Sacramento Theatre Company

Study Guide

Kings of America

A New Play By Sean Patrick Nill

Study Guide Materials Written and Compiled by Anna Miles

Sacramento Theatre Company

Mission Statement

The Sacramento Theatre Company (STC) strives to be the leader in integrating professional theatre with theatre arts education. STC produces engaging professional theatre, provides exceptional theatre training, and uses theatre as a tool for educational engagement.

Our History

The theatre was originally formed as the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre in 1942, an ad hoc troupe formed to entertain locally-stationed troops during World War II. On October 18, 1949, the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre acquired a space of its own with the opening of the Eaglet Theatre, named in honor of the Eagle, a Gold Rush-era theatre built largely of canvas that had stood on the city's riverfront in the 1850s. The Eaglet Theatre eventually became the Main Stage of the not-for-profit Sacramento Theatre Company, which evolved from a community theatre to professional theatre company in the 1980s. Now producing shows in three performance spaces, it is the oldest theatre company in Sacramento.

After five decades of use, the Main Stage was renovated as part of the H Street Theatre Complex Project. Features now include an expanded and modernized lobby and a Cabaret Stage for special performances. The facility also added expanded dressing rooms, laundry capabilities, and other equipment allowing the transformation of these performance spaces, used nine months of the year by STC, into backstage and administration places for three months each summer to be used by California Musical Theatre for Music Circus.

Sacramento Theatre Company can accommodate 292 patrons in the proscenium-style auditorium of its Main Stage, while the Pollock Stage offers a more intimate experience with only 87 seats in a black box-style theatre. Both provide good acoustics and sight-lines. This professional, Equity theatre presents seven professional productions per season with a reputation for excellent stage adaptations of classic literature. Three annual productions in the Cabaret Stage, which seats 100, round out the experience with high-quality Broadway musical revues.

The Young Professionals Conservatory, a training program for young theatre artists, was founded in 2003. The program, as well as the entire STC School of the Arts, is directed by Michele Hillen-Noufer.

For further information about the Sacramento Theatre Company please visit us online:

http://www.sactheatre.org

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Kings of America: Synopsis

Noah and his father, a self-described "history buff," always shared a love of American History - as his father's little "history goober," Noah began learning about the intricacies of the American Presidency and the great, flawed men who have held the position over the decades from the minute he was born. But when his father suddenly disappears from his life, Noah's interest in the collective Presidents of the United States turns into an obsession; an obsession which manifests in nightly visits from the Presidents in his dreams. Noah, once a happy, high-achieving student, begins to lose sleep, lose interest in his studies, and act out against his mother and teachers. When he is caught falling asleep in class, Noah is sent to an adolescent therapist.

At first reluctant to speak with the therapist, Noah finally concedes to describing some of the dreams that haunt him. In the first dream, Noah meets Teddy and Franklin D. Roosevelt, who mysteriously keep calling for a man named Arthur, and who speak about the recently elected Barack Obama - an election Noah is particularly hopeful about as a black American teenager. In this dream, Noah describes and defends this hope, despite being unable (or unwilling) to articulate it in his waking life with his therapist. When the two presidents try to make Noah choose which one of them would be the best president, Noah wakes up, and his therapist encourages him to speak with his mother about his feelings, and to read the book his father gave him: "The President's Almanac."

After his therapy session, Noah takes himself to see a movie. When he nods off in the movie theater, he is joined by Presidents Jimmy Carter and John F. Kennedy, who lead Noah to consider the performative and personality elements of the American presidency, until a movie theater attendant finally wakes Noah up and forces him to leave.

