

## **Embodying the Classics: *The Force of Habit***

Residency curriculum created by About...Productions in collaboration with the UCLA Center for 17th & 18th Century Studies

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**Embodying the Classics** is a curriculum designed to take high school students (grades 9-12) through the process of exploring and embodying theatrical texts from Spain's Golden Age (roughly 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries). This particular curriculum works with Guillén de Castro's *The Force of Habit* (*La fuerza de la costumbre*, c. 1610), translated by the UCLA working group, *The Comedia* in Translation and Performance, led by Professor Barbara Fuchs (2014). The translation group is part of the [\*Diversifying the Classics\*](#) initiative, the goal of which is to bring the canon of early modern Hispanic theater to theatrical circles of the United States. *Classics in the classroom* is part of this larger initiative, and is dedicated to bringing this canon into classrooms all over the United States, introducing young readers and theater practitioners to the vibrant, Spanish-language tradition of playwrights which developed on both sides of the Atlantic by playwrights such as Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca, Ruiz de Alarcón, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

***The Force of Habit* residency** will introduce students to basic theater concepts and strategies through this lively 17<sup>th</sup>-century play by using physical exercises, reading, discussion, and engagement with a team of teaching artists as well as professional actors. Students will often work collaboratively.

*The Force of Habit* is a funny, fast-moving play that tackles serious issues of gender, parenting and family dynamics. The story revolves around two siblings — a boy and a girl — who are raised separately and identify with the gender of the parent who raised them even though it is not their birth gender. This provides the residency with the opportunity to explore content that includes exercises and discussions around nature vs. nurture issues, and gender identity. The explorations are primarily built to engage students in reflecting on the characters in the play, but do include some reflection on how the play compares to current societal attitudes and student's relationship to them.

The curriculum assumes that the content is new to the students. Although we realize it is possible that this content may have been introduced earlier, the specific theatrical approach to the residency will more than likely be new. Although the curriculum provides resources that the

classroom teacher or teaching artists may want to utilize and/or explore, the school may have additional resources — faculty, counselors, library — that may enhance the residency or support the residency's students, classroom teacher and/or teaching artists. Prior to the beginning of the residency, pre-planning meetings should include discussion of all of the above so the teaching artist team can adjust any aspects of the curriculum as necessary.

Note that the school and/or classroom teacher may need or want to get **parental consent** to explore this content depending on the school's prior experience with this subject matter. Additionally, if **community agreements** regarding classroom behavior are not in place this may also be considered for the first session or a pre-residency session.

**This curriculum is written for a residency of 12 sessions** of 55-minutes each, meeting 2 to 3 days per week, for a total of 4 or 6 weeks. **Check-ins** between the lead teaching artist and the classroom teacher should occur after each session and/or each week.

**Number of student participants:**

Maximum: 30-33 Students

Minimum: 10-12 Students

**Optimum staffing options:**

1 Lead Teaching Artist (12 sessions)

3 Teaching Artists (12 sessions)

3 Actors (3 Sessions)

**Learning Outcomes; students will:**

- analyze and interpret classical texts
- develop critical thinking and reading skills
- develop ability to understand story through embodiment
- gain confidence in expressing their voice and ideas
- practice collaboration
- have a physical understanding of listening and responding
- become aware of the correlation between voice and body

**Objectives; the curriculum will provide students:**

- a playground in which they can put concepts and ideas into play/practice
- an introduction to diverse classics by exploring texts from Spain's Golden Age (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries)
- an opportunity to discuss and reflect upon subject matters that were relevant 400 years ago, and are still relevant now
- an opportunity to engage in the process of creating theatrical/physical language to tell a story
- exposure to the theatre, text and physical learning
- an introduction to theatrical tools that can be used to collaboratively solve a problem

**Goals; all activities will contribute to:**

- an ensemble to collectively/collaboratively develop embodied experience of the play
- comprehension of a play and theatrical narrative – a script and its structure, dialogue, asides, stage direction, etc.
- the use of theater tools to embody, physicalize students’ comprehension of, response to and expression of a text, etc.
- reflection on, and application to, relevant contemporary contexts and personal experiences

**Required texts and materials:**

De Castro, Guillén. *The Force of Habit*. (2015 English-language translation by UCLA’s *Comedia* Working Group; available upon request)

**Day 1**

Embodying the Classics: *The Force of Habit*  
Creating Ensemble & Act 1

**Activity 1: Who’s in the room?/Name game (5 min)**

For the first 3 lessons, warm up the students with a name game at the beginning of each class.

INSTRUCTIONS: Form a circle; with all who are able standing. With coaching, ask students to go one at a time around the circle, speak their first name loudly and clearly, while at the same time making a movement/shape/gesture that captures how that person feels today. Everyone responds by repeating each person’s name and gesture in unison.

**Activity 2: Transition exercise UPSET – Listening and Responding - 2 parts (10 min)**

BACKGROUND: When something ‘upsets’ it ‘breaks’ and it must be ‘reset.’ This simple structure gives the group the opportunity to start to learn about the group dynamic, and how this particular group of people solves problems. When the teacher calls out “UPSET,” the circle breaks and a new circle must be formed.

