

# **Clybourne Park: A Play Study Guide**

## **Clybourne Park: A Play by Bruce Norris**

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# Plot Summary

Clybourne Park is a play written by Bruce Norris. The first act takes place in 1959. Bev and housekeeper Francine are packing items while Russ eats ice cream. Bev takes a phone call from Karl, a concerned neighbor. Jim, a young minister, walks in and starts talking with Russ. He questions Russ's health and new office. Russ feels uncomfortable when Jim asks how he is doing personally and tries to engage him about his son. Russ uses foul language, which makes the situation tense. He heads upstairs, while Bev tells Jim that Russ uses dirty words and she does not want to be alone with him.

Karl and his wife Betsy arrive at the house. Russ wants to know what is going on because Francine and her husband Albert head upstairs. Karl is racist and is concerned about the new family that is moving in. He believes that they will not be able to fit into the community. Albert politely asks for help with the trunk, but no one hears him and the trunk crashes down the stairs. Russ becomes angry and tells them to leave it there as he goes down to the basement.

Jim and Karl ask inappropriate questions to Francine and point out differences between people. Russ comes back and calmly tells them that the house is sold. Betsy tries to figure out what is going on, but she is lost. Russ gets fed up and wants to punch Jim, who falls over a box and knocks down a lamp. Betsy leaves and Bev hides in the bathroom. Albert tries to calm Russ, but that only infuriates him. Francine is angered by Albert's involvement, they squabble, and she rushes outside. Jim and Karl leave after continuing to upset Russ. Bev tries to pay Albert, but he refuses and leaves. The act ends with Russ shouting the capital of Mongolia from their previous conversation.

The second act takes place fifty years later in 2009, in the same house. Lindsey and Steve bought it and want to tear it down, which has created problems. Kathy, their lawyer, helps to define vocabulary. Tom leads the group in their discussions. Kevin and Lena are neighbors representing the Home Owner's Association. The group is not able to stay on task due to interruptions. Lena feels that she has important information to share about the historical connections with the community. Her great aunt lived in the Clybourne Street house after the Stollers, from Act 1. Kathy is trying to help her Caucasian friends who bought the house. Her parents are Betsy and Karl, who tried to dissuade the Stollers from letting African Americans move into it.

Kevin and Lena share information about what happened in the house more than 50 years ago. Lindsey is not able to handle the fact that Kenneth hung himself in her new house. Inappropriate jokes are told and some are offended. Not a lot of business is conducted and the couples get upset with their spouses. The play concludes with a flashback to Act 1 where Kenneth writes a letter and Bev expresses hope for the future.



# Act 1

## Act 1 Summary

Russ and Bev are packing their belongings getting ready to move out. Their housekeeper Francine is helping them pack the dishes. Russ is eating ice cream and reading a National Geographic magazine. Bev wants to give their chafing dish to Francine because they have hardly used it. Bev is thinking out loud that maybe Francine and her family will find it useful. Francine says that she can not take it, but thanks Bev for offering to give it to her. Bev tells her to think about it and get back to her later about it.

Conversation between Russ and Bev focuses on the ice cream that Russ is eating. It is Neapolitan. Bev wonders about the origin of the word and Russ imagines it is from Naples. Bev questions his response and draws out that she thinks it comes from neo (new) and politan (city-like). She wonders about cities that end in the letter "s" and asks her husband for help. He names Des Moines, but it does not have a silent "s" ending. The next city he thinks about is Brussels and Bev asks what a person from that city is called. Russ tells her to look it up in the dictionary. Bev does not think it will be in the dictionary, so Russ encourages her to call Sally, who went to Paris, a nearby city. Bev dismisses his idea and the conversation continues with other cities including Nice, Moscow, Cairenes, along with previously mentioned cities. The couple discusses play-on words, such as musky Muscovites, and rhyme with Congolese, Tongalese, and Mongolese. Bev mentions the Wheeler boy when Russ stumbles to find the next words he is going to say. Russ shouts out "Ulan Bator!" which is the capital of Mongolia that he read in a National Geographic magazine.

At the mention of the National Geographic magazine, Bev questions Russ as to whether or not he has had the address changed for it. Russ tries to play dumb and not take responsibility even though his wife has asked him to do it several times. Fortunately, he is just teasing her since he had done it the previous week. The dialog changes as Bev asks him about bringing the trunk down and what he is wearing: a pajama top, chinos, and socks. He acts nonchalantly as Bev reminds him that he is a funny person.

A phone call interrupts their conversation and Francine answers it. Mr. Karl Linder is on the line wanting to talk to Bev who wants to call him back. She takes the call after finding out that he is on a pay phone.

Jim enters through the front doors without knocking and asks if he can encroach. Bev remains on the phone while Jim looks around. He notices that most of their things are gone. Russ tells Jim that the big moving day is on Monday. Bev pipes in on the phone that Russ is not feeling well. Jim warns Russ not to get hurt while they are moving things. Last month, Judy had asked him to move a spinet piano, which put him in a bad position while he was moving it. Bev hangs up with Karl and enters the conversation with Jim and Russ. Jim asks Bev if Karl is coming and Bev is not sure. Bev and Russ



exchange knowing looks as Russ mentions Karl's wife, Betsy, because she is pregnant and almost due. Russ states, "Give that girl a wide berth" (pg. 21). He tells Bev to call him back and request that he shows up later. Bev asks Jim about the meaning of the word Neapolitan and quiets Russ. Jim comes up with Napoli. Francine tries to get Bev's attention, but Bev keeps asking Russ to say it the way he did before. Russ declines. Francine states that she is about to leave and asks if there is anything else that can be done. Bev mentions the big trunk, but Russ reminds her that he is going to do it. Jim states that he cannot help due to his back injuries and his doctor does not want him to lift heavy things. Russ tells Francine that he'll move it and Francine exits with an uneasy feeling.

Bev asks if Jim has eaten lunch and offers iced tea. Jim is not given a chance to answer. Bev laughs hysterically at Russ when he says he cannot take the ice cream with him. Jim adds to the joke, which makes Bev laugh harder. Bev exits to the kitchen to see what else is in there. Jim asks Russ if he's sick, from overhearing Bev's phone conversation. Russ is not ill, but he is looking forward to the moving truck coming. Jim asks Russ if he ever needed to wear support gear and Russ does not remember. Jim replies that Russ would remember and gives him pointers to bend his knees. They talk about the move being on Monday.

Bev returns to ask Jim about wanting some iced tea. Jim accepts and asks Russ about when he starts at the Glen Meadows office. Russ replies the following week after the movers come. Russ excitedly tells Jim about his new office. He will have a corner office with a lot of space and it will be a short six and a half minute commute. Jim asks how Bev is doing, Russ replies that she loves a project and gets overexcited about things. Russ tries to change the subject when Jim asks about him and looks for Bev to come back into the conversation. Jim presses on with saying that Russ's son was a good hero. Russ is uncomfortable with the conversation and tries to tell Jim to mind his own business. Their conversation is simultaneous, because Russ does not want to hear what Jim is trying to say. Jim states that Russ's son, Kenneth, is in a better place. Russ gets annoyed with Jim since Jim is not letting up and Russ uses foul language toward him, twice.

