

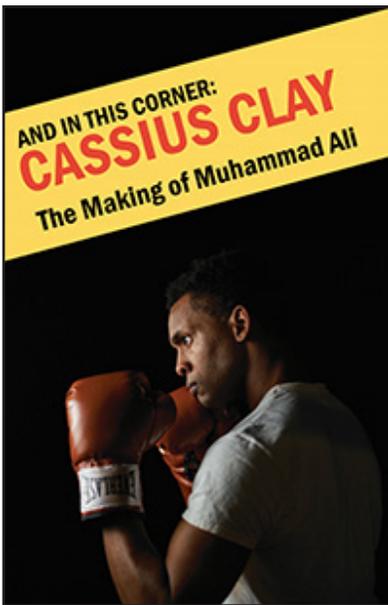
# Study Guide and Activities

This study guide includes information about our production along with creative activities to make connections in your classroom both before and after the show. We've aligned all activities to both the Common Core Standards and North Carolina Essential Standards. Look for the symbol below throughout the guide for curriculum connections.



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**  
Ages 8 and older



**Written by**  
**Idris Goodwin**

**Director**  
**Aaron Cabell**

## Themes explored

biography, civil rights, boxing,  
poetry, "taking a stand"

## Synopsis

A 20-something Cassius Clay, soon to become Muhammad Ali, addresses the audience about growing up in a Louisville that was "split down the middle." We travel to 1953, when Cassius was 11 as his mother struggles to tell her sons they can't enter a local diner because it's "White Only." At 12, young Cassius defiantly declares to his friends he's going to be the first "negro superhero."

When someone steals his new bike, he intends to use his superpowers to "whup" the culprit, but police officer Joe Martin stops him and convinces him to learn to fight at a boxing gym instead. Cassius dedicates himself to his training, and his newfound talent gives him the courage to challenge a neighborhood bully in the ring. As his skills improve Joe convinces him to conquer his fear of flying and to compete in the 1960 Olympics.

During an interview, after winning the gold medal, Cassius dodges a question about segregation, but he can't dodge his best friend Eddie when he returns home. Eddie accuses him of fighting only for himself and challenges him to use his celebrity to stand up for important issues. Cassius bravely returns to the diner with Eddie, but the employees still refuse them service. He throws his gold medal in the Ohio River vowing to never let someone treat him as a second-class citizen again. The friends say goodbye as Eddie leaves to join the Freedom Riders and Cassius prepares for his first professional fight.

Before entering the ring and becoming real-life superhero Muhammad Ali, Cassius decides he will be the type of person who fights not only for himself but for others too.

## The Power of Language in Performance

This playwright of this script uses historically accurate language that reflects the reality of segregated America, especially the time in which the story is set: 1950s Kentucky. *And In This Corner: Cassius Clay* uses the "n-word" once in conversation between the characters of Cassius and his best friend Eddie. In that moment, Cassius recalls a time it was used against him during a sit-in at a "white-only" diner.

This word is painful to hear and can be difficult to talk about. However, Children's Theatre of Charlotte has chosen not to censor this word in the play. The experience Cassius has is personal and affects his view of the world. To censor the word limits the play's ability to accurately represent his experience and the time period in which he grew up. We want the stage to give a voice to important issues and events and not minimize the racist treatment of black Americans.

You may want to discuss this word and its context in the play with your students before seeing the performance. [Click here](#) to read an interview with Arizona State University Professor Neal A. Lester about the history of the word and suggestions on how to discuss it with your students.

# On your way to ImaginOn

## The Story Jar



The Story Jar is a unique sculpture outside the McColl Family Theatre. It is an ever changing exhibit featuring items from our current and past shows. Our current show is *And in This Corner: Cassius Clay*. Can you find all of the items listed below?

boxing gloves      butterfly  
referee shirt      plate

## About our theatre

Founded in 1948, Children's Theatre of Charlotte has opened young minds to the wonders of live theatre for more than half a century. Today, it continues to be one of the most technically imaginative and resourceful theatres in the country. Annually, it reaches nearly 300,000 young people and their families through our Mainstage productions, Resident Touring Company and its Education Department's classes and workshops. Children's Theatre of Charlotte shares a space with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library at **ImaginOn: The Joe and Joan Martin Center**. Learn more about Children's Theatre of Charlotte at [ctcharlotte.org](http://ctcharlotte.org).

