

U Street, Washington, DC Curriculum-Based Readers Theatre Script

Developed by Dr. Rosalind M. Flynn with Ms. Jensen's Class * Lafayette ES * Washington, DC

- 1 Ladies and gentlemen!
ALL [sound effect: drum roll]
- 2 Boys and girls!
ALL [sound effect: “du du du du dah”]
- 3 Welcome to the...
ALL DC Theater Café! [Gesture—arm out]
- 4 Travel back in time with us now
down 14th Street to...
ALL U Street NW—in the 1920s!
[Dance with one finger in air.]
- 5 U Street—a neighborhood with a
rich black history!
- 6 U Street—a place where night
clubs and theatres come to life!
- 7 I’m going to hear the amazing Ella
Fitzgerald sing!
- 8 Billie Holiday is playing at the
Lincoln Theatre!
- 9 I have tickets for the fantastic Ray
Charles!
- 10 At the Bohemian Caverns, I get to
hear Duke Ellington!
ALL [Gesture: Play bass.] Do do do...
- 11 Who are all those people?
- 12 They were great African American
musicians.
- 13 But U Street was special for a lot of
other reasons, too
ALL Such as? [Gesture]
- 14 Well, you know back then,
segregation was still everywhere.
ALL Segregation—laws that kept blacks
and white separate—[Gesture: right
hand up, left hand up, separate.]
- 1-5 In schools,
1-10 In restaurants,
1-15 On trolleys,
ALL and even in neighborhoods.
- 15 Hey, I thought segregation meant
separate but equal?
- 16 But that’s not how it really worked.
- 17 White houses had better locations
than black houses.
- 18 Blacks had to sit in the back of
trolleys,
19 and ride in train cars with cracked
windows.
- 20 White schools were better than
black schools.
ALL Most everything was better for
whites than for blacks.
- 1 But, things were different on...
ALL U Street! [gesture]
- 2 Blacks got together and decided to
improve things for themselves.
- 3 We’ll make our neighborhood just
as good as white neighborhoods!
- 4 We’ll make our churches and
schools and businesses great!
- 5 And they will be just as good as the
white ones—
ALL Or even better! [thumbs up]
- 6 Let’s look at some of the places on
U Street in the 1920s.
- 7 Hey everyone, I hear something’s
happening at the Lincoln Theatre
tonight! Want to check it out?
ALL Absolutely! [Gesture toward
singers.]
- [SONG]**
- 8 Boy that song was...
ALL HOT! [Gesture]
- 9 And there were a lot of hot places
on U Street like...

ALL The Bohemian Caverns.
 10 What's that? A club or something?
 11 It's a jazz club, but it looks like a cave.
 12 And you can dance, hear great music, and eat delicious food
 ALL Umm ummm! [gesture]
 13 Come on! Lets go over to...
 ALL The 12th Street Y.M.C.A.
 14 It was the first Y.M.C.A. for black men and boys ever!
 15 A Y is like a club.
 16 The 12th Street Y was organized by Anthony Bowen, a former slave.
 17 Blacks come here to discuss all sorts of things like...
 ALL [Gesture: hands like a scale] The inequality among blacks and whites.
 18 Now let's go over to the first hotel for African Americans—
 ALL The Whitelaw Hotel!
 19 A hotel that allows blacks to hold...
 ALL dinners, balls, and dance parties ["Waltz" w/pretend partner 4 x]
 20 The Whitelaw Hotel—a place where Duke Ellington and other famous performers are guests.
 [Pause]
 1 Play ball!
 2 It's the Homestead Grays playing in...
 ALL Griffith Stadium! [sound effect: crowd cheering]
 3 A place in the U Street neighborhood where the Negro Leagues play baseball.
 4 The Washington Senators play here, too.

5 Hey! They were the last major league team in Washington before the Nationals!
 6 I'm broke after the baseball game!
 7 Then you should go to
 All The Industrial Bank of Washington! [Ch-ching!]
 8 This bank was the first to hire and train black employees.
 9 I hear that they lend money to black people...
 All to buy homes and start businesses.
 10 Cash!
 All We like cash! [gesture]
 11 I heard that the people who work at the bank graduated from...
 All Howard University! [grad.song]
 12 —an excellent school where blacks get a quality education.
 13 Important leaders like Thurgood Marshall went there and received...
 All the best education on U Street.
 14 Does anybody hear music playing?
 All Umm Hmm—at the Howare Theater they're doing the Flat Foot Floogie!

[SONG]

15 The Flat Foot Floogie!
 All Boy, that's hard to say!
 16 But it happened on that street full of...
 1-5 Great places,
 1-10 Great people,
 1-20 Great entertainment,
 All And great accomplishments
 17 for black people—
 All U Street! [gesture]
 18 Thank you for joining us at the
 All DC Theater Café!