

Holler if Ya Hear Me-
A New Musical Inspired by The Lyrics of Tupac Shakur

Portal and Study Guide:

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Part I: Welcome To Holler Scholar

Chapter 1

Introduction To The Portal and Study Guide

This guide is designed for immediate use in independent learning environments and middle school and high school classrooms. The lesson prompts and curricular materials address national learning standards and include instructions for classroom implementation, printable student handouts, links to online resources, and suggestions for extension activities to enhance your students' reading, viewing, and appreciation of the play *Holler If Ya Hear Me* and the topics and issues addressed in the play. Additional guides and portals will be introduced.

The Portal is organized around several themes that appear in the play. Each theme represents a section in the guide and includes:

- A “ Scene snapshot” that connects the reader back to the musical
- Supplementary links for main themes and ideas that the section covers
- Example activities that educators can use to guide discussion surrounding a particular issue that the musical covers
- Links to hard copies of lesson prompts
- A series of for key words that the students should be able to engage at the end of the portal journey

The Portal Sections open into subsections of exploration based on the topics underneath each heading. The sections are developed by the curators and include interactive educational questions regarding the musical. They work independently and in concert with the portal sections that pertain to the bigger themes that each act of musical discusses. We also have an activity bank for grades 9-12 that link to the play and to the life of Tupac that can be used in concert with the information on the portal. It also includes lesson prompts and explorations of themes from prominent cultural activists.

Following are the **Portal Sections**.

SECTION 1: I Wonder What It Takes to Make This?: Hip Hop Theater Documenting Urban Life (THEATER, POETRY, FINE ARTS, SPOKEN WORD)

SECTION 2: My Block: Speaking to the World Through our Communities (COMMUNITY, CULTURE, LANGUAGE, VIOLENCE, CAR CULTURE)

SECTION 3: Courage- Peace is Now: Locating Tools, Building Hope (COLLABORATION, DIVERSITY, GENDER AND IDENTITY, REMINISCING, SURVIVAL, COURAGE)

SECTION 4: That's Just the Way It Is: Love, Family, Faith and Peace (LOVE, DEATH, FAMILY, FRIENDSHIP, GOD AND FAITH, WOMEN'S STANCE)

Chapter 2

Notes to Educators

National Standards

This guide is designed for immediate use in junior and high school classrooms. In most cases these lesson prompts and curricular materials adhere to national learning standards. They often contain video segments, comprehensive instructions for classroom implementation, printable student handouts, links to online resources, and suggestions for extension activities to enhance your students' literacy and problem solving skills and creativity and appreciation of hip hop culture is related to learning and development. Additional lesson prompts and activities will be posted throughout the run of the play. Please see Appendix A for the subjects covered in the common standard.

Organizations and Schools

All information regarding standards is available online. In addition, we have provided links for resources and Hip hop curricula. We have also included links to Tupac Shakur sites, the playwright August Wilson sites and the Rap Genius sites for *Holler If Ya Hear Me* and Tupac.

Appropriate and Inappropriate Language Use: Bad Words

The play uses many words that are considered to be profanity and offensive. The writers use these words because they are present in some of the lyrics of the songs and because that is how young people often talk. The teenage years mark the period when youth repeatedly explore boundaries and rules. Young people often test the boundaries they've been told they cannot cross because they're not supposed to do so. The temptation to touch a hot iron and not get burned is often too much temptation for a teenager. This desire leads to their use of inappropriate or 'bad' words. We begin with this description of adolescence because as an educator, it is important to understand that a moral argument against word usage may not make sense to a young person. She and he know it's wrong and she and he often know why it's wrong. In order to persuade him and her that they get few benefits by using offensive language, it is best to (1) explain the language ideology or beliefs around some of the expressions and (2) the linguistic science as well. Punishment is often the policy for school infractions yet the 'crime' of using inappropriate language is actually the perfect context to teach about language.

Many schools have policies regarding profanity and words that refer to violence, sex, drugs, nationality, race, and sexuality. These policies vary and many don't reflect changing values of language and change in usage. It is important to make your policy clear from the beginning. This can be a challenge when working with hip-hop lyrics. Lyrical expression in hip-hop relies on knowledge of Standard English. With that knowledge artists introduce contrasts based on English language rules. They also build new vocabulary and change meanings of words. For example, bad can mean very, very good. I recently visited a high school where students were warned that if they used words associated with drugs they could be suspended. Unfortunately, the school was unaware of many of the contemporary terms for marijuana. Much to their delight, students used hip-hop drug terms in the presence of teachers with no consequence. One day a student quoted a song by a hip-hop artist who was quoting another artist from a decade earlier. The artist used the name Mary Jane – a marijuana reference from the teacher's youth. The student was put in detention, and swore he thought it referred to candy rather than marijuana.

The **N-word** may be one of the most offensive words used in society today. It is an enduring symbol of racism against people of African descent in the U.S. Yet

the **N-word** is found in numerous songs throughout hip-hop. Even when the term is deleted and replaced by another word, most young people already know the original version. **We suggest that a consistent policy regarding the use of this word should be stated at the beginning of any lesson.** The policy should be clear, include speaking and writing and have few, if any, exceptions. Whatever the policy, it is important that the instructor understand the ideology and history behind its usage and the political and social consequences.

