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As you take your students on the exciting journey into the world of live theatre we hope that you’ll take a moment to help prepare them to make the most of their experience. Unlike movies or television, live theatre offers the thrill of unpredictability.

With the actors present on stage, the audience response becomes an integral part of the performance and the overall experience: the more involved and attentive the audience, the better the show. Please remind your students that they play an important part in the success of the performance!

A FEW REMINDERS...

BE PROMPT
Give your students plenty of time to arrive, find their seats, and get situated. Have them visit the restrooms before the show begins!

RESPECT OTHERS
Please remind your students that their behavior and responses affect the quality of the performance and the enjoyment of the production for the entire audience. Live theatre means the actors and the audience are in the same room, and just as the audience can see and hear the performers, the performers can see and hear the audience. Please ask your students to avoid disturbing those around them. Please no talking or unnecessary or disruptive movement during the performance. Also, please remind students that cellphones should be switched completely off. No texting or tweeting, please. When students give their full attention to the action on the stage, they will be rewarded with the best performance possible.

GOOD NOISE, BAD NOISE
Instead of instructing students to remain totally silent, please discuss the difference between appropriate responses (laughter, applause, participation when requested) and inappropriate noise (talking, cell phones, etc).

STAY WITH US
Please do not leave or allow students to leave during the performance except in absolute emergencies. Again, reminding them to use the restrooms before the performance will help eliminate unnecessary disruption.
Dear Educator,

Live theatre is a place for people to gather and experience the joys, triumphs, and sorrows life has to offer.

The Syracuse Stage Education Department is committed to providing the tools to make learning in and through the arts possible to address varied learning styles and to make connections to curriculum and life itself. It is our goal in the education department to maximize the theatre experience for our education partners with experiential learning and in-depth arts programming. Thank you for your interest and support!

Sincerely,

Lauren Unbekant
Director of Educational Outreach

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Syracuse Stage is committed to providing students with rich theatre experiences that explore and examine what it is to be human. Research shows that children who participate in or are exposed to the arts show higher academic achievement, stronger self-esteem, and improved ability to plan and work toward a future goal.

Many students in our community have their first taste of live theatre through Syracuse Stage’s outreach programs. Last season more than 15,500 students from across New York State attended or participated in the Bank of America Children’s Tour, artsEmerging, the Young Playwrights Festival, the Franklin Project, Young Adult Council, and our Student Matinee Program.

We gratefully acknowledge the corporations and foundations who support our commitment to in-depth arts education for our community.
ABOUT THE PLAY

SYNOPSIS

Nick just immigrated to America from a country called Homeland and is struggling with a new language and a new way of life. The kids at his new school make fun of him because of his customs and strange language. The twist is... in New Kid the Americans speak a kind of gibberish neither Nick nor the audience can understand.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

The inspiration for the original production came from a school teacher in Vancouver, Canada named Carole Tarlington. Ms. Tarlington recognized that her ESL students were a rich resource as they each had a unique story to tell. In the early 1980s she introduced a program in which students interviewed each other to learn about their experiences coming to Canada. Dennis Foon joined Ms. Tarlington on the project called “Immigrant Children Speak.”

Dennis Foon then used the interviews from “Immigrant Children Speak” to develop a script. Working with the play’s original director, Jane Howard Baker, and professional actors at Green Thumb Theatre, he enhanced the piece with the concept of gibberish to help the audience understand what it is like to be bombarded by foreign languages.

The production of New Kid that is coming to your school is a modified version of the original play, New Canadian Kid, which was first produced by the Green Thumb Theatre in Vancouver, BC and toured it all over the U.S. and Canada. This modified version has been produced by many other companies around the world.

Characters

Nick: a young boy new to America
Mug: the school bully
Mench: Mug’s friend and eventually Nick’s friend
Nick’s Mother: also new to America
Before the show, have students discuss what gibberish is and examples of where they’ve heard it before (i.e. pig latin or perhaps another “secret language” they’ve made up with a friend). Why do they think people might use gibberish or a made up language? Why do they think the playwright chose to have the Americans speak gibberish?

**ACTIVITY**

Put students in groups of two or three. In their groups they will decide what the sentences below mean (you can have them write down the meanings). “Greeb! Bleebl nope nork bop fop la proo!”

“La grab gee nabble lorp quipper grunge la thack.”

“Dar dar har zar var var boomerang.”

“Freep oogle boop fling flong. Shleep loobie la ling ling.”

After giving them time to practice, have each group present in front of the class. Then have them write some of their own sentences and perform those!

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**Language**

Language often indicates what is important to a culture. For example, the Inuit language includes many words for snow while the Arabic language includes many words for camel. In our culture, “time” is important. We have a past, present, and future tense, and the concept has a place in our figurative language (i.e. “time marches on,” “in the nick of time,” “time flies,” etc.). In Hopi or Chinese, there is only one tense for time, so people do not specify when an event took place. As *New Kid* deals with conflicts between cultures, it is not surprising that language and language barriers play important roles in the play, as well.

