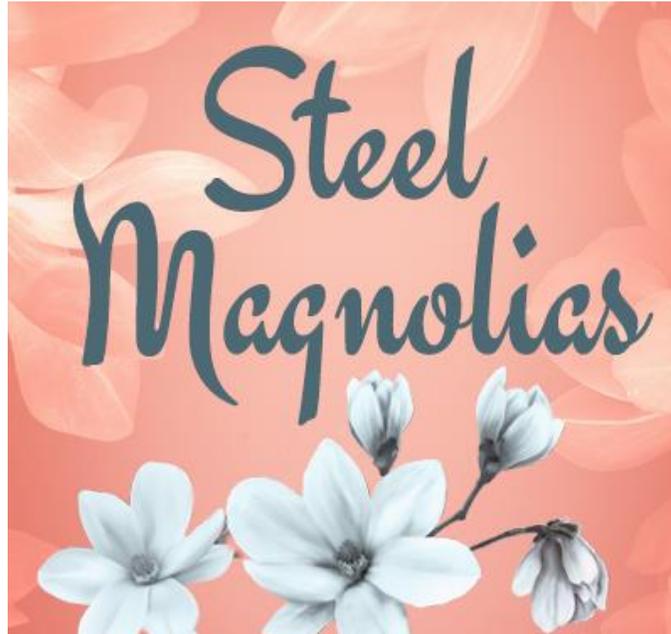


# **Sacramento Theatre Company**

Study Guide



## **Steel Magnolias**

By: Robert Harling

**Study Guide Materials 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>**

# Steel Magnolias

## Sacramento Theatre Company Production Study Guide

Study Guide Materials Published with Permission from New Stage Theatre and The Alliance Theatre ([www.newstagetheatre.com](http://www.newstagetheatre.com), [www.alliancetheatre.org](http://www.alliancetheatre.org))

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\*Written by Anna Miles for the Sacramento Theatre Company

Study Guide Materials Compiled by Anna Miles

## The Playwright: Robert Harling

Robert Harling was born in Louisiana in 1951 and was raised in Nachitoches, Louisiana, a town that bears a strong resemblance to Chinquapin Parish, where the action of *Steel Magnolias* takes place.

Harling studied acting at Louisiana's Northwestern State University and law at Tulane University Law School. In addition to theater and law, he also had a passion for music and was even in a band while in law school. Shortly after graduating from law school, he decided that his true passion was for acting.

Robert moved to New York in 1978 and sold tickets on Broadway and worked at Kentucky Fried Chicken to support himself, but he still managed to keep acting, if only as a hobby. He consistently continued auditioning for acting jobs in New York, and actually acted in quite a few commercials.

His play *Steel Magnolias* is based on the tragic loss of his sister, Susan Harling Robinson. Like the character Shelby, she died as a result of diabetes-related complications following the birth of her only child, also named Robert. Distraught by his sister's death, Harling threw himself into a surge of creativity, and, ten days later, he emerged from his room with the initial draft of *Steel Magnolias*: a play he has called an homage to his sister.

*Steel Magnolias* opened originally off-Broadway at the WPA Theatre in New York City on March 28, 1987. The production transferred to the Lucille Lortel Theatre on June 19, 1987. The play closed on February 25, 1990 after 1,126 performances. The Broadway debut opened at the Lyceum Theatre officially on April 4, 2005.

Following the stage success of *Steel Magnolias*, Harling wrote the screenplay for the film version which was released in 1989. Harling played the small role of a minister in the movie. He also wrote the screenplays for *Soapdish* (1991), *The First Wives Club* (1996), *The Evening Star* (1996), and *Laws of Attraction* (2004).

## **Synopsis: *Steel Magnolias***

### **Act One, Scene 1**

When the play opens, we are introduced to Truvy, who is getting her hair done by Annelle. Annelle has recently finished beauty school and is seeking employment in Truvy's Salon. Seeing potential in Annelle, Truvy hires her.

We then meet Clairee, one of Truvy's customers, who is as curious as Truvy about Annelle's past. Annelle leaves to get the coffee, and Shelby arrives for her appointment with Truvy; we begin to see the dynamics of the relationships in the salon. When Annelle returns, she is assigned to do the hair of the next client to arrive: Shelby's mother, M'Lynn. However, Annelle is apprehensive about doing the bride's mother's hair because she does not want to make any mistakes.

