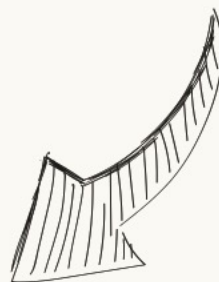




**PC  
+C**  
Ping Chong  
and Company



# GENERATION

# YOU



## TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE



**THE NEW VICTORY® THEATER**  
[NewVictory.org/SchoolTool](http://NewVictory.org/SchoolTool)

© The New 42nd Street and Ping Chong + Company

# NEW VICTORY® EDUCATION

209 W 42nd Street, New York, NY 10036 • Education@NewVictory.org | 646.223.3090

New Victory opens new worlds to young people and families through extraordinary performances, education and engagement programs. Bringing kids to the arts and the arts to kids since 1995, this nonprofit theater has become a standard-bearer of quality performing arts for young audiences in the United States. Featuring artistic disciplines and traditions from a multitude of cultures, New Victory presents theatrical stories and experiences that spark the imagination and broaden our understanding of the world and our place in it.

NEW VICTORY Education has made it possible for more than 610,000 students across 200 NYC schools to experience international performing arts with their classmates for little to no cost. Typically serving approximately 40,000 schoolkids every year, New Victory pairs these visits with free, arts-based classroom workshops and residencies, and offers professional development for educators who want to incorporate the arts into their daily curriculum.

New Victory is committed to arts access for all communities of New York to experience and engage with the exemplary international artists on its stages. The nonprofit is celebrated for programs including NEW VICTORY Arts Break, a digital series of performing arts videos and curriculum; New Victory Dance, which provides free dance performances and education to NYC summer schools; and GIVE, which addresses equitable engagement in inclusion classrooms for kids with disabilities.

## NEW VICTORY® SCHOOL TOOL® Resource Guides

Filled with practical, engaging and ready-to-implement activities that allow any teacher to incorporate performing arts into their curricula, NEW VICTORY SCHOOL TOOL Resource Guides are designed to enrich students' arts skills and creative expression.

*Please be advised that the unauthorized reproduction or distribution of NEW VICTORY SCHOOL TOOL Resource Guides for any purpose other than educational, such as for commercial or monetary gain, may constitute copyright infringement and may be punishable by law. For more information, please contact the NEW VICTORY Education Department at [Education@NewVictory.org](mailto:Education@NewVictory.org)*

## JOBS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Visit [New42.org](http://New42.org) to discover the New 42 Youth Corps, a youth development program that pairs life skills training with jobs in the arts for high school and college students. The Youth Corps is composed of three different tracks to meet students where they are academically and professionally, and to serve New York City with a diverse, creative pipeline of young talent.

### Support for NEW VICTORY Education has been provided by:

Bloomberg Philanthropies | Con Edison | Muna and Basem Hishmeh Foundation | The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation | New York City Council | New York City Department of Education | New York City Department of Cultural Affairs | New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature | May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation | Adolph and Ruth Schnurmacher Foundation, Inc. | The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust | Wells Fargo

**NYC** Cultural Affairs

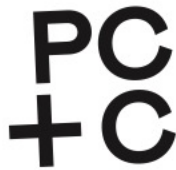


Council on the Arts

NEW VICTORY® SCHOOL TOOL® Resource Guides are made possible by a generous gift in memory of Fr. John R. Scarangelo, OFM whose lifelong passion for the theater was a powerful influence on all who were fortunate to know and love him.



## GENERATION YOU Teacher Resource Guide



Ping Chong and Company



Ping Chong + Company is a theater company based in New York City devoted to producing innovative works of theater and art with a commitment to social justice. The company was founded in 1975 by celebrated theatrical innovator Ping Chong, an internationally acclaimed theater and visual artist. He is the recipient of the National Medal of Arts, the highest honor for an American artist, recognizing his contributions to the nation's arts and culture. Today, Ping Chong + Company offers organizational support and artistic incubation to a multi-generational ensemble of affiliated artists, under Chong's artistic leadership. The company has produced over 100 works for the stage, which have been presented across New York City, throughout the United States, and around the globe. Productions range from intimate oral history projects that elevate and celebrate the voices of traditionally underrepresented communities, to grand scale cinematic multidisciplinary productions featuring puppets, performers, and full music and projection scores.

The artists at Ping Chong + Company use theater to bring communities together and engage in dialogue around identity, place, and belonging. *Undesirable Elements*, which celebrated its 25th Anniversary in 2017, is an ongoing series of interview-based theater works by Ping Chong + Company examining issues of culture, identity, and belonging in the lives of individuals in specific communities. Each production is made with local partner organizations, and local participants testifying to their real lives and experiences. The script is based on interviews with the participants, conducted by Ping Chong + Company artists during extended community residencies. The script weaves together personal and historical narratives, to create a collective storytelling experience. The cast members have final approval over the script, and then become the performers, sharing their own true stories on stage.

The series, including this production of UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: GENERATION NYZ, is comprised of over 65 interview-based theater productions created by and representing myriad communities! Productions have explored themes as far ranging as Native American identity, the experiences of refugees in the U.S., and the experiences of survivors of war and other trauma. Some other works in this series include: *Beyond Sacred: Voices of Muslim Identity* (2015, LaGuardia Performing Arts Center, National Tour), *Inside/Out...voices from the Disability Community* (John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, regional touring) and *South of the 8* (2017, La Jolla Playhouse).



## GENERATION YOU Teacher Resource Guide



**Courtney J. Boddie, Vice President, Education & School Engagement,** oversees all programs related to school communities including the NEW VICTORY School Partnership Program, teacher professional development training in the performing arts and an innovative approach in the professional development of more than 50 NEW VICTORY Teaching Artists. In 2019, TYA/USA awarded Ms. Boddie with the TYA Community Impact Award for her leadership in NEW VICTORY SPARK (Schools with the Performing Arts Reach Kids), a robust multi-year arts program that has transformed New York City school communities previously underserved in the arts. Ms. Boddie is the Creator and Host of Teaching Artistry with Courtney J. Boddie, a monthly podcast featuring engaging and investigative interviews, roundtable conversations and panels with artists and arts education leaders. An adjunct professor and Hermitage Artist Fellow, Ms Boddie received her Master's degree from the Educational Theatre Graduate Program at New York University.



**Christopher Totten, Senior Education Programs Manager** oversees and manages the content creation and facilitation of all teacher professional development programs including NEW VICTORY Professional Learning Labs, Creativity Intensives and in-school professional development workshops. He also creates all content for NEW VICTORY SCHOOL TOOL® Resource Guides, offering educators and students a range of curated art form-based and theme-based activities, student-centered creativity sheets, as well as information about artists, companies and productions presented on the NEW VICTORY stages. Christopher has worked to expand and elevate NEW VICTORY Education's approach to teacher professional development, and the theatergoing and theater viewing experience for kids. For the past three years, he has also worked in partnership with the NYCDOE on Create, a theater-based professional development track for Pre-K educators across NYC. Christopher holds a BFA in Theatre Arts from the University of the Arts, and a Master's degree in Educational Theatre from New York University.



**Christina Bixland, Education Director of Ping Chong + Company,** leads PCC's arts education programs in partnership with NYC schools and arts organizations around the country, elevating and celebrating student voice through documentary & devised theater. A veteran arts administrator, she served as Director of Education at the Flynn Center in VT for over a decade, curating world-class performances, designing arts training programs, integrating the arts into K-12 schools, offering professional development for educators and 70+ teaching artists, and founding and directing the Flynn Youth Theater Company. Ms. Bixland has taught and created curriculum in association with arts institutions across the Northeast, including The New School for Drama and Stella Adler Studio of Acting. Throughout her career she has championed access initiatives, like subsidized ticket programs, training scholarships, sensory-friendly performance adaptations, and arts programs for neurological patients and older adults. Ms. Bixland holds a BA in Theater from Bryn Mawr College, and studied musical theater at Carnegie Mellon University.



## GENERATION YOU Teacher Resource Guide



**Ryan Conarro, Affiliated Artist and past Creative Producer with Ping Chong + Company,** is an interdisciplinary artist and theater maker who creates multi-platform story-sharing experiences, with particular focus on collaborative processes that aim to amplify voices that have been silenced by white supremacy and class inequality. His practice includes documentary performance; creative placemaking and civic engagement; devising original work; audio production; and Queer performance. Ryan has taught at NYU Tisch School of the Arts, NYU Steinhardt School of Education, The New School for the Performing Arts, University of Alaska, and University of North Georgia, and he is currently a Visiting Professor at University of Denver. He has also served as a lead teaching artist for the Alaska State Council on the Arts (ASCA) and Maine's Stonington Opera House, and sat on the ASCA Arts Education Advisory Committee. For more about Ryan and his work, please visit his website, [www.ryanconarro.com](http://www.ryanconarro.com).



**Sara Zatz, Associate Director of Ping Chong + Company,** oversees the company's community engagement and training programs, and is the lead-artistic collaborator with Ping Chong on the interview-based *Undesirable Elements* series, exploring issues of culture and identity in the lives of individuals in specific communities. Since joining the company in 2002, she has led the production of dozens of original works in the series, working with partner organizations ranging from regional theaters to community-based arts organizations. She has had the privilege of interviewing hundreds of individuals from all over the world. In addition to co-writing/directing *Undesirable Elements: Generation NYZ*, recent productions include *Face to Face: Hmong Women's Voices* (Park Square Theatre), *(Un)Conditional*, with individuals living with chronic illness (Profile Theatre), *Undesirable Elements: Dearborn* (Arab American National Museum), and *Beyond Sacred: Voices of Muslim Identity* (national touring). She has spoken and presented workshops on community-engaged theater at many conferences and universities. She holds an M.Phil in Irish Theatre Studies from Trinity College, Dublin, and an AB from Bryn Mawr College.



**Kirya Traber, Collaborating Artist, Co-writer/director of UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: GENERATION NYZ** is a nationally awarded writer, performer, and cultural worker. She is a collaborating artist with Ping Chong + Company, and is New York Stage and Film's 2020 Founders Award recipient. Kirya was Lincoln Center's lead Community Artist in Residence from 2015-2020, and is the recipient of multiple awards for her writing and performance, including a NY Emmy Nomination (First Person PBS), Robert Redford's Sundance Foundation award for Activism in the Arts, the California Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts, and an Astrea Foundation award for Poetry. She has been a commissioned artist of notable New York arts institutions such as the New York Philharmonic, Lincoln Center Education, WNET Thirteen, the Morgan Library & Museum, the Orchestra of St Luke's, Ping Chong + Company, and others. Throughout her ambitious performance and writing career, Kirya has continuously utilized her art for social change as a cultural organizer. More at [kiryatraber.com](http://kiryatraber.com)



# OUR GUIDING PILLARS

*Want to know what guides the work we do in NEW VICTORY Education?  
The Guiding Pillars on this page are the foundation of how we strive  
to cultivate collaboration and creativity for everyone!*

## ARTS FOR ALL

How is the work accessible to and inclusive of everyone?

## CREATE

How can we activate art-making and creativity to explore the art form in each production?

## COMMUNITY

How are we encouraging ensemble and collaboration within the communities we work with?

## ART FORM

How are we honoring and exploring the technique of the art forms presented on our stage?

## DISCOVERY

What methods are we employing?  
What questions are we asking to encourage opportunities for meaning-making, deepening understanding, inquiry, curiosity, risk-taking and learning about oneself, one's peers and the world around us?

## PLAY

How is the work sparking imagination, encouraging joy in learning and evoking laughter?

