

Uhuru - One Mountain, Many Meanings

Pre-Show Activity for Grades 9-12

Goals

- Students will build background knowledge about Mount Kilimanjaro and its connection to the world of *Uhuru*.
- Students will consider how the same place can shape different perspectives, choices, and experiences.
- Students will practice observation, perspective-taking, and evidence-based interpretation through [Artful Thinking](#) routines.
- 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

- Student Handout (included, numbered separately for printing).
- Context Cards with images (included).
- [Alley Re-Sourced](#) guide for *Uhuru*.
- Pencils or pens.
- Optional: colored pencils, markers, or digital tools for audio-visual response options.

Step 1

Introduce the Context

- Give students a brief, spoiler-free entry point: *Uhuru* takes place during a climb on the Machame Route of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. Do not introduce the characters or reveal what happens during the climb.
- Distribute the Context Cards and/or show a picture of Mount Kilimanjaro.
- Use [See Think Wonder](#) to engage the students with the images:
 - **See:** What do you notice? Describe only what is visible or stated.
 - **Think:** What might these details suggest about this place and the people connected to it?
 - **Wonder:** What questions come to mind?
- Record observations and questions so the class can revisit them after the performance.

Universal Design for Learning tip: Let students examine the materials silently before discussion. Offer printed and enlarged materials, read-aloud or audio support, and the option to record ideas with words, sketches, symbols, or speech.

Step 2

Explore the Context

- Place students in pairs or small groups. Give each group one or more Context Cards.
 - Ask groups to identify:
 - One detail that helps them understand the physical journey of climbing up the mountain.
 - One detail that connects to history, identity, tourism, labor, or belonging.
 - One question the material does not answer.
 - Invite groups to share. Clarify that context can help students enter a story without determining what every person connected to that place thinks or feels.
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Step 3

Add a Perspective

- Give each group one Perspective Card. Ask students to revisit the same mountain and context materials through that possible point of view.
 - Use these prompts:
 - What might this person notice first?
 - What might the mountain represent to them?
 - What might they hope to gain, protect, prove, or change?
 - What might they overlook that another person would notice?
 - What might freedom mean from this perspective?
 - Remind students that each card offers a lens, not a complete character. More than one interpretation may be reasonable.
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Step 4

Make and Support a Claim

- Students use [Claim Support Question](#) to develop an interpretation:
 - **Claim:** From this perspective, Mount Kilimanjaro might represent...
 - **Support:** We think this because... Include at least two details from the materials.
 - **Question:** Something we still want to understand is...
- Students may write on the organizer, annotate an image, create a mini-poster, record an audio response, or make a short tableau or staged image that expresses the claim.

- Invite students to share their claims and evidence. Notice where interpretations overlap, differ, or leave something out.
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Step 5

Build Anticipation for the Play

- Return to the spoiler-free setup of the play: In *Uhuru*, four people begin a journey up Mount Kilimanjaro. They arrive at the same mountain, but they do not agree about what it means, who belongs there, or what reaching the summit would prove.
- Ask students to respond to one prediction or viewing question:
 - Which perspectives are most likely to come into conflict?
 - What could cause someone to reconsider what the mountain means to them?
 - Does reaching the summit necessarily mean achieving freedom? Why or why not?
- Save the responses. After the performance, students can identify what the play confirmed, complicated, or changed.

TEKS

Fine Arts – Theatre, High School Levels I–IV

- Level I – 4(A): Portray theatre as a reflection of life in particular times, places, and cultures.
- Levels II–IV – 4(B): Analyze how theatre, television, and film influence people’s values, behaviors, and understanding of the world.

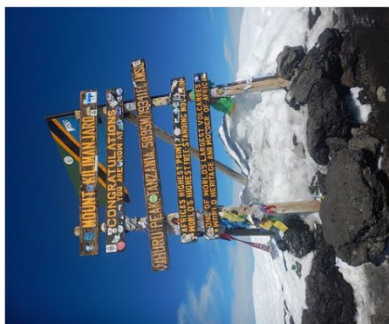
English Language Arts and Reading, English I–IV

- 4(F) and 5(C): Make inferences and use text evidence and original commentary to support interpretive, analytical, or evaluative responses.
- 5(E): Interact with sources in meaningful ways, such as notetaking, freewriting, or illustrating.

Context Cards (1 of 2)



Uhuru



Uhuru means “freedom.” Uhuru Peak is the highest point on Mount Kilimanjaro and the destination named throughout the play.

How might a physical place come to represent an idea?



The Summit



Uhuru Peak stands 5,895 meters, or 19,341 feet, above sea level. In the play, the summit attempt begins before sunrise in temperatures below zero.

What might reaching the top require physically and emotionally?



