



LOCOMOTION

TEACHER GUIDE

Kupferberg Center Performances @ Queens College

The Teacher Guide is a convenient source of background information, mini-lessons, and pre- and post-concert activities that coordinate with the performance and Student Guide to encourage learning across the curriculum. Most activities can be easily adapted to suit different age groups. This Guide supports the "Blueprint for Teaching & Learning in the Arts," and includes City and State Learning Standards. Click on the URL's to link directly to suggested websites. Feel free to reproduce these materials, as well as Student Activity Pages that may be posted on this website.

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Please send documentation (photographs, compositions, etc.) of class activities based on this guide so we can share your successes with other schools attending Revelations performances. Thanks!

ABOUT THE COMPANY

For the past 20 years, Kennedy Center Theater for Young Audiences on Tour has been a leader in bringing imaginative and original works to communities around the nation as well as in parts of Canada, reaching more than 2 million children, teachers, and parents. Many of the students who see these productions may never have the chance to visit the nation's performing arts center, but can still experience the professionalism and talent that has become the trademark of Kennedy Center Theater for Young Audiences. To learn more, visit <http://www.kennedy-center.org/kctyaontour>.

ABOUT JACQUELINE WOODSON

Jacqueline Woodson, who has written over 20 books for children and young adults, is a three-time Newbery Honor winner, a two-time National Book Award finalist, winner of a Coretta Scott King Award and three Coretta Scott King Honors, and recipient of the Margaret A. Edward Award for her contributions to young adult literature. Her novels celebrate people's differences, as the author has said, "who exist on the margins -- racial and sexual minorities, vulnerable young girls, the poor." Ms. Woodson grew up in Greenville, South Carolina and Brooklyn, New York (where she still lives). After graduating college with a BA in English, she became a drama therapist for homeless children and runaways in New York City, before deciding to become a full time writer. Her adaptation of her novel, "Locomotion," for the Kennedy Center Theater for Young Audiences is her first play. Visit her website,

A Note from the Playwright

A story begins in so many places—in the writer's head, their heart, their childhood. The story of Lonnie Collins Motion began for me in the fifth grade—the first year I knew I was going to be a writer. Yes, for many years before then, I dreamed of being a writer, talked about it constantly to whoever listened. But I didn't know. And knowing and dreaming are very different.

In fifth grade, poetry brought me from dreaming to knowing. That was the year I began to understand that poems told stories. That if one read a poem closely enough, slowly enough, the stories would begin to unfold. I know I wanted to tell stories the way the poets did. I knew I wanted the stories to have meaning, to be about real things, real places, real people—that I imagined. Years later, I would come to know the *real...imagined* was called Realistic Fiction. What was it about fifth grade that made the dream of being a writer more real to me? I guess now, all of these years later, I will call it “An Unbelieving.” Up until fifth grade, I read slowly. I talked a lot in school. I was terrible at math. I didn’t even know that people of color *wrote books*. So even as I imagined myself becoming a writer someday, a part of me didn’t believe it could really happen. Not for *me*.

But the world slowly presented deeper truths: I read slowly because I was a writer—studying the ways other authors told stories so that I could learn from them. I talked a lot because I had so many stories to tell. And math? Who knows? I still don’t get it. And here is where Locomotion arrives—because this story was always coming, was always being told—in bits and pieces, the story of a boy who is learning to love himself, his life, his world—through poetry. Who, like a locomotive, is moving forward, no matter what. A boy who is learning to tell his story just as I learned to tell mine. Where did Lonnie Collins Motion come from? He came from the pages of my own story. We’re different in so many ways—Lonnie is in foster care, I grew up with my mom and grandma and a village of aunts and uncles looking out for me. Lonnie has only one sister; I have a sister and two brothers. Lonnie is in sixth grade, I was in fifth. But like Lonnie, I too learned to love poetry, to tell my stories. Like Lonnie, I too take in every detail of the world, watching it carefully, and writing down what I think, see, feel. Like Lonnie, I too grew up in Brooklyn, New York. And like Lonnie—I too hate pigeons and love basketball.

