

STUDY GUIDE

Thank you for attending TheaterWorksUSA's production of *Stuntboy, In the Meantime*. We hope this guide will help your students learn more about the musical and its content, as well as prepare you for the show and give you creative ways to make the show part of your curriculum. A trip to the theater is always very special and unique, and it can create a lifelong passion for performance and storytelling. We hope our production will inspire your students.

Feel free to use this guide as a starting point for you and your students to explore the show and its content. This study guide is designed to enhance your students' experience in seeing *Stuntboy, In the Meantime*. It will provide discussion points after your class has seen the production, along with lessons and in-class activities to extend the topic-specific ideas within the show. Feel free to adapt or change any discussion prompts or material to suit your classroom and style!

The Audience Has a Job, Too!

Being an audience member is a special experience that we are excited to share with you. Review with your students and any volunteers expected theater etiquette. Unlike a movie, the performers can hear and feel the response of the audience. You are encouraged to react, laugh, clap at the end of each song, and cheer for the performers at the end of the show. Remember to be respectful of the performers and other audience members.

How to be a SUPER audience member:

Be Prepared!

Arrive early, use the restroom before the show starts, and stay at your seat. If your student(s) need to get up frequently, have a designated spot they can go to outside the theater with their grown up, and seat them where they can easily exit/return. If you are seeing the show in a theater, check in with your usher.

No Eating or Drinking

The noise from water bottles and snack wrappers can be distracting to the performers and other audience members. Please save your snacks and drinks until the performance is over.

Put Away Technology

No cell phones or tablets. Completely silence all devices and do not take them out during the show. This includes the adults!

Participate

Show the cast and crew your appreciation with applause at the end of songs and scenes. If you think something is funny, feel free to laugh! You can applaud and cheer during bows at the end of the show.

Be Respectful

Be respectful to other audience members. This includes staying quiet when appropriate, keeping phones in your pocket, staying focused on the show, and staying in your seat.



Photo by Jeremy Daniel. Featured: Jackson Kanawha Perry

The Story

Portico Reeves has a secret identity that only his best friend Zola knows about. As Stuntboy, he is the superhero who keeps all the other superheroes, and his fellow residents of Skylight Gardens (aka the Castle), safe. Lately, that means protecting Zola from their archnemesis, Herbert Singletary the Worst, learning to tame his own anxiety attacks (the Frets), and trying to keep his mother and father's fighting (which always reminds him of an episode of Super Space Warriors) from turning into an Explosion of Great Magnitude.

Before Seeing the Play

1. Review the following vocabulary words which will be helpful for the show: Tell students to listen for some of these words in the play.

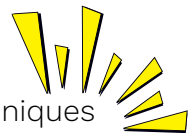
Anxiety

a feeling of fear, dread, and uneasiness



Meditation

a practice that can focus or clear your mind using both physical and mental techniques



Superintendent

a manager responsible for repair and maintenance in a residential building. Often shortened to Super.

Irate

angry or enraged. A source for the "Iratators," the enemy of the Super Space Warriors

2. In our play, there are fewer actors than characters. Ask children to observe the performance closely to see if they can tell which actors play more than one part.

3. Themes in this show include friendship, anxiety, divorce, family and community, and processing emotions. Discuss these themes prior to the show. Adjust the conversation to your students' abilities.

***If you are aware of any student to whom the topics of divorce or anxiety are particularly sensitive, make sure they are ready to watch the show and make a plan on what to do if they need a break during the performance.*

What does friendship, family, and community mean to you? What are some examples of how different people can show each other they care? How can families, friendships, or communities change? What are some positive examples of change/growth?

This play will show a story of divorce- is anyone in your family divorced or in the process of divorcing? Why might two people decide to get divorced? What are ways that parents can keep a loving family for their children while no longer living together? If your parents are divorced, how did you feel before, during, and after? Was there anything that made you feel calmer or comforted?

Different characters in the show will display different emotions, and they will each manage their emotions in their own way. Name some different emotions. What do those emotions feel like in your body? If an emotion is getting out of control, what do you do to calm your body and mind? When can emotions that don't feel good also be helpful?

After Seeing the Play

Discussion Questions

1. Skylight Gardens is a community. Give examples of specific ways that the different people in the building demonstrate that they care and look out for each other.

2. Explain the situations that cause Portico to get the Frets. Think about how the actor showed how Portico feels when he is anxious: Which parts of his body are affected when he has the Frets? How does your body feel when you are anxious, worried, or afraid? What helps Portico feel better when he gets the Frets? What helps you when you are anxious?



