

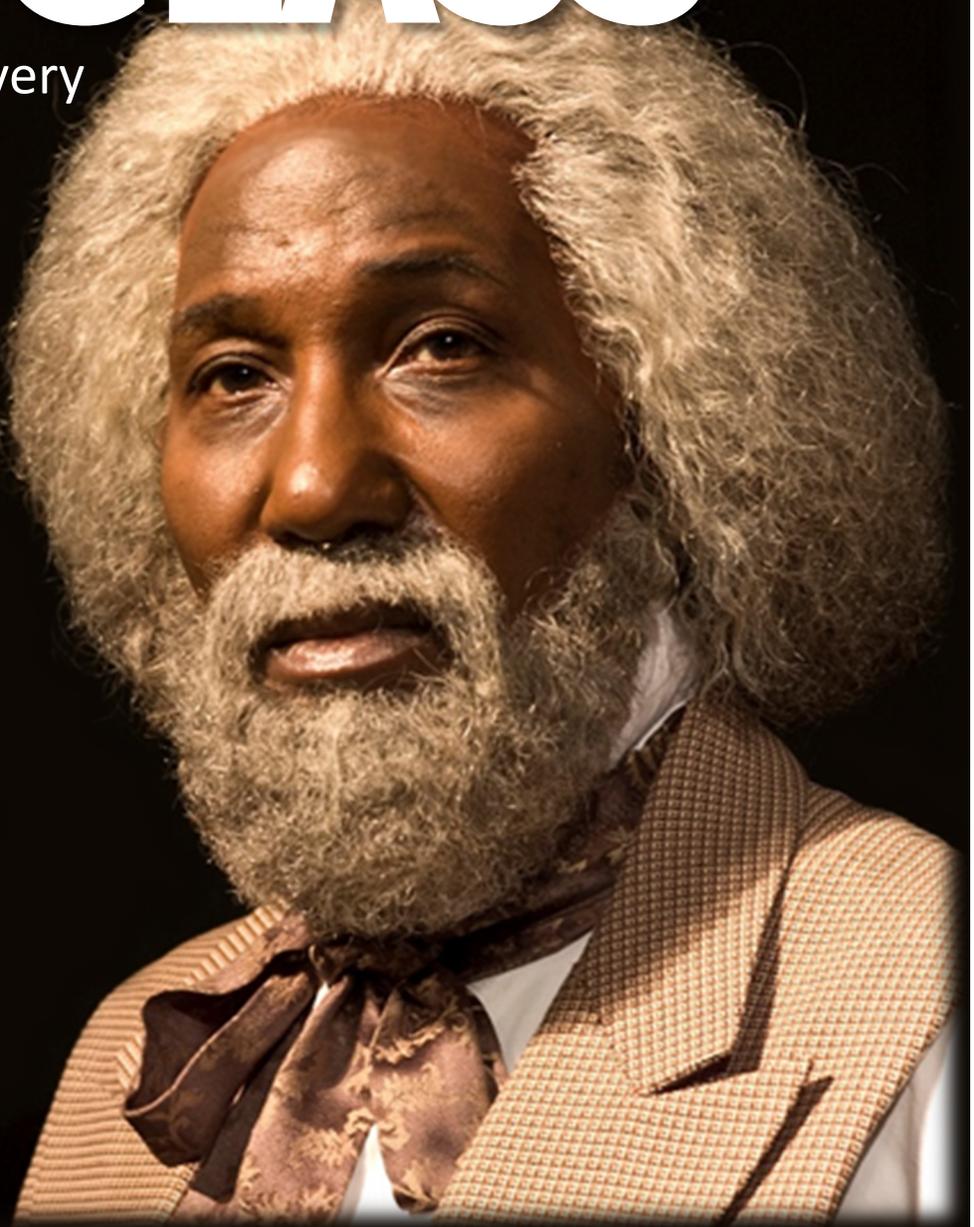


CLASS ACTS

2022-2023
Children's Series

FREDRICK DOUGLASS

In the Shadow of Slavery



STUDY GUIDE



Welcome to the Reif Class Acts series! We are so excited to have you visit us at the Reif Center and we are proud to help you provide live performances for your students.

Thank you for being such an important part of our mission. As advocates for the arts, we strive to increase access to live theatre, dance, and music as a critical part of education.

I would love to hear your feedback about the show and the overall experience for your students. Please take a moment to let us know how you felt about the show and what types of performances you would like to see in the future. Help us make our Class Acts experience as educational and enjoyable as possible.

Thank you and enjoy the show!

Katie E. Smith
Reif Education Director



IN THIS STUDY GUIDE

PAGE

ABOUT THE REIF

3

ABOUT THE SHOW

5

GOING TO THE THEATER

4

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

6



ABOUT THE REIF

The Reif Center is more than a building. With two auditoriums, four studio classrooms, an art gallery, and multiple practice rooms, it provides access for people of all ages to explore and exhibit their artistic talents.

The Reif Arts Council proudly produces Reif Education programming including Reif Dance and Theatre Education.

The Reif Center is home to the Grand Rapids Players and the Itasca Orchestra and Strings program. It is the venue for concerts of school bands and choirs, as well as the Itasca Community Chorus and Grand Rapids Area Male Chorus.

