

# THE BOY AT THE EDGE OF EVERYTHING

## Teacher's Packet

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# Welcome to Young Company!

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## About BYU Young Company

The Young Company serves as a training ground for both BYU actors and teaching artists wanting to work in theatre for young audiences. The group performs in front of 16,000 young people each year on topics that deal with everyday struggles encountered by people of all ages.

## What is a dramaturg, and why do they make teacher's packets?

As described on the website for LMDA (Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas), dramaturgs today have a variety of responsibilities. "Working in theatres and playwrights' organizations, in colleges and universities, and on a project-by-project basis, dramaturgs contextualize the world of a play; establish connections among the text, actors, and audience; offer opportunities for playwrights; generate projects and programs; and create conversations about plays in their communities."

In an effort to "create conversations" about the Young Company productions in our local communities, the dramaturgs at BYU create teacher's packets to share with all educators who will participate in these touring shows. We hope you will use them to enhance the experience your students have and further engage with the performance in ways that are meaningful specifically to your students. We hope you'll discover helpful approaches to learning more about the form and content of our productions in the attached lesson plans and activity ideas!

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## Welcome Letter

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Dear Teacher,

Thank you for joining us for BYU Young Company's production of *The Boy at the Edge of Everything*.

As a dramaturg, one of my responsibilities is to help the audience understand and engage with “the world of the play”. In *The Boy at the Edge of Everything*, we find not one, but two very different worlds colliding. Simon's planet is like ours — a busy one, where “the greatest mistake you can make is to think that everything is still”. The Boy at the Edge, on the other hand, is somewhat bored, wishing that “someone would need [him], to do something.”

Like Simon, you've probably sat around many a “super loud dinner table” and served your time “crowded-bus riding”. And a sneaking suspicion tells me you know a thing or two about a “way too full school day.”

As a young student, my favorite teachers were the ones who let me read during recess and my favorite friends were the ones who (on the off-chance that I wasn't holding a book) invited me to play tag, even if I wasn't too good at talking. Both seemed important to me - “otherpeopleness” and “myselfness”, as The Boy describes it. And thankfully, the adults and peers around me helped me find some of each.

In an interview about *The Boy at the Edge of Everything*, playwright Finegan Kruckemeyer said,

... So often when assessing a kid's health or happiness, we only look at the social—their peer interactions, teams joined, and skills accrued. But the other, more contemplative side to their personality can be forgotten—that of the child in quiet reflection, in bookish repose, a child removed and considering the world they exist in.<sup>1</sup>

Just like Simon and The Boy, young students deeply desire to understand who they are as individuals and the purpose of their lives. How have you seen your students developing both socially and introspectively?

Kruckemeyer's hope in making this comment was not to attach a singular meaning to the script, but rather to present one of many themes that could be considered in connection with the play. Other themes might include perspective, anxiety, and unexpected friendship. What others do you notice?

As you and your students watch Simon make personal discoveries about life, relationships, and the ever-elusive principle of balance, think about the connections

you see to your classroom community. What does this production inspire you to do moving forward?

We hope the production itself, as well as the attached activities and lesson plans, inspire you and your students to take the story beyond the stage, into the classroom, and maybe even out to the playground. Thank you for joining us on this journey to the Edge of Everything. We can't wait to see where it takes you!

Judy Schnebly  
*Dramaturg*

<sup>1</sup>Source: <https://howlround.com/conversation-finegan-kruckemeyer>

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## Theatre Etiquette

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Just like the performers, the audience also has an important role to play. Because some of the students may not have attended a play before, below are expectations to help them prepare for our performance!

- Remember to use the restroom before the show.
- No photography, please, and be sure to turn off your cellphones.
- Before the play starts, quietly follow the actors' instructions when they are seating you.
- Remember to sit flat on the floor with your legs crossed. This allows everyone to see the actors better and prevents limbs from falling asleep during the show.
- During the show, follow the actors' instructions when you are asked to participate.
- Don't speak with your neighbors during the show. We want everyone to be able to hear the actors.
- Please enjoy the show and laugh when you think it's funny!
- You can clap at the end.