Back at home, Noah continues to resist his mother's attempts to connect when he refuses to open his bedroom door to her knocking. Her desperate pleas lace their way into his next dream, a conversation (and chess game) with Presidents Andrew Jackson and Abraham Lincoln. As Noah continues working with his therapist, reckoning with his grief and his mother's concern, and struggling to stay awake and stay studious in school, he encounters six more presidents in three more dreams: Bill Clinton, Thomas Jefferson, Woodrow Wilson, Richard Nixon, George Washington and George W. Bush, all of whom offer Noah new insight into himself and his father's absence. By gradually accepting help from his therapist, Noah learns to reconcile his grief over his father by carefully listening to what exactly his dreams are trying to tell him. Noah finally brings himself to read the book his father gave him, and begins to imagine the possibility of overall forgiveness. The play ends with Noah and his mother, finally expressing to each other the feelings and loss they both share as they pledge to help each other move forward.

Kings of America: Characters

Noah Garrison- A black male teenager, somewhere between the ages of 15 and 18. He is a modern high school student, once academically high-achieving, but now growing uninterested in his studies and becoming increasingly preoccupied with the strange dreams he has been having of late.

Therapist- Noah's therapist, who attempts to help Noah navigate his dreams and his father's sudden departure from his life.

Movie Attendant- a young employee at a movie theater.

Pollster- A phone administrator of political polls.

Mr. Hallast- Noah's high school History teacher.

Mother- Noah's mother, who is struggling to help her son.

President Theodore Roosevelt- The 26th President of the United States*

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt- The 32nd President of the United States, and distant cousin to President Theodore Roosevelt*

President Jimmy Carter- The 39th President of the United States*

President John F. Kennedy- The 35th President of the United States*

President Andrew Jackson- The 7th President of the United States*

President Abraham Lincoln- The 16th President of the United States*

President William (Bill) Clinton- The 42nd President of the United States*

President Thomas Jefferson- The 3rd President of the United States*

President Woodrow Wilson- The 28th President of the United States*

President Richard Nixon- The 37th President of the United States*

President George Washington- The 1st President of the United States*

President George W. Bush- The 43rd President of the United States*

***for more information on the Presidents mentioned in the play, see "*The 'Kings' Themselves:* An Overview of the Presidents Featured in *Kings of America*" in this study guide**

About the Playwright: Sean Patrick Nill

Sean Patrick Nill is a playwright and actor from Sacramento, CA. He is currently an Artistic Associate at B Street Theatre, where his play, *Tiny Resurrections* was produced last May. His plays have been produced by Dramatist Guild's Footlight Series (*Children of Yorick),* CSU Sacramento (*Children of Yorick),* Torrent Theatre (*An Ordinary Woman),* M.T. Pockets Theatre (*An Ordinary Woman),* and Manhattan Repertory Theatre *(Hair of the Dog).* His play *An Ordinary Woman* was published in the 2017 edition of "STAGE IT! TEN MINUTE PLAYS".

On why he chose to write *Kings of America*: “Gore Vidal famously called this country, 'The United States of Amnesia'. I agree whole-heartedly with his criticism. It seems that our country continuously goes through a vicious cycle toward progress, a cycle of partisan attacks, twisting of facts for political benefit, and a need to either glorify or condemn the Office of the President. We never seem to learn the lessons that would make our political process easier, and infused with true equality and civility. I began writing this play in 2014, at a time when much of the progress I felt this country had made was being mocked, belittled, or flat out ignored. Many people cited leaders of the past as proof of our countries demise, and I quickly grew tired of the historical inaccuracies. I wanted to reveal these profound figures for what they were: men; flawed men, full of hypocrisies that history ignores. It began as a comedy, a series of *Saturday Night Live*-like vignettes. But after many rewrites, the play became a genuine conversation between a young man going through a tremendous ordeal and the historical figures that he blames for his predicament. The Office of the President is the most unique position in the world, and the hardships and ordeals these men have gone through is something that we as citizens do not understand fully. And we cannot condemn nor glorify until we do so. That's how this play was born and formed.”

Sean Patrick Nill and Sacramento Theatre Company

Sacramento Theatre Company's mission statement reads:

"Sacramento Theatre Company (STC) strives to be the leader in integrating professional theatre with theatre arts education. STC produces engaging professional theatre, provides exceptional theatre training, and uses theatre as a tool for educational engagement."

