

EDUCATOR GUIDE

A.C.T. PRESENTS

POOR YELLA REDNECKS

VIETGONE 2

BY QUI NGUYEN
DIRECTED BY JAIME CASTAÑEDA

22 SEASON
23 SEASON
SEASON 56



A.C.T. AMERICAN
CONSERVATORY
THEATER

THIS IS YOUR THEATER,
SAN FRANCISCO

WELCOME!

American Conservatory Theater's Education & Community Programs Department is delighted to welcome you and your students into the deep, dynamic, and hilarious world of *Poor Yella Rednecks* by Qui Nguyen. This guide was created in March 2023 by Natalie Greene and Anne Yumi Kobori, and designed by Laura Clatterbuck.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Prepare your students for their experience seeing *Poor Yella Rednecks* and use these materials to walk them through the show's main ideas and themes. Consider your curriculum, your own perspective, and how your students might engage with this information, then adjust the content as you see fit. Choose your own adventure and adapt the activities for your students' grade level, capacity, interests, and needs.

Please reach out to education@act-sf.org if you have any questions or support needs. We hope you enjoy the show!

NATIONAL ARTS STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS GUIDE

<https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/>

- **Creating:** Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work - CR1, CR2, CR3.
- **Performing/Presenting/Producing:** Realizing artistic ideas and work through interpretation and presentation - PR4, PR6.
- **Responding:** Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning - RE7, RE8.
- **Connecting:** Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context - CN10.

PAM MACKINNON
Artistic Director

JENNIFER BIELSTEIN
Executive Director



PRESENTS

*POOR YELLA REDNECKS
VIETGONE 2*

By **Qui Nguyen**

Directed by **Jaime Castañeda**

**THIS PRODUCTION IS
MADE POSSIBLE BY**

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Jerome L. and Thao N. Dodson

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POOR YELLA REDNECKS VIETGONE 2

By **Qui Nguyen**

Directed by **Jaime Castañeda**

THE CAST

WILL DAO Nhan/Cowboy/Little Man/Grocery Boy
CHRISTINE JAMLIG Huong/Thu/San/Cop
JENNY NGUYEN NELSON Tong
HYUNMIN RHEE Quang/Chris
JOMAR TAGATAC Playwright/Immigration Officer/British
Narrator/Bobby/Tommy/Grocery Boy

UNDERSTUDIES

BEN CHAU-CHIU Quang/Chris
AMANDA LE NGUYEN Tong, Huong/Thu/San/Cop
JED PARSARIO Nhan/Cowboy/Little Man/Grocery Boy,
Playwright/Immigration Officer/British
Narrator/Bobby/Tommy/Grocery Boy

STAGE MANAGEMENT

REBECCA J. ENNALS Stage Manager
WESLEY APFEL Assistant Stage Manager

CREATIVE TEAM

TANYA ORELLANA Scenic Design
JESSIE AMOROSO Costume Design
YI ZHAO Lighting Design
JAKE RODRIGUEZ Sound Design
YEE EUN NAM Projection Design
JAMES ORTIZ Puppet Design & Direction
SHAMMY DEE Original Music
JOY MEADS Dramaturg
JANET FOSTER, CSA & KATIE CRADDOCK Casting
NATALIA DUONG Assistant Director & Cultural Consultant

A.C.T. PRODUCING TEAM

ANDY CHAN DONALD Associate Artistic Director
LOUISA LISKA Director of General Management & Operations
AMY DALBA General Manager
MARTIN BARRON Director of Production

Poor Yella Rednecks was commissioned and first produced by South Coast Repertory
(David Ivers, Artistic Director, Paula Tomei, Managing Director) and Manhattan Theatre Club
(Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director, Barry Grove, Executive Producer).

Poor Yella Rednecks was co-commissioned by South Coast Repertory and Manhattan Theatre Club and
developed by South Coast Repertory as part of the Pacific Playwrights Festival.

This play is a recipient of the Edgerton Foundation New American Play Award

Developed in part with Center Theatre Group's L.A. Writers' Workshop

The actors and stage managers employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association,
the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

Recording notice: The videotaping or making of electronic or other audio and/or visual recordings of this production,
or distributing recordings on any medium, including the internet, is strictly prohibited.

ACT STAFF

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SYNOPSIS

Qui Nguyen's first installment of *Vietgone* was a nationally-produced hit production, telling the story of how his parents met at a refugee camp in Arkansas after fleeing their homeland during the fall of Saigon. While *Vietgone* was primarily told by Quang from a father's perspective, ***Poor Yella Rednecks*** (or *Vietgone 2*) is told by Tong, from the mother's perspective.

