

MERRIMACK REPERTORY THEATRE

2015-16 SEASON

PLAYGUIDE



**WALTER WHITMAN,
NATIONAL BADASS:**

Why he's the center of
attention for *I and You*

MEET LAUREN:

One of America's hottest
playwrights spills all

SET UP FOR SUCCESS:

Dreaming up a teen's
room for the stage

OCT 7 – NOV 1, 2015

I AND YOU

by LAUREN GUNDERSON
directed by SEAN DANIELS

SEAN DANIELS
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



ELIZABETH KEGLEY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

IN ASSOCIATION WITH
RICHARD WINKLER

PRESENTS

I AND YOU

WRITTEN BY
LAUREN GUNDERSON†

FEATURING

KAYLA FERGUSON

REGGIE D. WHITE

SCENIC DESIGNER
MICHAEL CARNAHAN

COSTUME DESIGNER
JENNIFER CAPRIO †

LIGHTING DESIGNER
BRIAN J. LILIENTHAL†

SOUND DESIGNER
DAVID REMEDIOS†

CASTING
BINDER CASTING
JACK BOWDAN, CSA

STAGE MANAGER
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DIRECTED BY
SEAN DANIELS

OCTOBER 7 – NOVEMBER 1, 2015

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PLAYGUIDE

THE CAST OF *I AND YOU*



KAYLA FERGUSON
(Caroline)

MRT: Debut. NYC: *The Foreigner* (Catherine), *The Heights Players*; *King Kong* (Ann Darrow), Radio Theatre NYC; *Twelfth Night* (Olivia), Co-Op Theatre East. **REGIONAL:** *Amadeus* (Constranze), *Bus Stop* (Elma), Center Stage Baltimore. **FILM/TV:** *Boardwalk Empire* (Doris),

Girls, Bait. **EDUCATION:** NYU Tisch Graduate, Stella Adler Studio. **OTHER:** For my ever supportive parents.



REGGIE D. WHITE
(Anthony)

MRT: Debut. **Off-Broadway/NYC:** *For the Last Time*, Clurman Theatre; *The Snow Queen*, NYMF/Signature Theatre; *Dogsboddy*, LaMama E.T.C. **Regional:** *Party People*, Berkley Rep; *Hundred Days*, Z Space; *Crime & Punishment*, San Jose Rep; *The Wiz*, Berkeley Playhouse; *The Bereaved*,

Crowded Fire; *The 4th Messenger*, Ashby Stage; *Titus Andronicus*, Impact Theatre. **FILM:** *Rebound*, *Buzzer*, Media Res. **EDUCATION:** Cal State Hayward & Atlantic Theatre Company. **OTHER:** Reggie also originated the role of Simon in *Lauren Gunderson's Exit, Pursued by A Bear* at Crowded Fire Theatre Company in 2011. Reggie is a TCG Fox Fellow.



Kayla Ferguson and Reggie D. White, Photo by Megan Moore

DIRECTOR'S NOTE



Lauren Gunderson is a force in the American Theatre and I'm thrilled that she calls us home.

She writes the smartest, most complex women appearing on our stages today and is deservedly rewarded with awards, productions and glowing notices.

But, of course, lots of playwrights get great reviews — what separates Lauren from the rest is that she has been a pioneer in telling stories that have slipped out of the cultural consciousness. Stories of women who pioneer science and critical thinking – often with their male counterparts getting the credit — stories of women (like Caroline) with complex emotional and messy personal lines — and doing it in a theatrical way that excites the imagination of a whole new generation.

In fact, it's almost become her niche thing — need a new smart play with tight dialogue that has women in it that resemble the women in your life? Get Lauren Gunderson.

Her dedication to discovering and telling these stories is impressive and ground breaking. I know of no other playwright anywhere in the world doing this with such success.

The idea that through charm and her whip-smart writing she is not only winning praise and awards, but sneakily educating theatre audiences everywhere is one of the most exciting things happening in our field.

What a joy it is to encounter her work and leave feeling like we have a bigger understanding of who we are as a people.

She's the type of artist you'll see more of at MRT— smart, successful, AND equal part good egg. She's interested in community, in theatricality, in winning, and in YOU.

She's the future, and we're proud to call her one of our own.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean".

SEAN DANIELS
Director/Artistic Director

Q&A: LAUREN GUNDERSON

Lauren Gunderson is the 2014 winner of the Steinberg/American Theatre Critics Association New Play award for I and You, and has written extensively for stage and screen.*

Here's her take on poetry, Ben and Jerry's®, and the ups and downs of teenagerdom.

It seems like this play has a real ability to reach across generations...

Yeah! People have told me about grandmothers taking their granddaughters to see the play, and having these great conversations afterwards, or teenagers coming to see the play with their schools and then coming back to see it with their parents. That they feel welcome to do that has been the most gratifying thing about the audience response.

Of all the things these characters could be studying, why poetry?

It was less that I wanted them to study poetry and more that I wanted them to study Walt Whitman. He's both a rebel of America, and a perfect embodiment of an American. His work broke all these rules at the time, and he spoke to so many people.

It's so much about the body, and the soul, and these kinds of things we share in a democratic sense of the American human experience. And that just seemed to fit at every level with what I was trying to say with Anthony and Caroline's relationship.

