



TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE



Kinky Boots

Book by Harvey Fierstein

Music & Lyrics by Cyndi Lauper

**Based on the Miramax motion picture Kinky Boots, written by
Geoff Deane and Tim Firth**

2021.22 Season

Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage

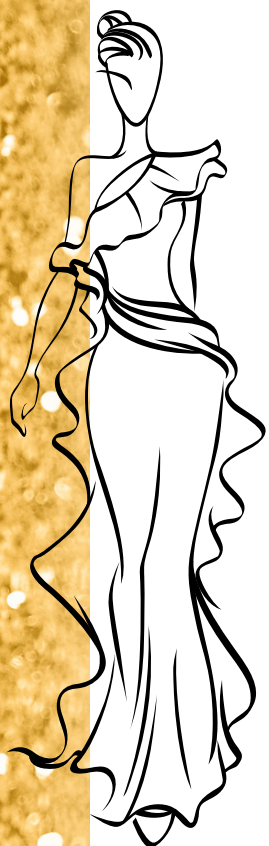
June 9, 2022–July 31, 2022

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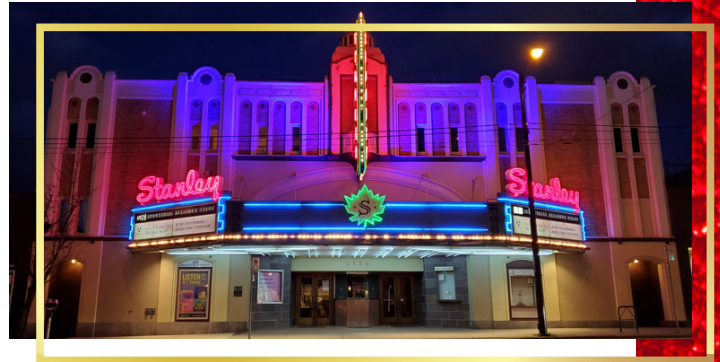


Welcome

This guide was created for teachers and students. It contains an overview of the play's story as well as informative resources and activities. The guide aims to provide background knowledge and critical perspectives on the play that will yield fruitful discussion and foster an understanding and appreciation of theatre arts.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for the guide, please contact our Education & Outreach Manager, Hila Graf, at hgraf@artsclub.com.

This study guide was written by Sydney Marino and Mikenzie Page.



About the Arts Club Theatre Company

The Arts Club of Vancouver was founded in 1958 as a private club for artists, musicians, and actors. It became the Arts Club Theatre in 1964 when the company opened its first stage in a converted gospel hall at Seymour and Davie Streets.

Now in its 58th season of producing professional live theatre in Vancouver, the Arts Club Theatre Company is a non-profit charitable organization that operates three theatres: the Granville Island Stage, the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage, and the Newmont Stage at the BMO Theatre Centre. Its popular productions range from musicals and contemporary comedies to new works and classics.

Learn more about the Arts Club Theatre Company at artsclub.com



Learning Objectives

After viewing *Kinky Boots* and working through the following activities, students will:

- Think critically and creatively about representations of gender, sexuality, and acceptance on stage.
- Identify how real-world topics and conflicts can drive a story.
- Reflect upon their own ideas of identity and acceptance, as well as the identity and transformation of the characters in the play.



BC Curriculum Connections



Drama 8–12

- Describe, interpret, and evaluate how performers and playwrights use dramatic structures, elements, and techniques to create and communicate ideas
- Develop and refine performance skills in a variety of contexts
- Intentionally select and combine dramatic elements and conventions

