



JABBER

Applause Series Curriculum Guide
February 27, 2018



CIVIC CENTER • STONER THEATER • TEMPLE THEATER • COWLES COMMONS

Jabber

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for joining us for the Applause Series presentation of *Jabber*. Des Moines Performing Arts is proud to bring this important piece of theater to teen audiences in our community. Just as our society grapples with the implications of increasing diversity and polarization on a variety of issues, including immigration, our students are also navigating what these issues mean for their own lives and peer relationships. *Jabber* explores what it is like to be a teen in this current climate in a way that is relevant, respectful and responsive to the many identities, pressures, and challenges young people face regardless of their background. As such, we hope that this experience is one that helps support meaningful dialogues amongst your school community and promotes the development of empathy across the perceived lines that divide us.

We hope that this study guide helps you connect the performance to your classroom curriculum in ways that you find valuable. In the following pages, you will find contextual information about the performance and related subjects, as well as a wide variety of discussion questions and activities. As such, we hope that you are able to “pick and choose” material and ideas from the study guide to meet your class’s unique needs.



See you at the theater,

Des Moines Performing Arts Education Team

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ABOUT THE APPLAUSE SERIES



TAKE THOUSANDS OF IOWA STUDENTS OUT OF THEIR CLASSROOMS, PLACE THEM IN A THEATER, SPRINKLE THE STAGE WITH WORLD-CLASS PERFORMERS, AND WHAT DO YOU HAVE? A RECIPE FOR LEARNING THAT REACHES NEW LEVELS OF POSSIBILITY—FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

WE CALL IT THE APPLAUSE SERIES.

BRINGING ARTS EDUCATION TO LIFE

The Applause Series is a flagship education program of Des Moines Performing Arts. Since its launch in 1996, more than a half million students and teachers have attended school-time performances as part of the series. You are joining us for the 22nd season of school performances!

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Each year, more than 55,000 students and teachers attend an Applause Series performance. The actual cost per person is \$8, but thanks to the caring contributions of donors, schools pay just \$1 per ticket. By removing the financial barriers to participation, donors introduce a whole new generation to the power of arts in action. That means stronger schools and communities now and in the future.

TICKET TO IMAGINATION

The Applause Series annually delivers 60 age-appropriate performances for pre-school to high school students. The impact stretches far beyond the Des Moines metro, reaching schools in over 35 Iowa counties. The theater becomes the classroom. One-hour matinees energize students to imagine new ways of creative expression, cultural diversity and even career opportunities.

BEYOND THE STAGE

For many Applause Series performances, we offer the opportunity for schools to go deeper by exploring an art form or theme that connects with what is seen on stage. Invite a professional teaching artist into the classroom or visit another cultural destination in Des Moines to help students make more meaning of a piece of theater.

ABOUT DES MOINES PERFORMING ARTS

Des Moines Performing Arts is central Iowa's premier not-for-profit performing arts organization.

More than 300,000 guests attend performances and events in our four venues each year:

- ◇ Civic Center, 2744 seats
- ◇ Stoner Theater, 200 seats
- ◇ Temple Theater, 299 seats
- ◇ Cowles Commons (outdoor plaza)

Guests experience a wide variety of art forms and cultural activities, with presentations ranging from Broadway, comedy, professional dance, to family programming.

Des Moines Performing Arts education programs serve more than 75,000 Iowans annually.

Programs for schools, such as the Applause Series and teacher professional development, help enliven students' learning. Public education programs such as master classes, workshops, Q&A sessions and summer camps allow audience members and aspiring artists to make meaningful and personal connections to the art they experience on our stages.

GOING TO THE THEATER



ATTENDING A LIVE PERFORMANCE IS A UNIQUE AND EXCITING OPPORTUNITY! UNLIKE THE PASSIVE EXPERIENCE OF WATCHING A MOVIE, AUDIENCE MEMBERS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN EVERY LIVE PERFORMANCE.

WHAT ROLE WILL YOU PLAY?

YOUR ROLE AS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER

Artists on stage are very aware of the mood and level of engagement of the audience. As such, each performance calls for a different response from audience members.

As you experience the performance, consider the following questions:

- ◇ What kind of live performance is this (a musical, dance, or concert)?
- ◇ What is the mood of the performance? Is the subject matter serious or lighthearted?
- ◇ What is the mood of the artists? Are they happy and smiling or somber and reserved?
- ◇ Are the artists encouraging the audience to clap to the music, move to the beat, or participate in some other way?
- ◇ Are there natural breaks in the performance where applause seems appropriate?

DID YOU KNOW?

ALTHOUGH NOT REQUIRED, SOME PEOPLE ENJOY DRESSING UP WHEN THEY ATTEND THE THEATER.

THEATER ETIQUETTE CHECKLIST

- Do not bring food, drinks or chewing gum into the theater.
- The use of cameras and recording devices are not permitted.
- Turn off and put away cell phones and other electronics before the performance begins.
- Do not text during the performance.
- Respect the theater. Keep your feet off of the seats and avoid bouncing up and down.
- When the house lights dim, the performance is about to begin. Please stop talking at this time.
- Talk only before and after the performance.
- Use the restroom before the performance or wait until the end.
- Remember that this is a special experience. The artists are creating something just for you. Appropriate responses such as laughing and applauding are appreciated. Pay attention to the artists — they will let you know what is appropriate.
- Open your eyes, ears, mind, and heart to the entire experience. **Enjoy yourself!**

CIVIC CENTER FIELD TRIP INFORMATION



WE WANT YOUR FIELD TRIP TO BE SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL!

