

LAYER
THE
WALLS

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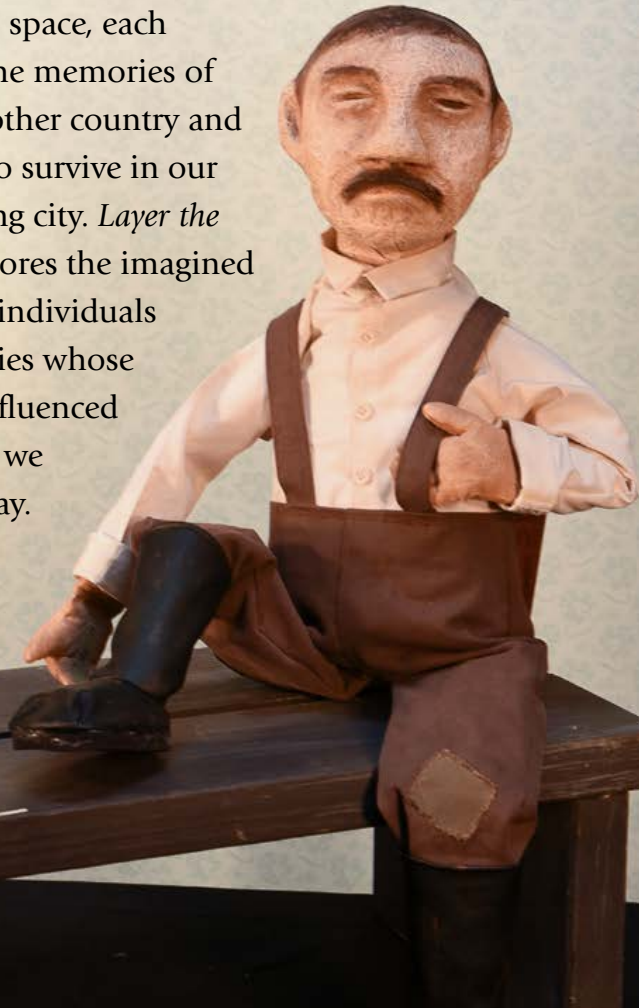
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WELCOME FROM RACHEL & LIZ

Our jaws dropped when we learned that twenty layers of wallpaper and forty layers of paint were found on the walls of 97 Orchard Street when the Tenement Museum purchased and began to explore the space that had been sealed since the 1930s. In less than a century, thousands of tenants had moved through that small space, each holding the memories of life in another country and working to survive in our unforgiving city. *Layer the Walls* explores the imagined stories of individuals and families whose actions influenced the world we know today.



We believe investigation into stories of the past will illuminate the larger struggles of immigration that have shaped and continue to influence our country today. Looking to the past can expose the damaging cycles of prejudice, exclusion and injustice that are relevant in our current political climate. Understanding these cycles is the first step in breaking them.

We were inspired by the extraordinary tales of the immigrants who lived in the Lower East Side and hope that the stories shared today inspire you to learn more about the layers in your life and all around us!

To curiosity!
Rachel & Liz

IMMIGRATION THEN AND NOW

LATE 1800S–EARLY 1900S

THE ARRIVAL

Immigrants entered the United States through various ports. Those from Europe entered from the East Coast and those from Asia entered the United States from the West Coast. The main East Coast port of entry after 1892 was Ellis Island in New York Harbor near the Statue of Liberty. More than 12 million immigrants entered through Ellis Island from 1892-1954.

REASONS FOR LEAVING HOME

Immigrants came to America fleeing religious and political persecution, famine, poverty, rising taxes, land and job shortages, and war.

WHERE TRAVELING FROM

By 1840, the majority of European immigrants (almost half) came from Ireland fleeing famine. Also coming in large numbers were Italians and Jews from Eastern Europe.

U.S. IMMIGRATION LAWS

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was one of the first pieces of legislation or laws that imposed restrictions on immigration. It was aimed at Chinese laborers coming to America.

In 1917, Congress passed legislation requiring immigrants of 16 to pass a literacy test.

The Immigration Act of 1924 restricted the amount of people who could come from each country.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS

Immigrants faced harsh discrimination from those living in America based on race, nationality and religion. It was hard for immigrants to find work, fair wages, housing, and safe working conditions.

