Monster

FEBRUARY 15 – MARCH 9, 2017
ADAPTED BY AARON CARTER
DIRECTED BY HALLIE GORDON
Dear teachers,

Thank you for joining Steppenwolf for Young Adults for Monster, the second show of our 2016/17 season as we continue to explore the question: **When We Stick to Our Guns Who Pays the Price?**

With each Steppenwolf for Young Adults production, we offer a forum for you and your students to grapple with and deeply engage in critical conversations about not only the work of art on our stage, but with the issues facing our society today. With these curated study guides, we hope to shine a light on how young people might use the creative process as a means of investigation and self-reflection, and as a catalyst for them to take action. Through these conversations, and through this art-making, we hope that students will begin to recognize the inherent power that lies at their core, and their intrinsic ability to use their voices to take action and be agents of change in their communities.

Our production of Monster tells the story of Steve Harmon, a 16-year-old boy in juvenile detention and an aspiring filmmaker. As Steve stands trial for his participation in a robbery gone awry, we watch as Steve writes his story as a screenplay, attempting to understand if he is really the ‘monster’ society says he is. We see Steve harness his creative potential in an attempt to interrogate the judicial system and understand himself in the face of a culture that systematically perpetrates acts of violence against marginalized communities.

Following its four week run at Steppenwolf and working in collaboration with Storycatchers Theatre, Steppenwolf for Young Adults will tour this production of Monster for a week to three Juvenile Justice Facilities in Illinois. Storycatchers Theatre, winner of the 2013 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award, is a youth development arts organization that prepares court-involved and otherwise marginalized young people to make thoughtful life choices through the process of writing, producing, and performing original theatre inspired by personal stories. We are thrilled to be working with this organization, and invite you to learn more about their work on page 16 of this guide.

Thank you for joining us for Monster. Thank you for allowing your students to take part in the artistic process. Thank you for your willingness to engage in this conversation.

See you at Steppenwolf!

Hallie Gordon
Artistic Director

Megan Shuchman
Education Director

Jared Bellot
Education Coordinator

Emilio G. Robles
Curriculum and Instruction Manager

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ACCESSIBILITY DATES

American Sign Language-Interpreted Performance
FRIDAY, MARCH 3 AT 7:30PM
(public performance)

Open Captioned Performance
FRIDAY, MARCH 3 AT 7:30PM
(public performance)

Audio-Described Performance and Touch Tour
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25
1:30PM TOUR / 3PM CURTAIN
(public performance)

STUDY GUIDE CURATED BY Jared Bellot

ARTICLES BY Jared Bellot, Emilio G. Robles, Fatima Sowe, Storycatchers Theatre

EDITED BY Megan Shuchman

ILLUSTRATIONS BY Finn Belknap

DESIGNED BY David Masnato

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CUT TO: INTERIOR: THE SAME COUNTY COURTHOUSE FROM BEFORE

We learn that STEVE and KING are co-defendants both on trial for felony murder. Steve is accused of serving as a lookout for a corner store robbery gone awry, resulting in the death of MR. NESBITT. Although STEVE protests that he did not kill anybody, O’BRIEN explains that if a victim is killed during the commission of a felony, then anyone involved can be charged with felony murder.

"I don't belong here."

FADE IN: INTERIOR: THE HOLDING CELL OF A COUNTY COURTROOM

Monster opens in the holding cell of a county courtroom as two young African American boys await a verdict in their trial. 16-year-old STEVE HARMON, our protagonist, rocks in his chair, on the edge of freaking out, scared about the outcome of the trial.

KATHY O’BRIEN, STEVE’s lawyer enters the room to let STEVE know that jury deliberations are taking longer than expected and for STEVE to remain patient, as the verdict will most likely be reached very soon. JAMES KING, the second boy in the room demands to speak to his lawyer, but O’BRIEN exits, leaving the two boys alone.

STEVE takes out a composition notebook and explains to KING that he is writing a movie about the experience of the trial. Inside the notebook are the storyboards planning out shots for the film which is entitled…

“MONSTER!”

“MONSTER!"

"You're young, you're black, and you're on trial. What more do they need to know?"

CUT TO: TITLE CREDITS, STEVE’S FILM

STEVE introduces us to an ensemble of actors who will portray all of the characters in his story. These actors play multiple parts and come in and out of focus as the story demands. STEVE addresses the audience directly, narrating his story using the language of filmmaking to set the scene and conjure characters from the ensemble at will. Over the course of the play, Steve jumps back and forth through time, taking the audience on a journey as he attempts to understand if he really is the monster that the prosecution has labeled him.

