

STUDY GUIDE

ALL THINGS EQUAL

THE LIFE
&
TRIALS
OF
RUTH
BADER
GINSBURG

a play by
Tony Award
Winner
Rupert Holmes





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I believe All Things Equal: The Life and Trials of Ruth Bader Ginsburg will bring together the audience and the glorious RBG in an enlightening and touching encounter with the remarkable person "behind the initials." In creating this play about her richly lived life and hard-fought struggles, I came to ever more deeply marvel at her strength, tenacity, sly wit, and compassion. Our play also reveals the love song that ran through her remarkable life and shares the music that was her giddy delight. All Things Equal offers each theater-goer the chance to better know this woman, her yearning for equality, and her love for this nation's precious institutions: Ruth ... Justice ... and the American way.

—Rupert Holmes
Tony Award-winning playwright



WHO IS WHO



Michelle Azar

Ruth Bader Ginsberg

Michelle is humbled and thrilled to take on the life of the great Ruth Bader Ginsberg as voiced by the esteemed Rupert Holmes. Her performance background began in Chicago where she sang with the Lyric Opera of Chicago's children's choir. She received an MA and BFA from NYU Tisch School of the Arts, and started working immediately as Janis Joplin in *Beehive*. Once moving to Los Angeles, she received Ovation awards for her roles in both dramatic and comedic roles with her theatre company, Neurotic Young Urbanites, and was the 2016 Stage Raw award winner for Best Actress in Eric Coble's *My Barking Dog*, directed by Michael Michetti at the Boston Court Theatre. Other favorite stage credits: Bella in *Lost in Yonkers*; Berte in *Boeing, Boeing* (La Mirada Theatre); Masha in *Mayakovsky and Stalin* (Cherry Lane Theatre); *The Awakening of Spring* (Circle Rep); and the creation

of Constance Lily in the recent hit musical, *Bronco Billy* (Skylight Theatre). Select television and film credits include: *NCIS: LA*, *How To Get Away With Murder*, *Criminal Minds*, *The Magicians*, *Aquarius*, *Community*, and the recently released film, *Senior Moment*, with Gene Smart and William Shatner. The web-series she co-created with her real-life sister-in-law is currently in development for series. Michelle is no stranger to the one-woman show, as her own original piece, *From Baghdad to Brooklyn*, continues to tour around the country after its sold out premiere at the United Solo Festival in NYC. The intention of the piece is to explore unconscious fears to bring about societal change, as paved the way by RBG. She is grateful to her family, to this entire artistic team for their faith in her, and to her manager, Alison Caiola, for having a hunch.

The stand-by actress for Ruth Bader Ginsburg will be **Jean Kauffman**.

WHO IS WHO



Laley Lippard

Director

Laley Lippard (she/her) is a director, creative producer, and educator. Lippard has directed and collaborated with Steppenwolf Theatre Company, The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, Guthrie Theater, Round House Theatre, Alliance Theatre, Cleveland Play House, American Theater Company, Magic Theatre, American Conservatory Theater, Court Theatre, Virginia Stage Company, among others. World Premiere directing projects include Matt Pelfry's *Pure Shock Value*; Eric Coble's *These Mortal Hosts*; and the National New Play Network's Rolling World Premiere of David Valdes' *The Mermaid Hour*. Her site specific work has been noted in *The New York Times* (*The Smuggler* with Solas Nua) and her devised work was recently

adapted to her first film which premiered in New York (*In the Middle of the Fields*). Lippard was the co-founder and co-executive producer of The Chicago Home Theater Festival, a five-year city-wide artistic network and annual event that organized artists across form, local community leaders, youth, and other invested neighbors to celebrate neighborhood culture, share a communal meal, experience transformative art, build intentional community across lines of difference, and inspire direct action. Other producing work includes *Z/Magic Mondays* at Magic Theatre as Artistic Associate, with *The Welders* as Interim Creative Producer, and as Cleveland Play House's inaugural Artistic Directing Fellow. During the quarantine, Lippard developed, curated, and produced over 30 events with a DC theater company including Creative Conversations, Peace Cafes, and more with local and international scholars, artists, community leaders, and change-makers. For this original series developed by Lippard, she curated an hour long memorial of Ruth Bader Ginsburg hosted by Edward Gero featuring Molly Smith, E. Faye Butler, Craig Wallace, and Ginsburg's nephew actor Rory Boyd. Lippard has taught, workshoped, and directed at universities including Stanford University, Northwestern University, Hampshire College, Carnegie Mellon University, University of Maryland, and Case Western Reserve MFA Acting program. Lippard is a member of the National Directors



