

# West Side Stories Creative Challenge: Still Pictures of West Side Story

<https://thenationaldcwestsidestory.org>



## Activity Overview

**Grade Level:** High School (9th – 12th) **Materials Needed:** Flip chart paper, markers or pens  
**Subjects:** ELA/Literacy **Activity Format:** Groups (4-5 students)  
**Estimated Time:** 20-30 min

**Summary:** This learning activity will help students understand the essential elements of story writing and gain insights into the central theme of *West Side Story*. Students will embody the experience through image work.

## Activity Guide

1. Place students into groups of 4 or 5 and ask them to share with one another specific topics or themes that came up for them after reading "The Story" section of [this site](#).
2. Have each group create a short scene or "tableau" (a frozen image created by students embodying different poses) representing the themes that they determined. Then, have each group present their work to the larger class. Have class members guess the groups' targeted topic or theme.
3. Facilitate a discussion with the class about the creation of *West Side Story*. Explain to students that, in addition to being influenced by William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the show creators also drew upon their personal experiences to determine themes for the show to explore.
4. Give students the opportunity to reflect upon their own personal experiences and instruct them to determine a new theme they would like to explore with a second scene or "tableau". This new scene or "tableau" should represent a theme or idea that students see present in their communities.
5. Give students time to practice and prepare their scene or "tableau" to present in front of the whole class.
6. Create a safe space to hold conversations about the themes presented in the second set of scenes or "tableaus".

If students are stuck, you may encourage them to use the *Role-On-The-Wall* worksheet to develop a character (see below).

# 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

