

Literature to Life's **Black Boy**

Based on the memoir by Richard Wright



Streaming Performances
for Schools



TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

Black Boy

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EDUCATION



The lessons and activities in this guide are driven by the Ohio Learning Standards in English Language Arts (2017), Fine Arts (2024), Social & Emotional Learning (2019) and Social Studies (revised 2019).

21st century skills of creativity, critical thinking and collaboration are embedded in the process of bringing the page to the stage. Seeing live theater encourages students to read, develop critical thinking skills and to be curious about the world around them.

This Teacher Resource Guide includes background information, questions and activities that can stand alone or work as building blocks toward the creation of a complete unit of classroom work.

The lessons and activities in this guide are created and adapted by Avery LaMar Pope in partnership with Playhouse Square's Education Department.



The Ohio Arts Council helps fund this organization with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans.

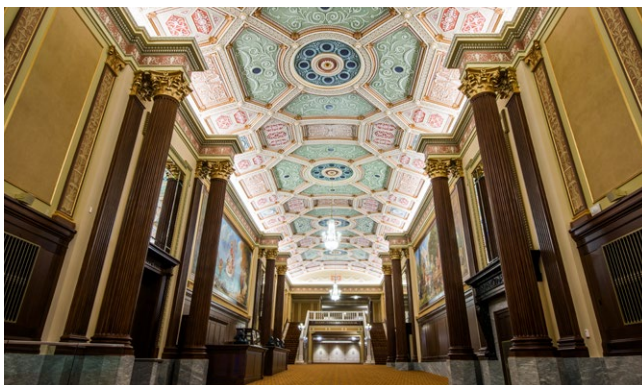
Playhouse Square is supported in part by the residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture.

ABOUT PLAYHOUSE SQUARE

Playhouse Square is an exciting field trip destination! The not-for-profit Playhouse Square attracts more than one million guests to 1000+ shows and events each year. Five of Playhouse Square's 12 venues are historic theaters that first opened in the early 1920s. By the late 1960s, they had been abandoned. A group of volunteers saved the theaters from being turned into parking lots. Now, all five historic theaters are fully restored.

You'll find Broadway, concerts, comedy, dance and family shows on Playhouse Square's stages, along with performances and events held by Playhouse Square's eight resident companies: The City Club of Cleveland, Cleveland Ballet, Cleveland International Film Festival, Cleveland Play House, Cleveland State University's Department of Theatre and Dance, DANCECleveland, Great Lakes Theater and Tri-C JazzFest.

When you visit, be sure to check out the retro Playhouse Square sign with its 9-foot-tall letters and the largest outdoor chandelier in North America – the Playhouse Square Chandelier generously presented by GE Lighting, a Savant company.



ABOUT THE SHOW

Literature to Life's *Black Boy* by Richard Wright is theatrical depiction of many of the notable and resounding themes from Wright's book. The text of the play comes directly from excerpts of the book. Performed in a one-man show format, this production highlights Wright's longing for justice and belonging, his search for identity and his perspective on the Jim Crow South. Adapted and directed by Wynn Handman and performed by Tarantino Smith, this powerful and intentional performance brings Wright's memoir to life, giving an audible voice to his literary masterpiece.

This play uses language rooted in historical context from Wright's book and experiences, including profanity and the "n-word." Educators are welcome to preview the performance video when access links are provided.

Key Themes

These themes are explored in the show, shaping Wright's journey to becoming a writer:

Hunger and Drive – Wright feels hungry for food, but also for knowledge and independence. His strong desire for better things in life pushes him forward.

Effects of Racial Injustice – Wright faces racism and unfair treatment because of his skin color. He describes how racism is not just caused by mean people, but also by unfair rules and systems in society.

The Importance of Family – Wright has a close bond with his mother, who teaches him values like loyalty and love. Even though their family faces struggles, her strength and sacrifices help shape who he is.

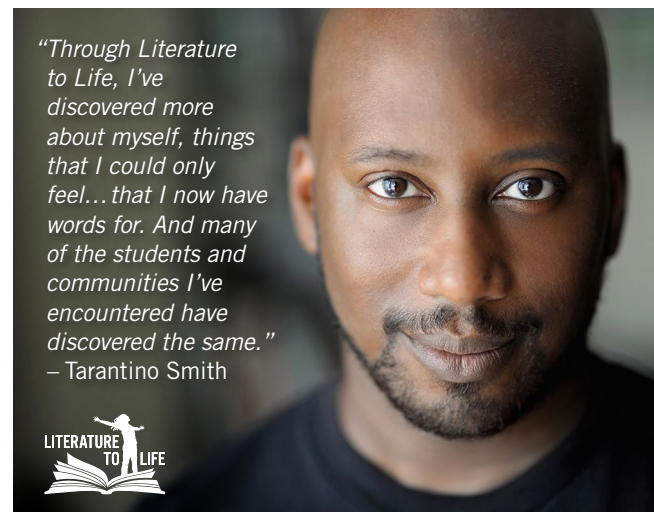
The Power of Education – Even though Wright has limited chances to learn, he is determined to get an education. This helps him grow smarter and dream of a better life.

The Struggle for Belonging – Wright wants to feel like he belongs and has a place in the world. Society often rejects him, but he keeps trying to stay true to himself and find his own way.

ABOUT LITERATURE TO LIFE

Literature to Life (LTL) is a performance-based literacy program that presents professionally staged verbatim adaptations of American literary classics. Founded as the educational program of the American Place Theatre more than three decades ago, LTL carries forward the legacy of founder Wynn Handman, who championed American writers of diverse backgrounds as “voices worth hearing” – a pioneering notion in the 1960s. Now under the leadership of Literature to Life co-founding Artistic Director, Elise Thoron, this mighty collective of artists and educators brings the voices of diverse authors to thousands of students and audiences nationwide, giving them the tools to become the empowered “voices worth hearing” of our future.

