

MERRIMACK REPERTORY THEATRE'S
45TH
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PHOTO BY MICHAEL BROSILOW

**STUDY
GUIDE**

DISHWASHER DREAMS

WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY **ALAUDIN ULLAH**

DIRECTED BY **CHAY YEW**

DISHWASHER DREAMS WAS PRESENTED AT HARTFORD STAGE AND WRITERS THEATRE

STUDY GUIDE BY **ALLISON BACKUS**

DESIGNED BY **EMILY BOYER**

FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 17



MERRIMACK REPERTORY THEATRE

WWW.MRT.ORG | 978.654.4678

COURTNEY SALE
NANCY L. DONAHUE
EXECUTIVE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



MERRIMACK REPERTORY THEATRE

PRESENTS

DISHWASHER DREAMS

FEATURING

ALAUDIN ULLAH*

SCENIC DESIGNER
YU SHIBAGAKI^

COSTUME DESIGNER
IZUMI INABA^

LIGHTING DESIGNER
ANSHUMAN BHATIA^

COMPOSER/ARRANGER
AVIRODH SHARMA

STAGE MANAGER
ELENA RING

DIRECTED BY
CHAY YEW+

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
JACOB JANSSEN+

ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION CREDITS

Lynn Sullivan Production Assistant

FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 17, 2024

WWW.MRT.ORG/SHOW/DISHWASHER-DREAMS

FOR THE FULL *DISHWASHER DREAMS* PROGRAM WHICH INCLUDES COMPREHENSIVE SHOW CREDITS, CAST AND CREW BIOS, AND MORE!



*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



+Member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, a national theatrical labor union.



^The Scenic, Costume, Lighting, and Sound Designers in this production are represented by United Scenic Artists (USA) Local USA-829, IATSE.



Merrimack Repertory Theatre is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre.



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LEARNING STANDARDS

FOR GRADES 9-12

AN INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT AND ACTOR ALAUDIN ULLAH

Theatre Arts – *Responding*
T.R.07, T.R.08, T.R.09

ABOUT THE TABLAS

Theatre Arts – *Responding*
T.R.07, T.R.08, T.R.09
Music – *Responding*
M.R.07, M.R.08, M.R.09

IN SEARCH OF BENGALI HARLEM, SOUTH ASIAN IMMIGRATION: THE ASIATIC BARRED ZONE ACT

History and Social Sciences – *US History I, US History II*
HSS.USI.T2.03, HSS.USI.T3.02, HSS.USI.T6.04, HSS.USI.T6.05, HSS.USII.T5.05

IMMIGRATION TRENDS: RESEARCH, ANALYSIS, AND PRESENTATION

History and Social Sciences – *US History I, US History II*
HSS.USI.T2.03, HSS.USI.T3.02, HSS.USI.T6.04, HSS.USI.T6.05, HSS.USII.T5.05
English Language Arts – *Writing, Speaking and Listening, Reading in History and Social Science*
W.8, W.9, SL.1, SL.2, SL.4, SL.5, RCA-H.4, RCA-H.9, RCA-H.10

THE AMERICAN DREAM AND IMMIGRATION, THE NEW COLOSSUS: A TOPICAL CLOSE READING, MAKING CONNECTIONS: JHUMPA LAHIRI'S "THE THIRD AND FINAL CONTINENT," DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

English Language Arts – *Reading Literature, Speaking and Listening, Language, Writing*
RL.1, RL.2, RL.4, RL.6, RL.10, SL.1, SL.4 L.3, L.5, W.10

PERSONAL ESSAY PROMPTS

English Language Arts – *Writing, Language*
W.3, W.4, W.5, W.10, L.3

THE PARTITION OF INDIA, TIMELINE OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE AND PARTITION

History and Social Sciences – *World History II*
HSS.WHII.T3.01, HSS.WHII.T3.03, HSS.WHII.T7.01

AMERICAN GRAFFITI ART, PROJECT: GRAFFITI ART

Visual Arts – *Creating, Presenting*
V.Cr.01, V.Cr.02, V.Cr.03, V.P.05, V.P.06

DISHWASHER DREAMS SYNOPSIS

Aladdin, a stand-up comedian, enters the stage and begins a routine where he discusses the challenges of growing up as a second-generation Bengali immigrant born to devout Muslim parents. The light changes, and present-day Aladdin, born Alaudin, explains that one night, his brother called him backstage during a comedy show, worried about their mother, who was unwell and in pain. Aladdin's brother urges him to come home to New York, but Aladdin says he has a movie audition for an Oscar-winning director and can't come home.

The following day at the audition, the casting assistant tells Aladdin to read with a "Muslim" accent for a culturally insensitive, stereotypical "terrorist" role. He impresses the casting assistant, and she asks him to read for the director at a later date, but Aladdin's brother calls again, this time to inform him that their mother needs surgery. Aladdin, still eager to audition for the director, feels conflicted between his family obligations and professional career. He begins to reflect on the past and the life of his father.

Aladdin explains that his father came from a small village in Bangladesh, where as a young man, his father hung out with outcasts and snuck into American films, includ-

ing his favorite, *On the Waterfront*. Aladdin recalls his father's love of this particular film and his habit of reciting lines from the movie at often inappropriate times.

Aladdin's father immigrates to America at the age of eighteen. Upon arriving in New York's Spanish Harlem, Aladdin's father

is nearly robbed; however, upon learning that Aladdin's father is a Muslim like him, the robber gifts him ten dollars and wishes him well. Aladdin's father finds great joy in his life in New York, despite his small apartment and the long hours working as a dishwasher. One of his fellow dish-

washers is an immigrant from the Bahamas named Sid, who wants to be

an actor. Aladdin's father visits Sid once he succeeds and performs in a play uptown. Sid, who became the famous actor known as Sidney Poitier, encourages Aladdin's father to open his own restaurant.

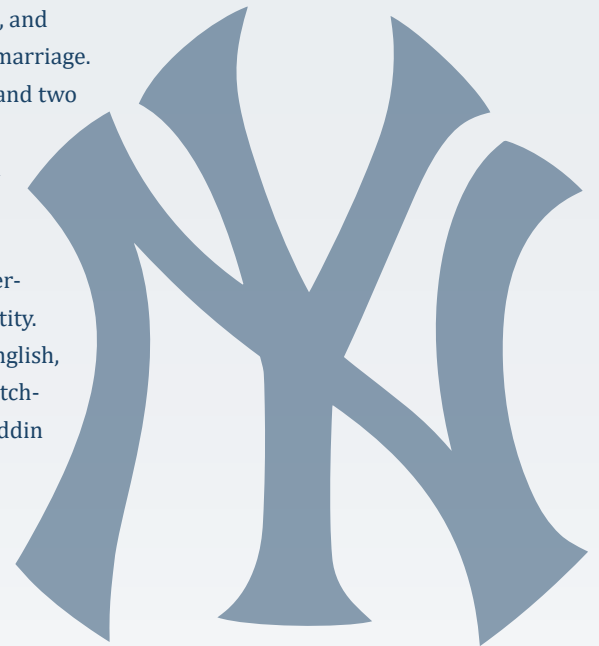
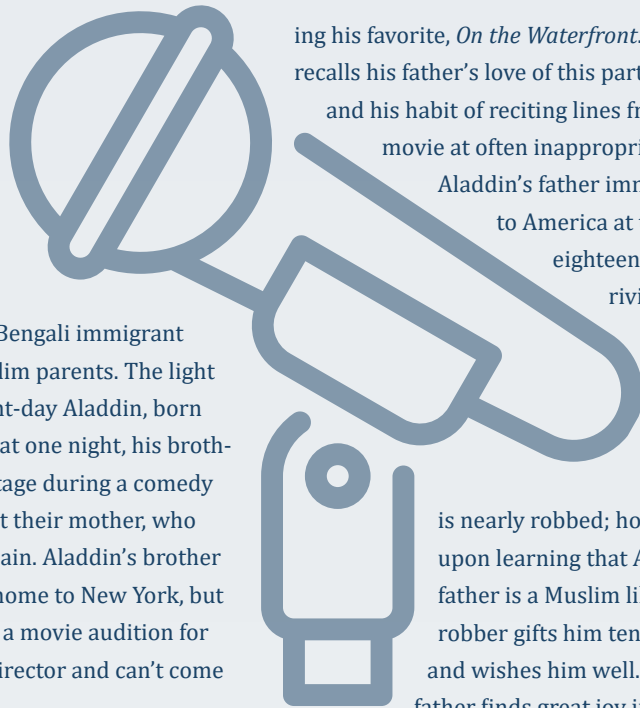
Aladdin's father falls in love with a Puerto Rican woman named Victoria, who

