



And In This Corner: Cassius Clay Pre-Show Lesson

Lesson Outcomes

- Contextualize the world in which *And In this Corner: Cassius Clay* takes place.
- Invite students to make connections between their own lives and the themes of the play.
- Encourage empathy and understanding by having students embody the emotions of protesters in the 1960s.

Materials

- Sit-in photo
- Please note: all of these activities can be done virtually or in-person with social distancing in place.

Sit Down or Stand Up

- Ask your students to begin this game sitting down. As you read each prompt, students will stand up if it is true for them or sit down if it is not true for them. Encourage students to notice who is standing up or sitting down. This is a completely non-verbal activity.
 - Sit or Stand if . . .
 - You play a sport.
 - You like fashion
 - You love to text.
 - You have relatives that speak other languages besides English.
 - Writing is one of your favorite activities.
 - You secretly dream of auditioning for America's Got Talent or the Voice.
 - You have lost somebody that you really loved.
 - You play a musical instrument.
 - You have ever been afraid to participate in an activity because people will think you're "not cool."
 - You think your parents are too strict.
 - Your friends have ever made you do something you didn't want to do.
 - You know someone who inspires you to be a better person.
 - You have made a new friend since you started this school year.
 - You have ever been made to feel like an outsider.
 - You have ever felt ashamed for being different.
 - You plan to go to college.
 - You want to travel to a foreign country.
 - There is somebody you know that you wish you could help, but you don't know how.



- Reflection questions to ask
 - What surprised you in this activity?
 - Did one of the statements make you excited/proud to stand up or sit down?
 - Did one of the statements make you nervous to stand up or sit down?
 - Did you participate anyway? Take a moment to celebrate the courage it takes to be honest in a group of people.

Intro to Cassius Clay

- Who was Cassius Clay
 - Ask students what they know about Cassius Clay
 - Fast Facts:
 - Cassius Clay was born in 1942 in Louisville, Kentucky.
 - He was 18 when he won a gold medal at the 1960 Summer Olympics
 - He changed his name to Muhammad Ali after converting to Islam in the 1960s.
 - In addition to his incredible boxing career, he was an activist and philanthropist.
 - He passed away in 2016 and was buried in Louisville.
- Introduce Civil Rights Movement
 - Ask students what they know about the Civil Rights Movement
 - Fast facts:
 - Cassius Clay grew up under what were known as “Jim Crow Laws”. These were federal, state and local laws in the United States (1876-1965) that mandated racial segregation in all public facilities.
 - Segregation is the act of isolating a race or class from the rest of the population. Supposedly, these laws created a “separate but equal” experience for African Americans. But in reality, these laws led to facilities that were inferior to those provided for the sole use of Caucasian Americans. Some examples of these laws in Kentucky were:
 - It was unlawful for children of different races to attend the same school.
 - Intermarriage between white persons and persons of color was prohibited.
 - All public parks, recreation centers, playgrounds, etc. were segregated.
 - The Civil Rights Movement worked to dismantle segregation and discrimination during the 1950s and 1960s.
 - For more resources on the Civil Rights Movement and the Life of Cassius Clay, visit our [website!](#)



Stepping into History

- For this activity, as a class you will look at the famous photo of the Civil Rights Lunch Counter Sit-in. Use the following steps to observe what is happening in the photo and then bring the photo to life
- Look at sit-in photo and ask the following questions:
 - What is happening in this picture?
 - How are the people in this photo feeling? What in their body language tells you that?
 - The teacher will write down the emotions that are shared. They will be used later.
- Introduce oppression
 - Define Oppression: when a person or group uses their power to keep another person or group down.
 - What roles exist during a moment of oppression:
 - Perpetrator: the person using their power in a negative way
 - Target: the person who is being oppressed
 - Bystander: the person who sees an act of oppression happening and does nothing to stop it
 - Collaborator: the person who assists the perpetrator
 - Upstander: the person who sees an act of oppression happening and stands up against it.
- Ask your students to identify what roles people are stepping into in the sit-in photo.
 - Remind the students of the emotions they listed before. Ask students to freeze in a statue that embodies that emotion.
 - Give them a three count to freeze in their statue shape. Encourage strong choices and body control as they freeze.
 - Don't ask your students to hold their statue for much longer than a ten count. It's hard!
 - If time allows, do this with a few of the emotions.
 - Ask students to relax from their frozen statues. Bring back the photo of the lunch counter sit-in and ask students to individually select a person who stands out to them in this picture.
 - Prompt students to freeze in a statue of that person
 - Prompt students to freeze in a statue of what they think happened to this person the moment after this photo was taken.
 - Ask students to relax and ask the following:
 - How did it feel to embody this person or emotion?
 - What was it like thinking about the moment after this photo was taken?
- ** Look out for a moment like the lunch counter sit-in in this play, how does it make you feel? **



Questions to ask before the show:

- Questions for your students to keep in mind during the performance:
 - How have things changed since Cassius Clay's childhood? What feels the same?
 - Are there times during this story where you thought a character would make one choice, but they made another?
 - How does the way that Cassius Clay responds to situations change over the course of the play?
 - What roles do Cassius' family members step into in the play? Why do you think the playwright included so many scenes with the family throughout the play?
 - This production was filmed in 2016 at the Missouri History Museum, what is a moment that sticks out to you where technical elements (the lights, the sounds, the sets, the costumes) help enhance the storytelling?