About Tarantino Smith



Originally from North Carolina, Tarantino Smith, moved to New York City on a full scholarship to study acting, singing, dancing, vocal production and speech at The American Musical and Dramatic Academy. He trained with The Pearl Theatre Company in classics by Chekhov, Ibsen, Shaw and Shakespeare, and worked with legendary teacher Wynn Handman on a historic drama about ex-slaves. Tarantino has performed in one-man shows: Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Richard Wright's *Black Boy*. In addition to his stage work, he appeared in films like *The Life* (2002), *Battle* (2011), *Robot Revolution* (2015) and *Carbon Copy* (2017). Most recently, he attended a summer writing program at The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London.

MORE TO KNOW

Richard Wright

Richard Wright (1908–1960) is celebrated as one of the most important writers of the 20th century. His work examines the struggles of Black Americans during the era of segregation in the Jim Crow South. Wright's writings opened readers' eyes to the experiences of Black Americans and remain influential today. He is known for:

- ***Uncle Tom's Children*** (1938): A collection of short stories depicting racial violence and injustice
- ***Native Son*** (1940): A groundbreaking novel about systemic racism and Black life
- ***Black Boy*** (1945): Wright's autobiography, recounting his childhood in the South and his journey to becoming a writer

Jim Crow

The Jim Crow era (1877–mid-1960s) refers to a system of racial segregation and discrimination that treated African Americans as second-class citizens. While it was most common in the southern United States, its impact extended nationwide. Jim Crow laws and customs enforced anti-Black racism and restricted the rights of Black people. Examples of these laws included:

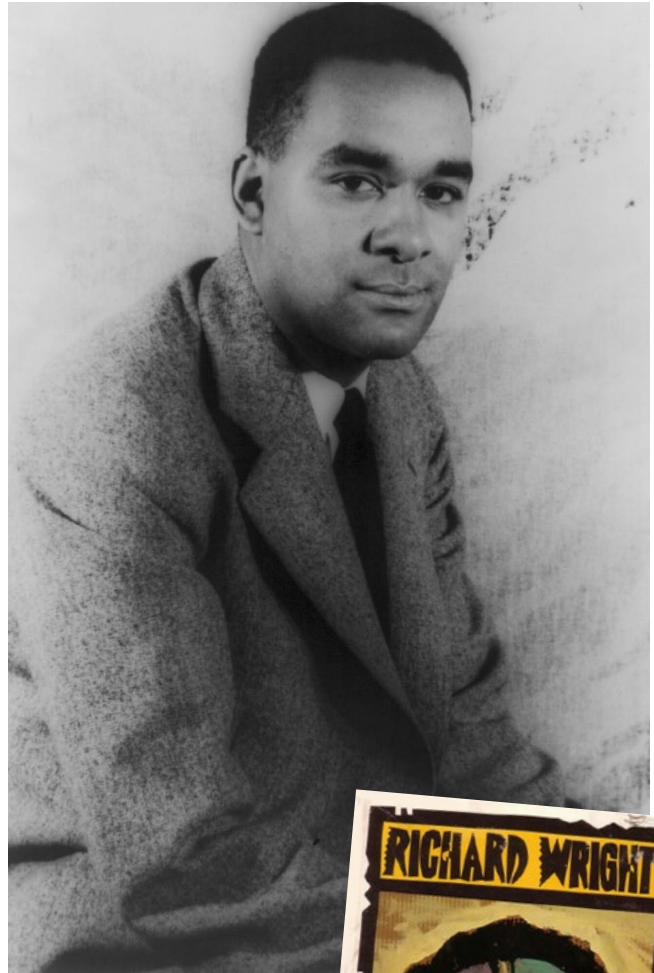
- A Black man could not offer his hand to shake hands with a white man, as it implied social equality
- Black people were not allowed to show affection toward one another in public, such as kissing, because it was considered offensive to white people
- A Black person was discouraged from claiming or overtly demonstrating superior knowledge

Important! Remember that Jim Crow is not a person, but a term used to describe this system of oppression.

Code-Switching

Code-switching occurs when someone changes how they speak, act or present themselves depending on their environment. This is often done for reasons such as:

- Making others feel more comfortable
- Avoiding negative stereotypes
- Gaining fair treatment in spaces where cultural norms are viewed as “inappropriate”



KEY TERMS & EVENTS

Cadence – a repeated rhythm or flow in sounds, words or movements, like the beat in music or the tone in a speech

Castigate – to subject to severe punishment or severe criticism

Colloquialism – a word or phrase that is commonly used in everyday speech within a particular region or group

Coping mechanism – a way people deal with stress or difficult emotions (can be either beneficial or harmful behaviors)

Discriminate – to make an unjust or prejudicial distinction in the treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of ethnicity, sex, age or disability

Gentrification – when wealthier people move into a poorer neighborhood, fixing up homes and bringing in new businesses, which often unfairly pushes out the people who already live there who cannot afford the changes

Onomatopoeia – a word that imitates the sound it describes (such as *buzz*, *hiss*)

Prejudice – a preconceived attitude, opinion or judgement about a person or group simply because they belong to a specific religion, race, nationality or other group

Racism – the belief that one race is better than others, leading to unfair treatment, attitudes or actions that support this idea

Satiate – to completely satisfy

Socio-political – relating to or involving a combination of social and political factors

Subtext – a deeper meaning or hidden message in a book, play or conversation that is not directly stated

Trauma – a strong emotional reaction to a very bad experience, like an accident, abuse, violence or losing a loved one

Significant Events from the Play

1908 – Richard Wright was born Richard Nathaniel Wright on Rucker’s Plantation in Roxie, Mississippi.

