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Synthanalysis:

Steel Magnolias

Initial Read-through Impressions

Steel Magnolias is about family, friends, gossip, unconditional love, desire, strength, morals, support, life and death. In this play friends and family are each others support system. Through love, courage, and comfort, to messy, helplessness and grief. These characters are like no other. Most friendships have the most trouble in wanting whats best for each other. In my experience, its easy to say the choices made in this play are very real and scary. There have been many times I've felt uncomfortable in my friends decisions because I felt it wasn't best for them or could hurt them. This was my protection mechanism. Though the specific challenges faced by these friends are different from my own experience, we still share these common struggles to protect one another. It's human instinct, motherly instinct to guard and protect your loved ones. Friendship, pain, selfishness, helplessness, faith, control, desire, strength, and unconditional love. The ups and downs, serious and funny ways the plot progressed kept me anxiously engaged in my first read-through. This story and its characters made you want to jump into the play and hug them yourself. It's a beautiful play that really hit home for me, and made me realize to never take my time and memories for granted. In the play, two major themes that stuck out to me were protection and unconditional love.

Images / Words

First Read Through



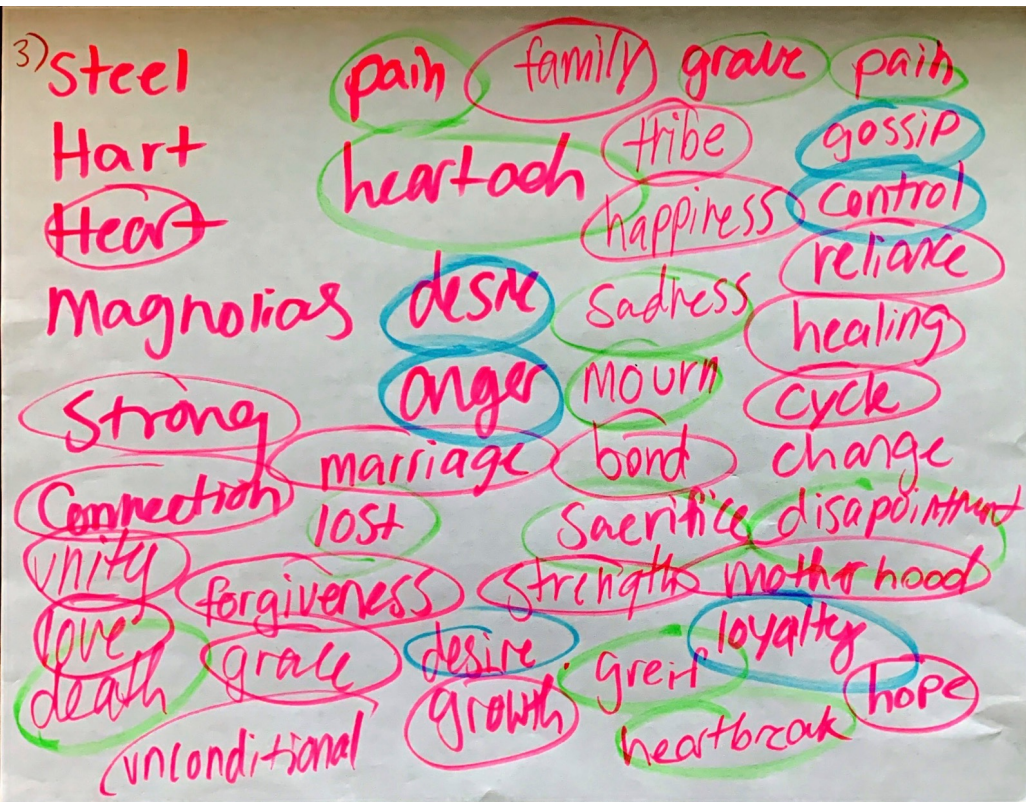
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Second Read Through



Images / Words

Third Read Through



What is this story about?

Steel Magnolias is about resilience, sacrifice, love, and motherhood. Family and friends that have a lot of love and strength, and a small town girl who is as resilient as they come. This story is about friendship and a mother who has no choice but to unconditionally love and make big sacrifices for her daughter to one day be able to do that same thing. Risk everything, with the chance of losing everything.



