

Milo Imagines the World Educator Guide

MILO

Imagines the World

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Behind the Scenes



Learn more about
the artists, history,
and themes of
this production.



What is this show about?

On a crowded subway, Milo passes the time imagining the lives of the other passengers. See his illustrations brought to spirited life in this world-premiere musical, featuring dynamic new songs ranging from hip hop and pop to country. Ride along with Milo from stop to stop as he begins to understand that first impressions aren't always accurate, that his older sister Adrienne isn't always annoying, and that real life can sometimes be even more incredible than an imaginary one.

A World Premiere Production

Milo Imagines the World at Children's Theatre Company is a world premiere production. Co-commissioned with Chicago Children's Theatre and The Rose Theater, the musical is an adaptation of the 2021 picture book by Matt de la Peña and illustrated by Christian Robinson. The picture book is a 2015 recipient of the Stonewall Book Award for Books in Children's and Young Adult Literature.

New York City Subway

Milo Imagines the World mostly takes place on the New York City subway. Discuss with your class what they might see, smell, or feel if they were riding the subway and transferring in a busy station. Consider playing the first three minutes or so of this video for your class before your field trip: [New York City Subway—Sounds and People](#).

What are your observations? How would traveling through the subway system make you feel? Excited? Nervous? Adventurous? Scared? After your trip, discuss how the **setting** affected the story.





Big Topics—Resources for Educators

“Kids understand so much more than we give them credit for. So, I like to go there. I explore big topics.” -Matt de la Peña

Milo Imagines the World brings up big topics that students may be eager to talk about after seeing the play. See below for resources to help guide the conversation.

Understanding and Addressing Implicit Bias

As Milo tries to imagine the stories and backgrounds of various people throughout the show, he learns that his initial impression and viewpoint might not be entirely accurate. Unconscious judgements on others based on stereotypes and societal influences is called **implicit bias**. Learn more about these automatic associations and specifically how they impact children with [this article](#) from Children’s Mercy Kansas City or this [interactive lesson](#) from PBS.

Children with Incarcerated Parents

Milo and his sister Adrienne are on their way to visit their mom in a correctional facility. 2.7 million (or 1 in 28) children currently have an incarcerated parent. In Minnesota, an estimated 1 out of 6 youth have an incarcerated or previously incarcerated parent. Use the information at [youth.gov](#) to provide [resources for your students](#) and learn more about [how to support youth](#) who have incarcerated parents.



Before You Go



Use these activities
in your classroom to
prepare your students
for their field trip
to CTC.

Grades: Grades 2 and up **Time Required:** 10-30 minutes

Supplies: Visuals from the following page of make your own

Set-up: This activity can be done in a circle or with students seated at their desks.



In *Milo Imagines the World*, Milo learns that there are many elements to his and everyone else's identity. While observing people on the subway, he focuses on one aspect of their identity and forms an opinion about them. This activity provides an opportunity to define **stereotype** to your students and allows them to examine and challenge stereotypes.

Stereotype—A simple idea that many people believe about a large group of people that is not true for everyone in that group.

Instructions:

1. With the students seated at their desks or in a circle, tell them you will say an activity or job that people do. They should visualize someone they associate with that activity or job.
 - Nurse
 - Reader
 - Firefighter
 - Basketball player
 - Runner
2. After each example, show them a picture of a person engaging in that job or activity. Use the examples on the following page or create your own.
3. Ask students to share who they visualized and what they notice about their visualization compared to the picture you show.
4. After you've gone through all of them, discuss which pictures were the most surprising to your students and why.
5. Ask the students if they have ever heard the word **stereotype** before. Explain that it is a simple idea that many people believe about a large group of people that is not true for everyone in that group.
6. Ask your students the following questions:
 - Is it ok when stereotypes don't fit us?
 - How does it feel when stereotypes don't fit?
7. Explain that what's important is that once we become aware of how we may stereotype others, we work on changing our thinking on a daily basis to see someone's full self and not exclude people that don't match our original stereotype.