Picking up six years after *Vietgone* left off, we experience how the now married couple navigate life as immigrants in rural Arkansas. Living with them are Tong's mother, who has come to hate the US, and their son Little Man, played by a puppet in the production. Tong works hard as a waitress to support her family, though she struggles to connect with them at times. When her husband Quang begins secretly sending her hard-earned waitressing money to the wife and kids he left behind when he fled South Vietnam, Tong decides their sham-marriage is over. With Quang out of the house, Tong tries to reignite a romance with her ex-boyfriend Bobby, and manage Little Man's school troubles. But when she learns that her mother was the one who contacted Quang's wife in Vietnam, she seeks him out to apologize, but he hands her the surprise of her life...

In ***Poor Yella Rednecks***, we witness the hardship and perseverance that are a part of the immigrant experience, at the same time as we are entertained by martial arts, comedy, puppetry, and hip hop music. It may or may not make you cry, but it will definitely make you laugh.

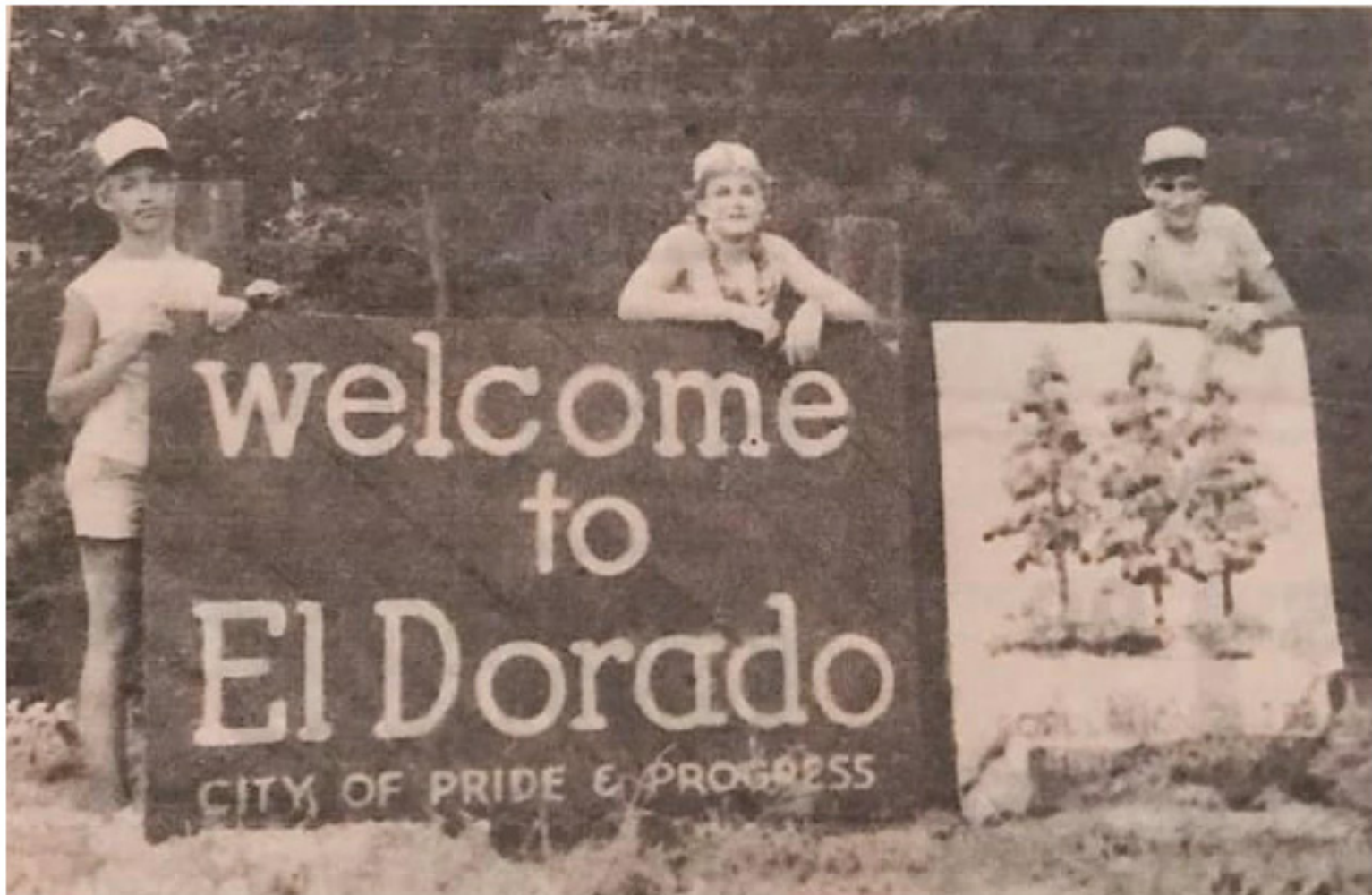
CONTENT WARNING:

This production contains **frequent mature language**, depictions of and references to drug use and consensual sex, and stylized scenes of violence, including one gunshot.