Social Studies 10–12

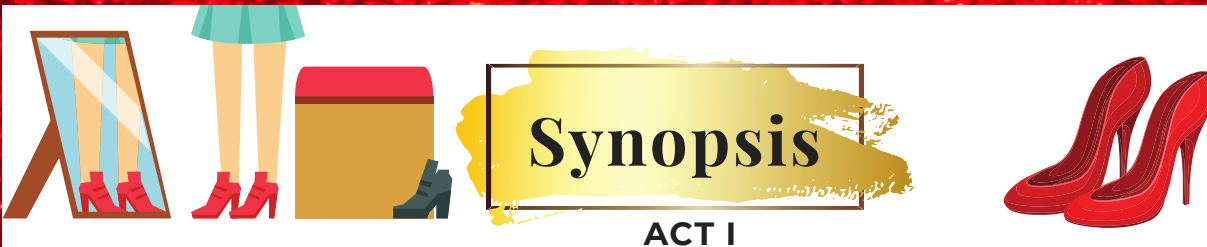
- Assess the significance of people, places, events, phenomena, ideas, or developments
- Explain different perspectives on past and present people, places, issues, and events, and distinguish between worldviews of the past or present

Creative Writing 10–12

- Respond to text in personal, creative, and critical ways
- Evaluate how text structures, literary elements, techniques, and devices enhance and shape meaning and impact
- Use writing and design processes to plan, develop, and create engaging and meaningful texts for a variety of purposes and audiences

Art Studio 10–12

- Express meaning, intent, and emotion through visual art
- Recognize and evaluate design choices in artistic creations
- Intentionally select and combine materials, processes, and technologies to convey ideas
- Express ideas, emotions, and values through art making



ACT I

The show opens on Price & Son Shoes, where Mr. Price is trying to convince his young son Charlie that the shoe factory is his future. Elsewhere, a boy, Young Lola, tries on a pair of high heel shoes with excitement, until he is shut down by his father. Time passes, and Charlie is now in his twenties. His father tries to persuade him to stay with Price & Son Shoes, but Charlie insists on moving to London with his fiancée Nicola, where they will be taking jobs in real estate marketing. Charlie and Nicola arrive in London and, just as they are getting settled in, Charlie gets called back to Northampton with news of his father's death.

Charlie returns to Price & Son Shoes. When he arrives, he learns that they've overstocked the shoes with no one to sell them to. Charlie heads to a pub in London, where he tries to sell some of his stock to Harry, a businessman and previous buyer, but Harry warns that it is only a temporary solution. As Charlie leaves the bar, he notices a group of hooligans harassing a woman, and steps in to protect her. The woman tries to defend herself, and accidentally hits Charlie in the chin with the heel of her shoe, knocking him unconscious. Charlie comes to in the dressing room of the Blue Angel Club, and realizes that the woman he was trying to defend is actually Lola, the drag queen headliner of the club. Charlie offers to fix her shoe and she notes that it's cheaply made, remarking that it's impossible to find "a shoe that can stand up to [her]." Lola goes on to perform a show, and after watching briefly, Charlie returns to Northampton.

Back at the factory, Charlie half-heartedly begins laying off his employees. A factory worker, Lauren, suggests that Charlie find an "under-served niche market and [aim] to fill the void" in order to save the company. Charlie gets a call from Nicola, who wants him to leave the factory and return to London, but instead, he gets an idea to save Price & Son Shoes.

Charlie takes Lauren to the Blue Angel Club to meet Lola, where he explains his plan—to create heels for drag queens that will support a man's weight and to debut them at the upcoming international shoe exhibition in Milan. Lola agrees to being measured for Charlie's sample pair, as long as she gets to keep them.

Synopsis

Charlie creates his boot and proudly presents it to Lola, who is horrified by the boring burgundy shoe. She emphasizes the excitement that red stiletto heels inspire and, getting the support of the women in the factory, orders Charlie to make another. She draws up a pair of glittery boots, and with some creative thinking from the factory manager, Charlie realizes that they can manufacture it. Charlie begs Lola to stay and help them, offering her the position of designer, and she eventually accepts.

The factory manufactures the shoes, and Charlie is in charge. He takes Lauren off the production line and offers her a position to work with him on the Milan show. She watches him work and realizes that she is falling for him.