I know now, many years and many stories later, that the characters we as writers create have a lot of us inside of them. But once you meet Lonnie, I think that you’ll agree—there is a little bit of Lonnie...in all of us.

CURRICULUM FOCUS: Language Arts, Literature, Visual Arts, Social Studies, Theater

Coordinates with Student Guide: “About The Performance”

Blueprint for the Arts: Theater

New York State Arts Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4

New York State English Language Arts Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4

New York City English Language Standards: 4a

Class Discussion: Theater Manners

Attending a live theatrical performance is a very different experience from watching a movie or television. It is also different from attending a live sports event. Before attending the performance of “Locomotion” at Colden Auditorium, prepare your young students for watching a live performance and about expected behavior in a theater. Remind them that audiences play a key part in the overall live theatrical experience. Each person affects those around them as well as the actors on the stage that can hear whispers and noise coming from the audience.

Have students compile two lists: “What To Do” and “What Not To Do.” Some examples: Good audiences watch closely and listen attentively to what is happening on stage [if you miss something happening on stage, you can’t push a “rewind” button!], and respond appropriately to what they see and hear. It’s okay to laugh if there is something funny going on, and to clap or applaud at the end of the performance if you liked the show. It is not acceptable to talk during performances, fidget in one’s seat, eat or drink, fall asleep, text messages or use electronic devices, or talk back to the actors on stage. Ask student if they can think of other behavior that is proper or improper in a theater. Compare and contrast theater etiquette with acceptable behavior at a sports event and movie theater.

Mini Lesson: Theater Conventions

If your students have never before attended a live theatrical performance, discuss some of the “theatrical conventions” they will encounter at Colden Auditorium. Watching a play is entering an imaginary world where the audience has agreed to “suspend disbelief” or pretend that the characters on stage are real. These characters might start singing or dancing in the middle of a conversation. They may sometimes speak directly to the audience or an actor may play more than one part (both of these happen in “Locomotion.”)

To designate the start of the show and sometimes scene changes, the auditorium may suddenly be darkened, with all stage lights turned off. Children should understand that this is a signal that the show is about to begin, or that there will be a change in scenery, or a passage of time in the production. It is NOT a signal to scream out loud!

Sharing: Have any students have ever performed on a stage? If so, would they share that experience with the class? Did they act? sing? dance? What did it feel like? How did they prepare for the performance?

Vocabulary: Elements of Theater

Before attending the performance review theater vocabulary with students.

Act (noun): The main division of a play. Acts may be further divided into Scenes.

Act (verb): To perform.

Actor: A person who interprets a role and performs it in a play; a theatrical performer.

Adaptation: practice of rewriting a play to fit it for conditions of performance different from those for which it was originally composed

Applause: the appreciation spectator’s show for performers by clapping their hands; a way of saying ‘thank you’ to the actors.

Audience: The group of people watching a play. The audience (and sometimes the entire theater) is also often referred to as the house.

“Break a leg”: Actors are superstitious about wishing each other “good luck” before a performance, so instead they wish each other to “Break a leg.”

Cast (noun): A group of actors in a play.

Cast (verb): To assign actors to character parts in a play.

Costumes/Wardrobe: Clothes worn by performers on stage. The clothes often give information about the character.

Costume Designer: The person who devises a visual concept for a production through the creation and the use of clothing worn by actors.

Cue: Any prearranged signal, such as the last words in a speech or an action, that indicates to the performers that it is time to proceed to the next line or action.

Curtain call: The moment at the end of the play when the performers come back on stage to bow and to thank the audience for their applause.

Dialogue or Dialog: A conversation in a play between two or more characters.

Director: The person who conceives of an overall concept for a production, supervises all its elements, and guides the actors in their performance.

Downstage: Area of the stage closest to the audience; the back of the stage [away from the audience] is referred to as Upstage.

Playwright: A person who writes a play.

Plot: Story line of a play developed through an unfolding of a series of events.

Props or Properties: Items [except costumes, scenery, furniture] used on stage to create a sense of place.

Rehearsal: A period of time during which the performance experiment and develop their characters, learn their lines, and learn where to stand and walk, etc (staging). A **Dress Rehearsal** is the final full run-through of a play in costume, to practice the show for opening night.