WHO IS WHO

Fellowship, a partnership between the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, National New Plays Network, Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC), and The Kennedy Center; a member of the Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab; an Associate Member of the SDC, and holds an MFA in Directing from Northwestern University



Rupert Holmes
Playwright

Rupert Holmes, born February 24, 1947, has worked as a composer, singer, songwriter, playwright, and author. After receiving his education from the Manhattan School of Music, he began recording his own music. His 1974 album *Widescreen* was a hit and Barbara Streisand used some of the songs in her movie *A Star is Born*. Holmes went on to write songs for five more Streisand albums and had multiple singles on the Billboard Hot 100. In 1985, he wrote the musical *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. This musical was loosely based on a Charles Dickens novel and won multiple Tony Awards, among other honors. This show was special because every night, audiences would vote on what character they suspected was the murderer, so different audiences got to experience different endings. Some of his other successful theater works include

Say Goodnight, Gracie, Curtains, Swango, The Picture of Dorian Gray, The Nutty Professor, and now, *All Things Equal*. Full bio: rupertholmes.com.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & DISCUSSIONS

Pre-Show (Discussion and/or Writing Questions)

1. What do you know about Ruth Bader Ginsburg? What do you know about the Supreme Court and its function?
2. Why do you think it was so important and influential for Ruth Bader Ginsburg to be on the Supreme Court?

Post-Show Reflections

1. What legacy has Ruth Bader Ginsburg left for women, for Supreme Court Justices, and for everyone?
2. What part of RBG's story did you feel the most connected to? What moved you the most?



PLOT SUMMARY



Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg (“RBG”) welcomes a friend of the family to her cozy chambers to convey—over the course of ninety fascinating and often funny minutes—a sense of her life and trials: losing her mother the day before she graduated as valedictorian of her Brooklyn high school; being one of only nine young women studying law at Harvard while also raising a daughter and helping her husband battle cancer; fighting for women’s rights in the 1970s before condescending all-male courts; and taking courageous stands for human rights as a voice of reason amid

a splintering and increasingly politicized Supreme Court. An evening with a great and compassionate icon of straight-thinking American justice emerges ... an RBG who is not only “notorious” but victorious as she takes a stand for ordinary people facing the many challenges of a changing world.



BIOGRAPHY OF RUTH BADER GINSBURG

Joan Ruth Bader was born on March 15, 1933, in Brooklyn. She graduated from Cornell University at the top of her class in 1954. After graduation, she married her husband Martin Ginsburg and changed her name to Ruth Bader Ginsburg. After Martin finished his military service, she enrolled at Harvard Law School. She transferred to Columbia Law and graduated in 1959.

She was offered jobs at law firms but always in lesser positions with a lower salary than her male colleagues. She accepted a position working as a professor at Rutgers University Law in 1963 and then began teaching at Columbia in 1972. She was the first female professor at Columbia to earn tenure. While teaching, she directed the Women's Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union during the 1970s. She argued cases before the Supreme Court, wrote briefs for the justices, and used her power for progress.

In 1980 she accepted President Jimmy Carter's appointment to the United States Court of Appeals. She served on the court for 13 years until 1993, when Bill Clinton nominated her for the Supreme Court. She was the second woman and the first Jewish woman to sit on the court.

As a Supreme Court Justice, Ginsburg consistently supported abortion rights and struck down the partial-birth abortion law. She advocated for the use of foreign law and norms to help shape US law. It is commonly believed that she was the first Supreme Court Justice to officiate a same-sex wedding.

In 1999, she was diagnosed with colon cancer. She underwent surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy, but continued working. In 2009, she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. She had the tumor removed and had a stent placed. In 2019, she announced she had a tumor in her pancreas. In early 2020, she said she was cancer-free but a month later she was once again getting treatment.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg died from complications due to pancreatic cancer on September 18, 2020 at the age of 87. A private ceremony was held for her in the Supreme Court's Great Hall. Her casket was then moved outside so the public would be able to pay their respects. After two days of respect at the Court, she lay in state at the Capitol, being the first Jewish person and the first woman to do so. She was buried next to her husband at the Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.