**ACTIVITY**

“Language” is an important contribution our immigrant cultures have made to America. Many words now common in modern American English usage were carried along like luggage with each influx of newcomers to our shores. Examples include: “Yankee” (Dutch), “alligator” (Spanish), “phooey” (German), “bric-a-brac” (French), “jukebox” (African), “chutzpah” (Yiddish), and “gung ho” (Chinese). Split your class into teams and have students go on a vocabulary “scavenger hunt” to find such words. Teams must provide words, definitions, and language of origin.
CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

DISCUSSION

Nick’s most cherished possession is a bowl given to him by his friends before he left Homeland. Ask your students to imagine that they are moving to a new country and can only take one suitcase with them. They will, therefore, need to pack very carefully. Have them reflect on what they value most and what will best help them remember their native land. These will be the items they take with them. When they have completed their list, as a class or in small group, compare their lists. Are there items reflecting similar ideas, values, and beliefs?

ACTIVITY: CULTURAL BAG

Culture is an ever-changing part of who we are. Have the class make a list of all the things that make up a person’s culture – language, religion, food, clothing, race, values, traditions, beliefs, music, dance, celebrations, geography, etc. Have them draw the outline of a suitcase on large sheets of paper and use pictures, symbols, collage, painting or words to express themselves and their culture. When the “culture bags” are complete, students can discuss their creations in groups and then post them for the rest of the class to see. Discussion can include: How did it feel making this picture of yourself? Were there any surprises? How did you take a complex idea (e.g. religion) and show it in your picture? What similarities do you see among the cultural bags of the different people in your group? What differences?

Despite the undeniably central role immigrants have played in the shaping of our nation, America has always had an ambivalent relationship with new arrivals to its shores – a great irony in a country settled by immigrants. Even the early English speaking colonists from Northern and Western Europe and their native-born children fast became nervous about the capacity of American society to absorb foreign-speaking newcomers. The venerated Ben Franklin himself grumbled that the influx of Germans into Pennsylvania would “contaminate” the English language. Sometimes the fear of the unknown or simply the unfamiliar grows into hate and prejudice. Instead of celebrating diversity, we allow differences to break us apart. New Kid demonstrates that even today such concerns remain evident. Many of the same stereotypes applied to immigrants today were used 150 years ago. None of this means, of course, that a complex issue like immigration can be reduced to a simple equation, but exploring its history may help to meet the challenges it poses for the future.

Playwright Dennis Foon has noted that “the country of Homeland is meant to stand for all countries whose people have immigrated to [the United States].” It is the case that American immigrants have come from all over the globe, so that the teaching of multiculturalism is of great value. With such instruction in the classroom, children will begin to:

• Develop an awareness of cultural practices
• Increase understanding and appreciation of different points of view
• Learn to promote acceptance
• Treat others with respect
• Increase their own cultural pride
WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is very complex and does not just mean a bigger person hitting a smaller person. According to the National Bullying Prevention Center, bullying is when a person or student is emotionally or physically harmed by another person or student. Bully behavior includes what is called an “imbalance of power” when a person with more power or social capital, such as being physically stronger or more popular, tries to hurt a person with less power. By doing this the person with more power normally hopes to feel more powerful by taking someone else’s power away.

Physical bullying can include hitting, kicking, and shoving. This aggression can either be done in an obvious way, such as in front of a teacher, or in a hidden way, such as hidden on a playground. Emotional bullying can include name calling, using bad words toward a person, gossiping, or excluding people on purpose from games or groups. These actions are intentional on the part of the aggressor. Children should understand that if they feel emotionally or physically harmed, then the situation is bullying.

How can you help?

• Help others who are being bullied. Be a friend, even if this person is not yet your friend. Go over to him/her. Let him/her know how you think he/her is feeling. Help him/her to talk to an adult about what just happened. (Just think for a moment about how great this would be if someone did this for you when you were being picked on or hurt!)

• Stop untrue or harmful messages from spreading. If someone tells you a rumor that you know is untrue or sends you a message that is hurtful to someone else, stand up and let the person know this is wrong.

• Make friends outside of your group. Eat lunch with someone who is alone. Show support for someone who is upset at school by asking them what is wrong or bringing them to an adult who can help.

• Reach out to new people at your school. Introduce them to your friends and help them feel comfortable. Imagine how you would feel leaving your friends and coming to a new school.

• Refuse to be a “bystander”. If you see friends or classmates laughing along with the person hurting someone else, tell them that they are contributing to the problem. Let them know that by laughing they are also bullying the victim.

• Respect others’ differences and help others to respect differences

• With a teacher or principal’s support develop a bullying program or project that will help reduce bullying in school. Bring together a team of students, parents and teachers to meet and talk about bullying on a regular basis and share stories while supporting each other.

As parents and students, as teachers and members of the community, we can take steps -- all of us -- to help prevent bullying.

President Barack Obama
CLASSROOM GLOBE

All Americans, except Native Americans are descendants of ancestors from other countries.
1. Ask your students to share all of the countries that their ancestors came from – they may need to do some research at home with their families.
2. Using an overhead world map, or a large paper map, color in or mark with pins all the countries the class is connected to.
3. Discuss/brainstorm why students’ families may have come to the United States.

