



FATHER COMES HOME FROM THE WARS

Parts 1, 2 & 3

BY Suzan-Lori Parks
DIRECTED BY Jo Bonney

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MARK TAPER FORUM

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Writer

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Marcos Nájera

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Center Theatre Group is excited to have you and your students join us at *Father Comes Home From The Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)* by Pulitzer Prize winner Suzan-Lori Parks. 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 Discovery Guide and Educator Resources raise questions: questions about freedom, questions about how we measure worth, questions about the legacy of slavery and how it impacts and lives on in our world today.

The Educator Resources and Discovery Guide are companion pieces, 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:

Discovery Guide

The 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 scene-by-scene synopsis to provide you with detailed information about the content and form of the play.

Comprehension

This section includes background resources about the setting and subject matter of the play. We have selected the information that most directly connects to or informs what happens in the play.

This section augments and deepens the background information provided in the 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.

Connections and Creativity

This section provides ways to explore connections between the ideas presented in the play, 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 specific artistic aspects of the production and delve deeper into the ideas and questions raised by the production. The questions, activities, and information in this section can be used both before and after the performance.

We know the hard work and dedication 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.



L.A.'s Theatre Company
A non-profit arts organization

Ahmanson Theatre
Mark Taper Forum
Kirk Douglas Theatre

601 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

About *Father Comes Home From The Wars* (Parts 1, 2 & 3)

Scene-by-Scene Synopsis

PART 1—A MEASURE OF A MAN

Early spring 1862, Far West Texas. An hour before dawn. Members of a Chorus of Slaves place bets on whether Hero, a fellow slave, will follow the Boss-Master into war, to serve on the side of the Confederacy.

The Oldest Old Man enters; he's been out looking for Hero's dog, Odd-see. Hero kicked the dog, and the dog fled. The Oldest Old Man and the Chorus of Slaves take this as a bad omen. It is an important day. Hero has a big decision to make: will he go to war or will he stay home? The Oldest Old Man tells the Chorus how Penny, Hero's almost-wife, found out about Odd-see and fell to her knees in prayer, then went out searching for the dog.

Hero enters. Hero wonders where Odd-see is. The Oldest Old Man tells Hero that Penny went to fetch the dog. Hero is surprised to see everyone awake. They are waiting on him. Hero and a fellow slave named Homer have been up all night getting the Boss-Master ready for war. The Boss-Master has given Hero some of his old uniform—an enticement to join him in war. Hero jokes about the Boss-Master's new uniform, his ridiculous large feather for his hat and his shiny tight new boots. Hero asks if the Chorus and the Oldest Old Man will be seeing the Boss-Master off. Yes, and they have been promised a shiny new coin if they do. The Chorus asks Hero if they will be waving goodbye to him as well. Hero can't think with all the nagging. He commands the Chorus to go look for his dog. The Chorus exits.

Hero and the Oldest Old Man talk. Hero wants to know the Oldest Old Man's opinion about whether he should he go to war or not. At first, the Oldest Old Man wants Hero to make up his own mind. Then the Oldest Old Man says no. Even though he is not Hero's father, he loves him like a son and doesn't want him to go. Hero doesn't quite believe this, so he pushes the Oldest Old Man to tell him the truth. The Oldest Old Man wants him to go. Hero confides in the Oldest Old Man: the Boss-Master has promised to free him. Hero is torn. If goes to war, he will be helping the wrong side. Can he trust the Boss-Master's promise? This isn't the first time the Boss-Master has promised freedom, and his first promise was a lie. Could this time be different? The Oldest Old Man thinks that the Boss-Master will honor his promise. Hero decides to go to war.

Penny enters. Hero wants to know if Penny has found Odd-see. She has not. Hero tells Penny that he is going to war. Penny protests. Hero told her just this morning, when they were lying in bed together, that he wasn't going to leave. Penny wants to know if Hero is going to go off to war without his dog, Odd-see, who is also his luck? The Oldest Old Man dismisses Penny—she doesn't understand. There are circumstances that Hero can't talk about informing his decision. Penny knows that the Boss-Master is promising Hero freedom, but Hero must know that that promise is and will always be linked to something bad.

The Chorus returns. They have not found Odd-see, and they want to know Hero's decision. Without his luck, with his woman mad at him, with her reminding him of the Boss-Master's treachery, Hero decides to stay. Penny is thrilled. The Oldest Old Man tells Hero to think about it. The Chorus reminds Hero that the Boss-Master has promised to beat them all if Hero doesn't go. Hero decides he will injure himself. That will keep him out of the war and keep the Boss-Master from beating him and the others. The others agree it's a solid plan, in theory. The Oldest Old Man tries to implement the plan by cutting Hero; he is interrupted by Homer—a fellow slave with a missing foot. Homer's foot was cut off as punishment for running away.

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Homer figures out what is going on. He tells the group to make sure they get a bucket and rags because there is going to be a lot of blood. The Oldest Old Man tries to cut Hero again.

He cannot. Hero will have to do it himself. He can't. Penny tries. Homer stops her and tells Hero he shouldn't stay—and he shouldn't go. The Oldest Old Man tells Homer that the Boss-Master has promised Hero freedom. Homer scoffs: the Boss-Master will never give Hero his freedom, so Hero might as well take it and run away. The Chorus considers this a valid third option. Penny and the Old Man tell Hero they will stand by whatever decision he makes. Hero won't run. His father ran, and it got him killed. Hero intends to make the Boss-Master keep his promise. Homer tells Hero that he is a fool. Hero is ready to fight. Homer asks Hero not to beat him, because it wouldn't look good for the man who cut off his foot to beat him.

Hero reminds Homer that he warned him not to run away. Homer reminds Hero that they were supposed to go together, but Hero chickened out. When the Boss-Master captured Homer, he forced Hero to cut off Homer's foot. Penny pleads that it wasn't Hero's fault. The Boss-Master put a gun to his head. The Chorus concurs; they all saw it. Is this the man Hero wants to put his trust in, Homer questions. The Oldest Old Man points out the sun is almost up, and it is time for Hero to make a choice.