Bev walks back into the room, continuing her word origin dialogue and notices that something went on between Russ and Jim. Jim states that he is about to leave and Russ utters that he is going upstairs. As Jim is leaving, Bev repeats what they must have spoken about before this day that Russ's behavior is out of control and he curses. Russ starts heading upstairs to change his shirt and does not want to be part of the conversation. Bev states that Kenneth was sick and she is ashamed that her husband would speak to someone else using foul language. As Jim tried to appeal to Russ's empathy by relating that he was in the military also, Russ snaps a snippy comment that he must have had a desk job. The doorbell rings and interrupts the conversation. Bev is disgusted with Russ's behavior and the trio stands in silence.

Albert, Francine's husband, peeks through the window to see if anyone is home. Jim answers the door while Bev yells to Francine that her husband has arrived. Russ continues to walk upstairs while Bev invites Albert in and asks if he would like some iced



tea. Bev tries to have Jim stay because she is worried about her husband and she does not want to be alone with him. He has not been sleeping and is being insensitive and uncaring. Albert overhears their conversation and starts to go outside to wait there. Francine comes into the scene and apologizes for the delay. Bev wishes that she had door-to-door service like Francine.

As Francine and Albert are leaving, Bev points out that the house is in disarray and she is thankful for Francine's help on the weekend. Bev mentions the trunk that she and Francine will bring down on Monday. Albert's ears perk up, since he wants to help. Francine says that she has things that she needs to take care of; she is holding two large bags of hand-me-downs. Albert reassures her by telling her that he will put the bags in the car. Jim is surprised that Albert has a car, a Pontiac. Francine wants to go and her husband is not picking up on her subtle cues that it is time to leave.

As Albert opens the front door, Karl Lindner is about to ring the doorbell. He enters as Albert and Francine squeeze by to leave. Albert quietly asks what is wrong with Francine. Halfheartedly, Bev invites Karl to come on in; however he is concerned about his wife, Betsy, who is waiting in the car. Bev snaps at him to bring her inside, out of the hot car. Karl exits to get his wife while Russ descends with a new shirt on and retrieves his ice cream. Russ leaves without saying a word. Bev and Jim whisper to each other that time should be on Russ's side, since it has been two and a half years.

Russ returns from the kitchen and heads to the basement. Karl brings Betsy inside and Bev comments on her size. Jim is able to use sign language and shares a laugh with Betsy, who is deaf. He miscues and signs the word "storm" for "stork." They all laugh about his "rusty" skills; Betsy adds that maybe he needs to wash his hands.

Russ enters into the scene and carries a shovel. He asks about his gloves while Karl makes a joke about digging to China. Bev asks Betsy if she would like some iced tea and Betsy accepts her offer. Albert and Francine return and walk upstairs without saying a word. Russ asks Bev what is going on and she tells him that she is going to get Betsy a drink while he talks to Karl. Karl tries to be funny while wanting to know if what Russ has is contagious and expresses concern that he has not seen Russ in a while at the Rotary. Karl is being protective of Betsy and says that he doesn't want her to catch anything. Jim states that he is going to leave, but Karl asks him to stay.

Bev walks back into the room and asks if Karl would like some iced tea. Since he has a cold sensitivity, he would like some tea without ice. Karl is very cautious about Betsy because two years ago when Betsy was pregnant, they lost the baby because the umbilical cord wrapped around the baby's neck. Karl shared his misfortune and went on to say that he had heard the people buying the Stoller's house are "colored" and they live in Hamilton Park. Karl and Betsy had just met them before they came over to the Stoller's residence. Jim asks if the term "Negro" should be used and Karl states he uses both. Karl reminds them that a family moved onto Kostner Avenue last year, but he has a higher standard for Clybourne Street. Karl is unsure that a "colored" family will fit into the community. Bev seems to have an open mind about the whole situation and states that every family should have the chance to live in a house. Karl is closed-minded and is



not willing to accept people for who they are, not based on the color of their skin. He quips that the "Red Chinese" will be next to want to live in the neighborhood. Albert tries to get their attention, but the Army footlocker drops down the stairs causing a commotion. Francine and Albert try to apologize, while Russ just wants them to leave it there. It is blocking the stairs. Angrily, Russ leaves the room and goes into the basement.

Jim stirs the pot by asking Francine to join the conversation. Jim asks if she would like to move into this neighborhood and asks if she has any children. Francine answers that they have three children and the neighborhood is very lovely. Albert pipes in that he is trying to ask if they would live next to "white" people. Karl mentions that people live differently and have different types of food. He states that Betsy's Scandinavian family eats lutefisk and other dishes that he does not enjoy. Karl asks her if she would be able to find her type of food at Gelman's market and Albert answers that if they do not have collards and pig feet, he would not shop there. Jim furthers his differences with types of worship between Presbyterians and Catholics and their style of music. After gaining his composure, Russ returns to the conversation. Karl inquires about skiing because he has never seen "colored" people skiing on Indianhead Mountain. Russ interjects and reminds Karl that the house is sold.

Karl digs into Russ by stating that the Community Association has given a counter-offer. Bev is shocked. Russ remains calm and stays in the conversation, even after Karl tempts him by saying that Russ has 60 days to change his mind if he is not fully satisfied with the transaction. Karl mocks them by saying that one family will move away and then others will follow, making the values of the houses drop. He flips the conversation by asking if Francine and Albert would mind if "white" people started to invade their community. Betsy does not understand what is going on and asks Karl to tell her.

In the distance, church bells are heard. It is now 4:00 pm. Russ opens the door for Karl to leave, but Karl throws out a last ditch effort to change Russ's mind by telling him that someone might have to inform the new residence why they got the house at a good price. Russ informs Karl that the community is not being respectful. Bev turns to Francine and Albert and says that she is ashamed of the people involved in the conversation. Russ tells Karl to say whatever he wants, but the community was not supportive of his son when he came back from the war. Bev turns to Francine for reassurance that her son was a good person.