lives in his building. They get married, and Victoria, like Sid, encourages him to open a restaurant. Aladdin's father opens one of the first Indian restaurants in New York City and calls it "Bengal Garden." However, Aladdin's father struggles with the business aspect of running a restaurant, and he ultimately sells his shares to his partners and returns to washing dishes. Victoria dies of a brain aneurysm six months later, and Aladdin's father's health declines. He retires and becomes disillusioned with American life, and at the age of fifty-five, decides to visit home, which after the Partition of India, is no longer India but East Pakistan (later Bangladesh). Aladdin's father, looking for a wife, meets Aladdin's mother, who is eighteen, pregnant, and divorced after leaving an abusive marriage. Together, they return to America, and two years later, Aladdin is born.

Aladdin grows up in Spanish Harlem, where he is teased at school for being Muslim and feels more deeply connected to his American identity than his Bengali identity. Aladdin's mom is eager to learn English, and Aladdin helps her learn by watching Sesame Street with her. As Aladdin gets older, he discovers a love for baseball, and the New York Yankees, and his father takes him to a game at Yankee Stadium when he is nine years old. Soon after, he joins a little league team.

Aladdin and his family visit Bangladesh, where Aladdin meets much of his extended family for the first time, including his cousin, Nadha. Aladdin takes in the cultural differences between Bangladesh and America; he watches his mother be shamed for not wearing a burka and hears the tablas for the first time. Nadha

wants to go to America, and when Aladdin leaves, he gives his cousin his most prized possession, his Reggie Jackson glove. A few years later, Aladdin learns that Nadha was removed from his home for being a "juvenile delinquent" and was shortly after found murdered. Aladdin mourns the loss of his cousin and reflects on their similarities and differences in circumstances.



DISHWASHER DREAMS SYNOPSIS

As an eleven-year-old in 1980, Aladdin becomes friends with a group of “hooligans.” Together they attend Bruce Lee films and graffiti on the streets and subways of New York City. He gets arrested for vandalism, and his father has to bail him out. Aladdin and his father argue. Aladdin’s father shares what it was like traveling to the American South and experiencing Jim Crow in the 1950s and how he was arrested after refusing to leave a restaurant that wouldn’t serve him.

When Aladdin is thirteen, his father dies of a heart attack. In the ambulance on the way to the hospital, Aladdin recalls holding his father’s roughened hands, looking him in the eyes and feeling as though it was the first time they “really saw each other.” Aladdin’s father’s funeral coincides with Reggie Jackson’s final baseball game. The announcers at Yankee Stadium celebrate the life and talent of Jackson. At the same time, the eulogizer at Aladdin’s father’s funeral mourns the fact that Habib Ullah “came to the promise land but couldn’t find the promise,” and states that it is a time to “pass that promise onto a new generation of dreamers.”

After graduating from high school, Aladdin feels frustrated with his circum-

stances and cynical about his future. He cannot understand his mother’s commitment to a religion he feels no connection with. One evening, Aladdin watches the comedian George Carlin on T.V. Carlin’s routine resonates deeply with Aladdin, and he decides he

wants to become a stand-up comedian instead of attending college, deeply disappointing his mother. Aladdin moves out of his mother’s house at nineteen and regularly attends comedy clubs. His first performance as a comedian is a disaster, and he struggles afterward to find his voice. Aladdin gets some advice from Richard Pryor’s writer, Paul Mooney, and his routines improve. However, the showcase clubs only feature comedians of color once a month, and Aladdin struggles to find enough work.

Aladdin finally starts his own show at a place on the same block as his father’s old restaurant. Although Aladdin didn’t want his mother to attend his shows, she shows up one evening with

Aladdin’s brother, and both express their disappointment with his career choice. While his family relationships suffer, Aladdin’s comic career finally begins to take off thanks to reviews in the New York Times, and the L.A. Times, which call him the “funniest South

Asian in the nation.”

Aladdin attends the callback for the movie role he auditioned for at the show’s start. His call-back goes well, but before he leaves, he expresses his disappointment with the part and its stereotypical, harmful, and uncomplicated depiction of a Muslim. Aladdin returns home where his mother is recovering from her operation.

In 2008, Aladdin takes his mother to the last game at Yankee Stadium. Reggie Jackson runs out onto the field to the crowd’s cheers, and Aladdin’s mother notices he is crying. Aladdin’s mother enjoys herself at the game, but on the train home, Aladdin expresses his sadness at leaving the stadium and what feels like his past behind. Aladdin

admits he feels like a “loser” for taking roles that “humiliate” Muslims. Aladdin’s mother tells him that he is “just like [his] father,” both possessing big dreams but wanting to see those dreams met on their “own terms.” An announcer introduces Aladdin at a comedy club, and Aladdin goes into one of his routines. He says that now that he’s older, he’s learned to have a “sense of humor about the injustice.” He says that he recently bought a boat. One day, after Aladdin’s brother drove the boat into the marina, Aladdin, dressed in a turban and lungie, exited the boat asking, “Is this America? Is this America? IS THIS AMERICA?”

ALADDIN ULLAH PERFORMING *DISHWASHER DREAMS*. | MICHAEL BROSILOW





FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT AND ACTOR: **AN INTERVIEW WITH ALAUDIN ULLAH**

Alaudin Ullah is a writer, actor, and comedian. He was one of the first South Asian comedians to perform stand-up on national television. Ullah joined the Public Theatre's Emerging Writers Group, where he first developed *Dishwasher Dreams*. He recently co-directed the film *Searching for Bengali Harlem*, which follows Alaudin as he seeks to learn about the lives of his parents, both in New York City, and in Bangladesh. Alaudin is dedicated to "creating stories and characters that counter, challenge, and correct, the misperception of South Asians and Muslims."

DO YOU FIND ACTING IN AND WRITING A ONE-PERSON PLAY TO BE AT ALL SIMILAR TO WRITING AND PERFORMING STAND-UP COMEDY? WHAT IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO?

Playwriting is storytelling, and stand-up is a set-up-punchline style of performance. In solo plays, there is emotional depth and

longer payoffs. In stand-up, you are chasing a setup and a punchline. The bottom line is you have to be funny. You are a slave to the

punchline. In solo plays, the stronger the story, the better the play. I've done both, and each is challenging but rewarding.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR STUDENTS INTERESTED IN WRITING ABOUT THEIR IDENTITIES AND THEIR DREAMS?

