

# National Theatre

## *Nine Night:* Teachers' Educational Resource Pack

Archive Resource Pack

# Contents

|                                              |    |
|----------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction.....                            | 6  |
| Historical context.....                      | 8  |
| Pre 20th century Jamaica .....               | 8  |
| Jamaica in the 20th and 21st centuries ..... | 9  |
| Geographical context .....                   | 12 |
| Nine Night .....                             | 12 |
| Signs and symbols of Nine Night (ritual) ... | 13 |
| Interviews.....                              | 18 |
| Characters.....                              | 21 |
| Scenes.....                                  | 23 |
| Themes.....                                  | 30 |
| Exercises .....                              | 37 |
| Glossary.....                                | 42 |
| Useful links.....                            | 45 |

This resource pack contain themes and details that might be challenging, emotionally activating or triggering. It is not our intention to cause distress or harm but to support your understanding of the play and its creative and historical contexts.

Please contact the National Theatre Archive ([archive@nationaltheatre.org.uk](mailto:archive@nationaltheatre.org.uk)) for any questions, enquiries, or feedback about the material within this resource.

# Introduction

At the beginning of *Nine Night* it becomes clear that someone is dying and then dies. The someone is Gloria, a formidable matriarch and a flawed mystery. She is to be celebrated. Her character, never physically but always spiritually present, is revealed with expert timing through Natasha Gordon's writing. And her presence cleverly signalled, without the need for theatrical effect through Roy Alexander Weise's subtly focused direction.



Poster for *Nine Night* (2018), staged at the National Theatre.

Grief and grieving are personal and collective experiences. There is no right or wrong way through our own and other people's emotions and responses. Some people have, or find, faith or ritual as a guide, and some people are shaped by previous experiences of death or some form of separation from a loved one. Some people grieve the loss of the same person more than once and we all never stop feeling the loss of those we love from our lives.

Throughout my life, stories have provided a space to process and the means, piece by piece, to let go of the pain caused by the death of another person. These fictional narratives encompass the complex truths of the person who has died, of ourselves and

others connected to the person. They capture the strange mundanity of funeral arrangements, what to do with the person's possessions and that we must continue navigating our own lives: family, friends, food, work, money when person is no longer with us and the lack of any of these fundamental parts.

Natasha Gordon joins a set of brilliant writers whose works navigate the realities of preparing for the death and the death of a relative, and the grief that follows with honesty and great sensitivity. Natasha shares a ritual, a way of letting the loved one go, beyond the culture to which it belongs. Death and

grief, although acknowledged in British society, are often unspoken experiences between family and friends. Learning how different cultures and religions recognise a life and mark a death can help us realise that we are allowed to be angry, sad and joyful: whatever the emotion this is the truth of our situation, expressing our past, present and future.

Natasha Gordon skilfully uses each character in *Nine Night* to explore the many conditions in which a person might experience the death of another person, and the many relationships that exist around the dead person. She provides insight into the negotiation (within one person and amongst people) between cultures and generations that shape our identities – what we choose to keep and lose, and what is beyond our control. Natasha Gordon has created characters with depth and nuance; we are not asked or tricked into liking or disliking any one character. She cleverly presents the complexity of being human – each character's strengths, vulnerability, intelligence and cruelty is presented without the need to judge. We are allowed to laugh and cry with the characters and witness a moment in their interwoven lives.

Life is not neat and many situations and relationships remain unsettled. I appreciate that this play does not attempt to resolve each character's dilemma; it would be a disservice to both the characters and an audience to neatly answer all of the questions. As with grief, Gloria's family needs time to understand who they are to each other and themselves.

If you are unable to watch a live or recorded performance of *Nine Night* you should read this play, it will move you. And as Roy Alexander Weise said, it will make you laugh out loud.

- mezze eade, 2026

# Historical Context

## Pre 20th century Jamaica

The Spanish were the first white Europeans to visit the island of Jamaica which was inhabited by the Taíno people. The Taíno had migrated from South America and lived on the island they called Xaymaca for approximately 900 years (since around 600 AD). By 1510 the Spanish had 'settled' on Jamaica. The Spanish enslaved the Taíno people to work on plantations to maintain a food supply for the ships and people who sailed between Europe and 'the Americas'. The Taíno fought to resist Spanish occupation of Xaymaca but were eventually eradicated through war or enslavement. The Spanish then trafficked and enslaved people from the African continent to work on the plantations.



"File:Jamaica Regions map.png" by Burmesedays is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

In 1655 Britain fought Spain and eventually took possession of Jamaica in 1670. These British settlers were a combination of merchants, pirates and 'land owners'. During the fighting and transition from Spanish to British 'rule' some enslaved people were able to escape and established a community in the hilly interior of Jamaica. The Maroons lived independently and were an integral element of resistance to the enslavement of African people. The trafficking and enslavement of Africans to Jamaica was continued by the British until 1838. However, the collapse of the system did not bring about the end of British rule in Jamaica, nor financial freedom and equality for Black Jamaicans. Whilst white British enslavers received financial 'compensation', Black Jamaicans were forced to become indentured labourers, which lasted

between four to six years. These so called 'apprenticeships' paid low wages, provided no food or accommodation and did not bring an end to the violent, physical abuse of Black Jamaicans.

- Read a detailed history of Jamaica:

[blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/jamaica/history-of-jamaica/](http://blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/jamaica/history-of-jamaica/)

## Jamaica in the 20th and 21st centuries

By the 20th century most of the British sugar plantations on Jamaica had been replaced with North American-owned banana plantations. Wages continued to be low and these organisations barely contributed to the Jamaican economy; they controlled all aspects of production and export and were essentially tax exempt. However, these industries did influence the development of infrastructure – enhancing the railway system (first built in 1844) and the building of large ports and faster boats. New mining organisations contributed to industrial growth but also brought little economic benefit to Jamaica and no improvement to the lives of Black Jamaicans.

During the 1930s continued low wages, high unemployment and high food prices compounded by poor living conditions motivated protests and strikes calling for an improvement to the economic circumstances of Black Jamaicans. The work of different unions eventually culminated in the formation of two political parties, the People's National Party (1938) and the Jamaican Labour Party (1942). Although both parties were supported by many Black working-class Jamaicans, these political forces were controlled by the economic power of white and light-skinned, educated and property-owning Jamaicans.

Tourists (travelling for leisure) had visited Jamaica via steamship since the late 19th century. During this time there were few hotels on the island and a tourism industry managed by Jamaicans did not exist. In the 1950s, improvements to aeroplanes and the expansion of international air travel made tourism a viable tool for the economic development of Jamaica. This was supported by the building of hotels and the greater urban development of Kingston, the capital city of Jamaica. Despite the impact of hurricane Charlie in 1951 Jamaica established a thriving tourism industry. Jamaican independence in 1962 slowly brought social change ensuring better access to education and more secure jobs for Black Jamaicans, and an increased focus on Jamaican Arts and

Culture. The National Dance Theatre Company was also founded in 1962.