Themes

Love vs. Resilience (Post-Intensive) -

Good: Unconditional love heals

Evil: Resilience leading to the decaying of life

Desire vs. Protection (Pre-Intensive) -

Good: Protection, the strength of motherhood

Evil: Desires leading to the decaying of life

Sacrifice vs. Control (Pre-Intensive) -

Good: Sacrifice can lead to happiness

Evil: Control leading to unhappiness and emptiness

Where / What / When

Chinquapin, Louisiana (Mid 1980s)

Act 1

Scene 1: April, Scene 2: December

Act 2

Scene 3: June, Scene 4: November

Ronald Reagan was president and it was a big time for rising artists. George W. Bush to soon be elected. People just had started to watch a lot of TV. The royal wedding was a hit. The computer is new and upcoming.

All scenes are held in Truvy's beauty parlour. Tight knit friends laugh, love, fight, and grieve through what they do best. Gossip. As Shelby, the bride to be is getting her hair done by Truvy, queen of hair, she has a diabetic episode which leads to her mother revealing that Shelby can't have children. As friends come around to support Shelby, her resilience to have a baby doesn't change. When shelby becomes pregnant, her mother and friends are very concerned. But without fail, they love and support her anyway. After Shelby has her baby, she became very sick. M'lyne, Shelby's mother tells everyone that she is giving her a kidney. Through fear and support, they get through everything together. Shelby passes away and her mother and friends grieve. But through unconditional love, they find peace through Shelby's passing.

Idea

Authors Idea: Sacrifice vs. Control; The power of control can blind one's sight to see that only sacrifice can lead to happiness.

Directors Idea: Love vs. Resilience; Deep resilience smudges the thin paint of life and creates dark shades of death, becoming blind to unconditional love making the color tickled pink non-visible.

Actors Idea: Desire vs. Protection; Mauve desires lead to the decaying of life, preventing protection can guard the strength of motherhood which leads to life.



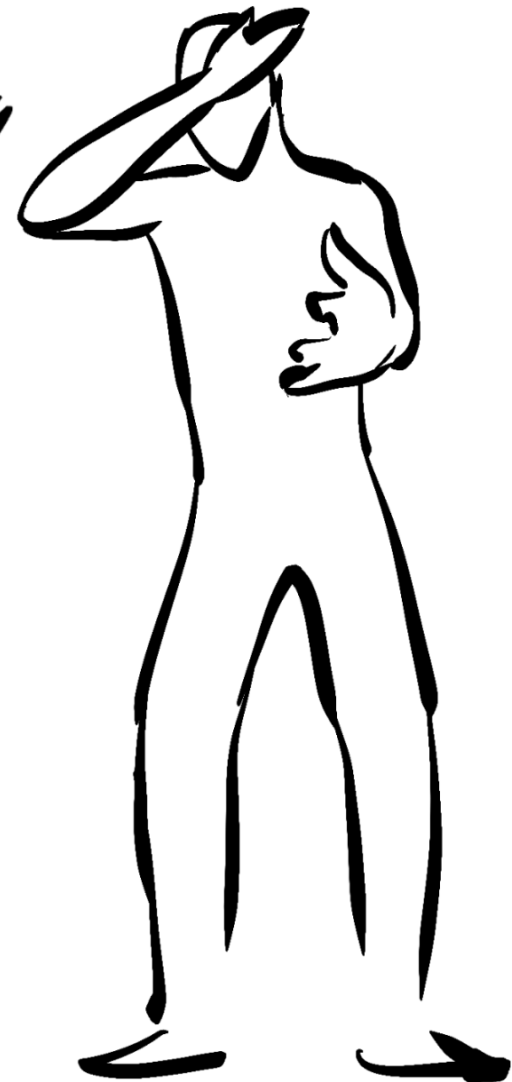
Love
Vs
Resilience



Sacrifice
Vs
Control



Desire
Vs
Protection



Drawn out theme PG's

Authors Aims / What for?

Author: The authors aim in telling this story is to show what unconditional love looks like. I believe the author wanted to show how it is possible to overcome anything when using love and strength to meet the challenges of life. Sacrifices have to be made for one another to create happiness. Even if that involves pain and suffering.

Director: As the director, I feel similar to the Author. I believe that this play is to show how powerful love can be, although it may be extremely painful. All of the characters in this play are real and are going through challenges that a lot of people face. As a director, I want to challenge the audience to think in a different perspective.

Why do I want to do this play? I want to do this play to truly show how strong women are. I want to create a sense of ease and beauty around life and death. I want to show that love conquers all.

Directors call to action:

Though we tend to be resilient, always choose to love unconditionally.

Nine Critical Events

Pre-Event: Shelby wants to start a family.

Event 1: Shelby's getting married.

Event 2: Shelby worries everyone by having a diabetic episode.

Event 3: M'lynn exposes that Shelby won't be able to have children.

