



2022– 2023

Circus Abyssinia: Tulu
EDUCATOR GUIDE

•
children's
theatre
company
•



September 27 — October 19, 2022

A Children's Theatre Company American Premiere Production

World-famous Circus Abyssinia returns by popular demand with a fantastical celebration of athleticism and the power of speed inspired by Ethiopian runner Derartu Tulu, the first Black African woman to win Olympic gold.

Watch in awe as a dazzling spectacle of high-flying acrobatics, hand balancing, and juggling (sometimes with fire!) flashes before your eyes, backed by the beat of Ethiopian music. Witness the energy and spectacle of the Olympic games, packed with extraordinary circus acts, and be amazed as the world of triumph and virtuosity come to dynamic life!

co-created and produced by **MEHARI "BIBI" TEFAMARIAM**

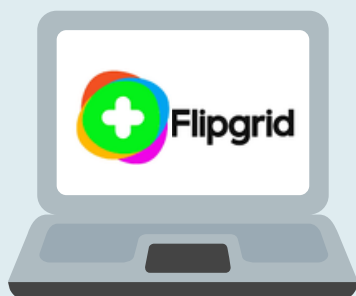
co-created and directed by **BINYAM "BICHU" SHIMELLIS**

choreography by **TAMERAT EJETA** and **BINYAM "BICHU" TEFAMARIAM**



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For virtual activities, videos, and more, join the creativity on the

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The Story of Tulu



Like many children of poverty in Ethiopia, Derartu Tulu's job (even as a child) was to tend to the cattle of her village alongside her 9 siblings. She would wake up before dawn to herd the animals into the Arsi highlands where she would often come face-to-face with hyenas who roamed the planes of her village. From a young age, she excelled at anything that involved speed and would often run while working in the fields. Even as an Elementary student, she out-ran the highest-ranking male athlete at her school. While she loved to run, her first love was horseback riding which she enjoyed with her father.

At the age of 17, she joined the Ethiopian Police Force where she ran for the police club and competed in her first world competition in 1989. Though she competed often, she was never looked at as a front-runner for Olympic or World competitions- an honor that often went to Elana Meyer, a white woman from South Africa.

In the 10,000m final at the 1992 Olympic Games, Tulu was considered the underdog of the competition. Her main competitor, Elana Meyer, pulled away from the field after 6,100m and, out of all the other competitors, only Tulu was able to keep pace with her. Then, Tulu darted into the lead and went on to win by 30 meters. She waited for Meyer at the finish line, and then Tulu, the first black African woman to earn an Olympic medal, and Meyer, a white South African, set off hand in hand for a victory lap that symbolized hope for a new Africa. Tulu's win in the Barcelona Olympics goes down in the History Books as the first gold-medal win ever by an African woman.

A few years later, she won the World Cross-Country Championship after being stuck in the Athens airport overnight without sleep and set her record for fastest last lap at 60.3 seconds. She went on to win 6 world and Olympic gold medals and continued to run long after her main competitors decided to retire. Her last race was in 2011 but continues to advocate for female athletes and is now the president of the Ethiopian Athletics Federation (EAF).

In an interview with BBC, she recognized that "After I won gold in Barcelona, many women runners started thinking that it is possible to win big competitions." And she was right. Although Ethiopia has a long history of producing champion male distance runners, it was not until the emergence of Derartu Tulu that they had a champion woman distance runner as well- paving the way and inspiring future female athletes in Africa.

Following in Tulu's Footsteps:

Modern-Day Female Athletes of Africa



Tobi Amusan

Oluwatobiloba Ayomide "Tobi" Amusan is a Nigerian track and field athlete who specialises in the 100 meter hurdles and also competes as a sprinter. She won the 2018 Commonwealth and 2019 African champion in the event. She is also a two-time African Games champion.

Francoise Mbango

Françoise Mbango is a Cameroonian-born two-time Olympic gold medalist in the triple jump. She is also the world-record holder in the triple jump with a distance of 15.39 meters. Only 25 women have ever jumped 15 metres!