PLEASE READ BELOW FOR IMPORTANT TIPS AND DETAILS TO ENSURE A GREAT DAY.

GET ORGANIZED

- ◇ Double-check that all students, teachers, and chaperones were included in your ticket order. Request an adjustment if your numbers have increased. We want to make sure we have enough seats for you!
 - ◇ Tickets are not issued. Bring a copy of your invoice, which will serve as your group's "ticket".
 - ◇ Schedule arrival for 30 minutes prior to the start of the performance. This allows time to park, cross streets, find your seats, and go to the restroom.
- Let drivers know that Applause performances are approximately 60 minutes, unless otherwise noted.

- ◇ Remind chaperones that children under the age of three are not permitted in the theater for Applause Series events.

DIRECTIONS/PARKING

- ◇ The Des Moines Civic Center is located at 221 Walnut Street, Des Moines, Iowa.
- ◇ Directions from I-235: take Exit 8A (Downtown Exits) and the ramp toward 3rd St and 2nd Ave. Turn onto 3rd Street and head south.
- ◇ Police officers stationed at the corner of 3rd & Locust Streets will direct buses to reserved street parking near the Civic Center.
- ◇ Buses are not allowed to drop groups off in front of the theater. Contact us in advance if there is a special circumstance.
- ◇ Buses remain parked for the duration of the show. Drivers must be available to move the bus immediately following the performance.
- ◇ Personal vehicles are responsible for securing their own parking on a nearby street or in a downtown parking ramp.

QUESTIONS?
We are happy to help!

Please contact us at:
education@dmpa.org
515.246.2355

ARRIVAL/SEATING

- ◇ An usher will greet you at the door and ask for your school name.
 - ◇ Adults will be asked to show proper identification (such as school IDs or visitor badges as applicable) at the door.
 - ◇ Each group will be assigned a specific location in the theater based on various factors. An usher will escort you to your section.
 - ◇ Your school may be seated in multiple rows. Adults should position themselves throughout the group.
 - ◇ Allow ushers to seat your entire group before rearranging student seats or taking groups to the restroom.
- This helps us seat efficiently and better start the show on time.

IN THE THEATER

- ◇ Adults are asked to handle any disruptive behavior in their group. If the behavior persists, an usher may request your group to exit the theater.
- ◇ Please wait for your group to be dismissed by DMPA staff prior to exiting the theater.

VOCABULARY



Photo by Heather McCuen

As you prepare to see the play *Jabber*, here are some vocabulary words to get you started.

Cairo: the capital and largest city of Egypt. Cairo is the largest metropolitan area in the Middle East. It is also associated with ancient Egypt and the Giza pyramid complex.



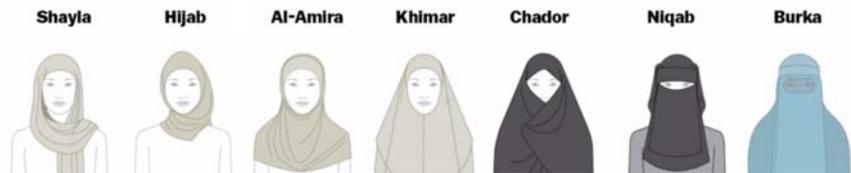
Photo by Luc Legay

duct: short for aqueduct; an artificial channel for conveying water, typically in the form of a bridge across a valley or other gap. The area under an aqueduct is often an isolated space that becomes a gathering place for teens, the homeless, or criminals.



Photo by David Malolo

TYPES OF ISLAMIC VEILS



Hijab (HIH-jaeb, or hi-JAAB): Arabic word that means “cover”. It is also a common term used to describe the veil or headscarf which usually covers the head and chest and is traditionally worn by some Muslim women in the presence of adult males outside of their immediate family. Most often, it is worn by as a symbol of modesty and privacy or as a means of expressing their Muslim identity. While hijabs are commonly associated with women, Muslim men also sometimes wear a head covering as a means of showing modesty.

“I tried to be honest. I was, like, it’s part of who I am, and it also reminds me where I come from.”

-Fatima in *Jabber*

Islam: the religion of Muslims.

The star and crescent is the most recognizable symbol of the Islamic faith.



‘jabber’: the nickname Fatima and her Muslim girlfriends at her old school gave themselves because they all wear hijabs.

Muslim: a follower of the religion of Islam. Muslims consider the Quaran (or Koran), their holy book to be the verbatim word of God (Allah) as revealed to the Islamic prophet Muhammad. The majority of Muslims also follow the teachings and practices of Muhammad. “Muslim” is an Arabic word meaning “one who submits (to Allah)”.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE



What is it like to be 16 years old, a girl, a Muslim, and a refugee all at the same time?

Jabber, written by playwright Marcus Youssef, is an original play created by Geordie Productions, a theatre company in Canada. It is a thought provoking, comedic, and at times dark play that deals with many issues we face today, both at school and in the community. Some of the central themes addressed in *Jabber* include: perception, religion, stereotypes, abuse, racism and generosity.

