

Before seeing/reading the play

1. Define the word well. What are the various meanings of the word? This and other websites provide information:
<http://www.onelook.com/?w=well&ls=a>
2. Research the well-made play. What features of plot and characterization are essential to the well-made play? These and other web sites provide information:
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/639300/well-made-play>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Well-made_play
3. Research the history of American performance art. How is performance art different or similar to traditional theatre? What role does autobiography play in performance art? How is performance art related to social and political issues? This and other websites provide information:
<http://www.arthistory.about.com/cs/arthistory10one/a/performance.htm>
4. The term metatheatre was first coined by Lionel Abel in 1963. What is metatheatre? What are the differences between “metatheatrical” and “theatrical?” What audience attitude, according to Lionel Abel, does metatheatre promote? What are the five techniques of metatheatricality? What is the outlook of characters in a metatheatrical piece as opposed to those in a theatrical work? These and other web sites provide information:
<http://www.enotes.com/literary-terms/q-and-a/what-metatheatre-metatheatricality-109181>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metatheatre>
5. Research *Well*/playwright Lisa Kron. What elements of her work fall into the category of performance art? What elements do not? These and other websites provide information:
<http://www.lisakron.com>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lisa_Kron

6. Define metaphor. How can the concept of the literary metaphor be extended to include thoughts, actions and objects? What is the difference between a metaphor and a simile? These and other web sites and books provide information:
<http://grammar.about.com/od/rhetoricstyle/a/13metaphors.htm>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphor#More_Than_Just_a_Figure_of_Speech
A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms, Richard A. Lanham
From Archetype to Zeitgeist, Herbert Kohl
Metaphors We Live By, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson
7. Research savant syndrome (also known as savantism). In whom does it usually appear? What forms is it likely to take? This and other websites provide information:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Savant_syndrome
8. Research allergies. What is thought to cause them? How are the causes discovered in the individual? What are common symptoms? How can an individual become desensitized to allergens? What is the difference between allergies and other illnesses such as cancer, heart disease or diabetes? These and other websites provide information:
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/allergies/DS01118>
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/allergy.html>
9. Define hypochondriac. What are the symptoms of hypochondria? What are the treatments for hypochondria? What causes it? These and other websites provide information:
<https://health.google.com/health/ref/Hypochondria>
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,490690,00.html>
10. Define prejudice. Be sure to take into account the roots of the word. This and other websites provide information:
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/PREJUDICE>
11. What is an anecdote? What purpose do anecdotes serve? How are they affected by time? What might be gained in using an anecdote to tell a story? What might be lost? These and other websites provide information:
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/anecdote>
<http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anecdote>

12. Research the American Civil Rights Movement beginning in the 1950s. Pay special attention to the integration of neighborhoods and schools during that period. How did local governments support segregation? What actions did ordinary citizens take to support integration? These and other web sites provide information.

<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-2716>

<http://rs6.loc.gov/ammem/aahtml/exhibit/aopart9.html>

<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/history/Ao858852.html>

After seeing/reading the play:

1. What is the significance of the title of the play? Refer to your research on the definitions of the word well. Which definitions were applicable to the play and why?
2. Refer to your research on well-made plays. What principles of the well-made play does *Well* violate or ignore? Why do you think the playwright chooses not to observe them? Describe how the story of *Well* might be told following the formula for the well-made play. What would be lost? What would be gained?
3. What was your emotional response to the story as presented metatheatrically? How do you feel about being addressed directly by the playwright? Compare your involvement in *Well* to your involvement to a play presented in a more traditional form. What role did you play as a member of the audience in *Well*? In another play?
4. If you are seeing *Hamlet* and/or *Henry IV, Part One* this season, compare Hamlet's, Hal's and Falstaff's direct speeches to the audience to Lisa's in *Well*. Compare your intellectual involvement. Your emotional involvement.
5. Refer to your research on performance art. What performance art elements are present in *Well*? How do they help to move the story forward? How do they influence your response?
6. For Lisa and Ann, chart the instances of sickness and of wellness. What does each expect of the other by way of health? Which instances of sickness and wellness meet expectations? Which defy expectations?
7. Refer to your research on savant syndrome. Why does Lisa refer to Ann as a "housewife

savant”? Why does Ann take exception to the term? To what extent does it apply to her? To what extent does it simplify and/or trivialize her achievements?

8. Refer to your research on the American Civil Rights Movement. What, in Ann’s opinion, are the advantages of an integrated neighborhood over a segregated neighborhood? What steps does the city government of Lansing take to thwart neighborhood integration? What steps does Ann take to promote it? To maintain it? What subsequent occurrences demonstrate the effectiveness of her methods?
9. Refer to your research on metaphor. What are the metaphors in the play? What is being compared with what? How does the show illuminate the elements of the metaphor, or metaphors? What is revealed by the metaphor, or metaphors, in the show?
10. Make a list of subjects in the play that are ailing or un-well. Which of these entities get better over the course of the play, and in what ways? Which do not? Is there anyone or anything that heals completely?
11. Follow the dramatic action from the points of view of each of the four actors: Gina Daniels, Brent Hinkley, G. Valmont Thomas and K. T. Vogt. How does being known as themselves (the actors) rather than as the characters alter their experience of the play? How does each influence the play’s action? What does the audience learn about each of these actors? How are they similar to the characters they play? How are they different?
12. As the play begins, what points does Lisa want to make? Which does she succeed in making? What does she claim the play is about? What does it turn out to be about? When and how does it shift?
13. Describe the character Ann as Lisa first presents her. Describe how she lives up to this description and how she does not. List examples. What do the four actors find so attractive about her?
14. How would you diagnose Ann? What conclusions can you draw by the end of the play regarding what Ann is afflicted by? Regarding what afflicted Lisa as a child? Refer to your research on hypochondria. What evidence is there that Ann is a hypochondriac? That she is not? How does the mystery of Ann’s illness affect her relationship to her daughter? To the outside world?

15. Refer to your definition of prejudice. Chart the instances of prejudice presented in the play. Who is prejudiced and against whom? How does each prejudice influence expectations?
16. Refer to your research on anecdotes. What function do anecdotes serve in *Well*? List specific examples from the play where anecdotes assist the character of Lisa in the telling of her story. List examples where they fail her. In what ways do they help? In what ways do they harm?
17. In a 2006 interview in *American Theatre*, Lisa Kron says, “*Well* really is about how we create narrative to make sense of our lives, and how each of our own individual narratives is not necessarily true for someone else.”
<http://www.tcg.org/publications/at/Mar06/kron.cfm>
Find examples in the play of events in Lisa’s life that don’t make sense to her. What narrative does she create in these cases? What other versions of the events are offered? What do you learn about Lisa and the other person from the differences in their versions of the same thing?

Members of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival’s Education and Literary departments— Hilary Tate , Amina Henry, Sarah Langan and Joan Langley —created the “Suggestions for Teaching *Well*.”

These suggestions were designed for students and teachers but may be enjoyed by audiences of all ages. They may be used without restriction for educational purposes.

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