*Dancers from the National Dance Theatre of Jamaica. Photo by National Dance Theatre of Jamaica.*

Since the end of the 19th century Jamaican people had migrated to the USA and Canada for construction and skilled labour work. When the UK introduced the British Nationality Act in 1948, which granted the status of citizen on people from countries in the British Commonwealth, many Jamaicans were encouraged to migrate to the UK. The Act recognised the right of commonwealth citizens to live and work in the UK. This immigration was backed by the British government after the end of World War II to help rebuild and grow essential infrastructure, institutions and industries such as the NHS and transport systems. Between 1948 and 1971 approximately 500,000 Jamaicans migrated to Britain. The introduction of the Immigration Act 1971 (which came into effect in 1973) meant that Commonwealth citizens lost the rights originally granted in 1948 and reduced the number of Jamaican people migrating to the UK.

- Between 1947 and 1981 over a million British people migrated to Australia, around 80,000 migrated to New Zealand and approximately 700,000 to Canada.

- ◆ Why are narratives about global majority migration to the UK presented as negative in comparison to white British migration out of the UK?
- ◆ Why are migration figures out of the UK not reported with immigration figures into the UK?

Anxiety about British power and identity, both internally around jobs and externally around international finances and military operations, compounded by racial stereotyping, was harnessed in a political narrative to create fear during the 1930s by Oswald Mosley, the 1960s by Enoch Powell and the 1970s and 80s by Margaret Thatcher. Black people were blamed for increased unemployment and the economic downturn in Britain in the 1980s, despite being one of the worst affected groups. White hostility manifested in violent attacks on Black and South Asian people across the country. Rather than addressing and seeking justice for the victims police sought to harass and punish, through targeted 'hard policing' utilising such practices as the 'sus' law – stop and search – which significantly targeted young Black men for decades.

Despite the deliberately hostile law-making, negative media narratives and experiencing everyday racism, many Black British people have been able to establish strong community connections (with people of many different ethnicities), find fulfilling work and create meaningful lives. Life can be emotionally exhausting – bridging more than one culture and finding a sense of identity that feels true. However, these things also bring a sense of abundance – celebrating and building upon literary, academic and artistic achievements; knowing how integral Black people have been (and are still) to the NHS, transport and sports; enjoying that the African diaspora is rooted, connected and thriving.

- Use the Historical and Geographical Context sections in the *Leave Taking* by Winsome Pinnock Education Resource Pack to expand on this information: [black-play-archives-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/uploads/2026/03/BPA-Leave-Taking-Education-Resource-Pack.pdf](https://black-play-archives-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/uploads/2026/03/BPA-Leave-Taking-Education-Resource-Pack.pdf)

# Cultural/Geographical Context

## Nine Night

Nine Night is a Jamaican ritual, which evolved out of West African traditions and ancestor worship, that respects and celebrates the death of a person. A variety of similar wake rituals (including Three Night) developed by enslaved Africans across the Caribbean islands represent communal strength through cultural and spiritual connection. Enslaved Africans believed that it took nine nights for the spirit of a dead person to make its way home to the African continent and their ancestors. For enslaved Africans, and later underpaid and unpaid Black Jamaicans, these cultural practices maintained individual and collective meaning, and created kinship amongst people who were systematically stripped of their dignity and identity. Thus, Nine Night facilitated social relations for the living and preserved ancestral links for the living to the dead, through dancing, singing, storytelling, eating and drinking.

The purpose of Nine Night can be described as being to appease the spirit of the dead person so that they do not become a *duppy* (a spirit that wanders the local town, roads and countryside causing problems for family members and strangers) and to ensure that they join ancestors who protect the living family members. The dead person is recognised as having lived a useful life which prompts a joyful sadness. Nine Night is a way of showing respect to the dead person and by honouring the dead a balance is brought to the living world. Spirit possession (and the practice of placing an ear to the lid of the coffin) assists the living to find resolution by enabling communal and personal healing. The dead person communicates what needs to be resolved: this might be the payment of debts or addressing the perpetrator of any physical, psychological or social injuries.

Christian beliefs, originally forced upon enslaved Africans by the British, became an accepted and integrated part of Jamaican ritual customs. Nine Night added and adapted Christian morals and practice through prayer, reading verses from the bible and the singing of hymns.

From the first night after the death the family prepares food and drinks and

---

host visitors which include family and friends, acquaintances from the local community and strangers who wish to pay their respects. The guests may also bring food and drink and will stay through the night, until they are ready to leave. Guests will share stories about the dead person usually highlighting positive qualities and events that will appease the spirit of the dead person, and will participate in ritual dancing to bring healing to the living and the dead.

The ninth night (the ninth night after the person's death) should be the night before the funeral. The furniture, particularly where the dead person slept while alive, must be rearranged to ensure that their spirit is not tempted to stay by the comfort and familiarity of their home. This disruption disorients the spirit and prevents it from staying and becoming a *duppy*. The music that is played is meaningful to the dead person and their family and friends, and connects everyone to their shared sense of culture and history. The dancing honours the living and the dead and the spirits of ancestors will be invited to join in the dancing. The spirit of the dead person may also be invited to sit, eat and drink and enjoy the stories that are being told about them. Before it leaves, or when the spirit is asked to leave, it may possess someone to communicate specific messages to the living.

In some families where there are babies and young children, the child will be passed over the coffin. This tradition is said to prevent a spirit from causing harm to the child or to the child's family. Before the body is carried out of the house people may place gifts in or on the coffin, such as money to help the spirit on their journey or a knife if the *duppy* needs to seek revenge. When the coffin is taken out of the house the body is carried feet first. Some people will sweep behind the body, as it is carried out, to symbolically clean the house of negative energies.

## Signs and symbols of Nine Night (ritual)

| Sign/Symbol | Meaning                                                                                      |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Candles     | A universal sign of hope. During wakes they can be used as a form of remembrance or healing. |
| Isaiah 52:  | In the play, Gloria uses this bible quote as an                                              |

|                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 'Shake off yuh dust, rise up' | invocation to find strength and keep trying, in the knowledge that God will bring salvation.                                                                                                      |
| Psalm 23                      | Gloria's message to Maggie in her dream – Gloria trusts that God will take care of her and she is not afraid of death.                                                                            |
| Scent of death                | Can be a warning or a caution about a situation. Can also indicate a significant change or transformation in someone's life. In the play, this is used to foreshadow changes in Robert's life.    |
| Sunflowers                    | Generally considered a happy flower, a symbol of loyalty.                                                                                                                                         |
| Water                         | Has many meanings including life, cleansing and fear. In Trudy's dream, water might represent difficult or negative emotions and perhaps request to release or request to release these feelings. |
| White dove                    | In Christianity, doves are seen as messengers from God. They also symbolise peace.                                                                                                                |
| White feather                 | After the death of a loved one, feathers are seen as signs that the spirit of the person is nearby, or as a greeting or goodbye. They can bring a sense of calm and permission to let go.         |

## Pouring rum



*Robert (Oliver Alvin-Wilson) and Vince (Ricky Fearon) in Nine Night at the National Theatre in 2018.  
Photo by Helen Murray.*

Pouring rum on the ground is a recognition of the presence of the spirit of the dead person. It may have roots in West African traditions of pouring water on the ground or on a sacred place. Libation as a sacred action connects the living to the ancestors and Gods, the visible within the invisible. The pouring of water is an act of remembrance and as a way to ask the ancestors to guide and bring balance and harmony to your life.

