

Teacher Quick Reference Guide

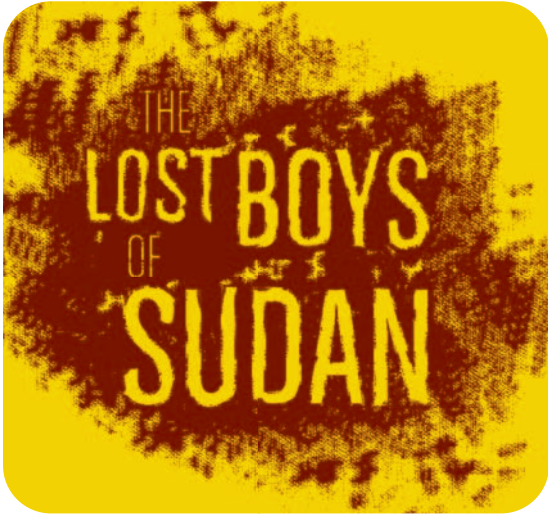
06/07 Children's Theatre Company Season

The Play

The Lost Boys of Sudan

by Lonnie Carter

Most enjoyed by ages 15+



Synopsis

It is the late 1980s, and civil war is ripping apart the African nation of Sudan. The conflict between the northern, Khartoum-based government and Christians in the south takes a deadly turn for members of the peaceful, cattle-herding Dinka tribe. Some 26,000 Sudanese boys are violently forced from their southern Sudan villages. A.I., T-Mac, and K-Gar are among these so-called "Lost Boys", who trek hundreds of miles through African wilderness. Thousands die along the way. They drown or are eaten by wild animals. They are shot by military forces or succumb to hunger, dehydration or fatigue. *The Lost Boys of Sudan* follows the three boys' journey from Sudan to the refugee camp in Kenya, and finally to Fargo, North Dakota, where they are settled by the U.S. government. Told in stylized, riveting, spoken word lyricism which heightens the epic nature of the story, this play vividly captures the spirit of the Lost Boys as they strive to make sense of their journey, adjust to their new life, and find a place to call home.

The Big Ideas

- The history of conflict in Sudan
- The specific story of the Lost Boys
- The struggle to adjust to a new culture while honoring one's heritage

Examples of Classroom and Standard Connections

Activity: Map the journey of the Lost Boys from Southern Sudan to the U.S.

Standard (Grades 9-12): Social Studies: Geography: Spatial Organization: The student will understand the regional distribution of the human population at local to global scales and its patterns of change. Students will use the concepts of push and pull factors to explain the general patterns of human movement in the modern era, including international migration, migration within the United States and major migrations in other parts of the world.

Research the journey of the Lost Boys. Using a map of Africa, chart their journey from Southern Sudan through the Sudanese wilderness to the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. What was that journey like for them? Look at the topographical landscapes. What landforms did they have to traverse? What other dangers did they face, animal and human? How long did it take them? Put yourself in their shoes. How would you have survived that journey? Do you think you could you have done it? How would you have prepared yourself? What are some of the strategies you would have used to survive? From there, based on your research, chart their paths to the various locations in the United States where they were resettled. Estimate the total mileage that they traveled from Sudan to their new homes. What are some of the challenges they faced when they moved here? What are some of the cross-cultural difficulties they faced?

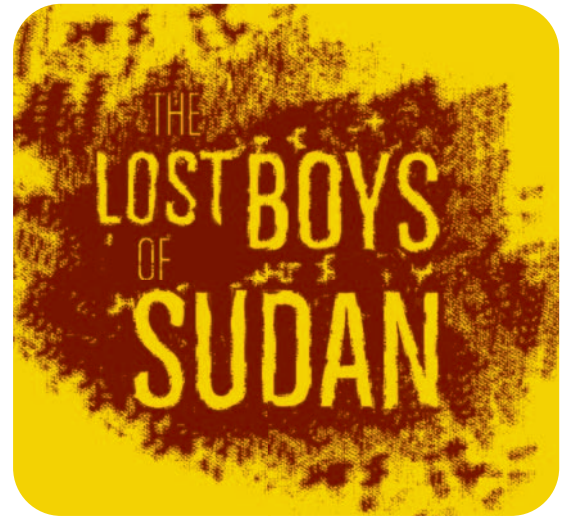
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Activity: Create your own culture.

Standard (Grades 9-12): Social Studies: Government and Citizenship:

Governmental Processes and Institutions: The student will analyze the relationships and interaction between the U.S. and other nations and evaluate the role of the U.S. in world affairs. Students will describe how governments interact in world affairs and explain reasons for conflict among nation states.

Divide the class into three equal sized groups. Groups 1 and 2 are to create their own cultures within their groups. There are certain items each culture must create: 1) a word and gesture for how to say “hello” 2) a word and gesture for how to say “goodbye” 3) one specific custom; examples: women always sit first, then men; or, you must always stand one foot away from the person you’re talking to; or, don’t look strangers directly in the eye. Decide what happens if someone does not follow your custom. 4) a specific social taboo; example: it’s disrespectful to cover your mouth when you yawn; or, it’s rude to shake a stranger’s hand.



When both groups have made their decisions, ask the groups to interact with each other. Give them a setting. Perhaps a peace meeting, or something simple like a party. Have the third group act as cultural anthropologists and observe what happens in the interaction. Keep track of how many times someone is offended or shocked by someone else’s behavior. What impressions do the two groups have of one another?