1910 – Leon Alan, known as Alan, was born.

1911-1912 – Wright’s mother took him and Alan to live with the Wilson family in Natchez and their father rejoined the family and worked at a sawmill. Wright accidentally set fire to his grandparents’ house.

1913-1914 – Wright’s father deserted the family and his mother found work as a cook.

1915-1916 – Wright started school for the first time.

1919 – Wright’s mother got sick so he left school to earn money.

1919-1929 – Wright alternated between jobs and school.

1929-1934 – Wright was introduced to a new kind of community, including writers’ groups, avid readers and political thinkers. He read powerful and inspirational literature, published radical poetry and produced daring stories for the public.

1940s – Wright’s body of work grew significantly and excerpts and elements of *Black Boy* were published.

■ PREPARATIONS FOR EDUCATORS

Primer Video



It is highly recommended that all teachers view the primer video.

This informational video resource is intended to prepare teachers for conversations that may be generated through participation in the *Black Boy* virtual field trip. Playhouse Square teaching artists Ananias and Molly host the video, overviewing activity instructions, giving historical context for the play and providing guidance to address the content warning.

Please note that the *Black Boy* performance includes the use of some profanity and the "n-word" just as presented in the text of the original book.

“Step Into the Circle If” Prompts:

- You’ve ever felt pressure to fit in with your peers
- You’ve ever had a mentor or someone who inspired you
- You’ve ever had a father figure in your life
- You’ve ever experienced racism or discrimination in any form
- You’ve ever felt unsafe walking home or out in your neighborhood
- You’ve ever felt like an outsider
- You’ve ever accomplished something you’re really proud of

Writing Activity Prompts:

In the years since the Civil Rights Movement:

- What have we gained?
- What freedoms do Black Americans have that previous generations did not?
- What freedoms have ALL Americans, regardless of race, gained as an effort of the Civil Rights Movement? Where do we need to grow?
- What are some of the issues that you see need change?
- Are there any voices that you listen to that help you understand the complexities of the world we’re living in? Who are they and what do they share?

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

Classroom Connections Video Workshop (Grades 7-12)

The Ohio Learning Standards listed below are addressed in the following Pre-Show Activity:

English/Language Arts: SL.7.1, W.7.4, SL.8.1, W.8.4, SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.4, SL.11-12.1, W.11-12.4

Fine Arts: Drama: 8.6CO, 8.6CR, HSP.1CO

Social & Emotional Learning: C1.2.d, C3.3.d, D3.1.d

Social Studies: AH.CS.12, AH.CS.18

Run time: 12:34

Playhouse Square teaching artists design workshops to actively explore and connect with the art forms and themes students will see during the performance. Join Ananias and Molly as they explore intersecting identities effects on individual experiences, offer historical context for the play and share the power of documentary theatre.



People to Know

Kimberlé Crenshaw – professor at the UCLA School of Law and Columbia Law School specializing in race and gender, American civil rights advocate and a scholar of critical race theory

Ida B. Wells – prominent American investigative journalist, writer, researcher and activist in the late 19th and early 20th century and also one of the founders of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People)

Adrienne Maree Brown – a contemporary activist and writer in the Afro-Futuristic, Sci-Fi and Non-Fiction categories

Additional Terms

Documentary theatre – transforms real-life narratives into a dramatic experience using interviews, essays, reports and memoirs like Wright's

First-person narrative – a writing style that reflects the writer's voice or point of view

Insidious – something dangerous that slowly harms over time without being noticed

Intersectionality – how any given person's overlapping identities (age, race, gender etc.) may shape the way that they are treated within the country's systems

Memoir – a biography of a person written by that person or using their personal accounts

Multitudes – many things or people

Seminal – a person, piece or work or event that has a big impact on later works or movements

Victim or Villain Vocabulary Activity (Grades 7-12)

The Ohio Learning Standards listed below are addressed in the following Pre-Show Activity:

English/Language Arts: L.7.3, SL.7.1, W.7.3, L.8.3, SL.8.1, W.8.3, SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.4, SL.11-12.1, W.11-12.4

In this activity, students will work in groups to create a short story about a social issue or inequity using the five elements of storytelling and incorporating six vocabulary terms.

Provide students with the list of Key Terms found on page 6. Review the definitions together as a class and give examples of use to ensure clear understanding. Also, review the five elements of a story together as a class:

- **Plot:** What happens in the story?
- **Character:** Who is the protagonist and what is their role?
- **Setting:** Where and when does the story take place?
- **Conflict:** What challenges or tensions drive the story?
- **Theme:** What message or lesson does the story convey?

Next, have students split up in small groups to weave a fictional (yet realistic) narrative surrounding a character's experience. For example, a character in the story may reminisce of a time when they were discriminated against or a time where they treated someone unfairly. The story must also use examples of and/or demonstrations of six of the Key Terms. The story should be about five minutes in length when read aloud. Encourage brevity and focus. The goal is a concise yet impactful story. Foster a respectful and honest exploration of sensitive topics. Remind students to collaborate, sharing ideas and responsibilities equally.

To wrap up, have each group read their story aloud to the class. After each presentation, facilitate a brief discussion to reflect on the story's message, vocabulary usage and alignment with the five story elements. After all the groups have gone, discuss how these stories relate to broader themes of empathy, understanding and social justice.

Example discussion questions:

- Did you have a strong reaction to any of the stories? Why?
- What was the most challenging part of this exercise for you?
- How did prejudice show up in the stories we heard?
- Could any of these situations be handled differently?
- How can understanding what prejudice means help us treat others more fairly?



