



# Guide for Teachers and Parents to Childsplay's Production of **New Kid**

## **New Kid**

by Dennis Foon

Based on a concept by  
Jane Howard Baker

Directed by Adam Burke

Scenic Design by Robbie Vaughn

Costume Design by D. Daniel Hollingshead

Sound Design by Anthony Runfola

### **The Cast:**

Mug..... Michael Arbuckle  
Mench..... Jenn Taber  
Nick..... Ricardo D. Araiza  
Mother..... Jessica Blaszak

School Tour, Fall 2004

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America West Airlines Education Foundation  
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### **The Story**

We meet Nick, the main character, and his mother as they are leaving Homeland for the U.S. His mother is trying to look on the bright side, but it is obvious there is much anxiety for this family about their new life. Mench and Mug are students at Nick's new school. Mench reaches out in friendship but Mug does not. Mug is a bully, and decides not to accept Nick just because he is a Homelander -- having picked up intolerance and prejudice from his family. Apart from the language, there are many other new things for Nick to learn -- foods, sports, and customs. Soon Nick picks up enough "English" to get along, but his mother has not had the same opportunity to learn the language. She would like Nick to speak Homelander at home, and is not welcoming to his new friend Mench. Eventually, these problems are worked out and even Mug overcomes his prejudice and his personality to accept Nick, at least on the hockey rink. Nick discovers the advantages of speaking two languages. He is able to maintain his respect for his family's culture and heritage while embracing the best of his new "homeland."

### **About the Play**

*New Kid* is a play that deals with many issues -- it's about immigration, assimilation, different cultures and customs, stereotypes and prejudice, language and communication, bullies and targets, and, most importantly, transcending differences and celebrating diversity.

*New Kid* is designed specifically for Childsplay's school tour program, and so a few set and costume pieces are used for many functions. The director wanted to emphasize the culture clash between Homeland and the U.S. Homeland may represent a foreign land, but it also could be a symbol of rural America and some of the good things that our U.S. culture is leaving behind in its mad dash to the future.

### **A Bit About Theater Etiquette...**

Whether going to the theater or having theater come to you, there are a few important things to communicate to your students before seeing a play. Since this may be the first live theater experience for some of your students, please take a moment to discuss the following pointers prior to seeing the performance.

- ◆ Stay seated during the performance.
- ◆ Remember that the performers can hear and see the audience just like the audience can hear and see the performers. Be respectful to the performers and other people in the audience by not talking during the performance.
- ◆ Appropriate responses such as clapping or laughter are always welcome!
- ◆ Please, please, please turn off all cell phones and remember photography of any kind is not permitted during the performance!

**Here is not merely a nation, but a teeming nation of nations – Walt Whitman**

## Things To Talk About And Do Before Seeing *New Kid*:

### Immigration:

*New Kid* was written and first produced in Canada in the 1980s when Canadian inner cities were dealing with the results of a liberal immigration policy. As is true in the U.S. today, most Canadians had forgotten that they were either immigrants themselves or descended from immigrants, and there was evidence in schools and communities of hatred, prejudice and intolerance towards immigrants and their families.

What is an immigrant? An immigrant is anyone who moves to another country with the intention of settling in it on a long-term basis. While there are, of course, many reasons for immigration, economic, religious and political conditions are the most common motivators.

In the U.S., there are four types of immigrants: **legal, refugee, forced and illegal**. The majority are **legal** immigrants, who have gone through the process established by the government to attain residency and citizenship. They are mostly responding to “pull” factors, making a voluntary decision to move. **Refugees** respond to “push” factors. There are circumstances in their homelands that make it necessary to leave. In 1974-5, the closing days of the Vietnam War, millions of Vietnamese fled to the U.S. Today the U.S. accepts about 100,000 refugees each year. **Forced** immigrants had no choice but to leave their country. The most dramatic example of forced immigration is the African slave trade. Since about 1800, the U.S. has not participated in forced immigration, but millions of Africans were taken from their homes and sold as slaves before the practice was abolished. **Illegal** immigrants have either entered the country without the appropriate papers or have stayed beyond the terms of their visas. Most illegal immigrants are desperate to escape poor economic conditions at home.



