



THE SHAPE OF A GIRL

Applause Series Curriculum Guide
November 9-13, 2015



CIVIC CENTER • STONER THEATER • TEMPLE THEATER • COWLES COMMONS

THE SHAPE OF A GIRL

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for joining us for the Applause Series presentation of *The Shape of a Girl!* We are delighted to welcome back actress Paige Hernandez with this important, issue-based play for young people produced by the Wharton Center for Performing Arts at Michigan State University. It is our hope that this experience will open up pathways for conversation and reflection amongst your students and staff about recognizing unhealthy bullying behaviors and finding the courage to take action. Moreover, we hope that students who currently feel voiceless – either as the result of being bullied or watching bullying occur – will find comfort in seeing their story reflected on stage and knowing that they are not alone.



Paige Hernandez as Braidie, in *The Shape of a Girl*.

We thank you for sharing this very special experience with your students and hope this study guide helps to connect the performance to your in-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 variety of discussion questions and assessment activities. Some pages are appropriate to reproduce for your students; others are designed more specifically with you, their teacher, in mind. 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.

Des Moines Performing Arts Education Team

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This study guide was compiled, written and edited by Yvette Zarod Hermann; edited by Karoline Myers and Michelle McDonald.

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ABOUT DES MOINES PERFORMING ARTS



Des Moines Performing Arts is a private, nonprofit organization and is an important part of central Iowa's cultural community. It is recognized nationally for excellence as a performing arts center and is committed to engaging the Midwest in world-class entertainment, education, and cultural activities.

Des Moines Performing Arts presents professional touring productions, including theater direct from Broadway, world-renowned dance companies, family programming, comedy, and concerts.

Education and Community Engagement programs are core to Des Moines Performing Arts' mission as a nonprofit performing arts center.

Public education programs allow audience members and local artists to make meaningful and personal connections to the art they experience on our stages. Guest lectures and Q&As with company members allow audiences to explore the inner workings of the performance. In addition, master classes, workshops, and summer camps taught by visiting performers give local actors, dancers, and musicians the chance to increase their skills by working directly with those who know what it takes to succeed on the professional stage.

Through its **K-12 School Programs**, Des Moines Performing Arts strives to ensure that central Iowa students have affordable access to high quality arts experiences as part of their education. More than 50,000 students and educators attend curriculum-connected school matinee performances through the Applause Series annually. In addition, Des Moines Performing Arts sends teaching artists into the schools to provide hands-on workshops and residencies in special opportunities that engage students directly in the creative process. And, through its partnership with the John F. Kennedy Center, Des Moines Performing Arts provides teachers with in-depth professional development training on how to use the arts in their classrooms to better impact student learning. The Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards is Des Moines Performing Arts' newest initiative to support the arts in Iowa schools, providing important learning tools and public recognition to celebrate the achievements of students involved in their high school theater programs.

DID YOU KNOW?

More than 300,000 people visit Des Moines Performing Arts venues each year.

Des Moines Performing Arts opened in 1979.

Des Moines Performing Arts has three theater spaces:

- *Civic Center, 2744 seats*
- *Stoner Theater, 200 seats*
- *Temple Theater, 299 seats (located in the Temple for the Performing Arts)*

No seat is more than 155 feet from center stage in the Civic Center.

Cowles Commons, situated just west of the Civic Center, is a community gathering space that is also part of Des Moines Performing Arts. The space features the Crusoe Umbrella sculpture by artist Claes Oldenburg.

As a nonprofit organization, Des Moines Performing Arts depends on donor funding to support facilities, programming, and education programs.

The Applause Series started in 1996. You are joining us for our 20th season of school performances.

GOING TO THE THEATER . . .



YOUR ROLE AS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER

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. As they act, sing, dance, or play instruments, the performers on stage are very aware of the audience's mood and level of engagement. Each performance calls for a different response from audience members. Lively bands, musicians, and dancers may desire the audience to focus silently on the stage and applaud only during natural breaks in the performance. Audience members can often take cues from performers on how to respond to the performance appropriately. For example, performers will often pause or bow for applause at a specific time.

As you experience the performance, consider the following questions:

- * What kind of live performance is this (a play, a dance, a concert, etc.)?
- * What is the mood of the performance? Is the subject matter serious or lighthearted?
- * What is the mood of the performers? Are they happy and smiling or somber and reserved?
- * Are the performers encouraging the audience to clap to the music or move to the beat?
- * Are there natural breaks in the performance where applause seems appropriate?