When Lola enters the factory the next day, she's dressed in men's clothing, looking uncomfortable. She quickly locks herself in the washroom, and as Charlie tries to persuade her to come out, she opens up to him. Lola tells him that her father trained her to be a boxer, but he cut off their relationship when she showed up to a fight in a dress. Charlie and Lola have a moment of connection, realizing that they have had similar difficulties with their dads. Nicola shows up at the factory with her boss Bailey, a real estate agent. He wants to buy the factory and develop it into condos, and he reveals that Charlie's father planned to sell the factory. Charlie tries to convince Nicola that he's found a solution to save Price & Son Shoes, but she won't listen. Charlie enters the factory as Lola reveals the new shoes—they're fantastic. Charlie, Lola, and the factory workers celebrate their achievement, looking towards the future with hope.

ACT II

As Lola works in the factory, Don and some other workers try to intimidate her. She fights back, teaming up with the women in the factory to explain that a woman would prefer someone like her over someone like Don. Lola presents Don with a challenge: he'll write down what he thinks she needs to do to be a real man, and she'll do the same for him. They'll do whatever is written.





Synopsis



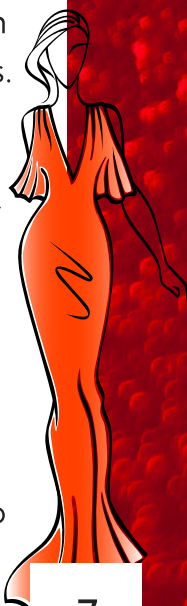
Don challenges Lola to a boxing match. Upon hearing the news, a horrified Charlie rushes to the fight worried that, as a trained boxer, Lola will destroy Don. Lola dominates Don in the fight, but ultimately lets him throw the winning punch, later revealing to him that she didn't want him to "walk into the factory tomorrow and feel disrespected." Lola then hands Don her challenge, which simply states: "accept someone for who they are."

Back at the factory, Charlie realizes that there's been a miscalculation, and they won't have enough money to make it to Milan. Lola suggests letting the drag queens from the Blue Angel Club model the shoes to save on costs and display the shoes' durability, but Charlie disagrees. He works himself up, nitpicking at the shoes and demanding the workers to keep remaking them. Nicola walks in during the chaos, upset at Charlie for mortgaging their apartment without asking her first. They get in a fight, and she leaves without him.

Lola tries to discuss her idea for the Milan show again, and Charlie lashes out at her, telling her: "[if] you want to be treated like a man; then start acting like one." Lola leaves, hurt and angry. Charlie tells the factory workers to redo the boots again, and they all walk out.

Charlie struggles with who he has become, and Lauren stays behind to comfort him. She shows him the factory, full of workers once again. Lauren reveals that Don persuaded everyone to rip up a week's pay cheque and return to the factory to finish the boots. When Charlie questions this, Lauren remarks that Don followed Lola's advice, and accepted Charlie for who he is. Charlie and Lauren head to Milan. Charlie calls Lola and leaves a heartfelt apology message, but hears nothing back. Meanwhile, Lola performs a moving song at a nursing home. When she leaves, she leans down to one of the spectators in a wheelchair, her father, and says goodbye.

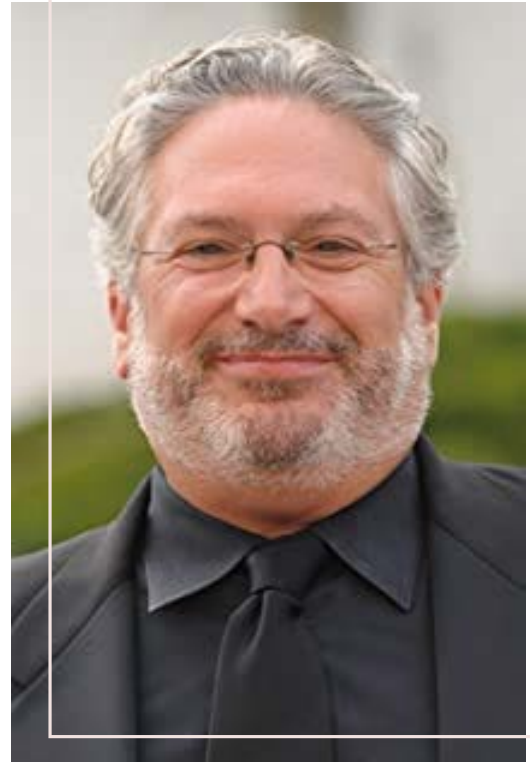
Backstage in Milan, there is no one to model the boots on the runway, so Charlie opts to do it himself. He puts on the boots and wobbles down the catwalk in his boxers, eventually falling to the ground. Luckily, Lola appears behind him with the Blue Angels to save the show. They walk the runway to wild applause. Lauren and Charlie share a kiss, and the whole company celebrates, modelling the shoes in song.



