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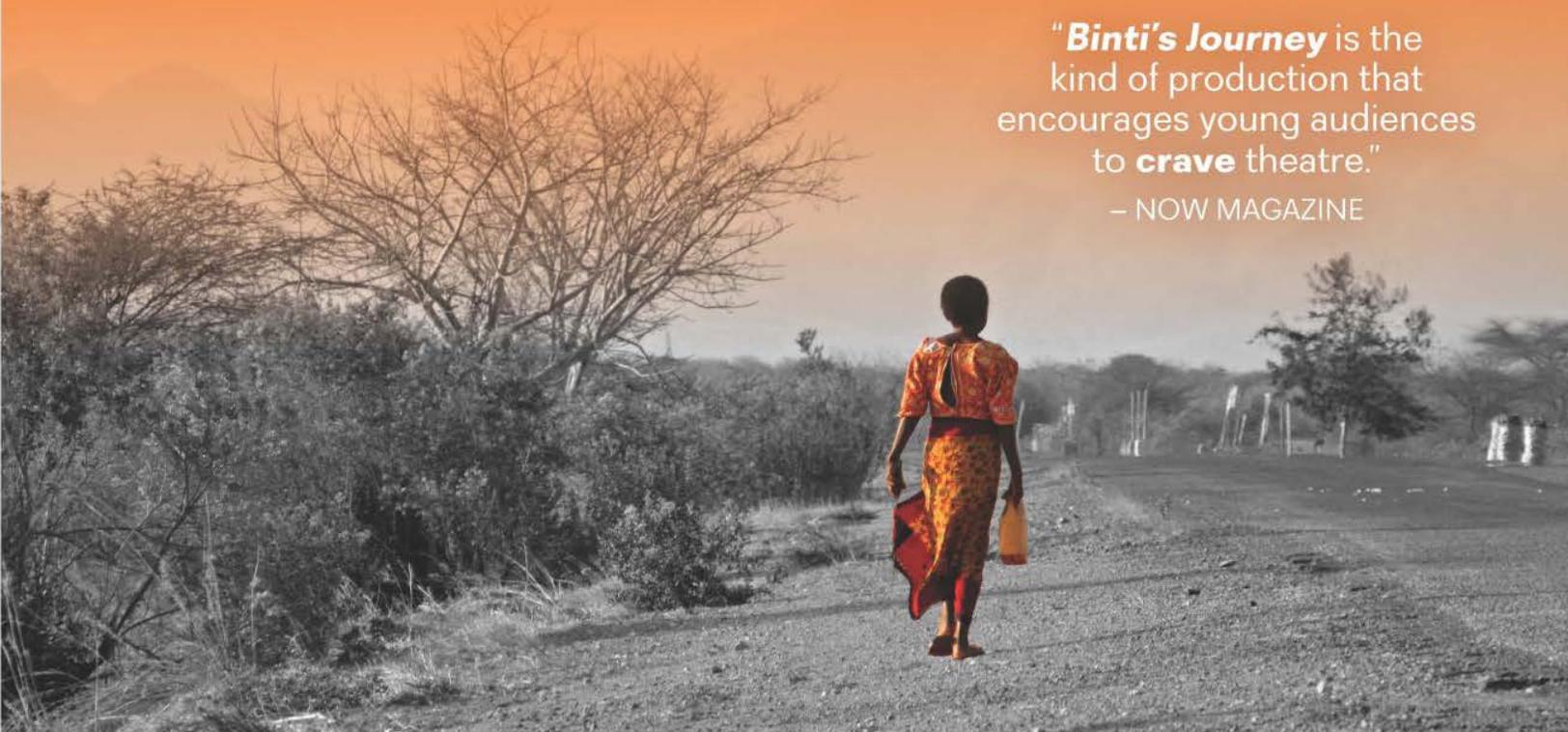
An anthem to hope, courage and the  
resilience of youth

# Binti's Journey

Adapted by **Marcia Johnson**  
from the novel *The Heaven Shop* by **Deborah Ellis**

"*Binti's Journey* is the  
kind of production that  
encourages young audiences  
to **crave** theatre."

– NOW MAGAZINE



## Guide for Educators

### Supplementary Activities

## Prologue

### Strand 1: A Trip to Malawi

#### 'Creative' Play

Curriculum Links: Health and Physical Education 6/7/8 A1.3 (6/7 only), A2.1, A3.1, B2.1  
Language 6/7/8, Oral Communication 2.4, 2.5

Materials:

- Outdoor or gym space

*[At the Orphan Club] All of us washed our own plates, even the small kids. Then it was time for more singing and a play.*

- Binti,

Just like in Canada, children in Malawi like to play and be creative – however, government resources for building schools there are limited. As a result, public schools typically consist of a brick structure classroom and latrine facilities. Depending on the number of students attending, makeshift shelters may be constructed around the building to accommodate extra children. Most public schools do not have their own gyms, so PE lessons take place outside. In 2002 Mark Jimu Tembo, former Deputy Director of Malawi's Sports Council and a PE specialist at the Malawi Institute of Education, noted that phys ed classes often fell by the wayside because there wasn't formal testing in the subject. Overworked teachers, independently supporting 60-90 children, often encourage recreational play and use the time to plan lessons.

A variety of charities and church groups engage in fundraising to bring volunteers and supplies into children's communities to create opportunities for sport. Amongst some of the most popular sports are football (aka soccer) and netball. However, when it comes to the school, many teachers do not even have the resources to secure textbooks, let alone sports supplies. Tembo has also commented that, due to tight budgets and frequent mismanagement of funds by government workers, "a school is lucky if it can receive soccer balls from the Ministry of Education." Many of the games played by children involve little to no equipment. In some parts of the country, children play a game similar to jacks with hundreds of small pebbles that they have collected. One of the oldest known board games, Wari, is a complex strategy game similar to chess that originated in Malawi. While some people own formal boards and pieces to play at home, children in more rural areas often scoop holes in the dirt to create a playing surface and use rocks as their tokens instead. Circle games, especially those that incorporate singing, are a popular practice as well. Can students imagine what it would be like to have recess or PE class without a playground, gym, equipment, or an adult to help share new games and build their skills?

Take your students outside and split them into small groups. Their challenge is to make up a game that the whole class can play together, using only open space and items that are naturally available to them. Share the games, and take some time to play each as a class. As students are making up their games, you might:

- Offer them some limits to ensure the games don't get too complex, e.g., stating that their game should take no more than 2 minutes to explain and have no more than 3-5 rules.
- Encourage them to keep safety in mind. What are the ways someone is most likely to get hurt participating in the game? Are there any ways the game can be structured to help participants avoid this issue?
- Ask them to practice how they will explain the game to their peers. What strategies might they use to hold listeners' interest and help them better understand the game (e.g., having some members of the group demonstrate the game in addition to a verbal explanation)?
- Remind them not to pull plant life out of the ground/off of branches.

## Strand 2: Key Pre-Viewing Concepts

### Binti's Coming

Curriculum Links: Health and Physical Education 6/7/8 A2.1, A3.1

Materials:

- Open space

*Binti takes off her pin and hands it to Memory. "This is my prefect pin", she tells her. Touched, but confused, Memory asks: "what's a prefect?"*

Throughout the play, the students will be introduced to some new words and places. During DPA or warming up for drama, you might engage in a variant on the classic 'Captain's Coming' to help students familiarize themselves with the language. Explain to them the significance of each term as you add it in to the game. You might use the actions suggested below, or make some up with your class. Set one end of the playing space as "Blantyre," where Binti has grown up, and the other as "Mulanje" where she moves in with Gogo and the cousins. Throughout the game, mix calling out the specific terms below to get participants to freeze and complete the action, and location names so that students run back and forth.

### Call and Action

- Bambo – ask students to wave and say 'Hi dad!'
- Chichewa (chich-ay-wa) – ask students to shake someone else's hand and say 'moni' (hello). Chichewa is one of the more common languages spoken in Malawi.
- Chintje (ASK COMPANY) – ask students to spread their arms wide and then draw them in, as if wrapping a blanket around their body. Chintje is a traditional cloth, often used for garments for special occasions.
- Gogo – ask students to say, together, 'there is a lion in our village!' Gogo, the term for grandmother, is played by the entire cast. She is a key caregiver, working hard to draw attention to the issues in their community.
- Nsima (en-see-ma) – ask students to sit and mime shucking maize, beating it into meal, then cooking it on a pot over the fire. Nsima is the Zambian term for a maize porridge.
- Prefect's coming – ask students to stand at attention. At some private schools like the one Binti attends, British teachers introduced practices from home. This includes having students nominated to act as prefects, helping with school tasks and in promoting rule following amongst their peers. Binti is a prefect at her school when the play begins.

## What is Stigma?

Curriculum Links: Health and Physical Education – (Gr.6) C1.3, C3.3, (Gr.7) C2.4, (Gr.8) C1.4

Materials: N/A

*In today's episode, I make fun of a cousin who comes to live in our house. I don't want him to be there, so I try to make him feel bad by saying his mother died of AIDS. My character wants to make him feel ashamed.*

- Binti

*Then Aunt Agnes came in and raised her hand to strike me. I prepared myself for it, but her hand remained in the air. Aunt Agnes was afraid to hit me because she thought she would catch AIDS. So, she used a fly swatter instead of her hand.*

- Binti

*At first, I was nervous about putting my arms around Jeremiah. But he felt as normal as anybody. So I held tight, forgetting about the HIV, and enjoyed my first bicycle ride.*

- Binti

*I have lost [five children]. All to the same thing. All to this AIDS. We do not want to say what it is. We think that if we don't say it, it will go away, but it won't go away.*

- Gogo

There are many facets of stigma, something that the characters of *Binti's Journey* draw attention to time and time again throughout the play. Binti provides a particularly valuable perspective, moving from a place of youthful naïveté to firsthand suffering. At the same time, however, she still must work to overcome her own bias in her interactions with Jeremiah. Ignorance, fear, power and more play into the perpetuation of stigma. Understanding how stigma can impact someone's daily life, whether from HIV or any other cause, is important in understanding larger social issues. This discussion donut activity asks students to brainstorm and draw on their own life experiences in relation to the impact of stigma.

