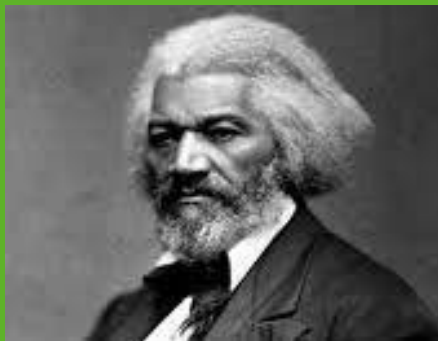


# LIFT EVERY VOICE

CLASSROOM GUIDE

Priceless

BRIGHT STAR TOURING THEATRE



Black literature and music have played a crucial role in expressing the Black experience, struggles, and triumphs.

Through powerful poems, speeches, and songs, Black voices have influenced social change and inspired generations. This study guide will help you understand and appreciate some of the most famous works in Black literature and music as brought to life in the show 'Lift Every Voice'.



## LIFT EVERY VOICE...

"Lift Every Voice and Sing" is often referred to as the Black National Anthem. Written as a poem by James Weldon Johnson in 1900 and later set to music by his brother, J. Rosamond Johnson, it has become an enduring symbol of hope, resilience, and the struggle for civil rights in the African American community.



Pictured on this page: (Top Left) Frederick Douglass, (Bottom Left) Sojourner Truth, (Center bottom) Dr. King

## I HAVE A DREAM...



The March on Washington in August of 1963 was the largest gathering for Civil Rights of its time. The 'I have a Dream' Speech that was given that day was largely improvised!

Yet, these powerful words forever changed the nation and still inspire people around the globe. What other speeches have impacted history as much as this one?

# **BLACK HISTORY TIMELINE**

## **THROUGH SONG, SPEECHES & POEMS**

Partial List.

- 1773: PHILLIS WHEATLEY BOOK OF POEMS PUBLISHED
- 'THE LIBERTY SONG' IN 1776 BECAME AN ANTHEM FOR ABOLITIONISTS
- 1831: NAT TURNERS CONFESSION
- 1852: FREDERICK DOUGLASS 'WHAT TO THE SLAVE IS THE FOURTH OF JULY'
- 1863: LINCOLN'S EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION
- 1865: 'GO DOWN MOSES'
- 1865: SOJOURNER TRUTH 'AIN'T I A WOMAN?'
- 1900: 'LIFT EVERY VOICE & SING'
- 1920'S LANGSTON HUGHES
- 1955: DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.'S 'MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT'
- 1957: DR. KING'S 'GIVE US THE BALLOT'
- 1963: MARCH ON WASHINGTON 'I HAVE A DREAM SPEECH'
- 1965: SAM COOK'S 'A CHANGE IS GONNA COME'
- 1965: DR KING'S HOW LONG, NOT LONG
- 1969: NIKKI GIOVANNI'S 'BLACK FEELING BLACK TALK'
- 1989: 'I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS' MAYA ANGELOU

## **Spotlight on: Phillis Wheatley**

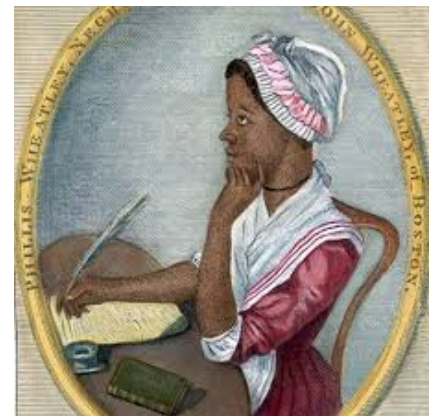
**Phillis Wheatley was born around 1753 in West Africa (likely Senegal or Gambia) and was enslaved as a young girl, likely around the age of seven or eight. She was transported to Boston, Massachusetts, on a slave ship called The Phillis and was purchased by John Wheatley, a wealthy Boston merchant, as a servant for his wife, Susanna.**

**The Wheatleys, unlike many slave-owning families, treated Phillis with kindness and recognized her intellect. They educated her alongside their children, teaching her to read and write, which was highly unusual for enslaved individuals at the time.**

### **Literary Career**

**Phillis Wheatley showed exceptional talent in literature from an early age. She began writing poetry by the age of thirteen and her first published poem, "On Messrs. Hussey and Coffin" was printed in the Newport Mercury in 1767. Her work soon gained attention in Boston's intellectual circles, and she began writing poetry on various subjects including religion, morals, and prominent figures.**

**In 1773, at the age of around 20, Phillis Wheatley published her first and only book of poetry, "Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral." This made her the first African American and one of the first women in colonial America to publish a book of poetry. The collection included elegies, religious poems, and moral reflections, showcasing her command of classical forms and themes.**



# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

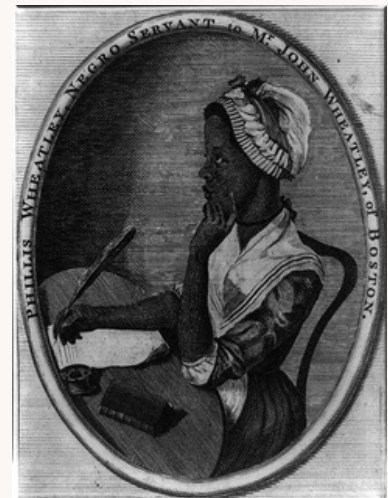
## Perform a Historical Figure

THIS ACTIVITY IS COLLABORATIVE

Separate your students into groups of 3-4 and ask them to pick (or pre-assign) a historical figure from black history. They will then spend some time researching their particular historical figure and write a small play, poem, song or short story about this person. The rule is that each person must participate in the performance with both the creation and the presentation.

