

Uhuru – First Impressions

Pre-Show Activity for Grades 9-12

Goals

- Students will analyze character descriptions from *Uhuru*.
- Students will identify personal connections and points of interest within these characters.
- Students will engage in [Artful Thinking](#) routines to deepen perspective-taking.
- Students will demonstrate their understanding through multiple means of expression.

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

- First Impressions Student Handout (included, numbered separately for printing).
 - Pencils or pens.
 - Optional: Colored pencils, markers, or other art supplies.
 - Optional: digital tools for audio-visual presentation options.
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Step 1

Meet the Characters and Choose a Focus

- Give students a brief, spoiler-free introduction to *Uhuru*, including its setting on Mount Kilimanjaro and the group's shared goal of reaching the summit.
- Review the "Who's Who" handout. Point out that each profile includes:
 - A brief description of the character
 - What they value
 - Why they are on the mountain
 - A key trait
 - The possible flip side of that trait
- Invite each student to choose one character they are curious about. Students do not need to choose the character who seems most similar to them.
- Give students time to examine the character's photograph and profile independently or with a partner.

Universal Design for Learning tip: Provide digital and printed copies of the profiles. Students may read independently, listen as the descriptions are read aloud, use text-to-speech, or review the information with a partner.

Step 2

Explore Your First Impression

- Ask students to use the photograph and profile to explore the prompts below.
- Students may respond by writing, drawing, diagramming, speaking, recording, gesturing, or arranging words and images. They may use one response mode throughout or choose a different mode for each prompt.
 - A handout from the Project Zero Thinking Routine Toolbox is included as an option for students to record their findings.
- Remind students to support each response with at least one detail from the character's profile.
 - **Same:** What value, quality, goal, or experience might you share with this character?
 - **Different:** What important difference do you notice between you and this character?
 - **Connect:** How does something about this character connect to your life, another story, someone you know, your community, or the wider world?
 - **Engage:** If you met this character, what would you want to ask, tell, show, or do with them?

Universal Design for Learning tip: Personal disclosure should not be required. For "Connect," students may make a personal, text-to-text, community, or real-world connection.

Step 3

Create Your Response

- Have students combine their thinking into a response that communicates how they currently see themselves in relation to the character.
- A student handout with further instructions is included. Each response can be created with plain paper and/or simple supplies. Students may choose from the following modes of expression:
 - Write: Create a journal entry, letter, short poem, or brief conversation from the point of view of your chosen character.

- Visualize: Create a sketch, comic, collage, character map, or symbolic portrait that represents your chosen character and your response to them.
 - Perform: Create a pose, tableau, short monologue, mime, or brief scene inspired by your chosen character.
 - Record or Produce: Create a short audio reflection, video diary, interview, podcast segment, or digital character profile.
 - Select or Arrange: Choose words, phrases, symbols, or images that represent your chosen character. Arrange them under the headings **Same, Different, Connect, and Engage**.
 - Students may combine modes—for example, drawing a symbolic image and recording a short explanation.
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Step 4

Share and Reflect

- Offer students a choice in how—or whether—they share their work:
 - Exchange responses with a partner
 - Discuss in a small group
 - Participate in a physical or digital gallery walk
 - Submit an anonymous response for the teacher to share
 - Present to the class
 - Submit privately to the teacher
- Invite students to notice how different classmates can form different impressions from the same character profile.
- Conclude with a brief reflection:
 - What detail most influenced your first impression?
 - Did another person's response change or complicate your thinking?
 - What are you now curious to discover about this character during the play?
 - Students may complete the reflection through a quick-write, sketch-note, audio recording, partner conversation, gesture, or digital response.

