

RED

BY /
DE: JOHN LOGAN

STUDY GUIDE

A SEGAL CENTRE
PRODUCTION /
UNE PRODUCTION DU
CENTRE SEGAL

DIRECTED BY / Mise en scène de: MARTHA HENRY, STARRING /
Mettant en vedette: RANDY HUGHSON & JESSE AARON DWYRE

2012 NOVEMBER 25 to DECEMBER 16
25 NOVEMBRE au 16 DÉCEMBRE

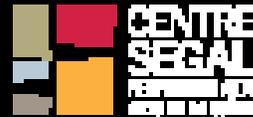


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Rothko

Randy Hughson

Ken

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“RED is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Services, Inc. New York.”

RED premiered at the Donmar Warehouse Theatre, London on December 3, 2009,
Michael Grandage, Artistic Director.

Original Broadway Production Produced by Arielle Tepper Madover,
Stephanie P. McClelland, Matthew Bryam Shaw, Neal Street Productions,
Fox Theatricals, Ruth Hendel/Barbara Whitman, Phillip Hagemann/Murray Rosenthal
and The Donmar Warehouse

Likenesses of the Rothko Seagram Mural Panels used with permission.

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SYNOPSIS

RED throws the audience in the studio of Abstract-Expressionist painter **MARK ROTHKO** in 1958, when the celebrated American artist was at the peak of his fame. Rothko has been commissioned to create a series of large-scale murals for Manhattan's newly-conceived Seagram Building, undoubtedly one of the biggest commissions in the history of modern art. Under the watchful gaze of his young assistant **KEN**, Rothko begins to question his role as an artist and whether this project is an affront to his artistic integrity.

The play begins on Ken's first day as Rothko's assistant, when he enters Rothko's enormous studio as it was in 1958: filled with the Seagram mural paintings. Rothko speaks eccentrically and Ken, trying to be polite, cannot match him and often misspeaks. Rothko is quick to don the mantle of mentor, and equally quick to discard it in a rage.

Rothko explains his current commission: mural-sized paintings to adorn the Four Seasons restaurant at the Seagram Building, designed by Mies Van Der Rohe and Philip Johnson, a commission for which he is getting paid \$35,000 (over \$278,000 today). He is delighted with the site-specific nature of the project because he likes the challenge of affecting the atmosphere of a closed space.

Time passes, and Ken tries to develop a relationship with Rothko, but it seems that Rothko is incapable of thinking outside of the terms of life lessons, philosophy, and grand truths.

A discussion about Picasso and Cubism inspires Rothko to work on a canvas. Ken's job is to alter the pigments in the paint at Rothko's instruction. When he asks hypothetically, "what does it need?" Ken answers, "Red," and Rothko flies into a rage. As his rage subsides, they begin brainstorming "Red." Rothko remembers the experience of seeing Matisse's "The Red Studio," asserting that its influence on him cannot be overstated. He falls into a depression.

Ken prepares himself to show Rothko a work of his own. Instead, they talk about Jackson Pollock and his death. Rothko clearly identifies with him, and talks righteously about his life and fame, calling him the "anti-Rothko." They discuss the commodification of art and artists while they prime a canvas in a dark plum colour.

The colour of the canvas touches Ken, and it is revealed that his parents died violently, that as their blood dried on the carpet it became darker. Rothko pushes Ken to remember this trauma, which took place when he was 7 years old: burglars broke into his house and stabbed his parents, he found his sister staring at their bloody corpses in the morning, and ushered her out of the room. They were raised in foster homes. The burglars in Ken's mind's eye are a common subject of his work.

Rothko, in response, tells a short story that may or may not be true, in which he watched Cossacks piling dismembered corpses in a mass grave. They discuss death and cliché, Ken arguing that Rothko reduces his role models to stereotypes. Rothko says that he is so familiar with them that he understands their pain.

Rothko returns from an art exhibit at a gallery where he has shown many times, featuring a new generation of artists such as Jasper Johns, Frank Stella, and Roy Lichtenstein. He is in an insulted rage, accusing the gallery and the artists of commercialism. Ken takes offense in turn, a young artist himself, and gets angry back at Rothko for not knowing anything about him after two years of spending 40 hours a week together. The ensuing fight is intense, but makes Rothko see Ken in a new, more respectful light. Ken, however, is still fuming, and calls Rothko a hypocrite for taking a commission from such a commercial, superficial project as the Four Seasons restaurant.

Later, Ken finds Rothko in his studio, depressed. He has gone for dinner at the Four Seasons, and has been disgusted by it. The noise and the clientele create an atmosphere totally antithetical to the sobriety and contemplation that Rothko was trying to achieve. He calls and cancels the commission, and fires Ken in order to preserve the young painter's perspective and to give his career a chance.

BEFORE SEEING THE PLAY

COLOUR

What does the colour red make you think of? Ask students to write down at least three nouns, three verbs, and three adjectives. Write a journal entry, describing a personal memory that is “red.”

Do the same with other colours: black; white; grey; blue; yellow; purple, orange, green.

Divide into nine groups, one for each colour listed above.

Each group should create a painting based on their colour, and then come up with a character that that painting represents.

ART

Write each of the artist names from page 6 on a scrap of paper, and put them in a hat. Randomly assign artists to students. Have students select a painting by that artist and write 200 words interpreting it.

VISIT

When you come to the Segal Centre, look at the building. It was designed by Phyllis Lambert, the Project Director of the Seagram Building’s construction.

What effect do the floor-to-ceiling windows have on the interior and exterior spaces?

What is the effect of the exposed I-beams?

How does the horizontality of the building and the verticality of the I-beams affect your impression of the size or shape of the building?

Come into the lobby, which was recently renovated by George Elbaz.

How does the interior space communicate with the exterior space?

Which design elements of the exterior are referenced in the interior, and which do not?

In the ArtLounge, downstairs at the the Segal Centre, there is an exhibit of contemporary abstract art. Ask students to pick a work and write 200 words interpreting it.

ABSTRACT ART

When Gustave Courbet and Antoine Millet showed paintings in the Paris Salons of the mid 19th century, they were considered vulgar because they depicted common people doing common things. The public, accustomed to pleasant scenes, portraiture, and allegory, were shocked to see the details of the subjects: the strain of labour on their muscles, the tears in their clothing, or the physical symptoms of age on their faces.

