



Dear Educators,

At House of SpeakEasy Foundation, we have cultivated a home for close encounters of a literary kind: a place where authors and audiences come together in innovative and sustaining ways. With our nonprofit mission in mind, we launched the SpeakTogether Student Matinee program, which is modeled after our “Seriously Entertaining” storytelling cabaret shows. Our student matinees bring writers and artists into public high schools providing students and teachers direct access to authors, their books, and a rich world of ideas to complement existing curricula.



Jason Reynolds on “Turn the Page”

Our aim with these in-school matinees is that by connecting with working writers, students would be empowered and inspired to cultivate their own artistic practices. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic brought daily life to halt, we wanted to find new ways to continue bringing writers and artists into schools and classrooms in an innovative manner.

Out of this desire, we have packaged recordings of all our student matinee performances in multimedia that can be shared digitally. Further, we have used the author talks as the basis for a sophisticated set of creative arts toolkits that expand upon each talk. Inside each toolkit, you will have access to a hyperlink for the video of the author’s talk.



Rachel Eliza Griffiths on “It’s Now or Never”

You will also be able to access guided lesson plans. These lesson plans include a brief introduction to the author, general discussion topics, guiding questions, art-making activities, and bonus reading materials.



Mahogany L. Browne on "The Road Not Taken"

Many of the ideas contained in the general topics and guiding questions come directly from the author talks. We encourage you to use these as a jumping off point and to add to it according to your classroom course of study. You will find that the activities are more detailed and provide step-by-step instructions. While the activities are scaffolded, there is some room for customization according to your students' needs and interests.

To ensure quality and functionality, each toolkit is peer-reviewed by two writers or educators who lend their expertise to the subject matter. This peer-review and revision process allows us to check each toolkit for inclusivity and content. The toolkits have also been used in workshop settings and received favorable responses from students. We believe that these toolkits provide context for some of today's most pressing issues. They can help create a structured and safe framework for students to have compelling conversations. Our hope is that you and your students will adopt these toolkits and make them your own, and that they will provide opportunities for students to be makers and creators.



Daniel José Older on "You Only Live Once"

If you have any questions and comments, we welcome your feedback. We also invite you to share any insights on how you've integrated these toolkits into your classroom. You can write to us at: toolkits@houseofspeakeasy.org.

Sincerely,

NK Iguh
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House of SpeakEasy Foundation