Sean Patrick Nill is living proof of this mission and of STC's truly exceptional theatre training - he is deeply grateful for the consistent trust the company has placed in him and his professional journey, first as an actor and now as a playwright.

Although not an alumnus of STC's Young Professionals Conservatory, the company still had a major hand in Sean's development as an artist. After finding success in educational theater during his first two years at CSU Sacramento, Sean entered his junior year in 2012 eager to begin a professional acting career - but he was unsure where to start. Sacramento Theatre Company gave him his first professional opportunity when they cast him as "The Prompter" in William Luce's *Barrymore;* an opportunity which launched a wonderful and fruitful professional relationship. Since his Sacramento Theatre Company premier, Sean has appeared in nine shows with STC, and his success with the company propelled his success with other theatre companies in Sacramento, Los Angeles, and the Bay Area.

Now, as a playwright, STC is once again taking a chance on Sean. STC committed to a workshop of *Kings of America* in 2015, and is now excited to give Sean's play a full production.

On his experiences working with STC, Sean Nill says: "Executive Producing Director Michael Laun has, time and time again, believed in my work. The Sacramento Theatre Company knows how to nourish young talent, whether in acting or in playwriting or in directing or in technical work. They are an excellent provider of theatre education and I am proud to be an affiliated artist for so long."

The "Kings" Themselves:
An Overview of the Presidents Featured in *Kings of America*

By: Anna Miles and Jonathan Fisher

Kings of America tells the story of a contemporary young man who experiences encounters with American Presidents old and new alike, from George Washington to George W. Bush. But who exactly were these powerful men who visit Noah in his dreams? Read on to find out a little bit about each of the presidents Noah converses with in Sean Nill's *Kings of America*.

President Theodore Roosevelt, The 26th President of the United States

President Theodore Roosevelt was born in New York City on October 27, 1858 and served for two terms as President from 1901-1909. Prior to becoming President, Roosevelt served as the 33rd governor of New York from 1899-1900 and as the 25th Vice President of the United States for seven months in 1901 under President William McKinley. Following McKinley's assassination, Roosevelt became president at age 42, and remains the youngest president to this day.

Theodore Roosevelt was known as both a leader of the Republican Party at the time and of the "Progressive Movement" or the "Progressive Era," which stressed cleansing government of corrupt politicians and regulating corporate monopolies through antitrust laws. Eventually becoming frustrated with the conservatism of the Republican Party, Theodore Roosevelt founded the "Progressive Party," nicknamed the "Bull-Moose Party," after his Presidential term in 1912.

His legacy as president includes the "Square Deal," a domestic program focused on fairness to average citizens, the breakdown of corporate trusts, railroad regulations, and pure food and drugs. President Theodore Roosevelt prioritized wildlife and land conservation, and as part of this initiative he created many of the country's national parks, forests, and monuments, as well as began construction on the Panama Canal. Born a sickly child, Roosevelt highly valued strenuous physical activity as a means to physical health. Though the media often nicknamed Theodore Roosevelt "Teddy," he despised the name. Despite this, the name stuck, and supposedly is the namesake for the famous "Teddy Bear," created by Morris Michtom in the US during Roosevelt's presidency.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, The 32nd President of the United States

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (or FDR as he is commonly known) was born on January 30, 1882 in Hyde Park, New York and served as President from 1933 until his death in 1945. Roosevelt entered politics in 1910, serving in the New York State Senate and then as Assistant Secretary of the Navy under President Woodrow Wilson. In 1921, his legs became permanently paralyzed after he contracted a debilitating illness, and despite believing his political career was over, he was elected Governor of New York in 1928, which he held until 1933.

