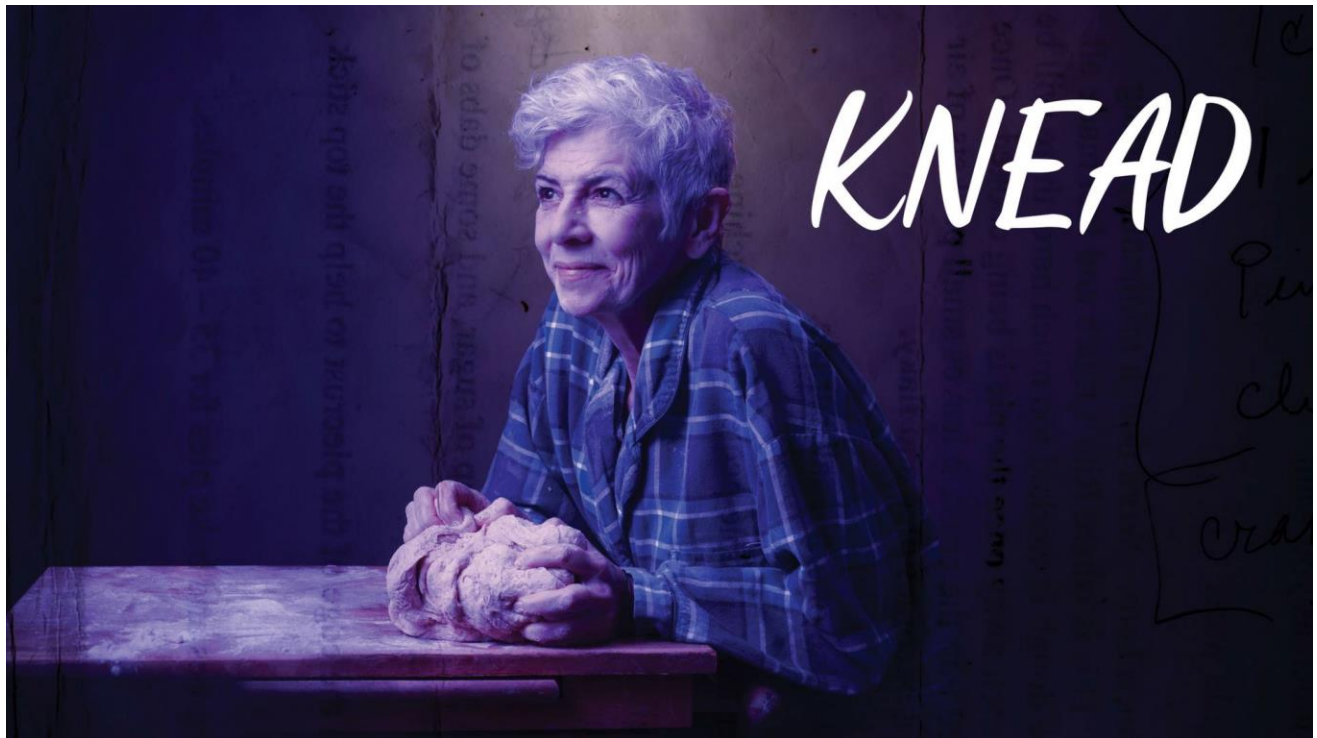


Alliance Theatre

institute

Study Guide:
KNEAD

Created as part of the Alliance Theatre's Dramaturgy by Students program
by: Sam Provenzano, UT Austin Theatre for Youth Fellow, Alliance Theatre
with: Grade 9 – 12 Theater & Chorus students at Frederick Douglass High School



Written and Performed by: Mary Lynn Owen
Directed by: David de Vries
November 13 – December 9, 2018
Hertz Stage at the Alliance Theatre

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Special thanks:

Barry Thibault, Theater Teacher; and JD Williams, Chorus Teacher
Frederick Douglass High School, Atlanta Public Schools

How to use this Study Guide:

Pretend these pages are notecards with histories written on them in the form of recipes. All of these notecards are kept neatly in a wooden box passed down from somebody's *abuela* (grandmother). The labels printed at the top will help you find what you are looking for as you shuffle through and engage with the themes and ideas the students at Frederick Douglass High School feasted on. Enjoy and see you at the theater!