After everyone has had ample time to create their presentation, have a performance day or time ready to go. Make it a real show! Ask if you can use an auditorium or create a stage-like space in your very classroom. Move desks around to feel like a real show. You could even turn the lights off and light the stage with lamps for a moody effect.

Have the students practice proper audience guidelines. Clap, laugh, stay silent - all when it is appropriate. When the groups are all done, discuss what you all learned together. Share feedback.



## The Life of a Theatre Critic

THIS IS A WRITING ACTIVITY

Ask your audience how they enjoyed the show. Have them write up a review stating specific things they remember from it. Did they learn anything new? What parts of the show really stuck with or impacted them? Encourage them be critical, honest and thoughtful.

TRY TO BE A RAINBOW IN SOMEONE'S CLOUD.

- MAYA ANGELOU

POET, SINGER, DANCER, ACTIVIST, SCHOLAR



# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Lift Every Voice

## Poetry Picnic

Collect famous poems by famous black poets, such as Langston Hughes' "Dreams" or Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise" and print them out. Have students sit around and take turns reading parts of the poems.

Discuss them as a group and encourage feelings shared.



## Speech Teach

Listen to a famous speech, such as Dr. Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream' speech. Discuss the main ideas, messages and feelings conveyed in the speech. Ask your students to reflect on why that particular speech is so important. Does it inspire you to make any positive changes in your own life? In your classroom? In your school? In your community? In the world?

## Song Spies

Pick a song from black history & listen to the song & lyrics together. Discuss the meaning, emotions, historical context and see if you can spy the real or hidden meanings in the songs. Discuss what it could all mean to different people listening.

## The Art of Art

Read a poem together. It can be any poem at all. We recommend Shel Silverstein's "I'm Being Eaten by a Boa Constrictor". Ask your students to create artwork inspired poem. They can draw scenes or images inspired by the piece or create something 3D with tape, paper, paints, markers, etc. Encourage them to use colors, shapes and other feelings expressed through art.



# LETS REVIEW

## THE PLAY

TODAY PRICELESS

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE SONG FROM THE SHOW AND WHY?

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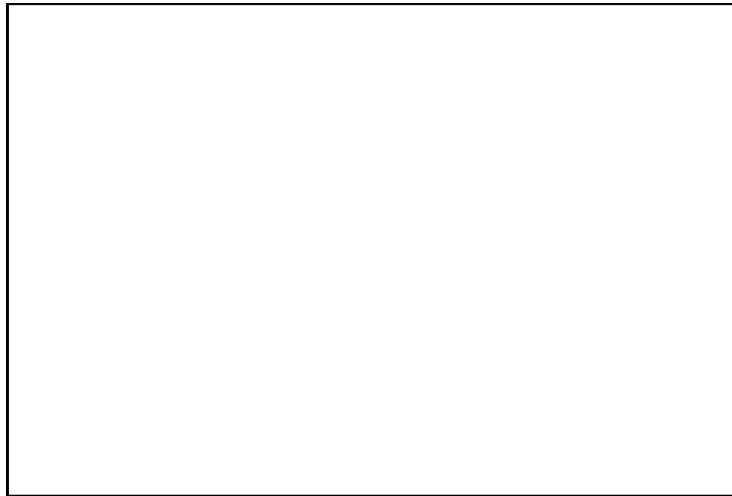
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DRAW YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTER FROM THE SHOW IN THE BOX BELOW AND WRITE ABOUT WHAT THEY DID



IF YOU COULD LIVE IN ANY TIME IN HISTORY WHERE WOULD YOU CHOOSE TO LIVE AND WHY?

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If you had to add a modern song to the show what would it be and Why?

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# Behind The Scenes of Our Theatre



We travel the country in mini vans!

## WHO ON EARTH IS BRIGHT STAR THEATRE?

Founded in 2003, Bright Star tours with a number of shows each season, from anti-bullying and STEM to Black History, and everything in between. The company strives to make professional theatre as accessible as possible with affordable pricing and quality shows.

We thank you for the opportunity to serve your young audience and hope you found the show and actors pleasant and enjoyable. We hope to make theatre a part of every young person's life!

### THEATRE DEFINITIONS

**Actors:** The people on stage that perform the play.

**Backdrop:** The background for the play.

**Props:** Anything that an actor holds while on stage--a cane, book or rubber chicken.

**Downstage:** the area closest to the audience -- a long time ago stages were built at angles.

**Upstage:** The area away from the audience-- like the back wall of a stage.

**Director:** The person who tells the actors where to go while they are on-stage and helped them create the characters they would play.

**Costumes:** The wigs, clothing and glasses that the actors wear to help flesh out their characters.

**Auditions:** How an actor gets a role is by auditioning. They may have to interview, pretend to be a character from the play, read something from it, etc.

**Set designer:** The person who decides what should be on the background and who paints or creates it.

### CONTACT US ANYTIME

Connect with us anytime! We love receiving feedback, thank you cards, pictures and whatever else from you and your students.

The best way to contact us is to send an email to [booking@brightstartheatre.com](mailto:booking@brightstartheatre.com)

Our actors average around 1,000 miles a week traveling the country to entertain young audiences.

Our company was founded in 2003 and is owned by an Emmy winning Actor.

Our programs have been seen around the country and across the world!