What the Streets Mean to Me (Grades 7-12)

The Ohio Learning Standards listed below are addressed in the following Pre-Show Activity:

English/Language Arts: SL.7.1, W.7.3, W.7.4, SL.8.1, W.8.3, W.8.4, SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.3, W.9-10.4, SL.11-12.1, W.11-12.3, W.11-12.4

Social & Emotional Learning: A1.1.c, A1.2.c, A1.1.d, A1.2.d, C4.1.d

Social Studies: AH.CS.16, AH.CS.18

This activity will help students explore themes of belonging and community through slam poetry. Students will draw connections between historical events and personal experiences, developing a deeper emotional connection before engaging in the performance.

Richard Wright's memoir is a story of belonging and community. While he may not be able to find communal acceptance in the Jim Crow South, through his wandering nature and hunger for understanding, he is able to establish his own sense of belonging through found community and creating his own form of home from and around the streets of the town.

As a class or individually, read the More to Know (page 5) and Significant Events (page 6) sections to learn more about Richard Wright and the show's period. Facilitate a discussion comparing/contrasting historical events from Wright's time to modern-day experiences. Encourage students to share personal reflections or revelations.

What is Slam Poetry?

Originating in Chicago in the 1908s by a construction worker named Marc Kelly, slam poetry is a form of performance poetry that combines the elements of performance, writing, competition and audience participation. It is performed at events called poetry slams or simply slams. The name *slam* comes from how the audience has the power to praise or, sometimes, destroy a poem and from the high-energy performance style of the poets.

Key Features of Slam Poetry:

- Metaphor
- Repetition
- Simile
- Personification
- Onomatopoeia
- Antithesis
- Colloquialism
- Pop Culture References
- Tone and Mood
- Cadence
- Imagery
- Song

Next, instruct students (individually or in small groups) to write their own piece of slam poetry that is 1-3 minutes in read aloud length, following the theme "What the Streets Mean to Me." They must use 3 of the features listed in their piece.

In cases of writers' block, feel free to allow students to research some slam poetry performances. Some slam poem performance videos are noted in Resources on page 17. Also, here is a list of artists to refer to:

- Siaara Freeman
- Steven Willis
- Javon Johnson
- Jared Singer
- Sarah Kay
- Phil Kaye
- Neil Hilborn
- Andrea Gibson
- Jesse Parent
- Alysia Harris
- Rudy Francisco

Once the poem is written, host a formal poetry slam for students to perform their pieces. Some instructions for hosting a poetry slam in your classroom are noted in Resources on page 17.

Optional Extension: This could also be a great introduction to other works by Richard Wright, such as exploring his poem "I Have Seen Black Hands" (noted in Resources on page 17), to deepen their understanding of his themes.

Eat, Or Else (Grades 7-12)

The Ohio Learning Standards listed below are addressed in the following Pre-Show Activity:

English/Language Arts: SL.7.1, SL.8.1, SL.9-10.1, SL.11-12.1

Social & Emotional Learning: B1.1.c, C1.3.c, C1.3.d

Hunger is a major theme throughout the entirety of *Black Boy*, being mentioned numerous times as it relates to academic and employment opportunities as well as overall livelihood for a Black man in America. The focus of this exercise is for students to relate to the circumstances of the play without having significant context so they can be assisted in relating to the character before meeting them. This is intended to eliminate any internal barrier a student may subconsciously create that distances them from the story and create student buy in. Be mindful of students' personal experiences with hunger or food insecurity and create a supportive environment.

Begin the activity by introducing the term “sate” and ask students to brainstorm examples to highlight the physical and emotional dimensions of satisfaction.

Satiate to completely satisfy

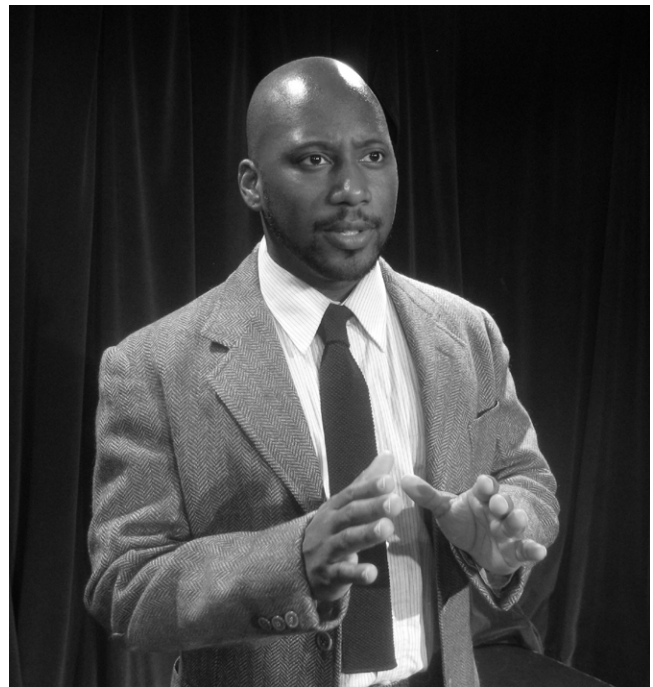
In a circle, lead students through an open discussion utilizing some of the following prompts:

- Would you define hunger as a want or a need? Why?
- Has there ever been a time where hunger distracted you from a task or activity? What was that like?
- What lengths would you go to satiate your appetite?
- What are some aspects of the body, mind, heart, etc., that hunger impacts?
- Has there ever been a time when you had to feed more than just yourself?
- Has there ever been a time when you were hungry in the company of others but didn't speak up? Why not?

