

JABBER



Written by Marcus Youssef

Directed by Amanda Kellock

Guide developed and designed by Toni Hakem

Director's Notes

Director's notes are forthcoming and should be available in mid-August. Stay tuned!

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Jabber Cast and Crew

Written by Marcus Youssef

Directed by Amanda Kellock

Cast

Mariana Tayler

Ian Geldart

David Sklar

Crew

Set, Props and Costumes - James Lavoie

Production Stage Manager - James Douglas

Introducing: *Jabber*

The play *Jabber*, written by playwright Marcus Youssef, is an original work to Geordie Productions. This thought-provoking, comedic, and at times dark play deals with many issues facing teens, and all Canadians, today. Some of the central themes addressed in *Jabber* are: perception, religion, stereotypes, abuse, racism and generosity.

Let's say three actors play out a story that takes place in a Canadian high school. Let's say one of them plays an outgoing Egyptian-born girl who wears a Hijab. Let's say her parents made her change schools recently because of some graffiti that said, "All Muslims must die," and that the guidance counselor at her new school, Mr. E, is doing his best to help her fit in. Let's say that a big part of his advice to her is to stay away from Jorah, a grade 10 guy who has challenges of his own – namely a temper that he inherited from his dad who's in jail for beating up his mom. But let's say that maybe, just maybe, Fatima and Jorah start to, like, like each other...

In *Jabber*, it is appearances, and judgments based on those appearances that are challenged. Some of those judgments arise out of our images of the Middle East, some arise out of our image of working class, teenage anglo boys. All are filtered through the particular cultural laboratory of our schools where, unlike almost anywhere, people of all histories and backgrounds are thrown together, and where young people of all kinds must learn about what they believe in, and how far they are willing to go to defend those beliefs.

Before *Jabber*

In this **Before *Jabber*** section, students will be introduced to the themes in the play and will begin reflecting upon them. For instance, when discussing stereotypes, students will begin to reflect on how they affect us and how they shape our world view and perceptions. The goal of these activities is for students to understand the themes and to reflect upon them from a personal and world view. How do these themes shape us? Our country? Our world? Our interactions with others?

By reflecting and gaining knowledge on these themes, students will be better prepared for the production of *Jabber* and also for the activities in the **After *Jabber*** section.

Students will be guided in achieving these goals through a variety of activity types including: creative writing, acting, puzzle making, and media use.

Quebec Competencies

Cross-Curricular

- * Uses Information
- * Exercises Critical Judgment
- * Uses Creativity
- * Communicates Appropriately

Language Arts

- * Produces texts for personal and social purposes

Contemporary World

- * Takes a position on a contemporary world issue

Drama

- * Creates dramatic works
- * Performs dramatic works

Geordie Productions theatre rules and etiquette

Before attending the performance of *Jabber*, please discuss theatre etiquette with your students.

Some questions and topics to help the discussion get started:

- » Have they ever attended any live cultural events outside of school?
- » What did they like and dislike about them?
- » Respect for performers during live events
- » No talking or text messaging during the performance.
- » Appropriate audience interaction (clapping, laughing etc...)
- » Staying seated during the performance, and if it is absolutely necessary to get up, to do so in a quiet and respectful manner

Please discuss the following Geordie Productions theatre rules prior to attending the *Jabber* performance.


- * Because of union rules and safety issues, no cameras, cellphones, video cameras, or other recording devices are permitted during the performance
- * No food or drink is allowed during the performance.
- * Please have your students remain seated throughout the performance. If you must take students out of the gym/auditorium, please do so quickly and quietly so as not to disturb others.

In the actor's shoes

After discussing theatre etiquette with your class, ask students to research real-life instances where audience members have misbehaved and distracted stage actors. How did the actors react?