Event 4: Shelby reveals that she is pregnant.

Event 5: M'lynn explains that shesby shouldn't have kids.

Event 6: Everyone discovers that Shelby is sick from having her baby.

Event 7: M'lynn confessed that she is giving Shelby her kidney.

Event 8: Shelby doesn't make it through surgery.

Event 9: Loved ones mourn Shelby's passing.

Post-Event: Everyone find peace in Shelby's memory.

Pre-Event

(Man Against Self)

Shelby desires to start a family.

Atmosphere: Excited Anticipation

Event Description	Why
Shelby desires to start a family. She falls in love and gets engaged.	This event begins the excited anticipation of starting and continuing a family. This event is the start of dreams, sacrifice, love, and death.

Event 1:
Accent
(Man Against Self)

Shelby's getting married.

Before - Shelby: *I just like the idea of growing old with somebody.*

After - Shelby: *My dream is to get old and sit on the back porch covered with grandchildren and say, "No!" and Stop that!"*

Atmosphere:
Before - Wedding Day Jitters
After - Youthful Exuberance

Event Description	Why
The moment Shelby's resilience kicks in for the first time.	This moment begins the reaching for Shelby's desire to have children. Even though she knows this could effect her health. This will lead the other characters to protection.

Event 2:
Tertiary Climax
(Man Against Nature)

Shelby worries everyone when she has a diabetic episode.

Before - Truvy: *Shelby? Shelby? M'lynn!*

After - M'lynn: *Oh, Honey.*

Atmosphere:
Before - Bubbling Worry
After - Disordered Chaos

Event Description	Why
The moment everyone realizes how serious Shelby's medical condition is.	This moment reveals the reality of Shelby's medical condition and how serious it needs to be taken. This pushes the other characters so show more compassion for her situation which causes conflict when Shelby doesn't listen.

Event 3:
Auxiliary
(Man Against Nature)

M'lynn exposes that Shelby won't be able to have children.

Before - M'lynn: *She's been so upset lately. She and Jackson have been going round and round. Dr. Michoud told her at her last appointment that children are not possible. It wasn't the easiest thing in the world to sit there and watch your child's heart break.*
After - Shelby: *Don't talk about me like I'm not here.*

Atmosphere:
Before - Disordered Chaos
After - Crushing Defeat

Event Description	Why
This moment exposes Shelby to reality.	This moment is crippling for everyone in the room. If Shelby can't have children, all of her hopes and dreams are defeated. This brings the rest of the characters to again unconditionally love and protect her from everything to come.

Event 4:
Primary Climax
(Man Against Man)

Shelby reveals that she is pregnant.

Before - Shelby: *Uh. Jackson and I have something to tell you. We wanted to tell you when you and daddy were together, but you're never together, so it's every man for himself. I'm pregnant.*

After - M'lynn: *Shelby?!*

Atmosphere:
Before - Christmas Eve Warmth
After - Crippling Discovery

Event Description	Why
Shelby reveals to M'lynn that she's pregnant.	This is a moment of resilience for Shelby. M'lynn becomes incredibly disappointed because she knows this could have terrible repercussions. M'lynn fights with love while Shelby continues to fight with resilience, causing M'lynn to take matters into her own hands.

Event 5:
Accent
(Man Against Nature)

M'lynn explains that Shelby shouldn't have kids.

Before - M'lynn: *The doctor said Shelby shouldn't have children. There's a big difference.*

After - M'lynn: *I guess you showed us all, Shelby.*

Atmosphere:
Before - Champagne Bubbles
After - Irritated Concern

Event Description	Why
In this moment everyone realizes that Shelby could be in big trouble.	In this moment, everyone realizes that Shelby could not make it through her pregnancy. They are disappointed and confused of why she would do this to herself. This leaves them to unconditionally love and stick with Shelby through thick and thin. Although they know things may take a turn for the worse.

Event 6:
Auxiliary Climax
(Man Against Nature)

Everyone discovers that Shelby is sick from having her baby.

Before - Truvy: *Shelby?! What have you done to yourself?*

After - Shelby: *Oh. It doesn't hurt.*

Atmosphere:
Before - Pre-Show Nervousness
After - Shocking Revelation

Event Description	Why
In this moment, everyone realizes that Shelby isn't as healthy as she says she is.	This is a moment of pure worry. Everyone realizes that Shelby's health is deteriorating which brings chaos into the equation. This moment leads to a more shocking revelation, which leads everyone to choose between love and resilience.

Event 7:
Auxiliary Climax
(Man Against Man)

M'lynn confesses that she is giving Shelby her kidney.