## Audience expectations

Young audiences should know watching live theatre isn't like watching more familiar forms of entertainment: they can't pause or rewind it like a DVD, there are no commercials for bathroom breaks, nor can they increase the volume to hear it 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's appropriate.

At the end of the play, applause is an opportunity for students to thank the actors. Live theatre only exists when an audience is present, and your students' energy and response directly affects the actors on stage! Here are some other guidelines to keep in mind while you are watching the performance:

- Respect others during the performance. Stay seated and keep your hands to yourself.
- Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices during the performance.
- Photography and video 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.



## Theatre 360 connections

Theatre 360 provides a way to interact with Children's Theatre of Charlotte productions by extending the theatre experience for families and classroom—providing access to all! Best of all, many programs are free. [Click here](#) to view the full list of events throughout the year.

**Audience engagement** These interactive experiences located around ImaginOn are available from the first public performance of a production through the entire run of the show. We change the exhibits to reflect the uniqueness of each show.

**Online engagement** Whether you're a teacher or a parent looking for quality activities, we've assembled a collection of online games, websites and articles that deepen the connections of elements from the show. [Click here](#) for online content for *And in This Corner: Cassius Clay*.

**Workshops and residencies** Teachers, are you looking for a way for your class to make stronger connections with our shows? You can add our workshops, led by our professional teaching artists, before or after you view the performance. Or incorporate the arts into your everyday classroom through a residency created to fit your subject area. Contact our programs coordinator, Tommy Prudenti, at [tommyp@ctcharlotte.org](mailto:tommyp@ctcharlotte.org) to book yours today!

# Before the show

## Vocabulary enrichment

- intertwine** v. to connect or join together; intermingle
- envy** n. a feeling of discontent aroused by someone else's qualities or luck
- fundamentals** n. primary rules or principles on which something is based
- whooped (whup)** v. slang term, to beat badly
- (champ)ion** n. a person who has defeated or surpassed all rivals, especially in sports
- menace** n. a person likely to cause harm
- amateur** adj. engaging without payment, unprofessional
- barrage** n. a concentrated bombardment of questions or blows
- mutilated** v. inflicted serious damage on someone or something
- accommodations** n. lodging, a place to stay
- broadcast** v. transmits information by radio or television
- pursue** v. seek to accomplish (a goal)
- “rhyming and jiving”** v. figure of speech (idiom), to taunt



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.(3-5).4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases.

**“I hated every minute of training, but I said, ‘Don’t quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion.’”**

—Muhammad Ali (2013)

## Taking a stand

Using this activity, the teacher helps the class identify what traits they have in common and provides a framework to explore ideas from the play. The teacher says, “Stand up if this statement is true for you . . .”, followed by the statements below. Feel free to add your own statements to the list, or those from your students. These statements should be more casual, and introduce the structure of the activity.

- I like chocolate.*                      *I play a sport.*                      *I have seen a play before.*                      *I have read \_\_\_\_.*
- I have become better at something that used to be hard. (ex: talking in front of groups, playing piano, etc.)*

Transition into statements applicable to the performance. Sometimes these statements lead to follow-up discussion. Don’t feel that you need to rush from statement to statement, allow observations from the students to lead to more questions. This is an opportunity for them to explore and share their pre-knowledge before watching the performance.

- I have heard of Muhammad Ali.*                      *I have watched a boxing match.*
- I have had something stolen from me.*                      *I have said something or done something that hurt someone’s feelings.*
- I know what racism is.*                      *I have witnessed examples of racist language or behavior in my communities.*



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.(3-5).1.B: Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1.D: Review the key ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

## The Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights movement was a struggle by black Americans for social justice during the 1950s and 1960s. Many of the events that motivated this movement are mentioned in the play: Emmett Till’s murder, lunch counter sit-ins and the Freedom Riders. [Click here](#) to learn more about these events and more from the National Civil Rights Museum located in Memphis, Tennessee.

# Before the show

## The BIG QUESTIONS before the show

1. Some words have a lot of power and are used to oppress others and make them feel worthless. What words have you heard that hold that power? Why do people use them?
2. Muhammad Ali created a tagline to describe his boxing style and personality. "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee." Create your own tagline to describe yourself.



