

For 9-12th Grades



Live From Lincoln Center's *PIPELINE* episode features the play written by Dominique Morisseau and directed by Lileana Blain-Cruz for Lincoln Center Theater. This guide is intended to encourage personal connections, spark the social imagination, and engage your students and you in conversations that, hopefully, will extend beyond your experience of *PIPELINE*. Ms. Morisseau's groundbreaking work, produced by Lincoln Center Theater and filmed by Live from Lincoln Center, provides the opportunity to consider our roles, as students, parents, and teachers, in advocating for education that is responsive to the needs of students and authentically works toward forming a more just society. Our sense of right and wrong, self-esteem, and sense of possibility begin and sometimes, sadly, end in the classroom. What can we do as a community to promote equity, address implicit bias, move beyond assumptions, and see the whole person beyond what they appear to be? We hope that you and your students will see in Ms. Morisseau's provocative work an opportunity for dialogue and action.

In Dominique Morisseau's *PIPELINE*, Nya Joseph (Karen Pittman) is a dedicated, inner-city public high school teacher who is committed to her students' achievement, while she sends her only son, Omari (Namir Smallwood), to a private boarding school. When Omari is involved in a controversial incident which threatens him with expulsion from his school, Nya is forced to reconcile Omari's rage, her own parental decisions, and the public and private school systems, as she rallies to save her son.

"I'm thrilled to bring *PIPELINE* beyond the stage in New York City to cinemas across the country," said Morisseau. "The school-to-prison pipeline has national ramifications for students, teachers, parents, and families. I hope the story of Nya, Omari, and their struggles within a biased system inspire new audiences to push this important topic forward in their own communities."

See Page 12 for additional resources related to *PIPELINE*.

Live  
From **Lincoln  
Center**



Lincoln Center Theater's production of *PIPELINE*

By Dominique Morisseau

Directed for the stage by Lileana Blain-Cruz

**CAST**

Tasha Lawrence as *Laurie*

Morocco Omari as *Xavier*

Karen Pittman as *Nya*

Namir Smallwood as *Omari*

Jaime Lincoln Smith as *Dun*

Heather Velazquez as *Jasmine*

**CREATIVE**

Sets - Matt Saunders

Costumes - Montana Levi Blanco

Lighting - Yi Zhao

Original Music and Sound - Justin Ellington

Projections - Hannah Wasileski

Stage Manager - Charles M. Turner III

**For LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER**

Executive Producer, Andrew Carl Wilk

Directed by Habib Azar

**For BROADWAYHD**

Executive Producers, Stewart F. Lane and Bonnie Comley

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## Dominique Morisseau

Dominique Morisseau is the author of *PIPELINE* as well as *The Detroit Project* (A 3-Play Cycle) which includes the following plays: *Skeleton Crew* (Atlantic Theater Company), *Paradise Blue* (Williamstown Theatre Festival), and *Detroit '67* (Public Theater, Classical Theatre of Harlem and NBT). Additional plays include: *Sunset Baby* (LAByrinth Theater); *Blood at the Root* (National Black Theatre) and *Follow Me To Nellie's* (Premiere Stages).

She is an alumna of The Public Theater Emerging Writer's Group, Women's Project Lab, and Lark Playwrights Workshop and has developed work at Sundance Lab and Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference. Her work has been commissioned by the Hip Hop Theater Festival, Steppenwolf Theater Company, LCT3/Lincoln Center Theater, Women's Project, South Coast Rep, People's Light and Theatre, and Oregon Shakespeare Festival/Penumbra Theatre.

She currently serves as Executive Story Editor on the Showtime series "Shameless." She is the recipient of the following awards: Stavis Playwriting Award, NAACP Image Award, Spirit of Detroit Award, Weissberger Award, PoNY Fellowship, Sky-Cooper New American Play Prize, TEER Spirit Trailblazer Award, Steinberg Playwright Award, Edward M. Kennedy Prize for Drama (*Detroit '67*), and Obie Award (*Skeleton Crew*).

### Essential/Guiding Question

In *PIPELINE* (film version), how does playwright Dominique Morisseau illuminate the impact of societal expectations and implicit bias on interpersonal relations through narrative, dialogue, and action?