Russ unlocks the footlocker and pulls out a letter. Bev begs him not to read it and she hides in the bathroom. Jim and Karl also plead for him not to read it, but Russ continues. It is his son's suicide note. Russ uses foul language again and Karl will not allow it in front of his wife. Russ points out that she is deaf and cannot hear. Russ tells them how his son was in the Korean War and came back home. He committed suicide by using an extension cord around his neck. Bev was the first one to find him. Jim wants to take a moment and pray, but this infuriates Russ more and makes Russ want to hit him. Jim backs up, falls over a box, and knocks a lamp down causing Betsy to run out the front door. Albert put his hand on Russ's shoulder to calm him down, but it infuriates



Russ. Francine has seen enough and is angry with Albert for joining in. They get into an argument while Karl and Jim exit through the front door. Russ pulls the footlocker into the kitchen and uprights the lamp. Bev comes out of the bathroom and offers to pay Albert for his help. He does not accept any money, so she tries to give him the chafing dish. Albert tries to explain that he does not need anything from her, but she does not listen until he raises his voice. This surprises Bev and she does not know what to say. Albert leaves after listening to her ramble on about how they could be neighbors.

Russ returns with his gloves that he found under the sink. He is about to dig a hole tomorrow. Russ changes the subject and asks her how long she thinks his commute will be. He tells her that it will be six and ½ minutes. She inquires as to what she will be doing while he is away. His response is "projects" to keep her busy. He turns on the radio and shouts "Ulan Bator!" which is the capital of Mongolia, just like in the beginning of the play, but with less fervor.

## Act 1 Analysis

Russ is taking it easy from packing and is not really involved in moving the household objects. He has not even gotten dressed for the day and it is three in the afternoon. Bev and Francine are wrapping things and packing them into boxes. Bev tells Francine that she likes to entertain guests, but she cannot remember the last time they had company over. She acts strangely about the chafing dish and describes it as lonely and sad as she offers it to Francine.

Bev and Russ like to rhyme and think about words and word origins. They enjoy each other's company and their banter. Bev mentioned the word "Mongol-oid" after Russ said the word "Mongolese." It is not politically correct nowadays to use the term mongoloid, because it is derogatory. Bev mentions the Wheeler boy. The audience later finds out he is developmentally delayed and bags groceries. Bev states, "But that's nice, isn't it, in a way? To know we all have our place" (pg.10). This is foreshadowing of her belief that everyone is entitled to do as they please and live where they want. She does not discriminate against ability or skin color.

Karl is a concerned neighbor and calls before he comes to visit the Stoller's house. Jim, on the other hand, is a concerned friend and feels comfortable walking through the front doors without knocking. As Francine is leaving, Bev asks her to help move the trunk, which Russ already said that he would move later. Was Bev being manipulative of the situation? Did she really want Francine to move it, even though Russ said he'd do it? Was she trying to get Jim to help since he was younger? Jim could not help because of his bad back. The whole situation made Francine leave with an uneasy feeling. It is foreshadowing of more problems to come. The audience is not told what is inside the trunk, but knows that it takes two people to move it.

The trio share laughter about ice cream and not being able to take it with them. After overhearing Bev say that Russ was under the weather, Jim asks Russ upfront about it, especially since he is not completely dressed for the day. Jim points out that Russ is still





wearing his pajama top. Russ denies any illness and states that he is looking forward to the arrival of the moving truck.

The new spacious corner office sounds appealing to Russ. An additional bonus of a short commute is appealing to Russ. Jim presses Russ to open up about himself and his son, Kenneth, but Russ is unable. Instead, he reverts to using foul language directed at Jim. When Bev returns to the scene, she continues her previous dialog about word origins. She notices that there is hostility in the air between Russ and Jim but does not get an answer as to what happened after she asked. Russ tries to escape the situation rather than discuss what went on with his son. He flees from an uncomfortable situation.

Albert arrives to pick up his wife, who is not immediately ready to go. He overhears the conversation between Bev and Jim. Albert starts to head outside to wait for his wife when she arrives and apologizes for the delay. Bev's desire to have door-to-door service like Francine is odd because she is the one who can afford a housekeeper, but Francine is a housekeeper. Albert indulges his wife, while Russ escapes the situation. Bev does not want to be alone with Russ.

Bev is manipulative as she brings up the trunk again before Francine and Albert leave. Albert offers to help while Jim reminds Bev that he has a hurt back. Jim is surprised that Albert has a car after Albert tells his wife that he will put the hand-me-down bags that she is carrying in the car. For some reason, Francine wants to leave and is unable to have her husband take her, because he wants to help Bev with the trunk. He is unaware of her subtle cues that it is time to leave.

As they are leaving, Karl shows up. Bev is apathetic toward Karl when she invites him in and snaps at him when he mentions that his wife is outside in the car. Karl is perplexed about saying the right words; he does not know how to express himself confidently, so he hems and haws. Once Russ comes back into the scene, he asks Bev if she has seen his gloves and wants to know what is going on because Albert and Francine have gone upstairs without speaking. Bev informs him that Karl is going to have a talk with him. Unfortunately, Karl is racist. He believes that the new family that is going to move into the Stoller's residence should not be allowed to live there because of the color of their skin. He does not think they will be able to fit into the community. Karl uses the words "colored" and "Negro," which is not appropriate by today's standards. The politically correct term is African American. Karl is not accepting of everyone and even goes after the "Red Chinese." Unfortunately, Albert and Francine were having difficulty with the trunk and no one paid attention when Albert politely asked. Russ got angry again after hearing the trunk tumble down the stairs. He left the scene instead of helping move the trunk out of the way. Avoiding conflict and leaving are his negative ways of dealing with issues.

Jim and Karl manipulate the conversation and express their racial concerns. Jim asks Francine questions and Albert tries to help her with her answers upfront when she is trying to be polite and reserved. Both Jim and Karl point out differences between people, for example, their food, entertainment and sports, and worship styles. Surprisingly, Russ is able to stay calm when he returns to the conversation. Ironically,



the church bells ring in the distance and people who attend church should not be racists or concerned with the color of peoples' skin.

Karl is not finished trying to make his point. Telling Russ that someone will speak with the new residents is a threat, but Russ does not care. Francine must have worked for the Stollers for a long time because Bev turns to her for support. Bev wants reassurance that her son was a good person, even bringing up things when he was a little boy, such as drawing, reading, and thinking. It is interesting to compare how Russ and Bev's son Kenneth died by wrapping an extension cord around his neck, while Betsy and Karl's unborn baby died after the umbilical cord was wrapped around the neck. Both are tragic deaths.

As Albert is leaving, Bev tries to give him money for his help. Albert does not accept any payment and will not take the chafing dish. Bev feels that she needs to give him something and she is unwilling to listen to him when he says that he has everything he needs.

The play concludes with the two main characters who were introduced in the beginning. To escape loneliness, Russ turns on the radio. He connects with their earlier conversation by halfheartedly shouting out the capital of Mongolia. The lights dim as Bev smiles dimly, too.



## Act 2

### Act 2 Summary

The same actors from Act 1 are used in Act 2 but act in different roles. Act 2 takes place 50 years later, in the same house in September 2009, on a Saturday afternoon, at 3pm. Steve and Lindsey are the new buyers for the house, Kevin and Lena represent the homeowners' association, Kathy and Tom are lawyers. Tom takes control and leads the discussion involving the documents in their hands.