3. When Portico's mother says "in the meantime," he thinks she says, "the mean time." Why is "the mean time" a good name for what is happening in Portico's apartment?



4. At first, Herbert bullies Portico and Zola, but later in the show we discover Herbert is upset because of his own parents' divorce. What's the difference between how Portico is handling his parents' divorce vs Herbert? Is Portico's frets or Herbert's bullying helping either of them? What brought the two together?

5. In the final scene, Portico speaks with his parents about their divorce, and his parents are able to emphasize how important their family is, even though they won't all live together. What does this family value? How do they show each other their values?

6. Superheroes often live in two worlds- their 'regular' life and their life as a superhero. Portico can sometimes struggle in between multiple worlds- between his identities as Portico and Stuntboy, between his two parents, between his desire to protect others and his struggle to manage his own fears and anxieties. Are there any instances in your life where you have to change a lot about how you behave to match two different worlds or different expectations? Discuss as a group why this might be, and what the hardships or benefits are of having multiple versions of yourself.

After Seeing the Play

Discussion Questions



Photos by Jeremy Daniel

Top photo L-R: Payton Tabb, Jackson Kanawha Perry

Bottom photo: Kolter Erickson

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7. Ask students if they were able to pick out the actors playing more than one character. What did the actors do to show that they were playing different parts (change costumes, voices, body movements)? How did the actors portray different ages (a mom versus a grandma)? Have students act out different people in their lives, or different professions. How do they move and speak? How is it different from how you move/speak?

8. Jason Reynolds cites being inspired by Dav Pilkey's *Captain Underpants* series to create a comic book story of his own. Read *Captain Underpants* or any other Dav Pilkey book, and compare how images are used to tell the story in both books. Name the differences and similarities. How do the different styles of illustration tell their respective stories?

- TheaterWorksUSA turned Dav Pilkey's Dog Man book series and Cat Kid series into musicals too! If you have seen those musicals, compare how the comic book styles were reflected in the stage performance for *Dog Man: The Musical*, *Cat Kid Comic Club: The Musical*, and *Stuntboy: In the Meantime*. What elements of the show brought the illustrations into the live performance? Is there a difference in the design (sets, costumes, etc) of the different shows based on the animation style of the books? Describe.

- To learn more about TheaterWorksUSA's performances, visit twusa.org

Extension Activities

1. Try reading some of *Stuntboy, in the Meantime* out loud. How does it compare to the play you saw? How was the story told differently in the book and on stage? What are some things you can do in a book that you can't have in a show, and vice versa? Examples:

Books

Inner monologue can be expressed silently in a book, but needs to be spoken in a play.

Plays

A play can show the characters interacting, you can see their facial expressions, and you can watch everything that's going on without having to rely on narration.

2. Portico and his best friend, Zola, imagine themselves and the other people who live in Skylight Gardens as superheroes, complete with special powers. If you could choose a secret superhero identity for yourself, who would you be? What would be your secret power? What would be your mission?

Drawing- Create a comic strip about one of your superhero's adventures (You can find this form in the worksheet section at the end of this study guide.)

Performance- Get up and act out your superhero. How do they stand? What's their signature move? How do they speak? Get costumes and dress like your superhero. Act out the comic strip you created of your superhero.



Photo by Jeremy Daniel. L-R: Payton Tabb, Jackson Kanawha Perry, Markia Nicole Smith, Kolter Erickson

3. Music is an important part of the show, and can highlight what the characters are feeling.
- Create a theme song for your superhero- what do you want everyone to know about your superhero? How do you want people to feel hearing this theme song?
 - Music can express feelings- play different music and have students act out feelings and behaviors that match the music. What different instruments, rhythms, speeds, and timbres illustrate different emotions? Play existing music or grab instruments and create your own!
 - Pick a song that makes you feel a specific emotion. Make an emotions playlist of the class' favorite songs. What songs make you feel happy, sad, energetic, calm, excited, nervous, or silly? Make a playlist for each!

Extension Activities continued



4. Zola teaches Portico about meditation, a practice that help people cultivate mindfulness and reduce anxiety. Meditate like Zola and Portico or do your own kind of calming techniques. Talk about how your body feels after you complete the exercises. How do you think you would feel if you practiced a mindfulness moment before you took a test or participated in a competition? How would you feel if you started and/or ended the day with a breathing exercise?



