

Playhouse on Park presents...

KENNEDY: BOBBY'S LAST CRUSADE

Study Guide



*Written by David Arrow
Featuring the Speeches of Robert F. Kennedy*

PLAYHOUSE 
ON PARK

**THERE IS A CHINESE CURSE
THAT SAYS, 'MAY YOU LIVE IN
INTERESTING TIMES.' LIKE IT
OR NOT, WE LIVE IN
INTERESTING TIMES. THEY ARE
TIMES OF DANGER AND
UNCERTAINTY, BUT THEY ARE
ALSO MORE OPEN TO CREATIVE
ENERGY THAN ANY OTHER TIME
IN HISTORY.**

**- ROBERT F KENNEDY IN TO
SEEK A NEWER WORLD, 1968**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the Play.....	4
About the Playwright.....	5
Background of Play.....	6
Timeline.....	7
Social Media Activity.....	10
Famous Quotes.....	12
Discussion Questions.....	14
Play Calling.....	15
How to Give Back?.....	16
Rock the Vote/Create the Vote.....	17

ABOUT THE PLAY

1968 was one of the most turbulent years in American history. The war in Vietnam was at its peak, President Lyndon Johnson was losing the trust of the American people, there were riots in American cities over racial justice, and Robert F. Kennedy faced the most difficult decision of his life.

This solo play portrays Kennedy during his short electrifying campaign for President of the United States. Told from Kennedy's perspective, the play follows Bobby from his announcement to enter the race on March 16, 1968 to his last speech on June 4th at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. The causes that Kennedy crusaded for and the policies he championed on the campaign trail are remarkably relevant and incredibly prescient of the politics and concerns of today. The play contains many of Kennedy's most famous and impactful speeches as well as his private apprehensions and some of the more personal, less publicized events of those four exhilarating months of his ill-fated campaign.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

David Arrow is an actor/writer based in New York City. As an actor, he has appeared in many New York productions, including the world premier of; *Kennedy: Bobby's Last Crusade*, directed by Eric Nightengale.



Arrow first became interested in the life and work of Robert Kennedy when he was hired by the San Jose Stage Company to perform the title role in a play called RFK. He won the San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award for his performance.

Arrow's other Off-Broadway credits include; *Anonymous*, *Vacuum*, *Wood Wind Hypothesis*, *Birds in Church* and Terrence McNally's *The Wobbly Wobbly Wiggly Dance*. Mr. Arrow has also performed at regional theatres all across the country. He won a Dramalogue Award for the title role in Albert Camus' *Caligula*, and a Dean Goodman award for his performance in *Benefactors*. He has also performed in several feature films and in numerous television shows.

Some other writing credits include: *At the Cabaret Chat Noir*, a play with music about the life of Toulouse Lautrec and the cabarets of late 19th-century Paris. He also adapted the screenplay for the award winning short film, *Rules of Love*.

BOBBY

BEFORE THE LAST STAND

Written by Nick Cantin

While Kennedy focuses primarily on Robert Kennedy's campaign for President of the United States, he had a rich history in U.S. politics prior that colored his time in the race. Below is a short biography of Kennedy, tracking his life and involvement in U.S. government prior to announcing his candidacy.

Born on November 20th, 1925 in Brookline, Massachusetts, Robert Frances Kennedy was the seventh of Rose and Joseph P. Kennedy's nine children. Kennedy spent his childhood constantly moving between his family's homes in New York City, Hyannis Port Massachusetts, and Palm Beach Florida. During WWII, he interrupted his studies at Harvard University to serve in the U.S. Navy before returning to the university and graduation with a degree in government in 1948. Kennedy went on to get a degree in law from the University of Virginia in 1951. While studying law, he married Ethel Skakel, from Greenwich, Connecticut. They would go on to have eleven children.

Having received his law degree Kennedy began his political career in June of 1952 when he managed his brother John's Senate campaign in Massachusetts. That December Robert was appointed by Joseph McCarthy as assistant counsel of the U.S. Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. McCarthy was known for ruthless and often controversial tactics to gain intelligence from supposed communists in the U.S. Disturbed by these practices, Kennedy resigned after six months of service but later returned to the subcommittee as chief counsel for the democratic minority. He first gained national recognition when working as Chief Counsel for the Senate Rackets committee where he investigated and exposed corruption in trade unions under Jimmy Hoffa and David Beck.

