

An illustration of a young girl with a pink star in her hair sitting up in a bed. The bed is covered with a blue sheet and a pink patterned pillow. A large pile of colorful fabric scraps, including red, yellow, green, and blue pieces, is scattered on the floor around the bed. The background is a dark blue night sky with a large, faint, glowing face of a person looking down. The overall scene is dreamlike and artistic.

SHOW WAY

The Musical

Study Guide

MARCUS
PERFORMING ARTS
CENTER

**2023/24 MARCUS PERFORMING ARTS
CENTER STUDENT MATINEE SERIES**

For Grades 3-12



Follow the stitches of a family’s lineage. Education Artist-in-Residence Jacqueline Woodson’s Newbery-winning book of history, love, and resilience becomes a world premiere stage adaptation with new music by Tyrone L. Robinson and directed by Schele Williams. This moving, lyrical account based on Woodson’s own family pays tribute to women whose strength and knowledge illuminate their daughters’ lives—from enslavement to freedom, through segregation, freedom marches, and the fight for literacy.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- This musical is approximately 45 minutes long.
- The performance has both spoken word and song.
- On the stage, a large quilt covers the floor and folds upward to create the background. Different animations, such as twinkling stars, appear inside the quilt. Sometimes, the center of the quilt becomes a white screen and different animations appear on it.
- There is a narrator who helps guide the story. She is called the Griot.
- Many of the actors play multiple characters. To become different characters, the actors change their costumes.
- The music is played by a live band that is off stage. The band includes keyboard, guitar, banjo, electric and upright bass, as well as drums and percussion. Sometimes, the music is soft and slow; and sometimes, the music is loud and fast.
- The actors also use their bodies in different ways to create rhythms. Sometimes, they clap and stomp on the floor.

WHAT TO LOOK AND LISTEN FOR

Before you watch the performance, check out this list of important moments and ideas!

- Examples of “show ways” in the scenic design, storytelling, and music
- Why do you think the title of this musical is *Show Way*? What do you think a “show way” is?
- Multiple generations of women—how are these generations connected?
- Different dance and music styles that show the evolution of African American art over time—Why do you think the creative team of *Show Way* chose the form of a musical?
- Moments of joy and love
- Moments where characters show resilience and determination
- The passage of time—notice the historical eras and events the characters live through over the course of three centuries, such as:
 - American chattel slavery**
 - The Civil War**
 - Emancipation**
 - The burning of Black neighborhoods**
 - The Civil Rights era**
- Dig deeper on these topics in the “Dig Deeper” section on the following pages.
- Before you watch the performance, read this quote by Schele Williams, the director of the original production of *Show Way*!

“I hope that the students seeing *Show Way* will leave forever changed by the extraordinary bravery of this true story. I also hope the students begin to think about the power of their own family stories and are inspired to discover connections between themselves and their ancestors.

That connection to the past, present, and future is what I love about the show. It inspires me to discover more about my past and be conscious about what I am contributing to the generations that will follow me.”

THINK ABOUT

After you've watched the performance, consider these questions.

In the "What to Look and Listen for" section, you defined a "show way." What are "show ways" in your own life?

What events from American history did you notice in this production? How do the characters experience these events in *Show Way*? Consider how this production connects events from this family's past with the history of the United States.

Show Way tells the stories of multiple generations of strong women. How are these women connected to past and future generations? How are you connected to the past and future?

DIG DEEPER

PLAYWRIGHT JACQUELINE WOODSON



EXPLORE: The [website of the author of *Show Way*, Jacqueline Woodson](#). Read her biography, learn about her books, and find events where you can see her speak!

MEET: Learn about [Jacqueline Woodson's Kennedy Center Education residency](#) and discover other performances featuring her work, *The Other Side* and *The Day You Begin*.

WATCH: [What reading slowly taught me about writing | TED](#)

Jacqueline Woodson gives a TED Talk about reading slowly, appreciating stories, and how reading stories led her to write her own.



DIG DEEPER

MUSIC & DANCE

WATCH: [A History of Black Music](#)

This video timeline shows Black music history from the 10th century to 2020.

WATCH: [The History of African-American Social Dance – Camille A. Brown](#)

Choreographer Camille A. Brown discusses and demonstrates African American social dances in this TED-Ed video. Some of the social dances shown here appear in *Show Way*, including the Juba dance, the Cakewalk, and the Charleston.

LISTEN: [Blues Journey](#)

The roots of blues can be found in slave songs, spirituals, and field hollers of the American South; its sound can be heard in early rock 'n' roll, and in today's alternative and Hip Hop landscapes. Journey with us to learn about the influences and impact the blues has had on musical cultures.

QUILTING

WATCH: [Quilting for the Culture, Bisa Butler](#)

Bisa Butler is a contemporary textile artist who creates vibrant quilted portraits of African American subjects. Watch her talk about her inspiration, style, and subject of her art.

VIEW: [The Quilts of Gee's Bend: A Slideshow](#)

This blog post features images of quilts from Gee's Bend, an African American community in rural Alabama. Gee's Bend is known for its gorgeous quilts which use patterns and styles passed down from the community's enslaved ancestors. Take a look at the quilts!

EXPLORE: [The Women of Color Quilters Network](#)

The Women of Color Quilters Network is a non-profit created by quilt artist Carolyn L. Mazloomi to foster and preserve the art of quilting among women of color.