SETTING

El Dorado, Arkansas: a small oil town in the central southern part of the state, in both 2015 and 1981.



Eagle Scout Troop 17, First Methodist Church, relocating a welcome sign (1985).

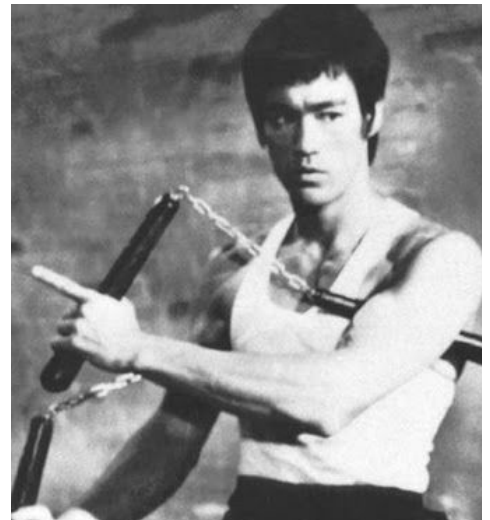
GLOSSARY OF TERMS



Ao dai

Ao dai is the traditional dress of Vietnamese women that consists of a long tunic with slits on either side and wide trousers.

Bruce Lee (1940–73) was an actor and martial arts specialist. Born in San Francisco, he rose to prominence with the television show *The Green Hornet*, before acting in the blockbuster films *The Big Boss*, *Fist of Fury*, *Way of the Dragon*, *Enter the Dragon*, and *The Game of Death*.



Bruce Lee

Death camps, or reeducation camps, were prison camps run by the Viet Cong after the Vietnam War. 300,000 South Vietnamese supporters, military personnel, and government

workers were detained, indoctrinated with communist ideas, and tortured. In 1989, the US and Vietnamese governments agreed to allow many of these prisoners to emigrate to the US. Prisoners of these death camps have been released as recently as 2000.

Fort Chaffee (Arkansas), Camp Pendleton (California), Eglin Air Force Base (Florida), and Fort Indiantown Gap (aka Camp Indiantown, Pennsylvania) were the four resettlement centers set up after the fall of Saigon to process Vietnamese refugees.

Lackland Air Force Base is located just outside of San Antonio, Texas. During the 1960s, many pilots in the South Vietnamese Air Force were sent to Lackland and other bases in the US for basic training and English language courses.

Operation Frequent Wind was the name given to the US evacuation of Vietnam in April, 1975. In roughly 48 hours, 1,373 American soldiers and 5,595 “at-risk” Vietnamese civilians were airlifted from multiple locations in Saigon, including the Defense Attaché Office (DAO) compound and the US Embassy. Because space was limited on these helicopters, many Vietnamese chose to evacuate in boats. The total number of Vietnamese evacuated during the Fall of Saigon was 138,869.

Saigon was the capital of South Vietnam. Today, the city is known as Ho Chi Minh City.

“The War” Vietnamese people would refer to the war as the “American War.” That said, while the U.S. understands the conflict to have occurred between 1958-1975 or thereabouts, this period is often scripted into a MUCH longer history of resistance against colonization/imperialism that is traced back to revolutions against China, France, and Japan, thus the duration of “the war” for Vietnamese people (even refugees from the South) is often a much, much longer period of constant fighting against another nation on Vietnam’s soil.

Waves of refugees The manner in which Vietnamese refugees came to the U.S. says a lot about the family’s status in Vietnam prior to the war. Tong, because she worked for the government, is given two airplane tickets. She knew in advance of the departure, even though she was not able to bring everyone in the family along. Quang, on the other hand, even though he was a pilot, would have arrived in the U.S. possibly by way of a navy ship that stopped in Malaysia or the Philippines, and then by a plane. Each of these methods are seen as relatively privileged compared to refugees who underwent illegal boat escapes following April 30, 1975.



An Air America helicopter crew member helps evacuees up a ladder on the roof of 18 Gia Long Street, Saigon, on April 29, 1975, shortly before the city fell to advancing North Vietnamese troops. HUGH VAN ES/UPI/NEWSCOM”

SETTLING DOWN IN EL DORADO

BY KATIE CRADDOCK

By the end of *Vietgone*, the play preceding *Poor Yella Rednecks* in Qui Nguyen's trilogy, his mother Tong has been matched with a sponsor in El Dorado, Arkansas, four hours south of the Fort Chaffee resettlement camp where she met his father, Quang. Six years later, in 1981, *Poor Yella Rednecks* finds them still in El Dorado, now with a young son (Qui!), where Tong works in restaurants and Quang works as a cleaner and repairman.