You need to read and explore how other people have done it. Everyone has a different path, but success leaves clues. Mentorship is key, but before all of that, you must be brave and willing to tell the truth. It may be daunting, but you've got to talk about the good and the bad and be able to laugh at yourself too. Avoid being didactic and strive to be authentic, even if the story is painful. Write your dreams, post them on your wall, and surround yourself with positive people that believe in you. Face adversity head-on and be resilient because without struggle, there is no progress. Identity begins by looking in the mirror first.

DOES AMERICA REALLY EMBRACE EVERYONE, OR IS THERE A COMPROMISE ONE MUST MAKE WHEN LIVING IN A COUNTRY THAT DOESN'T ALWAYS WELCOME YOU?

WHAT WAS YOUR WRITING PROCESS LIKE? HOW HAS *DISHWASHER DREAMS* CHANGED FROM YOUR EARLIER DRAFTS?

I developed this play at The Public Theater in NYC. I like to write every day when I'm working on a project. I want to work fast and then put the work on its feet—it's my training as a comedian. I write to get it ready to perform on stage. Then I revise, revise, and keep revising until it's right. In the earlier drafts, scenes were completely raw, and the story was still not there. There was no real ending, and the characters came and went. Once Chay Yew came on board as my director, the project evolved. He was an immigrant from Singapore who spent decades in America as a playwright and director. Other directors knew what I was trying to convey, but Chay was authentic in his notes because

he lived as a person who was a foreigner. He was very good with structure and focusing on the story I was trying to tell. He knew I wanted to let audiences see and feel what my father went through, and that I wanted to take them on that journey where I found the connection to my father and my mother. He helped organize the scenes and asked tough questions.

Throughout this process, I realized that despite my rebellion against my parents and their culture, their dreams were ironically similar to mine. My pursuit of my dreams was met with the same obstacles they had to contend with—being seen as "other" in America. Does America really embrace everyone, or is there a compromise one must make when living in a country that doesn't always welcome you? A good director will challenge you with good questions. What helped get this journey to the finish line was answering those tough

questions that I've been running from my entire life. I'm a die-hard New Yorker, but Bangladesh is deep in my DNA.

THE AMERICAN DREAM IS A THEME YOU EXPLORE THROUGHOUT *DISHWASHER DREAMS*—BOTH THROUGH YOUR OWN EYES AND YOUR PARENTS' EYES. WHAT IS THE AMERICAN DREAM TO YOU? IS IT ATTAINABLE? PROBLEMATIC? HAS IT CHANGED?

The American Dream is about better opportunities for immigrants and all citizens pursuing a happier life. The pursuit of better job opportunities, education, and healthcare is what people who arrive here are looking for, just like my parents did. I do believe the American Dream is problematic because of systemic racism, white privilege, and the growing xenophobia towards

FROM THE ACTOR & PLAYWRIGHT: AN INTERVIEW WITH ALAUDIN ULLAH

people who come from underdeveloped countries. Thankfully, not everyone shares that sentiment, but real struggles come with trying to achieve the American Dream. It can be achieved—I'm living proof of that, but it comes with lots of obstacles.

I think the important thing is to avoid getting frustrated and becoming bitter. If you can keep your sense of humor, you can keep your sanity. The American Dream is complex and nuanced, and it has evolved with technology, globalism, and social media. It's perhaps more tangible than it's been in the past, but there is still a fantasy element to it that should be demystified. America has a troubled past regarding immigration—but I believe there is still hope for the new immigrants who arrive here. Hope is what keeps the dream alive in times of despair. America gives that possibility to many who dream like my Dad did when he imagined a better world for him and his family.

IF YOU CAN KEEP YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR, YOU CAN KEEP YOUR SANITY.

HOW DO YOU THINK THE CONCEPT OF THE AMERICAN DREAM DIFFERS BETWEEN FIRST-GENERATION AND SECOND-GENERATION IMMIGRANTS?

The first-generation immigrant mentality is more blue-collar or working class, and less political. They do not focus on social life as much as focus on labor—work, sending money back home to family, and holding

... REAL STRUGGLES COME WITH TRYING TO ACHIEVE THE AMERICAN DREAM. IT CAN BE ACHIEVED—I'M LIVING PROOF OF THAT, BUT IT COMES WITH LOTS OF OBSTACLES.

on to their native culture is important. Second-generation immigrants like me are more assimilated into the fabric of America. We aren't from our parents' villages; we are born and bred Americans. American culture, our music, our accents—especially my NY accent—are

very different from those of our parents. We embraced America as our home, whereas I think my parents always felt like America was still a place that was a work in progress for them. I grew up loving the Yankees, the Knicks, hip-hop, pizza, and New York hot dogs. Yet when I came home, our apartment was another world inside. My parents were devout Muslims who spoke mostly Bengali, wore traditional clothes, and our kitchen always smelled like curry. I navigated those two worlds daily, but they were each so culturally different from each other. That culture clash of first-generation vs. second-generation is a conflict that always arises.

WHAT WAS YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGE WHEN WRITING THIS PLAY? HOW DO YOU GET THE ENTIRE STORY DOWN IN A REASONABLE WAY? HOW IS CREATING A DRAMATIC ACTION, 90-MIN SHOW DIFFERENT THAN AN HOUR STAND-UP SPECIAL? HOW DID YOU OVERCOME IT?

I believe when you write a solo play, the story is the key. The narrative must be the driving force of that play. The story was my greatest challenge. How do I sustain that story for 90 minutes? I didn't want to be another one of those solo shows where actors attempt to showcase their range in a stage version of a glorified audition tape. I really wanted the solo play to be strong enough to tell a story that moves audiences. I attempted

to make a story about my going to Hollywood to pursue my dream of being in the movies. When a conflict arises, I start thinking about how my father decided to come to America. So, it becomes this parallel story of time traveling, where we see his world juxtaposed with my world. I'm offered the chance of a lifetime in my play, but I'm thinking about my Dad and what he endured. I get to take this funny and moving journey every night with the audience. In stand-up comedy, you don't necessarily have to have a narrative theme or stick to a topic. You just have to be funny.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE AUDIENCES WILL TAKE AWAY FROM THIS PRODUCTION?

I hope the audience walks away from this production with understanding and empathy for what immigrants go through. Imagine what someone goes through when they leave their entire family, friends, and country to begin a life in a world that is unknown to them—and how scary entering the unknown can be. I want to give voice to a community that rarely gets to tell their story. I wanted to humanize their life with dignity.

ALAUDIN ULLAH. PHOTO: AMIR HAMZA | NEWCITYSTAGE.COM



ABOUT THE TABLAS

The tablas are a set of two drums. The larger drum played with the left hand is called a *bayan*, a bass drum made of clay or metal. The smaller drum played with the right hand, the *dayan*, is hollowed-out hardwood. Both drums have two layers of goatskin stretched across the top to create a playing surface for the percussionist. What makes the tablas unique is the paste applied in a circle in the center of each drum's surface. This paste, called *shyahi*, is made from iron and rice residue. Once this paste is dried, it "allows for sound possibilities that

are not found on any other drum in the world."¹ The tablas are played sitting down, and the percussionist uses both their fingers and the palm against the drum's surface. While the origins of the tablas are unclear, many music historians believe they were first created in Northern India during the early 18th century, when the classical musical style *Khayal* emerged in India. Today, the tablas are integral to the folk and classical musical traditions of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan.