Inès Boubakri

As a four-time Olympian, Inès is an Tunisian foil fencer. At the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, she became the first Tunisian as well as the first African and Arab woman to win an Olympic medal in fencing.

Naveen Daries

Representing South Africa, Naveen is an artistic gymnast who won bronze in the African Championships, competed at the World Championship Games and most recently competed at the 2020 Olympics.

Feryal Abdelaziz

Feryal is the first female Egyptian to have won a gold medal at the Olympic Games while competing in karate. She won the gold medal in the women's +61 kg event at the 2020 Summer Olympics held in Tokyo, Japan, and was the first female Egyptian to have won a gold medal at any Olympic Games.



Ethiopia measures the day using a different clock. They believe that the clock should start when the day starts. Therefore, sunrise is at 1 o'clock and sunset is at 12 o'clock.

110
Million

Ethiopia is the 2nd most populous country in Africa, with a population of about 110 million people.

Ethiopia has their own alphabet called Ge'ez.

70%

Of the mountains in Africa are located in Ethiopia.

The oldest human fossil was discovered in Ethiopia.

The capitol of Ethiopia is Addis Ababa

Get the Facts about Ethiopia

September 11th is considered the "New Year" in Ethiopia.



OVER 80

languages are spoken in Ethiopia.

Coffee was first discovered in Ethiopia.



Ethiopia is the only African country to have never been colonized.

The distance between Minneapolis and Ethiopia.

7730
Miles



Ethiopia uses a 13-month calendar, which means that it is the year 2014 right now in Ethiopia.

Springboard

Ideas of what to talk about, write about, or explore while connecting *Circus Abyssinia: Tulu* to your classroom curriculum



Visit one of the many Ethiopian restaurants in Minnesota.

A dream board is a visual representation of what you hope to achieve. Create a classroom dream board using magazine cut outs, drawings, or computer images.

Compare and contrast a circus production from a play or musical.

Host a class talent show for students to show off their abilities.

Play telephone but instead of passing your voice, pass a pantomime using your body. Was the message able to stay consistent while traveling from person to person?

Create a circus obstacle course in your classroom that includes hula-hoops, walking a tightrope line, and balancing.

Which circus act was your favorite and why?

Watch the winter Olympics as a class then hold your own classroom Olympics.

Tulu's story is told non-verbally through circus performances. Were you able to understand the story? What helped you understand?

Research famous female athletes from around the world!

Shadows are used multiple times throughout the play. Tell a story using shadows and shadow puppets.

Increase focus while walking between classes by placing painters tape on the floor of the hallway. Challenge students to walk the "tightrope" without falling.

Run a class race to see who is the fastest! How does your time compare to Tulu, who could run a lap in 60.3 seconds!

Tulu wins gold for running faster than her competitors. If there was an Olympics for your life, what would you win gold for?

What does it mean to work as a team? What are ways you can be good team members?

What emotions did you feel during the show? Why did you feel those emotions?

All the circus performers worked hard to master their circus skills. What is something you worked hard to master? Did you accomplish what you hoped to?

What barriers do you think Tulu faced throughout her career as an Olympic runner?



Class Act: Actor's Tools

Actors use many tools to help them tell a story—three we focus on at CTC are body, voice, and imagination.

Explain that projecting means using a loud voice and enunciating means speaking clearly. Have students practice projecting and enunciating by saying “Circus Abyssinia” as a group, and then individually.

Brainstorm emotions that actors might portray. Try saying “Circus Abyssinia” using those emotions. Students will naturally begin to use their body to portray the emotion as they say the line. Brainstorm how your body looks or feels different when you are feeling these emotions. Allow a few students to showcase their work as a solo.

Class Act: I Dream Of...

Objective: This activity allows students to explore their dreams for the future through physicality and gesture. Students will make observations and infer meaning.

Directions: Gather students in a circle. One at a time, each student will step forward and say “Hello, my name is (insert name here) and for my future, I dream of...” They will then show their dream for the future through gesture or mime. Allow each student to have a turn showcasing their dream. When everyone has had a chance, reflect with students about what they observed. What were the similarities they saw? Did any gestures stand out? What emotions did they feel while watching these gestures?