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# Wiggle Workout

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**Title:** Sensational Soundscape

**Time:** 5 minutes

**Activity Description:** This activity can be done sitting, standing, in a circle, or in personal bubbles around the room. Follow the steps below to make a series of “soundscapes”. For each of the following locations, invite students to close their eyes and think about the sounds they might hear in that place. All at the same time, each student will begin to make those sounds.

- Soundscape 1 (30 seconds): school playground
- Soundscape 2 (30 seconds): journey to outer space
- Soundscape 3\* (30 seconds): The “edge of everything”
  - \*Before the third soundscape, read the students this description:  
“Planets bob gently in the vast ether. Galaxies swirl and broil, and comets go on big journeys. But that just sounds like looking at the night sky...And if you sit on this side, you stare into the Everything – and Everything stares back... But if I sit on the other side...I stare out into... Nothing – into a place where nothing at all is happening.”
- Repeat all three soundscapes again one right after the other. Feel free to switch up the order or add another soundscape you want to try! Discuss with your students the differences they observed and encourage them to listen for the sounds they will hear in the production!

Optional extensions: Repeat the soundscapes, this time adding physical actions as well. You could also invite students to turn to a neighbor or small group and discuss what they can see from the edge of everything. They might physicalize what they see by acting it out for another partnership or group.

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## Play Synopsis - *The Boy at the Edge of Everything*

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Being 12 years and 4 months and 10 days old has never been easy for anyone, especially not for Simon Ives. His “super full brain” makes him wish he could travel to a faraway place where he could “just be calm and quiet and a bit bored.” Have you ever felt the same? Imagination takes flight as you travel with this small boy and his big ideas beyond the world you know — all the way to the edge. You may be surprised to see what’s there to find in this story about curiosity, family, and unexpected friendship between Simon and *The Boy at the Edge of Everything*.

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## Before the show...

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**Activity Title:** Exploring Dualities with “Would you rather...?”

**Time:** 5-15 min

**Materials Needed:** open space for students to walk back and forth (this activity can be adapted to many spaces)

**Activity description:** This game explores dualities, making choices, and finding balance.

Round 1: Begin by asking your students a “Would you rather...?” question (ideas below). Designate one side of the room to represent each answer. After you ask the question, each student will choose that side of the room to go to. Ask 3 or 4 more questions. With each one, students must choose to stand completely on one side or the other, nothing in between (even if it’s a hard choice!!). After this first round of questions, the rules of the game will shift slightly.

Here are some questions you might use (but feel free to also come up with your own):

Chocolate or vanilla?

PB & J or Ham & Cheese?

Lasanga or spaghetti and meatballs?

Would you like to explore outer space or deep in the ocean?

Would you rather have really long arms or really long legs?

Is it more fun to be alone or be with your friends?

Would you rather be on a sports team or cheering in the stands?

Would you rather have to eat the same food everyday or never eat your favorite food again?

Would you rather live far in the future or far in the past?

Would you rather watch a play or be in one?

Would you rather have two noses or three eyes?

Would you rather read a book or write one?

Would you rather be invisible or able to fly?

Round 2: For the second round of the game, the space in the middle of the room now serves a spectrum. In response to your next “would you rather” questions, students can choose to stand at either extreme, or somewhere in the middle. Feel free to reuse questions from the first round, especially some of the ones that were more difficult to choose an extreme on.

Here are some questions you might use (or re-use):

Is it more fun to be alone or be with your friends?

Do you prefer science or reading?

Would you rather always be busy or always be bored?

Would you rather it always be summer or always be winter?

Would you rather take a long road trip or long plane flight?

As you go throughout the game, (depending on class needs and time available), ask an individual from each side of the room to explain why they chose the answer they did. Alternatively, you could have everyone turn to a partner and explain their choice to them.

At the end of the game, discuss as a class what students learned about making choices. Was it difficult to make some choices? What was difficult about it? How did the game change when you were allowed to be in the middle rather than an extreme? What does balance mean, and why is it important to have balance in our lives? Etc.

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## After the show ...