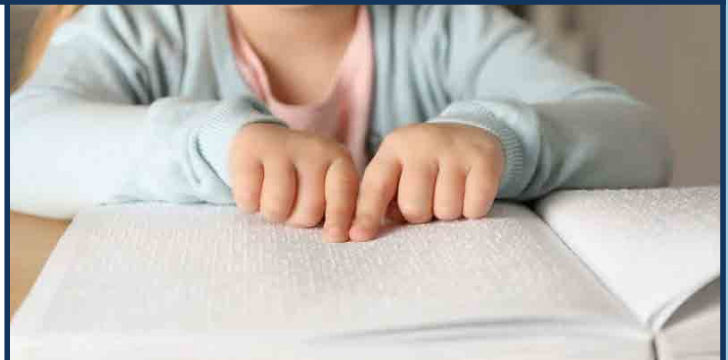
Variations and Adjustments

Read *Milo Imagines the World* with your class. Have students work together to identify when Milo is stereotyping others. When does Milo realize that he is stereotyping? Do you think the other people on the subway are stereotyping Milo?

Nurse



Reader



Firefighter



Basketball Player



Runner





Draw Someone's World

Grades: Grades K and up **Time Required:** 20-30 minutes

Supplies: Blank sheets of paper and drawing supplies (pencils, crayons, or markers)

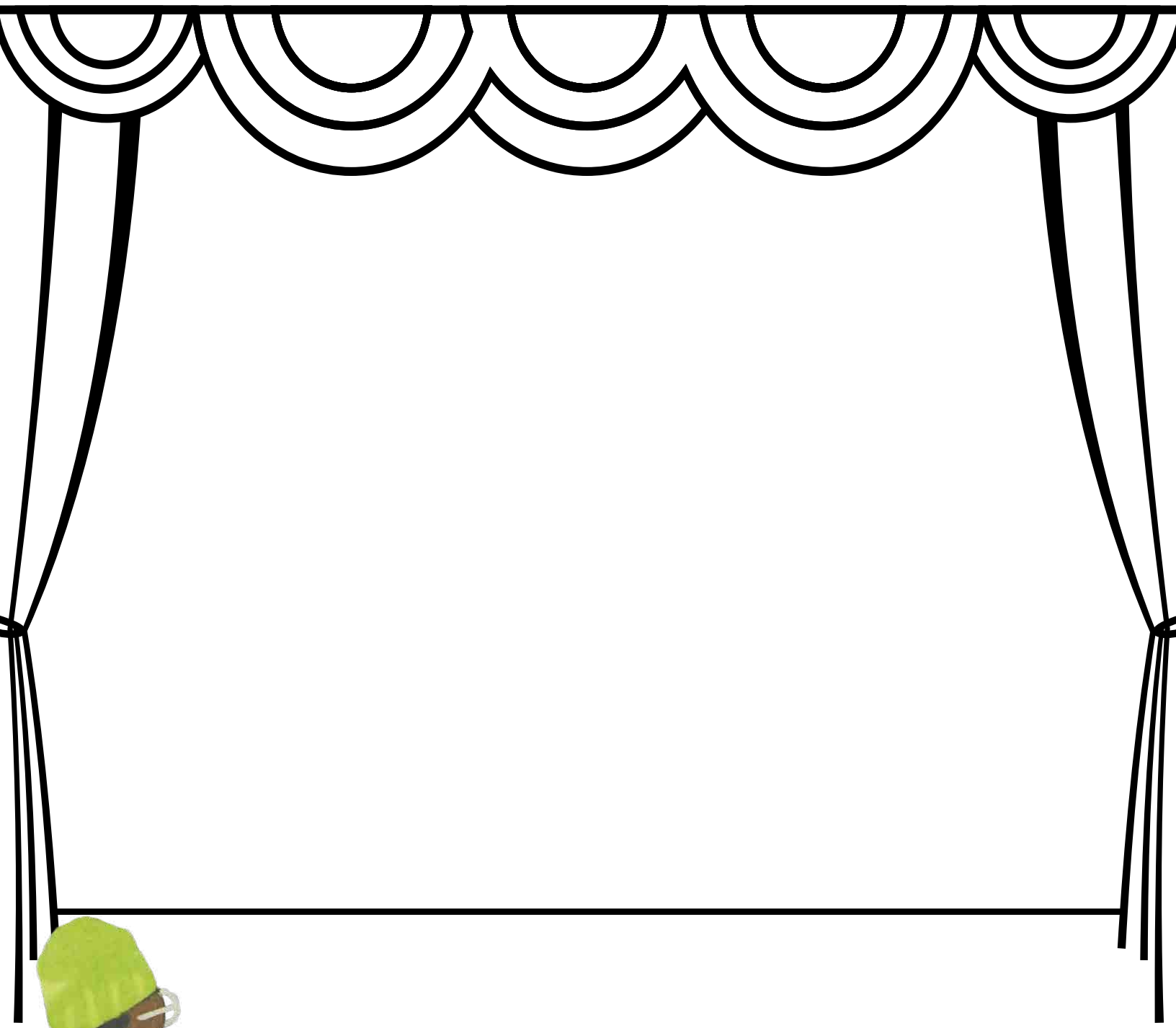
Set-up: This activity can be done in a circle or with students seated at their desks.