Subsequently, painters like Manet, Morisot, and Cassat went one step further--depicting real life and common scenes with visible brush strokes--the reality of life and the reality of painting. This style evolved quickly into impressionism, as artists realized that they could elicit emotional responses from their movements as they painted. As VanGogh's spiraling lines draw the viewer into the deepest parts of his work, the soft strokes with which Degas follows the contours of his subjects give the viewer a memory or hope of that tactile sensation. The name "impressionism" comes from the artists' intention to convey the real impression, emotion, reaction, or feeling of a scene as the primary subject of the work, as one would were one present at the site.

The importance the impressionists gave to line was central to the Art Nouveau and Aesthetic movements, for whom subject matter was no object: from the freedom of allegorical figures in pastoral scenes, to dancers at a night club. They were largely influenced by Japanese prints, which had become highly popular as trade between France and Japan grew.

Trade routes around the world led to a greater European awareness of different styles of art, and artists continued to see the function of their practice as conveying real human emotion outside of the traditional European conceits of representation. Fauvism, Futurism, Cubism, and Expressionism utilized every tool in an artist's arsenal to get to the emotional essence of things, and the things they represented covered the gambit of physical, spiritual, conceptual, and philosophical.

Composition and form overtook technique and content as the primary way to evaluate the success of an art work. Artists challenged viewers to relate their experience of viewing a painting with the experience of living, as opposed to simply watching life. Dadaism brought mundane objects and iconic visuals into a new context, while movements like Bauhaus and Constructivism stripped away the facades of things in the world to expose their pure function.

These varied, but equally revolutionary, ways of thinking about artistic creation, lived in conjunction through the first three decades of the 20th century. In the sobriety following World War II, American artists, many of them European ex-patriots, drew from the emotional intensity, sobriety, and non-representational aesthetic of these European movements, but added an aggressive disenfranchisement. They favoured a large scale as many of them had been muralists during the 1930s.

Occidental art since the Abstract Expressionist movement has been almost exclusively derivative of or in opposition to it. Minimalism, Pop Art, Conceptual Art, and Neo-Expressionism are some prime examples of this phenomenon.

A BRIEF HISTORY FROM A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

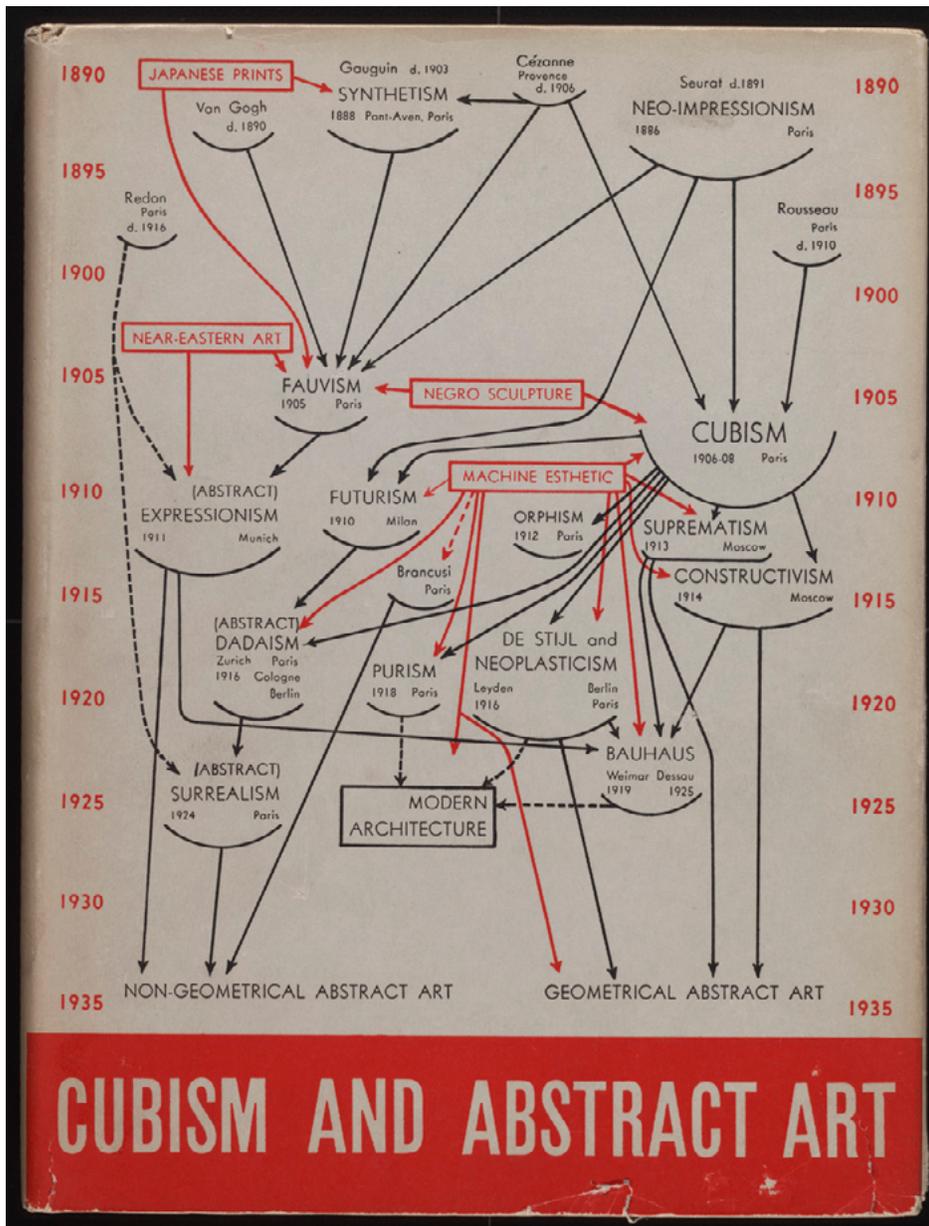
SIGNIFICANT ARTISTS:

Realists & Impressionists
Gustave Courbet
Antoine Millet
Edouard Manet
Berthe Morisot
Claude Monet
Edgar Degas
Camille Pissarro
Art Nouveau & Aestheticism
Gustave Klimt
Alphonse Mucha
Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec
Romaine Brooks
James McNeil Whistler
Fauvism
Henri Matisse
André Derain
Kees VanDongen
Cubism
Pablo Picasso
Georges Braque
Expressionism
Wassily Kandinsky
Egon Schiele
Paul Klee
Ernest Ludwig Kirchner



ABSTRACT ART

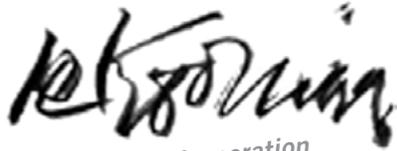
A DIFFERENT KIND
OF TIMELINE



This is the cover to the exhibition catalogue for “Cubism and Abstract Art,” which was one of the first exhibitions of Abstract art in America, held at MoMA in 1936. This cover was designed by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the first director of the museum.