About the Playwright

About Harvey Fierstein (book)

Harvey Fierstein is an American actor, playwright, and gay rights activist, best known for his acting work and contributions to musical theatre. He was born in 1954 in Brooklyn, New York and graduated from the Pratt Institute and soon found himself immersed as a writer and an actor in the New York theatre scene. Fierstein is best known for his Tony-award winning roles in *Hairspray* and the *Torch Song Trilogy*. He is also an accomplished musical theatre book writer with works like *Kinky Boots*, *Newsies*, *La Cage aux Folles*, and more under his belt. Fierstein worked in drag in the beginnings of his career and as one of the first openly gay celebrities, has changed the way theatre explores and voices queer stories.

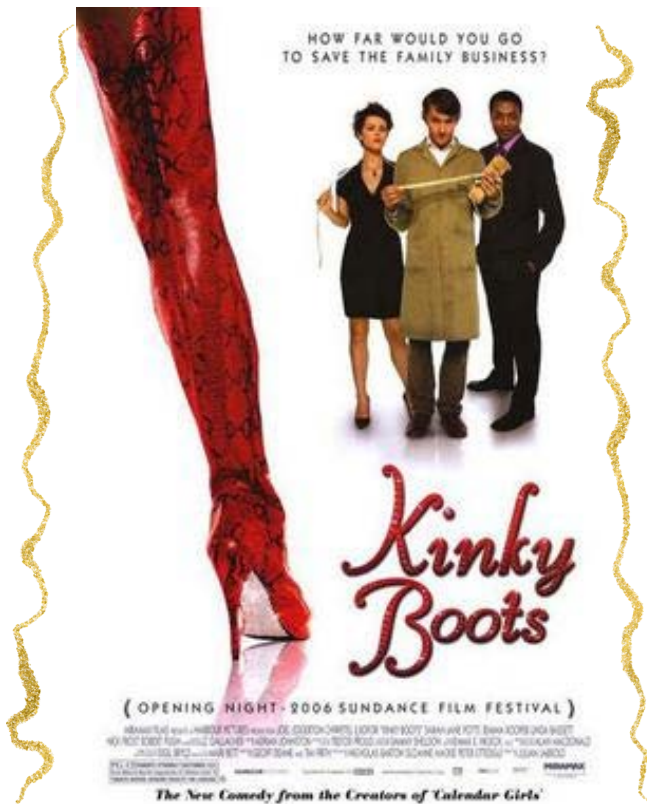


About Cyndi Lauper (composer)

Cyndi Lauper is an American songwriter, singer, actress, and activist, famous for revolutionizing the role of women in music, her humanitarian work, and her hit songs such as "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun," "Time After Time", and "True Colors". For *Kinky Boots*, Lauper became the first solo woman to win the Tony Award for Best Original Score. Lauper has been an advocate for LGBTQ+ rights throughout her career and co-founded the True Colors tour for human rights and True Colors United, a non-profit organization providing housing for LGBTQ+ youth. Lauper has been nominated for and won several awards and has sold over 50 billion records worldwide.