### Student Learning Outcomes

Through these suggested pre-viewing activities, students will be able to:

- Explore ideas related to the play, *PIPELINE*, through improvisation and playwriting.
- Reflect on the impact that assumptions and expectations can have on individuals.
- Consider and understand how words and actions driven by stereotypes and implicit bias can lead to individual harm and perpetuation of biased societal norms.

### Activities

#### Suggested Materials:

- Writing paper
- Index cards
- Writing implements
- Lesson Printable (handout, see page 9)
- Recording device (smartphone, iPad, video camera)

#### Opening Activity: (5 minutes)

**Journal Prompt:** *You have the chance to attend a school that has a good academic reputation, but the majority of the school population is different than you. Would you be willing to deal with possible cultural differences to obtain what others see as a superior education? Why or why not?*

#### Activity 1: Assumptions about Identity (10 minutes)

- Identity: Ask students to think of a way they might be described based on external factors or something that is widely known about them.
- Assumptions about Identity: Ask students to complete the following prompt:

I am \_\_\_\_\_ (identity), so people assume that I am/that I know about \_\_\_\_\_ (assumption).

Examples:

I am African-American, so people assume that I know about hip-hop.

I am Latina, so people assume that I am an immigrant.

I am a person who wears glasses, so people assume that I am smart.

- Have students share their sentences with a partner, followed by a “turn and talk” on the following questions:
  - What do you notice about these phrases?
  - What problems might arise from these types of assumptions?
  - How have you responded, or how might you respond, to someone making assumptions about you?
- Ask a few students (either in a circle or from their desks) to share what their partner said and some of their conversation.
- Using one of the examples above (or one that the students have offered), lead a discussion with students, asking the following suggested questions:
  - How might this assumption benefit or be damaging to the person?
  - What consequences or conflict might arise as a result of that assumption?

### Activity 2: Devising an Improvisation to Explore Assumptions about Identity (30 minutes)

Ask students to form groups of three. Count off to form those groups or assign. Groups of four can work, as well.

- Ask students to share their responses from Activity 1, and then select one to develop further.
- Ask students if they know the meaning of improvisation. Allow for a couple of responses, then offer:

#### Instructions for Students:

*Improvisation is a spontaneous performance without scripted preparation. Two members of your group will be creating an improvisation, and the other(s) will be writing down dialogue and actions as you devise them.*

- Tell students that they will devise an improvisation that explores how assumptions affect interactions.
- Give each pair a slip with one of the scenarios from the Improvisation Starters handout (see page 9). These slips should be pre-cut.
- Use the examples provided in the lesson plan on page 9 to model, if needed, but the student scenarios should be based on one of their own responses to the Opening Activity.
- Tell the students they will have 7 minutes to develop and practice an improvisation based on one of the Improvisation Starters, incorporating the assumption that was made as the basis for the conflict. Their improvisation should be no longer than 2 minutes and the conflict might not be resolved.
- Ask students to select two people in their group who will be actors in their improvisation. The other student(s) will be the playwright(s). Explain that it is the playwright’s job to write down key pieces of dialogue and action. What did the actors say and do in response to the prompt?
  - If there are two playwrights, ask one to be responsible for writing down actions and one to be responsible for capturing dialogue.
- Ask students to practice twice so there is time for the playwright(s) to write dialogue and actions. The improvisation does not have to be exactly the same each time. The playwright should give the actors feedback on dialogue that worked well. The group may select useful dialogue and actions to repeat when they present. Encourage students to develop and revise their scene.

- **Peer Sharing and Feedback:** Assign groups to present their scene for another group. Explain that each group will have 2 minutes to present and 2 minutes for feedback.
- **Post questions to guide feedback:**
  - o What did you notice?
  - o What actions did you see? What did the performers do?
  - o What assumptions were being made?
  - o How did these assumptions lead to conflict?
- After groups have presented and provided feedback to peers, allow time to view 2-3 scenes as a whole group, using the questions below to guide a group discussion about the scene. You do not need to ask all questions about each group. Select questions that are relevant to the presentation.

**Suggested Questions:**

- *What did you notice?*
- *What actions did you see? What did the performers do?*
- *What did you notice about the actors' body language?*
- *What did you notice about the choice of dialogue?*
- *How did the dialogue and action affect the conflict in the scene?*
- *What assumptions were being made?*
- *How did these assumptions lead to conflict?*
- *What might help to resolve or address a similar conflict in the future?*
- *Was there a moment of crisis (turning point) in the scene?*
- *How was the crisis resolved, or what would need to shift to work toward resolution?*
- *What other possible outcomes could there be in the scene based on the characters' actions?*

Improvisation Starters

Students can either choose one of the three possible Improvisation Starters (a, b, or c), or they can be assigned one to ensure even distribution. Assumptions should come from students' own work in this activity.

a) Character A is the student about whom certain assumptions are made based on their identity. Character B is a teacher who is basing their actions on those assumptions.

