

A RECIPE OF ME

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT BY
Kate Kilpatrick



CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDE

Introduction

Heartfelt stories about a family told through recipes. We see people all the time but don't always know their stories.

Playwright Bio

Kate Kilpatrick is a middle school drama teacher in Orlando, Florida. Her journey as a theatre educator began a few years ago when she moved to Orlando to attend the University of Central Florida in pursuit of her MFA in Theatre for Young Audiences. Throughout her graduate career, she found herself consistently drawn to working with middle school students and began building residencies to facilitate in local theatre classrooms. One of those residencies, in partnership with the Orlando Repertory Theatre (Orlando REP), was titled "Come to the Table," which became *A Recipe of Me*.

Synopsis

Leah and her siblings are relegated to the kids table in the kitchen AGAIN for Thanksgiving at Grandma Lucy and Grandpa Elliott's house. Worse, they've had their phones taken away. This leads to the siblings searching the cupboards for snacks. What they come away with is Grandma Lucy's secret family recipe box. They think they're going to find juicy gossip. Instead, they find heartfelt stories about their family told through recipes. Stories they never knew.

A beautiful look into the world of a family rooted in love and food. Food is the language that everyone can speak.

Characters

TYLER [M]: Sibling to Leah & Danielle; cousin to Frankie & Dorrie

LEAH [W]: Sibling to Danielle & Tyler; cousin to Frankie & Dorrie

DANIELLE [W]: Sibling to Tyler & Leah; cousin to Frankie & Dorrie

RALPH [M]: Son of Lucy; uncle to all of the cousins (one monologue)

BARBARA [W]: Sister to Elizabeth & Lucy

ELIZABETH [W:] Sister to Barbara & Lucy

FRANKIE [W]: Sibling to Dorrie; cousin to Tyler, Leah & Danielle

DORRIE [W]: Sibling to Frankie; cousin to Tyler, Leah & Danielle

ELLIOTT [M]: Grandpa; married to Lucy (one monologue)

LUCY [W]: Grandma; married to Elliott (one monologue)

ENSEMBLE [A]

Themes

Family, happiness, memory, relationships, individuality, love, parenting

Pre-Read Questions

- ★ What traditions do you have in your family? Do you like them? Why or why not?
- ★ Do you have any food traditions in your family? How does your family relate to food?
- ★ Describe your grandparents. How do you see them?
- ★ Describe your parents. How do you see them?
- ★ What do you know about your grandparents from when they were your age?
- ★ What do you know about your parents from when they were your age?
- ★ Does your family share stories about their past? If not, why do you think that is?
- ★ What do you know about your family history?
- ★ How important is it to you to be close to your family? Do you think family relationships are important?

- ★ Reflect on this statement: “Food is the language that everyone can speak.” How do you respond?

Pre-Read Activities

Family Recipes

- ★ Have students come to class prepared to share a favourite family recipe. Divide students into groups and have them share the recipe (or talk about the recipe) and what makes it special.
- ★ Discuss the similarities and differences between the recipes. What makes something a favourite? Is it the ingredients? Is it who makes it? Is it the event the recipe is made for? What makes a recipe special?

Food Traditions Monologue

- ★ Have students write about a family food tradition. Maybe they cook it on a certain holiday, or a certain person makes it. Why is it special to you? Describe the tradition using the five senses. What are the smells, tastes, and textures that go into the tradition?

Family and Food Original Scene

- ★ Divide students into groups. Have them create an original scene on the subject of family and food. How do the two go together?
- ★ Rehearse and present. Discuss the similarities and differences afterward. How do different groups perceive the concept of family and food? How are food and family connected in your life?

A Food Story

- ★ Have students prepare a story about food in their family. (Have you ever been cooking and something went wrong? Who taught you how to make your favorite meal?)
- ★ This can be a written exercise or a write and present exercise.

Family Tableau

- ★ Divide students into groups. Have them discuss what family means to them.
- ★ Based on their discussion, groups will create a tableau that visualizes their thoughts on what family means to them.
 - » Emphasize to students any principles of tableau that you use in your class. Do they need to incorporate levels? Connection between individuals?

Close Reading Analysis Questions

Close reading is an analysis tool. Students read a text multiple times for in-depth comprehension, striving to understand not only **what** is being said but **how** it's being said and **why**. Close reading takes a student from story and character to drawing conclusions on author intention. Close reading prompts students to flex their thinking skills by:

- ★ Teaching students to engage with a text.
- ★ Teaching students to be selective. We can't highlight everything in the text, only the most important elements.
- ★ Teaching students to make educated decisions. All conclusions and opinions must be backed up with a text example.

Have students analyze *A Recipe of Me*, individually or in groups, using the following text-dependent questions:

Read One: What is happening?

1. What is your first impression of the play?
2. What day does the play take place on?
3. Who are Dorrie and Frankie?
4. What does Leah find in the cupboard?
5. What key does Danielle know about?

6. What is Ralph's favourite recipe?
7. Finish this sentence: "Watch the rest of your football career _____."
8. Who wears a pair of shiny tap shoes?
9. Whose recipe is titled "Election Day comfort food. 1980"?
10. What is one ingredient in Frankie's recipe?
11. What is wrong with Grandma's health?
12. What is the key idea of the play?

Read Two: How does it happen?