Class Act: Story Dance

Objective: This activity encourages students to create a dance inspired by the plot points of a story. This activity provides students with kinesthetic anchors to remember a sequence of events or facts.

Directions: Work as a team to identify 4-8 parts or plot points of a story. This can be from a story you are reading or an original story created by the class. The more plot points, the longer the dance. To start, students are only going to focus on the first story point. When you say “go” students will perform a short, repeatable action that represents that story point. Observe the group and choose 2-3 actions to feature in the dance. String these actions together into a 4-8 beat sequence. Practice that phrase a few times, then do the same for the rest of the plot points. Don’t forget to go back and rehearse often to review.

If you would like to set your dance to music, discuss as a group what type of music you should choose. Discuss the emotions of your dance. What type of songs might convey that emotion? Perform your dance!

Team Builder: Hopes & Fears

Objective: This activity allows students to voice their hopes and fears for the future while comparing those with their classmates. This activity aims to give perspective and commonality.

Directions: Instruct all students to put their heads down and close their eyes. Sit for a moment in the silence then instruct students to begin to popcorn out their hopes and dreams for the future. Once the ideas begin to die down, instruct students to think about similarities and differences in those statements.

After the students have had enough time to think silently, instruct them to popcorn out their fears for the future. Assure students that these statements should be ones they are comfortable sharing with the class. Again, give students a moment to think about the similarities and differences.

Invite students to slowly open their eyes. Reflect as a group about similarities and differences they heard with the hopes and dreams. How did they feel when they were hearing the hopes and dreams of their classmates? Reflect on the similarities and differences they heard in the fears for the future. How did they feel while hearing the fears of their classmates?

Team Builder: Make a Shape

Objective: This activity works best in a large open space such as a gymnasium or playground however, it can be modified to work around desks.

Directions: In this activity, the teacher will act as a ring leader. Instruct students to spread out around the open space so that they are not touching anything or anyone else. When everyone has found a spot and you have the group's focus, the teacher says, "I am the ringleader and you are my performers. When I say 'go' you will become a star." When you say "go," the students will shape their bodies like a star (whatever that means to them). Take a moment to recognize things you see that are similar or unique then repeat the command using a different shape.

After students have mastered basic shapes, you can move onto objects or animals. If they are ready for a bigger challenge, you can group students into pairs or small groups that must work together to become the different objects.

Ready for an even bigger challenge? Challenge students to SILENTLY work as a team to become different objects or work as an entire classroom to make a statue of an environment.

"Our goal at Circus Abyssinia is to thrill and inspire, to celebrate the beauty and power of the imagination, and the real possibility that when we work together and fight for them, our dreams are for the taking."

~Bibi & Bichu



Research It: Athletic Art

Objective: Bibi & Bichu conducted research on Derartu Tulu while they were creating this brand new circus performance. This activity challenges students to research female athletes or leaders (such as those profiled on page 5) then create an original piece of art to celebrate that person's achievements.

Directions: Assign each student a female athlete or leader to research. Give them time on a computer or in a library to learn as much as they can about that person.

After research is finished, students can create a poem, scene, song, rap, dance, podcast, or visual art project inspired by their athlete or leader.

Showcase student creations for the class for students to share their creations. Allow each student to talk about their piece and how their research impacted their project.

Research It: World Map

Objective: This activity challenges students to think about countries and gain special awareness of the world around them. This activity works best in a large open space such as a gymnasium, classroom with desks to the side, or outside.

Directions: Assign each student a country to research. Give them time on a computer or in a library to learn as much as they can about that country. Students should color the flag of that country.

Tell the students that we are going to make a map of the world in this open area using our bodies. Decide collectively where the United States should be located on this map. Ask students to stand where their country would be located on your map and place the flag of their country at their feet. As the teacher, take a look at the space and see if any adjustments need to be made. Instead of giving students the answers, challenge them to take a second look at problem areas ("Let's take a second look at Europe. Can anyone help?").