In *Jabber*, it is appearances, and judgments based therein that are challenged. Some of those judgments arise out of our images of the Middle East, some arise out of our images of working class, teenage white boys. All are filtered through the particular cultural laboratory of our schools where, unlike almost anywhere, people of all histories and backgrounds are thrown together, and where young people of all kinds must learn about what they believe in, and how far they are willing to go to defend those beliefs.

Running Time: 60 minutes

SYNOPSIS

Let's say three actors play out a story that takes place in a high school. Let's say one of them plays an outgoing Egyptian-born girl who wears a Hijab. Let's say her parents made her change schools recently because of a racist incident at her old school, and that now she is the only girl in her school who wears a Hijab.

Let's say that the guidance counselor at her new school, Mr. E, is doing his best to help Fatima fit in. Let's say that a big part of his advice to her is to stay away from Jorah, a 10th grade guy who has challenges of his own – namely a temper and some other stuff in his past that have given him a bad reputation. But let's say that maybe, just maybe, Fatima and Jorah start to, like, like each other, and Fatima starts to feel less like an outsider. But she also knows that her family would not approve of Jorah. How can she balance this new relationship with her family's faith?

STYLE

Jabber has only three actors. They first introduce themselves as actors, using their real names, ages, etc. They then tell the story – both as the characters they play, and as themselves – commenting on the action directly to the audience. The sets and costumes are simple, as the dialogue and themes are the most important part of this play. The two main characters – Fatima and Jorah, who are both 16 – sometimes communicate using social media. When they do, you will see their conversation projected on a screen above the stage.

Note to Teachers: This production addresses difficult subject matters such as discrimination, domestic abuse, sexuality, and the danger of online sharing on social media. It has been praised for presenting these topics in a way that is relatable and sensitive to the needs of teen audiences.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Jabber is brought to you by Geordie Productions, a theater company from Montreal in Quebec, Canada.

Below, read the biographies of the actors, playwright, and director responsible for *Jabber*.

David Sklar (Mr. E.)

David is an actor/playwright. He is a graduate of theatre from Dawson College and the Bristol Old



Vic Theatre School. He also holds a B.F.A. in playwriting from Concordia University. He has toured with the Montreal Shakespeare Theatre Company. "Crazy Love," his first play, has been published in an anthology entitled, *Out on a Limb*. Last year he was artist in residence at Shakespeare-in-the-Rough, the Jerusalem based English Language Theatre Company. He can also be seen in the movie *X-Men: Apocalypse*.



Mariana Tayler (Fatima)

Born in Colombia and having grown up in Montreal, Mariana is a multicultural artist; her ability to easily partake in and traverse from one culture

to another has enabled her to act in French, English, Spanish and Italian, with each of their own distinctive cultural nuances intact. Mariana has acted in various plays, short films and independent films, as well as begun an extensive journey to continuing her training and education in performance with some of Montreal's best coaches.

Aris Tyros (Jorah)

Originally from Montreal, Aris Tyros graduated with honors from Dawson's Professional Theatre



Program. He then moved to Toronto where he performed at Theatre Passe Muraille (Billy Wigglesticks), Sterling Theatre (Mrs. Warren's Profession), and the Toronto Centre for the Arts (Delimax). Most recently he played the lead role in the BRAVO film "Magic Mushrooms." In his spare time he volunteers as an audio-book narrator at the CNIB (Canadian National Institute for the Blind).



Amanda Kellock (Director)

Amanda is the artistic director of Repercussion Theatre and is a Montreal-based director, actor, writer

and teacher with a BFA from Concordia University and an MFA in Directing from the University of Ottawa. Two monologues from her first play Fair(L)jy (S)Tale – A Story Unbound have been published in a book of monologues by Roger Ellis. *Jabber* is one of her very favorite shows.

Marcus Youssef (Playwright)