Begin by asking students to read the following examples and discuss them with your class:

- » Patti LuPone was in the middle of singing a song when she noticed an audience member playing with her cellphone. LuPone stopped the orchestra and went on a rant about how rude the behaviour was:
<http://www.lasvegassun.com/blogs/joe-brown/2009/jun/21/patti-lupone-stops-show----time-vegas/>
- » This article describes a few instances of bad audience behaviour and how to deal with it:
<http://www.broadwayspotted.com/audience-behavioral-problems/>



With the discussion complete, students will now research real-life instances of bad audience behaviour to find more examples of how actors have dealt with these situations. They will then write a newspaper article (or a blog entry) describing what they would do if they were a stage actor and how they would react to that type of behaviour.

Discuss some of their articles with the class, focusing on effective and non-effective ways to deal with bad audience behaviours.

Jabber: themes and concepts

As a class discuss the following themes and concepts from *Jabber*:

- * Religion
- * Hijab
- * Abuse
- * Tolerance
- * Bullying
- * Fundamentalism
- * Racism
- * Discrimination
- * Ethnicity
- * Diversity
- * Nature vs. Nurture
- * Gender
- * Stereotypes
- * Acceptance
- * Ignorance
- * Preconceived Notions
- * Prejudice
- * Customs (traditional and modern)

You may wish to write these themes and concepts down on a white board or use the handout in **Appendix A** to give to students so that they can make notes on it.

Some questions to help the discussion get started:

- » What is the meaning of the following word? (Ask students to look up the words to get the real definition)
- » Do you agree with that meaning or is it outdated?
- » Can you think of an example of it found in the media?
- » A lot of these terms interrelate, can you provide an example of some that interrelate and how?

Themes and concepts crossword

In this activity each student will create a crossword using the *Jabber* themes and concepts as discussed in class. They can add in more words, if they need to, as long as they relate to the main themes and concepts. For instance, religion and hijabs are included in the list, they can add in words that relate, such as: Muslim, Catholic, God, Allah etc...

To begin the activity, remind students to make sure that they have accurate definitions for the themes and concepts they will be using in their crossword.

There are many online tools that will build crosswords; here are two that students may wish to use:

- * Traditional Crossword: <http://edhelper.com/crossword.htm>
- * Curvy Words puzzle: http://www.edhelper.com/Curvy_Words.htm

When their crosswords are complete, you can do multiple activities with them:

- * Randomly hand them out for students to complete
- * Give out a few to small groups and have them discuss which crosswords are effective and which are not, all the while completing them
- * See who can complete the most accurately during a timed period
- * Discuss with students if creating the crosswords helped them to gain a better understanding of the themes and concepts

World of differences

Discuss the concepts of stereotypes, preconceived notions, and differences/acceptance by asking students to identify how they relate to, or interact with, each other.

Continue the discussion on stereotypes, preconceived notions, and differences/acceptance, by showing your students pictures of people of various races, ethnicities, sizes, appearances, socio-economic statuses etc...World of Images is a great resource for this and you can find their albums here:

http://monde.ccdmd.qc.ca/albums_partages/

While looking at the pictures, discuss with your class what their initial thoughts are of each picture.

Some questions to help the discussion get started:

- » Describe this person to the class.
- » What do you think their background or story is?
- » Where are you getting these ideas from?
- » Does anyone else in the class agree or disagree with you?

After looking at some pictures and having a discussion, ask students to consider stereotypes and preconceived notions. For this discussion, you may wish to use the Socratic Questioning Method.

If you are unfamiliar with this method, please refer to the following resources:

- * Socratic Method: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/4994>
- * Socratic Questions: http://changingminds.org/techniques/questioning/socratic_questions.htm
- * Using Socratic Questioning: <http://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/socratic/index.html>
- * Types of Socratic Questions: http://www.1000advices.com/guru/communication_questions_socratic.html

Some questions to help the discussion get started:

- » Where do these stereotypes and preconceived notions come from?
- » Can they be changed or modified?
- » How do stereotypes make people feel?
- » Is there any truth to stereotypes? How have they been developed and ingrained in us?
- » How can we look past stereotypes and see people as individuals?

Ask students to write a journal entry (or other personal creative genre) reflecting on the discussion in class.