### Prejudice and Intolerance:

What is prejudice? The dictionary says:

- An adverse judgment or opinion formed beforehand or without knowledge or examination of the facts.
  - A preconceived preference or idea.
  - Irrational suspicion or hatred of a particular group, race, or religion.
- Where does prejudice come from? Most often it is “passed” down from parents to children. Oftentimes prejudicial or stereotypical ideas come from fear and ignorance. Talk about prejudice with your students. What are some examples of prejudice? Have you ever observed prejudice? Do you think that you have any prejudices?

**Intolerance is the root of most violence. Teach tolerance by respecting and celebrating our differences and similarities!**

### Cultural Diversity and Tolerance:

With our American communities becoming more and more diverse, it is more important than ever to instill cultural awareness in children. Our youth need to respect differences in cultures while embracing similarities. Here are some ways to help children become more culturally sensitive and aware:

- Choose books written by or about those of a different culture. Read them aloud and discuss them.
  - Invite those of different cultural backgrounds into your classroom and have them talk about their culture. Encourage students to ask questions.
  - Confront instances of prejudice and discuss them. Encourage students to speak up if they see someone being treated unfairly.
  - Celebrate the various cultures in your class and school. Plan an ethnic festival with food, music, art and dance from various cultures.
- For other classroom ideas, read *Open Minds to Equality: A Sourcebook of Learning Activities to Affirm Diversity and Promote Equality*, by Nancy Schniedwind and Ellen Davidson, and explore the Web site [www.rethinkingschool.org](http://www.rethinkingschool.org)

**Give me your tired, your poor,  
your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me.  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.**

### Bullies, Targets and Witnesses:

Bullying is one of the leading social problems facing young people today. It is a form of abuse that can do permanent damage to its target. All children get into conflicts and need to learn how to handle them. However, conflict becomes bullying when:  
-It’s a repeated and consistent negative behavior.  
-There are contrasting feelings between the target and the bully.  
-There is an imbalance of power.

Bullying includes verbal and physical abuse, social alienation, and intimidation by peers. While boys are more often the perpetrators and victims of direct bullying, girls tend to bully in more indirect ways, relying more on verbal and psychological techniques than physical intimidation. A girl might, for example, pointedly exclude a classmate from a birthday party or start a hurtful rumor.

Children who are bullied may experience low self-esteem that remains a problem until adulthood. As targets of this aggressive behavior, they may exhibit physical problems, school phobia, and symptoms of aggression. School performance may also decrease.

Children who bully often become adults who bully. Research shows that 60 percent of chronic bullies have a criminal record by the time they reach their twenties. Bullying is linked with other antisocial behaviors such as fighting, vandalism, drug and alcohol abuse, and developing gang alliances. Bullying knows no social, economic, racial or geographical borders. Bullying tends to start at elementary age, peak in middle school years, and steadily decline by high school age.

Talk about bullying with your students. Have you ever been bullied or have you ever bullied someone else? How did it make you feel? Have you ever witnessed someone else being bullied? What, if anything, did you do? What can you do if you witness bullying or become a target yourself? Ask the students to watch for examples of bullying in the play.

**~Inscription on The Statue of Liberty  
by Emma Larzarus**

## Things To Talk About and Do After Seeing *New Kid*:

### Talking Points:

- Talk about bullying. For what reasons are people bullied? Talk about the strategies Nick and Mench devise at the end of the play for dealing with Mug.
- In Nick's early encounters with Mench and Mug, they attempt to communicate in ways that transcend language. What examples of language without words (universal language) can you think of?
- Talk about the contrast between life in Homeland and in the U.S. Make a list together of the differences between the two cultures.

### Social Studies

- Divide into groups to research immigration to the U.S. over the centuries. Assign each group a wave of immigrants (e.g., Puritans, Irish, Italian, Polish, Jews, Haitians, Mexicans, etc.). Share the research reports with the rest of the class and discuss the contributions of each immigrant group to society.
- Perform at least one act of kindness a day for a week (or a month) and keep track of your acts in a journal. Make notes of what you did, how it made you feel and how you think it made someone else feel. Choose one journal entry that you can share aloud with the rest of the class.
- Come up with an anti-bully policy for your class or school. Start by taking the following pledge (print it out on a poster board):
  1. We will not bully other students.
  2. We will help others who are being bullied by speaking out and by getting adult help.
  3. We will use extra effort to include all students in activities in our school.