Before - Shelby: *I suppose. But I'm lucky. I don't have to wait anymore. Mama's going to give me one of her kidneys.*

After - Everyone: *What?!/M'lynn!/You're not serious!/No!*

Atmosphere:
Before - Shocking Revelation
After - Lingering Worries

Event Description	Why
This moment is when M'lynn confesses that she is giving Shelby her kidney to save Shelby's life.	In this moment, everyone discovers that Shelby is in very bad shape and M'lynn is going to risk her life so Shelby can live. Everyone is scared and surprised but this time around, it's M'lynn that has resilience over the situation. They must love unconditionally and have hope that the surgery goes as planned.

Event 8:
Primary Climax
(Man Against Self)

Shelby doesn't make it through surgery.

Before - M'lynn: *I just sat there... holding Shelby's hand while the sounds got softer and the beeps got farther apart until all was quiet. There was no noise, no tremble... just peace.*

After - M'lynn: *I realized as a woman how lucky I was. I was there when this wonderful person drifted into my world and I was there when she drifted out. It was the most precious moment of my life thus far.*

Atmosphere:
Before - Tense Eggshells
After - Crippling Heartache

Event Description	Why
In this moment, everyone comes to understand how Shelby died.	This moment is a moment of grief and beauty. M'lynn and her friends come to terms with Shelby's death. M'lynn tells everyone about her last moments with Shelby and all the love she still had in this painful moment. This moment leads to one last painful moment of resilience.

Event 9:
Accent
(Man Against Man)

Loved ones mourn Shelby's passing.

Before - M'lynn: *I cant stand this. I just want to hit somebody until they feel as bad as I do. I... just want to hit something.. and hit it hard.*

After - Clairee: *Here. Hit this! Go ahead, M'lynn. Slap her!*

Atmosphere:
Before - Crippling Heartache
After - Clashing Greif

Event Description	Why
In this moment, everyone goes through the motions of greif.	This moment is a breaking point for M'lynn. She and her friends grieve together through unconditional love and resilience. This moment of grief could be negative to most, but in this moment it leads to healing.

**Post Event:
(Man Against Self)**

Everyone finds peace in Shelby's memory.