Marcus Youssef's dozen plays

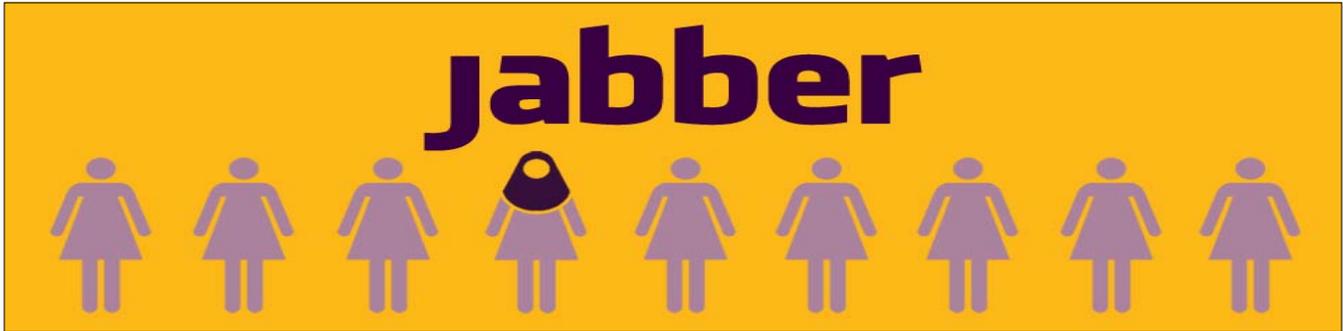


and performance events have been produced in theatres and festivals across North America, Europe and Australia, from New York to Dublin to Berlin. His awards include Rio-Tinto Alcan Performing Arts, Chalmer's Canadian Play, Arts Club Silver Commission, Seattle Times Footlight, Vancouver Critics' Choice Innovation (three times), as well as numerous local awards and nominations for best new play, production, and director in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. Marcus has been artistic director of Vancouver's Newworld Theatre since 2005, where he also co-founded Progress Lab 1422, a collaboratively managed, six-thousand-square-foot studio and production hub. Youssef has served as an assistant professor at Montreal's Concordia University and implemented Canada's first joint Bachelor of Performing Arts degree program at Capilano University. He was the inaugural chair of Vancouver's Arts and Culture Policy Council, teaches regularly at the National Theatre School of Canada and Langara College's Studio 58, and is an editorial advisor to *Canadian Theatre Review*.

What do you think it is like to be an actor? A director? A playwright?

If you could talk to any of these artists, what would you ask them about?

EXPLORING THEMES, CONCEPTS & MISCONCEPTIONS



THEMES AND CONCEPTS

As a class discuss the following themes and concepts from *Jabber*, using these questions to help the discussion get started:

1. What is the meaning of the following word? Do you agree with that meaning or is it outdated?
2. Can you think of an example of it found in the media?
3. A lot of these terms interrelate, can you provide an example of some that interrelate and how?

Religion	Abuse	Tolerance	Bullying	Fundamentalism
Racism	Discrimination	Ethnicity	Diversity	Gender
Acceptance	Ignorance	Prejudice	Customs	Preconceptions

DEBUNKING MISCONCEPTIONS

Source: TeachingTolerance.org

Stereotypes are beliefs about an entire group that may be based on information about an individual or a small number of people within that group. Stereotyping is almost always negative and is always harmful because it makes unsubstantiated generalizations and ignores the humanity of the people being stereotyped. Here are some common stereotypes about Islam—each followed by an explanation of why the stereotype is incorrect and wrong.

Islam is a religion that promotes violence and terrorism. “Islam totally prohibits terrorism,” says Ameena Jandali of the Islamic Networks Group. “Killing an innocent person is considered to be the greatest crime after worshipping another god.”

Islam guides followers to oppress women. Historically, Islam promoted women’s rights. For instance, the Qur’an grants women freedoms that they did not have before, such as the right to inherit property, conduct business and have access to knowledge. “Men and women have the same responsibility before God,” says Jandali. The oppression many women face in Muslim countries is caused by cultural tradition, not Islamic law.

Women are forced by men to wear a headscarf, or hijab, as a sign of submission. Rules about modesty are open to a wide range of interpretations. That is why women in Saudi Arabia must cover everything but their eyes, hands and feet, while many women in Turkey observe no special rules about dress. “It’s really because of a desire to please God,” Jandali says of using head or body coverings. The practice comes from a traditional interpretation that says the hijab protects women’s dignity. But wearing any special clothing is a personal choice.

Muslims’ God is Allah. The word Allah simply means God, and Islam springs from the same monotheistic tradition as Judaism and Christianity. To Muslims, Allah is the God of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mary.

PRE-SHOW EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES

1) YOU CAN'T JUDGE A BOOK...

Goals:

The purpose of this activity is for students to explore how physical appearance cues affect our perceptions of others. Students will consider the cues people use to categorize others including cues based on social categories, such as race and gender, and cues based on clothing style and facial expression. Students will also consider how they might have been socialized to think a certain way about social group members and reflect in their own experiences.

Materials:

- ◇ [Worksheets with photos](#)
- ◇ Discussion questions

Activity:

1. Choose the worksheets you wish to use and give them to students individually or display them on a screen.
2. Students should look at each pair of photos and answer the questions.
3. Encourage students to base their responses on their first impressions and remind them that people often make snap judgments based on those first responses.

Discussion Questions:

1. What characteristics of the people in the photos did you notice first? Were they the same or different for different pairs of photos?
2. Did those characteristics affect your judgments? Why or why not?
3. Do you think your first impressions of the people in the photos might affect your interactions with these individuals? Why or why not?
4. Think about the roles and stereotypes that are reflected in your culture. What are these? Where did they come from? Do you see any specific patterns in your answers that reflect these roles and stereotypes?
5. Do you think your parents would made different choices about the photos than you did? Why or why not?

Adapted from an activity by Bridget Ryan and Marli D. Simpson and from <http://www.witsprogram.ca/>

2) FLASH JUDGMENTS

Goal:

This activity aims to make students aware of how flash judgments based on appearance can influence the way they relate to people – and the way others may relate to them – and develop strategies to avoid being so quick to form an opinion solely based on appearance.

