

Three Tall Women

Stratford
FESTIVAL

2021 STUDY GUIDE

Three tall women

EDWARD ALBEE'S
THREE TALL WOMEN
DIRECTED BY DIANA LEBLANC

TOOLS FOR TEACHERS
SPONSORED BY



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PRODUCTION SUPPORT IS GENEROUSLY PROVIDED BY **SYLVIA D. CHROMINSKA, DR. DESTA LEAVINE IN MEMORY OF PAULINE LEAVINE, SYLVIA SOYKA, THE WESTAWAY CHARITABLE FOUNDATION AND BY JACK WHITESIDE**

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THREE TALL WOMEN STUDY GUIDE

ABOUT THE PLAY

Edward Albee's
Three Tall Women
Directed by Diana Leblanc

[Three Tall Women House Program](#)

Grade and Curriculum Connections

- Grades 9+
- Global Competencies: Communication, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Learning to Learn/Self-Awareness
- The Arts
- English
- Social Sciences and Humanities

Content Advisory

Includes offensive, racist language including the N-word

Synopsis

By turns acerbic, anguished and sarcastically funny, an old woman known to us only as “A” lays bare her inner life in sometimes shocking detail to two others: a middle-aged caregiver identified only as “B” and a young legal professional, “C.”

Edward Albee’s Pulitzer Prize-winning drama, which he called an “exorcism” of his own troubled relationship with his adoptive mother, is a profound meditation on aging, death and the very nature of the self: who are we really, and how do we become who we are?

Themes and Motifs

- Self-Identity
 - Loneliness
 - Dependence and Independence: Self in Relationship to Others
 - Becoming
- Aging and Mortality
 - Unfulfilled Promise
 - Memory and Regret
 - The Inevitability of Death

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What's the best age of life? Why?
- If you could, would you want to know your future? How would knowing how your life would unfold impact the way you lived?
- Does wealth or financial well-being signify a happy life? Why or why not?
- What makes a good life? What makes a good death?
- Why do people have regrets? What helps people resolve any regret they might hold?
- How do our memories change as we grow older?
- What surprised you most about the play?
- What's the relationship between the first and second acts of the play?
- Why do you think the characters are labelled, "A, B, C" rather than by names?
- Can we trust the character/s in the play? Are they "reliable narrators"? Why or why not?
- Why do you think the playwright chose to write the character of "The Boy" with no lines?
- In what ways did the humour in the play function? How did it impact you as an audience member?

MINDS ON

Objective: This exercise invites students to explore some of the themes in the play and their personal responses to them.

Materials: Access to the *Three Tall Women* statements (below)

Directions:

- Let students know that you will read a series of statements to which students will be invited to express their agreement/disagreement on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being "completely disagree" and 10 being "completely agree."
- Students can express themselves through a variety of means based on your student group/teaching context, but some examples include having them move to a particular place in the room along a spectrum of agreement, voice their opinion, show their numbers with their hands or type/write down their numbers on a piece of paper.
- After students have a chance to respond to the statements, invite them to reflect on the debriefing questions independently, in conversation with a partner or in small groups, or in a written reflection.

***Three Tall Women* Statements**

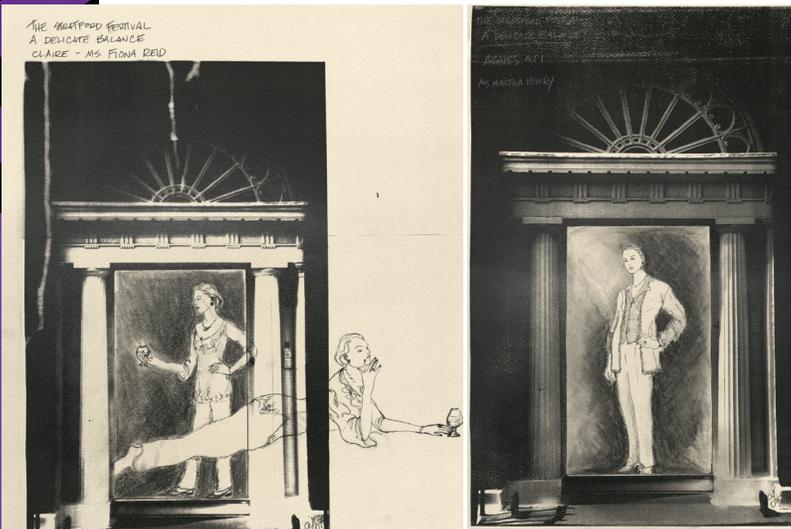
- Being young is better than being old.
- We have very little control over our fates; our destinies are predetermined.
- Elders should be respected.
- It's easier to be happy if you are wealthy.
- It is possible to be alone without being lonely.
- Forgiveness is easier for young people than it is for older people.
- Adults don't remember what it was like to be young.
- Our memories become less accurate as we grow old.

Debriefing Questions:

- Did any of your responses surprise you?
- Did any of your peers' responses surprise you?
- Have your opinions on any of these statements changed over time? Do you think your opinions might change in the future? Why or why not?

CONNECTION TO THE ARCHIVES

Edward Albee wrote more than 30 plays in addition to *Three Tall Women*, including *A Delicate Balance*, which was produced in 2007 at the Stratford Festival. These two plays were written more than 20 years apart. How do they compare? What connections do you see between the two?



The Stratford Festival's Archives maintains, conserves and protects recent and historical records about the Festival and makes those materials available to people around the world. Our multi-media archival holdings date from 1952 and extend through to contemporary materials. We house correspondence, production records, Board minutes, photography, design artwork, scores, audio-visual records, costumes, props and set decoration, press releases and other promotional materials: these document the processes that bring a production to the stage and reflect all aspects of mounting a play, from the administrative to the creative and beyond.

In addition to visiting the Archives in person, you can explore our [online catalogue](#).

RESOURCES

[Three Tall Women Showstarters](#)