

Uhuru – Exploring Themes

Post-Show Activity for Grades 9-12

Goals

- Students will identify and analyze key themes from *Uhuru*.
- Students will connect themes to characters, plot, theatrical choices, & social context.
- Students will engage in [Artful Thinking](#) routines to practice critical thinking.

Students will demonstrate their understanding through group discussion and artistic response.

NOTE: This activity has been aligned with TEKS and [Universal Design for Learning](#). TEKS can be found at the end of this document.

Materials Needed

- Exploring Themes Student Handout (included, numbered separately for printing).
- Includes Themes, Outline, and Theme Representation Planner.
- Pencils or pens.
- Optional: Colored pencils, markers, or other art supplies.
- Optional: digital tools for audio-visual presentation options.
- Optional: Post-show themes questions on the [Alley Re-Sourced](#) guide for *Uhuru*.

Step 1

Introduce the Themes

1. Define the concept: Briefly discuss how a theme is a larger idea a play explores rather than a one-word topic. Introduce five possible themes:
 - a. Belonging and Identity
 - b. Freedom and Self-Definition
 - c. Colonization, Ownership, and Cultural Power
 - d. Privilege, Labor, and Economic Inequality
 - e. Good Intentions vs Impact
2. Distribute the student handout: Give students the included Theme, Outline, and Planner.
3. Encourage them to organize notes during discussion and group work.
4. Brainstorm as a class:

- a. Ask students to name other themes they observed and connect each idea to a specific moment or theatrical choice.

Step 2

Assign and Discuss a Theme

5. Form groups: Assign each group one theme from the play.
6. Discuss the theme by considering:
 - a. Key moments that develop or complicate the theme.
 - b. Characters who understand the theme differently.
 - c. How the changing altitude, weather, and distance from the summit affect the characters.
 - d. How humor makes difficult ideas easier or harder to confront.
 - e. How the invisible porters shape the audience's understanding of labor and power.

Universal Design for Learning tip: Bridge students' everyday language with academic phrasing. For example, "Sprite wants to prove he belongs, but he keeps deciding who else does not" can become "The play explores how a search for belonging can reproduce exclusion."

Step 3

Create a Representation of the Theme

7. **Clarify the goal:** Explain that each group will create a representation that communicates:
 - a. The group's interpretation of its theme.
 - b. At least two moments, characters, or dialogue they recall from the play that support the interpretation.
 - c. A connection, contrast, or change that helps the audience understand the theme.
8. **Select a format:** Have groups choose one of the formats described on the student handout:
 - a. A poster, collage, or mood board combining lines or moments from the play, visuals, colors, words, and symbols to show different perspectives and explain the theme.
 - b. A route map tracing how the theme develops or changes as the hikers climb.

- c. Recreating a stage picture from the show, showing two characters' conflicting views of the same idea. Students may perform their version of the moment or represent it through a drawing or staged arrangement of available objects.
 - 9. **Plan before creating:** Direct groups to complete the planning section on the student handout.
 - a. Students may write, sketch, list, or discuss their responses before recording their group's ideas.
 - 10. **Divide responsibilities:** Encourage students to contribute according to their interests and strengths.
 - a. Possible contributions include finding evidence, developing ideas, writing, drawing, organizing materials, creating movement, narrating, or presenting.
 - b. Students may share responsibilities, and no student should be required to perform or speak publicly.
 - 11. **Check progress:** Display a visible timer and give verbal time warnings.
 - a. Midway through the work period, ask groups to use the checklist on the student handout to review their progress.
 - 12. **Keep expectations consistent:** Remind students that every format will be evaluated using the same criteria: a clear interpretation of the theme, relevant evidence from the play, thoughtful creative choices, and effective communication.
 - a. Artistic skill and performance ability are not being evaluated.
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Step 4

Share and Reflect

- 13. Have each group present its work, explain its theme, and identify the evidence and complication it chose.
- 14. During presentations or a gallery walk, use See-Think-Wonder:
 - a. **See:** What details do you notice?
 - b. **Think:** What interpretation do those details suggest? What makes you say that?
 - c. **Wonder:** What question about the theme or character remains?
- 15. Conclude by asking:
 - a. Which theme changed most between the beginning and end of the play?
 - b. Which character's understanding changed, and which character resisted change?

TEKS

Theatre, High School Levels I-IV

- Analyze and interpret characters, relationships, themes, and dramatic literature; collaborate to express ideas through writing, visual art, discussion, and performance.

English Language Arts and Reading, English I-IV

- Analyze complex characters, cultural and historical contexts, themes, and moral dilemmas; support interpretations with evidence from the text and performance.