Ask students to arrange themselves into pairs, and identify one as partner A and the other as partner B. Ask As to create a circle, facing outwards. Bs should then join them face to face, creating a larger circle facing inwards. Give about 1-2 minutes to talk about each question, then have one circle rotate so students talk to someone new each time.

- What are some things that are stigmatized (i.e., that may cause other people to make assumptions about them or treat them negatively)? Think about things that are visible, but also things that are invisible.
- What are some examples of discrimination that you have seen or heard about (e.g., what negative actions have been taken against individuals who have those characteristics)?
- HIV/AIDS carries a lot of stigma, and there are a lot of myths about the disease. One myth is that it can be spread through the air, sharing objects, saliva, or skin to skin contact. How do you think this myth could affect a person who is HIV+ at school?

- What about a person in the workplace? You might consider in particular jobs that put people into lots of contact with others or the things they use (e.g., teachers, cooks, etc.).
- Because HIV/AIDS kills the immune system, over time it makes individuals more susceptible to other illnesses – particularly if they are unable to get treatment. How do you think this could affect a student? A worker?
- As we discussed at the beginning, there are a number of things that people face discrimination for. Have you thought of any others? Share some of the ideas you have come up with. Pick one or two, and think about ways you can actively work to be accepting and combat stigma surrounding those issues.

End with a wrap up discussion where students can share key insights. You might opt to have students pick some of their favourite support strategies and post them in the classroom.

## What is an Adaptation?

Curriculum Links: The Arts, Drama 6/7/8 – B1.1, B1.3, B2.2; Language, Media Studies 6/7/8 1.3  
Materials: N/A

*“Tell us the story of being on the radio!” the cousins ask of Binti. Shy at first, she soon finds “it was fun doing impressions of the director telling the cast ‘You need to do it again!’ ...For the next week’s episode, I made it a little different. I pretended that I was trying hard not to sneeze during the taping. I wondered what it might be like to be them, listening to my stories.”*

The story that students will see presented is based on *The Heaven Shop*, a novel by Canadian author, Deborah Ellis. Before attending, it might be helpful to familiarize students with the idea of an adaptation. As Binti relates her experiences at the radio house, she tweaks the truth and turns colleagues into characters. Various activities throughout the guide encourage students to use art to represent other people’s stories or experiences. To do so, however, it can help for students to have time to learn about how to tell others’ stories in a respectful and thoughtful way. Working with the concept of adaptation can be a good starting point!

Discuss what an adaptation is (taking a composition and reshaping it into a different form, e.g., a novel to a dramatic performance) with your class. Remind students that a good story has a clear beginning, middle and end. They will put these concepts into practice by retelling a fairytale or other story with which they have a common familiarity through tableaux. Pick a story as a class and review it to ensure everyone is on the same page. Split students into groups of about five, and ask them to present the story through five to six tableaux. This exercise can be helpful because it asks students to do a few key things. They need to work together to create a piece, make decisions about what is important to include and what can be left out, and they have an opportunity to practice story structure (these pieces may be short, but that doesn’t mean there shouldn’t still be a clear beginning, middle, climax, and ending).

### Extension Options

- Pick a few things to focus on when giving feedback, such as story structure and physicality. Compare different groups’ choices – what was kept or left out in all pieces? What information from the story did some groups keep and some edit out? Why?
- Complete this activity on the day prior to seeing *Binti’s Journey*, and encourage students to do their best to remember their tableaux. After viewing the play, have a discussion about the actors’ physical movement. They have only a tree for a set, but they present a variety of places and events. What are some specific choices they made with their movement and actions to achieve this? After you have outlined some key strategies, ask students to return to their sequences. What can they do to make their work stronger?
- If you are using the radio play culminating activity, you might allow students some play with sound. They might create aural sound effects during their transitions to help set the scene for the next tableaux. Alternately, you might ask them to have one person speak one line per tableaux. This will allow students to practice planning dramatic speech and performing it for others in a more simplified, low stakes environment.

## Additional Prologue Sources

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# Understanding Change-Making and Advocacy

## Strand 1: Global Issues Exploration - Sample Issues and Informed Choices

### Power and Consent

Curriculum Links: The Arts, Drama – B1.1, B2 & Art, D1.1; Health and Physical Education 7-8 – C1.3(Gr.7), C1.4 (Gr.8), C2.4; Geography 8 – B2.5

*When Junie proposes the siblings' plan to their Aunt and Uncle, Wysom is quick to point out "We are the responsible adults... We are responsible for your care." Unfortunately, their choices over rule the children at each step, and do not prove to genuinely be for the better.*

This exercise allows students to understand the impact of power relationships on the well-being of women and children in countries like Malawi. In the context of *Binti's Journey*, students are invited to examine how power influences the experiences of orphans at the hands of adults like their aunt and uncle in comparison to Gogo. They are challenged to analyse instances where power is used both well and ineffectively, and draw a set of criteria for decision-making that they feel is more ethical. An optional extension encourages students to deepen their understanding of the complexity of choices around sexuality. The difficulties faced by Memory and Junie, representing many women across Africa, stand against the myth that everyone is well-educated about sexuality and that personal desire is the only factor in sexual decision making. Students are asked to consider both the power of knowledge as well as the social pressures that can influence women's choices.

Begin by providing students with some examples of relationships where one person has more power than another (e.g., boss and employee, parent and child, bully and victim). Ask them to brainstorm a few others. Are there times where an imbalance in power can be a good thing? (E.g., if a boss has more experience, they might be able to make more informed decisions for the good of employees and the organization overall). What are some of the characteristics that contribute to imbalances in power? (e.g., money, experience, age)

Ask students think back to the play. You might pre-select relationships that you would like your class to focus on, or allow students to brainstorm their own. Who has the power in these relationships? Where does it come from? Who uses power well, and who uses their power poorly? What are the end results?

In pairs, have students pick one relationship where power is misused. Ask them to make a list of 3-5 criteria they feel the more powerful party should have used when making decisions. After drawing up their list, they can role play what it might have looked like if the person had used those criteria. You might choose to share with the class, or pair groups to share.

### Reflection question

- What is a decision that students have to make sometimes, or a tough decision you have had to make in the past? What are three criteria that would be helpful in making that decision?

### Extension Option:

*While imparting the story of how she became a mother, Memory notes “I went to live with an uncle just like you did. My uncle’s friend had AIDS. I had never gone with anyone before so he thought he would be cured by making me go with him.” Binti, confused, seeks clarification. “He made me go with him as if I was his wife,” Memory elaborates. “He didn’t get cured. He still has the AIDS. He gave it to me, and he gave me this baby.”*

Analyze one example of power imbalance as above that is not related to sexuality (e.g., their Uncle and Aunt selling the house and moving the children). Next, draw student’s attention to Memory’s experience with Beauty’s father and/or Junie’s experience working in the sex trade.

Share with them this exchange between Memory and Binti. Do they think Memory or her Uncle’s friend had enough knowledge about sexual health to make effective choices? What makes them think this (with Memory, you might draw attention to the vague language she uses to describe intercourse). In Malawi, only about half of adults report knowing all the ways to avoid HIV-transmission. However, studies have shown that the longer girls stay in school, the more likely they are to avoid contracting HIV or becoming pregnant in their teens.

Ask the students to describe the relationships between the men and the women (Memory and Junie) in these situations. How did this impact their ability to ‘consent’? Did the women have easy choices? Do they think the characters felt like they had any choice? In Africa, young women often enter into relationships with older men to climb out of poverty, and thus may not feel they have the ability to advocate for safer sex practices. In many cases, these women are also not educated about sexual health. Research shows that contraception and family planning methods are heavily underutilized in Africa, even amongst girls who are already mothers.

Assure students that, even though many women are struggling because of unequal power, there are organizations actively working to restore a balance. Split students into groups and provide them with examples of projects that are working to help women in these situations. You might use some of the organizations provided, or share some that you know about. Ask students to create a poster or a commercial to draw attention to the organization and their work.

### Some examples:

- Upendi Na Matumaini (UMATU) – an organization in Tanzania that engages peer educators to share information with other teens in after-school clubs, teaching them about HIV transmission and other aspects of sexual health. They also teach about the impact of teen pregnancy on day to day life. The peer educators are an especially knowledgeable because they have direct experience with the issues, such as being HIV-positive and/or having experienced teen pregnancy. As a result of the program, students are able to discuss sexual health more openly with each other, their teachers, and their parents. Furthermore, fewer girls are now leaving involved schools because of pregnancy.
- Ripples International, Tumaini Rescue Center – this Kenyan organization offers a shelter for young women, many of whom have been the victims of sexual violence, forced into early marriage, and/or experienced child- or teen pregnancy. They provide counselling while the young women live at the shelter, find them appropriate homes, connected them

with trained social workers and continue to provide mental health support. The organization also facilitates community discussions about the impact of sexual abuse and children's rights. In some cases, they are able to help the young women bring legal cases against the perpetrators.

- African Institute for Integrated Responses to Violence Against Women and HIV/AIDS (also known as AIR) – made up of a team of women who partner with other organizations. They can provide assistance to medical workers, offer counseling to those affected by HIV/AIDS, support women in pursuing legal justice and advocating for legal changes, and help women find sustainable sources of income. They have also created an online resource bank so that organizations across Africa can share their discoveries about the best ways to help, allowing other groups to strengthen their own approaches.

The above organizations are all partners of the Stephen Lewis Foundation. More information about the work of these groups can be found in the SLF “2015 Year in Review” report and at [www.stephenlewisfoundation.org](http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org).

Reflection Question:

- There is a saying that “knowledge is power.” Do you agree or disagree? Provide one example from what you have learned about women in Africa, and one from your own life (or Canadian society in general).

### Clean Water Access

Curriculum links: Social Studies 6 – A2.5, B2.2; Geography 7, A1.1; Science 8, Water Systems 1.1; Mathematics 6/7/8 Measurement Relationships, Collection and Organization of Data

Materials:

- Jugs of water
- Measuring cup
- Container that can hold about 12 gallons
- Somewhere to record information (chart paper, whiteboard)
- Optional: iPads, laptops or Bring Your Own Device OR printed resources for students to use to investigate water use statistics (see links)

*We used to get water from a pond that made everybody sick, but some people from Canada built us a pump,” Machozi explains while guiding Binti. “I watched the women work the pump so that I would know how to do it when my time came,” Binti herself later notes. “One by one, the women lifted their pails and tubs of water onto their heads and walked off down the trails.” Despite her careful observation, Binti initially struggles to balance the water on top of her head. It takes weeks of daily practice before she proudly conquers the skill.*

There are a number of different types of issues you might explore with your class, including social and political challenges, to build their skills as ethical citizens and critical thinkers. The follow exercise offers a starting point and a few resources for an exploration of a key environmental issue, clean water access.