Materials:

- ◇ Paper & pencil (or computer & keyboard)

Activity:

1. Remind students that first impressions are judgments that we make about people based upon their appearances and our first guesses about them. Sometimes these impressions happen “in a flash” without you even realizing it.
2. Have students respond in writing to the following prompts:
 - ◇ Think of a time when someone (or a group of people) made a “flash judgment” about you. Describe what happened and how it made you feel.
 - ◇ Describe a time when you made a flash judgment about someone else. What did you base your flash judgment on? Did your flash judgment change? If yes, why did it change?

Discussion Questions:

In small groups, ask students to respond to the following:

1. What commonalities among their experiences and the emotions came up when someone is judged “in a flash.”
2. What are a few strategies we can use to be aware of our own tendencies when we make flash judgments about someone.
3. How can we work on not being so quick to form an opinion? (Create a list of strategies.)
4. What can we do as teenagers to improve someone else’s first impression of us?

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

Discuss the Play:

1. What was the general feeling of the play?
2. What does the title of the play mean?
3. What types of reactions did you have to the play? Did it seem realistic?
4. Did any scenes or moments in the play stand out? Why or why not?
5. What do you think of Fatima? Her family?
6. What do you think of Jorah? His family?

Discuss the Term “Jabber” as Used in the Play:

1. What do you think of the Muslim girls in the play calling themselves ‘jabbers’?
2. Why did they call themselves that?
3. Was it to be self-deprecating? Was it because they are unhappy having to wear a hijab? Or perhaps proud to wear the hijab?
4. What would happen if someone outside of their faith called them a jabber?
5. Can you name other ways people choose to express their faith (i.e. not cutting one’s hair, yarmulke, a cross on jewelry etc.)?
6. What about permanent forms of expression, such as tattoos? What compels people to do this?

Discuss the Concepts of Hate and Tolerance and How They Relate to the Play:

1. Why do some people hate people that are different from them?
2. What causes this type of attitude and behavior? How do we end it?
3. If there is only a thin line between love and hate, what does that say about people who hate others based on prejudices?
4. How do people develop prejudices? Where do they come from?
5. Why are tolerance, education, and open-mindedness important to society? To a person’s individual mental health?
6. How do we teach and promote tolerance and understanding instead of hatred and divisiveness?
7. How should we teach and promote tolerance and understanding instead of hatred and divisiveness?

Make Predictions:

What happens next for Jorah and Fatima? Discuss with a partner or a small group what you think they may be doing in one year, five years, twenty years, etc.

Nature or Nurture:

Read a short article about [“Nature vs. Nurture.”](#) Have students discuss how the concept relates to Fatima and Jorah in the play. After the discussion, ask students to write about nature vs. nurture by focusing on one of the characters. They should try and answer the following questions:

- ◇ Define nature and nurture in the context of *Jabber* and how it relates to Jorah or Fatima.
- ◇ How does nature and nurture influence people?
- ◇ Does one have more influence than the other? Why do you think that?
- ◇ Was the character’s behavior a product of nature or nurture? Defend your position.

Social Media Savvy:

Jorah and Fatima communicate through social media, and it ultimately has a huge impact on their relationship. Discuss the following with your students:

- ◇ What did it mean for Fatima to take off her Hijab for Jorah?
- ◇ Was it right for Jorah to take the screen shot?
- ◇ Do you feel Jorah was justified in sharing the photo?
- ◇ Do you think either Fatima or Jorah considered the consequences of these actions?

Ask students to examine their own use of social media:

- ◇ What platforms do they use? How public are their profiles and posts?
- ◇ Do they pause and think before posting anything online?
- ◇ Do they consider the permanence of the Internet and think about how what they post can impact their future?
- ◇ Have they ever used social media to tease or bully someone? What happened?

POST-SHOW ASSESSMENT, pg. 1

1) WRITE A LETTER

Goal: To reflect on the performance experience and to practice writing skills.

Explanation: In this activity, students will write a letter about their experience to the *Jabber* performers or to Des Moines Performing Arts education donors whose support keeps Applause Series tickets accessibly priced for school groups.

Activity:

1. After attending the performance, discuss the experience with your students. Use the following discussion questions to guide the conversation:

- ◇ What was the show about?
- ◇ What parts of the show were most exciting?
- ◇ Which character did you enjoy the most? Why?
- ◇ What did the characters learn?
- ◇ What was the theme?

2. Next, invite students to write a letter to the performers or to Des Moines Performing Arts donors about their theater experience.

Example letter starter:

Dear Performer,

My favorite part of the show was...
While watching your show I felt... because ...
The part of the play I connected to most
was...because...
If I could add a scene, I would
add...because...

3. Mail the letters to:

Des Moines Performing Arts
Attn: Education Department
221 Walnut Street
Des Moines, IA 50309

Follow-up Question:

1. What did you include in your letter? Why did you want to share that particular idea?

2) BREAK THE CYCLE

Goal: In *Jabber*, we learn that Jorah comes from an abusive household. In small groups, students will research types of abuse, the cycle of abuse, and ways to prevent abuse. Additionally, groups will create a media campaign to educate their peers about this important societal issue.

Materials:

- ◇ Frayer Model Graphic Organizer, page 14
- ◇ Computers/devices

Activity:

1. Explain to students that they will be discussing and learning about different forms of abuse. In their small groups, ask them to activate their background knowledge by answering these questions:

- ◇ What is abuse?
- ◇ What types of abuse are there?
- ◇ Can abuse happen to anyone?
- ◇ Can discrimination be a type of abuse?
- ◇ What is the abuse cycle?
- ◇ How can we end abuse?