READ: [The Enduring Significance of Harriet Powers' Quilts](#)

Harriet Powers was a formerly enslaved woman born in 1837 known for her storytelling skill in her elaborate paneled quilts. This article highlights the stories depicted in one of Powers' surviving quilts, the Pictorial quilt.

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

VISIT: [The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture](#)

Located in Washington D.C., right by the Smithsonian Metro station and the Washington Monument.

EXPLORE: [The 1619 Project Podcast and 1619 Books](#)

The 1619 Project created by Nikole Hannah-Jones reframes American history with enslavement at the center. Listen to the 1619 Project podcast and explore the project's book expansions. If you have a New York Times subscription, you can explore the project further on [The New York Times Magazine](#) website.

READ: [Black Soldiers in the Civil War](#)

In *Show Way*, Edwin fights for the North in the American Civil War. Read this article about the role and treatment of Black soldiers during the war.

READ: [The Underground Railroad](#)

Read this National Geographic Kids article about the Underground Railroad.

EXPLORE: [The Decolonial Atlas – Black Massacres in the U.S.](#)

The Decolonial Atlas is a project that challenges our relationships with the land, people, and state using maps. View the map below of Black massacres in the United States and explore other maps on The Decolonial Atlas.

WATCH: [Black Wall Street and How the Tulsa Race Massacre Began](#)

"Black Wall Street" was the name given to the Greenwood District in Tulsa, Oklahoma, home to thriving Black businesses and neighborhoods. Learn about Black Wall Street and the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre in these HISTORY Channel videos. Dig deeper on other Black massacres in the U.S. shown in the map above.



A LENS INTO THE PAST

Grades 3-5

Students will analyze 20th-century photographs of immigrants to the United States. They will examine how photography can recount history to gain perspective. Students will create a class time capsule with objects and photos that represent modern times.



SYMBOLS OF MY IDENTITY

Grades 6-8

Students will apply the concepts of symbolic representation to create “identity boxes” representative of their internal and external selves. They will research and explore the work of artists Lucas Samaras and Joseph Cornell to gain a deeper understanding of their use of objects and symbols in “portrait” boxes.



SECRET MESSAGES THROUGH SONG

Grades 3-5

Students are introduced to African American spirituals and their use of a secret language to share information. Students will listen to and analyze spirituals, then write an original spiritual to share a secret message.



RETELLING HISTORY THROUGH DANCE & DRAMA

Grades 3-5

Students will observe a dance performance to understand the emotional struggles Tubman faced as she helped enslaved people escape and travel north along the Underground Railroad. Students will create an original dance or drama production to the song, “Harriet Tubman.”



HARRIET TUBMAN: AN IMPRESSIONISTIC LOOK

Grades 3-5

Students will conduct research on Harriet Tubman and explore impressionistic artwork depicting her life. Students will create original impressionistic artwork.



HARRIET TUBMAN: ILLUSTRATING HISTORY

Grades 3-5

Students will explore Jacob Lawrence’s artistic collage technique from “The Migration Series.” Students will create original Lawrence-style collage artwork about the “conductor” of the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Storytelling & Art



PART 1 - INTERVIEW SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU

Ask someone close to you about stories from their life. Look at the [Story Corps questions](#) for inspiration!

PART 2 - TURN YOUR STORIES INTO ART

Jacqueline Woodson adapted her ancestors' stories into the picture book *Show Way*. Try making art inspired by your own story from Part 1.

This could be in the form of a:

- Poem
- Drawing
- Dance
- Song
- Short story
- Comic
- Play

Or any other art form!

SHOW WAY THE MUSICAL CAST & CREATIVE TEAM



GRIOT
Danielle Lee Greaves



LIL BIT
Avia Fields



ELDER MOTHER
Theresa Cunningham



MAMA
Angela Birchett



AUNTIE
Danyel Fulton



BROTHER
Emmanuel Elliot Key



PLAYWRIGHT
Jacqueline Woodson



DIRECTOR
Schele Williams



ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
Nadia Guevara



MUSIC & LYRICS
Tyrone L. Robinson



CHOREOGRAPHER
Tiffany Quinn



ELECTRONIC MUSIC DESIGNER
Taylor Williams



CASTING DIRECTOR
Victor Vazquez



ORCHESTRATOR
Wilkie Ferguson

EDUCATION STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

National Core Arts Standards

TH: Cr1.1.5

TH: Cr2-5

TH: Pr4.1.5; Pr4.1.6

MU: Pr4.1.5; 4.2.5; 4.3.5

Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.3

CASEL Competencies (Social and Emotional Learning)

Self-Management: The abilities to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations.

- Showing the courage to take initiative
- Demonstrating personal and collective agency

Social Awareness: The abilities to understand perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.

- Taking others' perspectives
- Understanding the influences of systems and organizations on behavior

LEARNING GUIDE CREDITS

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*Bring your
lessons to life!*

ABOUT MPAC'S STUDENT MATINEE SERIES

Student matinees are a series of special abbreviated daytime performances for K-12 students featuring internationally-renowned artists. A student matinee is the perfect way to bring the arts to life in a fun and memorable way. To learn more and view this season's matinee schedule, please visit [MarcusCenter.org](https://www.marcuscenter.org)

Please take a moment to review our [House Policies and FAQ](#). This includes our guidelines on safety, accessibility, food and drink, backpacks, cell phones, photography, recordings, and more.

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS STUDENT MATINEE SERIES SUPPORTERS!



Herzfeld
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