

Alliance Theatre

institute

Study Guide
EVERYBODY

Created as part of the Dramaturgy by Students program
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EVERYBODY

By Branden Jacobs-Jenkins
Co-Directed by Susan V. Booth & Tinashe Kajese-Bolden

September 2 – October 2, 2022
Coca-Cola Stage

Recommended for Grades 9-12

Content Advisory: Contains explicit language

Table of Contents

Georgia Standards of Excellence.....	3
Synopsis.....	4
Author Study.....	4
Vocabulary	5-6
Source Text: Everyman, a Morality Play.....	7
Side-by-Side Text Analysis.....	8-9
Allusions.....	10-11
Character Analysis.....	12
Pre-Show Discussion Questions and Journal Prompt.....	13
Post-Show Discussion Questions and Journal Prompt.....	14
Works Cited.....	15

Georgia Standards of Excellence

Suggested Grade Level: High School (grades 9-12)

Content Advisory: Contains explicit language

English/Language Arts

- ELAGSE9-10RL9: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).
- ELAGSE9-10RL2: Determine a theme and/or central idea of text and closely analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- ELAGSE9-10RL3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme
- ELAGSE11-12RL1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- ELAGSE11-12RL3: Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

Theatre

- TAHS.A.RE.1 Engage actively and appropriately as an audience member.
 - a. Examine and reflect on the relationship between actor and live audience in historical and contemporary performances.
 - TAHS.A.CN.2 Examine the role of theatre in a societal, cultural, and historical context.
 - a. Examine and apply theatrical theories, performances, and conventions from a variety of theatrical literature, historical periods, and cultures.
- TAHSFT.A.RE.1 Engage actively and appropriately as an audience member.
 - a. Articulate why the relationship between the audience and performers is critical to the success of the production and demonstrate appropriate audience behavior.
 - b. State and support aesthetic judgments through experience in diverse styles and genres of theatre.
 - TAHSFT.A.CN.1 Explore how theatre connects to life experiences, careers, and other content.
 - a. Examine how theatre reflects real life.
 - b. Analyze how theatre employs aspects of other art forms and disciplines to effectively communicate with a live audience.
- TAHSFT.A.CN.2 Examine the role of theatre in a societal, cultural, and historical context.
 - a. Identify and analyze plays and dramas from a variety of historical periods and cultures.
 - b. Explore the works of milestone playwrights and plays, and the relevance of historical theatre

Social Studies – Sociology

- SSSocSC1 Explain the process of socialization.
 - a. Identify and describe the roles and responsibilities of an individual in society.
 - c. Identify and compare the stages of socialization, include: childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and death/dying.

Synopsis

In EVERYBODY, Everybody is a happy person, a free person, a person who believes nothing but the best lies ahead. Then Death comes calling, and Everybody must go on a journey to find what has had lasting significance in his lifetime. Inspired by the 15th century play *Everyman*, EVERYBODY explores the meaning of life and the roles we play along the way. In keeping with life's random twists and turns, the play's performers draw names on stage each night to determine which actor will play each character in that performance. Remixing the archetypal medieval morality play into an explosive experiment of wit and emotion, EVERYBODY is a "sunny, stunning journey from life to death" that "fills the heart in a new and unexpected way" (DC Theatre Scene & The New Yorker).

Author Study



Branden Jacobs-Jenkins is a playwright whose plays include *Girls* (Yale Rep), *Everybody* (Signature Theatre; Pulitzer Prize finalist), *War* (world premiere, Yale Rep; LCT3), *Gloria* (Vineyard Theatre; Pulitzer Prize finalist), *Appropriate* (Signature Theatre; OBIE Award), *An Octoroon* (Soho Rep.; OBIE Award), and *Neighbors* (The Public Theater).

A Residency Five playwright at Signature Theatre, his most recent honors include the Charles Wintour Award for Most Promising Playwright from the London Evening Standard, a London Critics' Circle Award for Most Promising Playwriting, a MacArthur Fellowship, the Windham-Campbell Prize for Drama, the Benjamin H. Danks Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Steinberg Playwriting Award, and the inaugural Tennessee Williams Award. Jacobs-Jenkins is a Professor in the Practice of Theater and Performance Studies at Yale, and has taught at NYU, Juilliard, Hunter College, and the University of Texas-Austin.

Source: <https://fas.yale.edu/book/new-fas-faculty-2021-22/new-ladder-faculty-and-professors-2021-22/humanities/branden-jacobs>

Vocabulary

A list of advanced vocabulary terms used throughout the script is provided below, in order of appearance.

