Aubergine

Written by JULIA CHO
Directed by Flordelino Lagundino
Historical Context

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Diane: A woman who opens and closes the play by telling stories of her experiences with food. Her favorite meal is a hot pastrami sandwich with butter.

Ray: A Korean American and a chef who comes to terms with his father’s mortality. His favorite meal is a cold bucket of fried chicken.

Father: Ray’s father and a Korean immigrant who has spent the majority of his life in the United States. He is dying of cirrhosis of the liver. His favorite meals were unplanned, outdoors, and spent with friends.

Lucien: A hospice worker responsible for the care of Ray’s dying father. He is a former refugee and a naturalized American citizen. His favorite meal is the okra he first grew in the U.S.

Cornelia: Ray’s girlfriend who emigrated to the U.S. from Korea as a child and, as a result, speaks Korean. Her favorite meal is mulberries.

Uncle: The brother of Ray’s father who has lived in Korea his entire life and has come to the United States to say goodbye to his brother. His favorite meal is a soup his mother made before his brother left for the U.S.
In the opening monologue, Diane speaks at length about the presence of food and the people in her life. One such memory involves Diane returning home to spend time with her father before he dies. She reminisces about sharing hot pastrami sandwiches with him as a child.

The play then shifts from one dying father to another. Ray talks to Lucien, a hospice worker and former refugee, about how it might be time for his father, who is suffering from liver failure, to leave the hospital and return home. Once there, Lucien speaks about how he has seen people deal with death.

Ray reaches out to Cornelia, his girlfriend, and asks her to help him deal with his father’s inevitable passing. Because Cornelia knows Korean, Ray asks her to call his father’s brother who lives in Korea and does not speak English. A couple of days later, Ray sits by his father’s bed and reads to him from the Bible. Ray’s uncle shows up in the middle of the night, having gotten on a plane immediately after the phone call. In a monologue to the audience, Cornelia reflects on her parents, her relationship with food, and how she fell in love with Ray.

Ray sits by his father’s side, lamenting that his father didn’t understand or appreciate his chosen profession. His father dies, and, in a flashback, mentions the meals he had in the army as a young man. As Ray prepares for the funeral, Lucien comforts him. Ray gives his father’s eulogy, and his uncle returns to Korea. Ray talks about the best meal he ever had: a bucket of chicken with his mom and dad.

Diane visits Ray’s restaurant where he cooks her a hot pastrami sandwich; it is the food she needs.
Korean Americans can trace their history to the early 20th century when the first wave of immigrants arrived to work on sugar plantations in Hawaii, and while Hawaii was not yet a state, this connection cannot be ignored. The next wave of immigrants came to the U.S. mainland as war brides, students, businessmen, and political leaders. A third wave of Koreans were the children of U.S. servicemen and Korean women born during and after the U.S. involvement in the Korean War (1950-1953). The largest wave of Korean Immigration took place after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 which abolished quotas for Asian immigrants to the United States. After this, Koreans became the second largest Asian immigrant group, after Filipinos, to arrive in the United States. According to the 2010 census, Korean immigrants remain a significant presence in the U.S. with a population of 1.7 million.

Minnesota has long been home to both Korean immigrants and adoptees. After the Korean Armistice Agreement of 1953, transnational adoption was promoted as a way to help children orphaned by the Korean War. The Children’s Home Society of Minnesota (CHS) was the first to promote adoption in 1955. Since then, Minnesota has had one of the highest numbers of Korean adoptees in the US. According to the 2000 census records, the number of Korean immigrants in Minnesota is approximately 12,500 and the number of Korean adoptees is estimated at 15,000. Minnesota is also home to organizations like the Korean Institute of Minnesota (KIM) which was founded in 1975 and is “one of the oldest Korean educational organizations in the nation.” Korean culture camps and adoptee-led organizations such as AKConnection have also been an important part of Korean Culture in Minnesota.

Dora Kim Moon and her family. The first Korean immigrants to the U.S. Photo by Distinctive Women in Hawai’ian history.