Example: Prompt from Activity 1 (selected by students)  
I am Latinx, so people assume I am a newly-arrived immigrant.  
Character A is a new student who is Latina, who is beginning at the school in the middle of the semester.  
Character B is a teacher, who is meeting the student for the first time.

b) Character A is the student about whom certain assumptions are made based on their identity. Character B is a friend or peer who assumes they agree or have a shared interest based on a perception of shared identity.

Example: Prompt from Activity 1 (selected by students)  
I am African-American, so people assume I know about hip-hop.  
Character A is African-American and is new to a school where they are one of few non-white students.  
Character B is an African-American student who shifts their subject matter and the way they are speaking in response to how they perceive Character A. They are not unfriendly, just inexperienced in speaking with people who are not like them.

c) Character A is a student who has gotten into trouble at school or in another setting because of their response to assumptions being made about them. Character B is a parent who has been informed of the problem and must confront their child about this issue.

Example: Prompt from Activity 1 (selected by students)  
I am a person who wears glasses, so people assume that I am smart.  
Character A wears glasses and is quiet and respectful in class. She is struggling in math, but there are other kids who seem to be receiving more help. She becomes frustrated after asking for help for days and storms out of the room. Now she must talk to a parent about the issue.  
Character B is the parent or guardian of the student who must now address why they received a call from school.

See Lesson Printable on page 9 for Improvisation Starters to print for students.



**Exit Ticket:**

An exit ticket is a question to assess learning and stimulate imagination that may be collected on a card or entered in a journal/notebook for future reference.

- *What do you think of when you hear the phrase, “implicit bias”?*
- *Based on your activities, what do you expect to see in the movie?*

**Extension Activity 1: Pass-the-Paper playwriting based on Improvisation (30 minutes)**

Students write a dialogue scene based on their improvised scene.

- Give each pair a single sheet of paper.
- Ask pairs to share in writing the scene by passing the paper and writing the dialogue for their character in the scene. This technique is like passing notes in class and should be done without much prior discussion. Ask students to read the line that precedes and respond within the context of their original improvised scenario.
- **Note:** The scene does not have to be the same as the improvised scene. Students may revise based on feedback and consider how they would like to develop the scene and resolve the conflict. This scene could be part of a larger play and might not be resolved in this moment.
- Have students rehearse their scripted scenes and present them.
- These scenes could be recorded for later viewing or modification based on the availability of technology.

**Suggested Questions:**

- *If you were to add music, what would the soundtrack of your scene sound like?*
- *If you were to add additional images or film footage, what might contribute to the audience’s ability to connect to your scene?*

**Extension Activity 2: Public Service Announcement (PSA) (15 minutes)**

Ask students to create a sign that has their statement from Activity 1 written in large letters.

Ask students to respond to the following question:

- *What would you like to say to the audience about how assumptions about your identity affect you?*

On an index card, ask students to write 4-6 sentences advising the audience of their point of view about assumptions and stereotypes.

- *What are the possible consequences of reinforcing stereotypes and making assumptions about someone because of their race, religion, ethnicity, skin color, gender, sexual orientation or other?*
- *What action would you suggest to the audience?*

This could be presented live, OR, as an additional activity, record each student and create a Public Service Announcement (PSA). Produce this with your students to the extent you are technologically comfortable. Add music, graphics, title, etc.

Find an audience for your students to share their work.

LESSON PRINTABLE FOR ACTIVITY 2

Make multiple copies as you see fit for your class, then cut each page into three strips, one scenario per section.

**A. Character A is the student about whom certain assumptions are made based on their identity.**

**Character B is a teacher who is basing their actions on those assumptions.**

**B. Character A is the student about whom certain assumptions are made based on their identity.**

**Character B is a friend or peer who assumes they agree or have a shared interest based on a perception of shared identity.**

**C. Character A is a student who has gotten into trouble at school or in another setting because of their response to assumptions being made about them.**

**Character B is a parent or guardian who has been informed of the problem and must confront their child about this issue.**

## Post-Viewing Reflection Prompts

The following questions can be used as prompts for reflection following the viewing of *PIPELINE*. They can be provided on a handout after the viewing, discussed informally on the way back to school, or addressed more formally during your next class session. Feel free to select a few questions from this extensive list.