Before Hero can proclaim his decision, Homer lets everyone in on a secret: Hero was the one who told the Boss-Master where Homer was hiding. Hero says yes, the Boss-Master promised him freedom for telling him where to find Homer. The Chorus and the Oldest Old Man are shocked. Penny already knew. The Oldest Old Man will no longer call Hero son. The Chorus will no longer call him Hero. Homer tells Hero they are even now. Hero told the Boss-Master on him, and he has told on Hero. The sun rises. Hero calls Odd-see. The dog does not come. Hero decides—he will go to war.

PART 2—A BATTLE IN THE WILDERNESS

Late summer 1862. A wooded area in the South. Pretty much in the middle of nowhere. There is cannon fire in the distance. The Colonel—the Boss-Master talked about in Part 1—sings to a man, who is confined to a wooden cage. The man is Union Captain Smith. He is the Colonel's prisoner. Smith has a severe leg wound.

From the sound of the cannon fire, the Colonel estimates that the Rebel Army is close and that the Colonel will be back with his Regiment by nightfall. It was just bad luck that the Colonel wandered off by himself, got lost, and his horse died, but his luck has changed. He has found a prisoner, a prize. Smith reminds the Colonel that he's just a Captain, not much of a prize. The Colonel thinks on this and concludes Smith is a Union officer and a white man—he is worth something. If Smith had been a colored private, the Colonel would have shot him on sight. Smith muses that if he were a Major, the Colonel would get a medal. They each muse on the great rewards that the Colonel would get if Smith were a Colonel or General. It's too bad, Smith reflects, he is just a Captain.

The Colonel asks Smith what it is like to be an Officer in the First Kansas Colored Infantry. Smith says it is like leading any other men. The Colonel asks if Smith has ever led white men? Smith says no. The Colonel points out that Smith's colored troops left him in the field for dead. Smith supposes that he looked dead; otherwise, his men would not have left him. The Colonel asks Smith if he has ever considered owning slaves. Smith says no. The Colonel pushes. Smith keeps

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saying no. The Colonel invites Smith to have a drink with him. Smith says no. The Colonel cannot figure Smith out, but he wishes that for just one day, Smith could own a slave. Smith asks the Colonel, how many does he own? The Colonel replies 100. The Colonel lets Smith out of the cage and gives him a drink of water. The Colonel badgers Smith about slave ownership. Smith states emphatically that he is a Yankee through and through, and that will never change. The Colonel dresses Smith down, guessing he is from a fine family. Aristocratic. Rich. The Colonel reveals he is a self-made man. The Colonel is satisfied Captain Smith is a prize captive.

Smith asks if the Colonel is scared that he will try to escape. He warns the Colonel to keep him close, closer than his servant, Hero. Smith teases the Colonel that his servant has run off. The Colonel orders Smith back into the cage. He kicks Smith for good measure. The Colonel assures Smith that Hero has not gone. Hero is honest. He wouldn't steal himself. Smith asks if Hero came to war voluntarily. The Colonel replies of course, and the Colonel has even promised to free him when they return. Smith asks if the Colonel will honor his word. Before the Colonel can answer, Hero returns.

Hero has been out gathering firewood and scouting the approaching armies. Both are about 10 miles away, each coming from the opposite direction. As the Colonel prepares supper and Hero shines boots, the Colonel asks Smith to guess how much Hero is worth. Smith will not play the game. The Colonel ignores this, laying out the average price of a slave and outlining Hero's skill set. Smith still won't play, so the Colonel tells him if Smith can guess Hero's price, Smith can have Hero. Smith says that he would free Hero. The Colonel is fine with that. Hero is stunned. The Colonel assures Smith that Hero knows his worth, so Smith doesn't have to worry about the Colonel cheating him. The Colonel makes Hero show Smith his teeth. Smith guesses that Hero is worth a thousand dollars. Hero says that the Colonel paid \$800 for him.

The Colonel asks Hero: "How much do you think you are worth?" Hero says it depends on if the South wins the war. Smith says that Hero has a good point. Hero's point angers the Colonel, and he orders Hero to strip—to "finish" the physical inspection. Hero refuses. Smith implores the Colonel to leave Hero alone. The Colonel commands Hero again. Hero refuses. The Colonel strikes Hero across the face. Then the Colonel apologizes, he blames the long hot day and asks Hero to sing with him. The Colonel and Hero sing. The Colonel asks Hero to take out his special plume and affix it to his hat. The Colonel admires himself. He speaks about his promise to free Hero. The Colonel says he will be sad to see Hero go. The Colonel begins to cry. He recovers and tells Hero and Smith how grateful he is to be white. After that, it is time to put the plume away.

Cannons explode in the distance. Smith asks the Colonel: "How much would you fetch on the auction block?" The question enrages the Colonel. He hauls Smith out of the cage and makes Hero remove Smith's coat and tie his hands behind his back. The Colonel is going to shoot Smith. They notice that Smith is wearing a Private's coat under his Captain's jacket. Smith explains the coat belonged to a Private who was dear to him, and when the man died he took the coat. The Colonel aims his pistol at Smith. He pulls the trigger. The gun goes click. The Colonel laughs. He makes Hero untie Smith's hands and puts him back into the cage. The Colonel then goes to scout the approaching armies.

With the Colonel gone, Smith tries to engage Hero in conversation. Hero is reluctant at first, but soon they are trading stories about life in the military. Then Hero begins to inquire about Smith's second jacket. He figures out that Smith is only a Private in the First Kansas Colored Infantry, and that means he is black man. The Captain's coat belonged to Smith's superior, who died on the

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battlefield. Smith got cold and put the jacket on over his uniform. Hero lets Smith out of the cage.

Smith and Hero talk about their lives in slavery and the possibility of freedom. The prospect of freedom makes Hero wary. Smith lets Hero try on the Union Captain jacket. It fits him and feels good. Smith reveals his anger about the challenges freedom may bring them. He feels in his guts that freedom will not be easy. They will be free but not free, forever tied to the marketplace. Hero takes off the jacket, and Smith goes back into the cage as the sound of footsteps approach.

The Colonel returns. The Regiment is close. It is time to pack up camp. The Colonel removes Smith from the cage and ties a rope around his neck. He hands the rope to Hero, commanding him to follow behind with Smith. The Colonel exits to meet the coming army. When he is gone, Hero removes the rope from around Smith's neck and sets him free. Smith exits toward the approaching Union army. Hero exits following the Colonel.

