

**RESOURCE GUIDE**

**COPY  
THAT  
BY  
JASON  
SHERMAN**

**NOV. 6 - DEC. 8,  
2019**

For more info visit  
[www.tarragontheatre.com](http://www.tarragontheatre.com)

Photo Featuring  
Richard Waugh by Jim Ryce

# TABLE OF

# CONTENTS

**2** ABOUT THE PLAY

**6** WHERE TV AND THE REAL WORLD  
MEET

**8** WRITERS ON WRITING

**11** CONVERSATION STARTERS

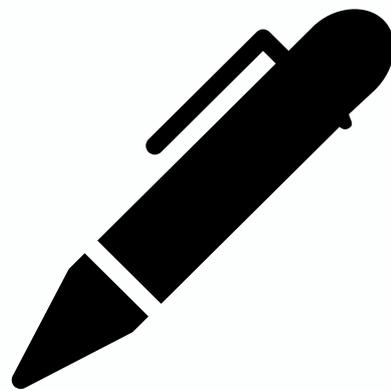
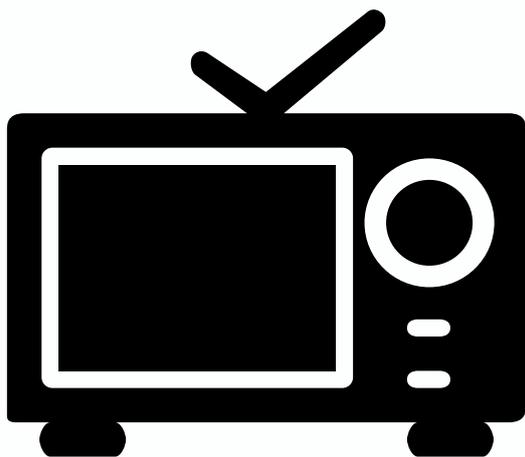
**12** CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

# ABOUT THE PLAY

## SYNOPSIS

Renowned playwright Jason Sherman's caustic look at the entertainment industry, *Copy That*, takes us behind the scenes of network television. Four writers struggle to get their new cop show approved for production. When the team's only Black writer is roughed up by an actual cop, the fallout threatens to not only kill the show, but expose the systemic racism at the heart of popular entertainment itself.

*From the author of last season's moving account of the life of Marshall McLuhan (The Message).*



## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

For Tarragon: *The Message*;  
*Remnants*; *It's All True*; *Patience*; *The  
Retreat*; *Three in the Back*, *Two in the  
Head*.

Selected Credits: *After the Orchard*  
(National Arts Centre); *The Brothers  
Karamazov* (Stratford Festival);  
*Reading Hebron* (Factory); *The League  
of Nathans* (Theatre Passe Muraille).

Selected Film and Television: *The Best  
Laid Plans* (CBC); *We Were Children*  
(APTN); *Bloodletting & Miraculous  
Cures* (TMN); *ReGenesis* (TMN);  
*Jonestown* (History).

Awards: Governor General's Award for Drama (*Three in the  
Back*, *Two in the Head*); Chalmers Award (*The League of  
Nathans and Patience*); Canadian Screenwriting Award,  
Radio (*Afghanada*).

## PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

I started writing *Copy That* a number of years ago, and came back to it thanks to George Youssef, who created the Bill Glassco Playwrighting Residency here at the Tarragon; and Richard Rose, who made me its first recipient. I am grateful to them both.



## DIRECTOR'S PITCH

Welcome to the world of network television where making stories is a team sport. You are invited to peek beyond your screens and witness the inner workings of the writers' room, an entertaining hive of personalities that decide what it is that you, the viewer, get to see. From the junior writer, to the senior showrunner, to the top executive; the clash of characters on this stage reveal just how provocative and contentious any team can be when creativity and values mix. It's everyone for themselves, and if that's too hot to handle, then change the channel or turn off your streaming device, but don't pretend the issues no longer exist. Everyone has a story to tell, but the question is, who's story will you hear?



