

## TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE



### 'DA KINK IN MY HAIR



### *'da Kink in my Hair*

**By Trey Anthony**

2021.22 Season  
Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage

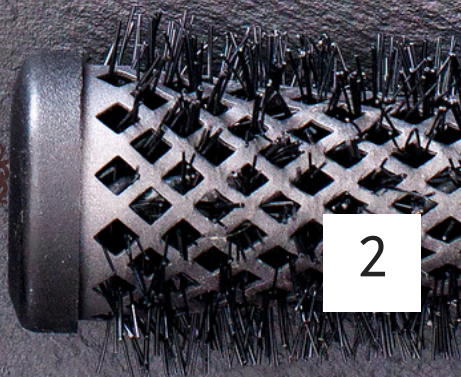
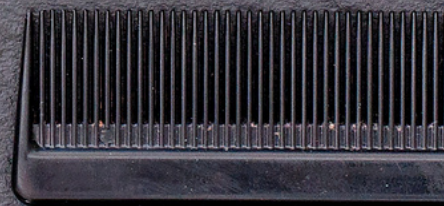
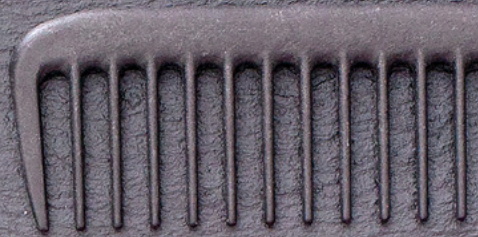
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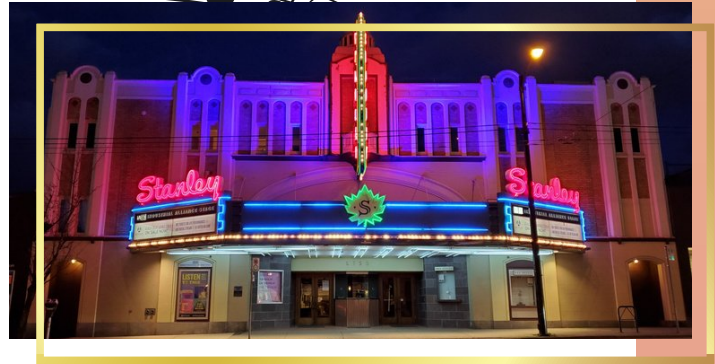


# Welcome

This guide was created for teachers and students. It contains an overview of the play's story as well as informative resources and activities. The guide aims to provide background knowledge and critical perspectives on the play that will yield fruitful discussion and foster an understanding and appreciation of theatre arts.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for the guide, please contact our Education & Outreach Manager, Hila Graf, at [hgraf@artsclub.com](mailto:hgraf@artsclub.com).

This study guide was written by Sydney Marino and Mikenzie Page.



## About the Arts Club Theatre Company

The Arts Club of Vancouver was founded in 1958 as a private club for artists, musicians, and actors. It became the Arts Club Theatre in 1964 when the company opened its first stage in a converted gospel hall at Seymour and Davie Streets.

Now in its 58th season of producing professional live theatre in Vancouver, the Arts Club Theatre Company is a non-profit charitable organization that operates three theatres: the Granville Island Stage, the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage, and the Newmont Stage at the BMO Theatre Centre. Its popular productions range from musicals and contemporary comedies to new works and classics.

Learn more about the Arts Club Theatre Company at [artsclub.com](http://artsclub.com)





## Learning Objectives

- After viewing 'Da Kink in my Hair' and working through the following activities, students will be able to:
- Engage with themes of community, connection, resilience, musicality, and language and understand how they can be shown onstage.
  - Reflect on ways real-life experiences can be used in dramatic works.
  - Discover Black women's stories being authentically told and explore Black representation in theatre.

### BC Curriculum Connections

#### Drama 10-12

- Active participation in drama creates personal and cultural connections and reveals insights into human experience.
- Explore and create dramatic works to express ideas and emotions.
- Reflect on dramatic works and make connections with personal experiences.