In your interview with American Theatre magazine, you speak to some deep personal experiences with Whitman in high school...

Yeah... and I remember having similar experiences the first couple times I studied Shakespeare, and just being so gripped by the language... I'm sure others around me were similarly gripped, but I felt like I was the only one who *got* it. (laughs)

Sometimes poetry is presented as obtuse, or "high-minded," or something that normal people couldn't relate to. But it's absolutely not true. And when I realized that, it wasn't



something I *had* to study, or I *had* to learn to pass a test; it was, "Wow. This is something I *get* to spend time with. What a joy!"

So that's part of what I wanted to show: Caroline and Anthony having that moment.

These characters read so naturally like teenagers. As an adult, is there anything you tap into to get that voice?

The language kind of just came out. But one way I had to kind of... massage the language, was to make sure they didn't know anything before they *knew* it. (But once they *do* know something to be true, or have an opinion that occurs to them, they own it completely.) That's what I remember feeling as a teenager: at once totally unprepared for everything I encountered, and then at the same time, like I knew everything already.

At the beginning of the play, she says "I will never, ever, ever like poetry, ever." And then 30 minutes later she's like "I LOVE POETRY!" So it's that fickleness, that flexibility, that constant, constant discovery. And both characters are very captive to their emotions, which I think is a teenage thing.

"It's so much about the body, and the soul, and these kinds of things we share in a democratic sense of the American human experience."

In the script, you specify that the two characters should be cast as different races. Why?

Basically, I'm on a quest to diversify American theatre in terms of gender and race, and ability, and everything. I'm kind of tired of just a wall of white people. (Even though I love white people, and I am one!)

I think that it serves all of us, if we have more people onstage. So this is my small bit of dramaturgical activism. But I also think it's more interesting in this play. It makes the subtle point of how similar, how *identical* we all are as creatures.

** For more on The Harold and Mimi Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award see page 10.*

I sense a question about technology in this script: do our computers and phones and social media separate us and make us more isolated... or do they actually bring us together?

I think for Caroline, it's both. She's able to stay involved, in some way, with the outside world through her camera phone and the art she creates with it through Facebook and Twitter and all these things. So the internet for her is a line to the world. But when she has Anthony in the room with her, it takes her a while to connect with him.

So I think that they're both true. But ultimately, it really is about being present with each other, and acknowledging each other as, you know, living beings. (laughs) You know, not the funny stuff you can post. The selfies you take.

But that's one of the ways she ultimately invites him in—by taking his picture and posting it.

Exactly. There's no way to deny that tech has changed how we interact with each other—and I don't think it's all bad. I do think that human beings evolved to need each other, not just intellectually—physically and emotionally, and how you do that is in the present space.

Writing a play means live actors onstage. How boring would a play be if people were just texting each other and taking selfies? That's not very good theatre! So we have to have a reminder of what keeps them in the space together, what compels them to listen to each other, learn about each other, touch each other, need each other—not in a “I know you're out there somehow” way, but “You're here right now. You're giving me the hug that I need, and have needed, and no one's given me.” That's a really beautiful thing!

Does having a renowned work of literature such as *Leaves of Grass* as a centerpiece pose any challenges?

I mean, I think it's a little bit of me cheating! It does a lot of the heavy lifting for me because it's beautiful and shockingly grand. Because people know it—or even if they haven't read it, they know *of* it, or have read some piece of it, or will realize they have when they hear it.

My intention is to link to the teenage experience, which is full of hope and learning and growing, but link it to *all* of our experiences; remind us that we were *all* studying this work at one point. We were all in high school. We were all their age. Walt Whitman was even their age! It helps it be not a play just for teens, but a play *about* teenagers, *for* everyone. By using Whitman, I think it reminds us, “Oh right; we were all in this place where we had first read Whitman,”

or Shakespeare, or whatever is the piece of literature that stuck with you. And what was that like?

“The theatre is this simple, beautiful thing that we’ve been doing for thousands of years.”

What's been fun about seeing the play go up so far?

I'll always love just the simple thing of when people laugh in the right places. (And when they laugh in unexpected places!) But there are two places at the end of the play where we generally get gasps. And there's nothing like a gasp. A well-timed gasp makes me very, very happy as a playwright.

I love the conversations people have when they walk out, and I've gotten emails a couple days after a person has seen the play saying they're still thinking about it, or they just realized something about the play and they wanted to tell me. A good play isn't just something that happens once, in those two hours, and then it's over. It's something that can keep engaging you.

Why do you write for the stage?

Oh man. Because theatre is magical, without having to have any magic. A novel can be magical, but it's your imagination that's doing it. And a movie can be magical, but it's the special effects and the movie stars. The theatre is this simple, beautiful thing that we've been doing for thousands of years: getting together, and having someone tell you a story with their voice and their body.

I never get used to that amazing, human act. I feel like it's this ancient thing that I get to be a part of, and I'm overwhelmed that I get to do it every day.

Is Chunky Monkey® really the best flavor of ice cream?

For me... but my husband is a Cherry Garcia® person. So we may disagree.

Learn more about Lauren
LaurenGunderson.com
@LaLaTellsAStory

SET UP FOR SUCCESS

The setting is immediately familiar: a teenager's bedroom.