CONTINUED...
The Korean community of Minnesota has long been involved in cultural and artistic endeavors. Theatre Mu, a leader in Asian American theater, tackles topics of interest to the Korean American community. Minnesota resident and Immigrant Ed Bok Lee is an award-winning Korean American poet and playwright. Sun Yung Shin, a poet living in Minneapolis, has written extensively about transracial adoption. Born in Seoul, South Korea and adopted by a white couple, she has become a voice for other transracial adoptees seeking understanding of their lives. Also, groups such as the Jang-mi Korean Dance and Drum group exist to help adoptees learn about and understand their culture.

In addition to contributions to local the Arts scene, Korean Americans have contributed in many areas of Minnesota life. One such notable Twin Cities Korean American leader is Ann Kim, an award-winning chef and extremely successful business owner of three top-notch restaurants: Young Joni, Pizzeria Lola, and Hello Pizza. Also, one of St. Paul’s most high-profile government leaders, Ramsey County Attorney John Choi, emigrated with his family from Korea to St. Paul in 1973. Serving as the Ramsey County Attorney since 2011, Choi is the first Korean American to serve as a county attorney in the United States and has led successful prosecutions of human trafficking and important initiatives in criminal justice reform.

With current pop culture interest in Korea, Korean pop music has hit the U.S. music scene through the online presence of YouTube. The popular Korean boyband BTS was the first Kpop group to win the Billboard Music Award for Top Social Artist in 2017 out-performing popular artists like Selena Gomez, Justin Bieber, and Taylor Swift. BlackPink was the first Korean group to perform at Coachella, the popular California-based music festival. Netflix also offers access to numerous Korean television shows. In addition to entertainment, “Korean traditional culture, food, literature, and language” has spread to many different countries riding the ‘Korean Wave’. Korean Culture has grown around the world, which has led to higher rates of tourism in the country and higher consumption of Korean food and products. Current interest in the Korean culture, language, and arts continues to thrive in the United States.

Sources:


By Alexandra Howes
Twin Cities Academy
With contributions from Richard Lee (Aubergine dramaturg)
And Alice Kim (Park Square Development Associate)

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Julia Cho’s play *Aubergine* tells an immigrant story. Ray, the play’s protagonist, is a second generation immigrant caught between the cultural elements of his family’s Korean heritage and everyday American life. One example of this state of cultural flux is Ray’s language use. Although he is Korean American, he does not speak Korean. This loss of language of origin is tragically all too common among immigrant groups in the United States.

The United States is a country of incredible linguistic diversity. A 2015 report by the United States Census Bureau documented speakers of at least 350 languages, and some experts even suggest that there are close to 500 unique language varieties in the United States. This rich linguistic diversity exists thanks to both generations of immigrants who have moved to the United States and the indigenous peoples who have occupied its land for centuries. However, because of cultural and societal pressure to speak English in the United States, many immigrant groups and indigenous people now only speak their native languages at home, and some groups fail to maintain their native language at all.

For many immigrant groups and indigenous peoples, teaching and passing down a language can serve as an important tool of preserving their cultural identity. These languages that are different from the language of the dominant society and that people speak at home are called heritage languages, and the people who speak heritage languages are called heritage speakers or heritage language users. Heritage speakers typically acquire heritage languages as their first language, which means they learn their heritage language before the language of the dominant society around them. For example, in the Twin Cities, many young people learn Somali before they learn English. In this case, Somali is considered a heritage language because English is the language of the dominant society in Minnesota.

Although maintaining heritage languages and cultural identity are often viewed as incredibly important by older generations of immigrants, younger generations often adopt the language of the dominant society and become increasingly less fluent in their family’s language of origin. In fact, it is common for immigrant groups in particular to switch over to the dominant language in society within three generations.

When immigrants lose their language of origin, they lose part of their cultural identity as well. This is not to say, however, they lose their cultural identity completely. There are other components, such as food, that can remind people of who they are and connect them to where their families came from. We see this in the characters in *Aubergine*. Each character has a meal that tells us about who they are as a person and connects them to their families and, in some cases, their home countries.
Adapted from the following sources:


Discussion Questions
1. Do you feel as though the language you use is an important part of your identity? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think younger generations of immigrants often switch to using only the language of the dominant society?
3. Do you think it is important for people to preserve the languages of their original culture? Why or why not?

A Map by The Seattle Globalist showing the percentage of non-English speakers throughout the U.S.

By Ben Carpenter
MPLS Substitute Teacher
Impact of Food on Memory

**Directions:** In monologues, the characters reminisce about food and the impact it had on them. Read the following excerpts from *Aubergine* by Julia Cho. After each excerpt are questions to use for discussion.

LUCIEN. The best thing I ever ate was the first thing I ever planted. It was a pod of *gombo*—“okra.” Grown here, to sell. A harvest, it turned out, no one wanted to buy. But that pod vibrated when I plucked it, and I knew its joy. And when I ate it, I tasted something that almost reminded me of home.

**Discussion Question:**
1. Does Lucien have a positive or negative association with food? What words show that?
   Lucien associates okra with home. What does that show us about his relationship with his home country? Explain.

CORNELIA. This abundance of food basically ensured I would grow up hating to eat. It was the scene of constant failure. I could never eat enough, never satisfy my mother’s need to feed me. If my mother’s fridge was chaos, my father’s garden was order. In the first house we lived in he planted figs, plums, peaches, mulberries. But it was the mulberries I loved best. We’d wait till they were ripened and eat ‘em straight off the tree. Small, soft, sweet. And now here they were: a whole bowl full. I looked at Ray in wonder: How did you know? I ate one: It was dark and ripe and sweet. And I’m barefoot, crouching under a tree, fingers stained and sticky, parting leaves to find berries dangling like earrings from the branches.

**Discussion Question:**
1. Does Cornelia have a positive or negative association with food? What words show that?
   Cornelia’s food memory is beautiful in its simplicity. What does this show us about her character? Explain.

FATHER. The meals I remember, the ones I look back on most fondly, took place when I was a young man and went on day trips into the mountains with two of my closest friends. We would bring a small pack of food, a pot to cook in, water. And that was it. No plan. And when we reached a good spot, we set down our packs and built a fire and cooked the food we brought. And drank the alcohol we had. And smoked under the stars. I can’t tell you how enormous that happiness was.

**Discussion Question:**
1. Does Ray’s father have a positive or negative association with food? What words show that?
   Ray says this about his father, “The man hates my cooking. He hates it. The fact of it. It’s women’s work, it’s low class, it’s uneducated. So the idea of me cooking him something like the last thing he sees before he dies—it’s not a good thing.” Is Ray’s opinion of his father correct? Explain.

CONTINUED...
DIANE. What I want is a restaurant that could give me Los Angeles, 1982. Essence of hot buttered bread and pastrami. I am eight years old and my father is young. And he, just like me, is never going to die. We’re going to eat sandwiches together forever. We were hungry before but now we are full. And I will never eat anything so good again.

Discussion Question:
1. Does Diane have a positive or negative association with food? What words show that?
   What’s a food that you’ve eaten that’s evoked a memory like this?

Extended Learning:
Write your own monologue about a memory you have that involves food. How did that food make you feel?

Samples of traditional South Korean cuisine. Photo from The Republic of Korea.
**Objective:** To familiarize students with *Aubergine* by speaking lines from the play. This activity helps students form questions, gain insight, and build excitement for seeing these lines spoken in the production. **This activity serves the students best if completed before they attend the play.**

**Time allotted:**
20-30 minutes

**Materials:**
- Tennis ball or hackey sack
- Slips of paper, cut from Tossing Lines Resource on the next page (2 sets if necessary)

**Procedure:**
Cut and distribute the slips of paper (see Tossing Lines Resource) to volunteers. Give students a few minutes or overnight if appropriate to memorize or prepare a dramatic reading of their line. Have the students form a circle and give one student the ball. After students speak a line, they toss the ball to another student who speaks their assigned line. Students toss the ball throughout the circle until all lines have been heard a few times. Encourage students to speak lines with varying emotions, seeking out the best way to perform the lines.

**Optional:**
Re-assign lines within the group to other students in the classroom and continue for another round.

**Freewriting/Discussion:**
After lines have been tossed and in preparation for discussion, allow students five minutes to freewrite their ideas and questions about the content of the play. The following questions may be used to guide the freewrite and/or discussion.

1. What can you tell about the setting of this play?
2. What do the lines tell you about who the characters might be and the relationships between them?
3. What might be the central conflict? Which lines support your ideas?
4. Can you predict which themes may be portrayed in this production based on the lines you’ve heard?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>To the teacher:</strong></th>
<th>Cut these apart and distribute to students.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>But every now and then, I do feel that old stirring, that old hunger.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will I know when it’s time? I guess that’s a dumb question, but when it starts to happen will I know?</td>
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<tr>
<td>And when I ate it, I tasted something that almost reminded me of home.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowing the right time, that is part of the art.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I wanted—needed—food that I could control. That didn’t make any declarations of love.</td>
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<td>If my mother’s fridge was chaos, my father’s garden was order.</td>
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<tr>
<td>He doesn’t trust the world. His own father wasn’t able to tell him, the truth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>He has a big openness inside. But the door to it is a little broken.</td>
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<tr>
<td>This thing you’ve carried all your life. You can set it down now.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I just had a sense that this is the way they wanted to be cooked.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A peaceful death: This is wealth beyond compare.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I don’t think it’s that he didn’t want to be alone. I think it’s that he didn’t want me to be.</td>
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<tr>
<td>We hold the hands of the dying, but...they are the ones holding ours.</td>
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<tr>
<td>You are already dead. So why not live?</td>
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<tr>
<td>For death is a meal. Death is a mirror. Death is yourself.</td>
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</table>
Tossing Lines (cont.)

Discussion Questions:
1. Which lines do you find most interesting? Explain.
2. What do the lines tell you about who the characters might be and the relationships between them?
3. What might be the central conflict? Which lines support your ideas? Can you predict which themes may be portrayed in this production based on the lines you’ve heard? Which lines support your ideas?

The first wave of Korean Immigrants worked on Hawaiian sugar cane plantations. Photo from Boston University.

By Tanya Sponholz
Prescott High School
To the Teacher: This activity allows students to become familiar with the play by reading and analyzing its scenes. Please review these scenes before handing copies out to students. The first scene contains strong language. The second scene does not contain strong language. Please use at the teacher’s discretion.

Materials:
Copies of the scene

Steps:
Hand out copies of the scene to students.
Choose students to read the scene.
Allow students to answer the discussion questions below.

Discussion Questions for Scene to Read Aloud 1:

1. What kind of relationship do Cornelia and Ray have? What are their feelings toward each other? How do you know?
2. How do Cornelia’s tone and word choice change when she is speaking to Ray’s uncle? What seems to be of value in Korean culture?
3. Does your language change when you speak to certain people? How does your use of language change, or code switch, when talking to parents or friends?
4. How does Ray’s inability to communicate with his uncle properly complicate this scene?

Discussion Questions for Scene to Read Aloud 2:

1. How do the values of Ray and his father differ from each other? What experiences may have shaped their values?
2. What language barriers make it difficult for the two men to communicate?
3. Korea, in both ancient and modern times, has struggled to survive through colonization, first, by the Chinese; then, the Mongolians, and finally, the Japanese. Is Ray aware of this history? How does his awareness or lack thereof add to existing barriers between Ray and his father?
Scene to Read Aloud 1

In this scene, Ray asks Cornelia, his girlfriend who is able to speak Korean, to meet him at a coffee shop. His father is dying, but Ray does not have the language to inform his family in South Korea. He asks Cornelia to call and speak to his father’s brother. When there are brackets around the text, these words are a translation from what will be spoken in Korean.

CORNELIA. So you’re not dead?
RAY. Not yet.
CORNELIA. What’s that supposed to mean?
RAY. I don’t know I’m trying to be...I don’t know what I’m trying to be. I want to say I’m sorry.
CORNELIA. Okay.
RAY. I was a shit.
CORNELIA. Yes.
RAY. I should’ve let you know where I was.
CORNELIA. Definitely.
RAY. And I know I can’t make it up to you...
CORNELIA. No.
RAY. ...but I need a little help.

Pause.
CORNELIA. I’m sorry, did you say you need help?
RAY. Yeah.
CORNELIA. That’s why you wanted to meet?
RAY. No, I wanted to apologize, but I also—
CORNELIA. You know what, Ray? It’s been great catching up with you, but I gotta go—
RAY. Cornelia, c’mon. Can’t we just talk?
CORNELIA. No. We can’t. We can’t talk. We can’t hang out. You can’t ask me for shit.
RAY. I’m sorry, what else do you want me to say?
CORNELIA. I’m not even mad—or only mad. I’m disappointed. Because I thought you at least wanted to try. But then I realized you don’t have the tools. You’re just this little kid who takes out all the toys and then changes his mind and doesn’t clean up and goes.
RAY. I don’t have the tools.
CORNELIA. You’re thirty-eight, Ray. If you had the tools, you’d be fucking married already. Instead, you’re dating women like me, ten years younger, and you know what? We’re still more mature than you why are you smiling?
RAY. Because you’re going to feel like shit in about ten seconds.
CORNELIA. Really. I think I’m going to feel great, ‘cause I’m going to be outside, walking away. (Standing.) Bye, Ray.
RAY. Cor? My dad is dying, Cor. So I don’t give a shit about tools. But I do need a little help.

Beat.
CORNELIA. Of what?
RAY. Cirrhosis.
CORNELIA. What’s that?

CONTINUED...
RAY. Does it matter? Disease of the liver. His liver is dying. So he’s dying. Fuck.

_ Ray presses his eyes shut. He is so not going to cry in front of this woman. So. Not. Going. To. Cry. _

Cornelia sits down. She does feel like shit.

CORNELIA. What do you need?
RAY. Thank you.
CORNELIA. I don’t even know what it is yet.
RAY. You can do this: it’ll be easy and quick.

_ Ray pulls out his father’s cell phone. It’s an old flip-top model with an antenna._

CORNELIA. Where’d you get that—1999?
RAY. It’s my dad’s. He’s got a brother in Korea. I need you to talk to him for me.
CORNELIA. I’m not an interpreter, Ray.
RAY. You speak better than anyone I know. Just tell him who you are, that you’re calling for me. Tell him what’s happening.
CORNELIA. I don’t even know what’s happening! You barely just told me.

_ Ray scrolls through his dad’s phone._

RAY. It’s this number, I think. Eighty-two—that’s the country code, right?

_ Ray presses a button. The phone dials._

CORNELIA. I didn’t say yes, Ray—
RAY. It’s ringing.
CORNELIA. Ray. I didn’t say yes!
RAY. How much do you think it costs to call—Hello? Uh yuh-boh-say-oh?

_ He hands the phone to Cornelia._

His only brother is dying, Cor. Tell him. _Tell him._

Cornelia gives Ray a death stare as she takes the phone.

CORNELIA. [Yes, hello, uh...]

[The words in brackets are the English translation and should not be spoken.]

(To Ray.) What’s your dad’s name?
RAY. Park.
CORNELIA. Duh, Ray. First name.
RAY. Jung-Sok—Jung-Sok Park.
CORNELIA. Older or younger?
RAY. What?
CORNELIA. Your dad, is he older or—
RAY. (Overlapping.) Older.

_Cornelia turns back to the phone._

CORNELIA. [I apologize for bothering you, but might this be Pak Jung-Sok’s younger brother?] _Her tone is exceedingly polite._

[I am a friend of Pak Jung-Sok’s son. I said, a friend of PAK Jung-Sok’s son.] 

(To Ray.) This connection sucks. It’s like I really am calling 1999.

(On phone, louder.) [My friend apologizes that he is not the one speaking to you but he does not speak Korean. Yes—Ray. He wishes to inform you, with great sadness, that his father is sick. No...He’s dying. I said: He’s dying.

_Pause._

No... (In English with a Korean emphasis.) “Cirrhosis.”

(Covers the phone, to Ray.) I think he’s crying.
RAY. Maybe this isn’t the right guy.
Scene to Read Aloud 2

The following scene is in the kitchen of Ray and his father’s home. Ray’s father struggles to understand the bill of a credit card that he has given to his son for emergencies while attending culinary school. However, Ray has used the credit card for a different reason.

Ray contemplates the eggplant. He handles it very gently. 
He takes out a worn knife roll and lays out his knives. He carefully selects one and brings it to the eggplant about to pierce its skin. 
His father enters with a piece of paper.

FATHER. What is this?
RAY. What is what?
FATHER. This is Visa statement. You have card I gave you, yes?
RAY. Yes.
FATHER. Is this an emergency? (Puts on glasses.) Charge for...one thousand, nine hundred and five dollars and...twelve cents. Is that you?
RAY. Yeah, so let me explain—
FATHER. You have some kind of accident? You almost die?
RAY. No, obviously. Don’t worry, I’m going to—
RAY. It’s a restaurant supply store down by—
FATHER. What you buy, whole store?
RAY. No. Just...this.
   He holds up his knife.
FATHER. You bought a knife with my money?
RAY. This isn’t just a knife, okay? It’s made by a family that’s been forging steel since like the days of the samurais—
FATHER. A knife?
RAY. It’s my livelihood. This is the one tool I need, the one tool.
FATHER. So, go to supermarket, one knife is ten dollars. You buy two hundred knives, one gets dull, throw it out!
RAY. And that’s why all we have is junk, ‘cause you only buy the cheapest and the crappiest—don’t you ever get tired of everything always breaking down?
FATHER. I am not giving you this knife.
RAY. Who’s asking you to!? I’ll pay you when I get my paycheck at the end of the month.
FATHER. Pay me now.
RAY. I don’t have anything now.
FATHER. What do you have in your pocket?
RAY. What? I have, I don’t know, a few twenties—

CONTINUED...
FATHER. Give it to me.
RAY. Now?
FATHER. Give it to me. Pay the rest later.
RAY. Fine, whatever—Have everything—sixty eight dollars. Happy?

He gives the money to his father, who pockets it without looking at it.

FATHER. And card.
RAY. Oh come on—
FATHER. Give it.

Ray gives him the card.
Father lays the card down on the cutting board. He lifts Ray’s knife and cuts the card in two in one sharp motion.

What kind of stupid pays so much for a knife.
Father leaves.
Ray contemplates the knife.

A Dojo Hayashi kitchen knife.
Write Your Name in Korean

In 1443, King Sejong invented the modern written language of Korea. Before this, Koreans wrote using a complex Chinese character system which resulted in very few people with the ability to read or write; only the wealthiest men could read and write in Korean. King Sejong created a much simpler written language because he wanted all of his people to read and write. He called it Hunminjeongeum or, as it is known today, Hangul. Although used among the common people, scholars refused to use the new language, and it did not become the official written language of Korea until after World War II.

Sound It Out

It is possible to learn Hangul without understanding the Korean language. A “complete” symbol is made by combining a consonant sound and a vowel sound, like go (고), toe (도), dew (두).

The chart below shows the different sound combinations and how to write in Hangul. Match the consonant sound to the vowel sound, and that is the complete symbol. In order to write a name in Hangul, it is important to remember to use the sounds of the name, not the spelling.

CONTINUED...
The following chart is a key to learning how the vowels sound. Use this key when sounding your name out. There are some vowel sounds in Korean that are not used in English. If you do not find the vowel sound that is in your name, choose one that is the most similar.

