

Where Blooming Flowers Meet the Sky Pre-Viewing Activity, Grades K – 6



In *Where Blooming Flowers Meet the Sky*, Zhuli, a young poet and painter on a deadline is visited by the spirits of three luminaries of the Civil Rights Era: John Lewis, Nina Simone, and Malcolm X. They both support and push Zhuli in rising to the challenge. Ultimately, students witness a diverse cross section of leadership and perspective from three very different leaders while also seeing how each of us can draw on our individual gifts to make a difference in our own ways.



John Lewis, the Activist



Nina Simone, the Voice



Malcolm X, the Intellectual

For students grades 7 to 12, there are a couple different steps teachers can take to prepare students:

1) Populating the Movement

This exercise challenges students to think about how there are always different perspectives and ideas for solving a problem – and then asks them to apply that to the struggle for Civil Rights.

- Think of a challenge that needs solving in your classroom. It could be how to line up for lunch, creating a fair way of sharing supplies, etc. Ask for suggestions. Point out how there's more than one solution and lots of ideas on how to get there. (Alternatively, you could do this same exercise with a math problem. For example, ask students all the way you can get to the number 10, from $9 + 1$ to $32 - 22$ to infinite other means). The point is to illustrate that there are different approaches to solving a common problem.
- Once you've underscored the idea of *multiple strategies, multiple solutions*, turn attention to Dr. King. Review with students that Dr. King, along with others worked to ensure that all people would be treated fairly, regardless of the color of their skin. Point out that Dr. King did not work alone in the struggle for justice. There were many others working on the same challenge. Some with Dr. King and some independently. Introduce the images and names for John Lewis, Nina Simone and Malcolm X.
- Ask students to watch out for these characters in the play and to be ready to share what they learned about them.

2) Our Superpowers for Good

Zhuli, the central character of the play, is a young woman of today who uses her artistic gifts to address challenges of injustice. What are our strengths and how can we use them

to support issues we care about? How do we use our strengths to express ourselves or help others?

- Ask students to think about things they are really, really good at. (Some students will have NO problem talking about strengths! In other cases, students may hold back, so you can encourage others to make observations about their peers' strengths.)
- List the strengths of the group on a board or screen
- Next, ask students, *How can we use these strengths to help others? And How can we use these strengths to make the world a better place?*
- Invite students to observe carefully during the play how Zhuli and the other characters use their gifts to work for change.