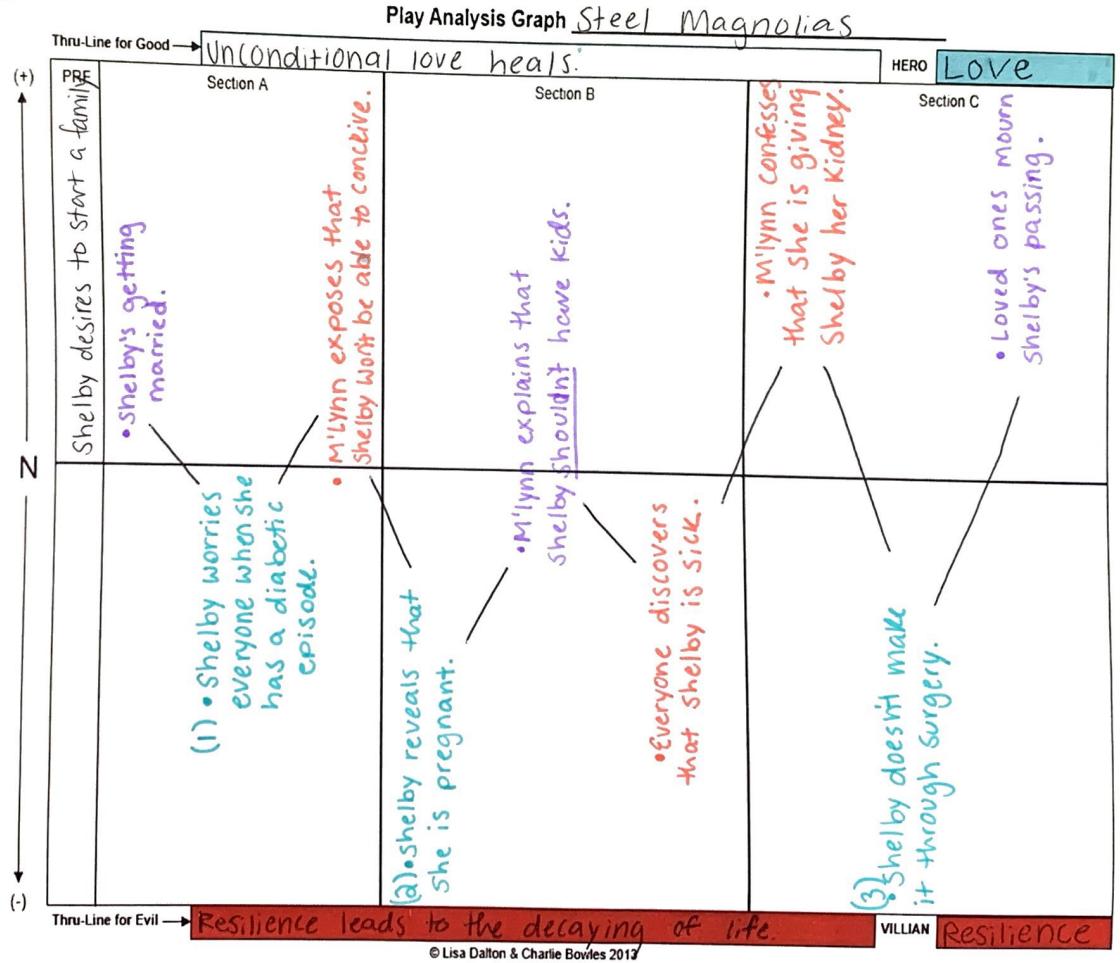
Atmosphere: Tickled Pink

Event Description	Why
<p>In this moment everyone finds peace through Shelby's passing. You could even say the atmosphere for this moment would be "Tickled Pink".</p>	<p>This moment happens because of unconditional love. It happens because of strength and resilience. They realize that all Shelby ever wanted was a baby and she got that. They continue to live with unconditional love and learn resilience, as it sometimes can be a dangerous trait, but resembles strength and courage. In which they all have aspired to have, just like Shelby.</p>

SART Chart

- main climaxes
- Auxiliary Events
- Accents

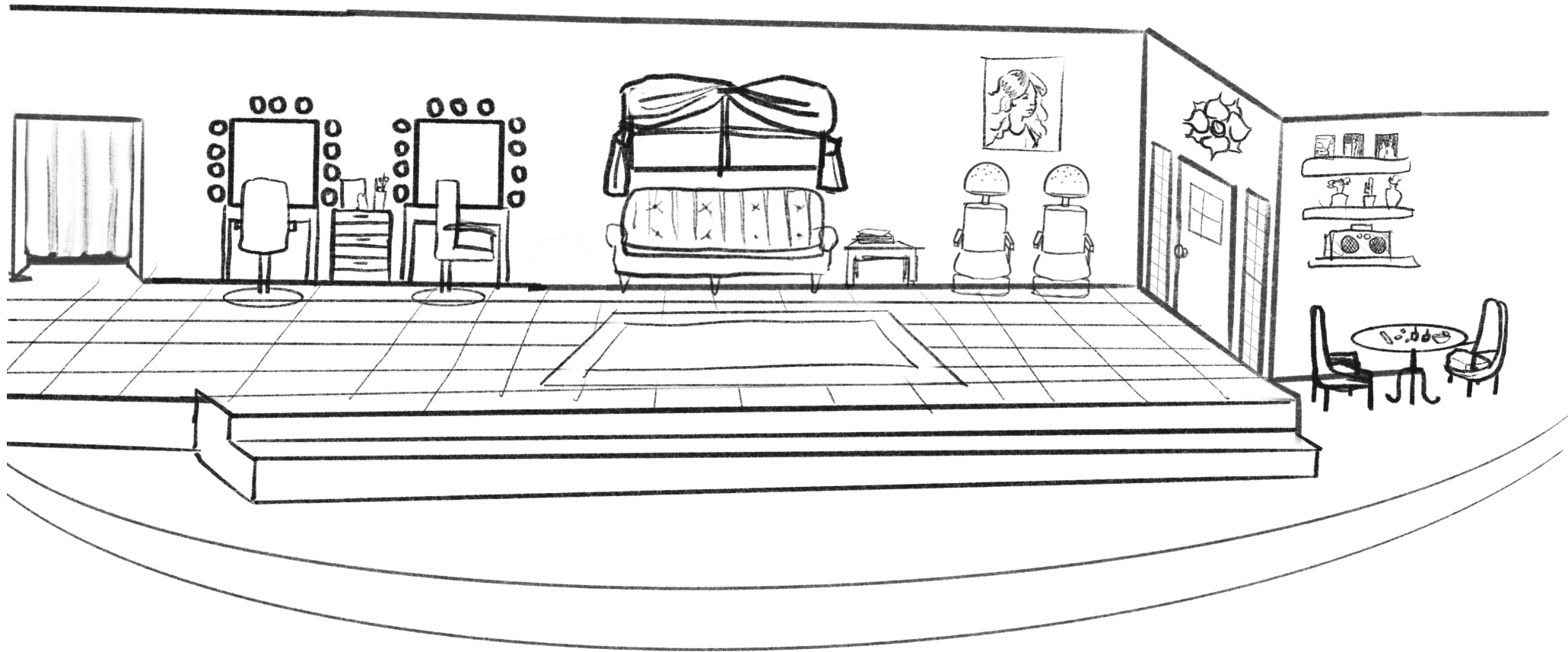
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SynthAnalysis™ Graph

