

LEARNING GUIDE



FREMONT AVE.

By Reggie D. White
Directed By Lili-Anne Brown

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ON THE KREEGER THEATER STAGE
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A CO-PRODUCTION WITH SOUTH COAST REPERTORY

**"Home is *who* you heal with when your dreams
don't turn out the way you wanted them to."**

— George, *Fremont Ave.*

THE PLAY

It's 1968 in a cozy suburb on Fremont Avenue in Southern California. **George**, a music therapist at the local hospital, must get multiple articles published each year for work. Due to his busy work schedule, he has limited time to maintain the upkeep of his home, where he lives alone.

Enter **Audrey**—a married mother of an 8-year-old, working to maintain her own life and marriage while juggling multiple jobs. Audrey and George meet when she responds to a reference who alerted her to George's need for a housekeeper. In no time, they hit it off, a little too well, and as the broken pieces of Audrey's marriage disintegrate, they find comfort, love, and home within each other.

Fast-forward to 1990 to meet Audrey's son, **Robert**, now an adult. He's still trying to find his way in life (and get out of his parents' house), but he can't seem to pass the bar exam. It's through the love, loss, and smack-talking around the Spades table with his friends, **Frank**, **Tony**, and **Walter**, that he learns to stand up and stand on his own.

Another shift in time, now 30 years later, we meet Robert's son, **Joseph**, a strong-willed young adult with his own skeletons in the closet. Joseph returns home at an unexpected time when everything hits the fan.

When the three men of the Plique family come together, all cards are on the table as secrets, stories, and the shared love of family are spread out for everyone to see.



MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT REGGIE D. WHITE

When Reggie D. White was studying journalism and sociology at California State Hayward, he stumbled upon a musical theater class. Drawn to performing, he auditioned for *The Wiz* and was cast as the title character. Now an award-winning actor, writer, director, and educator, White has worked on regional, international, and Broadway productions, specializing in developing new plays and musicals. He currently serves as the Senior Director of Artistic Strategy and Impact at Arena Stage.

White did not see himself as a writer at first. In an interview with South Coast Repertory, he shares how he was urged to become a writer by playwright Korde Arrington Tuttle back in 2016. Although he was initially hesitant, after persistent encouragement from other writers, White wrote what eventually became the inspiration for Act III of *Fremont Ave.*

“For me, writing always starts with a question that won’t leave me alone.”

— Reggie D. White

Through this semi-biographical play, White asks: “What would happen if we caught the little ways we shut ourselves down—from intimacy, and relationship, and truth, and honesty, and knowing ourselves—sooner?” He hopes audience members leave the play with “a question they would love to ask someone that they love very deeply.”



LEGAL LINGO

Robert is studying for “the bar.” The bar exam is a standardized test taken to gain a license to practice law.

Frank is a practicing lawyer in the District Attorney’s (DA) office. The DA is responsible for prosecuting criminal cases on behalf of the state.

Tony works as a public defender, a government-employed lawyer who provides legal representation to people who cannot afford a lawyer.

Walter was recently promoted to partner at his law firm. A partner is a senior attorney with leadership duties and, typically, co-ownership of the law firm.

MEET THE CHARACTERS

Fremont Ave. takes place in the same house across three decades.

ACT I / 1968



GEORGE
PLIQUE



AUDREY
JOSEPH



ROBERT
JOSEPH



JULIUS
JOSEPH

3-IN-1

George, Robert, and Joseph are played by the same actor.

Why do you think the playwright chose to do this?

The "roommate"

ACT III / 2020s



DAMON
FRANKLIN



JOSEPH
PLIQUE

George's new family



**GEORGE
PLIQUE**



**AUDREY
PLIQUE**



**ROBERT
JOSEPH**



ACT II / 1990s



**FRANK
BROWN**



**TONY
ADAMS**



**WALTER
FRANKLIN**



**ROBERT
JOSEPH**



**AUDREY
PLIQUE**

Robert's friends



**OLDER
ROBERT**



**OLDER
GEORGE**



WHAT IS SPADES?

As we move through the decades, one thing that keeps the characters coming back together is Spades.