In 1960, Robert became the manager of his brother John's presidential campaign. The campaign was a success and once elected, John appointed Robert U.S. Attorney General. As Attorney General Kennedy continued to fight against union corruption and organized crime, with convictions against organized crime rising 800% while he was in office. Kennedy also supported the civil rights movement, fighting to help win black Americans the ability to vote. More than just Attorney General though, Robert was the closest advisor and confidant of his brother, President Kennedy. Most notably, Robert played a key role in the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 where he assisted in developing a strategy to blockade Cuba and negotiating with the Soviet Union to remove their weapons.

Following the assassination of President Kennedy, Robert resigned position as Attorney General and launched a successful campaign to represent New York in the U.S. Senate. As a Senator, Kennedy concerned himself with a number of pressing issues across the U.S. He had great concern for underprivileged and dispossessed American citizens, urging legislation that would improve living conditions and create jobs for the unemployed. Kennedy also devoted his time in office to finding a way to end the Vietnam War, urging president Johnson to cease bombing and reduce the war effort. In 1964, Kennedy announced a presidential campaign that would focus on these issues and continue until his assassination in 1968.

1968 HISTORY

TIMELINE

To understand Robert Kennedy's presidential campaign, one must first understand the state of the nation at the time he ran for office. Known as the "Year that Broke America," 1968 took an incredible toll on the United States. Increasing resistance to the Vietnam War combined with countrywide civil rights movements to create a nationwide state of unrest that underscored the presidential election in November. American citizens, particularly young college students, raised their voice against the Vietnam War, Racism, and Sexism in the nation only to be met by violence from police forces and the military. Below is a timeline of social and political events that illustrate the struggles of a nation in pursuit of freedom for those who reside there.

January

1/15 Jeannette Rankin, an 87 year old who in 1916 was the first woman to hold federal office in the U.S., led around 5,000 women on a march in Washington D.C. protesting the Vietnam War. This was the largest march by women since the Women's Suffrage Parade of 1913.

1/30 North Vietnamese communists launched the Tet Offensive, a campaign of surprise attacks throughout South Vietnam. Upon seeing the devastating effects of this campaign, attitudes amongst many U.S. citizens, previously under the impression that the U.S. backed South was winning the war, shifted towards the antiwar movement.

February

2/1 Memphis sanitation workers Echol Cole and Robert Walker are crushed to death by a malfunctioning garbage truck where they were taking shelter from the rain. Their deaths lead to a sanitation worker's strike for better working conditions that grew into a larger movement, even receiving a visit from Martin Luther King Jr.

2/8 Police officers open fired on a group of SCSU students protesting segregation at their local bowling alley. 3 students were killed and 28 others sustained injuries. This event would become known as the Orangeburg Massacre. Nine officers were tried for their involvement but all were acquitted. Meanwhile, one of the injured students, Cleveland Sellers, was charged for inciting to riot and sentenced to a year in prison. He served seven months and was pardoned 25 years later.

March

3/1-3/8 Approximately 15,000 Cicanx high school students in East L.A. walk out of classes in protest of racism in the educational system across a series of protests.

3/1 Senator Robert F. Kennedy announces his campaign for Democratic presidential candidate nomination.

3/31 With pressure from the antiwar movement growing ever stronger, President Lyndon B. Johnson announces that he is not running for reelection.

April

4/4 While visiting Memphis for the aforementioned sanitation workers' strike, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated by white supremacist, James Earl Ray. Riots responding to the assassination in over 100 cities across the country would leave 39 dead, over 2,600 injured, and 21,000 arrested over the course of the next week alone.

1968 HISTORY

TIMELINE

4/11 President Johnson signs the Fair Housing act, which bans discrimination in housing based on race, color, religion, or national origin.

4/27 Vice President Hubert Humphrey enters the presidential race in Johnson's absence.