PASSPORT

1. Create your passport cover with colored construction paper by folding it in half and decorating the front and back.
2. Fold white paper in half and place between the covers. Staple to make a booklet.
3. Glue the student photo/picture on the front page and write in name, age and birthplace.
4A. Decide which countries you want your class to visit. Have students research facts through books, the internet and guest speakers. Students record important facts about the country in their passports. If you are able to make stamps or stickers for each country (e.g. Egypt = Pyramid) students can stick them to the appropriate page of their passports!
4B. As you study each country throughout the year (or whatever amount of time you allot) have students draw pictures of themselves in that country using the facts they have collected. (e.g. France – drawing of student standing in front of the Eiffel Tower)

Create a Country!

In a group of four or more, come up with your own country and culture! Brainstorm and prepare a presentation about the language, food, clothing and customs of your country! Bring your presentation to life using drawings and maybe even demonstrating the language and national dance! Use the library, the internet and your imagination to guide you.

This activity can be used to support a unit on multiculturalism, geography, or as a unit itself.

Materials Needed:
- photos or drawings of each student
- colored construction paper
- white paper
- a stapler
- markers, crayons or colored pencils
- glue
elements of drama

PLOT
What is the story line? What happened before the play started? What does each character want? What do they do to achieve their goals? What do they stand to gain/lose?

THEME
What ideas are wrestled with in the play? What questions does the play pose? Does it present an opinion?

CHARACTER
Who are the people in the story? What are their relationships? Why do they do what they do? How does age/status/etc. affect them?

LANGUAGE
What do the characters say? How do they say it? When do they say it?

MUSIC
How do music and sound help to tell the story?

SPECTACLE
How do the elements come together to create the whole performance?

Other Elements: Conflict/Resolution, Action, Improvisation, Non-verbal communication, Staging, Humor, Realism and other styles, Metaphor, Language, Tone, Pattern & Repetition, Emotion, Point of view.

Any piece of theatre comprises multiple art forms. As you explore this production with your students, examine the use of:

WRITING
VISUAL ART/DESIGN
MUSIC/SOUND
DANCE/MOVEMENT

ACTIVITY
At its core, drama is about characters working toward goals and overcoming obstacles. Ask students to use their bodies and voices to create characters who are: very old, very young, very strong, very weak, very tired, very energetic, very cold, very warm. Have their characters interact with others. Give them an objective to fulfill despite environmental obstacles. Later, recap by asking how these obstacles affected their characters and the pursuit of their objectives.

INQUIRY
How are each of these art forms used in this production? Why are they used? How do they help to tell the story?
elements of design

LINE can have length, width, texture, direction and curve. There are 5 basic varieties: vertical, horizontal, diagonal, curved, and zig-zag.

SHAPE is two-dimensional and encloses space. It can be geometric (e.g. squares and circles), man-made, or free-form.

FORM is three-dimensional. It encloses space and fills space. It can be geometric (e.g. cubes and cylinders), man-made, or free-form.

COLOR has three basic properties:
HUE is the name of the color (e.g. red, blue, green), INTENSITY is the strength of the color (bright or dull), VALUE is the range of lightness to darkness.

TEXTURE refers to the “feel” of an object’s surface. It can be smooth, rough, soft, etc. Textures may be ACTUAL (able to be felt) or IMPLIED (suggested visually through the artist’s technique).

SPACE is defined and determined by shapes and forms. Positive space is enclosed by shapes and forms, while negative space exists around them.
The Presentation

Have students respond in small groups or conduct a group discussion based on questions such as:

- Why did the playwright use gibberish in the play? Why did the playwright have Nick and his Mother speak English?
- Why is Nick from an invented country called Homeland, rather than a real country?
- Was the play funny or serious? How did that affect the story?
- How did the actors use movement and voice to create their characters?
- The designers made many choices when they created the set and costumes for New Kid. What did their designs add?

The Story

Students can respond verbally or in writing to questions such as:

- How would you describe each character in this play to someone who has not seen it?
- How did each of them change during the play?
- Was Mug’s bullying like real life?
- How did Mench help Nick? Would that be easy to do in real life?
- What would you say to Nick if he was in your class? What would you say to Mug?
- Would your school be an easy place for a kid like Nick?
- What could you do to make a difference for kids like Nick? What could your class do?
Writing a Review

After students have outlined the story and discussed the production elements, they can write reviews. Have them read their reviews aloud or post them online for other classes to read and respond. Reviews usually include the following:

- a brief summary of the story
- comments on the quality of the play itself
- a description of the costumes and set and a comment on whether these were interesting and appropriate
- comments on the actors’ character portrayals and on the director’s skill at pulling the whole thing together
REFERENCES:

SOURCES AND RESOURCES

Green Thumb Theatre Study Guide from the Original Production of New Canadian Kid by Dennis Foon
http://www.greenthumb.bc.ca/

Cincinnati Arts Association Playhouse in the Park Community Outreach Tour 2009-10 Study Guide
http://www.cincinnatiarts.org/

The Fulton Family Theatre Ensemble New Kid Study Guide
http://www.fultontheatre.org/