



# Educator Resources

# TRIBES

A NEW  
PLAY BY NINA  
RAINE

DIRECTED BY DAVID  
CROMER

February 27–April 14, 2013  
Mark Taper Forum

# Welcome

## Theatre Educator Resources *Tribes*

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Center Theatre Group is excited to have you and your students join us for *Tribes*. A great play raises questions about the human condition, and a great educational experience allows students an opportunity to reflect upon those questions and begin to discover their own answers. To that end the material in Center Theatre Group's Student Discovery Guide and Educator Resources raise questions: questions about language and love, the need to belong and the loneliness of not being included, the difference between hearing and really listening. Our goal is to provide you with a variety of entry points into the play so that you can choose what works best for you and your students.

The Educator Resources and Student Discovery Guide are companion pieces that are designed to help you prepare your students to see the play and to follow-up the performance with options for discussion, reflection and creativity.

We have organized the Educator Resources into the following sections:

## Student Discovery Guide

The Student Discovery Guide provides students with background information about the play and the subject matter, as well as questions for individual reflection. Written to be student-driven, the Discovery Guide helps prepare your students for the performance.

## About This Play

This section includes a detailed synopsis of the play.

## Comprehension

This section includes background information about the subject matter of the play. We have selected the information that most directly connects to or informs what happens in the play. This section furthers and deepens the background information provided in the Student Discovery Guide. This section can be shared before the play and/or discussed after the performance. It can also be used to provide research topics for your classroom.

## Connection and Creativity

This section provides ways to explore connections between the ideas presented in the play, the students' lives, and the world we live in. In addition, it provides opportunities for your students to use theatre to explore and express. Theatre activities are included that examine both specific artistic aspects of the production, as well as delve deeper into the ideas and questions raised by *Tribes*. The questions, activities and information in this section can be used both before and after the performance.

We know the hard work and dedication that it takes to bring students to see theatre. These materials are designed to support you in making the most of that experience. We applaud your passion for sharing theatre with your students, and thank you for sharing your students with all of us at Center Theatre Group. We look forward to seeing you at the theatre!

# About *Tribes*

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## Scene-by-Scene Synopsis

### SCENE ONE

England, present day. A noisy dinner table. Christopher and Beth have all their children under one roof again: Daniel, oldest brother and struggling academic; Ruth, middle sibling and aspiring opera singer; and Billy, youngest and most recently graduated from college. They are arguing about several things at once, but primarily about the merits of Ruth's new boyfriend. According to Christopher and Daniel, he's too old, he's too boring, he's a bad writer, he's a drunk, he's a womanizer, he's impotent, etc. Amid the back-and-forth, the only one not participating is Billy. Christopher notices and asks if Billy is wearing his hearing aids.

A phone call from Daniel's ex-girlfriend takes him from the room and conversation quickly shifts to her inadequacies and Daniel's pot smoking. Christopher becomes bored with the conversation and starts listening to Chinese language lessons on his laptop, drowning everyone out. In retaliation, Daniel blasts *Bohemian Rhapsody* from the radio. When the clash is over, Billy asks Daniel what happened. Daniel makes sure Billy can read his lips and says, "Nothing."

### SCENE TWO

Billy meets a young woman at a party. Sylvia signs to him rapidly, complaining about her boyfriend, until Billy tells her he doesn't know sign language. She switches to speaking and recognizes that his lipreading skills are excellent. Billy explains that his parents chose to raise him orally, and asks if Sylvia is an interpreter. She is, in a way – her parents are deaf. Billy is curious about sign and asks Sylvia to show him something. She fingerspells "flower," the letters blooming and wilting poetically. Billy is smitten – with sign and with Sylvia. As they flirt, he notices that she is losing her hearing. She reveals that her condition is congenital; she watched her siblings lose their hearing, and knows that sometime soon it will happen to her, too.

### SCENE THREE

Back home in the kitchen, Daniel and Ruth are fighting for Beth's attention – Daniel wants her to listen to his thesis and Ruth needs her to translate opera lyrics for a singing job she's preparing for. As the older siblings argue, Billy notices that Daniel is unusually upset. Daniel and Ruth's argument escalates into one of the family's typical debates, combining legitimate criticism and cheap shots. Christopher enters and leaps in with great relish. Beth urges everyone to slow down so Billy can keep up. Highly excited, Daniel sits at the piano shouting and smashing the keys, until Billy sits down next to him and puts his arm around his shoulders. The rest of the family goes silent. Daniel insists he's fine and leaves the room. The family tries to figure out what could be upsetting Daniel to such a degree. Christopher is sure it's the no-good ex-girlfriend, and the fact that Daniel doesn't have the skills to be an academic. Mid-argument, Billy tells them about Sylvia, "She's the one."

#### SCENE FOUR

Billy comes home late from a night out with Sylvia. Daniel is sitting in the kitchen with the radio on, but turns it off so it won't interfere with Billy's hearing aids. Daniel tells Billy he couldn't sleep because he's hearing voices in his head – shouting his name, criticizing him. Despite his personal pain, Daniel is still happy for Billy and Sylvia, but he doesn't want Billy to get hurt, and tells him that love doesn't last. Daniel asks Billy if it's okay to turn the radio back on. Music drowns out the voices.

#### SCENE FIVE

The family is preparing to meet Sylvia for the first time, and no one is in a good mood. They are surprised when Ruth reveals that Sylvia has been teaching Billy sign language. Daniel can't understand why Billy would want to learn now, after all these years of saying he didn't want any part of the Deaf community. Christopher is angry, too. He insists Billy is not deaf, he was raised hearing, "protected from all that shit" – protected from being labeled and confined to a group Christopher insists is defined by exclusion. Beth and Ruth are also nervous about meeting Billy's first girlfriend, but they understand why he would want to learn sign. Beth says, "People do things for people they love."

An awkward round of greetings follows Billy and Sylvia's arrival, as each of the family members explain their various creative endeavors. Sylvia shares that she works for a Deaf charity, and Christopher presses her on her thoughts about the Deaf community in general. She explains her experience of a "Deaf hierarchy" – that she has lower status because she was born hearing, unlike Billy who was born deaf. However, Billy loses some status because he doesn't know sign.

Beth's phone rings mid-conversation and despite the family's protestations, she answers it. On the other end is her cousin, extending an invitation. Beth accepts as the family groans and mocks the cousin and his wife. Beth, frustrated, tries to stop them: "We spend our whole time being nasty about other people, it's cliquy and horrible and I'm not having it!" To which Christopher responds, "Why not! What's wrong with laughing at people? I think you should be able to laugh at everyone!"