Steve asks a question about frontage; he wants to know what it means. Tom starts to answer, but then lets Kathy answer because Steve is her client. Steve does not understand the terminology about the distance from the house to the edge of the property. Tom and Kathy explain and point out which page and paragraph to Lindsey because she is lost already. Tom and Kathy discuss the legality of the sidewalk. Steve does not want to get into a predicament caused by not clearly understanding the language and what has been written in the documents. Kevin wants to know about the height issue, which brings about a tiff between spouses Lindsey and Steve. Steve wants to know if the perimeter can change, but Lindsey states that it cannot.

Kathy receives a phone call from Hector, the architect, which interrupts the conversation. She explains who is present at the house. Lindsey is excited about the location of the house because her commute will be shortened once they move in. Currently, she commutes from Glen Meadow, the exact same town where Russ's new job is located. Kevin and Lindsey find out that they both work downtown, across the street from each other. Steve asks if Kevin knows Kyle Hendrickson and Kevin states that they work together.

The architect is worried about something and Kathy tries to reassure him that it would not happen. Lindsey grabs the phone from Kathy and tells the group that she'll be back shortly. Steve murmurs that Hector is a volatile Spaniard. Kathy mentions that she visited Spain and Morocco last year with her husband. Unfortunately her husband got sick and they needed to find a doctor at 2 am. The group makes small talk waiting for Lindsey to return. Kevin brings up that he went to Prague and Zurich last April. Kathy says that she loves Prague, but has not been to Zurich.

Lena interrupts the conversation and wants to discuss important matters. Steve suggests that they wait for Lindsey. They decide to pick up the discussion about their documents in the meantime. Tom announces that he has to leave by 4:00pm. Steve interrupts by stating the capital of Morocco because he thought that Kathy misspoke earlier. The group is not sure which city is the capital.

Lindsey returns to the conversation. Steve asks her what the capital of Morocco is and she does not know. Steve fills her in about Kathy's trip, but Lindsey is not interested. Kathy interjects the name of Timbuktu. Steve states that Timbuktu is the capital of Mali



and Lindsey erroneously thinks Mali is in the Pacific. She was thinking about Bali, not Mali. Steve is upset with Lindsey because he thinks she talks to him like a child. Meanwhile, Dan walks into the kitchen and Lena wants to say something important. The group introduces themselves by first names to each other and Dan gets their attention. He is looking for Steve because he ran into a problem digging the trench in the yard. Dan has to take out the dead tree that has long roots. Steve wants to go and see it, which delays Lena's important business and the discussion revolving around the documents.

Tom continues the conversation by talking about the petition, which was drawn up about the height of the new house. He would like to reduce the new house volume to compensate for the new height length. Kathy points out that there are a lot of variables; such as the size of the lots and the year the houses were built. Lindsey tries to point out that they were simply going to remodel, but there are other problems involved that led them to want to start over. Tom addresses the problem that the new house is going to be a complete fifteen feet higher than the other houses.

Tom's cell phone rings and interrupts him while he is talking about the architectural integrity of the house. Steve returns from outside, while Tom steps into the kitchen to take his phone call. Steve tells the group that the workers have hit something underground while they were digging to put the koi pond in the ground. He notices that it's 3:30 and they wait for Tom to return. Kevin makes small talk with Lindsey about her due date, which is later in November. She thinks her baby is going to be a girl, but Steve has seen the ultrasound and knows for sure. Lindsey does not want to know if she's having a girl or a boy. Lindsey asks Lena if they have any kids and Lena replies that they have three kids.

Steve changes the subject by bringing up Kyle Hendrickson to Kevin. Kyle beat up Steve when he was in tenth grade, which makes Kevin laugh because Kevin thinks of him as a short, little guy. Lindsey tries to join the conversation and asks whom they are talking about. Steve responds by reminding her that he ran into Kyle last week and Kyle told him a joke. Steve starts to remember the joke and Lindsey tells him not to bring it up. She gets angered when he does not listen and he starts telling Kevin the joke.

Lena apologizes for interrupting, but she wants to know what they are doing at the house. Nothing has gotten accomplished and she wants to get back to business. Lena and Kevin have a short tiff about being friendly and respecting each other's time. Lena tries to explain that she is historically connected to the community, where her family made it through a lot of obstacles. She does not want to tell Steve and Lindsey what to do with their new house. Steve tries to ask Lena if the housing property values have increased over time and Kathy agrees that they have. Lindsey insults Lena and her historical connections by talking about seeing new potential over what the houses have been in the past. She points out that the neighborhood has changed demographically.

Kathy starts to tell of her historic roots with the community since her father's family lived there in the late 1950's. She reminds Lindsey that her deaf and pregnant mother moved out of the neighborhood when she was in the womb. Her mother is Betsy, while her



father is Karl, both from Act 1. Although Kathy, Steve, and Lindsey try to be respectful and tolerant, they are impolite and offensive when they state that the neighborhood has faced problems, such as economic and violent hardships. Kevin spurs them on by stating that they, pointing to Lena and himself, were once crack-heads. He is only kidding, but the others start talking about the negative effects of living in the projects, a low economic housing area known for drug problems and other such troubles. The conversation goes from poor to inappropriate in regards to ghettos. Steve mentions a ghetto in Prague, which turns the dialog into talking about visiting there. Lena, Kevin, Kathy, Steve, and Lindsey have all been there. Kevin asks Steve if he can ski. Lindsey pokes fun at the way Steve skis.

Lindsey redirects the conversation back to their documents. They have only gotten to page three. Tom notes the time is 3:45. Lena apologizes for taking too much time and Kevin mentions that Lena's great aunt used to live in the house that is going to be demolished. Lena used to climb the crepe myrtle tree in the backyard when she was little. She says that most of the neighborhood was African-American when she was growing up, except for Mr. Wheeler who bagged groceries at Gelman's. Lena and Kevin know more of the background about the Stollers and what happened to their son. Steve and Lindsey are concerned because they do not know what happened. Kevin mentions that the son killed himself after coming back from the Korean War. Lindsey starts to panic when Kevin and Lena explain that he died in the house that they bought. Steve and Lindsey go into the kitchen to discuss what they just found out. Lindsey thinks that someone should have told them about the situation before they bought it. Steve is not bothered and pokes fun at Lindsey. She is very upset.

Dan enters and wants to show Steve what he found, the large footlocker from Bev and Russ's son. Dan is not sure what is inside and realizes that he interrupted the conversation. He needs bolt cutters to cut the padlock and exits trying to get his friend Ramirez's attention. Tom continues business, but is interrupted by Lindsey apologizing for losing her cool earlier. They are concerned about tight finances, the baby coming, and receiving the petition in the mail. Tom tries to get back to business by stating that the height of the new house could be shortened. Kathy tells him that it cannot be done. Lena asks them to think about their motivation for changing the neighborhood. Steve and Lindsey question her as to what she is talking about - is it not all right for them to move in and start a family?

