How to Read a Play

Discussion Points

- What makes reading a play different from reading a novel or a poem?
- How does the absence of a narrator or interior monologue affect your understanding of character?
- What's the role of stage directions? Should we always take them seriously?
- How can performance (staging, voice, movement) radically change the meaning of a scene?
- What clues in the text help you imagine the rhythm, tone, or tension in dialogue?
- Can you think of a play you've read or seen that changed how you think about a theme (e.g. justice, family, identity)?

Have You Considered…?

- Reading a short play aloud with friends or recording yourself performing a scene?
- Watching different versions of the same scene on YouTube. How do performances shape meaning?
- Writing a monologue for a minor character in a well-known play. What don't we see?
- Thinking about how plays were staged historically—Greek theatre, Shakespeare, absurdist theatre, etc.?
- Exploring how staging, lighting, or costume design might change the emotional tone of a moment?
- Asking: Who is this play really for the characters, the audience, or the director?

Further Reading & Exploration

- ☐ **Lorraine Hansberry – *A Raisin in the Sun***
  A powerful family drama rooted in race, housing, and generational dreams.
- ☐ **Caryl Churchill – *Top Girls* or *Love and Information***
  Feminist, fragmented, and radically modern—great for thinking about structure.
- ☐ **Tom Stoppard – *Arcadia***
  Interweaves maths, time, and theatre in brilliant dialogue and layered staging.
- ☐ **Read Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* then watch the HBO miniseries.**
  Great for thinking specifically about elaborate staging, and actors playing multiple characters.
- ☐ **Digital Theatre+** (via school/university)
- ☐ **National Theatre at Home.** Streams of recorded productions
- ☐ **RSC Shakespeare Learning Zone**
- ☐ ***The National Theatre's*** *"How We Made It"* series
- ☐ ***The Globe Theatre's channel*** – behind-the-scenes of Shakespeare in performance
- ☐ Compare adaptations of *The Crucible, A Streetcar Named Desire*, or *Antigone*