THEATER ETIQUETTE

Here is a checklist of general guidelines to follow when you visit the theater:

- * Leave all food, drinks, and chewing gum at school or on the bus.
- * Cameras, recording devices, and personal listening devices are not permitted in the theater.
- * Turn off and put away all cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices before the performance begins.
- * Do not text during the performance.
- * When the house lights dim, the performance is about to begin. Please stop talking at this time.
- * **Talk before and after the performance only.** Remember, the theater is designed to amplify sound. Other audience members and the performers on stage can hear your voice!
- * Use the restroom before the performance or wait until the end. If you must leave the theater during the show, make sure the first set of doors closes before you open the second — this will keep unwanted light from spilling into the theater.
- * Appropriate responses such as laughing and applauding are appreciated. Pay attention to the artists on stage — they will let you know what is appropriate.
- * Open your eyes, ears, mind, and heart to the entire experience. Enjoy yourself!

GOING TO THE THEATER information is adapted from the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts study guide materials.

TEMPLE THEATER FIELD TRIP INFORMATION



**Thank you for choosing the Applause Series with Des Moines Performing Arts.
Below are tips for organizing a safe and successful field trip to the Temple Theater.**

ORGANIZING YOUR FIELD TRIP

- Please include all students, teachers, and chaperones in your ticket request.
- After you submit your ticket request, you will receive a confirmation e-mail within five business days. Your **invoice will be attached to the confirmation e-mail.**
- Payment policies and options are located at the top of the invoice. (Full payment and cancellation policies may be viewed at DesMoinesPerformingArts.org/education.)
- DMPA reserves the right to cancel unpaid reservations after the payment due date.
- Tickets are not printed for Applause Series shows. Your invoice will serve as the reservation confirmation for your group order.
- Schedule buses to arrive in downtown Des Moines at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the performance. This will allow time to park, walk to the Temple for the Performing Arts, and be seated in the theater.
- Performances are approximately 60 minutes unless otherwise noted on the website and printed materials.
- All school groups with reservations to the show will receive an e-mail notification when the study guide is posted. Please note that study guides are only printed and mailed upon request.

DIRECTIONS

- The Temple Theater is located in the Temple for the Performing Arts located at Tenth and Locust Streets in downtown Des Moines.
- Directions from I-235: Take Exit 8A (downtown exits) and the ramp toward Third Street. Travel south on Third Street approximately six blocks to Grand Avenue. Turn west on Grand Avenue and travel to Thirteenth Street. Turn south on Thirteenth Street and then east on Locust Street.
- Buses will park on the south side of Locust Street in front of the Nationwide building. See next column for additional parking information.

QUESTIONS?

Please contact the Education department at education@DesMoinesPerformingArts.org or 515.246.2355.
Thank you!

PARKING

- Police officers stationed at the corner of Tenth and Locust Streets will direct buses to parking areas with hooded meters near the theater. Groups traveling in personal vehicles are responsible for locating their own parking.
- Buses will remain parked for the duration of the show.
- Buses are not generally permitted to drop off or pick up students near the theater. If a bus must return to school during the performance, prior arrangements must be made with DMPA Education staff.

ARRIVAL

- When arriving at the theater, please have an **adult lead your group** for identification and check-in purposes. A staff member may be stationed outside the building to direct you.
- DMPA staff will usher groups into the building as quickly as possible.
- Seating in the theater is general admission. Ushers will escort groups to their seats; various seating factors including group size, grade levels, arrival time, and special needs seating requests may determine a group's specific location in the theater.
- We request that an **adult lead the group into the theater and other adults position themselves throughout the group**; we request this arrangement for supervision purposes, especially in the event that a group must be seated in multiple rows.
- Please allow ushers to seat your entire group before rearranging seats or taking groups to the restroom.

IN THE THEATER

- In case of a medical emergency, please notify the nearest usher.
- We ask that adults handle any disruptive behavior in their groups. If the behavior persists, an usher may request your group to exit the theater.
- Following the performance groups may exit the theater and proceed to their bus(es).
- If an item is lost at the Temple Theater, please see an usher or call 515.246.2355.

VOCABULARY



Bullying has risen to the surface of national conversation. What we call “bullying” when it happens to young people are actual crimes (theft, harassment, assault, slander) when committed by people over the age of 18.

Check and see if you know the different forms bullying can take. We’ve also listed examples of behaviors that fall under each form of bullying.

