

The Janeiad Post-Show Activity: Review		
Length	Grade Level	Content Area
1-2 class periods (45 – 90 minutes each)	Middle School & High School	ELA, Theatre
Objective		Materials Needed
Students will analyze and reflect on the performance of <i>The Janeiad</i> by expressing their understanding through a review of the play.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to the <i>The Janeiad</i> Alley Re-Sourced guide • Paper and pen or laptops for writing • Whiteboard for group discussion • Graphic organizer (included) • Example review (included)
Activity Overview		
<p>NOTE: This activity has been aligned with TEKS and Universal Design for Learning. TEKS can be found at the end of this document. Check out the “Notes” section for ideas on how to expand activities or provide additional scaffolding.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction Two Truths and a Lie 2. Example What is a Review? 3. Guided Practice Group Discussion 4. Independent Practice Writing Your Review 5. Reflection Headlines 		
1. Introduction Two Truths and a Lie		5 minutes
<p>Activity Steps</p> <p>a) Engage students with a quick round of “Two Truths and a Lie” about <i>The Janeiad</i> (examples below, but feel free to use your own).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The setting is mostly Jane’s Brooklyn apartment (true). - There are more characters than actors in this production (true). - Jane has a son and a daughter (lie – she has two sons). 		<p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can enhance the discussion by asking: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What was your initial reaction to the play? - What would you rate this play (1 out of 10, 5 stars, certified fresh, etc.)?

2. Example What is a Review?	10 minutes
<p><i>Activity Steps</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Present a sample play review of a different production, highlighting its structure and key components. Discuss the elements of theater that critics typically analyze (acting, directing, technical aspects). Explain the balance between objective analysis and subjective opinion in a review. Introduce specific theater terminology relevant to reviewing <i>The Janeiad</i>. 	<p><i>Notes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A review of the Alley's production of <i>The World is Not Silent</i> (another world premiere play) from Houston Press is included in this document. You can see the article online here. A graphic organizer is included in this document. Encourage students to utilize this outline to organize their notes during this section and the guided practice. A common misconception to address: A play review is not just a summary of the plot or a list of likes and dislikes.
3. Guided Practice Group Discussion	25-30+ minutes
<p><i>Activity Steps</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Divide the class into small groups, each focusing on a different aspect of the <i>The Janeiad</i> production. Groups will brainstorm and discuss their assigned element (e.g., acting, set design, comedic timing). Each group will present their observations to the class, encouraging whole-class discussion. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guide students in crafting effective thesis statements for their reviews during the group discussion. 	<p><i>Notes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a visible timer while the students are creating and give them verbal warnings during group work. Structure outlines, sentence stems, and potential questions to answer in a review can be found in this resource from Austin Peay State University.

4. Independent Practice Writing Your Review	15-20+ minutes
<p><i>Activity Steps</i></p> <p>a) Students will begin drafting their 500-word play reviews.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of any provided templates and incorporation of class discussions. - Balance description, analysis, and personal opinion. <p><u>Extension Activity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students can create a visual companion piece to their review, such as a poster or digital presentation that highlights key points and incorporates relevant imagery from the production. Production photos can be found at https://www.alleytheatre.org/plays/the-janeiad/. 	<p><i>Notes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate to provide individual guidance and answer questions. • Offer multiple options for drafting: traditional writing, voice recording, or digital mind-mapping.
5. Reflection Headlines	5-10 minutes
<p><i>Activity Steps</i></p> <p>a) If your review had a headline, what would it be?</p> <p>b) Share with your neighbor.</p> <p>c) Who heard a headline from someone else that they thought was particularly good at getting to the core of things?</p>	<p><i>Notes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This activity is an Artful Thinking routine. You can learn more about this activity here and explore more thinking routines here.