In *Milo Imagines the World*, to pass the time while riding the subway, Milo observes his fellow passengers and imagines what their world is like based on how they look. This activity provides an opportunity to have students collaborate and create pieces of art in a similar way.

Instructions:

1. With the students seated at their desks or in a circle, hand out a blank piece of paper for each student and drawing supplies.
2. Ask the students to draw a person or animal in the center of their paper that has a clear emotion or feeling. Ask them to think of a story or reason as to why they feel that way without sharing with anyone. Feel free to offer suggestions such as drawing a big smile if they are happy, tears and a frown if they are sad, etc.
3. Once all students have completed their figure, have them write their name on the back and trade papers with another student so that no one has their original paper.
4. Now ask the students to take a look at the figure on their new piece of paper and think about what emotion or feeling the figure in the drawing is feeling and why that might be. Have them draw the specific story or environment around the figure that they think matches the feeling or emotion. Again, you may offer suggestions such as if the person looks excited, maybe they got a surprise gift.
5. When everyone is finished drawing the world around the figures, return the papers to the original artist.
6. Ask your students the following question:
 - Does the drawing that was added outside the figure match the story and feelings you had thought of when drawing your figure?
7. Explain that we don't always know the full story of what people are feeling or going through. While we can make assumptions, they are not always accurate and helpful in connecting and helping others.

After reading *Milo Imagines the World*, draw what you think the set will look like at Children’s Theatre Company. What is the **setting** of *Milo Imagines the World*? Where does the story take place? What do you think that will look like on the stage?



Revisit your drawing after the show. Were there any similarities between what you imagined and what you saw? What surprised you?

Affirmation Poster

Grades: Grades K and up **Time Required:** 10-15 minutes

Supplies: Pen or pencil and worksheet from the following page.

Set-up: This activity can be done in a circle or with students seated at their desks.



In *Milo Imagines the World*, Milo's big sister Adrienne is often stressed and overwhelmed due to the amount of responsibility she has while taking care of her little brother Milo. She refers to something called **affirmations**, which are phrases or words that she tells herself to provide support and motivation. This activity encourages students to make their own affirmation poster.

Affirmation—A positive statement aimed at fostering self-improvement and boosting self-esteem.

Instructions:

1. With the students seated at their desks or in a circle, hand out a blank piece of paper or copies of the worksheet from the following page for each student and writing utensils.
2. If they have been given blank pieces of paper, have them write "I AM _____" 4 times.
3. Ask your class to imagine the kind words they'd say to themselves to feel calm, strong, and ready to take on anything. Brainstorm together and write their ideas on the board.
4. After several ideas have been generated, tell the students that they can pick their favorites or write their own ideas on the blank lines.
5. If time allows, have students draw things that make them happy or provide comfort around their affirmations.
6. When everyone is finished drawing and writing, ask students to share their affirmations out loud if they feel comfortable.
7. Suggest students put these posters somewhere they might see often, a mirror at home, in their locker at school, etc., and repeat the affirmations to themselves whenever they need some extra support and motivation.

Affirmation Poster

I AM

I AM

I AM

I AM



3 Things

In the day or so before your field trip, share the following prompts with your students. You can read them aloud to your class or give each student a copy. When you return from the performance, review the list again. What do they remember noticing or thinking about during the performance?



During the performance:



Look for...

1. A green beanie. Who is wearing it?
2. A superhero. Are they real or imaginary? What do you like to imagine yourself as?
3. Drawings coming to life. Do you like to draw?



Listen for...

1. The sounds of a subway train. Have you ever taken a subway? If so, where did you go?
2. Someone dramatically crying. Why do you think they are crying?
3. Different genres of music. How do the different styles reflect different characters and moments?

Think about...

1. What do you think it means that Milo and Adrienne feel like “a soda that’s shook?”
2. Milo draws during the long subway trip. What do you do on long travel days?
3. What is Milo’s surprise for his mom at the end?



Before You Go—At Home



Print this section and send it home with permission slips. This section supports family engagement and provides tools to help families reflect with students about their theatre experience.



Resources for Families

Extend your child's theatre experience at home!