Georgia Standards of Excellence

Georgia Standards of Excellence (English/Language Arts):

- ELAGSE11-12W2. d. Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.
- ELAGSE9-10SL1 c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
- ELAGSE9-10W3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
L11-12WHST4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- ELAGSE11-12RI6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.
- ELAGSE11-12RI4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text

Georgia Standards of Excellence (Fine Arts):

- TAHSFTII.8. b. Identifies and analyzes plays and dramas that are culturally diverse
- TAHSALIII.8. b. Explores cultural influences on acting, theatre, and human interaction
- TAHSADII.9 Exploring the business of theatre a. Explores careers in theatre through participation in various production roles and activities
- TAHSADIII.6 Researching cultural and historical information to support artistic choices a. Explores the relationship between research and theatrical production
- TAHSA.CR.1 a. Use script analysis in the development and presentation of formal and informal theatre performances.
- TAHSTL.RE.1 Evaluate various aspects of dramatic arts literature using appropriate supporting evidence. e. Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

About the Playwright



Mary Lynn Owen is an Atlanta-based actor, writer, and teacher with a career spanning nearly 40 years. Beginning at Atlanta's landmark Academy Theatre in 1979, her work has grown to include a breadth of styles, a repertoire of some of the most well-known roles in theatre and working relationships with all of Atlanta's professional theatre organizations, including The Alliance Theatre, Horizon Theatre, Theatrical Outfit, Actor's Express, Aurora Theatre, Georgia Ensemble Theatre, Theater Emory and Seven Stages. A member of Actor's Equity Association and SAG-AFTRA, Mary Lynn is a six-time nominee for the Suzi Award, and a Suzi Award winner for Best Actress in a Leading Role (*WIT*) and Best Actress in a Supporting Role (*THE LITTLE FOXES*). Recent film credits include the award-winning independent film, *THE BREAD SQUEEZER*, the independent film, *PEACE AT HOME*, and the feature films, *ONE MISSED CALL* and *THE CRAZIES*.

Mary Lynn has studied Fiction Writing and, in 2016, she was selected as a recipient of the Alliance Theatre's Reiser Atlanta Artists Lab Award, based on the submission of her one-woman show, *KNEAD*. *KNEAD*, a semi-finalist for the 2017 O'Neill National Playwright's Conference, will have its world premiere at The Alliance Theatre in November 2018. Mary Lynn is a recipient of writing residencies at Cottages at Hedgebrook in Langley, Washington, and The Hambidge Center in Rabun Gap, Georgia.

Since 2002, Mary Lynn has been a faculty member of the Theatre Studies Department at Emory University where she teaches Acting Fundamentals, and Taller de Teatro en Español/Theater Workshop in Spanish. She is a recipient of the 2016 Emory Grant for Faculty Development and Excellence, and of the 2015 Emory Center for Creativity Grant.

Vocabulary

Within the Play:

Word/Phrase	Definition
4H Club	An organization sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, established chiefly to instruct young people, originally in rural areas, in modern farming methods and other useful skills, as carpentry and home economics. The 4 H's stand for head, heart, hands, and health.
AIDS	A disease of the immune system characterized by increased susceptibility to opportunistic infections, as pneumocystis carinii pneumonia and candidiasis, to certain cancers, as Kaposi's sarcoma, and to neurological disorders: caused by a retrovirus and transmitted chiefly through blood or blood products that enter the body's bloodstream.
Flan	A dessert of sweetened egg custard with a caramel topping. (Image below)
Gluten	The tough, viscid, nitrogenous substance remaining when the flour of wheat or other grain is washed to remove the starch.
Knead	To work (dough, clay, etc.) into a uniform mixture by pressing, folding, and stretching.
Mantilla	A silk or lace head scarf arranged over a high comb and falling over the back and shoulders, worn in Spain.
Mastectomy	The operation of removing all or part of the breast or mamma.
Proof	To cause (especially bread dough) to rise due to the addition of baker's yeast or other leavening.

About the Play:

Word/Phrase	Definition
Autobiographical	Marked by or dealing with one's own experiences or life history.
Beat	A momentary time unit imagined by an actor in timing actions.
Magical Realism	A style of painting or writing that depicts images or scenes of surreal fantasy in a representational or realistic way.

Source: www.dictionary.com



Flan; source: <http://recipes.beewild.buzz/honey-flan/>

Historical Moments

Cuban Missile Crisis: A confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1962 over the presence of missile sites in Cuba; one of the “hottest” periods of the cold war. The Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, placed Soviet military missiles in Cuba, which had come under Soviet influence after the success of the Cuban Revolution three years earlier. President John F. Kennedy of the United States set up a naval blockade of Cuba and insisted that Khrushchev remove the missiles. Khrushchev did so.



Kennedy and Khrushchev depicted in a Political Cartoon - 1962

Source: <https://woodstockwhisperer.info/2017/10/07/october-1962-cuban-missile-crisis/>

Post-show connection:

The Cuban Missile Crisis is not mentioned in the play but influenced Mary Lynn’s experience in the world from a young age.

