

TICKETS TO YOUR FUTURE

Objectives

- Students will explore pantomime
- Students will imagine their futures and connect to their dreams of success and happiness
- Students will begin to understand how costumes help tell a story

Activity

In *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, playwright Pearl Cleage sets the story in Harlem, New York City during a time known as the Harlem Renaissance, a prolific and celebrated period of African American art and culture. The story also takes place during the Great Depression, a difficult period for Americans when unemployment was high, money was low, food lines were long, and disillusioned people with their dreams deferred chose to leave cities like New York in search of better work prospects. In the play, the character of Guy has dreams of leaving Harlem and moving to Paris to design costumes for African American nightclub entertainer Josephine Baker.

When referring to Guy's dreams, the character of Angel says: "Guy's a dreamer. He always is and he always will be." Guy spends much of the play waiting for a package from Josephine Baker containing two tickets to Paris via boat. These are essentially tickets to Guy's successful future.

Part 1

- If you could receive a package in the mail today containing tickets to your future, what would those tickets be?
- Invite the students to imagine their future success, their future happiness through pantomime, where they express meaning through gesture.
 - Open the door and see a package there waiting.
 - Pick up the package. Shake it. What do you think is in it?
 - Set down your package on a surface in front of you.
 - Grab a pair of scissors or a knife and open it up. Be careful. Those tools are sharp.
 - What is in this box are tickets to a new life. Where do these tickets to go?
 - What do you see? Are there actual tickets to go somewhere? What do they say?
 - Any objects? Any clothing items? Any personal mementos? Photographs, maybe?
 - What else is in there? Any other clues?
 - Take everything out of the package and set them on a surface in front of you.
 - Discard the package if you like.
 - Now go grab a suitcase. Get ready to go and head into our future.
 - Pack every item you see sitting in front of you.
 - Take a moment with each item.
 - Connect with it and what it means for your future.
 - Put the suitcase aside for now.

Part 2

In the play, the character of Guy is a costume designer. Guy is designing costumes for the future.

The costume designer for Center Theatre Group's production of this play, Wendell Carmichael, says, "I think Guy is designing ahead of the period."

- Invite the students to go back to thinking about their future.
 - Imagine what your future costumes would be.
 - Walk over to our future wardrobe.
 - Open the doors. What do you see?
 - What is the first thing you're going to pull out?
 - Pull it out and hold it in front of you.
 - What does it feel like? What is it made out of?
 - How heavy is it? What color is it?
 - Do you want to put it on? How does it feel?
 - Go back to your wardrobe and pull out a few more items.
 - What else are you going to grab? Connect with each item.
 - What does it feel like? What is it made out of? How heavy is it? What color is it?
 - Pack every item you grab into your suitcase from earlier.
 - Look at the suitcase you packed. Look at every item.
 - This is a snapshot of your future. Take it in.
 - Now close the suitcase. How full is it? Do you have to sit on it to close it?
 - Pick it up. It's heavy, isn't it?
 - Now stand up tall while carrying your suitcase.
 - Take your first steps into your future.

While you're watching the play, pay attention to the reality of these characters, the dreams they have, the futures that await them. And pay attention to the clothes the characters wear. How do the costumes designed by Wendell Carmichael help tell the story?