- What was a moment in the show that stood out to you? Why did it stand out to you?
- Did you have a question before the performance began? If so, was it answered? What questions do you have now about the performance?
- How would you describe the show to someone who has not seen it?
- What are the conflicts in the play? What are the issues and assumptions that create the conflicts?
- What assumptions are made about Omari? How do those assumptions and expectations affect him?
- Which characters stood out to you? How would you describe their character traits, and how did those traits affect events in the story?
- What does the character Omari mean by the phrase “token respondent” when he says to his teacher, “Threatened to punish me in front of the class, because I don’t want to be your token respondent”?
- What other situations in Omari’s life contribute to the conflict in the play?
- Which character did you most connect with, and why? What advice would you give to that character?
- What advice would you give to Omari’s parents? To Omari?
- The character Nya breaks the fourth wall by speaking directly to the audience. What was the purpose of that choice? How does it change the relationship with the audience?
- What was it like to experience a play, originally written for the stage, as a film?
- What was the camera able to do that we cannot do when we see a play performed live? Identify one scene in which the camera played a key role in how we viewed the scene.
- What did you notice about how the film juxtaposed other footage and music with the live performance on stage? How did those additions contribute to the film?

## Theater Vocabulary

**Character:** A person in a novel, play, or movie.

**Climax:** The highest, most intense point of a story.

**Crisis:** In the structure of a play the climax, or crisis, is the decisive moment, or turning point, at which the rising action of the play is reversed to falling action. It may or may not coincide with the highest point of interest in the drama. *Definition from <https://www.britannica.com/art/climax-literature>*

**Conflict:** The essence of dramatic story telling. Conflict may manifest as external or internal. External conflict usually involves the protagonist and the antagonist. A conflict in literature is defined as any struggle between opposing forces. Usually, the main character struggles against some other force.

**Dialogue:** A written or spoken conversational exchange between two or more people, and a literary and theatrical form that depicts such an exchange. *Defintion from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialogue>*

**Exposition:** The portion of a story that provides the listener with background information such as character names, relationships, details about the setting, and prior plot events.

**Fourth Wall:** An imaginary wall that separates the audience from the action of a stage play or film, which is said to be broken when an actor talks directly to the audience or starts talking as themselves rather than as their character. *Definition from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/fourth-wall>*

**Gesture:** A movement of part of the body, especially a hand or the head, to express an idea or meaning.

**Improvisation:** A spontaneous performance or rehearsal without specific or scripted preparation. *Definition adapted from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Improvisation>*

**Inciting Incident:** The event or decision that begins a story's problem or conflict.

**Monologue:** A dramatic monologue is any speech of some duration addressed by a character to a second person. *Definition from <https://www.britannica.com/art/monologue>*

**Plot:** The main events of a story.

**Setting:** The place or surroundings in which the story takes place (in a house, on a plane, on the beach, during a war, during a school year, while working on a farm or in a factory, etc.).

**Soliloquy:** An utterance or discourse by a person who is talking to himself or herself or is disregarding or oblivious to any hearers present (often used as a device in drama to disclose a character's innermost thoughts): Hamlet's soliloquy begins with, "To be or not to be." *Definition from <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/soliloquy>*

**Story Arc:** The path along which the story develops.

**Story Structure:** The major elements of a story, including plot, characters, setting, and theme.

**Theme:** The subject in a story. A story can have several themes. For instance, one theme is the life of a young woman; simultaneously, the story also follows a second theme, which is how the young woman's father is having problems at his work. The themes may influence each other or develop independently; in this example, the second theme may be the setting for the first theme (see "setting").