#### Creative Writing 10-12

- Explore how language constructs personal and cultural identities.
- Respond to text in personal, creative, and critical ways.
- Transform ideas and information to create original texts, using various genres, forms, structures, and styles.





# Synopsis

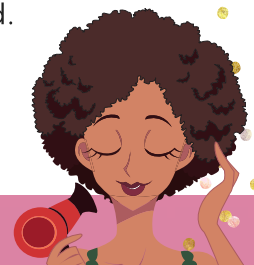
## ACT 1



At an African-American hair salon in Toronto, the stylist, Novelette, is busy with customers insisting that they get appointments right away. As these customers compete for Novelette's attention, Sharmaine, a successful TV and film actress, enters. Though only in town for a movie, she is from the neighbourhood and knows Novelette. The other customers, regular viewers of the soap opera on which Sharmaine appears, are starstruck. They begin peppering Sharmaine with questions about her show and her love life.

Patsy, a conservative, church-going customer, enters and tells Novelette she wants "the same thing, like every week." As she gets her hair done, Patsy reminisces about her son, Jerome, of whom she was very protective. One night, Jerome asked to go out to attend a school dance. Patsy reluctantly allowed him to go, but insisted on a strict curfew. As soon as he left, she felt an uneasy feeling. She later learned that Jerome had been shot to death in a parking lot. Patsy mournfully suggests that "maybe someone just need to post a sign that says, 'Warning. Black boys are in danger of becoming extinct.'" As Novelette finishes up with her hair, Patsy confides that she is pregnant again, with a boy, and she already feels scared for the child. She worries that, at 46, she isn't up to being a mother again. Novelette tries to comfort and reassure Patsy, telling her that "God knew you had a lot more love to give, so he decided to give you another chance."

Suzy, a white woman, waits for her turn with Novelette, but the other customers tell her she should leave and go to a white salon instead. She is about to exit, when Novelette tells her to stay, firmly insisting that everyone is welcome at her salon. Suzy sits down next in Novelette's chair, and relays her story: her parents kicked her out of their house for dating a black man and becoming pregnant with his child. Appalled by their racism, she left with him, moving from the U.S. to Canada. Yet, as time passed, she deeply missed her family. After splitting up with her boyfriend, she accepted their invitation to come home for Christmas, bringing along her son, Shaney. However, when Shaney accidentally injured his cousin, Suzy's father screamed at him and called him the 'n-word.' As Novelette finishes her hair, Suzy is happily surprised by the new look. Novelette tells her that it's "never too late to reinvent yourself," and encourages her to love Shaney "the way you want to be loved. Unconditionally. And in that, forgive yourself."

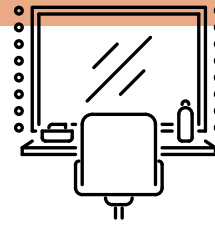






# Synopsis

## ACT 1



Novelette announces that Sharmaine is next. Sherelle, a businesswoman with a busy schedule, pleads for the next spot, but Novelette tells her that she does not have time to fit her in right now. Frustrated, Sherelle leaves and receives a series of calls on her cellphone, providing a glimpse into her hectic life and the pressure she is under. Meanwhile, in the salon, an elderly woman, Miss Enid, enters, and Novelette tells Sharmaine to move aside and allow the older customer to be served first. Sharmaine complies, and Miss Enid announces that she has a date that night with an 87-year-old man named Charlie. She confesses that he gives her a “tingly feeling” that her late husband never did.

## ACT 2

After Miss Enid is finished, Sharmaine gets her turn in Novelette’s chair. She tells Novelette about her relationship with a woman. She says that some of her longtime friends have turned their backs on her because she is a lesbian. What bothers her most, though, is the silence—the stubbornly withheld acceptance—of her mother. As Novelette finishes with Sharmaine’s hair, she tells her, “I will always be proud of you and always love you, no matter what!” Sharmaine invites the other women to meet the person she is dating; they’re shocked to learn that this person is female, but Novelette tells them to “get over it!”