Questions to ask your child BEFORE they see the show:

- What do you do to pass the time on public transportation or in the car?
- Have you ever felt nervous and excited at the same time?
- What about *Milo Imagines the World* are you most excited about?

Questions to ask your child AFTER they see the show:

- What did Milo learn about the boy in the suit with the tie?
- What surprised you the most?
- Why did Milo run away from Adrienne in the subway station? Did they ever make up?





Your Favorite Day

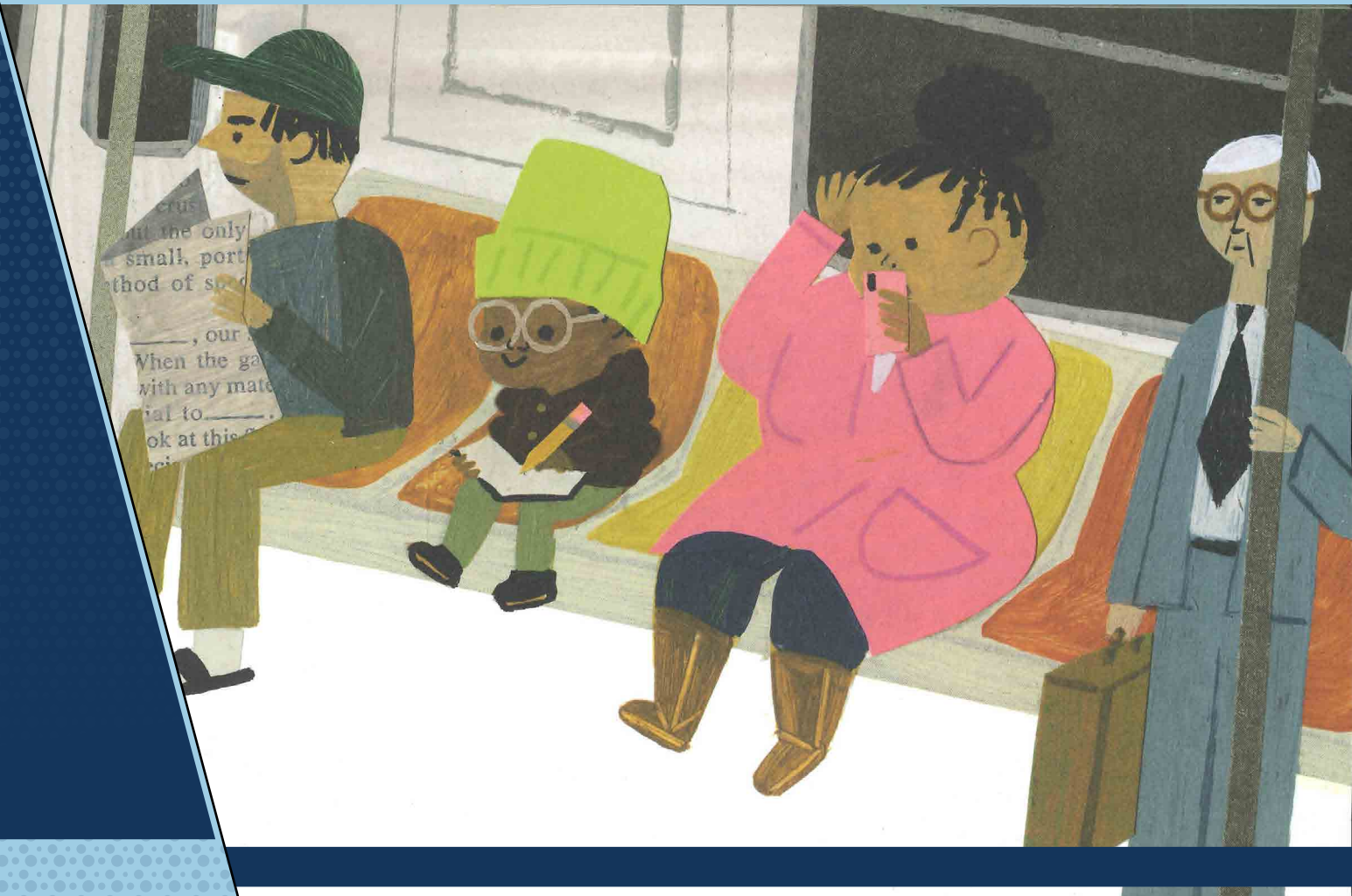
Milo's favorite day of the week is Sunday because he gets to spend it with his mom and sister. One of their favorite things to do is eat ice cream together. What does your family like to do together?