It's something we can all relate with: the posters on the wall, the stuff on the shelves. When we're teens, it's all about identity: who *are* we? What matters in our lives? And when there's a space that we "own," we try to make it reflect our truest, authentic selves.

As an audience, we're spending the evening in Caroline's room. So what does Caroline's room tell us about Caroline?

Set designer **Michael Carnahan** hit on this idea:

"When I was a teenager, I hated everybody. All the bedrooms in our house were on the top floor, and I moved into my parents' basement, because I wanted to have a little extra privacy..."



Research photo that inspired the playing space for *I and You*.

"Caroline lives this great life of the mind, and we're going to dress her bedroom with the things she's interested in. She's got this 'alt-sensibility.' She's not your typical American teenager. She's got this edge to her, and she's very smart. You're going to see that with all the bits of character that pop out from the walls."

Set Dressing is the art of adding props, furniture, decorations, and other flourishes **to a set in order to bring it detail, color, and life**. Playwright Lauren Gunderson describes the room simply:

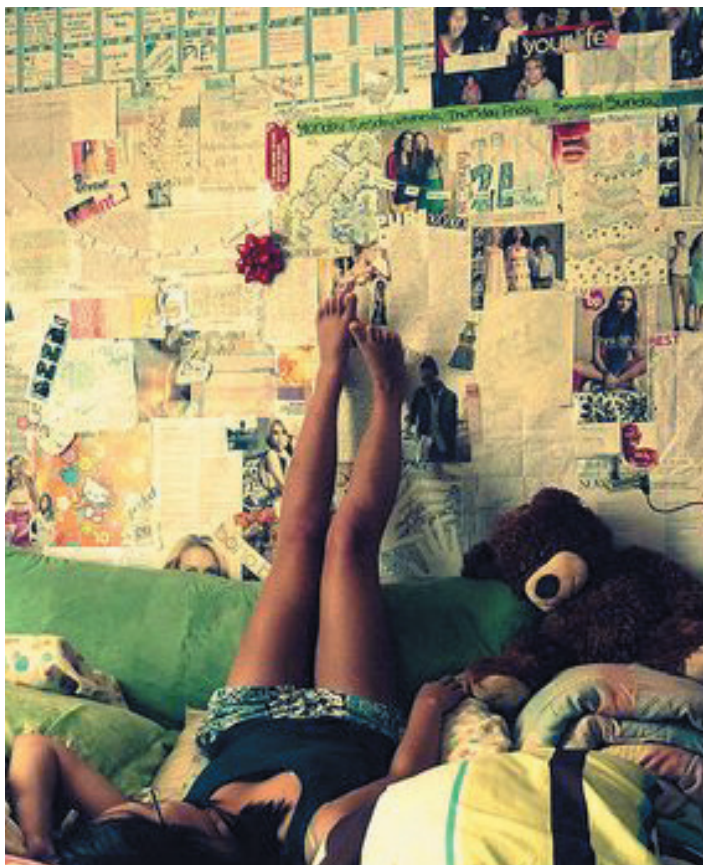
"A girl's room but not girly. Lots of tech."

Carnahan and props manager Amanda Williams are working together to create the great look that's called for. Already on the docket are iPhones, bluetooth speakers, colorful shoes, cat pictures, and copious amounts of note cards.

What if in Caroline's house, there is an attic space, and her parents wanted to give her a really cool room to be in? She's becoming a teenager, so they wanted to give her a little more space?"

So Caroline lives tucked away in an attic: not to be shut off, but to be given some much-needed personal space.

The creative team found a photo of an attic bedroom that really showed what they wanted to capture. That image informed many of the design choices.



Research photo that inspired the playing space for *I and You*.



The real character of Caroline's room comes to life in the details, called "set dressing."

The set for *I and You* carries a monumental technical challenge—one that you won't know about until you see the play. As Carnahan puts it:

"The set makes a transformation. We're doing the play at MRT and then in New York, and it was a huge challenge to figure out how to make that work in both spaces. They're both very small theatres, and I think we've handled that beautifully. It's elegant, and I think it will surprise all of our audiences."