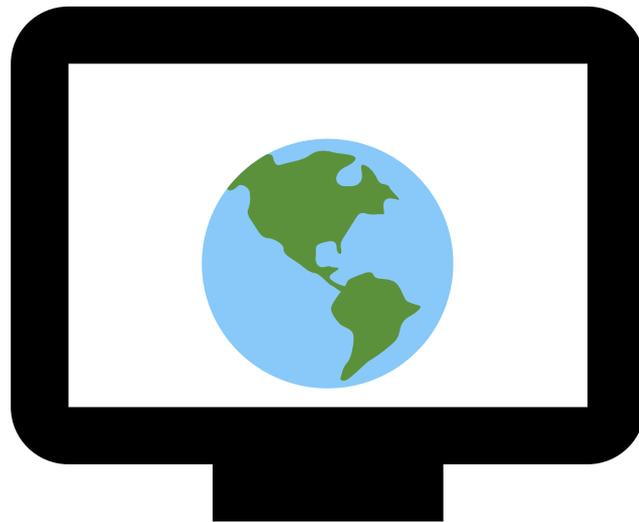
# Where TV and the Real World Meet

 Click here

**1**

## **"You Are What You Watch? : The Social Effects of Television"\***

A fantastic article looking at research done around the different effects that television can have on viewers; everything from the educational value of *Sesame Street* to news media's work to inform political thought.



**2**

## **"The Political Effects of Entertainment Media: How Fictional Worlds Affect Real World Political Perspectives"**

A political science scholar examines how entertainment media (including television's *Game of Thrones*) has had an impact on the views of Americans. This is an interview with that author about his book.

\*If you don't have a New York Times account you can login through the Toronto Public Library for free.

# 3

## **Amusing Ourselves to Death by Neil Postman**

Originally published in 1985, this book is seen by many as a prophetic look at the effects that television would have on public discourse. The updated edition has shown how the original theories have played out not only in television but on the internet and other modern forms of entertainment.

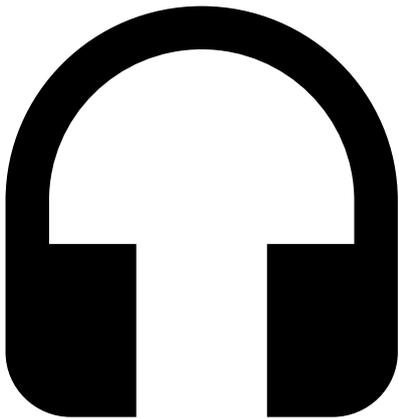


# 4

## **"What I Learned from Television"**

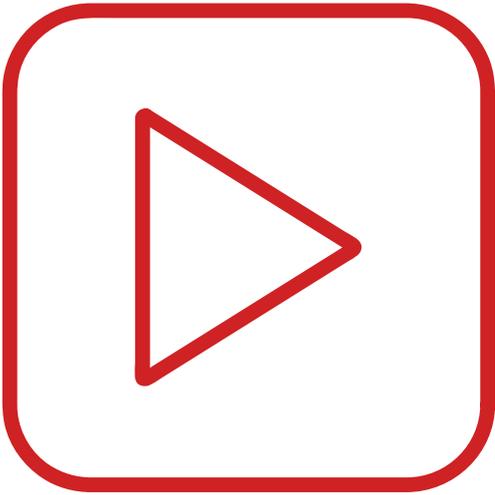
An episode of the podcast *This American Life* where a variety of contributors share stories about what they see as the impact of television on their lives.

Note for teachers: This podcast contains strong language.



# Writers on Writing

1



## Pop Culture Powerhouses

A panel discussion with Emily Nussbaum, Linda Holmes, Jia Tolentino, Taffy Brodesser-Akner all of whom work in cultural criticism and have each recently published a book. They take on everything from inspiration, to the ways in which pop culture impacts the world around it.

2

## How I Wrote That - Dominique Morisseau

An interview with Dominique Morisseau who's worked as a poet, a playwright, and a story editor for television, and so on. She talks about the various forms she's written in and her process of writing.



### 3



#### **"So you want to write a TV show?"**

A Globe and Mail article by Simon Houpt about an event at the Toronto Screenwriting Conference where writers worked up a mock episode of *19-2* with the show's co-creator and executive producer Bruce Smith. A great primer on how a TV writer's room functions.

### 4

#### **"The Future of Storytelling - Shonda Rhimes"**

A TED Talk interview with Shonda Rhimes, showrunner and creator of numerous television series including *Grey's Anatomy*. The focus of this interview is on storytelling; where it's been, how it's changed, and where it's going. Both in terms of the creation of the work and of the audiences and how they consume stories.



# Conversation Starters

Think about what you've seen on TV lately. How is what you watch been impacted by the world around it?

Can TV/movies/a play change the world? Can you think of an example of where this has/has not happened?

If you were to write for television or film, what would you want to write about?

Is there something unique to your experience that you think you could bring as a writer to the room?

Do you think that television is a true reflection of the world? Why or why not?

# Curriculum Connections



Drama - describe ways in which contemporary dramas show the influence of current media

Media Arts - identify and explain ways in which media art works can influence community or societal values

English - identify the perspectives and/or biases evident in media texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, and comment on any questions they may raise about beliefs, values, identity, and power