Do you agree with these classifications? Is there a category that is missing? In your opinion, can some of these behaviors fit more than one category of bullying?

CATEGORIES OF BULLYING

PHYSICAL
Using the body to inflict pain on another

hitting, punching, slapping, shoving, kicking and other physical attacks; defacing, destroying or stealing personal property

VERBAL
Using hurtful words

demeaning, name-calling, insulting, threatening, belittling, teasing, labelling, spreading rumors

SOCIAL
Interfering with personal relationships and friendships

ignoring, singling out, excluding, gossiping about, spreading lies or mean stories, intimidating; emailing or texting malicious pictures/words that hurt or invade someone’s privacy

EMOTIONAL
Trying to get what you want by making others feel angry or afraid

public humiliation, interfering in friendships or personal relationships, disrupting learning in school

CYBER
Using any online media to post hurtful comments or lies

using Facebook, Twitter, Vine, Snapchat, Tumblr, or Instagram to harass, threaten or hurt another person’s reputation

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE



The Shape of a Girl is a dynamic one-woman memory play that examines the frightening realities of teenage relationships, aggression and a young woman's battle with inaction. Originally inspired by the 1997 murder of a Canadian high school student, playwright Joan MacLeod's beautiful and tightly written play looks at the way little incidents of childhood cruelty can escalate, and the role an individual can have in stopping it.

Run Time: Approx. 60 minutes

“Gripping... By making the play about her failure to act courageously, [playwright] Ms. MacLeod has turned what could have been a simple after-school special into a much more complex drama with thornier moral issues.”

– *The New York Times*

THE STORY

Braidie, a teenager struggling both at home and in school, tells her story about standing by while her best friend Adrienne bullies a classmate (and former childhood friend) named Sophie. Braidie knows someone should stand up for Sophie, but will she realize it's her job before it's too late?

Braidie flashes back to the past as she remembers growing up in their quiet beach town in British Columbia, Canada. She speaks to her absent, older brother, Trevor, seeking his guidance, slipping into multiple characters as she relives memories, both childhood and recent.

She becomes obsessed with a news story about a group of girls accused of assaulting and murdering their 14 year old classmate. She is so not like them, or is she?

Braidie must decide whether there is such a thing as an innocent bystander, and if she has the guts to stand up for what's right.

FORMAT

The Shape of a Girl is a one-woman play. That means all of the characters are portrayed by one actor. Pay attention to how the actress, Paige Hernandez, changes her voice and physicality to show different characters and time.

A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

The Shape of a Girl includes some strong, adult language. It is included to provide insight into how the character of Braidie is feeling about her situation and relationships with those around her.

The playwright, actress, and your teachers trust that you will handle the language with maturity.

Adapted from *The Shape of a Girl* Study Guide by Wharton Center for the Performing Arts at Michigan State University

MEET THE ACTRESS, PAIGE HERNANDEZ

Paige Hernandez is a multifaceted artist, who is known for her innovative fusion of poetry, hip hop, dance and education. As a master teaching artist, Paige has taught throughout the country, to all ages, in all disciplines. To date, she has reached approx. 10,000 students, from Pre-K through college, in over 100 residencies, workshops and performances. She has been recognized in many organizations, including the Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning through the Arts and Arena Stage, where she was awarded the Thomas Fichandler award for exceptional promise in theater education. *The Huffington Post* also named Paige a “classroom hero” because of her outstanding arts integration and work with STEM initiatives.

Paige is a proud member of Actors Equity Association and has performed on many stages throughout the country including The Kennedy Center and many others. She has collaborated with The Lincoln Center (NY) and was commissioned by the National New Play Network in 2012.

With her company B-FLY ENTERTAINMENT, Paige has written and performed several original works including *Liner Notes*, *The Nayika Project*, *7th Street Echo* and *All the Way Live!* To date, she tours her children’s show *Havana Hop* and her solo show, *Paige in Full: A B-girl’s Visual Mixtape* throughout the country.

Visit www.paigeinfull.com or www.bflyentertainment.com to learn more about Paige and her work.

AN INTERVIEW WITH PAIGE HERNANDEZ

How does *The Shape of a Girl* differ from the one woman shows you’ve done in the past?

The Shape of a Girl is super relevant right now, both because of the topic, and that the play takes inspiration from recent, real stories. For me, that raises the stakes even higher. I’m representing not just a general idea or something vague, but something very specific. I know that this show is going to be very impactful. There are going to be students and grown up audience members who will relate to it. It’s different because it’s grounded into something so tangible. If the audience hasn’t gone through bullying themselves, they’ve seen it, they know of it, they have experiences, and they can speak to it.