May

5/10 Representatives of the U.S. and North Vietnam meet at the International Conference Center of the French Foreign Ministry in Paris to begin peace talks.

5/27 The Supreme Court rules 7-1 that burning a military draft card as an act of free speech is not protected by the First Amendment.

June

6/4 Robert F. Kennedy begins making notable strides in his presidential campaign, but is tragically assassinated at the Ambassador Hotel in L.A. by Sirhan Sirhan. The assassin was captured at the scene and is currently serving life in prison.

6/8 James Earl Ray is found by the FBI in London, arrested, and brought to the U.S. To avoid the death penalty, he initially pleads guilty to the assassination of MLK, but three days later recants his confession and claims to be a pawn in a greater conspiracy. He is arrested and sentenced to life in prison where he dies of a liver failure in 1998.

July

7/1 President Johnson signs the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. To this day it is still the world's primary means of preventing the spread of and encouraging the reduction of nuclear weapons throughout the world.

7/20 The first Special Olympics opens. More than 1,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities gather in Chicago to compete in 200 events.

August

8/5-8/8 Richard Nixon is nominated by the Republican National Convention as their presidential candidate.

8/21 Pvt. First Class James Anderson Jr. posthumously becomes the first African-American Marine to receive the Medal of Honor. Anderson had died the year prior in Vietnam when, in order to protect his fellow Marines, he used his body to shield against an enemy grenade, with the hopes of absorbing most of the impact.

8/28 Under fear of assassination, Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley calls in extra police and Illinois National Guardsmen to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. The police and Guardsmen then indiscriminately riot against anyone in the area, clubbing and tear-gassing hundreds of not just peaceful protesters, but news reporters and bystanders as well. Much of the event, later dubbed the Chicago Police Riot was broadcast on national television. The next day, Vice President Hubert Humphrey received the presidential nomination, despite 80% of primary votes going to an antiwar candidate. Humphrey's nomination is suspected to be the result of individuals, such as Daley and President Johnson, tampering behind the scenes.

1968 HISTORY

TIMELINE

September

9/7 In Atlantic City, New Jersey, feminists protest the Miss America Pageant and the misogynist, racist, corporate driven, pro-military, and double standard riddled nature of the pageant.

9/9 Arthur Ashe wins the U.S. Open, becoming the first black man to win a Grand Slam tennis tournament.

October

10/16 American athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos receive gold and bronze medals respectively in the 200-meter dash at the 1968 Olympic Games. Following the event, during the playing of the national anthem the two raised black gloved fists to protest America's treatment of black citizens. The International Olympic Committee president, Avery Brundage, was enraged by their gesture despite notably having no issues with German athletes giving Nazi salutes during the 1936 Olympics. Smith and Carlos were stripped of their medals by the committee and sent home.

10/31 President Johnson, supposedly as a result of the peace talks in Paris, orders a halt to, "all air, naval and artillery bombardment of North Vietnam" effective the following day.

November

11/5 After a campaign setting himself up as a figure of stability, appealing to those opposed to the wave of counterculture and political demonstrations, Richard Nixon beats out Hubert Humphrey by 0.7 percent of the popular vote to become president of the United States.

11/5 Shirley Chisholm is elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, making her the first black woman to do so.

11/9 After being an all male school for 267 years, Yale University announces that it will admit female undergraduate students in 1969.

December

12/9 Douglas C. Engelbart gives a demonstration at the Fall Joint Computer Conference in San Francisco, where he introduces the world to two new inventions: The computer mouse and the word processor.

12/21-12/27 The Apollo 9 becomes the first manned spacecraft to safely orbit the Moon and return to Earth.



ACTIVITY: SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM

Imagine if RFK had had the power of Twitter or Facebook at his side in early April 1968.

Objective

Students will be able to:

- Utilize their agency as creators and consumers of digital content related to themes of identity, diversity, justice and action
- Analyze and evaluate how hashtagging can be a tool for social justice work
- Explore different kinds of purposes behind and themes of hashtag campaigns

Essential Questions

Students will be able to:

- How can social media hashtags be used as tools to create and share digital content?
- How can young people create and use social media hashtags to develop awareness and agency related to social activism?

