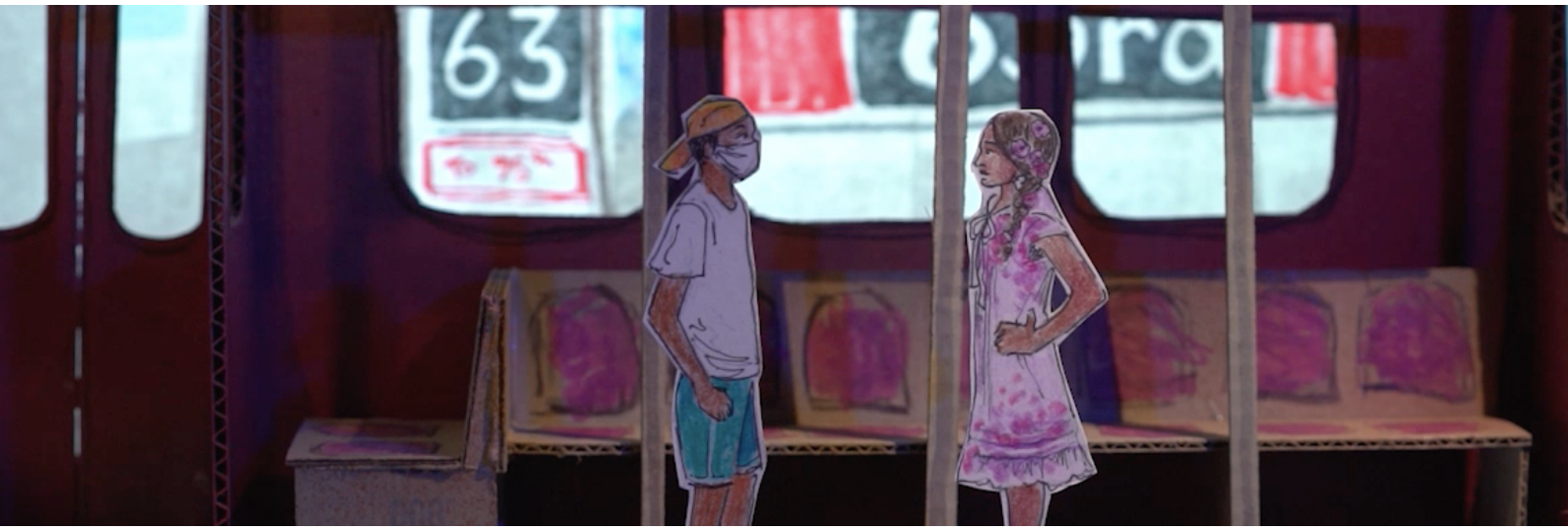
chicago children's theatre THE STATION 100 SOUTH RACINE AVENUE 20/21

DIAMOND'S DREAM STUDY GUIDE

recommended for ages 9+



ABOUT DIAMOND'S DREAM

Thank you for bringing Chicago Children's Theatre's production of DIAMOND'S DREAM into your classroom. DIAMOND'S DREAM is a virtual puppet production that takes place on a CTA Red Line train traveling south through pandemic-era Chicago. Diamond, a pre-teen African-American boy, has fallen asleep on the train while on his way to visit his dying grandmother. When he awakes, time and reality have shifted, and he meets the ghost of a young African-American girl, a shape-shifting elder spirit who died of Spanish Flu 100 years ago to the date.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To gain a greater understanding of the Covid-19 pandemic by learning about the Spanish Flu pandemic, with an emphasis on racial inequities.
- To draw connections between ongoing racial justice protests and the Red Summer of 1919.
- To identify and articulate messages of hope to protect ourselves and each other during challenging times.
- To spark ongoing conversations with peers inside and outside the classroom.

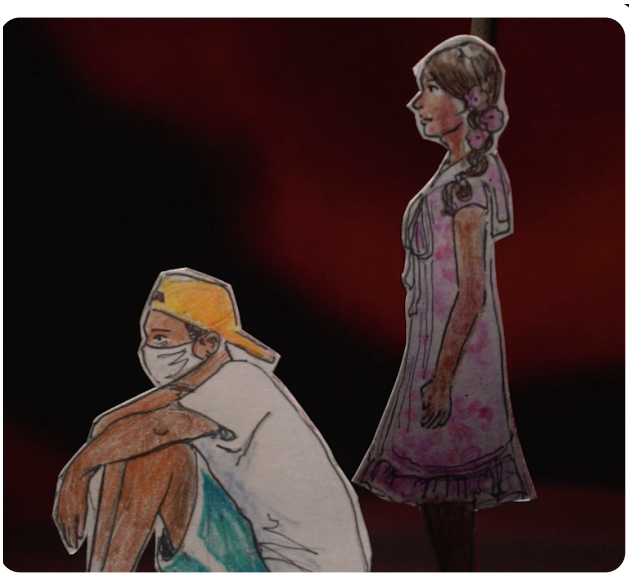
"LOVE EVEN AS YOU LOSE. FOR A GENTLE SPIRIT BURIED WITHIN A WELL-KEPT MEMORY IS NEVER LOST." - JLH