**Part 1**

INSTRUCTIONS: Call UPSET! Everyone changes places in the circle. Do this 3 – 5 times. Ask students what they notice when everyone changes places in the circle. Encourage students to share observations about the dynamic and or any feelings of their own. Be sure the students are clear that this is a safe space (see sample community agreements here).

Example dialogue that might take place between teacher and students:

*Teacher: So, what’s happening? What do you notice is happening when we change places, when I call UPSET?*

*Student: The circle is getting smaller!*

*Teacher: What else?*

*Student: I’m bumping into people!*

**Part 2**

INSTRUCTIONS: Check in with students briefly, which will encourage collective learning. Let the students know that everything they notice is important, that it is part of the group's research and the work the group will be building on during these 4-6 weeks together, and how essential listening and responding will be to the group's work.

Repeat UPSET exercise with a new goal. Explain to the students that this time when the teacher calls UPSET their goal is to form a new circle based on where they are 'needed' and to listen collectively, so that when they hear UPSET and the circle breaks, the question becomes "where am I needed?" Their new place in the circle will be informed by their listening and not just by simply making a random decision to change places in the circle.

### **Activity 3: Pass the Clap - Focus Technique (5 min)**

BACKGROUND: Unlike other exercises in the series, this will be repeated at the beginning of each class. Over the course of the 12 sessions, this exercise will become a kind of thermometer of each day, a focus mechanism, and it will establish a ritual that allows the teacher and the group to quickly enter the work physically and playfully.

Playing this simple game of passing the clap reveals personalities, tempos and rhythms. For example, rhythms syncing with each other, nervous laughter arising when students first make eye contact, talking when someone drops the flow or makes a 'mistake,' students wanting to strategize and direct others to do it this way or that way. Acknowledge that these are natural reactions and instruct students to continue to try it again: to Pass the Clap without talking, to breathe, to make eye contact, to "listen," and to trust. Over the course of the twelve sessions the group will notice how their listening and ability to focus has developed, and how making eye contact is no longer scary, nerve-wracking, or silly. It's a great exercise to build trust and ensemble.

INSTRUCTIONS: In a circle one person turns to the person to their left, and makes eye contact. While holding that eye contact, both clap at the same time. The clap continues to be passed around the circle. A rhythm will arise naturally.

### **Plot Summary & First Impressions – *The Force of Habit* Act 1 (20 min)**

INSTRUCTIONS: Give a brief description and demonstrate tableaux. Make three groups, all assigned Act 1. Each group will have a teaching assistant to help guide their first impressions of the play. Instruct them to work quickly, to read through the summary (see below) once, and to immediately start to interpret what they understand from Act 1. Ask the students what they feel drawn to, and what stands out clearly. Tell the students to use their answers to create five sections from the act, which can be pictures/tableaux, five short/condensed scenes, five movements, or a combination of these. Interpretations should be one to three minutes, maximum. Most importantly, refrain from judgement, encourage exploration and fun.

**Act I Summary:** *The Force of Habit* is a fast-paced play, structured around the plot lines of the siblings Hipólita and Félix as each undertakes a complete change of character based on traditional gender lines.

Act I opens with Félix’s father, Pedro, finally returning home after a long separation from his family. Félix’s mother, Costanza, explains how she and Don Pedro met, married, and had a daughter in secret—Félix’s sister, Hipólita. When Costanza’s brother and father discovered them, Pedro narrowly escaped with his life and the baby girl, leaving Costanza alone and pregnant with Félix. Following the recent death of Costanza’s father, Pedro can finally return home to them after serving as a soldier in Flanders for the past twenty years.

Pedro arrives with Hipólita, who is dressed in men’s clothing, and finds Félix dressed in less-than-masculine attire. The parents are shocked to realize that they have each raised their children in the habits and customs of the opposite gender, and decide that they must immediately rectify both son and daughter by forcing them to perform socially acceptable gender roles. Félix is hesitant and unsure of himself when told he must change his ways, while Hipólita adamantly refuses, fighting the process every step of the way. After initial and unsuccessful lessons in appropriate dress and deportment, the family is interrupted by the sound of a sword fight. Félix hides with his mother as Hipólita takes back the sword she had just been forced to give up and fights the offender, a handsome young man named Luis.

When things settle down, Luis and his sister, Leonor, explain that they ran into Pedro’s men on the street, where a misunderstanding caused them to fight. The first act closes with the parents’ hope that love will be the motivation needed to change their children. The pairings are already set in motion: Félix with Leonor, and Hipólita with Luis.

**With help from assistants to each group, help students find ways to interpret ACT 1, by instructing them to look for:**

- Relationships -- Pedro and Costanza; Félix and Hipólita; Félix and Leonor; etc.
- Action words -- “Pedro RETURNS home” or “narrowly ESCAPED”
- Emotional states of being -- Is Pedro happy, angry, or anxious to return home?
- Images -- “alone and pregnant”

### **Mini-presentations (10 min)**

All three groups show their interpretations of ACT 1

Use presentations to discuss with the students how compelling and useful it is to have three different interpretations of the same material because in theater there are many ways to interpret, or tell a story.