"I didn't kill anybody."

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CUT TO: INTERIOR: COURTROOM, ZOOM IN: THE VERDICT

A MONTAGE OF: the closing arguments from O’BRIEN, BRIGGS, and PETROCELLI arguing their respective sides. As the trial concludes, OVER THE COURSE OF THE TRIAL, WE MEET A NUMBER OF KEY WITNESSES AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS TESTIFYING ON BEHALF OF BOTH THE DEFENSE AND PROSECUTION. THIS IS NOT A CLEAR-CUT CASE, AND BOTH SIDES SCORE SIGNIFICANT VICTORIES AND DEFEATS AS EVIDENCE IS CONTINUALLY INTRODUCED SUPPORTING ALL SIDES OF THE CASE.

CLOSE UP ON: OSVALDO CRUZ and RICHARD "BOBO" EVANS, two other accomplices in the crime who testify during the trial speaking to STEVE and KING’S PARTICIPATION.

EXTREME CLOSE UP ON: STEVE, throughout the trial, maintains his innocence regarding all allegations.

“You have to believe in yourself if we are going to convince the jury that you’re innocent.”

CUT TO: INTERIOR JAIL, ZOOM IN: STEVE’S SENTENCE

CLOSE UP ON: A GROUP OF PRISONERS constantly remind STEVE that innocence is subjective. STEVE continues to struggle with the fact that while he may feel the same on the inside others now perceive him as something else. Seeing the other prisoners, STEVE begins to wonder "Is this how others see me?"

CLOSE UP ON: MR. HARMON and MRS. HARMON, STEVE’s parents, who struggle with how to make sense of the facts of their son’s new reality.

CLOSE UP ON: JERRY HARMON, STEVE’s younger brother. STEVE worries how is situation might impact his brother who looks up to him.

“You live by the rules and die by the rules. Whether you are innocent or not.”

CUT TO: STEVE’S NEIGHBORHOOD, ZOOM IN: STEVE’S COMMUNITY

FLASHBACK TO: STEVE’s life before his trial paints a picture of a young, inspired artist with a love for filmmaking. We learn of his relationship with his family, including his younger brother JERRY HARMON who idolizes his older brother. We also see STEVE interact with MR. SAWICKI, his film teacher and mentor who helps STEVE develop his passion.

CLOSE UP ON: STEVE, completing a film project for school to document his neighborhood which also introduces us to a cast of characters, including those we meet on trial and at home in their community. KING pops in and out of frame, interacting with and antagonizing STEVE as he does.

“I’m trying to show how I see the people in my neighborhood.”

CUT TO: INTERIOR: COURTROOM, ZOOM IN: THE VERDICT

A MONTAGE OF: the closing arguments from O’BRIEN, BRIGGS, and PETROCELLI arguing their respective sides. As the trial concludes, OVER THE COURSE OF THE TRIAL, WE MEET A NUMBER OF KEY WITNESSES AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS TESTIFYING ON BEHALF OF BOTH THE DEFENSE AND PROSECUTION. THIS IS NOT A CLEAR-CUT CASE, AND BOTH SIDES SCORE SIGNIFICANT VICTORIES AND DEFEATS AS EVIDENCE IS CONTINUALLY INTRODUCED SUPPORTING ALL SIDES OF THE CASE.

CLOSE UP ON: KING, found guilty.

CLOSE UP ON: STEVE, found not guilty.

EXTREME CLOSE UP ON: STEVE, after the trial, is working on a new project where he makes movies of himself talking to the camera. He is still struggling with the notion of how others perceive him. Particularly, he is haunted by the way O’BRIEN turned away from looking at him after the verdicts were read, causing him to forever wonder “Am I the monster others painted me as?”

“My name is Steve Harmon.”

WHAT DID SHE SEE?
THE CAST: MONSTER
CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS
By Education Coordinator Jared Bellot

STARRING:

STEVE HARMON
Our protagonist. A 16-year-old African American teenager and an aspiring filmmaker on trial for his involvement in the murder of MR. NESBIT. STEVE is labeled as a “monster” during the trial and struggles with other people’s perception of himself, and how that image is in contrast with how he sees himself. As a means of coping with his fear and making sense of his internal struggles, STEVE decides to write a movie detailing this experience.