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**Activity Title:** Earth Museum

**Time:** 10-20 min

**Materials Needed:** Earth Museum handouts (attached), pencils, crayons, colored pencils

**Activity Description:** In *The Boy at the Edge of Everything*, we get a glimpse of The Boy's "Earth Museum", where he collects things from Earth. Imagine that The Boy came to visit your house or school for a day. What thing would you most like to give him to put in his Earth Museum? Draw a picture of the object and write a few sentences below describing what the object is, and what makes it so special to you. For older grades, you might ask students to write a paragraph about how they would explain the object in simple terms to someone who's not familiar with our planet at all! Or, they could write about a misunderstanding The Boy might have when he sees their object for the first time, such as when he uses the calculator as a phone in the show!

**Optional extension:** As a class or in small group, have students play charades, acting out their object for other students to guess.

**Earth Museum Handout:** (see next page.)

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## Lesson Plans

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### **Communicating Creative Ideas Through Drawing and Storytelling**

*By Alisha Kirkland-Laidlaw*

**Grade:** K-2

**Length:** 30-45 minutes

**Materials:**

A blank sheet of paper and crayons (or pencils or markers) for each student.

**Standards:**

**Standard K.W.2:** Use a combination of drawing and writing to compose informative/explanatory pieces and provide information about the topic.

**Standard 1.SL.3:** Use age-appropriate language, grammar, volume, and clear pronunciation when speaking or presenting and use visual displays, when appropriate, to describe or clarify information to others.

**Standard K.T.CR.1:** Develop imagination to create artistic ideas and work.

**Standard K.T.P.2:** Demonstrate the ability to work effectively alone and cooperatively, with a partner or in an ensemble.

**Standard 1.1.1** Obtain, evaluate, and communicate information about the movement of the Sun, Moon, and stars to describe predictable patterns. Examples of patterns could include how the Sun and Moon appear to rise in one part of the sky, move across the sky, and set; or how stars, other than the Sun, are visible at night but not during the day. (ESS1.A)

**Objective:** Students will learn to communicate creative ideas by creating and describing planets of their own.

**Warmup Game:** (7 minutes)

Have students form a circle and tell them that they are going to be playing a game where they all go to outer space. Explain that you are going to give them space missions that they will have to act out in order to play the game. Start by having all the students pretend to build their own invisible rockets, coach them along the way by encouraging them to make their rocket out of anything they want and demonstrate how you pretend to build your rocket out of a silly material (ex: like marshmallows). Once their invisible rockets are finished, instruct them to get inside and buckle their seatbelts.

Once inside, do a countdown to a blast off. Encourage students to use their bodies to show how they blast into space. Once they blast off, tell them that you've landed on a nearby planet. Encourage them to walk around that planet like an astronaut, demonstrating what that might look like. As they walk, encourage them to use their imagination to pick up space rocks from the ground and look at the stars shining around them. Once they've explored enough, instruct them to get back in their rocket ships, buckle up, and then lead them through another blast off back to Earth.

**Instruction: (7 minutes)**

Have the students sit down in a circle. Tell them that you are going to tell them a story about a Planet. For this story, they will need to listen closely, because sometimes you are going to ask them to help you come up with ideas for the story. As an example, tell them that the planet in the story needs a name. Ask students to raise their hands and give ideas of what to name the planet. Once you have a name for the planet, begin the story. As you go through the story, ask for ideas whenever there's a "fill in the blank". Feel free to let the kids come up with some silly ideas as long as the story still makes sense. You will have to remember the name of the planet and the name of the kid in the story, so keep that in mind.

"Once upon a time there was a planet called \_\_\_\_\_ (*fill in the blank*).  
On this planet lived a kid (about your age) named \_\_\_\_\_ (*fill in the blank*).  
Every morning, the sun came up and \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of the kid*) would wake up.  
He/She loved this planet because it had lots of \_\_\_\_\_ (*fill in the blank: something they like*)  
During the day, He/she would \_\_\_\_\_ (*fill in the blank: something they like to DO*)  
But then the sun would go down. The stars would come out, and the moon would shine.  
At night, he/she really loved to \_\_\_\_\_ (*fill in the blank: something else to do*)  
Finally, it was time for bed on planet \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of planet*)  
So \_\_\_\_\_ (*kid's name*) went to sleep and dreamed of all the wonderful things he/she could do on his/her planet tomorrow."

**Creating Planets: (7 minutes)**

Have students return to their desks. Give each student a blank paper and crayons (or pencils or markers). Tell the students that they now get to make a planet of their own. They can do this by drawing a big circle on their paper, and then coloring it to look like however they want. Encourage them to add anything they want to their planet, just like how they added a bunch of fun things to the planets in the story.