## STANDARDS

### NEXT GENERATION LEARNING STANDARDS:

Reading: 1; 2; 3  
Writing: 2; 3  
Speaking and Listening: 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6  
Language: 1; 2; 3

### NEW YORK STATE LEARNING STANDARDS FOR THE ARTS:

Creating, Performing, Responding, Connecting

### BLUEPRINT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE ARTS:

Theater Making, Developing Theater Literacy, Making Connections, Art Making, Developing Art Literacy, Making Connections



### *Dear Educator,*

In 2018, New Victory commissioned and presented UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: GENERATION NYZ, celebrating the 25th Anniversary of Ping Chong + Company's Undesirable Elements series. That production addressed themes relevant to young people like community, loss, suicide, family dynamics, immigration, racism, LGBTQIA issues and the search for one's true identity. The guide with which you're about to engage is inspired by that very production and the young people whose stories, collected and molded via a theatrical convention developed by Ping Chong, helped bring it to life.

The creative processes at New Victory are guided by our institutional and departmental pillars. Ping Chong + Company's work is driven by a belief in amplifying traditionally underrepresented voices, and the power of claiming your own story. Both organizations think deeply about young people, their lived experiences and their creative agency. As arts educators, the team behind the creation of this guide were incredibly inspired by the young performers in GENERATION NYZ and the very real situations and themes that emerged from their stories, understanding that their stories would connect to New York audiences who are mainly young New Yorkers themselves.

Since 2018, this collaborative team has banded together and combined their passions and talents to create this resource guide for you and your students to help young people reinforce their innate ability to empower themselves; to recognize, realize and tell their stories; to feel emboldened to share their stories in a theatrical way, as individuals and as an ensemble. In 2020, when COVID-19 changed the shape of how and where students gather to learn, the guide was revised to include adaptations for virtual learning spaces.

In this guide, you'll find a range of ready-to-implement activities, opportunities for reflection, student-centered reflection sheets and information about New Victory and Ping Chong + Company. This curriculum, developed by New Victory and Ping Chong + Company staff, supports the New York City Department of Education's Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts, New York State Learning Standards, Next Generation Learning Standards and the Common Core State Standards.

This guide has been intentionally curated, with New Victory Education's "Arts for All" and "Community" pillars in mind, to help educators and their students build an exciting space in which they can create their own theatrical ensemble and foster dynamic storytelling. The goal is for students to feel that they can and must tell their stories and address the important social issues that shape their lives like climate change, racial justice, gun control and politics. Young people's voices need to be amplified now more than ever. It is these young creators—and their stories—that will have an impact on their peers, their audiences and, it is our hope, the world.

We hope that you and your students enjoy using the myriad activities in this educator's guide, whether you navigate through it page by page or choose your own adventure, and find new ways to provide pathways for amplifying young voices.

Sincerely,

*Courtney, Christopher, Sara, Christina and Ryan*



## Table of Contents

P. 9

### PULLING BACK THE CURTAIN

- The Art Forms & the Show
- An Educator's Guide to Engaging with the Show
  - Exploring Students' Prior Knowledge
  - Pre-Show Activity: Who Are You? Who who, who who?
  - Watch Video and/or Read the Script
- Reflect
  - Post-Show Activity: How Did That Feel?

### BUILDING COMMUNITY & ENSEMBLE

P. 19

- Prepare: Community Agreements
- Activities:
  - Snaps
  - Star Jump
  - Rhythm Nation
  - Four Corners
  - Finding Common Ground

### GROWING YOUR THEATRICAL TOOLKIT

P. 28

- Activities:
  - Taking Stage (Exploring Stage Presence)
  - I Have a Voice! (Exploring Voice)
  - Frozen Moments (Exploring Movement)
  - Flocking (Exploring Unison Movement)
  - Building Scenes with Intention (Exploring Gesture & Movement Phrases)

### EXPLORING PERSONAL STORIES

P. 35

- Peer Interview Protocol
- Activities:
  - What Do You Think Of...?
  - You See / I Am
  - River Stories Part One: From Memory to Script
  - Storyboarding

P. 43

### STAGING STORIES WITH DEVISED THEATER TECHNIQUES

- Activities:
  - River Stories Part Two: Crafting Performance from Personal Stories
- Production Elements
- Crafting a Script

### REFLECTING

P. 48

- In-Person Reflecting: Theater Twister
- Virtual Reflecting: Headlines

### Resources P. 51



# PULLING BACK THE CURTAIN



This section, which includes everything you need to know before viewing **UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: GENERATION NYZ**, is a behind-the-scenes look at New Victory, Ping Chong + Company and the art forms and themes of the production. Use the engaging pre- and post-show activities to bookend your viewing experience. Then, utilize the reflection tool in this section to generate even more conversation about the show!

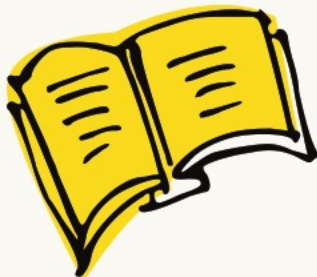


## – The Art Forms & the Show

## – An Educator's Guide to Engaging with the Show

## – You!

- Exploring Students' Prior Knowledge
- Pre-Show Activity: Who Are You? Who who, who who?



# ★ EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO ★ ENGAGING WITH THE SHOW

Use these four steps to help students navigate through the experience of encountering UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: GENERATION NYZ in video or written form.

## PREPARE

Make the experience of watching the show or reading the script more meaningful by helping students engage beforehand with some context around the collaborators, the creation of the show, the art forms, the show's themes, and their own personal connections to it all! To support this, check out the **Pulling Back the Curtain** section and try out the **Activity Who Are You? Who Who, Who Who?**



## WATCH

To begin, and for context, watch the full-length video of UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: GENERATION NYZ. Have students reflect on the experience of watching the production by using the **Creativity Page The Critical Thinker** in the **Pulling Back the Curtain** section.

## READ

To deepen student engagement with the video, have them read the UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: GENERATION NYZ script aloud as a class, or offer the script as a companion to their video-watching.



## REFLECT

After you watch or read UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: GENERATION NYZ with your students, use the **Activity How Did That Feel?** in the **Pulling Back the Curtain** section as a reflection tool.



If you have ample time to explore this curriculum, follow our guide from start to finish.

If you have limited time (six class sessions or fewer) we've curated a concentrated experience for you and your students – **just follow the river!**



1

**Pre-show Engagement:**  
Discuss students' prior knowledge and try the **Activity Who Are You?** on p. 16.

2

**Engage with the source material** by watching the video and/or reading the script with your students. Reflect on the show with the **Creativity Page The Critical Thinker!** on p. 18.

3

**Build Community and Ensemble** by setting *Community Agreements* and trying the **Activity Finding Common Ground** on p. 26.

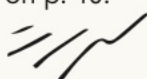
4

Grow Your Theatrical Toolkit with **Activity Taking Stage** on p. 29.



5

Explore Personal Stories using **Activity River Stories Part 1** on p. 40.



6

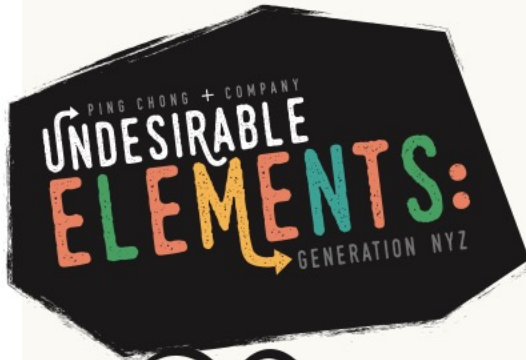
Stage Stories with **Activity River Stories Part 2** on p. 44.



7

Sharing/Performance (Optional)  
Reflection: Try **Activity Theater Twister** on p. 49., to help students reflect on their collaborative experience.

## IDENTITY + COMMUNITY X STORYTELLING =



WHERE IN THE WORLD  
IS UNDESIRABLE  
ELEMENTS:  
GENERATION NYZ  
FROM?

### UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: GENERATION NYZ

In January of 2018, Ping Chong + Company created UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: GENERATION NYZ exclusively for the New Victory Theater. This world premiere production used interview-based theater techniques to amplify the voices of young New Yorkers - real young people telling real-life personal stories about what it means to grow up in New York City. Ping Chong + Company Associate Director Sara Zatz and collaborating artist Kirya Traber conducted extensive interviews to uplift the untold stories of New York City youth, whose experiences span themes of cultural identity, sexuality and gender identity, bullying, immigration, homelessness, mental health and more. From recent discord to distant dreams, every experience they share is a personal truth. **Real people. Real lives. Real theater.**



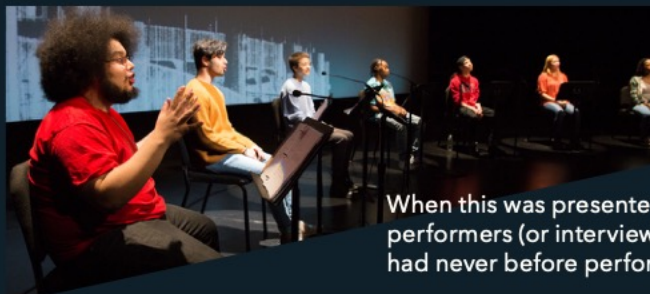
### DID YOU KNOW?

UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: GENERATION NYZ is a work of interview-based theater. The performers you'll see on stage are telling their own personal stories!

The show is not a traditional, scripted play performed by trained actors. Instead, it is presented through the voices of the people sharing their own stories.

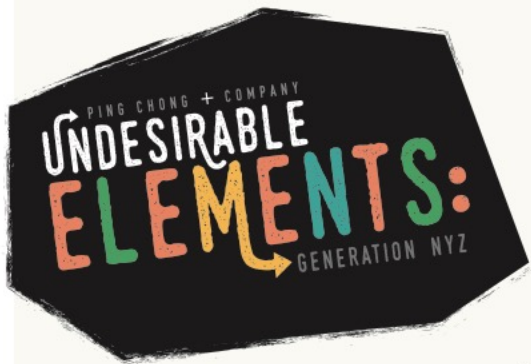
All productions in the *Undesirable Elements* series are created in partnership with a local host organization in the community where the show is being produced—in this case, the New Victory!

Since 1992, over 300 individuals have performed in the *Undesirable Elements* series, which has had over 65 productions in cities across the U.S., Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, France and Italy.



When this was presented, many of the performers (or interviewees) in the production had never before performed publicly!





OBSTACLES

IDENTITY

INDIVIDUALITY

WHERE DO YOU  
COME FROM?

CULTURE

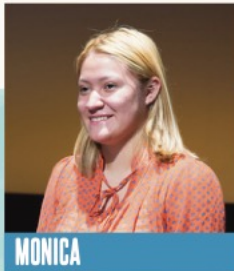
WHAT IS IT  
LIKE TO BE  
YOU?

## INTERVIEW-BASED THEATER

This style of theater—sometimes referred to as Documentary Theater, Theater of Fact, Testimonial Theater, Tribunal Theater or Verbatim Theater, though they are each slightly different in execution—is created by using the spoken words of real people, gathered by way of recorded interviews. In UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: GENERATION NYZ, those interviews, or testimonials, were then curated by creators Sara Zatz and Kirya Traber, in collaboration with the performers, into a cohesive script that is then performed by the interviewees in front of a live audience.



DE-ANDRA



MONICA



EDWIN



SYL



MOHAMMAD



PORSCHA

## STORYTELLING

UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: GENERATION NYZ is a work of interview-based theater. This production features young people telling their personal stories of what it was like growing up in New York City. UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: GENERATION NYZ uses music, rhythm, choral speaking, projection and spoken word as a means to enhance the telling of these real life stories told by real people.