Steve wants them to save time by being honest and not dance around the issues. Lena states that she is being upfront. Lindsey does not agree with Steve. He says it is about race and racism. Lindsey cannot believe what he is saying and Steve gets angry about the way she treats him. Lena digs into the original issue with the house being that it was too large, but now feels as if she has been called a racist. Kevin supports his wife, while Lindsey is unsupportive of her husband and denies knowing him. Steve states that there is some kind of undisclosed plan and Lena adds to the dispute that it has been going on for 40 years. As Lena and Steve argue, Lindsey and Kevin both question their spouses.

Tom tries to direct the conversation back to the house. Steve gets hostile and resents that he cannot even tell a joke that an African American told him without being seen as a



racist. Kevin incites him to tell the joke. Lindsey forbids him to tell the joke because it is insulting. Lena wants to hear the joke but Kevin backs off and does not want to hear it. Steve points out that it was Kyle Hendrickson that told him the joke and he is African American. Steve tells the joke. It is about a small Caucasian man and a large African American man who end up in the same jail cell. The large man gives the small man a choice of position, but proceeds to tell him that he is going to have sex with him. The joke is offensive to Lindsey and it is not funny according to Lena. Steve thinks it is funny, but Tom thinks it is not and inputs that he is gay.

Kevin changes the subject by trying to tell a joke about how many Caucasian men it takes to change a light bulb. Each character has a different reaction. Tom admits he needs to leave shortly, Lindsey is not interested, Kathy sees that the situation has been reversed from Steve's joke, and Steve is intrigued. After Kevin tells the punch line, Steve wants to continue telling racist jokes. Lindsey is appalled.

Lena tells a joke about Caucasian women. Kevin is shocked and tries to get her to stop. The punch line is disgusting and Lena quips that she hopes no one is insulted. Lindsey took it personally while Kathy felt slighted and has had enough. She is ready to leave. Steve interjects that he is offended in his present neighborhood where there are yellow ribbon magnets on the vehicles. Kevin gets angry because he has three such magnets for family members on his car, which astonishes the others. Lindsey expresses her frustration with Steve as the church bells ring. She is upset with Lena's comments that Lindsey's taste should be questioned. Tom tells Kathy he will be in touch with her and leaves. As Kevin and Lena leave, Steve makes a snide remark and insults Lena. Kevin comes back into the house full of anger. Lena and Lindsey want to drop the whole situation. Dan enters and tries to settle Kevin down by putting his hand on Kevin's shoulder, which further infuriates Kevin. Lindsey continues to express her frustration with her husband while Lena does the same with her husband. Kevin and Lena leave while Steve and Lindsey get ready to go. Steve feels that his needs are not being met and they continue to quarrel about being married and having a baby.

Kenneth, Bev and Russ's son from Act 1, comes down the stairs and sits silently near the front door. Dan reads the suicide note from Kenneth. Bev comes back from Act 1 and is baffled. Kenneth is writing a letter and Bev talks to him. He is going to a job interview. Francine enters with a wet umbrella and greets Bev and Kenneth. She tells Bev that it is sprinkling outside. Bev goes back upstairs to go back to bed. She feels that positive things are coming up and asks Kenneth if he has enough light so he does not hurt his eyes. The play ends with Kenneth turning the radio up and continuing to write. Dan reads the letter.

## Act 2 Analysis

There are many parallels between Act 1 and Act 2. Lindsey and Steve currently live and commute from Glen Meadow, the exact same town where Russ's new job was located in Act 1. Steve asks Kevin about Kyle Hendrickson, which allows the audience to think of how Kyle's name will come up later in the play. There is a lot of small talk going on



amongst the group because not all the members are present. The original business is not discussed right away and the group is not able to stay on task. Kathy is distracted by the phone call from Hector and then Lindsey takes the phone from Kathy. Lindsey continues talking with Hector and tries to appease his concerns. Kathy and Kevin talk about their travels with their spouses. They both can afford to take overseas trips.

The whole argument over the capital of Morocco is not solved. Steve is correct, though, because he names Rabat. Lindsey gets confused with the countries of Mali and Bali. One is in the Pacific and the other is in the African continent. She does not really care, but she aggravates her husband since he thinks she is treating him like a child. The interaction between spouses is interesting to observe for the readers and live audiences.

Lena has something important to say, but keeps getting interrupted by the others in the group. At first, Steve asks her to wait until Lindsey gets back. When Lindsey returns, the off-task conversation of the capital of Morocco interrupts Lena. Next, Steve leaves to see what the problem Dan is having out in the yard. The conversation starts and stops and keeps getting interrupted. Lena brings up her historic ties with the neighborhood and tells about families that have overcome obstacles to live there, such as racial tension. Kathy mentions that her father's family lived in the neighborhood in the late 1950's, which ties in with Act 1 that took place during that same time frame. She tells Lindsey that her mother was deaf, which cues the audience to remember that Betsy was deaf in Act 1. In an ironic twist, it was Betsy and Karl who tried to persuade Bev and Russ not to let African Americans move into their house. In Act 2, their daughter is the lawyer handling and helping her Caucasian friends move back into the neighborhood.

Kevin asks Steve if he can ski, which is a twist from Act 1 where Karl asked if Albert skied. It really should not matter the color of the people's skin that ski or do not ski. Not a lot of progress was made in the past 50 years with this topic.

Lena remembers that everyone was African-American in her neighborhood when she was growing up, except for Mr. Wheeler who bagged groceries at Gelman's. In Act 1, Russ was upset that Murray Gelman hired the Wheeler boy, who was developmentally delayed, instead of his son who came back from the Korean War. Russ used the politically incorrect term of "retarded" to describe the Wheeler boy. In Act 2, Lena used the politically correct term of developmentally delayed.

The characters reactions to each other and the racist jokes are disappointing. It is a sad commentary on how people are prejudice and inconsiderate of each other. The jokes are in bad taste and are not funny. The group is unable to accomplish the business that brought them together.

The following actions in the second act have similarities to the first act. Lindsey expresses that she is upset that they all cannot live peacefully in the neighborhood together, which parallels to Bev's reaction in the first act. Lena says that she questions Lindsey's taste, which is similar to the debate that Karl and Jim were discussing



different types of food in Act 1. As Kevin and Lena were leaving, Kevin stands up for his wife to Steve's impolite comment. This resembles when Karl stands up for his wife after Russ uses foul language in Act 1. Dan puts his hand on Kevin's shoulder to calm him down and this is done in Act 1 with Albert putting his hand on Russ's shoulder.

The characters from Act 1 return. Bev, Kenneth, and Francine make small talk as Dan reads Kenneth's suicide letter. Bev is hopeful that positive things are about to happen, but she is unaware that Kenneth is about to commit suicide.