## Dreams

The purpose of dreams is widely debated: the subconscious brain making sense of what has happened to a person during their waking hours, or messages from ancestors, spirits and guidance on difficult decisions or situations.

**Maggie:** Last night me dream she, me see ha, flying high pon a white dove. She land right in front of, stretch out she neck like ostrich and she 'Maggie, me beg yuh read me Psalm 23'. (scene one, page 17)

Gloria appears to be communicating that she is not afraid of death because she knows that God will protect and provide for her. The ostrich is a symbol of power, strength and beauty which contrasts with the peculiar image of a stretched human neck.

- ◆ Is the white dove a sign of forgiveness from Gloria?
- ◆ Is the ostrich significant?

**Robert:** ...but the other night I dreamt she was calling me. I could hear her voice, but couldn't find her. I ran downstairs into the kitchen and Alvin was standing there staring at me. Mum came up behind him, carrying a big-arse machete. Just as I shouted, 'Mum, don't!', she split his head in two and bare ten-, twenty- and fifty-pound notes splattered across the room... (scene five, page 41)

Dreaming about money is often connected with self-worth. Robert interprets the dream as his mother telling him to take decisive action.

- ◆ Is the dream a sign of Gloria's encouragement or caution?
- ◆ What is the significance of Alvin presence?
- ◆ Is she giving Robert permission to sell the house?
- ◆ When Gloria communicates to Robert through Maggie, she tells a version of the crow and eagle story (scene 11, page 85). The crow is mostly viewed as negative or easily distracted, whereas the eagle is a symbol of strength and focus.
- ◆ Does this support the meaning of Robert's dream?

**Trudy:** She was inna pure distress. She di try fi talk, but, when she open she mout, she speech drown inna water – a river gush from her tongue, like a waterfall, and wash she away. (scene ten, page 64)

Despite Trudy's anger about being abandoned by her mother she is concerned that Gloria didn't die peacefully.

- ◆ Is the dream a sign of Gloria's fear – which would contradict Maggie's dream?

However, Gloria's inability to speak may mean that she realises that there are no words that can amend for her decision to leave her child; that Trudy should use her mother's death to wash away her childhood fears and the negative feelings that Gloria caused. Gloria does not take the shame of her decision with her in death and Trudy should not continue to carry it in life.

- ◆ When Gloria communicates to Trudy through Maggie, she asks Trudy to let go of the burden that Gloria's actions have placed upon her. To let go of her anger, to 'unclench yu fist', so that she can connect to her family and her ancestors. To find strength in letting go.
- ◆ Does this support the message in Trudy's dream?

Lorraine does not dream of her mother and she does not receive a message through Maggie.

- ◆ Why doesn't Gloria communicate to Lorraine through a dream or through Maggie?

# Interview

This interview first appeared on the National Theatre's website in 2018, prior to the play beginning rehearsals. In it, Gordon talks about her origins as an actor and what it was like writing the play.

## **Q: What inspired you to write the play?**

**Natasha Gordon (NG):** The ritual and ceremony around death and funerals is something I've always been intrigued by. My family are from Jamaica. I've never attended a funeral in Jamaica but in the UK, in whichever part of country the funeral is taking place, there are certain elements to the service that are always recognisable, whether the deceased is religious or not.

## **Q: What makes a Jamaican funeral?**

**NG:** The congregants at the graveside, singing hymns continuously whilst the family – sharing spades – cover the coffin with earth, pour a libation of rum and adorn the freshly dug grave in a splendour of flowers. A Jamaican or Caribbean family wouldn't see this as a ritual necessarily – it's just something you do. You only see it as ritualistic once you've attended funeral services from other cultures and realise not everyone has an open casket at the end of the service.

## **Q: What is the play about?**

**NG:** The play is about grief. When I wrote it I was grappling with how grief moves through us, the importance for ritual and ceremony for some people, yet for others it's a quieter, private observance that's important. There can be a conflict between navigating our own grief whilst honouring the wishes of the dead and managing the expectations of the living.

## **Q: When did you first experience a 'Nine Night'?**

**NG:** I experienced the tradition of Nine Night for the first time when my grandmother passed away four years ago. I was struck by the importance of the tradition for my grandmother's generation and for the people in my family

that were born in Jamaica. We don't like to think of our own mortality, so on the whole, we don't really talk about death or the difficult stuff around it. My experience of Nine Night was similar. When my grandmother passed away, as a family we didn't discuss the ritual or tradition behind Nine Night. We just did it.

**Q: How did you start writing *Nine Night*?**

**NG:** I wrote a back story and timeline for all of the characters. I thought about the ideas or tensions that I wanted to explore. I spoke to older Jamaicans, family and neighbours about the significance of Nine Night, if any, to them – the responses were very individual. I think I expected there to be a collective experience but, the more I discover about Nine Night, the more I realise that one's connection to it really differs depending on which part of Jamaica you come from.

**Q: How does it feel going from acting to writing?**

There are lots of similarities between acting and writing. Some of the differences lie in the responsibility. Responsibility for the whole story. Creating characters that are real, three-dimensional, leaving scope for an actor to breathe life into your words – taking it to another dimension outside of your head. Articulating my vision to many other departments as well as the director. It can feel overwhelming, but it's also incredibly exciting.

**Q: What do you want people to take away from the piece?**

That's difficult as in lots of ways – I have no idea what the response will be. If I think about the place I was in when I started to write the play, I was grappling with questions that were hard to answer, in the thick of grief. So maybe it's something about bracing ourselves to ask questions of our loved ones – how do we want our passing honoured? But mostly, if people leave having felt moved and having laughed, I'll be happy.

**Q: Roy Alexander Weise is directing – how involved will you be in the rehearsal process?**

I'll be around a lot. It's really important that the director and actor have the space and freedom to own your words and at the same time have built a strong

understanding of the play based on what you've written. This is the first time that Roy and I are working together. Roy's a fantastic director and we have an amazing cast – so talented. I can't wait.

