



TREEHOUSE
SHAKERS®

presents



The Deepest Breath

A Show

That Celebrates
LGBTQIA+ Identities
Created For Ages 9-13

#thedeepstbreath

About the show:

Ages: 9-13
Run Time: 1hr

Stevie (she/her) LOVES to read! The more she reads the more she begins to realize that there are so many things to learn about. Stevie begins to experience anxiety just thinking about all the things there are to know. As her anxious thoughts start to take over, Stevie begins to focus on learning about EVERY creature in the ocean in the hopes that she can unravel her thoughts and make sense of these new feelings.

Told through theater and dance, The show follows Stevie on a bubbling, aquatic adventure of acceptance and self-love as her curiosity leads her to uncover more about the world and herself.

The Deepest Breath is an inquisitive and honest story that welcomes you to be brave in a world full of unknowns.

Dear Educators:

Thank you for coming to see the show!

I created this show so that LGBTQIA+ young people could have a show that celebrates who they are and gives them permission to be themselves.

After seeing anxiety show up in my classroom throughout the pandemic, I wanted this piece to be validating for students who are struggling and let them know that they are not experiencing these feelings on their own.

In this show, anxiety will be portrayed on stage and I encourage you to remind your students, that they are not alone and there are people (like you!) who they can talk to.

There is so much hate in this world and I hope you will join me in my mission to make sure all LGBTQIA+ kids feel seen and supported both in and outside the classroom.

Thank you for all that you do,
-Cheyenne Mesura
(they/them director)

Before the Show

- **Share the "about show" listed above with your students.**
- **Ask your students if they have ever been to the theater. If this is anyone's first time, start a conversation about what they think it might be like and have other students share their past experiences at the theater.**
- **Use the anxiety activity in this packet to explore what anxiety could look/sound/feel like. This can also be done after the show, but let students know before what anxiety is and see if they can pick up on moments of anxiety in the show.**

From Script to Stage:

This show started off as a book!

The book was written by Meg Grehan and published by Little Island Books and Harper Collins. The story was then turned into a script and dance was added to help tell the story.

If you have the opportunity to read the book before or after the show, take some time to notice the differences and similarities between the two. You can use the handout on the next page or draw one on the board.

WHAT CAN A BOOK TELL US THAT WE CAN'T SEE ON STAGE?

HOW WAS DANCE USED TO TELL THE STORY?

HOW DID THE MUSIC IN THE SHOW MAKE YOU FEEL?

DID SEEING THE CHARACTERS IN THE SHOW CHANGE HOW YOU HAD PICTURED THEM WHILE READING THE BOOK?