About Kinky Boots

Kinky Boots, the dazzling larger than life musical is actually based on a true story! It is based on the real life struggle of Steve Pateman in Northamptonshire, England, and his attempt to save his family owned shoe factory. Steve joined the factory in 1979 and became managing director in 1993. Due to deflating sales, Steve brilliantly pivoted after a store selling footwear for drag queens asked if he could manufacture heeled boots in men's sizes. This story inspired the 2005 film of the same name and has now skyrocketed the hit musical to stardom in its sparkling red boots.





Character List



Charlie Price: A young man unsure about what to do with his future. He tries to please others and do the right thing.

Young Charlie: Charlie Price at seven years old. Curious and uncertain.

Lola/Simon: A bold and vibrant drag queen. A confident performer exuding power on and offstage.

Young Lola/Simon: Lola at ten years old. Excited to wear high heels.

Nicola: Charlie's girlfriend. Focused on her career and her future.

Lauren: A determined factory worker

Don: An aggressively macho factory worker. Lola's rival.

Pat: An office manager ready to have some fun. Interested in Lola.

Trish: A long-time factory worker at Price & Son Shoes.

George: The factory manager at Price & Son Shoes.

The Angels: Bold drag performers at the Blue Angel Nightclub.

Mr. Price: Charlie Price's father. At the beginning of the show he is the proud owner of Price & Son Shoes.

Simon Sr.: Lola's father. A harsh, unforgiving man.

Harry: A young businessman who has previously done business with Price & Son Shoes. Self-assured and successful.

Richard Bailey: A successful real estate agent, and Nicola's boss.

Ensemble: Various factory workers, club patrons, and community members.





Discussion Questions

Pre-Show Discussion Questions

- Have you seen any live performances on stage before? What are your expectations about what you will see on stage in this production?
- Are you familiar with Cyndi Lauper or her music? How does this knowledge influence what you think you will see in this play?
- What do you know about drag queens and drag in popular culture? How do you think this will influence your view of the play?



Post-Show Discussion Questions



- Think about a time that you experienced acceptance from someone else or you changed your opinion on someone? What caused this? How do you think acceptance/personal growth can be shown onstage?
- What ideas or themes did this show make you think about?
- How did the technical elements of the show contribute to the story? How did the music and genre/style contribute to the story?
- What is the impact of sharing diverse stories on stage? How does queer stories on stage empower the whole LGBTQ+ community?

Warm Up 1: Walk the Runway

(RECOMMENDED FOR DRAMA CLASSES GRADES 8-12)



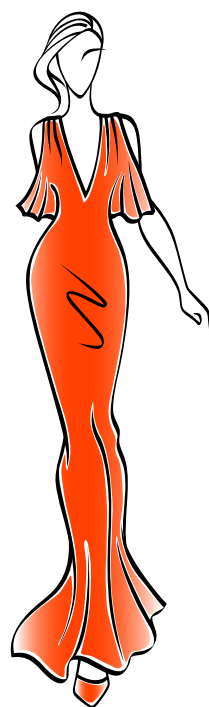
Rationale: At the end of Kinky Boots Charlie, Lola, and the Blue Angels walk the runway, showcasing their dazzling boots, as well as their big personalities. This warm up uses the runway format to let students explore the creation of a new character and present them to the class.

- **Explanation:** Students will walk around the space, finding the physicality of their character. The teacher can call out prompts to help the students find this character.
 - Ex.: What body part does your character lead with? Try leading with your nose, your chest, your stomach.
 - How does your character walk? Light or heavy? Quick or slow?
 - Where is your character going? What do they want?
- Once students have found a physicality, they can find their voice. Students can use one word or sound to greet each other as they pass by.
- Once students have created their characters, they can form an audience and “walk the runway” one at a time.

- To walk the runway, students will enter as their character and walk down the imaginary runway with their distinct character physicality. They can walk unapologetically, showcasing their character to the class. When they reach the end, they can strike a pose in character, and share their sound or word. Then, the next student will take their turn.