El Dorado, the county seat of Union County, had a population of about 25,000 in 1980 (it has since dropped below 18,000 as of 2020). In 1981, Union County's population was 70.9% white and 28.9% Black, with a scant 0.2% recorded "other." When Qui was growing up, his family was one of just two Asian families (the other was Chinese) in a primarily Black neighborhood. That growing-up experience indelibly shaped his writing. He explains, "Before I realized that I was different—which sounds silly, because I could look at myself and see that I was different—I just felt like a kid from that neighborhood. When my Black friends and I did realize we were different from each other, I remember a very distinct thing happened: we used to watch a lot of kung fu double features and Blaxploitation films [a 1970s movie genre featuring crime-based plots and African American actors in leading roles] in this small theater called the Rialto. All my Black friends would say, "I wish I was like Bruce Lee because he knows kung fu." And I'd say, "I'd rather be like Shaft. He gets to say cool stuff and gets the ladies." That crisscross admiration still influences who I am as an artist today."

El Dorado is called Arkansas's Original Boomtown because it was the epicenter of a south Arkansas oil boom in the



Qui Nguyen's parents' diner sign in El Dorado, AR. Photo courtesy of Qui Nguyen.

1920s; today, it is the headquarters of the Arkansas Oil and Gas Commission, and the oil and chemical industries are still central to its economy. Life in El Dorado is also deeply shaped by the church. There are 104 churches in the city, 47 of which are Baptist; in the 1980s, all manner of community activities, from Eagle Scouts to book clubs, were hosted or sponsored by churches. Ronald Reagan beat Jimmy Carter by fifteen percentage points in Union County in the 1980 election.

In *Poor Yella Rednecks*, Quang's buddy Nhan implores him to move to Houston. As one of the designated resettling sites in the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975, Houston is one of three major metropolitan areas in which the

Vietnamese American community is based (along with Los Angeles and San Jose). Tong and Quang decided to forge ahead with their life in Arkansas, despite the dearth of Vietnamese community. Of his parents, Qui writes, "Without even being able to speak the common language, their early years in America went about as easy as an [adult entertainer] vying for public office. Now though, almost thirty years later, after surviving many different naïve . . . social mistakes, they somehow have finally found their niche in the New World. Raising a family, helping three kids financially through the gauntlet of higher education, and owning their own old-fashioned greasy spoon diner, my folks are the proverbial American Dream."

FAMILY HISTORY & TABLEAU

In *Poor Yella Rednecks*, the playwright investigates and reflects on his family history. The following activity is designed to walk students through an investigation of their own family history, and prepare them to create physical and theatrical representations of what they know and what they imagine.

- Part 1: **Family History Brainstorm** 5-10 minutes
Worksheet (individuals) *CN10
Print this page and have each student fill in the blanks to explore their family history
- Part 2: **Family Identity Discussion** 10-15 minutes
Conversations (small groups)
In groups of 4-5, students discuss their families and identify similarities and distinctions
- Part 3: **Rehearse & Perform Family Tableaux** 20-35 minutes, depending on class size
Theatrical Activity (presentation) *CR1, CR2, CR3, PR6, RE7
Groups create and perform tableaux that animate their families, including facts and curiosities

A trauma-informed approach for asking students to investigate their families:

Before you assign and facilitate this activity, let students know they are going to be asked to use their memory and imagination to think and write about their families. Ensure them:

- they are in the lead,
- they decide what “family” means,
- they decide how deep to go,
- they will not be asked to share anything that you don’t feel comfortable sharing,
- all families are strange, and we hope you have fun with this activity.

Frame the activity in the context of the larger creative experience. It is supposed to be thought-provoking and enjoyable, preparing students for the family-centered story they will experience in *Poor Yella Rednecks*.



FAMILY HISTORY BRAINSTORM

Think about your family: the language(s) you speak and where you live now.

What do you KNOW?

What do you IMAGINE?

What do you WONDER?

1. WRITE A SHORT LIST, at least 3 things per question:

a. What are some facts you **know** about how your family arrived at the city where you live now?

Examples: *My Mom was born in San Francisco, but her parents are from El Salvador.
My Dad moved here for work.*

b. What are some things you don't know 100%, but you **imagine** to be true about your family history, and how you came to live here?