With your child, draw a picture of your family doing one of your favorite activities together. Is this something you do often or only once in a while? After you've finished, talk with them about how they feel when you do this activity together. How do they feel leading up to this activity?

After your child's trip, ask them about the picture that Milo drew of his family.



Heading to CTC



Provide this resource to all teachers, staff, and chaperones attending the field trip. This section contains field trip procedures, accessibility information, and CTC's approach to theatre etiquette.

Trip Guide



CTC Theatre Etiquette

At CTC, we encourage audiences to engage with the live theatre experience and react freely. It's ok to laugh if something is funny, exclaim if something is surprising, gasp if something is scary, and maybe even dance along in your seats if the music inspires you. We value the real-time, honest reactions of our student audiences.

We do, however, thank you for your partnership in making sure that any reactions from your students are kind and respectful towards the actors onstage and towards all of the people who worked so hard to make the show possible. If there is a group seated near you that is being disrespectful, please don't hesitate to notify an usher.

Arrival

Check-in begins 1 hour prior to the performance. Buses can unload in the circle driveway on 3rd Ave S between 24th St. and 25th St. An usher will greet you at your bus and will need to know the name of your school and how many buses you are traveling with. If all of your buses have arrived, we will ask you to unload and make one line. We will lead you inside and upstairs to the Red Lobby. Groups are seated in the order of arrival, and your entire group must be present before you can check in. Seating begins 30 minutes prior to the start of the performance.

CTC does not print or issue individual tickets or stickers for student matinee performances. Instead, as you line up in the lobby, one of our ushers will count your group to ensure that you are not over your allotted number of seats. It is helpful if you can provide the usher with a final count for your group, but not required.

Seating

Seating in the theatre begins 30 minutes prior to the performance. An usher will lead your group into the theatre in one line. We recommend spacing chaperones throughout the line to aid in guiding the students. To ensure that everyone gets a seat, please take whichever seat the usher is asking you to, including chaperones. Once your whole group has been assigned a seat, you are more than welcome to rearrange students and chaperones as you need to and utilize the restroom facilities.

Lunch

Lunch space must be reserved in advance. If your group has reserved space in our lobby to eat lunch after the show, please bring the lunches inside with you when you arrive. We will store them in the lobby during the show. We recommend consolidating lunches into paper or reusable shopping bags. Large coolers and bins can be heavy and unwieldy, and individual lunches can easily be lost or forgotten on the bus.

After the show, those with reserved lunch space will have a designated area of the lobby to utilize. The lunch space allows for picnic-style eating on the floor. You may be sharing the lobby with other schools or may be directed to our other theatre's lobby if we have multiple groups staying for lunch. Custodial services are provided by CTC.





Accessibility



Mobility Accessibility

The Red Lobby and UnitedHealth Group Stage are on the 2nd floor. At the building entrance, school groups will be led to the right and up a flight of 28 stairs to get to the lobby. Those wishing to use the elevator will find it to the LEFT of the entrance doors. CTC's accessible seating area is located in the last row of the main level of the theatre. Please email schools@childrenstheatre.org in advance to request accessible seating, if needed. The rest of the seating on the main floor can be accessed by going down a set of gradual stairs, and the balcony is accessed by going up another flight of 18 stairs. There is no elevator access to the balcony level.

An Accessible/All-Gender/Family Restroom is located next to the elevator on the 2nd level in the Red Lobby. An adult-sized changing table is available upon request.

Quiet Room/Sensory Sensitivities

The Quiet Room is located at the rear left side of the main floor of the UnitedHealth Group Stage. There are 3 stairs to get to the seating in the Quiet Room. The Quiet Room is separated from the audience by a glass window, so students can verbalize freely. Those utilizing the Quiet Room can still see and hear the performance. The performance is also live streamed in the lobby. The Quiet Room is open to everyone and cannot be reserved. Please feel free to come and go from the Quiet Room as you need to throughout the show. Please let an usher know if someone in your group would benefit from a fidget, ear plugs, noise-canceling headphones, or coloring/activity sheets during your visit.

Assistive Listening Devices

Please let an usher know if you would like to use an assistive listening device. These devices come equipped with an over-the-ear earpiece. This earpiece can be unplugged, and other devices, such as cochlear implants, can be plugged into the receiver using the 1/8" jack. If you will be plugging in your own device, please bring the appropriate cord as CTC does not have these on hand.