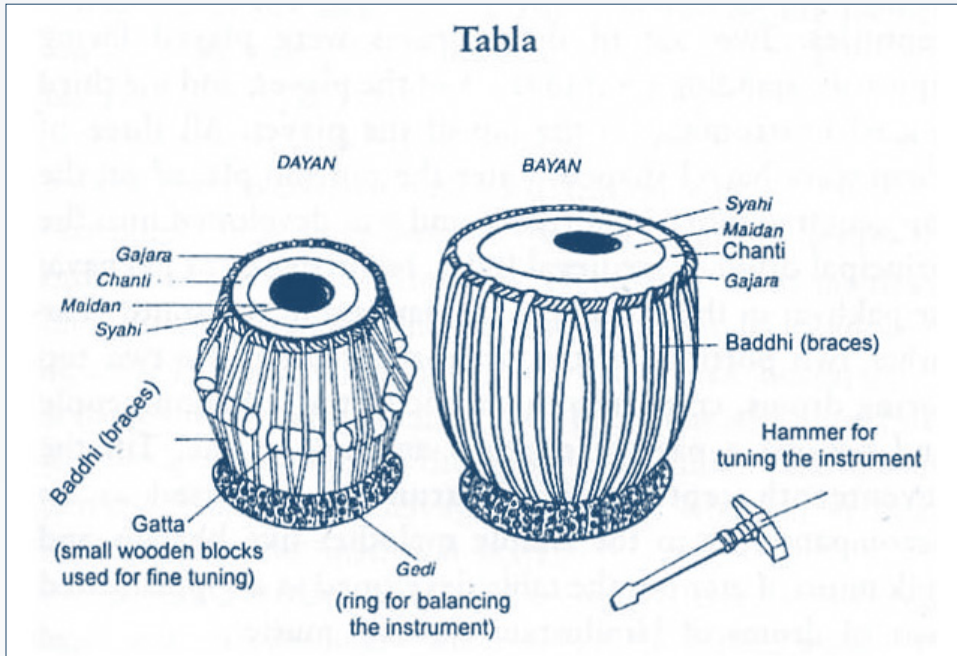


FIGURE 1: A DIAGRAM SHOWING THE ELEMENTS OF THE TABLAS. | [INDIA-INSTRUMENTS.COM/ENCYCLOPEDIA-TABLA.HTML](https://www.india-instruments.com/encyclopedia-tabla.html)

In *Dishwasher Dreams*, the tablas play a crucial role in setting the tone for what Aladdin explores during this 90 minute play. The original composer and accompanist for the show, Avirodh Sharma found that his greatest challenge was to “emotionally translate the sentiments in the play through rhythm.” Sharma found that reading and discussing the play with

Chay Yew, the play’s director, led him to explore rhythm patterns from all over the world. Sharma ultimately worked classical Indian rhythm patterns into *Dishwasher Dreams* along with Caribbean rhythm culture, and patterns from Africa and Europe.² According to Alaudin Ullah, *Dishwasher Dreams* is the first staged American play to feature tablas.

¹ Eric Phinney, “Tabla: Drums of North India,” *Bloomington School of Music*, <https://www.bsmny.org/instrument-discovery/tabla/>.

² Snigdha Sur, Interview with Alaudin Ullah and Avirodh Sharma, “From Bangladesh to Bengali Harlem and Hartford Stage, a Conversation with Actor and Playwright, Alaudin Ullah,” *Where We Live* (podcast), 9 March 2022.

DISCUSS

1. How did you feel the tablas affected *Dishwasher Dreams*?
 - a. How would the play have been different had it featured a small band?
 - b. How would the play have been different if it featured no music at all?
2. Composer Avirodh Sharma stated that his greatest challenge was “emotionally translating” the sentiments of the play through percussion.
 - a. How can percussion portray sentiments and emotions without harmony or melodic line?
 - b. Can you think of specific points in the show when these translations were the strongest?
3. Sharma’s musical influences for *Dishwasher Dreams* ranged from classical Indian and Caribbean music, to European and African rhythms.
 - a. Were any of these rhythms particularly evident to you when watching *Dishwasher Dreams*?
 - b. Why do you think Sharma, Yew, and Ullah chose to incorporate so many rhythmic cultures in a show that takes place in America and Bangladesh?
4. *Dishwasher Dreams* is not a musical or an opera, but Alaudin Ullah has called the tablas accompaniment “integral” to the play.
 - a. Having seen the play, do you agree? Why or why not?
 - b. At what points in the play did you feel that the percussion was most integral?
 - c. Did you notice when and why the percussion stopped and started throughout the play? Why do you think these specific choices were made?

AMERICAN DREAM AND IMMIGRATION

The now-famous phrase, “The American Dream,” was coined during the Great Depression. In 1931, historian James Truslow Adams defined the term in his book, *The American Epic* as “that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement.”³ At its heart, the American Dream is an ethos of freedom, equality, personal success, and democracy for all that has permeated American rhetoric since the days of the founding fathers.

However, this ethos is not without its critics. Many feel that the concept of the American Dream too strongly prioritizes capitalism, wealth accumulation, and materialism. Additionally, some believe that the American Dream promotes a near-sighted kind of nationalism and American exceptionalism that fails to address the problematic history of slavery, settler colonialism, and the genocide of indigenous Americans. The United States is often described as a “nation of immigrants.” Still, history proves that America is no stranger to stringent, racist, and xenophobic immigration laws, often designed to keep non-white, non-Protestant immigrants from entering the country. American law and rhetoric have often been at odds with what the American Dream represents. Nevertheless, the promise of the American Dream has drawn numerous waves of immigration from countries all around the globe.



FIGURE 2: FROM WALTER CRANE'S "COLUMBIA'S COURTSHIP," A SERIES OF LITHOGRAPHS DEPICTING THE AMERICAN IDEAL OF FREEDOM AND EQUALITY FOR ALL. | [WIKIPEDIA—COLUMBIA'S COURTSHIP](#)

THE NEW COLOSSUS: A TOPICAL CLOSE READING

The “New Colossus” is an 1883 poem written by Emma Lazarus. Lazarus penned the poem as a part of a literary auction to raise money for a plaque for the newly erected Statue of Liberty. In her poem, Lazarus juxtaposes the Statue of Liberty with the Colossus of Rhodes, an enormous bronze statue of the Greek god Helios constructed in 280 BC following the successful defense of the city from invaders. By juxtaposing the Colossus of Rhodes with the Statue of Liberty, Lazarus compares two statues: one erected to celebrate the event of keeping people out of a city, and one erected that signals welcome to all.

In 1903, after Lazarus’ death, a plaque bearing the poem was mounted inside the base of the statue. Lazarus’s poem is perhaps the most famous piece of literature to articulate what we today refer to as the “American Dream,” particularly in relation to immigration.

READ: Have students read “The New Colossus” and do a close reading of the poem. The poem can be found [HERE](#).

THE NEW COLOSSUS

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

DISCUSS

1. What is the meter and rhyme scheme of this poem? Why might the poet have chosen this particular meter and rhyme scheme? Is the meter consistent throughout? If not, where does the meter change?
2. Lazarus begins her poem by describing the Statue of Liberty as “not like the brazen giant of Greek fame.” What does this mean? Why does Lazarus start the poem describing what the Statue of Liberty is *not* like? What is the purpose of beginning the poem this way?

³ Jonas Clark, “In Search of the American Dream,” *The Atlantic*, Jun. 2007, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2007/06/in-search-of-the-american-dream/305921/>

DISCUSS

3. How are immigrants depicted in this poem? What specific language lends itself to this depiction?
4. What literary devices does Lazarus utilize? Metaphor? Personification? Alliteration? Assonance? Simile? Imagery? Juxtaposition? How do these literary devices affect the poem as a whole?
5. Why does Lazarus describe the Statue of Liberty as the “Mother of Exiles?” What does this title imply?
6. Based on what you know of the Colossus of Rhodes, why might Lazarus have chosen to compare the Statue of Liberty to this specific ancient statue?
7. What does the last line of the poem imply? What tone does the poem end on?