TEKS			
TEKS – MS ELA	TEKS – HS ELA	TEKS – MS Theatre	TEKS – HS Theatre
<p>Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama (TEKS 110.5(b)(8)): Analyze and interpret the elements of drama, including character and plot.</p> <p>Writing/Writing Process (TEKS 110.5(b)(10)): Engage in the writing process to develop essays, storyboards, or scripts that articulate analyses of the play.</p> <p>Writing/Expository and Procedural Texts (TEKS 110.5(b)(11)): Write reflections focusing on themes, character dynamics, and personal responses to the performance.</p> <p>Speaking/Listening (TEKS 110.5(b)(12)): Participate in discussions and presentations, sharing work with peers.</p>	<p>Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama (TEKS 110.5(b)(8)): Analyze and interpret complex elements of drama, including character motivations and thematic depth.</p> <p>Writing/Writing Process (TEKS 110.5(b)(10)): Develop sophisticated written reflections through essays, storyboards, or scripts that demonstrate a deep understanding of the play.</p> <p>Writing/Expository and Procedural Texts (TEKS 110.5(b)(11)): Compose clear and coherent reflections that analyze themes, character dynamics, and personal insights regarding the performance.</p> <p>Speaking/Listening (TEKS 110.5(b)(12)): Engage in meaningful discussions and presentations, practicing advanced com. skills while providing peer feedback.</p>	<p>Theatre Arts I (TEKS 117.202(b)(1)): Analyze and interpret various forms of theatre, including the structure and elements of a play.</p> <p>Theatre Arts I (TEKS 117.202(b)(3)): Evaluate the roles of actors, directors, and playwrights, understanding their contributions to the theatrical experience.</p> <p>Theatre Arts I (TEKS 117.202(b)(4)): Demonstrate skills in performance and presentation through group activities and reflections on the play.</p> <p>Theatre Arts I (TEKS 117.202(b)(5)): Engage in collaborative projects, contributing to group discussions and providing feedback to peers.</p>	<p>Theatre Arts II, III, and IV (TEKS 117.202(b)(1)): Analyze and interpret complex forms of theatre.</p> <p>Theatre Arts II, III, and IV (TEKS 117.202(b)(3)): Evaluate the roles of actors, directors, and playwrights, understanding their contributions to the theatrical experience.</p> <p>Theatre Arts II, III, and IV (TEKS 117.202(b)(4)): Develop advanced skills in performance and presentation.</p> <p>Theatre Arts II, III, and IV (TEKS 117.202(b)(5)): Engage in collaborative projects, contributing to group discussions and providing feedback to peers.</p>

| **STAGE** |

***The World is Not Silent* at Alley Theatre is Full of Delightful Comedic Surprises and Poignant Moments**

ADA ALOZIE | MARCH 28, 2024 | 9:15AM

Houston audiences might remember Don X. Nguyen's, *The World is Not Silent* from the Alley All New Festival in 2022. The multilingual play about a father and son reconnecting through language after the father's recent hearing loss struck a chord at the festival. Two years later, in its World Premiere production, it more than strikes a chord. It hit all the right notes.

Several plays presented at the Alley All New Festival go on to be produced all across the country after having their world premiere at the Alley. ***Born With Teeth***, The 2022 Houston Theater Awards winner for Best Play/Production, is currently running at Asolo Rep and Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Don't be surprised if *The World is Not Silent* enjoys the same fate.



Tony Aidan Vo as Don and Long Nguyen as Dau in Alley Theatre's production of *The World Is Not Silent*.
Photo by Lynn Lane.

Don (Tony Aidan Vo), an amateur astrophotographer, moves from New York City to Lincoln, Nebraska to take care of his father, Dau (Long Nguyen), whose hearing is getting worse with age. Wanting to show Dau his willingness to connect, Don surprises his father with the American Sign Language he's been learning. Dau can not comprehend Don's signing and through a humorous stumble of misunderstandings, Don learns that Dau has learned Vietnamese Sign Language instead of American Sign Language. Dau is Vietnamese, after all. Why would he learn ASL?

