

## **Weebjob, by Diane Glancy**

### **Education Pack**

#### **THEMES:**

CONFLICT OF GENERATIONS

GENDER INEQUALITY

ETHNIC IDENTITY AND BELONGING

**GENRE:** Native-American Realism

**AGE RESTRICTION:** 12+

**NUMBER OF CHARACTERS:** 6 main, 7+ minor characters (5F, 7M)

#### **CHARACTER LIST:**

**GERALD LONG CHALK / WEEBJOB (MALE):** 48, the main character. His name is a play on the Biblical Job because he is beset with problems, and has a friend, Pick Up, who isn't much comfort. Weebjob is a holy man, a Mescalero Apache. He's stern and unyielding, a little impractical, yet likeable. Weebjob always seems to be at a crossroads in his life. He paints signs and hangs them on his fence. Signs that say: "He hangs the earth on nothing, Job 26:7", "Rodeo / Albuquerque", "Behold and behold. He eats grass as an ox. He moveth his tail like the pines, Job 40:15,17", "Vote Ofred for Chief."

**PERCY WILLINGDEER / PICK UP (MALE):** 43, Weebjob's friend who's in love with his daughter. He is also a Mescalero Apache. He presents Weebjob with his newest disaster when Weebjob finds out that he wants to marry his daughter.

**SUZANNE LONG CHALK / SWEET POTATO (FEMALE):** 21, Weebjob's daughter. She has a mind of her own. She is unhappy with her life because she doesn't know where she belongs. She has run off several times to hitchhike on the interstate to Gallup.

**JAMES LONG CHALK (MALE):** 23, Weebjob's younger son. He works for the highway department and lives in Socorro with his girlfriend, Hersah.

**SARAH LONG CHALK / SWEET GRASS (FEMALE):** 45, Weebjob's wife. She has a sweet and understanding disposition. She is of Cherokee heritage. When the play begins, she has gone to visit her sister in Hobbs, because she wants to see her, and also, to get away from Weebjob for a while, whom she feels takes her for granted. She is a traditional woman who is just starting to deal with herself as an individual.

**WILLIAM LONG CHALK (MALE):** 28, Weebjob's older son. He is a lawyer in Roswell.

*Minor Characters who appear at the Wedding:*

**CLEMENT THOUSANDSTICKS (MALE):** the town buffoon, mid 50s

**MARY JANE COLLAR (FEMALE):** Sweet Grass' sister, early 40s

**HERSAH (FEMALE):** James' girlfriend, early 20s

*No age specified characters -*

**REESAH (FEMALE):** William's wife and their **Child**

**WARHALL (MALE):** Thousandsticks' friend

**MINISTER (MALE)**

**MUSICIANS**

**OTHER WEDDING GUESTS**

**SYNOPSIS:**

Gerald Long Chalk (the eponymous Weebjob) lives in present day Salazar Canyon, Lincoln County, New Mexico, USA. He always seems to be at a crossroads in his life. While his wife, Sarah / Sweet Grass is absent, he has to deal with the arrival of his youngest daughter Suzanne / Sweet Potato from one of her hitchhiking

adventures. He discovers that his wife has been sending letters to every member of the family except him. He realises that she wasn't just visiting her sister, but in fact wanted time away from him. Once Sweet Potato decides to wed Weebjob's close friend Percy Willingdeer / Pick Up, old resentments and new desires flair up. These culminate at Sweet Potato and Pick Up's wedding party, where the two women bring their new found perspective to light.

This play was written originally in English.

The play premiered at the Belvoir St Theatre in Sydney from 17 September to 16 October 2016, directed by Leticia Càceres and produced by Belvoir. The cast included Purcell in the title role, Mark Coles Smith, Tony Cugin, Benedict Hardie, and Will McDonald.

### **KEY MOMENTS:**

**pp. 56-60 - 2 characters - 2F**

Dialogue: Between Sweet Grass and Sweet Potato in Act II, Scene 1.

**pp. 70-71 - 2 characters - (1F, 1M)**

Monologue: End of Act II Scene 2. Weebjob declares his love for his wife.

**pp. 37-45 - 4 characters - (1F, 3M)**

Climax: Not necessarily the active climax of the play, but the scene of the heated discussion between Weebjob and Pick Up at Act 1, Scene 3.

### **STEP ONE: ASK**

What questions come to the students' minds when they read these scenes? In groups, ask them to come up with questions based on the play which have no easy answers. Think about the themes raised above and try to combine more than one concept in each question. Here are some examples:

- Why do parents and children tend to see the world through different perspectives and/or have different life goals?
- Can the generation conflicts arise between any age gaps; i.e. siblings with larger age gaps might also experience those conflicts?
- How different is the treatment of women in contemporary urban settings when put in contrast to smaller or rural communities?
- Is the fight for gender equality aware of women that live in those more secluded or remote areas? How can this fight be approached differently in this case?
- Do communities of original or indigenous people still have a place in today's society? How can that be ensured without interfering with their individual freedoms?
- Can you think of any recent case scenarios in our society where people's ethnicity and their own sense of belonging were challenged due to a law or political decision?