Ideology refers to what people believe and their overall philosophy. We use the term language ideology to describe what speech communities believe about how they use language and speak to one another. When the **N-word** was first used in America to refer to black people, it meant that of all the words to refer to another person, the speaker used a word that meant that blacks are inferior and not equal to whites because of their skin color. It was a racist term used by whites about blacks to signify that whites are superior to blacks and that blacks are inferior - and should understand that. This definition is an example of the language of white supremacy. Under this system blacks did not have the right to free speech and could not defend themselves. What they did do however, was very powerful under the circumstances. During slavery and later the Jim Crow period when blacks used the **N-word** to each other, it meant the opposite of what white supremacists thought about blacks. Even when black people were being critical of their community, the **N-word** was a reminder of bigotry against the community. Today blacks are not in agreement on the use of the word and those who use it believe that it is now a term of both friendship and critique. Many who argue that it is a somewhat neutral term contradict themselves by insisting that it should only be used among black people. The negative presuppositions associated with the **N-word** means that its meaning as intentionally bigoted speech persists. That is why non-black teenagers cannot 'play' with the **N-word**. As long as the term continues to be associated with the ideology of white supremacy and oppression, it is understood as racist usage.

Chapter 3:

Styles of Learning

Learning Groups and Cyphers

There are different styles of learning and teaching that are reflected in *Holler* and in classrooms throughout America. Hip-hop culture uses the expression “get in where you fit in.” For our purposes this means that whatever type of learning and teaching situation one may encounter, it is important to understand how to participate, when to participate, and how to evaluate yourself and others. Most of us belong to many learning groups that incorporate different approaches to educating and learning new skills. The main learning circle found in hip-hop and represented in *Holler* is **the cipher**. A cipher usually consists of rhyiming MCs and onlookers who form a circle and evaluate the overall lyrical skill of participants. MCs demanding an audience, competition and critical evaluation can occupy the center of the cipher. The skill necessary to participate as an MC and audience incorporates a broad understanding and reverence for all levels of knowledge and all people. Ciphers are considered to be the heart of hip-hop because all styles, values, norms and beliefs of hip-hop must come together in order for an MC to represent his or her block, city, crew, etc. The levels of knowledge include popular and public culture, history, politics, art, music, language, philosophy, literature, religion and more. To participate, one must be able to creatively play with all the knowledge sets in a competitive manner.

Improvisation and Freestyle

When MCs are in ciphers they often freestyle - produce rhymes instantaneously or deliver prepared rhymes in creative ways. They are able to do this because they have engaged improvisation as a critical process of repetition and revision that allows them to practice and to be evaluated on the spot by their peers in the cipher and then they practice again or at a new meeting. In the process they develop what hip-hop heads call “skills.” MC skills include knowledge of lyrical styles so that one can signify on a particular style or person, if necessary, as well. In fact, there are a variety of hip-hop styles including old school, hard core, gangster, gospel, social and political consciousness, and others. Both men and women practice them as they are not fixed and can occur across a performance turn or be a few lines within a long rhyme. Most people who enjoy hip-hop are aware of all of the above styles and more and evaluate MC skills accordingly. It is also in the cipher that MCs develop their battling skills and the ability to provide and accept critique live before an audience. One should also note that improvisation and freestyling within the cipher are not just skills that the MC obtains. Artists in all aspects of Hip-hop from DJ s to B-Girls develop their capacities to freestyle by engaging in improvisational performance practices throughout their journey as Hip-hop artists. Improvisation and freestyling are integral parts of Hip Hops aesthetic practices.

Classroom Teaching

There are a growing number of classrooms around the country that use hip-hop as a tool for learning. These classrooms translate hip-hop’s language values, art and cultural and social interests into many of the subjects offered in the classroom. Many examples of classroom practices can be found on our partner site Rap Genius

Chapter 4:

Themes and Activities

Reflections

This section is a collection of essays, videos, art, music, etc. that are used throughout the study guide. The authors represent writers, academics, musicians, performers and many who have thought about the work of Tupac Shakur.

Holler Memorial Wall

Tupac's music and acting had a tremendous impact on people around the world. This section provides the opportunity to consider what Tupac's legacy meant in someone's life. People are encouraged to post memories of Tupac and how his work has shaped your life. Upload a photo, poem, favorite song, piece of art work, comments, 30 WORDS OR LESS, 1 image per POST. Be inspired by this tribute from the late, legendary actress and activist Ruby Dee.

Activities

The activities are organized around principles of hip-hop. Some activities provide all of the information and materials necessary to participate. Others require that you use what you have and that you will adapt it to make something better and stronger. The activities assume that everyone works with the spirit of hip-hop to build, respect, represent.

Holler Scholars

Those who participate in the Holler Memorial Wall and build new activities and projects will be highlighted on the Rap Genius page and will be able to give shout outs.