Once your map is established, you will ask students to move to a country based on your prompts. Ask students to step to a country that they know that capitol of. After students have chosen a country, you can quiz them to see if they are correct. Additional sample prompts are below:

- Walk to a country where your favorite food originated.
- Walk to a country with a tropical climate
- Walk to a country that your ancestors are from.
- Walk to the country where you were born.

If students are comfortable, you can ask them to identify for the class where they choose and why they choose that location.

Write It Out: Olympic Invention

Objective: This activity challenges student to sequence events, instructions, and outcomes in clear and concise ways for others to understand.

Directions: Assign small groups of students an Olympic event which they should research such as cross country, gymnastics, weight-lifting, etc. They should be able to answer the following questions and present their findings to the class.

- Is the event played as a team or as an individual?
- How is the event played step by step?
- What is the objective or goal and how does someone win?
- Is the event strength based, logic/knowledge based, performance based, or strategy based?
- What are the rules and what happens if a player breaks a rule?

After each student or group of students has presented their assigned Olympic event, compare and contrast the events as a class. What is similar about the events and how are they different? What do student like about each event and what would they change?

Send students back to their group and assign them to create an original Olympic event. They should be able to answer the same questions listed above.

Allow each group to present their new Olympic event in front of the class. Groups can demonstrate their original event or hold your own classroom Olympics to try out each original competition!

Write It Out: Music-Art-Story

Objective: This activity challenges student to identify emotions in music, create art inspired by those emotions, and write about imagined events.

Directions: Choose a snippet of music (about a minute works well) from a specific genre such as classical, rock and roll, or gospel. Play the piece of music and ask student to simply listen to the music sample. It may help if they close their eyes. When the piece of music is done, ask students to write or share aloud some emotions they felt during the song.

Play the same piece of music again and this time, instruct students to draw a picture while listening to the song. When the song is over, give students time to share their art with a partner or with the class. Ask them to share what emotions inspired the artwork and make connections to times they felt that emotion in their life.

Choose another snippet of music from an alternative genre. Do the activity again with this piece of music. When they are finished, students should have 2 pieces of art inspired by 2 separate pieces of music.

Challenge students to write a story connecting the two pieces of art. Ask for student volunteers to share their story and drawings. If time, choose a few stories to act out as a class.



Write it Out: "Where I'm From"

Objective: This activity uses the poem "Where I'm From" by George Ella Lyon to build community and explore belonging. Students will practice writing skills by creating their own versions of the poem.

Directions: Gather students in a circle. One student begins by standing in the center of the circle and saying "Where I'm from, everyone eats..." and completing the sentence. If that statement rings true for anyone in the circle, that person also takes a step into the circle. If they feel it is very true for them, they step farther into the circle than if it is only somewhat true for them. Assure students that they only need

"Where I'm From"

By George Ella Lyon

I am from clothespins,
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.
I am from the dirt under the back porch.
(Black, glistening,
it tasted like beets.)

I am from the forsythia bush
the Dutch elm
whose long-gone limbs I remember
as if they were my own.

I'm from fudge and eyeglasses,
from Imogene and Alafair.

I'm from the know-it-alls
and the pass-it-ons,
from Perk up! and Pipe down!

I'm from He restoreth my soul
with a cottonball lamb
and ten verses I can say myself.

I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch,
fried corn and strong coffee.

From the finger my grandfather lost
to the auger,
the eye my father shut to keep his sight.

Under my bed was a dress box
spilling old pictures,
a sift of lost faces

to drift beneath my dreams.
I am from those moments--
snapped before I budded --
leaf-fall from the family tree.

to share statements that they are comfortable sharing and that they get to decide if something is true for them.

After everyone has a chance to observe the commonalities, everyone re-joins the circle and another student has a turn being the person in the center.

Allow everyone to have a chance to complete the prompt then give them another prompt.

Example Prompts:

- Where I'm from, everyone says...
- Where I'm from, everyone knows...
- Where I'm from, everyone believes in...
- Where I'm from, everyone smells like...
- Where I'm from, everyone feels...

Ask students to return to their seats and reflect on the activity as a group. How did they feel? Were there any moments that surprised them? What connections did you make with classmates?

