

SEE WHAT'S  
IN THE GUIDE...

- ▶ Classroom activities linked to Grade Level Expectations and Common Core
- ▶ Discussion questions to stimulate interest and reflection
- ▶ Insight into the production
- ▶ Resources for further inquiry



# New Kid

BY DENNIS FOON

based on a concept by Jane Howard Baker and originally produced as *New Canadian Kid* by Green Thumb Theatre for Young People, Vancouver, British Columbia



## THE STORY

Nick and his family have just immigrated to the United States from Homeland. In his new school he meets Mug and Mencha, but struggles to understand their strange language. Mencha attempts to befriend Nick, but Mug makes fun of him, breaks his special bowl from Homeland and calls him a "sgak."

The next day, Mencha invites Nick to play basketball with her, and helps him learn some of the language. She reluctantly admits "sgak" is a cruel word for "Homelander." At home, Nick's mother is having an equally difficult time adjusting to America. He tries to teach her some of the language he is learning.

Nick continues to endure Mug's bullying, and Mencha finds the courage to defend her new friend. Nick invites Mencha home where things are awkward with his mother, but ultimately they warm to each other. Meanwhile, Mug defaces their house with the word "sgak." Nick's mother wants to intervene, but Nick decides he needs to handle the problem himself. With Mencha's help, they stand up to Mug. Mug backs down...a little. Nick knows the bullying won't stop completely, but now he has strategies to deal with it and a new ally in Mencha.



## ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Being the new kid is not easy for any of us. Being the new kid in a strange place where you can't understand what others are saying to you, and where you can't make yourself understood, can feel impossible.

This is the circumstance in which Nick finds himself as Dennis Foon's play begins. And through a clever twist, we find ourselves there right along with him. Nick and his mother speak English in the play, while the "American" kids speak an invented language that, at first, sounds like gibberish. As Nick struggles to understand, so do we. Nick's journey to acceptance and understanding is one that is familiar to all of us who have ever experienced the feeling of being different or new.

Embracing diversity begins with empathy, a key component in the work of Metro Theater Company. When we nurture empathy, the one who is different among us is no longer scary. He is interesting. Our lives are not threatened by his presence, they are enriched.

The strength of America is in the rich diversity of all those who have made it. No matter who we are or where we came from, each of us was at some point a "new kid" in need of acceptance, friendship and support.

*Julia Flood, Metro Theater Company, Artistic Director*



## ACTIVITY IDEAS!

- ▶ Ask students to join you in the center of the room. Split off from the group and say, "Come on over if..." and finish the sentence with some statement that is true about you. If it is true for your students they stand next to you. If not, they remain where they are. One at a time have the students step out and say their "Come on over if..." statement. Have them notice who moves and who stays during the activity. Afterwards, ask, "What surprised you? What did you learn about your classmates?"
- ▶ Ask them as a classroom community what they can do to make sure new kids at school have the best possible welcome. Create an action plan that can be put to use the next time a new student arrives at school.

## DISCUSSION IDEAS

- ▶ Have you ever been a "new kid" at your school? What did other students do to make you feel welcome or unwelcome?
- ▶ How would you describe the treatment new students receive at your school?

### MISSOURI COMMUNICATION ARTS GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

- LS1B K-8 Demonstrate listening behaviors
- LS2A K-8 Share ideas or experiences verbally or using communication systems

### COMMON CORE STANDARD

- SL.3.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions



## SAY WHAT? THE LANGUAGE IN *NEW KID*

In *New Kid* Nick and his mother speak English, while the American characters speak a made up language. The playwright wants the audience to empathize with Nick. We struggle to understand and learn the language along with him.

### ACTIVITY IDEAS!



- ▶ Ask students to think of an activity that they'd like to teach somebody else to do. (i.e. make a paper airplane.) In pairs, ask each student to teach the activity to their partner, *but they cannot speak English, only gibberish*. The goal is to get their partner to do the activity successfully. Ask the students how they were able to communicate without a common language? How did you feel when you couldn't understand your partner? If you spoke a different language from those around you, what kinds of daily activities might be especially challenging for you?

### DISCUSSION IDEA

- ▶ If you were to visit another country that speaks a different language, what challenges do you think you would face? What daily activities might become more difficult?

#### MISSOURI COMMUNICATION ARTS GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

- LS2B K-8 Give simple directions verbally or using communication systems
- LS1A K-8 Listen for enjoyment, for information, to solve problems or for directions to complete a task.