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

ASPIRATIONS

UNTOLD  
STORIES

## CONNECTING WITH YOUR STUDENTS

Prior to watching the video or reading the script of UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: GENERATION NYZ with your students, find out how much students already know about **INTERVIEW-BASED THEATER**. In addition, give them opportunities to explore the themes: **INDIVIDUALITY** and **COMMUNITY**.

**What do your students know now?**

*Have you ever seen a piece of interview-based theater, spoken word or a personal storytelling performance? If so, how did you feel listening to the performer's personal stories?*

*The outside world often tells us that fitting in is better than being our own individual self. How do you feel about that?*

*In what ways do you try to be your own unique self?*

*What does it mean to belong to a community? What communities are you part of?*

*Do you feel a personal connection to your community? If so, how?  
If not, in what ways could this change?*

*What type(s) of stories are you hoping to hear or see represented on stage at the theater?*

*Do you see your own story or identity represented in television, media or in theater?*

*Do you have a personal story that you want to tell, but haven't? What do you think it would be like to tell that story in front of an entire audience?*



HANDOUT

# TERMS TO KNOW

This list of theater terms will be helpful to know as you make your way through this guide.

**STAGE**

a space designated for performance

**CHARACTER**

a type of personality portrayed on stage

**CUE**

a signal to a performer that tells them to begin or continue

**FOURTH WALL**

the space separating the performer from their audience

**DIRECT ADDRESS**

performer(s) speak directly to their audience, instead of each other, effectively breaking the fourth wall

**FIRST-PERSON**

in which the narrative is told from the narrator's perspective

**BEAT**

an added verbal or physical pause that changes a theatrical moment's rhythm

**GESTURE**

a movement that communicates to the audience a character's action

**RHYTHM**

the timing and pacing of dramatic storytelling

**CHRONOLOGY**

arrangement of events in order of occurrence

Pre-Show Activity

# WHO ARE YOU?

WHO WHO, WHO WHO\*



Activate the performance theme of personal identity through peer interviews, giving students a personal connection to the show.

**Note:** If facilitating this activity in a virtual learning space, peer interviews can take place in breakout rooms, over FaceTime or phone calls.

**Materials Needed:** index cards, pens or pencils



1. To begin, pair students up, and tell them they're going to be interviewing each other!
2. Next, have each pair choose who will be Partner A and Partner B. Tell them, "In this interview there is only one question, and it is all you're allowed to ask. That question is, **'Who are you?'**". Answers should only be in the form of, **"I am"** statements.
3. To start the process, have Partner A ask: "Who are you?" while Partner B shares their responses for 30 seconds. **Note:** Partner A should remember to only listen. If there are pauses, they can gently restate "Who are you?". Partner B, should only share what they feel comfortable sharing. This is students' opportunity to demonstrate brave listening and brave sharing. Ready? Go!"
4. Encourage students to make sure both partners are doing an equal amount of talking and listening.
5. Next, have Partner A and Partner B switch and give them another minute. After one minute, tell students to thank their partner for sharing and listening.
6. Next, tell each pair to have a brief discussion about the interview process. Ask questions like: *What was that experience like for you? Which role did you prefer? Why?* **Note:** Encourage these discussions to be about the process, not a commentary about the content of the interviews. Remind students that they are not to share or repeat anything said to them by their partners.
7. Pass out index cards to each student (or if facilitating virtually, make sure students have paper and a writing utensil) and tell them to pick three of their own "I am" statements made with their partner. These statements are going to be known as "identities." Then, have them write a different one of these identities on each index card (one per index card).

**Accommodation:** Students stay as a full group and the teacher interviews the class as a whole about who they are as a learning community and/or school community. Teacher (or a student) can scribe answers on chart paper, the board, in the chat function or whiteboard of a virtual learning space, or in a shared Google Doc.

Possible questions:

- What neighborhood is your school in?
- How would you describe the neighborhood?
- What do you wish people knew about this neighborhood?
- What do you wish people knew about this school?
- What's something that everyone at this school knows that people outside this school might not know?
- What are some of your favorite things to do in school?
- What is something special about your school?
- What do you find challenging about virtual learning?
- What has surprised you about virtual learning?

Once the class has been interviewed, pass out note cards and tell students to work individually to think about who THEY are as young people (or students). They are then to write their three 'I am...' statements on the note cards.





Post-Show Activity

# HOW DID THAT FEEL?



Reflect on the experience of seeing UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: GENERATION NYZ and begin to explore personal storytelling!

**Materials Needed:** chart paper, markers

1. To begin, bring students into focus with a collective inhale and exhale. Then, tell them you're going to have a guided reflection about the experience of watching the show and/or reading the script.
2. To prompt students, ask the series of questions below. If the answer is yes to any of these questions, have students find a new spot in the circle. **Note:** *If facilitating this activity in a virtual learning space, have students begin this part of the activity with their cameras off. Then, instead of finding a new spot in the circle, simply say, "Show yourself if..." before each prompt, cueing them to turn their cameras on in response. Repeat for each prompt.*

*Find a new spot in the circle if:*

  - Something surprised you about the show
  - You recognized something similar about yourself and one or more of the performers
  - You liked the show
  - You didn't like the show
  - You have questions about the show
  - You would do something different if you were directing the show
  - You think that what you saw is theater
  - You can name a performance tool or device utilized in the production\*
3. Ask volunteers to give a reason why they crossed after each question: *Would you like to share a "where," "when" or "why" to help us understand more about your decision to move to a different spot in the circle?*
4. You could choose to end here, or if time allows, you could foster an even deeper discussion by posing some of the following questions about the performance to the class:
  - What seemed familiar to you?
  - What seemed unfamiliar or new to you?
  - What was real for you?
  - What did you notice about the type of storytelling?
  - Why do you think they chose to tell it like this?
  - What did you notice about the structure of the show (chronology, transitions, etc)
  - What evidence did you see of any performing tools in use?
  - What do you think this ensemble was trying to say?
  - How did they work as an ensemble?
  - Was this a piece of theater?
  - Do you think they worked the way we have worked together so far?

*\*Try to get as many responses to this question as possible and scribe them on a piece of chart paper to be used later.*

## TEACHER TIP

You can lead the class through as many statements as time allows, but note that the starred question in step 2 sets up for the rest of the lesson.





# THE CRITICAL THINKER

Use the prompts below to reflect on the experience of viewing UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: GENERATION NYZ.

One thing I noticed while viewing the show that I've never seen or heard before was

---



Moments in the show that grabbed my attention the most were

---

---

The stories and experiences in the show made me think about

---

---



While viewing the show, I had the strongest emotional reaction to

---

---



A question I have about the show is

---

---

Before seeing this show, I didn't know that

---

---



After seeing the show, my classmates and I talked about

---

---



If I were the director, one thing I would change about the show is

---

---

Overall, the show made me feel

---

---

---



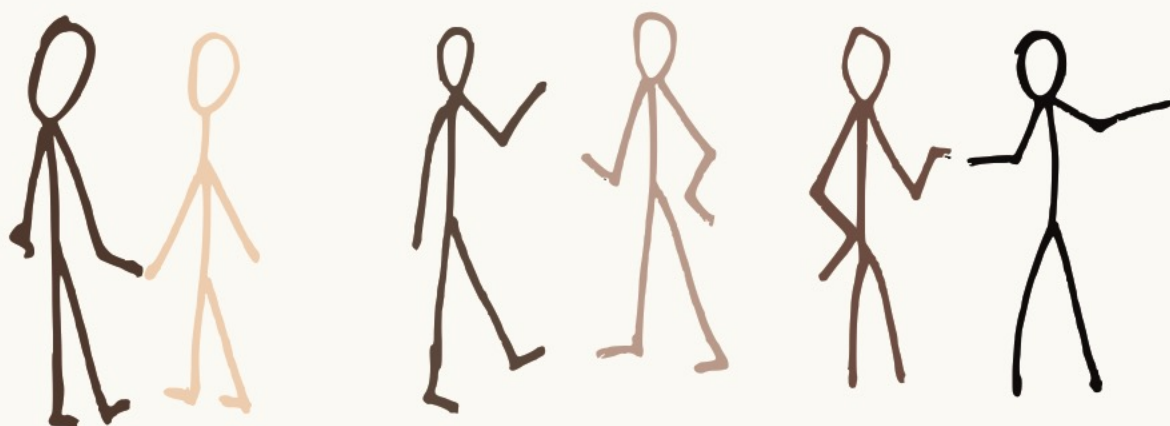
# BUILDING COMMUNITY & ENSEMBLE

– **Prepare:**  
Community Agreements

– **Activities:**

- Snaps
- Star Jump
- Rhythm Nation
- Four Corners
- Finding Common Ground

With a balance of playfulness, ensemble skills and scaffolded vulnerability, the activities in this section foster the development of trust between and among your students, an essential attribute of a successful ensemble. We recommend starting with the establishment of community agreements, in order to prepare as a group for the experience of engaging in a collaborative creative process. It can also be valuable to use one or more activities from this section at the beginning of every class as a ritual shift into the collaborative space, and to remind and reconnect students to the skills of a successful ensemble such as listening and focus.



# COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS



Establish a compilation of collective values to guide your student ensemble's process.

**Note:** For inspiration, use the sample list of Community Agreements on the following page!

**Materials Needed:** chart paper, markers, personal story from teacher

1. Start by telling students: "We're going to be telling personal stories. This exploration of personal narratives engages with issues of social justice, individual agency and identity. To that end, our group—our ensemble—should work together to establish some collaborative guidelines to make our process of working together feel successful and respectful for everyone!"
2. Then, as a model, begin the process of telling personal stories by telling one of your very own! For instance, you could say: "Let me tell you a story", followed by a personal story about a time you faced an ethical dilemma or felt like an outsider. **Note:** *Telling a story like this offers vulnerability, bringing a certain level of humanity to your role as an educator than students may be used to. Modeling that vulnerability shows a certain level of strength, which is a valuable thing for students to see!*
3. Once you've finished your story, ask questions like: *What do you think I learned from that experience? How did hearing my story make you feel? How could we make that lesson part of our agreements? What are some other important things we want to consider as we start to share more stories like this? What are ways in which we can work together, listen and share our stories?* **Note:** *If facilitating virtually, ask for a volunteer to scribe the agreements in the chat feature or in a shared Google document as the group develops them.*
4. Next, ask for volunteers to read the group-generated agreements aloud, then open the conversation for additions, revisions and any questions students may have.
5. Finally, ask students to give you two thumbs up to demonstrate their agreement to follow these guidelines throughout the project.

## TEACHER TIP



This is a good time to check in with students about mandatory reporting and (if facilitating virtually) internet safety. For instance, if you state: What we say here stays here, and then learn that a student (or someone else) is in danger, that's something you would need to share, in order to keep them safe. Full transparency with students here is key to establishing trust. It's also important that students understand privacy parameters online (no recording or sharing, etc.)





# SAMPLE AGREEMENTS

## **BRAVE SPACE: BRAVE SHARING, BRAVE LISTENING**

Volunteer, speak, create; and make space for others to do the same.

## **PRACTICE SELF-CARE** Ask for what you need.

## **PRACTICE CONSENT/ WHAT WE SAY HERE, STAYS HERE**

Actively ask for consent before physical contact, don't share others' stories without consent. If facilitating virtually, be sure to specify parameters for online privacy - like no recording or sharing of content or conversations held online.