It is clear that Shelby and M'Lynn have a typical mother-daughter relationship. M'Lynn seems a little overbearing because she is worried about Shelby's health and well-being. The plot thickens as all the women uncover a secret about Shelby. Shelby's focus remains on her big day as Ouiser Boudreaux enters the salon having a fit. Ouiser turns her attention to Annelle with the desire to find out some more information about her. Shelby then invites Annelle to the wedding and Truvy offers a very kind gesture to Annelle.

### **Act One, Scene 2**

It's the Saturday before Christmas and a few months post the wedding. Shelby returns home with some shocking news, leaving everyone worried and M'Lynn in disagreement with Shelby. Annelle has found religion and taken up arts and crafts. Ouiser is upset about the townspeople and tourists parking in her yard for the festival, which distracts her enough to prevent her from being concerned about Shelby setting her up with Owen, an old flame of hers.

### **Act Two, Scene 1**

One and a half years later we find the ladies in the salon, their usual gathering place, gossiping about the latest news. M'Lynn and Shelby have been at odds about most of Shelby's personal decisions, but the mother and daughter have nonetheless been hiding something from the other women.

### **Act Two Scene 2**

Annelle, who is experiencing a life-changing event, is styling Ouiser's hair. At the opening of the play, Annelle was quiet and secretive; but now, she is warm, open and happily in love. M'Lynn enters the scene discussing Shelby's medical battles. This scene showcases the growth of all the characters: despite the serious and life-changing events in all of the characters' lives, the playwright shows that the bonds of friendships can withstand these storms of life, albeit with a bittersweet ending.

## **Characters: *Steel Magnolias***

**Truvy Jones-** Truvy is in her late thirties and owns a hair salon, which is the setting for the play. She is quite the gossip, and loves to be in everyone's personal affairs. Her two sons are Louie, who attends Louisiana State University, and Poot, who is to work with her cousin in Baltimore. She is married to a man named Spud Jones who she describes as a "lazy old man." Truvy treats Annelle as a daughter, even though they are not related. She also loves listening to other people's romantic experiences.

**Annelle Dupuy-Desoto-** Annelle is young, between eighteen and twenty-five. She is new in town, and seeks out a job as a hair stylist at Truvy's salon and a room in a boarding house due to her lack of money. Annelle is a shy, private, and creative individual. She is kind and gracious towards the women she meets in the beauty salon.

**Shelby Eatenton-Latcherie-** Shelby, mid-twenties, is the daughter of M'Lynn Eatenton. At the start of the play, she is about to get married to Jackson Latcherie. She has diabetes, but does not want her medical background to define her nor does she want to rely on others. She is a pediatric nurse and she wants to have children. However, it is not recommended for her to have children because of her medical conditions. She wants to have a very romantic and peaceful marriage instead of the hectic relationship that her parents have.

**Ouiser Bourdeaux-** Ouiser is an older woman in her late fifties to early sixties, often described as "bitter" or "annoyed." The things she values the most are her dog Rhett and her property. She is constantly arguing with M'Lynn's husband Drum over property, but does have a deep and genuine concern for Shelby and her health. Even though she speaks poorly to the other women sometimes, she still considers them her closest companions. She has been married twice and has children.

**M'Lynn Eatenton-** M'Lynn is the mother of Shelby. She also has two sons named Tommy and Jonathan, Shelby's brothers. She is around 40 years old. She is also the wife of Drum Eatenton, whom she believes is "crazy." She is the administrator of the Mental Guidance Center. Her main priority is her daughter Shelby; she takes great care of her daughter, almost to the point of becoming overprotective. On the surface, she appears strong and collected, but deep down she is fragile.

**Clairee Belcher-** Clairee is the mayor's widow and the owner of the local radio station. She is older, around her late fifties. She is known for her "smart mouth" and "sweet tooth." She often puts herself down, but tends to remain playful whenever a serious topic arises. She is the only woman in the play without children, but she maintains close ties with her relatives.