#### COMMON CORE STANDARD

- SL.3.4 Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.



## THE POWER OF WORDS

In *New Kid*, Nick is the victim of a racial slur, a word that reflects bias or discrimination against people of a particular racial or ethnic background. Although "sgak" is a word the playwright invented, it is clear that Mug uses it to demean and humiliate Nick.

### DISCUSSION IDEAS

- ▶ What does it feel like when people call us names or insult us?
- ▶ What are some positive ways we can respond to negative language?

#### MISSOURI INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY LITERACY GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

- ICTL6A K-8 Demonstrate ethical behaviors (personal and social) when using information and technology, develop strategies to avoid cyberbullying.

#### MISSOURI PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

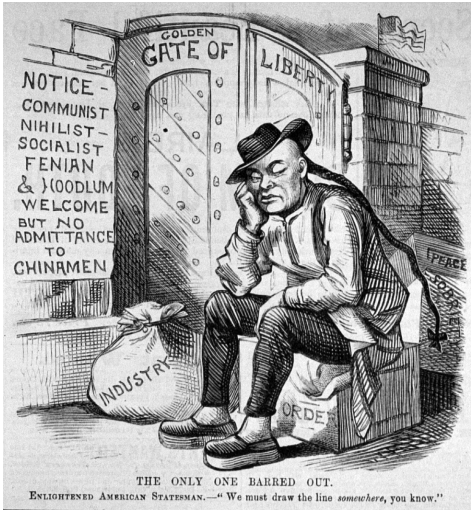
- PS3C K-8 Personal Responsibility in Relationships

### ACTIVITY IDEAS!



- ▶ Participate each year in "No Name-Calling Week." To learn more about it, go to [www.nonamecallingweek.org](http://www.nonamecallingweek.org).
- ▶ Have the students stand or sit in a circle. Begin by paying a compliment to one student. That student must say, "Thank you" and choose someone else to pay a compliment to. That student then passes it on until it comes back to you.

# TIMELINE



The first European settlement is established in St. Augustine, Florida.

The Declaration of Independence accuses the King of England with obstructing migration to North America.

The "Chinese Exclusion Act" is passed banning all Chinese migration.

1565      1630-1640      1776      1820-1880      1861-1865      1882      1886

**10 million** Asian and European settlers immigrate to the United States expanding into the Midwest.

Referred to as the "The Great Migration," 21,000 settlers immigrate to the colonies.

The Statue of Liberty is dedicated as a symbol of freedom.



**33%** of the Union Army in the Civil War is comprised of European and African immigrants.





### Ellis Island

is opened as an immigration reception center welcoming 12 million immigrants between 1892 and 1932.

The Chinese Exclusion Act is finally **repealed**.

**6.7%** of people in St. Louis City and County were born in another country. That's nearly **88,000** immigrants.

About **120,000** people in St. Louis City and County speak a different language from English at home.

1892

1908

1920

1942

1943

2014

Playwright Israel Zangwill coins the phrase **"The Melting Pot"** to describe the struggles of immigrants in the United States.



For decades after 1920, more than **6,000,000** African Americans moved from the U.S. rural South to the urban North, Midwest and West.

Over **1,000,000** people immigrate to the United States annually from over **60** countries.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, over 127,000 Japanese-American citizens were **imprisoned** in U.S. internment camps.



## WHAT ROLE DO YOU PLAY?

Nick endures Mug's bullying behavior throughout most of *New Kid*. Sometimes Mencha goes along with Mug, sometimes she watches his behavior, but eventually she chooses to take a stand and defend Nick. Essentially she plays three different roles in what is called the Triangle of Oppression. It is important to know the vocabulary in order to name and identify oppressive or intolerant behavior when it's witnessed.

### PERPETRATOR:

Someone who commits an act of oppression.

### COLLABORATOR:

Someone who sees the act of oppression and chooses to make the situation worse. This can be something as simple as laughing at what the perpetrator says or does.

### TARGET:

Someone who is oppressed by the Perpetrator.

### BYSTANDER/WITNESS:

Someone who sees the act of oppression and chooses to ignore it or do nothing.

### ALLY/UPSTANDER:

Someone who sees the act of oppression and chooses to make the situation better. This can be as simple as comforting the Target or reporting the incident.