That this graphic ends at 1935 is telling, not just of the moment of its conception, but of the beginning of the Second World War. When the war ended, as predicted, the geometrical and non-geometrical abstract art that ends this timeline did reign, underlined in the Americas by a deep internalization of the concepts that was new: instead of following a continuum of art movements, they looked inside themselves.

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM



*"My interest in desperation lies only in that sometimes I find myself having become desperate. Very seldom do I start out that way. I can see of course that, in the abstract, thinking and all activity is rather desperate."
-Willem deKooning*

Abstract Expressionism is the first significant art movement of North America. It moved the centre of the art world from Paris to New York. The artists who participated in the genesis of this movement had come of age in the 1920s and 1930s, a period of time that spanned the best and worst times of the American experience. The New Yorker writer Robert Coates first used the term "Abstract Expressionism" in 1946 about an exhibit by Hans Hoffman at the Mortimer Brandt Gallery in New York, replacing the term "splatter-and-blob school." Though that exhibit was considered "difficult," because the intention was not clearly distinguishable from accidents, the writings and teachings of Hoffman remained. He once said of

total abstraction, "the ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak."

MoMA curator Ann Temkin explains the extreme abstraction that occurred after human tragedies like the atom bomb and Nazi genocides: "you couldn't paint figures without mutilating them." In post-war Europe, the movements of Action Painting, Informal Art, and Lyrical Abstraction were classified under the umbrella term Tachisme, from the French word for stain. The Tachists were largely influenced by existentialism, which concerns itself primarily with the human mind's understanding and perception of the world.



*"The modern artist... is working and expressing an inner world --in other words-- expressing the energy, the motion, and other inner forces."
-Jackson Pollock*

Abstract Expressionism, on the other hand, was concerned with the internal workings of the mind, and the impulses of the body. Action painters like Jackson Pollock were working from the idea that the residue that the body leaves, when controlled by an emotional mind, will fossilize into something that can be felt and experienced through seeing, looking, and gazing. Painters like Robert Motherwell and Roberto Matta used



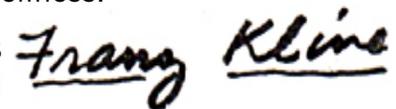
*"The 'pure' red of which certain abstractionists speak does not exist... Any red is rooted in blood, glass, wine, hunters' caps, and a thousand other concrete phenomena. Otherwise we should have no feeling toward red or its relations, and it would be useless as an artistic element."
-Robert Motherwell*

the surrealist tradition of automatic writing for their sketches, composing them recklessly but painting them thoughtfully.

Less impulsive abstract Expressionists, like Mark Rothko and Franz Kline, strove to convey a more reflective family of emotions: tragedy as opposed to rage; love as opposed to passion; solitude as opposed to loneliness.

Rothko said of himself and his contemporaries, "We understood the importance of seriousness."

By denying the viewer any familiarity of object or symbol, the content becomes pure emotion, which is immune to mockery--as soon as it is not taken seriously, it is rendered insincere and therefore impotent.



*"... destroying the planned forms; it's like an escape, it's something to do, something to begin the situation. You yourself, you don't decide, but if you want to paint, you have to find out some way to start this thing off, whether it is painting it out or putting it in..."
-Franz Kline*

MARK ROTHKO

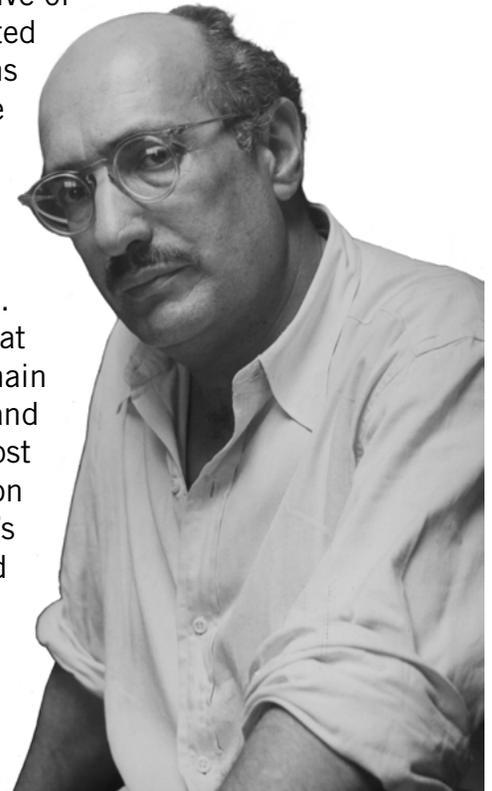
BIOGRAPHY

Born Marcus Rotkovich in the town of Dvinsk, Latvia, then part of the Russian Empire, Mark Rothko immigrated to the United States with his family at the age of ten, settling in Portland, Oregon. A gifted student, Rothko attended Yale University on scholarship from 1921-23, but disillusioned by the social milieu and financial hardship, he dropped out and moved to New York to “bum around and starve a bit.” A chance invitation from a friend brought him to a drawing class at the Art Students League where he discovered his