Discuss and map out what is considered bullying and what the consequences of bullying are.

### Technology/Computers:

- Using the internet, research the process of becoming a legal resident and then a citizen. Go to [www.us-immigration.org](http://www.us-immigration.org) to get started!
- The U.S. is a free, democratic and open society. Citizens from around the world are welcome to visit, study, and

do business in our country however, following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, there have been changes to the law. These changes were made to assist our government to better control visitor entry and exit. Using the internet as a resource, research the ways in which immigration has changed since 9/11/01.

### Language Arts

- It is not clear from the script why Nick and his family left Homeland. Talk about some of the possible reasons. Write a newspaper account of the problems the family faced before the play starts, including interviews with Nick and his parents.
- Pretend to be Nick, writing a letter to a friend in Homeland about the experience of his first days at school in his new country.
- The poem 'Jabberwocky' from Through the Looking Glass by Lewis Carroll is a wonderful example of the use of gibberish in literature. Like the language of Mug and Mench, 'Jabberwocky' is meant to be understood in part, or guessed at. Read the poem in class. Talk about the nonsense words and the reasons that the gist of the poem is understandable. Write a poem in the style of 'Jabberwocky' using made up words mixed with real ones.

### Math

- Using some of the statistics in this study guide, or others from the 2000 Census or elsewhere, make charts, graphs and pie charts to illustrate immigration numbers and trends in the USA.

### The Arts

#### Visual Art:

- Using pictures cut from magazines, have students make a collage of Homeland images (rural, rustic, homemade, old-fashioned, foreign). Then make a contrasting collage of images of modern day U.S. life (fast-paced, high tech, image conscious, trendy, electronic). Add newsprint words to underscore the meaning. Display the artwork.

#### Theater/Creative Drama:

- Use some of the scenes from the play as a basis for improvisations. In groups of three, recreate the scene in

which Nick brings Mench home to meet his mother.

- In pairs, improvise a scene in which two people (A and B) are trying to communicate but do not speak the same language. Choose a hobby or sport, and have A teach B about the activity using pantomime to communicate. Now reverse the situation, and have B tell A about a homework assignment or project they must do together.
- In pairs, prepare a short domestic scene between parent and child without using any known language. The scene must be in gibberish, but the meaning must be clear to the audience. After a short period of rehearsal, show some to the rest of the class, and have them guess the content of the scene

#### Music:

- Imagine the class was going to make a movie of *New Kid*. Nick and his family would have theme music, and Mug and Mench would have another kind of music. Decide on what style of music would work for each.

#### Dance:

Now that you have music, create a series of dance moves for each character. How might Mug dance? What would be a traditional Homeland dance that Nick's mom might perform?

#### Workplace Skills:

- Tangle: Divide into two groups-- boys and girls. Each group should clump together in a very small circle and put their hands in the middle of the circle grabbing the hands of two different people. Each group must now try to untangle itself without anyone letting go of a hand. Be patient and use teamwork!

#### Foreign Language:

- Watch a foreign language movie or television station try and figure out what is being communicated based on expression, body language, etc. Now, try and listen to a foreign language radio station. Can you figure out what is being said without seeing the speaker?
- Translate the words "New" and "Kid" is as many languages as you can! Make a list and hang it in your classroom!