## **The Setting: *Steel Magnolias***

Robert Harling sets the play in the fictional parish and town of Chinquapin, Louisiana. Chinquapin is the name for a type of fish and a particular breed of oak tree. Harling based Chinquapin on his Louisiana hometown, Natchitoches (pronounced NACK-uh-dish), which is named after the Naktosh Indians, whose name means "Chinquapin Eaters." Natchitoches was also the first settlement in the Louisiana territory. *Steel Magnolias* is partially based on the events surrounding Harling's sister's death and on the people he knew in his hometown.

The state of Louisiana is divided into 64 "parishes," in the same way that 48 other states, such as Mississippi, are divided into counties. The only other state not divided into counties is Alaska, which is divided into boroughs and census areas.

# Diabetes and Dialysis: An Overview

## DIABETES

Diabetes is a disease that causes the body not to be able to produce or properly use insulin. Scientists have not yet discovered the cause of Diabetes.

### The Three Types of Diabetes

Type 1-When the pancreas stop making insulin.

Type 2-When the cells in the body can't use insulin correctly.

Gestational Diabetes-The temporary form of insulin resistance that usually occurs halfway through pregnancy.

### Diabetes During Pregnancy

Having diabetes during a pregnancy can increase the chances of the patient developing preeclampsia and depression.

- Preeclampsia is a condition in which the patient develops high blood pressure and an excess of protein in the urine during the second half of their pregnancy.

- Depression can cause the patient to be too tired to manage their diabetes and care for themselves or a child.

During a pregnancy, a diabetic is at risk of having **low blood glucose, also called hypoglycemia.**

### Symptoms of Low Blood Glucose (Hypoglycemia)

- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Sweating
- Weakness
- Crankiness
- Headache
- Increased heartbeat
- Fainting
- Coma

**High blood glucose, or hyperglycemia,** can happen when a patient does not have enough insulin or when their body is unable to use insulin correctly.

### Symptoms of High Blood Glucose (Hyperglycemia)

- Increased thirst

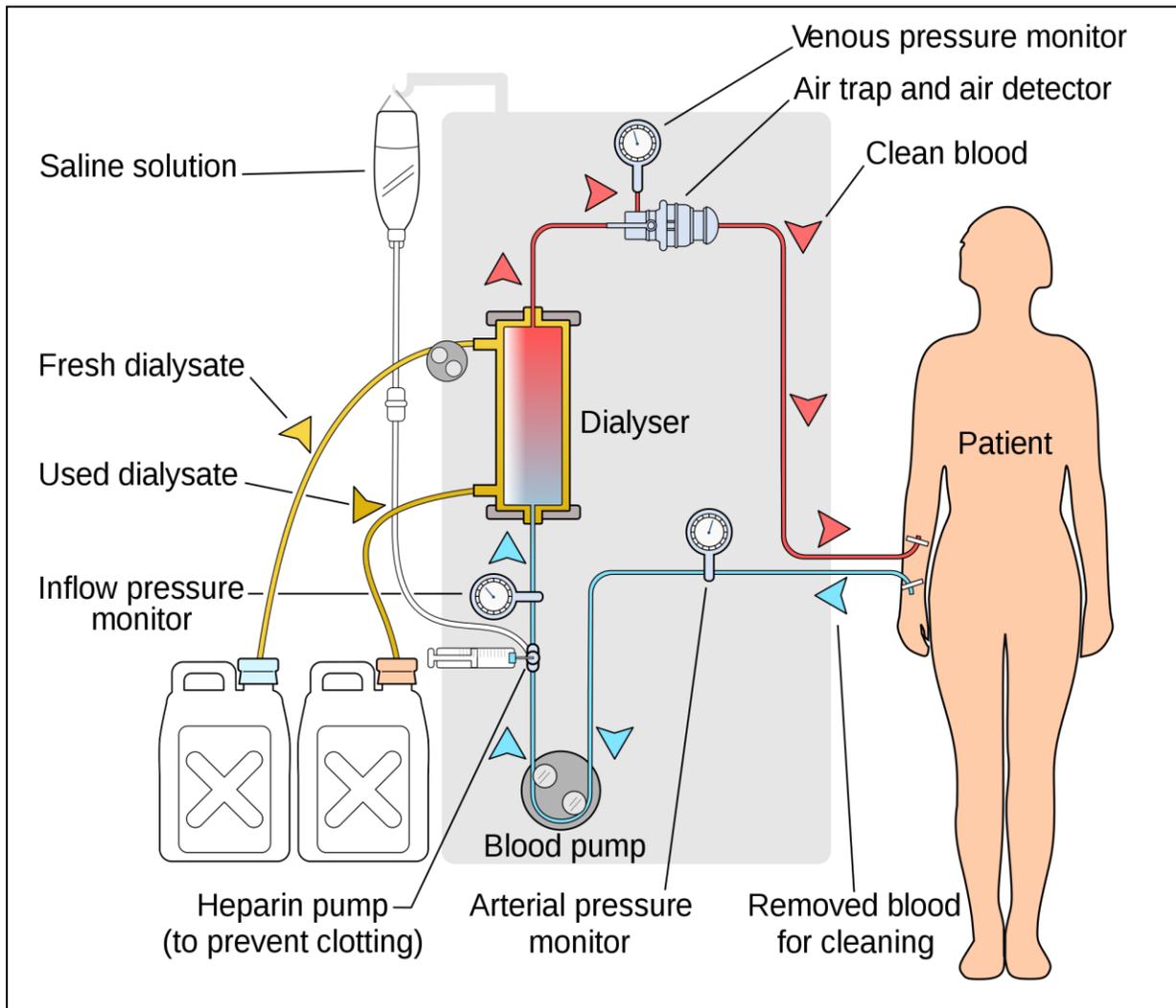
Frequent urination  
Fatigue  
Nausea, vomiting, stomach pain