Next up is Nia, who also discusses her troubling issues with her mother, who “hated [Nia’s] blackness, ranted and raved every Sunday afternoon as [she] heated up the pressing comb to press [Nia’s] bad hair,” while openly favouring Nia’s sister, who had “good hair.” Nia’s mother has recently died, and she is shaken up by the ambivalence and anger she now feels. Novelette and the other women insist that Nia is beautiful as she is. Stacey-Anne is Novelette’s next customer. She moved from the Caribbean to Canada with her mother, who married a Canadian, Mr. Brown. He tells them that he brought them to Canada, but he can also send them back. This ominous warning is why Stacey-Anne is afraid to admit that Mr. Brown that has been sexually abusing her. Yet, empowered by Novelette and the other women, Stacey-Anne boldly declares, “Touch me again Mr. Brown, you better run for your life.” After this, Novelette, finished with her day’s work, delivers a soliloquy, encouraging listeners to “decide what is your truth and stand proudly in it...embrace ‘da Kink, heal, love ‘da Kink, get kinky with ‘da Kink, straighten or keep ‘da Kink. Be gentle with ‘da Kink.”





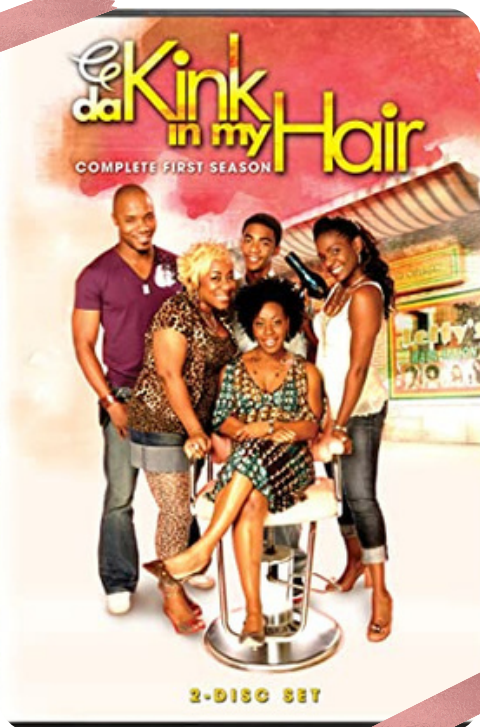
## About the Playwright

Trey Anthony is a British-born Canadian playwright, author, comedian, actor, and producer best known for her award-winning play and television series, *Da Kink in My Hair*. *Da Kink in My Hair* premiered at the Toronto Fringe Festival in 2001 and went on to gross millions and break box office records in Canada, the United States, and the UK. Another of Anthony's plays, *How Black Mothers Say I Love You* was the first play to be featured on The Globe and Mail's Bestseller List and the subsequent screenplay was shortlisted at Sundance. Her latest book *Black Girl In Love (With Herself)* was released in November 2020. Anthony is also a sought-after public speaker who delivers hundreds of keynote speeches a year and her viral TED Talk continues to inspire and speak to audiences. She is the recipient of 4 NAACP awards, the Eve Ensler Vagina Warrior award, the Egale Canada – Queering Black History Award, and many more. Anthony currently lives in Atlanta, makes an excellent chicken curry, and dreams of one day rapping on stage with Drake.



## About the TV Show

*Da Kink in My Hair* was adapted into a TV sitcom in Canada, which aired two seasons from October 2007 to May 2009. It aired on Global, making it the first comedy TV show created by and starring black women in Canada that was on a national private mainstream broadcaster. Like the play, the show followed the life of Novelette “Letty” Campbell (Ordena Stephens-Thompson) as the owner of a Toronto-based hair salon. Creator Trey Anthony starred as Letty's younger sister Joy. Other main cast members included co-creator Ngozi Paul as Allison McMasterson, an African-Canadian woman training in the salon, and Richard Fagon as Nigel, a flirtatious hair stylist and first-generation Jamaican Canadian. The show won a Gemini Award for Best Hair, and a Canadian Association of Broadcasters prize for Best Fiction Series.