Ask students to estimate the proportion of our bodies that is made up of water. Using the jugs of water and measuring cup, fill up the larger container to have about 10-12 gallons. This is about the amount of water that is in a human body, depending on a person's size (50-65% of its composition). Have a class discussion about how water works within the body. What does it do? How do we lose it? Replenish it? Why is it important that we have water in our bodies?

The UN estimates that about 663 million people across the world lack access to "improved drinking water sources". What kinds of factors do your students think might influence water access? In Malawi, for example, old systems, contamination and increasing urban populations influence water access. There is also simply the issue of limited freshwater resources available compared to the overall nation size, which USAID has predicted will lead to Malawi becoming a "water scarce nation." Fortunately, in many countries, charities such as UNICEF work to connect people with clean water, or "improved drinking water sources" and better sanitation methods. They often build wells with pumps that must be gathered by hand using buckets, just as Binti must learn to do when she moves in with Gogo. Even in Canada, safe water access is an issue. In the Fall of 2015, 93 First Nations communities were experiencing 'boil water' advisories, meaning that their water was not clean enough for healthy consumption and it needed to be boiled to reduce health risks. Ask students to brainstorm different risks that come from a lack of access to clean water, keeping in mind as well how important water is to us for sanitation. This is the reality people around the world face each day.

Explain to students that you would like to create an average theoretical Canadian household and figure out how much water they are using and explore what kind of effort it would entail for a household like Gogo's where the water must be carried back each day. You might follow the plan outlined here, or provide this as an inquiry opportunity for students to design their approach as a class; one of the challenges they will need to consider, for example, is accommodating for differences in units of measure between sources. Ask students to list all the things they use water for on a daily basis, other than drinking. With older students, you might also encourage them to consider the water consumption that goes into the things that they use on a day to day basis – for e.g., water use for agriculture. Once you have your list, decide on some parameters that seem appropriate for the household (e.g., number of bathrooms, household members, showers taken per day, etc.). You might have students go online themselves to search for statistics on water usage for different tasks, or gather information from some of the resources at the links below. The CBC site offers a water consumption calculator, although it may not encompass the full range of water uses the students have come up with.

Once you have completed your investigation, ask students to reflect. How many times over do they use that 10-gallon container of water in a day? In some communities, water pumps can be miles away. Imagine the pump was just a 30 minute round trip, and they had a 5 gallon bucket (about the size of the bottles that are used for home and office water coolers). How much time would be spent each day going back and forth to the water pump in order to meet their theoretical household's needs? Naturally, individuals in these countries have significantly lower water consumption rates, especially since many don't have plumbing systems that exacerbate water usage through toilet flushes, leaky faucets, or large bathtubs and long showers. However, it can be helpful to have a sense of how much we are using and the varied experience of other individuals around the world.

Some Key Numbers:

- The UN estimates that humans need about 50L of water per day to meet basic needs, including hygiene and food prep.
- Credible statistics on Malawi specifically can be challenging to find but across Africa research suggests that many people survive on about 20L per day
- Environment and Climate Change Canada estimated in 2011 that Canadians used about 251L per person per day.

Reflection/Exit Card Question:

Availability of improved water sources and proper sanitation is just one challenge we need to cope with in our environment. List 3-5 other environmental issues that you can think of, either that influence humans' well-being or that have resulted from the way we treat our natural world. Based on what you know about these issues, which one do you think is the most concerning? Why?

***Related Links:***

- USGS Water Science School on water volume and function in the body - <http://water.usgs.gov/edu/propertyyou.html>
- PEI Water Consumption Calculator - <http://www.cbc.ca/pei/features/watercalculator/>
- Redcliff offers information about water consumption, using a mix of volume and percentage values - <http://www.redcliff.ca/download/Water%20Conservation%20Tips.pdf>
- Anglian Using Water at Home Guide, see p.2 and 4 include charts of water usage for common activities as well as the production of basic items and foodstuffs (e.g., white bread, milk, shirts, newspapers) - [https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/assets/media/Fact\\_File\\_5\\_-\\_Using\\_water\\_at\\_home.pdf](https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/assets/media/Fact_File_5_-_Using_water_at_home.pdf)
- The City of Calgary offers a chart of typical volume of water usage for some common household activities in graph form - <http://www.calgary.ca/UEP/Water/Pages/Water-conservation/Indoor-water-conservation/Water-Use-in-the-Home.aspx>

Extension Exploration

Want to dive in deeper? UNICEF, as a part of the millennium goals, has put together a 3-lesson exploration that you can use in your classroom. Some of the benefits? The unit allows students to hear the stories of other children who are impacted by poor water and sanitation systems. It also includes examples of children who have found ways to be advocates in their own communities, promoting public health and improvements to current systems – much like Jeremiah does as a peer educator focusing on HIV/AIDS. Activities touch on aspects of science, geography and language curriculum as well as encouraging students to practice key learning skills. While the introductory materials focus on resources for American classes, most activities

can be easily adapted for Canadian students, and help them move from understanding the issue to brainstorming ways they can reach out. The final lesson focuses on the Paul Simon Water for the World Act from 2009. As an alternative, you might consider providing students with resources about the dire conditions of water systems on many Canadian First Nations' reserves.

### ***Related Links***

- The UNICEF Package - [https://teachunicef.org/sites/default/files/documents/units-lesson-plans/Water\\_and\\_Sanitation\\_Grades\\_6\\_to\\_8.pdf](https://teachunicef.org/sites/default/files/documents/units-lesson-plans/Water_and_Sanitation_Grades_6_to_8.pdf)
- CBC News – The Neskantaga Peoples' call for improvements after a 20-year boil water advisory, and Trudeau's campaign commitments to improving the state of reserves (2015). <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-election-2015-justin-trudeau-first-nations-boil-water-advisories-1.3258058>
- CBC News – A year and a half later, the Human Rights Watch reports that water conditions for Canada's first nations constitute a human rights violation. The Shoal Lake First Nations and other groups speak up about the issues they have faced (2016) <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/human-rights-water-first-nations-1.3619218>

## Strand 2: Change through Change – Using Funds in Advocacy

### Ethical Buying

Created in collaboration with Antony Discenza, B.Comm.

Curriculum Links: Social Studies 6, A2.6, B2.2; Geography 8 – B1.2; Science and Technology (Gr.6) 1.2, (Gr.7) 1.2 - symbol viewing up top, question about why not more, ext. of award

Materials:

- Copies of the handout or projector
- Blank paper or graphic organizer templates
- Optional: devices with internet access

*“Gogo, if we buy lumber and tools, we can use them to make more money,” Memory points out. “Or we can get an extra pail to cut down on trips to the pump,” Binti chimes in. But Gogo declares: “I have smart grandchildren, you’ll decide.”*

Even though students may not have travelled directly to Africa, they may still be able to have an impact on individuals who live there. Those who subscribe to the idea of ethical consumerism believe that the way we spend our money not only influences our own lives, but also the lives of others. The following exercise introduces students to this theory and encourages them to think critically about how they make purchasing decisions.

Ask students if they have ever heard of the terms “ethical consumerism.” You might start with a hand vote (having all students put their hands up in the air and use a closed fist for no, waffling hand for ‘kind of’ and open hand for yes). Brainstorm what you think the term means.

***Ethical Purchasing/Consumerism*** – a form of political activism. Based on the belief that when we purchase items, we implicitly support the processes that brought the items to market. Individuals who use ethical purchasing as a tool for activism try to purchase items that were produced in a socially and/or environmentally responsible way. For example, they may buy clothing that is more expensive from certain companies because they know those organizations pay their workers a living wage. Alternately, they may buy produce from a local farmer because the individual does not use pesticides that can harm the environment.

There are a number of ways in which individuals can learn about how an item is produced. Sometimes you can talk to the person who created the items, but when you are in the middle of a grocery store, that is not always an option. In that case, some companies will apply to see if they qualify for certifications that they can put directly on the packaging of their products. Below are some examples of symbols students might see as they shop. Start by showing them the symbols without an explanation of what they mean. Ask students to make some observations about them. Do they recognize any? Which ones catch their attention? Based only on its appearance, what might they guess the symbol is meant to tell buyers? After this discussion, you may wish to define the terms ‘fair trade’ and ‘organic’ with your class.

These symbols can tell us something important about a product, but it is important to understand the meaning of any given symbol when using it as a factor in purchasing decisions. As a class, use the handout with descriptions of the symbols to find some commonalities and differences in what the symbols mean. Select a form of graphic organizer to best represent the information. For example, which symbols indicate a product has met governmental standards? Which organizations focus on environmental vs. social concerns? You might let students explore the certifications in more depth online. What information can they add to their organizer?

**Did you know?**

One of the main partners of FAIRTRADE Mark in Malawi is Satemwa Tea Estates. Their profile page outlines details about how many people they employ, their production processes, and ways they give back to the community such as building schools and sponsoring adult education classes for workers who were unable to complete their studies.

<http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/farmers-and-workers/tea/satemwa-tea-estates-ltd>

A mix of Canadian and American certifications are included because US logos often appear on products sold in Canada. For example, David’s Tea – a Montreal-based company – offers products that bear the Canada Organic, USDA Organic, and Fair Trade Certified logos.

**Reflection Questions:**

- Did the symbols mean what you thought they did? What is one thing that surprised you?
- Fair trade and organic products can be more expensive to buy – in some cases because they cost more to produce, but sometimes because sellers raise the price because they know that people will specifically seek out these types of items. Do you think it is worth the extra expense? Why or why not?

- People often try to be careful to purchase products that they believe are ‘organic’ or ‘fair trade.’ However, not all evaluation systems are created equal. These symbols indicate that a product has met a certain set of standards, not that it is entirely perfect or healthy.
  - Is there anything that you find odd or concerning about the certifications?  
Formulate an investigation question to learn more about one of these issues.
  - There are a lot more products in stores that do not have these symbols on them, but that does not necessarily mean that the companies use unethical production processes. Brainstorm 2-3 reasons why you think they aren’t more common.