# Characters

## Bev Stoller

Bev Stoller is a white female in her late 40's. She is married to Russ. Her housekeeper is Francine. Bev likes to entertain, but she cannot remember the last time they had company over and used the chafing dish. She offers the dish to Francine, which Francine politely refuses to take. Bev makes Francine feel uncomfortable when Bev brings up moving the trunk that is upstairs. Russ has already told Bev that he will do it. Bev brings up the trunk again in front of Albert, as he was about to leave after picking up Francine.

Russ and Bev's son Kenneth was a hero to his country and has died. He was in the Korean War. In Act 2, Bev sees him early in the morning as he is writing dressed up in his military uniform. She thinks things in their lives are about to get better, especially after the hard years they have recently endured.

## Karl Linder

Karl Lindner is a white male in his 30's. He is married to Betsy and helps her because she is deaf. Karl is a strangely proper man and is uneasy when he comes to the Stollers' residence. He leaves his pregnant wife inside their car when he visits the Stollers. However, Karl goes and fetches her when Bev prompts him. He is concerned that the Stollers are selling their house to an African American couple. Karl knows that they are an African American couple because he has been to their house and tried to persuade them not to buy the house. He is a crossover character in Lorraine Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun*. Karl is a racist and wants the Clybourne Park community to stay Caucasian. He thinks that the property values will decline and other Caucasians will slowly start to depart if African Americans live in the community.

## Lena

In Act 2, Lena is married to Kevin and is African American. Kevin and Lena are representing the Home Owner's Association. Lena does not want the new residents, Steve and Lindsey, to tear down the house and rebuild a much bigger one. She has something important to say, but every time she tries to say it, she is asked to wait until everyone in the group is there. Lena has a personal connection to the house because she used to visit her great aunt who used to live in the house on 406 Clybourne Street. When she was little, she used to climb in the tree that was out back. It is the crepe myrtle tree under which Russ buried his son's footlocker in Act 1. Lena says that she must hear Steve's joke and later tells another inappropriate joke. Her husband tries to stop her from telling it, but she does not listen to him.



## Russ Stoller

Russ Stoller is a white male in his late 40's. He is married to Bev. In the beginning of the play, he is eating ice cream and is not involved in packing the household items. Russ and Bev's son Kenneth was a hero to his country and has died. When pressed by Jim to talk about his son, Russ is uncomfortable and uses foul language towards Jim. He does not know how to express his thoughts and needs clearly. Russ would rather escape an uncomfortable situation than deal with it. He retreats to his bedroom instead of continuing the conversation with Bev and Jim.

## Francine

Francine is an African American in her 30's. She is a housekeeper for Bev and Russ. Francine is married to Albert. She does not take the chafing dish from Bev when Bev offers it to her. Francine becomes uncomfortable when Bev talks about moving the trunk from upstairs.

## Jim

Jim is a white male in his late 20's. He is a minister and feels comfortable walking through the unlocked doors without knocking. Jim wears his clerical collar under his jacket. He presses Russ to talk about his son, which makes Russ feel uncomfortable. Jim moved things about a month ago and hurt his back. He is under doctor's orders not to lift heavy things.

## Albert

Albert is an African American in his 30's. He is married to Francine. He is very helpful and patient. He comes to the Stoller house to pick up his wife and waits for her to get ready to go. He offers to help move a trunk from the second floor of the Stoller's house when Bev mentions that she and Francine will move it on Monday.

## Betsy

Betsy is in her late 20's. She is 8 months pregnant and waits for Karl in their car outside while he goes to the Stollers' residence. Betsy is completely deaf. She depends on her husband to tell her what is going on because she cannot hear.

## Tom Driscoll

In Act 2, Tom is a lawyer for the Clybourne Park Home Owners' Association and leads the discussion for the group in Act 2. He is knowledgeable about terms and vocabulary



used in the petition drawn up by the Association. He takes offense to Steve's inappropriate joke because he is a homosexual.

## **Kenneth**

Kenneth is Russ and Bev's deceased son. He fought in the Korean War. Kenneth committed suicide in his parents' house. He appears in Act 2.

## **Lindsey**

In Act 2, Lindsey is married to Steve. They have bought the house on Clybourne Park and are going to rebuild it. Lindsey is pregnant and is due in November. She thinks she is having a girl, but does not want to know if her baby is a girl or a boy.

## **Steve**

In Act 2, Steve is married to Lindsey. They have bought the house on Clybourne Park and are going to rebuild it. His wife is pregnant and he knows if she is having a girl or a boy, but his wife does not want to know.

## **Kathy**

In Act 2, Kathy is a lawyer representing Steve and Lindsey. She went to Morocco and Spain with her husband in 2008. Her parents are Karl and Betsy from Act 1.

## **Kevin**

In Act 2, Kevin is married to Lena and is African American. They are representing the Home Owner's Association. Kevin does not want the new residents, Steve and Lindsey, to tear down the house and rebuild a much bigger one.

## **Dan**

In Act 2, Dan is a helpful hired hand who is building a koi pond in the back yard. He finds the buried footlocker near the dead crepe myrtle tree. He is not sure what's inside the footlocker, but he finds bolt cutters to open it.



# Objects/Places

## The House

The house is on Clybourne Park. It is a three-bedroom cottage on 406 Clybourne Street. It is located in a suburb northwest of Chicago. The front doors are unlocked, as Jim walks in without knocking first in Act 1. In the second act, the house has aged. Repairs to the house have been made with less quality.

## Footlocker

In Act 1, there is a heavy trunk that needs two people to move it. Russ tells Bev that he will move it, and Bev mentions it to Jim, who can not move it per his doctor's orders. Jim had hurt his back about a month before the scene takes place. Bev also mentions it to Francine while Francine's husband Albert is there. Albert offered to help move it. It is on the second floor of the house. Albert and Francine try to take it down the stairs, but they are unable to maneuver it around the corner and it tumbles to the bottom of the stairs. Russ is going to bury it under the crepe myrtle tree. In Act 2, the footlocker is dug up by Dan and placed in the house.

## Neapolitan ice cream

Neapolitan ice cream is what Russ is eating at the beginning of the play. The ice cream sparks a conversation about the origin of the word Neapolitan. Russ and Bev enjoy rhyming words and coming up with possible origins.

## Basement

The basement is where Russ retreats. He is looking for his gloves in the basement, but can not find them. He is able to find a shovel down there and Karl cracks a joke that he is going to dig to China with the shovel.

## Crepe myrtle tree

In Act 1, Russ is going to bury the footlocker under the crepe myrtle tree. It is a big tree. The crepe myrtle tree is mentioned in Act 2 as the tree Lena used to climb when she was little at her great aunt's house. The tree is dead in Act 2 and Dan shows Steve how far the roots go down into the earth.