MR. AND MRS. HARMON
STEVE’S parents. MR. HARMON supports his son, visiting him during the trial, but is struggling with how to cope with STEVE’S possible involvement in the murder. MRS. HARMON loves her son deeply, and believes him to be innocent, no matter what anyone else says. Both parents find it very difficult to see their son in jail.

JERRY HARMON
STEVE’S 11-year-old brother. JERRY is playful and energetic, and idolizes his older brother. STEVE is very aware of how his own circumstances might negatively impact his younger brother.

JAMES KING
On trial alongside STEVE. Slightly older than STEVE, KING served as the defacto leader of the crew that held up the store. KING is cocky, arrogant, and “does his best to look like a tough man.”

OSVALDO CRUZ
Also involved in the robbery of the corner store. Slightly younger than STEVE, but heavily involved in gang culture, OSVALDO claims on the stand that the sole reason he participated in the robbery was because he was intimidated by STEVE, KING and BOBO.

RICHARD “BOBO” EVANS
Also accused of being in the store at the time of the murder, BOBO is already serving time in prison for drug related charges. He makes a deal with the prosecution to testify against STEVE and KING in order to receive a lighter sentence.

KATHY O’BRIEN
STEVE’S defense attorney. O’BRIEN questions STEVE’S innocence, but does not think it necessary to believe STEVE’S story as long as she is able to convince the jury of STEVE’S innocence in court. STEVE is made uneasy by O’BRIEN’S lack of faith in him.

SANDRA PETROCELLI
The Assistant District Attorney who is prosecuting the case against STEVE and KING. She refers to STEVE as a monster during her opening and closing statements.

ASA BRIGGS
The defense attorney representing JAMES KING in the trial. He attempts to connect STEVE and KING in the eyes of the jury hoping that this will help his client in court.

MR. SAWICKI
STEVE’S film teacher and mentor. In teaching STEVE about filmmaking, MR. SAWICKI helps STEVE explore ideas of perception and narrative, all while helping him to develop his own voice as an artist.

AND FEATURING

Over the course of the play, Steve conjures, or speaks into existence the characters of his story. All other characters are played by the following seven actors, and each actor may play multiple roles. These characters represent members of Steve’s family, his neighborhood, and key players in the court trial. Check out some of the key players on the opposite page.
WALTER DEAN MYERS:
10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE MAN BEHIND MONSTER

By SYA Apprentice Fatima Sowe

FACT 1. Walter Dean Myers had a professional writing career that spanned over 45 years during which he wrote over 110 novels, picture books, graphic novels, poetry collections and nonfiction texts. Some of his most popular titles include: Slam! (1996), Fallen Angels (1983), Sunrise Over Fallujah (2008) and Somewhere in the Darkness (1992).

FACT 2. Born on August 12, 1937, Myers would be 80-years-old this year. Myers wrote so much that since his death on July 1, 2014, he has had several books published posthumously including: On a Clear Day (2014), Juba! (2015) and a graphic novel adaptation of Monster (2015).

FACT 3. Myers was born Walter Milton Myers in Martinsburg, West Virginia. When he was just two years old, his mother died giving birth to a younger sibling. As such, he was raised by his father’s first wife Florence Dean in Harlem, NY. Walter would later change his middle name to “Dean” to honor the adopted parents who raised him.

FACT 4. Walter beat the odds to become a prolific writer. He was bullied for growing up with a speech impediment and acted out in self-defense. Myers ultimately dropped out of high school out to enlist in the army in 1954. Though he wasn’t always the strongest student, several of his teachers remarked on his classroom leadership and his great ability to write.

FACT 5. Myers got his first big break after winning a writing contest for Writers’ Digest magazine in 1969. His award was five hundred dollars and a publishing contract. That winning entry, entitled Where Does the Day Go?, is a picture book about a child and his father’s walk in the park. It went on to win an award from the Council on Interracial Books for Children.

FACT 6. Basketball, military service and Harlem were all prominent themes in Myers’ life and in his books. Harlem, where Myers was raised, is the setting for many of his books including Fallen Angels (1988), Hoops (2012), Scorpions (1990) and Monster (1999).

FACT 7. The idea of writing Monster came to Myers after he observed the trial of a 16-year-old African American boy on trial in Harlem. His interviews with prison inmates sparked the book’s distinctive style after Myers observed that inmates would often refer to their pre-prison selves in the first person, and their post-conviction selves in the third person.