Read or listen to the poem "Where I'm From" by George Ella Lyon. Using the poem and activity as inspiration, students can write their own version of "Where I'm From." Students can either free write or use the template available below:

Poem Template

Ask for volunteers to showcase their poems for the class.



Taste of Ethiopia: Injera Recipe

Injera is a type of Ethiopian bread that is used as a vehicle or utensil for eating meat, vegetables, or stews. This food acts as an edible table cloth with the food piled on top. Injera is made of teff flour, which is the world's tiniest grain and originates in Ethiopia.

Materials:

- ☐ Mixing Bowl
- ☐ Spoon
- ☐ Non-stick pan or cast-iron skillet
- ☐ Plastic Wrap
- ☐ Spatula

Ingredients:

- ☐ 1/4 cup of teff flour
- ☐ 3/4 cup of all-purpose flour
- ☐ 1 cup water
- ☐ Pinch of salt
- ☐ Peanut or vegetable oil

Step 1: Stir teff flour and all-purpose flour together in a mixing bowl.

Step 2: Slowly add water and stir to avoid lumps.

Step 3: Cover bowl lightly with plastic wrap and set aside at room temperature for 1-3 days to allow it to ferment. You will see the batter start to bubble. This is how the bread gets a slightly tangy taste.

Step 4: Stir in salt.

Step 5: Heat the non-stick pan or lightly oiled cast-iron skillet. Coat the pan with a thin layer of batter. The batter should spread quickly. If it is too thick, stir in a bit more water. Injera should be thicker than a crepe, but thinner than a pancake.

Step 7: Cook until holes appear on the top of the bread. When the bread appears dry and the Injera is fully cooked, use a spatula to remove it from the pan and let it cool.

Injera can be topped with hummus, salads, meats, beans, or stew.

Build Your Own Mancala

Mancala is thought to be the oldest game in the world by many historians. The earliest physical evidence of this game was found by archeologists in Ethiopia dating back to between 500 and 700 AD (that is over 1500 years ago!). Historically, the game was made by digging small holes in the earth and using stones or seeds for game pieces. You can make your own mancala game using the directions below.

Step 1: Gather the materials and equipment below.

Materials:

- ☐ Egg carton
- ☐ Paint (optional)

Equipment:

- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Tape or Glue

Figure 1:



Step 2: Cut the lid off the egg carton.

Step 3: Cut the lid in half vertically.

Step 4: Using tape or glue, secure the two lid halves to either end of the egg carton so that approximately two inches are open on either side. This gives your mancala board the mancala holes on each side. (See figure 1)

Step 5: Gather 48 small objects to use as game pieces.

Step 6: You can paint or decorate your mancala board or skip this step to start playing using the directions below.

How to Play

Place the mancala board between you and an opponent with the long side facing you. There will be 6 pits or small holes facing you and your mancala or large hole to the right.

Place 4 game pieces in each small hole. Designate one player to go first. On your turn, grab all of the game pieces in a pit on your side and drop one into each pit going counter-clockwise. You CAN put one stone in your own mancala on your journey around the board. You CAN place pieces in pits on your opponents side of the board but you CANNOT put a piece in your opponents mancala.

If the last piece of your turn lands in your mancala, you get to go again! If the last piece of your turn lands in an empty pit on your side of the board, you capture all of the pieces in your opponents pit directly opposite of the pit you landed in. Always place captured pieces in your pit.