## Prague

Prague is where Kevin, Lena, Kathy, Lindsey, and Steve have visited. Lindsey thinks it's beautiful and wants to go back there. Kevin thinks it is crowded. Kathy is not fond of the food in Prague.

## Glen Meadows

Glen Meadows is where Russ's new office is located in Act 1. It is the same place where Lindsey and Steve currently live in Act 2.

## Gelman's

Gelman's is a grocery store. In Act 1, Russ tells the others that when his wife shops there, the other customers look at her like she has the plague. Murray Gelman has hired the Wheeler boy, who is "retarded," according to Russ. Karl states that the store had been Kopekne's Market before it turned into Gelman's. In Act 2, Kevin mentions that Mr. Wheeler used to bag groceries there. Lena states that Gelman's was torn down. It became a Super Saver, according to Kevin, and then a Whole Foods after that.

## Larabee

Larabee is where Russ's friend Tom Perricone lives. Tom is a colleague of Russ's who is relocating to the new office in Glen Meadows. In Act 2, Lena states that she used to live off Larabee when she was growing up.

## The capital of Morocco

The capital of Morocco is discussed in Act 2. Kathy misspeaks and thinks it is Marrakech, but Steve corrects her. The real capital of Morocco is Rabat.



# Themes

## Communication issues

Communication issues can be seen in the play. The characters try to communicate with each other, but have difficulty getting their thoughts and feelings expressed. In the first act, Russ flees the scene whenever he faces conflict. He went to his bedroom or to the basement. At times, it was helpful because Russ needed to cool down and not be so angry. When he got angry with Jim, he goes up to his bedroom. When he gets angry about the footlocker falling down the stairs, he goes to the basement. He could have stayed and tried to work things out, but he chooses to deal with things with silence. On the other hand, his wife, Bev, tries to break the silence. She invites her neighbors Karl and Betsy over, along with friend Jim. She is not happy that Russ is using foul language toward others and she does not want to be alone with him.

In the second act, the racial and property problems continue. Steve tries to ask Lena if the housing property values have increased over time and Kathy agrees that they have. Lindsey insults Lena and her historical connections by talking about seeing new potential over what the houses have been in the past. She points out that the neighborhood has changed demographically. Although Kathy, Steve, and Lindsey try to be respectful and tolerant, they are impolite and offensive when they state that the neighborhood has faced problems, such as economic and violent hardships. Kevin spurs them on by stating that they, pointing to Lena and himself, were once crack-heads.

## Relationships between spouses

Relationships between spouses are dealt with in the play. Bev and Russ enjoy rhyming words and thinking about word origins. Bev does not want to be alone with Russ and invites others to come over to talk with her husband. Bev is concerned with the foul language that Russ uses in front of others and his strange behavior. Jim and Karl come over to talk with Russ, while Betsy comes to keep Bev occupied. Russ escapes to different parts of the house when he feels uncomfortable. Francine gets upset with Albert when Albert gets involved and they squabble.

Lindsey and Steve had recently bought the house on 406 Clybourne Street. It is stressful to buy a new house and to complicate matters, they are going to level it and build from scratch. They have different views on what the house is going to look like when it is finished being built. Lindsey is surprised to find out that the designs call for the height of the new house to be completely 15 feet taller than the other surrounding houses. Steve understands that the house volume needs to be reduced.

Steve feels like he's being treated like a child when Lindsey talks to him. Steve tries to engage her in a conversation about the capital of Morocco, but Lindsey does not care.



Steve pokes fun at Lindsey after they find out that Bev and Russ's son committed suicide in their new house. Lena and Kevin get upset with each other, similar to the rest of the couples.

## Racial tensions

Racial tensions mount in both acts of the play. In the first act, Karl and Jim are concerned about the effects on the community if an African American family moves in. The homeowners who sell their house are not concerned. They do not know the race of the new owners and it does not matter to them. Karl is shocked when he finds out and chuckles when he is telling Russ. Karl and his wife Betsy visit the family in Hamilton Park. They try to make a counter offer to the African-American family. Bev is not concerned with the color of the new homeowners' skin. She is not even sure if they are African American. She states, "But isn't it possible that they're ... I don't know, Mediterranean or - (p. 64)."

In the second act, Lindsey tries to be nonprejudiced by stating that she has friends who are African American and she tells her husband that she has dated an African American. Her husband spurs her on to name her friends and questions who she dated. Lindsey is shocked and appalled at her husband's behavior. She just wants to live in the community and raise her children next to her neighbors. Lindsey and Bev's outlook are strikingly similar despite the 50-year difference between the two characters.

The author contrasts the differences between racial tension in 1959 and in 2009. Some progress has been made in terms of attitudes and relationships. The play makes the viewer question the present day perspective of racial issues.



# Style

## Point of View

The author's point of view is to compare and contrast two different time periods with 50 years in between. The play is acted out with a lot of dialog between the characters. The house, located on 406 Clybourne Street, is the setting. The neighborhood is predominately Caucasian and the first act takes place in 1959. A Caucasian couple, Bev and Russ, moves out of their house with the help of their African American housekeeper, Francine. Her husband, Albert, comes to pick her up and he gets involved by volunteering to help move Bev and Russ's deceased son Kenneth's footlocker down from the second floor. Concerned and prejudiced neighbors, Karl and Betsy, come and complicate matters, because they are troubled with the new neighbors moving in. Another friend, Karl, a young minister, adds to the complication with his narrow-minded views.

The second act takes place in 2009. The author draws interest by having a Caucasian couple Steve and Lindsey buy the house. The neighborhood is predominately African American now. Before they move in, however, they plan to have the house leveled and rebuilt. Their concerned neighbors, Lena and Kevin, complicate matters by not wanting the couple to build such a large and tall house in the historic community. The added twist is that Lena's great aunt owned the house after Bev and Russ. Lena used to climb the crepe myrtle tree in the backyard, where Kenneth's footlocker is buried. Karl and Betsy's daughter, Kathy, is the lawyer involved in the dispute.

## Setting

The play takes place in a 3-bedroom cottage on 406 Clybourne Street. It is located in a suburb northwest of Chicago. The play begins with Act I set in September 1959 on a Saturday afternoon. The time is 3:00 pm. The front doors are unlocked, as Jim walks in without knocking first. There is a bathroom on the first floor, where Bev hides when she does not want to hear Russ reading the suicide letter left by their son Kenneth. A kitchen and dining area are attached to the front room. Since the Stollers are in the middle of moving houses, there are cardboard boxes stacked in the corners, but some of the furniture has been removed. The shelves in the dining area have been cleared.

The staircase leads to the bedrooms upstairs and another staircase leads to the basement. Russ retreats to either his bedroom or the basement to cool off from his intense conversations. Russ finds a shovel in the basement, but cannot find his gloves down there.