## DIALYSIS

Dialysis is a process for removing waste and excess water from the blood and is used primarily as an article replacement for lost kidney functions.

**The kidneys** are two bean-shaped organs, each about the size of a fist. They are located just below the rib cage, one on each side of the spine. Every day, the two kidneys filter about 120 to 150 quarts of blood to produce about 1 to 2 quarts of urine, composed of wastes and extra fluid.

**Kidney dialysis** is a life-support treatment that uses a special machine to filter harmful wastes, salts, and excess fluid from your blood. Patients usually require dialysis when the waste products in their body become so high that they become ill.



## Female Friendship in *Steel Magnolias*

By Anna Miles

Robert Harling's classic Southern play *Steel Magnolias*, and even more so its 1989 film adaptation, have long been included in the canon of feminist entertainment; indeed, they have both been held up as veritable pinnacles of feminist theater and film, respectively. *Steel Magnolias* celebrates female friendship, honors and legitimizes uniquely female experiences, and refreshingly features not a single onstage male character. It is a play about women, for women- but in our modern era, when more and more women strive to define themselves beyond traditional gender roles and expand their identities, experiences, and friendships beyond the confines of the beauty parlor, does *Steel Magnolia's* 1980s feminism still hold up?

In order to understand *Steel Magnolias'* brand of feminism, we must first understand the play's brand of femaleness: as a concept, as a symbol, and as a state of being. In *Steel Magnolias*, we see femaleness in its most isolated form: in a beauty shop, a space traditionally reserved for women, and where women hone their presentations of stereotypical and socially acceptable femininity. "There's no such thing as natural beauty," Truvy says to Annelle in Act 1, Scene 1. Annelle is initiated into the feminine family with this adage- a requisite for joining is an understanding that physical beauty matters. Shared beauty rituals have long been a bonding rite for women, and continue to be so even today- visit a Sephora store, or a modern salon, a girl's sleepover, or a theater women's dressing room and you will see it. These rituals are a jumping off point for fostering inter-female intimacy; but in *Steel Magnolias*, we never see this intimacy leave that jumping off point. In *Steel Magnolias*, femininity and femaleness exists only as it relates to society's understanding of femaleness, and is confined to a space in which femaleness is considered socially acceptable.