2. Direct students to the following resources to further educate themselves about their preconceptions regarding abuse:

- ◇ [Types of Abuse](#)
- ◇ [Cycle of Abuse](#)

3. Ask each group to decide on one "Type of Abuse" that they will highlight for their media campaign. Have groups complete a Frayer Model Graphic Organizer (see page 14) to deepen their understanding.

4. Once Graphic Organizers are complete, have students begin brainstorming their media campaign. All projects will need to include the following:

- ◇ Clear platform (website, social media, commercial, radio advertisement, billboard, etc.)
- ◇ Definition of abuse
- ◇ Identification of abuse cycle and/or power and control
- ◇ Resources to get help

EXTENSION: Have groups follow-through with their ideas and create the campaign!

Follow-up Questions:

1. What type of abuse was prevalent in Jorah's family?
2. How did the Cycle of Abuse show itself in Jorah's situation?
3. Who did Jorah go to for help? Where else could he have looked?

POST-SHOW ASSESSMENT, pg. 2

3) CIRCLES OF MULTI-CULTURAL SELF/"JUST BECAUSE" POEMS

Goal: To engage students in a process of identifying what they consider to be the most important dimensions of their own identities.

Explanation: Stereotypes are examined as students share stories about when they were proud to be part of a particular group and when it was hurtful to be associated with a particular group.

The key to this activity is the process of examining one's own identity and the stereotypes associated with that identity, then having one's own stereotypes challenged through others' stories and stereotype challenges. Encourage students to think about the stereotypes they apply to people and to make a conscious effort to think more deeply about them, eventually eliminating them.

Materials:

- ◇ Circles Worksheet, page 15
- ◇ "Just Because" Poem examples, page 16
- ◇ Pens or Pencils

Activity Part One:

Note: Instructions for steps 1-3 should be given at once. Allow 8-10 minutes for students to complete all three steps, but remind them with 2 minutes remaining that they must fill in the stereotype sentence.

1. Ask students to write their names in the center circle. They should then fill in each satellite circle with a dimension of their identity they consider to be among the most important in defining themselves: (female, athlete, Jewish, brother, educator, Asian American, middle class, etc).
2. Have each pair of students share two stories with each other. First, they should share stories about when they felt especially proud to be associated with one of the identifiers they selected. Next, they should share a story about a time it was particularly painful to be associated with one of the identity dimensions.
3. Have each student share with their partner a stereotype they have heard about one dimension of their identity that fails to describe them accurately. Then ask them to complete the sentence at the bottom of the handout by filling in the blanks:

"I am (a/an) _____ but I am NOT (a/an) _____."

Provide your own example, such as "I am a woman, but I am NOT a bad driver."

4. Have students read their "I am/am not" statements aloud. You can simply go around the room or have people randomly stand up and read their statements. Make sure that students are respectful and listening actively for this step, as individuals are making themselves vulnerable by participating. (Hint: Start by reading your own statement. This part of the activity can be extremely powerful if you introduce it energetically. It may take a few moments to start the flow of sharing, so allow for silent moments.)

****You can end this activity here by skipping down to the Discussion Questions, or expand on it by having students expand their "I am/am not" statements to create a poem in part two.*

Activity Part Two:

6. Share the examples of "Just Because" poems found on page 16. Then have students write their own poem. Give them at least 15 minutes to work on their poems. Assist as necessary. If you want to give them extra time, make it a homework assignment.

7. When participants have completed their poems, have them read them aloud in class.

Follow-Up Questions:

1. How do the dimensions of your identity that you chose as important differ from the dimensions other people use to make judgments about you?
2. Did anybody hear somebody challenge a stereotype that you once bought into? If so, what?
3. How did it feel to be able to stand up and challenge your stereotype?
4. I heard several moments of laughter. What was that about? (There is usually some laughter when somebody shares common stereotype such as "I may be Arab, but I am not a terrorist" or "I may be a teacher, but I do have a social life.")
5. Where do stereotypes come from? How are they connected to the kinds of socialization that make us complicit with oppressive conditions?

