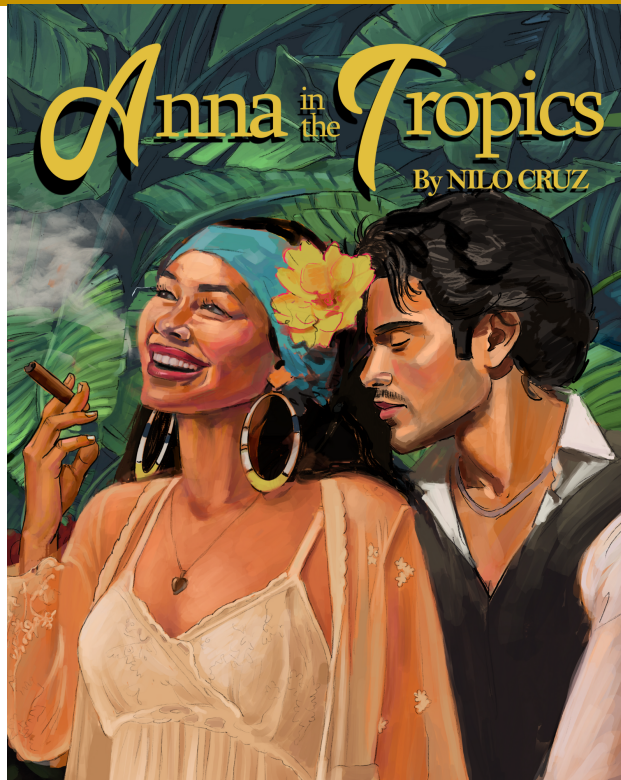


## Study Guide 2025- 2026



### Florida Standards

#### Language Arts

ELA.6-12.RL.1.1  
ELA.912.R.1.2  
ELA.912.R.3.2  
ELA.912.R.3.3  
ELA.912.R.3.1  
ELA.912.R.2.3  
ELA.912.C.1.3  
ELA.912.C.1.4  
ELA.912.C.2.1  
ELA.912.C.2.2

#### Theatre

TH.912.F.2.2  
TH.912.C.1.3  
TH.912.C.2.1  
TH.912.S.1.4  
TH.912.H.1.5  
TH.912.H.3.3  
TH.68.S.1.1  
ELA.912.R.1.1 / R.3.1  
ELA.912.R.1.1 / R.3.1

**PG-13**

Language, Use of Alcohol & Cigars, Sexual Themes, Violence

# *Anne in the Tropics*

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# Anne in the Tropics

## An Introduction

Educators:

Thank you for taking the time out of your very busy schedule to bring the joy of theatre arts to your classroom. We are well aware of the demands on your time and it is our goal to offer you supplemental information to compliment your curriculum with ease and expediency.

We hope this Study Guide and the companion Spotlight Guide will help you prepare your students to experience live theatre at Orlando Shakes! Additionally, we would love to come to your classroom to introduce your students to the Shakespeare play of your choosing and teach them how to unlock the meaning of our favorite playwright. With a few simple tools, they will realize that Shakespeare isn't scary, rather can be quite contemporary!

Please take a moment to explore our website at [orlandoshakes.org/education](http://orlandoshakes.org/education) for the following ways to add to your curriculum.

- Our Virtual Workshop *Spotlight: Theatre Careers*, which introduces students to the many professions in Theatre Arts.
- Classroom Activities to energize students to explore character status and motivation
- Shortened Shakespeare scripts that range from 60 – 120 minutes long that are perfect for school productions

We look forward to hosting you at the Lowndes Shakespeare Center. Feel free to contact us at Orlando Shakes should you have any questions or suggestions on how we can better serve you. We are always learning from you.

Thank you for your tremendous work in nurturing our audiences of tomorrow.

Anne Hering  
Director of Education

Keith Traver  
Education Coordinator





# Anne in the Tropics

## Enjoying Live Theater

### Theater is a Team Sport

The **Playwright** writes the script. Sometimes it is from an original idea and sometimes it is adapted from a book or story. The Playwright decides what the characters say, and gives the Designers guidelines on how the play should look.

The **Director** creates the vision for the production and works closely with the actors, costume, set and lighting designers to make sure everyone tells the same story.

The **Actors** use their bodies and voices to bring the author's words and the director's ideas to life on the stage.

The **Designers** imagine and create the lights, scenery, props, costumes and sound that will compliment and complete the director's vision.

The **Stage Manager** assists the director during rehearsals by recording their instructions and making sure the actors and designers understand these ideas. The Stage Manager then runs the show during each performance by calling cues for lights and sound, as well as entrances and exits.