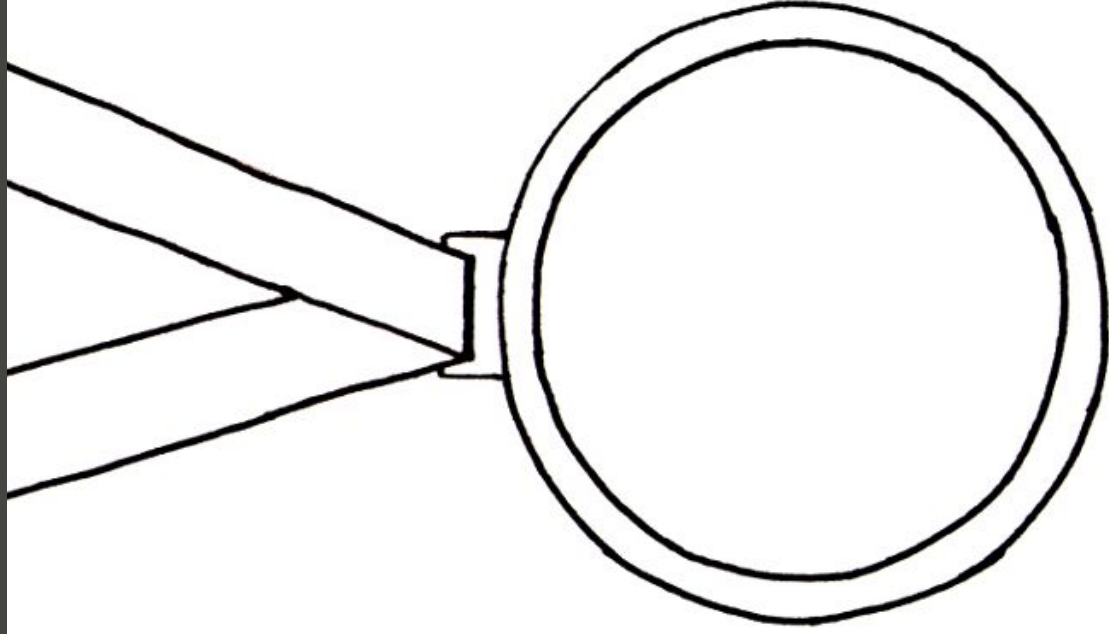
The game is finished when a player has no more pieces on their side of the board. The player who still has pieces on their side captures all remaining pieces for their mancala.

Count pieces in your mancala. The winner is the player with the most pieces.