While this reduction of femaleness may be problematic, there is another explanation for why Harling keeps his female characters inside the salon for the entirety of the play- the salon is a safe space for the characters, away from the dangers and violence of the outside (male) world. "Your boys grew up just fine," Shelby says to Truvy, "they're just a little scary that's all." The first sound we hear from outside the female-centric space is the sound of repeat gunshots, coming from Shelby's father as he attempts to shoot birds out of his trees for his daughter's wedding. Maleness in *Steel Magnolias* is consistently depicted as a force of violence and danger, existing just outside the parlor door like Ousier's aggressive male dog Rhett, always present but never quite breaching the sanctity of the safe haven. In a world in which the worst of the men, like Annelle and Ousier's husbands, abandon and hurt their wives, and the best of men, like Shelby's husband Jackson, insist on armadillo groom's cakes which look like real bleeding animals, it makes sense that these women would need a space of their own, a space to exist together without the violence of the outside world.

If this is the presentation of maleness in the play, the presentation of femaleness is the exact opposite: the women are the ones who "make themselves a little presentable and floss up the house" while the men cut down magnolias and fire guns; the women are the ones who hide those guns in their purses next to their lipsticks and hair curlers in an attempt to stop their trigger-happy husbands. In this way, *Steel Magnolias'* brand of feminism largely relies on a strong male-female dichotomy: the dichotomy that women are "sugar and spice and everything

nice,” or “hair styles and baby’s breath and everything pink” while men are “frogs and snails and puppy dog tails,” or “gun shots and hunting and killing.” Women are the magnolias: being violently ripped off their trees in their prime by the men, who are all steel, all hardness and hostility.

The primary exception to this dichotomy is Shelby, who precariously straddles the play’s female world and male world. Her signature color is pink, and her greatest desire is to get married and have a child- but she simultaneously refuses to stop working after getting married, and dips her toe into violent pursuits such as fire baton twirling, and cuts her hair short. She is the bridge between the world of the salon and the world outside: not a “regular” herself, but the daughter of a regular, coming in only when she needs to touch up her female side, as for her wedding. As her illness progresses, the active male presence in the play progresses: for example, the male voice begins to penetrate the salon’s safe haven through the radio Shelby gifted Truvy. The menace of maleness is as threatening as the menace of Shelby’s diabetes- but in the end, it is unclear whether it is Shelby’s maleness or femaleness that causes her death. Was it her desire to give birth, as a woman does? Or was it the fact that she traveled too closely to the reckless outside world, straying from the safety of her mother’s advice and guidance? Or was it the fact that she gave birth to a son? Was her femaleness sacrificed to the male forces of the play? Or, most literally, was it simply the disease- a disease which is neither male or female, but simply human?

Regardless of the nature of the literal and figurative menaces Shelby falls victim to, it is the salon M’Lynn returns to after her daughter ultimately succumbs. It is the women she seeks out- M’Lynn has proven herself to be steel by staying at her daughter’s bedside until the end, by donating her own kidney to save her daughter’s life, by persevering through the entire ordeal. But she comes back to, and finds comfort in, the magnolias- in the soft, the beautiful, and the safe.

Sephora and hair salons are as empowering as they are confining. In a dangerous world, which still does not always value women and their experiences, descending into the comfort of a traditionally female safe haven can allow women to build their identities and communities separate from their relationships to men. While *Steel Magnolias* does not take the next logical and necessary step - that is, to bring these identities and communities into the outside world and use them to make that world more inclusive for everyone - the play celebrates our safe spaces and our unique friendships in a way that rings true even thirty years after its conception. *Steel Magnolia*’s femaleness may be a bit dated- but it remains a beautiful homage to femaleness and female friendships nonetheless.

## Cultural References in *Steel Magnolias*

**Princess Di-** A nickname for Diana, Princess of Wales of England. In the mid-1980's, she made international news with her numerous charities and regular public appearances to hospitals and schools.

**Princess Grace-** An American actress who, after marrying Prince Rainier III, became the Princess of Monaco. Known for her beauty and fashion sense, she was inaugurated into the International Best Dressed List Hall of Fame in 1960.

**Jaclyn Smith-** An American actress and businesswoman who is best known for her starring role in the 1970's television show *Charlie's Angels*. In the mid-1980's, she entered the business world with her collection of women's apparel.

**The Petroleum Club of Shreveport-** A prestigious, member-owned club in Shreveport, Louisiana. Members are able to expand their social and business relationships, as well as have associations with more than 50 nationally-known clubs.