FACT 8. Monster was a New York Times Bestseller and is Myers’ most critically acclaimed and awarded book, with 27 awards including the first Michael L. Printz Award and the Coretta Scott King Award Honor (which he also won five additional times for other books!)

FACT 9. Starting in 1992 Walter wrote a series of books for young girls entitled 18 Pine Street… under the pseudonym Stacie Johnson!

FACT 10. Walter Dean Myers used literature as a tool to challenge the stereotypes and prejudices that created unfair perceptions of marginalized teenagers. He put these teens front and center in his books. Throughout his lifetime, Myers strongly believed that literacy was imperative. He knew that in order to encourage students to want to read, someone had to create the books and characters they could identify with. Walter Dean Myers created those books and characters and recorded the lives of those teenagers, letting them know that their lives were valuable enough to record.
ADAPTATIONS, TRANSLATIONS AND REPRESENTATION:
A CONVERSATION WITH PLAYWRIGHT AARON CARTER

Conducted by Education Coordinator Jared Bellot

Education Coordinator Jared Bellot sat down with Monster playwright Aaron Carter to discuss his process of adapting a beloved novel for the stage, and why it’s so important to be telling Steve Harmon’s story today.

“An adaptation is like a translation in the sense that you’re using the tools of one particular genre to tell the same story in a completely different form.” — Aaron Carter

Jared Bellot: Aaron, thank you so much for taking the talk with me about our upcoming Steppenwolf for Young Adults’ play, Monster. This production is an adaptation of a novel by Walter Dean Myers. What does it mean to adapt a play? How is that different than writing an original play?

Aaron Carter: The biggest difference is that in an adaptation, the story is already there. An adaptation is like a translation in the sense that you’re using the tools of one particular genre to tell the same story in a completely different form. Every genre has its own specific set of tools that it utilizes to tell a story. In this case, that meant using the tools of fiction to tell a story in the theater.

Monster was tricky, because the source material, the novel, is actually written in the form of a screenplay. So, in this case, the source material is using a combination of fiction tools and screenplay tools to tell its story, and I had to find the balance between those two different kinds of tools.

JB: How do you reach that balance in your adaptation?

AC: While I was reading the novel, whenever I saw a tool or technique used, I asked myself, to what end is this tool being used, and how can I translate that effect? In the novel, the screenplay is being used to constantly remind the reader that Steve Harmon is authoring this piece, that this young man is writing his own story.

To translate this for the stage, I used a theatrical technique that I call conjuring. William Shakespeare uses this in his plays; some dude walks out and says, “In fair Verona, where we lay our scene.” And that character has conjured location; he has spoken it into existence. And so, in my play - Steve is talking to the audience and he conjures characters and location, and he uses the language of screenplay to do it: “Cut to exterior on a stoop.” Steve’s direct address to the audience becomes a way of communicating his authorship of his story.
“The major dramatic question of the work revealed itself to be Steve Harmon asking himself, “Am I the monster they say I am?”

– Aaron Carter

JB: While you’re adapting, how do you know what to cut and what to explore more deeply?

AC: I asked myself “What is major dramatic question? What question does the work exist to answer?” For me, based on the work that I had put in to breaking down the text, the major dramatic question of the work revealed itself to be Steve Harmon asking himself, “Am I the monster they say I am?”

With that question in mind, I went back and I picked out the events and exchanges that had to exist in order for Steve to ask that question. That was the first draft of the play, just an exploration of the events and moments that explore that major dramatic question. I interpreted the book, I narrowed the story down to what I thought was the essence, and that left me with a set of raw material that I could work with.

JB: What about this story spoke to you? Why this play today?

AC: While the play does deal with the criminal justice system and notions of guilt and innocence, to me, the most active thing about the book is the question of perception of black bodies, particularly black, male bodies. Any time I can engage a story about that is important to me. I mean, I’m a mixed-race, light-skinned dude myself, and you know, the way that I am able to and have navigated the world in relationship to my particular appearance as a particular kind of black man—and how that is different than others is something that has always informed my work.