Scene: A division of a play, usually part of an Act, in which the action is continuous.

Scenery: Painted canvas mounted on wood frames, cloth drops, cutouts, etc. used on stage to represent a place or environment where the action happens.

Script: Written text detailing what happens on stage, including what is to be said during a play or performance.

Set: Arrangement of scenery and props on a stage; they can be painted, three-dimensional, realistic, or symbolic.

Set Designer: The person who imagines and creates the scenery and decides how the set and props should be arranged.

Stage left: Left side of the stage from the performer's point of view.

Stage right: Right side of the stage from performer's point of view.

Understudy: someone who learns another actor's part in order to be his or her substitute in an emergency.

Usher: the person who guides audience members to their seats.

Wings: The areas offstage, right and left, from and to which performers make exits and entrances; performers wait "in the wings" for their entrance cues. The wings are part of the theater's Back-stage area, the sections of the theater that are out of sight of the audience.

Lesson: Careers in the Theater

New York State Standard for Career Development & Occupational Studies: I

Putting on a musical or dramatic play is a collaborative effort involving many individuals. Discuss all the jobs required to create a theatrical production, from those who work back-stage or "behind the scenes," to the actors, to the "front of house" staff. What do these people do? What training do they need? Here's a list of some of the people who may have been involved in presenting "Locomotion."

Playwright	Composer	Lyricist	Director
Musical Director/Conductor	Musicians/Orchestra	Choreographer	Set Designer
Costume Designer	Properties Designer	Lighting Designer	Hair/Make-up Designer
Actors	Dancers	Stage Manager	Theater Manager
Box Office Manager	Ushers/Ticket Takers	Stage Hands	Electricians

Discussion: The Kennedy Center Theater for Young Audiences is a touring company. Discuss the problems of “taking a show on the road.” Are there positive aspects for the performers?

Mini Lesson: Plays can be performed in many types of places. Have the class collect pictures of varied theatrical presentations. These can be from different cultures as well as from different historical periods. Research and discuss kinds of stages—proscenium (like Colden Auditorium), thrust stages, theater in the round, etc., and the different areas of the stage. Have the students draw different types of stages, labeling the parts of the theater, such as the wings, the curtain, auditorium, etc. or have them build a 3-dimensional theater set in a shoebox.

CURRICULUM FOCUS: Language Arts, Theater Arts, Visual Arts, Relationships

Coordinates with Student Guide: “Theatrical Tricks”

Blueprint for the Arts: Theater

New York State Arts Standards: 1, 2, 3

New York State English Language Arts Standards: 1, 2, 3

New York City English Language Standards: 2b, 3c, 4a, 5a, 5b

Discussion: Pre-Performance Prompts

Elements in this production may differ from other plays students have seen. Prime students by asking them look closely as to how the story is told in “Locomotion.” Tell them to observe the production elements—the costumes, sound cues, lighting and set—and how they help shift the storyline from one location to another and shifts in time back and forth. Other things to pay attention to: how the characters are introduced and how they reveal themselves. What scenes are in dialogue and which are monologue or direct address to the audience? How does the play unfold? Be aware of how the layers of the story peel away over time. The cast of “Locomotion” is small – there are only three actors. How do they manage to embody all the characters?

Lesson: Before the Play/ Discuss the elements that make up a play, such as plot, themes, characters, language, visuals (scenery, costumes, props), staging, etc. After the Play/ Discuss how these elements were used in “Locomotion.” What do the students remember about the performance—such as how the actors were dressed, what specific actions the characters took, what was the scenery like? Younger students can make a vocabulary list of the words they would use to describe these things.

Discussion: Post-Performance Review/ After seeing the show, discuss the story with the class. Ask them to share their thoughts about the production. Here are some questions to pose:

- Who were the main characters in the play?
- What problems did they have? How did they go about solving these problems?
- Would you solve these problems in the same way?
- What were some of the themes of the play?
- Were the characters and situations believable?
- Was the sequence of events interesting? Surprising? Why?

- What parts did they like the best? Least? Why?
- Were there scenes or events that they did not understand?
- Did they think the play's ending was appropriate?
- If they were the director of the play was there anything they would change?
- How did the audience react to the play?

