

# A MIDSUMMER LITERACY + ARTS EXTRAVAGANZA



BRINGING CHARACTERS TO LIFE WITH A CHARACTER MEET N' GREET

## Overview:

Characters are truly the beating heart of any story, and the more connected a young person feels to characters in books, the more invested they will be in reading them. Moreover, to the extent that young readers learn to “look out through a character’s eyes,” they strengthen the foundation for such extraordinarily valuable capacities as empathy and perspective taking. This engaging drama game helps participants connect with characters from the inside out, as it guides them through a scaffolded process of bringing characters to life through acting.

## Activity

1. Participants choose a story character on whom they will focus.
2. Participants spread out around the room, facing a wall—the goal being to limit self-consciousness.
3. Tell them that they’re going to imagine their character and how that character would stand, including all the details they can come up with around body language and such. When you say, “Strike a pose,” they’ll assume their character’s stance and hold it until you give a cue (e.g. blow a whistle, flash the lights, or just say “unfreeze”). Do this a couple of times for practice.
4. Then have participants imagine how their characters would greet someone: what words would they use, what feelings would they show, what would their voice sound like? Tell them that when you say, “Talk the talk,” they’ll pretend to be their character, enacting their greeting with the wall in front of them.
5. Practice by alternating between the “talk the talk” and “strike a pose” instructions a few times.
6. Now add one more activity. How would their character walk? Tell them that they’ll walk around the room, without interacting with anyone else (yet) when you say, “Walk the walk.” They’ll freeze back into their practiced stance whenever you say, “Strike a pose.” Alternate between these two instructions a few times.



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7. Finally, have participants imagine that they are at some sort of gathering of characters—a party or meet n' greet. During this imagined event, you'll be alternating between all three instructions. They'll "walk the walk" and "strike a pose," and now when you say, "Talk the talk," they'll find the person closest to them and, staying in character, greet them. Continue a few times.
8. Possible extension: if participants seem comfortable enough with a simple greeting while in character, you can have them play around with expanding that greeting into brief conversations with the different characters they meet. If you want to scaffold that process a bit, you can have them go back to the wall and practice greeting the wall AND talking about the weather (or something like that) the way they imagine their character would. Then they could all return to the party and add this further bit of conversation into the meet n' greet process.
9. Possible addition: if you choose to do this activity with characters from a book or books that the whole group is familiar with, you can have them attempt to figure out which character each person is attempting to bring to life. They can make their guesses as part of the in-character conversations, or when back in the full group at the end of the activity.
10. Unpack: Encourage participants to examine what it was like exploring a character from the inside out. Was it pretty clear to them how their character should stand/walk/talk, or did it take some figuring out? Did acting like the character feel any different than being "their normal self," and if yes, then how so? Does their sense of the character feel any more (or less) clear now than before the activity? Do they feel any more (or less) connected to the character than before the activity?