### **Closing (5 minutes)**

In a circle, one at a time, students say a word that captures their experience of today’s session.

## Day 2

### Embodying the Classics: *The Force of Habit* Creating Ensemble & Act 2

#### Activity 1: Pre-Evaluation (10 min)

Students fill out a written pre-evaluation.

#### Activity 2: Pass the Clap - Focus Technique - see instructions above (5 min)

#### Imaging (15 min)

BACKGROUND: In this exercise, we will borrow from Augusto Boal's Image theatre technique used to explore abstract concepts such as relationships and emotions, as well as realistic situations. This technique is described fully in his book *The Rainbow of Desire*.

INSTRUCTIONS: Demonstrate by guiding a pair and a few more students through the exercise, then ask all to participate. In pairs, students create physical images in response to a given theme, for example, bullying. Ask students to do this quickly, without pre-thought. Invite them to step into the center of the circle and remake their image. Other students can now add in their own still images. This could lead to an abstract group image or a tableau that is "dynamised" or brought alive by adding sound/words or movement.

Use words and themes from *The Force of Habit* Act 2 in these 15 minutes to create images related to the play. Students will disperse among the space in pairs, and the teacher will call out the themes/feelings/situations from the list below. Instruct the students to respond immediately with their physical image in pairs, without thinking about it, without trying to make it perfect. Ask them to simply respond with their gut feeling. Ask students to hold and freeze their image until the teacher asks the students to return to a neutral position/posture and move on to the next image.

(Teachers should feel free to adapt this list by adding to it or editing.)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● In pursuit of love</li><li>● Falling in love</li><li>● Madly in love</li><li>● At church</li><li>● Ladylike</li><li>● Very uncomfortable</li><li>● Family home</li><li>● Sword-fighting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Humiliated</li><li>● Manly behavior</li><li>● Constant fear</li><li>● Bravery</li><li>● Disastrous</li><li>● Expressing doubt</li><li>● Restoring honor</li></ul>
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#### Act 2 Plot Summary and Imaging (20 min)

As in the first lesson, make three groups. All three groups will work on Act 2. Each group will have a teaching assistant to help guide their first impressions of the play. Instruct them to work quickly, to read through the summary once and immediately start to create and interpret what

they understand from Act 2. They will already have a lot of images to use from the previous exercise. Ask the students to use and combine the images they made in the previous exercise, and to “dynamise” their images.

Give an example: Let’s say the image is of a body in love reaching for his/her loved one. When it “dynamises” it might mean the body reaching, which then walks towards the loved one and screams “don’t leave me!” When something is dynamised, an action is followed through.

**Act II Summary:** Act II introduces Otavio and Marcelo, gentlemen of good standing who will present a challenge to both Luis and Félix in their pursuits of love. These two, along with Luis, see the Moncada family leaving church and note how the siblings still seem very uncomfortable in their new roles. Still, Marcelo falls in love with Hipólita, and Otavio with Leonor.

Back at the family home, Hipólita continues to resist her training in ladylike behavior, and Félix begins his sword-fighting lessons with equally disastrous results. When Hipólita cannot resist demonstrating how to use a sword correctly, she is chastised and told to leave men’s things to men. Félix, meanwhile, is humiliated by his father for not fulfilling the expectations of a male heir. Pedro and Galván, his servant, concoct a plan to cure Félix of his constant fear. Later, while Félix anxiously stands guard in the street, his father comes out in disguise and attacks him; Félix, scared at first, finally begins to fight back as his father runs away. Leonor, awakened by all the noise, calls out to Félix and the two exchange sweet words. Félix excitedly tells his father about the fight and how Leonor saw him in his moment of bravery.

The next day, Marcelo and Otavio come to the house to court Hipólita and Leonor, and are met by Luis and Félix. Leonor comments on Hipólita’s growing interest in Luis, which Hipólita vehemently denies. The four suitors begin to fight over favors that Hipólita and Leonor drop from the balcony. Marcelo runs off with Hipólita’s cuff and is followed by Luis, while Otavio wins Leonor’s glove. Leonor expresses her disappointment in Félix’s failure to retrieve the token and breaks off their courtship, calling Félix a coward. Pedro, apprised of the situation, swears he would rather kill Félix than let his son continue to dishonor the family name. Hipólita, feeling insulted, is ready to go after her cuff herself, and when Galván refuses to give her his sword, she punches him in the nose. Luis returns with the cuff, stained with Marcelo’s blood, Hipólita thanks him profusely, and she expresses doubts about herself for the first time in the play. Félix swears he will avenge himself and restore his honor.

### **Students show their Imaging of Act 2**

#### **Reflection and Closing (5 min)**

Lead the students through the process of reflection by asking them what they noticed or learned in the process, what they noticed in themselves, what they learned about the play. To close, ask the students to say a word that captures their experience of today’s session.

