

# CHILDPLAY

## RESOURCES

**The Big Idea:**  
Power of Your Voice



Written and Directed by  
Idris Goodwin

# Meet the Team

## Cast

JSonic .....Tanner J. Conley  
UNDRGRND\_1 ..... Ricky Araiza  
UNDRGRND\_2 ..... Megan Holcomb  
UNDRGRND\_3 ..... Khloe Janel

## Creative Team

Director/Playwright ..... Idris Goodwin  
Stage Manager ..... Kalie Hagen  
Scenic Designer ..... Douglas Clarke  
Costume Designer ..... Connie Furr  
Sound Designer ..... Chris Lane  
Prop Designer ..... Natalie Ward  
Lighting Designer ..... Nick Hutchinson  
Projection Designer ..... Chris Ignacio  
Fight Choreographer ..... Rich Brown

## Sponsors

Field trip discounted ticket prices are underwritten by Cheryl Mandala.

This show was developed as a part of the Theater for Young Audiences (TYA) BIPOC Superhero Project, a nationwide initiative connecting playwrights of color with TYA theaters and bringing communities together through inspiring stories of new heroes.

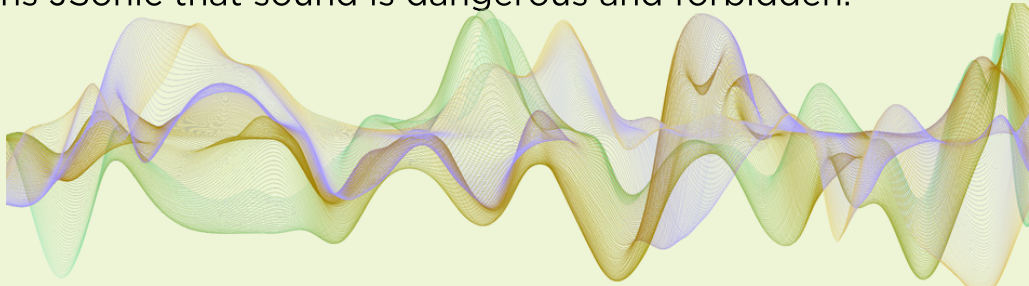




# What the Play is About

J Sonic & the Unknown is an original Afrofuturistic adventure that follows a young, sound-powered superhero named JSonic as he journeys to a distant planet called Whisper, where speaking and sound have been banned. The play begins on JSonic's home world, where he is celebrated for his ability to turn sound into energy using a powerful tool called the SonicBox. JSonic is confident and charismatic, but when a mysterious cosmic pull draws him toward Whisper, he finds himself transported into a world where his powers no longer work.

On Whisper, JSonic meets Xyler, a spirited and curious teenager who introduces him to the strange rules of the silent planet. Whisper is controlled by an authoritarian figure known as Enforcer O, who maintains order by suppressing sound and discouraging individuality. Enforcer O believes that noise leads to chaos and has convinced the population to value silence and sameness over creativity and expression. Xyler is fascinated by JSonic's stories of music, rhythm, and voice—things they've only heard of in secret—but warns JSonic that sound is dangerous and forbidden.



Despite the risks, JSonic begins to share pieces of his past and his sound-based power. With help from Xyler, he starts to remember who he is and why the SonicBox chose him. As JSonic learns more about Whisper, he realizes that the planet once had a rich tradition of sound and storytelling, long since erased by fear and control. He discovers that Enforcer O has their own complicated past—one shaped by loss and trauma—and that their desire for silence comes from a place of protection, not just power. JSonic, Xyler, and a small group of young rebels decide to take a stand, using music, voice, and courage to awaken a sense of possibility in the community.

In the final moments of the play, JSonic reactivates the SonicBox with Xyler's help, amplifying a wave of sound that spreads across Whisper. Enforcer O is confronted not with violence but with the joy and connection that sound can bring. Moved by the courage of the young people, Enforcer O allows the people of Whisper to reclaim their voices. The play ends with JSonic preparing to leave, confident that the planet's future now belongs to people who will use their voices to lead with imagination and empathy.