Their banter speeds up and it gets harder for Sylvia to read their lips. Billy translates for her as the conversation turns toward an uncomfortable subject: which is superior, the spoken word or sign language? Assuming sign language is "broken English," Christopher and Daniel press Sylvia about the limitations of sign language and whether or not she, as someone losing her hearing, considers deafness a disability. She surprises them by saying that she believes it is, and that sign language itself is confining because everything has to be concrete, black and white. That being said, she goes on to demonstrate how much emotion sign can convey, "You don't have to pin the emotion down to a word." Ruth observes, "So it's like music. Non-verbal but it gives you emotions."

## ACT II

### SCENE SIX

Evening, the kitchen. Billy proudly updates Daniel on his new job – lipreading surveillance footage for court trials. In a recent case, his testimony may have been the deciding factor in getting a conviction. Sylvia comes downstairs as Billy heads up to bed. She and Daniel share a cigarette and a quiet moment. Sylvia tells Daniel she and Billy are planning to move in together. Daniel kisses her.

### SCENE SEVEN

Billy and Sylvia are no longer living in the house, but they have called a group meeting. While the family waits, Christopher wears headphones and is plugged into his computer. Beth and Ruth worriedly discuss Daniel's psychological deterioration – a childhood stutter has returned and the voices are getting worse. Ruth isn't doing very well herself, struggling with her own feelings of creative failure and familial neglect. Christopher gets impatient and shouts for Daniel, who initially doesn't respond, claiming he thought the shouts were coming from the voices in his head.

At Billy and Sylvia's arrival, everyone exchanges warm greetings, but the moment is made extremely awkward by Billy's refusal to talk to anyone. Instead, he signs and Sylvia translates for him, "He's decided to stop talking to you. He thinks you should all learn sign... He spent his life trying to understand you and now he thinks you should try to understand him." The family is shocked – they thought they were doing the right thing, but instead they made him feel like an outsider. An argument follows between Billy and his family with Sylvia caught in the middle translating and Daniel battling his stutter.

### SCENE EIGHT

Sylvia and Billy's apartment. Billy is in front of the television, taking notes as he watches surveillance footage. Sylvia tells him she's decided to skip the party they'd been planning to attend. While Billy has now fully embraced his place in the Deaf community; Sylvia needs a break from it.

The surveillance video Billy has been working on catches Sylvia's attention. She plays the tape back and reads his notes at the same time. As Billy presses her to tell him what's happened to make her want to withdraw from the community and life that she introduced him to, she presses him about how much of the dialogue on the tapes he's been making up.

### SCENE NINE

Sylvia visits Ruth and Daniel to tell them that she and Billy have broken up and his work on the surveillance footage is being investigated. Daniel's psychological state is much worse – his stutter and the voices make it hard for him to communicate.

#### SCENE TEN

Daniel and Billy are in the family kitchen discussing their respective burdens – Daniel’s mental health and Billy’s legal trouble. Daniel’s stutter gets so bad, he nearly can’t speak at all but does his best to tell Billy that the family doesn’t care about the investigation. They don’t care about what he did or why he did it. They love him and they want him to come back.

THE END

# Comprehension

Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

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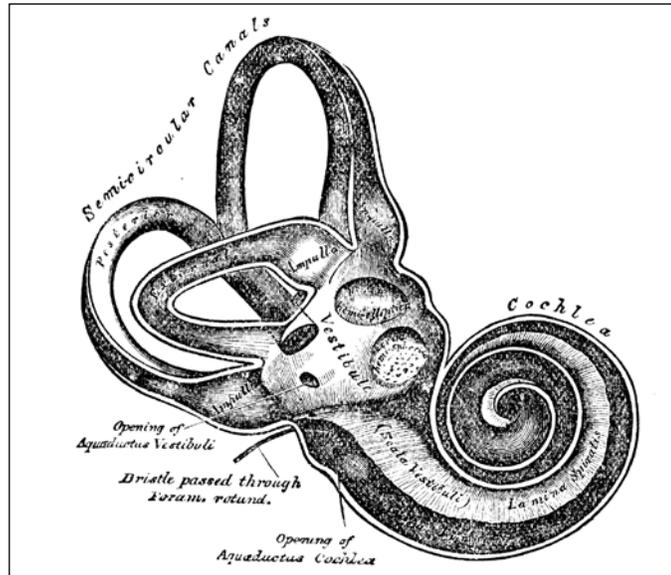
### Timeline

- Without any systematic way of communicating, the American deaf are isolated from each other and the people around them.
- 1817, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet opens the first school for deaf children in Hartford, Connecticut.  
Laurent Clerc joins Gallaudet from the Paris Institution for the Deaf, bringing French Sign Language (FSL) with him. FSL, combined with some of the signs his American students were already using, evolved into American Sign Language (ASL). ASL becomes the foundation for deaf academia.
- 1864, Abraham Lincoln signs a law establishing Gallaudet University, the first college for deaf students.
- 1860s, Alexander Graham Bell champions the Oral Method, arguing that deaf children only need to be taught how to speak. Because of his fame, the method catches on and oral schools open all over the country, pushing sign language into the background.
- 1876, Bell patents the telephone – an invention he perfected while training teachers in the Oral Method at Boston University. The telephone later becomes a primary mode of communication, requiring deaf people to rely on hearing friends.
- 1880, the National Association of the Deaf is founded. Its first public cause is 1906 legislation forbidding deaf people from working for the government. After grassroots protests, Theodore Roosevelt repeals the guidelines.
- 1964, deaf physicist Robert Weitbrecht invents the teletypewriter (TTY).
- 1967, the National Theatre of the Deaf is founded. Their critical success brings Deaf art and culture to hearing people.
- 1988, Students at Gallaudet University organized a massive protest — Deaf President Now! — demanding that the Board of Directors appoint a Deaf president. After taking over the campus for seven days, their demands are met.

### Anatomy of the Ear

The ear is a finely tuned, complicated, delicate machine. It is made up of three parts: the outer ear, the middle ear, and the inner ear. The outer ear includes the external ear, which acts as a funnel for sound waves, and the auditory canal, which directs those sound waves into the middle ear. When the sound waves reach the middle ear, they cause the eardrum to vibrate, which in turn causes three tiny bones – the hammer, anvil, and stirrup – to vibrate as well. In the snail-like cochlea of the inner ear, tiny cells along the spiraling path turn those vibrations into electrical impulses, which hit the auditory nerve and are directed to the brain to be interpreted.