MARK ROTHKO

love of art. He took two classes there but was otherwise self-taught. Rothko painted in a figurative style for nearly twenty years,

his portraits and depictions of urban life baring the soul of those living through The Great Depression in New York. The painter Milton Avery offered Rothko both artistic and nutritional nourishment during these lean years. In the 1930s, Rothko exhibited with The Ten, a close-knit group of nine (!) American painters, which included fellow Avery acolyte, Adolph Gottlieb. Success was moderate at best but the group provided important incubation for the Abstract Expressionist school to come. The war years brought with it an influx of European surrealists, influencing most of the New York painters, among them Rothko, to take on a neo-surrealist style. Rothko experimented with mythic and symbolic painting for five years before moving to pure abstraction in the mid 1940s and ultimately to his signature style of two or three rectangles floating in fields of saturated color in 1949. Beginning in the early 1950s Rothko was heralded, along with Jackson Pollock, Willem deKooning, Franz Kline and others, as the standard bearers of the New American Painting--a truly American art that was not simply a derivative of European styles. By the late 1950s, Rothko was a celebrated (if not wealthy) artist, winning him three mural commissions that would dominate the latter part of his career. Only in the last of these, The Rothko Chapel in Houston was he able to realize his dream of a truly contemplative environment in which to interact deeply with his artwork. *RED* presents a fictionalized account of Rothko's frustrated first attempt to create such a space in New York's Four Season's restaurant. Rothko sought to create art that was timeless; paintings that expressed basic human concerns and emotions that remain constant not merely across decades but across generations and epochs. He looked to communicate with his viewer at the most elemental level and through his artwork, have a conversation that was intense, personal and, above all, honest. A viewer's tears in front of one of his paintings told him he had succeeded. While creating a deeply expressive body of work and garnering critical acclaim, Rothko battled depression and his brilliant career ended in suicide in 1970.

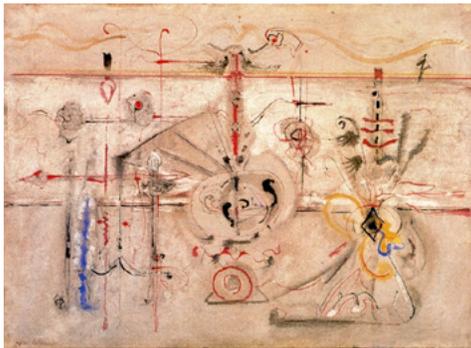


ROTHKO'S WORK

EARLY WORK

Rothko's first teacher in New York was Max Weber at the Art Students League. He began painting figures, inspired by fauvists and cubists. The Arts Students League introduced him to many teachers and other artists, and provided Rothko his first opportunities to exhibit his work.

It was when he began teaching children at the Center Academy of the Brooklyn Jewish Center that Rothko began exploring the depiction of emotions in painting, inspired by the children's lack of filter. He began working with more crude techniques and distortions.



Mark Rothko, Archaic Idol, 1945. <http://www.markrothko.org/>

During the 1930s, Rothko worked under the Works Progress Administration, a federally-sponsored project that enabled him to earn a living. After a group exhibition in 1934, Rothko and several other artists, including Adolph Gottlieb and Joseph Solman, formed an intellectually-motivated, expressionist-style group that they called "The Ten."

In the late 30s and early 40s, Rothko's subject matter favoured ghostly figures haunting the New York subway. He played with expectations, contrasting deep spaces with utter flatness, and detailed rendering next to near-sketches. The interest in scale and the shape of the environment foreshadows his eventual move to pure shape and composition.



Mark Rothko, Underground Fantasy, c. 1940
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

In the context of the social anxiety of World War II and the unavoidable truth of the tragedy of life, Rothko moved sharply away from figurative painting. He said of this move, "a time came when none of us could use the figure without mutilating it." The fact of the holocaust and the atom bomb at the forefront of their minds, Rothko and his peers distanced themselves from the post-impressionists who had mentored them through their early careers. Instead, they drew from myths and iconography in a surrealist style, creating highly symbolic work.



Mark Rothko, Untitled (Reclining Nude) 1937/1938
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



Mark Rothko, Untitled, 1946
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

ROTHKO'S WORK

LATE WORK



Mark Rothko, Ochre and Red on Red, 1954
The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.

In the mid-40s, Rothko started working large-scale, and soon after removed any determinate shapes from his work. He said of himself and his peers: “we favour the simple expression of the complex thought. We are for the large shape because it has the impact of the unequivocal. We wish to reassert the picture plane. We are for flat forms because they destroy illusion and reveal truth.”

He immediately started using oil paints like watercolours, thinning them. He would begin with an entirely wet canvas and keep his pigment diluted so that the edges of his shapes were not distinct from their background. In the layering of transparent colour, it becomes unclear which layer holds which colour. As the mind of the viewer copes with this ambiguity, the mystery and introspection of the work becomes the subject matter. The idea that lay behind all of these decisions was removing any obstacle to understanding.



Mark Rothko, Untitled, 1968, Private Collection
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

In the late 40s, Rothko stopped titling his works with anything other than numbers and colours, further trying to remove any preconceptions or biases that a viewer would bring to his work. He also reduced the number of shapes in the compositions to no more than four: a minimalism that would maintain for the remainder of his career.

In the play *RED*, Rothko describes his work as “like a fugue,” and “like a frieze.” A fugue is a short musical theme that repeats over a long composition, a frieze is a horizontally-arranged strip of art or carving in an architectural form in which a similarly repetitive technique is used to create a narrative or statement. Rothko expects his colour fields to vibrate or pulse under the gaze of a viewer—an incessant repetition of the one single complex emotion.



Mark Rothko, Green and Maroon, 1953
The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.

The large scale of these late works is crucial to their message. To stand in front of one is an experience that is not reproducible on a screen or page, as the enormity of the canvases are to the scale of human emotion.

PAINTING TECHNIQUES

Mark Rothko's colour fields begin with a rigorously prepared canvas stretched over a wood frame. He used rabbit skin glue first, to shrink the fabric on the frame and to reduce its flexibility. In the play, you will get the chance to witness the second layer of preparation: a flat white layer of gesso, which is a kind of liquid plaster. Gesso reduces the absorption of paint into the canvas fibres, and also decreases the flexibility of the surface.

The challenge of the large scale at which Rothko paints is that more and less moist areas of fabric will dry and shrink at different rates, which can distort the canvas.

Rothko developed his shapes by painting a thin, translucent layer, letting it dry, and repeating that process. He favoured a large brush and quick work, so each layer would be basically uniform, though the inevitable variables in thickness reveal variations in colour. One of the primary elements of Rothko's colour fields is the edges of the shapes--that they seem to float and that their edges fade rather than conclude is paramount to the significance of his work.

Rothko would often make several sketches to work out the best proportions in his work, then start with many layers of a base colour before building his rectangles.

The stroke an artist uses affects the work significantly. Many abstract expressionists created what are called "action paintings," in which the application of the paint can be recorded simply by looking at the strokes. The speed and direction figure prominently and the immediacy and intensity of the application of paint translates to the final product.