MODERN DAY

THE ARRIVAL

Immigrants arrive to America by land, air and sea. Immigrants coming to the United States legally have several methods of doing so including obtaining a visa such as a family-based visa or employment-based visa or seeking asylum from religious or political persecution. These policies constantly shift depending on decisions made by the President and Congress.

REASONS FOR LEAVING HOME

Immigrants come to America fleeing religious and political persecution, poverty, lack of work, and war.

WHERE TRAVELING FROM

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 43.1 million immigrants were living in the United States as of 2016 which comprises of 13.5 percent of the population. The majority of immigrants arrive from Latin America followed by Asia and Europe. Mexico has the largest amount of immigration from a single country.

U.S. IMMIGRATION LAWS

Laws and legislation around immigration have been in flux since the mid-1900's.

In 1965, Congress passed a law that stopped limiting how many people could come from each country, doing away with quotas.

In 1976 & 1978, the U.S. allowed a total immigration of 290,000 per year and 20,000 from any single country.

In 1986, Congress passed immigration reform that included a requirement of "English proficiency and knowledge of U.S. history" to become a legal resident, and increased border enforcement.

In 1990, Congress altered the laws and increased the annual immigration limit from 290,000 to 675,000 people annually, plus an additional 125,000 for refugees.

Today, immigrants seeking to come to the U.S. legally need to pass a criminal background check and can be denied permanent residence for reasons including lack of vaccinations, drug abuse or addiction, disease that poses a public health risk or are likely to become a burden to taxpayers. At the time of this writing stricter restrictions are being enforced based on nationality, religion and country of origin.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS

Immigrants today face discrimination from those living in America based on race, nationality, and religion. This poses challenges for immigrants to find work, fair wages, housing, a quality education, and healthcare.



QUESTIONS

- What are reasons you know of that people immigrated to the United States in the late 1800's?
- What do you think were the challenges for immigrants in New York City when they came to America in the late 1800's?
- Why do you think our country has had different immigration laws over time? What might impact changes to those laws?
- What kind of immigration laws would you put in place if you were an elected official?

THE TENEMENTS



- Many immigrants in NYC lived in the tenements of the Lower East Side. By 1900, 2.3 million people were living in these tenements. The Lower East Side was once the most densely populated place in the world.
- Tenements were buildings that were divided up into small apartments or rooms. Each tenement building was very close to each other, often only a foot apart.
- Often, dozens of people lived together in each room which was unventilated and dark. These created unsafe conditions and aided in the spread of disease. You can imagine how Danny McKenna got sick.
- Tenement living was hard! No elevator for your fifth floor walkup; poor lighting on the dark stairs made it easy to fall; during Jimmy's story there would have been latrines in the backyard, and by the time of Goldine's story she would have had to share one toilet with the entire floor of families.
- Even in these tiny apartments people took on boarders (for example, Marco & Lorenzo were boarders living in Mrs. Bellantoni's apartment) who paid rent to live in a corner of the room.
- There was so little space in the crowded apartments, so often, people would hang out on the fire escape like Goldine and Ruth.



QUESTIONS

- What do you think would be the most challenging thing for you if you lived in the tenements?
- Where do you think you could go for your private space?
- Take a guess at how many times a woman might go up and down the stairs in one day? Remember the water, the bathrooms, the coal, the food, the laundry, are all downstairs or at the market.

JIMMY'S WORLD: THE 5 W'S OF THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE

WHO

John Augustus Roebling: German born, creator of the Brooklyn Bridge, was known his design and engineering of suspension bridges. He died before seeing the Brooklyn Bridge completed.

Washington A. Roebling: John Roebling's son who took over as chief engineer after his father died in an accident while building the Brooklyn Bridge. He became paralyzed when he succumbed to caisson disease.

Emily Warren Roebling: Washington Roebling's wife, who managed the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge after her husband developed paralysis due to caisson disease. Without her efforts, the completion of the bridge would likely never have happened. She was also the first person to cross the Brooklyn Bridge.