Activity

Have students take out a piece of paper and write down something within the school, community, or world they would like to change, stop, or an issue they are passionate about.

After they have a minute to do this, call on a student and have them read out what they wrote. Then, tell all the students who wrote something similar to stand up as well. Next, call on another student who is still sitting down to read out what they would like to change, then again have all the students who wrote something similar to stand. Continue doing this until all of the class is standing.

This activity allows students to see how issues they care about are often issues others are passionate about as well. After the activity is finished, have the students sit back down and then pick one of the topics the students' raised and ask the class what they would do to address the issue. Write down on the white board methods of change-making that the class proposes, then leave it up for the remainder of the lesson for student reference later on.

ACTIVITY: SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM

Social Media Portion of Activity

1. Choose one social media hashtag campaign you have prior knowledge about.
2. Name the campaign. What is the purpose of each campaign?
3. Who seems to be the intended audience for each campaign?
4. Why are campaigns like this important?
5. Why do you connect to these campaigns?
6. How might these campaigns influence people's thoughts or actions in real life?

Using one of RFK's quotes below and/or a moment from the timeline above, create a social media campaign with a partner. This social media hashtag campaign should be able to resonate with our modern audiences as well as incorporate RFK's actions and beliefs.

Answer the above questions now with your original social media hashtag campaign. Using your own Facebook and/or Twitter, post your campaign and tag Playhouse on Park so we see it!

Use #PlayhouseOnPark and #PoP12 so we can see your responses!





ROBERT F. KENNEDY FAMOUS QUOTES

ON CHANGE:

“Some men see things as they are, and ask why. I dream of things that never were, and ask why not.”

ON WEALTH:

“Sometimes people think that because you have money and position you are immune from the human experience. But I can feel as lonesome and lost as the next man when I turn the key in the door and go into an empty house that is usually full of kids and dogs.”

ON SUCCESS:

“Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly.”

ON OPPORTUNITY:

“All of us might wish at times that we lived in a more tranquil world, but we don't. And if our times are difficult and perplexing, so are they challenging and filled with opportunity.”

ON HOPE:

“Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”

ON DIVERSITY:

“America's answer to the intolerant man is diversity - the very diversity which our heritage of religious freedom has inspired.”



ROBERT F. KENNEDY FAMOUS QUOTES

ON PROGRESS:

“Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total; of all those acts will be written the history of this generation.”

ON GIVING:

“The purpose of life is to contribute in some way to making things better.”

ON UNIFICATION:

“Let us dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world. When you teach a man to hate and fear his brother, when you teach that he is a lesser man because of his color or his beliefs or the policies he pursues, when you teach that those who differ from you threaten your freedom or your job or your family, then you also learn to confront others not as fellow citizens but as enemies — to be met not with cooperation but with conquest, to be subjugated and mastered.”

ON FREEDOM:

“I can understand the Chinese Wall: it was built as a defense against marauders. But a wall such as that in Berlin, built to prevent people from seeking freedom, is almost beyond comprehension.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

As one critic puts it, “[Kennedy:] Bobby’s Last Crusade’ is a sincere tribute to a Democratic hero of the past, giving us plenty to ponder in choosing the hero of the future.” I say there can always be more than one hero. Though Kennedy was by no means perfect, the play presents us with the portrait of a citizen who has the passion and guts to help make our country just for everyone.

General Questions about RFK

- What if Bobby Kennedy had never been assassinated?
 - Would he have gone on to win the White House in 1968, thereby precluding the presidency of Richard Nixon?
 - Would he have brought our troops home from Vietnam, ending an already protracted war?
 - Would he have been the voice of moral clarity to bind Americans together and ward off the culture wars that still rage in 2020?
 - Or (more likely), would he have irritated his detractors with his successes and disappointed his followers with his compromises (the standard fate of every politician)?

Questions on Activism

- What are the benefits of non-violent activism?
- Does non-violent activism work in achieving long-term sustainable change?
- What tactics did non-violent activists use during the civil rights movement?