Roosevelt defeated incumbent Herbert Hoover in a landslide to win the 1932 presidential election, the first of four presidential elections he would win. Taking office at the height of the Great Depression, Roosevelt used his first 100 days to take drastic federal action in the form of legislation and executive orders that instituted the New Deal, a series of programs whose goals included creating government jobs for the unemployed; stimulating economic growth; regulating banks, transportation and the stock market; and growing labor unions. His support for the repeal of Prohibition in 1933 helped him to a landslide re-election, which was followed by a rapidly improving economy.

With the commencement of World War II in 1939, Roosevelt was determined to remain officially neutral while supporting the UK and China financially, but the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 thrust the US into the war, and led to his decision to intern over 100,00 Japanese-American citizens, and to initiate research into the creation of the atomic bomb. His active military leadership and diplomacy led to the eventual defeat of the Axis Powers, though his health declined severely during the war, and he died on April 12, 1945, 11 weeks into his fourth term. He is often considered, along with George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, to be among the greatest of United States Presidents.

President Jimmy Carter, The 39th President of the United States

President James Earl (Jimmy) Carter Jr. was born in Plains, Georgia on October 1, 1924 and served as President from 1977-1981. Prior to his presidency, he served in the US Navy, the Georgia State Senate from 1963-1967, and as Governor of Georgia from 1971-1975.

At the domestic level, Carter pardoned Vietnam War draft evaders and established the Department of Energy and the Department of Education, and enacted a national energy policy that supported conservation, price control and new technologies, while contending with persistent economic "stagflation", which was a combination of high inflation and unemployment and slow economic growth. Abroad, Carter acted as a peacemaker, presiding over the Camp David accords between Egypt and Israel, the Panama Canal Treaties and the return of the Panama Canal Zone to Panama, and the second round of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks with the USSR.

His early presidential successes were overshadowed by his late-term struggles, including the 1979-81 Iran hostage crisis, the 1979 energy crisis, the Three Mile Island nuclear meltdown and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, in response to which he ended the detente with the Soviet Union and boycotted the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow.

While he won the nomination at the 1980 DNC, he was defeated in the general election of 1980 by Ronald Reagan. Since his presidency, Carter has remained highly active in the advancement of human rights, especially through his Carter Foundation and Habitat for Humanity, and he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. In 2012, he surpassed Herbert Hoover as the longest-retired president in U.S. history, and is generally considered by historians to be a below-average president.

President John F. Kennedy, The 35th President of the United States

President John F. Kennedy, commonly referred to by his initials JFK, was born to the famous and wealthy Kennedy family (often described as “American royalty) in Brookline, Massachusetts on May 29, 1917 and served as Democratic President of the United States from January 20, 1961 until his assassination on November 22, 1963. Before serving as president, Kennedy graduated from Harvard University in 1940, served in the Navy during World War II, and served in Congress first as a Massachusetts Representative and later as a junior Senator from 1947-1960.

JFK’s time in office is distinguished largely by the tensions with Communist states known as the Cold War, which included the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962; his short term was filled with threats of global nuclear conflict. Domestically, JFK helped form the Peace Corps in the United States and notably supported the Civil Rights Movement.

On November 22, 1963, while on a political trip to Dallas, Texas, John F. Kennedy was shot and killed by, the FBI concluded, Lee Harvey Oswald.

While he was mostly a beloved political and public figure (the country at large taken by his charm and good looks, he came in third behind Martin Luther King Jr. and Mother Teresa in Gallup’s List of Widely Admired People of the 20th Century), John F. Kennedy’s presidency was often drenched in controversy. JFK was known as a playboy in his single days in the 1940s, and while married to the fashion icon Jackie Kennedy Onassis and while serving as President, rumors of extramarital affairs with many women, including movie star Marilyn Monroe, threatened to tarnish his reputation. In addition, Kennedy suffered from poor health and was diagnosed with Addison’s disease in 1947, but kept this fact largely secret from public knowledge.