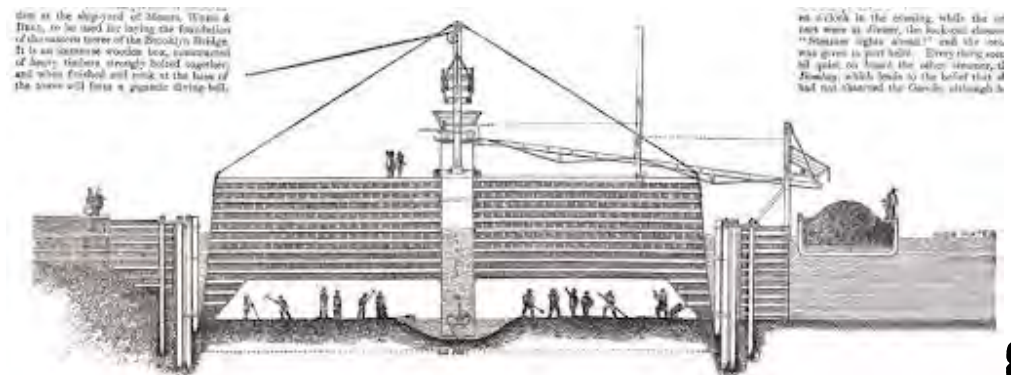
Sandhogs: The workers who helped build the Brooklyn Bridge, many of them immigrants, were known as "sandhogs" because they cleared the mud, rocks and boulders at the bottom of the river.

WHAT

The Brooklyn Bridge is a suspension/cable-stay hybrid bridge that connects Brooklyn and Manhattan in NYC. Completed in 1883, it is one of the oldest suspension bridges in the United States and it was the longest bridge in the world at the time of its completion.

Caisson: A caisson was a closed wooden box that was placed in the river and filled with compressed air. This allowed workers to go to the bottom of the river to clear mud, rocks and boulders and lay the granite foundation for the bridge.

Caisson Disease: A sickness, also known as "the bends" or decompression sickness, that can occur from the change in pressure from working in a caisson. Affecting the nervous system, it can cause fatigue, pain, and paralysis.



JIMMY'S WORLD:

THE 5 W'S OF THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE (CONT.)

WHERE

The Brooklyn Bridge connects Brooklyn and Manhattan over the East River in New York City.

WHEN

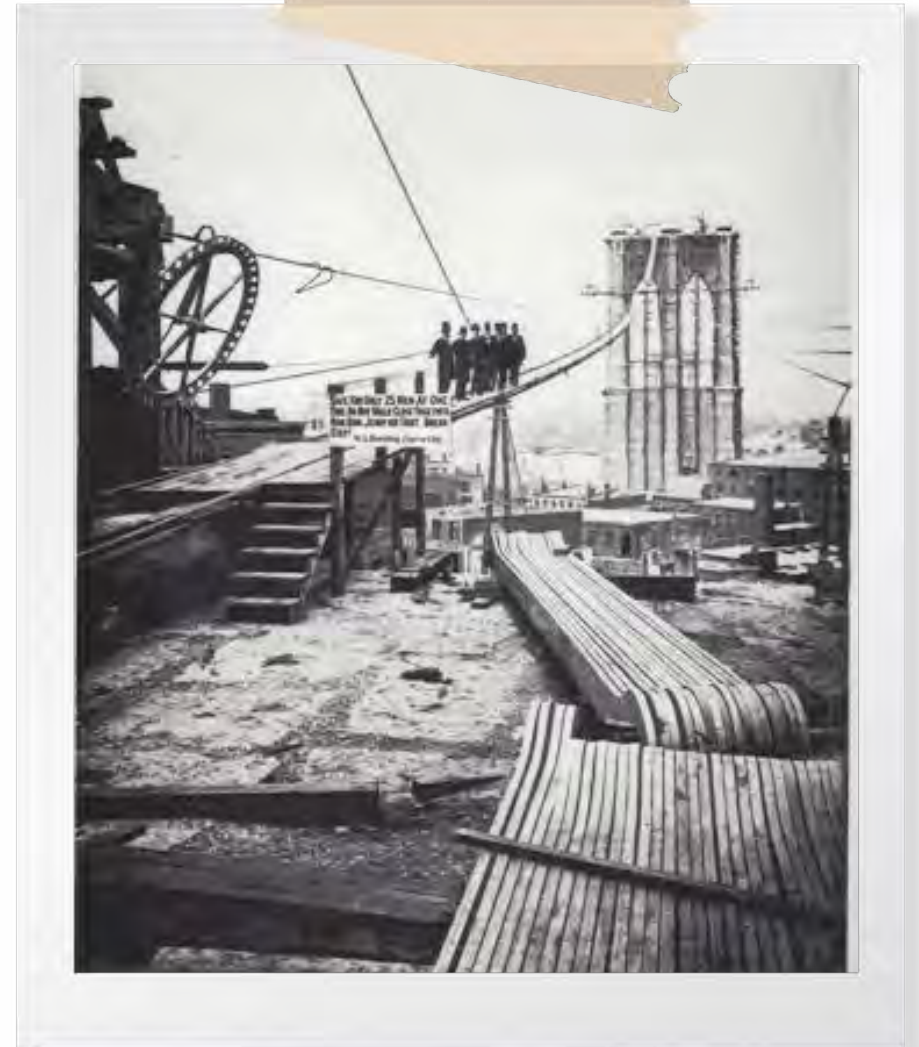
The construction of the Brooklyn Bridge began on January 3, 1870 and was completed on May 24, 1883.