# Themes of the Show

- Power of Your Voice
- Storytelling
- Stand Up for What's Right
- What it Means to be a Hero



## Talk About It!

### Start a conversation before the show:

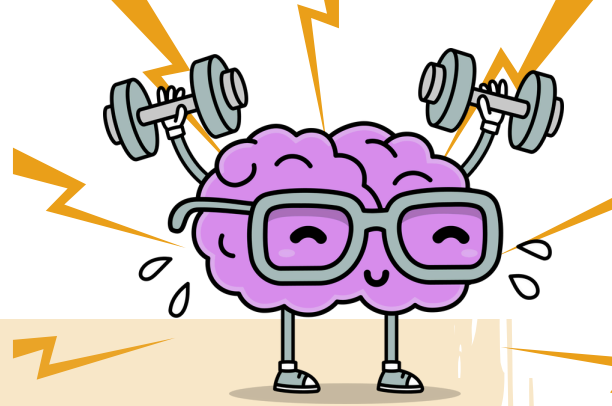
- ★ What does it mean to be a hero? How does it compare to being a superhero?
- ★ If you could have any superpower, what would it be and why?
- ★ Have you ever felt like you couldn't speak up or express yourself?

### Start a conversation after the show:

- ★ JSonic thinks he needs the SonicBox, but finds out his power is within him. What is an ability you've discovered in yourself?
- ★ Can you think of any real world examples of someone in power silencing the voices of others? What can we do when that happens?
- ★ We hear the JSonic stories secondhand - each one is retold by one of the UNDRGRND. How might the real story be different from what they tell us?
- ★ JSonic & the Unknown is an unfinished adventure. What do you imagine happens next?



# Discover It!



## What is Afrofuturism?

- Afrofuturism envisions a world where African culture, science fiction, space travel, cool tech, and powerful storytelling all come together.
- More than just robots and spaceships, Afrofuturism asks big questions like: What if Black scientists and artists shaped the future? What if music and rhythm could power a spaceship? What if your voice could change the universe?

## Did you know?

- Afrofuturism stories often vibrate with sound and movement — kind of like a poem that makes your chest thump or a beat that gets stuck in your head. Just like JSonic!
- These stories are full of action, imagination, and meaning. They're about finding your power and using your voice.

## Space Facts



- Space is silent... but not quiet!
  - There's no air in space, so sound can't travel like it does on Earth. But stars, black holes, and even galaxies send out vibrations we can feel — and scientists can turn those into sound we can hear!
- The Sun hums!
  - The Sun is constantly vibrating and shaking. NASA turned those vibrations into a low, deep hum — like a cosmic drumbeat echoing through the solar system.
- Black holes can sing!
  - A black hole in the Perseus galaxy cluster sent out waves that, when turned into sound, create the deepest note ever recorded — 57 octaves below middle C!
- Saturn's rings make music!
  - Particles in Saturn's rings bump and move in patterns that scientists converted into eerie, spacey sounds like a futuristic symphony!



# Explore It!

Check out more of  
Idris Goodwin's work at  
[idrisgoodwin.com](http://idrisgoodwin.com)

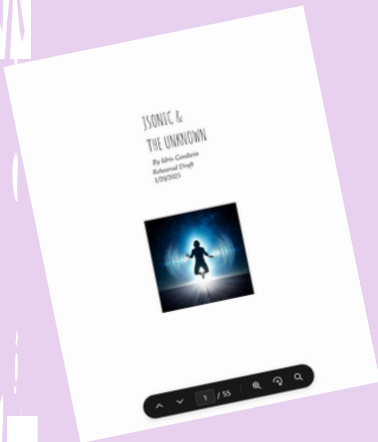
## From Script to Stage

This play is a world premiere - nobody has ever seen it before! From an idea in playwright Idris Goodwin's head to a live theatre production, here are some of the steps it took along the way.



## Writing and Rewriting

The character of JSonic first appeared in another Idris Goodwin play, *The Boy Who Kissed the Sky*, in 2022. Idris wanted to give him his own story, so he started writing! As he wrote and revised the script, Childsplay held a series of workshops where actors read the play out loud so Idris could see where he wanted to make changes. Some things even changed during rehearsals!