Once they're finished coloring, invite them to add a name for their planet at the bottom of the paper.

**Practice: (4 minutes)**

After they're finished, have the students stand next to their desk and hold their planet in the air. Have them practice saying aloud: "My planet's name is \_\_\_\_". Allow them to all say their planets names at the same time. Then practice saying aloud: "My planet \_\_\_\_" and then tell us something interesting about their planet. Give them an example from the story they filled in the blanks for earlier in the lesson. Give them a second to think between answers so they have a good idea of what they want to say.

**Group Work: (5 minutes)**

Once they have finished practicing, assign students a partner. With this partner, invite them to tell each other about their planets. Once everyone has shared with their partner, ask if anyone would like to share their planet with the class.

**Debrief: (5 minutes)**

Have the students return to their desks. Discuss what they learned by asking these questions:

- What made your planet different from everyone else's?
- How did you explain your ideas to your partner? Did they understand what you were saying?
- What did you like learning about space/planets today?

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## Storytelling through Puppets and Movement

By: *Melanie Ricks Kamauu & Alisha Kirkland-Laidlaw*

**Grade:** 3-4

**Length:** 30-45 minutes

### Materials:

- Space shapes sheet– found at the end of the lesson (1 per student)
- Popsicle sticks (4 per student)
- Glue/tape
- Scissors
- Colored pencils, crayons, or markers

### Standards:

- TH:Cr1.1.3.a. Create roles, imagined worlds, and improvised stories in a drama/theatre work.
- TH:Pr4.1.3.b. Investigate how movement and voice are incorporated into drama/theatre work.
- TH:Pr5.1.4.b. Propose the use of technical elements in a drama/theatre work.

**Objective:** Students will demonstrate storytelling skills by creating their own puppets and stories about space.

### Warmup/Hook: (7 minutes)

Have students form a circle and tell them that they are going to play a game. In order to play this game, they are going to have to listen carefully to everyone else in the circle. Tell them that as a class, they are going to make up a story. To play this game, someone will stand in the middle of the circle and be the “Story Conductor”. The Conductor will point to a student to start the story. After a few beats have passed, the Conductor will randomly point to a new student. The new student will have to continue the story wherever the first student left off. Tell the students that the story should make sense, and that they should try to continue the story from right where the last student finished (even if it was in the middle of a sentence.) Practice once by being the Story Conductor for the first round.

### Explanation: (5 minutes)

- Explain that just as Simon Ives and the Boy explored space, we’re going to create our own stories about exploring space. One form of storytelling used in theatre is through “puppetry.” Students will be creating their own puppets to tell a new story about space exploration.



**Practice:** (10 minutes)

- Pass out the “space shapes” paper and invite students to cut out the objects and color them.

**Group Work:** (10 minutes)

- Have students find a partner in the class with whom they will be creating a story. This story will be an opportunity for them to play and explore their imagination rather than performing for the whole class. Ask them the following questions to help guide their play:
  - What is the name of your astronaut?
  - What are the names of your planets?
  - What is it like on the planets?
  - Why do these two astronauts team up?
  - What do these two astronauts hope to accomplish?

