

THE
**THEATRE
SCHOOL**
.....
AT DePaul University

Teacher Guide

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Synopsis

Does anyone have a pen? Sasha—one of New York City’s bravest 5th graders—is stuck in quite the predicament when she cannot find a pen to write her history assignment: an essay on the Brooklyn Bridge. Breaking her mother’s rule to stay inside her apartment, Sasha sets on her expedition for a pen, meeting a variety of characters along the way. With the help of her newfound neighbors (Sam, John, Trudi, and Talidia), Sasha finds her pen and her Brooklyn community.

Vocabulary

Gentrification (n.)

A process that can occur when wealthier people move into lower-income neighborhoods, prompting cultural shifts, increases in prices, and the displacement of long-standing, lower-income residents

Displacement (v.)

To compel people or animals to move out of the area where they live

Disproportionate (adj.)

Having or showing a difference that is not fair or expected

Marginalized (adj.)

To put or keep someone in a powerless or unimportant position within a society or group

Revitalization (n.)

To make something active, healthy or energetic again

Definitions Provided by KQUED Learning

Who are the Characters?

By Rebecca Galkin



A “ten year-seven month-six day-and 18 hours and counting year old” and serial procrastinator, **Sasha** is a rambunctious kid finding her way through school. Though she might repeat 5th grade, her mind is full of knowledge.

She knows the entire detailed history of the Brooklyn Bridge—it’s just hard to find what to write about!

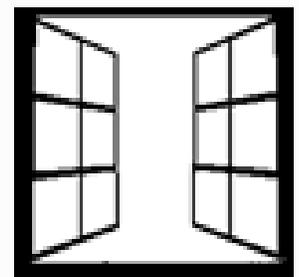
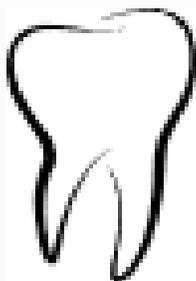
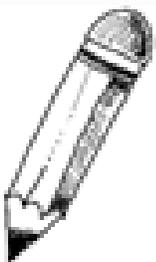
Sam, a dental student from Caribbean, is the first ally Sasha makes on her quest to find a pen. He sees Sasha’s predicament (How can one possibly write a paper without a pen?) and, with the help of his cat, Red, Sam teaches Sasha a very important lesson: Everyone one in the world should smile...and to stop chewing on pens.

Short on time and short in stature, **Trudi** is the second friend Sasha makes on this journey. Trudi is always checking her many watches due to her recently diagnosed condition, Sensus Lackus Ofus Timus. Without all her watches, Trudi will always show up late to her board meetings for work. Which reminds me, time to move onto our next character.

After waving goodbye to Trudi, Sasha meets **John**—a neighbor who teaches her a very different lesson about time. Like Sasha, John shares a passion for the Brooklyn Bridge. Though they’ve never officially met, John does a lot of looking out of his window. Life is long; however, it passes by quickly. John understands this better than everyone else.

When she isn’t taking care of her children Freddie, Frankie, Frannie, Felix, Flora, and Fidelia, **Talidia** is folding laundry and sharing her wisdom. She is the final friend Sasha meets on her search for a pen. However, unlike her fellow neighbors, Talidia notices Sasha’s trouble is a bit deeper than her lack of writing utensils. Like all moms, she sees the truth in Sasha’s predicament: procrastination.

Gracing our story with music, the **singer/songwriter** is one character we never actually meet. Like the Brooklyn Bridge itself, the singer/songwriter’s tune sets the scene of our story.



Brooklyn Bridge Trivia

Q: Where is the bridge located?

- A: Hawaii
- B: Panama
- C: New York, NY
- D: Kansas

Q: What category of bridge is it?

- A: Arch Bridge
- B: Hybrid Cable-stayed
- C: Bended
- D: The Bridge

Q: When was the bridge built?

- A: Nov. 15, 1888
- B: May 24th. 1883
- C: February 19th, 1763
- D: May 4th, 1886

Q: What material is the bridge made out of?

- A: Copper
- B: Steel
- C: Wood
- D: Metal & Steel

Q: When did construction begin?

- A: January 3rd, 1870
- B: November 1st, 2001
- C: June 5th, 1876
- D: December 22nd, 1882

Q: How much did the bridge cost?