### PERPETRATOR (AND COLLABORATORS)



## ACTIVITY IDEAS!



- ▶ In small groups have students come up with a frozen image or tableau of an example of oppression they've seen at their school. Have students assume the roles of Perpetrator, Target, Bystander and Collaborator. Remind them to keep it real and based on what they have witnessed. Share the images and discuss them.
- ▶ Have the students write a letter to the Bystander in their image giving them three different action strategies they could use to make the situation better for the Target.

### DISCUSSION IDEAS

- ▶ Which role do you think people play most often? Why?
- ▶ What do you think stops people from taking action?

MISSOURI PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS  
PS1C K-8 Citizenship and contribution within a diverse community

MISSOURI COMMUNICATION ARTS GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS  
WP3E K-8 Develop an awareness of audience and purpose in composing text

COMMON CORE STANDARDS  
W.3.1 Write narratives to develop real and imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

# AMERICA: THE MELTING POT

Nick and his mother immigrate to the United States from Homeland. While Homeland is a fictitious country, approximately 13% of all citizens in the United States are immigrants. That's over 40 million people.



## DISCUSSION IDEAS

- ▶ Do you know your family's country of origin? How long ago was their arrival in the U.S.? Are there members of your family for whom English is a second language?
- ▶ Have you ever moved to a new neighborhood, city or community? What was it like to leave your old home? How did you feel when you saw your new home for the first time?

### MISSOURI COMMUNICATION ARTS GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

WP3A K-8 Tell and/or write stories about familiar experiences and events using words/pictures/symbols/objects/actions.

### MISSOURI SOCIAL STUDIES GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

SS5C 2-8 Identify physical and human characteristics, such as climate, topography, language, diversity, economies and religions

### COMMON CORE STANDARDS

W.3.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

## ACTIVITY IDEAS!

- ▶ Write a journal entry as if you are the character Nick about your experience coming to America. Why did you leave Homeland and what was it like? What do you miss most about Homeland?
- ▶ Have students research their family's country of origin - even if it was many generations back. Create a travel brochure that includes lots of descriptive detail.

## RESOURCES

### RESOURCES FOR EARLY READERS:

- ▶ *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi
- ▶ *La Mariposa* by Francisco Jiménez, illustrated by Simón Silva
- ▶ *Brothers in Hope: The Story of the Lost Boys of Sudan* by Mary Williams, illustrated by R. Gregory Christie

### RESOURCES FOR ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL READERS:

- ▶ *Mai Ya's Long Journey* by Sheila Cohen
- ▶ *The Stone Goddess* by Mingfong Ho
- ▶ *Drita, My Homegirl* by Jenny Lombard
- ▶ *Blue Jasmine* by Kashmira Sheth

### RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND EDUCATORS:

**How to prevent bullying and make your school a more welcoming environment:**

- ▶ [www.welcomingschools.org](http://www.welcomingschools.org)
- ▶ [www.nonamecallingweek.org](http://www.nonamecallingweek.org)
- ▶ [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)
- ▶ [bornthiswayfoundation.org](http://bornthiswayfoundation.org)
- ▶ [www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources](http://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources)

#### Further Resources on immigration:

- ▶ [www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/themes/immigration/](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/themes/immigration/)
- ▶ [teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/](http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/)

*New Kid* is generously supported by



Funding for *New Kid* is made possible in part by the late Fred Saigh, who through his foundation is helping area children have a better opportunity to achieve their goals.

© Metro Theater Company 2016

Content for this guide was compiled and written by Resident Teaching Artist, John Wolbers and Education Director Karen Weberman. Graphic Design by Britni Eggers. Special thanks to Emily Kohring and Chiara Lovio for their research and contributions to this guide.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Metro Theater Company provides theater that invites you to feel deeply as you connect with complex characters going through challenges that may remind you of your own. We provide theater that is not only entertaining, but also gives you lots to think about—during the performance and long afterwards. We know that when emotions are engaged and minds are turned on, it's a powerful combination that leads to growth and learning.

Tell us about the great conversations you have with your children or your students. What moments in the play spark especially meaningful learning or surprising connections? We would love to hear from you. Letters, drawings, emails, phone calls, Tweets, Facebook Posts—we love them all.



3311 Washington Ave.  
St. Louis, Missouri 63103

P: 314.932.7414 F: 314.932.7434

### MISSION

Inspired by the intelligence and emotional wisdom of young people, we create professional theater, foster inclusive community and nurture meaningful learning through the arts.