President Andrew Jackson, The 7th President of the United States

President Andrew Jackson was born on March 16, 1767 in the Waxhaw Settlement between the North Carolina and South Carolina Provinces and served as president from March 1829-March 1937. Prior to becoming president, Jackson served as a representative for Tennessee in both the US House of Representatives and the US Senate and as an appointed justice on the Tennessee Supreme Court. He became a war hero when he became colonel of the Tennessee militia during the War of 1812 over the British.

When Jackson ran for President in 1824, no candidate won an electoral majority. The House of Representatives appointed John Quincy Adams as president- as a response to this appointment, which became known as the "corrupt bargain," Andrew Jackson and his supporters founded the Democratic Party. Jackson once more challenged Adams in 1828, running on a platform of "populism," or an appeal to the "common man" as opposed to the "privileged political elites," this time winning by a landslide majority.

One of Jackson's most notable acts as president included completely paying off the national debt in 1835- but despite this, his presidential acts are considered controversial at best. Jackson spent a great deal of time early in his term responding to the "Petticoat Affair" or the "Eaton Affair," a major point of Washington gossip concerning his Vice President John C. Calhoun's wife Floride Calhoun, and her distaste for John H. Eaton's wife Peggy Eaton, whom she alleged was sexually promiscuous. This eventually caused Jackson to demand that all of his Cabinet members resign in 1831. In addition, Jackson's term marked the beginning of what is commonly known as the "spoils system" in American politics, a practice in which the winning political party assigns government jobs to its supporters and members in exchange for loyalty to the party.

President Andrew Jackson aggressively opposed abolitionism, and in 1830, signed the Indian Removal Act, which relocated Native Americans from the South to designated Indian Territory on what came to be known as the "Trail of Tears."

President Abraham Lincoln, The 16th President of the United States

President Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809 in Sinking Spring Farm, Kentucky and served as the 16th President of the United States from March 1861 until his assassination in April 1865. Lincoln is best known as the president who presided over the American Civil War and the abolition of slavery in the United States.

Abraham Lincoln began his political career when he taught himself law and became a lawyer in Illinois, and later served in the Illinois House of Representatives for eight years followed by a term in the US House of Representatives. While in the House, Lincoln promoted the rapid modernization of the US economy. From early on in his political career, Lincoln spoke out against slavery, and while serving as president, both his Gettysburg Address and the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 have become American historical icons of liberty and equal rights. Lincoln is responsible for pushing the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution through Congress, which permanently outlawed slavery country-wide. In response to his anti-slavery measures, the Southern, slaveholding states formed the Confederate States of American and attempted to secede from the Union, prompting the American Civil War.

On April 14, 1865, only five days after Confederate general Robert E. Lee surrendered marking a Union victory over the Civil War, President Lincoln was shot by Confederate sympathizer and actor John Wilkes Booth while attending a play at Ford's Theatre in Washington DC. Abraham Lincoln died the next day.

President William (Bill) Clinton, The 42nd President of the United States

President William Jefferson Clinton, better known as Bill Clinton, was born on August 19, 1946 in Hope, Arkansas and served as the Democratic President of the United States from 1993-2001. Prior to his presidency Clinton served as Governor of Arkansas from 1979-1981 and from 1983-1992.

Although a member of the Democratic Party, Clinton was considered a "New Democrat," and ideology that was noticeable more centrist that previous Democratic philosophies, which means a general opposition to political changes which would lean either too far right or too far left. Clinton defeated the incumbent Republican candidate in 1992 and was the third youngest president (and the first from the large "Baby Boomer" generation) ever to serve in office.

His presidency is notable as the longest period of peacetime economic expansion in American history and resulted in the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement, welfare reform, and the State Children's Health Insurance Program. In 1996, Clinton became the first Democrat since FDR to be elected to a second term.