Have a class discussion about what happened. How did it feel when someone misunderstood your behavior? How did it feel when someone acted in an inappropriate way towards you? Give examples. What would it be like to visit a different country where you don’t know the language and culture? What would be some positive or negative aspects of the experience? How would you feel? Would you feel comfortable? What is **xenophobia**? What are the root causes of xenophobia? What is **empathy**? How can we combat xenophobia with empathy?

Activity: Write a spoken word “I Am” poem.

Standard (Grades 9-12): Reading and Literature: Writing: Type of Writing: The student will write in narrative, expository, descriptive, persuasive and critical modes.

The play begins with the cattle declaring,

“We are the Cattle of the Sudan
We are proud four-footed creatures
Dinka Boys of Dinka tribe tend our herds
where and all they can
They are students, we are teachers...”

The Lost Boys of Sudan is written in what can be called a spoken word style, which is a lyricism whose roots are based in beat poetry and hip-hop, as well as classical poetic forms. Try your hand at writing a declarative spoken word poem, using the popular “I Am” form. Use the following prompts to write your lines, or come up with your own way of defining yourself. There is no right or wrong way to write an “I Am” poem.

I Am...

- Describe one strong, happy memory.
- Describe an adult who has had a big influence on you.
- Describe your fears, your hopes and your dreams.

Look at what you wrote. Can you add descriptive words or details? For example, if you wrote “my eighth birthday,” could you add to it to make, “my eighth birthday, when anything was possible.” If you wrote, “my grandmother,” could you add, “my grandmother, who taught me how to say ‘thank you.’”

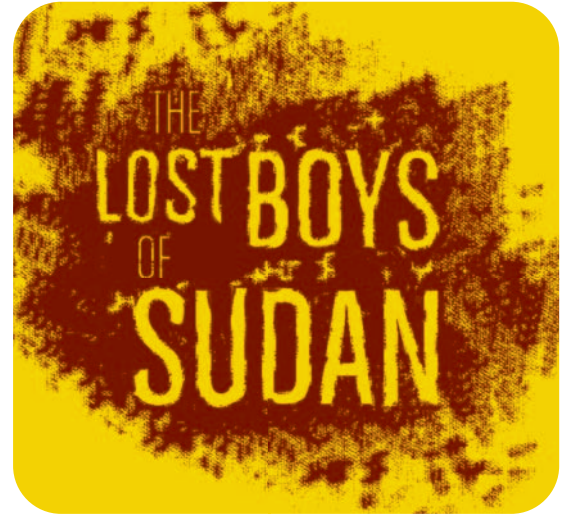
Activity: Play the “How-to Pantomime” Game

Standard (Grades 4 and 5): Theater: The student will: understand the following components of theater: vocabulary; and create a character based on fiction of life experience using movement, voice, costume and props.

This is a competitive charades game that utilizes **pantomime**, or acting without words, and challenges students to empathize with the experience of coming to a new country and learning how to do everyday tasks. First, define pantomime with your students.

Where have they seen pantomime? They may be familiar with the archetypal street mime in whiteface makeup and a striped shirt. Another way they may have seen or used pantomime is in playing charades.

Ask for two volunteers to act as judges. You will facilitate. Divide the class into two teams, with one judge per team. The two teams will sit in half circles facing away from each other. Starting at the end of the line, one player from each team will come to the facilitator. The facilitator will have listed on index cards a number of everyday tasks, such as “How to use a vending machine” or “How to use a vacuum” or “How to make an ice cream sundae.” The students read the **same card**, making sure they understand the task. Then each student goes back to his/her team and stands facing them. The facilitator says “go” and starts timing them. Each student must act out the task from the card. They will be acting out the same task. Allow the actors to complete their task entirely. When a member of their team thinks she knows what task it is, she may raise her hand. The judge for that team then goes to that person, who whispers the answer to the judge so that the other team does not hear. If the answer is correct, that team gets 2 points. Give the other team a chance to keep guessing. If they get a correct answer, they get 1 point. If both teams answer correctly, they both get 2 points. Continue play with the next team members coming to the facilitator for the next task card. Play can continue for a set amount of time or a set amount of points.



Possible tasks to write on the index cards: How to...use a vending machine, use a washing machine, play a video game, ride a skateboard, drive a car, use an ATM machine, use a Xerox machine, cook beef stew, shop and pay for groceries, use a CD player, start a motorcycle, use rollerblades, make spaghetti, use a vacuum, make and bake a pizza.

Discussion questions: What did it feel like to do this exercise? What was hard about understanding the task that your team members performed? What was easy? Imagine that you are a new immigrant to this country, trying to learn how to use a toaster or a CD player, or even how to drive a car or apply for a credit card. What are some everyday tasks that you think would be particularly hard for new immigrants to understand? How do you think it feels for new immigrants to try to master things like technology or even customs? Have you ever visited another country and tried to use a machine or tried to figure out how to get places or simple tasks such as paying for food? Can we do anything to help new immigrants transition to this country?

Pre- and Post-Show Discussion Questions

- 1) What was the cause of the unrest in Sudan? Why did the people have to leave?
- 2) Think about the first time you ever did something, like riding your bike or swimming. How did you feel before you did it? What are some of the things that the Lost Boys did for the first time when they came to the United States? Make a list. Are there things that they did for the first time which we take for granted because it's part of our culture?