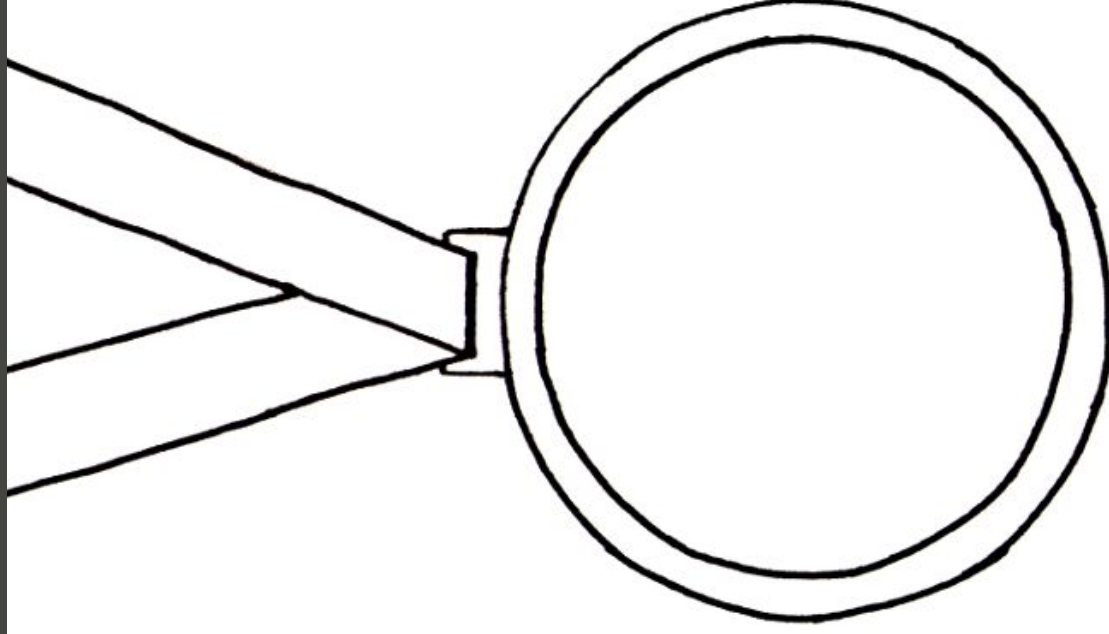


Design Your Olympic Medal

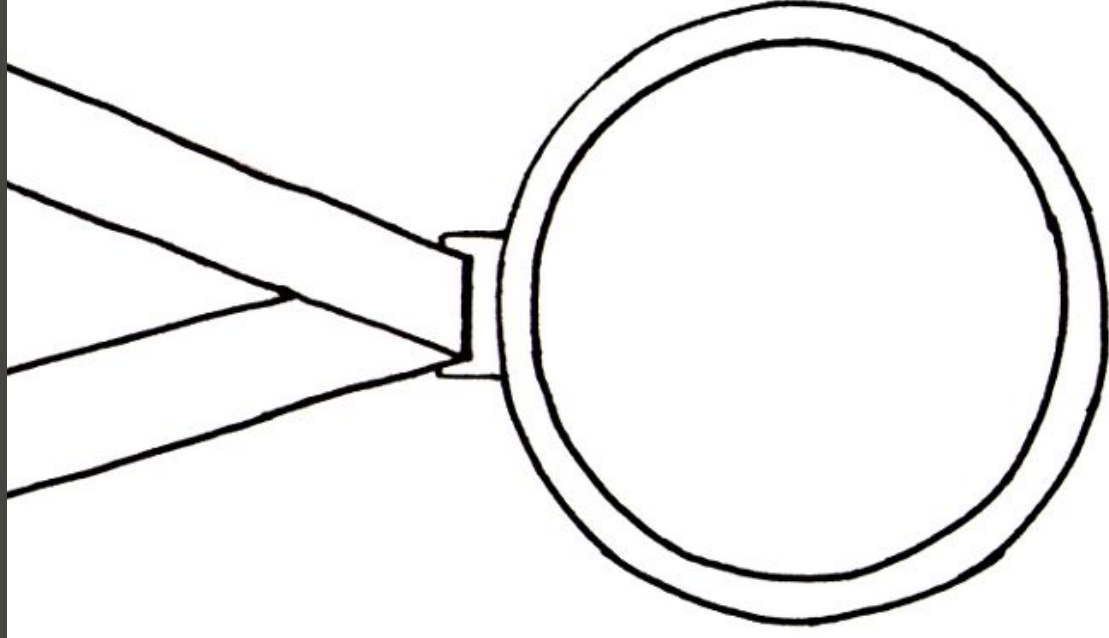
Design and color the Olympic medals below. One is for Detartu Tulu, one for yourself, and one for a friend!



This medal is awarded to
Derartu Tulu for her
achievement in running!



