

BRIDGEWORK

BUILDING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN STAGE AND CLASSROOM

The following assortment of discussion starters, exercises and activities offer theatre concepts aligned with state standards. By exploring drama as a mode of learning, students strengthen skills for creative problem solving, imagination and critical thinking.

AT YOUR DESK ACTIVITIES

1) **Character traits.** Create a family tree using character traits. Each family member (Austin, Lee and Mom) will have four branches. Two of those branches should list two of each character's flaws. The other two should list the positive aspects of each flaw. For example: stubborn turns into independent. By the end, each character should have two flaw branches and two positive branches, creating a family tree.

2) **Differences and Similarities.** Austin and Lee are extremely different; that's one of the reasons they fight. But they are also very similar—that's another reason they fight. Create a Venn Diagram of the two characters. On the outer circles write the things that make them different. In the inner circle, write the things that make them the same. Now, think of someone with whom you don't see eye to eye (parent, sibling, cousin, peer at school, etc.) and create your own Venn Diagram for you and that person.

3) **Text work.** Get descriptive with perspective. The Mom character is only in the play for a short time. She comes back to her house expecting one thing and finds another. Taking what we know from her dialogue below, write two inner monologues for the Mom: one inner monologue about what she expected to see when she came back and one inner monologue about what she actually sees. Make these very descriptive. Also try to include how she feels about each scenario, whether it's the expected situation or the real situation. Here is an example of some of her dialogue. What evidence can you glean from it?

Mom: What happened in here?

Mom: What're all these toasters doing here?

Mom: (*To Lee*) What happened to your shirt?

Mom: I just started missing all my plants... Oh, they're all dead aren't they.

Austin: Stay here, Mom. This is where you live.

Mom: I don't recognize it at all.

ON YOUR FEET ACTIVITIES

Transformation Circle

Everyone form a circle. First person sends a sound and a motion to the person to their right. That person sends it to the person next to them and so on. When the sound and motion makes it all the way around, the person standing to the left of the first person starts a new sound and motion. Repeat until everyone has had a turn. In *True West*, there is a theme of qualities or traits that get passed down from generation to generation, and how those legacies affect the characters. Identify how the sound and motions change with each person. Encourage the students to try to match it perfectly. We are all different; something for one person can be completely different for another person, no matter how hard they try to replicate it.

Sound Mash-Up

In *True West*, there are a lot of sounds—sounds from outside the home, inside the home, etc. As a class, create a sound design. One student begins making a sound that she/he can repeat. Another student adds. Then another student adds, and so on, until everyone has added a sound to the group. The result should be a cacophony of sound created solely by the students! If the class is too big, split them into groups with a few students per group.

Mirror Mirror

Divide into pairs. The two people in the pair will face one another. One person in each pair is going to be the leader. The leader will start a movement and their partner must mirror them. Switch leaders. Eye contact and trust are very important in this activity! What was it like to see what you were doing on another person? How did it feel looking into a "mirror" and seeing a different reflection?