I think it’s important because the way that individuals are perceived helps drive what happens to them and what opportunities they have, and I think that continuing to interrogate that all the time hopefully means that we get better at preventing ourselves from limiting peoples’ opportunities based on how they look or how they sound. And that’s what this title Monster to me is about. “Monster” is inhuman—we’re wrestling with reminding people of the humanity of a group of people who don’t always get assigned their humanity. And when we’re not assigned our full humanity, that’s when bad things happen.

– Aaron Carter

JB: Can you talk more about this idea of representation in storytelling? In your adaptation of Monster, how did you ensure Steve is allowed his full humanity?

AC: Mostly I just followed the lead of Walter Dean Meyers and tried not to flatten out the character he created. That character is a young man who is striving to figure out who he is. He’s doing that through art and his aspiration to be a filmmaker. And he’s also doing it by hanging out with different people, trying to learn who he wants to emulate. And you know, some of those choices might be mistakes. He loves his family, particularly his little brother. But he’s no saint. I think seeing characters as fully human means that they aren’t defined by just one thing. They are flawed, contradictory and can be wrong. They are people who want to change, and who try a bunch of different things—good and bad—to make that change.

“Seeing characters as fully human means that they aren’t defined by just one thing. They are flawed, contradictory and can be wrong.”

– Aaron Carter

JB: Thousands of students from across the Chicagoland area will be seeing this show. What do you hope that they will take away from it?

AC: I think the big question in the play is the intersection between personal responsibility, personal choice, and the systems that we operate inside of and navigate through. I hope that what everyone takes away is a desire to really question those assumptions about how those two things intersect. It’s not as simple as guilt or innocence. It’s not as simple as, did this person do a bad thing? Do they need to be punished? I think that is a difficult and ongoing conversation that all of us need to keep having about what we’re responsible for when we make mistakes. What is justice, and how do we pay for those mistakes? How do we right those mistakes? How do we make up for them? If those questions are activated, I think we’ll have been successful.

JB: Thanks for taking the time to speak with me, Aaron - can’t wait for Monster!
We at Steppenwolf are thrilled to be able to partner with Storycatchers Theatre to tour this production of Monster for a week to three Juvenile Justice Facilities in Illinois, and wanted to take a moment to catch up with some members of the Storycatchers family to learn a bit more about how they use art to amplify the stories of the youth they work with.

“By writing my story, I’ve learned how important it is to speak out on whatever your story is. I find freedom in that, and I think others would too.”

– Cameron, Storycatchers Youth

The youth and staff at Storycatchers Theatre (based in Chicago) are using their art to shine a light on stories that are often ignored. We asked Rachel Combs, Development Director at Storycatchers, to give us a bit more background on the organization. She explained “Storycatchers is a Chicago-based nonprofit that uses creative youth development programs to work with court-involved young people. The company’s mission is to prepare young people to make thoughtful life choices through the process of writing, producing and performing original musical theatre inspired by personal stories. Storycatchers uses its nationally recognized, award-winning process to help young people navigate court involvement and reentry successfully; and to develop the tools to become peer leaders and agents of positive social change.”

By using art to help young people navigate the complexities of the world, Storycatchers is doing the work of making room for young people to tell their stories. As Rachel reminds us, “this work is important because it actively engages young people who have been failed by this community and who live and struggle under the radar. Storycatchers gives these young people a process by which to become more self-aware, self-reflective and expressive; and then offers them a platform to make their stories public. I have seen young people progress from sullen non-compliance to enthusiastic leadership over and over throughout my eight years with this company.”

Cameron, a youth who participates in the program first joined to have a new experience, but has continued with the group because he wants to restore justice to his community and to improve himself. He says “Storycatchers’ program helps me to be more creative. It motivates me to step out of my comfort zone. I believe that communication is key in building relationships, and through touring this musical with my program, Changing Voices, I am able to communicate directly with people in the audience, and that can be life saving.”

This work has allowed young people like Cameron to use art to tell stories, and use their voices to make real life change. Cameron says “by writing my story, I’ve learned how important it is to speak out on whatever your story is. I find freedom in that, and I think others would too.”

To learn more about the amazing work of the Storycatchers team, visit their website at www.storycatchers.org.
LENSES OF ACCOUNTABILITY: A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

By Curriculum and Instruction Manager Emilio G. Robles

ACTIVITY TIME: This activity (as outlined) is designed for 50 minutes, but could easily be extended for multiple class periods that could allow time for more lingering and discussion/creation in each step.

In many ways, Monster’s protagonist, Steve Harmon, struggles with his own feelings of innocence, guilt, accountability and blame connected to his alleged crime. This activity will give students an opportunity to reflect on these ideas by 1) creating a personal narrative and 2) transforming that personal narrative into an original screenplay idea.

5 mins  
STEP 1 – REFLECT
What do the words innocence, guilt and accountability mean to you? Brainstorm, discuss or write some individual responses down as a class in the space provided below:

Guilt
Ex: I was supposed to be watching my little brother but I got distracted and didn’t notice he took the dog out to the yard.

Innocence
Ex: I’m not the one who left the gate open. I always close it behind me.

10 mins  
STEP 2 – THE BALANCING ACT
Have students silently make personal connections (either positive or negative) that might result from exploring the following prompt: A time when I felt that I was BOTH guilty AND innocent (in regards to something I said, did, or was accused of) was...

In the graphic organizer below, have students brainstorm a moment from their own lives when they felt both guilty and innocent. In the left hand column, students should note why they felt guilty in that particular situation. In the right hand column, students should note why they felt innocent in that particular situation.

Communicate with students that responses might be shared with others.
20 mins

**STEP 3 – CONTRIBUTE AND COLLABORATE**

Have students discuss and share some of the details from their graphic organizers in small groups. Consider some of the following guiding questions:

What details or moments do you most remember about each story? Why? What is similar or different about the stories you hear/are shared to your own story? What do you think about determining guilt, innocence and accountability in the stories that were shared?

10 mins

**STEP 4 – INTERPRET AND TAKE ACTION**

Have students choose one of the stories their group discussed that they think would best be adapted into a movie. The idea chosen should reflect a complex story where a character is both guilty and innocent. Have students fill out the script project pitch organizer on the opposite page to generate both creative and analytical ideas and decisions about this movie.

5 mins

**STEP 5 – REFLECT**

As an entire class, have students share out what this activity has meant to them in conversation with the character of Steve Harmon in *Monster*. Some questions to consider to help guide your discussion:

How might ways you perceive yourself vs. ways you are perceived by others connect to the ideas of who is innocent, who is guilty and who is accountable in our society? Why are these useful things to be contemplating along with your viewing of *Monster*?

---

**MOVIE SCRIPT**

**MOVIE TITLE:**

**SCREENWRITER(S) NAME:**

**WHAT ARE SOME SCENES YOU COULD ENVISION BEING PART OF WHAT YOU SEE ON THE SCREEN?**

**WHO/WHAT MIGHT BE THE CHARACTERS, ACTIONS, DIALOGUE AND SETTINGS INVOLVED WITH THESE SCENES?**

**HOW DOES THIS FILM IDEA SPEAK TO THE THEME OF GUILT VS. INNOCENCE?**

**HOW DOES THIS FILM SPEAK TO THE IDEA OF THE “BALANCING ACT” BETWEEN GUILT AND INNOCENCE?**

Illustrations by Finn Belknap
ARTISTS AND IDENTITY:
FINDING A PLACE WITHIN THE WORLD

By SYA Apprentice Fatima Sowe

Carrie Mae Weems’ (b.1953) iconic black-and-white film photography seeks to fill a void in art history by representing black women, while investigating family relationships, cultural identity and gender. Her first major work, *The Kitchen Table Series* stars Weems seated at her kitchen table. Weems explores the complex realities of women’s lives through simple activities like playing Solitaire and applying makeup.

Weems described the impact of the series in a 2016 interview with W Magazine saying, “I think the [Kitchen Table] images are more current now than ever before, and I’m still very much aware of the ways in which women are discounted: They’re undervalued within the world generally, and within the art world in particular...There’s still sort of a dearth, a lack of representational images of women.”

Carrie Mae Weems is a MacArthur Fellow, New York City based photographer and installation artist.

Kerry James Marshall, Painter

Through his perspective as a classical and technical painter, Kerry James Marshall’s (b. 1955) paintings challenge the lack of substantive representation of African-American lives in the art historical canon. In a profile with New York Magazine, Kerry describes his mission of expanding the history of black bodies in the Western tradition of painting. “When you talk about the absence of black figure representation in the history of art, you can talk about it as an exclusion, in which case there’s a kind of indictment of history for failing to be responsible for something it should have been. I don’t have that kind of mission. I don’t have that indictment. My interest in being a part of it is being an expansion of it, not a critique of it.”

Kerry James Marshall is a MacArthur Fellow, painter, printmaker and installation artist currently residing in Chicago, IL.

Monster explores the questions: Who am I in the world? And how does the world see me? We all grapple with our personal identities and the identities the world assigns to us.

Just as Steve Harmon uses the writing of his screenplay to examine his given circumstances, artists use their work as a way to sift through their own personal histories and the larger narratives that encompass them.

Check out some of the ways these contemporary artists address these questions.
**STORYBOARDING THE SELF**

**A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY**

By Curriculum and Instruction Manager Emilio G. Robles

**ACTIVITY TIME:** This activity (as outlined) is designed for 45 minutes, but could easily be extended for multiple class periods that could allow time for more lingering and discussion at each step.

In *Monster*, Steve Harmon must deal with the realization that how he perceives himself is different than how others in society perceive him. This activity will give students an opportunity to reflect on the idea of perceptions with 1) Storyboard images connected to the production and 2) Original and personal storyboard images that explore this idea.

**STEP 1 – REFLECT**

Have students think about their own identities. What are ways that they see themselves? How do other people see them? In the space below, have students brainstorm (at least) six descriptor words that they consider to be a part of their identity.

*I am Latino, I am a son, I am an extrovert*

**STEP 2 – REVISIT**

Allow students to linger on the list they created for step one, considering some of the guided questions below. Have students circle the four descriptor words they feel are the most important aspects of their identity.

*How does it feel to be identified in these ways? Do you agree with all of these labels? Are you frustrated by any of these labels? Do any of these labels feel more important than others?*

**STEP 3 – COMPLICATE**

Ask students to consider the ways people in which people might perceive aspects of their identity in a way that does not necessarily match with who they perceive themselves to be.

In the space below, allow students to explore the four elements of their identity that they circled using the following prompt: *Just because I am __________ does not mean that __________.*

*Just because I am Latino does not mean that English is my second language.*

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Tarell Alvin McCraney’s (b.1980) plays address themes of community, identity and coming of age through a unique style that incorporates metaphor, imagery and lyrical prose. Many of his characters are inspired by his upbringing in the inner-city of Liberty City, Miami, representing communities that are otherwise overlooked by theatre history. Through his awareness of how the world perceives him, Tarell describes how perception informs his work as an artist:

“We see what society says about us as a person and rather than check that against the courage of our intuition we fall for the pleasures of privilege, step into the glory of oppression, and relax into the lazy river of the status quo. This indictment, playing in my mind since I was a teenager, amplified now by recent rhetoric, reveals to me that I have more in me to mine, more authentic self to drag out of sleep and privilege to the vulnerable place of my work.”

Tarell Alvin McCraney is an American playwright, Steppenwolf Ensemble Member and MacArthur Genius Fellow. He is best known for his trilogy of plays, *The Brother/Sister Plays*. Most recently, Tarell’s story *In the Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue* was adapted into the Golden Globes award-winning drama, *Moonlight*. 
STEP 4 – DESCRIBE

Look at the four images above. Spend about one minute on each image.

What do you notice in each image? What is your first impression of this character based on what you see? What contradictions do you notice? Read the ‘Just Because…’ statements under each image. Do any of these statements surprise you? Why or why not? How do these contradictions reveal a deeper level of humanity about this character?

STEP 5 – GENERATE

Returning to the ‘Just Because…’ statements that were brainstormed in step three, have students draw four storyboard images about themselves that reflect contradictions in their own identities. Make sure that these images reflect both how students see themselves and how others might see them.

Please share with students that they might be discussing their work with someone else, so only draw things that they might be willing to share in the classroom setting.

STEP 6 – INTERPRET AND REFLECT

As an entire class have students share out what this activity has meant to them in conversation with the character of Steve Harmon in Monster.

How might they create a collective picture of Steve’s identity? How might they represent different ways Steve perceives himself vs. ways he is perceived by others? Who might be looking at him or seeing him in these different ways? How? Why? Explain?
COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR READING, STANDARD 2:
Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

See Play Synopsis and Character Descriptions, pages 4 and 8

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR WRITING, STANDARD 1:
Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

See ‘Lenses of Accountability Activity’ page 18

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR SPEAKING AND LISTENING, STANDARD 3:
Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

See ‘Storyboarding the Self Activity’ page 25

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR SPEAKING AND LISTENING, STANDARD 1:
Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

See Examples throughout guide

If you need further information on how grade-specific standards fit into these anchor standards, please let us know.

