



**ORLANDO
FAMILY
STAGE**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH UCF

RESOURCE GUIDE

for Educators and Students

Playwrights for Change 2025

Playwrights for Change is a national theater for social change initiative by the American Alliance for Theatre in Education (AATE). Orlando Family Stage is hosting the Orlando regional competition this spring by accepting ten-minute plays into a playwriting competition for middle and high school students. The top three scripts are presented as a reading with Orlando Family Stage and the winning play is submitted to the national competition!

2025 Prompt: Empathy in Action

Empathy in Action

"Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another, and feeling with the heart of another." -Alfred Adler

Empathy is the ability to listen to someone, and emotionally understand what other people feel and see things from their point of view. Whether the situation is loss, pain, disappointment, or simply a difference in perspective, empathy allows us to put ourselves in another's shoes. When action is taken to uplift or help improve the situation, we create a safe and supportive environment and community for everyone. Essentially, it is putting yourself in someone else's position without being judgmental and communicating to them that you are there for them.

Rules

- Submissions should be no more than ten-minutes when read aloud and fit within the theme of "**Empathy in Action**"
- Play must have no more than six characters.
- Complete submission rules, formatting guide, style tips and more can be found [on our website](#).
- Entries are submitted online via [this Google Form](#) or on paper through the mail.
- Please contact education@orlandofamilystage.com if you plan to submit through mail to receive further instructions.

Finalists

- Up to three finalists will receive a new play workshop with Orlando Family Stage's Teen Perspectives Lab and a staged reading for the public.
- This new play workshop allows the finalists to hear their play read aloud and collaborate with actors and a director to develop their story for the stage.
- Playwrights are expected to attend rehearsals at least once a week in person at Orlando Family Stage during the month of February. Zoom meetings can be arranged if needed.

Important Dates

Submissions Open: [Open NOW!](#)
Submissions Close: December 18, 2024
Winners Notified: January 2024
Performance: March 7, 2024

Subject to Change

EXPLORING THE PROMPT

These are suggestions on how to approach and discuss this year's prompt with your students. We encourage you to use these questions as a starting point for classroom activities.

Exploring the Prompt: Imagination

Empathy requires imagination—the ability to visualize ourselves in someone else's position.

This does not mean we need to have experienced the same events, but rather that we can resonate with the emotions involved. When we recognize that others face their own battles, we cultivate a sense of solidarity, reminding us that we are all human.

Activity: "Role on the Wall"

- On a whiteboard or butcher paper, draw the outline of a human figure.
- The group will decide the character's external and internal traits (ex. appearance, job/school, etc.).
- These can be written on and around the drawing, or on Post-it notes and placed on and around the drawing.
- Next, present the group with some scenarios and have the group imagine how that character would react, think, or feel in that scenario based on the traits that were discussed prior.
- This can be done as a whole group activity or students can be placed in smaller groups with different scenarios and then shared with the entire class.

Scenario examples

- Standing in front of a group for a speech presentation
- Being bullied by another person or group of people
- Being picked last for a team activity
- A friend just shared a really juicy piece of gossip
- Being a member of a science project group where no one knows each other
- Losing an immediate family member
- Being the victim of a robbery or house break-in

Exploring the Prompt: Listening

Empathy challenges us to slow down, listen deeply, and approach others with curiosity rather than judgment. Rather than offering quick fixes or dismissive reassurances, empathy asks us to pause and really listen. We might say, "I cannot fully understand what you are going through, but I am here with you."

By fostering empathy in our interactions, we can build a more compassionate society where everyone feels included, valued, and seen. While our experiences may differ, our emotions and struggles unite us in our shared humanity.

Listening Activity: 'Empathy Circle'

- Break into small groups of 4-6.
- A group member will share a 1-2 minute story while the others listen.
- After 1-2 minutes, the other participants need to retell the story and add how the teller may have felt at that moment.
- Participants will practice listening, interpreting, and putting themselves in the position of the storyteller.

EXPLORING THE PROMPT

Exploring the Prompt: Barriers

Barriers to empathy can stem from various sources, including personal biases, cultural differences, and emotional fatigue. When individuals hold preconceived notions about others based on stereotypes or past experiences, it can cloud their ability to genuinely connect and understand differing perspectives.

These barriers, if left unaddressed, can prevent meaningful connections and deepen misunderstandings within diverse communities.

Discussion Questions

- What are other common barriers to empathy? How can we overcome these barriers?
- How do we see empathy barriers reflected in history? Current events? Literature? Our own lives?
- Reflect on a situation where you or someone you know lacked empathy and its outcome. How could the situation have changed by taking action through empathy?

More Discussion Questions

"Empathy is about finding echoes of another person in yourself." – Mohsin Hamid

Imagine you wake up in someone else's body. They are the complete opposite of you whether it is in age, height, weight, gender, ethnicity, ability or social class. How would spending a day in their life affect your ability to empathize with the struggles in their life compared to yours?

- Anne Frank wrote *"In spite of everything, I still believe that people are still good at heart."* Why might someone still have empathy for an enemy, even after facing difficult or negative experiences?
- Can someone born into wealth have empathy for someone born into poverty? Can someone born into poverty have empathy for someone born into wealth? What empathy driven actions can they do/ have for each other?

Exploring the Prompt: Connection

Empathy is a choice to be present and supportive. It involves asking questions, seeking to understand, and reflecting on what we hear. When someone feels genuinely understood, it can lead to deeper connections and a sense of belonging.

Discussion Questions

- If a person, friend or stranger, were to share something personal and possibly troubling with you, how would you respond to make them feel understood and cared for? What kinds of follow-up questions may not be helpful or appropriate?
- Who are you at your core and how did you become that person? How much do you know about what shaped people around you?
- What types of questions can you ask others to understand them better?
- Reflect on a time you think you showed great empathy. What actions did you take to show empathy in action and what was the result?

FLORIDA STATE STANDARDS

Writing Standards

LAFS.1.RL.1.2 – Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

LAFS.K-12.W.1.3 – Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

LAFS.68.WHST.2.4 – Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience.

Questions

Contact Us

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