PART 3—THE UNION OF MY CONFEDERATE PARTS

Fall 1863. Far West Texas. A slave cabin in the middle of nowhere. A group of Runaway Slaves talk about leaving that night. They talk about Penny, the nightmares she has been having about Hero. They talk about Homer and hope he will go with them, for he knows the country best. They debate whether he will leave without Penny.

Homer enters with food for the Runaways. They implore him to go with them. Homer is not going. He has it pretty good where he is. True, he has lost a foot, but he has Penny even though she still dreams of Hero. Things could be worse. The Runaways remind Homer that things could be better, and if Hero comes back, Homer will be left with nothing. Homer speculates that if Hero comes back and Homer is gone, that would show Hero that losing a foot didn't break Homer. It would even things up between them. Besides, Penny's heart is with Hero. Homer decides that he is going. The Runaways question Homer's decision. Is Homer sure he can leave Penny? Homer says he is set and sure.

Penny enters. She has been up at the plantation all day, and she has news. The mistress received a letter. The Colonel and Hero are dead. Homer asks Penny to leave with him tonight. He loves her. He will protect her. Penny will not leave. Even though Hero is dead she will wait for his body, she will bury him, then she will move on. But she won't go with Homer. Homer asks for a goodbye kiss. Penny obliges him. They kiss. Something stirs in Penny. She loves Homer. Penny changes her mind and decides to leave.

Odd-see—Hero's dog—returns. He has lots to tell. He found Hero during the war. Penny and Homer want to know how Hero died. Odd-see hesitates. He tells a long story of his adventures. Penny and Homer keep asking: "Is Hero dead?" Finally, Odd-see reveals that Hero is alive and coming home. The news of Hero does not change Homer's mind. He is still going. But Penny decides to stay. Penny makes Homer promise he will see Hero before he leaves. Homer agrees.

Hero returns. He has changed his name to Ulysses. Penny is happy. Ulysses has brought presents. A plaster foot for Homer. A silver-tipped gardening spade for Penny. Ulysses pulls out a piece of paper from his jacket—it is an announcement. He is going to read it but hesitates. Instead, Ulysses shows off the present that he brought back for himself. He pulls out a picture of a woman. This is his new wife. Penny is devastated. Homer comforts her. Ulysses does not like that. Homer

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says they should leave now. Penny pulls herself together and goes into the cabin to get it ready for Ulysses and his new wife.

Homer and the Runaways huddle together to work out their plan of escape. Ulysses talks to Odd-see, and he stewes about Homer and Penny. Ulysses confronts Homer. Did he sleep with Penny? Homer confesses that he did. Homer asks if the Boss-Master/Colonel ever kept his promise to free Hero/Ulysses? Ulysses confesses he did not. Ulysses is bitter about this. It grows dark. Ulysses tells Homer that he and the Runaways should leave. Ulysses pulls out a knife. He and Homer fight. Penny comes out of the cabin and stops them. The Runaways, Homer, and Penny get ready to go. Ulysses asks Penny to stay. She tears off a piece of her dress and gives it to Ulysses, then leaves with Homer and the Runaways.

Ulysses is left with Odd-see. He looks at the announcement he brought back with him. He reads it. It is a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation. They are all free. Ulysses looks back at the big house. He will go and bury the Boss-Master/Colonel.

About Suzan-Lori Parks

A MacArthur “Genius” Award recipient, Suzan-Lori Parks was the first African-American woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize (in 2002) for *Topdog/Underdog*. She was a 2015 Pulitzer Prize finalist for *Father Comes Home From The Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)*, for which she won the 2015 Edward M. Kennedy Prize for Drama and the 2014 Horton Foote Prize. She received a Tony Award® in 2012 for her work on *The Gershwins’ Porgy and Bess*. Her plays include *The Book of Grace*, *In the Blood* (2000 Pulitzer Prize finalist), *Venus* (1996 Obie Award), *365 Days/365 Plays*, and *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*. She’s also written a novel, *Getting Mother’s Body* (Random House). Her first film was *Girl 6*, written for Spike Lee. Her adaptation of Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* premiered on ABC’s *Oprah Winfrey Presents*. Parks is currently writing a television show for Amazon and a live stage musical adaptation of the film *The Harder They Come*.

For additional information on Suzan-Lori Parks:

www.suzanloriparks.com

www.americanrepertorytheater.org/events/show/father-comes-home-wars-parts-1-2-3

www.nytimes.com/2014/11/30/theater/suzan-lori-parks-on-father-comes-home.html?_r=0

www.barclayagency.com/site/speaker/suzan-lori-parks

Comprehension

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Greek Chorus in Theatre

www.britannica.com/art/chorus-theatre

www.krishaamer.com/function-chorus-greek-drama/

The Odyssey

www.pantheon.org/articles/u/ulysses.html

Homer

www.biography.com/people/homer-9342775

www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/homer

www.online-literature.com/home

Civil War

www.pbs.org/kenburns/civil-war

www.historynet.com/civil-war

www.civilwar.com/overview.html

www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/civil/jb_civil_subj.html

www.civilwar.org/education/history/faq/

www.civilwar.org/education/history/civil-war-overview/overview.html

www.civilwar.org/education/history/civil-war-overview/triggerevents.html

Confederate States of America

www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/confederate-states-of-america

Secession Acts of the 13 Confederate States

www.civilwar.org/education/history/primarysources/secessionacts.html

Civil War Military Leaders

www.historynet.com/union-generals

Ulysses S. Grant

www.empirenet.com/~ulysses/index.htm

First Kansas Colored Infantry

www.civilwaronthewesternborder.org/content/1st-kansas-colored-volunteers-later-79th-us-colored-infantry

www.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2010/February/Blood--Fire--The-1st-Kansas-Colored-Infantry/

www.blackpast.org/aaw/first-kansas-colored-infantry-1862-1865

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Slavery in Ancient Greece

www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ac41#ixzz3uWaclNIg

www.crystalinks.com/greekslavery.html

Slavery in America

www.history.com/topics/black-history/slavery

www.historynet.com/slavery-in-america

www.infoplease.com/timelines/slavery.html

www.gilderlehrman.org

www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery/experience/freedom/history.html

www.abolition.e2bn.org/slavery_43.html

www.civil-war.net/pages/1860_census.html

www.civilwarcauses.org/stat.htm

www.civil-war.net/pages/1860_census.html

www.civilwarcauses.org/stat.htm

Worth of Slaves

www.measuringworth.com/slavery.php

www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2956.html

www.yesmagazine.org/issues/make-it-right/infographic-40-acres-and-a-mule-would-be-at-least-64-trillion-today