Alternative Activity: Write a review

Let students respond to the above questions by writing assignment a review of the play, backing up their opinions. Encourage students to illustrate their reviews with a drawing, painting or diorama of their favorite scene from the play. Have students read their reviews to the class and show their artwork. Use the reviews and artwork for a bulletin board display. Send some to Kupferberg Center Performances for inclusion on the Revelations website.

Activity: Review with class how to write a letter. Then have them write a fan letter to their favorite character/actor in the play. Tell them what part of the play you liked best. Read the letters aloud.

Discussion: What other popular novels do students think would make an interesting play adaptation?

Activity/Discussion: Have class read the novel "Locomotion." (For extra credit, read its sequel, "Peace, Locomotion.") Were the novel and play the same? Different? Discuss the problems the author might have had in adapting a novel made up entirely of poems into a stage play that uses dialogue. What creative choices did she have to make?

Activity: Create a newspaper ad about the play

Compile a list of adjectives and verbs (with their definitions) that might be used in such an ad. Discuss the differences between a critic's review/opinion about a play and an advertisement about the same play.

Activity: Using voices on stage.

Actors practice to learn how to project their voices and to develop "stage voices." Two games/exercises will give students an idea of how actors develop their "stage voices."

- Give each student a short phrase to memorize, i.e. "Please come here," "Let's go for a walk," "Close the window." Then have students say their lines in three or four different tones of voice to convey different meanings.
- Actors must have good diction and practice speaking clearly. Students can practice their diction with tongue twisters. Try saying them faster and faster. Some examples: "Momma made me mash up my M & M's;" "What noise annoys an oyster? A noisy noise annoys an oyster;" "Baby buggy rubber bumpers;" "Which wrist watches are Swiss wrist watches?" "Freshly fried flying fish;" "Greek grapes."

CURRICULUM FOCUS: Diversity, Interpersonal Relationships, Contemporary Issues, Language Arts, Literature

Coordinates with "Families"

New York State Standards for English Language Arts: 2, 4

New York State Standards for Social Studies: 1, 5

Discussion: “Locomotion” deals with some serious themes and subjects. Open up an age-appropriate discussion of such topics as:

- What is a family?
- Losing a parent or what happens when the people in your life are not there or are in danger of being lost to you;
- How to cope with hardship and separation when you are young;
- Bullying;
- Adapting to different kinds of family structures;
- The power of personal expression.

NB: Younger students might need some explanation of vocabulary such as “traditional family,” sickle-cell anemia,” and “foster care,” which are touched on in the play.

Discussion: In “Locomotion,” Lonnie is 11 years old. Have students discuss what they think Lonnie’s life will be like in 5 years when he’s 16 and in 10 years when he’ll be 21. Will he still be writing poetry? Will he keep in touch with Ms. Marcus? Will he be living with his younger sister?

Activity: Coordinate with Student Guide: “A Poem About “Me”

This activity asks students to define themselves as they were, are and wish to be. The three parts of the poem can be fused together as one, perhaps moving chronologically, or in mixed-up order.

CURRICULUM FOCUS: Language Arts

Coordinates with “Poetry: Rules or No Rules”

Blueprint for the Arts: Visual Arts

New York State Standards for English Language Arts: 1, 2, 3, 4

New York City English Language Standards: 2c, 3c, 4a, 5a, 5b

Lesson/Activity: Research different poetic forms

Students should compile a descriptive list and examples of each type of poetry described in the Student Guide. Add other forms of poetry they may have studied.

Discussion/Activity: Ways To Make Your Poem Extraordinary

Poets have a number of ways to make ordinary things appear extraordinary or new in their poetry. Discuss these poetic forms:

- **Metaphor:** comparing two things without using the words “like” or “as.” Example: It’s raining cats and dogs.
- **Simile:** comparing two things using the words “like” and “as.” Example: She’s pretty as a picture.
- **Personification:** Giving human feelings to something that is not alive. Example: The sun played hide and seek with the clouds.
- **Onomatopoeia:** a word that sounds like the word it represents. Examples: boom, bang, buzz, zoom, squish, splash, crunch.