### Write It Out
First, break your name down by sound. For example, the name *Maggie* could be broken down into the syllables it sounds like: *may-ggee*. The first symbol would be written as 맵 (may). The second symbol would be written as 기 (gee). The whole name would be written as 맵기.

If the name starts with a vowel, the silent consonant marker, the middle column on the consonant chart, will be used. For example, if the name *Anna* is broken down into syllables it would sound like *ah-nah*. The first symbol is written as 어 (ah) and the second is written as 나 (nah). It would be written as 어나.

### Try It Out
Fill out the chart below to write your name in Hangul. There is space to write your friends’ and family members’ names as well. Then answer the questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Syllables</th>
<th>Hangul</th>
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### Discussion Questions
1. How did writing your name in Hangul help you to understand the Korean language?
2. In *Aubergine*, the characters have different language abilities. How does Ray’s inability to understand Korean further complicate his ability to communicate with his family?
3. Do you remember a time when you could not read or write? What power can you gain by learning to read, write, and speak a language?

### Further Research
1. Why do you think rich, educated men in Korea refused to use the Hangul language?
2. What might be the reasons for making Hangul the official written language after World War II?

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By Maggie Quam
HMONG COLLEGE PREP ACADEMY

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Post Show Discussion Questions

Relationships
1. What is the relationship between Ray and his father? How does it change over the course of the play?
2. Ray and his uncle have a language barrier. How does this impact their relationship?
3. Ray’s father kept his phone with him even in the hospital. Whose call was he waiting for? Why?
4. What do the miscommunications between Ray and his father and also Cornelia and her parents reveal about them?
5. One of the main themes of the play is intergenerational conflict. Where do we see that manifest itself in the play?

Food
6. All of the characters have monologues about food. What greater themes or ideas connect them all?
7. Lucien says this about aubergines, “They need warmth and space. Pick them too soon or too late and they will be bitter. Knowing the right time, that is part of the art.” Which character also fits this description? Why?
8. What does Ray’s uncle teach him about food?
9. Ray is hesitant to make soup for his father. He says, “The man hates my cooking. The idea of me cooking something as like the last thing he sees before he dies--it’s not a good idea.” What could be other reasons why his father isn’t eating?
10. Hunger can mean more than a physical desire for food. What else do the characters hunger for? Explain.
11. What connection does food have to memory in the play?
12. Ray knows exactly what food will have the greatest impact for each of the characters. What would he make for you? What would you make for your family?

Culture
13. The characters all have connections to Korea. For each character, what is that connection? How is it revealed in the play?
14. Ray, his father, and Cornelia all represent different places on the spectrum of assimilation into American culture. Who is the most assimilated and how has that affected him/her?
15. Why does the author include a character who only speaks Korean?

Mortality
16. Lucien is a caretaker for Ray’s father, and he provides Ray with a lot of advice about his father’s death. What piece of advice was the most useful to Ray? To you personally? Explain.
17. After looking in the mirror, Ray says, “I saw how, even though we are alive, we are already in some respects dead. Even in the daily movements of life, we are already in our graves. That’s what my father was trying to tell me. You are always already dead. So why not live?” How does Ray follow his father’s advice? Do other characters follow it too?

CONTINUED...
18. Ray says at the end of the play, “For death is a meal. Death is a mirror. Death is yourself.” What does he mean by these lines?

19. What role does the mirror play? If grief is a process, how is that represented in the play?

Production

20. How did the spoken Korean language and the English superscript impact your viewing?

21. Why is the play called *Aubergine*? Is this an effective title? What title would you give it?

22. How were lighting, sound, and the set used to evoke the tone and mood of the play?

23. How did the thrust stage (audience being on three sides) affect how the story was told?

An aubergine, commonly know as an eggplant.
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Thank you for giving the gift of theatre to your students, and the gift of your students to our theatre.

Yours sincerely,

The Staff at Park Square Theatre