

The Compass

Play by Michael Rohd

Presentation by Sofia Lindgren Galloway



DBP - Before

TGAM: Crumbling/Falling

Over the next several class periods, we're going to be diving into some heavy material related to violence in schools. How might this strategy be a metaphor for ways we can support everyone in our ensemble while we tackle this challenging play?

***Do this to reinforce ensemble and caretaking before getting into challenging material.**

DBP - Before

Activating Dialogue: Exploding Atom

- 1. Schools keep students safe**
- 2. Technology is always a useful tool**
- 3. It is okay to do something illegal if it might help people**
- 4. I prefer when someone else makes decisions for me**

***Do this strategy to get students thinking about core themes in the play**

About the play:

- Synopsis - Read pages 5-7 of the [study guide](#)

About the Playwright

- Michael Rohd - read page 15 in the [study guide](#)

Playwright - Additional Info

- Founder of Sojourn Theatre
- Wrote Theatre for Community, Conflict, and Dialogue about theatre techniques he used with an ensemble during the AIDS epidemic
- Pick 2 of the following posts from HowlRound to read more about Rohd's work bringing social justice and theatre together

New Play Development - Steppenwolf for Young Adults

- Every year, Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago presents 2 plays for teens. 1, an adaptation of a classic novel. The other, a companion piece.
- *The Compass* was part of the 2015-2016 season along with an adaptation of 1984.



Theatre History/Form

This play was devised: what does that mean?

- Go back to page 15 in [Study Guide](#)
- Read [this article](#) from The Guardian
- Try it: in small groups, you have 10 minutes to create a 2 minute performance piece about the technology you use every day.
Your piece should include: a moment of stillness, a moment of rapid movement, a hashtag, a moment where everyone is speaking at the same time.

DBP - Before

Image Work: object as image

Create a 3-D model that represents *your* relationship with social media.

*Students will now know a bit of what the play is about. Before reading, they should consider their own position/biases about a core theme.

DBP – Before

Role Work: Soundscapes

This play takes place in a school and a courtroom. Lets create a soundscape of a school hallway. Then, we'll create a soundscape of a courtroom. What's the same in each? What's different?

***This strategy sets the stage and lets us embody a bit of the play without attending it. It also creates connections to students' lives (hallway) or points out experiences they may or may not have had (courtroom).**

The Compass

STUDY GUIDE

How would you feel if you never had to make a decision again?

PRESENTER: ANASTASIA LARSON
DIRECTOR AND EDITOR: MICHAEL BORD

WOLF BY HICKSON
steppenwolf
for YOUNG PEOPLE



DBP - During

Role Work: PSA

After viewing tech company launch videos ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)), students will work in small groups to think of an app that might help them in their daily life, then create a PSA for that app.

*Teaching dramaturgy and playwriting, how might a playwright and director create something fictional that represents or calls back to something recognizable?



Design - Projection

- Read [What is Media Design](#) from HowlRound
- Watch [this video](#) about projection design
- Then, [choose 1 other piece](#) from the media design series on HowlRound



DBP - During

Activating Dialogue: Visual Dramaturgy

This play takes place in the recent past (2018) and features many pop culture references. If we were to do the production today, we would need to update the references. What movies, celebrities, hashtags, social issues, etc. would we need to include? What might be projected for the audience to see?

*Starts conversation about design elements. Also, share that Michael Rohd has given permission to make these updates for future productions.

JURY DECISION

In small groups, discuss the jury facilitation questions in the script. Elect someone to speak for your group to the “Judge” (teacher/facilitator)



Audience

- In *The Compass*, the audience becomes a part of the action in the trials. Read page 11 in the [study guide](#) about juries.
- Then, take the quiz on [page 12](#) to learn about how YOU might make decisions as a jury member in *The Compass*.

Dramaturgy - Mental Health and Schools

- Read or listen to [this story](#) about mental health and schools as students return to school after pandemic related time away (**cw: violence, self-harm, suicide**)
- Read or listen to [this story](#) about counselors in schools, including this stat: *average student to counselor ratio in American High Schools is 403:1*
- Turn and talk: do you think our school has enough mental health services? What would you like to see more of? How might you go about advocating for more or different services?

DBP - During

Role Work - Writing in role

Imagine you are a reporter writing an article about violence in schools. Who might you need to interview? Where might you look for information?

In small groups, research the issue. Consider there may be multiple sides. Then, write a letter to the editor expressing how you feel. You do not need to personally agree with the character you're developing.

***Gets students doing research on the issue and considering multiple perspectives. Challenging topic- give students a chance to emotionally process personal perspective with data and history**

JURY DECISION

In small groups, discuss the jury facilitation questions in the script. Elect someone NEW to speak for your group to the “Judge” (teacher/facilitator)



DBP - During

Image Work: Real and Ideal

Marjan has gone to her teacher, Mr. Ferguson to ask for advice. Show us the “Real” image of what happens in the play. Then, show us the “Ideal” image of what you think the characters **SHOULD** have done in the play.