WHY

The Brooklyn Bridge was built to allow ease of travel between Brooklyn and Manhattan. Because of this, in 1898 Brooklyn (which used to be its' own city) formally became part of New York City and Staten Island forming Greater New York.

QUESTIONS

- What kinds of discrimination did Jimmy face when looking for a job and how did he overcome these acts?
- Would you have worked in a caisson like Jimmy did?
- How do you think bridges are built today?
(Hint: they still use caissons!)



MARCO'S SURVIVAL IN THE GREAT BLIZZARD OF 1888

When we think of blizzards, we think of roaring winds, snow that slaps your face and piles several feet high. We can hear the howling of the wind and the rumbling against the houses and the bare tree branches outside. We think of the sledding we can do the next day and school being cancelled! We also think of winter storms in December, January and February. But the Great Blizzard of 1888 happened later, on March 11, 1888.

Imagine, thinking that winter has passed and expecting spring flowers to bloom any day. Maybe you smell the grass growing or begin sneezing from those seasonal allergies. Well, before iPhones, computers or television could tell us what weather was coming, our experiences and observations were the greatest indicator on what each day would be like. So imagine what a surprise it must have been when one of the worst blizzards ever recorded happened when everyone was least expecting it...and without warning!!!!

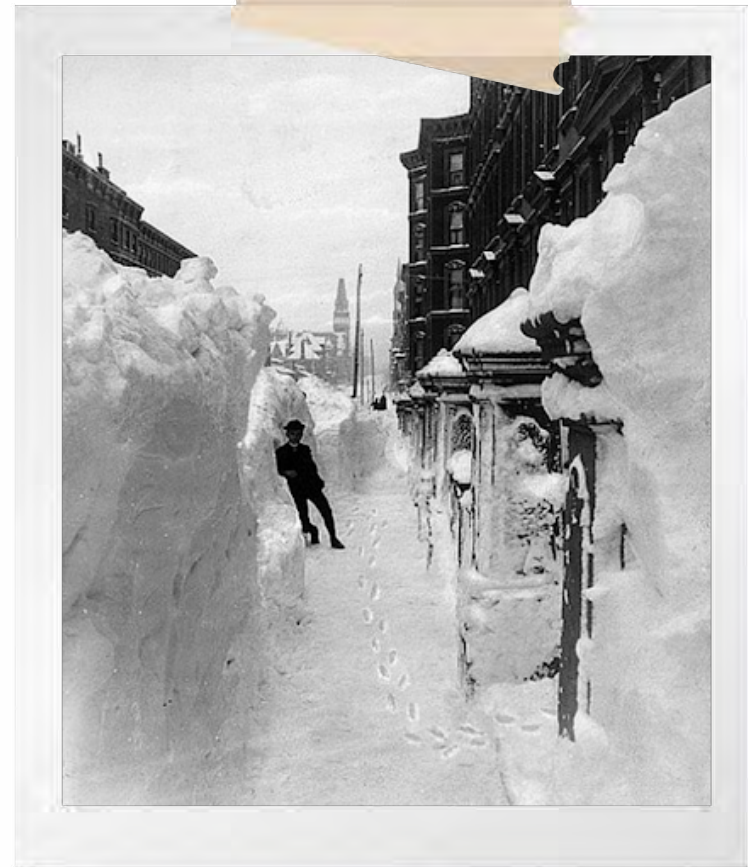
The day before the blizzard, March 10, 1888, the weather was in the mid-50s. But on March 11, the temperatures dropped and the

weather dumped 55 inches of snow (4 feet, 7 inches, the height of many second and third graders!) on the northeast including Washington D.C., New Jersey and New York City.