Warm Up Debrief:

- How did the physicality of your character affect your choices about their personality and voice?
- How did it feel to walk the runway as your character? Did your character like being on the runway? How did this affect your walk?

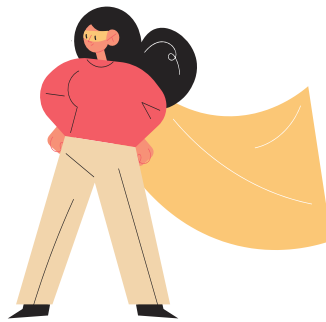


Activity 1: Overcoming Obstacles

(RECOMMENDED FOR DRAMA CLASSES GRADES 8-12)

Rationale: In Kinky Boots, nothing comes easy for Charlie. At the beginning of the musical, Charlie comes up with a plan to save Price & Son Shoes, but he is constantly coming up against new challenges (e.g. Pressure to turn the factory into condos, not having enough money to get to Milan, etc.). Just when he thinks he has things under control, something goes wrong, and this is what keeps the story engaging.

These obstacles make the story more interesting than if Charlie's original plan worked immediately, and they show the audience his true character. Obstacles are what give us the story. This activity asks students to navigate obstacles thrown at them in a scene, in order to make interesting character choices while reaching for their goal.



Explanation:

- Each student will write down one or two obstacles on pieces of paper, fold them in half and put them in a box.
- The obstacles can be realistic or ridiculous. For example:
 - There is now a big storm
 - Suddenly you're feeling sick
 - You realize that someone stole your wallet
 - You are being chased by an army of frogs!
- The class will give suggestions of characters, location, and a problem, and two students will start improvising a scene
- For example, a bus driver is trying to get a rowdy passenger off the bus.

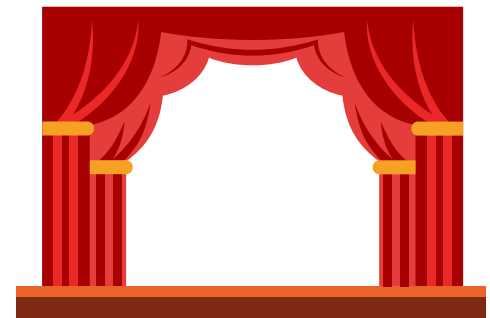
Explanation (cont'd)

- At random points in the scene, the teacher will pull out a new obstacle from the box and read it out. That is now happening in the scene, and the characters must deal with it.
 - In the bus example, maybe the obstacle pulled is that the power goes out. How would this change the characters' goals and how they interact?
- After three obstacles are pulled, the students can find a conclusion to the scene



Activity Debrief:

- What did you find challenging about adding the obstacles? What did you find fun?
- Did you learn anything new about your characters by seeing their responses to these obstacles?
- How did the obstacles affect the direction of the overall scene? Were you still able to reach your original goal?



Activity 2: Authentically Me

(RECOMMENDED FOR ENGLISH
LANGUAGE ARTS AND VISUAL ARTS
CLASSES GRADES 10-12)

Rationale: In Kinky Boots, Charlie and others are inspired by Lola's strength to authentically be herself. Through this inspiration, Charlie and others experience personal growth through the act of acceptance. In this exercise students will explore what it means to reflect on their own authenticity and what it means to accept others for who they are and who they hope to be.

Explanation:

Part One

- Announce to the class that they are going to become fashion designers, starting with designing a pair of shoes. Explain that the challenge is to design a costume/look they feel authentically represents who they are. They can draw, paint, create an online collage, etc. (Art supplies will need to be provided).
- Students will start by creating a "base" shoe (sneakers, heels, flats, boots, etc). They can trace this shoe, print it out, cut out a photo from a magazine, etc.

- From there students will add 3 special things to the shoe that they feel also represents themselves. (colored laces, wings, a unique design, etc.)
- Continuing from that, participants can then move on to designing their own socks, pants, shirts, dresses, etc! Whatever their heart desires.
- As an added activity, participants can add special skills to their clothing. (e.g their shoes are able to tap dance or run fast, their shorts are good at soccer, etc)



What makes you ,
"you"?