LAW TERMINOLOGY & GLOSSARY

CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEALS

There are 13 Courts on the Circuit Court of Appeals that sit below the US Supreme Court. These courts sit higher than local, county, and district courts but below the supreme court. The 94 federal districts are organized into regions, each of which is given a court of appeals. If someone does not agree with the decision made by a district court for their case, they are given the option for it to be seen by the Court of Appeals. Like the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals chooses which cases to hear. After the Court of Appeals, the case has the option to go to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court Justices and associate justices are assigned a Circuit Court to oversee and sometimes act as judges within.

SOLICITOR GENERAL

The Solicitor General is the fourth highest-ranking official in the Department of Justice. They represent the federal government before the Supreme Court. This general determines the legal position the government will take in court. They also will review cases against the United States and determine whether the government will seek review in the Supreme Court. Essentially, they are the lawyer for the federal government and sometimes the whole nation.

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

The Senate Judiciary Committee is a group of 22 US Senators whose role is to oversee the Department of Justice, consider executive and judicial nominations, as well as review pending legislation. Every Supreme Court Justice has to be approved and voted upon by the Senate Judiciary Committee.



LAW TERMINOLOGY & GLOSSARY

14TH AMENDMENT TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

The 14th Amendment reads "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside." This granted citizenship and equal civil and legal rights to anyone born in the United States or who became a citizen of the country.

15TH AMENDMENT TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

The 15th Amendment reads "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." This amendment did not give the right to vote to women of any race and all indiegiuous people.

LAW CLERK

A law clerk is mostly a recently graduated lawyer who provides direct assistance to a judge by researching issues and drafting legal opinions for use in cases before the court. They are often lawyers who graduated at the top of their class and often share the same morals as the judge they work for. It is one of the most highly sought positions in the legal field.

DISSENT

To dissent is to hold or express opinions different from those commonly or officially held.



EXPLANATION OF THE SUPREME COURT

WHAT IS THE SUPREME COURT? HOW DOES IT WORK?

The Supreme Court was established by the United States Constitution. Article III states “The judicial Power of the United States, shall be vested in one Supreme Court, and in such inferior Courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish.” What this means is that the Supreme Court Justices will hear arguments about different cases, around 80 every year. Lawyers will make an argument for their side of the case and will answer any questions asked by the Justices. Afterwards, the Justices must decide the case. They will all speak to each other and give their views on what they just heard. Then, every Justice will vote. Once the votes are in, the Chief Justice will assign another Justice who voted for the majority, to write the opinion of the Court. The opinion of the Court is a document by a Justice that states why they voted the way they did and what some of the thoughts were surrounding the case. The opinions are then given to the public.

HOW DOES SOMEONE BECOME A SUPREME COURT JUSTICE?

There is no test or job interview to become a Supreme Court Justice. The President of the United States is given the power to choose someone to nominate to the Court when there is an open seat. There are no requirements to become a judge, but one has to be noticed by the President to become nominated. Most Justices were once lawyers and many, like RBG, have argued in front of the Supreme Court. Once someone is nominated by the President, they are voted on by the United States Senate. The Senate is allowed to question the nominee and make sure that they are up for the job. If the Senate votes that the nominee should become a Justice, then the process is over and they can begin becoming a Justice.



MAJOR CASES AND OPINIONS BY RUTH BADER GINSBURG

UNITED STATES V. VIRGINIA (1996)

"Inherent differences' between men and women, we have come to appreciate, remain cause for celebration, but not for denigration of the members of either sex or for artificial constraints on an individual's opportunity."

PARTIAL-BIRTH ABORTION ACT (2007)

"Thus, legal challenges to undue restrictions on abortion procedures do not seek to vindicate some generalized notion of privacy; rather, they center on a woman's autonomy to determine her life's course, and thus to enjoy equal citizenship stature."

OLMSTEAD V. L.C. (1999)

"Institutional placement of persons who can handle and benefit from community settings perpetuates unwarranted assumptions that persons so isolated are incapable or unworthy of participating in community life."

FRIENDS OF THE EARTH V. LAIDLAW ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES (2000)

"A would-be polluter may or may not be dissuaded by the existence of a remedy on the books, but a defendant once hit in its pocketbook will surely think twice before polluting again."

TIMBS V. INDIANA (2019)

"The protection against excessive fines guards against abuses of government's punitive or criminal law-enforcement authority. This safeguard, we hold, is fundamental to our scheme of ordered liberty."