The Machame Route



The hikers follow the Machame Route over several days. The play tracks their location, the weather, the altitude, and the hours remaining before the summit attempt.

How could a journey upward change a group of people?



Changing Environments



Hikers enter through a dense montane forest, where the air may be humid and the trail muddy. As they climb, the trees thin out and give way to open heath, rocky moorland and, eventually, alpine desert.

How could a changing landscape change the climb?

Context Cards (2 of 2)



Guides and Porters



Guides lead the expedition. Porters carry equipment, prepare camps, cook, and make the climb possible. In Uhuru, the porters may be heard but are not seen.

What does that theatrical choice ask an audience to notice?



Tourism and Work

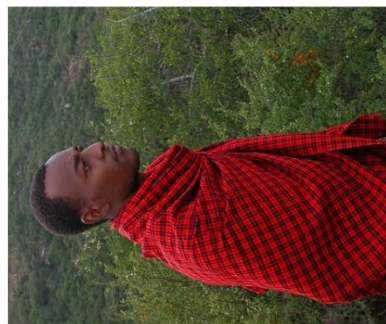


For some people, climbing Kilimanjaro is an expensive adventure or personal achievement. For others, the mountain is a workplace and source of income.

How does that change the risks and rewards of the journey?



Tanzania & Belonging

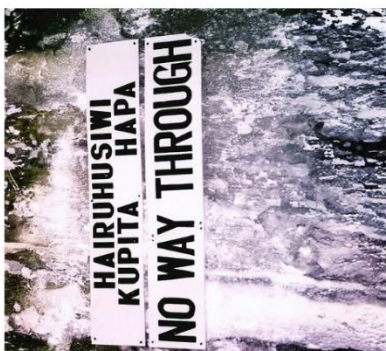


Kilimanjaro is located in Tanzania and is internationally recognized as a symbol of the country. The play asks who can claim a connection through citizenship, heritage, residence, work, or lived experience.

Is there a place that acts like a symbol for your country?



Language & Perspective



Characters in the play use English and Kiswahili. Language can create connection, reveal belonging, or separate people from those around them.

What can language communicate beyond the literal meaning of words?

Perspective Cards (1 of 2)

A Porter Earning a Living



The mountain is your workplace. You carry supplies and help make another person's adventure possible. Your income may depend on the expedition and its guests.

A Tanzanian American Returning



You have connections to Tanzania and have also lived elsewhere. You hope the climb will strengthen your sense of belonging and your relationship to the country.

A Tourist Seeking Adventure



You have spent significant money and time preparing for the climb. You want a challenge, an unforgettable experience, and a photograph at the summit.

A Local Guide



You know the route, the risks, and the needs of visiting hikers. You are responsible for helping the group move safely while managing your own goals and pressures.

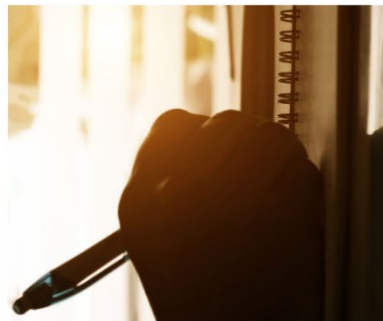
Perspective Cards (2 of 2)

A Tanzanian Citizen Who Doesn't Climb



Kilimanjaro is a national symbol, but climbing it is not part of your daily life. You may live far from the mountain or experience it mainly through stories, images, products, or tourism.

An Artist Telling this Story



You are deciding what the audience should see, hear, and question. You must choose whose labor is visible, whose language is understood, and what "freedom" might mean.

A Missionary Living in Tanzania



You moved to Tanzania because you believe your faith calls you to serve others. You may see your work as helpful, while people around you may understand its impact differently.

A Conservation Worker



You focus on protecting the mountain's ecosystems and reducing the effects of visitors. You may measure a successful expedition differently from a person focused only on the summit.

Uhuru – Context Activity

Student Handout

See Think Wonder

Use the space below to record your thoughts about the materials provided.

- **See** What details do you notice? What can you objectively state?
- **Think** What do those details suggest about Kilimanjaro and the people connected to it?
- **Wonder** What questions or conflicts do the materials raise?

View the Mountain in Their Eyes

Look at the description on your Perspective Card and consider what Mount Kilimanjaro means to them. What does it represent? What might they hope to gain, prove, or change? What might they overlook? What does freedom mean to them?

Claim, Support, Question, Prediction

Use the space below to organize your findings from the previous section.

- **Claim** From this perspective, Mount Kilimanjaro represents...
- **Support** We think this because...(include at least two details).
- **Question** Something we still want to understand is...
- **Prediction** When people bring different meanings to the same place, I predict...