Extension:

- a) In pairs or individually, have students select a product that they use regularly. Have them investigate how that product gets made or the impact of using it. Have they found any concerns with the item? Will they continue to use it now that they have this information? Why or why not?
- b) In pairs or individually, ask students to think about other symbols or certifications that they have seen on products (magazines and cleaning products especially tend to carry these). Investigate the certification. What does it actually signify? Now that they have more information, will they use it to help making buying decisions?

## *Buying Standards – Know the Signs*

Logo	Organizational Info
	<p>Canada Organic Logo – “voluntary and only permitted on products with 95 per cent or more organic content that have been certified according to the requirements of the Canada Organic Regime,” a set of government-regulated standards.</p> <p><a href="http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/organic-products/eng/1300139461200/1300140373901">http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/organic-products/eng/1300139461200/1300140373901</a></p>
	<p>FAIRTRADE Mark - There are a number of different fair trade symbols. The mark is earned by evaluation by an independent international organization that takes into consideration practices such as “fair price paid to producers; high standard of human rights; safe working conditions; and prohibition of child labour.” This logo is present on products sold in over 120 different countries. FAIRTRADE partners are also encouraged to contribute back to the community through various projects.</p> <p><a href="http://fairtrade.ca/en-ca/what-is-fairtrade/what-is-the-fairtrade-mark">http://fairtrade.ca/en-ca/what-is-fairtrade/what-is-the-fairtrade-mark</a></p>
	<p>Fair Trade Certified – This symbol indicates items evaluated for Fair Trade USA, and is the image you are most likely to see in the United States. They evaluate a variety of types of products, including clothing, coffee and tea, plants, home goods, sports equipment and other food items. Like FAIRTRADE mark, their primary standards focus on worker’s rights and well-being. It takes up to 6 years to earn the logo from the time of application, and organizations must pay a set of fees in order for their products to be evaluated.</p>
	<p>Non-GMO Project Verified - Non-GMO verified products are often viewed as the same as organic. Although they overlap, they are slightly different. GMO stands for Genetically Modified Organism, indicating a plant, animal or micro-organism whose DNA has been altered by scientists introducing elements of genes from other organisms. There is debate over the long term impacts of GMOs on the environment and on the health of individuals who eat them. The Non-GMO project is a major organization in North America, but the standards are set by the organization and not the government.</p>
	<p>USDA Organic - the American equivalent of the Canada Organic logo. It indicates that a product has met certain growing standards set by the government. This includes evaluation of practices to ensure that they “foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity.” There are a few exceptions, but in most cases a producer must be evaluated to be able to use the logo. Organizations who use the logo without conforming to its standards can be fined.</p> <p><a href="https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/NOP%205020%20Biodiversity%20Guidance%20Rev01%20%28Final%29.pdf">https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/NOP%205020%20Biodiversity%20Guidance%20Rev01%20%28Final%29.pdf</a></p>

## Youth in Business

### Part A: Raise Your Voice

Created in collaboration with Joel Schaefer (MA Musical Theatre)

Curriculum Links: The Arts, Drama 6/7/8 – B1, Social Studies 6 – B1.2; Language 6/7/8, Oral Communication 1.6, 2.4, 2.5

#### Materials:

- Laptop, projector and speakers
- Youth in Business Printouts
- Optional: personal devices with internet connection
- Optional: 5 scrap pieces of paper, and 1-2 dot stickers per child.

*You could all take a lesson from the way Binti was reading that scene. She sounded like an actual person.*

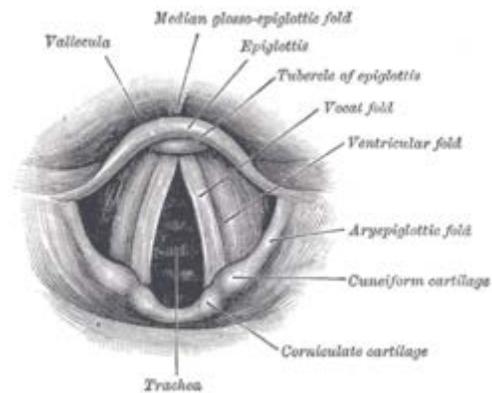
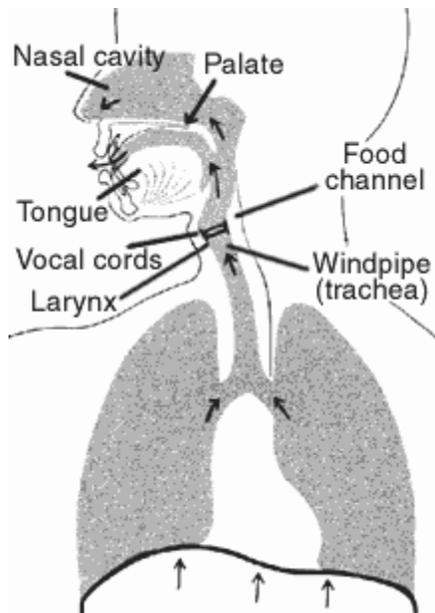
- Mr. Wajiru

Early in the play, Mr. Wajiru praises Binti for the way she uses her voice to create character, although as the story progresses she learns that this is not the only important part of acting. In this exercise, students will learn about three new vocal qualities that can contribute to character. You might wish to begin by having students review the concepts of tone, pace, pitch, and volume. What are they? How can they influence our impression of an individual?

Have your students listen to the sound clips entitled Kristin Chenoweth, James Earl Jones, and Marilyn Monroe (links below). Although the clips are provided through youtube, start just by letting the students hear the audio without allowing them to see the speaker. Following each clip, have a short discussion about what kind of person might have this voice (feel free to use any format you wish, be it creating a brainstorming chart, drawing a picture, or simply having a discussion): are they meek, or boisterous, tall or short, old or young? Are they smart, are they a leader or a follower, nice or mean, what do they look like? Don't be afraid to speak in broad generalizations. If students have conflicting ideas, that is absolutely fine; the focus at this time is the impression that they get based solely on voice. After you have listened to and discussed the clips, show students pictures of the people whose voices they just heard and have a follow up discussion. What did you get right, and what did you get wrong?

How a person speaks is integral to how they are viewed by the people around them. If someone has a big booming voice, people are more likely to look to them as a leader, if they have a high voice, they might be perceived as young, a raspy voice might make you think a person is rough or mean. Explain that these are all tools that can be used to develop characters, and the thousands of assumptions that you innately make about a person before you even know who they are can be very useful in helping an audience to know who a character is without using a great deal of exposition.

All these sound qualities depend on a speaker's use of their larynx, sometimes nicknamed the voice box. The first diagram offers a larger picture of where the larynx is located in the throat. The more detailed diagram provides a snapshot of the aryepiglottic fold and vocal folds, structures within the larynx. Some students may find it helpful to be able to visualize how these effects are created.



Clip A: Kristin Chenoweth performing “My New Philosophy” in *You’re A Good Man, Charlie Brown* (view up to 0:45)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRa7WNmRakY>

The vocal quality that can be heard in the Kristin Chenoweth clip is called twang. It is created by the tightening of the aryepiglottic fold in order to create a brighter, tighter sound. It is common in North American accents, and is often heard in piercing voices. Some examples of characters or people that use a lot of twang are Kristin Chenoweth, Janice from *Friends*, Megan Mullally, and Amy Poehler. A lot of twang can sound very ugly and shrill, but used in smaller quantities, it creates a sense of youth, or of cheeriness. When slightly exaggerated, it can contribute to a sense of a loud, annoying character. Ask students to sit up straight and say ‘nya nya nya’ as if taunting, or like the videogame character Walowigi. After this, you may also have them quack like a duck. As they do so, encourage them to observe the feeling in their throat (the goal is to feel the sound behind rather than in one’s nose) and the sound that is produced.

Clip B: James Earl Jones in an excerpt from *The Lion King* (view from 0:50-1:22)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x49NwjnwDUw>

This clip is a little short, and you may wish to supplement it with some of this excerpt from *You Can’t Take it With You*, performed for The New York Times (view up to about 0:30)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvrloFTXCtA>

The second vocal quality is that of a lowered larynx. It is indicative of a deep voice, often found in operatic, or gravelly voices as well. Some examples of people with lowered larynxes include James Earl Jones, Morgan Freeman, KD Lang. This is especially useful in creating characters with a deep voice, or older and wiser characters, leaders, and villains. Once again, ask students to sit up straight, then encourage them to yawn and letting out a deep sigh. Next, ask them to speak out a gentle Oh vowel, sliding down to the bottom of their vocal range. Encourage students to think about how this feels in their throat and chest. Watch that students are not straining their throat to create a gravelly effect.

(Interesting fact; while James Earl Jones learned to read when he was four, he is dyslexic and has a tendency to stutter, so he avoided reading out loud as much as possible until age 14)

Clip C: Marilyn Monroe singing 'Happy Birthday' to the president (view from 0:33-0:55)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vg5HIMnPx7k>

The final vocal quality is a breathy quality. It is created by limiting the degree to which the vocal folds are able to adduct (draw together) when creating sound. Many folk and pop singers such as Norah Jones or Alanis Morissette, or in actors such as Marilyn Monroe or, more subtly, Mandy Patinkin. It can often be used for a meek or shy effect, or in the opposite, it can be threatening, or sultry, it can help create an intimate feeling for a scene, but also create a sense of foreboding. As students sit up straight one final time, and encourage them to begin talking (this can be anything, or you might give them a very easy passage to read aloud). Encourage them to relax while talking, then slowly increase their pitch until they reach the spot where it cracks (i.e., find the willowy place in their voice where they slip into falsetto). Encourage students to think about how they feel in their throat.

End with a culminating exercise together. You may start this as a repeat-after-me and then practice once in unison. Start with the breathy quality, slowly repeating 'hi, hi, hi'. Next, move into twang and rhythmically state "hey, hey, hey, hey." You might put your finger on your nose to cue students here, but remember that the feeling should be behind your nose, not in it (the latter indicates too much air is coming through your nose instead of your mouth). Finally, slide into a lower register and say "hello, hello, hello" (this should resonate in your chest). Remember that these are just three of many vocal qualities. Throughout your dramatic projects, don't hesitate to encourage your students to explore more.

