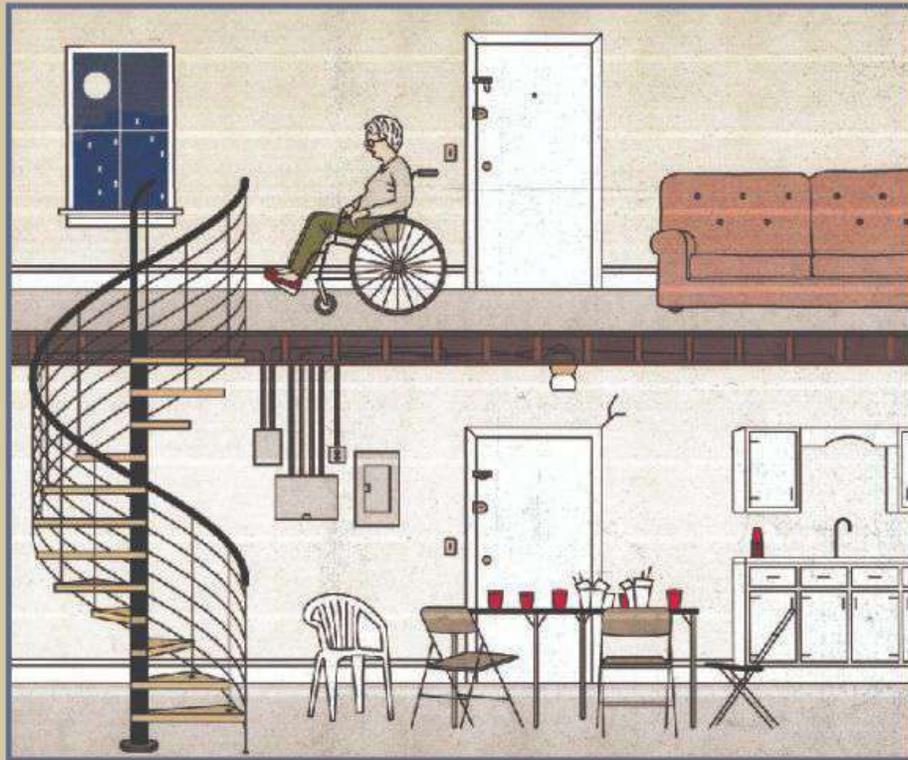


STUDY GUIDE

The Humans

by Stephen Karam



Sponsored by The Caplin Foundation

January 31 – February 16

Directed by
Francine Smith



29th Season

123 East Water St. 434.977.4177 livearts.org



LIVE ARTS

Presents

THE HUMANS

Directed by

Francine Smith

Guide by Suzy Cincinnati
Dramaturg

Study Guide

Study Guide edited and compiled for *THE HUMANS* at Live Arts

With contributions and editing by Live Arts Intern Beatrice Goodwyn and Live Arts Education Director Miller Susen

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Photograph by Karen Pape Photography

Dramaturg's note

Originally a commission from the Roundabout Theatre Company, "THE HUMANS" by Stephen Karam (rhymes with "harem") had its world premiere in November 2014 with Chicago's American Theater Company. The late PJ Paparelli helmed both the production and the theater company at the time. As a frequent collaborator of Stephen's, PJ first took note of Karam at the Utah Shakespeare Festival when Stephen was just 22. The two bonded over their shared hometown of Scranton, Pennsylvania. Years later, their final collaboration was when they created "THE HUMANS." Stephen reflected that it was a way for them to "go home again."

"THE HUMANS" opened at the Roundabout the following fall then opened on Broadway later that winter where it had nearly a yearlong run before closing in January 2017. It had a limited West End engagement as well as a U.S. national tour. Joe Mantello directed once the play moved to New York where it wracked up nomination after nomination, earning four Tonys in 2016. "THE HUMANS" was also a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize but lost out to a young, scrappy, and hungry musical you may have heard of.