What historical or social political events have shaped your view/experience of the world?

Cuban Plane Hijackings: Aircraft hijacking incidents between the United States and Cuba were at their height between 1968 and 1972. These incidents have variously been attributed to terrorism, extortion, flight for political asylum, mental illness and transportation between the two countries as a result of the ongoing antagonistic Cuba-United States relations and the Communist government restrictions against Cubans attempting to leave Cuba.

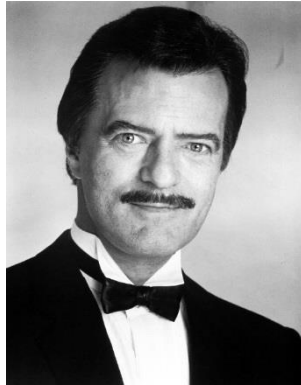
Watergate: White House political scandal that came to light during the 1972 presidential campaign, growing out of a break-in at the Democratic Party headquarters at the Watergate apartment-office complex in Washington, D.C., and, after congressional hearings, culminating in the resignation of President Nixon in 1974.



People marching to support the impeachment of Nixon – Early 1970’s

Source: <https://blog.gale.com/headlines-in-context-comparing-the-watergate-scandal-to-russias-election-meddling-investigation/>

Historical People



Robert Goulet

Source: <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0332587/>

Robert Goulet: A star whose career spanned over 40 years. He was famous for roles on Broadway, film, and television. His trademark was a “rich baritone singing voice.”



“Muhamad Ali, right, stuns Joe Frazier in the 9th round...”

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2015/oct/01/thrilla-in-manila-40-years-on-muhammad-ali-joe-frazier-boxing>

Thrilla in Manila: The name given to the third and final match between boxing legends Muhamad Ali and Joe Frazier. In 1971, Frazier beat Ali in Madison Square Garden. In 1974, Ali overcame Frazier. To settle their tie, the two met for the last time in 1975 in one of the major metropolitan areas of the Philippines referred to as Manila. Ali won by a TKO (technical knockout).

Unpacking Major Themes: Food and Family

Recipe for Me

The events of our lives help shape us into the people we are in this moment. *Knead* could almost be considered a recipe for Mary Lynn Owen, where she shares the parts that make up her identity and life. For this activity, consider the parts and pieces of your past that has helped create you.

Recipe for Me is a writing exercise where participants reflect on personal or collective identity through the language and structure of a recipe (i.e., ingredients, preparation and cooking directions, etc.). Participants are invited to use metaphorical language and cultural food references to name, describe, and share multiple aspects of their background and identity markers with a group.

Instructions:

- Invite participants to take 5 minutes to create a list of words that describe who they are; this might include words that describe specific identity markers, things they like to do, or personality traits.
- Next, ask participants to describe the elements, structure, and language in a recipe. If a group has not seen a written recipe it might be important to share an example and make observations. Introduce the task.
- Turn your list of words that describe who you are into a Recipe for Me, using the structure and format of a recipe to share your information. Each Recipe for Me should include a list of ingredients and measurements, cooking directions and serving directions, along with a title for the recipe. Provide examples as needed, emphasize ways to use cooking as a metaphor to describe who you are.
- When completed, choose a way to share the work:
 - Pairs to Full Group Share: Students pair up and share their recipe with a partner. Then, each individual in the pair introduces their partner, shares their favorite line from their partner's recipe, and explains why they like it.
 - Individual to Full Group Performance: Each student reads over their recipe and selects one line of text to share with the group.

Reflection:

- What was the writing process like for you? What did you notice about our recipes?
- What recipe might you write in 5 or 10 years? How might your recipe change overtime?
- What parts of your recipe do you think will always be the same throughout your life? Why?

Source: <http://dbp.theatredance.utexas.edu/content/recipe-me>



Exploding Atom

The themes of food and family brought about fruitful dialogue in our classroom at Douglass High School. Below is a strategy with statements that allowed us to dig into the themes of *Knead* and connect them to our own lives.

Exploding Atom:

- The full group stands in a large, open space in a circle.
- Explain that a statement will be read.
 - If the participant agrees with the statement they should come as close to the center of the circle as possible.
 - If the participant disagrees with the statement they should stand as far away from the center as possible within a set boundary.
- Model how each participant is on their own continuum between “agree” and “disagree” in their response to each statement.
- Read the first statement and ask participants to vote with their bodies by moving to the place that best expresses their response between *Yes, I agree* and *No, I disagree*.
 - When desired stop and unpack or process the participants responses to the statements.
 - Someone who is standing closer to “I agree,” please share why.
 - Then, someone who is standing closer to “I disagree,” please share why.
 - Or, please turn to the person next to you and share why you are standing where you are standing.
- Re-set the group to a neutral circle between statements to prepare for the next prompt.