Some questions for them to consider when writing their entry:

- * How did the discussion make them feel?
- * Did they learn anything about themselves?
- * What are their views on stereotypes and preconceived notions – are they helpful or harmful?
- * How do they react when someone stereotypes them?

Stereotypes in action

In small groups, ask students to prepare a skit (a couple minutes in length) describing how stereotypes can hurt and how we can move beyond them to treat all people like individuals.

After each skit, discuss the content of the performance with the class. Were students better able to understand how stereotypes can hurt once they were acting it out? Were they able to come up with better concrete ideas on how to move past them?

After the skits, ask each student to write a short essay describing their own stereotypes. Their essay should answer the following questions:

- * What stereotypes do they possess?
- * Where do they come from?
- * What reason is there for them to have these stereotypes?
- * How does lack of education promote stereotypes? How can we change that?

Is the media to blame?

With students in small groups, ask them to explore the role media may have in promoting and developing preconceived notions and stereotypes. To do this, they should maybe focus on one theme, for example racism or gender and then narrow it down to specific stereotypes. Once they have selected a theme and stereotypes, they can research if the media has a role in promoting or propagating them.

Each group will then record a podcast, discussing their research and their own conclusions on the topic. Some podcasting resources:

- * Blabberize: <http://blabberize.com/>
- * Stupeflix: <http://studio.stupeflix.com/>

Play the podcasts for the class and generate a discussion on what students think of the conclusions drawn by their peers.

Breaking the chain

Ask students to think of a television show, movie, video game etc... that goes against the grain and breaks stereotypes. With their example chosen, ask them to write a short paper describing how the general public and media have reacted to the show/book/game etc... and how it broke stereotypes. In their paper, they should discuss the type of feedback it received from the media. If there was a lot of negative attention and press, they should address if it is worth it to break stereotypes. Is it worth it in the short run? Is it worth it in the long run?

Express projects

The following are project ideas that you can give to your class without much discussion beforehand. They are straight to the point and also creative in nature.

What do you think of when...?

Begin by asking each student to create a Wordle (<http://www.wordle.net/>) of what they think of when they hear the word 'racism' or 'racist'. Ask students to share their Wordles with the class and have a discussion on what they share. Were they surprised by the thoughts that popped into their head? Did any of the Wordles stand out to them? Why or why not?

Three writing pieces

Using various writing styles and genres, ask students to choose three of the concepts previously discussed in class. Once they have their chosen three, they will then write a different creative, thought-provoking, and unique piece for each one of them. For instance if someone chose abuse, perhaps they would write a fictional diary entry from the perspective of the abuser or for stereotypes, perhaps they would write a magazine article about how movies are full of stereotypes and the impact that has on teens. They should hand in their work in a portfolio.

After *Jabber*

The **After *Jabber*** section gives students the opportunity to apply the themes and concepts discussed in the **Before *Jabber*** section. Whereas the first section dealt mainly with students reflecting upon their own thoughts and opinions while gaining knowledge and understanding of terms they may not be familiar with, this second section will see them applying that information and knowledge.

The activities and projects in this section will help guide students into going more in-depth on some topics (tolerance, abuse etc...), trying to come up with solutions on how to move past stereotypes and prejudices and also thinking about what kind of society Canada is and what kind of society they would like it to be. There are also activities related directly to the play *Jabber*, which will help students to tie the two sections together.

Quebec Competencies

Cross-Curricular

- * Uses information and communication technologies
- * Cooperates with others
- * Uses creativity
- * Communicates appropriately
- * Adopts effective work methods

Language Arts

- * Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn
- * Produces texts for personal and social purposes

Contemporary World

- * Interprets a contemporary world problem
- * Takes a position on a contemporary world issue

Drama

- * Creates dramatic works
- * Performs dramatic works

Ethics and Religious Culture

- * Demonstrates an understanding of the phenomenon of religion

What is a Jabber?

Discuss *Jabber* with your students to see what they think about the play.