### Day 3

#### Embodying the Classics: *The Force of Habit* Creating Ensemble & Act 3

#### **Activity 1: Pass the Clap - Focus Technique (5 min)**

##### **Infinite Circles (5 min)**

Divide students into three groups. Each group makes a circle, so there will be three small circles in the room. This is a simple and fun game to practice working fast and without pre-thought. The teacher calls out “CHANGE!” and then each group makes a new circle as quickly as possible: a new circle defined by them. For example, it can no longer be a circle of standing bodies. Instead, the circle changes to everyone joining hands; or a circle of their heads touching; or they all lie down in a circle with their feet touching, etc. They start in a regular circle, and every time you (the teacher) call “CHANGE!” they change quickly into a new circle.

##### **Act 3 Plot Summary and Gender Gestures (20 min)**

Keep the same three groups from the previous exercise. All three groups will work on Act 3. Each group will have a teaching assistant to help guide their process. Instruct them to work quickly, to read through the summary once and immediately start to create and interpret what they understand from Act 3. This time, however, their focus will be on ‘gender’ and their first impression of what this play is saying about gender. Every person in each group will come up with two gestures: a FEMININE gesture and a MASCULINE gesture. Their presentation must involve all gestures created by all members of each group, in any way that they want.

**Act III Summary:** In Act III the siblings’ training is put to the test. The men discuss the best way for Félix to restore his honor and decide that he must do it alone, out of sight of the local constables who might interfere. Pedro asks one of his captains to keep an eye on his son, and come to his rescue if necessary. Once again, Luis declares his love for Hipólita, and she finally admits that she loves him, too. Galván seizes an opportunity to get back at Hipólita for punching him in the nose and tells her that Luis is already married to Marcelo’s sister. Hipólita, jealous, angry, and hurt, goes off to look for Luis and avenge herself. Otavio calls at Leonor’s balcony. Disappointed that the wrong suitor has come, she decides to make Félix jealous to motivate him to fight Otavio. The two suitors argue, then go off to find a private place to settle their argument, with the Captain following closely behind. Hipólita, dressed as a man again, finds Luis and reveals herself, furiously challenging him to fight, but Luis explains that she has been tricked. Hipólita is embarrassed and tries to save face, and Luis uses this to his advantage, convincing her to meet him in a grove of trees to settle their argument. Hipólita is aware that Luis has no intention of fighting and every intention of wooing her, but follows his lead. In the meantime, the Captain has followed Félix and Otavio and hides behind a wall, the only witness to their fight. When Otavio appears injured and defeated, Félix shows mercy and lets him run away. Alerted by the noise, some bailiffs appear and try to apprehend Félix, who fights them off successfully until the Captain can jump into the fray.



Costanza wonders anxiously about her children, when Hipólita comes in clearly upset. Prompted by her mother's questioning, Hipólita describes her encounter in the field with Luis. She describes the loss of her manly bravery and strength of character due to the ambiguous fight with Luis where some kind of sexual physical encounter has occurred, and ends with a declaration of love and weakness as a womanly quality. Before Costanza can console her daughter, Leonor enters and inquires about Félix's whereabouts. Pedro, filled with worry, vows to avenge his son if he has been killed, but then the Captain walks in and describes the fight between Félix and Otavio. When Félix and Luis enter shortly after, Félix has clearly been changed by his experience. He approaches Leonor with full confidence, and Pedro declares that he has earned Leonor's hand in marriage. Costanza takes the opportunity to subtly command Luis to do the same for Hipólita, since he had already defeated her in another "challenge."

The play ends with the two siblings having conformed to the expectations of their gender, and with the promise of marriage for both. Their father is happy to declare that his children have returned to their rightful nature, seemingly unaware of the loss Hipólita has suffered, and proud of the violent actions of his son.

### **Groups present their gender gestures to entire class (10 min)**

### **Reflection and Closing (15 min)**

Lead the students through the process of reflection by asking them what they noticed or learned in the process, what they noticed in themselves, and what they learned about the play. For this session specifically reflect on the closing paragraph of the summary:

"The play ends with the two siblings having conformed to the expectations of their gender, and with the promise of marriage for both. Their father is happy to declare that his children have returned to their rightful nature, seemingly unaware of the loss Hipólita has suffered, and proud of the violent actions of his son."

To close, ask the students to say a word that captures their experience of the last three sessions or the play as a whole.

## **Day 4**

Embodying the Classics: *The Force of Habit*  
Historical Background & Act 1, Scene 2

**PowerPoint Presentation:** fashion, music, objects/props used in the play, such as the sword and other weaponry of the time **(15-20 min; PowerPoint available upon request)**

**Contextual Resource:** "The *Comedia* in Context"

<http://diversifyingtheclassics.humanities.ucla.edu/resources/>

See also the ["Introduction" for the play](#)

**Additional music resource:** <https://beta.prx.org/stories/68546> (especially 27:00-32:00)

### **The wind came and took everyone who... (10 min)**

This game is a sociometric one (the measurement of attitudes of social acceptance or rejection through expressed preferences among members of a social grouping). Through sociometric games, a group becomes more aware of shared experience and what they have in common. This is very useful when working with a new group to build and establish trust.