In Act 2, the house has not been kept up well and is worn out. Repairs have been made with inferior materials. A metal railing has replaced the wooden staircase railing and the fireplace has been painted over several times. The wooden floors have been topped





with linoleum. It is warm outside and many of the characters have iced beverages. In the house are crates and discarded furniture. The front door is open and during the middle of Act 2 is shut due to the noisy traffic.

## Language and Meaning

The language is casual as the characters are having real life-like conversations with each other. At times, the characters voices are overlapping each other, such as when Bev is on the phone with Karl and Jim is talking to Russ. The characters' speech is not grammatically correct with slang words thrown in, such as "ya," "s'not," "izzat," and "ohhh yeah" (pp. 18, 19).

Socially acceptable language is not adhered to in the play. The characters struggle with trying to express their thoughts and feelings in positive and constructive ways. In Act 1, the 1959 characters use currently politically incorrect words, such as "Negro," "mongoloid," and "colored." Act 2 shows that progress has been made since those terms are not longer tolerable.

At times, the characters are not able to be direct, so they hem and haw about racial subjects. For example, Karl chuckles when he tells Russ about the African American family moving in. There are uncomfortable pauses in between the characters' lines, which add to the tension.

Many members use foul language throughout the play. Russ gets angry with Jim and is not able to control what comes out of his mouth. Again, due to his anger, Russ is very impolite to Betsy about her hearing loss.

In Act 2, there are a lot of legal vocabulary that the group discusses, such as "frontage," "façade," "recess," and "easement." Steve is concerned that they will not understand everything and that will create problems. Lindsey, on the other hand, feels comfortable with the legal terms.

## Structure

The play is structured with two acts. The first act takes place in 1959, while the second act takes place in 2009, fifty years later. Each act is about 100 pages long. The first act introduces the Caucasian characters, Bev and Russ, who have sold their house. The neighborhood is primarily made of Caucasian residence. The audience is subtly told about the characters and their backgrounds. They do not want to live in the house anymore because they keep seeing reminders of their son Kenneth's suicide. This subplot returns in Act 2. Their house is the one that is bought by the African American characters in Lorraine Hansberry's play "A Raisin in the Sun." The audience is not told specifically that it is the Younger family from Hansberry's play that bought the house, but it is implied. Karl Linder is in both plays and is a crossover character. He tries to dissuade the Younger family from buying the house in both plays.



Act 2 presents conflict between the new Caucasian owners, Lindsey and Steve, and their African American neighbors. The neighborhood association sends two representatives, Kevin and Lena, to encourage the new homeowners not to tear down their house and rebuild. The neighborhood has changed and is now primarily made of African American residence. Lena has personal connections to the house since her great aunt used to live there.

The action escalates in both acts with the characters not getting along with each other. They are unable to communicate in socially acceptable ways. In the end, there are no clear-cut answers to the questions asked in the play about race and property.



## Quotes

"BEV: 'I would think it had something to do with neo, as in something new, and then there's the -politian part which to me would suggest a city, like metropolitan.'" Act I, Clybourne Park, page 4

"JIM: 'Bev, I am trying to bestow the pearls of my wisdom upon this man.'" Act I, Clybourne Park, page 20

"JIM: 'Knowledge is power, Bev.'

BEV: 'Then I choose to remain powerless.'" Act I, Clybourne Park, page 23

"BEV: 'I told you so. I told you what it's like. And he uses these ugly words in other people's presence and I'm not some kind of matron, but what in the world is wrong with civility?'" Act I, Clybourne Park, page 38

"KARL: 'Now, some would say change is inevitable. And I can support that, if it's change for the better. But I tell you what I can't support, and that's disregarding the needs of the people who live in a community.'" Act I, Clybourne Park, page 64

"FRANCINE: 'Let'em knock each other's brains out, for all I care. I'm done working here for these people two days from now, and you never worked for 'em at all, so what the hell do you care what they do?'" Act I, Clybourne Park, page 94

"BEV: (holding back tears, nobly righteous) 'You know, I would be ... So proud. So honored to have you and Francine as our neighbors. And the two children.'

ALBERT: 'Three children.'

BEV: 'Three chil- We would ... Maybe we should learn what the other person eats. Maybe that would be the solution to some of the - If someday we could all sit down together, and, and, and, and ... (trails into a whisper, shakes her head.)'" Act I, Clybourne Park, page 97

"TOM: 'Knowing as we do that the height continues to be the sticking point - and by the way, the reason the petition was drawn up this way in the first place - I mean, nobody wants to be inflexible, but the idea was to set some basic guidelines whereby if, say, the height is the problem, like it is here, then one option would be to reduce the total exterior volume, like your husband was saying.'" Act II, Clybourne Park, page 131

"LENA: 'I mean, I know I'm not the only person who takes the situation seriously and I don't like having to be this way but I have been sitting here for the last fifteen minutes waiting for a turn to speak - and meanwhile it seems like nothing is even remotely getting accomplished.'" Act II, Clybourne Park, pages 143, 144



"LENA: 'At that time - well, when I was growing up I really don't remember seeing a single white face in the neighborhood for pretty much my entire -.'" Act II, Clybourne Park, page 162

"LENA: 'I'm asking you to think about the motivation behind the long-range political initiative to change the face of this neighborhood.'" Act II, Clybourne Park, page 175

"STEVE: 'This is why we have wars. One group, one tribe, tries to usurp some territory - and now you guys have this territory, right? And you don't like having it stolen away from you, the way white people stole everything else from black America. We get it, okay? And we apologize. But what good does it do, if we perpetually fall into the same, predictable little euphemistic tap dance around the topic?'" Act II, Clybourne Park, pages 185, 186

"LINDSEY: 'And I'm basically kind of hurt by the implications that's been made that, just because we want to live as your neighbors and raise a child alongside yours, that somehow, in the process of doing that, we've had our ethics called into question.'" Act II, Clybourne Park, page 200



## Topics for Discussion

Why did Russ and Bev's son commit suicide? Discuss ways to prevent suicide and its affects on the remaining family members and friends. How did Kenneth's suicide affect Lindsey in Act 2, more than 50 years later?

How does Russ deal with his anger issues? What are Bev's reactions to seeing how her husband acts? How can anger be dealt with in a positive way?

How does Russ solve conflicts? How does Bev solve conflicts? How do you solve conflicts?

How are Karl and Jim unjust in their thoughts about the new neighbors moving in? How is racism dealt with in the play? Have you had experience with racism? What did you do? Have you been a target of prejudice?

What is gentrification? How is it dealt with in the play? What are the consequences of gentrification?

The actors from Act 1 are the same in Act 2, but they play different roles. Why would the author use the same actors? What are the positive and negative aspects of using the same actors in both acts?

Discuss your neighborhood. Who lives there? Do you get along with your neighbors? How has your neighborhood changed in the past 50 years?