## The Design Process

Once the show officially became a part of Childsplay's 25-26 season, our team of designers got to work bringing the world of JSonic to life. Professional theatre artists created everything seen onstage, from the set, lighting, and projections to the props and costumes. Check out how the "look" of JSonic evolved:



Initial sketch by  
playwright Idris  
Goodwin



Rendering by  
costume designer  
Connie Furr



Costume in progress  
by costume shop  
manager Roberto  
Parchment Chavez

# Create It!



## What's In Your SonicBox?

Every hero has special things they carry with them: knowledge, passions, and skills. Create your own SonicBox to highlight your strengths and what makes you unique.

You will need:

- ★ printable SonicBox template (on the next page)
- ★ cardstock or heavy paper
- ★ scissors
- ★ glue stick or tape
- ★ markers, crayons, or colored pencils



1

Print out your SonicBox template and cut carefully along the solid lines, including the tabs labeled “Glue.”

2

Decorate each side using the power words that describe you.

- Head: What do you know? What do you love to learn about?
- Heart: What do you care about? What brings you joy?
- Hands: What do you create? What is a talent you have?

3

Fold on the dashed lines. Use a ruler to help you fold neatly. Fold each flap and edge inward to create the shape of a cube.

4

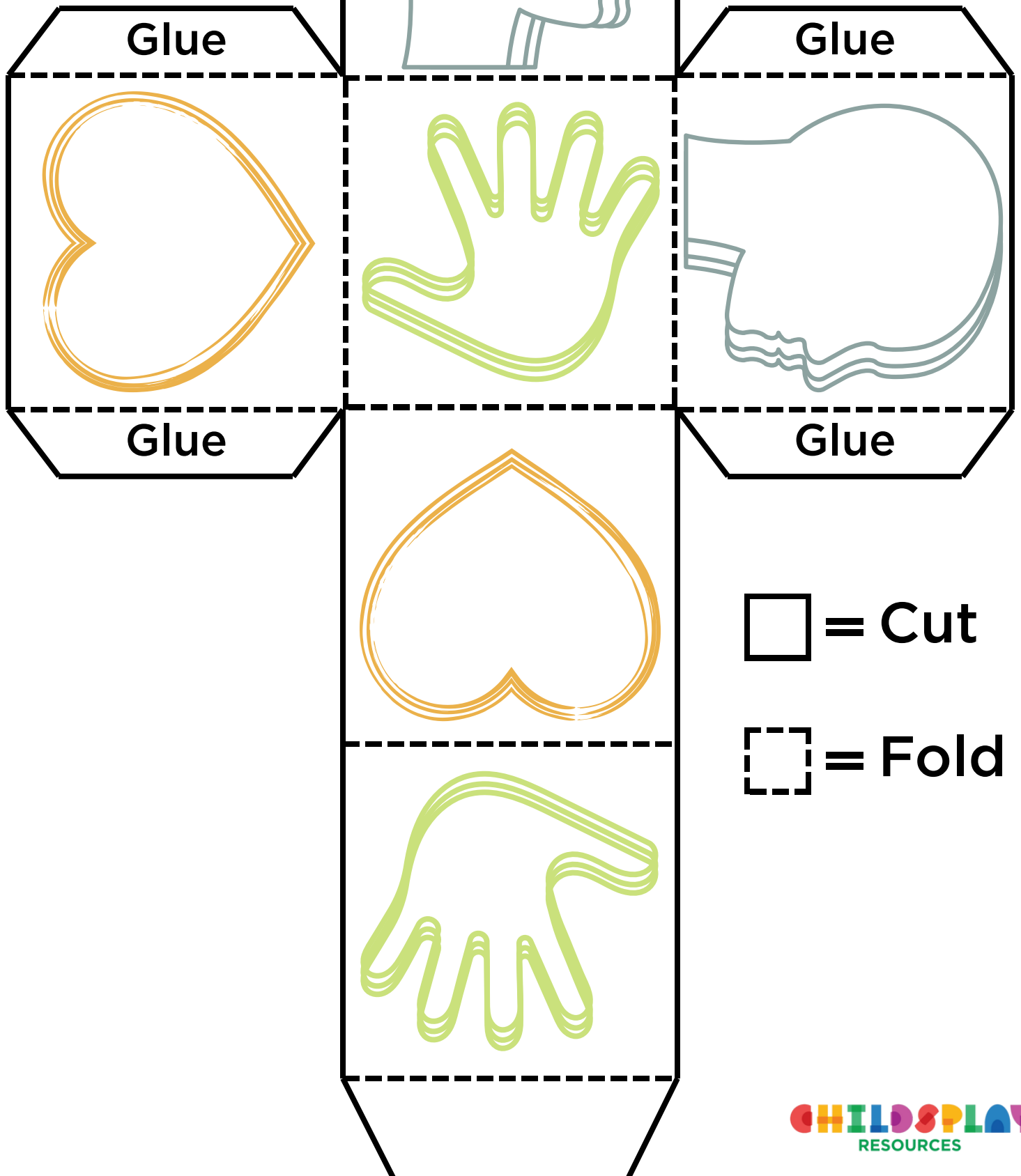
Glue the tabs to hold your box together. Apply glue to each flap and carefully press it into place. Build the cube one side at a time until it's sealed up.