The lobby gallery is curated by MacRostie Art Center and exhibits professional artists' work as well as multiple student showcases from area schools each year.

In addition to supporting all of these regional programs, the Reif presents a series of events each year, bringing theatre, dance, and music from around the world to our community.

WHOSE PORTRAIT IS HANGING IN THE LOBBY?



MYLES REIF

Myles Reif, for whom the center is named, was a former president of Blandin Paper Company who believed in investing in the arts and education. Thanks to his contributions, there is a place for generations of artists to develop and share their craft.



LOIS GILDEMEISTER

The first director of the Reif Center was Lois Gildemeister, who was the greatest champion for the creation of a performing arts center in Grand Rapids. It was Lois' determination and vision that lead the community to come together and realize this dream.

GOING TO THE THEATER

Please encourage your students to visit the rest rooms before the show begins. It is disruptive to visit the rest rooms during a live performance.

We recommend that you provide your students with some guidelines of things to look at and listen for during the performance.

“Going to the Theatre Watching a live performance is very different than watching television or going to the movies. When you see a live performance you play a part too! Your role is an audience member. As an audience member you should obey the following instructions. . . (You may also want to encourage your children to add to this list.)”

CHILDREN SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO:

- A. Watch the performers.
- B. Listen to the music.
- C. Look at the costumes and set designs.
- D. Laugh when they see the performers do something funny.
- E. Clap to show that they are enjoying the performance when a song, scene or dance has finished.

It is customary to applaud when the performers take a bow.

CHILDREN SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED NOT TO:

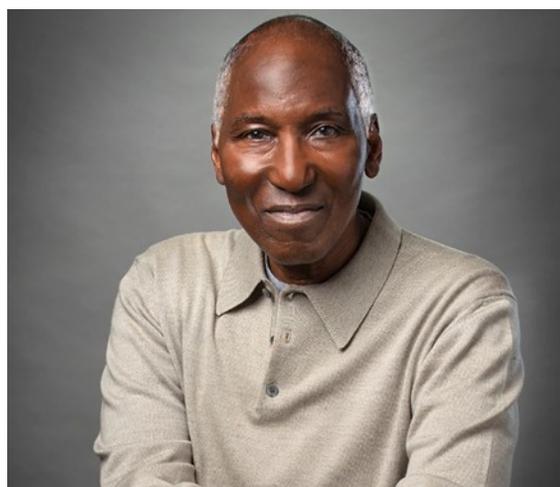
- A. Talk or make noise because they might miss something important.
- B. Chew gum or eat because it is disruptive to others and makes a mess in the theater.
- C. Leave their seats before the lights go on because this is very distracting to their neighbors.
- D. Bring phones in the theater because this is disruptive to the performers and other members of the audience.

About the Performance

Frederick Douglass: In the Shadow of Slavery is a one-man theatrical journey that chronicles Douglass' remarkable life; from his childhood in slavery to his perilous escape to freedom, from his intense friendships with Susan B. Anthony, John Brown, and Abraham Lincoln to his crucial work on behalf of former slaves following the Civil War. Incorporating gripping plantation songs, lush lighting and sound design, the story of Frederick Douglass' struggle for African American freedom, as performed by Mel Johnson, Jr., star of Broadway and film, is a fascinating evening of theatre that will inspire, educate and entertain.

Meet the Actor Mel Johnson Jr.

As an actor, Mel co-starred with Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Total Recall*. He was a regular on David Lynch's television show *On the Air* and has guest starred on *The Fresh Prince of Bel Aire* and *The Practice*. He has starred on Broadway as *Mufasa* in *The Lion King*. His other Broadway credits include *Jekyll & Hyde*, *On the Twentieth Century* with Kevin Klein, *Eubie!* with Maurice and Gregory Hines, *The Rink* with Liza Minnelli and Chita Rivera, *Big Deal* directed by Bob Fosse and *Jelly's Last Jam*. Johnson



was the executive producer of Big City Pictures. His films *Ragdoll*, *The Horrible Dr. Bones*, *Killjoy* and *The Vault* are now out on video. He was also the artistic director of the award-winning arts organization, *The Imagination Workshop*.

Mel's Los Angeles directing credits include the award-winning *Give 'Em Hell Harry* starring Jason Alexander, and the national tour of the critically acclaimed comedy *Confessions of a Swordfish*.

Frederick Douglass: In the Shadow of Slavery captures the life of Frederick Douglass, who has been called the father of the civil rights movement. Douglass, portrayed by Mel Johnson Jr., received its world premiere during the 2006-07 season. The play was written by playwright/actor/director, Tom Dugan.

Curriculum Connections: English/Language Arts, Social Studies and
American History – grades 5-12

ACTIVITY: On the Entertainment Beat

Pretend you are a newspaper reporter. Write a review of the performance. Describe what you saw. What did you hear? Did you learn about things you didn't know prior to the show? How did it make you feel? Would you recommend this performance to a friend? Include as many vocabulary words as you can.

ACTIVITY: One Man/Woman Show

Choose an historical figure who inspires you. Could you play them on stage? Try to write from their perspective. How can you tell their story in a way that would captivate an audience.



Thank you for coming to the show!

We hope to see you back at the Reif Center soon.