"THE HUMANS" is set in real-time; there are no formal escapes as offered by scene changes. Karam's original concept for the play was one based on horror as inspired by Napoleon Hill's Six Basic Fears as illustrated in his 1937 self-help tome "Think and Grow Rich." Hill played off Andrew Carnegie's formula for money-making. The Fears that Hill references are Poverty, Criticism, Ill Health, Loss of Love, Old Age, and Death. There is even a bonus seventh Fear which Hill warns readers to beware: that of Susceptibility to Negative Influences, an Evil that "men who accumulate great riches always protect themselves against" and "poverty stricken never do."

Much has changed in the intervening years of self-help books - indeed, even Marie Kondo is starting to feel as dated as "The Secret" - but there is something that persists in the fears Hill enumerated long ago. You will find few jumpscare in this play. There is no gore (though there is some talk of guts). Special effects are more subtle, nuanced, *underground*. You may be reminded of former Lawnie Edgar Allen Poe's short story "Tell-Tale Heart," where secrets lurking beneath eat away at the Blake family as they eat away at the turkey.

Synopsis

Breaking with tradition, Erik Blake has brought his Pennsylvania family to celebrate Thanksgiving at his daughter's apartment in lower Manhattan. As darkness falls outside the ramshackle pre-war duplex, eerie things start to go bump in the night and the heart and horrors of the Blake clan are exposed.

(Source: Dramatists Play Service: <https://www.dramatists.com/cgi-bin/db/single.asp?key=5398>)

Playwright's Bio

Stephen Karam is the Tony Award-winning author of *THE HUMANS*, *Sons of the Prophet*, and *Speech & Debate*. For his work he's received two Drama Critics Circle Awards, an OBIE Award and is a two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist.

He wrote a film adaptation of Chekhov's *The Seagull* starring Annette Bening, which was released by Sony Picture Classics. His adaptation of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* premiered on Broadway as part of Roundabout's 2016 season. Recent honors include the inaugural Horton Foote Playwriting Award, the inaugural Sam Norkin Drama Desk Award, two Outer Critics Circle Awards, a Lucille Lortel Award, Drama League Award, and Hull-Warriner Award.

Stephen teaches graduate playwriting at The New School. He is a graduate of Brown University and grew up in Scranton, PA.

(Source <http://www.stephenkaram.com/bio/>)

For more, please read this 2015 NYT profile of Stephen:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/27/theater/stephen-karams-plays-treat-anguish-as-a-laughing-matter.html>

Oh, the horror!

The playwright initially envisioned “THE HUMANS” to be a horror play. The following excerpts appear as an epigraph in the script published by Dramatists Play Service, Inc.

There are six basic fears, with some combination of which every human suffers at one time of another...

The fear of poverty

The fear of criticism

The fear of ill health

The fear of loss of love of someone

The fear of old age

The fear of death

- Napoleon Hill, *Think and Grow Rich*

The subject of the “uncanny”... belongs to all that is terrible -- to all that arouses dread and creeping horror... The German word [for “uncanny”], *unheimlich*, is obviously the opposite of *heimlich*... meaning “familiar,” “native,” “belonging to the home”; and we are tempted to conclude that what is “uncanny” is frightening precisely because it is not known and familiar... [But] among its different shades of meaning the word *heimlich* exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, *unheimlich*... on the one hand, it means that which is familiar and congenial, and on the other, that which is concealed and kept out of sight.

- Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*

The mask. Look at the mask!

Sand, crocodile, and fear above New York.

- Federico Garcia Lorca, *Dance of Death*

They call it Scranton, what? The Electric City!

If your introduction to Scranton, Pennsylvania was through NBC's quirky sitcom "The Office," you're not alone. Many millennials attribute the show to putting Scranton on the map. However, Scranton might have been known thirty years earlier by boomers who remember Harry Chapin's hypnotic 1974 ballad or the story that inspired it about an ill-fated truck driver, "30,000 Pounds of Bananas." Perhaps today is your very first time hearing of Scranton, PA. If so, congratulations! Let's learn more together.

