

West Side Stories Creative Challenge:

Create a New Character

<https://thenationaldcwestsidestory.org>



Activity Overview

Grade Level: High School (9th – 12th)

Subjects: ELA/Literacy, Playwriting

Estimated Time: 20-30 min

Materials Needed: Pen or pencil, paper, *Role-on-The-Wall* worksheet (see below)

Activity Format: Individual

Summary: In this activity, students will take on the role of playwright by creating new characters for *West Side Story*. Then, they will write scenes using their new characters and an existing character in the story.

Activity Guide

Students will use the *Role-On-The-Wall* worksheet to guide them through the process of creating a new character for *West Side Story*. A sample completed *Role-on-The-Wall* worksheet is provided below for reference. An overview of the plot of *West Side Story* can be found here to assist students with this process: <https://thenationaldcwestsidestory.org>.

1. Identify a name for the new character.
2. Think about the relationship this character has with the protagonists (in this case either Tony or Maria).
3. Determine how the character looks, feels, walks, thinks, and dresses themselves.
4. Identify the objective of the character. What does this character WANT or NEED or MUST HAVE? How do these wants and needs contribute to the dramatic tension in *West Side Story*?

Once students have created their new character they will write a short scene that puts their character in conversation with one of the main characters from *West Side Story*. Students may either:

1. Write a 2-3 page scene to submit OR
2. Work with friends to film their short scene using Vimeo or Flipgrid and submit a video file

For an extra challenge, students may consider writing song lyrics for their new character and coming up with a title for the song.

Example Filled Role on The Wall Worksheet

Family:

- Parents
- Lives with his father
- One younger sister
- Seldom sees his sister

Wants:

- To work in the arts in some way
- Saving up for an expensive guitar

Friends:

- Tends to be loyal to his friends
- Three main friends, Simon, Dave, and John
- They went to primary school together

Obstacles:

- He has been in love with Danielle for over a year but because he feels she is superior he can't bring himself to ask her out.

Hobbies:

- Trying to learn the guitar
- Part-Time Job
- Dislikes school music lessons
- Enjoys drama and art



Role on The Wall Worksheet