Questions on the Play

- How do the speeches exemplified in *Kennedy: Bobby's Last Crusade* compare with candidates speeches today?
- *Kennedy: Bobby's Last Crusade* is a one-man show. Why did the playwright chose a one-man show rather than a full cast?
- Bobby once said, “The purpose of life is to contribute in some way to making things better.” After watching the play, do you think Bobby met his purpose in life?



WHAT IS OUR CALLING?

In 1961, Robert F. Kennedy discontinued his membership with the Metropolitan Club in New York City, citing that the Club's adherence to racial segregation was not "logically tenable, humanly honest or diplomatically sound." For him, "it [was] inconceivable...[that] in this day and age, that the privileges of the Club....would be denied to anyone merely because of his race."

For RFK, civil rights was a matter of both law and morality. In his capacity as U.S. Attorney General, RFK helped to initiate national legislation and action that would help to ensure civil rights for black Americans. Specifically, he firmly believed in the right to vote and its positive effect on black political participation and influence in America. But beyond his politics and his legal advocacy, Robert F. Kennedy had a fervor and desire for true equality, displayed in his belief that "Americans...[should be] bound together by a common concern for each other."

As we build a bridge between the past and the present and reflect on the work of the advocates of then and now, we should keep one question in mind:

WHAT DO WE DO NEXT?



HOW YOU CAN GIVE BACK

Robert Kennedy's legacy for social justice and his desire to "make better the life of this world" continues today through the efforts of **Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights**. Founded in 1968 by Ethel Kennedy and the Kennedy family, it is lead today by Robert and Ethel's daughter Kerry Kennedy. For more information, visit their website: RFKHumanRights.org.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was created in the aftermath of World War II in an effort to ensure that the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany would not be repeated. Representatives from all regions of the world, who symbolized a variety of legal traditions and cultural backgrounds, came together to codify a list of human rights to which all people around the globe should be entitled. The drafting committee, known as the UN Commission on Human Rights, was chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, widow of

American President Franklin D. Roosevelt and a long-time advocate on behalf of minorities, refugees, women, and the working class. The final document, containing 30 articles, was recognized as a common standard by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948. Since that date, the document has been translated into over 500 languages. The Commission's work did not end with the approval of the declaration. The treaty still needed to be ratified by nations, with the expectation that every nation that signed on "would then be obligated to change its laws wherever they did not conform to the points contained in the covenant." The Commission was optimistic that this work could be completed within a few years. However, the challenge was far greater than they realized. Today, advocates continue to fight to secure the human rights of citizens around the globe. For more information, visit their website: <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

SPEAK
TRUTH
TO
POWER

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Article 19: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. • Article 22: Everyone has the right to social security. • Article 25: Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being. • Article 26: Everyone has the right to education. • Article 29: Everyone has duties to the community.

HOW YOU CAN GIVE BACK

In the spirit of Kennedy, the team at Playhouse on Park is preparing to exercise their civic duty to vote and we want to encourage you to join us. While we will never tell you how to vote, we feel it is a part of our responsibility as members of this community to help you be best prepared to vote. The two non-partisan initiatives listed below are tools that we believe will help you leading up to November.

ROCK THE VOTE: Rock the Vote helps to prepare you for the best performance you can give... **VOTING!** On this national platform you have the ability to check your voter registration, set reminders for election day, and even be one of the over 12 million people they have helped register if you haven't already done so. You can text VOTER to 788-688 or visit <https://www.rockthevote.org> to get started.

CREATE THE VOTE: Create the Vote CT is an initiative uniting Connecticut arts organizations to help elect "Arts Champions" in this coming election. The arts community is a vital part of our state and the state will not be able to recover if arts organizations do not recover with it. They are curating several projects to help with voter education and are currently working to compile answers from all candidates seeking office statewide about their relationship with the arts and plans to help with arts recovery and racial justice. You can get started by taking their pledge to Create the Vote at <https://ctartsalliance.org/ctvpledge/> and by using the hashtag #CreateTheVoteCT on social media.

**ROCK
THE
VOTE**

**CREATE
THE
VOTE**

CITATIONS

Textual Citations:

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