Set Design



Set

Chinquapin, Louisiana (Mid 1980s). An older salon that is heavily decorated to hide the wear and tear. The only visible location throughout the entirety of the play is this salon in one open set. Stage left is the door to get into the salon as well as the hair dryer station and the nail station. This area is where Shelby's radio is located. Stage right you can find both Truvy and Annelles hair stations as well as the entrance to the back room area which is off-stage. Center stage you can find the seating area and side table filled with magazines. Above the couch is the infamous window that is used quite frequently throughout the play. The rest of the set include a checkered floor and stairs for dimensions and a more dramatic TFW.

General Description: Southern middle class hair salon.

Furnishings: Furnishings are era appropriate. Everything decorated perfectly with discount materials.

Lighting: Depending on the time of day and season, the set will be lit with era appropriate lamps. The stage lights will change only when switching scenes to a different time and season. Otherwise there will not be many lighting changes other than special effects for explosions and scripted lighting differences. This will give a realistic approach to the play.

Images: Above the front door is large magnolia flower. This flower will wither and loose life as the play progresses. This will be a symbol of not only Shelby's health but the general atmosphere transformation throughout the show. At the very end of the play this magnolia will be replaced with a healthy and vibrant new magnolia. This will represent healing through TPT.

Set - TPT

Transformation & Polarity: The magnolia slowly withers throughout the play, revealing images of the effects of the push and pull of the theme. The magnolia then is replaced with a new one at the end of the show as an image for healing and will further our directors call to action.

Scenic Triplicity

Beginning: The magnolia flower is big bright and beautiful.

Middle: With every scene change, the magnolia withers little by little. Each time it decreases in life, the atmosphere within the show also withers with it.

End: The magnolia is replaced with a new healthy flower. This change represents the healing that love can achieve.

Music / Sound

The music in the show will be played only in scene transitions. The songs played will be era appropriate and create the atmosphere of the play and bookends the beginning and end of scenes. The only sounds that will be played are the sounds required in the script for example; barking dog, gun shots, radio, ect... There will be no extra sound or music played to be devoted to the rawness and reality of the script.

Props

Props in the show will be true to the script. There will be extra props throughout the salon giving a reality to play as well as giving actors more tools to make friends with in the space.

Marketing

Posters, social media, and mass communication will all include imagery of a withering magnolia flower. This will include all of the details of the show, and a warm invitation to come see a wonderful show.

Psychology of the Stage

Item	Placement (Thinking, Details Feeling, Willing)	
Nail Station / Radio	Feeling / Future	The nail station is in feeling because this area is the center of attention for a very emotional event. It is also placed in future because feelings are towards future fear. The radio is also placed in feeling and future because a lot of the characters feeling are tied to the radio itself in the future of the play as a representation of love.
Salon Entrance / Magnolia	Feeling / Present	The salon entrance is placed in feeling because the door represents the passing of loved ones through time. It is paced in present time because each time someone enters and exits it propels the story in the now. The magnolia is in feeling and present because throughout the play as it withers through feelings of the characters and atmospheres, it in its present state represents the state of the plot.
Couch / Window	Willing / Past	The couch and window are placed in willing because this is where all of the gossiping happens and the willing mindset is at play the most. They are in past, because they gossip about the past as well as looking into the past through the window metaphorically.
Hair Station	Thinking / Moving through Past, Present, Future	The hair station is in thinking because this is where the most questions are asked and most thoughts are laid on the table. This moves through past present and future through the moving of the chair. This is important because the characters discuss everything within the movement of time.
Back Room	Thinking / Past	The backroom is placed in thinking because it is most used by Annelle, a thinking character. She often goes into the back when overthinking. It is set in the past because her cause of overthinking is due to her past.
Steps	Moving though Thinking, Feeling & Willing / Future	The steps go though thinking, feeling and willing because this gives the character space to be able to choose how they feel. The steps are in future because they have to take one step forward to choose between love and resilience.