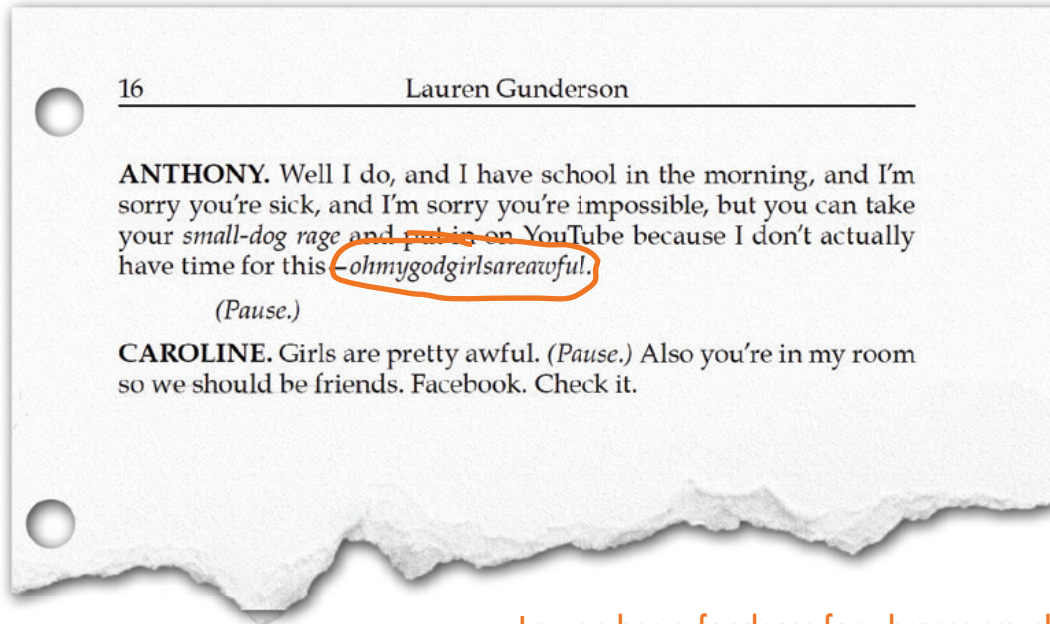
There are more standard ways of pulling off what happens in *I and You*; but working with tight theatre spaces like MRT and 59E59 Theatres (where the show will make its Off-Broadway transfer), Carnahan was **driven to do something much more exciting**.



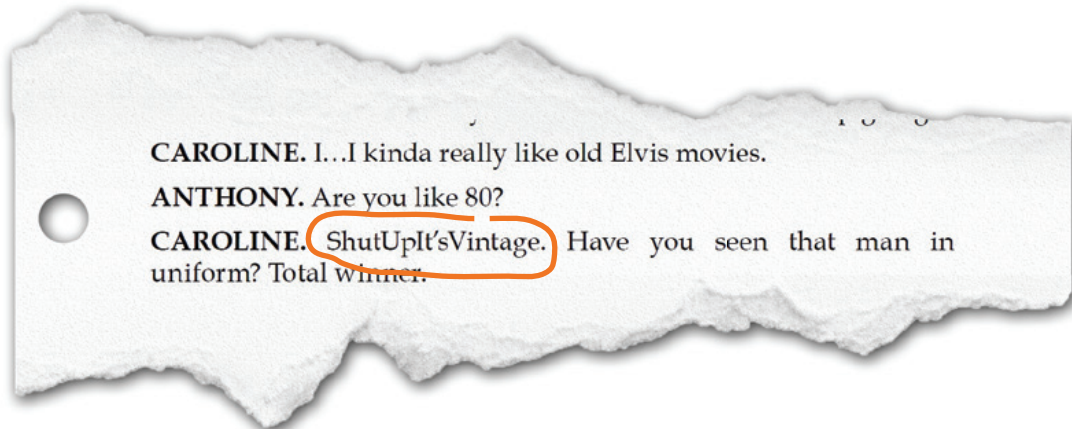
Carnahan's set allows for a surprising transition.

PLAYOUT OF THE LAYOUT

Lauren Gunderson's script for *I and You* makes some unusual uses of text formatting. When you look at the script, it's not just words on a page: indentation, capitalization, italics, and more all carry specific instructions for the actors on **how to speak the lines**.



Lauren has a fondness for phrases smushed together into a single word; it pushes the actor to speak them faster, and gives them a sort of "Twitter feel." *I and You* uses words like "ShutUpIt'sVintage" and "ohmygodgirlsareawful."



A grammar note in the script's preface lays out some basic performance instructions.

Grammar Note:

A character's emotional and vocal emphasis should attempt to build the progression from normal to intense suggested by the following punctuation and fonts.

Normal
Elevated!
Intensified
REALLY INTENSE
THE MOST INTENSE!

ANTHONY. I DON'T KNOW I JUST WANTED TO... You're this mystery at school, and I thought you'd get it, and I was...curious... about you.

(Pause.)

CAROLINE. So we're dating?

ANTHONY. WHAT? NO.

CAROLINE. KiddingGross.

ANTHONY. OhMyGod.

CAROLINE. Totally kidding.

ANTHONY. *Jesus.*

CAROLINE. That's what you get for homework bombing a sick girl. Now. What do you mean "I would get it"? I would get *this*?

Progressive indentation means a section should be rapidly speeding up.

• Words capitalized are "really intense"; words capitalized and in italics are "the most intense".

• Words in italics are simply "intensified."

THE HAROLD AND MIMI STEINBERG/ AMERICAN THEATRE CRITICS ASSOCIATION NEW PLAY AWARD

Lauren Gunderson is the proud recipient of the 2014 Steinberg/ATCA New Play award for I and You. The award is granted to the best new play produced outside of New York City.

Gunderson's "I and You" wins 2014 Steinberg/ATCA Award, citations to Demos-Brown and Zimmerman

Posted on Saturday, April 5, 2014 at 11:43PM



ATCA has named **Lauren Gunderson's *I and You*** recipient of the Harold and Mimi Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award, recognizing playwrights for scripts that premiered professionally outside New York City during 2013.

Gunderson's delicate but droll play about teenagers exploring life and death received \$25,000 and a commemorative plaque at the Humana Festival of New American Plays at Actors Theatre of Louisville on April 5.