The **Shop** and **Stage Crew** builds the set, props and costumes according to the designer's plans. The Stage Crew sets the stage with props and furniture, assists the actors with costume changes and operates sound, lighting and stage machinery during each performance.

The **Front of House Staff** welcomes you to the theater, takes your tickets, helps you find your seat and answers any question you may have on the day of performance.

The **Theater** is where it all takes place. Orlando Shakespeare Theater In Partnership with UCF is the only professional, classical theater company in Central Florida, reaching students and audiences in the surrounding eight counties.

### Mission:

To enrich our community with engaging professional theater, inspiring educational experiences, and thought-provoking new plays.





# *Anne in the Tropics*

## *Enjoying Live Theater*

### **The Actor/Audience Relationship**

The Audience is the reason Live Theater exists. At Orlando Shakes, we cherish the Actor/Audience relationship, the unique give and take that exists during a performance which makes the audience an ACTIVE participant in the event. The actors see the audience just as the audience sees the actors, and every, laugh, snuffle, chuckle and gasp the audience makes effects the way the actor plays his next moment. We want you to be engaged, and to live the story with us!



There are certain Conventions of the Theatrical Event, like, when the lights go down you know that the show is about to start, and that the audience isn't encouraged to come and go during a performance. Here are some other tips to help you and your classmates be top notch audience members:

- Please make sure to turn off your cell phones. And NO TEXTING!
- Please stay in your seat. Use the restroom before you take your seat and stay in your seat unless there is an emergency.
- Please do not eat or drink in the theater.

### **Talkback**

After the performance, the actors will stay on stage for about 10 minutes to hear your comments and answer any questions you have about the play, the production and what it means to be a professional actor. We'd love to hear what you felt about the play, what things were clear or unclear to you, and hear your opinions about what the play means. This last portion of the Actor/Audience Relationship is so important to help us better serve you!

# *Anne in the Tropics*

## *About the Play - Summary*

Nilo Cruz's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Anna in the Tropics* takes place in Ybor City, Florida in 1929. Here, a Cuban-American family eagerly awaits the arrival of their new lector, Juan Julian. In a cigar factory owned by the Patriarch of the family, Santiago, Juan Julian is hired to read to the family during their long days of rolling cigars by hand. Most of the family is overjoyed by the presence of a new lector, but when he starts reading from the Russian classic, *Anna Karenina*, the scandalous lives of Tolstoy's characters start to intertwine with the lives of his listeners. As Juan Julian reads, the hot, humid Florida summer starts to resemble the cold Russian winter of the story. Infidelity, money problems, and violence spring to the surface as the family members grapple with their new

found understanding of life and relationships. Conchita, Santiago's daughter, confronts her husband, Palomo, about his extramarital affairs, and Palomo becomes aware of a budding relationship between his wife and Juan Julian. Cheche, Santiago's half brother, tries to take over the factory, and Santiago has to admit to his wife that he is neck-deep in gambling debt. Instead of discovering the love and acceptance they seek, the family is met with tragedy in the end, just as in the story of *Anna Karenina*.

<https://stageagent.com/shows/play/1635/anna-in-the-tropics>

## *Anne in the Tropics*

### *Meet the Characters*

**Santiago**, cigar factory owner. In his late fifties, Santiago has become ashamed and bitter as he has aged. After losing a large sum of money in gambling, he feels he's lost more than just the money, namely his dignity and self-respect.

**Ofelia**, Santiago's wife. Ofelia is no-nonsense woman in her mid-fifties. This matriarch has a practical mind and runs the cigar business

**Conchita**, Santiago and Ofelia's daughter. The 32-year-old Conchita is a dreamer who longs for romance, but would welcome just a meaningful conversation with her husband, Palomo. She recognizes the power of literature in changing one's life, which leaves her vulnerable to the advances of Juan Julian, who has been reading *Anna Karenina* to the factory workers. Conchita identifies with Anna's longing for passion in her life, and recognizes the parallels between Anna's marriage and her own.

**Palomo**, Conchita's husband. While his wife focuses on the romance in *Anna Karenina*, the 41-year-old Palomo can only see the money in the characters' lives. He laughs at his wife's romantic fantasies about "places made of dreams," until she takes Juan Julian as a lover. He sees how she has come alive, and asks her to teach him passion, and how to appreciate her.