Costumes

All costuming would be period appropriate.

Shelby: As a willing character, Shelby's costuming would be grounded, edgy and trendy, with pink in every outfit. As the play progresses, Shelby's wardrobe will become more motherly and have more feeling. Of course, continued in pink.

M'ylnn: As a thinking character, M'ylnn's costuming would be in straight lines with solid colors. Very conservative, with a lot of strength and style. As the play progresses her fashion becomes less conservative and more loose.

Truvy: As a feeling character, Truvy's costuming would be in curves with bright colors and patterns. Not too conservative, with a slight sense of sexy. Throughout the play Truvy's fashion gets less sexy and more confident.

Annelle: As a thinking character, Annelle's costuming would be in straight lines with solid colors. Annelle will become more fashionable as the play progresses and will be a little more curvy with pastels.

Clairee: As a feeling character, Clairee's costuming will be in curves with warm colors. Her costumes will be very put together prim and proper. Throughout the show she becomes a bit more careless, but is still socially acceptable for her stature.

Ouiser: As a willing character, Ouiser's costuming will be grounded and in deeper colors and larger patterns. As the play continues, Ouiser's costuming will lighten up and become looser without losing her ground.

Japanese Rock Garden

Focal Point: The holding of a baby, gentle and motherly. (Down, Left)

Support Stone: Arms wide, close, protecting the focal point. (Center)

Connecting Stone: Kneeled down for extra protection reaching toward the support stone. (Down, Right)

Conflict Stone: The holding of self. (Up, Right)

Background: Slight gather towards focal point. (Up, Left)



Costume Application



Proposed Rehearsal Schedule

NOVEMBER 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	Read-Through Synth Imagery/ Threshold	1 SART/Japanese Rock Garden/ Harmonious Groupings	2 PG/Themes/ What do I want my audience to do?	3 PPE/Blocking SART	4 Radiating/ Receiving Blocking SART	5 Improv/Jewelry Blocking SART
6 DARK	7 Ensamble/ Run SART	8 Characterization Blocking	9 Atmosphere Blocking	10 Focal point/ Blocking	11 VETERANS DAY objective/ Blocking	12 Concentration & imagination/ SART
13 DARK	14 Tempo/Rhythm Reversal of the Rehearsal Run	15 Style/Truth Run	16 Qualities & Sensations SART	17 4 brothers/ Reverse Run	18 3 sisters Run	19 Angel Walk
20 DARK	21 Tech	22 Tech	23 Tech/ Full dress	24 THANKSGIVING DAY opening performance	25 Performance	26 performance
27 performance	28 DARK	29 DARK	30 performance	performance	performance	Closing performance

Atmospheres Throughout the Play

Nervous Anticipation	Christmas Eve Warmth
4th of July Chaos	Crippling Discovery
Mysterious Curiosity	Champagne Bubbles
Wedding Day Jitters	Irritated Concern
Youthful Exuberance	Pre-Show Nervousness
Annoyed Tolerance	Shocking Realization
1st Love Butterflies	Resigned Acceptance
Bubbling Worry	Birth of a Baby
Disordered Chaos	Joyous Spring Day
Crushing Defeat	Shocking Revelation
Interfering Intrusion	Lingering Worries
Chaotic Circus Tent	Tense Eggshells
Raging Curiosity	Crippling Heartache
Naive Innocence	Clashing Greif
Chaotic Barnyard	Tickled Pink

Shelby - Functionality

Shelby is the center of resilience, she does not take no for an answer and other characters have a love/hate relationship with that trait. She also causes most of the resilience in other characters.

Shelby's character is important to the play because she is the centerfold for atmosphere changes and events. This is because she constantly is giving the plot new information. Shelby is full of love and resilience and this is what grounds her as a character in this play because she so directly represents and holds together the purpose of the play.



Shelby

“What for” is the character aiming?

To have a family

Shelby's monologues

“My dream is to get old and sit on the back porch covered with grandchildren and say, “No!’ and, “Stop that!’.”

“I look at having this baby as the opportunity of a lifetime. Sure, there may be some risk involved. That’s true for anybody. But you get through it and life goes on. And when its all said and done there’ll be a little piece of immortality with Jackson’s looks and my sense of of style - I hope. Mama, please. I need your support. I would rather have thirty minutes of wonderful than a lifetime of nothing special.”

Shelby mentions this throughout the play many times. Shelby wants to get married, she wants to start a family, she wants to have grandkids. She continues to fight for this throughout the play with no care of the consequences. This puts the rest of the characters in a place of hurt, toying between the options of perfection through love or resilience through anger.