TEKS

Fine Arts – Theatre, High School Levels I–IV

- Level I – 2(B): Define creativity as it relates to personal expression.
- Level II – 2(B): Explore creativity as it relates to self and ensembles
- Level III – 2(B): Analyze creativity as it relates to self and ensemble and its effect on audience.
- Level III – 2(C): Analyze characters from various genres and styles, describing physical, intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions.
- Level IV – 2(B): Demonstrate creativity as it relates to self and ensemble and its effect on audience.
- Level IV – 2(C): Analyze and interpret characters from various genres and styles, describing physical, intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions.

English Language Arts and Reading – English I–IV

- 4(F): Make inferences and use evidence to support understanding.
- 5(A): Describe personal connections to a variety of sources, including self-selected texts.
- 5(E): Interact with sources in meaningful ways, such as notetaking, annotating, freewriting, or illustrating.
- 5(I): Reflect on and adjust responses when valid evidence warrants.
- 5(C): Use text evidence and original commentary to support a comprehensive (I), interpretive (II), analytic (III), or evaluative (IV) response.

Uhuru – First Impressions

Student Handout

Select Your Response

Choose one way to explore your character. **Use the boxes on the next page to plan or create your response.** Include at least one detail from the character profile.

Write

- Create a journal entry, letter, or short poem from the character's point of view.

Visualize

- Create a sketch, comic, collage, or symbolic portrait using images and words.

Perform

- Create a pose, short monologue, mime, or scene. Use the boxes to plan what you will show.

Record

- Create a one-minute audio or video diary, interview, or "Meet the Climber" introduction. Use the boxes to plan what you will say.

Select & Arrange

- Choose or create words, phrases, symbols, or images and place them in the boxes on the next page:
 - **Same:** What do you share?
 - **Different:** What sets you apart?
 - **Connect:** Who or what do they remind you of?
 - **Engage:** What would you ask, say, show, or do?

Uhuru – First Impressions

Student Handout

Same | Different | Connection | Engage

Same

In what ways might this person and you be similar?

Different

In what ways might you and this person be different?

Connect

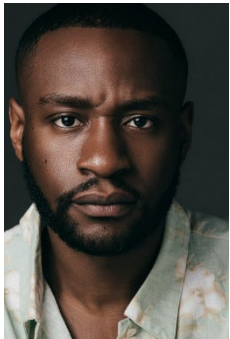
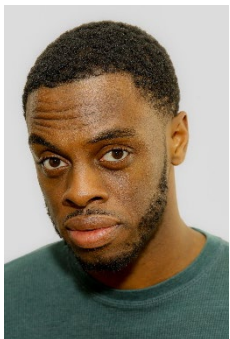
In what ways might the person and you be connected as human beings?

Engage

What would you like to ask, say, or do with the person if you had the chance?

The “Same, Different, Connect, Engage” thinking routine was developed by Project Zero, a research center at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Who's Who in Alley's *Uhuru*

	Mshale (Michael Oloyede) Mshale is an experienced Tanzanian guide who leads the group's expedition up Mount Kilimanjaro. • Values: Opportunity and independence. • Why he's on the mountain: Guiding climbers is his job. • Key trait: Practical. • The flip side: His ambition can make him idealize life elsewhere.
	Sprite (Oghenero Gbaje) Sprite is a Tanzanian American hoping to strengthen his connection to Tanzania and understand where he belongs. • Values: Heritage and belonging. • Why he's on the mountain: To reconnect with Tanzania and "decolonize" the climb. • Key trait: Outspoken. • The flip side: His strong convictions can make him quick to judge.
	Henry (David Gow) Henry is a white American missionary who has lived in Tanzania for years and considers it his home. • Values: Faith and service • Why he's on the mountain: To complete the climb with Frannie • Key trait: Confident • The flip side: His confidence can become stubbornness when he is challenged
	Frannie (Skyler Sinclair) Frannie is a white American missionary who has built a life in Tanzania with her husband, Henry. • Values: Faith and connection • Why she's on the mountain: She is on a spiritual journey • Key trait: Optimistic • The flip side: Her optimism can keep her from recognizing uncomfortable realities