Part Two

- Have the students pair up to discuss their creations and offer input. The creator of the design becomes the “director” and their partner is the “supporter” offering suggestions. The creator of the design is the final decision maker. The pair will then switch so the roles are reversed and have the same discussion about the other partner’s creation.
- Allow time for the students to make any edits, inspired by the other partner’s thoughts.



Part Three

- Once they have finalized their outfit, students will be invited to write a poem, paragraph, monologue, short story, quote, etc, about their final design.
- Once these tasks are finished, hang the designs and their written rationales around the room and invite students to silently observe what others have created.
- After everyone has had time to look at others’ creations, discuss what stood out to them and why.



Activity Debrief:

- What challenges did you face while trying to authentically represent yourself through design? What made it easier?
- What stood out to you about other designs? What stood out to you about your own?
- How do you think self-reflection can lead to acceptance of others' world-views/lived experiences?





Activity 3: Drag Culture and History— Research and Discussion



(RECOMMENDED FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSES GRADES 10-12)



Rationale:

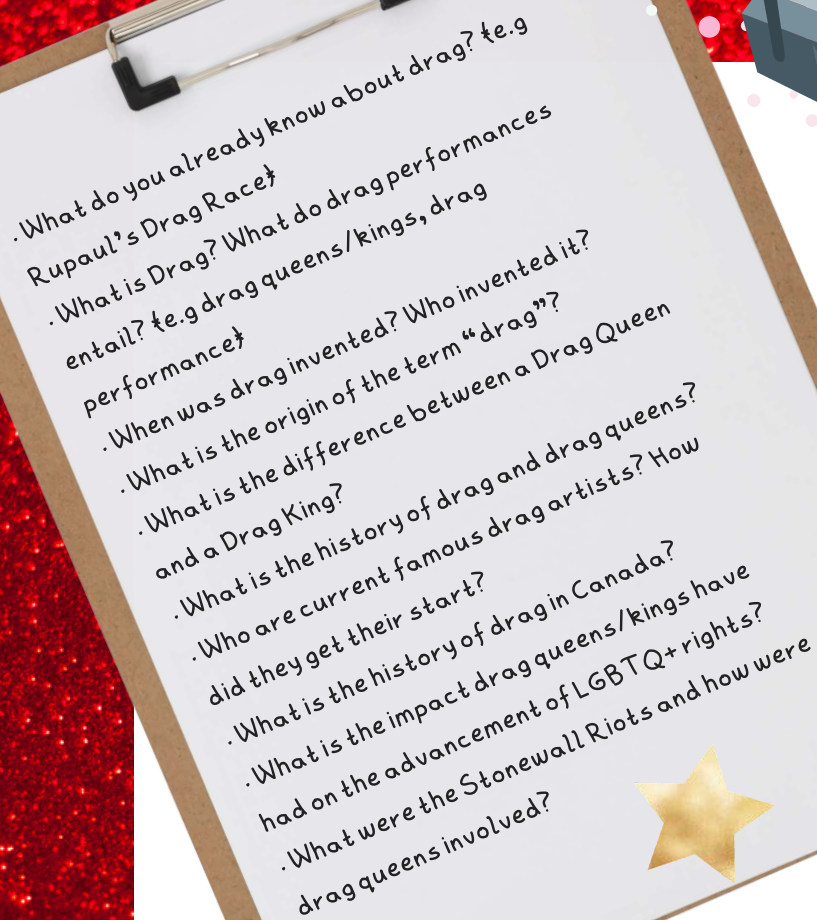
In *Kinky Boots*, Charlie saves his father's shoe factory by creating shoes made specifically for drag queens. Throughout the entire show, drag and drag performance are at the centre of this musical. With this exercise students will learn the history of drag and drag culture and explore LGBTQ+ history and how drag has been an essential part of that history.