Hearing loss can occur if any part of this system doesn't function properly. Causes of hearing loss are varied and include heredity, aging, excessive exposure to loud noises, head injury, and infection.



## Hearing Loss

“The lives of Deaf people are far from silent but very loudly click, buzz, swish, pop, roar, and whir.” –*Deaf in America*

The onset of Billy and Sylvia’s hearing loss is very different. Billy has been deaf all his life. Sylvia had been the only hearing member in her family. Now in her twenties, she is experiencing the same degenerative hearing loss that affected her siblings.

Individuals also experience a range of severity along a continuum from mild to profound based on the number of decibels they can hear. Someone with mild hearing loss would have trouble hearing sounds that are less than 40 decibels, such as rain. Profound hearing loss means a person is unable to hear anything less than 90 decibels, such as a leaf blower.

In addition, the pattern of hearing loss varies from person to person. Billy still has a very small amount of residual hearing, which is why he’s able to use hearing aids. Describing her own experience, Sylvia says, “I still get a lot...Vowels. The low frequencies, like your voice, I can still hear. It just...doesn’t make sense anymore. I can’t get the consonants.”

Sylvia is also surprised that losing her hearing doesn’t mean everything just goes silent. “No one told me it was going to be this noisy going deaf... It’s this buzz...this roar and outside – it’s all – black.”

## Hearing Aids

Hearing aids are small electronic devices that sit directly in or behind the ear. They are made up of a microphone, an amplifier, and a speaker. Sound vibrations enter the hearing aid through the microphone, are magnified, and then delivered into the ear by a miniature receiver.

Throughout *Tribes*, Billy’s hearing aids serve as a means of both connecting with and blocking out the people around him. When his voice fragments and he has difficulty maintaining a consistent volume, Christopher reminds Billy to check his hearing aids’ batteries so he can communicate more effectively with the family. When Billy is sick of hearing his family complain, removing the hearing aids gives him some relief.

# Connections and Creativity

This section provides ways to explore connections between the ideas presented in the play, the students' lives, and the world we live in. In addition, it provides opportunities for your students to use theatre to explore and express. Theatre activities are included that examine both specific artistic aspects of the production, as well as delve deeper into the ideas and questions raised by *Tribes*. The questions, activities and information in this section can be used both before and after the performance.

## Cultural Mapping

### Objectives

- Students will gain knowledge of similarities and differences in their classmates.
- Students will be introduced to *Tribes* and begin to reflect on the play.

### Exercise

Ask the students to move the desks to the side and stand in a circle. Describe the room as a map of the world. Identify Los Angeles in the space.

Have students who were born in Los Angeles gather in that place. Have the other students group themselves according to their birthplace (north, east, south, or west of Los Angeles). Each group must determine two additional things that they have in common. Report back to the whole class. (Example: The members of the “north” group all like pizza and are the oldest in their families.)

Repeat activity using other divisions such as:

Oldest, middle, youngest, only child.

Speak one language, two languages, etc.

Quotes from the production:

(Ask each student to stand by the quote that most intrigues them. Discuss in the group why they chose that quote. What intrigues them about it?)

*Tribes* Cultural Mapping quotes:

“It’s a scary universe out there. If you’re part of a group, it’s easier.”

“The thing I’m finding, it’s all about empathy.”

“Join in! Have an argument!”

“How can you feel a feeling unless you have the word for it?”

“Look at me. Look at me!”

“I just stopped listening.”

## Tableaus/Artist and Sculpture

### Objectives

- Students will practice using their bodies to communicate an idea or theme.
- Students will reflect on the varied interpretations of the theme.
- Students will reflect on *Tribes* through a physical exploration of its themes.

### Exercise

Divide students into pairs. Student A is the artist. Student B is the statue.

Have student A create a statue out of B on the theme of “the future.”

Examples: Flying cars, world peace, destroying the environment, graduating from college.

Statues can be realistic or symbolic, personal or global.

## Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

Have each student title their statue and present to the class.  
Repeat this exercise with B as the artist and A as the statue.  
Repeat with the themes of Tribes, Family, Language, Communication, Belonging, Isolation, Hearing and Listening. Have each student sculpt an image that represents one of these themes.

Discuss what these ideas mean to your students and what these ideas meant to the characters in *Tribes*. Are they similar or very different?

### Gesture Communication:

#### Objectives:

- Students will experience what it is like to express an aspect of themselves through movement
- Students will experience trying to communicate with others nonverbally
- Students will experience what it is like to use their eyes “to listen”

Have the group stand in a circle.  
Ask everyone to think of a physical gesture that expresses how they feel right now. Each person shares their name and gesture. The rest of the group repeats three times. Go around the circle again, this time each person shares only their nonverbal gesture. Ask everyone to see how many “gesture names” they can remember.

Next, ask one person to begin. This student will make eye contact with someone in the circle and then share that person’s gesture name. The person receiving the gesture will acknowledge by repeating their gesture name and then will make eye contact and make the gesture name of a third person. Repeat for a few rounds. Make sure you don’t sign until the person sees you.

Make the game more complicated by having two people go at once. Remind the group that they need to use their eyes to make contact with another student and to see if their gesture name is being called. After several rounds add in a third person and a fourth person with everyone going at the same time. The game should be getting more complicated as students try to both sign and watch for their sign.

After the game is over, discuss what it felt like to have to communicate without words. After seeing *Tribes*, discuss how this relates to Billy’s experience with his family and others.

## Have Your Say!

In *Tribes*, the character Billy has to tell his family something he's never said to them. It's hard, but he does it. Now, students get to write a letter to a person or a group of people who they need to say something to, but never have. Your students don't have to share the letter if they want the words to stay private. In fact, they'll rip it up afterwards, so encourage bravery and honesty.

### MATERIALS:

Beautiful stationary and envelopes  
Great pens  
Stamps  
Jazz music

### ACTIVITY:

Ask students to find a comfortable space on the floor to lie down if space permits. Otherwise, they can remain at their desks with eyes closed.

Play a great, meditative song.

Ask students to give the weight of their bodies to the floor. Let them know you will ask three questions while the song is playing. No spoken answer is required, just silent thinking.

- 1) Is there a person or a group of people you've always wanted to say something to, but were too scared or embarrassed?
- 2) What would you like to say to them if you could say absolutely anything?
- 3) How would you feel after you told this person or group what you really felt?

Once the song ends, distribute stationary, envelopes, pens and stamps. Ask the students to write a letter to the person or group they just thought about. Tell them to write and say whatever they want. Encourage them to be brave, honest and direct. Let them know the letters won't be shared.