Here are some examples of different brush strokes:

This is two layers of wet, diluted paint. The thicker one was done quickly, the thinner was done with hesitation.



This is a slow brush stroke with medium-wet brush.



This is a fast stroke with a dry brush.



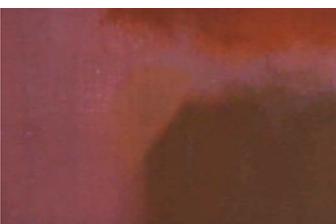
Pigment is usually a powder substance, of a purified compound, often a mineral but more and more, synthetic pigments are being used because they are safer, more stable, and less expensive. This is the colour.

Medium is the liquid that the pigment will be suspended in. Good media will have a predictable texture and will dry to transparency, leaving the pigment suspended and stable in it. Examples of media are oil, water, latex, or egg yolks.

Solvent is a chemical that can be used to break down the medium, such as paint thinner, turpentine, alcohol or bleach.

For the fading edges of his rectangles, Rothko would often flare out paint from the centre of the object, and you can see the feathers of that quick motion around many of this shapes.

Rothko used a variety of mediums, but also, atypically, used solvents to dilute his paints further. The effect that this will have is that the powder of the pigment will be suspended in the solvent instead of the medium, which has broken down, and will leave spaces that are blank or a less-predictable hybrid colour, called a turpentine burn (left).



TRAGEDY

In common usage, tragedy is used synonymously to “very unfortunate,” but the true literary meaning of tragedy is much more related to inevitability. For an event to be truly tragic, it must happen as a direct consequence of the victim’s character. It begins with a “tragic flaw,” for example, a yearning for power or acceptance. This personality trait can be suppressed, but never vanquished, and ultimately, in a moment of weakness, that character trait will inform an action that will result in unhappiness.

In *RED*, Rothko cites “The Birth of Tragedy” by Friedrich Nietzsche as the penultimate text on tragedy. In it, Nietzsche describes Apollo as lording over the land of appearances, which is the land of dreams and symbols. In this realm, the dreamer can assume that what they see is real and manipulate or interpret it at face value. In other words, Apollo takes the infinite number of things that can be perceived and takes out what is not needed so that the mind can cope. Dionysus has no such land--his realm is undifferentiated, and the self is lost in this infinite largeness. Dionysus is the anti-Apollo: when “measured restraint” and reason fail, Dionysus takes over. Nietzsche sees the Dionysian state as fundamental to the creation of art. The tragedy in this--the inevitable suffering--is that they cannot exist simultaneously. The tragic flaw of Apollo is that he is not Dionysus, and the flaw of Dionysus is that he is not Apollo.

When Mark Rothko says that Jackson Pollock’s death was a suicide, he quotes Goya: “We have Art that we may not perish from Truth.” He continues, “Pollock saw some truth. Then he didn’t have art to protect him anymore...who could survive that?” It was succumbing to the Dionysian strata that made Apollo’s Earth unendurable.

Hamlet is a figure whose tragic flaw is his lack of conviction--in seeking revenge for his father’s death he fails to act quickly enough, which ultimately results in the accidental deaths of almost everyone he knows, including himself.

The Babylonian King Belshazzar, as told in the Book of Daniel from the Old Testament, is the content of a painting by Rembrandt that Rothko references during the play. It depicts a scene in which the King uses sacred Jewish vessels as mere drinking cups. A disembodied hand appears and writes on the wall of the dining room (transliterated from the ancient Hebrew) *Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin*. Daniel interprets this writing as “God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end...You have been weighed on the scales and been found wanting...Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.” “The writing on the wall” as an idiom means either, “No empire lasts forever,” or, as in *RED*, “You have been weighed in the balance and found wanting.”

Oedipus’s tragic flaw is hubris--in thinking that he could avoid his fate, which was already determined by the gods, he created the scenario that he was avoiding. Namely, he killed his father and married his mother.

Oedipus is central to the works of Sigmund Freud, who is cited in *RED* for his theories of patricide, or the killing of one’s father. In the play, Rothko says, “We destroyed cubism... Nobody can paint a cubist picture today...The child must banish the father. Respect him, but kill him.” Freud said, “You wanted to kill your father in order to be your father yourself. Now you are your father, but a dead father...now your father is killing you.”

POP ART

ROTHKO: These young artists are trying to murder me.

...

KEN: You think **JASPER JOHNS** is trying to murder you?

ROTHKO: Yes.

KEN: What about **FRANK STELLA**?

ROTHKO: Yes.

KEN: **ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG**?

ROTHKO: Yes.

KEN: **ROY LICHTENSTEIN**?

ROTHKO: Which one is he?

KEN: Comic Books.

ROTHKO: Yes.

KEN: **ANDY WARHOL**?

The term “Pop Art” describes art that references popular culture for its subject matter and references. American Pop artists returned to representation, sometimes outrightly appropriating objects and icons for their work.

Jasper Johns used ready-made objects for the content of his work: “Things the mind already knows,” such as the American flag or single digits in a standard font. He would render these in thick, crude paint but keep his lines very sharp.

Frank Stella similarly joined the pop art movement, but instead of iconic images, drew from more universal ready-mades, like squares and circles, formed out of a clean, robotic process, which have no room for interpretation. When he transitioned from painting to print making, he distanced his artist’s hand from the work even further.

Robert Rauschenberg, like Johns, combined the harsh, almost aggressive application techniques of the Abstract Expressionists, and the reappropriation of familiar objects that the dadaists first employed. But while Johns took two-dimensional objects and reproduced them, Rauschenberg incorporated the objects themselves into his work. These are called combines, and the canvases are dripping with trash that he has applied to it—notably a pillow and a taxidermied and painted eagle, as in “Canyon” (1959).

Roy Lichtenstein’s work is based on parody more than any other American pop artist. He created works at a large scale that replicated the cheap CMYK dot-printing of comics. In the early 60s, he became known for selecting particularly melodramatic cells from comic books which, in isolation, emphasized the silliness of popular narratives, but, like Andy Warhol, Lichtenstein was not engaging in social commentary, he was simply reproducing a popular medium.

Andy Warhol’s “Eight Elvises” (1963) is currently the 13th most expensive paintings ever sold. * Warhol’s practice was particular because he, quite intentionally used an assembly line system, in which he transferred found images to screens to print in large editions with minimal alteration. It was his studio “The Factory,” that really underlined the entire movement, gathering all the American trendsetters into one space, literally manufacturing popular culture.