Feel open to build more discussion questions off of these prompts and allow students a free range of conversation. There is no mutual conclusion - so students should feel free to respond and banter responses to open up to one another.

To conclude the activity, help students brainstorm a symbol of hunger. Students should imagine what their visual representation of hunger would look like and describe it to classmates. Have students explain why they chose their representation of hunger.

Make sure they use descriptive language in their explanations. To some hunger may be direct, like an empty refrigerator. To others, hunger may be more metaphoric, such as a person with wide eyes, longing for more in life.



■ POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

Classroom Connections Video Workshop (Grades 7-12)

The Ohio Learning Standards listed below are addressed in the following Post-Show Activity:

English/Language Arts: SL.7.1, W.7.4, SL.8.1, W.8.4, SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.4, SL.11-12.1, W.11-12.4



Guest star: DeMarco Sleeper,
Physically Integrated Dancer

Run time: 7:35

Playhouse Square teaching artists invite students to join them once again as they continue to explore themes found throughout the show. Join Ananias and Molly as they encourage reflection and classroom conversation with a special guest artist.

Hunger Prompts:

- Wright used the concept of hunger both literally and metaphorically. What metaphorical hunger do you have, both in your life and for the country?
- What do you hope and long for to change?

Additional Terms

Literal – what something means directly with no interpretation

Metaphor – a figure of speech that creates a comparison between two things using one word to define another

Better Left Unsaid? (Grades 7-12)

The Ohio Learning Standards listed below are addressed in the following Post-Show Activity:

English/Language Arts: RL.7.4, RL.8.3, RL.8.4, RL.9-10.4, RL.11-12.4

Fine Arts: Drama: 7.2CO, 8.1PE, HSP.2PE, HSP.6CR

Social & Emotional Learning: A1.1.c, A1.2.c, D1.1.c, A1.1.d, A1.2.d

Social Studies: AH.CS.12, AH.CS.13

Subtext is the hidden meaning behind a character's words, revealing their true feelings, desires or needs through tone, actions or body language. In plays, subtext may not be directly written in dialogue but can be conveyed in stage directions. For example, when a character says, "This is exactly what I needed," their tone or context might indicate relief or sarcasm. Subtext adds depth, showing what a character is really experiencing. In Richard Wright's memoir *Black Boy*, Richard and his mother's conversations are filled with subtext, especially around food and household needs, subtly revealing that Richard will need to take on more responsibility to help the family survive.

To explore this idea of subtext, break students into groups. Each group will write two scenes between a parent and a child. Both scenes will tell the same story, but from different perspectives:

Scene 1: Spoken Dialogue – What the characters say on the surface.

Scene 2: Subtext Dialogue – What the characters truly mean but don't directly say.

Scene work will help students explore how subtext works in communication. Before writing, have the students read these examples scenes:

SCENE 1: SPOKEN

MOTHER: Baby, you're gonna have to put your big kid pants on and help around here, okay?

CHILD: Um... Okay?

MOTHER: Go on down to town and see about some work, yea?

CHILD: I... Okay.

MOTHER: And don't come home till you find some.

CHILD: Yes'm.

SCENE 2: SAID

MOTHER: Baby, I can't take care of this house by myself. Now since your father went off and left his responsibilities here, I need you to help out.

CHILD: But that's not fair, Mother!

MOTHER: I understand, and I agree. But we need to keep this roof over our heads. There's work for you down in town. I want you to go and try your best to find some.

CHILD: But mother, I want to play and be a kid!

MOTHER: I know baby, but we won't have a home for you to come to if you don't help out. I need you to make sure you get some work before dark.

CHILD: ... Yes'm...

Then, facilitate a brief discussion:

- What is happening on the surface of the scene?
- What feelings might the characters have that are not explicitly stated?
- Are the unsaid words better left unsaid? Why or why not?

Then, groups will create their own parent-child scenario, writing both a spoken and subtext version of the scene. Students should think about each character's needs, wants or desires while writing. What is the character trying to accomplish? What are they hiding? This is the character's objective. Students may brainstorm scenarios from their own lives to get inspiration. Once written, students will:

1. Cast roles
2. Rehearse briefly
3. Perform for the class (either as a seated reading or a fully staged performance, depending on comfort levels)

After performances, facilitate a discussion on subtext:

- What did you notice about the differences between the spoken and subtext scenes?
- How does subtext help us understand the characters better?
- Why do people often say one thing but mean another?
- In real life, name a time where subtext can be frustrating when trying to communicate with someone.

Optional Extension: Subtext in history can reveal the hidden struggles of difficult times. Help students connect with and understand why the Wright family and others faced hardships in early 20th-century America. There were major changes happening in the world, such as cities growing larger, people working in new kinds of jobs and neighborhoods changing rapidly. These changes made it difficult for families to keep their homes and find enough money for what they needed. Read pages 199-201 (excerpt of Ch. 10) in the *Black Boy* book.

Then, discuss:

- Why was the system rigged for Richard?
- What were some obstacles Richard and other Black men faced in the workforce?
- Is stealing or breaking the rules acceptable in certain circumstances? Why or why not?
- Why do some communities seem to thrive while others struggle? Why is there a divide?
- Can struggles from one generation affect the next?
- Do you think people hide their true feelings or desires because of the tough circumstances they face? Why might someone feel the need to keep their struggles hidden?