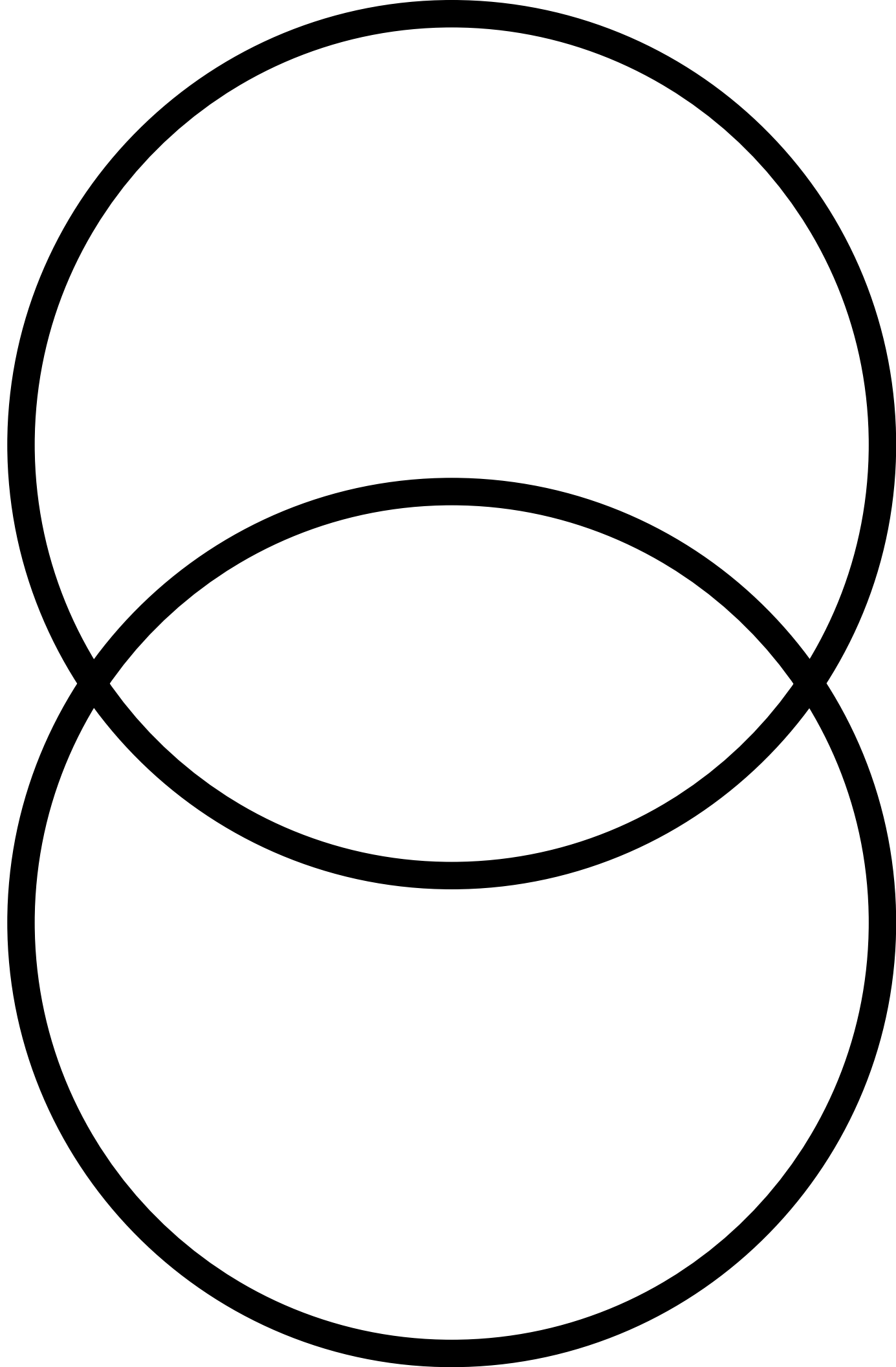
USE YOUR IMAGINATION:

**IF YOU COULD WRITE A SEQUEL TO THIS BOOK OR
CREATE A NEW SCENE TO THE SHOW. WHAT
WOULD YOU WANT TO ADD?**

**SEND DRAWINGS AND WRITINGS TO
CONTACTUS@TREEHOUSESHAKERS.COM**

Book

Show



After the Show *Reflection Questions*

WHO WAS YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTER? WHY? DID YOU SEE ANY CHARACTERS IN THIS SHOW THAT YOU RELATE TO?

WHAT MOMENTS DID YOU SEE OR HEAR STEVIE EXPERIENCE ANXIETY?

WHAT WERE THE REACTIONS OF THOSE AROUND HER IN THOSE MOMENTS?

IN THE SHOW STEVIE LEARNS THAT SHE HAS A CRUSH. SHE DESCRIBES THIS AS A "FIZZY FEELING." HOW IS A FIZZY FEELING IN YOUR STOMACH DIFFERENT THAN FEELING NERVOUS OR REALLY ANXIOUS ABOUT SOMETHING? DO YOU THINK THEY ARE SIMILAR FEELINGS?

HOW DID STEVIE CHANGE FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE PLAY TO THE END OF THE PLAY?

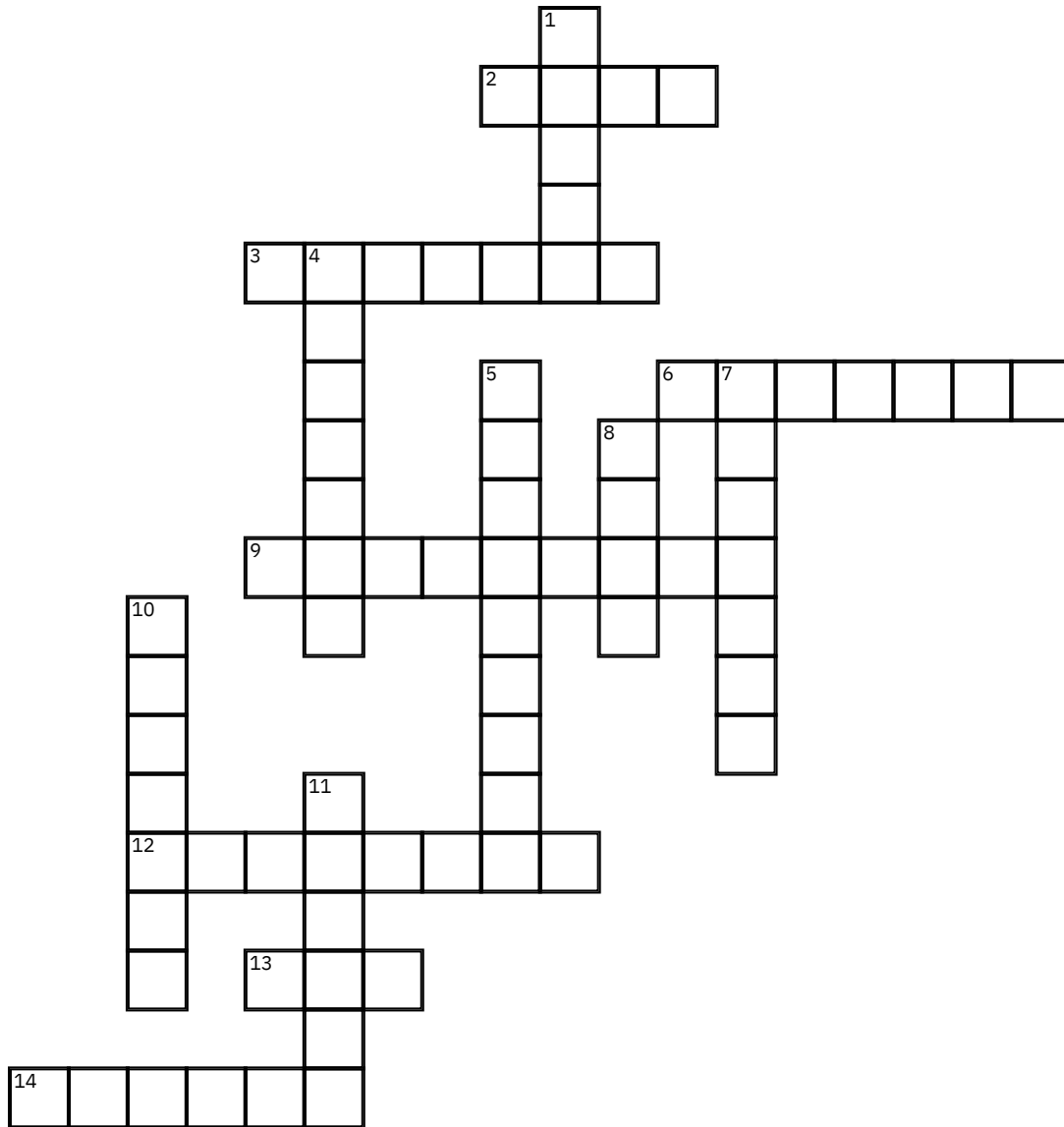
STEVIE FEELS BRAVE AT THE END OF THE PLAY.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE A TIME WHEN YOU WERE BRAVE? WHAT DID THAT FEEL LIKE?

**Trivia Crossword
on the next
page!!**

The Deepest Breath

Trivia questions for after you watch the show!



Across

2. Andrew loves to do this!
3. Crawls on the ocean floor because it can't swim so well
6. Chloe gives Stevie this stuffed animal
9. The teenager of the sea
12. Chloe can say this backward
13. Chloe drinks this for breakfast
14. Stevie's favorite color

Down

1. Chloe always has her _____ painted
4. Stevie feels this way about not knowing things
5. How mom and Stevie communicate to keep nightmares away
7. Stevie and Andrew bake this together.
8. Susan the librarian is also a _____ Queen
10. Stevie goes here for a research expedition
11. Mom always puts too much of this on her spaghetti

Optional Activity

Understanding Anxiety

Start the discussion by defining anxiety for your students.

Anxiety: Being very worried about the future and about bad things happening.

What moments in the show did you see Stevie struggle with anxiety? Now, think about your life have you seen anxiety show up in yourself, your friends, or on social media?

On the board make 3 columns. In one column write, LOOKS LIKE. In the next, write SOUNDS LIKE. In the last column write, FEELS LIKE.

Have students either come up and fill in the columns with what they know anxiety to look like, sound like, or feel like. This can also be done by calling on students and having the educator write on the board.

After students are done, take some time to notice and call out similarities and things you notice to facilitate a conversation about anxiety. Talking about anxiety will normalize this feeling and help students be able to identify when they are just nervous about something, or are having anxious thoughts. You might notice in the feels like section that stomach aches come up a lot. Take time to acknowledge where students are seeing anxiety show up in their body (stomach, chest, brain/head).

After talking about what it looks, sounds, and feels like - make a list of things you can do when you start to feel anxious about something.

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

HOW CAN YOU BE A SUPPORTIVE PERSON WHEN YOU SEE SOMEONE IS VERY ANXIOUS ABOUT SOMETHING?

Optional Activity

Creative Writing

Stevie goes on a “research expedition” and meets a librarian named Susan. Susan helps Stevie find books that have characters that are similar to Stevie. Have you ever read a book or watched a tv show/movie that had a character similar to you? How did it feel to see yourself represented?

Are there any characters you want to see in books or movies that you haven’t seen yet? Create your own character by answering the following prompts. You can draw, write, or do both!

This can also be done in one large group or small groups by taking turns answering the questions!

on the next page find out what books the actors loved reading as a kid

CHARACTER CREATING PROMPTS:

What’s your character’s name and pronouns?

What are 3 words that you would use to describe this character?

What’s their backstory (the story of their life to this point)?

What is their mission or goal?

What makes this character happy?

How are they different from other characters you’ve seen?

What do you think people could learn from your character?

Aria (Mom) - One of my FAVORITE books as a kid was Pirate Pearl! I liked some feminine things growing up, but I loved dressing more masculine and being rambunctious and rough. Pirate Pearl showed me I can be as loud as I want, and I can be a strong girl even if I don't want to wear a dress.

Barry (Andrew and Susan) - The May Bird Trilogy! I love stories where characters are transported into different worlds for their adventures, and May just meets so many different types of spirits after she falls into the lake in her back yard! They have to go on many serious adventures throughout the stories, but it never feels too heavy, there's always a good laugh or a cute moment.

What Book did you love reading as a kid?

Ella (Stevie) - I loved Ella Enchanted, and not just because it's my name! I loved Ella's spunky personality and the story's memorable characters. That book taught me the power of perseverance and commitment to doing what is right.

Olivia (Chloe) - The Percy Jackson and the Olympians series are some of my favorite books I've ever read! I was (and still am) totally convinced I was a daughter of Apollo as a kid! Those characters taught me to face any obstacle in my life with bravery and humor, no matter how tough or scary the problem may be.

Optional Activity

Drag Queens and Kings

Drag is an artform that plays with gender. It is a heightened and exaggerated performance that can be performed by all genders. Often a Drag Queen is a male identifying person who performs as a women, and a Drag King is often a women identifying person who performs as a male. These performances are very theatrical and larger than life. Regardless of your gender ANYONE can be a Drag Queen or King and you get to choose which category feels right for you!

In the show Stevie meets a Librarian named Susan. Susan's character is performed in Drag. Where have you seen Drag before? How did Susan help Stevie with her research? Have you ever felt similar to Stevie in that moment?

You may trace drag back to Shakespeare as in that time period women were not allowed to perform on stage leaving males to perform all roles including the female roles.

We don't know for certain where the term Drag Queen came from, but many suggest that it came from the types of clothing women wore in the 1870's.