**Cheche (Chester)**, Santiago's half-brother. In his early 40s, Cheche is all business, especially since his wife ran away with their last lector (storyteller-reader). He understands how machinery is taking hold in the cigar industry, and tries to educate Santiago and Ofelia about progress. He proposes that they spend their money on new machinery rather than on a lector. Cheche has noticed that people's lives are spinning faster and faster, with cars and industry, and that cigarettes are cutting into the cigar market because they are smoked quickly. No one takes the time anymore to savor a cigar, which is meant to be smoked slowly.

**Marela**, Santiago and Ofelia's daughter. Marela is very young at 22. Still, she recognizes the power that literature can have on one's life. She feels that the lector's stories offer a valuable education. She is attacked by her uncle, whom she spurns.

**Juan Julian**, a lector. Part of an old tradition, Juan Julian was hired to entertain the workers through their monotonous task of rolling cigars. He is a well dressed, knowledgeable, 38 years old, and has selected the novel *Anna Karenina*, which has unforeseen consequences the lives of the cigar family. He has an affair with Conchita. Later, Cheche murders Juan Julian for the tumult he has brought, and as revenge for the lector who ran away with Cheche's wife, Mildred.

**Eliade**, a gamer who runs cockfights and their associated gambling.

<https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/literature-and-writing/anna-tropics-analysis-major-characters>

# *Anne in the Tropics*

## *Meet the Playwright*

### *Nilo Cruz*

Nilo Cruz was born in Cuba in 1960. During his early childhood, his father, who was a staunch opponent of the communist government, was imprisoned for trying to flee the country. After his father completed his sentence, when Nilo was nine years old, the family immigrated to the United States and took up residency in the Little Havana neighborhood of Miami. He began exploring his interest in theater by acting and directing in the early 1980's. Before moving to New York City, he studied theater at Miami Dade Community College. In New York, he met fellow Cuban María Irene Fornès, who recommended him to an instructor at Brown University. Eventually he attended Brown and earned his MFA in 1994. He returned to Florida in 2001 and was appointed as the playwright-in-residence for the New Theatre in Coral Gables. In 2002, he wrote his most famous work, *Anna in the Tropics*. This work was a great success and performed in theaters across the country. After learning that he had won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, Cruz said, "By honoring my play *Anna in the Tropics*, the first Latino play to earn the Pulitzer Prize in Drama, the Pulitzer Prize Board is not only embracing my work as an artist, but is actually acknowledging and securing a place for Latino plays in the North American theater." After winning this award, *Anna in the Tropics* opened on Broadway with continuing success and was even nominated for a Tony Award in 2004. In addition to writing plays, Cruz has taught drama at many universities, including Brown, Yale, and the University of Iowa. Through his work, Cruz has become one of the most revered playwrights of our time. His introduction of Latino themed plays into mainstream American theater has set the stage for playwrights and authors to come.





# Anne in the Tropics

## Glossary of Spanish Terms

Ñombre – Man

Gardenia – Large, fragrant, white flower

Señora – Ma'am

Señor – Sir

Fedora – A soft felt hat with a rim that can be easily turned up or down

Napoli – Italian name for Naples

Guanabacoa – A city east of Havana with a population around 100,000

Cacique – Chief

Salud – "Cheers" or "drink to your health"

Neapolitan – A native of Naples

Purísima – Purest

Oídores – Hearers

Zeppelin – A rigid, cylindrical airship

[www.miaminewdrama.org/education](http://www.miaminewdrama.org/education)

## Anne in the Tropics Historical Context

The story of *Anne in the Tropics* revolves around the role of el lector - an educated man from Cuba who is brought to cigar factories to read stories to the rollers. In his essay *The Alphabet of Smoke*, Nilo tells how having lectores in the cigar factories is a tradition that can be traced back to the Taino Indians. "For the Native Americans of Cuba the sacred tobacco leaf was tied to the language of the gods. The leaves were smoked or converted into powder that was mixed with pulverized seashells. This fusion of ingredients was known as cohoba, and it was smoked or inhaled through the nose. The cacique (Indian chief) used to communicate with the Divine through this sacred concoction."

A description of the indigenous rite can be found in *Apologética Historia*, a book of chronicles written by Bartolomé de Las Casas, a Spanish priest, historian, theologian, activist, and reformer. He described how the cacique was the one who began to smoke and "all the rest remained quiet until he was finished; once he had consumed his cohoba, he held his head to one side for some time with his arms over his knees, and then he raised his face toward the sky speaking certain words, which could have been a prayer."

In the cigar factories, Nilo proposes that the lector became "a sort of cacique who gave voice to the written words, and the cigar rollers became listeners who wrapped the spoken words in cigar leaves as their minds wandered to the heights of literature."

