

# **THE WOLF AT THE END OF THE BLOCK**

## **STUDY GUIDE**

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# I. Ike Holter's The Rightlynd Saga

*The Wolf at the End of The Block* is one play in Ike Holter's seven-part Rightlynd Saga. Each play in the cycle takes place in the fictional Chicago neighborhood called Rightlynd and the changing cultural, political, and social dynamics of the people that live there. Portions of dialogue in *Wolf* make references to the previous plays. The plays in the saga are as follows in chronological order:

## **Rightlynd**

Setting: Winter 2011 – Summer 2014

Chicago's 51st Ward, Rightlynd, once a thriving neighborhood, is now populated with vacant storefronts and abandoned apartment buildings. Alderman Nina Esposito embarks on a one-woman crusade to stop an outside real estate redevelopment project seeking to usher in a new age of gentrification that threatens the heart of Rightlynd's identity.

## **Exit Strategy**

Setting: Summer 2014 – Summer 2015

TumblDn High School, a now-crumbling cornerstone of Rightlynd, is slated for an unceremonious shutdown by the city (aided by Alderman Esposito.) A grassroots campaign of teachers and students emerges under the leadership of a fast-talking administrator, willing to risk it all in a city-wide clash to save their careers, future and safety.

## **Sender**

Setting: Summer 2016

More than one year after his sensational death, a young man returns to his former Rightlynd apartment: alive, well and with a new-found ambition to fix what went wrong. A miracle reunion turns into a catastrophic disaster as the past catches up with the present and old debts return, expecting payment in full.

### **Prowess**

Setting: Summer 2016

Temperatures flare, shootings spike and Rightlynd is stuck in status quo. Enter a mixed bag of underdogs ready to save whatever's left of the day. As Nina Esposito cozies up to city hall, her assistant uses her boss' turned eye (and vacant office) as the headquarters for a rebellion against the powers that be. Completely powerless but sky-high on passion, they fight back. But as broken bones multiply and alliances splinter, the team is forced to draw the line between well-meaning heroism and vigilante justice.

### **The Wolf At The End of The Block**

After the heat of *Sender* and *Prowess*, a bitterly cold Chicago fall seeps into Rightlynd. A dimly lit bar deep in the neighborhood is the scene of a terrifying and bewildering crime. New witnesses and startling facts emerge within the following 48 hours over sandwiches at Nunley's Grocery and Meat Counter. A personal horror story flips into a destructive and thrilling political maelstrom that defies containment, while the resident at its center struggles for control of his narrative—and his life.

### **Red Rex**

Setting: January – April 2018

A theater company moves into a small storefront in Rightlynd, hoping their upcoming show will launch their careers to new heights. But when it's revealed that their source material isn't as original as they assumed, they must face off with the neighborhood's residents, who are determined to take back their story.

### **Lottery Day**

Setting: Fall 2019

Long the matriarch of a quickly gentrifying neighborhood, Mallory invites the lonely residents, hardcore activists and starving artists of her block to what she hopes will go down as a legendary barbeque- thanks to a special surprise. But her mysterious plan to revitalize her community may be the very thing that tears it apart.

## II. Exploratory Questions and Activities

- 1.) Read (or listen to) the classic tale of “The Boy Who Cried Wolf” from *Aesop’s Fables*. Discuss how elements of this narrative are woven throughout the play.  
<https://fablesdfaesop.com/the-boy-who-cried-wolf.html>
- 2.) Discuss the connection (and conflict) between heroism and morality as explored in the play.
- 3.) Ike Holter categorizes the play as a neo-noir (a narrative genre usually relegated to film that both expands and subverts the elements of classic film noir.) Three of the common traits of neo-noir are: *an antihero protagonist*, *a conspiratorial plot*, and *high contrast lighting*. Give examples of each of these traits as they exist in the production of *Wolf*.  
<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/neo-noir-guide#6-notable-neonoir-films>
- 4.) Which of the characters in the play do you feel the strongest connection to? Discuss why this particular character resonates with you.
- 5.) The play ends with a tense silent moment between Abe and James. Choose between one of the two and write a monologue, in their voice, describing what they are thinking in the final moments of the play. <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-a-monologue-with-examples#4-tips-for-writing-a-strong-monologue>
- 6.) Read the highlighted monologues from Frida, Abe and James from the play. (see attachment link.) Discuss the ways that each monologue highlights the challenges in the functions of modern social institutions (family, education, religion, economy, government/politics, health care, and media.)
- 7.) Describe the ways that the author uses language, rhythm and word choice to communicate place/location, age, and need. (you can use the sample monologues or other moments you remember from the production)