**Q: What advice would you give aspiring writers?**

One of the things I found difficult when writing *Nine Night*, was tussling with my own confidence and self-belief. I couldn't imagine how an unformed idea – a jumble of dialogue in my head – could take shape and become a play. Give yourself permission to write your narrative. We may share or be interested in similar stories, but know our own narrative is truest to us – give yourself the time and the permission to write it.

*Nine Night* is published by Nick Hern Books. More information about the play can be found on the Black Plays Archive and National Theatre websites.

# Characters

## ANITA

Lorraine's daughter and Gloria's granddaughter. Anita is 23 and has a nine-month old child, Rosa, with her partner Nathan. Anita has stayed in contact with her father.

## LORRAINE

Gloria's second daughter and Anita's mother. Lorraine is in her mid-40s. She was born in England. Lorraine is divorced from Anita's father. She was able to leave her job and received a redundancy payment to take care of her mother after Gloria's cancer diagnosis.

## MAGGIE

Gloria's cousin. Maggie is in her 70s. She was born in Jamaica and came to England at or around the same time as Gloria. She is married to Vince.

## ROBERT

Gloria's son and youngest child. He is in his early 40s. He was born in England. He is married to Sophie, a white woman. He does not want children. He works in finance and / or property development.

## SOPHIE

Robert's wife. She is a white woman in her mid-40s. Sophie is a music teacher at a secondary school. She no longer speaks to her mother. She is pregnant but has not told Robert.

## TRUDY

Gloria's eldest daughter and Lorraine and Robert's half-sister. She is in her early 50s. Trudy was born in Jamaica. Trudy was four when Gloria left and was brought up by her grandmother. Trudy runs a successful business making clothes.

## VINCE

Maggie's husband. Vince is in his 70s. He was born in Jamaica. He may have

---

travelled to England before Maggie to secure a job and place to live or they may have come together. Vince was interested in Gloria before he began a relationship with Maggie. He still loves Gloria. Vince is a humble man who has worked hard to provide a secure life for his family.

## GLORIA

Gloria is never seen but is described by all of the characters. Despite not being physically present, Gloria's presence surrounds every moment of the play.

- Read through the script and find all of the descriptions of and stories about Gloria. Write a character description as if she is the eighth character in the play. Your description must be at least 100 words long.

# Scenes

The story unfolds in Gloria's house in London, England, in the mid-2010s. All of the action takes place in the kitchen of Gloria's home.



*Lorraine (Franc Ashman), Vince (Ricky Fearon), Maggie (Cecilia Noble), Trudy (Michelle Greenidge) and Anita (Rebekah Murrell) in Nine Night at the National Theatre in 2018. Photo by Helen Murray.*

## Scene one

Lorraine and Anita are caring for Gloria, who is upstairs in her bedroom. Gloria was diagnosed with cancer and her condition has recently deteriorated. Lorraine has established a routine for taking care of her mother. Lorraine is attentive, worried and very practical. Anita is confident, capable and supportive. Lorraine is upstairs and we do not see her until the end of the scene. Anita is in the kitchen preparing a nutritional supplementary drink for Gloria, when Maggie and Vince arrive unannounced.

Maggie has had a dream which she interprets as a sign that Gloria is dying. Vince is deeply affected by the change in Gloria's condition and the imminent loss of Gloria from his life. Maggie makes it clear that she does not agree with Anita's life choices and ideology, she compares Anita with and views her as less successful than her own daughter, Yvette.

When Lorraine comes downstairs, she reluctantly agrees that Maggie and Vince can go upstairs to see Gloria. She then calls her brother, who is either

ignoring or unable to take her calls.

## Scene two

It could be a few days or over one week since the first scene. Robert and Sophie are waiting to see Gloria. Anita sits opposite her uncle while Lorraine chops vegetables to make a soup. The atmosphere is tense. Gloria's condition is significantly worse and she has been set up with a subcutaneous needle which administers morphine to help relieve the pain she is experiencing.

Robert is frustrated and wants to see his mother. Lorraine is exhausted and needs to rest but also needs to keep busy. She knows she cannot save her mother – it is as if she senses that Gloria will die today – but she will keep trying. Anita is protective of her mother. She is angry that Robert has not helped and is critical of Lorraine. Sophie is trying to relieve the tension and prevent an argument. She genuinely wants to help her husband's family but her suggestion of calling Trudy makes the situation worse.

There is a sudden burst of rain and Sophie is sent outside to take the washing off the line. Lorraine prevents Robert from going upstairs and asks Anita to make a Complan drink. She senses something or hears a sound that no-one else hears and goes upstairs. Anita follows. When Sophie returns she tries to tell Robert that they seem to have given up on their relationship. Robert ignores this and confronts Sophie about mentioning Trudy, which leads to an argument that proves Sophie's point.

Lorraine returns and tells Robert her can go up. It is clear that something has changed. Lorraine quickly leaves the house. For a moment Sophie is alone, and a tender gesture hints that she is pregnant. This moment is interrupted by a distressed Anita. It is now clear that Gloria is about to die. Sensing this and unable to bear it, Lorraine has left the house.

## Scene three

The third night after Gloria's death. There are guests, off-stage, in the front room and back garden. Soca music plays loudly in the front room. Anita has been helping Lorraine each night with the celebrations but is tired, and having never experienced the tradition feels that it is an intrusion; she is disconnected from her grandmother's culture. Lorraine is also tired but tolerates what needs to happen to honour her mother. Anita leaves to turn the music down and Maggie enters looking for Vince. Despite reiterating the importance of

observing the Nine Night traditions she wants to leave so that she can watch the latest episode of *EastEnders*. Maggie leaves to find Vince.

Sophie enters and it becomes evident that she has given Lorraine some pills to help her to sleep. The pills are anti-depressants and Lorraine is upset by the implication, which wasn't Sophie's intention. Sophie then shares how much she misses Gloria and how different this experience is to when her father died. She tried various ways, including sitting at night with a candle, to communicate with her father's spirit. Sophie also shares that Robert has dreamt about Gloria.

Lorraine asks Sophie why she said she 'probably shouldn't be eating...' peanuts. They are interrupted by Maggie. Maggie deliberately sends Lorraine to look for Vince so that she can make Sophie offer to drive her home and to tell Sophie that Yvette is getting married. Maggie wants to tell Sophie that she thinks Yvette's marriage will result in a granddaughter, thus making Yvette better than Sophie and Robert who have not yet had children.

Robert enters, he is drunk. Lorraine returns to let Gloria know that Vince is talking to George, an old friend. When Maggie makes a disparaging comment about George, Lorraine shares that they are discussing how Maggie stole Vince from Gloria. Maggie abruptly leaves and yells for Sophie to follow. Lorraine and Robert fall into the familiar habit of arguing.

Lorraine questions Robert about his dream. He doesn't want to talk about it and is trying to talk about something else when Anita interrupts. She has had enough and is about to leave when Robert directs his anger at her. They argue and push Lorraine to rebuke them. Lorraine feels that everyone is disrespecting Gloria by already accepting her death and reverting to their usual behaviour.