Despite the storm, many New Yorkers still tried to go to work, not know just how bad the storm was going to get. Many got stranded at train stations, on elevated platforms and away from their homes and had to wait until the storm passed before returning to their families. In 1888, trains, telegraph lines, water mains and gas lines were all above ground. Everything froze and could not be accessed or repaired by work crews. This meant that New Yorkers didn't have water, heat or any way to communicate or leave because of frozen lines. New Yorkers were stranded in their own homes.

In the end, the storm claimed 400 lives, over 200 of them in New York City. The storm and the resulting loss of life prompted many changes that we still see today. Gas and water lines, many electrical and phone wires and subways are located below ground (not above) as a result of this storm.





QUESTIONS

- If you were going to go out in a blizzard, what would you bring? Now imagine Marco, he didn't have a down coat, several layers of sweaters or long underwear, waterproof boots. He had barely seen snow back in Sicily.
- Mother nature is powerful and is a strong force in our lives. What has been happening weather wise in your city? Have you ever faced a blizzard? A hurricane? An earthquake?
- Sometimes it takes a tragedy for us to learn how to make things safer for our community. Can you think of any recent storms that occurred in New York (or the world) that prompted change?
- Marco went out in the dangerous blizzard despite warnings from his brother, Lorenzo. Why was it so important for him to try to sell his papers? What was at stake for him and many immigrants like him?

EXPLORING GOLDINE'S STORY: THE WOMEN'S LABOR MOVEMENT

When we hear about the Women's Labor Movement we might get it confused with Women's Suffrage, which would be understandable. Both occurred at the same time and both dealt with women's rights and resisting the stereotype that a woman's place was in the home. Women's Suffrage was a movement that focused on a women's right to vote. The Women's Labor Movement focused on fair wages, equal pay and safe working conditions.

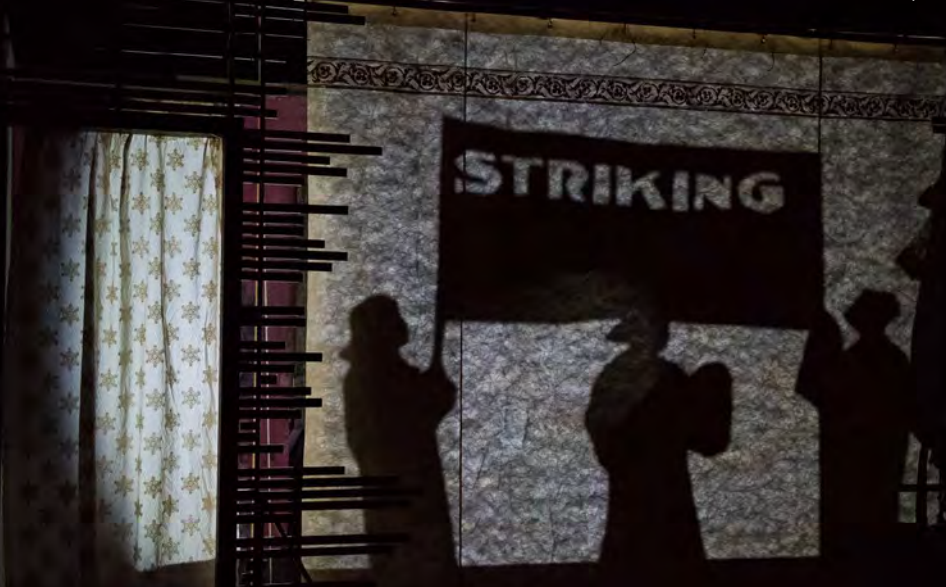
The late 1800's saw the end of the Industrial Revolution and moved toward big companies with a focus on mass production: making a lot of things as fast as possible. Women, especially immigrant women, were entering the workforce in droves but because of their immigrant status (plus being a woman) they were subjected to unfair treatment. Imagine, working fourteen hours a day, six days a week, short breaks (or no breaks at all), dangerous conditions, no windows, low pay.... these were just some of the challenges they faced.

They knew that they were being treated unfairly so many of the young female textile workers began to protest and strike. The women organized and formed groups like the International Ladies Garment Workers Union in 1900 formed from seven local unions. In 1903,

The Women's Trade Union League was founded and became the first national association dedicated to organizing women workers.