Some examples could be someone you have a crush on, a person who hurt you or a someone you owe an apology. Or perhaps someone you should have thanked or congratulated! Play great music in the background while students compose their letters.

Ask students to sign their letter, and then seal in a stamped and addressed envelope. Invite the students to take the letters home and rip them up whenever they are ready.

Gather in a circle and do a check-out with the class. Encourage each student to share a thought or feeling about the activity.

## Say It Through Sign!

This is an extension of the letter writing exercise above. In the play, Billy learns how to use sign language. Now, students get to learn a few words in ASL to experience how the signs often look like the meaning of actual words. Students will get to make up their own language based on gestures and share a few ideas from their letters in a silent, choreographed gesture poem.

### MATERIALS:

Journals and pens

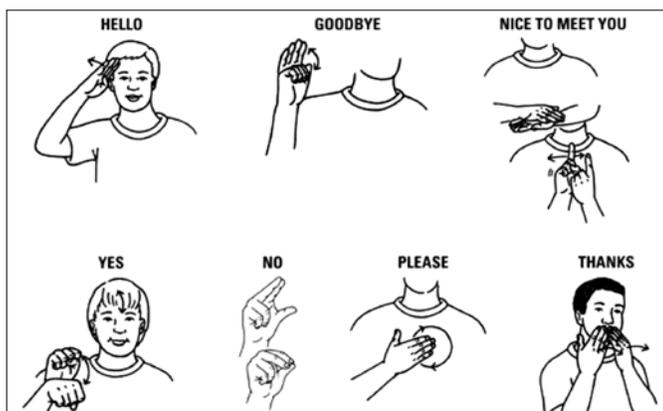
A projector or large wall sticky notes

### ACTIVITY:

Start with the classic theater game “What do you see?” The class forms a circle. One by one, a student volunteers to go to the center and strike a frozen pose. The other students describe what they see, where the student could be, what they are doing, what they are thinking, etc. Continue the game until all students have had a chance to enter the center circle.

Repeat the game, but now it’s called “What do you sign?” The class stays in a circle. One by one, a student volunteers to go to the center. Ask the student to think of a secret word. Then, using one or two hands only, create a simple gesture that would get other students in the circle to guess the secret word. For example, a student could hold their fingers to their side temples for “headache.” Or shoot an imaginary hoop, for “basketball.” Teacher demonstrates a few ideas to get the game going. Continue until all students have had a chance to invent a sign for a secret word.

Invite students to have a seat in the circle. The teacher projects the following graphics (or other examples from a basic internet search) on a screen, draws them simply on large wall sticky notes (stick-figures are fine), or demonstrates these ASL words:



## Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

Match up the students in pairs. Students get a chance to practice the signs with each other.

A few pairs volunteer to demonstrate the signed words with the class.

Ask the students to take a minute to think about the letter they wrote in the first activity. Then write down 5 secret words that might describe feelings or ideas in the letter.

The students get back in their original pairs. They share their 5 words with their partner only, but the specific content of the letter always remains private.

Working together, the pairs invent simple gestures for each word. Then, students practice signing their 5 invented words to their partner. Allow about 15 minutes for this rehearsal.

Students then prepare to share their 5 invented signs in order, as if performing a choreographed 5-word silent poem made out of gestures.

Gather the class back in a circle. Play some light jazz in the background.

Let the class know that there are many stories in the letters that everyone wrote. The stories will remain private. But now the group will share some ideas from the letters using only their hands, faces and arms to sign and gesture. This will give students an idea of what it might be like to talk without speaking and using only their hands, like the characters in *Tribes* who use American Sign Language (ASL).

Go around the circle without pause, while the music is playing, and allow each student to sign their 5 secret words.

After everyone has shared, allow some time for discussion. Ask the group what ideas, words and feelings they saw in the different signs.

### OPTIONAL:

If time allows, students can go online to look up the real ASL sign for their 5 invented words. Perhaps they can demonstrate and compare both the real ASL word and the gesture they invented for the word.

## Gesture And Body Language In Daily Life

Throughout *Tribes*, we witness characters expressing themselves verbally, through sign language, body language, gestures, facial expressions and silence. While we might not know American Sign Language (ASL), we all communicate in a variety of ways as well in our daily lives.

Discuss with your class: what and how do we communicate without words in daily life? “Cover the space”: Have students move through the space without talking or touching.

Students will move as if they are:

Light, Heavy, Explosive, Angry, In love, Rebellious, Confused, Depressed, Happy (and any other feelings you would like to add).

After covering the space communicating the feelings above with their whole body, ask students to distill their movement into a gesture. Pick two opposite emotions and ask the class to communicate these feelings using only their shoulders, then their head and finally with just their hands.

Discuss what it feels like to communicate without spoken words. Did you find it easier or harder to express yourself?

## Observation Game

### Objectives:

- Students will practice their observation skills
- Students will gain an appreciation of the need for strong visual communication for the characters in *Tribes*.

Divide the class into two lines about five feet apart. The lines should be facing one another. Ask each student to make sure they know who their partner is (who is directly across from them) and their partner’s name.

Without telling the students the name of the game, ask them to take a deep breath in and then observe their partner in silence for 30 seconds. Tell them it is alright to laugh but they cannot talk.

At the end of the 30 seconds, ask them to turn their back to their partner and to make three changes to their physical appearance. Offer suggestions: roll up your sleeves, take off a shoe or a belt, put hair in a ponytail, change a ring from one finger to the next. Give them about a minute to make these changes.

## Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

Have the students turn back to their partner, step forward and then guess each other's changes. When they have guessed all the changes, have them step back in line but keep the physical changes they made.

Have one line move down a space. Each person has a new partner. Repeat above activity.

Ask students to notice if this second round is easier now that they know why they are looking at their partner. Repeat several times – each time challenging the students to find new and different physical changes.

Discuss how it felt to have to look at their partner in silence, especially in the first round. What would it be like if you needed to watch people's faces to know what was going on in a room? Discuss how this relates to *Tribes* and to Billy's and Sylvia's experience in the play.

### Rules Of The World

We meet characters in *Tribes* who live in different worlds. They have to communicate differently in each world.

Billy has discovered the world of sign language. Billy has had to adjust to his hearing family and their ways of communicating his entire life and now is spending a lot of time communicating in sign language with the Deaf community. This puts him between worlds, as he needs to communicate differently in each of them. It was hard for Billy that his family did not learn sign. Sylvia translated to his family for him: "And you made promises. We'll learn sign. You never did."

