removed to Oklahoma in the mid-1800s. But an estimated 200 to 500 retreated deep into the Everglades and the Big Cypress Swamp, living on land considered unsuitable by White settlers. Their descendants continue to live in these wetlands.

speculators

In finance, speculation is the purchase of real estate with the hope that it will become more valuable shortly. A speculator attempts to buy a piece of land from an eager seller at a low price, then hold the property until they can sell it to an eager buyer at a higher price. In the interim, the speculator generally makes no investment to add to the value of the property or its community.

telegram

Before long distance telephone services were readily available or affordable, telegram services were very popular. A telegraph (from the Greek words *tele* = far and *graphein* = write) is a machine for transmitting and receiving messages over wire. The sender would go to a telegraph office and pay a per-word fee to have his message sent over the wire. The receiving office would print the message on a small, yellow paper form, and the telegram would be hand delivered to the addressee. An electrical telegraph was patented in the United States in 1837 by Samuel Morse, who also developed the Morse code signaling alphabet with Alfred Vail. America’s first telegram was sent by Morse in 1844, and the Morse-Vail telegraph was deployed across the United States over the following two decades.

THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

You, the audience are one of the most important parts of any performance. Experiencing the theatre is a group activity shared not only with the actors, but also with the people sitting around you. Your attention and participation help the actors perform better, and allow the rest of the audience to enjoy the show. Here are a few simple tips to help make each theatre experience enjoyable for everyone:

Leave mp3 players, cameras, mobile phones, and other distracting and noise-making electronic devices at home.

You may think texting is private, but the light and the motion are very annoying to those around you and on stage. Do not text during the performance.

Food and drink are not allowed in the building during student matinees.

The house lights dimming and going out signal the audience to get quiet and settle in your seats: the play is about to begin.

Don't talk with your neighbors during the play. It distracts people around you and the actors on stage. Even if you think they can't hear you, they can.

Never throw anything onto the stage. People could be injured.

Remain in your seat during the play. Use the restroom before or after the show.

Focus all your attention on the play to best enjoy the experience. Listen closely to the dialogue and sound effects, and look at the scenery, lights, and costumes. These elements all help to tell the story.

Get involved in the story. Laugh, cry, sigh, gasp—whatever the story draws from you. The more emotionally involved you are, the more you will enjoy the play.

Remain at your seat and applaud during the curtain call; this is part of the performance too. It gives you a chance to recognize a job well done and the actors a moment to thank you for your attention.