Two citations that carry \$7,500 each were presented to **Christopher Demos-Brown** for ***Fear Up Harsh*** and **Martin Zimmerman** for ***Seven Spots on the Sun***.

At \$40,000, Steinberg/ATCA is the largest national new play award program recognizing regional theaters as the crucible for new plays in the United States.

In 1977, ATCA began to honor new plays produced at theaters outside New York City, where there are many awards. Since 2000, the award has been generously funded by the Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust.

I and You, which has already had three productions, focuses on Caroline, a cranky high school student in desperate need of a liver transplant. She is enticed by classmate Anthony, a level-headed basketball star with a taste for English lit, into helping him finish a school project deconstructing Whitman's ***Leaves of Grass***. As their quirky relationship evolves, they explore the meaning of life and death without a shred of condescension or pretentiousness. Awash in humor and sharp insights, the play grows quietly toward a surprising, overwhelmingly moving conclusion. It premiered in October at Marin Theatre Company as part of the National New Play Network's rolling world premiere program.

Gunderson is a prolific playwright, screenwriter, teacher and short story author based in the San Francisco area, who had five world premieres in 2013 and 2014. Her works include ***Exit Pursued by a Bear***, ***Leap***, ***Toil & Trouble***, ***By***

and By, ***Silent Sky*** and ***Bauer***. A Resident Playwright at The Playwrights Foundation, she is a Dramatists Guild member and was a member of Just Theatre's New Play Lab.

Past honorees of ATCA's New Play Award have included Lanford Wilson, Marsha Norman, August Wilson, Arthur Miller, Mac Wellman, Donald Margulies, Lynn Nottage, Moises Kaufman and Craig Lucas. Last year's honoree was Robert Schenkkan's ***All The Way***, which subsequently opened on Broadway. For a full list of 38 years of winners and runners-up, go to www.americantheatrecritics.org and click on Steinberg-ATCA under Awards.

The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust was created in 1986 by Harold Steinberg on behalf of himself and his late wife. Pursuing its primary mission to support the American theater, it has provided grants totaling millions of dollars for new productions of American plays and educational programs for those who may not ordinarily experience live theater.

ATCA was founded in 1974 and works to raise critical standards and public awareness of critics' functions and responsibilities. The only national association of professional theater critics, with members working for newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations and websites, ATCA is affiliated with the International Association of Theatre Critics, a UNESCO-affiliated organization that sponsors seminars and congresses worldwide.

For more information on the Steinberg/ATCA Award and ATCA, visit www.americantheatrecritics.org; Wm. F. Hirschman, chair of the ATCA New Play Committee, at muckrayk@aol.com or 954-478-1123; Jonathan Abarbanel, ATCA Executive Committee Chair, jonnyatca@earthlink.net; or Christopher Rawson, ATCA communications chair, at cchr@pitt.edu or 412-216-1944.

WHAT WE THINK ABOUT WALT

Caroline and Anthony have their own opinions about Whitman's poetry.

And in the poet's time, so did just about everyone.

Love him or hate him, here's some of what's been said about Walt Whitman and his work:

"I find [Leaves of Grass] the most extraordinary piece of wit & wisdom that America has yet contributed. I am very happy in reading it, as great power makes me happy."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson, philosopher and writer

"He is a great fellow."

-Henry David Thoreau, philosopher and writer

"Yes, Walt Whitman has appeared. He has his place upon the stage. The drama is not ended. His voice is still heard. He is the Poet of Democracy - of all people."

-Robert G. Ingersoll, American Civil War veteran, lawyer, political leader, and orator

"The hardening, vulgarising influences of life have not hardened and vulgarised the spiritual sensibilities of this poet, who looks at this world with the wondering freshness of a child, and to the world beyond with the gaze of a seer."

-Arthur Clive, literary critic

"To call it poetry... would be mere abuse of language. In poetry there is a special freedom, which, however, is not lawlessness and incoherence."

-William Allingham, Irish poet and diarist

"I read him (in parts) with the acute pain, but when I write of certain things I find myself using his rhythms."

- Ezra Pound, poet

"...a personality worthy to rank even above Socrates..."

-Robert Buchanan, Scottish lecturer and journalist

"If I ever saw anything in print that deserved to be characterized as atrociously bad, it is the poetry of Walt Whitman"

-Peter Bayne, Scottish author

"Since I quote so few poets, my selection of a motto of Walt Whitman might be taken as a sign of special admiration which I am very far from feeling".

-George Eliot, pen name of English novelist Mary Ann Evans

"That glorious man Whitman will one day be known as one of the greatest sons of Earth, a few steps below Shakespeare on the throne of immortality."

-William Michael Rossetti, English art and literary critic

"WALTER WHITMAN: NATIONAL BADASS"

Caroline and Anthony have lots to say about "Walter Whitman, National Badass."
Here's how it all fits with the actual life of the beloved and controversial figure:

"He was writing during the Civil War, right, like bullets flying by your face... he was in there with the wounded, the dying, he held their hands, and he still writes about beauty and life."

As the Civil War ripped America apart, Whitman made it his **personal mission to visit the sick, injured, and dying**. He found a call and a purpose in bringing them candy, fruit, oysters, stationery, money, and good cheer. Whitman's most significant affectional partner was a Confederate soldier named Peter Doyle.