Action Figures (Grades 7-12)

The Ohio Learning Standards listed below are addressed in the following Post-Show Activity:

Fine Arts: Visual Art: 7.2PE, 7.3CO, 7.4RE, 8.1CO, 8.2CR, 8.2RE, HSP.3CO, HSI.3CO

Social & Emotional Learning: A2.1.c, B1.3.c, B3.1.c, B3.1.d

Inspired by Richard Wright, students will learn how to self-regulate in tough situations and gain tools to reframe and use their strengths. In the *Black Boy* book, Wright describes his experiences as a Black man in a racially divided America. In the excerpt below, he reflects on the differences between his life and the lives of the white waitresses at the North Side Café:

“They lived on the surface of their days; their smiles were surface smiles, and their tears were surface tears. Negroes lived a truer and deeper life than they, but I wished that Negroes, too, could live as thoughtlessly, serenely as they. The girls never talked of their feelings; none of them possessed the insight or the emotional equipment to understand themselves or others. How far apart in culture we stood! All my life I had done nothing but feel and cultivate my feelings; all their lives they had done nothing but strive for petty goals, the trivial material prizes of American Life.” (Excerpt of *Black Boy* book, Pt.2, Ch. 15)

Have students read this passage and reflect on traits like thoughtfulness, resilience or empathy superpower. In dull situations, everyone has a toolbox of strengths, but sometimes a reminder brings confidence to use them.

To get them thinking about these strengths, students should discuss the following questions with a classmate:

- What traits do people use to protect themselves from difficult situations?
- If a superhero came to save your day, what trait would you want them to have?
- What tools, behaviors or strengths do you already use to deal with challenges in your own life?

Remind students that action figures are not just symbols of heroism – they take action. They face obstacles and get things done. Students will imagine their own “action figures” symbolic of their inner strengths and abilities. Provide a variety of art materials and the worksheet on the next page to help students define and visualize their superhero. Here are some examples of powers to inspire them:

Typical Superpowers	Wright's Superpowers	YOUR Superpowers
Super speed	Studied Intellect	Knowledge
Super strength	Code-Switching	Flexibility
Invisibility	Curiosity	Empathy

As students work on their superhero artwork, circulate around the classroom and ask them to think deeply about how they handle everyday challenges. Use the following questions to guide their reflection:

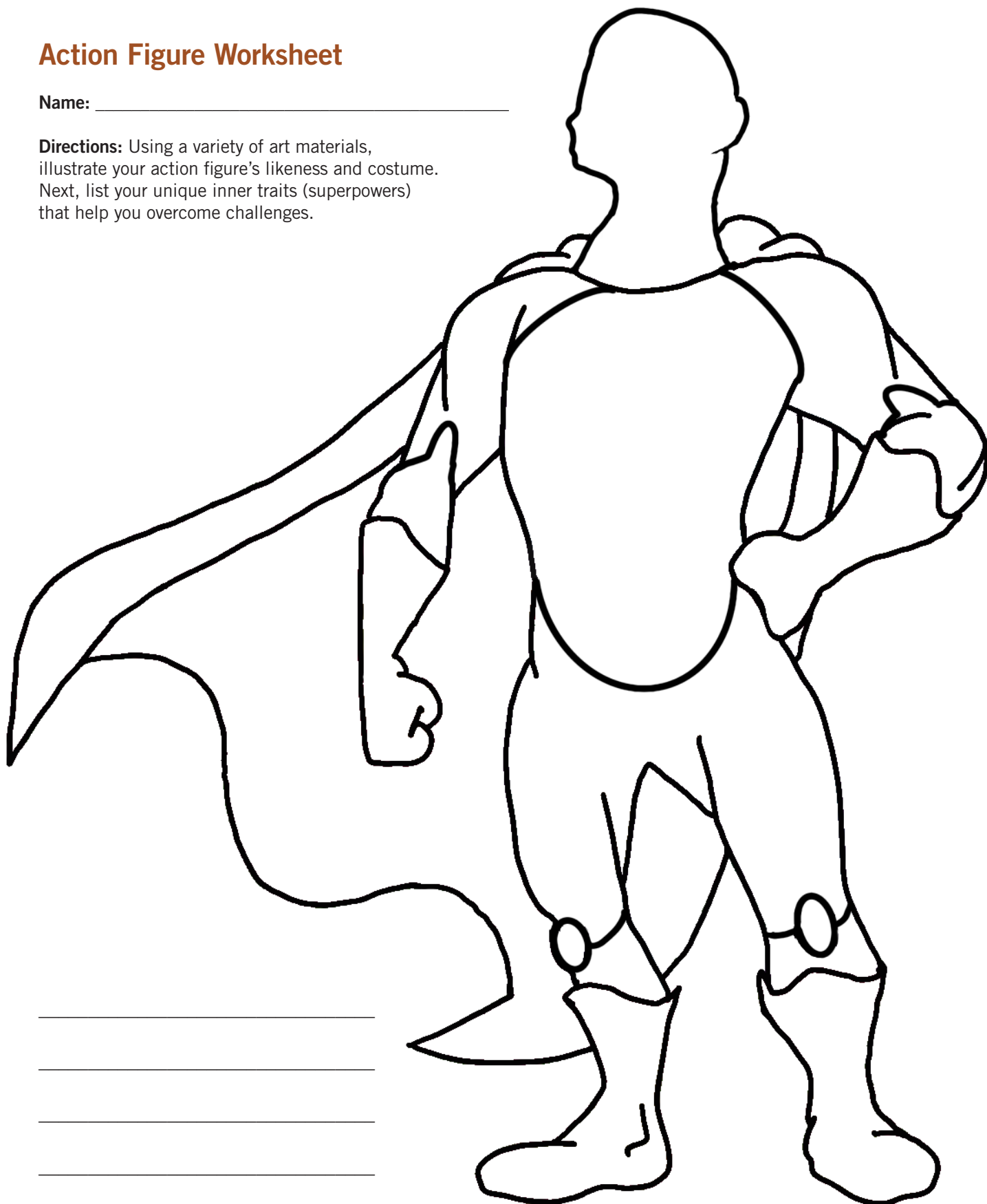
- What kinds of superpowers do you already use in your life?
- How do you manage stress, stay motivated or navigate challenges with others?
- How can creativity be a superpower?
- Think about how people from the past have used their “powers” to survive and thrive. Are these people from history, like those from the Harlem Renaissance or Civil Rights movement?

