

upstageACTIVITIES

EXCEPTION TO THE RULE

PRE-SHOW: How does a playwright show a shift in character status? How does a director use blocking to highlight a shift in status?

ANALYZE

Read the excerpt from *Exception to the Rule* by Dave Harris below. Analyze when each character has higher or lower status, and when that status switches. There is at least one switch in the short interaction.

CHARACTERS

MIKAYLA: female, Black, high schooler

TOMMY: male, Black, high schooler

SETTING

An inner-city classroom.

(Mikayla enters in a fit, followed swiftly by Tommy.)

MIKAYLA. Yo Mr. Bernie! Where you at?

TOMMY. What's good bae? I see we're all alone in here.

MIKAYLA. Tommy. You know I don't want you.

TOMMY. It's cool. I'm not tryna holla.

MIKAYLA. You not tryna holla?

TOMMY. Nah.

MIKAYLA. You mean you not tryna get a piece of me?

TOMMY. Nah.

MIKAYLA. You don't think I'm sexy?

TOMMY. Nah! ... I mean yeah I might be tryna holla a lil bit. But it ain't like that. I'm not like all those other guys.

MIKAYLA. You think you different?

TOMMY. No doubt.

MIKAYLA. You think you special?

TOMMY. No doubt.

MIKAYLA. Then you exactly like every other guy out there.

PHYSICALIZE

How might a director help make these changes in status clear? If possible, work with two actors to develop blocking that highlights the shifts in status; otherwise, envision the blocking in your mind and note it on the script. Does one character stand as the other sits? Does one character strut boldly while the other covers by the window? How can an actor's movement help tell the story?

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POST SHOW: How does a designer use sound, lighting, and set design to evoke an emotion?

Exception to the Rule draws audience attention to issues of systemic racism in the lives of young Black students through both bringing those students to the stage as characters and through set, sound, lighting, and costume choices that contribute to an audience's emotional response to a show.

DISCUSS

How did a specific lighting, sound, or set design choice make you feel as an audience member? Consider color, texture, intensity, timing, volume, and shape/scale as you articulate your experience.

CHOOSE

Select one of the following emotion words at random.

SORROWFUL

JOYOUS

TERRIFIED

ANXIOUS

PEACEFUL

DISGUSTED

DESIGN

Imagine that you are a designer hired to create the set design of a classroom environment that evokes the emotion word you chose. What lighting choices—color, intensity, texture, etc.—would you make? What sound design choices? What would the primary scenic elements be, and how would you use them to evoke the emotion word (scale, location, texture, etc.)? If possible, create your design in your classroom or draw it in a notebook.