Some questions to help the discussion get started:

- » What was the general feeling of the play?
- » What does the title of the play mean?
- » What types of reactions did you have to the play? Did it seem realistic?
- » Did any scenes or moments in the play stand out? Why or why not?
- » What do you think of Fatima? Her family?
- » What do you think of Jorah? His family?

Before asking students to write a critique of the play, have a brainstorming session on elements critical to a play critique. Some of the major elements are:

- * Basic Information
- * Script
- * Acting
- * Costume and Set Design
- * Characters
- * Final Thoughts

Ask each student to write their own play critique making sure to focus on the elements of a play critique in their final paper.

Analysis: Jorah

Ask students to write a character analysis on Jorah but there's a twist!

Students will choose any writing style, genre or medium that they like and will be as creative as possible. It's important for students to remember not to judge the character but rather to analyze the character, by focusing on all aspects of who the person is, therefore they should focus on both Jorah's positive and negative attributes.

Some examples:

- * A letter to the editor defending Jorah based on his home-life
- * A poster with pictures and words describing Jorah

Analysis: Fatima

Ask students to write a character analysis of Fatima, but what's the twist?

Students will write their character analysis as a blog entry or a letter from the perspective of either her mother or father. Again, remind students that when analyzing a character, they are not judging that character or infusing their personal opinions into the analysis but rather remaining objective by focusing on Fatima's negative and positive attributes, in order to write a full and well-rounded analysis.

Themes and concepts independent projects

Brainstorm *Jabber* related-project ideas based on the themes and concepts of the play, (as previously discussed) with your students. For each idea that comes up, discuss the project and its various components.

When the brainstorming is complete, ask each student to choose one project that they would like to produce. Discuss with your students your expectations in terms of curriculum, goals, and how their projects may go about meeting these expectations. Once students understand what is expected of them, they will then write up a proposal page outlining the project, including a deconstruction of each task and associated deadlines for your approval.

With their project approved, they can now go about producing it. Each student should also include at least one written piece that demonstrates their understanding of the play, a character from the play, a theme from the play etc...

Depending on the nature of the projects, it may be fun to share them with the class.

What would you do?

With students in small groups, and using the themes and concepts from the play, ask students to create and perform a short scene describing how they would respond to the situation. For instance, how would someone respond if someone asked them if they were able to play soccer because they wore a hijab? Or how would a girl who wears a hijab deal with being asked by a boy to show him her hair? The scenarios that students come up with do not have to be ones directly from the play, rather they should focus on using the themes and concepts from the play to create their scenarios.

Assign each group a different scenario and after each scene is presented, discuss the different ways to respond to the situation.

Then ask each student to write up a scenario and place each one in a hat or a bag. Each student will randomly pull one out of the hat/bag and will write a short story on how they would respond or deal with the situation.

We are the Jabbers

Discuss the term ‘jabber’ as used in the play *Jabber* with your students.

Some questions to help the discussion get started:

- » What do you think of the Muslim girls in the play calling themselves ‘jabbers’?
- » Why did they call themselves that?
- » Was it to be self-deprecating? Was it because they are unhappy having to wear a hijab? Or perhaps proud to wear the hijab?
- » What would happen if someone outside of their faith called them a jabber?
- » Can you name other ways people choose to express their faith (i.e. not cutting one’s hair, yarmulka, a cross on jewelry etc...)?
- * What about permanent forms of expression, such as tattoos? What compels people to do this?

Discuss the hijab and other religious apparel with your students.

Some questions to help the discussion get started:

- » Can you name any types of religious apparel or items that people wear?
- » What are the reasons people have for wearing religious items?
- » Are they worn by choice or due to familial or societal pressure? Is that good or bad?
- » Was it Fatima’s choice to wear the hijab?
- » Would you wear something for religious purposes because you wanted to express your faith?
- » Would you wear something for religious purposes because your family or community told you that you should?

After the discussion, students can choose one of the following two project ideas (or they can create and discuss their own project idea with you based on the conversation had in class).

Option 1:

Research various religious clothing, and/or artifacts from one religion of your choosing. The religion that you choose to research and write about does not have to be mainstream (i.e. can be a sect or cult); so long as there are religious apparel items or artifacts for you research.