## Part B: Speak with Purpose

Many of the organizations that we have discussed are run by adults. However, there are a number of creative young people who have found a way to use business to contribute to causes that they care about. In this exercise, students will learn about some of these peer leaders and practice their voice and performance skills in sharing their discovery with others.

Start by asking students to share some of the strategies they have heard radio advertisers use in order to make their commercials memorable (e.g., impersonating celebrities, funny or annoying voices, jingles, sound effects, etc). Explain that they will be creating their own radio commercials and sharing them with one another. Split students into groups and provide each with an entrepreneur's profile. Their job is to review the information about the individual, and create a radio commercial to advertise the products the child creates and the benefits of buying (this may include benefits for the consumer as well as the impact on the entrepreneur's cause). Encourage students to consider the vocal qualities they reviewed/learned for creating character voices. Share as a class and debrief about their experience playing with different voice skills.

### Reflection Activity:

Label 5 pieces of scrap paper with each of the business initiatives and place them around the room. Give students 1-2 dot stickers and let them vote for the businesses they think they would be most likely to buy from. Find out which businesses were the most popular. As a class, discuss why.

## *Youth Entrepreneur Profiles*

### **The Ladybug Foundation**

When Hannah Taylor was 5 years old, she was surprised to see a man searching for food in a dumpster. Over the next year, she continued to struggle with what she had seen; she could not understand why people in her hometown of Winnipeg were going without food or shelter. Her efforts started in Grade 1, with a presentation to her classmates and a drive to collect supplies a local shelter. Next, she gathered the support of her friends in art and bake sales to raise donations. With the help of her parents, Hannah established The Ladybug Foundation at the age of 8. She began hosting ‘Big Boss’ lunches where she shared her concerns with businesspeople and politicians in her community. She also began speaking at schools and other youth events. The Ladybug Foundation began selling bright red ladybug scarves, t-shirts, bracelets and pencils to raise funds for shelters, as well as a book she authored called “Ruby’s Hope”. While in middle school, she organized a Red Scarf Day ‘Walk a Mile in Their Shoes’ event to raise awareness, with participants across Canada and Singapore. The combined funds from sales and donations to the foundation have totaled over \$4 million since the charity was established. The Ladybug Foundation is run primarily by Hannah and her parents on a 100% volunteer basis. Hannah has had to pull back on her efforts recently, as she is now studying at McGill University, but the cause still remains near and dear to her heart. In a recent interview for the McGill student publication, she explained “my passion is helping people, especially homeless people. It’s just something my heart made me do and it’s like breathing – it doesn’t stop. Some people spend their lives trying to find that passion but I got lucky and I found it when I was five.”

See also:

<http://www.ladybugfoundation.ca/>

<http://publications.mcgill.ca/reporter/2015/04/hannah-taylor-wrong-turn-sets-her-on-the-right-path/>

### **Christian Royal Pottery**

Christian Royal didn’t sit down at a potters wheel until he was in his late teens. However, he quickly discovered that the art form offered a critical source of self-expression. With lots of support from his parents and a series of warm-hearted mentors, he learned to create a variety of pottery pieces inspired by nature and delicate lacework. Now, they have also helped him start his own business, and he has up to 200 pieces in various stages of production at any given time. His parents explain that they feel particularly lucky that Christian has found a source of passion and income because the young man, who has Down Syndrome, had long been frustrated at school where he struggled to understand many basic reading and math concepts. Though a quiet child, Christian’s enthusiasm for pottery has brought him out of his shell. The affectionate and excitable artist has donated profits and individual pieces to a variety of charities, including the Down Syndrome Association of the Lowcountry (where he lives) and the Special Olympics.

See also: <http://www.christianroyalpottery.com/pages/about>

## **Me and the Bees Lemonade**

Mikaila Ulmer's story is the result of two bee stings, a pair of very supportive parents, and her great-grandmother's 1940 recipe book. When Mikaila was four, her parents entered her in a contest to come up with a unique product. While trying to develop with an idea, the young girl suffered two bee stings in the course of one week. Seeing her daughter becoming increasingly afraid of the insects, Mikaila's mother encouraged her to do a little research. Mikaila soon learned about how invaluable bees are to the world's ecosystem, and how quickly they are dying out. Fortunately, around the same time, her great-grandmother mailed her one of her old recipe books, including her famous flaxseed lemonade recipe. Mikaila decided to combine the two, and came up with a honey-sweetened lemonade that she entered into the contest. She didn't stop there, however, instead experimenting with a variety of flavours and launching her own business – Me and the Bees Lemonade. By 11 years old, she had been invited to dinners at the White House and appeared on the US TV Show Shark Tank, where one of the hosts offered to invest in her company. Now in Grade 7, Mikaila's lemonade is sold by a variety of food trucks, small businesses, and the Whole Foods chain. Her slogan: buy a bottle, save a bee. Mikaila, years later, still remembers the importance of those fuzzy little insects and donates a portion of her profits to local and international charities that protect the bees.

See also:

- <http://meandthebees.com/pages/about-us>
- <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/how-11-year-old-turned-something-scary-something-sweet-n545651>

## **Lily's Lovebirds**

In 2012, second grader Lily Miller's school in Montana needed to raise funds to build an all-abilities playground. With her mother's help, Lily learned to sew soft 'lovebirds' out of recycled fabric so that she could sell them and donate the profits. A few years later, she read *I Am Malala* and learned that girls in some countries are not able to go to school. Investigating further, she found that the Conscious Connections Foundation (CCF) can fund one month of studies for a girl in Nepal with only \$5. She started up her lovebirds effort again, now with the help of her younger sister Maizy. Other students heard about her work and joined in making the birds, which are now sold online. By 2016, their efforts had raised over \$5000 in donations to CCF and the Malala Fund. Lily explains that "girls that go to school educate their children to go to school, which makes the world a better and more peaceful place...I hope that one day I will see more girl presidents and great leaders in the world, but it all starts with going to school."

See also:

- [www.lilyslovebirds.com](http://www.lilyslovebirds.com)
- An interview with Lily at <http://www.missoulavalleylifestyle.com/2015/06/25/lilys-lovebirds/>

## Nalu

Dali and Finn were still in elementary school in 2011 when their parents, both chiropractors, moved them to India to work in a series of schools. The children quickly found a number of friends at the schools. Dali, the eldest, was surprised at age 13 to find that many of her friends were not returning. She soon learned that most schools in India require students to have uniforms in order to be allowed to attend school but that the government stopped paying for such expenses when students finished grade 7. Dali and Finn wanted to help their friends stay in school. They had learned that the boys who dropped out tended to get factory jobs, while many of the girls became young mothers. Without an education themselves, it would be hard to make enough money to allow their children to complete school and break the cycle of poverty. However, it was important to Dali and Finn that they found a solution that would be a little more reliable from year to year. They decided that, rather than campaigning for donations, they would start a clothing line. They hoped that this might provide a more steady stream of income that they could use to help. They contemplated what to buy, such as textbooks and writing supplies. However, they ultimately decided that uniforms would be the best way to help, since they are students ticket in the door of the school. Now, for every 5 t-shirts sold in their Nalu clothing line, they are able to provide a new, properly fitted uniform for a child in India.

See also:

- <http://www.nalu.me/pages/creation-story>
- <http://www.nalu.me/pages/know-this>

## Strand 3: Advocacy Through Arts

### Outlining Purpose: The Director's Note as Writing Form

Curriculum: Language 6/7/8, Reading 1.6, (Gr.8) 1.7, 2.4

Materials:

- Director's Note hand out
- Optional: examples of programs from theatre productions

*Is everybody here? Everyone in position? Good. Let's rehearse something that Malawi will find worth listening to.*

- Mr. Wajiru

At the end of the day, a theatre company's goal is usually to communicate their core message through their art, to create 'something worth listening to'. However, sometimes members of a company will also communicate with the audience more directly such as with a speech before the show, or through written word in the program (or in a guide like this!). Depending on the nature of the show, a program will contain a variety of different things. In a musical, for instance, there will be a list of all of the songs and sometimes which characters sing them. Many theatre productions will feature a little blurb about the different members of the team, listing other performances they have been involved in and sometimes acknowledging important people in their lives. It's also a space that can be used for advertising upcoming shows or sponsor ads. Making art can be expensive, so businesses will sometimes provide goods or funds in exchange for ad space or other recognition by the theatre group. Finally, most programs contain a director's note. The class's job in this exercise is to read two director's notes for productions of *Binti's Journey* to identify general features of the form as well as engage in a brief analysis some of the authors' specific stylistic choices.

After students complete their initial written questions, recap as a class. Then, you might have an extension discussion about the following topics:

- In literature, documents surrounding the main text like blurbs, introductions, 'about the author' pages and acknowledgements are referred to as "paratexts." The Director's Note is kind of like a paratext for a play. What do you think its equivalent would be in book form? Explain your reasoning.
- Would you characterize the form as being focused on providing key information and facts, or as a method of artistic expression? Why?
- Jamaican-born artist mandiela makes some specific choices in her use of capital letters and sentence structure. This isn't because of a lack of education; she is a noted Canadian theatre practitioner, recording artist, dancer, author and dub-poet. Just like everything that she puts on stage in a performance, there is a specific reason for her choices. As a class, identify some of the ways in which she 'breaks the rules' of proper writing. What message do you think she might be trying to send by ignoring these conventions?

Once you have had these discussions, you might choose to share with your students that mandiela reports her choice not to use capitals is, in part, because she is trying to relax the

structure of the written word to better align with that of speech. Primarily, however, it is as a rejection of hierarchy. She uses her name as a key example: “my name is not any more important as representing this/my being, than the designated label of an orange, or a road, or a country, or a ‘higher’ being, or mother’s day.” She has been writing this way since the 1980s. She is also not alone, as University of Saskatchewan Professor Susan Gingell points out in an interview with the artist. The Cree peoples ultimately determined that all alphabetic representations of their language should be written without capitalization. For them, it is a way to resist colonization; figures like capital letters were absent from all original written representations of information in their culture, and were only an idea introduced by English settlers whose influence has ultimately had a profound effect on their way of life. By rejecting the use of capital letters in the English alphabet, they are able to assert some of their own practices and values into what had been a form controlled and, to a certain degree, enforced by settlers. A variety of Canadian writers have begun to experiment with writing conventions for the purposes of drawing attention to cultural power imbalances. Not that it’s an excuse for students to start ignoring all conventions of writing – it’s important to know the rules before you break them!