## Scene four

The middle of the night on the third night after Gloria's death. Lorraine stares at a candle.

## Scene five

The fourth night of Nine Night. Lorraine organises snacks and drinks while Vince and Robert are reminiscing about Gloria. After Lorraine leaves Robert tells Vince how much he appreciated that Vince took care of him when he was a child. His recollections of his childhood indicate how central money has become for his sense of self-worth. He then reveals that he has worked out

that Vince gave Gloria money to buy their house. It becomes clear that Robert is trying to persuade Vince to invest money in a business deal. He uses flattery and emotional blackmail. However, Vince says his success is that he has not allowed greed to shape his life and that he has taken care of the people he loves. Vince tries to explain this to Robert, that he needs to take care of the people who love him before he ends up alone. Vince leaves Robert alone.

The scene fades into late night and Lorraine enters with a candle. Lorraine and Robert do not see each other. Alone in their own worlds they look at the picture of their mother. Robert leaves.

## Scene six



*Sophie (Hattie Ladbury) and Lorraine (Franc Ashman) in Nine Night at the National Theatre in 2018. Photo by Helen Murray.*

The fifth night of Nine Night. Lorraine and Sophie sit on the floor with the candle. Sophie is guiding Lorraine through a yoga or mindfulness breathing exercise. However, Sophie starts crying and reveals that she is pregnant and that she has not yet told Robert.

## Scene seven

The sixth night of Nine Night. Loud music plays in the front room. Vince sits alone in the kitchen drinking rum. Maggie enters, she has been dancing and wants Vince to join her. Vince is no longer able to conceal the immense sadness he feels. He does not want to dance and leaves to go home, without Maggie. Maggie takes a mouthful of rum and deliberately spits it out – she is trying to keep Gloria's spirit or *duppy* away.

## Scene eight

Daytime on the eighth day of Nine Night. Lorraine, Anita, Robert, Maggie and Vince sit around the kitchen table. Lorraine is trying to communicate the plan for the funeral. Everyone is finding it difficult to manage their emotions. Again, Lorraine with Anita's help has done all of the work, no one appreciates this and are more concerned with what they want to do or to happen. Maggie wants Trudy to be involved but Lorraine informs her that when she spoke to Trudy on the phone, Trudy said that she isn't coming. When Robert answers a phone call and Maggie attempts to get involved with dressing Gloria for the funeral – Lorraine's last chance to spend time with her mother – Lorraine has had enough of everyone's opinions. Using the excuse that she has a meeting with the vicar, she insists that they all leave.

Robert, who left the room to take the phone call, is not aware of this and is in the kitchen when Lorraine returns from literally pushing everyone out of the door. He is lingering. This is unusual and Lorraine tells him that he can leave. Robert doesn't leave and it seems he wants to connect with his sister. He shares that Gloria would call him at lunchtime every day. It becomes apparent that Robert wants to sell their mother's house and has arranged for a buyer to visit the house the next day. Lorraine, shocked and angry, reveals that Sophie is pregnant.

## Scene nine

The morning of the ninth day of Nine Night. Lorraine is sleeping on the sofa while a strange woman watches her. Lorraine wakes up and screams. The woman is Trudy.

## Scene ten

Later the same morning on day nine of Nine Night. Lorraine, Anita, Maggie and Vince watch Trudy unpack food and gifts from her suitcase. Lorraine is annoyed because Trudy lied to her. Trudy shares that she also dreamt about

---

Gloria. Anita is happy and wants to connect to her aunt and her grandmother's culture.

Robert and Sophie arrive. Robert is not pleased to see his half-sister. He is also angry that Sophie is pregnant. When Trudy organises a toast to Gloria she accidentally forces Sophie to reveal to everyone that she is pregnant. Trudy then leads a prayer blessing Sophie and Robert's child and for protection for Gloria's spirit.

At the end of the prayer there is drumming. Everyone except Vince leaves the room. Vince dances and the drumming reaches a crescendo, then stops.



*Left to right: Anita (Rebekah Murrell), Sophie (Hattie Ladbury), Lorraine (Natasha Gordon), Robert (Oliver Alvin-Wilson), Vince (Karl Collins), Trudy (Michelle Greenidge) and Maggie (Cecilia Noble) in Nine Night at Trafalgar Studios in 2018. Photo by Helen Murray.*

## Scene eleven

Evening of the same day on day nine of Nine Night. Vince recites the poem he has written for Gloria's funeral. He is interrupted by Trudy, who is looking for Maggie. She leaves. Lorraine and Anita enter; Lorraine is tidying while Anita talks about how she finally understands the importance of the Nine Night tradition. She feels connected to her family and ancestors, and to their future descendants.

After Anita leaves, Lorraine throws the bin bag she has been using to clear up

on the floor. She tells Vince that she wants 'things put back where they were'. He follows her into the front room to try to stop her from moving a heavy cabinet by herself. Maggie and Trudy enter and begin moving the furniture in the kitchen out of place. When they hear voices, they take a bottle of rum and leave.

Sophie and Robert enter, they are in the middle of an argument about Robert's business and the baby. Sophie tries to remind Robert of the man with which she fell in love. They are interrupted by shouts from the front room. Vince has hurt his back helping Lorraine move the cabinet. Robert goes to help Vince, and Sophie leaves. Robert, Vince and Lorraine return to the kitchen. Lorraine hears a noise upstairs and goes to investigate. Robert realises that Sophie might have left him – that their relationship has ended.

Lorraine returns with Trudy and Maggie, accusing them of stealing Gloria's things. Really she is upset that her mother's room has been disrupted, the only room in the house that remained the same since Gloria died. This leads into an argument about each child's understanding of why Gloria left Trudy in Jamaica and never brought her to live in England. Lorraine and Robert discover that, even after their father left them, Gloria deliberately chose not to ask Trudy to come London.

Their argument is interrupted by Gloria's possession of Maggie. She has messages for her children. She speaks through Maggie to Robert and Trudy. It is unclear if Gloria needs to leave or Maggie pushes her spirit out so that she does not get trapped. Lorraine refuses to let Gloria's spirit leave because she has not received a message or sign. Lorraine recounts the months and the small moments with her mother and finally realises that Gloria communicated directly to her before she died. Lorraine finally understands that there is nothing to resolve between her and her mother.

Although the problems of Gloria's children are not solved, the pressure that has been building since Gloria's death is released. Only Maggie is left with the worry that her cousin's spirit will continue to haunt her in the form of Vince's love for Gloria.