In 1909-1910 young women in New York's shirtwaist industry organized The Great Uprising (also called the Uprising of the 20,000). Angered by long hours, low wages, workplace safety issues and workplace abuses from managers and owners, 20,000 (mostly Jewish and Yiddish-speaking immigrants) took to the streets. But striking wasn't easy. Many of these women faced threat of arrest, harassment and personal injury, not to mention the loss of wages from not working, which was a hardship on the families reliant on their income to survive. The strike lasted 11 weeks, during the cold months of November - February, and resulted in many factories agreeing to changing their policies including, fifty-two hour weeks, four paid holidays with pay and better wages.

Unfortunately, not every company agreed to these changes, one of them being the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory made famous by the horrific fire that killed 146 young immigrant women, some as young as 12 years old. It was this event that prompted further changes in the labor movement that we still see today.





QUESTIONS

- Why do you think Goldine decided to continue to strike?
- Goldine had to stand outside in the cold for 3 ½ months to strike.
Think about a topic or cause that is important to you. Would you be able to stand outside in the freezing cold for this topic?
What would help you keep going?
- Goldine and Ruth worked in a factory with poor working conditions. What were those conditions and how did women like them fight to change the laws and rules for workers in the future?
- Do you know that the Triangle Shirtwaist building still stands today? Check out the work this group is doing to establish a monument to honor those women and girls who lost their lives. <http://rememberthetrianglefire.org/>

ACTIVITIES

HOW: ACTIVITY WITH AIR PRESSURE

In *Layer the Walls*, Jimmy helps to build the foundation of the Brooklyn Bridge at the bottom of the East River by entering a caisson. But how does that work exactly? Try this simple experiment to see how air pressure and water work. You might want to do this one outside or with a bunch of towels handy. Things are about to get wet!

MATERIALS

- A 2 liter bottle (take off the label)
- A straw
- Clay

HOW TO?

Fill your bottle about halfway with water.

Insert the straw and then wrap the clay around the top of the straw, creating a strong seal.

Blow into the bottle as hard as you can but step back quickly.

What happens to the water? Did it come up? That's because the increase of air pressure pushed on the water which made it come out. Know this, how do you think a caisson works?

ACTIVITIES

COLLAGE WALLPAPER ACTIVITY

Imagine 100 years from now the walls of your home, room, school or favorite place could talk and tell a story. What would it say? What would people see? What would they be able to learn about how we live today? Create your own wall of wallpaper that helps to tell a story about yourself for someone to find in the future.

MATERIALS

Newspapers and magazines

Scissors

Large piece of construction paper,
poster board, or cardboard

Glue or glue sticks

Colored pencils, crayons and markers

Assorted craft supplies like fabric,
patterned paper, sequins, etc...

ACTIVITY

Find pictures and phrases from newspapers and magazines that you relate to, that excite you, that can help tell a story about your life and cut them out with scissors or rip them out.

Using glue or a glue stick, glue all of the pieces to a large piece of construction paper, poster board or cardboard. Feel free to layer all of the pictures and words (or not). Not every part needs to be seen.

Add any decoration you'd like with markers or additional art supplies.

Write a short monologue from the point of view of the wall you just created. What would it say? How would it feel? What story would it tell?

Hint: You can start your monologue as if your wall was talking to a child 100 years from now or to someone trying to buy/sell your home, just like in the show.

*Create a class wallpaper that can be displayed on the bulletin board and have everyone work on it together. You can choose a common theme like, "Class 201," "New York," or "Immigration in the 19th Century."



CREATIVE WRITING PROMPTS

PRE-SHOW WRITING PROMPTS:

If the walls of your home or room could talk, what would it say about you and your life?

Write about a time you felt afraid.

Write about a time you were in a new place and didn't know anyone.

Write about a time you were treated unfairly.

POST-SHOW WRITING PROMPTS:

Choose your favorite character from the show. Write about what you think happens to that character 5, 10 or 20 years later. You can write it in monologue form (from the character's point of view) if you choose. Use evidence from the show to support your ideas.

With a partner create a short scene between two of the characters from the show 5, 10 or 20 years after the last time we see them.

Many of the characters in the show had difficult decisions to make. Some were life or death decisions. Some were about right and wrong, fair and unfair. Others were about survival. Pick one of the characters from the show and write about a different choice he or she could have made than the one you saw and how that would have changed the outcome for the character. The change can be positive or negative.