What message do you believe *The Shape of a Girl* is trying to get across?

I want audience members to walk away with the self-empowered knowledge that we always have a choice. No matter what our role in a certain situation or circumstance, we always have a choice.

Actress Paige Hernandez brings the character of Braidie and her story to the stage in *The Shape of a Girl*.

Interview conducted by Crysta Harper, Michigan State University Residential College in Arts and Humanities, as appeared in the Michigan State University Study Guide for *The Shape of a Girl*.

What are you doing to prepare for *The Shape of a Girl*?

I just finished reading *Under The Bridge* which is the true story about the murder of Reena Virk, an important inspiration for the play. It gives a really detailed account of what teenage life might have been like in British Columbia in 1997. It chronicles what kids were dealing with in pop culture, in their family lives, and what their background is — and what Braidie’s background could have been — as a teenager. Then, I’m looking into the group female dynamic, something that fascinates me as a woman. Like what it means to be a part of a clique, and the role cliques have and how people achieve different status in those groups. How do these girls operate and what does being in that kind of group mean to them? How does it affect them for the rest of their lives?



PRE-SHOW EXPLORATION

1) AN ANONYMOUS SURVEY

Goal: Students will share their experiences with bullying in an anonymous survey. Students will determine percentages based on the results of the survey.

Explanation: Students will anonymously complete a survey about their experiences with bullying, evaluate the results, and discuss solutions to the problem.

Materials:

- ◇ Copy of survey, found on page 14 for each student
- ◇ Writing utensils

Activity:

1. Explain to students that you want to learn more about your school environment.
2. Hand out copies of the survey and ask students to complete it without signing their names.
3. Collect the surveys.
4. Ask students to guess the results. What percentage of students have been bullied? What percentage have seen bullying?
5. Ask a volunteer to help tally the survey results on the board (you can be the one to read the results if there are concerns about handwriting being recognized by peers); then ask students to add the responses to each question.
6. Help students determine the fractions or percentages for each answer.

Follow-up Questions:

1. What did you think of our survey results? Do you think everyone was truthful?
2. Are we doing enough to reduce bullying at school?
3. Do you know if we have an anti-bullying policy? What does the policy say?
4. Can adults be bullies? Parents? Teachers? What can be done if you encounter adult bullying?

2) BE POSITIVE! BUILDING SELF-ACCEPTANCE THROUGH POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Goal: Students will be able to distinguish between self-esteem and self-acceptance. Students will discover ways to build self-acceptance and apply their own positive messages.

Explanation: *In The Shape of a Girl* play, the character Braidie describes Sophie, a girl who was bullied while Braidie stood by and watched. Although we never actually see Sophie, we learn that she struggled with her self-esteem and never had any happy moments in the context of the play.

Materials:

- ◇ Piece of paper for each student
- ◇ Writing utensils
- ◇ Two-sided copy of “Building Self-Acceptance through Positive Self-Talk” handout, found on pages 15-16, for each student

Activity:

1. Ask each student to list on their sheet of paper messages (positive or negative) that they have received from other people in their lives.
2. Ask students to put a check mark by each message that they have adopted and believe about themselves today.
3. As a group, have students read the “Building Self-Acceptance through Positive Self-Talk” handout.
4. On the handout, have students individually complete the follow-up sentences using the strategy of self-talk.
5. Last, have students rate on a scale of 1-10 (ten being the most difficult) how difficult it was to finish the self-talk sentences using positive responses.

Follow-up Questions:

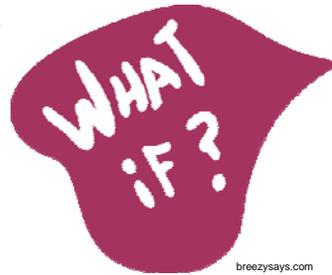
1. What situations can you use positive self-talk in the future?
2. Can adults use positive self-talk too? When?