Emancipation

www.archives.gov/historical-docs/document.html?doc=9

www.civilwar.org/education/history/emancipation-150/i-would-save-the-union.html#

www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery/experience/freedom/history.html

www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h1549.html

www.civilwar.org/education/history/emancipation-150/10-facts.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/

Texas State History

www.thestoryoftexas.com/discover/texas-history-timeline

Connections and Creativity

This section provides ways to explore connections between the ideas presented in the play, your 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 specific artistic aspects of the production and delve deeper into the ideas and questions it raises. The questions, activities, and information in this section can be used both before and after the performance.

About the Play | Comprehension | Connections & Creativity

CULTURAL MAPPING

Age Group

Middle, high school, and/or college

Length

20–40 minutes depending on the number of categories explored

Objectives

- Students will gain knowledge of similarities and differences between their classmates.
- Students will be introduced to *Father Comes Home From The Wars* and begin to reflect on the play and make personal connections to the story.

Materials Needed

- Quotes from the play

Activity

1. Ask students to move their desks to the side and stand in a circle.
2. 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.)
3. Repeat activity using other divisions:
 - Oldest, middle, youngest, only child
 - Speak one language, two languages, etc.
 - Most inspired by music, image, movement, language
 - Quotes. 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?

QUOTES:

*“Old stories, they guide us
They happened so far back...
Years ago
Years and years ago
Years and years and years ago
What could they have to do with you?”*

*“Sometimes I get the feeling that the heart of
the thing won’t change easy or quick.
Cause of the way we were bought and
brought over here in the first place.”*

*“How much is Hero worth? In dollars
and cents.”*

*“Maybe even with Freedom, that mark,
huh, that mark of the marketplace, it
will always be on us.”*

*“Where is the path?
Where is the path?!
The path it isn’t marked.”*

“A wild thing called Freedom is calling.”

TABLEAU/FROZEN PICTURE

Age Group

Middle, high school, and/or college

Length

30–45 minutes

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 the ideas explored in *Father Comes Home From The Wars* through a physical exploration of its themes.

Activity

1. Divide students into pairs. Student A is the artist. Student B is the sculpture. 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. Have each student title their statue and present to the class.
2. Repeat exercise with B as the artist and A as the sculpture.
3. Repeat with any of the following show-specific ideas: Freedom, Slavery, Runaways, Honesty, Loyalty, Heroes, etc. Have each student sculpt an image that represents one of these themes.
4. Discuss what these mean to your students and what these ideas mean in *Father Comes Home From The Wars*. Are they similar or very different?

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CHORUS CALL: Where are the group voices today?

Age Group

Middle, high school, and/or college

Length

45 minutes

Summary

Examine the device of the “chorus” in theatre and find everyday examples of “choirs” that provide commentary, explanation, and punditry to our modern lives.

Objectives

- Introduce the choral “device” (i.e. tool) used in storytelling
- Identify the application of a theatrical device to life offstage

Materials needed

- *Father Comes Home From The Wars* Discovery Guides
- Internet access, projector, and/or TV

Activity

1. Simple Definition of CHORUS—a group of singers and dancers in an ancient Greek play who take part in or talk about the things that are happening onstage
2. Choral group read of Discovery Guide section “The Chorus.”
3. Respond to Discovery Guide question:
 - a. Pre-show workshop: How do you think the chorus will help us deepen our understanding of the story and the characters?
 - b. Post-show workshop: How do you think the chorus helped us deepen our understanding of the story and the characters?
4. Are there groups of people in our world today who act like a theatrical chorus or choir?
5. Watch clips from NBC’s *Saturday Night Live* sketch talk show “What Up With That?”, which takes on issues of the day. Or does it? How is this an example of a chorus?
 - a. www.nbc.com/saturday-night-live/video/whats-up-with-that/n12960
6. Watch a few minutes of a game on ESPN. Can you identify examples of choirs that offer commentary to the story taking place on this field? (In this case, the playing field is almost like an athletic stage.)
 - a. www.espn.go.com/watchespn/index
7. Watch a few minutes of CNN. Can you find chorus commentary about modern events happening on the world stage?
 - a. www.cnn.com
8. Closing conversation: How do you think these modern-day choirs help us deepen our understanding of our lives and the people in our world?

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Variations

Students can create their own chorus about events happening at your school (a play, a sports event, or even a class sketch).

Tips

Ask if any students are part of singing choirs. What is the benefit of singing in a choir? What does it offer to the audience? To the musicians?

Quotes

“A lot of people pretty much only listen to the chorus.”

—Lenny Kravitz

“Movies, as evidenced by a chorus of protesting and celebrating Americans, influence broader trends.”

—Anna Deavere Smith

Examples

SNL, CNN, ESPN

Vocabulary

Chorus, commentary, color commentary, satire, sketch comedy, journalist roundtable

Reflection questions/prompts

1. How am I part of a choir or a chorus in my life?
2. When I talk, share ideas, sing, or dance about life—how does it help me understand my world better?

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CONCEAL OR REVEAL

Age Group

High school

Length

20 minutes

Objectives

- For participants to identify and become connected with aspects or qualities of themselves they reveal or conceal at a given moment to successfully maneuver a given situation.

Materials needed

- Notebook
- Pen or pencil

Activity

STEP 1: Discussion. In *Father Comes Home From The Wars* characters are struggling to survive and must do whatever it takes, including withholding parts of their identity or their plans for the future, to survive. We see this with Smith, who passes as white for his safety until he decides to tell Hero his true identity. His reveal allows both Smith and Hero to gain a better understanding of the truth by relating to each other as comrades. In what environments can you reveal more of who you are? Where do you feel the need to conceal parts of yourself? Why? What are the different masks you wear?

