

THE CHINESE LADY

By Lloyd Suh | Directed by May Adrales
February 17 - March 24, 2019 | Stiemke Studio

This Teacher's Guide is designed to be used in the classroom along with The Rep's PlayGuide for *The Chinese Lady*. These are some suggested activities for your classroom. The PlayGuide is available online at <https://www.milwaukeekeerep.com/Tickets--Events/201819-Season/The-Chinese-Lady/The-Chinese-Lady-PlayGuide/>

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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SUGGESTED TEACHING & CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. Exploring Chinese culture
2. Amusements and Exploitations in the 1800s
3. Monologues

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you connect to your own culture? How would you teach others about your cultural traditions? Which cultural traditions would you share?
2. In what ways do you see your cultural identity represented in media, literature, and popular culture? Is this representation true to who you are?
3. What examples of cultural appropriation do you see in current society or popular culture? Is cultural appropriation okay? In what circumstances?
4. Does Afong Moy have agency or not? Give examples from the play to support your viewpoint.
5. Discuss the relationship between Afong Moy and Atung. Are they friends? Master and servant? How does the relationship change during the course of the play?



Shannon Tyo in *The Chinese Lady*, Barrington Stage Company. Photo Credit: Barrington Stage Co.

EXPLORING CHINESE CULTURE

Have students read the sections in the PlayGuide that explore Chinese cultural traditions and the history of the real Afong Moy. Have students do research on elements of Chinese culture or history of their choice, whether contemporary, ancient, or from some other point in Chinese history. Allow students to find parts of the culture that they find engaging and would like to teach to their classmates. Once students have completed their research, have them share with the class using both their vocal performance skills and also some other type of artistic expression to enhance their presentation.

Some larger categories to get them started: Chinese dynasties, foodways, beauty standards, music, theatrical performance, visual art, imperialism and foreign relations, philosophy, religion, etc.

AMUSEMENTS AND EXPLOITATIONS IN THE 1800S

Read the "Exhibiting 'the Exotic' for Amusement in 1800s America" article from the PlayGuide as a class. Also have students read the following article that discusses an exhibit about human zoos: <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-16295827>. Have students discuss the practice of displaying people in this way. Was it moral? Can they think of examples in more contemporary history or pop culture that have the same exoticizing of people who are "other?"

If students have seen the film *The Greatest Showman*, bring the film into the discussion. You can also watch the film as a class if time allows. How is the display of "human oddities" romanticized in the film? Is Barnum a hero for these people, a villain, or a little bit of both? How does this film represent the true history of this type of display? Does it address the problematic ethics of exhibiting these people?

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CONNECTING WITH YOUR CULTURE

In the play, Afong Moy comes to America with a hope of creating greater understanding and friendship between Americans and Chinese people. She hopes that sharing her culture will help her audiences better understand a culture that is new to them.

Have students choose an aspect of their own cultural identities to share with the class. Each student can decide which aspect of their cultural traditions they feel most drawn to share with others. Give students time in class to do some further research on the tradition, and encourage them to discuss their performance with their family or with whomever they share the tradition.

On presentation day, have students share with the class in whatever way they feel best represents their cultural tradition: dance, sharing of food, visual art, singing a song, telling a story, bringing in a guest, etc. After all the presentations have completed, have a class discussion about what students learned about each other and what commonalities they found between the cultural backgrounds/traditions of their classmates.

MONOLOGUES

Throughout the play, both Afong Moy and Atung have numerous monologues, or solo speeches. Talk to the students about which monologues in the play really stood out for them as audience members. What do they remember about the monologues' content and delivery?

Have students try their hands at writing their own monologues. A good place to start is with a memory or story from their lives. Encourage students to think about theatricality, form, and the voice of their monologue.

Once students have written their monologues, break them into peer review and rehearsal groups. In these groups, students should share their pieces, get feedback, revise, and then rehearse their performances.

After pieces have been revised and rehearsed, students may showcase them in class, or if thinking even bigger, perhaps for the public!

WRITING FROM HISTORY

The Chinese Lady, *Hamilton*, and dozens of other plays and musicals are based on the lives of real historical figures. Playwrights who create these works combine extensive research with their own dramatic retelling of events to engage audiences.

In small groups, have students choose a historical figure, perhaps one who aligns with your curriculum, about whom they would like to see a play written. Students should do some additional research on that person's life and story. Once students have completed their research, each group will create an outline for the major plot points and characters in their play.

After completing their outline, student groups will write a short scene that would appear in their play and perform it for the class. Be sure that students include all group members in the performance in some way, so that should inform their selection of the scene they will write. Encourage students to think about theatricality in addition to the historical facts. How can they bring this person's story to the stage in a dynamic and creative way?

If you utilize any of the activities above, please share them with us at The Rep! We would love to see your students' work. Email Auburn at amatson@milwaukeeep.com with any work samples you would love for us to see.

Sketch of Afong Moy. Photo Credit: National Women's History Museum.



Contact Us:
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MILWAUKEE REP EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

The Education Department offers backstage tours, pre- and post-show workshops and classroom residencies.

For questions or to schedule a workshop, please contact:

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Standards

NCAS Anchor Standard #10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

NCAS Anchor Standard #11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

WI SEL 17 Relationship Skills: Learners will be able to accept constructive feedback.

WI SEL 18 Relationship Skills: Learners will be able to formulate group goals and work through an agreed upon plan.