DISCUSSION AND ESSAY QUESTIONS

PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever seen a one-person show? What was it like? Or what do you think it will be like?
2. *The Shape of a Girl* is the title of the play we are going to see. Guess what you think the title means.
3. What does your room look like? What is on the walls? Do you have any places that are strictly your own? What are they? What do you keep there? What can you tell about a person from their room?
4. How do you think others see you? Describe yourself from two other people's perspectives.
5. What is your definition of kindness? Give an example.
6. Have you ever faked being sick to stay home from school? What was your reason?
7. Play the "what if" game. Read the director's note on page 9 and discuss your personal "what if" memories. Would you change the past if you could? Even if you can't change your past decisions, can your thinking change your future actions?



Then, try to finish each of these "what if" sentences:

- ◇ What if I hadn't pretended I didn't care about...
 - ◇ What if I had kept my promise to...
 - ◇ What if I did my homework when...
 - ◇ What if I had the courage to step in and do something when...
8. Has there ever been a story on the news about a tragedy that really caught your attention or bothered you? What was the story? Why did it stay with you?
 9. Who is one of your earliest friends? How has that person stayed the same in the time that you've known them? How have they changed? How have you stayed the same or changed during your friendship with that person?

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

1. What was the most memorable moment of the performance for you? Why?
2. What was the overall message of the play?
3. If you could give the play a different title, what would you call it and why?
4. What does Braidie's home life have to do with how she acts? Why do you think she wants to homeschool herself?
5. Today social media has brought out a new type of bullying called Cyberbullying. What can we classify as cyber bullying and is it just as hurtful as bullying face to face?
6. Study Reena Virk's situation. (See page 18.) Was this play an ode to her? Do you think it helped to illuminate some issues we have with bullying and how to fix them?
7. What motivates people to bully others? What justifications do they make for themselves, what justifications did Braidie make for herself?
8. How did the media affect Braidie's outlook on her situation? When did she realize that Adrienne was wrong?
9. Did Braidie's silence make her innocent?
10. Why do you suppose the author chose a one-woman show to depict this story? Do you think it was more powerful with just one person on stage, or would it have been better with more?
11. Who was Annie? Why do you think Braidie trusted her enough to tell her what had been going on? Do you have someone like Annie in your life?
12. What would you say to Braidie if you could? To Sophie? To Adrienne?
13. The characters in the story were mostly young women? Do only girls bully? Do boys bully too? How is that the same? How is it different?

POST-SHOW ASSESSMENT, pg. 1

1) WRITE A REVIEW

Goal: To write a review of the performance.

Explanation: In this activity, students will reflect on the performance by writing their own review.

Activity:

1. Ask students to imagine that they are a critic for the school newspaper. They are going to write a review of *The Shape of a Girl* to inform others about what they experienced.
2. In the review they should describe with detail:
 - ◇ what they saw
 - ◇ what they heard
 - ◇ how the performance made them feel
 - ◇ what the performance reminded them of
 - ◇ what their favorite part was and why
3. Remind students that they must paint a picture of the experience with their words so that others can imagine it as vividly as possible.

Follow-up Question:

1. What did you include in your review? Why was it important to include?

2) IN HER SHOES

Goal: To re-examine the story from Sophie's perspective

Explanation: In the play, Braidie learns that Sophie keeps a diary. In this activity, students will write at least one diary entry from the perspective of Sophie

Activity:

1. Remind students that *In the Shape of a Girl*, the girl who was bullied (Sophie) kept a diary.
2. Ask students to write one or more diary entries from the perspective of Sophie.
3. At the top of each entry, they should note what grade or how old Sophie was when she wrote the entry.

Follow-up Question:

1. What incident in Sophie's life did you choose to write about? Why?
2. What things did you include in the diary entry that Braidie knew? What things did you include that Braidie would not have known?

3) DIGGING INTO A QUOTE

Goal: To reflect on the performance

Explanation: In this activity, students will choose a quote from the performance as an essay prompt.

Activity:

1. Ask students to choose one of the following quotes from *The Shape of a Girl* as an essay prompt.
 - ◇ "It happened. What scares me...what freaks me out...is that I know the way in."
 - ◇ "I could have divided that room up in grade 2."
 - ◇ "We all understand that Sophie telling the truth isn't even a remote possibility."
 - ◇ "We did a good job. Even Sophie hates Sophie."
 - ◇ "The friend I love is gone. All that's left is a shape of a girl."
2. In their essay, ask students to provide context for the quote they chose and to reflect on why that quote resonates with them. What did Braidie mean when she said it and how does that quote connect with their own experiences of bullying?

4) CHILDHOOD FRIENDSHIPS

Goal: To think about how friendships evolve and change

Explanation: Students will share stories of childhood friendship with their peers and make a personal connection to the conclusion of Braidie's story.