"He's legit crazy, like a rambling crazy homeless guy, but in this genius kind of way."

He wasn't quite homeless, but he did have a **mean bohemian streak**, sporting a shaggy gray beard, reciting Shakespeare or singing ballads on public streets and ferryboats, and hanging out with the colorful crowd at Pfaff's, an underground saloon in New York. And he was a rambler, moving from region to region in the U.S.

"He only wrote one book his whole life. One."

There were no fewer than eight editions of *Leaves of Grass* published in Whitman's lifetime. The first (1855) had just twelve poems. The last (1892) had **over 400**. He really did just keep adding and adding to the same book.

"[It's] like he's with us here because we're reading it and he's... reborn in us."

Whitman hit a spiritual nerve with readers from the start. Even in his own lifetime he was a **borderline religious figure**, complete with his own band of disciples. One admirer compared him to the likes of Buddha, Moses, Socrates, and Jesus.

"His genius must be shared! Widely!"

Whitman was a master of self-publicity. He wrote glowing reviews of his own work to help get it off the ground, but also published negative reviews from his harshest critics in *Leaves of Grass*—an early adherent to the idea that "any publicity is good publicity."

"Uh. Dude's having a lot of sex in this."

Lots of Whitman's work takes the human body as a central theme, and human sexuality is no exception. He **considered human sexuality beautiful and sacred**, and disdained pornographic writing; still, his sensual poems were enough to get *Leaves* banned in Boston in 1882.



Kayla Ferguson and Reggie D. White,
Photo by: Megan Moore

"He's a passionate guy. Sometimes about America, and sometimes... dudes."

Whitman prided himself in being truly American, down to his very center. To quote biographer David S. Reynolds:

"Under one poetic roof he gathered together disparate images from nature, city life, oratory, the performing arts, science, religion, and sexual mores. He took upon himself the messianic task of absorbing his nation, with the expectation that in turn it would absorb his poetry and be healed by its triumphant proclamation of democratic togetherness and toleration."

And yes, dudes. Whitman had numerous intense, affectionate relationships with men—especially younger men.

That said, the label "gay" as we understand it doesn't quite fit; in Whitman's time, same-sex intimacy was commonplace and didn't necessarily mean a homosexual identity.

"It makes me want to... not hate everything."

Maybe because there were just so many things that Walt Whitman loved, in a huge-hearted way. He was an impassioned consumer of theatre, music, opera, art, and—as Caroline would probably appreciate—photography.

Sources:

Walt Whitman by David S. Reynolds (Oxford University Press Lives and Legacies series)

The Walt Whitman Archive: Biography, by Ed Folsom and Kenneth M. Price



Walt Whitman at age 78 and 35.
Images in the public domain.

SONG OF MYSELF

From "Song of Myself", the first poem of the original *Leaves of Grass*.

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The last scud of day holds back for me,
It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the shadow'd wilds,
It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

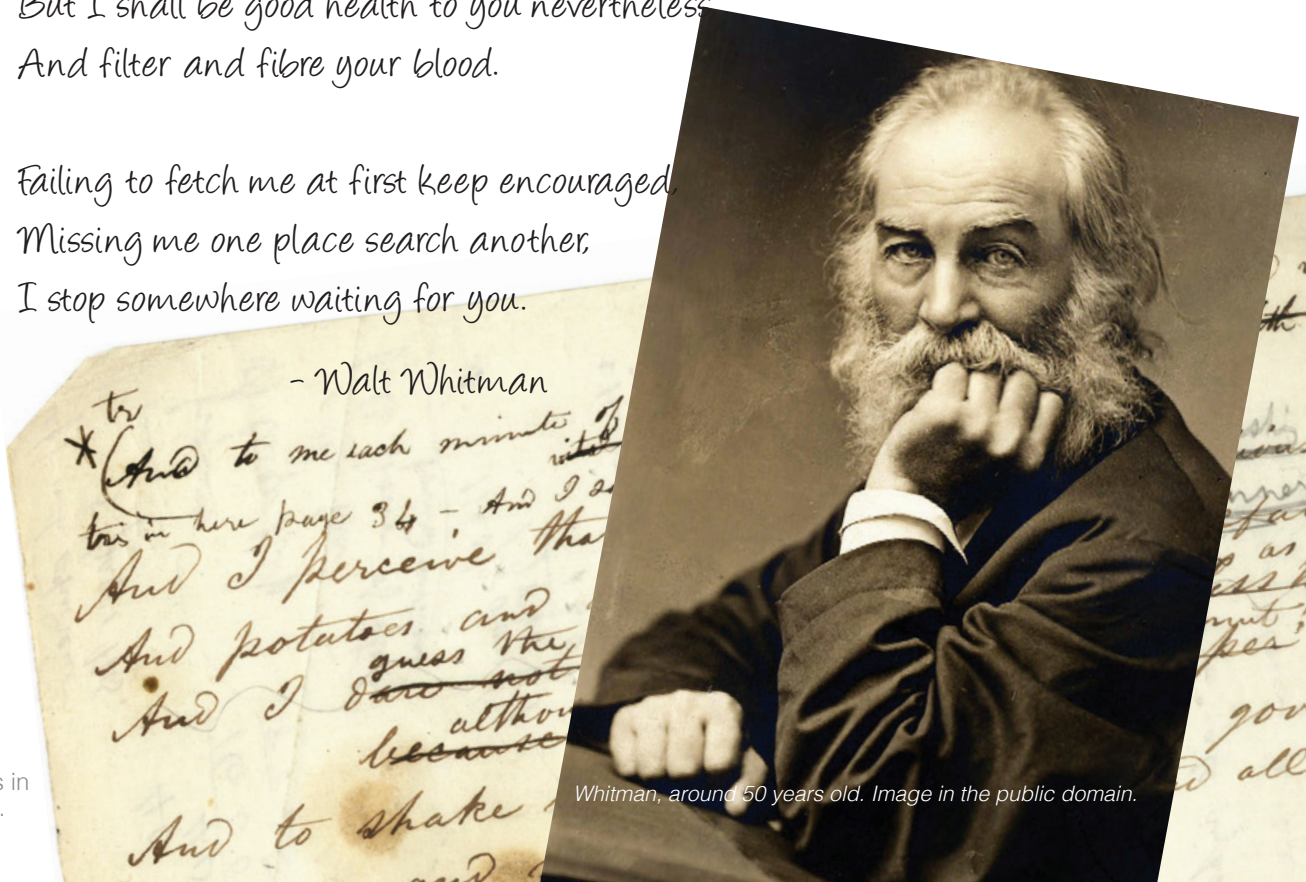
I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
Missing me one place search another,
I stop somewhere waiting for you.