### III. Monologues

FRIDA

I do what I want.

Never mistake me for some low-level hire some idiot pawn to be pushed I answer to no one but the mirror  
*do not mistake me I do my job I do exactly What I Want.*

.....I am the only --I am the only *one of my kind* in my line of employment.

I am the voice. The quo. The--

I am the foot in the door I am the only foot in the door for 16 years running that floor I do what I want I  
do what needs to be done and that means I can fail *this* many times.

Know how many stories I do? How many, how many, you watch, you're a fan, right, 71, 71 stories, per  
year, on your television in your newspaper on your little phone you can find 71 instances where I shoot  
and when I strike it is implicit that my insistence is above approach, 100 percent, everybody else? Doesn't  
matter, one, two, three strikes, they get four more,

they get up they get down but me,

with my position, within my *exotic disposition*:

If I presented every time a white person beats a brown body without a 360 degree rotating camera with  
dolby surround sound voice recording and 4 witnesses without one mark of red on their ledger;

if I use my voice, and that call is not clarion, even once, that mic goes mute my foot is out of the door and  
we don't get to scream about anything down here, again, ever, not anymore.

.....So do it.

Go undercover for your brother and get a statement,

from the bartender that feeds the man who beat someone and got away with it,

his loyal customer, his alibi in full light you go there and strap a wire to your back and then you deal with  
the laws against that;

you find a security camera that shows people screaming but with no words and find a lip reader to tell me  
within a 60 percentile what was "possibly said",

you find me some easy way to squeeze out as much truth as possible you bring that for me to see and I  
will click my finger on the screen and like your little blog that will be seen and heard and felt by no one of  
any more importance than some clicktivist with a bone to pick now you look me in the eye I am trying to  
be your voice so don't you *ever* tell me to *shut up*.

EVERYONE

.....  
ABE

They didn't want me there. Windows boarded up. People smoking. Inside. Still.  
Not a normal bar. Cop bar.

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....Didn't hear his name, didn't know his title, but when I push him into the wall to get away he fell down hard and as I was getting up my eye caught the glint of his holster and his gun and his badge on the belt the guy who did it they man who put hands on me the man who did all this all this this shit, to me, he-- he's a cop.

He's--He's special, right?

...And I'm a waiter.

Didn't finish school. Tried, couldn't, never went back and, I don't know, I drink too much, sometimes, trying not to, better now, but I drink and I smoke, whenever I can, but I don't buy, cause I'm broke did I mention that, I think it bears repeating let me say it again just to be sure I am poor, as fuck, I am really really, really fucking poor and I'm dark skinned, and I've been turned down from over 30 apartments, And I've never gotten a job where I didn't know the owner, and I get flagged in every airport and they ask me about drugs, but all that doesn't happen as much anymore because I stopped going by my birth name so that's, that part's OK now,

*I'm not--*

I'm not unimpeachable.

But I'm

I am still here, I am still *alive*

that's something not a lot of people can say once they've seen a cop get dark *that's something*. I'm--

I am *worth something* because I am still breathing my life is worth something god damn it I am still somebody.

---And that's--

I don't know, if you ask me, I think that makes me kinda sorta maybe unimpeachable. So.

FRIDA

JAMES

I couldn't do what you do.

Try to place myself in other people's shoes, yea?

When I'm out, at work, and I get the call, and I go,

I try to place myself in the position of the person I'm supposed to go against.

And it's hard.