Scranton is the sixth-largest city in the Commonwealth, part of Lackawanna County in Northeastern Pennsylvania's Wyoming Valley. The city's population sits just under 80,000, and is still known for its anthracite coal mining communities as well as the steel and railroad booms in the latter half of the nineteenth century. By 1900, Scranton's population hit 100,000 as industry peaked. In the mid-1930s, 140,000 called the city home as many flocked towards the growth in mining and silk textiles.

As oil and natural gas rose in prominence, coal fell out of favor for its energy stores, and the Knox Mining Disaster of 1959 flooded mine galleries in nearby Jenkins Township and killed twelve miners, further crippling a dying industry. The local labor market suffered as jobs moved north, south, or overseas in the 1960s and 70s. City revitalization efforts began in the mid-80s and many historic properties have been restored.

Today Scranton is known for its low cost-of-living, pedestrian-friendly downtown, and hip loft-style apartments in historical buildings which have attracted young professionals and artists. Scranton is receiving many renewed residents who grew up in the area and decided to return for its amenities as compared to pricier large cities. The region's healthcare and manufacturing sector is robust so job opportunities have made a comeback.

And now that you've read this far, here's how Scranton got its nickname: the country's first electric-operated trolley system was introduced in 1886. Six years prior, Dickson Manufacturing Company installed electric lights within its facility. Reverend David Spencer, D.D., has been credited as the one to proclaim Scranton as "The Electric City" sometime before his passing in 1924.

Chinatown, Manhattan

Manhattan's Chinatown is the second-oldest in the United States and is one of nine Chinatowns in New York City and one of twelve in the NYC metro area. Its estimated population is less than 50,000 according to the 2010 census. Chinese immigrants suffered widespread discrimination in America while building transcontinental railroads. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prohibited Chinese labor immigration for an entire decade such that the estimated population of Chinese men in New York City in 1900 was 7,000 with a ratio of men to women nearly 200:1. It took nearly half a century to relax and repeal such laws.

Though the Chinatowns in Queens and Brooklyn have surpassed Manhattan's in population, Manhattan's Chinatown is the densest, a massive cultural epicenter bordered by the Lower East Side, Little Italy, Civic Center, and TriBeCa. Historically Chinatown has been populated by Cantonese speakers but an influx of Fuzhounese-speaking immigrants settled in the 1980s and 90s. Today many Chinatown residents speak Mandarin, the official language of China and Taiwan.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 allowed many more Asian immigrants into the U.S. and Chinatown's population saw a substantial rise in the growth of families in the neighborhood over the following generation. Gentrification in the 2000s has meant that the Chinese population of Chinatown has declined for the past twenty years. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of residents in Chinatown has been nearly halved. Real estate and astronomical rents have further forced out many longtime residents, who have opted for more affordable boroughs to rebuild community.



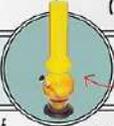
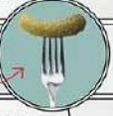
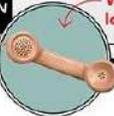
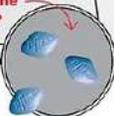
Chinatown remains a large Chinese commercial shopping district. Tourism and food service industries continue to thrive. The Chinese population is trending ever downward as primarily white residents move in with higher costs of rent.

One way or another

	Scranton, PA	Chinatown, Manhattan, NYC
Median household income	\$39,066	\$68,657
Average rent (1br)	\$979	\$2,500
# Housing units	30,069	6,246
Median year built	1939	1946
Largest industry	Healthcare & social assistance	Restaurant & food service
Poverty rate	23.8%	31% (among Asians)
Top cuisine	Carl Von Luger	Chinese Tuxedo
Largest religion	Catholicism	Buddhism
Source country of largest immigrant community	Ireland	China
Median age	36	40
Most popular means of transit	Drive	Walk