# Themes

## Culture and Identity

Maggie, Vince, Trudy, Lorraine, Robert and Anita have a shared ancestry of people who were forcibly removed from Africa to the Caribbean and then moved to England. However, their cultural identities differ according to their connection to or disconnection from Jamaican beliefs, traditions and practices. Culture can be described as the learnt ideas, beliefs and behaviours or customs of a social group based on a set of shared values or agreed norms. Its importance to individuals and groups is the meaning attached to the information – this informs people's sense of individual and collective identity.

Culture can include language, dialects, food, rituals, religion, dance, music, art, stories, clothing, social rules of interaction and group hierarchies.

Black Jamaican culture was forged out of a history of displacement and oppression, with a strong connection to nature. Thus an enduring requirement of resistance has been underpinned with a mindset of abundance, to withstand the imposed poverty and exclusion.

- ◆ How do Vince, Trudy and Anita's lives embody the ideas of resistance and abundance?
- ◆ How have Lorraine and Robert's lives been shaped by an apparent sense of their cultural identity and / or a lack of belonging to Jamaican culture?
- Research British culture in London during the 1970s and 1980s. What cultural trends or experiences would have influenced Lorraine and Robert as they were growing up, eg music and fashion, alongside Robert's experiences of 'stop and search' by the police or when and how Lorraine was exoticised or othered?

**Vince:** She used to say, 'Shake off yuh dust: rise up' – Isaih 52 (scene three, page 29)



*Left to right: Lorraine (Natasha Gordon), Vince (Karl Collins), Trudy (Michelle Greenidge), Maggie (Cecilia Noble) and Anita (Rebekah Murrell) in Nine Night at Trafalgar Studios in 2018. Photo by Helen Murray.*

- Find the moments where Anita refers to her sense of identity, and examples of how she thinks and lives that connect her to African, Jamaican and English cultures.
- What does Anita's journey, as a multi-ethnicity person, through the play represent?

**Anita:** ...I've felt so disjointed, Mum. You always said: stay true to who you are, Anita. I'm trying. All who've been before and all who've yet to come were jamming in that room and making space for me...  
(scene 11, page 73)

## Race

This play is about a family dealing with the death of a family member. It could be argued that race and whiteness are peripheral to the story. A story about a family which includes Jamaican and British people who are racialised as Black in the context of the history of British society and culture being created in direct relation to the colonisation of different places around the world, and the subsequent oppression of different peoples. Thus race and whiteness are

always present.

Each generation's lives have been shaped by racism and white people's perceptions – their ideas about the behaviour and qualities of Black people. Whiteness is a constant force acting upon Black and global majority lives. Its power is deliberately invisible and its discriminatory systems and methods are constantly excused or falsely justified. Although systemic racism feels permanent, it is not an immovable feature of British or English society, it can be addressed and reduced. But we must be careful of the progressive narratives that posit that racism doesn't exist any more – that we are post-racial.

- ◆ How does Sophie represent both the power and impact of whiteness and racism, and the possible connections across racial divides through common life experiences such as death?
- ◆ How is Sophie used to explore the idea or paradox that English whiteness has a clear view of its identity but has lost its sense of meaning through culture?

**Sophia:** The last time we set foot in my mother's house, the day you stood up for me – the expression on her face...

**Robert:** Like an animal.

**Sophia:** That's how she looked at me. (scene 11, page 75)

- Whilst Sophie is comfortable around Black people and Black culture, does she fully understand the dynamics of racism and the discrimination that Robert and his family have experienced? Read the play and find examples which support or challenge your opinion.

**Anita:** Nathan and I are challenging the subtleties of discrimination...(scene one, page 14)

- How does the play talk about racism without being a 'Black play' or a play about racism?

**Maggie:** ... And dat pickney will have tall, Indian-like hair (scene three, page 32)

- Find examples of how self-oppression and conforming to white ideas of beauty and dress codes. How are hair and clothing used as forms of resistance?

## Self-worth and empowerment

Identity is strongly linked to a sense of self-worth. Notions of individual meaning and a person's sense of their own value are created by family dynamics and shaped by how people behave towards us and how we are permitted to behave. As we grow older, this is shaped by the dominant society's beliefs about different aspects of a person's identity and where we are permitted to belong and be ourselves and from where we are excluded.

In neo-liberal capitalistic societies an individual's sense of worth is strongly linked to money. Income and / or wealth enable access to opportunities and bring the respect (and sometimes envy) of other people. Money and wealth do not automatically equate to acceptance and belonging. For some people, such as Robert, a successful life means having more money and property than are needed to live a comfortable life.

For Vince a successful life is ensuring that you and your family have enough money and a home to feel secure and content. Self-worth comes from a profusion of love and kindness. Robert's father left before Robert was ten years old. Robert's low sense of worth is also tied to having an absent parent, and he may be scared of becoming his father if he has children. Despite Vince's kindness Robert has internalised a negative idea of fatherhood.

For some people their sense of worth comes from education and knowledge and the ideology they follow. Living out the principles and values that challenge different forms of discrimination and oppression. Anita is navigating all of these things.

- ◆ What can we understand about the changing socio-economic status or gentrification of different areas of London through Maggie? How does Maggie use her daughter Yvette as a barometer of success or lack of success for Lorraine, Anita, Robert and Sophie?
- ◆ What barriers in his education or career might Robert have faced to make him feel like he is always losing?

**Robert:** I've lost her too, I'm not losing anymore... (scene ten, page 61)

- ◆ Use the table below to explore which signifiers the characters in the play believe give them power or status (some characters may have more than one):

| Signifiers of power or worth | Money  | Care  | Knowledge |
|------------------------------|--------|-------|-----------|
|                              | Robert |       |           |
|                              |        | Anita |           |
|                              |        | Vince |           |
| Lorraine                     |        |       |           |
| Maggie                       |        |       |           |
| Sophie                       |        |       |           |
| Trudy                        |        |       |           |

- ◆ How does this shape their attitude to and the way that they live their lives?
- Choose two characters and read through the play finding examples of how Gloria has impacted their sense of self-worth. For example, you could compare Trudy and Lorraine, or Trudy and Robert.
- In which belief is each character's sense of self-worth rooted? Do any characters hold both?

The ability to feel empowerment is often connected to our sense of belonging to a group or shared experience with others, knowing that we are not alone in our experiences and feelings. Robert's sense of isolation, as a form of protection, means that he is unable to understand that he shares a similar ideology with Trudy and experience with Trudy and Anita.

- Find examples of these moments of missed connection or recognition. How are they used to increase tension or raise the stakes in the action of the play?

## Family, Loyalty and Love

Loyalty and love are expressed consistently and quietly by Vince, Lorraine, Anita and Sophie. It is not that Maggie, Trudy and Robert's love is questionable but that a significant event in their life causes them to prioritise themselves; they remain consistent in their wants but not in their actions and relationships. Remaining consistent in emotion and action for another person or other people is difficult, it requires effort and energy. The way we enact our loyalty or love may not be perceived as so by the person to whom it is given or we may not be able to provide loyalty and love in the way that it is wanted.