Optional Art Extension: Once students complete the worksheet, take it a step further and turn the designs into fully movable, 3D creations! Have them use clay, foam, aluminum foil, paper mâché or other crafting materials to make a small model that can stand or move, just like a true action figure. They must somehow find a way to incorporate their traits into the moveable figure design.

Action Figure Worksheet

Name: _____

Directions: Using a variety of art materials, illustrate your action figure's likeness and costume. Next, list your unique inner traits (superpowers) that help you overcome challenges.



RESOURCES



BOOKS

Black Boy, by Richard Wright, 1945.

"I Have Seen Black Hands" poem, by Richard Wright, originally appearing in *New Masses*, Vol. 11, June 26, 1934.

Check It Out!



For more information,
visit CPL Youth Services
or go to cpl.org.



Recommended reads curated by Cleveland Public Library

All American Boys, by Jason Reynolds & Brendan Kiely
Between the World & Me, by Ta-Nehisi Coates
Dear Martin, by Nic Stone
Invisible Man, by Ralph Ellison
Kindred, Falafel, by Octavia Butler
Long Way Down, by Jason Reynolds

March (Trilogy), by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin & Nate Powell
Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, & You, by Jason Reynolds & Ibram X. Kendi
The Fire Next Time, by James Baldwin
The Hate U Give, by Angie Thomas

WEB



Classroom Connections Video Workshops

Black Boy Primer Video for Educators.
Password: identity262103

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/11503227/video/1029386085>

Black Boy Pre-Show Video. Password:
identity262103 <https://vimeo.com/showcase/11503227/video/1029386677>

Black Boy Post-Show Video. Password:
identity262103 <https://vimeo.com/showcase/11503227/video/1029387351>

"Education Resources," *The Poetry Foundation*,
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/education>

"The Costs of Code-Switching," by Courtney L. McCluney, Kathrina Robotham, Serenity Lee, Richard Smith and Myles Durkee, *Harvard Business Review*, November 15, 2019.
<https://hbr.org/2019/11/the-costs-of-codeswitching>

"What Was Jim Crow," by Dr. David Pilgrim, *Jim Crow Museum*, September 2000. Edited 2012.
<https://jimcrowmuseum.ferris.edu/what.htm>

"What The Streets Mean to Me" Activity Hosting a Poetry Slam:

"Teach Spoken Word Poetry," *Educational Theatre Association*, <https://learn.schooltheatre.org/click-to-teach-spoken-word-poetry>

"Welcome to the Poetry Café," by Anne Holmes, *Library of Congress*, <https://blogs.loc.gov/catbird/2018/01/welcome-to-the-poetry-caf/>

Slam Poetry Performances:

"Broken Heart performed by Avery LaMar Pope & Q in the Stu" YouTube, uploaded by The Sparrow's Fortune, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85YNDTEoTBQ&t=167s>
Advisory: Mention of alcoholism & cancer

"Cuz He's Black performed by Javon Johnson" YouTube, uploaded by Button Poetry, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9Wf8y_5Yn4
Advisory: Use of strong language & mention of violence

"For Cleveland, Ohio, My Home performed by Siaara Freeman" YouTube, uploaded by Button Poetry, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ws8mZmMUx0w>
Advisory: Use of strong language & mention of violence

"OCD performed by Neil Hilborn" YouTube, uploaded by Button Poetry, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnKZ4pdSU-s>
Advisory: Use of strong language and mention of obsessive compulsive disorder

CURRICULUM STANDARDS INDEX

English/Language Arts

Standard	Description	Grade	Activity	Page
L.7.3	Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening. a. Choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely. b. Recognize and eliminate wordiness and redundancy.	7	Victim or Villain	9
RL.7.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific language choices, such as sensory words or phrases, on meaning and tone, including rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.	7	Better Left Unsaid	13
SL.7.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grade 7 topics, texts, and issues</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	7	Pre-Show Video Workshop Victim or Villain What the Streets Mean to Me Eat, Or Else Post-Show Video Workshop	8 9 10 11 12
W.7.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.	7	Victim or Villain What the Streets Mean to Me	9 10
W.7.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	7	Pre-Show Video Workshop What the Streets Mean to Me Post-Show Video Workshop	8 10 12
L.8.3	Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.	8	Victim or Villain	9
RL.8.3	Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.	8	Better Left Unsaid	13
RL.8.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning, mood, and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.	8	Better Left Unsaid	13

SL.8.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grade 8 topics, texts, and issues</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	8	Pre-Show Video Workshop Victim or Villain What the Streets Mean to Me Eat, Or Else Post-Show Video Workshop	8 9 10 11 12
W.8.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and wellstructured event sequences.	8	Victim or Villain What the Streets Mean to Me	9 10
W.8.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	8	Pre-Show Video Workshop What the Streets Mean to Me Post-Show Video Workshop	8 10 12
RL.9-10.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning, mood, and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place or an emotion; how it sets a formal or informal tone).	9-10	Better Left Unsaid	13
SL.9-10.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.	9-10	Pre-Show Video Workshop Victim or Villain What the Streets Mean to Me Eat, Or Else Post-Show Video Workshop	8 9 10 11 12
W.9-10.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.	9-10	What the Streets Mean to Me	10
W.9-10.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	9-10	Pre-Show Video Workshop Victim or Villain What the Streets Mean to Me Post-Show Video Workshop	8 9 10 12
RL.11-12.4	Determine the connotative, denotative, and figurative meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text; analyze the impact of author's diction, including multiple-meaning words or language that is particularly evocative to the tone and mood of the text.	11-12	Better Left Unsaid	13
SL.11-12.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.	11-12	Pre-Show Video Workshop Victim or Villain What the Streets Mean to Me Eat, Or Else Post-Show Video Workshop	8 9 10 11 12