Spades originated in the Midwest in the late 1930s. It is considered a trick-taking game, like dominoes, pinochle, or hearts, filled with strategic moves to win a hand or “book”.

Played with four people on two teams (called partners), the goal is to collect the most “books” in a round. All 52 cards in a standard deck are passed out and play begins.

The goal is to play the highest card in the suit (spades, hearts, diamonds, or clubs) based on the first card put down in the round. If you do not have the suit that led, you can play a spade and cut the hand. The round ends when all players have taken a turn, and the next round begins. The first team to either 300 or 500 points wins.

SANDBAGGING

Meeting your bid and getting a few extra books might be a nice bonus. It might also mean you're playing it safe with your bid, or **sandbagging**.

CUT

If you play a spade when your partner would've won the book, you've **cut** them. Do it too many times, and you could make an enemy out of your partner.

TRUMP

The spade suit **trumps**, or wins against all other suits.

JOKER

When playing Spades with **Joker** cards in the deck, they'll be counted as spades themselves.

RENEGING

Playing a different suit when you had a legal card is called **reneging** and can come with heavy penalties when tallying points.

BOSTON

The hardest thing you can do in Spades is manage to win every book in a hand. If you do, it's called a **Boston** and earns you bragging rights for years.

PLAYING LIKE A PRO

A MUSICAL PLAY

Music, and how the characters interact with it, plays a major role in the storytelling of Fremont Ave.

*The character **George** is a composer and music therapist. You'll also hear music used to establish time periods and represent different characters.*

Source: Pexels

MUSIC THERAPY

Music therapists use music as a tool for healing. This can look different depending on the needs of the patient. For some, it could be listening to music and discussing the feelings that emerge; for others, it could be writing lyrics along to music and practicing creativity. George writes articles on his work as a music therapist.

SETTING

As the play spans time, music genres allow us to explore the world and the eras through jazz, R&B, gospel, hip-hop, and more. We also experience emotional shifts in the characters through songs.

EXPRESSION

Throughout the play, you will hear piano chords that represent individual characters or ideas. In the script, the playwright describes them as “the rush of the ocean” or “deeply dissonant” and sounding “like chaos.” See if you can gain additional insight into how characters feel or view their relationships with others based on these musical details.

THREE BIG QUESTIONS



What can love and support look like in a family?



How can music hold memory?



What can vulnerability look like with your friends and family?

RESOURCES

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Visit www.arenastage.org for more information on Arena Stage productions, educational opportunities, and digital learning guides.

(Front Cover) Jerrika Hinton and Bradley Gibson for *Fremont Ave.*
Photo by Ambe J. Photography.

(Page 2) Bradley Gibson, Jerrika Hinton, Doug Brown, and Kevin Mambo for *Fremont Ave.* Photo by Ambe J. Photography.

(Page 4 and 5) The cast of *Fremont Ave.* Photos by Ambe J. Photography.

(Page 6) Wildlin Pierrevil, Stanley Andrew Jackson, Jeffrey Rashad, and Bradley Gibson for *Fremont Ave.* Photo by Ambe J. Photography.

(Back Cover) Photo by Ambe J. Photography.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR THEATER AUDIENCES

As an audience member at the theater, YOU are part of the show! Just as you see and hear the actors onstage, they can see and hear you in the audience.

To help the performers do their best, please remember the following:

- Arrive early.
- Visit the restroom before the show starts.
- Sit in the seat indicated on your ticket.
- Ushers are there to help you!
- Before the show begins, turn off your phone, watch alarms, and any other electronic devices. If anything rings by accident, turn it off immediately.
- Do not use your phone for texts, calls, games, pictures, or recording.
- Respond to the show! You can laugh, cry, and gasp. However, don't distract the performers onstage.
- There is no food allowed in the theater.
- Intermission is the best time to discuss the show and visit the restroom.
- If you must leave during the show, wait for a scene change and exit quietly and quickly.
- **Be sure to applaud at the end!** During a musical, audiences sometimes clap after a song or dance. If you love the show or a performer, you can give a standing ovation. The actors bow to thank you.