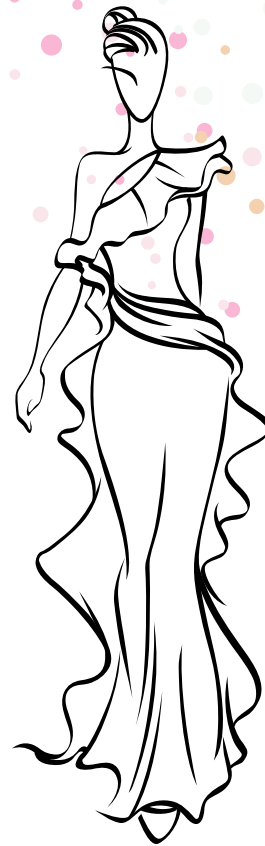


Explanation:

- Split the class into groups and have them research the following questions about drag culture and history. Students can be assigned multiple questions, depending on how many students you have, to even out the workload. This activity is meant to happen over one class and students will need access to a computer/library to research. Students can be allotted half of the class time to research/create.



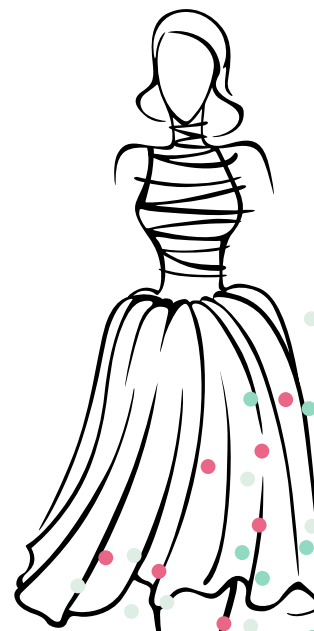
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- What do you already know about drag? (e.g. RuPaul's Drag Race)
 - What is Drag? What do drag performances entail? (e.g. drag queens/kings, drag performance)
 - When was drag invented? Who invented it?
 - What is the origin of the term "drag"?
 - What is the difference between a Drag Queen and a Drag King?
 - What is the history of drag and drag queens?
 - Who are current famous drag artists? How did they get their start?
 - What is the history of drag in Canada?
 - What is the impact drag queens/kings have had on the advancement of LGBTQ+ rights?
 - What were the Stonewall Riots and how were drag queens involved?



- Once students have finished researching, have them create a skit, poem, monologue, drawing, collage, etc to explain what they learned and the impact of it. Once all the groups have presented their pieces, the class can discuss what they learned.

Activity Debrief:

- What challenges did you face while researching these questions? What was the most interesting part about drag culture?
- Why do you think drag as an art form has lasted over 200 years?
- What do you think is the general public's response to drag in our current age?



RESOURCES



It takes courage and support to grow into who you are. You don't have to do it alone.

If you are in immediate danger or crisis, please call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room.

QMUNITY



BC's Queer, Trans, and Two Spirit Resource Centre.
Youth Support groups, referrals, and youth services.
qmunity.ca

Accept someone for
who they are
-Lola, Kinky Boots

KIDS HELP PHONE



Mental Health support. Available 24/7
[1-800-668-6868](tel:1-800-668-6868)

YOUTH IN BC DISTRESS LINE



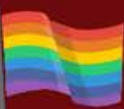
Call [604-872-3311](tel:604-872-3311) or [1-866-872-0113](tel:1-866-872-0113) (toll-free) to speak with counsellors and trained volunteers who are committed to helping youth in crisis. Available 24 hours a day.

THE TREVOR PROJECT

The **Trevor Project** is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ+ youth.

The Trevor Lifeline: 866-488-7386.

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now/>



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Sources

Biographies

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Harvey-Fierstein>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyndi_Lauper

Curriculum Connections

<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/>

About the Playwright

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/evarinaldiphotography/33326507463/>

Photo by Dimitrios Kambouris - wireimage.com

About Kinky Boots

<https://www.bossinboots.co.uk/contact>