Example Statements for the Continuum:

- I am really good at baking and/or cooking.
 - Follow up Question: How did you learn to cook? Who in your household cooks?
- I feel connected to my identity through food.
 - Follow up Question: Why or why not? If yes, what food in particular?
- Food and culture are the same thing.
 - Follow up Question: Why or why not?
- Family is always complicated.



Reflection:

- What did you notice about the responses in the room?
- What did we learn about the group from this activity?
- Where we most in agreement? Why?

Source: <https://prettysimplesweet.com/cinnamon-roll-cookies>

Source: <http://dbp.theatredance.utexas.edu/node/26>

Class Cookbook

"Every recipe is - a possession, and this is what stands out to me, not the teaspoons and tablespoons, but the titles and the names. They are...information.... about a life"

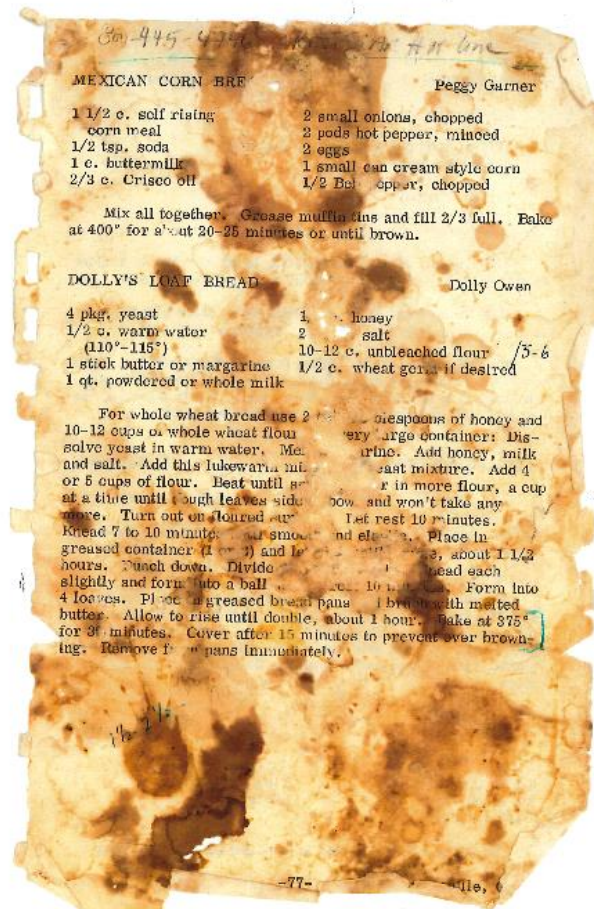
(Knead, page 12).

Directions:

- Choose a family or community member to interview.
- Ask him/her for their favorite recipe.
- Or, create your own recipe to share with the class.
- Combine all recipes to create a class cookbook.

Reflection:

- How do the *titles* of the dishes in our class cookbook give information about their origin?



Dolly's Loaf Bread recipe used in *Knead* courtesy of Mary Lynn Owen.

Solo Performance Study

About Solo Performance:

Knead is a one woman show or solo performance. Solo performance is where one actor on stage performs entirely by themselves. Other theatrical elements are often used to enhance the storytelling. In *Knead*, one could consider the dough Mary Lynn's counterpart on stage. Because she is actually baking the bread on stage, the temperament of the dough must be taken into consideration for each performance. But other than compelling props, solo performers are just that: solo! Although they will often take on multiple characters to complete the story.

There are many types of solo-performance. In *Knead*, the playwright, Mary Lynn Owen plays a character that is very similar to her and uses her actual life experiences.

About Anna Deavere Smith:

In order to see a different type of solo-performance, our class looked at the work of Anna Deavere Smith. She is a famous playwright, actor, teacher, and author whose solo-performance is based on interviewing people with differing opinions about a topic. She portrays characters based on the actual people, using their exact words, mannerisms, and physicality to embody them, and ultimately creates performances that offer a multidimensional view of issues in the world. Many of Anna Deavere Smith's performances can be found on YouTube.