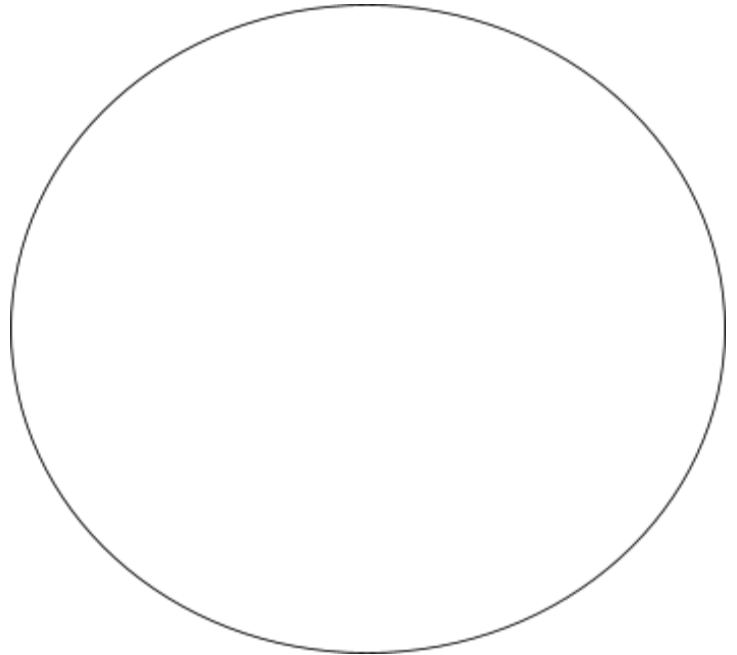
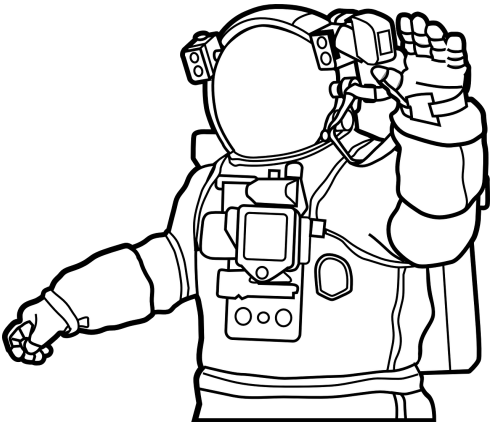
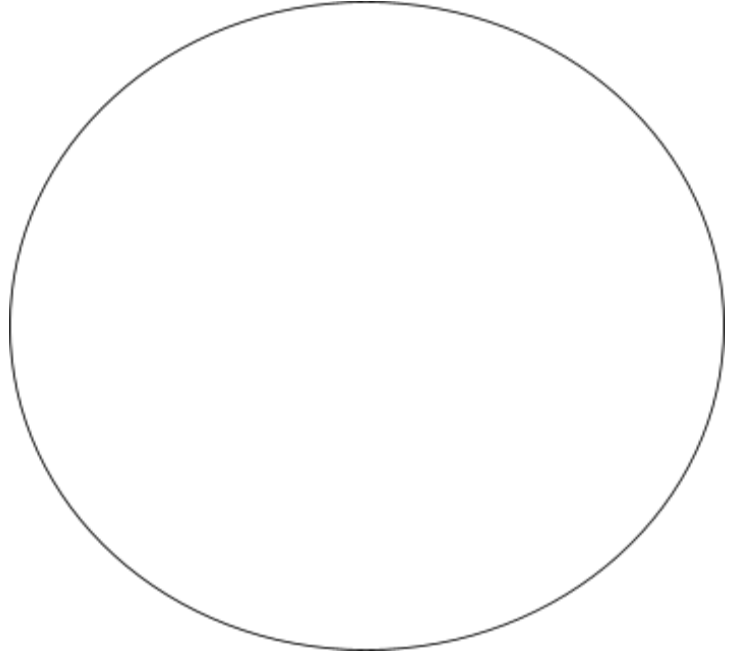
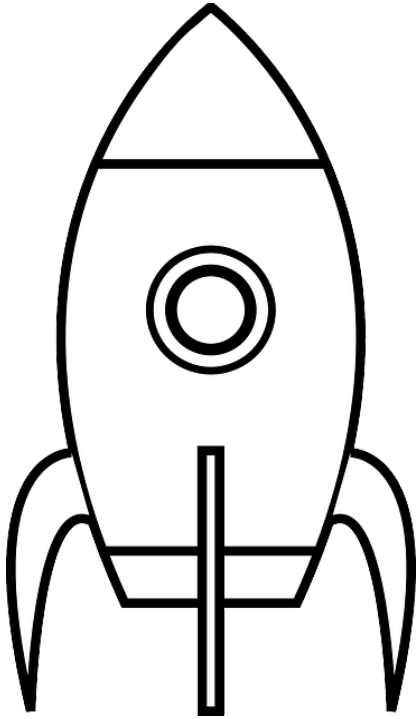
**Debrief:**

Have students form a circle and tell them they are going to play a game. In order to play the game, they’re going to have to listen carefully to the person in the center. Demonstrate by opening and closing your hands how the stars twinkle in the sky. Have the students practice being stars by “twinkling” their hands and whispering the word “twinkle” as they do it. After students have practiced being stars, demonstrate how the sun comes up by crouching down, making a circle with your arms over your head, and slowly rising up to stand. Have the students practice being the sun by “rising”. After the students have practiced, tell them the rules of the game.