While known for many political accomplishments, Bill Clinton's personal life often eclipsed his professional life in the public sphere. Before he was elected, Clinton appeared on the popular Arsenio Hall Show, where he captured the imagination of the nation's young people and people of color by playing the saxophone, prompting some conservative critics to nickname him "the MTV president." During his presidency, in 1998, Clinton was impeached by the House of Representatives for perjury and obstruction of justice following an alleged extramarital affair with White House employee Monica Lewinsky, but he was acquitted by the US Senate in 1999 and was able to serve his full term as president.

Despite the scandal, Clinton left office with the highest end-of-office approval rating of any US president since World War II. Bill Clinton entered the national spotlight once more when his wife Hillary ran for President on the Democratic ticket in 2016.

President Thomas Jefferson, The 3rd President of the United States

President Thomas Jefferson was born in colonial Virginia on April 13, 1743 and served as president from 1801-1809. Jefferson is one of the Founding Fathers of the United States and the principal author of the Declaration of Independence.

Before being elected to the presidency, Jefferson served as Virginia's representative in the Continental Congress; wartime Governor of Virginia from 1779-1781; United States Minister to France in May, 1785; the first Secretary of State under George Washington from 1790-1793; and as the second Vice President of the United States under John Adams from 1797-1801.

As President, Jefferson actively pursued the nation's shipping and trade interests in the rest of the world, particularly against piracy and the British, and organized the Louisiana Purchase from France, which nearly doubled the nation's territory. After his re-election in 1804, he faced several difficulties and controversies, including the trail of his former Vice President Aaron Burr for the death of Alexander Hamilton; his implementation of the Embargo Act of 1807 in response to British threats, which diminished U.S. foreign trade; and the beginnings of Indian removal to the Louisiana Territory from the original colonial land holdings.

Jefferson was a master of many skills and disciplines, including classical architecture, philosophy, mathematics and linguistics, and was a prolific letter writer. He founded the University of Virginia after his retirement from public office, and he died on July 4th, 1826. Modern scholars and historians primarily take a positive view of Jefferson and his presidency, though his private life often comes under scrutiny, particularly his ownership of hundreds of slaves throughout his lifetime and his relationship with his slave Sally Hemings, with whom he had at least one child.

President Woodrow Wilson, The 28th President of the United States

President Thomas Woodrow Wilson was born on December 28, 1856 in Staunton, Virginia and served as president from 1913-1921. Prior to his presidency, he served as the president of Princeton University from 1902-1910 and as the Governor of New Jersey until his presidential inauguration.

As president, he enacted numerous progressive legislative efforts, including the Federal Reserve Act, the Federal Trade Commission Act, and the Clayton Antitrust Act, as well as the Revenue Act of 1913 which introduced an income tax. At the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Wilson kept the U.S. neutral while more aggressively pursuing national interest in the Mexican Civil War, and became the first Democrat since Andrew Jackson to be re-elected to a second term in 1916.

In April 1917, Wilson asked Congress to declare on Germany in response to their resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, which led the U.S. into the war effort. Wilson instituted the Selective Service Act as a military draft, as well as war bonds and agricultural regulations to contribute financially to the war effort. In 1918, Wilson issued his *Fourteen Points*, a series of principles intended to help end the war and, after the 1919 armistice, traveled to Paris to sign the Treaty of Versailles and promote the formation of a League of Nations, a precursor to the modern United Nations. Though the proposal was well received abroad, he was unable to obtain Congressional permission for United States membership.

After his return from Europe, Wilson suffered a severe stroke and his wife and staffers handled many of his duties as President. His bid for re-election at the 1920 Democratic National Convention was a failure, and he died in 1924, after the end of his presidency in 1921. Modern scholarship is generally kind to Wilson and his political skills and ideas, though his private racial prejudices have colored opinion of his character in recent years.