## New Kid Booklist:

\*Prepared with the help of  
Tim Wadham, Youth  
Services Coordinator for the  
Maricopa County Library  
District

By Eleanor Estes

*The Hundred Dresses*

By Joan W. Blos

*Brooklyn Doesn't Rhyme*

By Barbara Cohen

*Molly's Pilgrim*

By Katie Couric

*The Brand New Kid*

By Patrick Jennings

*Faith and the Electric Dogs*

By Kathryn Lasky

*Dreams in the Golden Country:*

*The Diary of Zipporah Feldman, a Jewish Immigrant Girl*

By Maggie Lewis

*Morgy Makes His Move*

By Marissa Moss

*Hannah's Journal: The Story of an Immigrant Girl*

By Martin W. Sandler

*Immigrants: A Library of Congress Book*

By Marjorie Weinman Sharmat

*Gila Monsters Meet You at the Airport*

By Helen Lester

*Hooway for Wodney Wat*

By Patty Lovell

*Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon*

By Alexis O'Neill

*The Recess Queen*

### For Older Readers

By Gershen Kaufman

*Stick Up for Yourself: Every Kid's Guide to Personal Power and Positive Self-Esteem*

By Kathleen O'Dell

*Agnes Parker: Girl in Progress*



## Interesting Internet Sites:

[www.stopbullyingnow.net](http://www.stopbullyingnow.net)

[www.bulliesandvictims.com](http://www.bulliesandvictims.com)

[www.bullying.org](http://www.bullying.org)

[www.safechild.org/bullies.htm](http://www.safechild.org/bullies.htm)

[www.bullybeware.com](http://www.bullybeware.com)

[www.lionlamb.org](http://www.lionlamb.org)

-to stop the marketing of violence to children

[www.nationalsave.org](http://www.nationalsave.org)

-*Student's Against Violence Everywhere; a fantastic site for both students and teachers*

[www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov](http://www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov)

-search "anti-bully" and several links will come up!

[www.bullypolice.org](http://www.bullypolice.org)

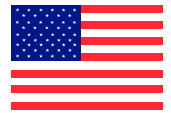
-for info on anti-bullying laws and what you can do to get one in AZ

[www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org)

[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)



**"Everywhere immigrants have enriched and strengthened the fabric of American life." ~John F. Kennedy**



## Did You Know...?

- 1 in 5 Americans do not speak English at home.
- 1 in 10 Americans and 1 in 4 Californians are foreign born.
- 13.3 million immigrants arrived since 1990.
- Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Georgia and the Carolinas quadrupled their immigrant numbers in the last 10 years.
- First generation immigrants now make up 11% of the U.S. population – the largest percentage since the 1930's.
- The Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Project counted 751 active hate groups in the United States in 2003.
- More than 1/3 of the foreign-born population is from Mexico or another Central American country.
- As of March, 2002, there were 32.5 million foreign born people in this country representing 11.5% of the population.
- 160,000 children in this country miss school every day to avoid being teased, harassed or physically assaulted.

Sources: 2000 US Census, [tolerance.org](http://tolerance.org),



**"If we want to have peace in the world, we have to start with the children."**

**--Gandhi**

## About Childsplay:

Childsplay is a non-profit professional theatre company of adult actors, performing for young audiences and families.

Our Mission is to create theatre so strikingly original in form, content or both, that it instills in young people an enduring awe, love and respect for the medium, thus preserving imagination and wonder, the hallmarks of childhood, which are the keys to the future.

We love to hear from our audience members!

Send letters, drawings or reviews to:



Childsplay, Inc.

PO Box 517

Tempe, AZ 85280

Call us at 480-350-8101 or

1-800-583-7831 (in-state)

Email us at: [info@childsplayaz.org](mailto:info@childsplayaz.org)

Web Site: [www.childsplayaz.org](http://www.childsplayaz.org)

## Arizona Academic Standards:

Your visit to the theater as well as the preparation and follow up activities can involve many content areas from the Arizona Department of Education K-12 Academic Standards. Many of the suggested discussion topics and activities can be tied to several standards. For example, a Math activity on creating Story Problems can fulfill standards in the areas of math, language arts and the arts (theater).

To access the K-12 standards go to:

[www.ade.state.az.us/standards/contentstandards.asp](http://www.ade.state.az.us/standards/contentstandards.asp)

We are always looking for ways to help you prepare your students for the theatre experience and at the same time fulfill curriculum and standards requirements.

If you have any suggestions as to how we might improve in this area, please email Katie McFadzen at [kmcfadzen@childsplayaz.org](mailto:kmcfadzen@childsplayaz.org)