## *Defining the Director's Note*

Read the notes on the following page and respond to the questions on a separate piece of paper.

### BEFORE READING

1. Discuss with a partner. Have you ever read a 'Director's Note' before? What do you remember about it? (e.g., where was it, what in general was it about, etc.) If you haven't, make a prediction of what its purpose might be.

### DURING READING

2. Highlight any words or phrases that confuse you or you are unsure of the meaning. Discuss with a friend or look them up.

### AFTER READING

3. 2010 Director's note:
  - a. Who is the author's intended audience? How do you know?
  - b. What is the author's message or purpose for writing? Provide 3 pieces of direct evidence to support this.
4. 2007 Director's note:
  - a. Write a one sentence summary of each paragraph. Compare with another member of the class – did you come to the same conclusions? Work together to find a common understanding.
  - b. Provide an example of figurative language that stood out to you. What is the author trying to say?
  - c. Who is the author's intended audience? How do you know?
  - d. What is the author's message or purpose for writing? Provide 3 pieces of direct evidence to support this.
5. Compare the two pieces.
  - a. Aside from mandela's unusual grammar and punctuation choices, list some similarities and differences.
  - b. Think about the Director's Note as a form of writing, like poetry or short stories. Based on the similarities, how would you define the form?

***Binti's Journey 2010 Director's Note, written by Lynda Hill***

As theatre artists, we are storytellers, and as artists devoted to young people, we know firsthand how powerful stories can inspire young minds to think deeply about themselves and the world around them. It is my hope that the story of 13 year-old Binti will inspire our audiences of young people her age to make the connection between their lives and the lives of their peers on another continent.

Finally, I hope that they learn, as Binti does, that we are all part of the same family and when one starts to think of others as family, difference gives way to compassion and empathy. When this happens, almost anything is possible!

***Binti's Journey 2007 Director's Note written by ahdri zhina mandiela***

a novel, a theatre, a group of artists most/firmly situated in the scattered expanse of the cultural african diaspora, and teens and teachers in a canadian metropole: these are the current tools in the fight against further spread and devastation of aids...at least right here/right now!

the heaven shop novel by deborah ellis and the stage adaptation wrought from this theatre direct production, binti's journey, is not a medical solution, or even a social program, nor a political stance. it's also not a panacea for comforting a world which barely looks on while other people's existence and customs are decimated.

it's an emotional banging of drums – or pot & pans – which seeks to have us not turn away from an imminent and apocalyptic careening of the saddeningly termed 'aids crisis in sub-saharan africa'. the banging starts softly in the exuberant and expectant voice of binti, a regular teenage girl just wanting to enjoy life now, and grow up to be! but her desires find only fallow ground as she's growing up in modern-day malawi. where the citizens have been dealing with different social crises over several decades; the least of which has them as a perpetual winner or loser of the title of one of the world's poorest nation. and now there is 'the aids' right in binti's house. the banging continues as the pain of being split from her siblings become unbearable and the desperation sets in, and binti must do what she needs to do. and the banging rings out loud as the caring folks like her gogo shore up binti's survival. and a new community of other orphans and her rekindled sibling relationships, and the legacy of loving caregivers forge a future. the banging continues with you...

speak about it. aids is killing people, near and far away: parents and children, across seas and within countries cross the vast expanse of the african continent. care about this. these people's lives matter. they may not be our neighbours in the immediate sense; but what they give to the world has, and will continue to affect how we live on this north American continent.

do something meaningful...bang your own little drum and get someone else started on a path of caring and sharing. it may just be words at first, and maybe tears; but these emotionally charged moments are the respite places we need. so we can stop and look and feel, and then be impelled to genuinely offer and share some of our physical resources: practical medicine for healing, money for rebuilding, dreams of a future. start right here/right now! with binti's journey.

## The Importance of Multiple Narratives – Version 1

Curriculum Links: The Arts 6/7/8, Drama – B1, B2; Language 6/7/8, Reading – 1.6, 1.9

Materials:

- Copy of *Put Me in a Book*
- Optional: internet access, laptop and speakers

*“You’ve been moping around here as though you were the only one who’s lost something,”  
Memory points out to Binti.*

*“You work but you still don’t act like you’re one of us. Not really. You act like you’ve been stuck  
here by accident and you’re waiting for someone to fish you out. Like you’re special.”*

*“Well, I was special!” Binti retorts, “once.”*

*“Oh yes, the radio. That will be what you tell people all your life, ‘I was once on the radio.’”*

*“What do you know about it? You don’t know what it’s like to have something so wonderful, and  
then to lose it.”*

*A chorus of “Really, Binti...” echoes across the cast.*

*“Sometimes you don’t make any sense”*

Stories have power. The ones we hear, the ones we don’t hear, and the ones we ignore. Even after learning one of Memory’s toughest stories, Binti still fails to recognize her depth, or of many others living in Gogo’s house, and others are impacted by this choice. There are two versions of this exercise, one using a children’s text written by Robert Munsch and another for more mature classes designed around a TEDx talk by Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie. Both activities are intended to help students begin to engage in discussion about the power of stories, and especially the importance of hearing multiple perspectives.

In 2010, Robert Munsch and Michael Martchenko’s *Put Me in a Book* was published. Protagonist Hailey is initially flattered when an author makes her the kid in his newest book. However, she quickly discovers that she has no power to escape the pages of the text – in agreeing to be in the book, she has given herself up to be trapped and controlled by the author. Her class tries to come to the rescue, showing resilience and creativity in their varied attempts to help her escape. Ultimately, Hailey finds her way out and doles out a clever comeuppance to the author. If you check out Munsch’s website, you can listen to a recording of the author himself reading the book!

For some classes, a reading and discussion of this book might offer a nice starting place for understanding the power of stories. Some potential discussion points might include:

- How would they feel in Hailey’s shoes?
- What if, instead of being directly inside a book, someone told a story about them or their family that didn’t represent them in a truthful way (e.g., as meaner, weaker or less intelligent) – how would they feel?
- What would they do if other people started treating them differently because of that story?
- In the book, Hailey’s life was almost controlled by one single author, but her class worked very hard to give her the power to escape that story and speak for herself. What

kinds of things can we do to make sure that individuals at school are given a chance to speak for themselves?

- This might be a good time to review the concepts of stereotypes. Stereotypes are kind of like a story or narrative about particular groups, and often have an impact on how they are treated by others. What are some examples of stereotypes? What kinds of things can we do to make sure that groups aren't judged based on one story of who they are?
- Depending on the composition of your class and their comfort level with one another, you might ask how many of them feel like there are a lot of books with characters who have similar personalities to their own? Similar appearances? Similar families? Similar cultures or beliefs? What does/might it feel like when there are no stories a group can connect with?

If you have the time, you might also use Munsch's book as an opportunity for students to practice their skills in structuring as story. Repeat the pre-viewing tableaux exercise using the narrative of *Put Me in a Book*. You might determine the sequence of events as a class, or allow students to do this in their small groups. After sharing, take some time to reflect. Did students do anything differently this time? Did it help? What is one thing they feel they were more successful with in comparison to the fairytale exercise?

### **Did You Know?**

In January 2017, Robert Munsch's newest book, entitled *Blackflies*, was released. One of the things that makes this story particularly special is that the piece, drawn from the experiences of a family that Munsch met while sharing his tales on a First Nations reserve, is illustrated by Anishinaabe artist Jay Odjick. As you explore the issues in this lesson, you might share the following article with your students. Here, Odjick articulates some of the joys and challenges of being an artist, alongside the frustration of growing up in a world where well-rounded Aboriginal characters were glaringly absent from the media.

→ <http://www.windspeaker.com/news/windspeaker-news/first-nations-artist-jay-odjick-illustrates-new-robert-munsch-release>

## The Importance of Multiple Narratives – Extension Version

Curriculum Links: Language 8, Oral Communication – 1.4-1.8, 2.4

Materials:

- Projector and internet connection or downloaded version of the video
- Optional: post-its and chart paper

For more mature classes, you might have a viewing of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED Talk, "The Danger of a Single Story." In the talk, the Nigerian author shares her own experiences of stereotype and bias – including those she has mistakenly held – and attributes these issues to the pervasiveness of single narratives around peoples and places. She begins by discussing the influence of western texts on her childhood and the process of expanding beyond these narratives as she grew as an artist. As the talk finishes, she places an emphasis on sharing different communities' stories of strength in addition to the challenges they face. It is important to note that the talk is a little lengthy, includes some complex language, and makes one reference to the high rates of rape in Congo. It may be beneficial to have the subtitles visible for some students. This video link is closed captioned, accessible by clicking the small CC symbol in the bottom right of the viewing screen.

Potential stopping points:

- 3:00 – Adichie discusses the British stories that she read as a child, and how they influenced her own writing. She ultimately explains that her later exposure to African literature helped her to see that girls who looked like her had a place in stories too, how it "saved [her] from having a single story of what books are." Ask students to summarize the problem that Adichie has just explained, or to explain why people kept laughing as she described the people and events in her early stories.
- 4:11 – Ask students to summarize Adichie's experience with the house boy, Fide. What was the single story she had of his family, and why was this problematic? Why might she have shared a story where she made a mistake?
- 6:35 – Ask students to summarize Adichie's experience with her roommate. What does she mean when she says that the other young woman treated her with a "patronizing, well-meaning pity"? Eventually she notes that she understands how the images of Africa that are common in America contribute to this attitude. You might ask students to take a moment here, without necessarily sharing with others, to think about whether there are groups that they have judged in a similar way.
- 8:30 – What is Adichie trying to show is the problem with her professor's definition of what it means to be "authentically African"?
- 9:36 – Once again, Adichie shares a story where she made a mistake – this time as a more educated adult. Why might she have done this?
- 11:22 – Why does Adichie share her exchange with the student at a university and her comment about *American Psycho*? It is often said that 'history is written by the winners.' Adichie shares examples of nations and peoples whose treatment has been defined by specific narratives. How does controlling a story give a group power? Can they think of any historical examples they have studied?

- 13:10 – Adichie shares elements of her childhood that were happy, but also those that were tough. Why does she provide this summary of her life?
- 14:10 – What is Adichie’s point about stereotypes? What are her concerns with single narratives?
- 17:55 – Why does Adichie share so many positive stories? Which ones stood out most to you? Adichie recognizes that stories can be problematic, but also comments that “stories can also be used to empower and humanize”; what does this mean?

Following the video, you might take a little extra time to allow students to clarify anything that confused them. Place three pieces of chart paper in different spots in the room, titled “Dangers of Single Stories,” “Benefits of Multiple Stories,” and “Ways to Encourage Multiple Stories.” Provide each student with three post-its and ask them to come up with specific examples for each chart. Allow them some time to write their examples and place them up on the charts, then peruse other people’s responses. You might also pick some ideas of note to share.

### Reflection Question

Throughout this unit, we have examined different issues faced by people around the world and in Canada. However, Adichie cautions us that focusing only on the negatives does not give us a full picture of others’ experiences. In your final project, what are some steps you might be able to take to avoid running into this issue?

## Ethical Adaptations

Curriculum Links: The Arts 6/7/8, Drama – B2; Language 6/7/8, Reading – 1.6, 1.7

Materials:

- Printout of novel/play differences chart for students
- Optional: Chart paper and markers

*There's no time to tell you the whole story.*

- Boy at the Orphan Club

Telling Binti's story is a process that took many years. Before writing her novel, *The Heaven Shop*, Deborah Ellis travelled to Malawi and Zambia. There, she spent time with a number of children whose lives had been impacted by HIV/AIDS and their caretakers. In addition to *The Heaven Shop*, she also produced another book – *Our Stories, Our Songs* – a non-fiction text relating her interviews and interactions with the children. Many of the experiences that we see Binti and her siblings go through reflect the common patterns documented in *Our Stories*. Ellis took her trip in 2003, and *The Heaven Shop* was published in summer 2004. A few years later, Marcia Johnson, the playwright, began composing her adaptation. In 2007, a team of actors and other artists at Theater Direct congregated in an empty classroom at Kent Senior PS to begin the rehearsals that would bring Johnson's script to life. Early on, they performed a reading of the play for students, including a class that was studying *The Heaven Shop*. Just as Ellis met with children in Malawi to hear their real experiences, the artists sought the opinions of students to help understand the impact of the piece. The artist team then worked with a group of students at the school, using a variety of art forms to explore and share their responses to some of issues around HIV/AIDS for young people in Sub-Saharan Africa.

If you are using radio plays as a culminating project, you might share this information with your students and ask them to highlight specific steps that the artists took to ensure that they were representing others' experiences in an authentic way. Explain that later on they will have the chance to select an issue that they feel is important and draw attention to it through their art. Encourage them to reflect throughout the learning process on strategies they might use to ensure that they are being truthful in their representations of others' experiences.

Ask students to think back to their fairy tale tableaux exercises. Part of this process was choosing what information should be kept, and what could be left out. Ellis, Johnson, and the Theatre Direct team were all tasked with doing the same thing as they created their adaptations. However, it is important to keep in mind that what we keep and what we leave out can have an impact on our story or how our characters are perceived. Below is a chart of differences between the novel and the play. Split students into groups and give each group 1-2 differences to consider. You may not use all of the differences but rather pick and choose depending on your students. Do they think the choice the artists made had an impact? How does the alternative version affect how they view the character (e.g., do they like them more or less, do they see a new flaw or strength)? Does it change elements of the story (e.g., does it bring up a different issue)? Why might the artists have made that choice (e.g., could it be related to resources, did they focus on different themes)? Regroup as a class and share, or have students record their ideas on chart paper and do a gallery walk.



***From Page to Stage: Comparing Novel and Play***

<b>Context</b>	<b>In the Novel</b>	<b>In the Play</b>
<p>While at the radio station at the beginning of the play, Binti is interviewed for a newspaper.</p>	<p>“Some of my father’s customers say life in Malawi was better under President Banda. More people had jobs.”            “More people were tortured, too, for voicing their opinions. Which do you think is more important, Binti—jobs or free speech?”            Binti thought for a moment. “It depends on how poor you are.”            (p.10)</p>	<p>The majority of the interview is maintained between the novel and the play, but this particular exchange is left out.</p>
<p>Early on in the story, we learn about Binti’s school, in particular her pride in being a prefect.</p>	<p>Today, the Anti-AIDS Club put on a play they had written about a girl who decides that having a boyfriend is more important than studying. The girl dropped out of school and ended up with AIDS. At the end of the play, the cast faced the audience and yelled in unison “Virgin Power! Virgin Pride! Stop AIDS Now!” It was a good play, and got lots of applause. Binti applauded with enthusiasm. It helped to warm her up.            (p.32)</p>	<p>The school performance does not appear in the play.</p>
<p>After arriving in Mulanje, Jeremiah helps Binti find Gogo’s house. She is surprised to discover how humble it is, given how powerful her grandmother is reputed to be.</p>	<p>Gogo scooped one of the babies off the ground, and nodded for Binti to join her on a low wooden bench outside the hut. One of the toddlers tried to crawl into Binti’s lap. He was very dirty, so Binti didn’t want to pick him up. Her old school uniform was getting shabby, but at least it was still sort of clean.            The toddler gave up and sat in the</p>	<p>This is not included in the play.</p>

	dirt at Binti's feet. (p.116)	
While at Gogo's house, she shares the legend of how the stars were placed in the sky.	In the book, the story is told outside by the embers of the fire. Afterwards, they go inside and Gogo and Memory rush Binti to bed in order to preserve the candle. (p.118)	In the play, all of the cousins go inside and find spots to lay down first. This is when Memory expresses worry about making the candle last. The story comes after this exchange, and so is told inside by candlelight.
Binti experiences frustration and a sense of awkwardness when she struggles to perform in the improvised play with the other children at the Orphan Club.	Then she remembered how awkward she'd felt during the play and how comfortable the other kids seemed, making the play up as they went along. Maybe there were things she could learn, after all. She thought about it some more while she helped get the little ones ready for bed, and kept thinking about it as she fell asleep. She didn't even notice that her blanket was being used to keep five small children warm in the night (p.133)	In the play, Binti has the same experience of embarrassment. However, instead of helping the other children and reflecting on her ability to learn, she instead falls asleep questioning why she was chosen for the radio show.
In the novel, Binti asks Jeremiah about what it means for Memory and Beauty to be HIV-positive. He explains that many HIV-positive infants pass away from AIDS, and that medications are available but are in short supply in Africa.	"What should I do?" [Binti asked] "You won't catch it from living with them." [Jeremiah responded] "No, I mean, what should I do...for them?" Jeremiah smiled. "Be their family, and let them be yours." (p.140)	Binti's request for more information about the likely fate of her cousin and the baby, as well as advice as to how to help them, does not appear in the play.
Jeremiah promises to see if he can track down Kwasi, and ultimately reports back that their brother has been imprisoned for stealing	Binti goes to visit Kwasi in jail. The siblings are happy to see one another, but Kwasi initially says very little. A social worker explains that orphans commonly	In the play, Binti does not travel to the jail herself. Instead, Gogo journeys to get her grandson released. In her absence, Memory draws

bread from their uncle.	end up there, and that it can take years for them to get a trial. Rather than getting individual servings of food, the boys often have to fight amongst themselves over one big pot. They are overcrowded and packed in to sleep at night. (p.146-50)	Binti’s attention to the fact that Gogo is unwell.
Towards the end of the story, Binti reflects on how her life has changed and the love that she has found as a result. She also thinks about the skills she has developed, like carrying water, cooking nsima and looking after the children.	[Binti] was learning to really act, to actually become a character in a play, not just do what the director told her to do. (p.177)	Most of Binti’s reflection on the skills she has gained is the same in both the book and the play. However, this particular line is left out.
Near the end of the story, Binti thinks about how she has grown. In the book, she also recalls a memory of Bambo.	“Tears go into our coffins,” her father once said, after broken-hearted parents had picked out a coffin for their child. “Tears make the coffins lighter and make the dead rise faster to Heaven. It’s harder to go to Heaven if no one cries when you die. There is a lot of good sorrow in our coffins.” .... There were certainly more tears to come, because life and love seemed to require tears from her, just as they required hard work and hard times, and keeping on when she wanted to give up. (p.178)	In both the book and play, Binti notes that she has learned: “that there is sorrow in life but there’s laughter too, and belonging and being needed and wanted.” However, instead of the reflection on Bambo, the play ends with her statement: “First we eat, then we sleep and tomorrow, we will all make it through another day” and the actors turn to face The Heaven Shop sign.

Novel excerpts:

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Play excerpts:

Johnson, Marcia & Deborah Ellis. *Binti’s Journey*. Theatre Direct, 2010.

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## Art into Action

### Internal Dialogue: Writing in Role

Original exercise created by Jessi Linn Davies, adapted from the UNICEF guide for The Heaven Shop. Modifications made by Victoria Roberts.

Curriculum Links: Language 6/7/8, Writing – 2.2, 2.3; The Arts 6/7/8, Drama – B1.1, B2.1, (Gr.7/8) B2.2

Materials:

- Basic writing materials

*I told her everything. I meant to skip over a few things—like stealing the money, but it all came out.*

- Binti

When telling stories that reflect experiences we might not directly share, it is important to really think about the challenges those individuals might face and handle our work with care and respect. Putting ourselves in other people's shoes takes practice! This exercise is intended to help students practice thinking in character and reflecting on difficult topics.

Binti, Kwasi and Junie have been put in situations where they needed to make a morally difficult decision (i.e., whether or not to steal) during the course of their story. Identify some of the choices that Binti and Kwasi (and, if you are comfortable with exploring the relevant issues with your class, Junie) make and the thoughts and feelings that the character had while contemplating that decision. Be prepared to explain answers with evidence from the play or its text. Now write, in a script or poetic form, a conversation that your chosen character might have had with themselves or a close friend while deciding which choice to make, contemplating the tough decision. What might happen if your character chose to do something different from the play?