Word	Used in Context	Definition
<i>Treatise</i> (noun)	HERE BEGINNETH A TREATISE ON HOW SOMEONE OR SOMETHING—GOD?—SENDETH DEATH TO SUMMON EVERY CREATURE TO COME AND ACCOUNT FOR THEIR LIVES IN THE WORLD, PRESENTED IN THE MANNER OF A MORALITY PLAY (page 7)	A written work dealing formally and systematically with a subject.
<i>Bonbon</i> (noun)	“If you answered “yes” to any of these questions and are now even remotely entertaining the notion of a cough drop, hard candy, or bonbon , now’s your time to deal with that. I’ll wait until it’s clear to me that all candies and cough drops are unwrapped and/or consumed...” (page 8)	A piece of candy, especially one covered with chocolate.
<i>Purported</i> (adjective)	“Now, the original play, Everyman, purported to be about Life and its transience, which is to say it was really, I guess, about Death.” (page 9)	Appearing or stated to be true, though not necessarily so; alleged.
<i>Transience</i> (noun)	“Now, the original play, Everyman, purported to be about Life and its transience , which is to say it was really, I guess, about Death.” (page 9)	The state or fact of lasting only for a short time; transitory nature.
<i>Unfathomable</i> (adjective)	“...and let’s call that ‘Hell,’ this state of eternal, unfathomable suffering.” (page 9)	Incapable of being fully explored or understood.
<i>Vis-à-vis</i> (noun)	“So think about that and what you want to do with the rest of your life, vis-à-vis that.” (page 10)	In relation to; with regard to.
<i>Belittles</i> (verb)	“WHAT IS THAT LAUGHTER AND TO WHOM DOES IT BELONG? IS THAT MY OWN CREATION WHICH BELITTLES ME?” (page 10)	Make (someone or something) seem unimportant.
<i>Infinite</i> (adjective)	“I WOULD HOPE THAT IT WAS MERELY MY IMAGINATION, INFINITE AS IT IS, PLAYING ONE OF ITS INFINITE TRICKS ON ME.” (page 11)	Limitless or endless in space, extent, or size; impossible to measure or calculate.
<i>Vessel</i> (noun)	“BECAUSE OF THE VESSEL I HAVE CHOSEN?” (page 11)	(Chiefly in or alluding to biblical use) A person, especially regarded as holding or embodying a particular quality.
<i>Omniscient</i> (adjective)	“I, THE ALL-SEEING, I, THE ALL-FEELING? THE OMNISCIENT , THE OMNIPOTENT, THE OMNIPRESENT?” (page 11)	Knowing everything.

Vocabulary
(continued)

Word	Used in Context	Definition
<i>Omnipotent</i> (adjective)	"I, THE ALL-SEEING, I, THE ALL-FEELING? THE OMNISCIENT, THE OMNIPOTENT , THE OMNIPRESENT?" (page 11)	(Of a deity) Having unlimited power; able to do anything.
<i>Omnipresent</i> (adjective)	"I, THE ALL-SEEING, I, THE ALL-FEELING? THE OMNISCIENT, THE OMNIPOTENT, THE OMNIPRESENT ?" (page 11)	(Of God) Present everywhere at the same time.
<i>Vantage</i> (noun)	" POSSESS THE VANTAGE OF DIVINITY." (page 11)	A place or position affording a good view of something.
<i>Divinity</i> (noun)	" POSSESS THE VANTAGE OF DIVINITY ." (page 11)	Godliness; the state or quality of being divine.
<i>Thematize</i> (verb)	"This is done in an attempt to more closely thematize the randomness of death while also destabilizing your preconceived notions about identity, et cetera, et cetera, blah, blah, blah." (page 19)	Present or select (a subject) as a theme.
<i>Destabilizing</i> (adjective)	"This is done in an attempt to more closely thematize the randomness of death while also destabilizing your preconceived notions about identity, et cetera, et cetera, blah, blah, blah." (page 19)	Upsetting the stability of a region or system; causing unrest.
<i>Entrapment</i> (noun)	"So this assignment is sort of like a trap! Like entrapment ! Like Life is entrapment !" (page 22)	The state of being caught in or as in a trap.
<i>Policing</i> (verb)	"You're policing the way that I dream...?" (page 27)	Enforcing; regulating.
<i>Kinship</i> (noun)	" Kinship is way different than friendship!" (page 29)	Blood relationship.
<i>Tchotchke</i> (noun)	"Your great tchotchke collection slash collections." (page 36)	A small object that is decorative rather than strictly functional; a trinket.
<i>Cryptoracist</i> (noun)	"What does our being friends have to do with whether or not you're a cryptoracist ?" (page 39)	A form of racial discrimination that is disguised and subtle, rather than public or obvious.
<i>Forsake</i> (verb)	"All things upon this Earth are but Vanity—Beauty, Strength, Mind, Senses, do man forsake ..." (page 54)	Abandon (someone or something).