Photo by Jeremy Daniel. L-R: Markia Nicole Smith, Jackson Kanawha Perry, Payton Tabb

5. The residents of Skylight Gardens have created a community where everyone knows and cares about one another. Schools can also be a place of community and support in a variety of ways. Think about the things that create community for the residents of Skylight Gardens, and what your school does to develop that same sense of community. What can you as a student do to improve the school community? As a class? Develop a plan inspired by the book to create more community in your classroom and in your school.

6. Stuntboy and the people in his life are all skilled people. Portico's mom is a hair stylist, Soup the Super can fix things in the building, Portico's Dad can take garbage off the streets, Zola's mom teaches yoga and meditation, Zola's Dad sells lawn chairs, and Gran-Gran can DJ!

Interview- What can the adults in your life do? What's something they do for their job that you think takes a lot of skill? Is there something they do at home to help everyone that takes a lot of effort? Interview an adult in your life and describe what's super about them and explain their skill to the class.

Demonstrations- What's a skill that you have? Give a presentation on something you are skilled at, and teach others how to do it!

7. Many of the items that Portico's parents fight over have a symbolic value (they are connected to a memory or idea that makes them important) such as the chair or the picture frame. Discuss why each item that they fight over is important to both of them. Think about an object you own that has a symbolic value to you and write an essay that describes the object using sensory details and explains why it is important to you. You can also bring in the object as a show and tell!



Extension Activities continued

8. Superheroes often live in two worlds- their 'regular' life and their life as a superhero. Portico can sometimes struggle in between multiple worlds. Create a venn diagram and place Portico's actions into Portico or Stuntboy circles- how does he behave when he's Stuntboy vs when he is himself? When are Portico's and Stuntboy's behaviors or feelings the same? Make a venn diagram about instances in your own life, or of other famous characters that have secret identities, have multiple aspects of their personality, or are torn between two different things. (You can find this form in the worksheet section at the end of this study guide.)



Photos by Jeremy Daniel. L-R: Markia Nicole Smith, Jackson Kanawha Perry, Manny Houston, Markia Nicole Smith, Jackson Kanawha Perry, Markia Nicole Smith, Manny Houston

9. Zola says to meditate you have to make yourself into a pretzel. But there are many ways to meditate, including through movement like yoga! Try some of these moves with the class:



Downward Dog- From an all fours position, lift the hips to the air. Feel the stretch in the hamstrings and back. For a variation, lift one heel up and pedal the feet.



Tree Pose- From standing, lift one leg to the calf or thigh and balance. Feel how the foot adjusts to keep balance. For variation, lift the arms up to the sky.



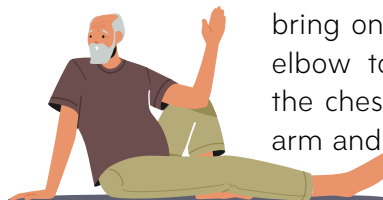
Bird/Dog- From an all fours position, one arm and the opposite leg. Feel the core working. Repeat on the opposite side.



Warrior II- From standing, bring one leg back, bending the front knee. Open the chest and extend arms. Repeat on the opposite side.



Cat/Cow- From an all fours position, drop the belly and inhale (cat). Exhale and bring the spine up (cow). Repeat with each breath.



Seated Twist- From sitting, bring one knee up. Use either elbow to twist and open up the chest. Repeat on opposite arm and leg.

Extension Activities continued



10. Portico and Zola are besties, and do many things together. Practice some classic partner theater games- activities our very own actors practice and train with!



Photo by Jeremy Daniel. L-R: Payton Tabb, Jackson Kanawha Perry

Mirror Game- Pair up students, facing each other. One person will be the leader. The leader will begin moving their body without touching their partner. The follower will match the leader's movements as close to exact as possible, so it looks like one person moving in front of a mirror. Take turns leading. For an extra challenge or for more advanced students, don't label a lead; allow the two partners to give and take moment to moment- you'll be able to feel when someone is leading and the other is following, and when the follower takes over as the leader. Hint: the slower you move, the easier it is!

Ten Word Story- Partner up. Create a story by saying one word at a time, alternating between the two people. Neither person will know what the next word is, so the story is a surprise to everyone! For more of a challenge, allow more for longer stories or work in larger groups.

Invisible Ball- Partner up. Explain that each pair has an imaginary ball and that each group will be playing a game of catch. One person begins throwing the ball and the game of catch begins. Without speaking, each pair must agree on how big the imaginary ball is, how heavy it is, if it's easy or difficult to catch. You can also guide the students by giving the class different characteristics to change the ball. How does their acting change when the ball gets as heavy as a bowling ball, or their ball turns into a balloon, or if the ball grows cactus spikes? How does each pair show the change in their imaginary ball? For more of a challenge, work in larger groups.

