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CLIMB Theatre presents  
a teacher activity guide for....

# A Common Thread

Exploring Acceptance of Differences  
for grades 3-6



Activity guide by Lauren Diesch

## About CLIMB Theatre:

CLIMB Theatre is the 2009 winner of the American Alliance of Theaters in Education's (AATE) prestigious Sara Spencer Artistic Achievement Award. AATE is a national association existing "to promote standards of excellence in theatre and theatre education." Only one other Minnesota theatre has ever received the Sara Spencer Award.

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# Activity

Notes:

## Lemons:

**Objective:** To introduce the concept of stereotyping and how generalizations influence thinking.

**Materials:** Enough lemons for each group to have one.

### Directions:

1. Get class into groups of five.
2. Place all of the lemons on a table where everyone can see them.
3. Have the students list some characteristics of lemons (they're yellow, citrus, have seeds, etc.), which then are listed on the board.
4. Give each group one lemon.
5. Have each small group study its particular lemon. They're not allowed to write anything down, nor are they able to create their own "special marks" on the lemon. They just need to find characteristics that will help them to identify it later.
6. After about 30 seconds to one minute, collect all of the lemons and place them back on the table in random order.
7. One person from each group should come up to the table and pick out that group's lemon. This usually presents no problem; the lemons have become distinct and individual.

### Debrief:

- *In that activity, you had to find your lemon after it was mixed up with the others. How did you do that?*
- *When are other times when things seem to be the same until you look a little closer?*
- *Sometimes people appear to be the same until you get to know them better? What are some questions you could ask someone to get to know them better?*



# Activity

Notes:

## Paper Bag:

**Materials:** A brown paper lunch bag for each student

### Directions:

1. Give each student a brown paper bag. Say: *For tomorrow, I would like you to bring in three things that represent who you are or something that's important to you. They must fit inside this paper bag. So you can't, for example, bring in your puppy, but feel free to bring in a photo of your puppy.*
2. The next day, tell your students: *Conflict is created by differences that people have with one another. Overcoming these differences is easier when we can find ways that we are similar.*
3. Divide the students into groups of 4 or 5. Say: *In your groups you are going to take turns sharing each item in your bag. It is your job to try and find things you have in common that you didn't know about before. Try to come up with as many things as you can. Everyone needs to share each item in their bag.*

### Debrief:

- *Who discovered something you had in common with someone else? What was it?*
- *Asking questions is a great way to learn about people who might be very different from you.*
- *What are some questions that you could ask someone who is very different from you to find out more about them?*



## Activity

Notes:

### The Line of Uniqueness

**Objective:** To demonstrate diversity by showing that people are different and are good at different things.

**Materials:** A scarf, rope or yardstick that can be used as a “line.”

**Set up:** A “line” placed on the floor with a few feet of clear space on either side.

**Directions:**

1. Say: *If you can tell me what unique means please raise your hand. Unique means something that is special or one of a kind.*
2. Ask for a volunteer to come up to the line uniqueness. Instruct him/her to stand a few feet away from the line, facing it like a finish line in a race.
3. Say to the class: *It is Volunteer's goal to cross to the other side. We are going to help Volunteer cross this line by telling him/her what makes him/her unique. It could be something that he/she is very good at, or something you like about him/her. However, we need to be respectful.*
4. To the volunteer: *Every time you hear a compliment, take one step closer to the line of uniqueness.*
5. Keep encouraging compliments until the volunteer makes it over the line. This process can be repeated with as many students as are in the class.

**Debrief:**

- *How did it feel to give a compliment?*
- *How did it feel to get a compliment?*
- *Why is it important to tell other people nice things?*
- *Why might it be important to think about what makes each of us special or unique?*



# Activity

Notes:

## Attitude Sculpture:

**Objective:** To explore how body language expresses different feelings:

### Directions:

1. Explain: *Your words aren't the only things that send messages to others. Our bodies also say things. We can tell if someone is happy, sad or mad just by how they look.*
2. Split the group into two halves. Say: *We're going to use our imaginations. Group one, I need you to pretend that you don't like group two. Pretend that they come from a different town, they dress different, and they look different from you. I want you to think of ways, without speaking, that you can show the other people that you don't like them. When I say "Go," I want you to show me that feeling, and then freeze, just like a statue. 'Go.'*
3. Have group two look at group one. Ask them: *What is group one showing us? How do they feel? How can you tell they feel that way? Ask them then: How would you feel if someone looked at you like that? How might you react?*
4. Then add: *When I say 'go,' I want you to create a statue using your bodies that shows how your feeling or reaction to what you see. 'Go.'*
5. Have group one relax and look at group two. Ask group one how group two responded to the first set of statues. Have group two relax.
6. Say: *That time we saw what it looks like if you have a negative or bad attitude toward others. Let's try this again. This time, group two is going to start. We're still going to pretend that group one is very different and you don't know them very well. But this time, we are going to use our body to send a message that would be more accepting and friendly. When I say 'go,' show me your sculpture. 'Go'*
7. Ask group one: *How would you feel if someone looked at you like that? What would you do because of it?*
8. Have everyone relax. Then ask: *What was different the second time? What are sometimes in life that it might be important to think about what messages our body language sends to other people?*



## Resources

Notes:

The following is a list of books that help to reinforce the topic of “acceptance of differences” for students in grades 3-6:

Estes, Eleanor, and Louis Slobodkin. *The Hundred Dresses*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and, 1944.

Kindersley, Barnabas, and Anabel Kindersley. *Children Just like Me*. New York: Dorling Kindersley, 1995.

Palacio, R. J. *Wonder*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012. Print.

Seuss. *The Sneetches: And Other Stories*. New York: Random House, 1961.

Smith, David J., and Shelagh Armstrong. *If the World Were a Village*. London: A. & C. Black, 2004.

Stefanski, Daniel, Eric Braun, and Hazel Mitchell. *How to Talk to an Autistic Kid*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Pub., 2011.

