

## *The Force of Habit* Lesson Plan for 3rd-5th Graders

24<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre, Los Angeles, California in collaboration with Classics in the Classroom

— DRAFT —

### DAY 1

#### **ACTIVITY 1: CULTURAL MAPPING GAME**

The purpose of this game is to see where the students stand with these prompts. I've mixed "male" and "female" activities and "jobs" that both suit the play and the time. It will help the discussion about the play later.

##### **"Things that you like"**

- Get 6 volunteers to come up: 3 boys, 3 girls.
- *When I say "Go," I want those of you who like/participate in martial arts, kick boxing, karate and even boxing to go to the right.*
- *Those who would rather stay home and bake cookies or help mom with dinner, or if you love making breakfast for your parents on the weekend, you will go to the left.*
- *OK, go!*
- Acknowledge boy/girl ratio (regardless of the outcome, the discussion is valid).
- *Ok, come back.*
- *Now those who love fashion, fashion design; who love to look good; who love to go shopping; who love to get the latest pair of tennis shoes or the latest styles in clothing, you will go to the right, "you little fashionistas."*
- *Those who would rather stay home and read a book or write poetry will go to the left.*
- *Ok, go!*
- Acknowledge boy/girl ratio.
- Have them sit down.

##### **"Jobs/Careers that you might want"**

- *Now in this tableau of "courage" (demonstrate) when I say "go" you will get up and freeze into this pose if you want to be a fire fighter, police officer, or a soldier.*
- *In this "nurturing" tableau (demonstrate), you will get up and freeze if you want to be a veterinarian, gardener, nanny, caretaker or nurse.*
- *OK, go!*
- Acknowledge boy/girl ratio.
- Note: Having them in a circle might help them see each other's "jobs/tableau"

#### **ACTIVITY 2: DISCUSSION**

- *Have a seat.*
- Interview boys with "female" gender interests, and vice-versa.

- *What if I said you couldn't be a nurse, Frank? Or Maria, what I said only boys can be police officers/soldiers?*

### **ACTIVITY 3: GO BACK IN TIME**

- *Well, there was a time when even just saying that out loud could get you in a lot of trouble. Patty wants to be a soldier, and female soldiers are just now going into combat. You think you'd make a good soldier? I do, too. Well kids, there was a time when your way of life was determined by your gender and your status. What's status? Today you can work hard and be just about anything you want to be. But 400 years ago that wasn't the case.*

#### **Guided Meditation to This Morning**

- *Close your eyes... You are asleep in your bed... The alarm goes off... What's today's date? Tell me Gary, what or who woke you up this morning? Clock? Mom? Charisa, what did you hear as you got ready? Mom making breakfast? What did you smell Larry? Coffee? Ok, and I assume we all either walked to school or were driven right? And here we are.*
- *Invitation: Do you all want to travel back in time with me? Well I'm ready to time travel are you? "Yes!"*

#### **Guided Meditation to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century**

- *Ok. Close your eyes. The year is 1615. It is Sunday, February 12th. It's lightly raining outside. Etc. Open your eyes. This is your neighbor down the road. What do they look like? Rich? Poor?*
- *Go through a series of paintings:*
  - [https://c2.staticflickr.com/6/5072/5900294734\\_e09854bb95\\_n.jpg](https://c2.staticflickr.com/6/5072/5900294734_e09854bb95_n.jpg)
  - [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/40/Unbekannter\\_Meister\\_18-19\\_Jh\\_Feiernde\\_Bauern.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/40/Unbekannter_Meister_18-19_Jh_Feiernde_Bauern.jpg)
  - [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/3/39/Felipe-III-de-Espana\\_A-Vidal.jpg/800px-Felipe-III-de-Espana\\_A-Vidal.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/3/39/Felipe-III-de-Espana_A-Vidal.jpg/800px-Felipe-III-de-Espana_A-Vidal.jpg)
  - [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/59/Margaret\\_of\\_austria\\_1609.jpg/800px-Margaret\\_of\\_austria\\_1609.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/59/Margaret_of_austria_1609.jpg/800px-Margaret_of_austria_1609.jpg)
- *What do we think people did for fun? Go to the theatre! And it just so happens that today a mighty play is opening by — Oh wow, he's here!*
- *Choose one of the kids to be Guillén, the playwright.*
- *Interview the playwright: Ask the kids what they think his play is about. Guide the answers. Have him sit with the plume and watch his play unfold.*

### **ACTIVITY 4: INTRODUCE THE TEXT THROUGH SCENES**

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Scene: Felix/Costanza**

FÉLIX: What novelties are these? What changes?

COSTANZA: I notified my husband to come take possession, and I await him now.

**“Activity:” Pedro/Hipolita**

They lift their swords in fierce battle and FREEZE.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Scene: Pedro/Costanza/Hipólita**

COSTANZA: Who is this?

PEDRO: A chip off the old block

COSTANZA: And why are you dressed like this?