For Further Reading and Research

In addition to *Stuntboy, In the Meantime*, students may also enjoy:

Stuntboy: In-Between Time By Jason Reynolds, illustrations by Raúl the Third, published by Simon & Schuster

There was a Party for Langston By Jason Reynolds, illustrations by Jerome Pumphrey and Jarrett Pumphrey, published by Simon & Schuster

Low Riders in Space By Cathy Camper, illustrated by Raúl the Third, published by Chronicle Books

Jason Reynolds and Raúl the Third have many more books for children, young adults, and readers of all ages- the books listed are appropriate for a similar age range to *Stuntboy, In the Meantime*.



Photo by Jeremy Daniel. L-R: Manny Houston, Payton Tabb, Markia Nicole Smith, Jackson Kanawha Perry, Kolter Erickson

We'd love to hear from you! Please let us know what you thought of *Stuntboy, In the Meantime*. Were your students familiar with the story before seeing the play? Did seeing it inspire them to read the book again? Send testimonials to marketing@twusa.org, or feel free to post on our social media accounts [@theaterworksusa](https://www.instagram.com/theaterworksusa).

To learn more about this and other TheaterWorksUSA productions, visit [twusa.org](https://www.twusa.org)

Superhero Comics



Create a comic strip about your own superhero. Show your superhero in action, and tell a story about an obstacle they overcome.

Title:

A template for a comic strip. It consists of a title box at the top, followed by three rows of panels. The first row has three panels of equal width. The second row has two panels of equal width, with a diagonal line separating them. The third row has three panels of equal width. All panels are outlined in black and are currently empty.

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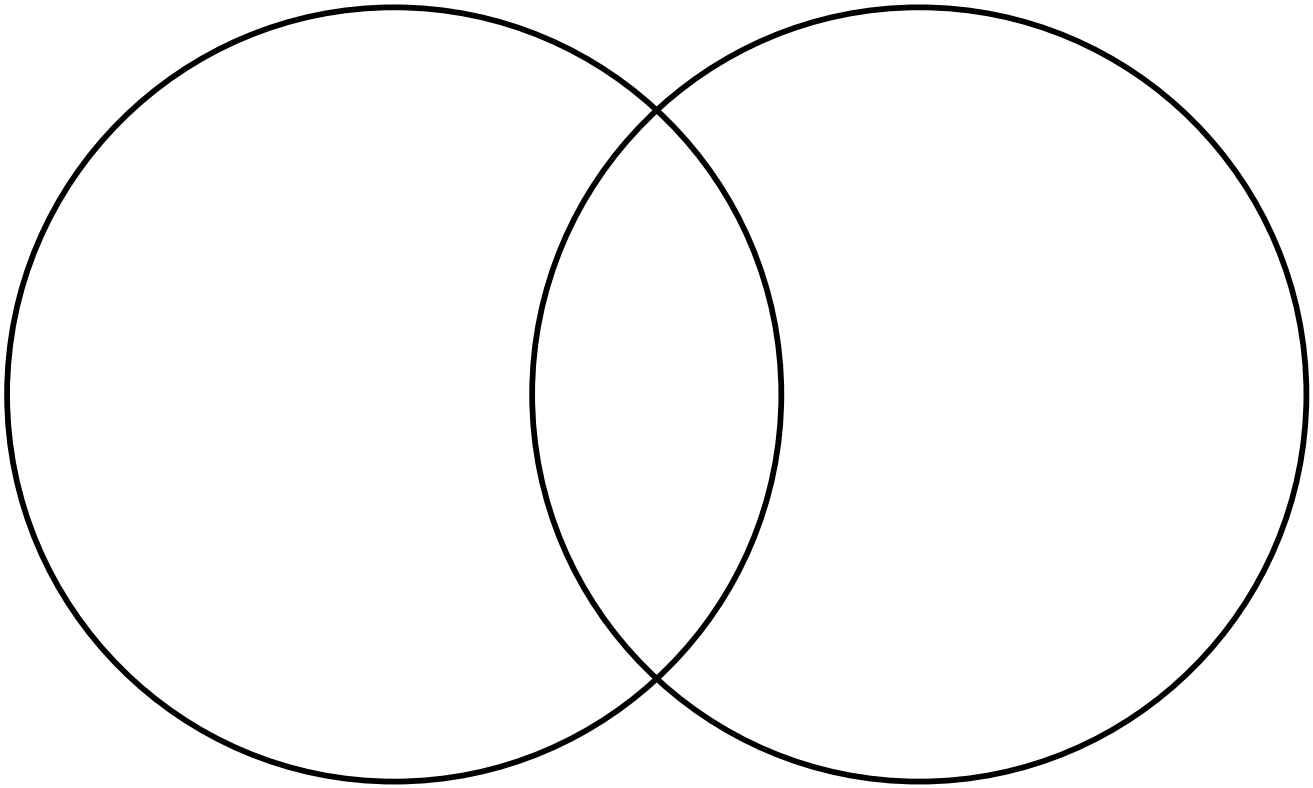
Title:

Venn Diagram

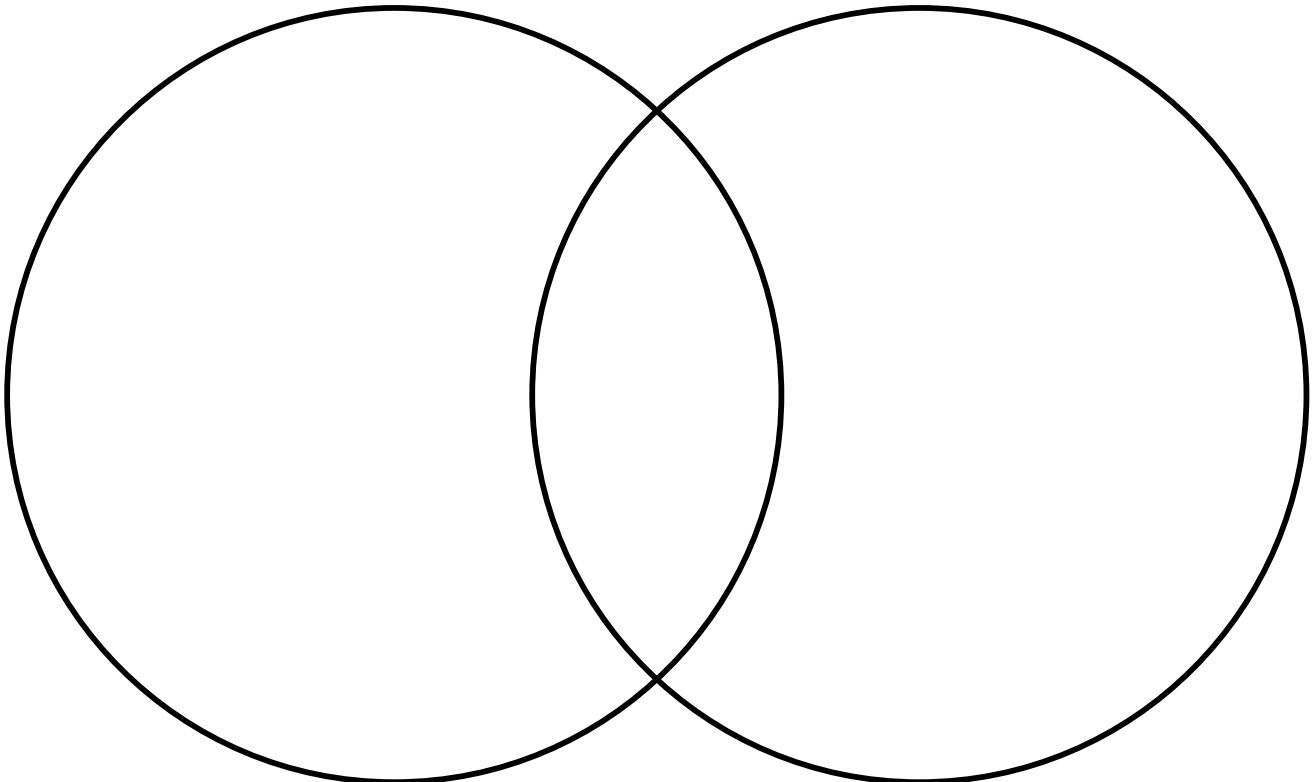
Portico Reeves behaves differently as Stuntboy than he does when he's not trying to be a superhero. What different behaviors does he do? When are his actions the same, both as himself and as Stuntboy?

Portico

Stuntboy



Now think of an instance in your own life where you behave two different ways. What behaviors are different, and which are the same?