## Supplemental Resources

Lincoln Center Theater Review's PIPELINE Issue: <https://www.lct.org/explore/magazine/pipeline/>

Additional resources:

- *New York Times* review of PIPELINE:  
[https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/10/theater/pipeline-review.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Ftheater&action=click&contentCollection=theater&region=stream&module=stream\\_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=4&pg-type=sectionfront](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/10/theater/pipeline-review.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Ftheater&action=click&contentCollection=theater&region=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=4&pg-type=sectionfront)
- PIPELINE author Dominique Morisseau, on seeing the whole person:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xervHKqk9FQ#action=share>
- *New York Times* article about *American Promise* documentary:  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/18/movies/american-promise-a-documentary-on-dalton-students.html>
- *American Promise* trailer:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yfA939LmPbU>



## Welcome to Lincoln Center

Since 1962, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts has served our community in three primary roles: as a presenter of high-caliber artistic programming, a national leader in arts education and community engagement, and as manager of the Lincoln Center campus, providing support and services for the Lincoln Center complex and its 11 resident organizations. In presenting more than 3,000 events, performances, tours, and educational activities each year, we focus on commissioning, curating, and producing a variety of performances by artists from around the world reflecting the rich diversity of our audiences. We are also continuously working to expand the reach of our artistic programming by offering free and low-cost performances throughout the year both on and off the Lincoln Center campus.

## About Lincoln Center Education

Success in our dynamic, changing world requires imagination and critical 21st century skills, such as problem-solving, collaboration, communication, and creativity. Studies have shown that the arts, when integrated thoughtfully, are essential in developing this vital skill set.

As a global leader in arts education and part of the world's premier performing arts center, Lincoln Center Education (LCE) works closely with schools to translate these skills from the artists' studio and the stage to the lives of students from all backgrounds.

Our approach activates the **Capacities for Imaginative Thinking** and empowers young minds to **Think Like an Artist** by placing a work of art at the center of the learning experience. Through our in-school programming, we implement our aesthetic education model by designing and delivering customized arts-based experiences for any grade level or subject area. LCE also helps invigorate teaching and learning in a range of schools and school districts by providing professional development workshops in which educators learn how to integrate aesthetic education across all subject areas.

## Lincoln Center at a Glance

- 16.3 acre complex
- 30 indoor & outdoor facilities
- 11 resident arts organizations
- 6.5 million annual visitors

## Lincoln Center Education School Programs

- Meet the Artist Series
- Focus Schools
- Arts in the Middle
- New Visions Charter High Schools Partnership
- Higher Education Partnerships
- Professional Development for Educators



## About Lincoln Center Theater

Now in its 33rd year, Lincoln Center Theater is one of New York’s favorite not-for-profit theaters, with productions at Lincoln Center’s Vivian Beaumont, Mitzi E. Newhouse, and Claire Tow Theaters, as well as other theaters on Broadway and Off-Broadway, as well as touring productions nationally and around the world, TV and film projects, and original cast recordings. Notable recent productions include the Tony award-winning productions of *Oslo*, *Rodgers & Hammerstein’s The King and I*, *The Coast of Utopia*, *Rodgers & Hammerstein’s South Pacific*, *War Horse*, *Other Desert Cities*, and *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*. LCT is currently producing the ongoing run of its award-winning production of Lerner & Loewe’s *My Fair Lady*, directed by Bartlett Sher, at the Vivian Beaumont Theater; and will be a co-producer of the Broadway production of Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a new play by Aaron Sorkin, also directed by Bartlett Sher. LCT3 is Lincoln Center Theater’s programming initiative devoted to producing the work of new artists and developing new audiences.