A common day at the cigar factories started with the lectores reading from newspaper articles. "In the afternoon they read from the proletarian press, and the last part of the day," Cruz said, "was saved for the sweet delicacy of the novel. Besides providing literary escape, the lectores were instrumental in facilitating awareness and mobilizing change in the workplace and the larger political arena. Cuba's greatest poet and political leader, Jose Martí, read in the cigar factories of Tampa in the late 1800s. He believed that people who attended literary events were the ones who promoted ethics in politics and preserved the nation's honor. He was a firm believer that

the purpose of literature was to help humanity, and that one could not know a country without knowing its literature.

Cigar laborers were mostly illiterate, but they could recite passages from *Don Quixote*, or a verse by Ruben Dario. These workers were similar to musicians who can't read music but can play it by ear. They demanded precision from the lectores and elicited coloratura in their reading.

An interesting fact is that the readers were not hired by the factory owners, but by the workers. "In the same way that an actor or an opera singer auditions for a role, the lectores had to audition before a group of cigar workers. A strong voice was imperative, clarity of speech was crucial, but, most important of all, the lectores had to read the novels with their hearts."

In Tampa the tradition ended at the beginning of the Depression. "The introduction of machines to the cigar factories prohibited the listeners from fully surrendering their ears to the stories. Microphones were introduced to the workplace, but the necessary silence, which offers a stage for the spoken word, was missing. Finally, the lectores became seen as a threat to the factory owners, because of the labor press they were reading to the workers. The lectores were removed from the factories in 1931."

[www.miaminewdrama.org/education](http://www.miaminewdrama.org/education)



ELA. 912.R Reading Informational Text

# *Anne in the Tropics*

## *Lesson Plan: Themes and Discussion*

### **Themes to Discuss After Watching the Play**

**\*Spoilers Ahead\***

#### **TRADITION VS MODERNITY**

Due to the play's historical context and the events defined by its plot, one of the central conflicts arises between tradition vs. modernity. Cruz studied the historical pivotal point when mechanized production began to replace the lector tradition in Cuban cigar factories. This highlights the inherent tension between local and immigrant traditions and the popular perception of American or globalized "modernity." However, numerous individual actions also contribute to this overall sense of struggle between traditional and modern lifestyles. For instance, Marela's custom of "sweetening" Juan Julian's name is scorned by the other Alcalá ladies. Conchita's decision to cut her hair short responds to a need she has to challenge the expectations placed on women by society's gender norms. Thus, one can see the superstructures of tradition and modernity being articulated in every aspect of the play.

**Discussion Question:** Can you remember other specific actions taken to either embrace or run against tradition?

#### **GENDER DYNAMICS**

One of the main aspects of gender dynamics addressed in the play is that of machismo or overly strong/aggressive masculinity. A clear example is seen within Palomo. He is dismissive of Conchita's needs, ignoring the woman he married and claims to love. Instead, he takes on a lover shielding himself in a practice "permitted" for men in the Society. Cheché, or Chester, is another character to analyze in this theme especially regarding the negative consequences of machismo. His lack of tenderness and extreme pride are factors in his wife leaving him. Furthermore, he allows his temper to rise to an extreme level which leads him to commit actions without restraint. In contrast, Juan Julian represents different values leading to a new dynamic. He celebrates the power of literature and open communication, shows his honor and confidence without risking an ego, and respects boundaries. He understands that each character needs different amounts of time to adjust to his arrival and get to know him.

Female roles within this gender dynamic are inevitably conditioned by masculine ones. In this work, Cruz proposes different ways in which the disempowered women liberate themselves and try to change the status quo. In the beginning of the story, Conchita finds herself immobilized in a marriage where she is invisible. However, after being empowered by Anna Karenina's story and finding a confidant in the lector, she is able to reinvent herself to regain personal autonomy.

Similarly, when we first meet Marela she is innocent, naïve, and unable to contain her emotions. At the end of the play however, we see her determined to defend her passion for literature and her unique worldview. The beauty of her growth is that she learns to use her emotions as a strength. On the other hand, there is the matriarch of the family – Ofelia. In her first appearance we already see her challenging dynamics and gender norms by hiring the lector herself, rather than waiting for her husband's authorization. Although Marela and Conchita have a strong role model in their mother, it takes literature, love, and other outside forces to reveal their true potential.

**Discussion Questions:**

What are other ways in which the characters abide or rebel against the feminine stereotypes?

What other attitudes, actions, or words did you detect that allude to different representations of masculinity?

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