Consider these questions across conflict of generations, gender inequality in small communities, sense of belonging or ethnic identity issues and explore if students can relate to the issues portrayed in this text.

## **STEP TWO: EXPLORE**

### **Exercise 1:**

Boal's Machine – inspired by the Working Machine exercise by Augusto Boal, one of the participants should go into the middle and imagine that they are a moving part in a complex machine. As they start doing a movement with their body, a mechanical, rhythmic movement, and vocalising a sound to go with it. Everyone else watches and listens, in a circle around the machine. Another person goes up and adds another part (their own body) to this mechanical apparatus, with another movement and another sound. A third, watching the first two, goes in and does the same, so that eventually all the participants are integrated into this one, synchronised machine. When everyone is part of the machine, the facilitator asks the first person to accelerate his rhythm – everyone else must follow their modification, since the machine is one entity. When the machine is near to

explosion, the facilitator asks the first person to ease up, gradually to slow down, till in their own time the whole group ends together. It is not easy to end together, but it is possible. For everything to work well, each participant really does have to try and listen to everything he hears. This play's machine could work both as a) The machine of whatever themes we are currently working on: sense of belonging, generational conflict, sexism, racism, etc. This helps enormously to create images for the actual scenes; b) The machine of the play, of a character or a situation. In this case, the actors' task is not necessarily to unify but to structure their relationships. As Boal says "[it] is extraordinary how the ideology of a group, its political standpoint, can be revealed in a rhythm of sound and movement. The way people think and the things they find fault with soon become apparent." This exercise can also be repeated including text, once characters are assigned.

### **Exercise 2:**

In Act 2, Scene 4, all characters are ready for the ceremony and party. Speech is fast and they are all happy and ready to celebrate. A good exercise to keep students on their feet in preparation for that scene is the following –

Word Association Game – Participants will form a circle and whoever starts the exercise says a word related to a theme of the play. The person to their right has to say "[The word said] that reminds me of [new word]." And that continues until someone repeats a word. That person who repeated the word has to go back the thread of words until they reach the original first word said. This is a good icebreaker and tool for students to memorise text and scene order.

### **Exercise 3:**

Early in the play, at Act 2, Scene 4, all the central characters are together in the scene but their interaction is limited as we need to focus on the specific relationships that are being discussed (Sweet Potato and Sweet Grass, Weebjob and Pick Up, Pick Up and Sweet Potato...) However, it is important for all characters to know how they relate to each other and how they react to being in each other's company. A good exercise for that would be -

Improvisation with the characters – allow participants to study their character and their given circumstance (Stanislavski) in the story. For example, for Weebjob he is

being bombarded by news that shakes everything he believes to be true and the vision he had for his family's future; how does he react to that? Is he responding to those news only verbally? How does it affect his physicality?

Double up characters who do not interact much during the play.

Participants should imagine their interaction given a scenario and objectives (a few suggestions which will work could be – James and William remembering their time when they left the ranch, or Sweet Potato and Hersha on how it is to be a married woman). This exercise can be also merged with Frantic Assembly's exercise of the burial (imagining a character's funeral and how all other characters attending will interact, what are their relationships, or objectives in that specific circumstance.)

### **STEP THREE: FEEDBACK**

Discuss what came up for the students. Can they relate with the characters' plight? What was the most interesting thing they learned? Bring students to return to the text and analyse what they are taking away from the exercises for their character study - if they have been assigned their characters already. If time permits allow students to return with their impressions, assign them characters and set them to work on their physicality.

---

## **APPENDIX**

### **STRUCTURE:**

This play is divided into two acts, four scenes each:

#### **Act I**

**Scene 1.** Weebjob, Sweet Potato, Pick Up, (later) James – Weebjob misses his wife, and learns of his friend's relationship with his daughter.

**Scene 2.** Sweet Potato, Pick Up – they discuss their relationship and we learn of Sweet Potato's wish to leave their hometown. He asks to marry him.

**Scene 3.** Weebjob, James, Pick Up, Sweet Potato – Weebjob and Pick Up have a heated discussion over his relationship with his daughter.

**Scene 4.** same characters – Sweet Potato says yes to Pick Up's proposal, but they have very different ideas for this marriage. Weebjob seems to come to terms with it.

## **Act II**

**Scene 1.** Weebjob, Sweet Potato, Pick Up, James (enter) Sweet Grass, William – Weebjob finds out his wife was not where she said she was, and learns of he was the last to know of Pick Up and Sweet Potato's relationship. Mother and daughter have a heartfelt conversation.

**Scene 2.** Sweet Grass, Weebjob – they discuss their relationship and we learn of Sweet Grass's need to have time away from him from time to time. She still loves him.

**Scene 3.** Weebjob, (later) all other characters – Weebjob prays in his squash patch. All characters dance a genesis/turtle-island creation myth, bringing Weebjob's vision to life.

**Scene 4.** all of the characters in the play – Sweet Potato and Pick Up wedding ceremony. She confesses her doubts but goes ahead with it. There's a party and Pick Up embarks in Sweet Potato's dreams of escaping their hometown.