Source Text:
EVERYMAN, a Morality Play

There begyneth a creatyse how þe
fader of heuen sendeth dethe to sa-
mon every creature to come and
gyve a counte of theyr lyues in
this woꝛlde/and is in maner
of a moꝛall playe.



A source text is an original text that inspires a new idea or work. *EVERYBODY* was inspired by the 15th century morality play *Everyman*.

Morality Plays were allegorical dramas (stories that use symbolism to convey a hidden moral meaning) popular in the 15th and 16th centuries. In these plays, flawed human characters came into contact with characters who personified moral qualities and learned a lesson or moral by the play's end.

The plot of *EVERYBODY* draws heavily from the source text *Everyman* and even features some direct quotes from the original morality play. The titles of both plays refer to the main character (Everyman or Everybody), who embodies all of humanity. Many of the supporting characters from *Everyman* remain the same in the newer adaptation, but some have been renamed to reflect our modern times (for example, the character "Goods" in *Everyman* is named "Stuff" in *EVERYBODY*).

Source: www.luminarium.org/medlit/intro.htm

Jacobs-Jenkins's modern take places a centuries-old story in the present day, drawing parallels between the medieval anxieties about death and modern existential dread surrounding the meaning of life and what happens after we die. *EVERYBODY* employs humor and modern jargon (or slang) to explore themes of self, the value of life, and the inevitability of death, making it accessible to modern day audiences.

Learn more about morality plays here: <https://www.britannica.com/art/morality-play-dramatic-genre>

Side-by-Side Text Analysis

Below is a side-by-side comparison of the same scene from *Everyman* and *EVERYBODY*. Close read each text, pausing to compare and contrast the word choice, syntax, and tone in the two selections.

Source Text: <i>Everyman</i>	Adapted Text: <i>EVERYBODY</i> :
<p>GOD: Every man liveth so after his own pleasure, And yet of their life they be nothing sure. I see the more that I them forbear, The worse they be from year to year. All that liveth declineth fast, Therefore I will in all haste Have a reckoning of every man's person; For, if I leave the people thus alone In their life and wicked tempests, Verily they will become much worse than beasts; For now one would by envy another eat up; Charity they do all clean forget. I hoped well that every man In My glory should make his mansion, And thereto I had them all elect; But now I see, like traitors deject, They thank Me not for the pleasure that I to them meant, Nor yet for their being that I them have lent; I proffered the people great multitude of mercy. And few there be that ask it heartily; They be so cumbered with worldly riches, That needs on them I must do justice, On every man living without fear. Where art thou, Death, thou mighty messenger?</p> <p><i>DEATH enters.</i></p> <p>DEATH: Almighty God, I am here at Your will, Your commandment to fulfill.</p>	<p>"GOD": HOW CAN IT BE THAT OF ALL MY PRODUCTIONS, IT IS YOU WHO HAVE DETERIORATED SO SEVERELY AND INTO SUCH DISAPPOINTMENT? AND DON'T YOU HEAR THE REMAINDER OF MY CREATION, THE WONDER THAT IS EVERYTHING, CRYING OUT FOR JUSTICE AGAINST YOU? MY LOVE MUST BE FAIR AND ALL- ENCOMPASSING! THIS IS ALL VERY TAXING. I REQUIRE DATA. I MUST HAVE A RECKONING OF EVERYBODY'S PERSON SO THAT I MAY ACCOUNT, IF ANY, FOR MY PERFECTION'S MOST PERFECT ERROR! <i>(Calling out.)</i> DEATH?! DEATH! REVEAL YOURSELF!</p> <p><i>Death emerges from the audience.</i></p> <p>DEATH: Over here.</p> <p>"GOD": OH. HELLO.</p> <p>DEATH: Hey. How are you?</p> <p>"GOD": TO BE HONEST, I'M NOT IN THE BEST MOOD.</p> <p>DEATH: Oh no, is there something I can do?</p>

Side-by-Side Text Analysis
(continued)