STEP 2: Give each student two notecards. On one card, students write down a personal quality from their life that they feel they need to conceal. On the other card they write down a personal quality that they feel comfortable revealing. They do not include their name. Share some of the traits on the cards and discuss scenarios as a class where a character might need to conceal or reveal a given quality. For example, if a person giggles a lot, they might need to conceal that trait on a job interview but would want to reveal that trait at a friend's birthday party.

STEP 3: Participants work in groups (3–5 people depending on class size). Each participant takes a turn naming one thing you might know by looking at them and one thing you don't know just by looking at them. Pick something personal you feel safe and comfortable revealing that your classmates don't know about you. For example, participants *can't* tell that my socks are covered in laughing kittens just by looking at me. But people *can* tell that I wear glasses just by looking at me.

STEP 4. Have each group of students pick two notecards from the opening discussion. The group will create a tableau or improvised scene exploring who, what, where, and why characters might need to conceal and/or reveal the traits on the cards. Share scenes.

STEP 5. Journal Reflection. Participants explore the benefits gained from revealing certain qualities in specific contexts. What are the masks we wear to maneuver the world? What's the first thing people might see when looking at me? What is something the world can't see by looking at me?

THE PRICE OF WORTH

Age Group

Middle school and up

Length

30–45 minutes

Summary

This lesson was created to highlight the concept of measuring a person's worth. It is derived from the discussion in Part 2 of *Father Comes Home From The Wars* between the Colonel, Smith, and Hero where a guessing game occurs to find out how much the Colonel paid for Hero.

Objectives

- To introduce the student to American slavery and the inhumane treatment of buying and selling humans as livestock.
- To look at worth—what makes a person worthy, or worthless, and how we measure it.
- To find other institutions where this model is being used.

Materials Needed

- Construction paper for cards
- Monopoly money (or created money)
- Sharpies for writing
- Selfies of students (this could be a pre-assignment)
- Large poster board for charting responses

Activity

STEP 1: Students are given a questionnaire to fill out, detailing vital statistics that they have and a set monetary value for each (ex. male under 5'-7", price \$100, male 5'-7"-5'-11", \$150, male over 6', \$200, and so forth). Students then staple their pictures to the questionnaires and turn them in to the instructor, who will be known as the 'overseer.'

STEP 2: Every 5th person is selected to be an "owner." The owners receive an equal amount of Monopoly money. They are then given an equal number of questionnaires. Once they have received these "slaves," they are now free to buy, sell, or keep whomever, paying the price that is the total on the questionnaire. One round is done.

STEP 3: The students are then given another questionnaire determining other qualities of worth (loyalty, critical thinking, humorous disposition, good at sports, great at math, etc.). Here, they are allowed to put their own price on each quality.

STEP 4: This second questionnaire goes up for discussion with the owners, only using two or three of these questionnaires for time, with the overseer picking one to add the quality and the price to the discussion.

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STEP 5: Unbeknownst to the slaves, there is a secret price list given to each personality/worth answer. You are to share this information with the class after the questionnaire is filled in, so the owners can use this in their decisions to keep a slave or try to sell them. If an owner has enough money to keep their property, then they keep the slave. If the worth is too great for the owners to meet, they will have to barter in order to meet the price.

STEP 6: The goal is to see who ends up with the most quality slaves (like Monopoly, it's better to have Park Place and Boardwalk than anything on the START side of the board).

Under no circumstances should any of the “slaves” receive any of the monetary compensation—the exchange of money is done between the owners.

Variations

The game can be prefaced with a discussion of what happens in a sports trade. (For example, fantasy football, the offseasons of various sports, and who/what should happen to which player—how much are they worth.) This is a great starting point for discussing institutions and value of worth.

Vocabulary

Slave, owner/master, overseer, worth, measure

Reflections

1. What did it feel like as a slave having no say in the judgment of your wealth?
2. What did it feel like as an owner with the power to buy and sell your peers?
3. Is there any price on the questionnaires that you thought was too low? Too high? Why?
4. How will you look at personal worth vs. institutional determination of wealth in the future?

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WORTH QUESTIONNAIRE #1

FILL OUT YOUR VITAL STATISTICS AND ASSIGN THE FOLLOWING MONETARY AMOUNT TO EACH

For height:

MEN

5'7" and under:	\$100
5'8"–5'11"	\$150
6' and over:	\$200

WOMEN

5'0" and under:	\$100
5'1" – 5'6"	\$150
5'7" and over:	\$200

For weight: (THIS IS OPTIONAL IF YOUR STUDENTS HAVE SENSITIVE ISSUES WITH WEIGHT):

MEN

Under 150 lbs.:	\$100
151–190:	\$150
191–200:	\$200
Over 200:	\$100

WOMEN

Under 100 lbs:	\$100
101–130:	\$200
131–150:	\$150
Over 150:	\$100

For eyes:

Black:	\$100
Brown:	\$100
Blue:	\$150
Green or hazel:	\$200
Gray/multiple:	\$250

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If blind:	subtract \$200
Wears glasses:	subtract \$100
Teeth:	
All teeth:	\$200
For every missing:	subtract \$15
Hair color:	
Black:	\$100
Brown:	\$125
Red:	\$150
Blond:	\$200
White/Gray:	\$75
Dyed:	\$75
Physical:	
One amputation:	subtract \$100
Multiple amputations:	subtract \$200
Ears:	
Perfect hearing:	add \$100
Impaired hearing:	no additional money
Deaf:	subtract \$100
Strength:	
Can do 50 or more pushups:	\$200
Can do 20 or more pushups:	\$100
Less than 20:	\$50
Language:	
Fluent in English:	\$200
Fluent in English and another language:	\$250
Does not speak English:	subtract \$100

(Note: the highest price adds up to \$1350)

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WORTH QUESTIONNAIRE #2

PLEASE ANSWER TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY:

1. What is your strongest attribute? (ONLY PICK ONE)
 - a. Loyalty
 - b. Humor
 - c. Hard-working
 - d. Discretion (able to keep secrets)
 - e. Problem-solving
2. If a friend were in trouble, you would...
 - a. Call their parents
 - b. Try to help them without telling an authority
 - c. Give them money
 - d. Look for someone who can help them
 - e. Stay away from them
3. If our country was under attack, would you enlist?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. What do you want to do when you graduate?
 - a. Find a job
 - b. Go to college
 - c. Travel
 - d. Get married and start raising a family
5. If you found \$10,000 on the sidewalk, you would...
 - a. Keep some of it
 - b. Keep all of it
 - c. Turn it in to the police

Based on your answers, give yourself a monetary worth from \$100–\$500.