President Richard Nixon, The 37th President of the United States

President Richard Milhous Nixon was born in Yorba Linda, CA on January 9, 1913 and served as President from 1969 until his resignation in 1974. Prior to his presidency, he served in the US Navy Reserve during World War II, and was elected to the House of Representatives in 1946 and the Senate in 1950, where he gained a reputation as an anti-communist. He then served as the Vice President under Dwight Eisenhower from 1953-1961, but was defeated for the both the presidency by John F Kennedy in 1960 and the Governorship of California by Pat Brown in 1962.

As President, for which he defeated Hubert Humphrey in 1968, Nixon enjoyed a reputation as a skilled foreign diplomat, establishing diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China and initiating detente and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with the USSR in 1972 and ending American involvement in the Vietnam War in 1973. On the home front, Nixon ended the military draft, enforced desegregation of Southern schools, established the Environment Protection Agency and presided over the Apollo 11 moon landing, all leading to his landslide 1972 re-election.

His second term was marked by controversy, starting with his order to resupply Israeli forces in the Yom Kippur War, which led to a U.S. oil crisis. By late 1973, the Watergate scandal had eroded most of his remaining political and popular support. Facing almost certain impeachment by Congress, Nixon resigned the presidency on August 9th, 1974 and was pardoned by his successor Gerald Ford. He died in 1994, after suffering a stroke at the age of 81. Because historians often have difficulty contending with the contradictions between Nixon's political savvy and his moral and criminal controversies, Nixon is considered a complicated part of the Presidential legacy of the United States.

President George Washington, The 1st President of the United States

President George Washington was born on February 22, 1732 in the British American Colony of Virginia and served as the country's first ever president from April 1789 until March 1797. He was known not only as the United States' first president but also as one of the country's Founding Fathers and a leader of the American Revolutionary War. In 1775, Washington was appointed commander-in-chief of the Continental Army against the British by the Second Continental Congress and was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

After the Revolutionary Army secured victory against the British, Washington resigned as commander in a gesture of commitment to American republicanism and democracy. He presided over the Constitutional Convention in 1787 and was unanimously elected president by the Electoral College in the first two national elections. However, as further proof of his commitment to the American federal system, Washington established the two-term maximum, which existed first as tradition and later as law with the passage of the 22nd Amendment, when he voluntarily retired from office after eight years.

Washington was consistently non-partisan and was widely admired for his leadership skills and his honesty; the most well-known myth about George Washington tells the story of a six-year-old Washington who used a new hatchet to chop down his father's cherry tree, and who later "could not tell a lie" about what he had done. In actuality, this parable was entirely invented by one of the president's first biographers. In Kings of America, Noah memorized and quotes George Washington's famous "Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation," which a school-aged Washington copied from a Jesuit French manual as part of a writing exercise.

President George W. Bush, The 43rd President of the United States

President George Walker Bush was born in New Haven, Connecticut on July 6, 1946 and served as President from 2001-2009. Prior to his presidency, he served as Governor of Texas from 1995-2000. He is the eldest son of George H.W. Bush, the 41st President of the United States, making him the second president to follow in the footsteps of his father to the office, after John Quincy Adams.

His election in 2000 was mired in controversy, and he became the fourth president to be elected with an electoral majority but with fewer popular votes than his opponent Al Gore. His presidency ultimately was defined by the Bush Doctrine, a foreign policy instigated by the September 11th terrorist attacks that occurred eight months into his first term, and which was defined by an international "War on Terror", which included the 2001 war in Afghanistan and the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Domestically, he pursued policy on the economy, health care, education and Social Security reform, while prohibiting same-sex marriage by Constitutional amendment, banning partial-birth abortions, and signing broad tax cuts, the No Child Left Behind Act, the Patriot Act, Medicare prescription benefits for seniors and AIDS relief program funding.

Bush was re-elected in 2004 after another close race, and his second term was marked by criticism from all sides over his handling of the Iraq War, the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf States and national debates over use of torture and surveillance of U.S. citizens. Near the end of his presidency, the U.S. entered its longest recession since WWII, which prompted institution of economic programs to help the financial system stay afloat. As president, Bush enjoyed the highest recorded approval rating in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, and one of the lowest recorded approval rating during the 2008 financial crisis. Among historians, his presidency is generally considered near the bottom of United States presidencies.