- **Rhyme:** using words that sound alike. Example: Hickory, Dickory, Dock, / the mouse ran up the clock.”
- **Alliteration:** Using the same sound over and over again. Example: “Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary...while I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping...” Edgar Alan Poe, *The Raven*

After discussing these poetic forms, ask student to find examples in poems you provide or that they find on their own in a poetry anthology. Have students include 2-3 different poetic forms in their own poetry.

Activity: Reinventing a poem

Have students select a short poem, nursery rhyme or song lyric. Print it out and then cut the words out. Rearrange the words to make a new poem, nursery rhyme or song lyric. They may have to add some new words so it makes sense. Read results to class.

Activity: Collaborative writing

Have class collaborate on writing a poem. Chose a subject and a poetic form. Draw lots for order. First student writes first line, 2nd student writes second line, etc. Print out entire poem for the class to share.

Activity: Create a rhyming dictionary

For younger students/ make lists of rhyming words to create a rhyming dictionary. Pick a word/s. How many different rhymes can they come up with? Write a poem using rhyming words.

Activity: Make a Rhyming Flip Book

For younger students/ You will need index cards, a hole punch, crayons or colored pencils, string, ribbon, or a paper fastener, scissors.

- On the right hand side of your index cards write a common rhyming ending syllable, such as “at,” “all,” or “ing.”
- Cut several index cards in half. On each half write a letter or letters that might form a word when connected to the ending syllable, such as “c,” “b,” or “w.”
- Punch holes on the top and bottom on the left side of all the cards and secure the cards with string, ribbon or a paper fastener and flip through your book to find rhyming words. When you think of other rhyming words you can add them to more half cards.

Activity: Acrostic poems

Ask each student to write an acrostic poem based on his or her name. Subject of the poem: “Who Am I?”

Activity: Create a “collage” poem or a “concrete” poem

Cut different words from newspapers, magazines, cereal boxes, etc. in different sizes and color. Paste them in whatever order and design you like on another sheet of paper to form an abstract collage of words that may or may not resemble in shape the subject of the poem.

Activity: Poetry can be about anything

Encourage students to start a personal Poetry Journal and to write a poem a day for a week, each day on a different subject. Try to write in different poetic forms. Brainstorm with children to identify subjects for their poems: a friend, an animal or their pet, about something big, about something small, a color, the weather, your school, a favorite pastime -- the list is endless.

Activity: Make greeting cards

For a friend's or relative's next birthday, instead of buying a greeting card, write a poem about the person and print it inside of a folded piece of construction paper. Decorate the outside of the card.

Activity: Sharing memories

Coordinate with Student Guide: "The Rewind Button": "Locomotion" is a play about memories. Ask class to write a free verse poem about one of their own memories. Illustrate with a drawing. Share memories and poems with classmates.

Activity: Memorization

Poems were originally intended to be read aloud or recited from memory. Ask each student to memorize a poem of at least 8-10 lines. It can be a favorite poem, or one they have written themselves. Then have a Poetry Recital, with students reciting their chosen poem before the class. Invite other classes to attend the Recital. Follow the activity "using voices on stage" on page 8 of this guide to help students prepare for their recital.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books For Teachers

Favorite Poetry Lessons: A Poet's Great Activities for Writing Free Verse, Rhyming List Poems, Synonyms Poems, Clerihews, Wish Poems, Letter Poems, Personal Poems and More!
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Teaching Poetry: Yes You Can! By Jacqueline Sweeney, Scholastic, 1999
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Books for Students

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Locomotion, a novel by Jacqueline Woodson, Speak, an imprint of Penguin Books, 2003
Peace, Locomotion, by Jacqueline Woodson, Puffin Books, 2009
Read a Rhyme, Write a Rhyme, poems selected by Jack Prelutsky, Alfred A. Knopf, 2005

Web Sites

www.kennedy-center.org/education/pwTV, site contains webisodes of interviews with actors and technical staff of Locomotion talking about their roles in the creative process; interview with Jacqueline Woodson about creation and adaptation of her novel for the stage. Interviews with actors can also be found at <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/students/kc->