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**For the teacher: the following monetary values are as follows to share with the “owners.”
In other words, disregard the answers of the “slaves.”**

1. a. \$100
 b. \$50
 c. \$100
 d. \$75
 e. \$75

2. a. \$50
 b. \$100
 c. \$50
 d. \$75
 e. \$0

3. a. \$100
 b. \$0

4. a. \$75
 b. \$100
 c. \$0
 d. \$50

5. a. \$0
 b. \$0
 c. \$100

FAMILY AFFAIR: FAMILY WE CHOOSE/FAMILY WE ARE BORN INTO

Age Group
High school

Length
30 minutes

Summary
Participants explore the elements that make up the families we are born into vs. the families we choose.

Objectives

- To identify what it is that connects us to other people in a way that feels like or is family.

Materials needed (if applicable)

- Notebook
- Pen or pencil

Activity
STEP 1: Discussion. The teacher and participants discuss the elements and dynamics of the relationships and friendships in their lives that feel like family, but may not be blood family. In *Father Comes Home From The Wars*, the Oldest Old Man and Hero feel connected as family even though they are not blood family. What makes people feel like family whether they are blood or not?

STEP 2: Writing Reflection. Students write in detail about who makes them feel like family and why. Who are you in alliance with? Do you feel judged by certain people in your family? Who do you feel understood around and free with? How does your chosen or blood family influence you and your life? Perhaps you have never felt like anyone in your life feels like family. If they did, what would that be like? What would you wish for or imagine? Perhaps there is a cousin you did not grow up with or an uncle you've seldom encountered or a friend who really does feel like a sister or cousin to you. There may be entire groups of people who feel like family that may include the soccer team, drama club, or even members of the same classroom. This writing will not be shared.

STEP 3: Funny Family Portraits. Students walk about the room, covering the available space. The teacher says "freeze" and names a style of family such as "Royal Family." Students create a tableau representing that specific family portrait. Other examples can be "Superhero Family," "Sports Team Family," "Movie Star Family," "Cat Family," or "Alien Family." Between each tableau, students walk around the space until the teacher calls "freeze" again and the next Family Portrait is created.

STEP 4: Drawing Family Portraits. Each participant draws a family portrait inside a frame in a notebook. Perhaps some of the family members are crafted outside the frame.

STEP 5: Staging a Family Portrait. Who would like to create a family portrait? This is done using only volunteers. The teacher leads the students through the creation of the portrait. It can be a Family Portrait of Chosen, Imagined, or Real Family.

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DOORS OF CHANGE

Age Group
High school

Length
30 minutes

Objectives

- To fully consider the options and aspects of different choices before making a decision.
- To listen to one's own inner voice in decision making regardless of external voices.

Materials needed

- Notebook
- Pen or pencil

Activity

STEP 1: Discuss internal conflict. In *Father Comes Home From The Wars*, characters encounter challenging life-decisions that people around them have strong opinions about. For example, Hero must choose whether or not to go to war. He is torn between the Oldest Old Man and Penny. Penny is faced with the decision about whether to run away with Homer and the Runaway Slaves or stay. We are faced with decisions in our everyday lives, some more challenging than others. Come up with a simple inner conflict, not something too personal. For example, you may be choosing between two good schools or two different jobs and must weigh the options carefully before deciding.

STEP 2: Set up two different doors. This can be achieved by drawing them on a board, arranging two chairs to represent doors, or using two different actual doors in the classroom.

STEP 3: Casting. Choose one actor to start out as the Conflicted Decision Maker and two different actors to narrate the External Voice of each door. What's behind the door? Is there a third choice? How do you listen to your own voice? Is there a way to get quiet and listen to your own voice? How can those voices be compelling enough to persuade you?

STEP 4: As External Voices alternate dialogue speaking to different aspects of consideration for each choice, the Conflicted Decision Maker physically moves toward the more appealing option at any given moment. Perhaps the Conflicted Decision Maker reaches a door and walks through it, maybe decides there is a third and better option, or is at a standstill present with internal discoveries.

STEP 5: Reflection writing exercise. Participants use their notebooks to further explore inner conflict and decision making, writing the pros and cons of two different choices in list form or free write. Is there a way to listen to and consider other people's voice and also hear and respect your own? What are the differences and similarities in what people are telling you vs. what you feel inside? Is there a third choice that become apparent as you explore the initial two choices? How do you achieve getting quiet enough to hear your own voice? What might happen if you flipped a coin? Does where the coin lands inform how you really feel about the choices?

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HEROES

Age Group

Middle, high school, and/or college

Length

20–45 minutes

Objectives

- Students will explore what it means to be a hero in *Father Comes Home From The Wars* and in their own lives
- Students will collectively brainstorm heroic moments/acts in their own lives and in our country's history.
- Students will present these heroic moments through tableau and dialogue.

Activity

1. Warm-up. Have the participants move through the space. Each time the facilitator/teacher says “freeze,” each individual will create a frozen statue showing an idea of a hero. The leader will share dictionary definitions of a hero while participants move through the space. Repeat multiple times so that a range of ideas about heroes emerges.
2. Discuss. Share ideas about what it means to be a hero.
3. Divide the class into groups of five to six. Have the groups brainstorm heroic acts/moments from their own lives and/or in American history. Select one of these moments to create a group tableau depicting the heroic deed or action. Every member of the group must be in the picture.
4. Add dialogue and movement to create a beginning, middle, and end.
5. Share scenes.
6. Discuss. What do the heroes/heroic moments have in common? What are the differences?
7. Discuss the character of Hero in *Father Comes Home From The Wars*. Do you think he was a hero? Why? Why not?