- A: \$379,661,000
- B: \$980,987,287
- C: \$1,700,000
- D: \$965,143,220

Q: How many miles is the bridge?

- A: 1.1 Miles
- B: 2.3 miles
- C: 0.8 miles
- D: 3 miles

Q: Who designed the bridge?

- A: John A. Roebling, Washington Roebling, David B. Steinman
- B: Richard Upjohn
- C: T.U Walter
- D: Lousie Bethune

Activity: Build your own Bridge



This activity takes 20-30 minutes.

Do you think you can build a bridge out of paper? What about one that can hold your pencil? In this activity, you will become a civil engineer responsible for constructing a bridge.

Part of the challenge an engineer faces while building a bridge is deciding which materials to use. To start off, take a sheet of paper and see if you can make it span the length of your pen (hopefully you can find one). Then, try to see if it could hold the weight of your pen.

Here are some questions to answer:

Did your bridge hold the weight of your writing utensil?

If not, where do you think the bridge failed? Does it need more legs to hold it up? What about stronger legs?

Now, try advancing your bridge. Look around your classroom. What can you find? Would it be helpful to stack more paper? Do you need to take a pair of scissors and cut it down to a smaller size? Would using something like popsicle sticks help keep the bridge above water? Obviously, civil engineers use complicated mathematics to create bridges. So, if you want to use more math, try adjusting the activity like this:

Materials:

Printer Paper

Ruler

2 Books of Equal Size

Scissors

Small Weights (like coins or erasers)

Decorative Materials from class or home (make your bridge unique to you).

With your ruler, measure 20 cm between each of your books. Before it can support weight (this is called a live load in bridge building) the bridge must support itself. This is called the dead load. With your live weight, let's say pennies, stack them on top of the bridge one by one.

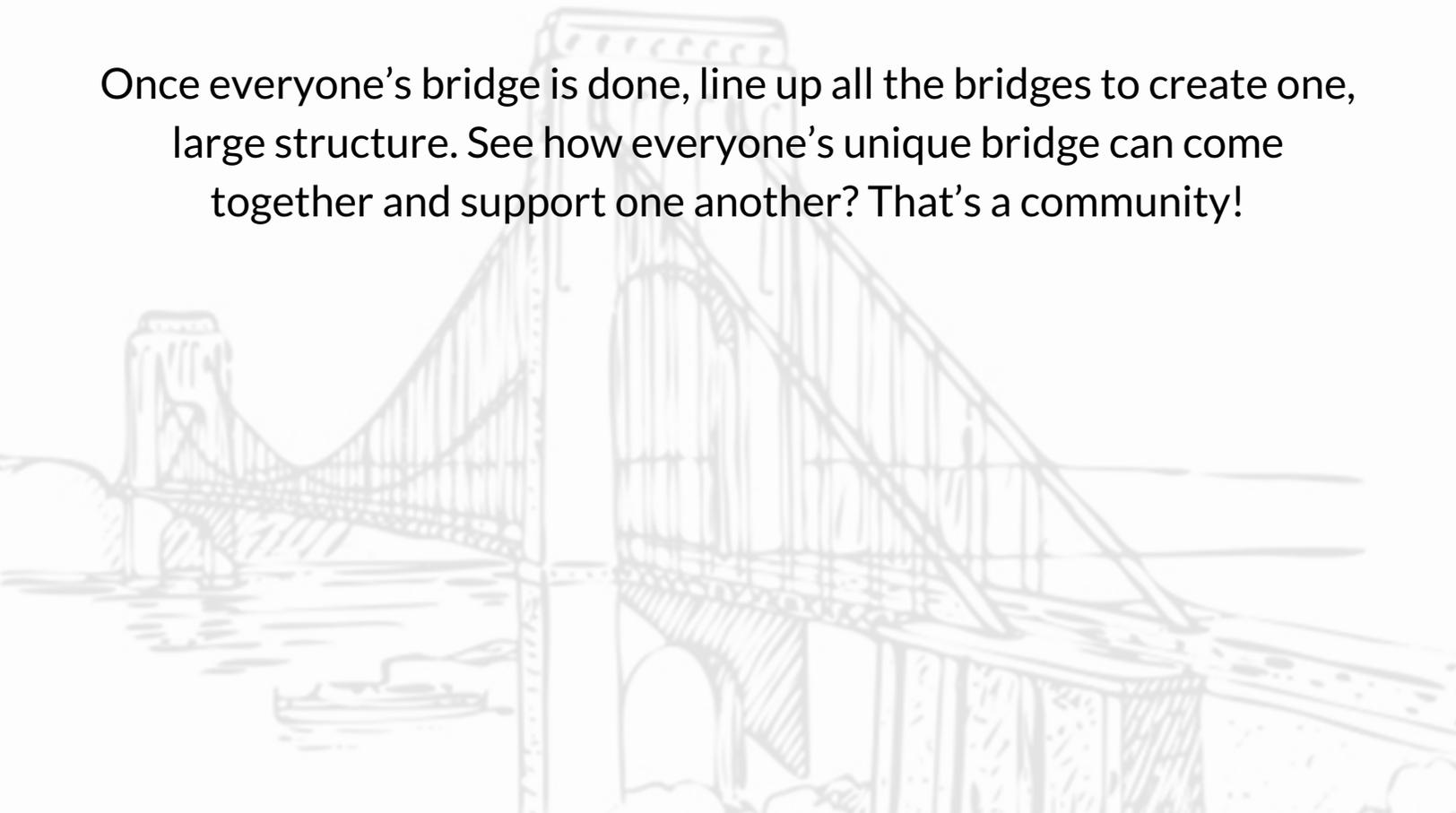
Record your results and answer some of these questions:

How many pennies could the bridge support?

What can you change to make the bridge stronger?

After modifications, how does your second attempt compare? Did your bridge hold more weight?

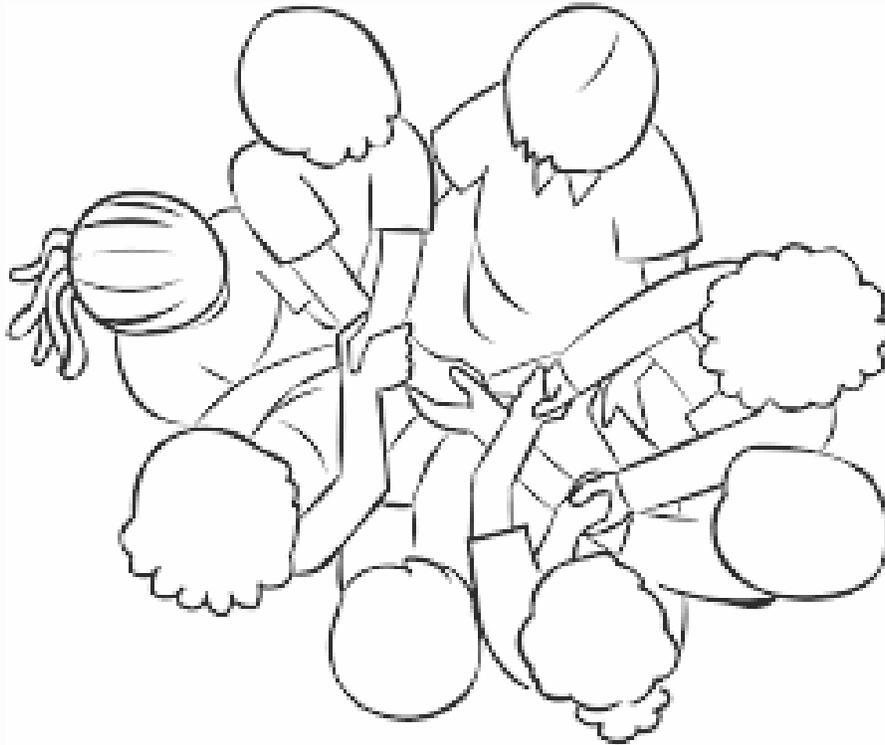
Once everyone's bridge is done, line up all the bridges to create one, large structure. See how everyone's unique bridge can come together and support one another? That's a community!



Activity 2: The Human Knot



This activity takes 10-15 minutes.



Stand in a circle with your classmates.

On the count of 3, gently grab someone else's hand in the circle (make sure it's not the person next to you).

As you may have already noticed, you've created quite the knot...a human knot that is!

Without letting go of each other's hands, untangle yourselves. The goal is to end up in a perfect circle again.

*Before following this activity, make sure everyone has washed their hands.

Also, be gentle with one another. It's important no one gets hurt!