- Students sit in a circle, except for one person who starts in the center of the circle.
- The person in the center of the circle is standing and his/her goal is to get a chair (like in musical chairs). To do this the student will say “the wind came and took everyone who...” and will complete the prompt with something that is true to them. For example, the person in the center might say: “the wind came and took everyone who has a younger brother,” and if this is true for anyone sitting, they must get up and switch chairs.
- During the switch the person in the center tries to get a chair and someone else will end up in the center.

At the end of this game there’s a better sense of who’s in the room and the things we have in common. Because the objective of the game is to get a chair, it gets students to run, and a playful energy erupts which sets the mood for the session. This kind of activity gets them to continue to come out of their shell without them knowing it, and create a situation in which they are surprised by play.

### **Read Act 1, Scene 2: Pedro’s Arrival and Script Highlights (20 min)**

#### Activity Instructions

Divide students into four groups. Assign each group to a different corner of the classroom. Each group will need a role: Pedro, Costanza, Félix, or Hipólita. Read the scene collectively in unison, that is, each group will read their lines together. Long monologues can be shared within a group, for example, for Pedro’s opening lines, each student in the “Pedro” group reads a line. When a character only has one line, the group reads the line in unison. Because the text is dense it will take some time to get through it.

After reading through the scene, have each group mark/highlight in their scripts lines of text that they find interesting, different, beautiful, etc. Have them also mark/highlight words they don’t know or use in their everyday vocabulary. Have them highlight words or phrases/expressions that aren’t used in today’s culture. Collect their scripts and save to bring next session.

#### **Closing (5 minutes)**

Use Pass the Clap, and then ask the students to say a word that captures their experience of the session today.

**Day 5**  
Embodying the Classics: *The Force of Habit*  
Act 1, Scene 3

**Activity 1: Who's in the room?/Name game (3 min)**

**Activity 2: Pass the Clap - Focus Technique (3 min)**

**Discussion (10 min)**

Pick up where the last session left off. Lead a discussion based on the lines and words from Scene 2 that they marked on their scripts. This will include defining words they don't understand, talking about their first impression of the text, what it felt like to speak it out loud, what it made them think about, etc.

**Read Scene 3: Pedro Questions Tutor and Script Highlights (36 min)**

All students will read. Make two groups and assign a character to each group: Pedro and Tutor

This scene is only three-pages long, but the text is dense and the characters speak long discourses. Instruct students to read slowly, loudly, and clearly. If the students are reading too fast, stop them and have them slow down. The long discourses can be divided within each group (for example, if there are 15 students in a group, each student can read one line from a long discourse).

After reading through the scene, have each group mark/highlight in their scripts lines of text they find interesting, different, beautiful, etc. Have them also mark/highlight words they don't know or use in their everyday vocabulary. Have them highlight words or phrases/expressions that aren't used in today's culture.

Each group reads out loud the words and phrases that they marked in their script. Then invite students to find a line from the text that drew their attention, a line that surprised them, or a line that they don't understand. As time allows, discuss why they highlighted certain things; if there are things they have questions about/don't understand; or if the scene, characters, and/or situations remind them of anything in their own lives.

**Closing (3 minutes)**

To close, ask the students to say a word that captures their experience of today's session.

## Day 6

### Embodying the Classics: *The Force of Habit* Gestures & the Introduction of Nature vs. Nurture

#### Activity 1: Pass the Clap - Focus Technique (3 min)

#### Gesture Ballet (20-24 min)

*Gesture: an abstract and representational body movement that expresses an idea or meaning*

A gesture has a beginning, middle, and end. Instruct students to create gestures that they can repeat in exactly the same way each time. Breath should inform the rhythm and pace of the gesture. Give an example.

Students work in groups of 5. Give each group ten vocabulary words to work with from scenes 2 and 3 (see below). Each student takes two words and makes one abstract gesture with one word and one representational gesture with the second word. Then each student teaches their group their two gestures.

Naturally the gestures will be strung together. Therefore in the end, each group will have ten gestures, called a gesture ballet. Everyone in the groups will know their ten gestures. Play classical music in the background while they are working. Teaching artists move around from group to group to help guide the process and answer questions.

This is the beginning of composition – a way of creating a physical language for the play. Some of this physical language will be in the project’s culmination.

#### Vocabulary from scenes 2 & 3:

Unravel	Musket
Modestly	Fight
Piously	Risk
Tenderly	Courage
Weaned	Habit
Unencumbered	Devout
War	Chambers
Battles	Shackles
Vile	Tether
Wounds	Layman
Slaughter	Spurs
Cid	Consolation
Lance	

Each group shows their gesture ballet. Play music in the background for their presentation.