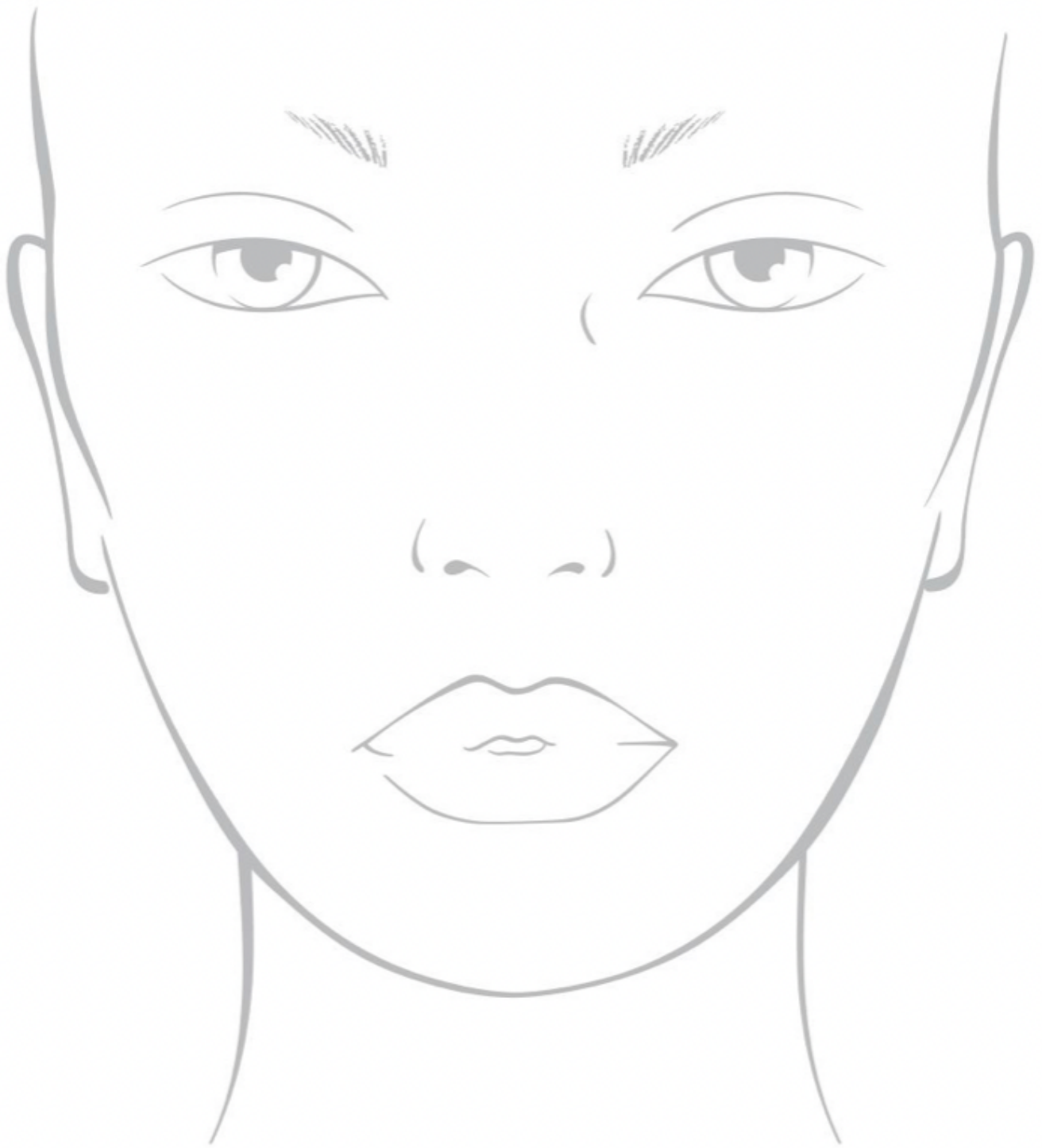
Drag can be seen as performance art, activism, and self-expression To learn more about Drag and it's origins, explore the history of Ballroom Culture in NYC.

Have you heard of Drag Queen Story Hour? Much like Susan, Drag Queen Story Hour celebrates reading through Drag. It happens in Libraries, Schools, and Bookstores all over the World.

Learn more @ www.dragstoryhour.org



Design your own drag makeup on the next page!!



Optional Activity

Identity Drawing or Collage

Stevie starts the show by describing all the things she knows about herself. By the end of the show, she has discovered even MORE about herself. Can you think of something that you learned about yourself this year? Learning new things about yourself is all about finding confidence in who you are and there is nothing wrong with changing your opinion, liking new things, trying new pronouns, and making new friends!