**Monroe and West Monroe-** Monroe is the eighth-largest city in Louisiana. The neighboring city of West Monroe sits across the Ouachita River. Both cities are often referred to as the Twin Cities of Northeast Louisiana.

**On the Pill-** A slang term for the use of birth-control in the form of a birth-control pill.

**G.I. Joe-** A line of action figures that have been produced by the toy company Hasbro since 1967.

**Spoolies-** Hair curlers from the 1940's and 50's that were advertised as the most comfortable to wear to bed.

**Hawaii Five-O-** An American police drama series produced by CBS. The show had very recognizable theme song, and the series aired from 1968 to 1980.

**Earp-** A slang term that means to throw up.

**Elizabeth Taylor-** A British-American actress known for her numerous marriages.

**Dark Victory-** A 1939 American drama film about a young, carefree socialite who is diagnosed with an inoperable malignant brain tumor.

**Elizabeth Arden-** A Canadian-American businesswoman who founded and built a cosmetics empire. Located on New York's Fifth Avenue, her company was called Red Door Salon for its signature red front door.

**Reach Out and Touch Someone-** An AT&T advertising jingle that was coined in 1979.

**Getting Colors Done-** The process of finding colors of clothing and makeup to match a person's skin complexion, eye color, and hair color. The idea of basing these colors on the four seasons became popular in the late 1970's.

**Valium-** A medication commonly used to treat a range of conditions including anxiety.

**Deputy Dawg-** A cartoon character featured on the animated television series *Terrytoons*.

**Zwolle-** A small town in Sabine Parish, Louisiana.

**Tickfaw-** A small village in Tangipahoa Parish, Louisiana.

**Dago-** An ethnic slur for one from Italy, Spain, or Portugal.

**Dry Pong-** A small village in central Grant Parish, Louisiana.

**Baton Rouge-** The capital of Louisiana, and the state's second largest city.

## Thoughts for Discussion: *Steel Magnolias*

### Pre-Show Questions

1. Does anyone in your family have an illness? If so, explain how your family takes care of them. Is your family overprotective or injurious?
2. Have you ever argued with a friend that later seemed frivolous in light of all you two had been through? What was the conflict about and how was it resolved?
3. Why it is that close bonds are created in a barbershop or beauty salon?

### Post-Show Questions

1. What is the significance of the title, *Steel Magnolias*, to the play?
2. In the play, Shelby brought a dysfunctional radio to the salon. How does the radio symbolize Shelby?
3. During the play, what changes did you see in Annelle?
4. Children and parents often have disagreements. Can you relate to the relationship between Shelby and M'Lynn even at your age? What are some situations in which you don't see eye to eye with your parents?

### Creative Writing Prompts

1. In the play, Shelby does something that M'Lynn doesn't agree with. What personal connections can you make to this event?
2. Illnesses are usually seen as negative occurrence. How might a person grow or become a better person when dealing with an illness or supporting a loved one who is ill?
3. What personal connections can you make with the title of the play?

# 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:

If you **HAVE** read the play:

How did you envision the set, or the visual world of the play, while reading?

How did you imagine the characters looked while reading the play?

What themes did you notice repeating throughout the play?

What images jumped out at you while reading the play?

How would you describe the central theme of the play in one sentence?

If you **HAVEN'T** read 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:

If you **READ THE PLAY BEFORE SEEING IT:**

How did the production set differ from what you had imagined while reading the play? How was it similar? How did these changes affect your understanding of the story?

Did the characters look different from how you envisioned them looking while reading the play? Did they sound different? Act differently? How did these changes affect your understanding and opinion of each character? How did these changes affect your understanding of the overall story?

How did the themes and images you noticed while reading translate to performance? Did the same themes and images jump out at you? Did you notice new ones?

Did this particular production seem to have the same central theme, or a different central theme from the one you discovered while reading? What elements of the staging, acting, or design helped convey the theme?

Did they play gain or lose anything in performance? Did you enjoy reading it more, or watching it?