Your final paper should include the following:

- * Description and short background of the religion
- * Description of the religious clothing or artifacts that you researched
- * Pictures of the researched items
- * Why you chose to research this religion

Option 2:

Research similarities of religious apparel or artifacts between multiple religions, for instance, perhaps there are similarities between what a Catholic nun wears and what a Muslim woman wears. To keep your research simple, you should only focus on two religions and choose a few items to focus your research on.

Your final paper should include the following:

- * Description and short background on the religions
- * The religious apparel or artifacts that you researched and the similarities between them
- * Pictures of the researched items
- * In your conclusion, answer the following question: Do people realize the similarities between the religious apparel and/or artifacts that you researched? If not, how would people react to finding this out?

Tolerance and hate

Discuss the concepts of tolerance and hate with your students and how they relate to the play *Jabber*.

Some questions to help the discussion get started:

- * Why do some people hate people that are different from them?
- * What causes this type of attitude and behaviour? How do we end it?
- * If there is only a thin line between love and hate, what does that say about people who hate others based on prejudices?
- * How do people develop prejudices? Where do they come from?
- * Why are tolerance, education, and open-mindedness important to society? To a person's individual mental health?
- * How **do we** teach and promote tolerance and understanding instead of hatred and divisiveness?
- * How **should we** teach and promote tolerance and understanding instead of hatred and divisiveness?

Brainstorm ideas on how to educate and promote tolerance and understanding with your students. Once the brainstorming session is complete, randomly assign students to small groups where they will develop a learning plan on how to teach tolerance, acceptance, and understanding.

Each group should hand in a detailed outline of each activity that they have created for their toolkit. Choose the best idea(s) from each group and ask them to develop the activities so that you may incorporate them into the class curriculum.

After teaching their activities, discuss with students if their activities were useful in promoting tolerance, acceptance, and understanding. Why or why not? Did they learn anything that may change their minds?

Educating about abuse

In *Jabber*, we learn that Jorah comes from an abusive household. With your class, discuss abuse; the different types of it, the abuse cycle, how to get help etc...

Some questions to help the discussion get started:

- » What is abuse?
- » What types of abuse are there?
- » Can abuse happen in any type of relationship? Please elaborate on the different types of relationships and abuse (i.e. elderly abuse, child etc...)
- » Can racism be a type of abuse? Why or why not?
- » What is the abuse cycle?
- » How can we end abuse?

Some resources to help the discussion:

- * The Cycle of Abuse
<http://www.heart-2-heart.ca/women/page5.htm>
- * Domestic Violence and Abuse
http://www.helpguide.org/mental/domestic_violence_abuse_types_signs_causes_effects.htm
- * Domestic Violence – Government of Manitoba
<http://www.gov.mb.ca/justice/domestic/cycleofviolence/index.html>
- * Forms of Abuse
<http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/socialcare/adult-protection/appg/ap-alert-guide/ap-alert6.htm>

After the discussion, ask students to form small groups. Each group will be tasked with creating a media campaign to educate people about a specific type of abuse (preferably ones that teenagers would deal with) and how to break the cycle and get help. For instance, one group may focus on family violence, another on dating violence etc...

Each group will write up an extensive media plan and produce one or two samples to submit with their final project. Ask the groups to share their plans and samples with the class and hopefully an organic discussion on how to educate about abuse and break the cycle will emerge.

The Charter project

Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms celebrated its 30th anniversary on April 17th, 2012. Our Charter is the envy of the world and

“is founded on the rule of law and entrenches in the Constitution of Canada the rights and freedoms Canadians believe are necessary in a free and democratic society. It recognizes primary fundamental freedoms (e.g. freedom of expression and of association), democratic rights (e.g. the right to vote), mobility rights (e.g. the right to live anywhere in Canada), legal rights (e.g. the right to life, liberty and security of the person) and equality rights, and recognizes the multicultural heritage of Canadians. It also protects official language and minority language education rights. In addition, the provisions of section 25 guarantee the rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.”