Write your name in the center of piece of paper. Then, fill the area around your name with all the things that make you, YOU! This can be your age/grade, things that you like to do for fun, your favorite colors, or pride flags you identify with.

You can draw these out, or just write them. If you have access to magazines or pictures you can them too to make a collage!

If you know that a student is struggling with their name encourage them to try a nickname or something they would like to be called. Leave some space for students to explore what they want to learn about or if they want to try something new.

Additional Reading and Resources

Other Books about Anxiety:

- Hello, Universe
- The Spinner of Dreams
- Ghost
- The Golden Hour (TW: Gun Violence)

Short Stories Collections:

- The Hero Next Door
 - This book highlights stories of bravery
- This is our Rainbow
 - This book highlights multiple LGBTQIA+ identities

Books with LGBTQIA+ Main Characters:

- Ana on the Edge
- The Deep and Dark Blue
- Too Bright to See
- King of the Dragonflies
- Both Can Be True
- The Witch Boy
- The Best at It
- Meow or Never
- How to Become a Planet

Online Resources for Educators:

Serving LGBTQIA+ Students - Learning for Justice website

Teachers Guide to Anxiety - Learning for Justice website

The Savvy Ally -

book and website (highly recommended for all teachers!)

About Treehouse Shakers

Treehouse Shakers, Inc., a non-profit dance and theater company, was founded in 1997 by Mara McEwin & Emily Bunning. Treehouse Shakers has created and performed 19 original dance-plays for young audiences and adults in many established performance venues, including theaters, festivals and schools across the nation. Most recently the company was awarded the Tides Center's Creatives Rebuild New York grant, which has allowed us to expand our Branching OUT programming focused on LGBTQIA+ youth. In 2019, we were awarded a commission from Performing Arts Center at SUNY Purchase under the leadership of Executive Director, Seth Soloway. We also have received the CUNY Dance Initiative, Flushing Town Hall 2015-2022 Space Grants, selected artists for the New York State Presenters Network Roster, and were chosen to participate in the prestigious BAM Professional Development Program in association with the DeVos Institute of Arts Management for the 2014-2015 cycle. Treehouse Shakers created and performed the dance programming for the Television show, Alex & The Kaleidoscope, which won an Emmy. In partnership with UOutlook and Star America Preschools, we began leading drama camps in Shanghai and Beijing, China and surrounding provinces in 2019. The company currently partners with several summer camps across NYC and Long Island.

Treehouse Shakers' original performances for young audiences currently include: Hatched, for ages 0-6, about baby animals and their life on the farm. Olive & Pearl, for ages 2-5, follows the story of a young girl Olive and her grandmother. The company premiered Flutter: A Discovery Play about the Seasons for ages 6-18 months in 2021. The Boy Who Grew Flowers for ages 5-10 is about diversity, empathy and celebrating individualism. The dance-mystery, Under the Tangle, is about a young girl who becomes trapped in an enchanted labyrinth, for ages 8+. Let's Talk About IT!, for teens, incorporates dance, world folklore, and video interviews of teens. The Littlest Cove, an immersive discover play, will premiere May 2023 for ages 2-6. Treehouse Shakers' new initiative, Branching OUT, focuses on LGBTQIA+ teens with school programming and a new play, The Deepest Breath, for ages 9-13. Pillow Fort is our 9-part web series for ages 3-7. We have also recently created Dance Break, a virtual series for classrooms to get students up and moving! All of our performances are also available On Demand.

Since 2004 Treehouse Shakers has dedicated itself in providing free and subsidized tickets and residencies to underserved, low-income and differently abled communities. We offer Title One schools tickets to the performances, and have created strong partnerships with organizations across NYC to reach these communities. Treehouse Shakers also offers Relaxed Performances in our New York City Seasons. These performances are part of our commitment to making our work accessible to all. Relaxed Performances are designed to welcome audience members who will benefit from a less restrictive audience environment, including (but not limited to) those with sensory processing conditions, Autism, and learning or intellectual disabilities. Children with the tools of imagination are more likely to imagine themselves into a better set of circumstances as adults.