*Sold for \$100 million in 2008. Interestingly, Jackson Pollock’s “No. 5, 1948” (1948) is #2 at \$140 million in 2006, and Mark Rothko’s “Orange, Red, Yellow” (1961) just earned #24 in May of this year, and #33 in this month (November 2012) with “No 1 (Royal Red and Blue)” (1954) at \$86.9 million and \$75.1 million, respectively.

Rothko also holds #28 for “White Center (Yellow, Pink, and Lavender on Rose)” (1950), at just \$1.1 million more than Warhol’s “Green Car Crash (Green Burning Car 1)” (1963) which is at #29.

In fact, of this list of 48 works, six are Abstract Expressionists (specifically Pollock, DeKooning, and Rothko), and five are pop artists (Jasper Johns and Andy Warhol.) So I guess Rothko made all that fuss for nothing.

THE ARCHITECTS

RED is the story of Mark Rothko working on a large commission for the newly-constructed Seagram Building on Park Avenue in New York City. It opened in 1958 to function as the American headquarters for the Montreal-based Seagram Company Ltd, which, in 1919, was acquired by the Distillers Corporation Ltd, the corporation headed by Samuel Bronfman. It is 38 stories and 515 feet (157 metres) high. At the time that it was built, it was the most expensive skyscraper ever constructed, because of the interior details such as materials like bronze and marble, and electric curtains.

The building was designed by the famous architect Mies Van der Rohe (lower left), in collaboration with Philip Johnson, in a style now called "Functionalist." The idea behind functionalist design is to reveal the functional elements of the construction, replacing standard decoration as the tools for aesthetic beauty. Van der Rohe was also interested in the movement between interior and exterior space, so his ground floors were often set back, creating a covered courtyard as a transitional space.

Phyllis Lambert, the daughter of Samuel Bronfman, was another student of Mies Van Rohe, who worked as the Director of Planning for the construction of the Seagram building, and she designed the Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts (now the Segal Centre) on Cote Sainte Catherine Road in Montreal, which opened in 1967. She also founded the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal in 1979.

Although the Segal Centre is only one story, the similarities are evident. The same transitions between interior and exterior space are at work, with floor-to-ceiling windows, exposed vertical I-beams, and interior architecture that is positioned in the centre of the building.



The Seagram Building, 1967.



Interior of the Seagram Building Lobby.



Interior of the Segal Centre Lobby.



Van der Rohe with a model of the Illinois Institute of Technology.



The exterior of the Segal Centre for Performing Arts.

AFTER SEEING THE PLAY

THEMES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

"SILENCE IS SO ACCURATE"

In the play, talking about the great artists who came before him, Mark Rothko says, "Don't think you have captured them. They are beyond you. Spend a lifetime with them and you might get a moment of insight into their pain... Until then, allow them their grandeur in silence.

"Silence is so accurate."

What does he mean?

Discuss the trauma of a youth in early 20th-century Russia, the trauma of the death of one's parents, the trauma of fame, or success. How might this inform one's taste, preferences, skills, priorities?

Discuss reverence, and relate it to the experience of viewing or experiencing something that is all-encompassing.

While Ken accuses Rothko of selling out by taking money from the rich for the rich, Rothko ultimately backs out because he realizes his works will not be revered. Which concern is more valid?

Consider the above question in the context of this text from the script:

"The voices...It's the chatter of monkeys and the barking of jackals. It's not human... And everyone's clever and everyone's laughing and everyone's investing in this or that and everyone's this charity board or that and everyone's jetting off here or there and no one looks at anything and no one thinks about anything and all they do is chatter and bark and eat and the knives and forks click and clack and the words cut and the teeth snap and snarl."

What message does the contrast between silence and noise carry in this play?

How does the contrast of daylight and artificial light mirror the conflict in this play?

Why can Rothko revere artists from a different time, but not those immediately before or after him?

How is Rothko like a mentor to Ken? How is he like a parent?

After seeing the play, do you like Mark Rothko? Do you like his work? How did you feel before seeing the play?

JOHN LOGAN, PLAYWRIGHT

John Logan received the Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critic Circle and Drama League awards for his play *RED*. This play premiered at The Donmar Warehouse in London and at the Golden Theatre on Broadway. He is the author of more than a dozen other plays including *NEVER THE SINNER* and *HAUPTMANN*. His adaptation of Ibsen's *THE MASTER BUILDER* premiered on the West End in 2003. As a screenwriter, Logan had three movies released in 2011: *HUGO*, *CORIOLANUS* and *RANGO*. Previous film work includes *SWEENEY TODD* (Golden Globe award); *THE AVIATOR* (Oscar, Golden Globe, BAFTA and WGA nominations); *GLADIATOR* (Oscar, Golden Globe, BAFTA and WGA nominations); *THE LAST SAMURAI*; *ANY GIVEN SUNDAY*, and *RKO 281* (WGA award, Emmy nomination).



MARTHA HENRY, DIRECTOR

Martha Henry was last seen at the Segal Centre under the direction of Diana Leblanc in the 2007 production of *Rose*, a one-woman play about the Holocaust survivor sitting Shiva. Ms. Henry is the Director of the Birmingham Conservatory for Classical Theatre at the Stratford Festival, where she has directed and performed since 1962. This past summer she returned to the Shaw Festival (where she previously directed *The Royal Family* and *Autumn Garden*) to direct Moya O'Connell and Jim Mezon in *Hedda Gabler*. Her roles at Stratford have included Mary Tyrone in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, Cordelia and Goneril in *King Lear*, Titania and Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Ranyevskya in *The Cherry Orchard*, Volumnia in *Coriolanus* and Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. She will return to Stratford in 2013 to direct *Measure for Measure* at the Tom Patterson Theatre and will appear in *Taking Shakespeare*, a new play by John Murrell. Ms. Henry is the recipient of 3 Gemini Awards, 5 Genie Awards, a Governor General's Lifetime Achievement Award, seven honorary doctorates, the Order of Ontario and is a Companion of the Order of Canada. She is honoured to return to Montreal (where she is a graduate of the National Theatre School) to direct *RED*.



APPENDIX

LOOKING AT ABSTRACT ART

It can be tempting to judge representational art by evaluating how closely the experience of looking at the representation is to looking at the real thing. But remember that all painting is an abstraction. Light and dark, colour, line and shape, perspective, are all inventions that became tools to taking the real world that we move around in, and making a symbol of it. The rendering of a three-dimensional thing two dimensionally is the greatest leap to abstraction that an artist makes. So how important really are a few liberties with paint gobs?

The colour of a thing is not a quality that it possesses; it is a symptom of an entire environment. The range of colour that humans can register is so broad that colour has become a crucial quality to identifying things in our environment. For example, a human face is a different colour in daylight than it is in the light of a computer screen in a dark room. That same face, lit by a red light, will be yet another colour. The simplest way for a mind to reconcile these differences is to average them out—to think that the colour that a thing is most of the time, is the colour it has, absolutely. But colour is nothing except the eye's interpretation of the light that hits it. A tomato is not red, it looks red most of the time.

More than that, because colour is light, the mind registers it in relationships. Think about walking from a brightly lit space into a dark space, or vice versa. In the time before your eyes have adjusted, the light level was extreme because of the light level that preceded it. This is why painters juxtapose the lightest value to the darkest value. The lighter something is, the darker everything else will be. In the same way, looking at something that is very very yellow will make other things look purple, because your eyes adjust to not seeing any blue or red. This is called a complimentary colour pair. The other complimentary pairs are blue and orange, and red and green.

This may seem needlessly detailed, but the example I'm trying to make is that in real life, shadows are formed where less light hits, but there's no such colour as "dark." As soon as a work is colourized you have to start thinking about how these values relate to their colours, and how those colours relate to the experience of viewing a work.

Looking at the lines, colour, and contrast of a piece of art, as opposed to the historical contexts or biographies surrounding it, is called "Formalism." When Rothko says that his work "needs the viewer" as opposed to the unchanging representational work of painters like Velasquez or Turner, who, in a way, depict moments frozen in time, he means that in order to understand the work, the viewer is obliged to track their experience of seeing it. The biographies, comparisons, and historical contexts contained in this study guide aid in a richer reading of the play, and similar background information can be supplied to supplement the understanding of any work of art. Formalism is a method that can be utilized with nothing but the work to guide you.

The eyes on the right are by great artists over a long period of time. The differences are evident, but can you see the similarities?

Look very closely at the values and colours used.

The pupils are rendered in cool shades of brown, blue and black, as is the dip of the tear duct.

The bottom lid is rendered with a pale warm highlight.

In each image, special attention has been paid to the outside corner, using a dark that is second only to the centre of the pupil.

Each artist highlights the crest of the eyelid, right at the lash line, with a nearly pure white.

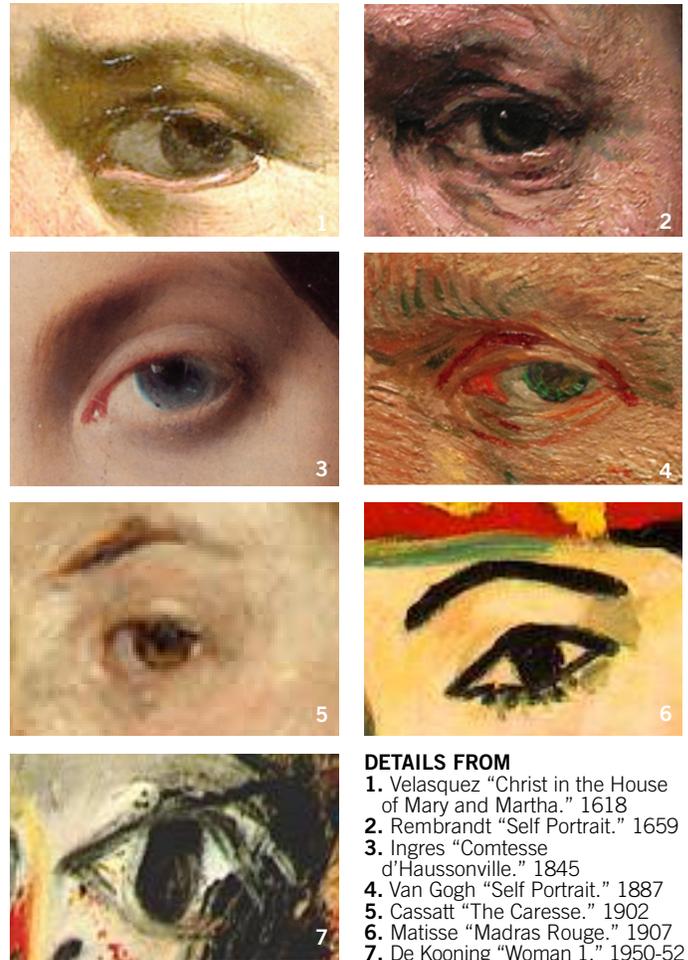
They have far more in common than not, in fact.

Look at the brush strokes, or lack thereof. how does that change the experience of looking at the image?

Which of these thumbnails best communicates the subject's emotion?

This exercise analyses colour and line, but the whole COMPOSITION of a work is arguably the most important criteria to evaluating the success of a piece.

Why? is the most important question in understanding art. You don't need to know the answer right away--in fact, you shouldn't. To the right are seven steps that you can take to learn how to look past your first impression with no tools but your eyes.



DETAILS FROM
1. Velasquez "Christ in the House of Mary and Martha." 1618
2. Rembrandt "Self Portrait." 1659
3. Ingres "Comtesse d'Haussonville." 1845
4. Van Gogh "Self Portrait." 1887
5. Cassatt "The Caresse." 1902
6. Matisse "Madras Rouge." 1907
7. De Kooning "Woman I." 1950-52

Step one: See the work, have a first impression.

Step two: Write it down and forget it.

Step three: Look again, and remember what you saw first, where your eye went. That moment of the work is like its thesis.

Step four: Step back and track how your eyes move over the work. You've noted the first spot you looked at, now note the second, third... pay special attention to where you end up. Did you look in order from lightest to darkest? From busy to calm? From left to right? Foreground to background? What is the shape of that journey?

Step five: Squint your eyes. See if any shapes form if you look just at the dark or just at the light, or if you chose one colour to see at a time. That's like the structure.

Step six: Get close again and look for moments. A sharp line or a thinness of paint, a unique colour. Are these moments in which the artist left residue of the act of painting, or carefully considered choices that affect the subject?

Step seven: Remember your first impression and compare it to your impression now.