Shelby

(+, -) Relationships

There is a lot of polarity within Shelby's relationships throughout the play.

Shelby's relationship with M'lynn becomes increasingly less stable through anger and resentment because M'lynn wants to protect Shelby which is a negative (-) for Shelby because this takes her away from her aim.

But Shelby's relationship becomes increasingly more stable with her husband Jackson as the play continues because he allows her to reach toward her aim- which is a positive (+).

One might contend that Shelby and M'lynn's relationship is a positive (+) because M'lynn is saving Shelby from her own death, while Jackson could be a negative (-) because he's not taking into account her health. But, Shelby's aim to start a family is the decision maker for her (+,-) relationships.

Shelby - TFW Forces

Shelby's Thinking: Shelby's thinking forces are the weakest of the three, but are there in full throttle when there's no other choice. Shelby's thinking forces are ruled by her feeling forces. When shelby is overthinking she tends to be emotional because at time the forces can be so similar that they trigger one another for Shelby. She is constantly doing everything she can to get what she wants, which is a family.

Shelby's Feeling: Shelby uses her thinking and willing forces to protect her feeling forces. Shelby wants to feel fulfilled by a family and to feel the love of a family. So, her feeling forces take charge of her other forces to follow her dreams of having love, and a family.

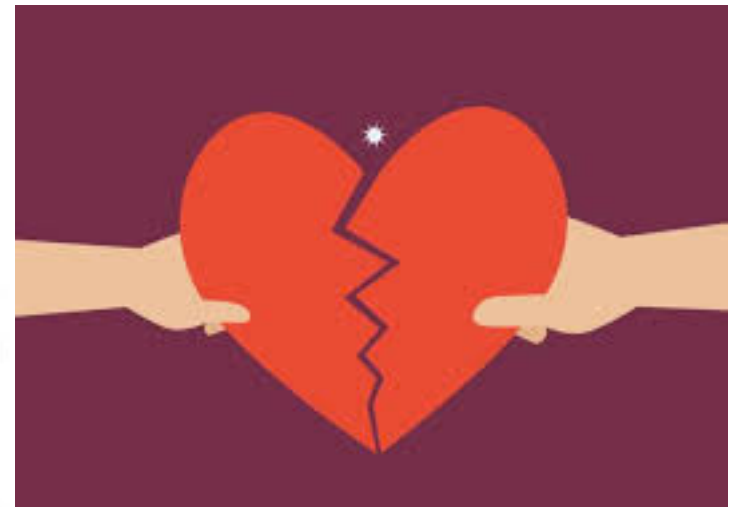
Shelby's Willing: I believe that Shelby is a willing character. Shelby uses her willing forces throughout the play to achieve her aims. She uses these forces constantly to get what she desires and to fight for her desires. Shelby uses her willing forces out of desire strictly to please her feeling forces.

Romy - Gestures

Shelby's Core gesture is a pull. This is because all she wants is to love and have a family so she uses her willing forces and pulls them toward her.

Shelby's Wining gesture is a gather into the heart. She is fulfilled with love by her family and forever happiness.

Shelby's Losing gesture is a tear, a ripping of the heart. If she were to not start a big family it would be like the ripping of a broken heart.



Shelby - Through-line

Good Through-line: Sacrifice leads to love and family.

Evil Through-line: Control destroys family relationships

Shelby's through-line is almost opposite to the plays overall though-line. This is because Shelby's aim is so extreme that she see's nothing, but through her own tunnel vision. While her family and friends struggle to try to protect her, she feels as if they are trying to control her. Through her eyes, she knows that making sacrifices to her own body and against her family's will, will allow her to have the family that she's dreamed of having.



Shelby - TPT

Throughout the play Shelby's character experiences TPT in many different forms. At the beginning of the play Shelby is perfectly healthy. As the play progresses she begins to get sick, and by the end of the play she dies. This is the biggest and most dramatic form of transformation and polarity seen within her character. You also see transformation within Shelby as she gets older. She starts the play as a young woman about to be wed, then to a married woman who's pregnant, to a mom who changes her image and style for comfortability. You see polarity within her relationship with her mom. At the beginning they fight like cats and dogs and by the end of Shelby's on-stage time, they treat each other with love and respect. Shelby started out with the innocence of wanting a family and grew to a woman with a lot of strength, who had the power to say and do exactly what she wanted in life. You also see triplicity within Shelby's character when her large transformations AND events are throughout three separate scenes.

Shelby - Imaginary Body