Much to Don's chagrin, Dau invites the popular VSL YouTuber, LittleCricketLinh, to visit Nebraska and teach VSL to its Vietnamese community. Linh (Mai Le), also happens to be the longtime family friend Dau would like Don to marry.

Le gives a bubbly and bewitching performance as an outgoing free spirit- ever curious of the world around her. The lighthearted zeal for life and its wonders underlies each choice that Le makes. Vinh is introduced as a possible love interest for Don though never is her character contingent on Don's attention. She takes pleasure in both her independence and her gift for connecting with others.

She is the antithesis of Don who in his desire to connect with his father ends up isolating himself even further. Le's vivacity contrasts well with Vo's more understated performance. What Vo lacks in overt charisma he makes up for with astute contemplation. Vo's performance is most comfortable when he is alone with his telescope and the imaginary viewers on his YouTube channel. He expresses all the frustrations that burden him during these intermittent soliloquies. On stage by himself, Vo utters the soundless grievances that distance him from his father.



Long Nguyen as Dau and Mai Le as Linh in Alley Theatre's production of *The World Is Not Silent*. **Photo by Lynn Lane.**

Nguyen's shamelessly and humorously blunt portrayal of Dao brings steady laughter and bold insight about sacrifice and loss. With other characters, there's always a certain cheeky abandon to his interactions. It's when he's alone reflecting on his past life that his moments turn more serious. Nguyen's ability to unlock the humor in many moments is obvious. However, his pride as a Vietnamese man never wavers. His banter never undermines his seriousness as a person. He doesn't veer into caricature territory. The way he balances both is a testament to a script that doesn't pigeonhole the father and gives Dau space to be three-dimensional.

Under Marya Mazor's clear direction, each element of the production exists in harmony with

each other. Mikiko Suzuki Macadams' scenic design is flexible. Jennifer Fok's lighting relevantly fills in the space of the sparse set when necessary. With few set pieces, an indoor ping pong match and outdoor stargazing scene happen simultaneously due to Melanie Chen Cole's resonant sound design and Victoria Beauray Sagady's stellar projection design. Macadams' set proves the ideal playground for Cole's, Sagady's and Fok's contributions.

In theater, a lot of times projection design bores. Images are simply projected on screen to give a sense of place. But Sagady's projections immerse. Her designs evoke the sense of being in a planetarium or even at the airport. Her contributions enhance the visual storytelling. More than providing the audience with where the characters are, Sagady's projections are an invitation to be with the characters rather than to observe them.



Long Nguyen as Dau in Alley Theatre's production of *The World Is Not Silent*. **Photo by Lynn Lane.**

Mazor clearly delights in both the comedic and dramatic moments of this story. Each scene builds and flows seamlessly together. A tight 90 minutes, Mazor wastes no time in establishing who the characters are but intoxicatingly reveals what each character wants.