**Introduce the concept of Nature vs Nurture (25 min)**

Introduce the basic concept, by asking students what they think determines their likes, dislikes, and personality characteristics. Is it their genetic makeup or their environment? Have students write down 3 of their traits or characteristics and assign nature or nurture to each one. Share and discuss their ideas and findings.

**Closing (3 Min)**

Close with students’ reflection about today’s work, and one word that captures their experience of today’s session.

**Day 7**

Embodying the Classics: *The Force of Habit*

Looking at Self

**Activity 1: Pass the Clap - Focus Technique (3 min)**

**Writing Exercise (15 min)**

In today’s session students are guided through a writing exercise in which they answer/complete the questions/prompts given. They are not required to share their answer, nor are they required to turn this in, but they will discuss in the group why these questions are relevant in exploring the themes in the play. The prompts are meant to get students thinking about how we become the person we are. The prompts purposefully ask about voice, self, and family background. This ties in with the prevalent theme in *The Force of Habit* – nature versus nurture.

Students need paper, and pen or pencil. Teaching artist(s) dictate the following prompts and questions, allowing enough time for them to write and answer. Instruct them to write whatever comes to mind first.

**Prompts (in following order)**

<p>I hope I don't sound like:  I hope I do sound like:  The voices I most like to listen to or sound like are:  The voices that I find most annoying sound like:  People tell me my voice is/sounds like:  What I like best about my voice is:  What does your gender have to do with your voice?  What musical instrument do you sound like?</p>	<p>Where were you born?  Who is part of your immediate family?  What is your family birth order?  What languages are spoken in your home?  Any difference in accent?  Do you live in a city or rural area?</p>
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**Reflections (30 min)**

Let this sit with them for a few minutes. Then break into 3 groups and in these small groups reflect on the writing prompts and answers. Have a teaching artist be with each group to moderate discussion. **(15 min)**

In the same groups, instruct them to make a list of the themes in the play. **(15 min)**

**Closing (5 min)**

Close today's session by asking each student to share the instrument they chose to represent themselves in the prompts.

**Day 8**

Embodying the Classics: *The Force of Habit*  
Guest Professional Actors (2-3)

**Activity 1: Who's in the room?/Name game to meet guest actors (5 min)****Actors Read Act 1 (25 min)**

Actors read along with some students, and/or teaching assistants as needed.

**Tableaux Exercise (10 min)**

After the reading, students and actors divide into four groups, and each group creates FIVE tableaux that capture the conflict that all four characters—Pedro, Costanza, Hipólita and Félix—are going through in this Act. Assign a character to each group.

By now students will be used to creating on their feet quickly.

**Each group shows their FIVE Tableaux (5 min)****Definitions and Homework (10 min)**

Review the following definitions, and allow for questions before and/or after assigning the homework.

**Gender:** the state of being male, female, or non-gender binary (typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones)

**Gender Identity:** a person's perception of having a particular gender, which may or may not correspond to the gender they were assigned at birth

\*For more information on the definition of gender, and for resources about ongoing conversations, legislation, and debates on the subject, see the GLAAD Media Resource website <https://www.glaad.org/reference>, and the Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Tolerance <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2013/the-gender-spectrum>

**Homework:** Give students a writing assignment to answer the questions below in one paragraph. Due the next session.

- In this play, what does society say about gender and/or gender identity?
- In this play, what does nature say about gender and/or gender identity?

**Day 9**

Embodying the Classics: *The Force of Habit*  
Nature Versus Nurture, Act 1, Scene 4

**PROPS** needed for this session: 3 pairs of high heels and 3 sticks (to be used as swords)

**Activity 1: Pass the Clap - Focus Technique (3 minutes)**

**Discuss homework reflections on gender (15 min)**

**Read Scene 4 (10 min)**

Students will volunteer or be selected to read Scene 4 (Pages 14-22, beginning with the stage direction: *Enter Félix dressed in man’s clothing, wearing the garments incorrectly, and very bashful*; and ending with Hipólita: “He has insulted me with that name.”)

For this reading, cast 6 students in the roles of:

Pedro, the father	Tutor
Felix, the son	Hipólita, the daughter
Galván, the servant	Costanza, the mother

At this point in the program they have seen the guest actors do a reading of Act 1, therefore some students will volunteer to read.

In pages 14-22, the play clearly shows the circumstances that Félix and Hipólita are living in. This scene will then be deconstructed to physicalize the conflicts they face.

**Physicalize Action (20 min)**

Make three groups assigning a teaching assistant to each group. Give each group a pair of heels and a stick.

Each group:

1. Comes up with a physical routine where Hipólita tries to learn how to walk in heels and fails
2. Comes up with a physical routine where Félix tries to learn how to use a sword and fails
3. Come up with a physical routine that shows how Costanza and Pedro feel about their children “learning” their gender

Each group shows their routines to entire class.

**Homework: Gender Now (5 min)**

Ask students to make a letter-size paper collage using images from magazines/newspapers/ internet in response to the question below. Collages will be shared at next session.