Source Text: Everyman	Adapted Text: EVERYBODY:
<p>GOD: Go thou to Everyman, And show him in My name A pilgrimage he must on him take, Which he in no wise may escape; And that he bring with him a sure reckoning Without delay or any tarrying.</p> <p>DEATH: Lord, I will in the world go run over all, And cruelly out-search both great and small; Every man will I beset that liveth beastly, Against God's laws, and dreadeth not folly: He that loveth riches I will strike with my dart, His sight to blind, and from heaven to depart, Except that alms be his good friend, In hell for to dwell, world without end.</p>	<p>"GOD": ACTUALLY, YES, THERE IS, DEAR ASSISTANT. DO WHAT YOU DO AND GO SEEK OUT EVERYBODY AND BRING THEM TO ME ASAP.</p> <p>DEATH: Alright—</p> <p>"GOD": I NEED THEM TO GIVE ME SOME SENSE OF HOW AND WHY THEY HAVE LIVED THE WAY THEY HAVE LIVED SO I CAN MAKE THE APPROPRIATE ADJUSTMENTS TO MY BELOVED EXPERIMENT EVERYTHING.</p> <p>DEATH: Okay, and what kind of form would you like this "sense" to take?</p> <p>"GOD": I DON'T KNOW! CAN'T YOU JUST FIGURE IT OUT? YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I HAVE TO DO!</p> <p>DEATH: Okay...</p> <p>"GOD": THANK YOU.</p> <p>DEATH: Feel better.</p> <p>"GOD": I DON'T NEED YOU TO TELL ME HOW TO FEEL.</p>

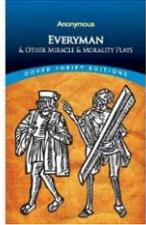
Source: Project Gutenberg <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/19481/19481-h/19481-h.htm>

Allusions

A literary allusion is a reference to a person, event, thing, or other text within a literary work. Pick one allusion that appears in *EVERYBODY* from the list below and research it using the link provided, as well as other reliable sources of your choice. Then, examine how (and why) playwright Branden Jacobs-Jenkins draws on that specific source material to create a significant moment in the play.

Allusion	Learn More	Image
The Bible		
<p><i>The Book of Matthew</i> STUFF: “And it already sort of sounds like obsessing over me and chasing me down and having more of me might be what’s distracted you from focusing on this presentation or whatever in the first place.” (pages 37-38)</p>	<p>Biblia.com: https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/matthew/6/19-21</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Book of Matthew (The New Testament)</i> Source: theologyofwork.org</p>
Greek Mythology		
<p><i>Sisyphus</i> “I don’t have time for this. I’ve already spent my entire life dealing with this crap. I refuse to spend the last moments of it pushing the same rock up the same hill.” (page 40)</p>	<p>Britannica.com: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sisyphus</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sisyphus</i> Titian, 1548–49 Source: britannica.com</p>
Danse Macabre (dance of death)		
<p>XIII. LA DANSE MACABRE <i>Skeletons dance macabre in a landscape of pure light and sound</i> (page 46)</p>	<p>Brittanica.com: https://www.britannica.com/art/dance-of-death-art-motif</p>	
<p>DEATH. (Waxing poetic.) “And now out of thy sight I see so make thee ready shortly for here’s the day from which they say that no one living gets away!” (page 19)</p>	<p>Britannica.com: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Everyman-English-morality-play</p> <p>Source Text: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/19481/19481-h/19481-h.htm</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Chandler</i> Hans Holbein the Younger, 1526 Source: britannica.com</p>

Allusions
(continued)

Everyman, a Morality Play		
<p>“Ye hearer, take it of worth, old and young: All things upon this Earth are but Vanity—Beauty, Strength, Mind, Senses, do man forsake, just as his foolish friends and kinsmen who to him fair spake: All fleeth save his Love, which beyond he doth take.” (page 54)</p>	<p>Britannica.com: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Everyman-English-morality-play</p> <p>Source Text: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/19481/19481-h/19481-h.htm</p>	 <p>Source: target.com</p>
Economics		
<p>Capitalism “Well, basically, I’ve been summoned to go on this scary journey at the end of which I have to give a presentation on my life to someone or something which I’m pretty sure now is definitely “God” and, anyway, I’m super scared and over the years you have been such a comfort to me and all the pieces of you are basically all the pieces of my life here and, at the very least, due to Capitalism, my labor has been literally translated into the abstract value with which I purchased you, so in some ways you are actually the sum total of how I spent a lot of my time on this planet...” (page 37)</p>	<p>Britannica.com: https://www.britannica.com/topic/capitalism</p>	 <p>New York Stock Exchange Source: britannica.com</p>

Character Analysis

In *EVERYBODY*, characters represent abstract concepts, relationships, and even physical things, often illustrated by their name. These characters include GOD, DEATH, EVERYBODY, FRIENDSHIP, STRENGTH, KINSHIP, BEAUTY, COUSIN, MIND, STUFF, SENSES, TIME, EVIL, and LOVE. Analyze one of those characters below.