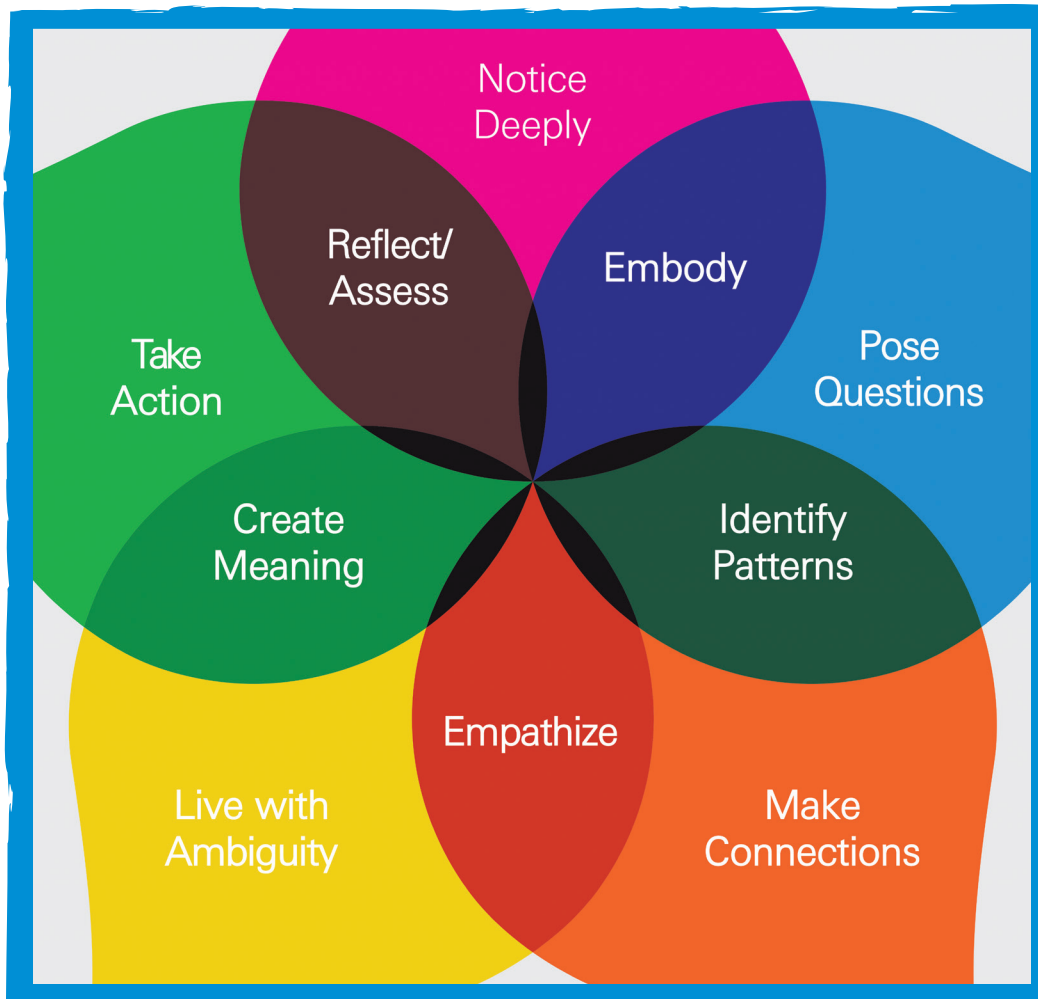
## About Live From Lincoln Center

*Live From Lincoln Center* is a cornerstone of performing arts broadcasting, presenting the world’s greatest artists and performances in music, dance, and theater from Lincoln Center’s renowned stages. Now in its 43rd season on PBS, the pioneering series—produced by Lincoln Center—has been seen by hundreds of millions of viewers since its debut and celebrated by 17 Emmy Awards and other honors for its broadcasting excellence. Additional *Live From Lincoln Center* content is accessible online at [PBS.org](http://PBS.org).

## About Broadway HD

BroadwayHD, founded in 2015 by Tony Award® winning producers Bonnie Comley and Stewart F. Lane, is the only online streaming service of its kind, offering “Broadway Your Way” through an unprecedented in-hand theatre experience that delivers premium live productions to theatre fans globally. In addition to exclusive live streamed content of the world’s best productions, BroadwayHD offers subscribers unlimited on-demand access to a library of more than 250 theatre productions from the comfort and convenience of their own homes – or wherever streaming is possible. It’s the Broadway you know and love, curated from the stage to your screen..

Our inquiry-based approach activates ten habits of mind that help lifelong learners succeed academically and perform in a dynamic world.



**NOTICE DEEPLY**

How many layers of detail can you identify if you take the time? Can you go deeper?

**EMBODY**

Use your body to explore your ideas. Try it out.

**POSE QUESTIONS**

What do you wonder?

**IDENTIFY PATTERNS**

How might different details relate? Analyze them.

**MAKE CONNECTIONS**

How is this like something else? Make personal, textual, and wider connections.

**EMPATHIZE**

Can you understand how others think and feel? What are their perspectives?

**LIVE WITH AMBIGUITY**

What if there is not just one answer? Be patient with complexity.

**CREATE MEANING**

Bring together what you've thought so far. What new interpretations can you make?

**TAKE ACTION**

What will you choose to do with your ideas? Put them into practice.

**REFLECT/ASSESS**

Look back on what you've experienced. What have you learned? What's next?