Activity: How to Build Community

Activity 1: The Hand Raising Game



This activity takes 10 minutes.

For this activity, gather your classmates and stand in a line. Take one step forward or one step backwards if the following statement applies to you.

Raise your hand if you have brown eyes.

Raise your hand if you like dogs.

Raise your hand if you like cats.

Raise your hand if you live with one or both of your parents.

Raise your hand if you live with another relative.

Raise your hand if you speak more than one language.

Raise your hand if you like school.

Raise your hand if you like desert.

Raise your hand if you live in an apartment building.

Raise your hand if you live in a house.

Look around the room and see where your classmates are. See how everyone is standing in a different place?

Now that we've seen all our differences, it's time to build a community. This does not mean we forget our uniqueness, instead, we choose to come together.



Activity: Make a Chicago Playlist



This activity takes 10 minutes.

There are so many talented artists that live in the city of New York. Our Spotify playlist has some of the most influential artists that have come out of the Big Apple. While there is a lot to admire about New York, let's take a look at our city; Chicago!

In groups of threes, come up with 10 of your favorite songs done by local Chicago artists. If none come to mind, jot down your top favorites and tell us where the artist originates from. Limit 2 songs per genre i.e: 2 Pop, 2 Hip-Hop songs.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Common Core Standards

ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS (EARLY ELEMENTARY)

COMMON CORE STANDARDS: General Activities

Re8.a. Use personal experience and background knowledge to create or interpret a drama/theatre work.

Cn10.a. Explore the connections of theatre artists to their community and the world at large.

Cn11.1.a. Create works that express/ connect historical context to a community, social, or global concern.

A.1d Use visually oriented and auditorily based media.

B.1b Participate in discussions around a common topic.

D.1a. Identify problems and conflicts commonly experienced by peers.

D.1b Identify approaches to resolving conflicts constructively.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS: Movement Activities

Pr4.a. Demonstrate that there are multiple choices for every drama/theatre work and select the most supportable choice for the moment.

B.1b Make positive choices when interacting with classmates.

Pr6.a. Perform a drama/theatre work with a defined purpose or intent.

A.1b Drama: Understand the elements of acting, locomotor and non-locomotor movement, vocal and nonvocal sound, story making; the principles of plot, character, setting, problem/resolution and message; and the expressive character of simple emotions.

A.1a Drama: Understand the tools of body, mind, voice, and simple visual/aural media and the processes of planning, practicing and collaborating used to create or perform drama/theater.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS: Articles

Re8.b. Interpret how culture influences a performance.

Cn11.2.a. Research societal, historical, and cultural context for a performance.

Cn11.2.b. Research societal, historical, and cultural context to create a unified drama/ theatre design.

D.1a. Identify problems and conflicts commonly experienced by peers.

D.1b Identify approaches to resolving conflicts constructively.

A.3b Identify social norms and safety considerations that guide behavior.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS: Synopsis and Characters

A.1a Identify the literary elements of theme, setting, plot and character within literary works

B.1a Respond to literary materials by connecting them to their own experience and communicate those responses to others.

B.1c Relate character, setting and plot to real-life situations.

3A.1a Explain why unprovoked acts that hurt others are wrong.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS: Reading the play

A.1a Apply word analysis skills (e.g., phonics, word patterns) to recognize new words.

A.1b Comprehend unfamiliar words using context clues and prior knowledge.

C.1a Use information to form questions and verify predictions.

A.1a. Recognize and accurately label emotions and how they are linked to behavior.

C.1b Identify important themes and topics.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS: Build your Own Bridge

Cr1.b. Imagine technical elements for a unified drama/theatre concept.

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Additional Resources

Looking for more? Here are some additional online resources!

Poems about the Brooklyn Bridge:

<https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/usa/new-york/articles/an-ode-to-new-york-8-poems-describing-the-brooklyn-bridge/>

Link to a Street View of the walkable Brooklyn Bridge path:

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Brooklyn+Bridge>

Link to the Kahoot! version of the Brooklyn Bridge Trivia Activity: <https://create.kahoot.it/share/brooklyn-bridge/daac415a-ef3f-4eed-acea-0a0234bccca56>

Link to the article on the National Disability Theatre: <https://www.americantheatre.org/2018/12/05/disabled-artists-launch-national-disability-theatre/>