Activity:

1. Ask students to talk about how *The Shape of a Girl* ended (Braidie shares a memory of her childhood self, playing on the beach with her friends.)
2. Have students pair up. Ask them to tell each other a story of a childhood friend and the games they used to play together.
3. If they feel comfortable doing so, have students share with each other a description of what their relationship with this person is like now.
4. Let students know that they can change names, if that makes them more comfortable.

Follow-Up:

1. How did you feel sharing your story?
2. Why do you think sharing a childhood memory was how Braidie chose to end her story?

POST-SHOW ASSESSMENT, pg. 1

5) ACTS OF KINDNESS

Goal: Students will learn about the ‘Random Acts of Kindness’ movement and how they can participate.

Explanation: In *The Shape of a Girl*, Braidie was afraid to show kindness to Sophie — even though they had been friends in elementary school. This activity is designed to initiate a conversation about the impact of kindness and empathy.

Activity:

1. Ask students to define kindness. Have them write their answers and then share with the rest of the class.
2. Ask students to think about if they ever felt disappointed or cheated because they did something nice for someone who did not return the favor.
3. Ask students their opinion: if you expect to get something back, are you then performing a kind act or are you really trading favors for favors?
4. Create a class definition of kindness and post it prominently.
5. Next, ask students to think about if anyone has ever done something for them anonymously, without expecting something in return. What was it? How did it make you feel?
6. Make a list of ten things you can do as “Random Acts of Kindness” or RAKs — you can be kind to people, groups of people, animals, or your environment.
7. Set a class goal to accomplish their RAK list within the next two weeks.
8. Ask students to journal about each of their RAKs. At the end of the two weeks, ask each student to share their favorite journal entry with the class.

Follow-up Questions:

1. Was this a successful experiment? Why or why not?
2. Are some people “naturally” kind while others find it harder to be kind? Which type are you? What kinds of life situations make it hard to be kind to others? Can these situations be overcome?
3. Was anyone on the receiving end of a random act of kindness? What happened? Did anyone experience a RAK gone wrong? What happened?
4. Do you think you will continue to practice performing random acts of kindness in the future?

6) REMEMBERING REENA VIRK

Goal: Students will read about the real-life events that inspired *The Shape of a Girl* and compose a response.

Explanation: The story of Reena Virk’s death is one that should never be repeated. Students will reflect on the events.

Materials:

- ◇ “Not Waving but Drowning” poem on page 17
- ◇ “Reena Virk” article on page 18

Activity:

1. Read/share with students the poem, “Not Waving but Drowning” by Stevie Smith, which Braidie quotes in the play. (page 17)
2. Give each student a copy or project it on the board.
3. Ask students in 6-8th grade to underline the negative words and circle all the positive words. Which are there more of? What is this poem saying? What does the title mean?
4. For students in 9-12 grade, discuss connotation and denotation. What does “waving” mean in this poem? What does “drowning” mean? Speculate about who the “poor chap” is, who “they” are, and who the narrator is.
5. Remind students, that, often, people who are bullied do not cry out for help. Ask students: Why? What could change that?
6. Read the article about Reena Virk, “Senseless Teen Violence – Senseless Waste” (page 18) Notice the author’s attitude towards his subject matter. Is he disgusted? Angry? How can you tell?
7. Write a poem, song, letter or speech inspired by Reena’s life and death. Consider your audience and purpose. (Teachers may also consider assigning a visual collage project, where students collect and draw images that relate to Reena Virk’s story.)
8. Share student work by posting it or by having each student present their own work.

Follow-up Questions:

1. Do you know anyone who reminds you of Reena Virk? Has your attitude towards this person changed after reading her story?
2. Do you know a person who reminds you of Kelly Ellard? In what way? Can you do anything to prevent this person from hurting others?
3. What did you choose to write: a poem, song, letter or speech? Why? How did it feel to write your piece?

ANONYMOUS SURVEY (Handout #1 accompanying Pre-Show Exploration #1)

DIRECTIONS: *Please circle the best answers to the following questions. You may have more than one best answer for some questions. Please do not put your name on the paper.*

1. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN BULLIED?

Yes No

If you answered yes, how often did someone bully you?

Occasionally Often Every day

Where did it happen?

School Bus Park Home Neighborhood Somewhere else

If it happened at school, where?