- Walt Whitman



AMERICA'S POET

Many consider Whitman to be the most thoroughly American poet. He spent much of his life moving from city to city, taking in the heart of what it meant to live in the United States of America in the 1800's.

BOSTON: In the spring of 1860, Whitman headed to Boston to supervise the third edition of *Leaves of Grass*. About a hundred new poems were added to the third edition of *Leaves of Grass*, speaking of the complex relationship Whitman had with his family, and the comfort of homosexual love.

BROOKLYN: Whitman considered himself "Brooklyn bred;" he considered Brooklyn to be his home. It was where he attended school and received his first job as an **office boy, learned to print, and began his career in journalism**. Later, in 1855, the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* went to print and Whitman quickly began preparations for the second edition.

LONG ISLAND: Whitman worked in rural Long Island as a **travelling schoolteacher**. Many of his students were fond of his teaching approach, where Whitman engaged his students in thought-provoking conversations—unconventional at a time where much of education amounted to rote recitations. He was not very fond of teaching and returned to journalism after teaching for only four years.

NEW JERSEY: Whitman moved to Camden, New Jersey with his **mother in the last few years of her life**. Camden was the home of Whitman's brother George and his family. It is where Whitman spent the last nineteen years of his life. He died on March 26, 1892 and was buried in a nearby cemetery.

VIRGINIA: While working for a paper in New York, Whitman saw the name "G.W. Whitmore" on the casualty list for a battle in Fredericksburg. **Convinced there was a mistake** and it was actually his brother George W. Whitman, Walt headed to Washington for information. He was eventually able to track his brother down in Alexandria, Virginia. George Whitman had suffered a minor cheek wound and would soon head back to battle.

NEW ORLEANS: In 1848, Walt Whitman spent three months in New Orleans, Louisiana where he received a job doing rewrites for the *New Orleans Daily Crescent*. Whitman's stay in New Orleans inspired his **great love for the South**, which is evident in much of his writing.



WASHINGTON: Whitman spent much of his time in Washington as volunteer nurse. **Walt Whitman's work in the Civil War** saved his reputation and his career. After the war ended, Whitman published a book of war poems called *Drum-Taps*, many of which paid **tribute to the presidency of Abraham Lincoln**.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS IN I AND YOU

AGNOSTIC: A person who believes that there is no way of knowing whether or not there is a God or higher power. Agnostics typically hold that the existence of a higher power cannot be proven or disproven.

AMERICAN GIRL: American Girl Doll brand. The dolls began to be sold in 1986. Many dolls come with their own story, set during historical periods. The company's goal is to encourage expression and individuality among girls.

CHUNKY MONKEY: Ice cream flavor made by the Ben and Jerry's®, consisting of Banana ice cream with chunks of fudge and walnuts.

CORSET: An undergarment worn by women to shape their figure, accenting the waist, hips, and chest. Corsets are known to be constraining and uncomfortable, and were commonly worn from the 1500's to the 1920's.

DACHSHUND: A small, long dog. Often called a "wiener dog."

DARK MATTER: Invisible material that may account for the majority of all matter in the universe, and in some theories is tied in with the existence of other dimensions.

MILES DAVIS: One of the 20th century's most influential jazz trumpeters, bandleaders, and composers.

DETRITUS: Waste, rubble, debris.

EDDIES: Circular movements of water, counter to a main current, causing small whirlpools.

BILL EVANS: American Jazz pianist and composer.

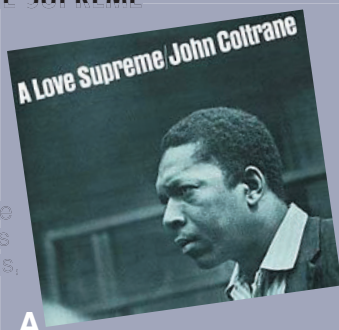
GNOME: A small mythical creature that is known to hide and guard treasure. See MRT Playguide, *Out of the City*.