Anna Deavere Smith in *Notes from the Field*

Source: <https://variety.com/2018/tv/features/anna-deavere-smith-notes-from-the-field-hbo-injustice-school-to-prison-pipeline-1202698663/>

Autobiographical Writing

Autobiographical work starts with you! Regardless of your age or life experience, the moments of our lives can be spun into compelling stories that we can share with one another. When we think of storytelling, we might feel like we must jump to the big events of our lives first. But try starting small. In this excerpt from the script, Mary Lynn zooms into this small moment and describes her struggle and joy with baking using her mother's recipe:

*"It's my favorite part. It's the only part that I can seem to do... well.
My mom leaves this part out, the kneading part.
Well, she leaves out a lot of parts. At least on paper.
Which is probably why it never works for me,
why my loaves look so - flat - and square- like they're orthopedic shoes -
and why they taste - well, they never taste like I remember.
They never taste - (speaking to dough) - you never taste - right"*

(Knead, page 9)

Mary Lynn is using the experience of baking and her opinion about the situation in her storytelling. As you are writing, think of using not only your life experience, but including your opinion of the experiences to create full stories.

Below are writing prompts to start your journey of creating your solo performance script:

- What is a food that is meaningful in your family? Who usually cooks it?
- Describe the best meal you have ever had. Who was there? Where did it take place? Who cooked?
- What is an activity/hobby (e.g. baking, sewing, skiing, playing an instrument, etc.) that you do well? Who taught you how to do it? What was a moment of struggle you had when learning how to do it? What inspired you to learn this skill?



Source: <https://www.atlanta-theater.com/theaters/alliance-theatre/knead.php>

Your Solo-Performance

The students at Frederick Douglass High School created solo performances in small groups. Each student in the group was responsible for one of the following roles:

- Playwright/ Actor
- Music Director/ Sound Designer
- Costume Designer
- Scenic Designer

How to Create a Solo Performance:

- **Brainstorm a title.** If you wrote a one-person play about your life, what would the one-word title be?
- **Draft your script.** Write a short story from your life and memories that would exemplify your one-word title. Aim for 1-2 minutes in length.
- **Define the setting.** What would the one setting be of your solo-performance? Describe the location where you would tell the above story. Create a visual board of images that would inspire the setting. Think of color, lighting, tone, and objects.
- **Visualize your costumes.** What would you be wearing when you tell the above story? Describe in detail the costume. Again, think about color, style, time period, and how it would look in your imagined setting. Create a visual board of images that would inspire the costume.
- **Select your soundtrack.** Think about performing this story, what would be the perfect 15 seconds of a song that introduces your story? Think about tone, rhythm, lyrics, etc.
- **Share your piece.** Put it all together as a performance. Project your digital boards as you play the first part of the chosen song. Share your title and story. Then explain your choices in the design elements.

Student Work Example:

Setting	Costumes
	

Post-Show Discussion Questions

1. Mary Lynn shared memories that were happening during major historical events such as Watergate or the Cuban plane hijackings. Is there a major historical event that has happened in your lifetime where you can clearly recall the details of where you were when it happened? How did it change or shape your perception of the world?
2. This play takes place at 3 AM, when the character can't sleep. Have you ever experienced a night without rest? What did you do when you couldn't sleep?
3. The audience of *Knead* knows it is the early morning of Mary Lynn's birthday. Do you or your family have any birthday rituals?

Follow up question: This is the character's 60th birthday, which holds significance because the character's mother passed away at 59. Is there an age you are looking forward to most? Least?



4. Mary Lynn's mother brought her home the mantilla from her time in Spain. She writes, "She brings me a present – this present – a mantilla for me to wear in my wedding – but when she hands it to me she can barely let go of it. Her grip is just a little too tight. She hands it to me – and I take it – I have to TAKE it. My mom doesn't want to let go of Spain. She doesn't even want to share it" (*Knead*, page 23).

Is there an object in your life that holds memories of a place or people? Under what circumstances could you imagine giving it away? Is there an object in your life that you would never give away?

Queen Sophia of Spain wearing a mantilla circa 1960's

Source: <http://nickverreos.blogspot.com/2014/06/royal-couturequeen-sofia-of-spain-style.html#more>

5. Re-read this line from the play: "I want to slam my brother's head shut in his MacBook and beat him senseless with his floppy Bible. I THINK I KNOW NOW WHAT A HIJACKING IS!" (*Knead*, page 44). What does this moment say about Mary Lynn's relationship with her brother? Also, this is the second time she brings up *hijacking* in the play. How is this an effective use of repetition?

6. How did the use of magical realism (objects, such as a tricycle, appearing from impossible places) add to dramatic tension?



Works Cited

"List of Cuba-United States aircraft hijackings." <https://www.revolvy.com/page/List-of-Cuba%E2%80%93United-States-aircraft-hijackings>)

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