This procedure is appropriate for all art. Go to the next page to see this applied to an abstract expressionist work.

APPENDIX

EXPRESSIONISM IN QUEBEC

Meanwhile, in Quebec of the 1940s, the cultural separation from the rest of Canada and the United States was reaching a climax, largely as a result of a vote against conscription that contradicted the rest of Canada. The Union Nationale was the reigning political party with its leader Maurice Duplessis, who was notably ungenerous in funding for social services. Under this leadership, the Catholic Church was permitted to have major influence in the provincial government.

A group of intellectuals formed in reaction to this situation. They would become known as Les Automatistes, having taken their name from "automatic writing," a practice that the surrealists employed as a way to access their unconscious mind. They were, in addition to being artists, activists who opposed the state of affairs socially and politically in Quebec.

riopelle

Though inspired by the French Surrealists, who were led by André Breton, the Automatistes differed in their fundamental philosophy. Whereas the Surrealists called for a coup of the bourgeoisie, the Automatistes called for a revolution on an individual scale--saving souls and changing ways of thinking in order to affect social change.

Although the Automatistes are generally considered to have evolved out of the European movements of Surrealism and Tachism, this inward-looking philosophy is indisputably similar to the American Abstract Expressionists. The range among these artists was similarly diverse, from Jean-Paul Riopelle's action paintings in drips and spatters to Paul-Émile Borduas' thick, Franz Kline-like shapes, to Fernand Leduc's pure colours.

HARBEAU

The Automatiste philosophy is outlined in the socio-political manifesto Refus Global, written and signed by 15 Québécois artists in 1948 under the leadership of Paul-Émile Borduas. This document calls for a total restructuring of current Québécois values, including the artistic, political, and religious structures and norms that were in place. It is widely seen to be one of the causes of the Quiet Revolution.

Excerpts from Le Refus Global (translated by Ray Ellenwood)

"...cherished illusions will always win out over objective mysteries."
"...la constante préférence accordée aux chères illusions contre les mystères objectifs."

"Fuzzy intellects began to clear, stimulated by contact with the *poètes maudits* who were not monsters, but dared to express loudly and clearly those things which the most unfortunate among us out of shame and a fear of being swallowed alive."
"Des consciences s'éclairent au contact vivifiant des poètes maudits: ces hommes qui, sans être des montres, osent exprimer haut et net ce que les plus malheureux d'entre nous étouffant tout bas dans la honte de soi et la terreur d'être engloutis vivants."

"Hand in hand with others searching for a better life, no matter how long it takes, regardless of support of prosecution, we will joyfully respond to a savage need for liberation."
"...sans repos ni halte, en communauté de sentiment avec les assoiffés d'un mieux être, sans crainte des longues échéances, dans l'encouragement ou la persécution, nous poursuivons dans la joie notre sauvage besoin de libération."

Borduas

LES AUTOMATISTES

SELECTED WORKS



Fernand Leduc, Portes rouges, 1955. Oil on canvas.
National Museum of Fine Arts of Quebec
73 cm x 92 cm



Paul-Émile Borduas, The Black Star, 1957.
Oil on Canvas.
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
162.5 cm x 129.5 cm



Jean-Paul Riopelle, Austria III, 1954. Oil on Canvas.
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
200 cm x 300.7 cm

THEATRE ETIQUETTE

Please take a moment to prepare your students or group for their visit to the Segal Centre. Explain to them what is meant by good theatre etiquette and why a few simple courtesies will enhance the enjoyment of the play for all audience members.

1. *RED* will be performed in the main theatre of the Segal Centre. Performances at the Segal are for both groups and the general public. It is important that everyone be quiet (no talking or rustling of materials) during the performance, so that others do not lose their immersion in the “world of the play”. Please do not unwrap candy, play with zippers, or play with your programme.
2. Do not put your feet on the back of the seat in front of you and please do not climb over seats.
3. If you plan to take notes on the play for the purpose of writing a review, please do not try to write them during the performance. Seeing you do this can be distracting for the actors. Please wait until intermission or after the performance is finished to write your reflections.
4. Use of phones or cameras is strictly prohibited inside the theatre. Absolutely no photos or video may be taken without the express consent of management. Composing or reading text messages is forbidden.
5. Use of cell phones, iPods, tablets, or other self-illuminating electronics is strictly prohibited in the theatre. The light from these devices is visible from the stage and in the audience. It is extremely distracting to the artists on stage and inconsiderate to your fellow audience members.
6. Your seat is only guaranteed until the moment the theatre doors close. Late entry is very disruptive; if a patron is tardy we ask that they please follow the instructions of our front-of-house staff.
7. ENJOY THE SHOW!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

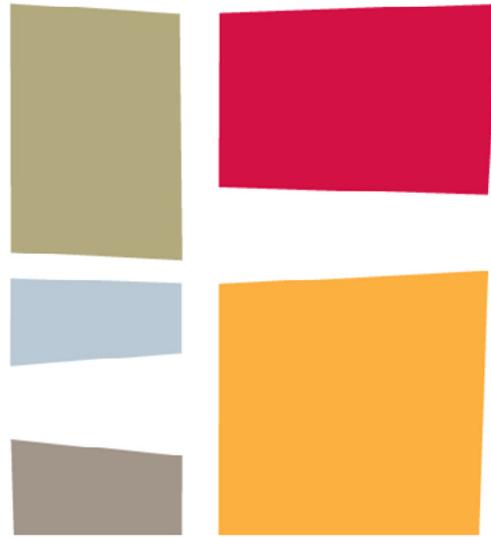
IT WOULD BE A PLEASURE TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE OF BRINGING YOUR GROUP TO THE PLAY.

1. How would you rate your experience?
Extremely positive 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely stressful
2. How much do you feel your group benefited from the experience?
Very much 1 2 3 4 5 Very Little
3. Would you recommend the experience to other group leaders?
Wholeheartedly 1 2 3 4 5 Never
4. Will you consider bringing a group to the theatre again?
Wholeheartedly 1 2 3 4 5 Never
5. What did you enjoy most about coming to see the play?

6. What aspect of coming to the theatre did you find problematic?

We welcome all additional comments.

Reply to:
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This guide was compiled by Lucie Lederhendler for the Segal Centre for Performing Arts. Please contact her for resources, permissions, or any other questions at extension 8360, or llederhendler@segalcentre.org.

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