## **TRUST THE PROCESS** But, it's okay to ask questions.

## **INTENT IS DIFFERENT THAN IMPACT**

Even if we didn't mean to cause hurt, hurt can still happen, so let's figure out how to repair it!

## **ONE VOICE, ONE MIC** Respect the speaker.

## **BE CURIOUS, BE OPEN, RESPECT DIFFERENCE**

New ideas and new perspectives are welcome. We can't argue with lived experience. Don't assume shared experience.

## **BE GENEROUS, BE TRANSPARENT**

Assume positive intent. Don't yuck my yum! Acknowledge and remember that we all come from our own unique and limited perspectives, with both valuable insights to contribute and biases to address through listening and learning.

## **DEBATE THE TOPIC, NOT THE PERSON**

Be conscious, aware and intentional about the power of language.

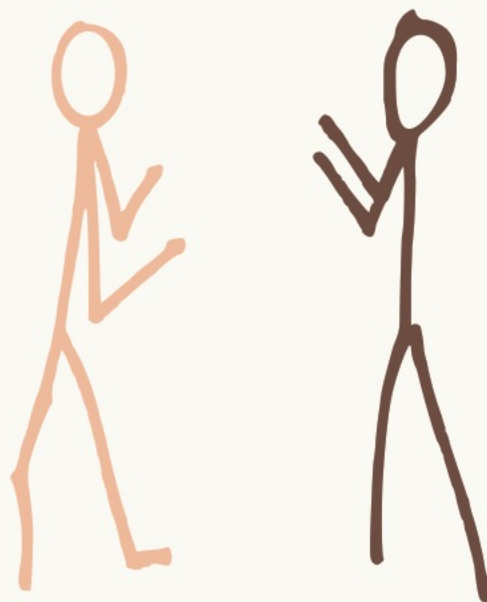


Help establish focus, listening and an ensemble ritual.

**Note:** If facilitating this activity in a virtual learning space, the “object” in step 3 is the camera lens, so snaps are thrown toward the camera, and caught away from the camera. In step 5, snaps should be accompanied by a name, so that students identify who they are throwing to, and the group knows who should catch, to continue the snap’s movement through the virtual group.

1. To start, bring all of your students into a standing circle.
2. Next, say: “Everyone snap your fingers with me!” and allow some time for everyone to join in. **Note:** For students who may struggle with snapping, have them clap or ask them to come up with another suggestion that works for them.
3. Next, place an object, such as a hat, book or pencil, in the middle of the circle and tell students to try throwing their snaps in the direction of the object in the middle of the circle.
4. Now ask students to imagine that the object is throwing a snap back at them. Guide them to incorporate movement by saying something like: “Really use your body. The snap is coming at you with a lot of force!” Take some time to practice throwing and catching the snaps.
5. Next, send one snap around the circle, telling the student to your left: “When I throw this snap to you, catch it, then send it to the next person. This means that each person has two separate moves—a catch and then a throw.” **Note:** Remind students to be very specific in their physicality when catching and throwing.
6. Then, repeat **Step 5**, this time throwing snaps across the circle.

**Bonus:** If you want to get really advanced, have everyone walk around the space, sending a snap around the room at random. The challenge is for students to always be at the ready for the snap to come to them! Keep the stakes high by shouting phrases like: “Keep track of it!”, “Where is it?” and “We have to work together as a team to keep it going!”







# STAR JUMP!



Build community through low-level risk-taking, and infuse your ensemble with silliness and joy.

1. Begin by having everyone gather in a standing circle.
2. Instruct one student to make eye contact with another student, run across the circle and stop in front of that student so that they are facing one another. Then, have them jump, making a star shape (arms out, legs out as if making an "X" with their body), while shouting, "Wheeee!" Repeat this a few times. **Note:** *If facilitating virtually, ask a volunteer to lead by making a star shape with their hands or their body, and ask the group to echo that gesture.*
3. Next, generate a list of emotions from the class, asking questions like the ones below to elicit nuanced emotions.
  - How did you feel on the last day of school?
  - How do you anticipate feeling on the first day of school?
  - How did you feel when you woke up this morning?
  - How do you feel at an amusement park?
  - How did you feel at your most recent friend's wedding?
4. Then, repeat **Step 2**, calling out different emotions for students to express when they jump in the air! **Note:** *If virtual, students can respond to your prompts by embodying the specified emotion onscreen.*
5. To raise the stakes (and energy) even higher, have multiple students cross the circle at once. Happy jumping!



# RHYTHM NATION



Explore your students' identities and introduce rhythm as a theatrical transition!

1. To begin, introduce a basic rhythm using your body, and ask students to echo it back to you. For example, tap your knees twice and then clap once, "We Will Rock You" style! Repeat this a few times with different rhythms and incorporating stomps and snaps. **Note:** *If facilitating in a virtual learning space, share your computer's sound and play rhythmic music. This way all students can be as in unison throughout the activity as possible.*
2. Next, have students suggest rhythms of their own, echoing them as a group. This is a "call and repeat" exercise in which the leader will say or sing or make a rhythm that is either repeated by the group and/or has a specific response in return. This is a form of interaction between a speaker and an audience, using voice, sound or music, in which the speaker's statements invite a repetition from an audience, creating a dialogue between the two.
3. From rhythms you've experimented with, select one that is easy for the group to execute and practice it until the whole group can "respond" to the "call" in unison.
4. Explain that we are now going to use that rhythm as a transition.
5. Have each student:
  - Say their name
  - Speak an identity they hold (sister, friend, skier, rapper, gamer, hard worker, joker, etc.)**Note:** *Encourage them to select an identity that is not the most obvious to the group, i.e. something others may not know. You can also have students offer a gesture for their "identity" word if you wish.*
6. Have the ensemble echo the identity.
7. The student then "calls" the transition rhythm, and the ensemble "responds."
8. Continue until each student has had a turn.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

*What was that like?*

*What did we learn?*

*What effect did our rhythmic transition have?*

*Was it easy or hard to remember to cue the ensemble? To stay in unison?*

*How might we use rhythm and/or choral call & response to structure a piece of performance?*







# FOUR CORNERS

Deepen common ground exploration and introduce gesture.



1. Tell students you are going to name each corner of the room, and ask them to situate themselves in the corner that best represents them. Be sure to make it clear that it's okay to feel pulled between multiple prompts, but that students must choose a corner for now. **Note:** *If facilitating virtually, you can use a poll feature for students to select their "corner."*

Round 1: Oldest Siblings, Youngest Siblings, Middle Siblings, Only Children

2. Once students have selected their respective corners, ask them to find three more things that the people in their corner share in common. The commonalities should be specific, like: "we all once had a pet cat," not general or obvious like "we are all in 10th grade" or "we all go to the same school." **Note:** *If virtual, you could assign each "corner" a breakout space for students to connect.*
3. Come back together as a full group, and ask each group to select a spokesperson to share their commonalities with the rest of the class and celebrate the discoveries they made. **Note:** *You could ask each group to select a gesture to represent the thing they have in common, and to share out the gestures, rather than the spoken phrases. Then, other groups can try to guess what the gesture is intended to represent.*
4. Alternate "corner" designations for additional rounds:

Round 2: Birthday Months: Jan-Mar, Apr-Jun, Jul-Sep, Oct-Dec

Round 3: Gamers, Sports Players/Athletes, Performing Artists (Musicians, Rappers, Dancers, Actors),  
Quiet Solo Workers (Visual Artists, Readers, Writers, Poets)

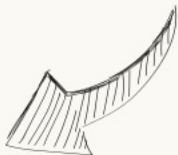
## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

*How easy or hard was it to find things you have in common?*

*How did you work together as a group/ensemble?*

*Did someone take the lead on decision-making or did the group come to collaborative consensus?*

*How might what we're learning have implications for our creative work together?*





# FINDING COMMON GROUND



Identify commonalities and celebrate differences.

1. Tell students that, as a class, you're going to get to know a little more about your learning community.
2. Ask students a series of questions (see list in **Step 3**). If the answer is 'yes' to any of the questions, students are invited to find a new place in the circle. It's ok if one's answer is complicated, or not a clear yes or no. Just have students make a choice in the moment, of whether it feels true for them. **Note:** *If facilitating virtually, instead of finding a new spot in the circle, students can cross the screen by walking or leaning or finger walking from one side of the screen to the other. Alternatively, you could ask students to do a specific gesture as affirmation.*
3. Ask if anyone would like to share more about why they crossed after each question. Be clear that no one is required to share and make sure not to call on students who do not enthusiastically volunteer.
  - If any of your parents or grandparents were born in another country (including Indigenous lands)
  - If you have a memory from your first day of school
  - If there's a time you've ever felt old
  - If there's a time you've ever felt young
  - If you have hugged someone in the past week
  - If you have cried in the past week
  - If there's a time you've ever felt like an outsider
  - If there's a time you've ever felt like you belonged
4. Lead the class through as many prompts as time permits, progressing to increasingly personal storytelling, depending upon the vibe of the class.

**LIST OF COMMON GROUND PROMPTS:** There is no need to state all of the listed prompts. However, be sure to sequence prompts in the same order as they appear below so that statements grow from impersonal to personal:

- Cross the space...
- If you had something awesome for breakfast
- If you've ever eaten something unusual for you
- If you did anything fun over holiday break
- If you were born in this city/town/borough
- If you were born somewhere besides this city/town/borough

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

*What did you notice during this activity?*

*What did you find most successful about this activity?*

*What did we discover about each other that we didn't know before?*

*What is the value of common experiences?*

*What is the value of different perspectives?*

*What was challenging about this activity?*





# ALPHABET RELAY



Generate student-led discussion points, energize the group and encourage laughter and joy!

**Note:** If facilitating this activity virtually, you could assign teams to separate breakout spaces, and have them complete Steps 3-7 in small collaborative groups, then return to the full group to share out. Although this effectively eliminates the "relay race" element, there is still a high-stakes sense of competition and teamwork!

**Materials Needed:** three pieces of chart paper, markers

1. To begin, choose a topic or unifying theme, such as "community" or "collaboration," that students wish to delve deeper into. **Note:** For the purposes of this activity, let's assume you've chosen "community."
2. Then, on two different sheets of chart paper, write the topic or theme at the top and the letters A through Z down the left side.
3. Next, have students form two relay teams/lines, each making a straight line facing their respective piece of chart paper.
4. Explain that teams are going to make a list of words that spring to mind on the topic of "community." Explain the rules of the relay race:
  - One by one, each group member writes a word beginning with the next letter of the alphabet. For example, the first person gets A, the second person gets B, etc.
  - As quickly as you can, move through the alphabet, adding words or phrases, such as: *Allies, Belonging, Calms me, Doesn't judge.***Note:** Teammates can help by shouting out words if someone gets stuck.
5. Have each team race through to "Z", side coaching as needed. When the first group (and each subsequent group) finishes, they should sit down quietly in their row/line, while the other team completes their list.
6. When all teams are finished, instruct the teams to pick five words from their list that together most fully define their idea of "community." Encourage them to pick positive and negative words. One easy way to determine five words is to have each student star two to three words of their choice with a marker, and then count stars, identifying the five words with the most stars.
7. Ask each relay team to share their five words with the whole group. **Note:** You could also choose to ask teams to create gestures or tableaux for their words and have the other team guess the words.
8. Use these words as a jumping off point for further discussion of your topic, and/or use the reflection questions below!