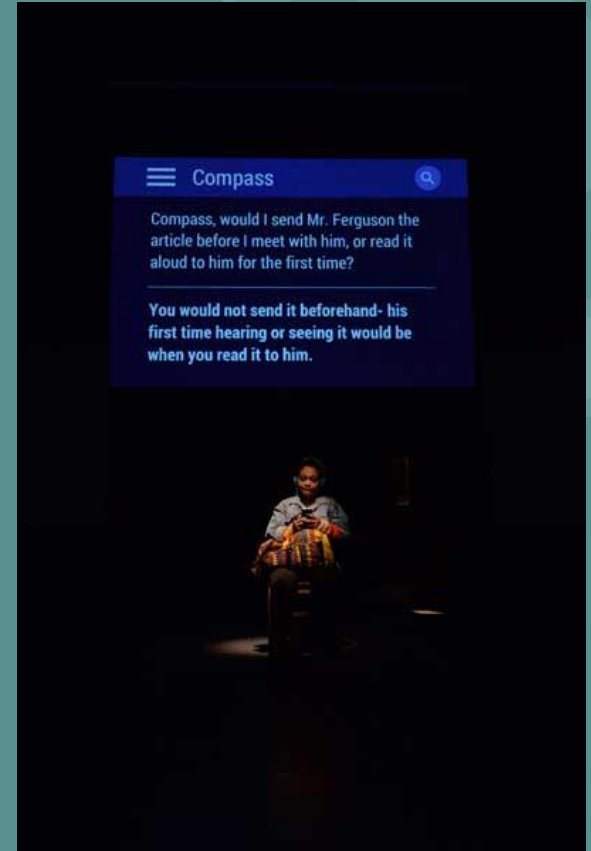
*Allows students to embody multiple outcomes of the same situation and consider how *they* might respond in a similar situation.

DBP - During

Role Work: Conscience Alley

Should Marjan publish her article about how to bring a weapon to school? What might be going through her mind after she meets with her teacher Mr. Ferguson? Come up with one line of dialogue that represents her internal thoughts.

*Get students to embody a turning point in the play.



JURY DECISION

In small groups, discuss the jury facilitation questions in the script. Elect someone NEW to speak for your group to the “Judge” (teacher/facilitator)



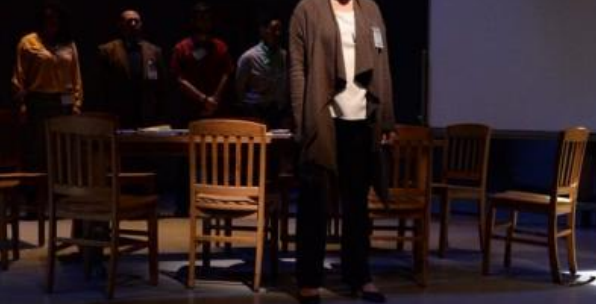
DBP - During

TGAM: Great Game of Power

How might we arrange chairs as a metaphor for shifting power dynamics in the script? Who is actually in control? Is it the school? The students? The App? What control might the audience have?

***Get students thinking about power and status and how that affect decision making. Also get students thinking about audience relationship to performing artists.**

The Verdict



JURY DECISION

In small groups, discuss the jury facilitation questions in the script. Elect someone deliver your group's final verdict.



DBP - After

Image Work: Connecting images

As yourself, show us how you felt about technology at the beginning of the play, middle, and end.

***Calls back to beginning strategies where students were asked to consider their relationship with technology.**

DBP - After

TGAM: Who Started the Motion

Information spreads and morphs quickly online, how might this strategy be a metaphor for the spread of online information in your own life?

*Scaffolds into Trial/Courtroom strategy. Also embodies online organizing dramaturgy.



Dramaturgy - Online Organizing

- From study guide: [Why Videos go Viral Ted Talk](#)
- What other recent events and movements do you know of that have grown from online organizing?
- Check out “What do you stand for” on page 20 of the [study guide](#).
- Once your editorial is written, get in groups who have similar topics and create a series of tweets or posts citing each other’s work to defend your argument and drum up support for your cause!

Dramaturgy - Teens and Tech

- Read Technology: Friend or Foe on page 16 in the [study guide](#) and complete STEP 1 of the activity
- Read [this story](#) about Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen (cw: **body image, suicide**)
- Read these opposing stories about teens' relationship to social media. "[A Teenager's View on Social Media](#)" and "[Social Media is Harming the Mental Health of Teenagers](#)"
- After considering all of the stories above, complete steps 3-5 of the Technology: Friend or Foe activity in the study guide

DBP - After

Role Work: Trial Courtroom

As a group, we will select a social media app to put on trial (ex: tiktok). Students will do research about recent trials of social media apps, recent health issues related to apps, and the benefits of these apps. Then, we will create characters on all sides of the issue and embody them while the instructor facilitates a trial.

***Students apply the fictional story in the play to something they likely use (or affect their live, lives of people they know) on a daily basis.**

Critic - Content Warnings:

- The Compass brings lots of challenging topics to the forefront such as violence in schools and mental health. While studying this play, we've explored the ways technology and schools can exacerbate already challenging topics. Throughout this unit, slides with potentially challenging material have been marked by "cw" for Content Warning. Some folks think content warnings are necessary, and some don't. Read 3 perspectives here. (cw: sexual assault, rape, violence, ptsd, trauma)

I want to hear from you:

- Should plays include content warnings? Why or why not?
- Do you think there are topics that are inappropriate for high school students to learn about?
- Is *The Compass* appropriate for high school audiences?

DBP - After

Activating Dialogue: It Made Me Think

The Compass brings up a lot of ethical questions about technology, safety, right and wrong. It also deals with topics that are emotionally fraught like violence in schools and we've delved deeper into other challenging topics. As a final check-in, I want to know what you're taking away from this play.

*Informal assessment to see what student take-aways are. Also assesses emotional needs of students.

The Compass

Play by Michael Rohd
Presentation by Sofia Lindgren Galloway