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-HealthEd.4.ICR.1.1: Explain the importance of showing respect for self and respect and empathy for others. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.(3-5).5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

## Choose your words carefully

One word can dramatically alter the message we're trying to convey. It can communicate tone and imagery when speaking and writing. See the example below.

She said her ABCs. She shouted her ABCs. She mumbled her ABCs.

Encourage your students to write a sentence about something they do every day. Can they make the sentence have a positive or negative connotation by altering the word choice? You may need to help younger students generate a list of words from which to choose. Start with a simple word like "big," and write on the board as many different ways to communicate that idea. Which words seem more positive? More negative?



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.3.A: Choose words and phrases to convey ideas precisely.

## Poetry alive

Many of the biographical elements of the play are communicated by an older Cassius through poetry, acting as a narrator to the story.

*I looked in there.  
Took a second to see  
Them boys drinkin' water ain't look like me  
And on we walked  
Thirsty as ever  
But we didn't make a peep  
Shoot, we knew better*

Part of this is because Muhammad Ali had a unique rhetorical style. He would often communicate in rhyme when addressing reporters and the media. Encourage your students to take a moment from their life and adapt it into a poem. Is it a moment of triumph or one of defeat?



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.(3-5).3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.(3-5).5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

## Muhammad Ali



Muhammad Ali (born Cassius Clay) was a boxer, philanthropist and social activist who history regards as one of the greatest athletes of the 20th century.

Ali became an Olympic gold medalist in 1960 and the world heavyweight boxing champion in 1964 following his fight with Sonny Liston. After his suspension for refusing military service in the Vietnam War, Ali reclaimed the heavyweight title two more times during the 1970s, winning famed bouts against Joe Frazier and George Foreman along the way. He had a career record of 56 wins, five losses and 37 knockouts before his retirement from boxing in 1981.

Diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 1984, Ali devoted much of his time to philanthropy, earning the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2005.

[Click here](#) to learn more about Muhammad Ali.

# Worksheet for before the show

**COPY PAGE**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Boxing is a sport with its own terminology and expressions. Can you match the boxing term with its definition by writing the letter in the blank? After the performance, review the terms on this sheet. Are there more you know after seeing the play? If you want to learn more about the sport of boxing and its terms, go to [www.titleboxing.com/boxing-dictionary](http://www.titleboxing.com/boxing-dictionary).

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| ___ Contender        | <b>A.</b> movement of the feet that helps the boxer retain balance or evade punches                     |
| ___ “Fancy footwork” | <b>B.</b> a vertical, rising punch thrown with the rear hand  |
| ___ Jab              | <b>C.</b> the boxer you hope to defeat  |
| ___ Combination      | <b>D.</b> a powerful, straight punch thrown with the rear hand  |
| ___ Uppercut         | <b>E.</b> a semi-circular punch thrown with the lead hand to the side of the opponent’s head            |
| ___ “Haymaker”       | <b>F.</b> make the motions of boxing without landing heavy blows as a form of training                  |
| ___ Cross            | <b>G.</b> a quick, straight punch thrown with the rear hand   |
| ___ Hook             | <b>H.</b> a desperation punch thrown with full force and the intent to knock out an opponent            |
| ___ Weight Class     | <b>I.</b> a series of punches thrown in succession, one right after the other, with no break in between |
| ___ Sparring         | <b>J.</b> divisions of competition to match boxers against others of their own size                     |

# After the show

## The BIG QUESTIONS after the show

1. What would have happened if Cassius never ran into Officer Joe Martin and “whupped” the people who stole his bike?
2. What makes Cassius stand up to Corky Baker? Have you ever stood up for what you believed in? What gave you the courage?
3. Cassius and Rudy aren’t allowed to eat in the “white only” diner. How would you respond if someone excluded you from something your friends were allowed to do?



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-Soc.Studies.3.H.1: Understand how events, individuals and ideas have influenced the history of local and regional communities. NCES-TheatreArts.2.TA.A.1.2: Analyze the relationships between events, characters, and settings.

## Worksheet key

Contender (C)	Haymaker (H)
Fancy footwork (A)	Cross (D)
Jab (G)	Hook (E)
Combination (I)	Weight Class (J)
Uppercut (B)	Sparring (F)

Want to learn more about boxing and its terminology? [Click here](#) to discover more about this sport.