As Seen on TV



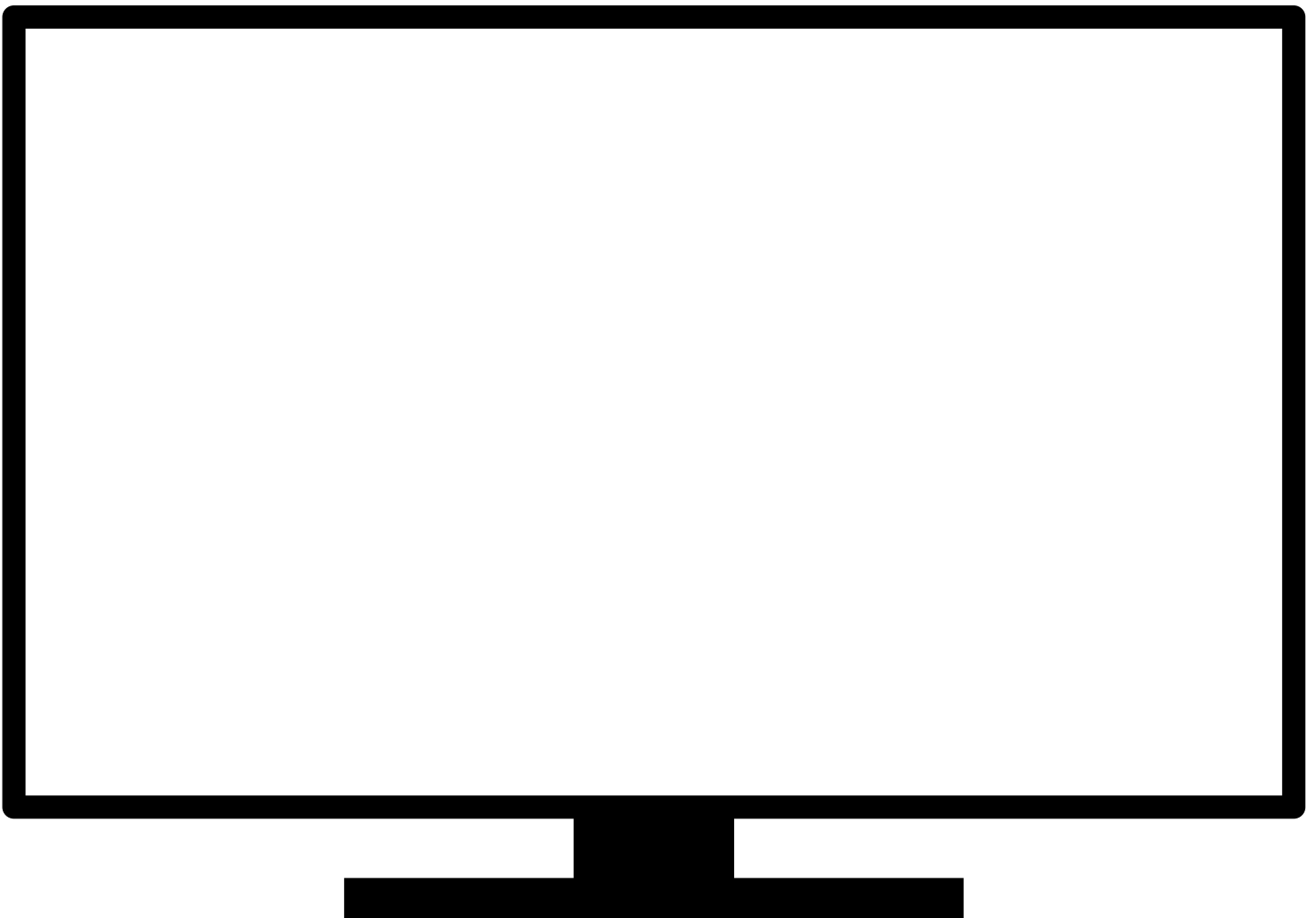
Portico and Zola watch Super Space Warriors on TV, and the stories on the show help inspire the two friends to take action! Draw a clip from your own superhero TV show, or act it out for the class!

Show Title: _____

Superhero(es): _____

Super powers: _____

Challenge: _____



The Many Worlds of Apartment Buildings

Skylight Gardens is a community where many things happen! Everyone has their own lives in their own apartments, but interact with each other all the time. Draw your own apartment building- what jobs do the people have? What kids of families are in each unit? What kind of group activities are there? Use your imagination! You can also act out scenes from your apartment in pairs with the class.