UPCOMING EVENTS

THE SCENE

THE SCENE is a special opportunity for high school students to score an affordable ticket to a Steppenwolf production, meet Chicago’s most celebrated artists and connect with other teens who are passionate about theater. Each ticket includes dinner and post-show discussion with the actors.

TICKETS ARE $10

Purchase tickets at the door 30 minutes before the show, or in advance by calling Steppenwolf Audience Services at 312-335-1650. Use code 24361.

UPCOMING EVENTS

THE SCENE: MONSTER
FRIDAY, MARCH 3
AT 7:30PM (post-show)

STEP IN

STEP IN is a new series that offers teens from all over the city the chance to participate in hands-on theatre workshops alongside some of the most exciting theatre artists working in the city right now while learning more about the Steppenwolf Young Adult Council, an afterschool program for teens interested in careers in the arts.

ADMISSION IS FREE!

To reserve your spot, please RSVP to Education Coordinator Jared Bellot at jbellot@steppenwolf.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5
WEDNESDAY, MAY 3
All events last from 4:30-6:00pm

Questions? Please contact Steppenwolf for Young Adults Education Coordinator Jared Bellot at 312-654-5643 or jbellot@steppenwolf.org.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ALIGNED WITH ACTIVITIES IN THIS STUDY GUIDE

Illustrations by Finn Belknap
ONLINE RESOURCES:

Mastery: Kerry James Marshall
The Met Breuer’s Official Website for Painter Kerry James Marshall’s Retrospective, Mastery.

How Does Your State Rank For Transparency and Accountability?
Public Integrity grades all 51 states in categories like public access to information and judicial accountability.

Buzzfeed: #IfTheyGunnedMeDown
The Twitter community responded with images of themselves side-by-side with images that might be used by the media if they were reported on. This campaign was in response to biased media representation of 18-year old Michael Brown, shot and killed in Ferguson, MO in 2014.

Criminal Justice Flowchart
Understand how adult misdemeanor and felony cases are processed form initial arrest to conviction or acquittal.

BOOKS:

Rethinking Juvenile Justice, Elizabeth Scott, Laurence Steinberg (2010)
Scott and Steinberg challenge an increasingly punitive approach towards teenagers in the past 25 years. The authors take a multidisciplinary approach as leaders in law and adolescent development, proposing a new developmental model that recognizes adolescent immaturity while holding them accountable.

Lockdown, Walter Dean Myers (2011)
Myers vividly depicts the jail ecosystem and those who are able to survive it. Reese is locked up at Progress juvenile detention facility; can he get a second chance? Will he survive?

Rikers High, Paul Volponi (2011)
Volponi’s novel builds upon his six years of observations teaching teenagers in jail. Martin, arrested for something he didn’t mean to do, is locked up at Rikers Island. When he’s attacked by a fellow inmate, he’s transferred to a part of the prison where he must attend high school. When Martin meets an understanding teacher – will he learn from this new situation or will prison consume him?

DOCUMENTARIES:

This hour-long investigative documentary about juvenile justice in America investigates the overrepresentation of minorities and the poor within the system. Narrated by Academy Award-nominated actress Gabourey Sidibe and introduced by Russell Simmons this documentary is available at Fusion.net/PrisonKids for free!

Thirteen (2016)
13th is a documentary centered on races in the U.S. Criminal justice system arguing that slavery has effectively continued and is being perpetuated through mass incarceration. Directed by Ava DuVernay, this documentary is available on Netflix.

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Steppenwolf for Young Adults is a citywide partner of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) School Partner Program.
Applications are available on March 1, 2017.

Like the Steppenwolf Young Adult Council on Facebook!
Or visit steppenwolf.org/youngadultcouncil for more information.

The Young Adult Council is a unique program for passionate and motivated high school students who wish to learn the inner-workings of professional theater from the most celebrated artists in the city. In addition to face time with these leading professionals, Council members attend the best plays in Chicago, learn how to analyze and speak about these plays and lead events for their peers around Steppenwolf productions in hopes of inspiring a new generation of theatre enthusiasts and practitioners.

Applications are available on March 1, 2017.

Like the Steppenwolf Young Adult Council on Facebook!
Or visit steppenwolf.org/youngadultcouncil for more information.

The Young Adult Council’s 10th anniversary season is generously sponsored by Ann and Richard Carr.