- What shapes our ideas about gender? Family, community, country, race, religion? Media?

**Day 10**

Embodying the Classics: *The Force of Habit*  
 Gender Then and Now  
 Act 3, Scene (Pages 77 – 81)

**Activity 1: Pass the Clap - Focus Technique (2 min)**

**Collage Share (10 min)**

Display their collage homework and have brief reflection.

**Scene Reading and Gender Traits (20 min)**

Everyone receives a copy of the scene below. Ask students to work in PAIRS. Each pair reads through the scene (out loud or to themselves), and then makes a list of feminine and masculine traits as presented in this scene, for example:

• Men = Courageous	• Women = Fearful
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*Enter HIPÓLITA in a man's habit, her face covered with either a cape or a sash*

LUIS                      A fine figure! What a gentleman!

HIPÓLITA                (Aside) I am furious.

LUIS                      What are you looking for?

HIPÓLITA                I am in a rage.

LUIS                      What is it that you want?

HIPÓLITA                I want to kill you.

LUIS                      What's this I hear?  
 I might take you on myself;  
 but I suspect treason  
 in one who hides his face from me.  
 Who are you? Did Marcelo send you?

HIPÓLITA                (Aside) I am furious and afraid!



(Aloud) I am a bolt of lightning!

LUIS                    You are no less than heaven itself.

*HIPÓLITA uncovers her face*

My lady!  
But, why do you berate me  
in such a rage?

HIPÓLITA            Because you have broken faith,  
you have abused me,  
at my love's expense.  
Vile, disgusting traitor,  
bad friend,  
ungrateful lover, false gentleman!  
(Aside) I am wild  
with shame and anger.  
(Aloud) Take from my sword  
what my mouth cannot say!

LUIS                    Hold on, by God.  
What bad omen leads me on?  
I make you furious,  
who pledged myself to you?  
For me to offend you, when I adore you so?  
I, a vile traitor,  
who by my own will, my lady,  
offer my loyalty and honor to you?  
I consent to mistreatment?  
I despicable? I a false friend?  
I ungrateful, when I am gratitude itself  
in being with you?  
My lady, why do you reproach me  
and distress me so?

HIPÓLITA            You anger me all over again  
with new lies.  
You're married,  
and yet you ask me all this  
after having tricked me?  
You're upset, because I tell you what you truly are?

LUIS                    Me married?

HIPÓLITA            You, married.

LUIS                 To whom?

HIPÓLITA            To a certain Doña Ana,  
Marcelo's sister.

LUIS                 Someone has deceived you.

HIPÓLITA            Deceived me?  
Everyone wished you well yesterday.

LUIS                 Wait!

HIPÓLITA            Traitor!

LUIS                 Even if I were,  
that would not be possible.

HIPÓLITA            How is that?

LUIS                 Listen;  
Marcelo's sister is named Elvira,  
not Ana.  
You see,  
you've been tricked!

HIPÓLITA            (Aside) My haste to believe proves  
that I am a woman now.

LUIS                 And if that is not enough  
from a man who loves you,  
this comes from the heart,  
where your name is written  
and your image engraved:  
to serve you,  
I would sacrifice myself to you—  
I give you my sword and my consent.  
I would rather die at your hand  
than see you so offended.

HIPÓLITA            (Aside) Oh heavens!  
As jealousy dies away,

my love is at the ready!  
I will pretend  
I am still angry and offended,  
for now I am as embarrassed  
as I was jealous before.  
(Aloud) I am not satisfied;  
take up your sword.

LUIS (Aside) She's more embarrassed than angry now,  
I can tell.

HIPÓLITA Defend yourself!

LUIS Now your eyes shine  
like rays of the sun  
instead of lightning bolts.  
(Aside) But how can I be so distracted  
when my glory is at hand?

HIPÓLITA Defend yourself now, now!

LUIS Well, if you insist,  
since I am the one who is being challenged  
it is up to me  
to choose the place and the weapons—  
the weapons can be those we carry.

HIPÓLITA (Aside) He is clever,  
but he speaks as a lover, too...

LUIS And so I will wait for you  
behind that grove of trees.

HIPÓLITA Move along,  
and there you will see  
that I am a woman in name only.

LUIS And there you will see  
that I am man enough  
for more than a woman.  
You'll get a taste of my strength, God willing!

HIPÓLITA Keep walking,  
and we'll see there who surrenders!

LUIS (Aside) There, fortune will see my greatest desire come true.

HIPÓLITA (Aside) He is deceiving me, I can see it, yet I do not wish to see it.

LUIS (Aside) She is letting me lead her on.

HIPÓLITA It's a fine trick to let oneself be tricked!

**Scene Review (20 MIN)**

After reading the scene, come back as one group, have a few pairs share their lists, and then discuss the following:

- How does this scene deal with gender?
- How would Hipólito handle this and the following scene if it were set in contemporary time?
- How would you rewrite the ending of the play?

**Closing (3 min)**

To close, ask the students to say a word that captures their experience of today's session.