## CHARACTER LIST



Novelette: The narrator of the story, Novelette is a hairdresser who owns the hair salon where all the women come together.

Patsy: A devout churchgoing woman who lost her son to gun violence.

Suzy: A white mother dealing with her family's racism towards her partner and her biracial son.

Sherelle: A high powered career woman struggling to cope with the pressures of her work and home life.

Sharmaine: A television actress figuring out how to come out to her family and friends.

Nia: A young woman struggling with her mother's death and her own self-acceptance.

Miss Enid: A widow who has found another chance at romance.

Stacey-Anne: A young new immigrant to Canada enduring sexual abuse at home.

Jasmine: Sharmaine's girlfriend.

Claudette: Novelette's assistant.

### CHORUS

Milly: A customer at the hair salon.

Virgilia: A customer at the hair salon

Krystal: A customer at the hair salon.

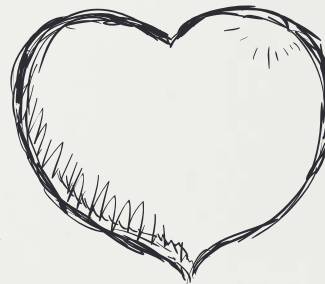
Tamara: A customer at the hair salon.

Brenda: A customer at the hair salon.

Allison: A customer at the hair salon.

Rae: A customer at the hair salon.

Lennette: A customer at the hair salon.





# Discussion Questions

## Pre-show discussion questions:

- Have you seen any live performances on stage before? What are your expectations about what you will see on stage in this production?
- By examining the title of the play, what sorts of themes and topics do you think it will discuss?
- What are your expectations for this show because it is a musical? Is there anything specific that you anticipate experiencing?

## Post-show discussion questions:

- What did you think about the use of monologues in this play? How did this format affect how you watched the play?
- One of the play's main focuses is on the image of hair as a way for Novelette to learn about the characters' lives. What do you think the significance of hair is in this play, and how can stories like these be empowering?
- Why is highlighting diverse stories important for the future of theatre? How do you think going forward theatre companies can authentically tell diverse stories?



# Activity 1: Creating a Monologue

(RECCOMENDED FOR DRAMA AND CREATIVE WRITING CLASSES GRADES 10-12)



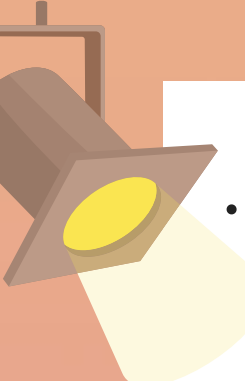
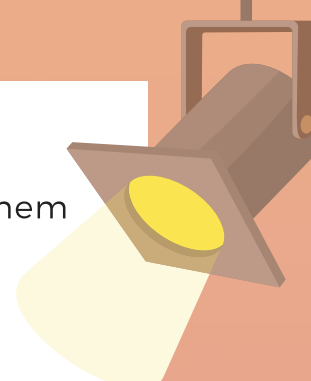

**Rationale:** *'Da Kink in My Hair* utilizes the monologue to connect to the audience and to dig deeper into character to reveal their inner truths. This exercise asks students to create a monologue as a way to deepen their understanding of character.

## Explanation:

- Pair students up. Each partner will have one minute to speak. They can tell their partner about their favourite character from a TV show, book, movie etc. Then, they will switch and the other partner will have a chance to listen.
- What does your partner sound like when they speak? Do they have a speech pattern or a rhythm to their words? Are there any phrases that they repeat often?
- This first step is just to get students thinking about the different ways that people speak, and how everyone has a unique voice.
- Play some instrumental music for the class to listen to. Tell students to imagine this music as the theme song to their character's life.
- **For creative writing classes** have students freewrite from a character's point of view for five to ten minutes. They are writing the character's internal monologue. Encourage them to keep writing for the entire time—they will find something this way!
- **For drama classes** have students walk around for a few minutes, finding the physicality of their character from the music. When they have found the physicality, encourage students to start speaking as their character. This is a time to explore, as everyone will be speaking at once. Students should only be focused on their own character, not interacting with others. They can be speaking the character's stream of consciousness thoughts as they move about the space





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- After giving students a chance to explore their character, ask them specific questions to prompt their monologue.
    - Where is your character?
    - Who are they speaking to?
    - What do they NEED to say?
    - Why is it important for them to say this NOW?
  - With those questions in mind, give students the chance to write or create their monologues. In drama classes, students can write their monologue or devise it through speech and improvisation.
  - When the monologues are completed, give the students a chance to read or present them to the class.
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## Post Activity Discussion:

- How did it feel to freewrite or explore your character to music? Did you find out anything unexpected about your character?
- How did people in the class interpret the music differently than you? Were there characters that were unique or similar to each other?
- Which parts of this activity did you find difficult? Which parts did you find enjoyable?

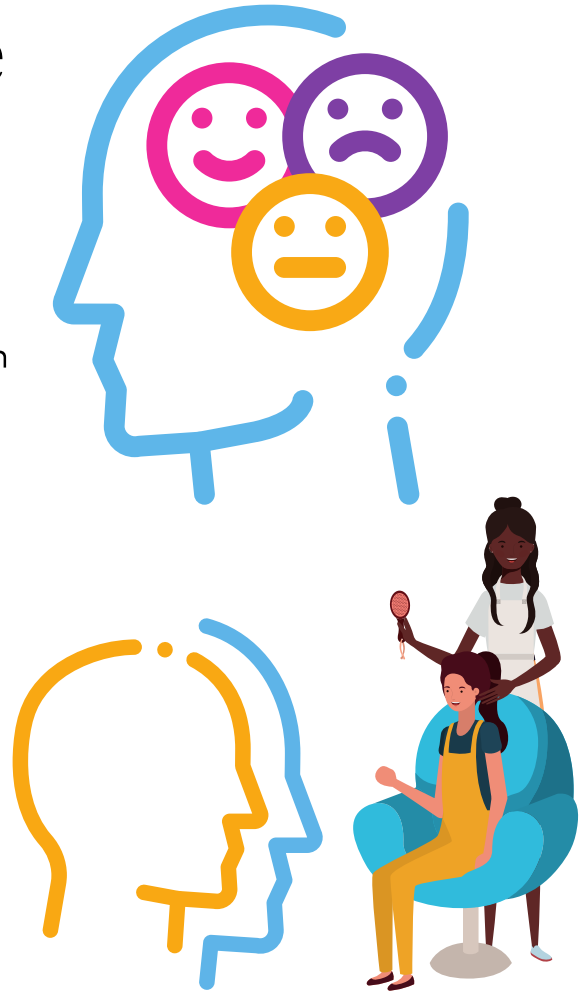




# Activity 2: Inner Life and Outer Life.

*(RECOMMENDED FOR DRAMA AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSES 10-12)*

**Rationale:** Throughout the musical 'Da Kink in My Hair', multiple characters explain to Novelette the personal struggles they are dealing with even though outwardly they put on a brave face. Through empathy, acceptance, and forgiveness, Novelette and her community help these women find courage, confidence, and personal transformation. In this activity students are invited to explore the dramatic convention of an inner vs outer life, how to authentically tell tough stories, and how community and kindness can create bravery to overcome struggles.



## Explanation:

- Divide students into groups of 3-4. Explain that they will be creating a scene based on the idea of a character's outer persona and their inner life.
- Students will create a 5-8 minute scene based on the structure of 'Da Kink in My Hair'. The scene will take place in some sort of service setting (e.g a grocery store, beauty salon, clothing store, etc). The students will create characters that outwardly appear fine but have something internally they are dealing with. Students also have the option to write the scene out and read it out.

