

---

**HowlRound  
Theatre Commons:  
Essays and  
Conversations  
from the  
First Ten Years  
(2011-2020)  
Lesson Plans**

---

Accessing Character:  
Igniting Creativity  
through Disability  
and Climate Justice

## Accessing Character: Igniting Creativity through Disability and Climate Justice

### Relevant Courses

Acting  
Directing  
Arts and Equity  
Disability  
Access and Inclusion

---

### Focus Questions

- ▶ What is the role of an actor in a rehearsal room?
  - ▶ How might actors enact climate justice in a rehearsal room?
  - ▶ What innovations might disability justice offer acting methods?
- 

### Pre-Reading

- ▶ *A Culture of Trust* | by Taylor Mac
  - ▶ *Our Differences are our Strengths* | by Mickey Rowe
  - ▶ *I Am the Damage We Have Done To the Earth: Intersections of the Climate Crisis and Disability* | by Hanna Cormick
- 

### Pre-Assignment

- ▶ Read the required assigned articles ahead of time and come ready to discuss.
  - ▶ This lesson requires students to be in-process of rehearsing/studying a play. Students should be familiar enough with the world of the play being rehearsed/studied to take on a character.
-

## Accessing Character: Igniting Creativity through Disability and Climate Justice

### Objectives/ Goals

- ▶ Students will participate in an acting rehearsal.
  - ▶ Students will identify their characters' relationship with land and water.
  - ▶ Students will examine the intersections of climate justice, disability justice, and character values.
- 

### Room Setup

Enough space and pathways for students to move around safely and comfortably. If your classroom allows, an open space with enough room for fluid movement is ideal. This lesson requires movement, physical touch, and a level of comfort amongst students.

---

### Materials

- ▶ Prompts and reflection questions for each activity is visually accessible for students on a slide or poster
- ▶ Poem prompt worksheet (one per student) made accessible either on paper or via a fillable worksheet on an electronic device
- ▶ Writing utensils or speech-to-text electronic devices for students

**NOTE:** Students should choose the character they will focus on for the remainder of the rehearsal. They should explore all subsequent activities and prompts “in character.”

---

# Check-in: Constellations (10 min)

---

**Accessibility Adaptation:** This activity can be adapted to utilize pointing instead of physical touch. Please discuss consent with students and make agreements about how to engage in this activity based on what the group is comfortable with. For example, the facilitator might invite students to close their eyes and do a non-verbal poll to assess if students are comfortable having their shoulder touched or would prefer pointing. **Adaptation for mobility:** Students can remain seated and signal their opinion using their head or arms to point in the direction of their response. For low vision students, be sure to verbally describe where the responses are falling (for example, “We have four people connected to Character A” or “Several characters want something from Character C.”)

Before the activity begins, invite students to name the character out loud that they are committing to for this rehearsal. Alternatively, the facilitator may invite actors to write their character names on name tags or sticky notes to help other characters remember who they are.

---

## Constellations

In this activity, explain that a series of statements will be read that will ask students to connect with a person who meets the criteria for the statement. Explain that students should go with their gut response; there is no right or wrong answer. Between prompts, students can reset by walking to a new space in the room. Multiple people can connect with the same person at a time, there is no maximum capacity. Between connections, invite students to witness other connections and reflect on their connections.

- ▶ *Connect with a character you've known for a short amount of time.*
  - ▶ *Connect with a character you've known for a while.*
  - ▶ *Connect with a character who has something you want.*
  - ▶ *Connect with a character who wants something from you.*
  - ▶ *Connect with a character who sounds, looks, or smells like home.*
- 

## Reflection

Invite students to remain in character when reflecting. Students can share their individual responses with the whole group.