## Design your logo

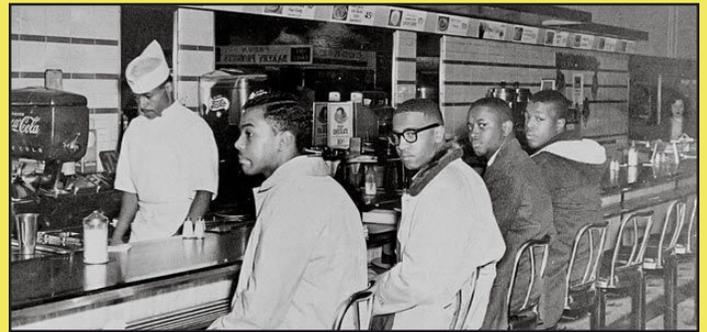
A costume is any piece of clothing worn by an actor during performance. The costume designer is in charge of making all decisions about how the costumes look. The designer considers many things, including the age of the character, where he or she lives and the time period in which the play takes place. The designer then makes drawings for the director and design team, called renderings, to show how each costume will look. The renderings are then given to the costume shop, where the shop manager and stitchers sew the costumes. The renderings help guide them in creating each piece.

In the final moment of the play, Cassius steps into the ring wearing his robe for his first professional boxing match. Boxing robes often have elaborate designs that communicate something about the athlete. Become a designer and create the logo for your boxing robe. What information does it say about you?



NCES-TheatreArts.(3-5).TA.AE.1.2: Understand how costumes [and technical elements] enhance dramatic play. NCES-VisualArts.(3-5).VA.V.3: Create art using a variety of tools, media, and processes, safely and appropriately.

## The Greensboro Four



In early 1960, a non-violent protest by African-American college students at a segregated Woolworth’s lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, sparked a sit-in movement that soon spread to college towns throughout the region. Though many of the protesters were arrested for trespassing, disorderly conduct or disturbing the peace, their actions made an immediate and lasting impact, forcing Woolworth’s and other establishments to change their segregationist policies.

The four young black men who staged the first sit-in in Greensboro were Ezell Blair Jr., David Richmond, Franklin McCain and Joseph McNeil, students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College. They were influenced by the non-violent protest techniques practiced by Mahatma Gandhi, as well as early Freedom Riders.



NCES-Soc.Studies.4.H.1.3: Explain how people, events and developments brought about changes to communities in various regions of North Carolina.

If you enjoyed the show, travel to **ImaginOn** or your local **Charlotte Mecklenburg library branch** and check out these books. Check availability at [cmlibrary.org](http://cmlibrary.org).

### Recommended for elementary

#### ***Muhammad Ali: A Champion Is Born***

by **Gene Barretta**

After 12-year-old Cassius Clay, as he was known then, had his new red bike stolen, he practiced at the gym and learned to fight back against injustice wherever he saw it.

#### ***Feather***

by **Rémi Courgeon**

Paulina, nicknamed Feather, leaves her piano to start boxing, showing her father and brothers she'll stand up for herself.

#### ***Jimmy the Greatest!***

by **Jairo Buitrago**

Inspired by Muhammad Ali, Jimmy starts training to become a boxer, and while his future looks bright, he decides leaving his small town for big matches might not be the best option for him.

### Recommended for middle school

#### ***Muhammad Ali: Boxing Legend***

by **Gregory N. Peters**

A biography describing the life of boxer Muhammad Ali, from birth to world champion.

#### ***Shadow Boxer***

by **Chris Lynch**

After their father dies of boxing injuries, George is determined to prevent his younger brother, who sees boxing as his legacy, from pursuing a career in the sport.

#### ***Boxing in Black and White***

by **Peter Bacho**

Text and photographs present some of the notable heavyweight boxing matches of the 20th century that had profound significance not only for the world of boxing but also for society at large. Featuring such fighters as Jack Dempsey, Joe Louis and Muhammad Ali.

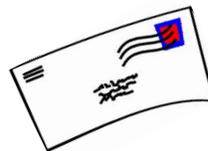
## THEATRE CORNER

Every play Children's Theatre of Charlotte produces is created by a talented team of designers, technicians, actors and a director. A play is different from a television show or a movie because it's presented live. 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.



## Write to Us!

Children's Theatre of Charlotte  
300 E. Seventh St.  
Charlotte, N.C. 28202



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

Children's Theatre of Charlotte is supported, in part, with funding from the Arts & Science Council, and the N.C. Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.



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*Fifty years  
of leadership*