Examples: *My Dad only stayed in California because he fell in love with my Mom.
My aunt and uncle stayed in Vietnam to take care of my grandparents.*

c. What are some things you **wonder** about your family history? What are you unsure or curious about?

Examples: *Will my parents stay in California for the rest of their lives?
I wonder if my Grandparents ever regret leaving their country to come here.*

2. Consider what your family seems like from the outside. Consider what your family seems like from the inside. Then respond:

People expect my family to be _____,

but in reality we are _____,

and I wonder if _____.

3. If you were to write a rap, a musical, or a comedy script, and the main characters were your family members, the story would include :

FAMILY IDENTITY DISCUSSION

- Divide students into groups of 4-6.
- Have each group select a timer (using a computer or phone), or facilitate and time yourself.
- In small groups, each person has the same length of time (we suggest 30, 60 or 90 seconds each) to talk about their family.
 - Remind students they don't have to share anything they don't want to share, and they are the leader of their own response.
 - Students might share their answers to questions from Part 1, or tell a story that brings their family to life for listeners.
- Once everyone has shared, group members work together to identify at least one thing their families have in common, and individuals determine at least one way their family is unique.

FAMILY TABLEAUX

Step 1: Play one or more of these videos, to teach the concept of tableau

(short for *tableau vivant* - from French, meaning a living picture)

How to Create a Group Tableau from Santa Monica Repertory Theater:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6vJTpVDT-c> (Total time: 4:34, but **the first 90 seconds** will do!)

How to Make a Tableau from Singapore Repertory Theatre:

<https://youtu.be/YfNmlY1-t5k> (Total time: 2:08)

Additional examples and instructions can be found here: <https://dramaresource.com/freeze-frames>

Step 2: Rehearsal

- In groups of 4-6, students volunteer to share their responses to question #2 from the Part 2 worksheet (“People expect my family to be ____, but in reality we are ____, and I wonder if ____.”)
- Groups then choose a student director who is willing to share their answer with the class and lead their group members in a tableau activity, bringing their responses to life.
 - First, the director casts who will play which family character. We recommend the director cast a different actor to play themselves, so they can lead and assist their group from the outside. Remind them to be creative if the total number of group members isn't the same number of people in their family.
 - Next, the director instructs their group on how to create & memorize a family portrait tableau for their “expectation.”
 - Next, the director works with their group to create & memorize another family portrait tableau for their “reality.”
 - Finally, they create a third tableau for their “curiosity” or “wonder.”
- The group practices moving from one tableau to the next, in sequence, while the director cues each shift by saying “expectation, reality, curiosity.”

FAMILY TABLEAUX

Step 3: Presentation

- Before groups perform for the class, remind everyone:
 - Move and freeze together. Hold your position strong, until your next cue.
 - Stay in character, even if the audience is reacting.
 - When you're in the audience, enjoy the performances **and** be respectful to the performers.
What does a good audience look like?
- Groups perform their tableau sequence for the class.
- After each group performs, invite the audience to discuss what they saw, what they thought, and what they wondered about the various family portraits.
 - The student directors should not be forced to explain or defend themselves, however, they should be invited to respond or elaborate if they want to.
 - Promote equitable conversations by giving each group and director around the same amount of conversation time.

Optional Step 4: Repeat the activity with different student directors.



FOOD ACTIVITY: A MENU FOR A FEAST

Food and family play a huge role in the world of *Poor Yella Rednecks*. We all have different cultural food traditions and favorite family meals. For this activity, students work in small groups and share family/cultural food memories to create a menu for a special feast.

Part 1: In groups of 3-5, students take turns sharing their **favorite cultural or family food**. Be sure to describe in detail:

- **What** is the type of food/dish?
- How does it **look/smell/taste/sound**: does it sizzle? Does it taste spicy, tangy or sweet?
- **When** does your family eat this dish/drink this beverage? Is it for a holiday or special occasion?
- **Why** is this your favorite dish?

Part 2: Once everyone has shared their food memory, small groups create a Menu for a special feast that includes one dish/ beverage from every student!

- Include 3-5 courses in your Menu.
- Write the specific names for each dish/course.
- Write a brief sentence description of each dish - ingredients, tradition, taste, etc. - as well as a sentence about why this food is significant and deserves a place on this menu!
- Consider making it visual! Option to sketch or draw the different dishes.

One sample menu might include:

1. Appetizer course: Satay Chicken skewers
2. Beverage: Horchata
3. Fish Course: Spicy Tuna sushi roll
4. Main Course: Vegetarian Misir Wat Lentil Curry with Injera bread
5. Dessert: Mooncakes

Optional Part 3: Consider having each group present their menu to the class, along with an explanation of why their choices are significant and why their feast will be delicious. At the end of the presentations, have the class vote on their favorite imaginary feast.