JAILHOUSE ROCK: A musical drama starring Elvis Presley.

KEY CLUB: An extracurricular club for students to go out and improve their community. They may do things such as cleaning up local parks or organizing food drives.

JOHN COLTRANE and A LOVE SUPREME

Legendary jazz saxophone player who lived from 1926-1963. Coltrane revolutionized the way jazz was played and written, a pioneer in modal jazz and in the incorporation of African and Latin American elements. Considered one of the **greatest players of all time**, his bandmates included Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, and Thelonious Monk.



Many consider the album *A Love Supreme* to be Coltrane's masterpiece, **epic in scope yet intimate and spiritual**. Its haunting beauty is spun from a simple set of four notes that mimics the speech pattern of the words "a love supreme"—which is, according to Coltrane, God's love. After being fired from Miles Davis' band because of his heroin and alcohol addiction, Coltrane recalls experiencing, "by the grace of God, a spiritual awakening, which was to lead me to a richer, fuller, more productive life," and that experience spawned the creation of the album.

A) Album cover for *A Love Supreme* B) Jazz saxophonist John Coltrane C) First page of the musical score for *A Love Supreme*. It only provides a handful of music notes; the rest consists of written-out instructions for performance.

Like Walt Whitman, Coltrane became a **near-religious figure** late in life. There's even a Saint John Coltrane African Orthodox Church in San Francisco, which infuses its African Orthodox liturgy with Coltrane's quotations and music.



SOURCES:

NPR: "50 Years of John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*." www.npr.org/2014/12/07/369191157/50-years-of-coltrane-s-a-love-supreme. December 7, 2014

NPR: "The Story of *A Love Supreme*." <http://www.npr.org/2000/10/23/148148986/a-love-supreme>. March 7, 2012

PBS.org: Biographies: John Coltrane. http://www.pbs.org/jazz/biography/artist_id_coltrane_john.htm

LEAVES OF GRASS: The volume of Walt Whitman's poetry. Whitman published several different editions during his lifetime, each adding on to the previous.

NINE-VOLT: Battery often used for small electronic devices, including smoke detectors.

POP-TART®: A small pre-made pastry that can be heated in a toaster or eaten straight out of the package. There are 26 regular flavors, plus limited edition flavors.

RAY-BANS: Well-known and popular brand of sunglasses, the aviator glasses being the most popular

ROCKABILLY: Originating in the 1950's, a type of music using elements from country music as well as rock and roll

SHENANIGANS: Acts of mischief, high jinks, or general silliness

STUFF WHITE PEOPLE LIKE: Humorous website dedicated to the interests of white people. It includes entries on the likes of Bob Marley, *Where the Wild Things Are*, and why white people hate Ed Hardy clothing. www.stuffwhitepeoplelike.com

WALT WHITMAN: (see p. 9)

JERRY LEE LEWIS: American rock pianist. Born in a small Louisiana town in 1935, Lewis taught himself piano, singing in church and listening to radio shows like "Grand Ole Opry" and "The Louisiana Hayride." When he was 10, his father mortgaged the family farm to buy him his own piano.

Before long Lewis found himself in Memphis working as a studio musician, jamming with the likes of Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, and Carl Perkins (the "Million Dollar Quartet"). He broke out as a huge star in 1957, and his hit "Great Balls of Fire" was released later that year, exemplifying his **high-energy, piano-driven rockabilly sound and flamboyant showmanship**.

A scandal surrounding Lewis' marriage to his 13-year old cousin caused public outrage, tour cancellations and record boycotts. Despite his tarnished reputation, he's regarded as one of history's great piano rockers, credited with unlocking the instrument's rock and roll potential. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986.

He lives on a Mississippi ranch and continues to record and perform.



A) Piano rocker Jerry Lee Lewis performing in 2009. Photo by Silvio

B) Album cover for the hit single "Great Balls of Fire," 1957

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What do you think the objects in Caroline's room say about her personality? What objects in your own home help to define you?
2. Playwright Lauren Gunderson describes Walt Whitman's poetry as "beautiful and shockingly grand." Would you use those same words to describe it?
3. Is there anything that you hated for a long time, then realized you actually liked? What made you change your mind?
4. Do you think Caroline's dependence on tech leaves her more isolated, or more connected to her world?
5. Why do you think Anthony takes as long as he does to tell the story about his basketball game?
6. Who do you think shows more courage in this story—Caroline or Anthony? How do they show courage differently?
7. What's one question you'd like to ask the show's playwright Lauren Gunderson after the ending?

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING ON WALT WHITMAN

Leaves of Grass: Walt Whitman's complete, collected poetry.

Walt Whitman by David S. Reynolds (Oxford University Press Lives and Legacies series): A very good concise overview of Whitman's life and influence.

Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography by David S. Reynolds: Whitman's definitive, comprehensive biography.

Rebel Souls: Walt Whitman and America's First Bohemians by Justin Martin: A look at Whitman's radical band of cohorts in mid-1800's New York City.

www.whitmanarchive.org: A mammoth archive of Whitman's letters and journals, published works, criticism, and more.

THANK YOU

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