- ▶ What did you notice about yourself in that activity?
  - ▶ What did you notice about your connection to the people around you?
  - ▶ What did you notice about others' connection to you?
-

---

# Engagement:

## Spectrum of Difference (15 min)

---

**Accessibility Adaptation:** The facilitator should check-in with students to see how they would like to navigate this activity, and/or if they would like someone to pair up with them to help move their body to the space. Students can remain seated and signal their opinion using their head or arms to point in the direction of their response. For low vision students, be sure to verbally describe where the responses are falling (for example, “We have 3 people that strongly agree” or “Most of the class is on the strongly disagree side.” If adapting for low vision students, the facilitator might (if possible) place their body in line with students’ responses that are being narrated, so that the position of the facilitator’s voice can be oriented in context to the spectrum through proximity of sound.

In this activity, designate a spectrum across the room. This will be the spectrum on which students can physically place themselves in response to their opinion. Explain to students that when they hear a prompt, they should place themselves along the spectrum in line with their opinion, from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” or anywhere in-between. Remind students that they are responding as their character, not as themselves.

- 
- ▶ I am someone who is considered good.
  - ▶ I am someone who cares about the planet.
  - ▶ I am someone who cares about the water; oceans, rivers, lakes, and streams.
  - ▶ I am someone who respects water; I care for the water in actionable ways.
  - ▶ I am someone who respects land; I care for land in actionable ways.
  - ▶ I am someone who has a strong relationship with non-humans.
  - ▶ I am someone who has a strong relationship with plants.
  - ▶ I understand myself as part of an ecosystem on this planet.
  - ▶ I understand myself within a hierarchy on this planet.
  - ▶ I am someone who has power over others.

### Reflection

Invite students to think about their response for a minute, group up with characters near them, and share their responses after a minute of thinking time. The facilitator should create a silent minute of thinking time between each prompt.

- ▶ What did you notice about yourself as you participated in this activity?
- ▶ What did you notice about your relationship with land in this activity?
- ▶ What did you learn about your relationship with water in this activity?
- ▶ What was challenging or easy to respond to? Why?

---

# Characterization Poem: Character Introduction (15 min)

---

Invite students to find a comfortable position in the room. Students may complete the character poem using the sentence stems provided and should also feel empowered to add or shift any of the sentence stems. Students are still writing “in character.”

- ▶ My name is ...
- ▶ I am from ...
- ▶ Home is ...
- ▶ This place looks like ...
- ▶ When I listen, I hear ...
- ▶ In the \_\_\_\_\_, I taste ...
- ▶ This reminds me ...
- ▶ People might say ...
- ▶ They should know ...
- ▶ My body feels ...
- ▶ My voice says ...
- ▶ I want ...
- ▶ I hope ...
- ▶ (insert place) knows my name.

## Closing

---

**(15 minutes)** Invite students to share their poems aloud, either with the whole group or in small groups. If students are comfortable performing in front of one another already, the facilitator might invite them to come to the front of the room to perform. Once students have performed their character, they should be invited to transition out of character.

## Reflection

---

**(15 minutes)** Invite students to transition out of character for the final reflection. Reflection questions should be accessible on a slide or poster paper. Allow students thinking time between reflection questions, time to listen deeply to one another, and the option to share their responses with the group. It is not necessary for every student to share every response aloud. However, students should be given the time to reflect internally.

1. How did it feel to embody your character today? How did it feel to consider character through the senses?
  2. How did thinking about land and water relationships activate a deeper knowing of your character?
    - ▶ What is your character’s relationship to land and water?
    - ▶ How did your understanding or experience of your character shift or transform throughout the rehearsal?
  3. What considerations will you carry forward or leave behind in your character work?
-

## **Accessing Character: Igniting Creativity through Disability and Climate Justice**

### **Curriculum Writers:**

Emi Aguilar and Meg Greene

### **Graphic Design:**

Paul Del Bosque

### **HowlRound's Intellectual Property Statement:**

All content, unless otherwise noted, is free cultural work available to you by our community of content contributors under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). If you republish one of our pieces, please include the following sentence in your publication:

“This curriculum by Emi Aguilar and Meg Greene was originally published on HowlRound Theatre Commons [hyperlink to the original article url on [howlround.com](http://howlround.com)], on [Date].”

For more progressive essays, podcasts, videos, and conversations like this, visit [www.howlround.com](http://www.howlround.com).