PEDRO: As soon as she was weaned,  
I changed her name,  
and, thinking like a man,  
she dressed as one, too.

COSTANZA: May God watch over her a thousand years.

HIPÓLITA: To serve you with them.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Scene: Pedro/Costanza/Félix**

PEDRO: My don Félix? In such a long habit? Do you want to join the church?  
(Note: Explain the difference between clothing/habit vs. behavior/habit,  
and how Don Pedro might not approve of priest-like habits because there's  
no sword or obvious courageous qualities.)

COSTANZA: No,  
it's because I never let him  
wear a sword.

FÉLIX: Let me kiss your hand, if not your feet.

PEDRO: I give you my hand and my arms!

**4<sup>th</sup> Scene: Pedro**

PEDRO: Don Félix will learn  
to conquer with courage  
this horrid habit  
that vanquishes valor.  
And put Hipólita  
in a long dress,  
and do up her hair.

- Translate scenes/portions of scenes.
- *What's the problem/conflict in this story?*
- *“Cliffhanger: We will come back next time and see what happens.*

- “Sleep” back to the future.

## **DAY 2**

### **ACTIVITY 1: RECAP LAST WEEK**

- Review the story.
- *Is it going to be easy for Hipólita and Felix to relearn their appropriate genders for the time?*
- Call back examples from Cultural Mapping game.
- *Well, let’s see what is happening in Zaragoza, Spain on February 13, 1615.*

### **ACTIVITY 2: TIME MACHINE**

- They become the machine: some kids “clump,” some “tic-toc;” others become the clocks (moving counter clockwise); two of them steer “the machine.”
- They open their eyes: *We are in the corral!*
- Explain what a *corral* is: *Theatre can be done anywhere, but here in Zaragoza it is done in a corral.*
- Call back 24th Street Theatre venue seating layout: *But the seating is “all wrong”/different in a corral. I don’t want us to get in trouble!*
- Explain where you’re supposed to sit 400 years ago because of gender: *Women to the back. This is what Guillén was commenting on—the way gender played a part in how you lived and were treated! The Force of Habit was modern for its time.*
- Discuss the power of storytelling in theatre: *People have always loved stories. What are your favorite stories?* Call back “The Lie” scene from 24th Street’s *Enter Stage Right* play, when we went back in time to the 19th century.

### **ACTIVITY 3: MONOLOGUES AND SCENES**

- Invitation: *So let’s see how this re-learning of the appropriate gender for the time is working out for Hipólita and Félix!*
- Choose a “Félix:” *But before we start, “Félix,” who do you want to dedicate this performance to today?*
- Explain *loas*: students make their own dedications.

#### **Félix’s Monologue** (Note: Teaching Artist models it first.)

“I want to be as brave as my noble ancestors, and my soul is honorable, my lord. Courage spurs me on- it strikes at my very heart, it makes my blood boil. I want to act on it, but my lack of experience trips me up.”

- Discuss. Paraphrase. And translate.

### **Hipólita's Monologue** (Note: Teaching Artist models it first.)

“Oh sword! I worship the cross of your hilt *y de tu hoja el acero*. I have no hopes of buckling you once again, *pues sería ser cruel, poco honrada y poco fiel* to take you up again after I'd placed knitting needle where you used to be. And yet, how much more honor is there in detecting an ambush in your polished steel *que el trenzado en un cristal*. Time is unjust- *Que pues tan bien me acomodo ser varón*, that just as my disposition changed my gender should have too. ¡Ay mi espada!”

- Demonstrate and discuss rhyme in a snippet of the Spanish monologue.

### **Costanza/Hipólita Scene**

COSTANZA: Sit here and get on with your embroidery. (To servant) Please bring a cushion. Sit right here.

HIPÓLITA: I will never do this properly. Wouldn't a chair be better?

COSTANZA: Pull your feet back.

HIPÓLITA: I curse whoever made me a woman.

COSTANZA: You will learn to look around more discretely.

HIPÓLITA: This is unbearable! (She spreads out her legs.)

COSTANZA: Good lord!

HIPÓLITA: Why doesn't everyone have a cushion?

COSTANZA: That is our habit.

### **ACTIVITY 4: “HAPPY ENDING?”**

- *How do we think this will end? Will it be a happy ending? What would your happy ending be?*
- Read Pedro's text at the end: “From their habits, I restored my children to their very nature— a miracle, as one habit trumps another. And so ends our play, The Force of Habit.”
- Discuss the ending and their responses to it.
- Discuss why we do theatre. Discuss the theme for the time—was it brave or not? Discuss the power of theatre and of the written word.
- *It's time to go back to the future. Everybody up! Turn slowly to your right. Slowly. Extend your arms out. Tic-toc, tic-toc... Have a seat slowly and close your eyes!*
- Take Guillén's plume and present them with it.
- *Remember this, fearless time travelers. The pen is always mightier than the sword. May the words be with you!*