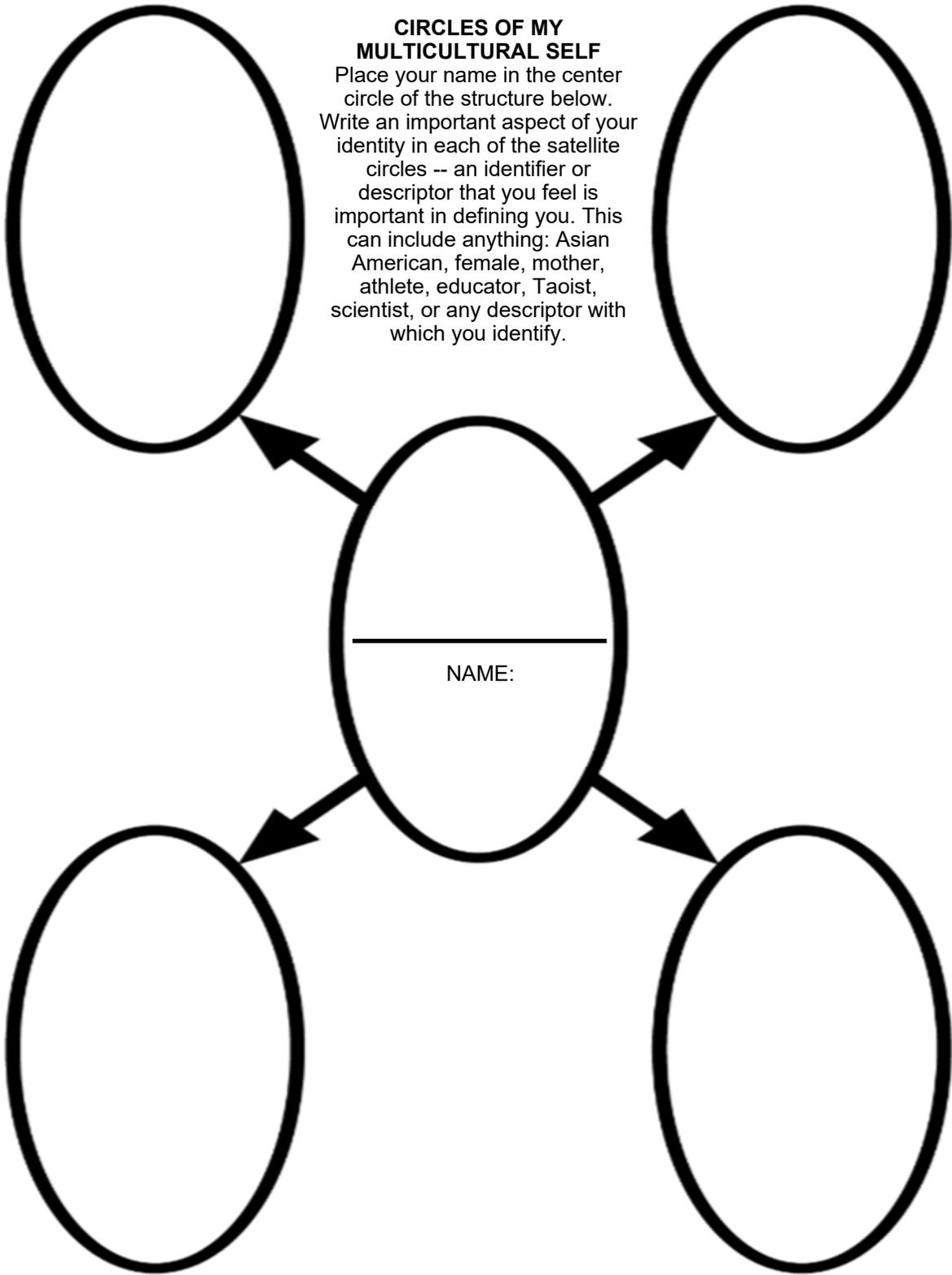
Activity adapted from EdChange.org

REPRODUCIBLE (for use with post-show activity #2)

<p>Definition</p>	<p>Type of Abuse:</p> <hr/>	<p>Examples</p>
<p>Characteristics</p>	<p>Non-Examples</p>	

REPRODUCIBLE (for use with post-show activity #3)

**CIRCLES OF MY
MULTICULTURAL SELF**
Place your name in the center
circle of the structure below.
Write an important aspect of your
identity in each of the satellite
circles -- an identifier or
descriptor that you feel is
important in defining you. This
can include anything: Asian
American, female, mother,
athlete, educator, Taoist,
scientist, or any descriptor with
which you identify.



JUST BECAUSE POEM EXAMPLES

Just Because...

by Kayli

Just because I'm a teenager
that doesn't mean that I'm going
to grow up to be a trouble maker.
Just because I'm a teenager
that doesn't mean that I'm going
to go with the wrong people.
Just because I'm a teenager
that doesn't mean that I'm going
to stop being friends with you
just because you're my mom.
Just because I'm a teenager
that doesn't mean anything.

Teenager

by Wesley

Just because I am a teenager doesn't mean
That I will boss around little kids or
Not play little kids' games.
Or stop watching little kids' TV shows
Or stop climbing trees
Or stop swinging on swings
Or stop doing homework
Just because I am a teenager
Doesn't mean I am a bad person
Or will not follow directions
Or become lazy.

ADHD

by Spencer, 8th grade poet

Just because I have ADHD doesn't mean
I'm never calm
I can't pay attention
I'm stupid
I'm good at sports
I will always misbehave
Just because I have ADH

Just Because I'm Black

by Charles

Just because I'm black doesn't mean
I'm bad.
I'll shoot you.
I always listen to rap and wear bling.
I play basketball.
I can dance.
I eat chicken and drink cool-aid.
I want you staring at me.
Just because I'm black, you think you
know me. You don't.