W.11-12.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.	11-12	What the Streets Mean to Me	10
W.11-12.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	11-12	Pre-Show Video Workshop Victim or Villain What the Streets Mean to Me Post-Show Video Workshop	8 9 10 12

Fine Arts – Drama

Standard	Description	Grade	Activity	Page
7.2CO	Incorporate multiple perspectives and diverse community ideas in a dramatic or theatrical work.	7	Better Left Unsaid	13
8.1PE	Develop scripted or improvised characters using appropriate voice, posture, movement, or language to reveal a conflict and develop a resolution.	8	Better Left Unsaid	13
8.6CO	Use different theatrical forms to examine contemporary social, cultural, or global topics.	8	Pre-Show Video Workshop	8
8.6CR	Engage in complex ensemble-building activities to develop character goals and tactics.	8	Pre-Show Video Workshop	8
HSP.1CO	Describe how drama and theatre can affect social change, both globally and locally.	9-12	Pre-Show Video Workshop	8
HSP.2PE	Demonstrate the collaborative skills necessary for producing a scene with a unified vision	9-12	Better Left Unsaid	13
HSP.6CR	Collaborate with a small group to create a written scene and produce it for class.	9-12	Better Left Unsaid	13

Fine Arts – Visual Arts

Standard	Description	Grade	Activity	Page
7.2PE	Explore materials to design and create works of art.	7	Action Figure	15
7.3CO	Explore how personal experiences influence style and choice of subject matter.	7	Action Figure	15
7.4RE	Connect various art forms to their social, cultural, or historical purposes.	7	Action Figure	15
8.1CO	Interpret how community context, beliefs, and resources influence works of art.	8	Action Figure	15
8.2CR	R Brainstorm, refine, and select solutions for original works of art.	8	Action Figure	15
8.2RE	Differentiate between established criteria and personal goals throughout the learning process.	8	Action Figure	15
HSP.3CO	Examine personal and social contexts related to works of art.	9-12	Action Figure	15
HSI.3CO	Investigate emotional experiences through personal and collaborative artistic processes.	9-12	Action Figure	15

Social & Emotional Learning

Standard	Description	Grade	Activity	Page
A1.1.c	Identify, recognize, and name personal complex emotions	6-8	What The Streets Mean to Me Better Left Unsaid	10 13
A1.2.c	Explain that emotions may vary based on the situation, including people and places	6-8	What The Streets Mean to Me Better Left Unsaid	10 13
A2.1.c	Describe how personal interests, qualities and strengths may help with decision making to accomplish personal goals	6-8	Action Figure	15
B1.1.c	Describe the relationship between thoughts, emotions and behavior and apply strategies to regulate response	6-8	Eat, Or Else	11
B1.3.c	Apply productive self- monitoring strategies to reframe thoughts and behaviors	6-8	Action Figure	15
B3.1.c	Utilize strategies for persevering through challenges and setbacks	6-8	Action Figure	15
C1.3.c	Demonstrate empathy through understanding of others' feelings and acknowledgement of their perspective	6-8	Eat, Or Else	11
D1.1.c	Demonstrate the ability to actively listen and understand multiple perspectives	6-8	Better Left Unsaid	13
A1.1.d	Identify complex emotions as an indicator of personal state of well-being	9-12	What The Streets Mean to Me, Better Left Unsaid	10 13
A1.2.d	Analyze ways emotions impact the social environment	9-12	What The Streets Mean to Me, Better Left Unsaid	10 13
B3.1.d	Demonstrate the ability to persevere through challenges for long-term rewards or success	9-12	Action Figure	15
C1.2.d	Demonstrate ways to encourage mutual respect across all settings when viewpoints or perceptions differ.	9-12	Pre-Show Video Workshop	8
C1.3.d	Demonstrate empathy through compassion in self and encourage in others	9-12	Eat, Or Else	11
C3.3.d	Analyze how one can build community that respects all human dignity virtually and in-person.	9-12	Pre-Show Video Workshop	8
C4.1.d	Evaluate how societal and cultural norms influence personal interactions	9-12	What the Streets Mean to Me	10
D3.1.d	Demonstrate an ability to co-exist in civility in the face of differing perspectives to prevent conflict.	9-12	Pre-Show Video Workshop	8

Social Studies

Standard	Description	Grade	Activity	Page
AH.CS.12	Following Reconstruction, old political and social structures reemerged and racial discrimination was institutionalized.	9-12	Pre-Show Video Workshop Better Left Unsaid Action Figure	8 13 15
AH.CS.13	The Progressive era was an effort to address the ills of American society stemming from industrial capitalism, urbanization and political corruption.	9-12	Better Left Unsaid	13
AH.CS.16	Racial intolerance, anti-immigrant attitudes and the Red Scare contributed to social unrest after World War I.	9-12	What The Streets Mean to Me	10
AH.CS.18	Movements such as the Harlem Renaissance, African- American migration, women's suffrage and Prohibition all contributed to social change.	9-12	Pre-Show Video Workshop What The Streets Mean To Me	8 10 15