I will admit that straight off, it is hard for me to look at someone who doesn't look like me

and put all my history into their heads and then say to myself "Oh ok, this lead him to this. That lead him to this. He lead himself to this",

it's hard, real hard, and it's hard cause it's impossible.

I wouldn't be me...if I was you, and vice versa, you admit that, you know that; can't put my brain in somebody else's head but

I can try, in that moment, with everything I got to be a good person.

...And that's a fight I don't always walk away from as a--

Can't always win that fight.

I see hundreds of people go by a day,

and that's only a fraction of the thousands that pass by,

only thing is, when I'm at work I'm in a uniform;

they can see me, I can't see them, see?

So it takes a...

Takes a certain kind of person to do what I do.

I'm the one who has to decide.

And it can never be wrong, cause if it is, I'm not the person who gets to decide anymore,

I'm the person who's dead.

....You see me

and you see everybody who ever did you wrong all at the same time.

That's tough that's real tough son I don't envy you that.

Nobody gets it unless they have to get it, but it's tough thinking everybody wants to get you, cause if you don't, if you just see the good in everybody, constantly, like me:

You mess up the one wrong time and you're dead.

.....Now I know

from the second I sat down

that you didn't really want to trust me.

Then for a minute you did,

then another minute back to before, worse, cause you let yourself go.

And...Hahahahaha.

And--I want to say *do it*. Give in. Smile more. Relax.

-But I can't.

So why should you.

You're pissed, you're on edge, you're scared and you don't wanna take it anymore:

(continued ...)

Stay just like that.

Who am I to tell you any different.

.....But you've got a nice air about you, it's real nice and it's one of a kind.

You're funny. You're smart. You're on the right track and if the day ever came when it was you against me please know it would be about your attitude and your questioning of my authority, not the color of your skin.

Maybe that's specific only to you.

*Maybe* I'm completely different when it's somebody else who looks just like you.

Maybe I know exactly what happened last night, *Maybe* I'm covering up for a friend,

Maybe I'm the bigoted piece of shit who did it and I am sitting right in front of you with a gun on my side and the power to do whatever the fuck I want, maybe this time the fucker won't get away, maybe this time I won't stop "maybe maybe" *all these maybe's*.

.....Truth is:

I'm not the guy you want.

Easy for me to say, tough for you to hear, but that's the truth.

...Bar's called Everson.

Corner across from the currency exchange two blocks off California.

Bartender'll tell you everything you wanna know about last night and---

If I were you?

I would...listen to the entire story

before I held one up to be the only, k?

But what do I know, Right?

I wasn't even there.

....Next time keep the knife on your belt buckle,

nobody looks good with their hands already behind their back.

*(JAMES puts down two bills.*

*Exits.....*



## IV. Standards (9-12)

SSSocSC4 Analyze the function of social institutions as agents of social control across differing societies and times (a, b, d are highlighted in *Wolf*)

- a) Analyze the function of social institutions in society, include: family, education, religion, economy, government/politics, health care, and media.
- b) Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of various social institutions.
- c) Evaluate other possible social institutions such as sports.
- d) Analyze the functions and inequalities of the criminal justice system in relationship to a society's construct of crime and punishment.
- e) Explain the role of total institutions.
- f) Analyze the re-socialization process.

SSSocIC1 Analyze forms of social inequality (a, b are highlighted in *Wolf*)

- a) Explain how unequal distribution of power and resources affects the life chances of individuals in that society.
- b) Analyze the sources and effects of stratification on the basis of social class, race and ethnicity, gender, age, and emotional, mental, and physical disabilities.
- c) Analyze the sources of global stratification and inequality.
- d) Evaluate the impact of global stratification and inequality on global relations.

TAHSTL.RE.1 Evaluate various aspects of dramatic arts literature using appropriate supporting evidence. (d, e are highlighted in *Wolf*)

- a) Compare and summarize theatre literature from various historical periods, cultures, and styles.
- b) Develop and apply a set of comprehensive criteria for theatre text analysis. c. Compare and contrast theatre texts to live/film performance.
- c) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone.)
- d) Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.