This medal is awarded to me,
_____,
for my achievement in

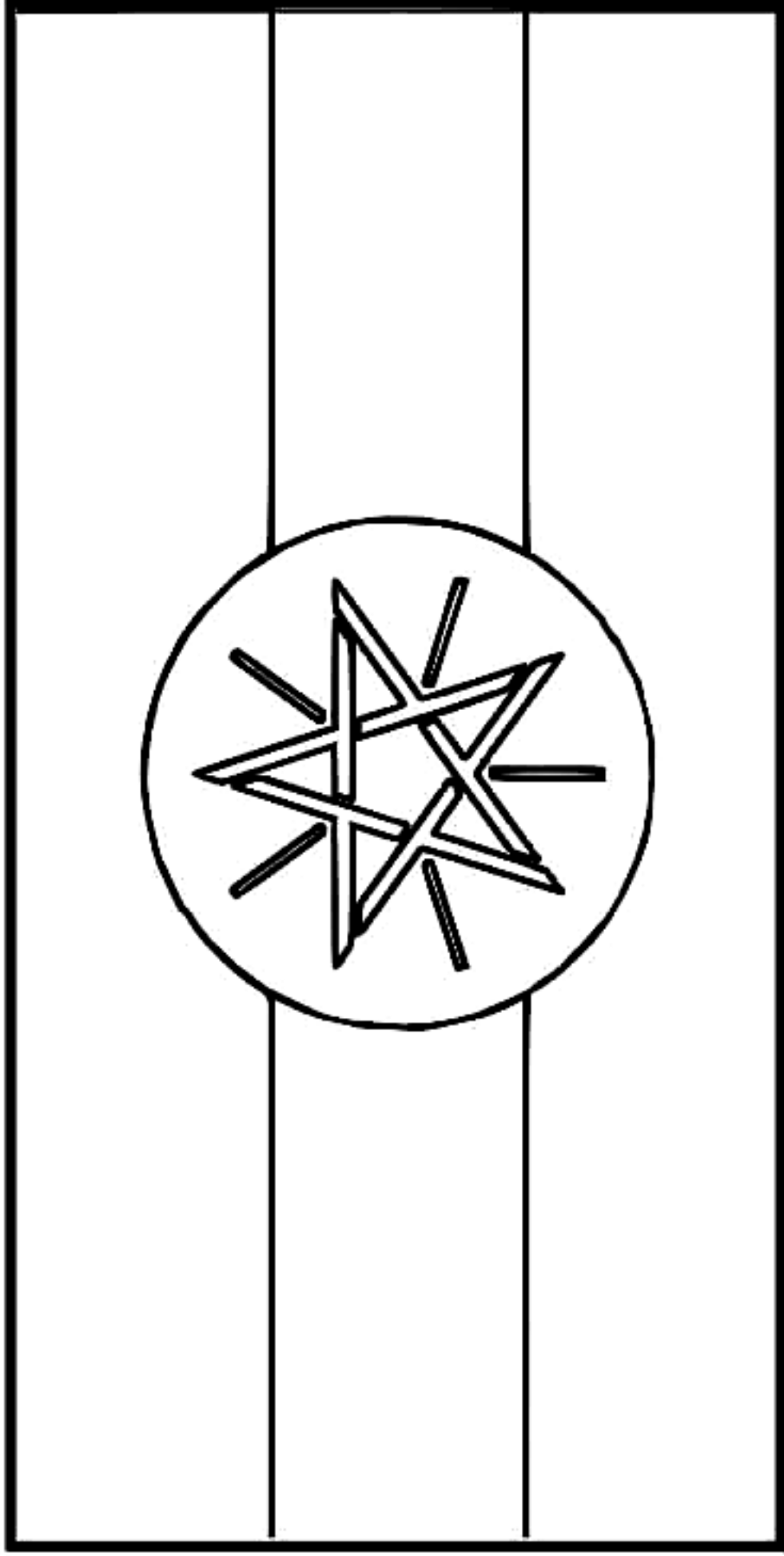


This medal is awarded to my friend

for their achievement in

Color the *Ethiopian Flag*

Color the Ethiopian flag below. The top stripe is green, the middle stripe is yellow, and the bottom stripe is red. The circle in the middle is blue with a yellow star.



Corkboard Conversations

Use the sticky notes below to think critically about *Circus Abyssinia: Tulu*

Three adjectives that describe this play are...

1

2

3

This play made me feel...

This play made me think about...

A status I would post on my social media after seeing this show is...

A question I still have is...

This play taught me...



My Rating of *Circus Abyssinia: Tulu*
at Children's Theatre Company



FURTHER RESOURCES

More About Ethiopia

Ethiopia Quiz from the
'New York Times'

[Take the Quiz](#)

Amharic Online
Translator

[Translator](#)

Geography Now
Ethiopia Video

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Ethiopian Expedition:
Learn about Ethiopia

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Passport to Ethiopia
on Off Book

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Ethiopians in
Minnesota

[Learn More](#)

More About Circus Abyssinia

Sneak Peek into the
Rehearsal Room

[Watch](#)

Meet the Women of
Circus Abyssinia

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CNN Inside Africa
Feature with Bibi & Bichu

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The Music of
Circus Abyssinia

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Mail Letters to:

Children's Theatre Company

2400 Third Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404

Submit Student Questions at:

[www.childrenstheatre.org
/offbookquestions](http://www.childrenstheatre.org/offbookquestions)

Check out more activities on:



Flipgrid

Questions? Email:

schools@childrenstheatre.org