Write a monologue, scene, poem or song from the point of view of an immigrant or refugee today.

At the end of the show the rats ask us to think about the other layers in our own buildings, neighborhoods, and families. What stories/layers would you like to know? Why?

SCIENCE AND SHADOW PUPPETRY: LIGHTS, PUPPETS, ACTION!!!!



In the show, puppeteers Rachel Sullivan and Liz Parker did something called Shadow Puppetry. By using small puppets and strategically placed lights, they were able to make objects look larger, closer, farther away, close together or apart. Were the puppets really as large or small as they seemed? Were they really far apart or close together? The answer is all in the lighting and lots of practice.

MATERIALS

Cardstock

Scissors

Metal fasteners

Pencils with erasers

Tape

Stencils (if necessary)

Thin kebab sticks, tongue depressors or straws

Flashlights and lamps

Translucent white fabric or tissue paper that can be stretched between two large sticks, a classroom door or in a cardboard box.
See links.



SCIENCE AND SHADOW PUPPETRY: LIGHTS, PUPPETS, ACTION!!!! (CONT.)

DAY 1

What is a shadow? How is a shadow created? When do you see your shadow?

Write down predictions. What do you think will happen when the light is closer to your hand? What do you think will happen when the light is further away from your hand or body?

Using flashlights, play with shadows in the classroom. Find empty wall space or on the floor that is bare. With a partner, have one person hold the flashlight while the other person creates a shadow with the hand and/or body. Move the light closer, further away, change the angle and distance. Move the hand or body closer and further away. Use two hands at varying distances.

Write about what you learned through shadow play. What happened when you changed distance and angle? How did you make your hand or body bigger? Smaller? What happened when each hand was at a different distance? What happens when the angle of the light changes?

DAY 2

Get into pairs or small groups. Use the playwriting template to create characters and a short scene for you puppet show. (Can be a short, 4 line scene or as long as 10 lines of dialogue)

Create shadow puppets with materials of your characters.

On cardstock, draw the outline of your character. If you want your shadow puppet to move (arms, legs, etc..) you can draw in pieces.

Using scissors, cut out your puppet.

If you cut out in several pieces, use metal fasteners to assemble your puppet

Tape a stick or straw to the puppet

DAY 3

Create a "shadow theatre" by adhering a translucent fabric in a cardboard box, in a doorway or between two sticks/rods. You can use a translucent material like gauze, linen, or tissue paper. Make sure the material is tightly stretched and there are no wrinkles, curves or loose edges that might distort the puppets.

Using different light sources (flashlight, projector, clip light), play with distance and angle of your puppets.

Discover how to make your puppet move to show emotion. How can your puppet move happy, sad, angry, excited, surprised?

Add voice to your puppet. Say, "Oh, it's you!" in a voice that is happy, sad, angry excited, surprised...while simultaneously moving the puppet.

DAY 4

Take out your script. Without using your puppets, begin rehearsing the dialogue on your script.

Add in the use of light and puppets. Begin rehearsing your scene using a light source and your puppets. Play with distance and angle. Don't forget to show the emotion of your puppet.

Rehearse several times until you are happy with the outcome of your puppet show.

Share with the class each pair's puppet performance.

LINKS FOR SHADOW PUPPETRY:

This resource from The Kennedy Center gives a great history on shadow puppetry, how to create shadow puppets and create a puppet show.

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/interactives/shadowpuppets/artsedge.html>

http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-6-8/Shadows_and_Light.aspx

Video on making a shadow puppet theatre from a cardboard box.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hL28SkHf1g>

Online instruction for making a shadow puppet theatre.

<https://wehavekids.com/education/shadow-puppet-theater>

MORE RESOURCES

THE TENEMENT MUSEUM

www.tenement.org

NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

www.nyhistory.org

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

www.mcny.org

JIMMY'S STORY:

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/obituaries/overlooked-emily-warren-roebeling.html>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/brooklyn-bridge-while-being-built-4122708>

MARCO'S STORY:

<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/great-blizzard-of-88-hits-east-coast>

<http://myinwood.net/a-buried-city-the-blizzard-of-1888/>

GOLDINE'S STORY:

<http://www.seiu-uhw.org/archives/20663>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/1911-conditions-triangle-shirtwaist-factory-4024743>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/1910-cloakmakers-strike-4024739>



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