Taken from: <http://www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/pdp-hrp/canada/frdm-eng.cfm>

Discuss the Charter of Rights and Freedoms with your class. If you and your students would like to read the Charter before the discussion: <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/charter/page-1.html>

Some questions to help the discussion get started:

- » What is the Charter of Rights and Freedoms?
- » What information is in Charter?
- » What is the purpose of the Charter?
- » Why is our Charter the envy of the world? Is it still the envy of the world?
- » Does our Charter define us as Canadians?
- » Can you link the Charter and this discussion to the play *Jabber*?

After the discussion, each student will write an essay focusing on the following:

- * What does the Charter say?
- * Background of the Charter- how it came to be, how old it is etc...
- * Choose one clause in the Charter, describe it, and explain how it is or is not relevant today
- * Should we be proud of our Charter? Why or why not?

- * Why does it make us the envy of the world? Or maybe it is no longer the envy of the world?
- * Does it define us as Canadians? Why or why not?

Once students have an understanding of the Charter, move on to discussing Canadian society

Some questions to help the discussion get started:

- » Is Canada a cultural melting pot or a mosaic? Discuss.
- » What should Canada be?

Ask students to then write an opinion essay on what they think Canada is (a cultural melting or a mosaic) and if that is good or bad. What should Canada be? They should support their opinions based on their previous research paper on the Charter.

Other Charters?

In small groups, ask each group to choose another country and to research how they protect their citizen's equality. Is it better or worse than Canada's Charter? Why or why not?

Express projects

The following are project ideas that you can give to your class without much discussion beforehand. They are straight to the point and for the most part creative in nature.

What happens next?

What happens next for Jorah and Fatima? Individually, students will each choose a character from the play and write a short story about what happens to them in the future. They can choose to set their short story one year from now, five years now, twenty years from now etc...

Nature and nurture

The concepts of nature and nurture were previously discussed before attending *Jabber*. Bring the discussion back to your class, but this time focus on how they relate to Fatima and Jorah. After the discussion, ask students to write about nature vs. nurture by focusing on one of the characters from the play.

They should try and answer the following questions in their paper:

- * Define nature and nurture in the context of *Jabber* and how it relates to Jorah or Fatima.
- * How does nature and nurture influence people?
- * Does one have more influence than the other- why do you think that?
- * Was the character's behaviour a product of nature or nurture? Defend your position.

Opinion essay #1

In the play, Jorah says the following to Fatima:

“People aren't always what you think they are”

What does he mean by this? Ask each student to write an opinion essay on what he means and whether they agree or disagree with his statement.

Opinion essay #2

When speaking about his dad to Fatima, Jorah says the following:

“He told me sometimes people do things they really regret”

Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Ask students to write an opinion essay defending their position by using real-life experiences to support their position.

Jorah's view

Using any creative writing genre, ask students to write from Jorah's perspective his view on his life. They can choose any point in Jorah's life. Perhaps he's 50yrs old now, looking back on what he was like as a teenager. Or perhaps he's 22yrs old, in therapy, trying to figure out his life. Students can be as creative and imaginative as they like with this assignment.

Fatima's view

Using any creative genre, ask students to write from Fatima's perspective her view on her life. They can choose any point in Fatima's life. Maybe she decided to no longer wear a hijab, how did she make this decision? What was her family's reaction to it? Maybe she decided to move back to the Middle East – is she happier there? Or maybe she has written a diary entry on how she removed her hijab for Jorah and she is explaining her decision. Students can be as creative and as imaginative as they like with this assignment.



Appendix A

Discuss the following themes and concepts found in Jabber. As you go through the list, make notes on the meaning of the words or relevant examples.

Religion:

Hijab:

Abuse:

Tolerance:

Bullying:

Fundamentalism:

Racism:

Discrimination:

Ethnicity:

Diversity:



Nature vs. Nurture:

Gender:

Stereotypes:

Acceptance:

Ignorance:

Preconceived Notions:

Prejudice:

Customs (traditional and modern):