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Part II

Welcome to the Holler Portal

Overview

The purpose of the *Holler If Ya Hear Me* Portal is to create an online education zone for middle school, high school and community educators. It functions much like a traditional study guide - but is much more than that. The Portal also teaches, learns, develops and grows from the users' input and use. It searches and explores a variety of materials that relate to the themes and content of the play. More than a lesson plan, the Portal treats each theme as a prompt to build knowledge, develop, share and critique ideas as we grow. **This is Hip-hop** so there are no limits to how far we may go to build and facilitate program development and education about the musical "Holler if You Hear Me" and the book by Todd Kreidler and music by Tupac Shakur.

Objectives

Holler If You Hear Me is a musical inspired by the artistic work of the late Tupac Shakur whose mc'ing, poetry, acting and community presence has inspired youth across racial lines around the world. The objective of this education portal is to inspire young people to Holler and bring their own story and to inspire educators to develop programs, lesson plans, field trips, and other educational experiences that address the life of Tupac Shakur and how his audacity for living has inspired creativity.

Curated Sections

Scholars and artists have collaborated on developing content for each interactive model. The Portal is scheduled to grow like a rose in concrete. The first three sections to grow are: **Broadway: From August Wilson to Tupac Shakur, Hip Hop Theater Documenting Urban Life and WORD Up: The Language Genius of Hip Hop.** Collaborators for these sections include works from: Jamaica Kincaid, Dionne Bennett, Henry Louis Gates Jr. Mark Anthony Neal and more.

Appendix A

NATIONAL STANDARDS

Common Core Standards, now adopted in over 40 states, are designed to help educators prepare students for success in college and careers by focusing on core knowledge and skills. The English Language Arts standards reflect the need for young people “to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas” including history/social studies. This curricular resource developed to accompany *Holler If Ya Hear Me* aligns most closely with the following Common Core Standards:

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy>:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3 Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Conventions of Standard English:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1.B

Use various types of phrases (noun, verb, adjectival, adverbial, participial, prepositional, absolute) and clauses (independent, dependent; noun, relative, adverbial) to convey specific meanings and add variety and interest to writing or presentations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.2

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.2.C

Spell correctly.

Knowledge of Language:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.3

Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.4

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grades 9-10 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.4.A

Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.4.B

Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., *analyze, analysis, analytical; advocate, advocacy*).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.4.C

Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, or its etymology.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.4.D

Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.5

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.5.A

Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.5.B

Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.6

Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Conventions of Standard English:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.1

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.1.A

Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time, and is sometimes contested.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.1.B

Resolve issues of complex or contested usage, consulting references (e.g., *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage*, *Garner's Modern American Usage*) as needed.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.2

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English

capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.2.B

Spell correctly.

Knowledge of Language:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.3

Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.3.A

Vary syntax for effect, consulting references (e.g., Tufte's *Artful Sentences*) for guidance as needed; apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts when reading.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.4

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grades 11-12 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.4.A

Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.4.B

Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate

different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., *conceive*, *conception*, *conceivable*).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.4.C

Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology, or its standard usage.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.4.D

Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5.A

Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5.B

Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.6

Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when

considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

From the National Standards for United States History for grades 5-12, available online at <http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/us-history-content-standards>:

United States Era 10: Contemporary United States (1968 to the present)

Standard 1: Recent developments in foreign policy and domestic politics.

Standard 1A: The student understands domestic politics from Nixon to Carter.

Therefore, the student is able to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations in addressing social and environmental issues. [**Assess the importance of the individual in history**]

Standard 2: Economic, social, and cultural developments in contemporary United States.

Standard 2A: The student understands economic patterns since 1968.

Therefore, the student is able to:

- Explain the sluggishness in the overall rate of economic growth and the relative stagnation of wages since 1973. [**Utilize quantitative data**]
- Explain the increase in income disparities and evaluate its social

and political consequences. [Analyze cause-and-effect relationships]

Standard 2B: The student understands the new immigration and demographic shifts.

Therefore, the student is able to:

- Explore the continuing population flow from cities to suburbs, the internal migrations from the “Rustbelt” to the “Sunbelt,” and the social and political effects of these changes. [Analyze cause-and-effect relationships]

Standard 2D: The student understands contemporary American culture.

Therefore, the student is able to:

- Analyze how social change and renewed ethnic diversity has affected artistic expression and popular culture. [Analyze cause-and-effect relationships]
- Explain the influence of media on contemporary American culture. [Explain historical continuity and change]

Standard 2E: The student understands how a democratic polity debates social issues and mediates between individual or group rights and the common good.

Therefore, the student is able to:

- Evaluate to what degree affirmative action policies have achieved their goals and assess the current debate over affirmative action. [Consider multiple perspectives]
- Evaluate the continuing grievances of racial and ethnic minorities

and their recurrent reference to the nation's charter documents. [Explain historical continuity and change]

Evaluate the continuing struggle for e pluribus unum amid debates over national vs. group identity, group rights vs. individual rights, multiculturalism, and bilingual education. [Consider multiple perspectives]