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

*How challenging was it to think of words that represent your sense of community?*

*How aligned were you with your team-mates when it came to selecting the top five descriptors? What does this tell us about what community means to us individually and collectively?*

*What strategies did your team find helpful to working together toward a common goal?*

*How can our successful strategies inform our continued work together as a creative ensemble?*

# GROWING YOUR THEATRICAL TOOLKIT



In this section, you'll find ready-to-implement activities which allow educators and students to explore performance skills like stage presence and the use of voice and body to express ideas!



## – Activities:

- Taking Stage (Exploring Stage Presence)
- I Have a Voice! (Exploring Voice)
- Frozen Moments (Exploring Movement)
- Flocking (Exploring Unison Movement)
- Building Scenes with Intention (Exploring Gesture & Movement Phrases)







# TAKING STAGE\*



Explore stage presence, owning space and the power of different spatial relationships onstage.

**Note:** If facilitating virtually, you can accomplish a “performer” group and an “audience” group by directing half the students to turn their cameras off. “Eye contact” in this context means looking directly at the camera lens. Entering/exiting the stage space can mean turning cameras on/off OR physically moving through the viewing window.

1. First, establish an audience area and a performance area within your room. Split your group in half, half audience and half performers.
2. Next, have the performers enter the playing space and do the following:
  - Stand and face the audience.
  - Choose eye contact or a horizon point of focus
  - Remain onstage for two to three breaths
  - Exit the stage (Optional: It helps to underscore this experience with music in order to set the tone.)
3. Next, guide students in the discussion by asking questions like:
  - *What was it like to be seen? What was it like to see?*
  - *What difference did focus/eye contact make?*
  - *What difference did posture/stance make?*
  - *What else did you notice?*
4. Next, switch groups and repeat **Step 2** and **Step 3**, repeating the experience for the other half of the class.
5. Finally, invite students to take the stage one at a time, keeping the playing space active. In this version of the exercise, a new person takes the stage as the previous person exits. Consider the ways their choices of where and how to stand impact the story told by their collaborative stage picture. **Note:** If facilitating virtually, help students think about the impact of proximity to the camera, location in the viewing window, etc.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

*What do we learn from just seeing others onstage?*

*Can we see any story in their eyes or their posture?*

*How about in the spatial relationships people choose?*

*What should we carry with us from this activity as we think about making our own theatrical piece?*





# I HAVE A VOICE\*



Introduce projection, articulation and inflection, and practice strong vocal expression.

**Note:** If facilitating virtually, you may encounter a sound delay with full group unison work. Ways to address this include mics off/video on, designating "audience" and "performer," groups using video off/on or asking for individual volunteers with mics on. As for the prompts in **Step 1**, simply drop them in the chat!

**Materials Needed:** chart paper, markers

1. First, write the following text on the board, on a poster, or in chat:  
*I have a voice!*  
*My voice is powerful!*  
*My voice can change the world!\**
2. Next, introduce the concept of **projection** by asking students to speak the alphabet at progressively different volume levels. Build up from "A" (quietest whisper) to "Z" (loudest yell), and find the optimum volume for a public presentation (usually somewhere around "M").
3. Once you have found the optimum projection level, ask students to read the text above at that level.
4. Following that, have a brief reflection on the value of projection by asking: *Why is it important to be heard? What does it feel like when someone is too quiet? Too loud? As an audience, how do we interpret different volumes?*
5. Next, introduce the concept of **articulation** by asking students to speak a tongue twister of your choice such as: "She sells seashells by the seashore." First, try having them say it in a mumble, then strongly enunciated, encouraging exaggerated use of the mouth and tongue.
6. When students have demonstrated an understanding of articulation, ask them to read the scribed text using both **projection** and **articulation**.
7. Then, briefly reflect on the value of articulation by asking: *Why is it important to be understood? If you are heard but not understood, what does the audience take away?*
8. Finally, introduce the concept of **inflection** by asking students to make a siren sound as a group, from very low in their vocal range to very high.
9. Then, have students speak the question, "Is that your phone?" placing emphasis on different words and varying the melodic range in their voice. **Note:** *Emphasizing one word over another completely changes the meaning of the question. Challenge students to find even more meanings in the question by varying their inflection further.*
10. Next, ask students to read the scribed text with inflection that supports its meaning.
11. Briefly reflect on the value of inflection by asking questions like: *If we are heard and understood but our meaning is not clear, have we truly communicated?*
12. You could end here, or if time allows, wrap up this activity with a final "performance" of the original text, being mindful of all three vocal performance skills: **projection**, **articulation** and **inflection**. You could choose to call upon volunteers to perform the text solo, have the class perform in small groups or as a full ensemble.

## TEACHER TIP

While three different elements of voice production have been bundled into this one activity, each of these concepts could be taught and explored in their own separate sessions.





# FROZEN MOMENTS: POSES & TABLEAUX



Explore the translation of an idea into physical performance and practice strong vocal expression.

**Note:** If facilitating virtually, designating “performer” (camera ON) and “audience” (camera OFF) groups will help students observe and reflect upon the concepts of pose and tableau.

**Materials Needed:** students’ River Stories, chart paper, markers, paper, pens or pencils

1. First, ask students to define the word **pose**. (Hint: A pose is a still image made with your body, unlike a gesture, which moves.) Help students connect with the effectiveness of poses by showing, for example, some photographs taken from magazines, or images found online. Ask:

- What emotion do we think is being expressed in this picture?
- What can we infer about story from a still physical body?

2. Write the following phrases on slips of paper or in the chat box, and ask for a volunteer to take a pose that expresses one of the phrases. Ask the other students (audience) to share what they can see or infer from the performer’s pose. You can repeat this with as many willing volunteers as you have!

*I wonder...*  
*Can I help you?*  
*I need that.*  
*Oh no!*  
*I love you.*

3. Now, ask students to define the word **TABLEAU**. (Hint: A tableau is a still image made by more than one person in collaboration. It is like a snapshot of a group scene - a frozen picture.)

4. Divide the class into groups of four. Ask one group to enter the playing space, and the other groups to become the audience. Using some evocative words or phrases that connect with themes your class wishes to explore in their creative work, ask the first group of performers to create a tableau illustrating the word of their choice. Some ideas might include:

- Belonging
- Outsider
- Community
- Individuality
- Injustice
- Equity

5. Have groups take turns creating tableaux, inviting the audience to share what they see in the frozen picture being presented to them. **Note:** If virtual, with student consent, the teacher could take screenshots of the literal frozen moments students devise, so that performing groups can also reflect upon tableaux they’ve created.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

*What is it like to physically express a moment in a story?*

*What does visual representation like poses or tableaux add to our audience experience of understanding text?*

*Does an audience’s interpretation always align with the performers’ intentions? What can we learn from any differences in interpretation about clarity and specificity of physical choices?*

*What can we take with us from this activity to help us in our future theater-making?*



# FLOCKING

Explore the potential of unison movement.



1. To begin, split students into groups of four. If facilitating in person, all groups can work simultaneously. If facilitating virtually, ask one group to stay on camera, and the others to turn their cameras off to act as the audience.
2. If in person, have each group situate themselves in a diamond shape with one student at the top point, like a flock of skybirds.
3. Next, identify a flock leader or point person. **Note:** *In person, this would be the point of the diamond. If virtual, it could be anyone!* Have the point person create a series of slow movements with everyone in their flock following those movements.
4. When they're ready, each point person passes on leadership to someone else in the flock. **Note:** *If virtual, they can simply name the next point person. If facilitating in person, students should turn to the right.* When this happens, the person on the right naturally becomes the point person and leads the flock's movement.
5. Continue this pattern, round after round, with one person leading and the others following until each member of the flock has had an opportunity to lead and the group establishes a natural rhythm.
6. If facilitating in person, offer students the opportunity to become the audience, watching another group (or groups) to witness the movement they've created.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What was it like to lead?

What was it like to follow?

What was it like to witness other groups' movement as an audience member?

What did you find successful or challenging about this activity?

What can we take with us from flocking, as we look toward creating our own piece of theater?





## BUILDING SCENES WITH INTENTION\*

Deepen understanding of building character(s) through physical theater, improvisation and non-verbal scenes.



**Materials Needed:** chart paper, markers, chairs, music (various tempos, lyrics, instrumental, etc.)

On chart paper or in the chat box, write the header "TEENS" and ask the group: *What words would you use to describe teenagers? What do they think? How do they behave? What do they want? What do they need?* (You can scribe responses or have students type directly into chat.) Explain to students that as an ensemble they are going to work together to create nonverbal scenes.

**Note:** This activity should build on itself, step-by-step through questioning, that leads to developing a Performing Toolbox. For each round, ask for a new set of volunteers until everyone has had a chance to explore. The first round is set up as a launching pad for establishing how performers can work. As new performing skills are illuminated along the way through the scene reflection protocol after each round, highlight specific performing strategies/skills/tools for the students to pull from as the rounds continue.

### ROUND 1

4-6 participants

**Focus:** To get the improvising ball rolling, exploring neutral position and gesture.

**Physical Vocabulary:** The four gestures are look right, look left, raise hand and cross leg. Teach this physical vocabulary before you begin by modeling each movement.

1. To begin, invite the first set of volunteers to sit in the chairs lined up in a row facing the audience. The performers should begin in a neutral body position: feet flat on the floor, limbs uncrossed, etc.

**Note:** If facilitating virtually, have all students except the first 4 turn their cameras off, so that the 4 volunteers are visible as a group on screen.

2. Invite the performers to improvise the four gestures you've learned in any sequence they feel an impulse to explore. Direct the audience to watch and see what happens.
3. Have the audience count the performers in with a "3, 2, 1 ACTION!" and let the scene play for at least one to two minutes.

**Scene Reflection:** Ask these questions after each improv round and scribe them on chart paper or in the chat box:

- What did you notice? ("I noticed...")
- What did you like? ("I liked...")
- What do you wonder? ("I wonder...")
- What new performing tools can we add to the performing toolbox?
- What suggestions from the "I Wonder" statements should we incorporate for the next round?

**Note:** Add 1-2 new performance tools from the list to each subsequent round of scenes

### ROUND 2

4-6 new participants

**Focus:** To respond to scene partners nonverbally, applying intention and emotion to movement and character-building choices. Additionally, use this round to deepen the exploration of "characteristics" or "traits."

1. Invite the performers to select a word secretly from the "Teen" list. Ask performers to take a moment to really think about how that word will inform their "character." *How does this word inform the quality of movement in how you use the gestures?*
2. They will start the scene in neutral and then after "3, 2, 1 ACTION!" is called; the scene should begin with performers clearly defining their movement based on their selected word.
3. Let the scene play for at least 1-2 minutes, and direct the audience to watch for what stories are emerging.

4. Use **Scene Reflection** from Round 1 and ask questions like:

- What changed when these traits were added?
- What characters emerged?
- What changed from the previous round?
- What characters or characteristics did you observe?
- What story did you see as you watched?
- How did the music impact the scene?

# BUILDING SCENES WITH INTENTION (CONT'D)

## ROUND 3

4-6 new participants

**Focus:** To explore relationships and storytelling

**Performance Tools:** Setting, Repetition, Rhythm, Connection, Standing, music, 1 or 2 elements from the "I Wonder"/Suggestions

1. Performers privately and individually select a word from the "Teen" list to guide their intention.
2. As a group, performers decide on a setting, but do not share with the audience. They should convey the setting through the nonverbal scene only.
3. Invite the performers to incorporate any performing tools they have seen in the previous rounds, and to really listen to their scene partners.
4. Encourage the audience to watch if relationships form as the scene unfolds.
5. Start the scene with "3, 2, 1, ACTION!" and let the scene run for at least one to two minutes.
6. Option: Take it to the next level by playing music during the scene.
7. Use **Scene Reflection** and ask questions like:
  - What are the performers doing to communicate the word?
  - What relationships did you see? Were there any stories developing? What were they?
  - What surprised you? happened?
  - How did music change the dialogue/conversation?
  - Is there a story emerging?
  - What happy accidents occurred?
  - How were the performers listening?