LIKE COMING HOME

INTERVIEW WITH JAIME CASTAÑEDA AND SHAMMY DEE

BY NATALIA DUONG, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR & CULTURAL CONSULTANT

Poor Yella Rednecks director Jaime Castañeda and composer Shammy Dee are long-time friends and collaborators. After meeting this storied duo during A.C.T.'s production of *Vietgone* in 2018, working on this show feels like coming home. Here's an inside look at the soundtracks of our lives, the playlists that fed our process, and a look behind the scenes at how Jaime and Shammy crafted the music of *Poor Yella Rednecks*.

Natalia: Can you share about the musical inspiration for the songs in *PYR*?

Jaime: We cycled through various decades of jazz, hip hop, funk, and punk. We landed in a place of nostalgic hip hop in the culture's early years.

Shammy: Jaime and I wanted to touch on our love of hip hop during the Golden Era. We wanted to have music that the hip hop heads would like, but that people who grew up during the 70s and 80s would hear and say "I recognize that!" Our starting point was a lot of 90s hip hop classics that a lot of people may recognize. And then we went all over the place—soul, funk, disco, 80s, and more—to see what vibes would work with each moment.

Natalia: How did this process differ from your approach to *Vietgone* in 2018?

Jaime: Shammy and I came to this with fresh ears—we wanted to think about what might move an audience today. We did however listen to our tunes from *Vietgone* before diving in for inspiration.

Shammy: The primary question we asked is, "How could the music support the emotion and the story of the moment?" We experimented heavy with different sounds and styles. I came up with a ton of ideas and we filtered through them all! *Vietgone* had a similar approach, but this round we really made sure there was more connective tissue between the music and characters.

Natalia: There's been a lot of discussion this year about the 50th anniversary of hip hop. Can you share a bit about the way that hip hop traversed communities both in its origins and also in the way it circulates now?

Shammy: Hip hop brings people together! In the early days, you had the Latino and African-American communities come together as breakdancers. You had African-American and Jamaican DJs. You had MCs of different cultures. And we can't forget about the graf artists! The foundation of the culture was embedded in inclusivity. If you had skills or you loved the music, you were in. No questions asked. It's a testament to the music that something which started at a party at 1520

Sedgwick Ave has blown up and gone around the world multiple times! Today, you have K-Pop artists rapping. I don't think anyone would have guessed how powerful the culture could be. I think technology is a huge part of how it spread. Television and radio were huge in creating a big monoculture of what is hot, and hip hop really took off during that time. But now with streaming and social media, there is global access to everything. I've seen young kids in the Middle East rap about the real on Instagram. That was impossible 20 years ago.

Jaime: Right at this moment, I'm more interested in looking forward than looking back. What will the next several decades across this globe bring in terms of music, art, and hip hop in all its elements—including the theater!

	Jaime	Shammy
1. Track you first fell in love to?	This is a cheat, but Shammy Dee was the DJ at my wedding eleven years ago and our first dance was to Talib Kweli's "Talk to You." See also: "Never Been In Love" (also Talib).	I might swoon a touch if she listened to Ella and Louis duets
2. Track that makes you feel most at home?	My kid self: Gloria Estefan's "Mi Tierra." My twenty something self: JAY Z's "Already Home." Me now: Natalia Lafourcade's "Hasta La Raiz."	This is hard. I got three options: Black Star - Little Brother (off the Hurricane soundtrack) produced by J Dilla, Black Star feat. Black Thought - Respiration (Pete Rock Remix. So good.), and Common - Invocation.
3. Track that plays rent free in your head?	"Because I'm Me" - The Avalanches	Changes on a daily basis! Today, "Royalty" by Gangstarr popped into my head. (Wow, I'm heavy 90s hip hop right now...)
4. Best breakup song?	Lauryn Hill's "Lost Ones" and Amy Winehouse's "Love Is a Losing Game."	Labrinth - "Jealous." Oof...hits deep
5. Favorite crates-digging find?	The Crusaders' "Way Back Home." Add that to your playlist on the way back home.	Singular favorites are hard to nail down. But one of them is "Shaft In Africa (Addis)" by Johnny Pate
6. Favorite track that you forgot about and rediscovered recently?	Because of Natalia, I discovered SUBOI who is a straight up emcee! Also, I'm always throwing Courtney Barnett into the rotation every several months.	Slum Village - "Untitled/Fantastic"
7. Personal anthem?	See numbers 1, 2, 3, 5.	Shammy Dee - "Now That I'm On!"