Sign Interpretation and Audio Description

A sign interpreted and/or audio described student matinee performance is scheduled for each production at CTC. We suggest booking your field trip for these scheduled performances if you need either of these services. Please contact schools@childrenstheatre.org if you are unable to reserve your field trip for the scheduled performance(s) and need to request this service for a different date. CTC requires at least 3 weeks' notice to schedule ASL interpretation or Audio Description.

Prayer/Private Nursing Space

During your visit, please ask a member of our staff to use our private space for nursing, pumping, prayer, or other needs.





Milo Imagines the World Content Advisories

Language: 0 out of 5 stars ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Themes and Situations: 1 out of 5 stars ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Milo and his sister are on their way to visit their mom who is incarcerated. This is revealed towards the end of the story. Their mom is very kind and loving, and we learn the siblings visit her in prison every Sunday.

Violence and Scariness: 1 out of 5 stars ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

There are several moments of cartoon-style action between creatures and characters in Milo’s imagination. A character’s pet bird dies. The subway that Milo and Adrienne ride goes through the “Scary tunnel,” which is dark and has strange sounds.

Sensory Advisories: 1 out of 5 stars ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Musical numbers can be loud and some sound effects are jarring. Milo’s imagination and feelings are portrayed through stage magic. Lighting moves quickly from dark to bright and some stage effects such as fog, dry ice, and haze may be used.

Potentially Anxious Moments: 2 out of 5 stars ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Milo’s mom is incarcerated. Milo’s big sister Adrienne can sometimes get frustrated and impatient with him, but they always make up. At one point, Milo gets so frustrated with Adrienne that he runs away and is by himself in the train station; Adrienne finds him.

Please contact schools@childrenstheatre.org with any questions.

Trip Guide

This tool is called a **social story** and tells students what to expect at the theatre. Hand it out to anyone who may benefit from knowing procedures in advance.



Bus—I will ride on the **bus** from my school to the theatre.



Lobby—I will enter the **lobby** and be greeted by the theatre staff and ushers. I can say hello to them. There may be a lot of other students from different schools in the lobby at the same time. I will stay with my teachers.



Bathroom—If I need to go to the **bathroom**, I will let my teacher know, and they can take me. I can go to the bathroom any time I need to during the show.



Enter the Theatre—When it's time to **enter the theatre**, there may be a line at the door. I will wait in line for my turn to go through the door.



My Seat—An usher will show me to my **seat**. During the show I will sit in my seat next to my classmates.



During the Show—If the show is funny, I can **laugh**. If something surprises me, I can **gasp**. At the end of the show, I can **clap** to tell the actors I enjoyed the performance.



After the Show—I will wait **patiently** for my teacher to lead me out of the theatre.



Leave the Building—I will leave the building with my classmates and get **back on the bus** to my school. There may be a lot of other students from different schools leaving at the same time. I will stay with my teachers.

After the Show



The discussion prompts and activities in this section are an extension of the theatre-going experience and allow students to reflect on the experience of seeing a live show and further engage with the art forms and themes of the performance.

Springboard

Use this page to recall observations, reflect, and think critically about the show you just saw!



The part of the show that grabbed my attention the most was

The show made me think about

Before seeing this show, I didn't know that

A question I have about the show is

If I were the director, one thing I would change is

One thing I saw during this show that I've never seen before was

After seeing the show, my friends and I talked about

Overall, the show made me feel

While watching the show, I had the strongest reaction to

I Am—Character and Self-Portraits through Poetry

Grades: Grades 4 and up **Time Required:** 20-60 minutes

Supplies: Writing materials and the “I Am” template on the following page, if desired

Set-up: This activity can be done with students seated at their desks



Milo learns that what he sees on the outside is just a small fraction of others’ identities. This activity allows students to create a deeper, more empathetic understanding of multiple characters’ identities in *Milo Imagines the World*.

After exploring characters from *Milo Imagines the World*, students will use the same tools to explore their own identities.

Instructions:

1. As a class, discuss what you remember about different characters from *Milo Imagines the World* (Milo, Adrienne, Milo’s mom, etc.). Assign or have each student pick one character to focus on for this activity.
2. Hand out the “I Am” template from the following page or have the prompts pre-written on the board.
3. Give the students time to fill out the template from the perspective of the character that they chose. Tell them that they are putting themselves inside the character’s head.
4. Once the students have completed their writing, group them together by character to share out in small groups. Have them discuss similarities and differences between their “I Am” poems.
5. Have one or two students from each character group share out in front of the full class.
6. Facilitate a discussion with the class.
 - Did this activity change your opinion of the character?
 - Which prompt was the most difficult to fill in?
7. Repeat the activity with the students filling out the “I Am” template about themselves to create an original self-portrait poem.