Hallway Classroom Playground Cafeteria Bathroom Somewhere else

2. HAVE YOU SEEN OTHER STUDENTS BULLIED AT SCHOOL?

Yes No

If you answered yes, how often did it happen?

Occasionally Often Every day

Where have you seen other students bullied?

Hallway Classroom Playground Cafeteria Bathroom Somewhere else

3. WHAT KINDS OF THINGS HAVE BEEN DONE TO YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW?

Called names Threatened Stole or damaged something Shoved, kicked, or hit Ignored

4. HOW MUCH IS BULLYING A PROBLEM FOR YOU?

Very much Not much None

On the back of this paper, list some of the actions you think parents, teachers, and other adults could perform to stop bullying.

Adapted from a survey by The National Crime Prevention Council.

BE POSITIVE!, pg. 1 (Handout accompanying Post-Show Assessment #2,)



In the play *The Shape of a Girl*, we learn about a young woman named Sophie who doesn't like herself. This is largely the result of how many of the people around her constantly give her negative messages about herself. As a result, Sophie develops low self-esteem and has a hard time seeing herself as someone of value.

Our perceptions of ourselves are shaped by the people around us, but we also can play an important role in developing a positive sense of self-worth.

Read on to explore how you can practice loving yourself through something called positive self-talk.

What is self-acceptance?

Self-acceptance is being able to recognize your value as a person. It is essentially your level of self-worth and feeling of comfort in your own skin, regardless of your faults and weaknesses. Without self-acceptance, one would not be capable of reaching their full potential in life.

What is the difference between self-acceptance and self-esteem?

Self-esteem is a belief or feeling about yourself. It is what you believe or feel you are capable of doing. Having high self-esteem can help build self-acceptance.

- High Self-Esteem = Feeling good about yourself
- Low Self-Esteem = Feeling badly about yourself

Self-acceptance is an action rather than a thought or belief. It is something you do – you stick up for yourself, you use your strengths, take responsibility for your faults, and practice loving yourself every day.

How can I build my self-acceptance?

Self-acceptance is a reflection of beliefs you gain as a child and adolescent. It usually comes from messages you get about yourself. These messages can come from other people (like parents, teachers, or friends). The messages you send yourself are called "Self-Talk." If you are used to hearing negative messages from other people, chances are you will send yourself negative messages too. Things like "I'm so stupid," or "I'm not good enough at this..." are examples of negative self-talk. One way to rebuild your self-acceptance is to re-train the way you talk to yourself. Positive self-talk is when you focus on your strengths and positive qualities, reminding yourself that you are a good and valuable person. For example:

- "I am allowed to make mistakes and learn from them."
- "I am a good and caring person and deserve to be treated with respect."

BE POSITIVE!, pg. 2 (Handout accompanying Post-Show Assessment #2,)



Now that you've learned more about how messages impact our self-perceptions, go ahead and try some positive self-talk.

I am a brave person. An example of a time I was brave is

I am capable of being happy. A time I was happy was

I am a good friend. A time I was there for a friend was

I am capable of making decisions for myself. A time I made a good decision was

I am loved and cared about. People who care about me are

I am talented. Two things I am really good at are

REMEMBERING REENA VIRK (Handout #1 accompanying Post-Show Assessment #6)

Braidie quotes the poem "Not Waving But Drowning" in *The Shape of a Girl*. Read the poem and explore its implications in the context of Braidie's story, using the prompts on page 10.

NOT WAVING BUT DROWNING

by Stevie Smith

I was much further out than you thought

Poor chap, he always loved larking

It must have been too cold for him his heart gave way,

Oh, no no no, it was too cold always

Nobody heard him, the dead man,

But still he lay moaning:

And not waving but drowning.

And now he's dead

They said.

(Still the dead one lay moaning)

I was much too far out all my life

And not waving but drowning.



REMEMBERING REENA VIRK (Handout #2 accompanying Post-Show Assessment #6)

Joan MacLeod's play, *The Shape of a Girl*, was inspired by the murder of a girl named Reena Virk. Read about Reena's story.

Senseless Teen Violence – Senseless Waste

By Corey D. Steinberg
August 2009 *Double Diamond Law - Whistler, BCYRABC General Counsel*

On November 14, 1997, Reena Virk was a 14-year old girl of East Indian descent, raised in a highly religious (Jehovah's Witness) family. She lived outside Victoria, British Columbia, in Saanich, Canada; a quiet, little Vancouver Island community, where she attended Shoreline Secondary School. She questioned the religious teachings of her parents, and lived a more secular lifestyle, similar to other girls in her school. She has been described as wanting acceptance from her peers, but instead faced "harassment and name calling."