Just Because I'm Your Little Girl

by Molly

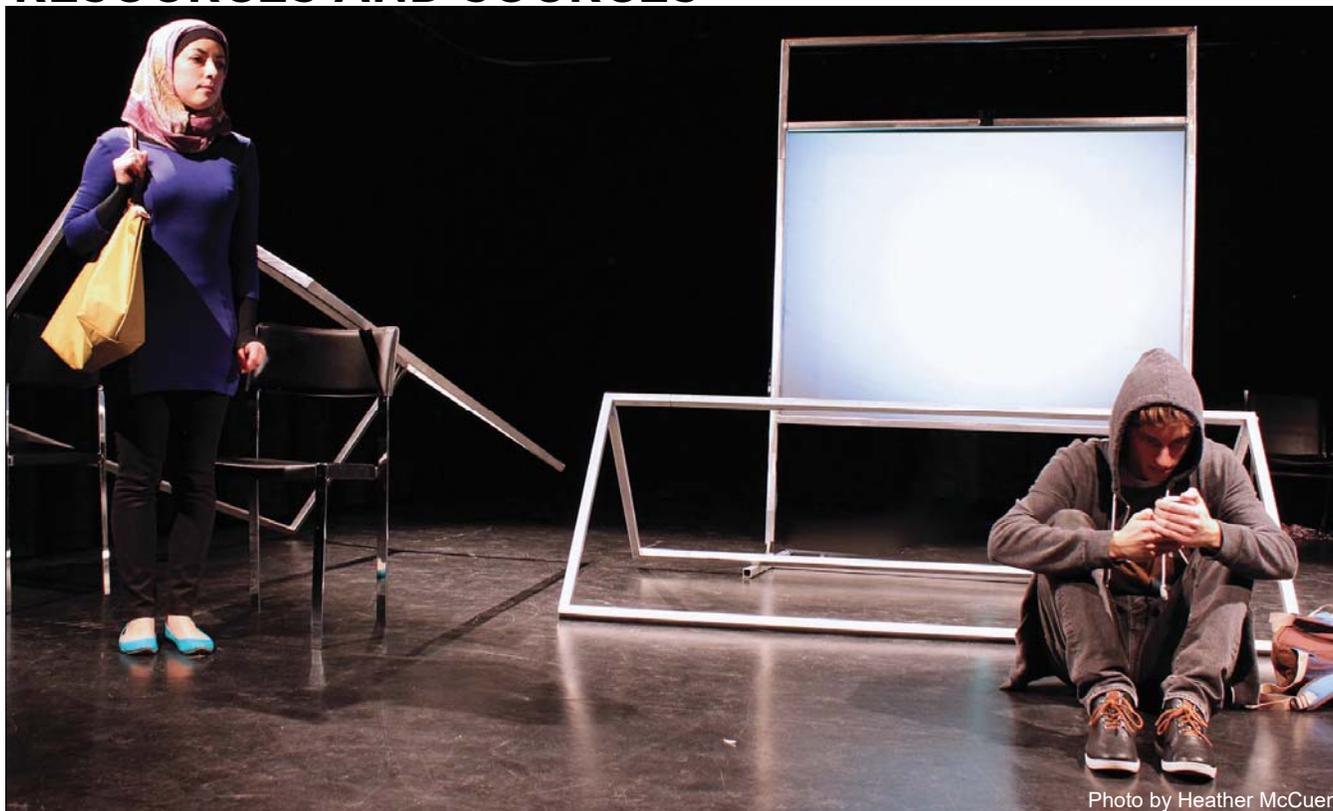
Just because I'm your little girl doesn't mean I can't
do what I want. I'm getting older, I'm changing.
Just because I'm your little girl doesn't mean I will
never disobey you. No one is perfect, I can make my
own decisions.
Just because I'm your little girl doesn't mean you can
control me my whole life. I'm independent. I'm a big
girl now.
I love you, you know I do, but let me go just because
I'm your little girl

Just Because I'm Asian

by Quan

Just because I'm Asian doesn't mean I'm smart.
Just because I'm Asian doesn't mean
I play video games all day.
Just because I'm Asian doesn't mean
I only eat rice and I'm 4'9".
Just because I'm Asian doesn't mean
I'm obedient and scared of my parents.
Just because I'm Asian doesn't mean
I'm a ninja or good at DDR or shop at
the Dollar Tree or do Karaoke at parties.
Just because I'm Asian.

RESOURCES AND SOURCES



ADDITIONAL BOOKS

Ten Things I Hate About Me
by Randa Abdel-Fattah

Boy vs. Girl
by Na'ima B. Robert

Does My Head Look Big in This?
by Randa Abdel-Fattah

Bestest. Ramadan. Ever.
by Medeia Sharif

Where I Belong
by Gillian Cross

Borderline
by Allan Stratton

The Day of the Pelican
by Katherine Paterson

My Sister Lives on the Mantelpiece
by Annabel Pitcher

In the Name of God
by Paula Jolin

RESOURCES

[Geordie Productions - Jabber](#)

[Marcus Youssef \(playwright\)](#)

[Teaching Tolerance](#)

[PBS Learning – Islam in America](#)

[Anti-Defamation League – Creating an Anti-Bias Classroom](#)

[The NEH Created Equal project](#)

[Learning to Give: Getting Out of the Box](#)

SOURCES

“Circles of My Multicultural Self.” *EdChange Consulting and Workshops on Multicultural Education, Diversity, Equity, Social Justice.*

“Debunking Stereotypes About Muslims and Islam.” *Teaching Tolerance*, 24 July 2017.

Hakem, Tony. *Jabber Study Guide.*