Reflection Questions:

Did you find you had anything in common with the *Milo Imagines the World* characters?

What was more challenging, filling out the poem for yourself or for one of the characters in the play?

“I Am” Template

An “I Am” poem is a way to further understand a character in a story. First fill out the template for a character from *Milo Imagines the World*. Then, fill out for yourself!

Character’s Response

Your Response

I am... _____

(your name)

I am... _____

(two special traits or physical characteristics)

I wonder... _____

(something to be curious about)

I pretend... _____

(something to imagine)

I want... _____

(an actual desire)

I am... _____

(first line of the poem repeated)

I worry... _____

(something that is bothersome)

I cry... _____

(something that is very sad)

I am... _____

(first line of the poem repeated)

I say... _____

(something to believe in)

I try... _____

(something to make an effort about)

I hope... _____

(something to hope for)

I am... _____

(the first line of the poem repeated)



Identity Web

Grades: Grades 2 and up **Time Required:** 20-30 minutes

Supplies: Large piece of paper or whiteboard and blank sheets of paper and writing utensils for students.

Set-up: This activity can be done in a circle or with students seated at their desks.

In *Milo Imagines the World*, Milo learns a lot about identities, and how they may be different or more complex than we initially think. This activity encourages students to reflect on the multiple identities that Milo has, and then reflect on the many identities that they have.

Instructions:

1. With the students seated at their desks or in a circle, draw the rough outline of Milo's head (don't forget his beanie and glasses!) and write the name "Milo" in the middle.
2. Explain that as a class you will be creating an identity web for Milo, and brainstorming what makes "him, him."
3. As students are sharing ideas, write the words in the space around the head and connect them with lines.
4. You may need to prompt deeper answers and suggest they think about his relation to other characters, what he enjoys, etc.
5. Once you feel happy with the number of ideas generated for Milo, pass out blank sheets of paper and writing utensils to the class.
6. Invite students to draw a rough outline of their head and write their name in the middle. They will now think about what makes "them, them" and create their own identity webs.
7. Once students have completed their webs, ask them how theirs are similar and different from the one the class created for Milo. You can also have them compare with a neighbor or small group and share how they are different from other classmates.

Character Interview

Grades: Grades 2 and up **Time Required:** 15-30 minutes **Supplies:** None

Set-up: This activity works best utilizing the front of the classroom as a stage and the students' desks as the audience.

In this activity, students will use their imagination to invent backgrounds of the other people Milo sees on the subway and answer questions from that character's perspective.



Instructions:

1. Place a chair in the front of the room. Ask for a volunteer to come to the front of the class and pretend to be the Break Dancer from the play.
2. The rest of the students will play the role of news reporters who are interviewing the dancer for the local newspaper. The student playing the Break Dancer should respond as the character. It may be helpful to model asking the Break Dancer a couple of starter questions before opening it up to the class.
3. After interviewing the Break Dancer, do the same activity for other characters in the story such as the person who was having a bad day or the Super Cool Guy.

Sample Questions:

- Where were you going on the subway?
- What do you do for a living?
- What do you and your friends like to do for fun?

Variations and Adjustments:

If time allows, give multiple students the opportunity to play the characters.

Encourage the students playing reporters to also act in character. How would a reporter sound and move their body?

Reflection—What Don't We See?