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Merriam-Webster definitions for Hero:

- A person who is admired for great or brave acts or fine qualities
- A person who is greatly admired
- Hero can refer to either a man or a woman, but it is often used to refer specifically to a man. The specific word for a woman who is brave and admired is heroine.
- The chief male character in a story, play, movie, etc.
- An outstanding warrior or soldier
- One that shows great courage
- A mythological or legendary figure of great strength or ability
- (Classical myth) a being of extraordinary strength and courage, often the offspring of a mortal and a god, who is celebrated for his exploits

RUN, RUN, RUNAWAY ROUTES

Age Group

High school

Length

45 minutes–1 Hour

Summary

Students explore what it must have been like for slaves of African heritage to escape their owners to seek freedom. They will have the opportunity to examine Underground Railroad routes and work in teams to bring to life their escapes.

Objectives

- To learn the history of the Underground Railroad, including that there were allies that supported slaves' efforts to escape.
- To gain empathy by putting themselves in another's shoes while bringing to life the escape of slaves seeking freedom.
- To increase teamwork skills to create, plan, and perform their journey of escape.
- Share our own stories related to the ideas of the Underground Railroad and escape. This provides opportunities for teachable moments around current events and diversity and inclusion.

Materials Needed

- Markers
- Large Post-It Note paper to plan and draw students' own Underground Railroad and escape
- Images of runaway slaves and the Underground Railroad route (handouts)

Activity

PART 1—Warm up with brain gym exercises:

- Stretch the left leg back and lunge forward with the right leg. Feel a stretch in the left leg. Switch sides and lunge forward with the left leg. Feel a stretch in the right leg. Breathe all the while stretching.
- Then, begin to march in place while swinging your arms, too. Watch out for your neighbor. The opposition of arms and legs wakes up the right and left sides of the brain to get synapses firing back and forth. Keep breathing!
- Next, bring both thumbs up in front at chest level like you're giving a "thumbs up!" sign with both hands. Begin to draw in the air with your thumbs and make sure your thumbs are mirroring each other. Come to a close and take a couple of deep breaths.

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PART 2—Guided meditation:

- Close your eyes and take a deep breath—let it out. Take another breath...and let it out.
- Now, let's time travel back to a different century—back to 1863.
- Imagine you are working on a farm and the sun is blistering hot. Your Master owns you. The Master assumes his power and thinks you will obey and work harder if he abuses you more.
- Your situation is so bad that you dream of running away, even though you don't know where to go.
- You constantly dream of a better life and a safe place—what does it look like? What does the word safe mean to you? What do you dream of doing that is different than working on the Master's plantation?
- Now dream of how you will escape—do you convince other slaves to escape with you?
- When will you escape? When is it least likely that anyone will catch you?
- You receive a limited amount of instructions to get you only to the first step of your journey. Each step of the journey is called a station.
- You must take the risk to run away to the first station in order to learn of the next station on your escape route. You will only get the next piece of information at each station from someone who is called a conductor.
- So, when you get to the first station, you will be guided to the next station—you have at least four stations to travel to before you are free. Will you make this journey?
- One last thing—you must create a password so that no master or anyone working for the Master will know that this word means, "I am a runaway slave heading North—take me to the next station." The password is.....
- Please keep your eyes closed as I offer you your next set of instructions. You will break into small groups of slaves who have agreed to run away together. You will draw a map of your escape and then bring it to life, acting out your journey. Think of landmarks you know of or can imagine that are your stations. Decide on a password with your group. You can use the playing space in the room to share your story of escape to freedom. Be sure to include what freedom looks and feels like when you arrive.

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PART 3

- Divide students into groups of 4–6.
- Once in their groups, introduce the Underground Railroad (UGRR):

The UGRR was a network of secret routes and safe houses used by 19th-century enslaved peoples of African descent in the United States in their efforts to escape from their owners to free states, which were areas where slavery was illegal. This included Canada.

The escape network was not literally underground and was not an actual railroad. It was figuratively “underground” in the sense of being a secret system of resistance to slavery.

It was known as a “railroad” because of the use of rail terminology as a code name.

The UGRR consisted of meeting points, secret routes, transportation, and safe houses, and personal assistance provided by abolitionists and ally sympathizers. Abolitionists were those who wanted slavery abolished/outlawed. Allies were people who did not believe in slavery, were not slaves, and wanted to help slaves get to freedom.

There were also slaves who didn’t know of the UGRR and who knew they had to run away because their situation was so horrendous. Many slaves did not know there were allies along the way to help them.

Some Participants generally organized in small, independent groups; this helped to maintain secrecy because individuals knew some connecting “stations” along the route but knew few details of the stations in their immediate area. Escaped slaves would move north along the route from one station to the next.

Without the presence and support of free black residents, there would have been almost no chance for fugitive slaves to pass into freedom unscathed.

“Conductors” on the railroad came from various backgrounds and included free-born blacks, white abolitionists, former slaves, and Native Americans. Churches and their clergy and congregations often played a role, including the Quakers. Conductors led or transported fugitives from station to station. They sometimes pretended to be slaves in order to enter a plantation. Once on the plantation, the conductor would direct the runaways to their first station on the way to the North.

To reduce the risk of infiltration, many people associated with the UGRR knew only their part of the operation and not of the whole scheme.

- Share images of slaves escaping and photos depicting UGRR history.

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Have student volunteers read the section from the play below (1, 2, and 3 are different roles):

1. *"I ran from the east of here*
2. *I ran from a place further south*
3. *And I ran from a place further south than that.*
1. *We met up on the road.*
2. *And now we're running together.*
3. *Running buddies you could say."*

—Suzan-Lori Parks, *The Union Of My Confederate Parts*

This text is on a large Post-It so that all the groups can see it and work it into their performances.

Pass out the map of the UGRR routes, with free states depicted.

Each group receives a large Post-It and markers to plan out their route of escape. Groups ask themselves these questions and work the text into their performances:

- Where is freedom to us?
- What is our route? (Use landmarks or places that you know are safe and will get you where you designate freedom to be. Safe places might be someone's home.)
- What will we take with us?
- When will we start our escape?

Students have 7–10 minutes to plan and stage their escape.

Student groups perform their escapes.

After all groups have performed, discuss:

What was it like planning your escape together? What came up for you? What does freedom mean to you? What does a "safe place" mean to you? What does it look like, feel like?

What was interesting to you about the history of the Underground Railroad?

Do you have your own stories or thoughts that connect you to this history?

Close with each student naming a "safe place" they have experienced or provided for someone. It could be how they were helpful to someone in supporting their empowerment.