Created by Jerrell L. Henderson and Caitlin McLeod | Directed by Jerrell L. Henderson
Designed by Caitlin McLeod | Music & Sound Design by Daniel Ison
Director of Photography - Jeff Paschall | Voiceover performances by Davu Smith (Diamond) and Amira Danan (Elder) | Dramaturgy by Denae Hill | Produced by Jacqueline Russell and Will Bishop

DIAMOND'S DREAM LESSON PLAN

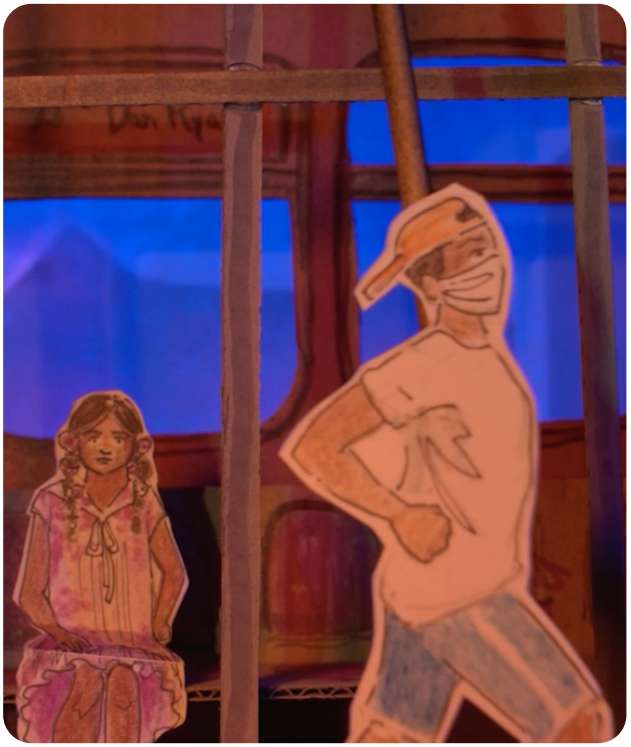
Discussion, Video, and Activities for 45-60 minute lesson

BEFORE WATCHING



As a class, brainstorm a list of events that have occurred since COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic in March. What are some of the big events that happened in our city? In our country? In the world? If this is challenging for students, encourage them to share personal stories that can then be related to larger issues. Be sure racial justice protests are included in the list.

Review the Historical Context provided in these materials, touching on the Great Migration, the 1918 pandemic, and Red Summer. As you prepare to share these heavy historical events, we encourage you to choose which details to include based on the ages of your students and what's best for your classroom. DIAMOND'S DREAM makes direct reference to the 1918 pandemic, Chicago's segregated housing, and homes of Black citizens being burned down by white rioters in the summer of 1919.



AFTER WATCHING

Briefly discuss powerful moments and images students remember from the video. Consider what messages and themes Jerrell Henderson and Caitlin McLeod, the creators of DIAMOND'S DREAM, hoped to convey with this piece.

Near the end of the video, Diamond tells the elder-spirit "it gets better" over and over again. Have students each write a letter to a child their age in the year 2120 who is going through crises similar to those we face today. The purpose of the letter should be to comfort the imagined future person and inspire hope. Encourage students to include current events and personal experiences and feelings. Give students the option of creating their own hopeful mantra like 'it gets better' or 'everything will be okay.' In the spirit of the piece, welcome students to add a drawing or visual imagery to help carry their message. Provide the opportunity for students to read their letters aloud for the class.

Diamond channels his grief through art -- making a mural of his ancestors. As a final closing moment with this piece, ask students: How does art lift us up in times like these?

HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR DIAMOND'S DREAM

The following historical topics will help provide context for DIAMOND'S DREAM. Note: these events include details and content that may be too intense for some students and/or inappropriate for certain ages. Adults should review material and tailor the material to meet the needs of their students.

THE GREAT MIGRATION

Starting in 1916, thousands of Black people who lived in the Southern United States started immigrating North "to escape the tyranny and violence of the Ku Klux Klan, to be able to vote without fear and to get better education for their children" - Timuel Black Jr., historian, educator and activist.

The Black population of Chicago grew. However, these newly arrived citizens experienced discrimination, employment challenges such as exclusion from the unions, segregated housing in Chicago termed the "Black Belt" on Chicago's South Side, and racial violence.