IMMIGRATION TRENDS: RESEARCH, ANALYSIS, & PRESENTATION

WHAT IT IS

A project that requires students to research and analyze United States immigration trends, helping them hone their research, analysis, presentation, and digital media skills. Students can complete this project individually or in small groups of 2-4.

INSTRUCTIONS

Have students choose a specific United States immigration trend to research. Individually or in groups, students should organize their research findings and create a 5-7 minute digital presentation to share with their peers that answers the research questions below. Students are encouraged to feature photographs, maps, political cartoons, and other visuals in their presentations. Presentations should include a bibliography with proper citations. Presentations can be done through PowerPoint, Adobe, Google Slides, or iMovie.

UNITED STATES IMMIGRATION TRENDS

- Irish immigration between 1820 and 1860
- German immigration between 1840 and 1880
- Jewish Eastern European immigration between 1880 and 1924
- Mexican immigration between 1880 and 1930
- Dutch immigration between 1820 and 1900
- Chinese immigration between 1850 and 1880
- Indian immigration between 1900 and 1930
- Brazilian immigration between 1980 and 2000
- Central American immigration between 1950 and 1980
- Cambodian Immigration between 1975 and 1995

NOTE

This project is an excellent opportunity for students to practice being discerning in their research of primary and secondary sources. Students should not use information found on Wikipedia and other websites where information can be easily changed, or where sources are not properly cited. Encouraging students to utilize databases, libraries, and Google Scholar is recommended. The digital resources and archives offered by the [Boston Public Library](#) are free for everyone living in Massachusetts, and students can easily apply for a eCard that allows them free access to these digital resources.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

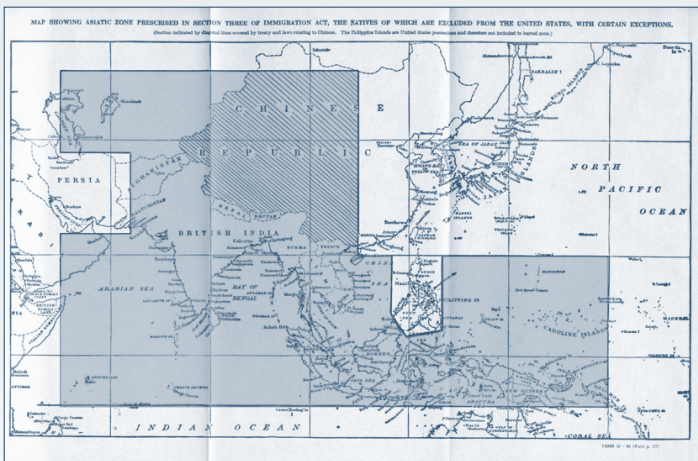
1. What caused this particular immigration trend? What happened in this particular region/country that caused immigrants to come to the United States? What was happening in the United States during this time?
2. Where did these immigrants settle? Why?
3. What specific challenges did these immigrants face?
4. What were the immigration laws at the time of this wave of immigration?
5. Was there a response to this particular wave of immigration? Protests? Xenophobia? Specific immigration laws? Immigration reform?
6. What were the lasting effects of this wave of immigration?

SOUTH ASIAN IMMIGRATION: THE ASIATIC BARRED ZONE ACT

The first wave of South Asian Immigration to the United States began in 1897, the peak years being between 1905 and 1912.⁴ The majority of these immigrants were male Sikhs and Muslims from the Punjab and Bengal provinces of what was then British India. Many of these immigrants were farmers and soldiers looking to escape the harsh conditions of colonial India where Indians were subjected to rural indebtedness – a cycle of immense debt brought about by Britain’s high taxes and their exploitation of South Asian labor. This wave of South Asian immigration resulted in a xenophobic panic throughout the United States that spouted the beliefs that South Asian immigrants were stealing American jobs, and that they were an inherent threat to white American women. This hateful rhetoric led to the Pacific Coast Race

Riots, the first anti-Asian riots in the United States, which targeted Indian, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants.

As a result of the anti-Asian sentiment within the United States, Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1917, today known as the Asiatic Barred Zone Act. The purpose of the law was to limit the number of “undesirable” immigrants from India, Indo-China, Siam, Java, New Guinea, and Borneo, as well as parts of Afghanistan, Siberia, and Arabia. The law also mandated an English literacy test for all immigrants hoping to enter the U.S. This law was a direct response to the anti-Asian prejudice of the time, and the increase in South Asian immigration that had permeated the first decade of the 20th century. Many Indians believed that “as a nation built upon the foundation of revolutionary struggle against the same empire that Indians sought to free themselves from,” America “would provide a safe haven from which to organize their own freedom struggle.” However, many Americans held deeply racist views and believed that South Asians were not only “incapable of



THE ASIATIC “BARRED ZONE.” | [SAADA.ORG/TIDES/ARTICLE/SHADOWS-OF-THE-PAST](https://saada.org/tides/article/shadows-of-the-past)

assimilation,” but also an “economic threat” to white workers.⁵

While the Asiatic Barred Zone Act primarily targeted South Asians, it was preceded by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which denied Chinese immigrants the right to enter the United States. Immigration laws were again tightened in 1924, when the United States instituted white-supremacist ethnic quotas in the hopes of limiting the number of non-white and non-Christian immigrants. The Asiatic Barred Zone Act was not repealed until the early 1950s, and the racist and restrictive immigration laws of 1924 were not revised and revoked until the 1960s.

TERMS TO KNOW

ASIATIC BARRED ZONE ACT
RURAL INDEBTEDNESS
THE CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT OF 1882
THE IMMIGRATION ACT OF 1924

⁴ Shreya Bhandari, *South Asians in the United States*, NASW Press, Sept. 2022.

⁵ Seema Sohi, “From 1917 to 2017: Immigration, Exclusion, and National Security,” *South Asian American Digital Archive*, 31 May, 2017, <https://www.saada.org/tides/article/1917-2017>.

FUNDING PROVIDED, IN PART, BY

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IN SEARCH OF BENGALI HARLEM

Vivek Bald is a writer and filmmaker based in Boston. Bald is a long-time friend of Alaudin Ullah, whom he met in the 1990s when Ullah broke out into stand-up comedy. Alaudin Ullah shared with Bald the story of his father, Habib Ullah's immigration to the United States, which Bald found fascinating given the anti-Asian immigration laws that were in effect during that time. Bald's interest in the life of Habib Ullah led him to research the under-documented history of South Asian immigration

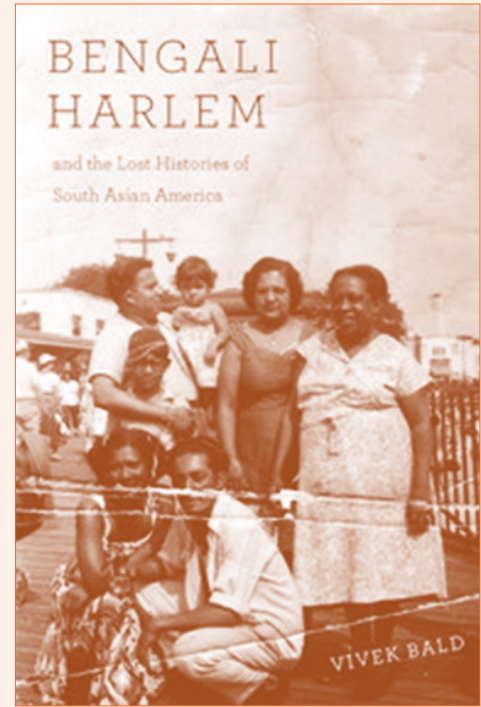
during the years the United States heavily restricted Asian immigration. Bald's research led him to discover that Habib Ullah's immigrant story was not an anomaly. In fact, Bald found that Habib Ullah was a part of a "larger history of South Asian Muslim men" who worked in "indenture-like conditions on British steamships" who defied anti-Asian immigration laws by "jumping ship in U.S. ports" and building lives for themselves on shore.⁶ Many of these Bengali seamen settled in the Bronx, Harlem, Staten

