



Resource Guide | for Educators and Audiences

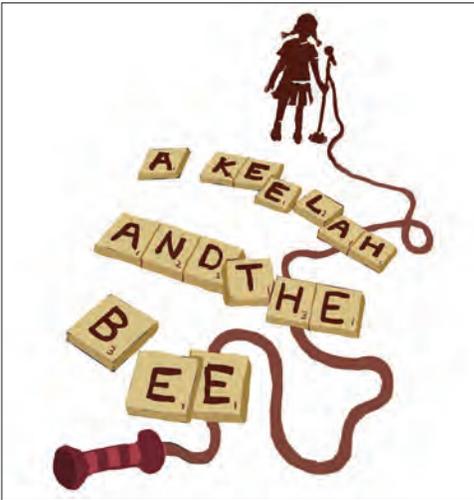
We include information about our production along with creative activities to make connections both before and after the show. For educators, all activities are aligned to the Common Core Standards and North Carolina Essential Standards. Look for the symbol below throughout the guide.



NCES-TheaArts.(3-5).TA.A.1: Analyze literary texts and performances. NCES-TheaArts.(3-5).TA.A.1.1: Recall the basic parts of a story, such as characters, setting, and events.

Mainstage production

Recommended for ages 8 and older



By Cheryl L. West

Based on the screenplay
by Doug Atchison

Director
Corey Mitchell

Summary of *Akeelah and the Bee*

Akeelah has a crazy passion for words: the more abstruse and labyrinthine, the better. But this gift is almost overwhelmed by the challenge of her daily life in a tough, Chicago neighborhood. Living with her single mother and brother, everything in Akeelah's world seems to be working against her. With the help of a spelling coach dealing with his own personal losses, Akeelah finds the confidence to continue. Her aptitude earns her a spot in the National Spelling Bee, which inspires the people in her neighborhood, and brings community and family together.

Audience expectations

You may wish to have a discussion with your students about their role as an audience member. Live theatre only exists when an audience is present; their energy and responses directly affect the actors in performance.

Younger audiences should know watching live theatre isn't like watching more familiar forms of entertainment: there is no pause or rewind button, there are no commercials for bathroom breaks, and they can't turn up the volume if someone else is talking. Encourage your students to listen and watch the play intently so they may laugh and cheer for their favorite characters when it is appropriate. At the end of the play, your applause is an opportunity to thank the actors for their performance. Here are some other guidelines to remember as well:

- Respect other audience members. Stay seated and keep your hands to yourself.
- Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices during the performance.
- Photography and recording of the performance is prohibited by copyright law.
- We do not permit food and drinks in the theatre.



NCES-TheaArts.(3-5).TA.CU.2: Understand the traditions, roles, and conventions of theatre as an art form. NCES-TheaArts.3.TA.CU.2.1: Illustrate theatre etiquette appropriate to the performance situation.

The BIG QUESTIONS about the show

1. *Akeelah and the Bee* was a movie before it was made into a play. What is the difference between watching a movie and seeing a live performance on stage?
2. Akeelah has to deal with some difficult things in her life that make it tough for her to succeed. What are some of the difficulties that Akeelah encounters in the story? How does she deal with these troubles?
3. Akeelah's community plays a large part in her story. How does Akeelah's community help her as she is preparing for the spelling bee? Have you seen a community come together to help someone in need? When and where?

Themes explored

fitting in, sense of identity, loss,
community and belonging



CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.(3-5).2: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media. NCES-TheaArts.2.TA.A.1.2: Analyze the relationships between events, characters, and settings.

About the playwright



photo credit - Abe Booker III

Cheryl L. West's plays have been seen in England, off-Broadway, on Broadway (Play On!) and in numerous regional theatres including Minneapolis Children's Theatre, Seattle Children's Theatre, Seattle Rep, Arena Stage, Old Globe, The Goodman, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Bay Street Theatre Festival, Syracuse Stage, Cleveland Play House, South Coast Rep, Cincinnati

Playhouse in the Park, and off-Broadway's Manhattan Theatre Club, Second Stage and Primary Stages. Her plays include: *Last Stop on Market Street*, *Akeelah and the Bee*, *Pullman Porter Blues*, *Motherhood Out Loud* (co-author), *Addie*, *American Girl Story* (21-city tour), and *Jar the Floor*. She has written TV and film projects at Disney, Paramount, MTV Films, Showtime, TNT, HBO, CBS and is the Webby-nominated writer for the original web series *Diary of a Single Mom*. Ms. West is currently working on commissions for Chicago Goodman's Theater and Seattle Rep, Seattle's 5th Avenue Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Chicago Children's Theater, Minneapolis Children's Theater, Seattle Children's Theater and UC Santa Barbara's Launch Pad Program.

THEATRE CORNER

Every play Children's Theatre of Charlotte produces is created by a talented team of designers, technicians, actors and a director. As a class, discuss what you experienced when you saw the performance.

1. Name three things you noticed about the set. Did the set help tell the story? What sort of set would you have designed?
2. What did you like about the costumes? Did the costumes help tell the story? What sort of costumes would you have designed?
3. What role did lighting play in telling the story? How did the lights enhance what you were seeing?
4. Talk about the actors. Were there moments you were so caught up in the story you forgot you were watching a play?
5. Were there any actors who played more than one character? What are some ways you can be the same person but play different characters?



NCES-TheaArts.(3-5).TA.A.1: Analyze literary texts and performances. NCES-TheaArts.(3-5).TA.AE.1.2: Understand how costumes [and technical elements] enhance dramatic play.

For more activities and content surrounding this show, [click here](#) to access Children's Theatre of Charlotte's Pinterest boards.



Write to Us!



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CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.(3-5).1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Recommended Reading

If you enjoyed the show, check out these books at your local Charlotte Mecklenburg library branch. Check availability at cmlibrary.org.

Brown Girl Dreaming by Jacqueline Woodson

The Fingertips of Duncan Dorfman by Meg Wolitzer

Patina by Jason Reynolds

The Mighty Miss Malone by Christopher Paul Curtis