RAPPING ACTORS AND HIP-HOP THEATER

HIP HOP CULTURE

Hip Hop is a culture and art movement that was created in the 1970's and 80's by African American, Latinx American and Caribbean American people in the Bronx, New York City, though it was also developed in other regions, and the West Coast has had a large influence on the culture.

Originally, hip hop culture was characterized by four key elements: rapping, DJing & turntablism, breakdancing, and graffiti. Today, some Hip Hop scholars fold as many as six elements into Hip Hop culture, they include:

DJing—the artistic handling of beats and music

MCing, aka rapping—putting spoken-word poetry to a beat

Breaking—Hip Hop's original dance form

Writing—the painting of highly stylized graffiti

Theater and literature—combining Hip Hop elements and themes in drama, poetry, and stories

Knowledge of self—the moral, social, and spiritual principles that inform and inspire Hip Hop ways of being.

For more information, visit:

<https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/media-and-interactives/media/hip-hop/hip-hop-a-culture-of-vision-and-voice/>

HIP HOP THEATER

Hip Hop Theater is a performance style that uses some of the elements of hip hop to tell contemporary stories. Danny Hoch, founder of the Hip-Hop Theater Festival, says *“Hip-hop theater must fit into the realm of theatrical performance, and it must be by, about and for the hip-hop generation, participants in hip-hop culture, or both.”*

The first production of *Poor Yella Rednecks* was produced in 2019 by South Coast Rep in Costa Mesa, CA. In the following video, you can see performers in that production using hip hop music and dance to express their characters' feelings and experiences.

Hip Hop theater performers use lyrics, rhythms and melodies alongside traditional theatrical storytelling to express their characters' feelings and experiences.

Meet the cast of A.C.T.'s “Poor Yella Rednecks” and hear a sneak preview of two of the show’s songs:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJnHGHtDlxk> (39 sec.)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqpXXFWZ_80 (36 sec.)



HIP HOP THEATER ACTIVITY

Many students have preconceived notions about hip hop & rap, including a perception that they “can’t rap.” You might want to acknowledge this as you introduce the activity. We recommend starting by sharing the information about hip hop culture & hip hop theater from the page above, including the music videos from A.C.T. Then, remind students they don’t need any previous experience to succeed in the following activity.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Audio Playback (e.g. computer hooked up to speakers). Ideally students rehearse with their own devices & headphones, so they can pick their own tempo & backing track. However, if there’s only one sound option, pick one backing track and have everyone use the same one.

WRITE YOUR OWN RAP

STEP 1: Watch this video for the basics.

Watch Take 10: How to Rap with Sierra Gonzalez - PART 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEqM76q-2KU> (5 min. 31 sec.)

STEP 2: Write your rap/poem.

Many of the raps in *Poor Yella Rednecks* are used by characters to hype themselves up, sharing aspects of their identity, especially what is great about them. For this activity, choose between hyping yourself or hyping your city/hometown.

Option 1: HYPE Yourself

First, write down a hype word brainstorm. This can include all the things you like best about yourself, your accomplishments, your favorite jokes - anything! Next, add in rhymes for those words/phrases. Finally, string together your hype words and your rhymes with linking sentences.

Option 2: HYPE your City

First, write down a hype word brainstorm. This can include all the things you like best about your hometown/favorite city - the best places to visit, your favorite restaurants, bands, views, anything! Next, add in rhymes for those words/phrases. Finally, string together your hype words and your rhymes with linking sentences.

STEP 3: REHEARSE

Now you have written your lyrics, practice speaking your rap with one of the backing tracks below. (Or, if you prefer, you can opt out of performing with a backing track and perform your piece as spoken word poetry.) Make sure to practice on your feet. Explore adding gestures or dance moves to punctuate certain words/phrases. Imagine you are creating your own music video!

Hip hop beats from composer Shammy Dee: <https://soundcloud.com/shammydee/sets/beatz>

STEP 4: PERFORM!

Before rappers perform for the class, remind everyone:

- Project and articulate your voices.
- Stay in the flow & vibe, even if the audience is reacting.
- When you’re in the audience, enjoy the performances **and** be respectful to the performers.

What does a good audience look like?

Invite volunteers to perform their raps or spoken word poems for the class. After each performance, invite the audience to share 2-3 unique things about that rap/spoken word.

After the final performance, encourage the class to discuss what differences they noticed between the raps, and the creative rhymes and wordplay that individuals used to hype themselves or their cities.

VIDEOS & OTHER RESOURCES

Forty years after Vietnam, a refugee relives his journey from Saigon to San Francisco

<https://www.wnyc.org/story/saigon-san-francisco-40-years-later/>

Listen to a short interview with a Vietnamese immigrant to the Bay Area
Short article and audio (7 min.)