This game is played by one person standing in the center. If the person in the center says “Day”, all the students in the circle must rise up like a sun. If the person in the center says “Night”, all the students in the circle must twinkle their hands like stars. If the person in the center says “Shooting Star”, the students in the circle must move to a new spot in the circle. The last person to find a spot becomes the new person in the middle.

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Space Shapes



## The Given Circumstances at the Edge of Everything

By Melanie Ricks Kamaau

**Grade:** 5-6

**Length:** 40-45 minutes

**Materials:**

- Whiteboard and markers
- Open space for acting/practicing

**Standards:**

- TH:Cr2-5.a. Devise original ideas for a drama/theatre work that reflect collective inquiry about characters and their given circumstances.
- TH:Pr4.1.6.a. Identify the essential events in a story or script that make up the dramatic structure in a drama/theatre work.
- TH:Pr6.1.5.a. Present drama/theatre work informally to an audience.

**Objective:** Students will extrapolate information from given circumstances by creating a 1-2 minute scene where they build off of the characters, story, and design from *The Boy at the Edge of Everything*.

**Hook:** Frozen Picture Refresh (10 minutes)

- To refresh the students of the story of *The Boy at the Edge of Everything*, break them up into 6 groups following Freytag's pyramid plot structure with the following questions to help them identify specific moments in the play. Each group will create a frozen image (tableau) that allows them to demonstrate and communicate important moments in the story. Give them 5 minutes to work in their groups to identify a moment and come up with their tableau.
  - Introduction: Who are the important characters? What do we need to know about their lives before the action begins?
  - Inciting Event: What does Simon Ives do or say that makes the action of the story begin?
  - Rising Action: What is one thing that happens between Simon Ives and the Boy?
  - Climax: What moment was the most suspenseful? What was the peak of the action between Simon and the Boy?
  - Falling Action: What did Simon and the Boy do once they made it to Earth?
  - Resolution: How does the play end?
- Take 5 minutes for the students to go around and share their tableau as well as what moment in the plot/story they are representing.

**Instruction:** What are Given Circumstances? (10 minutes)

- Allow students to return to their desks and ask students to raise their hand and identify what things they know about the characters, the story, the worlds they live, etc. Write each answer on the board, leaving a space for the title of “Given Circumstances” to eventually be filled in.
  - If students need help identifying the circumstances of the play, prompt them with questions, such as:
    - What do the characters like?
    - What do they dislike?
    - Where do they live?
    - What’s it like where they live?
    - What else is talked about in the play that is important for us to know about these characters? Or about the story?
  - Guide students to give answers that are specifically rooted in the performance they saw (i.e. the facts of the play). They will be extrapolating information later, but should focus on the facts for now.
- Once there is a decent list, title it “Given Circumstances.” Explain to the students that each fact of the world is an example of a “given circumstance” of the play. The given circumstances are the things we know about the world of the play, the characters, and the conditions of the events that shape the story into what it is.

**Practice:** Extrapolation and Scene Creation (10 minutes):

- Return students to the 6 groups they were in at the beginning. Instruct these students to work together using what they know about the play through the given circumstances to “add on” to the story. They will create a 1-2 minute scene of something that might happen between various characters sometime after the play ends. Invite students to work on their feet as they brainstorm as much as possible!
  - Some ideas that might prompt scene creation if groups are stuck:
    - What questions do you have about what happens next to the characters?
    - What do you wish you knew about the characters?
    - Where does The Boy/Colin go after the play ends? What does he do?
    - Does Simon Ives ever return to space? What does he do next?
- Invite students to practice acting out their “new endings” for 10 minutes until they will perform their idea for their peers. If students are spending a lot of time discussing without doing, invite them to get on their feet and try some things out!

**Assessment:** (10-15 minutes):

- After the students have had sufficient time to practice their scene ideas, allow each group to perform their short scene for each other. Take a moment after each group performs to ask them what given circumstances they referred to when creating these new situations.

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