The love and loyalty that Anita shows Lorraine was modelled by Lorraine's acts of love and loyalty to Gloria and Anita. Consider Gloria's relationship – or lack of – with Trudy:

- ◆ Gloria was prevented from bringing Trudy to England by her husband Alvin but she did not ask Trudy to come to England after Alvin left her. How might Gloria's experiences of racism and witnessing Lorraine and Robert's experiences have affected her decision?

**Lorraine:** ...You were right not to come. Mum wanted you but England didn't. It didn't want her. It didn't want them. It didn't want him. It didn't want me. (scene 11, page 83)

- ◆ Gloria sent gifts and money to Trudy. Are these gestures of love or a way to assuage her guilt?

**Robert:** Mum always provided for Trudy. How many barrels did me and Lorraine watch travel to Jamaica? Filled to the brim with things we couldn't touch... (scene five, page 43)

Gloria has kept Trudy present in the lives of Lorraine and Robert. As the youngest child Robert resents how Trudy was given, what he views as, preferential treatment. Lorraine, however, has conflicting feelings about Trudy: an anticipated and wanted older sister who did not show up when she was a child, or when she was an adult caring for their dying mother (scene nine). The responsibility that Lorraine takes on as an adult likely reflects how she behaved when Alvin left, helping her mother to take care of the house and Robert. Robert does not recognise this, seeing her loyalty and love as

something to rebel against as a child and as a failure to achieve success as an adult.

- ◆ How are love and loyalty expressed in the relationships of Vince and Maggie (and Yvette), Sophie and Robert, and Anita and Nathan (and Rosa)?

# Exercises

## Status

Work in pairs or groups of three. Choose one of the following extracts and read it aloud: scene one (pages 10–16), scene three (pages 28–29), scene three (pages 54–47), scene five (pages 48–44), scene seven (page 46).

1. Discuss what is happening and what the characters are trying to communicate by what it being said and what it not said.
2. Read aloud using status levels A. Discuss how this affects the dialogue: tone, pace, pitch, pauses and emotion. Does it increase or reduce tension in the scene?
3. Read aloud using status levels B. Discuss how this affects the dialogue: tone, pace, pitch, pauses and emotion. Does it increase or reduce tension in the scene?
4. What is each character's fixed status level? Consider all the factors that will influence this: age, ethnicity, gender, career, values, who they are in the family etc.
5. Decide at which points in the dialogue each character's status level changes.

| Extract         | Character | Status Levels A | Status Levels B |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Scene one       | Anita     | 8               | 4               |
|                 | Vince     | 4               | 10              |
|                 | Maggie    | 2               | 7               |
| Scene three (A) | Lorraine  | 6               | 8               |
|                 | Sophie    | 9               | 4               |
| Scene three (B) | Robert    | 7               | 8               |
|                 | Lorraine  | 10              | 5               |
|                 | Anita     | 9               | 10              |
| Scene five      | Vince     | 6               | 9               |
|                 | Robert    | 10              | 3               |
| Scene seven     | Maggie    | 3               | 9               |
|                 | Vince     | 3               | 9               |

## Subtext

Use the extracts from the previous status exercise. Work in groups of four or six.

1. In the groups split into pairs. One person will read the dialogue and the other will represent how the character really thinks or feels (what is not said).
2. Read the extract aloud, pausing at each full stop for the subconscious to be expressed (ie scene three).

| Character | Line                     | Subtext                                      |
|-----------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| LORRAINE  | Those pills you gave me? | 'Did you think I wouldn't notice?'           |
| SOPHIE    | Brilliant, aren't they?  | 'Please say they helped.'                    |
| LORRAINE  | They're for depression.  | 'I'm worried about you.'                     |
| LORRAINE  | I'm not depressed.       | 'I don't have time to be worried about you.' |
| SOPHIE    | No.                      | 'You're always so strong.'                   |
| SOPHIE    | But -                    | 'I can't take them now, I'm pregnant.'       |

## Monologues

1. Write a letter from 12-year-old Lorraine to Trudy.

Context: Alvin has left the family and Lorraine expects Trudy will come to live with them in London. What might she include about her personal life, the family and life in London? To help you create a full backstory for teenage Lorraine also list what she would not include and why?

2. Choose one of the following scenarios and create monologue:

- ◆ Robert speaks to Alvin, his father, either when he was 16 or if Alvin comes to one of the Nine Night nights.
- ◆ Trudy arrives at the house before Gloria dies, what would she say to her mother?
- ◆ Sophie talks to the spirit of her dead father about her relationship with Robert.

## Creative writing (or improvisation)

Write a scene of reminiscence, including three characters, about someone who has died. (You can also work in groups of three to improvise and finesse this scene.)

1. Choose a place in which the scene is set: the country and then if the characters are in a rural location, village, town or city, or even on a river or the sea.
2. Choose a location that the scene takes place: room in a house, a public location, on a plane etc.
3. Who are the three characters and how did they know the dead person?
4. Why are they in the same place/ why are they talking to each other?
5. When is the conversation taking place, in relation to the day or time the person died?

Before writing you could research different rituals for death. You could also read *Here We Go* by Caryl Churchill, *Now, I See* by Lanre Malaolu and *Grief is the Thing with Feathers* by Max Porter.

6. Think about the style or presentation of the scene: is it naturalistic, verbatim, epic or musical or gig theatre?
7. The characters do not all need to have known or be related to the dead person. They may not all agree about what kind of person the dead person was or what they mean to each of them.

Once you have written the dialogue:

- ◆ Look for moments where you can increase tension or add risk to the situation.
- ◆ Find a moment for one or more of the characters to participate in some form of ritual or symbolic action without any speech or dialogue.
- ◆ Are there any opportunities to include humour (if you have not already done so)?
- ◆ What happens if one character has a mundane task to complete (eg washing up, ironing, gardening).
- ◆ They do not all need to be in the scene at all times. Explore what happens if a character arrives later or what might cause them to leave the scene.

## Costume

Imagine a new production of *Nine Night* is being staged at your local or favourite theatre. You are designing the costume, wigs and hair.

Draw, cut out or digitally create the costume for each character. Present your concept and ideas. Explain why you have chosen each item of clothing, its cut and colour. Explain why you have chosen each hairstyle or wig, its cut and colour.

## Lighting

Read scene 11, the final scene of the play, and design the lighting states and plot the cues.

- ◆ Look for significant information (eg it's evening) and moments.
- ◆ What colours will enhance the important moments?
- ◆ How can you mark the passage of time?
- ◆ Are there any moments when it would be effective to use side lights or spotlights?
- ◆ How can you use the lights to influence how the audience feel at the end of the play?

## Discussion

1. Choose a topic (immigration, identity, class, education, or employment) and discuss how Anita's comment is relevant today:

**Anita:** Self-improvement is not radicalism. That's the exactly the kind of rhetoric the media use. Throw around buzzwords as a means to distract while their government drags us deeper into oppression. (scene two, page 20).