NYC 1952. A BANQUET HOSTED BY THE PAKISTAN LEAGUE OF AMERICA, AN ORGANIZATION WITH A LARGE MEMBERSHIP OF EX-SEAMEN FROM BANGLADESH LIKE ALAUDIN ULLAH'S FATHER. | [NYTIMES ARCHIVE—A CONVERSATION WITH VIVEK BALD](#)

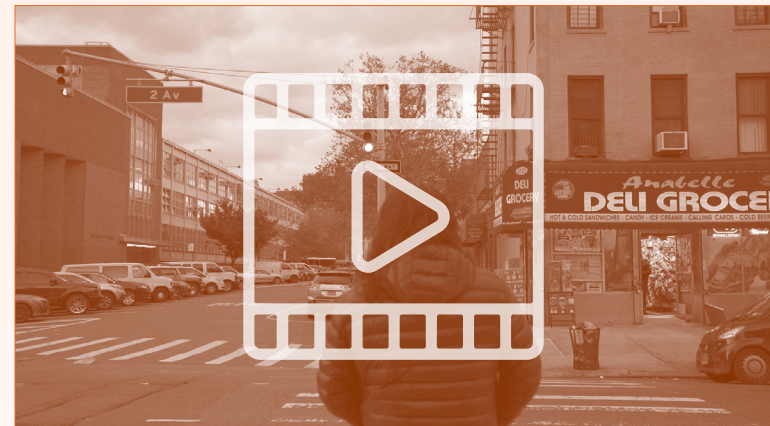


Island, New Jersey and Detroit, and many worked in restaurants, factories and hotels. These South Asian Muslim men often married Black and Latina women, and raised intercultural-interfaith families. While Habib Ullah was likely one of the first of these men to open his own restaurant, many of these immigrants later opened their own restaurants as well, which ultimately led to the booming industry of Indian cuisine in New York City. Bald's research culminated in his book, *Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America*.

Following the publication of his book, Vivek Bald paired up with Alaudin Ullah to direct the documentary film *In Search of Bengali Harlem*, which follows Ullah's quest to learn about the lives and histories of his parents. According to Bald, the movie "celebrates the complex lives and deep historical roots of Bangladeshi Americans, one of the least known but fastest growing groups of Muslim migrants in the United States." This celebration is particularly important given the "continually rising anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant, and anti-Asian" sentiment in the United States. Watch the trailer for the film [HERE](#).



THE COVER OF THE BOOK, *BENGALI HARLEM AND THE LOST HISTORIES OF SOUTH ASIAN AMERICA* | HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS AND HABIB ULLAH, JR.

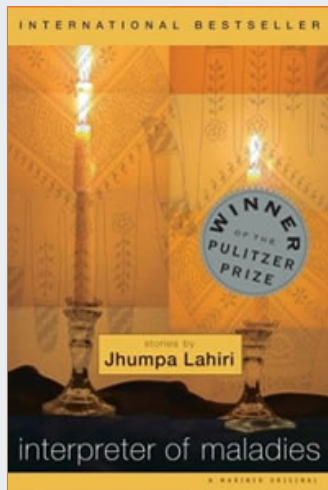


STILL FROM *IN SEARCH OF BENGALI HARLEM* TRAILER | VIMEO

⁶ Vivek Bald, "A Conversation With: Author and Filmmaker Vivek Bald," by Jennifer Chowdhury, *The New York Times*, 31 May, 2013, <https://archive.nytimes.com/india.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/05/31/a-conversation-with-author-and-filmmaker-vivek-bald/>.

"THE THIRD AND FINAL CONTINENT"

Jhumpa Lahiri is a renowned American fiction writer. Her parents immigrated from West Bengal to London, and then to the United States. Lahiri's debut short story collection, *Interpreter of Maladies*, published in 1999, won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction. Lahiri's literary works explore the complexities of the American Dream, the lives of first and second-generation immigrants, and the nuances of South Asian and American culture. The last short story in *Interpreter of Maladies*, "The Third and Final Continent," features a protagonist based on Lahiri's father.



COVER OF JHUMPA LAHIRI'S *INTERPRETER OF MALADIES*. | WIKIPEDIA

READ

Have students read "The Third and Final Continent" after seeing *Dishwasher Dreams* at Merrimack Repertory Theatre. A full PDF of the short story can be found [HERE](#).⁷

DISCUSS

The following discussion questions are designed to help students hone their textual analysis and comparative literature skills. The questions can be discussed as a whole class or in small groups. They can also be given as short, informal writing prompts.

1. Consider the theme of the American Dream in both *Dishwasher Dreams* and "The Third and Final Continent." What do these works say about the American Dream, particularly about the American Dream for immigrants?
2. Parent-child relationships play a vital role in both of these stories. Examine the relationships between Aladdin and his father and Aladdin and his mother.
 - a. What similarities and differences are there between these

relationships and the relationship between Lahiri's unnamed narrator and his mother?

b. What about Lahiri's unnamed narrator and his son?

3. What does the moon landing symbolize in Lahiri's story?
4. What symbols/motifs exist in *Dishwasher Dreams*? What do they symbolize? (Consider: Yankee Stadium, Reggie Jackson, graffiti, On the Waterfront, etc.)
5. In *Dishwasher Dreams*, Aladdin talks about the relationships his father forged when he first got to America (Sid, Victoria, his neighbors in Spanish Harlem, and even the mugger). Lahiri's narrator develops an interesting relationship with Mrs. Croft and her daughter, Helen. Lahiri's narrator has a drastically different lived experience from Mrs. Croft, just as Aladdin's father has a drastically different lived experience from Victoria or even Sid.
 - a. What do you think draws these people together, despite their differences in culture, age, etc.?
 - b. What effects do these relationships have on these stories?
6. Both Jhumpa Lahiri and Alaudin Ullah explore their fathers' lives: Lahiri through the first-person narration of the protagonist based on her father, Ullah by "becoming" his father at various points throughout his one-person play.
 - a. What is the effect of these narrative choices on the audience/reader?
 - b. Why do you think the writers made the narrative choices they did?
 - c. How would "The Third and Final Continent" differ if it was written in third-person?
 - d. How would *Dishwasher Dreams* be different if it was not a one-person play?
7. One topic Lahiri explores in her story is the role of the "ordinary" and the "extraordinary." Do a close reading of the passage below.
 - a. What does this passage say about what is ordinary versus what is extraordinary?
 - b. Does *Dishwasher Dreams* suggest something similar? If yes, how so? Cite specific examples from the play.

Whenever [my son] is discouraged, I tell him that if I can survive on three continents, then there is no obstacle he cannot conquer. While the astronauts, heroes forever, spent mere hours on the moon, I have remained in this new world for nearly thirty years. I know that my achievement is quite ordinary. I am not the only man to seek his fortune far from home, and certainly I am not the first. Still, there are times I am bewildered by each mile I have travelled, each meal I have eaten, each person I have known, each room in which I have slept. As ordinary as it all appears, there are times when it is beyond my imagination.