Study Guide Questions: *Kings of America*

By Anna Miles

1.) What are some of the major themes you saw in *Kings of America*?

2.) Pick one of the themes you identified and write about how you feel it applies to our current political climate.

3.) Do you remember where you were/what you were doing when President Barack Obama as elected? How did you feel about it and why?

4.) What do you think works well about the United States' current government system, and what do you think could be improved?

5.) As a young person, do you feel like your interests are represented enough in the national political dialogue? Why or why not?

6.) Think of the facts and/or stories that instantly pop into your mind when you think of each of the presidents mentioned in *Kings of America* (i.e., George Washington chopping down the cherry tree, or Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address). Why do you think those stories are the ones that came to mind? How do we choose which stories we tell more than others?

7.) In *Kings of America*, Noah is struggling to move forward after a great personal loss. Have you ever experienced a loss, big or small? What coping mechanisms did you use to move forward? What advice would you give to Noah?

8.) *Kings of America* compares the US Presidents to kings - do you think the President is like a king (or queen)? Why or why not? Is the president like a monarch in some ways, but not in others?

Study Guide Questions: Engage With the Play

By Anna Miles

Take charge of your theatre-going experience and make it your own by asking yourself questions before, during, and after watching a play.

Questions to ask before the play:

Do you know anything about the play? If so, what do you know?

In General:

When you think about "theatre," what impressions come to mind? What does "theatre" mean to you?

What do you expect your experience to be when you watch a play? Do you expect to be bored? Excited? Engaged? Curious? Angry? Tired?

Questions to ask after the play:

How did the play live up to your expectations? Did it turn out the way you thought it would? Was your knowledge of the play correct?

Were you able to follow the story?

Which part of the story did you most respond to? What themes and images jumped out at you?

Which character did you most relate to? Why?

In General:

How did this production change or confirm your original impressions of "theatre"?

How did your experience watching the play differ from how you expected it would go?

In your own words, how would you summarize the plot of the play? How is the plot different from the story, or the thematic implications, in the play?

Did you feel the story was relevant to your life? How and why?

Did you feel the story said something about our society, or about the world at large? If so, what?

Do you feel this story is an important one to tell and keep telling? How and why?

What kind of stories do you most respond to?

Theatre Etiquette

-Arrive at the theater on time.

-Visit the restroom before the performance begins.

-Turn off your cell phone. Do not speak on the phone or text during the performance.

-Pay attention to announcements that are made prior to the show about the rules of the theater you are attending and the location of the fire exits.

-Don't speak during the performance unless you are encouraged by the performers to participate.

-Remember that the Overture (introductory music) in musical theater is part of the performance, so be quiet when it begins.

-Do not take pictures during the performance. It can be very distracting to the actors and can cause a mishap. It can also be a violation of an actor's contract.

-Remain in your seat for the entire performance. If you must leave, exit during intermission. In an emergency, wait for an appropriate break in the show. It is rude to get up in the middle of a quiet moment.

-Do not eat or drink in the theater.

-Do not put your feet up on the seats or balcony and do not kick the seat in front of you.

-Don't put or throw anything on the stage.

-Do laugh when the performance is funny.

-Do applaud when it is appropriate during the performance.

-Do applaud when the performance is over... this tells the performers and crew that you appreciate their work.

-Stand and applaud if you really thought the show was great (a standing ovation).

-Do not whistle, stomp your feet, or scream out to the performers except for a Bravo or Brava.

Additional Reading/Research Material

The Presidents (whitehouse.gov)
https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/Presidents

Presidents of the United States: Resources Guide (The Library of Congress)
http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/presidents/

US Presidents (The Miller Center)
https://millercenter.org/president

Presidents (The National Archives)
https://www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/research/alic/presidents.html