Sylvia, who is going deaf, is suddenly having a difficult time communicating in the hearing world in what has always been her first language. Sylvia is also between worlds as she is no longer as easily able to communicate with the hearing as she used to be. Daniel responds to Sylvia, "But you're in both worlds. You're in both worlds."

- Writing Exercise: Are there two worlds you experience in your own life? What two worlds are you in between? How does your communication differ in each world?
- Writing Exercise: The Rules of Your World. Students write a detailed account of their different worlds.
- Students receive pictures from National Geographic magazine. Each student selects an image. From looking at the picture and from their imaginations, they write the rules of the world of that image. Ask them to describe the society in detail.

## Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

- Suggested Questions: What is celebrated and what is cursed in this imaginary world? How are people expected to behave? What is the history of how this place came to be?
- A scene from two different worlds is brought to life. The rules are reviewed and firmly established.
- A character is created that will go between the worlds. What behaviors serve in one world that do not serve in the other?

Suggested Questions: How does the character have to adjust his/her behavior in each of the different worlds? How does the character feel in each environment? How do the inhabitants of the different worlds respond to your character?

- Switching Worlds: The teacher and students use three created worlds (A, B and C) from the National Geographic Exercise. The teacher asks the students who created those three worlds to give as many details as possible to the rest of the class.

Volunteer students begin doing an activity that is only relevant to one world. Upon a cue, they switch worlds but keep doing the same activity from their first world. Pick a student to play the role of a tour guide. The tour guide's job is to explain why their behavior does not work there in this new world and what they need to do to fit in.

### Mirror Exercise: Through The Eyes Of...

*Tribes* explores the differences between the Deaf and hearing worlds. The world of the Deaf is the world of seeing and looking. This exercise explores the “sense of sight” which can become more vibrant when the hearing sense is not active. Observation becomes the key in taking in and communicating with the world. This exercise explores the world of looking and seeing.

Materials needed:

Small hand mirrors for each student

Journals or paper and pen for each student

- Students walk around the room covering the space as different characters. The first character can be a very, very old person, the next can be someone weighed down by the world, and the third a person with an attitude (or any other character traits you want the students to explore).

## Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

- Students choose one character from the above exercise to portray and focus on that character while looking in the hand mirror. Next, students write about the character they see in the mirror, asking: Who is this person? What is it like to be in their shoes? What do they want? Students can share if time allows.

Tell the students that the next section of the activity is personal and won't be shared.

- Ask students to look in the mirror at their own reflection. The teacher asks students to focus on their eyes while reflecting upon the following question: What do you see when you look in your eyes? Students then write their reflections in their journal.
- Next, students look at their entire face in the mirror and reflect in their writing: What do you wish for your face to convey to people when they look at it?
- And finally, students study their mouth and answer in their writing: What is the one thing you'd like to say to yourself?

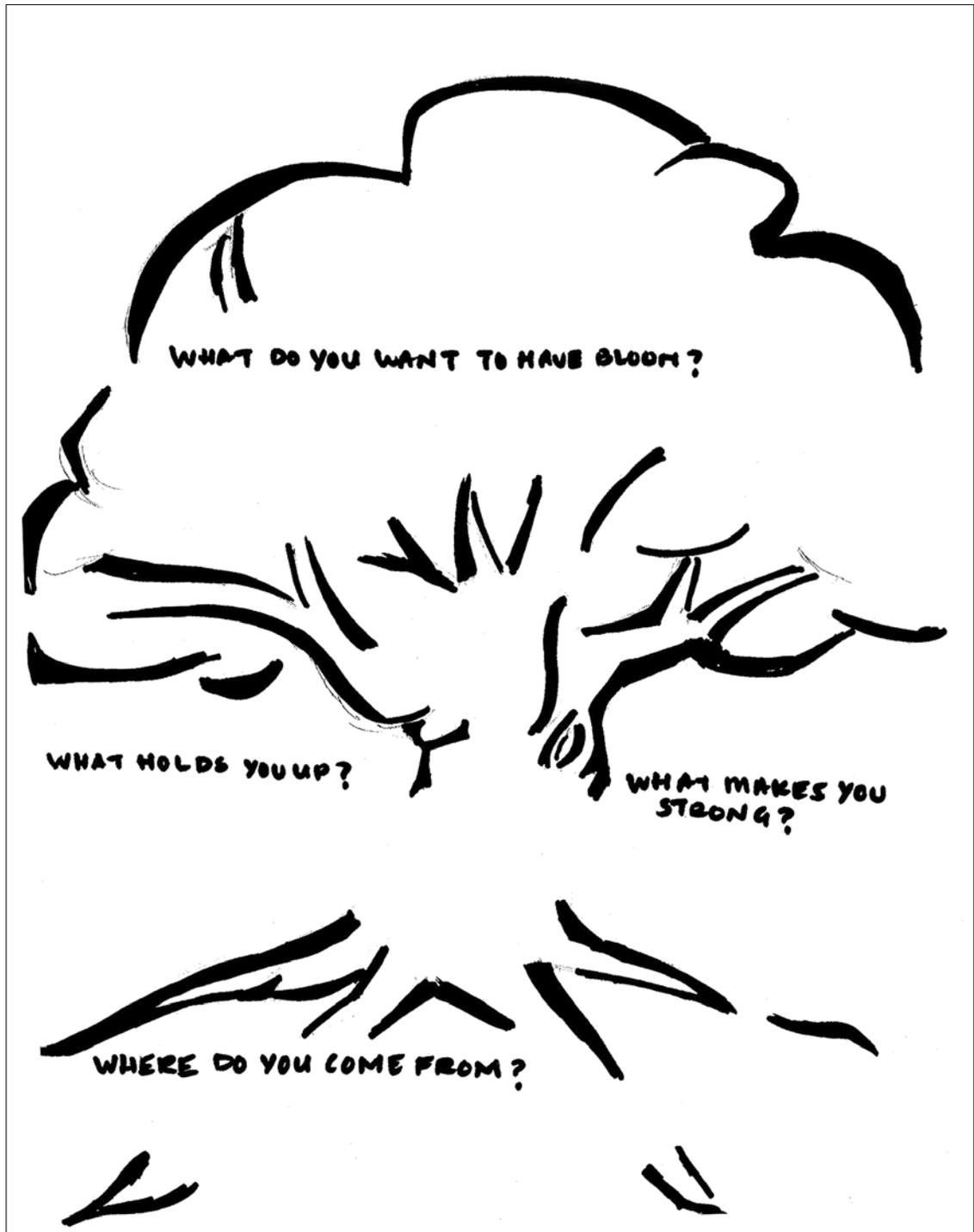
## Tree Mapping

*Tribes* is a play about what it means to be a family and what we learn or inherit from our families. The characters in *Tribes* are struggling to find the community or family where they feel they belong. Some people are very close to their blood family and others create their families in the world. We are all made up of our experiences, choices and the things that make us feel alive and whole.