## ROUND 4

4-6 participants  
This can be anyone in the group

**Focus:** To explore ways to set a scene

**Performing Tools:** Let the group decide, two different music pieces

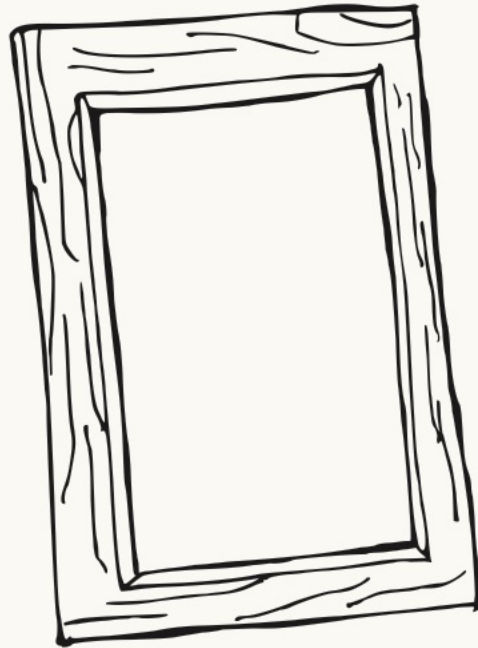
1. Explain that the scene will have two sections, each with different musical scores. The action will begin to establish setting, characters, etc. One or two minutes into the exploration, change the music.
2. Ask students to let the music inform their dramatic choices, such as movement and intention.
3. Audience will watch to see if there is any change between the first part of the scenes and the second part.
4. Use **Scene Reflection** and ask questions like:
  - How does different music affect performer choices and/or the audience experience?
  - What performing tools would you like to explore that we haven't?
  - What happens when there is no text or dialogue in a scene?
  - What stories can we tell without verbal language?

### EXTENSIONS:

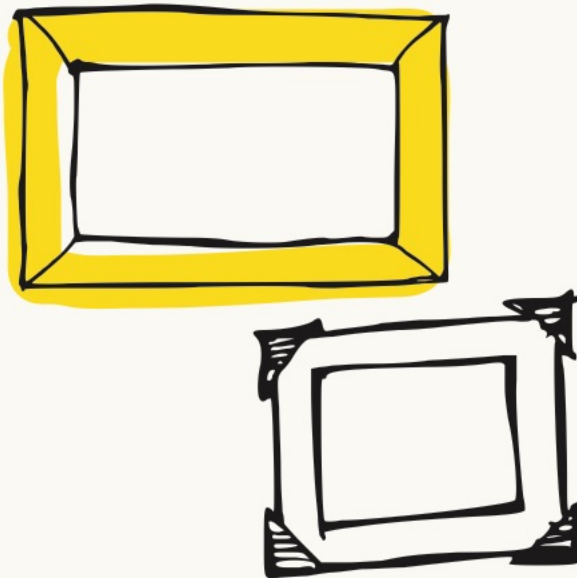
- Continue to improvise different scenes while adding more and more theatrical elements
- Have students choose a character they improvised and write journal entries with different prompts
- Use this improv work to develop performance techniques for personal storytelling
- Build new scenes using physical vocabulary, with different themes/words and add to the performing toolbox



# EXPLORING PERSONAL STORIES



In this section, you'll find prompts and structures which allow educators to engage students in guided exploration of their own memories, perceptions and experiences. Students will also learn how to engage in respectful and validating peer interviews. Use the **Teacher Tool Peer Interviewing Protocol** on the next page to guide your students toward brave sharing and active listening. Content generated from the activities in this section can act as potential source material for interview-based theater development.



## – Peer Interview Protocol

### – Activities:

- What Do You Think Of...?
- You See / I Am
- River Stories Part One: From Memory to Script
- Storyboarding

# TEACHER TOOL

## Peer Interviewing Protocol

Sharing one's true stories with someone else takes bravery and respectful listening. Here are some tips to help students share and listen well!



### ALWAYS EMBED CHOICE WHEN SHARING:

For example, if individual students have responded to three of the writing prompts, let them choose which one to share. Forcing personal sharing on a specific prompt can make a student feel emotionally unsafe. Choice gives them agency to decide what they feel comfortable sharing.



### ENCOURAGE ACTIVE LISTENING:

Explain the difference between a conversation (two speakers sharing airtime) and an interview (one speaker, one listener). Model for students how to demonstrate that they are listening deeply by offering suggestions like: nodding, asking follow-up questions; or using statements like: "hmm," "yes," "tell me more."



### DEFINE TIME FRAME FOR SHARING:

This way, both partners have opportunities to share and listen/interview.



### REVISIT THE COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS AND MANDATORY REPORTING:

Students should enter into these conversations prepared to respect privacy and consent around sharing stories. Make sure to remind students of the importance of respecting and honoring each other's lived experiences, even if it may be different from their own experience. If virtual, remind students that online privacy includes agreeing not to capture or share any private moments via screenshots or video.

**If you are following the peer interviews with a full-group share out, here are some more tips!**

Students can share their own responses with the whole group.

Students can share their partners' responses with the whole group. **Note:** *This gives you the opportunity to introduce the concept of consent by making sure students ask each other whether they may share what they've heard with the larger group, or whether there are parameters on what may be shared. (i.e. "You can say anything except that part about my grandma's illness.")*

Students can create statues, gestures and/or tableaux to represent their responses.

Students can teach their statues/gestures to each other, and make a collective movement phrase to represent their experiences.

**Note:** *It's important that students know they can always opt out from sharing their personal stories.*

#### TEACHER TIP



Students may also enjoy interviewing each other as if they were a guest on a radio/tv show. **Note:** *Peer Interviewing may not be appropriate for every learning space. An alternative would be to allow students to journal or draw their memories to expand and add detail before moving on to Developing Writing.*





# WHAT DO YOU THINK OF...?



Encourage student exploration of their personal stories and lived experiences, and introduce peer interviewing!

**Note:** If facilitating virtually, place prompts one at a time in the chat box, providing opportunities for students to respond to each prompt individually.



**Materials Needed:** chart paper (three to five sheets) posted around the room, markers and small post-it pads

1. Before you start, tell students they will be creating individual written responses to prompts you'll be providing. Let them know that they will be sharing their written work with others in the class.
2. To begin, come up with three to five prompts for inviting students to explore and share their experiences, such as: *home, community, culture, belonging* or *[the city in which you live]*. Post these words around the space on large chart paper, and set out markers near each poster.
3. Next, ask students: *What do you think of when you read or hear the words on these posters?* Then, invite students to reflect on their experiences and engage with the prompts by:
  - Moving around the space to write answers on the large posters
  - Writing answers on sheets at their desks/tables
  - Drawing responses **Note:** *This is particularly effective in virtual classes, as drawings can be held up to the camera for a virtual "gallery walk."*
4. Next, divide the group into pairs or small groups to share their responses with one another as a scaffolded low-risk entry point into peer interviewing. **Note:** *Prompt students to consider the concept of consent as they discuss the privacy of their conversation and determine what feels acceptable to share out with the full group.*
5. Have students deepen their exploration of these experiences through longer peer interviews. In pairs, guide them to follow the provided peer interviewing protocol on page 30.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

*How do our ideas of home/community/culture (or other thematic words you chose for your class) overlap? How are they distinct?*

*What arose in your conversations that we might like to pursue further as a group, as a potential theme or frame for our creative work?*

*What can we take from this activity about how to welcome the voices of all of our ensemble members, as we begin to shape a collaborative focus?*



## NAME STORIES



Introduce personal storytelling from a low-risk rung on the scaffold.  
Everyone has a name, thus everyone has a story to tell!

**Note:** If facilitating virtually, you may wish to replace the rhythmic transition with a gestural transition to adjust for sound delays, and suggest that each speaker identifies the next speaker by name.  
You could also pre-select a speaker order in the chat box.

1. To begin, gather together. In person name stories can be successfully accomplished in a standing or seated circle.
2. Choose one of the rhythms your group created in Rhythm Nation in the **Building Community and Ensemble section**, or invite ideas for a simple rhythm the group can easily repeat (e.g., clapping hands or tapping knees twice). This will be your *transition rhythm*.
3. Practice the transition rhythm as a call and response. (One person makes the rhythm, and the rest of the group echoes it back.)
4. Invite students to share their full names one at a time. After each student speaks their name, they lead the transition rhythm (call) as a *cue* for the group to echo the rhythm back (response) if in-person, the next student in the circle speaks their full name, and so on. If virtual, the speaker identifies someone to go next.
5. Explain to students that now everyone will have another turn to speak names, but this time after a student speaks their full name, they are invited to tell a story about one part of their name. Explain that students can choose which part of their name to talk about:
  - First name
  - Middle name
  - Last name
  - Cultural or religious name
  - Nickname, etc.

Further explain that stories should be two to three sentences long, and students can choose what kind of story to tell. (These choices are important, as not everyone knows or has access to a birth parent who knows the origin story of their name).

Some options include:

- How they got this part of their name (Who named them that, and why? "My mother named me for her brother who died before I was born.")
- The meaning of the name ("My first name, Farrah, means happiness in Arabic.")
- Their feelings about or relationship to this part of their name ("I've always hated my last name because kids make fun of it," or "My middle name makes me feel really connected to my grandmother, like she is always with me," or "I like the way my initials spell out "J.O.Y."")

Last, remind speakers to "call" the rhythmic transition when their story is complete, and remind the group as a whole to echo the rhythmic response. **Note:** If virtual, remind students to identify the next speaker by name.

6. Repeat the process until all students have had the opportunity to share a name story.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

*What was it like to share stories of your name with others?*

*What was it like to witness and hear others' name stories?*

*What can we take from this activity about the power of storytelling connected to personal experience?*

*What theatrical concepts were we applying in this activity? (Cues, transitions, vocal projection, etc.)*



# YOU SEE, I AM



Explore the relationship between intentions and perceptions, and begin theatricalizing text.

**Note:** If facilitating virtually, have students complete **Steps 2 and 3** with a partner in a virtual breakout space, or have students type their responses in chat. Because chat streams continue moving up the screen until everyone stops typing, designate a time to stop typing and begin viewing responses, so that everyone's responses are seen and honored.

1. Gather the group and tell students, "It's time to get to know more about you! Without answering out loud, think about ways you, as an individual, perceive that you are seen by others. And think about how those views are similar or different from who you feel you actually are." **Note:** These two answers might not align because sometimes we are viewed differently than how we actually intend to be viewed.
2. Now, have students share with a partner one way that they are often seen or viewed. For example, a student might say, "I'm seen as someone who is a good friend," or, "I'm seen as flaky."
3. Next, have students turn to a new neighbor and share one attribute about themselves they know to be true. For example, students might say, "I care more than I let on," or, "I'm brave."
4. Invite students to share out their responses and, using a marker and chart paper, act as scribe to help generate a two-column group list based on the previous share-outs. **Note:** If virtual, these lists could be created in a shared Google doc.
5. Next, encourage students in their own spaces, standing or seated, to create two separate gestures representing who they are ("I AM") and how they are perceived ("YOU SEE"). Students are free to choose words or phrases from the list to illustrate through gestures if they'd like. As they are creating, encourage students to simplify and refine their two gestures.
6. Once they have created two gestures, direct students to turn those gestures into a movement phrase by rehearsing the gestures in a sequence that they can remember easily and repeat.
7. Invite volunteers to share their gestures with the larger group. **Bonus:** Call on a few volunteers! Have the group learn each volunteer's gestures in a physical game of call and repeat.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What was fun or interesting about this activity?

