

## PICTURES TO LIFE: CHARACTER

### Objectives

- Students will reflect on story and character by analyzing a picture.
- Students will communicate the character's thoughts, feelings and activities through tableau and writing.
- Students will reflect on ordinary people, living in extraordinary, historical times

### Materials needed

- Pictures to Life photos

### Activity

In *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, "Great events are seen not through the eyes of leaders and celebrities, but through the experiences of the ordinary people who lived them." Playwright Pearl Cleage was curious about what happened to ordinary people when the Harlem Renaissance ended, and the Great Depression began.

Actors create characters from the outside in, figuring out how the character walks and moves, and from the inside out, exploring what the character thinks and feels.

### Warm-Up

1. Invite the students to move through the space, being mindful not to bump into each other. Call out different directions and ways to move. Cover the space big, little, heavy, light, fast, slow, etc.
2. Ask the students to cover the space with character walks. Call out different body parts and have the students cover the space with different parts as the "center". Lead with your chin, nose, belly, shoulders, toes, etc. Ask them to notice how it makes them feel. What are some of the character clues you get with different centers?

### Photographs

1. In the "Pictures to Life" photo packet, find a picture that intrigues you. These are all photographs of people in Harlem during the Harlem Renaissance or Great Depression.
2. Once you have selected your image, get paper and a pen and find a place in the room to explore your picture – imagining these people from the inside/out. If your picture has more than one character, pick a character who is most interesting to you.

3. Write down ideas based on the following questions:
  - a. What is this person's wildest dream for the world? For themselves?
  - b. What caused this person grief or anger?
  - c. Who did this person call family?
  - d. Who cared for this person? Whom did this person care for?
  - e. Who is this character's best friend?
  - f. What is this character's life philosophy? (Sam's in the play is "Long life, good health and let the good times roll!") What is it for this character?

### Character Walks

1. Invite your students to cover the space as this character.
2. Ask: Do they walk heavy, light, fast, slow? Try out different walks experimenting with creating characters from the outside in. What did they discover about the characters inner life? How does that impact how they move through the world?

### Pictures to Life

1. Divide the group in two and ask half the class to freeze in the shape of the character in the picture. (To the best of their ability).
2. Ask: What is your character thinking or feeling? Is there something they want to say/share with the world? Encourage your students to use first person when answering.

While you watch the play, think about the character you explored. How are their dreams and fears similar to Angel and Guy and the other character from *Blues for an Alabama Sky*? And how is history different when it is seen through the eyes and heart of ordinary people?

### Lesson Extensions through Writing

A Day in the Life: Write an ordinary day (24 hours) in the life of your character. What would happen if the character's greatest want or greatest fear came true? How would that change this ordinary day?

How did daily life change for your character from the height of the Harlem Renaissance to living during the Great Depression.

Write a song, poem, letter, or journal entry communicating how the character sees themselves, how the world sees them, and how they create a world where they can be their truest selves.

Write a series of postcards or conversations between this person and someone they loved.

Create Character profile:

NAME

AGE

FAMILY

HABITAT (WHERE AND WHEN THE CHARACTER LIVES)

GREATEST WANT

GREATEST FEAR

GREATEST FRIEND

MOST PEACEFUL PLACE

LIFE PHILOSOPHY

JOB