Pictured Right: An African-American family leaves Florida for the North during the Great Depression. (MPI/Getty Images)

THE PANDEMIC OF 1918

The 1918 'Spanish Flu' pandemic was the deadliest in history. It infected a third of the world's population and 50 million people died from it. It began immediately before the United States entered WWI and killed many more people than the war did. In Chicago, 8,510 people perished in eight weeks. Though it's called the "Spanish Flu," its origins are unknown.

When the pandemic first hit in September of 1918, Chicago media did not recognize the Spanish Flu as a significant danger. The Chicago Tribune called it "a mild form of influenza." By early October cases mounted to 1,200 a day, making the crisis impossible to ignore. Hospitals were overcrowded, nurses were in short-supply, settlement houses and churches became ad hoc emergency rooms, businesses shut down, athletic events were canceled, and people wore masks.

COVID-19 and the Spanish Flu are different types of viruses. COVID-19 mainly affects people over 60, while the Spanish Flu infected people between 20 and 40. Sometimes people would develop psychosis after bouts of the Spanish Flu, making them delirious and occasionally violent. There are many tragic stories of whole families becoming ill without access to medical care.

Black Chicagoans faced significant challenges during the 1918 pandemic. Chicago's City Health Official at the time openly blamed black people for spreading the disease - a misconception which put Black communities in greater danger of racial violence. In spite of this, black communities worked together to take care of each other during the 1918 pandemic, much as they do today. Black people were cared for in segregated hospitals. While these facilities were often under-funded, Black health care workers dedicated themselves tirelessly to the effort. Neighborhood groups formed to help provide food and care. Churches supported the efforts to keep people safe.

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR DIAMOND'S DREAM CONT.

RED SUMMER

In the summer of 1919, riots and civil disturbances started by white Americans against Black Americans occurred in cities across the United States, going down in history as "Red Summer." Chicago's riot of 1919 was considered the worst conflict, leaving 38 people dead (23 Black and 15 white) and 537 recorded injured (two-thirds Black, one-third white). Between 1,000 and 2,000 Black people lost their homes when white rioters burned them down. President Woodrow Wilson publicly blamed white people for starting the riots, though he did not desegregate his own federal departments.

The violence began on July 27, 1919 when Eugene Williams, a Black teenager, was drowned in Lake Michigan when his raft floated over an unofficial boundary into a "whites only" beach area. George Stauber, a 24 year old white man, threw stones, striking Williams and knocking him into the water. Black crowds demanded Stauber's arrest, but police officer Daniel Callahan refused. Later that night, groups clashed violently. Over the next several days, the violence continued.

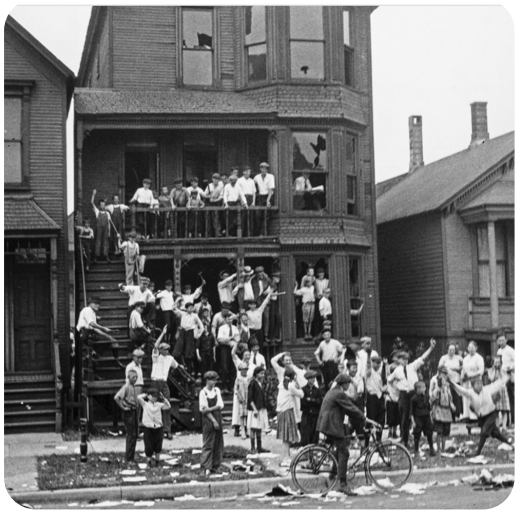
A photo of nine African American nurses who worked at the Camp Sherman Base Hospital in Ohio during World War I. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers. Special Collections and University Archives, UMass Amherst Libraries

Again, Black communities worked together to keep each other safe. They formed self-defense groups to protect themselves. Black veterans returning from WWI had fought for their country and were unwilling to submit to the attacks. "I remember my uncle standing in the window and I heard him say 'here they come'-- which meant the race riot was coming down 35th and Giles" -- Juanita Mitchell, a Chicagoan who was 8 years old at the time.

Many remember 1919 as a critical time in history when Black Americans fought for their rights in the face of injustice. The Chicago Defender, the leading Black controlled newspaper in the country, followed the riots and took a strong position: "A Race that has furnished hundreds of thousands of the best soldiers that the world has ever seen is no longer content to turn the left cheek when smitten upon the right."

LEFT: Crowds gathered by the 29th Street Beach in Chicago after the drowning death of Eugene Williams on July 27, 1919.Jun Fujita/Chicago History Museum/Getty

RIGHT: Neighborhood children raiding an African American family's house after they were forced out during the 1919 Chicago Race Riots. Photograph by Jun Fujita, courtesy of Chicago History Museum



For more information about the work being done at Chicago Children's Theatre, visit our website at ChicagoChildrensTheatre.org and follow us on social media @chichildtheatre