

AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER
Carey Perloff, Artistic Director Heather Kitchen, Executive Director

PRESENTS

WORDS ^{on} PLAYS

INSIGHT INTO THE PLAY, THE PLAYWRIGHT, AND THE PRODUCTION

The Rainmaker

BY N. RICHARD NASH

DIRECTED BY MARK RUCKER

AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. In what ways does *The Rainmaker* represent a version of “the American dream”? How do you define “the American dream”?
2. Consider the self-images, and the personas they present to others, of Lizzie, File, and Starbuck. How do these characters change over the course of the play? What or who influences that change? Can you identify their specific moments of self-discovery?
3. Playwright N. Richard Nash said that in writing *The Rainmaker* he intended to tell “a simple story about droughts that happen to people, and about faith.” Do you think he succeeded? How many types of drought are there in the play? What role does faith play in the events that take place? What does each of the characters hope for? Do they get it? If so, how? If not, why not?
4. In an article about *The Rainmaker*, Nash also wrote, “There is beauty in reality, beauty in the balances of nature, no matter how brutal the imbalances; beauty in the togetherness of people which, sadly, must sometimes be measured by loneliness.” How is this statement reflected in the play? Which characters share Nash’s belief in the beauty of reality, and which don’t? Why do you think so?
5. Is H.C. right to say that Lizzie will never be satisfied unless she is married? Why or why not?
6. Why do you think Lizzie chooses to stay with File instead of leaving with Starbuck? Would you make the same choice? Why or why not? What do you think life with Starbuck would be like? How will her life with File be different?
7. What do you think of the design for this production of *The Rainmaker*? How do the design elements (sets, costumes, lighting) affect your perception of the story? If you were designing a production of this play, how would your design be different? Why?
8. How has the social and economic status of women changed since the 1930s, when the play is set; the 1950s, when it was written; and today? Do you think Lizzie is a typical woman of her time? If so, why? If not, why not? Can you relate to Lizzie?
9. What does the rain mean—literally and symbolically—for each of the Currys? For File? For Starbuck?