The lines that divide us

GENERATION GAPS					
By BRUCE FEIRSTEIN					
GENERATION	iGEN	MILLENNIALS	GEN X	BABY-BOOMERS	GREATEST GENERATION
YEAR OF BIRTH	After 2000	1980-2000	1965-1979	1946-1964	Before the end of WW. II
WHICH MAKES THEM HOW OLD?	0-14	15-35	36-50	51-69 (but they lie)	70+
LIFE-ALTERING EVENT	Release of the iPhone 6 	Free Wi-Fi	9/11	First time they tried pot 	First time they laid eyes on a '55 Ford Thunderbird
CURRENT LIVING SITUATION	Down the hall from Mom and Dad	Sharing an apartment in Brooklyn	Priced out of Brooklyn, considering Los Angeles	Back in the city, baby!	Using a reverse mortgage to provide shelter for feckless offspring
HOW DO THEY GET AROUND?	Mom's Prius	Lyft	Handmade Dutch bicycle	Soon-to-be-repossessed BMW	Dreaming about that '55 T-Bird 
TRUSTED NEWS SOURCE	YouTube	Twitter	 John Oliver	Don Rather-Brian Williams	Dead trees
PREFERRED MODE OF COMMUNICATION	Snapchat	Selfies	Text	Lawsuits	Guilt-inducing phone calls
ICON	Ariana Grande	Mark Zuckerberg	 Kurt Cobain	Howard Stern	Harry Truman 
SOCIAL NETWORK THEY ABANDONED FACEBOOK FOR	Instagram	Tinder	LinkedIn	Match.com	The Rotary Club
ENTERTAINMENT EXPENDITURE	\$26.95 on Minecraft	\$900 on Coachella	\$2,000 on Burning Man	\$5,000 on "Platinum" fix to the Rolling Stones	\$35 on Oklahoma at community dinner theater
MONEY-DRAINING ADDICTION	Mobile-game upgrades 	Limited-edition Nikes	Superhero collectibles on eBay	Second home	G.O.P. fund-raising e-mails
GET-RICH-QUICK SCHEME	Create a video game	Invent an app	Sell something to Yahoo	Flipping houses	Fracking
SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	Being Common Core guinea pigs	Trigger warnings and micro-aggressions	Artisanal pickles 	The bong	Defeating Hitler
DEFINING CONDITION	Peanut-allergic	Gluten-intolerant	Attention-deficit-disordered	Erectile-dysfunctional	Permanently aggrieved
DEEPEST FEAR	Low batteries	Everybody doesn't get a trophy?	How to pay off grad-school loans	No longer being the center of the universe	America, 2015
AND, FINALLY, THE KEY QUESTION OF THEIR LIVES	 What's a landline?	What's a career?	What's the point?	Where's the Viagra? 	Where the fuck did we go so very, very wrong?

Source: <https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2015/10/generation-gap-guide>

Chinese New Year

If you were born in 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, or 2008, this is Your Year, according to the Chinese lunar calendar. The Year of the Rat symbolizes professional growth and prosperity. The New Year begins January 25 and ends February 11, 2021.

Around the world one-and-a-half billion people will celebrate what is also called Lunar New Year, an occasion declared “the largest annual migration on Earth” by a Business Insider feature on the holiday. Time spent with family and loved ones is typical during LNY celebrations, and a two-week Spring Festival rings in the new year.

In Chinese culture, the color red is associated with wealth and good fortune. Red envelopes with money are shared with children and unmarried adults across the culture, even many employers give these packets to single employees as a sign of gratitude.

There is no house cleaning on Chinese New Year’s Day for fear that dusting will sweep away the family’s good fortune. So put that vacuum down and pick up some dumplings.

Gong hei fat choy (Cantonese)

Gong xi fa cai (Mandarin)

Want to learn more? Check out Lulu Wang’s touching 2019 film which showcases daily life within a multigenerational Chinese family as they gather for a special occasion: *The Farewell* is available to rent or buy wherever you consume your streaming media. If you’re looking for a mirror-companion piece after experiencing “THE HUMANS,” this would be an apt start.

What the smell?

Do you ever wish you could be in two places at once? Now, you can... *in a sense*. Our sense of place is comprised of our own human senses experiencing in concert - sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. Now that you've seen what it's like to be in an apartment in Chinatown, and heard stories of Scranton told by the Blake family, would you like to know what these places smell like?

Scranton-based Note Fragrances recently sold out of their Scranton Candle Duo online (\$44/2 9.8 ounce candles). "Electric City Christmas" contains notes of wintergreen, eucalyptus, and silver fir needle. "Christmas in Scranton" contains notes of holly berry, bay berry, and winter pine. You can now find Scranton Summer and Scranton in the Fall scents for sale on their website or at their Scranton store on the corner of Wyoming & Spruce.

Further north and deeper in pocket, Bond No. 9 New York's signature Chinatown scent contains notes of peach blossom, gardenia, tuberose, patchouli, and cardamom. A 6.4 ounce candle will set you back \$105, but that's still a hundred dollars cheaper than their smaller perfume bottle. Perhaps this description will entice you: "Superpower meets Supercity: The emerging superpower energy with the avant-garde cachet of downtown New York. A sultry, mouth-watering equal-opportunity East-West bouquet."

If you're sniffing for more of a homegrown scent, this area boasts several artisan candlemakers whose wares can be found in shops along the Downtown Mall.

Relics of “Humans”

The Peppermint Pig

The origin story comes from Saratoga Springs, New York, in the 1880s. European chefs visiting the area’s resorts requested that Jim Mangay make a marzipan candy, but when marzipan wasn’t available to him, he substituted peppermint oil from his dad’s apothecary.

Each person uses a hammer to break off a piece, then shares gratitude for the past year and good luck for the next. Sugar rationing during WWII all but eliminated the pink pigs. In 1988 candymaker Mike Fitzgerald was inspired to recreate the tradition with his company Saratoga Sweets. Fitzgerald recalled during that first year, “One man came to me with his grandson. ‘The last time, I was the little hand holding the big hand. Now I’m the big hand holding the little hand.’”

As of 2013, sales for the Christmas holiday were projected to be 130,000 peppermint pigs.

The Virgin Mary Statue

In Catholic churches and homes across the world, statues and other representations of the Blessed Virgin Mary are immensely popular. Mother to Jesus, Mary symbolizes family, faith, compassion, nurturing, perseverance, and vigilance, among others. Within the Church, there is an entire subset of study called Mariology. The depiction of BVM runs throughout Catholic music, prayers, art, and architecture. There is no more prolific female in the faith.

Deidre’s gift of the statue imparts many possible meanings, as does Brigid’s ensuing insinuation about the drawer.

“The Parting Glass”

Also known as Good Night and Joy Be With You All, this tender folk song has appeared in Scottish and Irish cultures for hundreds of years. Bob Dylan even borrowed the music for one of his early songs. No matter its origin, The Parting Glass will always take you home.

Local resources

Housing

Piedmont Housing Alliance <https://piedmonthousingalliance.org/>

Equity starts with access to safe, affordable housing. Piedmont Housing Alliance provides high-quality housing, counseling, community development and management services to low-income communities in Charlottesville and the surrounding counties.

Jobs

City of Charlottesville Jobs <https://agency.governmentjobs.com/charlottesville/default.cfm>

The City of Charlottesville is an Equal Opportunity Employer and supports workforce diversity. Minority and disabled individuals are encouraged to apply. We will make reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.

The Center for Nonprofit Excellence <https://www.thecne.org/connect/jobs/>

Mission: We strengthen nonprofits to realize the potential of our community. Vision: Strong nonprofits. Strong community.

Respite Care

Jefferson Area Board for Aging (JABA) <https://www.jabacares.org/caregiver-support-respite>

We provide a full day of fun, highly qualified and caring staff, plus intergenerational activities and outings to engage members. Our centers provide individualized care for adults 18 years and older with dementia or disabilities, and a variety of payment options.

Martha Jefferson House <https://www.marthajeffersonhouse.org/care-services/respite-care/>

Respite stays, of a 7 day minimum, offers families and caregivers peace of mind and is an excellent introduction to our services. Enjoy a reliable and comfortable option with the medical attention you need and deserve.

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