



# Study guide and lesson plan activities

This study guide includes information about our production along with creative activities to help you make connections in your classroom both before and after the show. We've aligned all activities to both the Common Core Standards and North Carolina Essential Standards. Look for the symbol below throughout the guide for curriculum connections.



NCES-TheatreArts.(3-5).TA.A.1: Analyze literary texts and performances. NCES-TheatreArts.(3-5).TA.A.1.1: Recall the basic parts of a story, such as characters, setting, and events.



By Dennis Foon

Based on a concept by Jane Howard Baker

Directed by Mark Sutton

## About our theatre

Founded in 1948, Children's Theatre of Charlotte has opened young minds to the wonders of live theatre for more than half a century. Today, it continues to be one of the most technically imaginative and resourceful theatres in the country. Annually, it reaches nearly 300,000 young people and their families through our Mainstage productions, Resident Touring Company and its Education Department's classes and workshops. Children's Theatre of Charlotte shares a space with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library at **ImaginOn: The Joe and Joan Martin Center**. Learn more about Children's Theatre of Charlotte at [ctcharlotte.org](http://ctcharlotte.org).

## Synopsis

**N**ick is packing his belongings so that he and his family can immigrate to America from Homeland. His most prized possession is a lunch bowl that his friends gave him as a going-away present. In the new country, things are different, and there's a new language to master. Nick doesn't understand the kids at the new school. They speak a kind of gibberish, and he often feels left out. His mother promises life will get better and that he'll learn English "in a week." A boy and girl he meets at school, Mug and Mencha, makes fun of his food and language. Mencha plays along until Mug breaks Nick's lunch bowl and calls him a *sgak*. Nick is so upset that he runs home and lies to his mother about how the bowl got broken, but his mother finds out the truth and promises to fix it. Back at school, Mencha makes an effort to help Nick feel more comfortable, as she teaches him games like *trotter glob* (basketball) and introducing him to *baykee lassees* (hot dogs). Mug's father told him not to play with Nick and, instead, makes sure Nick feels unwanted in his new school. Nick's mom doesn't have it any easier. When she goes to the grocery store she doesn't understand what people are saying to her. One day she panics, spills her groceries on the store floor and runs away. Nick's mom becomes wary of Americans and their language, even forbidding him from speaking English in their home. Nick invites Mencha home, where things are awkward with his mother, but, ultimately, they warm to each other. Meanwhile, Mug defaces their house with the word *sgak*. Nick's mother wants to intervene, but Nick decides he needs to handle the problem himself. With Mencha's help, they stand up to Mug. Mug backs down—a little. Nick knows the bullying won't stop completely, but now he has strategies and a friend to deal with it.

## THEMES EXPLORED

prejudice, bullying, cultural differences

## Discussion questions

1. What happens to Nick's family in America? Why do you think they left Homeland and came to America? Do you think they're better off in America than they were in Homeland? Why or why not?
2. As an audience member, how did you feel when the "American" children entered and you couldn't understand their words?
3. How do Mug and Mencha react differently to Nick? Why do you think they treat Nick the way they do? How does Nick change throughout the play?
4. Reflect on a time when you were witness to a situation that you felt was unjust but did not take action. Describe the situation and consider what kept you from taking action. What do you think would have needed to happen for you to act?
5. Have you ever been a "new kid" at your school? What did other students do to make you feel welcome or unwelcome? How would you describe the treatment new students receive at your school?



CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.(3-5).2: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media. NCES-HealthEd.(3-5).ICR.1 : Understand healthy and effective interpersonal communication and relationships.

## Vocabulary enrichment

**immigrant** *n.* a person who comes to a country to live there

**prejudice** *n.* unfriendly feelings directed against an individual, a group or a race

**tradition** *n.* information, beliefs or customs handed down from one generation to another

**culture** *n.* a particular form, stage or type of civilization

**custom** *n.* a specific practice of a person or group

**international** *adj.* relating to or involving two or more nations

**bully** *n.* a person who teases or threatens another person *v.* to tease or threaten

**frustrated** *adj.* feeling discouraged or defeated



CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.(3-5).4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases.

## Gibberish activity

Much of the language used in *New Kid* is gibberish. Although the language sounds foreign at first, the audience can understand the text through the actor's gestures, expressions, and tone of voice.

Examples of gibberish from the play:

lo = hello	e noma = my name is
homvorko = homework	porko = pig
gibba may = give it to me	nax vay = no way
sue-she = okay	ver shure = for sure
presi coin = quarter	kwesta = what?

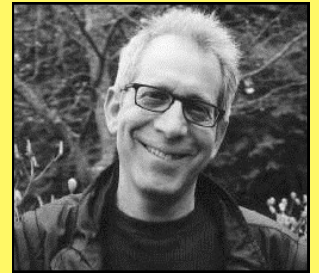
Create your own language! You can begin with some of the gibberish used in *New Kid* or you can come up with a new language of your own. Before writing a story with your new language, be sure to create a "key" like the one above, so that readers can translate the material.



CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.(3-5).4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.(3-5).5: Add details to strengthen writing.

### ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

DENNIS FOON was born in Detroit, Michigan, but has spent most of his life in Vancouver, British Columbia. He is the founding artistic director of Green Thumb Theatre and has written more than twenty award-winning plays for adults and young people. Since leaving Green Thumb Theatre in 1987, Foon has directed plays, written books, and he's written for film and television. Recently he completed another young adult novel titled *The Keepers Shadow*, the third book in The Longlight Legacy series.



### HISTORY OF THE PLAY

The official title of the play is *New Canadian Kid*. In its original version, Nick's family moves from Homeland to Canada. Because of its universal themes, the play has been performed internationally under the generic name *New Kid*.

The inspiration for the play came from a classroom teacher in Vancouver who initiated student-to-student interviews about their experiences moving to Canada. Dennis Foon joined the project and helped to shape the interviews into a play for the students to perform. It was called *Immigrant Children Speak*.

From there, Foon worked with director Jane Howard Baker to develop a script for professional actors at the Green Thumb Theatre using the convention of gibberish. Since its premiere, *New Kid* has been performed across Canada, England, Sweden, Denmark, Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and the United States.

## What role do you play?

Nick endures Mug's bullying behavior throughout most of *New Kid*. Sometimes Mencha goes along with Mug, sometimes she watches his behavior, but eventually she chooses to defend Nick. Essentially, she plays three different roles in what is called the "Triangle of Oppression." It's important to teach young people the vocabulary in order to name and identify oppressive or intolerant behavior when they witness it. These activities are based on the Teaching Tolerance: A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Find out more at [tolerance.org](http://tolerance.org).

**Perpetrator:** Someone who commits an act of oppression.

**Collaborator:** Someone who sees the act of oppression and chooses to make the situation worse. This can be something as simple as laughing at what the Perpetrator says or does.

**Target:** Someone who is oppressed by the Perpetrator.

**Bystander:** Someone who sees the act of oppression and chooses to ignore it or do nothing.

**Rescuer:** Someone who sees the act of oppression and chooses to make the situation better.

PERETRATOR (AND COLLABORATOR)



In small groups, encourage students to create a frozen image or tableau of an example of oppression they've seen at their school. Instruct students to assume the roles of Perpetrator, Target, Bystander and Collaborator. Remind them to keep it realistic and based on what they have witnessed. Share the images and discuss them.

Encourage the students to write a letter to the Bystander in their frozen image and give them three different action strategies they could use to make the situation better for the Target. Help them become a Rescuer!



CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.(3-5).3: Write narratives to develop real and imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, descriptive details, and clear event sequences. NCES-HealthEd.4.ICR.1.5: Exemplify how to seek assistance for bullying.

## What can you do about bullying?

**Give compliments.** It's so simple to say something nice to someone, and it will make that person's day.

**Hold your breath** if you have the urge to say something unkind or mean. If you don't have anything nice to say, then say nothing.

**Treat people the way you want them to treat you.**

**Stand up** for people who are victims of bullying.

**Don't give in** to something that doesn't feel right "just because everyone else is doing it."

**Make friends.** Find someone who's lonely and be nice to them today.

**Set a good example** for younger friends and siblings by being a good role model.

**Learn** about other countries, cultures and people.

**Smile** at everyone you see. They will feel better and so will you!

**There are many web sites about anti-bullying efforts and overcoming prejudice, including:**

[adl.org/prejudice/prejudice\\_school.html](http://adl.org/prejudice/prejudice_school.html)

### IMMIGRATION IN THE COMMUNITY

Early in the 19th century, people built railroads throughout North Carolina. Asheville, a crossroads for agriculture, emerged as a magnet for tourists seeking the healing climate, loggers looking to harvest timber and miners interested in the large deposits of minerals. We have a long history of immigration in our state. Explore immigration in your community through the following activities.

- Investigate the ethnic heritage of your community.
- Survey the class and chart ethnic backgrounds of students.
- Write a story in first person describing the feelings of an immigrant coming to America for the first time.
- Choose a famous person who immigrated to America. What dreams and goals did that person achieve?
- Explore holiday customs that were brought to the U.S. by immigrants.



NCES-SocialStudies.(3-5).C.1: Understand how various cultures influence communities. NCES-SocialStudies.(3-5).H.1: Understand how individuals and ideas have influenced the history of local and regional communities.

## Check out these recommended books at your local library or order them online!

### Recommended for elementary

#### **Brothers in Hope: The Story of the Lost Boys of Sudan** by Mary Williams

Garanga, an 8-year-old, orphaned by a civil war in Sudan, finds the inner strength to help lead other boys as they trek hundreds of miles seeking safety in Ethiopia, then Kenya and finally in the United States.

#### **La Mariposa**

##### by Francisco Jiménez

Because he can only speak Spanish, Francisco, son of a migrant worker, has trouble when he begins first grade, but his fascination with the caterpillar in the classroom helps him begin to fit in.