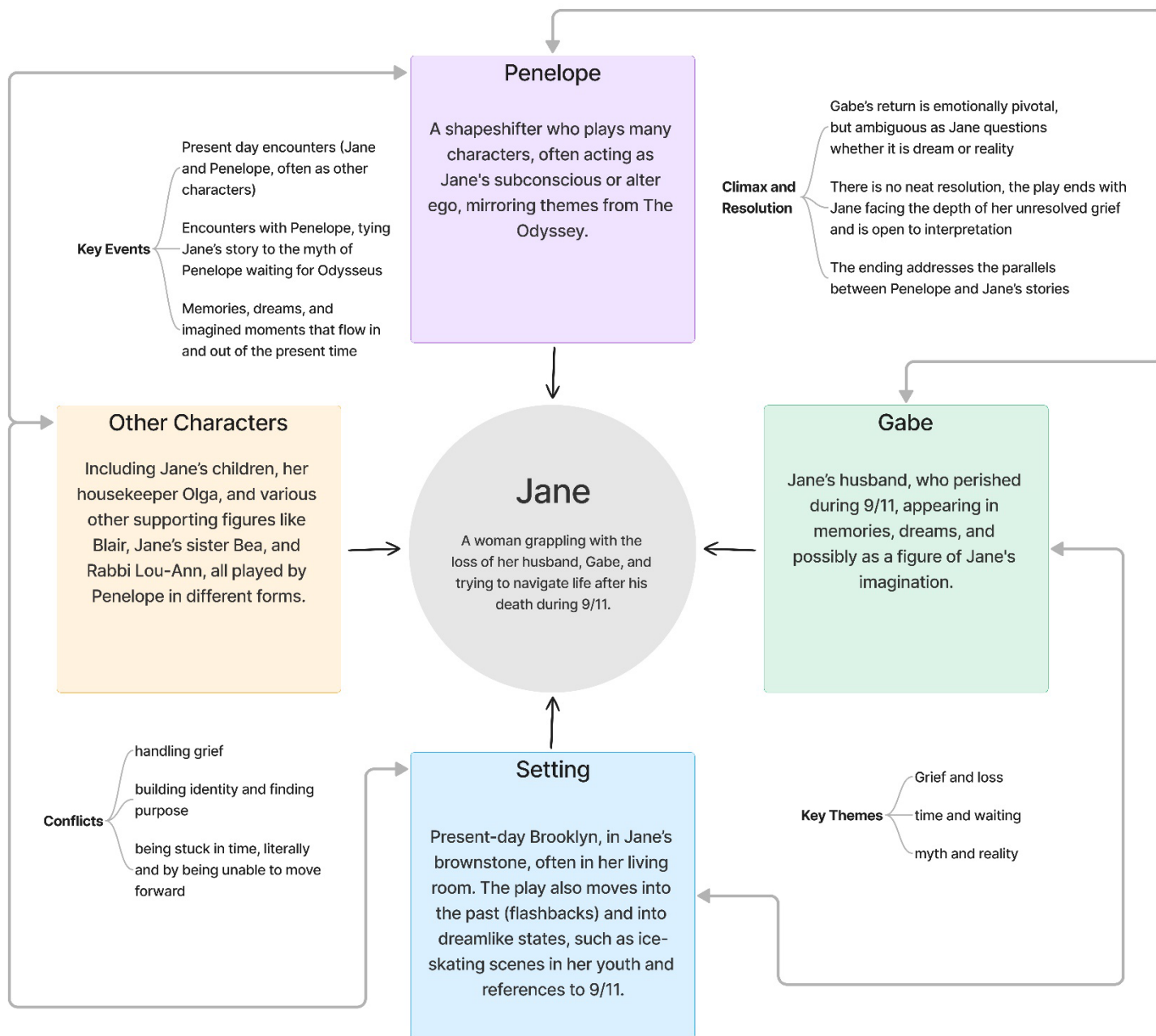
The World is Not Silent is similar to plays like Brian Friel's *Translations* or Julia Cho's *The Language Archive*. Plays that grapple with the inevitable paradox of the spoken word: how language- a unifying tongue- divides and ends up highlighting differences. While American English and Vietnamese are spoken in this play, it is the sign language in the play – the expression of language through silence – that adds an acutely dynamic sense of depth and

thought to the actions that take place on stage. For some reason, calling attention to silence makes everything so loud.

Beyond the spoken word, there are many ways that people express their affection to others. Some people are more reserved than others, but this play showcases all the ways that people say “I love you” without saying “I love you.” Learning a new language, preparing a new recipe, showing interest in someone's hobby are all expressions of love. But sometimes, at the end of the day, all people want to hear is “I love you.”

Performances of The World is Not Silent continue through April 14 at 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Thursdays, 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays, and 7 p.m. Sundays at Alley Theatre, 615 Texas. For more information call 713-220-5700 or visit alleytheatre.org. \$43-\$75.

The Janeiad Graphic Organizer



Notes & Personal Reflections