Either draw a tree or use the attached tree template.

- Roots: Write the elements that made you who you are in the roots. Include the positive and the more difficult aspects, remembering that the roots pull the tree's life force energy from the nutrients in the ground. Where do you come from? What made you who you are today?
- Trunk: In the trunk write the parts of you that have helped you cope with the world and move forward. Perhaps the spine and heart are located in the trunk of the tree. What holds you up? What makes you feel strong? What does your heart tell you?
- Branches: In the branches map out all that has blossomed for you as a result of your roots and trunk. What has bloomed? What do you want to have bloom? What are you aspiring to? What different flowers will appear?

Notice how all the parts of the tree are connected. What happens when the blossoms fall off the tree? Do they fall and grow new trees? What are those trees made of? Blossoms fall and create new beginnings. What could your new beginning look like? What future blossoms could come from your new beginning?



## Beauty and the Need to Communicate

(This entire unit can be utilized in sequence or as individual segments as the educator sees fit for their students.)

“...--Without language our thought will die.” from *Tribes* by Nina Raine

What happens when we don't have words for what we need to express? What happens when we don't support the language of others? Can we include others in our language(s)? What if we are supportive and/or inclusive? What if we aren't?

Begin with the theatre game The Big Chief, where all participants but one are “in the know” and using movement language.

### The Big Chief Circle Game:

The object of the game is for the Chief to lead gesture phrases and have the participants in the circle, the tribe, follow. As the gestures change, make sure that the outsider is unable to detect who initiated the new movement. This is a nonverbal game.

- One participant volunteers or is designated as the outsider and leaves the room while the rest of the tribal circle designates a Chief. (Chief, originating during the period of 1250-1300 AD, meaning the head or ruler of a tribe or clan: i.e. an Indian or Tribal Chief)
- The participant designated as Chief initiates gesture phrases (arm and hand movements that one can follow safely in the circle) and the rest of the circle, the tribe, mirrors the Chief. Once a movement pattern is established, the Chief introduces a new one and so on. The Chief learns to be strategic about changing the pattern so the outsider will not detect the change.
- The tribe mirrors the movements without giving away the Chief. Let students know they can follow the Chief without looking directly at him/her. The outsider returns to the room and enters the circle. As the tribe executes their movements, the outsider tries to identify who the Chief is, by detecting who is initiating the gestures. The outsider is free to move about the tribal circle to change his/her position in order to try to discover the Chief.
- Allow the outsider to have up to three guesses to identify the Chief or if time permits, allow the outsider to continue until he/she can detect the Chief.
- When the round is over, have the outsider join the tribe and select another outsider. When that student has left the room, designate another Chief and play again.

## Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

- Play a number of rounds so the group might experience being in the different roles: leader, tribe member and outsider.

### Discussion Questions:

- Discuss what it felt like to be the Chief, a member of the tribe, and the outsider.
- Ask the students who played the outsider, what did you do to try to find out who the Chief was without the ability to talk? How did you figure out the source of the communication? What senses were you using? Sense of smell? Taste? Touch? Hearing? Sight? Did you depend on any of your senses more because you weren't able to talk?
- Have you ever felt like an outsider? What was it like to not be "in the know" when everyone else seems to be in sync?
- What was it like to have to detect the Chief in order to join the tribe?
- What was it like to be a member of the tribe? Did you feel you needed to protect the Chief and the other tribe members? In life, have you ever been a "tribe member"? If so, what was it like when an outsider entered the situation? Do you send signals to each other when you're uncomfortable or wanting to nonverbally keep your communication from the outsider?
- What was it like to be Chief? To lead and not be found out? How did you feel about your tribe and about the outsider?
- Does playing this game remind you of any real life situations?
- In real life situations, are you most often the Chief, tribe member, or outsider?
- If you were Deaf, how would you find where the communication is happening and how would you follow it?

Try the game again, but this time, once the outsider guesses the Chief, have them join the tribal circle and have the Chief and tribe welcome them and then teach the outsider to follow the movements. Notice and discuss the differences in the dynamic and roles.

### Pre-Show:

After playing The Big Chief game, connect the game to the experience of seeing the play Tribes. Ask the students to look for any "Big Chief moments" that they see while watching the play. Encourage them to notice at any given time, who is the Chief? Who is an outsider? Who are the tribe members? How do they communicate? How do they follow what is being communicated?

### Post-Show:

After seeing the performance, ask the students to identify the characters in the play through the following questions:

Who was the Big Chief? Was there more than one Chief? Who were the tribe members and who were the outsiders? What were their character names? (Use Discovery Guide if necessary.)

## Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

### **Activity: Create Tableaus (frozen pictures) of the Big Chief moments.**

Divide the students up into teams of 2-6. Once in their teams, have the students share some Big Chief moments they observed while watching *Tribes*. Ask them to decide whose Big Chief moment to depict in their tableau. (If time permits, the team can create more than one, of course, and/or they can combine more than one Big Chief moment into one tableau.)

Team members cast themselves in the tableau and create their Big Chief Moment(s). Ask each team to consider the following questions as they sculpt their tableau: How do the characters communicate? Do they share the same language? What were their gestures? Were the characters able to successfully communicate with each other? If yes, or if no, how can you share this dynamic in the tableau? How do the characters feel about the Big Chief and vice versa?

Share the Big Chief tableaus one at a time and have the other students/audience discuss what they see, feel or experience.

Discuss with your students that all of the above activities are heavily dependent on the sense of sight. What insight might this give the class into what it must be like to be a Deaf character and actor in *Tribes*?

Imagine the absence of the sense of hearing. What would life be like if our eyes, our sense of sight, became our primary way to connect and follow what is happening in our world? What if we didn't have one of the five senses? How would necessity cause us to communicate? What would necessity cause us to create?

"...Languages open our hearts to the world, but sign language opens our eyes."  
–Excerpt from the article, "The People Of The Eye," by Carol A. Padden

## The Beauty of Communication

Communication usually develops out of necessity and creates connection. Out of enduring connection can develop culture, art and in this case, theatre art.