Grades: Grades K and up **Time Required:** 15-30 minutes

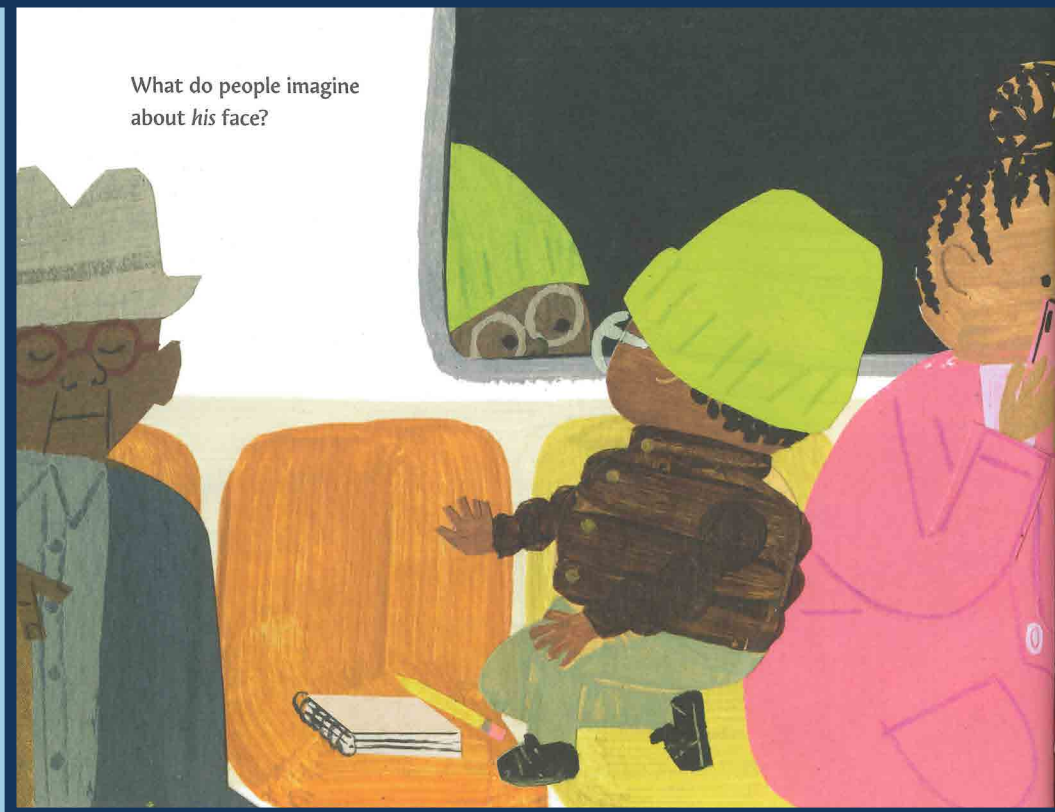
Supplies: Paper and coloring materials

Set-up: This activity can be done with students seated at their desks.

Milo looks in the window on the subway and sees his reflection. He wonders what people imagine about his face and wonders if they can see that he loves to dance, cook, and sing.

Instructions:

1. Using a blank piece of paper, have your students draw a self-portrait of what people see when they look at them.
2. Then, have them flip the paper over and draw or write the things they love to do that may not be apparent when people look at them.
3. Have volunteers share their work with the class. If you'd like, let students ask follow-up questions about anything new they learn about their classmates.



Further Resources



[Study Guide from Penguin Classroom](#)

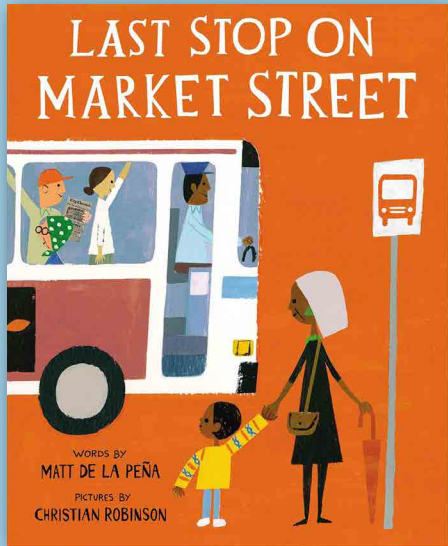


[Conversation and Studio Tour with Illustrator Christian Robinson](#)

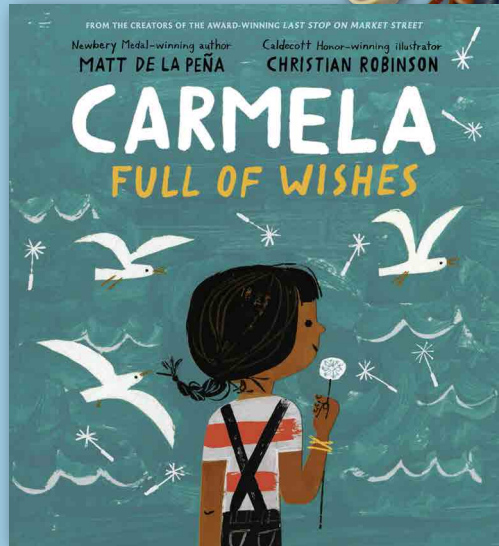


[Listen—de la Peña and Robinson talk about *Milo Imagines the World* on NPR](#)

Other books to explore by Matt de la Peña and Christian Robinson



The Last Stop on Market Street



Carmela Full of Wishes



Questions? Email: schools@childrenstheatre.org

Mail letters to:
Children's Theatre Company
2400 Third Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404