- Choose Binti, Kwasi, or Junie and identify a morally difficult decision that character had to make.
- Jot down some of the thoughts and feelings the character might have had while weighing the pros and cons of the decision.
- Write a dialogue expressing the thought process the character might have gone through to reach a decision – either as it occurred in the play, or might have developed if they made a different choice.

Extension:

Have each student perform their piece for a partner. If you are working towards a radio play, you might want to emphasize writing in script form rather than a poem. Ask each person to give their partner three pieces of feedback: (1) one thing that their partner touched on but that they would like to hear more about (maybe it was interesting, maybe a little confusing); (2) one constructive, specific action that might improve the piece or performance (e.g., speaking more clearly, making sure the character's voice stays consistent throughout, etc.); and (3) one choice

or element of the piece/performance that they thought was very effective (e.g., I like how you showed Binti's different emotions throughout the piece, you have a very clear order of ideas in your piece, etc.).

### Reflection

- What was the most challenging part of putting yourself in the character's shoes? The easiest?
- Did you keep the character's choice the same or change it? Why?
- In theatre, it is common for shows to go through a 'workshop' with actors so the playwright can decide if they need to make changes in the script. Prior to presenting a play for an audience, actors rehearse so that they can learn the role and often work with a director to make changes to improve their performance. Reflection is an important part of the artistic process. If you were to share this again, what is one change you would make to your writing or performance?

## Introduction to Soundscapes

Created in collaboration with Joel Schaefer (MA Musical Theatre)

Curriculum Links: The Arts 6/7/8, Drama – B1.3, B2.1

Materials:

- Regular classroom items (you might encourage students to bring in found items from home that can be used to make interesting sounds, but this isn't necessary)

*In the olden days, very long ago, there were no stars in the sky.  
It was a girl child that put the stars there.  
She was on a long journey, and the night was very dark.  
She built a small fire, then threw the sparks from the fire high into the sky.  
They lit up a road for her in the darkness.  
And that is how we got to have stars.  
- Gogo*

Soundscapes are an excellent way to help a group of students focus and work together cooperatively and creatively. The opportunity to be a little vocal, or produce sound effects with found objects can also be a great outlet for energetic students. Finally, the skills built through soundscape exercises can be used to add depth to dramatic performances, especially if you opt to create radio plays as a culminating exercise. This activity is designed to build students' skills through reflection and practice. Following the first mindful listening exercise, it may be helpful to work with your class to create 1-2 practice soundscapes that are based around specific environments, such as a busy city street and a forest, before moving into working with the legend which allows students to expand into more abstract ideas.

Have your students close their eyes and listen. Allow them about 20 seconds to do so on their own, to calm down and begin to pay attention to everything they are hearing. Then bring them into a more focussed state, asking them to pay attention to the sounds that are in their immediate surroundings (i.e. their desk if they are sitting at their desk, or just the area around them and before the person beside them): their breathing, the beating of their hearts, any other sounds they hear in their immediate surroundings. Then, encourage them to expand the area of listening to the room in which they are: the other students breathing, a clock ticking, a computer humming, a radiator working. Finally, they should once again expand their listening to what they can hear beyond the room: people moving around, cars driving outside, dogs barking, and the contrast in how loud those sounds are, compared to the sounds nearer to them. Have a discussion with your class about what sounds they heard in the various levels of awareness. At this point, you may choose to introduce students more formally to the concept of a 'soundscape,' the idea that performers can use music and sound effects in order to give the audience the sense they are in a particular setting or help enhance the mood of a piece. Although some productions use recorded sounds to help with this, let your students know that they will be creating all of their effects live – either with their mouths or with found objects.

In creating these soundscapes, encourage the students to work with their eyes closed in order to immerse themselves in the experience. It can be helpful to start by working on a volunteer basis to begin with, one student at a time adding to the soundscape. Ask them to think about the sounds that might occur in their given scenario, and create a sound that would fit the scene: a dog barking, cars honking, birds chirping, a babbling brook. They may use any means that you deem appropriate, as long as they are not using words: using their voices, their bodies,

some props or simple noisemaking tools, such as pencils or books in the room. If students need time to warm up to the exercise, you might ask each to establish a sound and then take on the role of conductor, having some sounds round throughout and others brought in and out on your cue. Following the soundscape have a discussion about what they thought were especially effective noises, keeping the conversation constructive, only focussing on what noises they found interesting and compelling and that they thought told an interesting stories.

To begin the final exercise, read the students the lines from Gogo's legend (above). Encourage them think about what sounds would occur as the legend progresses, both practical (such as fire cracking and footsteps), and more abstract (The sound of darkness, or of a star coming into being). Allow the students to make sound as they feel inspired to do so, letting them come to a natural conclusion. Encourage them to play with volume, pitch, and tempo, in order to tell a story and create context, mood and feeling.

## Create a Legend

Original exercise created by Jessi Linn Davies. Modifications made by Victoria Roberts.

Curriculum Links: The Arts 6/7/8, Drama – B1, B2, B3.2

Materials:

- Open space

*Where do you think you are? Where do you want to be?*

- The Women of the Water Pump

Through her legend, Gogo tells her grandchildren the tale of how the stars came to live in the sky, of how one girl lit up the darkness. Many cultures have such stories, giving fantastic explanations for things we experience. In small groups, have your students create their own legends. The last line of each story should be “and that is how we got…” and should describe something marvelous about the world we live in.

- In groups of 4 or 5, create a six-line legend like Gogo’s story of the stars
- Rehearse your story using tableaux, choral speaking, and/or mime techniques
- Add a soundscape to your story – drum beats or sound effects to accentuate key parts of the story, rhythms to set the pace of your story, or humming to add the desired mood to your performance

Extension Exercise:

Thomas King, a Canadian First Nations storyteller shares some important insights in his 2003 CBC Massey Lecture series, “The Truth About Stories.” In his first installment in particular, he points to the ways in which different creation stories reflect a culture’s values. While King’s discussion of complex social and environmental issues and open critique of some of the elements of Christian narratives is beyond the maturity level of most intermediate classes, there is a valuable lesson in his attention to the idea that stories reflect our culture in more subtle ways. He encourages listeners to consider, for example, the style of leadership demonstrated by the inherent hero, the role of animals and nature in the story and whether they are granted some autonomy, or even the gender of key figures. With your class, yStou may wish to discuss the values that are demonstrated by Gogo’s story, and perhaps even explore those represented in their own legends. What kind of a world do our stories promote?

## Who Do You Love? Finding Personal Inspiration

Curriculum Links: The Arts 6/7/8, Music – C2.1 & Art – D1.1; Language 6/7/8, Media Studies – 1.1, 1.2

### Materials

- Projector and internet connection or downloaded version of the video
- Chart or poster paper
- Magazines or computer/printer access
- Markers, pencil crayons, glue, etc.
- Optional: bulletin board space

Sometimes, the best sources of inspiration come from the people and passions in our own lives. In January 2017, Canadian band Marianas Trench cracked the Top 10 with their single, “Who Do You Love?” However, the song’s accompanying video was actually released last October, and the band has been using it to drive a campaign of kindness ever since. The premise of the video is that the normal budget for over the top stunts and sets is better invested in causes the band members care about; the cameras follow the artists as they give gifts and donations, share their skills, and celebrate time with family members and friends. Please note that the video does include one explicit term.

With your class, begin by watching the video. Ask students about things that they noticed or that stood out to them. Do a second viewing, asking students to look out for particular messages or information that is provided visually rather than through the subtitles. For example, who else is featured in the video besides the band? How does the video show us the relationship between those people, or help us see some of the different things the band members care about? Is donating goods or money the only way the band shows you can make an impact, or do we see evidence of alternatives?

In pairs or small groups, ask students to create a pitch for their own version of the video. What causes would they draw attention to? Who would be featured in it? Encourage them to incorporate images, rather than just writing out ideas. If they could shoot at a particular location, what would it be (and why)? Are there key ideas that they could communicate without words, like in the video? Provide students with chart or poster paper to create a board for their pitch. Throughout this process, remind them that everything we present in a piece sends a message to the audience, so there should be a specific purpose behind anything they want to feature. That does not mean it all has to be serious, of course, but there should be an intent to share some kind of information or create an emotional effect. Finish by sharing with their classmates.

### Extension:

Work as a class to create a “Who We Love” or “Who Do You Love?” class bulletin board with key images and quick facts about different causes and organizations.

## Drama in the News

Curriculum Links: The Arts 6/7/8, Drama – B1, B2, B3; Language 6/7/8, Media Studies – 1.5, 3.4, 4.1

### Materials

- Ipads, laptops or bring your own device period for web searches OR hard copies of various news stories
- Writing materials

### *People called me...The Girl on the Radio* - Binti and Ensemble

This exercise is designed to help students draw from research in order to create stories about issues that catch their attention in the news. Although the final radio play activity may be a more fictional narrative compared to what is produced in this activity, as ethical storytellers, it is important that students explore different perspectives on issues.

Either as homework, or at the start of the period, have students explore some online news media to find information about a news issue that concerns them – it can be global, national, or local. Try to encourage them to find a mixture of video and text resources, aiming for about 3 total. Then split students into small groups of about 4 and ask them to provide a brief summary of the event they focused on to their groupmates. Alternately, you might provide students with a variety of information sources on some topics that you have already seen are important to them and give them time to review before splitting into groups.

Ask each group to select one issue to present through a short performance, continuing to practice building strong story structure and basic performance skills. Before encouraging groups to get up on their feet, you may provide a little time to review the relevant news articles in more depth, since initially each group member only provided a summary. If appropriate, you might give a little extra research time so the whole group can deepen their understanding of that event. Some of the dialogue for their piece can be made up, but as an extra challenge, you might encourage students to use some of the language directly from the news, particularly if they are able to find coverage with interviews. If you are moving on to the radio play, you might also encourage students to create a formal script but let them know that it's okay to read off of it when they perform so that can both create their pieces and share with the class on the same day.

### Reflection Questions

- What were some of the challenges in being truthful to real events, rather than being able to create things entirely out of your imagination?
- Were there biases evident in the different news representations? How did that influence your creative process or the final piece?
- How did you feel telling the story of a real person you don't know? Saying their words?