Meet the Playwright, Qui Nguyen

<https://quinguyen.com/>

In the interview and video you'll see featured on this page (11 min. 59 sec.), Nguyen discusses his approach and work as a co-screenwriter and martial arts supervisor on the film *Raya and the Last Dragon*.

Pushing Theatrical Genre: Puppetry and Personification

<https://www.act-sf.org/news/pushing-theatrical-genre-puppetry-and-personification/> (5 min. read)

Syche Phillips interviews Poor Yella Rednecks' incredible Puppet Designer and Puppet Director James Ortiz

A.C.T.'s Take 10 video series shares fun theater activities for you to try out at school or at home with family and friends. In the videos below, A.C.T. Teaching Artist Sierra Gonzalez walks you through the steps to write your very own poetic Hip Hop masterpiece.

Take 10: Intro to Rap and finding your Rhythm with Sierra Gonzalez

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lSj8wjVz8Mo> (10 min. 44 sec.)

Take 10: How to Rap with Sierra Gonzalez - PART 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEqM76q-2KU> (5 min. 31 sec.)

Listen to a song from *Poor Yella Rednecks*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_CtglCBAkI (3 min. 20 sec.)

A.C.T. almost produced this show in 2020, here's is a song from that would-be production that the actors & DJ filmed during lockdown. Starring Stephen Hu, Cindy Im, and Jomar Tagatac. Special thanks to Jaime Castañeda, Qui Nguyen, and DJ Shammy Dee.

HOW TO MAXIMIZE YOUR EXPERIENCE

PRIOR TO YOUR VISIT

- Double check A.C.T.'s COVID-19 updates: <https://www.act-sf.org/about-us/covid-19-updates/>
 - If you are feeling unwell, please stay home. If you or a member of your party is experiencing symptoms similar to those of COVID-19 or have had known exposure to someone with COVID-19, please stay home.
- For more information about ACCESSIBILITY at A.C.T.: <https://www.act-sf.org/your-visit/accessibility/>
- Read the **A.C.T. “Rules of Play”** to learn more about how we hope you arrive, engage and enjoy the show! <https://www.act-sf.org/your-visit/a-c-t-s-house-rules-of-play/>
- If your students would benefit from additional information about theater etiquette, consider discussing some of the points made by Blake Theater here: <https://www.blaketheater.com/theater-etiquette/>

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT THE THEATER

- Front of House Staff including security personnel, ushers, and house managers are trained to assist guests and ensure that safety measures are followed. If you feel uncomfortable or perceive a risk at any time, please speak with one of these team members.
- Hand sanitizer stations are available throughout the theater.
- During the show, please stay in your seat unless using the restroom.

STUDENT MATINEE PERFORMANCE

If you are seeing Poor Yella Rednecks during our Student Matinee performance:

- Masks are recommended for all students, staff, and guests, and masks are available upon request. Masks should fit well, meaning they cover your nose and mouth comfortably without need of frequent adjustment. We request that you and your students wear your mask for the full performance.
- No food and beverages will be served or allowed in the theater.
- No cell phone use during the performance. No photo, no video.
- To ensure a positive experience for all in the audience, we kindly request chaperones monitor eating and phone use when your group is in the theater.
- There will be a talkback after the show. Your students will have the opportunity to ask the performers questions! Please consider staying in the theater for the additional ~20-minute engagement opportunity. Invite your students to consider their curiosities in advance, and encourage them to participate in the Q&A.

AFTER THE SHOW

- ★ Revisit parts of this guide that you didn't use before, including readings, videos & links, as well as activities and discussion prompts.
- ★ **Questions to consider:**
 - Why is Little Man a puppet?
 - How does the “English” help you understand the immigrant experience in the United States?
 - How does assimilation impact the relationships between the characters?
 - How does movement (martial arts, dance, puppetry) help tell the story of Poor Yella Rednecks? Would the show have been the same without it? Why or why not?
- ★ **Use a “SEE - THINK - WONDER” discussion model:**
 - What did you **see** in the show? What are some memorable images or moments, and why? What role did the design play in the show (music, puppets, set, video, and more)?
 - What did you **think** during the show?
What do you think now that you've experienced the full show?
What were your favorite moments, and why?
 - What do you **wonder** about the show?
What are you still curious about?
If you could learn more about any of the characters, relationships or events, what would you want to know?
- ★ *Poor Yella Rednecks* is the 2nd play in a series of three plays about the playwright's family.
 - What do you think the 3rd play will be about?
 - What do you hope the play includes?
 - Would you be excited to see Part 3? If so, why?

Thank you for coming to A.C.T.!

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