PERSONAL ESSAY PROMPTS

WHAT IT IS

An opportunity for students to hone their writing, editing, and narrative skills by choosing a prompt from the list below and writing extensively on it. Writing personal essays can help students prepare for college applications and scholarship applications. A series of peer reviews is suggested for these essays so that students can practice both giving and receiving constructive writing feedback.

INSTRUCTIONS

Have students choose from the list of prompts below.

1. The concept of the American Dream is explored heavily throughout *Dishwasher Dreams*. What does the American Dream mean to you? Is it attainable? Problematic?
2. The power of cinema is explored multiple times throughout *Dishwasher Dreams*, namely, Habib Ullah's love for the 1954 film, *On the Waterfront* and Aladdin's love for the Bollywood film *Pather Panchali*. What is a movie that has deeply moved you? Why did this particular film resonate with you so strongly?
3. At his audition with a big-name director, Aladdin is asked to read for the role of a Muslim character that is stereotypical and racist. Even though Aladdin has waited his "entire career" for an audition like this, he calls out the director and the script by pointing out that "most Muslims don't leave their home to join terrorist groups, they leave home to pursue their dreams." Reflect and write about a time you stood up for what you believed was right. What caused you to act/speak out?
4. When Aladdin visits Bangladesh for the first time as a child, he forges a deep bond with his cousin, Nadha. Reflect and write about a particular family relationship you have/had and what it means to you.
5. Aladdin vividly recalls visiting Yankee Stadium as a boy with his father. Reflect and write on a vivid, happy memory you have from childhood and what it means to you today.
6. Aladdin is inspired to become a stand-up comedian when he watches George Carlin on T.V. one evening. Who is someone who has similarly inspired you? How so?

7. Aladdin explores his religious and cultural identity throughout *Dishwasher Dreams* and the nuances that come with those identities. Reflect and write on either your religious or cultural identity and how it has shaped you into who you are today.
8. In the play's closing lines, Aladdin says you must "have a sense of humor about injustice." Do you agree? Why or why not? In what ways do you/do you not have a sense of humor about injustice?
9. Prejudice and oppression play a crucial role in *Dishwasher Dreams*. Aladdin struggles to break out into the white-dominated field of stand-up comedy because he faces racial prejudice as a South Asian man. Aladdin faces this issue again when he begins the audition process for a role that requires him to act in a stereotypical, racially insensitive way. Aladdin's father faces similar prejudice when he visits the American South during Jim Crow. Write and reflect on a time you or someone you know faced prejudice and oppression.
10. Personal goals and dreams are central to the plot and play's characters. Write about a dream or personal goal you have for yourself and your future. How did this dream emerge? How do you plan to achieve it?
11. Are you a first-generation immigrant? A second-generation immigrant? How has this affected your life?

THE PARTITION OF INDIA

As early as the late 18th century, the British East India Company controlled parts of India both directly and indirectly. By 1858, the entirety of India was ruled by the British crown. India gained independence from Imperial British rule on August 15, 1947, after years of both violent and non-violent protests from Indian citizens. Many of the leaders of the Indian independence movement advocated for a united India. Still, the Indian Independence Act of 1947, passed by the British Parliament and approved by the Indian National Congress, divided the country in two—the Hindu majority India, and the Muslim majority West and East Pakistan. As a result of the partition, 15 million Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs

fled their homes and traveled over the new borders, eager to relocate to places where they would be safe from religious persecution.

Tensions and animosities between Indian Muslims and Hindus existed long before British Imperial rule. However, Britain, seeking to quash any political opposition, fueled the Hindu-Muslim tensions with a policy known as “divide and rule,” which sought to keep Hindus and Muslims strongly divided so that Britain could more easily control the country. Britain fueled the deep resentment between the two religious populations by stoking divisions and giving preferential treatment to some

religious groups over others. Lord Louis Mountbatten, charged with planning and overseeing India’s move to independence, proposed his “Mountbatten Plan” for partition. When questioned about the possibility of violence arising from partition, Mountbatten stated: “I will see to it that there is

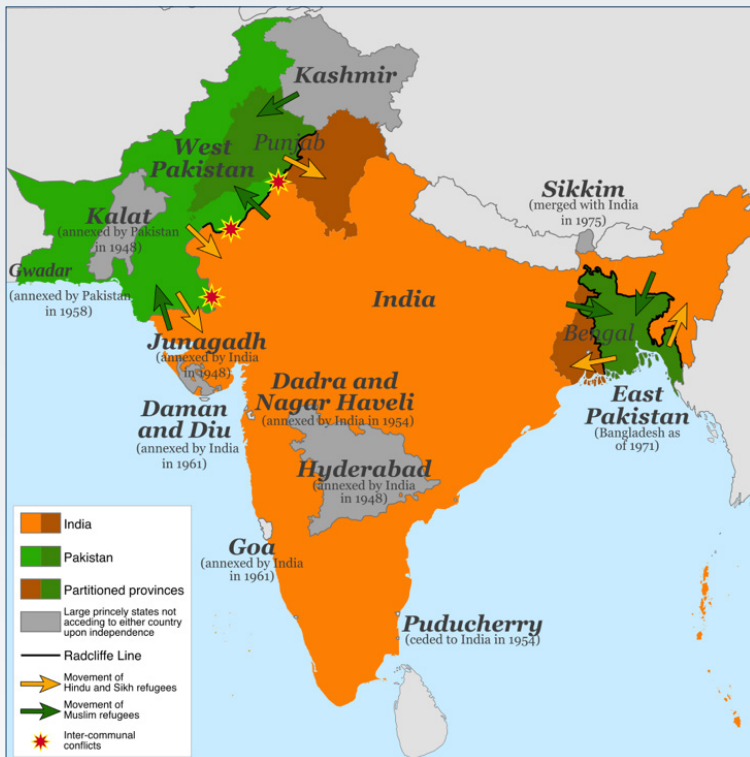
no bloodshed and riot. I am a soldier, not a civilian. Once partition is accepted in principle, I shall issue orders to see that there are no communal disturbances in the country.” Despite Mountbatten’s promise, partition was more violent and destructive than he could have possibly imagined.⁸

While India officially celebrated its independence on August 15, 1947, the location of the Radcliffe Line, which marked West Pakistan from India, and India from East Pakistan (later Bangladesh), was not published until two days later. As a result, many people who believed themselves on one side of the border suddenly discovered they were on the opposite side, causing panic and mass migration as families sought to settle in a place where they would not be a religious minority. Violence perpetrated by religious extremists on both sides had been an issue since the topic of partition had been broached, but following the publication of the Radcliffe Line, violence skyrocketed. Women and girls were abducted and raped, and many people died as a result of travel and violence as the populations of both religions clashed through the tumultuous period of migration. Muslims living in India headed west for Pakistan, and Hindus living in Pakistan headed east for India. In the province of Bengal, violence was less severe, but migration and displacement still caused chaos in the region. The province was divided, with the western part of the province going to the Dominion of India and the eastern part of the province going to the Dominion of Pakistan.⁹

The Partition of India resulted in the migration of around 14 million people and the death of close to 2 million. Today, tensions still exist between the Muslim majority Pakistan and Bangladesh, and the Hindu majority India. Free speech is often stifled for the religious minorities of these countries, and while partition occurred over 70 years ago, much of the younger generations of Pakistanis, Indians, and Bengalis continue to view those of the opposing religion with animosity and distrust.¹⁰

TERMS TO KNOW

- PARTITION OF INDIA
- BRITISH RAJ
- IMPERIALISM
- INDIAN INDEPENDENCE ACT OF 1947
- DIVIDE AND RULE
- EAST INDIA COMPANY
- THE MOUNTBATTEN PLAN
- THE RADCLIFFE LINE
- INDIA
- PAKISTAN
- BANGLADESH



THE PARTITION OF INDIA
| WIKIPEDIA

⁸ Stephanie Jelks, “The Partition of India: Division and Violence in the 20th Century,” *The Collector*, 11 Sep. 2022, <https://www.thecollector.com/partition-of-india-pakistan-1947/>

⁹ Vivek Shankar, “India’s Partition: A History in Photos,” *The New York Times*, 16 Aug. 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/14/world/asia/india-partition-history-photos.html#:~:text=The%20division%20set%20off%20communal,and%20geopolitics%20of%20South%20Asia.&text=Polarized%20by%20religion%2C%20friends%20were%20not%20spared.>

¹⁰ Julie McCarthy and Diaa Hadid, “70 Years Later, India and Pakistan Still Feel the Impact of Partition,” *NPR*, “All Things Considered,” 15 Aug. 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/08/15/543730298/70-years-later-india-and-pakistan-still-feel-impact-of-partition>

TIMELINE OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE AND PARTITION

1858

The British Crown directly controls India from the East India Company. The period of the British Raj begins.