### Recommended for middle school

#### **If Your Name Was Changed at Ellis Island**

##### by Ellen Levine

Describes, in question and answer format, the migration of immigrants to New York's Ellis Island, from the 1880s to 1914. Features quotations from children and adults who passed through the station.

#### **Drita, My Homegirl**

##### by Jenny Lombard

When 10-year-old Drita and her family, refugees from Kosovo, move to New York City, Drita is teased about not speaking English well, but after a popular student named Maxine is forced to learn about Kosovo as a punishment for teasing Drita, the two girls soon bond.

#### **Blue Jasmine**

##### by Kashmira Sheth

When 12-year-old Seema moves to Iowa City with her parents and younger sister, she leaves friends and family behind in her native India but gradually begins to feel at home in her new country.

Every play produced by Children's Theatre of Charlotte is created by a talented team of designers, technicians, actors and a director. A play is different from a television show or a movie because it's presented live. As a class, discuss what you experienced when you saw the performance.

## THEATRE CORNER

1. What was the first thing you noticed on the stage?
2. Name three things you noticed about the set. Did the set help tell the story? What sort of set would you have designed?
3. What did you like about the costumes? Did they fit the story? What sort of costumes would you have designed?
4. What role did lighting play in telling the story? How did the lights enhance what you were seeing?
5. Talk about the actors. Were there moments you were so caught up in the story that you forgot you were watching a play?
6. Were there any actors who played more than one character? What are some ways that you can be the same person but play different characters?



NCES-TheatreArts.(3-5).TA.A.1: Analyze literary texts and performances. NCES-TheatreArts.(3-5).TA.AE.1.2: Understand how costumes [and technical elements] enhance dramatic play.

## Come, my neighbor

Ask the whole group to spread out in the space. The teacher will start by saying "Come, my neighbor if \_\_\_\_\_." The teacher will fill in the blank with something that they like or something that is true about them. If other members of the group have these things in common, then they gather around the teacher, if not, they stay where they are in the room. The teacher continues to choose students, one at a time, to find their own space in the room and repeat the pattern with a new statement.

Remember to stress making positive statements, rather than focusing on negative connections and associations. What similarities surprised you? Did you learn something new about another student in the class?



NCES-Guidance.P.SE.2.2: Explain how understanding differences among people can increase self-understanding.



# Meet the Resident Touring Company



**Rahsheem Shabazz** is best known for his role in the feature film *Blood Done Sign My Name* (Student #1) and the CBS television series *Under the Dome* (Jones). He has performed in numerous stage plays, including: *Othello* (Iago), *A Raisin' in the Sun* (Walter Lee), *Fame* (Goody), *A Soldiers Story* (Private Anthony Smalls) and *Stick Fly* (Kent Levay). Shabazz has performed since he was a 3-year-old in New York City, where he was born and raised. He is extremely excited to be back on the stage and performing with the Resident Touring Company.



**Elisha Bryant** is excited to start her first year as a member of the Resident Touring Company! Bryant has toured the country in shows, including: *Alice in Wonderland* (Alice) and *Greek Mythology for Kids* (Epictitus). Bryant's regional credits include *As You Like It* (Celia), *The Complete Works...Abridged* (Jess) and *Christmas at the Galt House* (the Snow Fairy Princess). Bryant enjoys singing, adventures with her niece and nephews and spending time outdoors. She is grateful for her family, mentors and God for making her dreams of building a brighter tomorrow through art a reality!



**Jonathan Hoskins** is a recent graduate of Winthrop University, where he received a Bachelor of Arts in theatre performance. Hoskins' professional and regional performance credits include *Miss Saigon* and *Rent*. Last spring, Hoskins performed in *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* at Children's Theatre of Charlotte. Hoskins has recently found a passion for directing, and his assistant director credits include *Next Fall* and *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. Hoskins directing credits include *Project 1*, *Project 2: Find Your Light* and *The Ex*. Hoskins is incredibly thankful for the opportunity to spend all year with the great people at Children's Theatre of Charlotte!



**Lakeetha Blakeney** is a Cabarrus County native. She is a graduate of University of Charlotte at Greensboro with degrees in theater and African-American studies, and she is currently pursuing her Master of Arts in english/creative writing at Southern New Hampshire University. Blakeney also runs Redeeming History Theatricals, where she serves as playwright and performer. Blakeney has worked with the Repertory Theater of St. Louis, The Black Rep, St. Louis Shakespeare Festival and Bright Star Children's Theater. At 15, Lakeetha participated in summer camps at Children's Theatre of Charlotte, where she played the Wicked Queen in *Snow White*, and is delighted to return to the role that sparked her passion!



## Write to Us!

Children's Theatre of Charlotte  
300 E. Seventh St.  
Charlotte, N.C. 28202



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.(3-5).1:  
Demonstrate command of the  
conventions of standard English  
grammar and usage when writing or  
speaking.

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ARTS & SCIENCE  
COUNCIL



[www.ncarts.org](http://www.ncarts.org)