Vocabulary:

Underground Railroad, safe house

Other related topics:

The Syrian refugee plight, immigration

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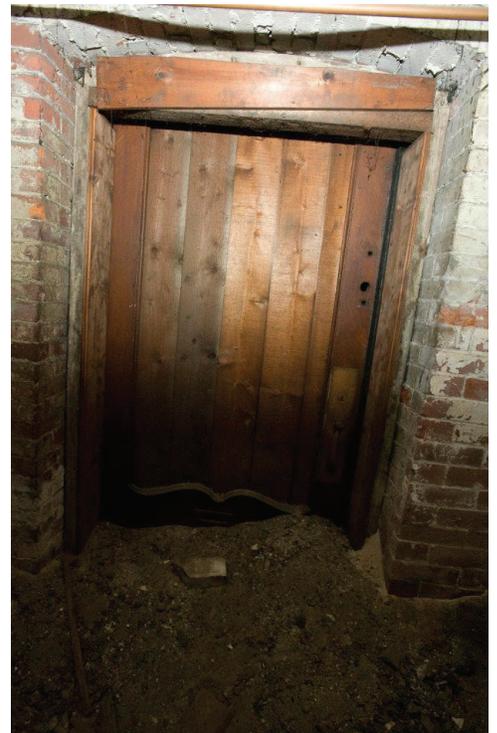
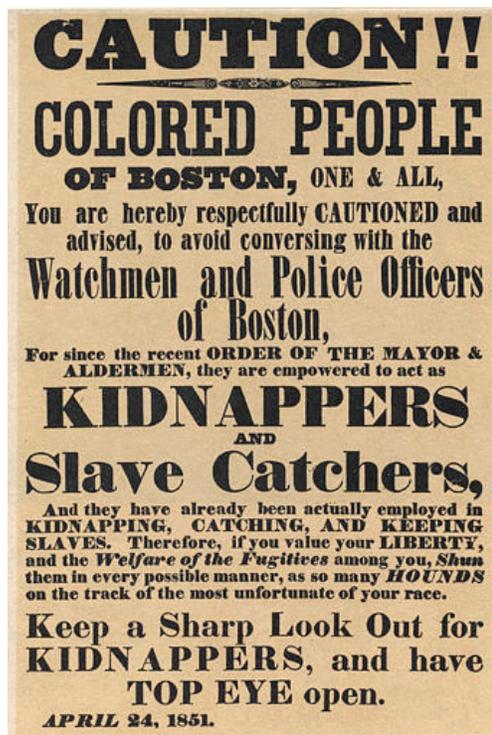
Trigger warning: Given the immigrant and refugee communities that populate our schools, talking about the abuse of slaves could be a trigger for students who have experienced abuse or mistreatment in their lived experiences. Let students know that the history explored in this activity touches on the history of black/African heritage slaves and the horrendous abuse and mistreatment they received while enslaved and while trying to escape and/or seek freedom. If a student is triggered, please follow the policies of your school. Hopefully this will mean guiding them to the appropriate support so they might receive proper care and the opportunity to heal around these issues.

Images: See below—share these before the students begin mapping out their escape. Perhaps they can utilize these images in their performance. All images are in the public domain or free to be shared as educational resources.



A map of Underground Railroad routes

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Clockwise from top: *The Underground Railroad* by Charles T. Webber. Door to a smuggling tunnel in Salem, Massachusetts, where runaway slaves could hide and stay for a night. An April 24, 1851 poster warning the "colored people of Boston" about policemen acting as slave catchers.

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\$150 REWARD



RANAWAY from the subscriber, on the night of the 2d instant, a negro man, who calls himself *Henry May*, about 22 years old, 5 feet 6 or 8 inches high, ordinary color, rather chunky built, bushy head, and has it divided mostly on one side, and keeps it very nicely combed; has been raised in the house, and is a first rate dining-room servant, and was in a tavern in Louisville for 18 months. I expect he is now in Louisville trying to make his escape to a free state, (in all probability to Cincinnati, Ohio.) Perhaps he may try to get employment on a steamboat. He is a good cook, and is handy in any capacity as a house servant. Had on when he left, a dark cassinett coatee, and dark striped cassinett pantaloons, new--he had other clothing. I will give \$50 reward if taken in Louisville; 100 dollars if taken one hundred miles from Louisville in this State, and 150 dollars if taken out of this State, and delivered to me, or secured in any jail so that I can get him again.

WILLIAM BURKE.
Bardstowen, Ky., September 3d, 1838.

Top: A tunnel on the Underground Railroad. Bottom: An ad for an escaped slave who had likely gone to Cincinnati, the center of Underground Railroad activity along the Ohio-Kentucky border.

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Top: *A Ride for Liberty—The Fugitive Slaves* by Eastman Johnson.

Bottom: A hiding space on the Underground Railroad.

Credits

Michael Ritchie
Artistic Director

Stephen D. Rountree
Managing Director

Douglas C. Baker
Producing Director

Leslie K. Johnson
Director of Education and
Community Partnerships

Kathryn Mackenzie
Director of Department
Operations

Traci Cho Kwon
Director of Arts Education
Initiatives

Jesus Reyes
Program Manager,
Community Partnerships

Camille Schenkkan
Program Manager,
Next Generation Initiatives

Melissa Hernandez
Program Associate

Felipe M. Sanchez
Program Associate

Jennifer Harrell
Operations Assistant

Khanisha Foster
Resident Teaching Artist

Debra Piver
Resident Teaching Artist

Center Theatre Group Education and Community Partnerships

Center Theatre Group's mission is to serve the diverse audiences of Los Angeles by producing and presenting theatre of the highest caliber, by nurturing new artists, by attracting new audiences, and by developing youth outreach and education programs. This mission is based on the belief that the art of theatre is a cultural force with the capacity to transform the lives of individuals and society at large.

Education and Engagement

Theatre is an enduring and powerful tool for communicating ideas, stories, emotions, and beliefs that fuel the intellect, imagination, and creative spirit. Center Theatre Group believes that stimulating awareness, creativity, dialogue, and an inquisitive mind is integral to the growth and well-being of the individual and the community, and that nurturing a life-long appreciation of the arts leads inextricably to an engaged and enlightened society.

Center Theatre Group's education and engagement programs advance the organization's mission in three key ways:

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.

Special Thanks



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