**Note to teaching artists:**

At the end of the tenth session, choose material from all the work done in class that can be compiled and worked on for a culmination of the project:

Tableaux	Gestures	Scenes	Gender physical routines	Etc.
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**Day 11 & 12**

Embodying the Classics: *The Force of Habit*  
Overview

These last two sessions are a celebration of the work done over the course of the entire residency. A celebration keeps the focus on the process and a laboratory attitude where the students continue to respond to the play. The teaching artist curates a loose structure to show the highlights of the work the students created.

**Day 11** could be a review and rehearsal.

**Day 12** could be the presentation leaving time for students to fill out a written **post-evaluation**, and then close with a group reflection of what they have taken from this residency.

**Structure example:**

**Part 1** – Ensemble movement opening using all the gesture work, possibly with live improvised music by guest musician.

**Part 2** – A narrator or group of narrators summarize the whole play, with tableaux.

**Part 3** – Work on three condensed scenes from the play: Pedro's Arrival; Hipólita and Félix learn their natural genders; and the final scene between Hipólita and Luis.



**Embodying the Classics**  
*Force of Habit* Residency  
 High School Student Pre-Program Evaluation

Evaluate how you see yourself in each of the following activities and circle the corresponding number:	<b>I rate myself</b> 1=Not True, 5=Very True
1. I enjoy reading. <b>Comments:</b>	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
2. I enjoy writing. <b>Comments:</b>	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
3. I can use the elements of theater to express myself. <b>Comments:</b>	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
4. I know how to learn new vocabulary. <b>Comments:</b>	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
5. I am confident in my schoolwork. <b>Comments:</b>	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
6. I am comfortable asking adults for help. <b>Comments:</b>	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
7. I know how to collaborate. <b>Comments:</b>	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
8. I can change my communication style to work, or collaborate, with those whose style is different from mine <b>Comments:</b>	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
9. I am comfortable speaking in groups. <b>Comments:</b>	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>

<p>10. I want to see more theater. <b>Comments:</b></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>
<p>11. I want to read more poetry. <b>Comments:</b></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>
<p>12. I feel comfortable reading a work of classical theater. <b>Comments:</b></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>
<p>13. I am interested in theater classics. <b>Comments:</b></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>
<p>14. I can receive constructive criticism. <b>Comments:</b></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>
<p>15. I can give constructive criticism. <b>Comments:</b></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>
<p>26. I always ask questions when I need clarification.  <b>Comments:</b></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>



**Embodying the Classics**  
*Force of Habit* Residency  
 High School Student Post-Program Evaluation

Evaluate how you see yourself in each of the following activities and circle the corresponding number:	<b>I rate myself</b> 1=Not True, 5=Very True
1. I enjoy reading. <b>Comments:</b>	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
2. I enjoy writing. <b>Comments:</b>	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
3. I can use the elements of theater to express myself. <b>Comments:</b>	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
4. I know how to learn new vocabulary. <b>Comments:</b>	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
5. I am confident in my schoolwork. <b>Comments:</b>	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
6. I am comfortable asking adults for help. <b>Comments:</b>	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
7. I know how to collaborate. <b>Comments:</b>	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
8. I can change my communication style to work, or collaborate, with those whose style is different from mine <b>Comments:</b>	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
9. I am comfortable speaking in groups. <b>Comments:</b>	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>



10. I want to see more theater. <b>Comments:</b>	1 2 3 4 5
11. I want to read more poetry. <b>Comments:</b>	1 2 3 4 5
12. I feel comfortable reading a work of classical theater. <b>Comments:</b>	1 2 3 4 5
13. I am interested in other theater classics. <b>Comments:</b>	1 2 3 4 5
14. I can receive constructive criticism. <b>Comments:</b>	1 2 3 4 5
15. I can give constructive criticism. <b>Comments:</b>	1 2 3 4 5
26. I always ask questions when I need clarification.  <b>Comments:</b>	1 2 3 4 5

### PART TWO – Program Evaluation

1. Please describe this program:

2. What were the best parts of the program?

3. Think about the process you went through to understand and embody the characters. What was challenging or hard?

4. How did you get through the hard parts?

5. What would you change?

6. What did you learn during our time together?

7. Describe what it was like to develop the final performance?

8. If you chose to perform, what was it like to be on stage?

9. What effect do you think your play had on the audience?

10. What feedback did your family or other audience members give you about the show?

11. What does theater mean to you?

12. Any other comments?

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree N = Not Applicable					
1.	This staff member was approachable	1	2	3	4 N
2.	This staff member made the group feel welcome	1	2	3	4 N
3.	This staff member listened to me and to other youth	1	2	3	4 N
4.	This staff member regularly asked for input from youth in the community	1	2	3	4 N
5.	This staff member was able to give clear directions	1	2	3	4 N
6.	This staff member was fair and impartial	1	2	3	4 N
7.	This staff member works well under pressure	1	2	3	4 N
<b>Please write at least one answer to the following questions:</b>					

8. Something that I liked about working with this person:

9. Something that I found challenging about working with this person: