



EXERCISE: REVOLUTIONARY FIGURES

Subject(s): Social Studies and Theatre

Goals: Students will be able to:

- Synthesize evidence from artifacts and primary and secondary sources to obtain information about events and life in world history;
- Evaluate sources for accuracy, credibility, bias and propaganda;
- Describe artistic, literary and intellectual ideas of the Renaissance;
- Define and describe how the Scientific Revolution led to social and technological changes that influenced the European view of the world.
- Describe the development of social and cultural patterns in France, with emphasis on the Age of Absolutism, Louis XIV and the Enlightenment period.
- Propose and select alternatives to solve problems while building ensemble.
- Refine physical and vocal techniques for theatre performance.
- Demonstrate theatrical direction, including blocking and staging a scene.
- Understand roles and relationships for theatre production.

Show Connection: There are quite a few revolutionary figures from history whose voices and stories serve as inspiration to *Failureland!* In this exercise, students will unpack the lives lived by some of the figures who inspired the piece. In exploring their lives, students will better understand what these heroes had to overcome, the work they did and the impact they have had on the world today.

Materials:

- Resources for Revolutionary Figures
 - [Galileo Galilei](#)
 - [Maya Angelou](#)
 - [Artemisia Gentileschi](#)
 - [Vincent Van Gogh](#)
 - [Augusta Savage](#)

Set Up: Divide the students into 5 equal groups.

Description:

- Instruct the students to get together with their preselected group of peers for their work today

- Each group will be assigned one of the following five figures that feature prominently in *Failureland!*
 - Galileo Galilei
 - Maya Angelou
 - Artemisia Gentileschi
 - Vincent Van Gogh
 - Augusta Savage
- Using digital resources provided, or physical copies of articles for each group's respective figure, each group is given sufficient time to prepare a short three-minute scene(s) that show what sort of revolutionary effect / observation / discovery that figure had. The scene should also consider how their figure's work was interpreted and reacted to by those around them, and what, if any, lasting impact that figure left behind them. This could include their immediate family, loved ones, business partners, etc. These reactions and interpretations also do not have to be strictly positive. (These figures lived a lot of life and the people in their lives may not have always been the most supportive of their work or their lifestyles.)
 - Make an impact by showing us the impact. Play up their contributions and the ways their contributions were received. And great creative! Let the content of their lives dictate the form and format of the scenes. These scenes should help us feel the impact of what these figures brought to the world.
 - As each group explores the research materials, encourage them to not only try to uncover what "discovery" and eye opening work the figure brought to the rest of the world, but what discoveries the figure may have made about themselves, the world and their own place in it. (These may be good discoveries, bad ones, or something else entirely.)
- Instructors should circulate around the classroom as groups are working on their piece, offering guidance on possible staging suggestions, ways to highlight the lives of the historical figures, etc.
- Following the time to prepare, present the pieces one at a time and be prepared to jump in and give corrections, explanations, questions, etc.

Discussion:

- What types of cultural impacts did these figures have on the world? What impacts did they have on themselves?
- Why are we so quick to dismiss new or revolutionary ideas as failures? How does that kind of societal response affect the potential for progress?
- Some feel that we should paint the most positive version of history possible, often out of respect for the historical figures we're discussing. Some go to the other extreme, feeling a need to focus history on "exposing" people for their negative attributes. How do you feel we should approach talking about real people from history? Why?