Throughout *Tribes*, we will witness a real language, sign language, onstage. Let's begin to learn American Sign Language so we can thoughtfully enter the world of this play and experience the art of signing. Learning to communicate in other languages gives us the chance to further develop our brain capacity by imagining a new way of communicating. This creative process helps us to stretch our abilities and sensitivities regarding other fellow human beings.

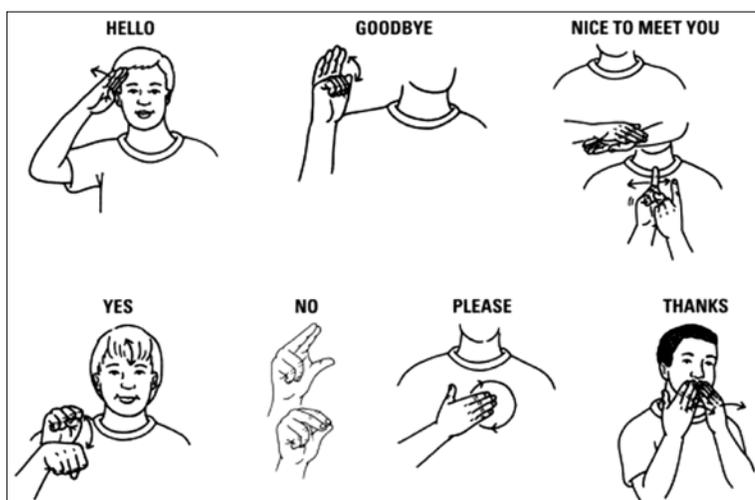
## Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

### Some Information about American Sign Language (ASL):

- ASL is not a universal language for the Deaf/hearing impaired community.
- There is no single “sign language.” Wherever communities of Deaf people exist, sign languages develop.
- Deaf sign languages are not based on the spoken languages of their region, and often have very different syntax (sentence structure), owing to their ability to use spatial relationships to express aspects of meaning.
- In *Tribes*, ASL is used even though the speaking actors are utilizing a British accent. This choice was made to consider the American Deaf audiences that might attend this play in New York and Los Angeles.
- In the British Isles, British Sign Language (BSL) is utilized.

Let’s learn some vocabulary so we can better connect and follow Center Theatre Group’s production of *Tribes*.

- Distribute a document that depicts ASL hand positions/alphabet and/or click on the link to ASL hand positions/alphabet below. (Alphabet document is also at the end of this curriculum.)
- Link to sign language hand positions and alphabet: <http://lifeprint.com/asl101/topics/wallpaper1.htm>
- Time permitting, teach each of these ASL words/phrases: (see diagram following)



With a partner or in trios, use this new vocabulary to have a brief conversation.

### Sign Poetry: Beauty in Sign Language

- In *Tribes*, we witness a moment where a character signs the word, flower, as an artistic form of sign language expression called “sign poetry.”
- Like oral poetry, signed performance poetry uses the conventions of repetition, rhyme, alliteration, rhythm and meter to construct linguistic patterns that add emphasis, meaning, and structure to word forms.
- Unlike traditional verse, modern sign language poetry transforms “phonetic nuances into visual ones and one-dimensional words into three-dimensional shapes.” (<http://lifepoint.com/asl101/topics/poetry.htm>)
- Let’s learn the finger spelling “F-L-O-W-E-R, FLOWER.” (Refer to the alphabet document and/or link provided.)
- Once the participants can spell flower, take a few moments to have them create, utilizing hand and arm gestures, a depiction of a flower. What kind of flower: A rose, a daffodil, Bird of Paradise? How can they physically express the beauty of the flower they have chosen? Through movement, can they share how the flower smells? What is the journey or life of a flower? Encourage three-dimensional shapes and changes in rhythm and meter as they explore and create their flower.
- Now, have the participants begin to combine or incorporate the finger spelling F-L-O-W-E-R, with gestures and movements they discovered that best express what they want us to know about their flower. If it helps to offer specific parameters, have them utilize at least 3 three-dimensional shapes in their sign poem. This is creating a sign poem!
- In preparation for sharing their sign poem, have the participants practice and find their own rhythm and meter as they create their three-dimensional shapes, interpretations and the spelling of flower.
- The students can create individually or in pairs. They can choreograph their sign poem together and have unison or counterpoint parts to perform.
- This is a link to a sign poetry moment in *Tribes* when the two characters, Billie and Sylvia, meet for the first time: [www.centertheatregroup.org/tickets/2013/Tribes/](http://www.centertheatregroup.org/tickets/2013/Tribes/) Watch the clip entitled *Tribes* in performance.
- If you are doing this as a pre-show activity, and don’t want to share the video, ask the students to look for the F-L-O-W-E-R moment in the play. Ask them to notice how Sylvia created her flower sign poem.

The sign poetry above begins to reveal and demonstrate the creative brilliance of sign language. Unlike the rigidity of a myth, sign language and the creativity of the Deaf and hearing impaired is flexible, expressive, evolving, and highly adaptable.

## Becoming an Ally: Debunking Myths Surrounding the Deaf and Hearing Impaired

We often don't realize we are utilizing misinformation about other people or about other communities. One of the greatest gifts we can offer is to educate ourselves and become more aware and sensitive to the myths that may surround a community. This is what it means to become an ally to another person or group of people who might be experiencing prejudice or marginalization by others outside their community.

Throughout this section, you will find "Tips" for becoming a thoughtful ally:

- Tip #1: Remember, everyone needs allies, people from other groups that help us to understand and experience different perspectives in our world and the world of the play, *Tribes*.

The first steps to becoming an ally include taking a look at our experiences and the myths that surround particular groups, in this case, the Deaf, hearing impaired, and those who are hearing but are learning they may have misconceptions about deafness. Once we've accomplished this, we'll begin to debunk myths surrounding the Deaf and hearing impaired.

If you have a Deaf or hearing impaired participant in your class, please invite them, if they feel comfortable, to share their experiences. You might want to ask them privately first and consult with them in order to set up a thoughtful discussion. This person can offer first-hand experience. (This can also be combined with the circle discussion regarding myths below.)

Consider this set of questions as a starting point:

- What is your name?
- Will you share with us your experience of being Deaf or hearing impaired?
- What do you love about being Deaf or hearing impaired?
- What do you hate about being Deaf or hearing impaired?
- What do you want to never experience again as a person who is Deaf or hearing impaired?
- What do you prefer to experience as a person who is Deaf or hearing impaired?

To continue our development as allies, let's prepare for debunking myths by sharing our experiences of the Deaf and hearing impaired communities in relation to the hearing community.

## Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

Let's Actively Share Our Experiences and Knowledge

- In the process of dispelling myths about Deaf and hearing impaired people/communities in relation to the hearing community, practice keeping track of what you are learning and what is new for you and discuss your discoveries as the process unfolds!
- Tip #2: A great ally has a great memory for being thoughtful regarding others and their experiences, especially their struggles.
- Tip #3: A great ally never uses that information against or to take advantage of the other person.

Divide the students into small groups of 4-5.

- Ask the students to create two tableaux (frozen pictures):  
ONE: a situation where a Deaf or hearing impaired person is being treated poorly or unjustly, and TWO: how they would hope to intervene or rectify the situation.  
Have them discuss what situation to depict.  
Cast and create the scenarios.  
Encourage them to share body language, gestures, and emotions of their character for both scenarios. Do they use sign language or other expressions to communicate?  
Once their first tableau is established, have them come to life and act out how they would intervene or rectify the situation.

Have the participants explore how the characters who are Deaf or hearing impaired might be empowered to problem solve. If they are playing a hearing character, how do they support the Deaf or hearing impaired person(s) to feel their empowerment as the situation evolves. If necessary, how do they intervene?

- Tip #4: A wonderful ally may not always “do” for the person experiencing prejudice or mistreatment, but they support that person to take their own power and then back them up.
- Tip #5: And sometimes it is necessary for an ally to step in and interrupt the injustice going on. This can help show that you do not tolerate mistreatment and you support setting the situation right.

Discuss what is hurtful and/or unjust about each scenario. How is the rectifying follow-up effective? How was each character an ally to the other characters as the tableaux came to life?

## Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

As in a rehearsal of a play, feel free to utilize each tableau as a working model to explore different choices for each character. How does the situation change based on the character's different choices and actions?

### The MYTH List: (It's a starting place.)

This can also be a wonderful time for a participant who is Deaf or hearing impaired to share their experience if they would like to. It is important that they don't feel that they are responsible to do all of the educating.

- Tip #6: To become a great ally, it is important to realize when you are of the dominant, supposedly preferred, culture/tribe you can take for granted how that culture/tribe functions. It is important that you don't make the person from outside the dominant culture/tribe always do the work of teaching you about their world. It can be tiring for them. Take initiative to learn about their world, their tribe.

Be sure that the hearing participants are fully participating in exploring and identifying where they have misinformation in order to debunk myths and grow to be a wonderful ally.

- Ask your students to sit in a circle so everyone has view of each other during this part of the session.
- Ask that there are no side conversations so that everyone takes turns, listens, speaks, and journeys through this discussion together.
- Then read each statement below one at a time and allow a discussion to unfold.

#### **There are many myths regarding people with hearing loss including, but not limited to:**

1. Everyone who is deaf or hearing impaired uses sign language.
2. People who cannot hear are not allowed to drive.
3. All forms of hearing loss can be solved by hearing aids or cochlear implants.
4. All deaf or hearing impaired people are experts on Deaf culture.
5. All deaf people want to be hearing.
6. It is true that people who can't hear can't use a phone.
7. It is true that everyone who cannot hear can lipread.
8. Most deaf people have deaf parents.
9. Any other statements you might want to add for this or future discussions.

While still in the circle, close by having each person offer an appreciation regarding something new they learned from another person in the circle.

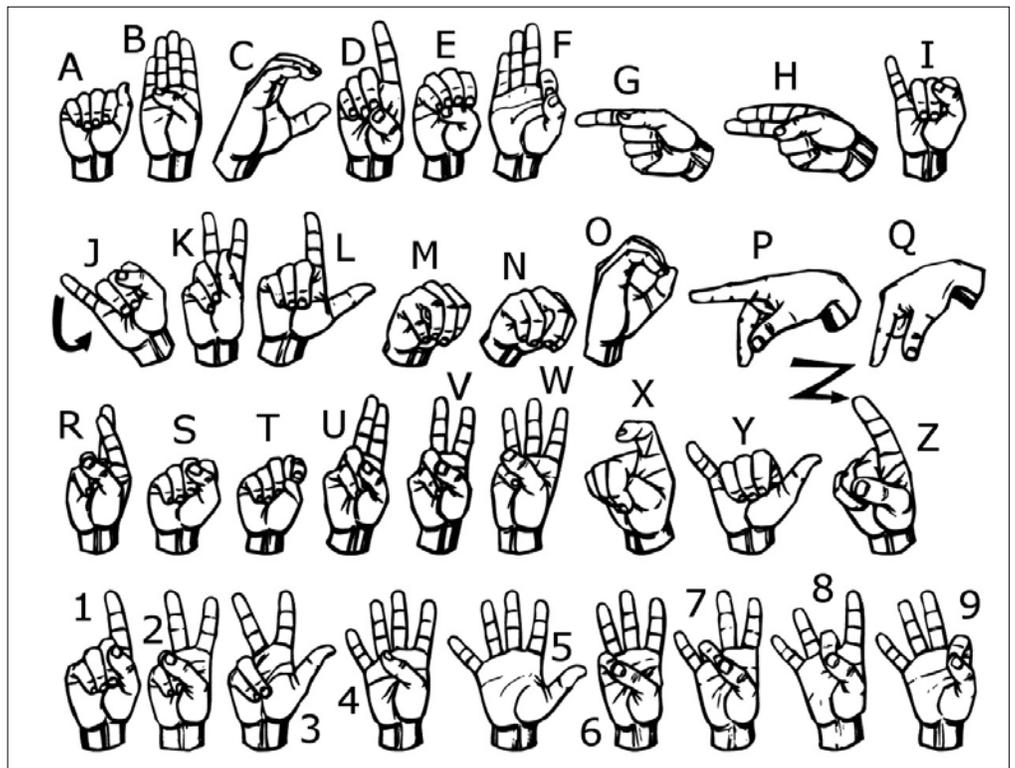
- Tip #7: Everyone has the ability to learn and awaken their innate gifts to listen, support, and thoughtfully share their experience in order to be a great ally to someone else.

## Comprehension | Connections & Creativity



End by signing applause.

Below find the handout of ASL hand signs/positions version of the English alphabet to have even more fun acquiring more new language skills to open our eyes to others in our communities and to open the imagination!



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**Audiences:** Inspiring current and future audiences to discover theatre and its connection to their lives;

**Artists:** Investing in the training, support and development of emerging young artists and young arts professionals who are the future of our field; and

**Arts Education Leadership:** Contributing to the community-wide efforts to improve the quality and scope of arts education in Los Angeles.

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