She was ridiculed for being a larger girl, reportedly called "pudgy" and "overweight." She was humiliated for alleged body-hair, reportedly called names such as "beast" or "the bearded lady."

In November 1997 Kelly Ellard was a 15-year old girl, perhaps a 'bit of a partier,' but by no accounts a bad girl, having had no known run-ins with the law. Ellard was more popular than Reena. Ellard also disliked Reena, profusely. At that time, Warren Glowatski was a 16-year old, living alone in a trailer in Saanich. He was supported by money sent

by his father who had left Saanich to marry a woman in Las Vegas. Warren was somewhat of a 'wannabe-gangsta.'

On what proved to be her last night on Earth, Reena had been invited to a party by girls from her school, ostensibly to enjoy a good time, but really as a ploy to teach her a lesson for (possibly) being interested in a boy that other girls considered off-limits. The party travelled to various locations. Ultimately Reena was attacked, "swarmed," at the south end of the Craigflower Bridge in Gorge Park by eight teenagers — seven girls including Ellard, as well as Glowatski.

During the brutal assault, Nicole Cook stubbed out a cigarette on Reena's forehead, and someone attempted to ignite her hair on fire. Mercifully, an onlooker persuaded the group to set Reena free and she was able to flee to the north end of the bridge. Ellard and Glowatski (at Ellard's request) followed and resumed the attack, punching and kicking Reena in the abdomen, face and head. This second assault, and young Reena's short life, ended shortly thereafter when Ellard and Glowatski dragged Reena into the Gorge Waterway, where further blows and stomps were administered. Then, as Glowatski watched, Ellard held Reena's head under water until she drowned. (One witness reported, Ellard later bragged she smoked a cigarette as she stood on Reena's head, drowning her.)

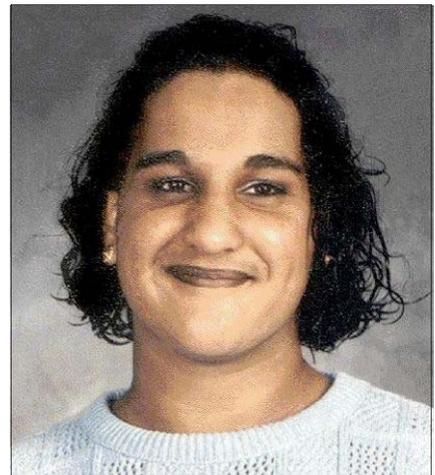
For the following week, rumors proliferated around Shoreline Secondary School, heard by students and faculty alike. No one contacted Saanich Police, who

were investigating Reena's unexplained disappearance. The police detained Ellard on November 22, 1997; interrogating her for more than three hours, in the presence of her mother and step-father, Susan and George Pakos. Although Ellard initially denied knowing Reena, eventually she admitted to taking part in an assault upon her.

Reena's murder received considerable attention in the media and the courts.

The six girls, apart from Ellard, who took part (dubbed by the media the "Shoreline Six") were convicted of assault and sentenced in fairly short order in British Columbia Provincial Court. Each served up to one year in jail. Ellard was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to serve seven years in prison.

Glowatski was tried as an adult and convicted of second-degree murder on June 2, 1999. He served seven years of a life-sentence and has since been paroled. (He has also since made ... gestures of amendment toward the Virk Family).



A photo of Reena Virk. Source: cbc.ca

RESOURCES AND SOURCES



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For kids:

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services anti-bullying website with videos and interactive games.
<http://www.stopbullying.gov/kids/index.html>

For teachers:

The U.S. Department of Education outlines the federal mandates and legal obligations on any employee of a public school. Narrated by Morgan Freeman, this video, "Bully, Harassment and Civil Rights," has been developed as part of collaboration among the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services. The video is designed to help schools, parents, and others who interact with kids understand the differences between harassment and bullying, and their legal obligations with respect to both.

<http://www.stopbullying.gov/videos/2014/02/civil-rights.html>

A helpful guide for assessing and handling a bullying situation

<http://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/roles-kids-play/index.html>

SOURCES

The Shape of a Girl Study Guide by Wharton Center for the Performing Arts at Michigan State University

Stopbullying.gov. <http://www.stopbullying.gov/>

Nobullying.com. <http://nobullying.com/>

Random Acts of Kindness. <https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/>