- ◆ Discuss: Do the media and politicians create connection or division? How?
- ◆ Research immigration, identity, class, education, or employment in London, England, or Britain in the 1970s and 1980s. Has anything changed?

2. Research different religious rituals for death (ie cremation).

**Vince:** I wouldn't mind it at all. Like de Indian Man. Burn de body, release de soul, ready to start over. A second chance. (scene eight, page 51)

- ◆ How do these rituals help a person to grieve? How do they connect or separate individuals?

**Sophie:** ...I think a neighbour brought food round the first few days, but it felt like people were avoiding us mostly. Some people couldn't even look me in the eye. (scene three, page 29)

3. The use of humour in *Nine Night* is important for providing nuance to each character as well as for bringing moments of relief to the audience and to the structure of rising tension and risk.
- ◆ How does each character knowingly use humour in the play and how is humour used to create relief or build tension in a scene and throughout the story?

# Glossary

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ackee      | The national fruit of Jamaica. Ackee is a fruit which the edible part is cooked like a vegetable. Is it often eaten with saltfish. The ackee tree is native to West Africa, the seeds of which would have been transported to Jamaica by enslaved Africans.                                                                                                 |
| Bami/bammy | A traditional Jamaican flatbread made from cassava. Peeled cassava is grated and dried, then shaped into patties. Some people soak their bammy in coconut milk before frying them. They are understood to have originated from the Tani people.                                                                                                             |
| Bauxite    | Ore or natural rock from which aluminium is melted. Bauxite is extracted from open mines, usually destroying forests and important natural ecosystems. Ore mining uses huge quantities of water and create slurry which can cause further damage to plants and animals.                                                                                     |
| Bush tea   | Refers to different types of tea made from plants growing across the island of Jamaica. Brewing bush is a ritual of care and healing, as well as maintaining a connection with ancestors and the earth.                                                                                                                                                     |
| Callaloo   | A green leafy vegetable, similar to spinach. Callaloo is chopped and steams or stewed with other vegetables to make a variety of dishes, including pepperpot soup. Callaloo is high in iron and fibre.                                                                                                                                                      |
| Calypso    | A music genre that is rooted in West African rhythms and griot storytelling. Developed as a form of resistance, first mocking white enslavers then later a form of political commentary, Calypso music was eventually commercialised but often still had a political message. Lord Kitchener was a Trinidadian musician who lived in London and Manchester. |

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cerasee       | Also known as bitter melon, cerasee is a green-leafed herb with a yellow or orange melon or gourd.                                                                                                     |
| Chocolate tea | A drink made from cocoa fruit. The cocoa is ground and dried then rolled into small balls or sticks.                                                                                                   |
| Complan       | A drink designed for adults to supplements the nutrients, vitamins and minerals lacking from their diet.                                                                                               |
| Dasheen       | Also known as taro, is a root vegetable that can be cooked like potato. It has a sweet nutty taste.                                                                                                    |
| Donkey weed   | A herb used to treat dizziness. Its name comes from being used as a part of animal feed.                                                                                                               |
| Duppy-gun     | A plant with small purple flowers and seed pods. When placed in water the seed pods pop.                                                                                                               |
| Guinep        | A small round sweet fruit, with a green exterior. Guineps look like limes and are also known as 'Spanish lime'.                                                                                        |
| Jankcrow      | An insult. It comes from John crow, another name for the Jamaican turkey vulture, and implies that a person is a scavenger and shouldn't be trusted. The turkey vulture is also associated with death. |
| Kumina        | Dance and music rituals which take place at a wake or memorial ceremony, which include drumming, dancing, singing or chanting.                                                                         |
| Myal          | The possession of a living person by a sprit or a god. It is also the religious practice that focuses on healing and harmony with nature and ancestral spirits.                                        |
| Pum-pum       | Slang word for vagina.                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Rass          | A derogatory term for a person or used as a way to express surprise or frustration. It can also be used to place extra emphasis on the following word.                                                 |

Soca

A genre of music originating in Trinidad and Tobago. A mixture of calypso and Indian rhythms. 'Dollar' by Colin Lucas, a Trinidadian artist, was recorded in Jamaica.

# Useful Links

National Theatre YouTube Video – Natasha Gordon on *Nine Night*

[youtube.com/watch?v=nVIJ2EoPnVg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVIJ2EoPnVg)

*Guardian* interview – How Natasha Gordon's grandmother's Nine Night inspired the play

[theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/may/05/grandmas-traditional-jamaican-wake-brought-me-closer-to-the-windrush-generation](https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/may/05/grandmas-traditional-jamaican-wake-brought-me-closer-to-the-windrush-generation)

Interview with Roy Alexander Weise

[blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/interviews/nine-night-nine-questions-for-director-roy-alexander-weise/](https://blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/interviews/nine-night-nine-questions-for-director-roy-alexander-weise/)

*Guardian* review – joy and grief as generations collide at a Jamaican wake

[theguardian.com/stage/2018/may/01/nine-night-review-dorfman-national-theatre-london](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/may/01/nine-night-review-dorfman-national-theatre-london)

*The Theatre Times* – The Play About Grief

[thetheatretimes.com/nine-night-national-theatre/](https://thetheatretimes.com/nine-night-national-theatre/)

Bush Theatre – Life in 1970s Britain

[bushtheatre.co.uk/news/life-in-1970s-britain/](https://bushtheatre.co.uk/news/life-in-1970s-britain/)

BFI – Documentaries about activism and social change in 1970s and 1980s Britain

[bfi.org.uk/features/four-documentaries-activism-britain-1970s-80s](https://bfi.org.uk/features/four-documentaries-activism-britain-1970s-80s)

Black Power and Resistance

[bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z6mp3qt#zk739ty](https://bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z6mp3qt#zk739ty)

Rock Against Racism

[musiciansunion.org.uk/news/rock-against-racism-love-music-hate-racism-and-the-fight-against-racism-today](https://musiciansunion.org.uk/news/rock-against-racism-love-music-hate-racism-and-the-fight-against-racism-today)

Linton Kwesi Johnson

[blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/author-and-historians/linton-kwesi-johnson-the-revolutionary-poet-and-cultural-activist/](https://blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/author-and-historians/linton-kwesi-johnson-the-revolutionary-poet-and-cultural-activist/)

## Greif Support

The Good Grief Trust

[thegoodgrieftrust.org](http://thegoodgrieftrust.org)

Mind: Support and Self-Care for Bereavement

[mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/support-and-self-care/](http://mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/support-and-self-care/)

Grief Chat UK

[griefchat.co.uk](http://griefchat.co.uk)

# Thank you

This Teachers' Educational Resource Pack was written by  
mezze eade, 2026.