## Example:

- A woman is shopping for clothing in a store. On the outside she appears calm and collected however internally she is panicked over her first day in her dream job and she wants to find the perfect outfit.
- A young person is getting their nails done but the nail technician has no idea this person is dealing with a death in the family.
- A young man is getting their hair done because they are going on their very first date ever. (Like Ms. Enid!)



## Explanation (Continued)

- The students will then work through writing or improv to create a scene based on previous parameters. At some point in the scene, every actor will freeze and the actor who is internally dealing with some conflict will have a brief speech explaining what they are feeling.
- This activity has lots of room for creativity as students can have multiple characters deliver monologues, they can have the other actors in the scene react to/help the character solve their problem as Novelette does in 'Da Kink in My Hair, or they can comfort the character if the problem is unsolvable.
- The scene must resolve somehow though it doesn't necessarily have to be perfectly tied up. There simply must be a journey or a decision made.
- Students will then perform their scenes for the class or in small groups.



### Activity Debrief:

- How do we respectfully tell challenging stories? How do we authentically tell these stories?
- How does acknowledging other people's struggles teach empathy? How does it teach kindness?
- Why do we tell challenging and personal stories in theatre?



# Resources

## **Ethos Lab**

<https://www.ethoslab.space/>

<https://www.ethoslab.space/new-page-4>

“Ethos Lab is a space where we come together to experiment with emerging technologies and see what’s possible when there are no limits. With an online virtual arena and safe, limited-attendance in-person workshops, Ethos Lab powers safe, accessible, anti-racist, technology-forward youth spaces created from the imagination of the Black community, and for all youth.”

- Ethos Lab Homepage

## **Black Youth Hotline**



<https://blackyouth.ca/>

Phone: 1-833-294-8650

Email: [info@blackyouth.ca](mailto:info@blackyouth.ca)

## **Black Women Connect Vancouver**

<https://blackwomenconnectvancouver.com/>

“Black Women Connect Vancouver is a collective of women who come together to inspire, empower, leverage our strengths and embrace our diverse experiences. It’s a community where black women in Vancouver can build meaningful relationships, and celebrate the beauty of Black womanhood.”

- Black Women Connect Vancouver About Page.

## **WAWAV (Women Against Violence Against Women) Rape Crisis Centre**



24 Hour Crisis and Info Line

Lower Mainland: 604-255-6344

National Toll-free: 1-877-392-7583

<https://www.wavaw.ca/get-support/>



# Resources

## HELPLINE for Children (Sexual Abuse/ Assault)



This helpline is available for children, parents, and other community members to report abuse.

Helpline: 310-1234 If you are deaf or hard of hearing, call 1-866-660-0505 for TTY services <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/sabus>  
Available anytime day or night.

## QMUNITY: BC's Queer, Trans, and Two Spirited Resource Centre

"QMUNITY is a non-profit organization based in Vancouver, BC that works to improve queer, trans, and Two-Spirit lives. We provide a safer space for LGBTQ2SAI+ people and their allies to fully self-express while feeling welcome and included"



- QMUNITY Webpage

<https://qmunity.ca/get-support/>

## The Trevor Project



"Founded in 1998 by the creators of the Academy Award®-winning short film TREVOR, The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer & questioning (LGBTQ) young people under 25."

- Trevor Project About Page

Trevor LifeLine: 1-866-488-7386

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now/>







# Sources



## Biography

<https://www.speakers.ca/speakers/trey-anthony/>  
<https://treyanthony.com/about>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trey\\_Anthony#'Da\\_Kink\\_in\\_My\\_Hair](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trey_Anthony#'Da_Kink_in_My_Hair)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Da\\_Kink\\_in\\_My\\_Hair\\_\(TV\\_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Da_Kink_in_My_Hair_(TV_series))  
<https://bestsimilar.com/movies/58030-da-kink-in-my-hair>

## Resources

<https://www.ethoslab.space/>  
<https://blackwomenconnectvancouver.com/about-2>  
<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/about/>  
<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/sabus>  
<https://qmunity.ca/about/>