OCTOBER 1905

THE FIRST PARTITION OF BENGAL— The British Raj divides Bengal hoping to stop the growing nationalism and unrest within the province. The eastern Muslim majority becomes separate from the western Hindu majority.

1914-1919

WORLD WAR I. Britain recruits troops from British India. In exchange, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League collaborate to demand increased self-rule after the war.



MARCH 1919

The Rowlatt Act passes, extending the emergency measures put in place in 1915. Enacted to temper nationalists and revolutionaries opposed to British rule, the Rowlatt Act gave British police the right to arrest anyone without reason and to imprison anyone without trial for up to two years at a time.

SIDNEY ROWLATT, BEST REMEMBERED FOR HIS CONTROVERSIAL PRESIDENCY OF THE ROWLATT COMMITTEE | [WIKIPEDIA](#)

1920s

Following World War I, Britain fails to make good on their promise of allowing Indians increased self-rule. The Indian Independence Movement, led by Mahatma Gandhi, takes root.

AUGUST 1935

THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT—British Parliament allows for direct elections in India, federal courts, and greater autonomy in India. However, the British establish separate electorates for Muslims and Hindus, and this causes political tension as the electorates of both religions vie for political control.

1939-1944

WORLD WAR II

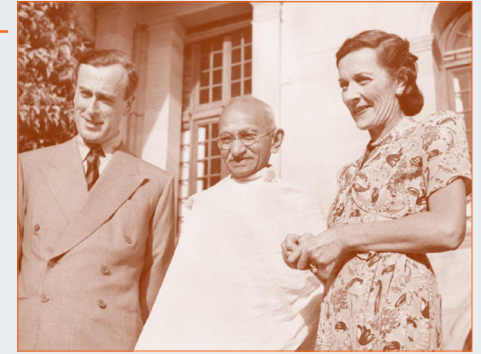
1945

The British Labor Party takes control of Parliament, promising to end colonial rule in India.

JUNE 1947

Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, announces his plans for Indian partition. He plans to divide the country into two separate nations, Pakistan and India. Religious tensions continue to rise, and violence breaks out in the Province of Bengal.

LORD AND LADY MOUNTBATTEN WITH MAHATMA GANDHI, 1947 | [WIKIPEDIA](#)



JULY 1947

The Indian Independence Act passes. Britain plans to withdraw from India, and announces plans for partition.

AUGUST 15, 1947

India and Pakistan become independent nations.

AUGUST 17, 1947

The location of the Radcliffe Line is published, causing mass migration, violence, and chaos.

1947-1948

THE FIRST KASHMIR WAR—India and Pakistan fight for control over the Muslim-majority states of Kashmir and Jammu. In 1948, the United Nations mediates a cease-fire; Pakistan gets one-third of the disputed territory, and India gets two-thirds.

INDIAN SOLDIERS DURING THE INDO-PAKISTANI WAR OF 1947-1948 WAR (THE FIRST KASHMIR WAR) | [WIKIPEDIA](#)



MARCH-DECEMBER 1971

THE BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR AND THE BANGLADESH GENOCIDE—East Pakistan fights for independence from West Pakistan following West Pakistan's attempts to militarily suppress Bengalis calling for independence. East Pakistan becomes independent from Pakistan, becoming the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

AMERICAN GRAFFITI ART

In *Dishwasher Dreams*, Aladdin reflects on his adolescence in Spanish Harlem during the 1980s when he fell in with a group of “hooligans” and discovered a love for graffitiing which “possessed the badass Cubism of Picasso and the ferociousness of Jackson Pollack’s splatter.” A crucial moment in the play comes when Aladdin is arrested for vandalism, and his father bails him out of prison. Father and son argue, and neither seems to understand or empathize with the other. Aladdin declares that graffiti allows him to “let the whole world know” who he is, but his father calls graffiti “garbage” and professes his disappointment in Aladdin’s life choices. This moment in the play starkly showcases the conflict between Aladdin and his father, their different views and lived experiences, and what Aladdin Ullah calls the “clash” of first-generation and second-generation immigrants.

Contemporary American graffiti art emerged in New York City during the 1970s and was heavily influenced by hip-hop culture. Young people began using spray paint to write, tag, and draw on public buildings and subway trains. Some graffiti artists were members of street gangs who sought to mark their territory, but others were simply adolescents and young adults who found appeal in the rebellious ways graffiti allowed them to express themselves creatively and publicly. By the late 1970s, art museums began purchasing graffiti and street art, seeing value in the new art form and what it said about the cultural and socio-political moment. However, by the early 1980s, cities began to take measures that would limit the amount of graffiti, including

harsher penalties, increased police presence, and restrictions on the sale of spray paint. Nevertheless, today, graffiti remains an integral part of American urban landscapes, and many have used the art form for self-expression, socio-political critiques, and depictions of identity and culture.

GRAFFITI TERMS

TAG — a tag is a simple graffiti design of letters and lines. Tags do not feature bubble letters and generally do not feature additional design elements.

THROW, THROW-UP, OR THROWIE — a throw is the design of a word or a name that can be filled in with color (bubble letters). Given its dimensionality, throws have a stronger, more cohesive shape than tags.

PIECE — a piece is the most complex and intricate of graffiti designs. Like a throw, a piece has bubble letters that can be colored and filled in, but pieces feature additional design elements. The artist/artists of a piece may overlap letters, or play with dimensionality, distortion, angle, and color effects. Many pieces feature traditional graffiti motifs like arrows, halos, clouds, stars, splatters, and drips. Because of the time required to create a piece, pieces are often the collaborative effort of multiple artists.

PROJECT: GRAFFITI ART

WHAT IT IS

An art project where students use their knowledge of graffiti practice and design to create their own tags, throws, and pieces.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Have students choose a word, name, or nickname they would like to use for the project. The word/name should be between four and seven letters long.
2. Have students do some research on graffiti fonts and tags, throws, pieces, and designs. The website [90 Degrees](http://90Degrees.com) is good place to start.
3. Students should produce a tag, a throw, and a piece using the name or word they chose. Tags should be relatively simple, while throws and pieces should be more intricate and complex. Students should be able to comment on and explain what classic graffiti design elements they chose to experiment with and incorporate into their designs. Students can use drawing paper, markers, paint, pencils, etc.
4. After the projects are completed, it is recommended that a wall of the classroom be designated to showcasing the students’ designs, so that all the graffiti work can be admired in a legal and safe environment.

AN EXAMPLE OF A GRAFFITI “PIECE” | GRAFFITIBIBLE.COM