If you **DIDN'T READ THE PLAY BEFORE SEEING IT:**

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 Material

*Steel Magnolias Study Guide: The Alliance Theatre*

<https://alliancetheatre.org/sites/default/files/Steel%20Magnolias%20Study%20Guide%202014Oct13%20A.pdf>

*Steel Magnolias Study Guide: New Stage Theatre*

<http://newstagetheatre.com/manage/wp-content/uploads/Steel-Magnolias-sg.pdf>

*Thirty Years of Steel Magnolias*, by Julia Reed for Garden and Sun

<https://gardenandgun.com/feature/thirty-years-of-steel-magnolias/>

*Direction of the Play: Steel Magnolias* by Jana Petersdorf for Central Washington University

[https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1038&context=thesis\\_projects](https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1038&context=thesis_projects)

*Diabetes in The Movies* by Deanna Glick for Diabetes Health

<https://www.diabeteshealth.com/diabetes-in-the-movies/>

## **About *Alliance Theatre***

[www.alliancetheatre.org](http://www.alliancetheatre.org)

The Alliance Theatre is Atlanta's national theater, expanding hearts and minds onstage and off. Founded in 1968, the Alliance Theatre is the leading producing theater in the Southeast, reaching more than 165,000 patrons annually. The Alliance delivers powerful programming that challenges adult and youth audiences to think critically and care deeply. Under the leadership of Susan V. Booth, the Jennings Hertz Artistic Director, the Alliance Theatre received the Regional Theatre Tony Award® in recognition of sustained excellence in programming, education and community engagement.

Known for its exemplary artistic standards and national role in creating significant theatrical works, the Alliance has premiered more than 100 original productions, professionally launching important American musicals, including the Tony Award winners *The Color Purple*, based on the novel by Alice Walker; *Aida* by Elton John and Tim Rice; and Alfred Uhry's *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*. Recent musical premieres include *Sister Act: The Musical* and Twyla Tharp's *Come Fly Away*.

The Alliance also creates and nurtures the careers of emerging writers through the Alliance/Kendeda National Graduate Playwriting Competition, producing the world premiere for the competition winner as part of the regular season. The Alliance is deeply committed to Atlanta artists, showcasing locally based artists on a nationally watched stage, and sustaining Atlanta's artistic community through the Reiser Atlanta Artists Lab, providing developmental support and production resources for an annual roster of locally sourced performance projects.

The Alliance's dedication to providing access to the arts is reflected in its commitment to creating new work for all ages, and to bringing that work into classrooms and communities across Atlanta and throughout the region. More than 80,000 students each year experience age-specific professional performances and participate in acting classes, drama camps and in-school initiatives through the Alliance Theatre Acting Program and Education Department. The Alliance's groundbreaking Kathy and Ken Bernhardt Theatre for the Very Young performances offer professionally produced, fully interactive theater for infants and toddlers; the Palefsky Collision Project invites high school artists to create and perform new civic-minded theater based on a classic text; and community acting classes and skill-building workshops engage professional artists, young actors, business leaders and curious learners of all ages. Twice recognized by the U.S. Department of Education for leadership in arts education, the Alliance Theatre Institute equips classroom

teachers with theatrical techniques that link directly to school curriculum and have been empirically proven to improve student learning.

## ***About New Stage Theatre***

[www.newstagetheatre.com](http://www.newstagetheatre.com)

New Stage of Mississippi produces five plays each year in its subscription series, in addition to a holiday show, an annual SchoolFest matinee, and a kids-only summer camp show that features local area talent. Main stage productions range from master works to contemporary classics to new plays. All carry the mark of professional quality for which the theatre has long been recognized. Additionally, the theatre presents a second season called "Unframed at New Stage Theatre Series" featuring cutting-edge plays directed and performed by local artists.

### **Mission:**

The mission of New Stage Theatre is to provide professional theatre of the highest quality for the people of Mississippi and the Southeast.

New Stage is committed to producing important contemporary works and classics, selected for their artistic merit and their power to illuminate the human condition. Challenging new works in development are included through the Eudora Welty New Play Series named for the distinguished writer.

The theatre is dedicated to cultivating and educating a culturally diverse audience by gathering the finest available resources including playwrights, actors, directors, designers, technicians, administrators, trainees, and board members.

Integral to the theatre's total effort, its education department maximizes its potential by offering artistic technical internships, by mounting intern touring programs supported by teachers' materials for schools statewide, and by developing curricula for and teaching youth and adult classes.