

the NICETIES

By Eleanor Burgess | Directed by Annika Boras
September 25 - November 3, 2019 | Stiemke Studio

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Written by Lindsey Hoel-Neds, *Content Writer*

Edited by Jenny Toutant, *Education Director*

Kristen Carter, *Education EPR*

Auburn Matson, *Education Administrator*

SUGGESTED TEACHING & CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. Bias in Texts
2. Racism and Microaggressions
3. Status, Power, and Privilege

This Teacher's Guide is designed to be used in the classroom along with The Rep's PlayGuide for *The Niceties*. These are some suggested activities for your classroom. The PlayGuide is available online at <https://www.milwaukeeep.com/Tickets-Events/201920-Season/The-Niceties/The-Niceties-PlayGuide/>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is a safe space? Do you feel safe spaces are necessary? Why or why not?
2. What identity groups are you a part of? How do those identities impact your view of the world?
3. What are microaggressions? What microaggressions have you experienced in your daily life?
4. How do you experience privilege? What examples of privilege do you see in your own life?
5. Are there times in your life that someone in a power position (boss, parent, teacher, etc.) has made you feel like your opinion was less valuable than theirs? How did that make you feel?

BIAS IN HISTORY AND ACADEMIC STUDIES

Read the article called "Who Tells Our Stories?" in the PlayGuide. After reading the article, discuss its contents with the students. What examples of bias have they seen in their own schooling? How did that bias impact their understanding of the subject matter?

After discussion, have students spend some time examining resources that are used for lessons or readily available in your school. In small groups, let students choose sections of their textbook or other curriculum materials to analyze. As they look at the resources, ask them to make note of what perspective dominates the resource and what bias it may have. After students have noted the bias in the text, have them think about and list other perspectives that could be shared in another text about the same issue or event. Students will share their examples and thoughts with the class and lead discussion with their peers. For extension, students could look for other resources that take another viewpoint on their chosen issue or event.

MICROAGGRESSIONS IN DAILY LIFE

Before starting this activity, it is important to create a safe environment in which students can share their personal experiences. Setting some ground rules can be helpful in having a respectful and validating dialogue. Some ground rules to start with:

- No sharing names
- No speaking about instances involving people in the room
- Listen before speaking
- Use "I" language
- Respect other people's experiences and differences

Share with students the definition of microaggression. You can also share the graphic in the PlayGuide with examples. After sharing the definition and examples, have students journal for 5-10 minutes about any microaggressions they have experienced. Once students have journaled, give each of them 3-5 sticky notes to write some of their examples on. Collect the sticky notes and place them on large papers or the board in the classroom. Then allow all students to read the examples their peers have anonymously shared.

Once students have seen the examples, share a discussion about the examples with the students. Use the discussion to create content for theatrical exploration of microaggressions. In small groups, have students create short scenes illustrating the occurrence of a microaggression. Students should create a scene that shows the original example and then a version where someone points out the error, or "calls in" the character who committed the microaggression. Students will share the scenes with the class. Discuss the content of the scenes after the performances.

EXPLORING FEMINISM IN OUR TIME

Ask the students to answer the question “Are you a feminist?” Once students have answered this question, ask students what they believe feminism is and to cite examples of issues they believe feminists fight for. Share with students some quotes from well-known people who have commented on feminism, specifically some contemporary pop culture figures who have either advocated for feminism or vocally said they are not feminists.

Have students work together to create lists of ways that their gender impacts their role in the world, their rights, and what society expects of them. Have them do some research into the time periods of the earlier “waves” of feminism and see what other expectations would be placed upon them. Students should create a compare/contrast chart of the similarities and differences. After looking at these charts, have students discuss their viewpoints on feminism again.

STATUS, POWER, AND PRIVILEGE

In the play, who has the power changes back and forth several times, even though Janine is set up to have higher status due to several privilege factors. Let students explore the idea of status through several theatrical exercises.

Start with the entire group together in one part of the room. Put a chair in the center of the space. Have students “enter” the space one by one. As they each enter, they are to put themselves in the highest status position in the room relative to the others in the space. Once all of the students have placed themselves, discuss who has the most power and the least and why. Repeat the exercise, but have students put themselves in the place of lowest status.

In pairs, students will create a still image where one of them has a higher status than the other. Have students show their images to the class and let them guess who is “high” and who is “low”. Discuss why there may be areas of disagreement. Repeat the process. Then have students create an image where they believe they have equal status.

After completing both exercises, discuss the exercises and how they demonstrate power dynamics and privilege.

RACISM IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA

Have students read the article in the PlayGuide about the Yale controversy that inspired the play. Then allow students to research an incident in the last five years of racism that has led to controversy or protests. Students will create a presentation about the incident in whatever form works best for your class. Students will share the presentations with the class, your school community, or other community members.

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 Matson at amatson@milwaukee.com with any work samples you would love for us to see.



MILWAUKEE REP EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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

Contact Us:

Milwaukee Repertory Theater
Education Department
108 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

For questions or to schedule a workshop, please contact:

Auburn Matson, *Education Administrator*
414-290-5393 • amatson@milwaukee.com
www.MilwaukeeRep.com | 414-224-9490

Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.6: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

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.RH.9-10.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

WI SEL Emotional Development 5.9-10: Learners will be able to demonstrate empathy to others who have different views and beliefs.

WI SEL Self-Concept 9.9-10: Learners will be able to reflect on their own beliefs relative to different familial and societal norms.

WI SEL Social Competence 12.9-10: Learners will be able to identify positive ways to express understanding of differing perspectives.

WI SEL Social Competence 13.9-10: Learners will be able to support the rights of individuals to reflect their family, culture, and community within the school setting.

WI SEL Social Competence 14.9-10: Learners will be able to assess for personal bias and evaluate strategies to oppose stereotyping.

WI SEL Social Competence 18.9-10: Learners will be able to formulate group goals and work through an agreed upon plan.

PROGRAMS IN THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT RECEIVE GENEROUS FUNDING FROM:

Bader Philanthropies
Patty & Jay Baker Foundation
Clarice S. Turer Charitable Fund
Mae E. Demmer Charitable Trust

The Einhorn Family Foundation
Ralph Evinrude Foundation
Gardner Foundation
Greater Milwaukee Foundation
GMAR Youth Foundation

The Harley-Davidson Foundation
The Richard and Ethel Herzfeld Foundation
Frieda & William Hunt Memorial Trust
Dorothy Watkins Inbusch Foundation
Johnson Controls Foundation

Herb Kohl Philanthropies
Kohl’s Foundation
Lubar Family Foundation
MPS Community
Grant Program

MPS Partnership for the Arts & Humanities
Northwestern Mutual Foundation
Jane Bradley Pettit Foundation
Townsend Foundation
Wisconsin Energy Corporation Foundation