Character Name: _____

Symbol or Image <i>Sketch an image below that represents the character</i>	Allegorical Role <i>Describe how the character serves to represent the abstract meaning or idea their name suggests</i>
	Motivation <i>Describe the character's multiple or conflicting motivations – what do they want?</i>
	Development <i>How does the character grow or change throughout the play?</i>
	Relationships <i>How does the character interact with other characters?</i>
	Plot or Theme <i>How does the character advance the plot or develop a specific theme?</i>

Pre-Show Discussion Questions & Journal Prompt

Discussion Questions:

1. The definition of a journey is “an act of traveling from one place to another”. Journeys can be taken with a group or alone (a “solo journey”). Journeys can be literal, like a vacation somewhere, or figurative, like a spiritual journey, or a journey of change.

- Describe a journey that you have taken in your life. Consider:
 - Did your journey involve a group, or were you on the journey alone?
 - Did you choose to take the journey, or was the choice made for you?
 - Was it a literal or figurative journey?
 - How did you change from the beginning of the journey to the end?

2. What is an “identity”?

- Do we have a choice in our identity?
- How do our identities shape our paths in life?
- Do you believe we, as humans, are more alike than we are different? Why or why not?

3. What do you believe holds the most value in life?

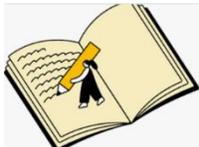
- a.) the material things we possess
- b.) our friends and family
- c.) the good deeds we have done

Support your answer with examples.

4. *EVERYBODY* is an adaptation of the morality play *Everyman*. What does the concept of “morality” mean to you?

- What types of behaviors are deemed “right” or “acceptable” in our society?
- What kinds of behaviors in our society might be considered “immoral”?
- Is morality fixed, do morals shift over time? What are some examples of universal morals? What morals have changed over time?

Journal Prompt:



Source:
nytimes.com

EVERYBODY is Branden Jacobs-Jenkins’s modern-day adaptation of the 15th century morality play *Everyman*.

If you were a playwright, what old story would you adapt for a modern audience, and why? How might the story you chose speak to us today?

Post-Show Discussion Questions and Journal Prompt

Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe the character Everybody? In what ways are they representative of humanity as a whole?
2. How is death depicted and discussed in this story?
3. Consider your earlier knowledge of Morality Plays. What literary and dramatic conventions of these types of plays does Jacobs-Jenkins employ in *EVERYBODY*? In what ways did he turn the genre on its head? Did you find these choices to be relevant to a modern audience?
4. How do the following themes develop, interact, and build on one another throughout the play?
 - Consider the excerpt below (pages 35-36) in forming your response.

Central Themes		
The Mystery of Life and Death	The Impermanence of Material Things	The Loneliness of Death

EVERYBODY:

You have been living your whole life completely wrong. Everything has been a lie! And now it's too late to do anything about that. Death will be back here any moment. This is a disaster! Why do your last moments on this Earth have to be so miserable? What was the point of it all—of all the good feelings? Of joy, relief, excitement, happiness, belonging? Of feeling anything in the first place? Why make you so acquainted with the world and its treasures and then take it all away? But maybe it's not your place to know why. But then why were you given the ability to wonder why? Ugh!

Beat, seeing ugly trophy:

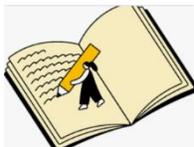
You're going to miss so many things. You're going to miss your apartment slash house. You're going to miss all your favorite things—your favorite places, your favorite nature places, your favorite stores, your favorite restaurants, your favorite foods, your favorite snacks. All your books and your music and your laptop and your tablet and your phone and your various streaming accounts. Your great tchotchke collection slash collections. You're going to miss all your money you worked so hard to earn!

Beat.

Wait...you've actually accumulated a lot of amazing stuff over time. Maybe you could bring some of it with you? It might actually be sort of comforting to have it with you on this journey, since all your friends and family are the worst, and when you hold certain things in your hand, don't memories of when and where you found it or who gave it to you come back to you? It's been such a nice way to keep your past with you and—wait!—that means it might also help you with this stupid presentation! Like a visual aid! Where is your stuff? You should find your stuff! Get your stuff! (*Shouting out.*)

STUFF?! / STUFF?!

Journal Prompt:

 <p style="font-size: small;">Source: nytimes.com</p>	<p>Analyze Jacobs-Jenkins's choice to use a lottery to determine which actor plays the character of Everybody at each performance.</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the significance of introducing this element of chance into the play? • How does this device contribute to the question: What is the meaning of life? • What does this choice suggest about our identity?
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