1. The playwright notes that the original production only used five chairs and a card table as their set. Given the stage directions, write a set description for your version of the play.
2. What can you infer about Leah's personality based on her character language? How would you physicalize her?
3. In your opinion, why does the playwright use recipes to introduce us to the characters? What is the purpose of this structure?
4. Based on the interaction between Barbara and Elizabeth, how would you costume these characters?
5. What is the significance of the line, "But Grandma and Grandpa have always lived in this house"?
6. What is the significance of the line, "This recipe box is kinda like her diary"?
7. What is the main conflict in the play?

Read Three: Why does it happen?

1. In your opinion, why is the play called *A Recipe of Me*?

2. What is the playwright trying to say about family? Cite the text to support your answer.
3. What is the playwright trying to say about the connection between food and family? Cite the text to support your answer.
4. Compare and contrast your personal experience with food and family with what happens in the play.
5. How does the playwright want you to respond to this play?

Post-Read Questions

- ★ What is one question that you still have about the play?
- ★ Which moment resonated with you the most and why?
- ★ Do you recognize yourself in any of the characters?
- ★ How have the characters changed by the end of the play?
- ★ Would you end the play differently? Why or why not?

Post-Read Activities

A Recipe of Me

- ★ Based on the structure for creating a “recipe of me” at the beginning of the play, have students create their own “recipe of me.” What are they made up of?
- ★ This can be a written exercise or a write and present exercise.

Character Costume Design

- ★ Choose a character and design their costume.
- ★ Based on their personality, what would they wear? What pieces of clothing define them? What colours and textures would they choose?

- ★ Draw a colour costume rendering.

Staged Scenes

- ★ Divide students into small groups and assign each group a scene from the play, or a short moment within a scene.
- ★ Give students time to rehearse.
- ★ Each group will present their moment.
- ★ Discuss the scenes afterward.
 - » How did seeing the scenes acted out differ from reading them?
 - » Why is it important to act a scene as well as read it?
 - » Did any of the presentations offer a different interpretation of the characters than yours?

Playwright Process

Playwright Kate Kilpatrick talks about her process of writing this play. Have students read and then discuss/reflect on how their perception of the writing process compares to the playwright's.

What was the inspiration for writing this play?

While I was working at the Orlando Repertory Theatre, we developed a program designed to bring together local middle schoolers and seniors living in an assisted living facility with a focus on food and family traditions. The goal was to take the conversations between students and seniors and use it as inspiration to write a one-act for the middle schoolers to perform. As we got to know the seniors better, it really became apparent how full and rich every single person's life is, and how little we may know about a person unless we make the effort to ask and start a conversation. You never know what you may learn about someone!

What challenges did you encounter during the writing process?

I knew from the very beginning that this play would be about multiple generations, but I really wanted to avoid having middle schoolers play grandparents. That created an interesting challenge; how do I tell a story about a multigenerational family without actually having characters that represent multiple generations played onstage? Additionally, from start to finish, I was very aware that I was a thirty-year-old adult who was trying to create characters that are honest in their depiction of the middle school-age demographic. I didn't want the language to seem insincere, or too quickly outdated, which is why it was such a help to be creating this play alongside our middle school students.

What was it like to see the play performed?

It was a surreal and incredible experience seeing this story come to life! We devised and created the piece together through our Come to the Table program, so it was really created and crafted in our rehearsals through devising and play. I really look forward to the day when I get to see it performed by a different group of people to see how they interpret and reimagine the story — THAT will be a very moving experience!!

Which is harder for you, first drafts or rewrites?

The first draft is so much harder! I feel like I spend the first week of writing staring at an intimidating blank screen and a menacing cursor. Once I start writing, it's so much easier to just go with the flow. But taking the first step and getting something — ANYTHING — on the page is the biggest challenge. Rewrites are just like getting notes as a performer; it means there is room for growth and improvement. I love when I get to make an edit and it feels like a missing puzzle piece clicking into place.

What is your writing process like?

- ★ Step 1: Come up with the idea.
- ★ Step 2: Create a story map full of characters, plot points, and big glaring holes and questions.
- ★ Step 3: Start writing. Don't start at the beginning, just pick any scene that feels inspiring to write.
- ★ Step 4: Snacks and a walk around the block to clear up brain space.

- ★ Step 5: Try to connect all of the pieces. All of those tiny chunky scenes? Weave a through-line and then mold it like clay to make sure your story is compelling and has proper plot structure.
- ★ Step 6: Share it! Share with friends, family, anyone who will read it; you never know who may have an idea about how to make it even stronger.
- ★ Step 7: Compile some awesome people and read through it! See how it sounds out loud. Do any parts sound really forced or insincere? What questions are you or your readers left with? How can you make it even better?
- ★ Step 8: Go back and polish, polish, polish! (But don't get too set in stone — some of the best moments and rewrites are discovered when it gets to rehearsals and into the hands of amazing performers and creative minds!)

What engages you about playwriting?

Playwriting is the best because you get to tell a story that is intended to be shared with a group of people all at once. Novels are special because many people can read your book, but it's quite an individual experience. Plays are meant to be shared. They are meant to be brought to life, to encourage people to think differently, feel empathy, and start a conversation in the car on the way home. I also love that playwriting means you get to create a skeleton for your story, and when you hand it off to a new director with a new cast and crew, they get to take that skeleton and work to make it into something totally new. I love that at its heart, the story will always be the same, but it will be constantly reinvented and reimagined into something wholly unique to the group producing it. Knowing that a story like *A Recipe of Me* will continue to grow and morph to fit different communities is incredibly gratifying, and I can't wait to see what the theatre world can do with it!