When sharing, what if anything felt scary?

What did you discover about yourself?

What did you discover about your peers that you didn't know before?

What was challenging about this activity?

# River Stories\*



## PART ONE: FROM MEMORY TO SCRIPT

Identify key memories and lived experiences that helped shape your students.

**Note:** If facilitating virtually, the partner sharing in **Step 2** could be done in paired or small group breakout rooms, or students could type out one sentence about their chosen memory in the chat box. You could also choose to forgo partner sharing and move directly to full-group sharing.

**Materials Needed:** chart paper (three to five pieces) around the room, markers, paper, pens/pencils

### STEP ONE:

#### GATHERING MEMORIES TO MAP YOUR RIVER

1. To begin, make sure students have a piece of paper and a pen or pencil and tell them they're going to be creating a visual representation of their life, thus far, in the form of a River Story.
2. Next, using chart paper and a marker, draw two wavy lines diagonally across the page to create a "river."
3. In the top left corner, draw a "stone" in the river, and write the date you were born. In the lower right corner, draw another stone and write today's date.
4. Ask students to consider a memory using one of these prompts: *I remember the first day of school; I remember feeling love; I remember feeling loss; I remember feeling that I belonged.*
5. Then, have students draw a "stone" in the river at the approximate time in their life during which that memory took place. For example, a kindergarten memory would land close to the upper left of the river. A memory from last week would land in the lower right of the river.
6. Next to each prompt's stone, students should write the following:
  - The day, month and year of that memory
  - The subject of the memory
  - A brief summary of the memory (two or three sentences)
7. Once students have finished one memory "stone," they can begin working on another. Each student should write responses to three or four prompts so that they have some options to choose from when sharing.

### STEP TWO:

#### PARTNER SHARING

8. Ask students to choose one memory they feel comfortable sharing with a partner (and, later, with the larger group). Circle the memory on the paper.
9. Pair students up, and begin partner sharing. Remind them of all the key points in our peer interviewing protocol!

CONT'D ON THE NEXT PAGE





# River Stories\*

## PART ONE: FROM MEMORY TO SCRIPT

CONT'D

### STEP THREE:

#### DEVELOPING WRITING

10. Now that students have shared a small nugget of their memories, invite them to flesh out the memory in writing. **Note:** *Suggest that students think about the five senses. When they think about this memory, what do they remember seeing? Hearing? Smelling? Feeling? How can they add those details into their story? What impact do those details have?*

### STEP FOUR:

#### SCRIPTING

11. When students have really captured the memory, they are ready to transform their memory into a structured script. Suggest the following structure:

- The year of the event
- My name is \_\_\_\_\_.
- "I remember... [The subject of the memory]"
- A one-sentence summary of the memory. (Distill down to the essence of the story.)
- An impact statement: "Because of this, I am now [how this memory changed or influenced me]"

#### Script Example:

- September, 2008.
- My name is Jane.
- I remember the first day of school.
- Laura saved me from embarrassment by whispering how to correctly pronounce the teacher's name.
- Because of this, I made a friend for life.

#### TEACHER TIP

You can jump directly from this activity to staging the text students have written with follow-up activity River Story Part Two in the **Staging Stories** section of this guide.



# STORYBOARDING

Explore dramatic structure and visualize the translation of writing to theater.



**Note:** If facilitating virtually, designating “performer” (camera ON) and “audience” (camera OFF) groups in **Steps 4 and 5** will help students more easily observe each others’ tableaux to forgo partner sharing and move directly to full-group sharing.

**Materials Needed:** students’ River Stories, chart paper, markers, paper, pens or pencils

1. First, ask for a volunteer who is willing to share their story as a storyboarding model. Ask that student to read their story aloud. Then, say something like: “Let’s focus on and explore one story together. The individual events of a story are called the plot. What are the plot points of the story we’ve just heard?”

**Beginning:**  
Inciting Event  
(What started it all?)

**Middle:**  
Rising Action  
(What happened next?)  
Conflict or Climax  
(What was the turning point?)

**End:**  
Resolution  
(Where did you see transformation?)

2. On a large piece of chart paper, or in a shared google doc, work with your students to create a three-panel storyboard—a visual representation of the important elements of the story—illustrating three key plot points from your read-aloud. The first box will be a picture of the story’s beginning, the second box illustrates the middle of the story and the third box shows the story’s end.
3. Next, have students work individually to draw three-panel storyboards for their own stories, using their River Stories as source material. Alternatively, students could collaborate in small groups to create storyboards for one selected story per group. **Note:** Part of this step might include realizing that a story as written doesn’t have enough plot points fleshed out, so you may wish to add a step to have students revise their stories for clarity of beginning, middle, and end.
4. Remind students of the “Frozen Moments” activity on p. 31. Using one of the completed storyboards, ask a small group of students to create a tableau (a frozen picture) of what’s happening at that moment in the story. **Note:** Students can choose one of their three storyboard images or they can create three consecutive tableaux—one for each of the three plot points in their storyboard.
5. To bring tableaux to life, have one student volunteer narrate the tableaux by telling the story aloud, while a group of students enacts the tableaux physically. Have students take turns creating tableaux for each others’ stories within their own groups.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What is the value of identifying the key plot points in a story?

How does storyboarding help us “see” our stories figuratively and literally?

What does physicalizing a storyboard through tableaux offer us, as a tool for our theater-making?





# STAGING STORIES WITH DEVISED THEATER TECHNIQUES

Your ensemble has shared quite a few stories with each other by now! This section offers devised theater techniques and tips for transforming students' work into a scripted performance. A formal culminating event is not essential, but if your group would like to share their work with a larger audience of peers or family, this section will guide you through the process!



- **River Stories Part Two: Crafting Performance from Personal Stories**
- **Production Elements**
- **Crafting a Script**

# River Stories



## PART TWO: CRAFTING PERFORMANCE FROM PERSONAL STORIES

Generate devised performance from scripts created in River Story Part One, using theatrical techniques like unison, transition and gesture.

**Materials Needed:** students' scripts from River Story Part One, including the month and year of their memories

1. To begin, ask students to arrange themselves in a line chronologically based on the memory they intend to share. The student whose memory happened earliest is first in line, left to right, and the student with the most recent memory is last. **Note:** *If facilitating virtually, students could hold up a piece of paper with the month and year of their memory, and a designated scribe could make a list of students' names and memories in chronological order in chat or a shared document.*
2. Next, split students into groups by asking them to number themselves (1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3 and so on) so that the chronology of memories is preserved. These groups are smaller ensembles who will take turns devising performance and observing as audience members. **Note:** *If virtual, teacher can designate groups, preserving chronological order.*
3. Ask the group of 1s to take the "stage," and the other group(s) to sit in the audience area or turn their cameras off.

### FIRST STAGING (Group 1):

4. First, have students stand onstage in chronological order. **Note:** *If virtual, arrange speaker order by date of memory.*
5. Then, have the person with the earliest memory step forward and speak their written text, including the year, their name, the memory's subject, the one-sentence story and the statement of transformation, then step back into the line. **Note:** *If virtual, substitute turning cameras on for stepping forward, such that each performer is off camera until it is their turn to speak. Leave cameras on when finished, until all group members have shared. In this way there is an additive experience of performers coming into focus when it is their turn, and then staying "present" to witness and support the members of their small ensemble.*
6. Repeat this sequence to the end of the line until all students in the group have shared.
7. Take a moment to reflect on what it was like to share these stories by asking:
  - Group 1: What was it like to share your story in this structured format?
  - Audience: What was it like to witness their stories in this way?
  - Audience: What struck you in what you saw/heard?
  - All: What questions do you have?

CONT'D ON THE NEXT PAGE





# River Stories

## PART TWO: CRAFTING PERFORMANCE FROM PERSONAL STORIES

CONT'D

### SECOND STAGING (Group 2):

8. Next, the 2s repeat the same exercise as the 1s adding the following variations:
- After each speaker states the year of their memory, the group repeats the year in unison.
  - When each speaker finishes their change statement, they restate the year, and again, the group repeats the year in unison.
  - As the speaker steps back upstage, the group claps in unison two times, to transition to the next person. **Note:** *If virtual, you may wish to substitute gestural repetition vs unison spoken repetition/ rhythms, should you encounter any sound delays.*
  - Repeat this sequence down the line until the end.
9. Reflect on the differences in this second staging by asking:
- *Group 2: What was your experience like, sharing with these additional theatrical elements?*
  - *Audience: What did the repetition/unison echo do for your experience of witnessing these stories?*
  - *All: What effect does the rhythmic transition have on the performance?*
  - *All: What questions do you have?*

### THIRD STAGING (Group 3):

10. Then, the 3s repeat the exercise with some additional theatrical elements:
- Have students choose one word in their change statement to punctuate with a gesture.
  - Their ensemble could mirror the speaker's gesture (a la the flocking exercise.)
  - Add more elaborate rhythmic transitions
  - Incorporate the use of unison recitation or movement
11. Finally, reflect with students by posing some of the following questions for discussion:
- *Group 3: What was your experience like, sharing with these additional theatrical elements?*
  - *All: What was the effect of adding gesture or flocking to the performance for the audience? How about for the performers?*
  - *All: What can we take from this activity, as tools for staging our stories?*

# PRODUCTION ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER

If your ensemble would like to share their devised work with a larger audience, below are some factors to consider with the group as you prepare.

## AUDIENCE

Talk with students about who they would like to share their work with. A performance could be held for an audience of invited peers, for an entire grade, an entire school population, for an audience of family and friends, or any combination of the above. If performing in person, be mindful that the amount of seating and the size of your intended audience align. **Note:** *If virtual, be mindful of the accessibility of the broadcast to audience. If for invited guests only, make sure links are shared privately, and with password protection.*

## SCRIPTS

For student comfort in sharing personal stories in performance, it's often better to allow scripts onstage, rather than expecting memorization. Consider whether each student will have their own script in a binder, or if you want to use master scripts in a binder on music stands in order to free students to use their hands and bodies more expressively. **Note:** *If virtual, have students experiment with the optimal placement for scripts and eye contact (On screen? Above or beside the screen? What looks the most natural?)*

## MICROPHONES

While you have more freedom for physical staging without mics, you would have to feel ultra-confident that your students will both master and embrace vocal projection. In our experience, unless you are performing virtually or in a small classroom, you can never ensure that 100% of the students will be heard without microphones.

## SPACE

Consider the optimum formality/informality of a performance space for your students. Student groups have successfully held culminating performances in the classroom, in the school auditorium or on the stage of a nearby professional theater. In recent months, groups have arranged virtual and socially distant in-person performances. Consider what feels right for your community and your students.

## MUSIC

Using entrance and exit music can give your piece a polished start and finish, and music can help with section transitions too. You can invite students to brainstorm musical options that fit the themes explored in their piece. **Note:** *If virtual, it can be more successful to play music directly off your computer (YouTube, Spotify, etc.) than to ask your computer's microphone to pick up music played on a separate device.*



# SAMPLE SCRIPT

Your ensemble has generated a lot of material based on personal stories. Here is one example of how to weave that material together into a collective script, but feel free to expand or explode this template in any way you or your students can imagine!

**Entrance Sequence:** Group arrives onstage or onscreen. Consider use of music, clapping, and a still moment such as in the **Activity Taking Stage** in the **Grow Your Theatrical Toolkit** section to establish connection between performers and audience, etc.

