

THEATER-MAKING AT HOME

GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



CELEBRATING OUR HEROES

NAME :

SCHOOL / ORGANIZATION :



BE FEATURED!

Are you interested in sharing your creative work with the Geffen community—and beyond?

If so, submit your letter to your hero, which may be recorded on video by Geffen artists, or a video recording of you reading the letter as a monologue.

If selected, your monologue will be featured on the Geffen Playhouse website.

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for a consent form and more information.

All submissions must be accompanied by a completed consent form.

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CELEBRATING OUR HEROES



In theater, monologues are extended speeches by characters in a play that reveal their deepest thoughts and feelings. The character usually speaks to other characters who are onstage with them, or to the audience. Reading a letter aloud while writing it or after it has been composed allows a character to direct their thoughts to one person, who may not be present. Through what the letter expresses, we learn about the qualities and impact of the person being addressed, as well as the life experiences and perspectives that are unique to the letter writer.

In this project, you will write a monologue in the form of a letter to a hero you wish to celebrate.

When we think of a hero, we often envision a larger-than-life person or figure, accomplishing feats of bravery in the face of challenging foes or odds. A hero can also be someone in daily life who is creating good for others, or has had a significant impact on our lives through the generosity or wisdom they extend to us.

Letters usually come in two different forms that have different purposes and tones. *Formal* letters include those written to apply for a job, to engage in business or legal transactions, or to provide information. *Informal* letters usually express personal news, observations, and feelings.

Follow the guidelines in the next few pages to select a hero and to write an informal letter that celebrates their achievements, their ability to solve problems, or their gifts for effecting positive change in the lives of others—especially your own!

Remember, writing involves exploring what you want to say, selecting the words that best express your thoughts, and revising what you have written to communicate clearly and powerfully. Give yourself space and time to come up with ideas, look them over, adjust, and, most importantly, keep going!

Though these steps have been designed to guide you, there is no wrong or right way to write. As you continue to write in the future, feel free to explore other techniques. What's most important is using your voice to share your story! **HAVE FUN!**



We encourage you to use any of our theater warm-up videos with this packet! You can find them along with other projects here:
<https://tinyurl.com/theaterwarmups>

ACTIVITY

WHO ARE OUR HEROES?

In this section you will think of figures—real and imagined—you consider heroes, and explore why you appreciate them.

Consider individuals that have made a significant impact on you or the world around you. Use the page below to brainstorm different people you recognize as heroes and their qualities and actions.

Public Heroes: List heroes you revere from history, stories, or public life and what qualities and actions have made them heroic in your eyes.

PUBLIC HEROES	PERSONAL QUALITIES	HEROIC ACTIONS

Personal Heroes: List heroes from daily life (past or present) whom you admire for the good they have done for others or who have had an important impact on your life.

PERSONAL HEROES	PERSONAL QUALITIES	HEROIC ACTIONS

ACTIVITY

SELECTING A HERO

Identify one figure that stands out to you as the hero you want to celebrate. Respond to the prompts below to come up with the details you will include in your letter.

What is your hero's name?

Where were or are they located geographically?

In which time period have they lived or do they live?

What was or is going on in their world at this time?

How did you become aware of and learn about this hero?

How would you characterize your relationship with this figure?

What unique and admirable personal qualities do they possess?

What heroic actions have they taken?

How have they overcome obstacles to achieve their goals or made a difference in the lives of others?

What impact have they had on your life or the lives of others?

Have they inspired you to take actions that benefit others? If so, how?

SUMMARIZE IN 2-3 SENTENCES WHY THIS FIGURE IS YOUR HERO

ACTIVITY

LETTERS AS COMMUNICATION

Now that you have selected the figure to write your letter to, think about the many ways letters communicate and what you want to convey to your hero.

In a time when emails, texts, and phone conversations are our primary forms of communication, writing informal letters is a special way to share our thoughts and feelings with those we care about. They can be handwritten and include more details than electronic messages allow. Letters can be poetic, funny, or serious and allow space for people to say things they might not be able to say in person.

Since letters are usually sent through the mail or hand-delivered, it takes a while for the message to be received and for a response to be sent back, which can create a sense of excited—or anxious—anticipation.

Letters often become “keepsakes,” or objects that people save to preserve memories of people and experiences in their lives. A series of letters can not only map the history of a relationship but can also provide a window into the times in which the letters were written.

In theater, letters have been featured in a number of Shakespeare’s plays and as central to the plot in Eugene Rostand’s *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Letters serve as almost the entire dramatic text between two people who are geographically distanced in *Love Letters* by A.R. Gurney. You can also find letters used as monologues in many films, as spoken word pieces, or as lyrics such as “Dear Mama” by Tupac Shakur.

BRAINSTORMING THOUGHTS FOR YOUR LETTER

Write down or sketch images of the thoughts you wish to share with your hero.

ACTIVITY

EXPLORING WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY

The typical structure of a letter usually includes:

- the date—in the upper left or right
- a greeting to the recipient—*Dear...*
- an opening that states why the letter is being written
- the “body” of the letter that expresses what the writer wants to say
- a concluding thought
- a salutation—*Best, Sincerely, Love,*—followed by the name of the writer.

To continue exploring what you wish to say to your hero, consider the thoughts and images from your brainstorm and respond to the prompts below. Feel free to come up with and respond to your own prompts.

I am writing because...

When I think of you, I feel... because...

What I admire most about you is...

You have impacted my life by...

I wonder...

You inspire me to...

I wish you...

Is there anything else you wish to include?

WRITING & REVISING YOUR LETTER

ACTIVITY

TURNING YOUR LETTER INTO A MONOLOGUE

You will now transform your letter into a monologue. Follow the steps below to practice reading your letter aloud and to add new elements to support your words.

1. Read through your letter and note the different emotions that you express. Circle or highlight any words that can be said with power to emphasize their meaning.

2. Guided by the emotions and words you have identified, read your letter at a whisper.

Note how whispering your monologue felt:

3. Consider any adjustments that would help you convey what your hero means to you more strongly, then read your monologue loudly enough for another person to hear you.

Note how reading your monologue out loud felt:

4. Make any adjustments necessary for a room full of people to hear you and to clearly understand why the person you are addressing is your hero..

Note how reading your monologue more loudly than you may be used to speaking felt:

5. Using the emotional power you discovered and enough volume for a roomful of people to hear you, share your letter once more—as if directly to your hero.

Note how it felt to acknowledge your hero in this way:

SHARING & EXTENDING YOUR LETTER WRITING

Send your letter to your hero. If they respond, consider continuing to correspond with them through letter writing.

Read your letter aloud to your hero (if it is safe to do so). You can also share your letter with them through a virtual platform.

Imagine a scene in which you are reading your letter aloud as you write it. Intertwine moments of reflection between lines, revealing any inner thoughts during the writing process. Put it all together in a staged dramatic monologue and perform it for a friend or family member or make a video recording and send it to the Geffen Playhouse. (See page 2 for directions.)

Envision how you might write a play, based on or inspired by an exchange of letters between you and your hero.

Continue to write letters to...

- Express your appreciation to people in your life and/or public figures
 - Seek advice or information from those whose work you find inspiring
 - Address issues/policies that need attention or to change, with agency leaders, government representatives, and media outlets.
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REFLECTION

Take a moment to reflect on your creative process and how it felt to select a hero, to write a letter that celebrated them, and to read the letter aloud as a monologue.

WHAT WAS THE MOST MEANINGFUL PART OF THIS ACTIVITY? WHY?

HOW DID IT FEEL TO FOCUS ON A HERO—IN THESE TIMES?

WHAT WAS MOST REWARDING AND MOST CHALLENGING ABOUT WRITING A LETTER TO THEM?

WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR HERO WILL UNDERSTAND AS A RESULT OF READING OR HEARING YOUR LETTER?

WHAT DID YOU DISCOVER ABOUT YOURSELF WHILE WRITING ABOUT YOUR HERO?

**WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT WRITING AND PERFORMING IN THEATER,
BY TURNING YOUR LETTER INTO A SPOKEN MONOLOGUE?**

WHAT DO YOU HOPE OTHERS WILL TAKE AWAY FROM HEARING YOUR LETTER?

RESOURCES

GREEN BOOK CLIP

<https://youtu.be/3Y6-11P8S1o>

APOLOGY TO MY UNBORN BY BASSEY IKPI | DEF POETRY JAM

<https://youtu.be/zzyrHsYTveE>

LOVE LETTER TO DARLA | LITTLE RASCALS

<https://youtu.be/J2ONM6n7avA>

HOPPER'S HEART TO HEART SPEECH | STRANGER THINGS

<https://youtu.be/5ShfbN9LBDs>

THE LETTER FROM PARIS | SABRINA

<https://youtu.be/jS9zJMIsjMg>

SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF LETTERS IN TWELVE REPRESENTATIVE PLAYS

<https://tinyurl.com/y74cb49y>

5 LOVE LETTERS FROM PABLO NERUDA

<https://tinyurl.com/y86brkbt>

REGULAR HEROES

<https://tinyurl.com/yd2g3s6c>

10 INSPIRING STORIES OF EVERYDAY HEROES

<https://tinyurl.com/yxqfscoc>