**Introduction Sequence (My Name Is):** Begin with naming, to give every student a moment and to ground the piece in students' truth. Consider including the stories students shared in the **Activity Name Stories** in the **Exploring Personal Stories** section. Names can also be followed by an identity, or a descriptor. (e.g., "My name is Jacob and I am brave," or "My name is Dana and I am Caribbean-American.") Consider how students can cue the next speaker. For instance, they could clap, pass a snap as in the **Activity Snaps** in the **Building Community and Ensemble** section or invite the next speaker by name.

**Theme Sequence (Making Meaning):** Students can speak the themes of their piece aloud as a rhythmic choir or a chant. Examples are below.

**Example Theme: IDENTITY**

ALL: Identity!  
A: Race  
B: Nationality  
C: Gender  
D: Culture  
E: Family  
F: Relationships  
G: Passions  
I: Experiences  
J: Identity  
ALL: Identity! Identity is  
WHO WE ARE.

**Example Theme: COMMUNITY**

A: Queens is...  
ALL: Queens is...  
B: Buses and traffic!  
C: The world's borough  
D: 800 languages  
A: Queens is...  
ALL: Queens is...  
E: Amazing music  
F: Delicious food  
G: Huge!  
ALL: Queens is our community!

**Example Theme: HOME**

A: Home is...  
ALL: Home is...  
B: Arroz con frijoles  
C: Sweet and salty  
D: My sister being noisy!  
A: Home is...  
ALL: Home is...  
E: Footsteps in the hall  
F: Bittersweet  
G: Complicated  
ALL: Home is where we're from.

**Digging into Themes: Specific Identity Sequence - Who Are You? Who Am I?...** (Consider sharing identity work from **Activity Who Are You**, with the possible inclusion of gesture, or with speaker leading flocking movement. Example below.

- Who are you?
- Who am I? I am a caring friend (with gesture). Who are you?
- Who am I? I am a hard worker (with gesture). Who are you? (and so on...)

**Personal Story Sequence** (Consider a series of in-depth personal stories by students, generated from the River Story activity, or other activities and writing. Look for themes and connections among student writings. River stories can be shared in random order, but it's interesting (and aligns with *Undesirable Elements: Generation NYZ*) to share them in chronological order, or you can cluster thematic stories together in sections (loss section, outsider section, etc.) Consider tableaux, call and response text, and/or simple gestures and movement to activate the storytelling and engage peers in the stories.

**Conclusion Sequence** Consider revisiting introductions, with a callback to the **Activity Taking Stage** in the **Grow Your Theatrical Toolkit** section, creating a final group message or tableau and/or reversing your entrance. For instance, students arrived on stage/screen one at a time, they could exit in reverse order, or turn off their video one by one to signify their exit.

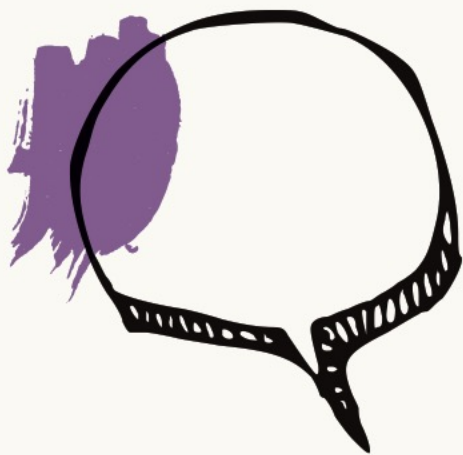
**NOTE:** *Ping Chong + Company* uses **TRANSITIONS** between each sequence in *Undesirable Elements: Generation NYZ*. Sometimes transitions happen with music and movement, or sometimes with performers clapping a rhythm in unison. Consider adding your own transitions between each sequence in your script.

# REFLECTING

Congratulations! You've made it through an entire collaborative creative process! You and your students have encountered a work of art, established an ensemble, built theatrical performance skills, explored personal stories and transformed those stories into a theater piece. Guiding students through the opportunity to reflect on all that they've accomplished helps to further extend their new skills and understanding of the concepts they've learned, builds personal resonance and fosters confidence in their ability to learn new and complex things. Use this section to reflect on creative exploration and the process of making a work of art!

– **In-Person Reflecting: Theater Twister**

– **Virtual Reflecting: Headlines**





# IN-PERSON REFLECTION: THEATER TWISTER\*



Engage in collaborative peer interviews to reflect on performance, and end the experience with some joy!

**Note:** If facilitating virtually, see virtual reflection activity on the next page.

1. To begin, bring everyone into a standing circle. Alert the group that this activity includes physical contact: fingertips, toes and elbows. Confirm consent for physical contact, or offer alternative options.
2. Invite students to walk around the space. Freeze!
3. Fingertip Partners:
  - Find the person closest to you, connecting by gently touching fingertips E.T. style!
  - Discuss a DISCOVERY: something you learned or found really interesting during this collaborative process (two minutes)
  - Say goodbye to your fingertip partner!
4. Walk around the space. Freeze!
5. Toe Partners:
  - Find a new person close to you, putting the toes of your right shoes together
  - Discuss a SURPRISE: something that you weren't expecting.... (two minutes)
  - Say goodbye to your toe partner!
6. Walk around the space. Freeze!
7. Elbow Partners:
  - Find a new person close to you, linking or bumping elbows gently.
  - Staying with your elbow partner, look around the space and wave to your PINKY partner. Now locate your TOE partner and wave at them!
  - Still with your elbow partner, discuss a WONDERING: something you still have questions about or would like to explore further. (two minutes)
  - Say goodbye to your elbow partner!
8. Walk around the space. Freeze.
9. Twister: For the next step, be aware of respecting physical space.
  - On a cue, ask the whole class to find their toe partners and reconnect.
  - Then keeping that connection, try to also connect with your elbow partner.
  - And lastly, keeping the first two connections, find and connect with your pinky partner as well. The entire ensemble is now connected!
  - You can play with breaking the connections and separating on a count of five, and then returning to all three connections on another count of five. Lots of laughter usually ensues!
10. Before **Step 8** OR after **Step 9**, you can gather the whole class for an organic group reflection as you see fit. Some questions to explore include:
  - What was it like to collaborate?
  - What was it like to tell your own personal stories?
  - What was it like to hear your classmates' stories?
  - What were your favorite moments of the creative process?
  - Where/how did you see yourself growing through this experience?

## TEACHER TIP

Alternative Options for Questions to explore with Pinky/Elbow/Toe partners:



1. Pinky: Something new you learned about theater
2. Elbow: Something new you learned about your peers
3. Toe: Something new you learned about yourself

# VIRTUAL REFLECTION: HEADLINES\*



Engage in collaborative peer interviews to reflect on performance, and end the experience with some joy!

**Note:** If facilitating in person, see live reflection activity on the previous page.

1. On a virtual platform that supports breakout rooms, designate three breakout rooms as DISCOVERY, SURPRISE and WONDERING.
2. Assign students to those rooms in small groups as you see fit.
3. Each group gets five minutes to discuss the prompt in their assigned room:
  - DISCOVERY: Discuss something you learned or found really interesting during this collaborative process
  - SURPRISE: Discuss something that you weren't expecting that arose in this process
  - WONDERING: Discuss something you still have questions about or would like to explore further.
4. When the five minutes are up, give each group the additional instruction to collaborate to sum up a take-away from their conversation as a "headline," i.e. "High schoolers shocked to discover peers share the same fears!" or, "Students wonder how to keep a strong sense of community alive!"
5. Groups should also decide on one word in the headline to illustrate with a collective gesture. (i.e. all group members could slap hands to cheeks on the word "shocked.")
6. Finally, groups should designate one speaker to voice the headline when they return to the main room, and rehearse all students joining in with the gesture on the designated word.
7. Bring all three groups back to the main meeting space to share and discuss together. The share out can begin with each group's "headline" voiced by their group representative and physicalized by each small group.
8. Repeat **Steps 3-7** until all three groups of students have rotated through the three themed breakout rooms.
9. You can follow these take-away sharings with an organic group reflection as you see fit. Some questions to explore include:
  - What was it like to collaborate?
  - What was it like to tell your own personal stories?
  - What was it like to hear your classmates' stories?
  - What were your favorite moments of the creative process?
  - Where/how did you see yourself growing through this experience?

## TEACHER TIP

Alternative Options for Questions to explore in breakout rooms:



1. Something new you learned about theater
2. Something new you learned about your peers
3. Something new you learned about yourself



### Additional Resources

#### **The Work of Ping Chong + Company:**

Undesirable Elements: Real People, Real Lives,  
Real Theater

The Interdisciplinary Theatre of Ping Chong:  
Exploring Curiosity and Otherness Onstage

#### **Other Documentary Theater Resources:**

A History of U.S. Documentary Theatre in  
Three Stages

Documentary Theatre Resources at Howlround

#### **Other Devising Theater Resources:**

TDF's Theatre Dictionary: Devised Theatre  
A Practical Guide to Ensemble Devising  
Ensemble-Made Chicago · Digital Chicago

#### **Anti Racism Resources for Educators:**

Compendium of Anti-Racist Resources  
Educators for Antiracism: AntiRacist Resources  
National Museum of African American History  
and Culture Releases "Talking About Race"  
Web Portal  
Teaching Tolerance | Diversity, Equity And Justice  
Teaching for Change: The Conscious Kid  
Zinn Education Project: Teaching People's History

#### **NYC-Based Social Service Resources:**

**Girls for Gender Equity (GGE)** - Promotes the physical, psychological, social and economic well-being of girls, women and ultimately the entire community. Programs for boys and girls ages 8-19

**New York City Department of Homeless Services** - An NYC government agency that provides services to the homeless; DHS's overarching goal is to overcome homelessness

**Sanctuary For Families** - Counseling and services for survivors of domestic abuse and gender-based violence

**Ali Forney Center** - An organization dedicated to protecting LGBTQ youths from the harms of homelessness and empower them with the tools needed to live independently

**The Door** - Services and programs for LGBTQ, homeless and runaway youth

**Make the Road By Walking** - Builds the power of immigrant and working class communities to achieve dignity and justice

**New York State Youth Leadership Council** - Working to empower immigrant youth through leadership development, grassroots organizing, educational advancement, and self-expression

### Additional Resources

#### **National Social Service Resources:**

##### **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

24/7 Crisis Hotline

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Online chat: Lifeline Crisis Chat

Text line: Text "Start" to 741-741

##### **National Domestic Violence Hotline**

1-800-799-7233

Text "LOVEIS" to 1-866-331-9474

##### **National Child Abuse Hotline**

1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)

##### **Girls Leadership**

Teaching girls to exercise the power of their voice

##### **JED Foundation**

Mental health and suicide prevention for teens  
and young adults

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

##### **National Center for Homeless Education**

1-800-308-2145

##### **Trevor Project**

National Suicide Prevention for LGBTQ Youth

1-866-488-7386

##### **United We Dream**

National youth-led immigrant network

##### **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services**

**Administration (SAMHSA)** - Free and confidential  
information in English and Spanish for individuals and  
family members, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

1-800-662-HELP (4357)

TDD Helpline: 1-800-487-4889

#### **CREDITS**

This educator guide was created in a collaboration between New Victory and Ping Chong + Company, with contributions from Courtney J. Boddie and Christopher Totten at New Victory, and Christina Bixland, Sara Zatz and Ryan Conarro at Ping Chong + Company. Some activities were inspired by or adapted from other artists/organizations, and are credited on the relevant page(s).