5

Share or display your SonicBox! Use your box as a reminder of the superhero tools you already have—or collect boxes as a class and make a Wall of Strengths.



# SonicBox Template



# Imagine It!



## “Another New Adventure” - One Sentence Story

UNDRGRND\_1, 2, and 3 compete to tell the best JSonic story. Your class can create your own superhero story, one sentence at a time!

1

### Set the Stage

Gather in a circle and establish who will begin the story. Remind students that a good story has a clear setting, characters, and problem.

2

### Start the Story

The first player begins with one sentence, and the others add a single sentence to the story in turn. Establish a set beginning to your stories, like “Once upon a time...” or “On a distant planet...”

3

### Build the Narrative

Each player adds a sentence, trying to build upon the previous sentences and create a coherent story.

4

### Wrap it Up

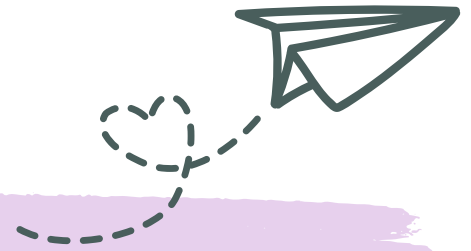
When a student feels like their sentence brings the story to a close, they can add “The End.” If you’d like to keep playing, the next person can begin a new story!

## Level Up!

- Rhyme Time - every other sentence must rhyme with the one before it.
- Fortunately, Unfortunately - the second player begins their sentence with “unfortunately” and creates a problem for the characters; the third begins with “fortunately” and adds a positive twist, and the pattern continues.
- One Word Story - instead of each player adding a sentence to the story, they add a single word. Be sure to listen carefully!



# Share It!



## Create Your Own Comic!

Now it's your turn to become the storyteller! Using the comic template we've provided, create your own JSonic-inspired adventure.

# 1

### Build Your Adventure

- Will you continue JSonic's story, create a new hero and tell their story, or imagine a team-up between the two?
- What challenge does your hero face?
- How do they use their voice, imagination, or teamwork to overcome it?
- How does the story end?

#### Theme Ideas

- What does JSonic do next?
- Using your voice to help others
- Returning sound to a silent world
- A new hero with musical powers
- Finding strength in your own story

# 2

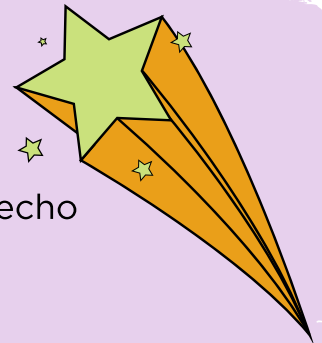
### Design Your Characters

- What makes your hero unique? What are their powers or talents? What do they look like?
- Will your story have a supervillain? What are their powers? What do they look like?

# 3

### Draw it Out

- Use the panels to show the action
- Add speech bubbles, sound effects, and narration
- Use vibration words like boom, zap, hum, pulse, and echo to bring your comic to life!



# 4

### Color and Decorate

- Make your comic bold and bright! Use Afrofuturistic styles — stars, tech, colors, patterns — to make it pop!

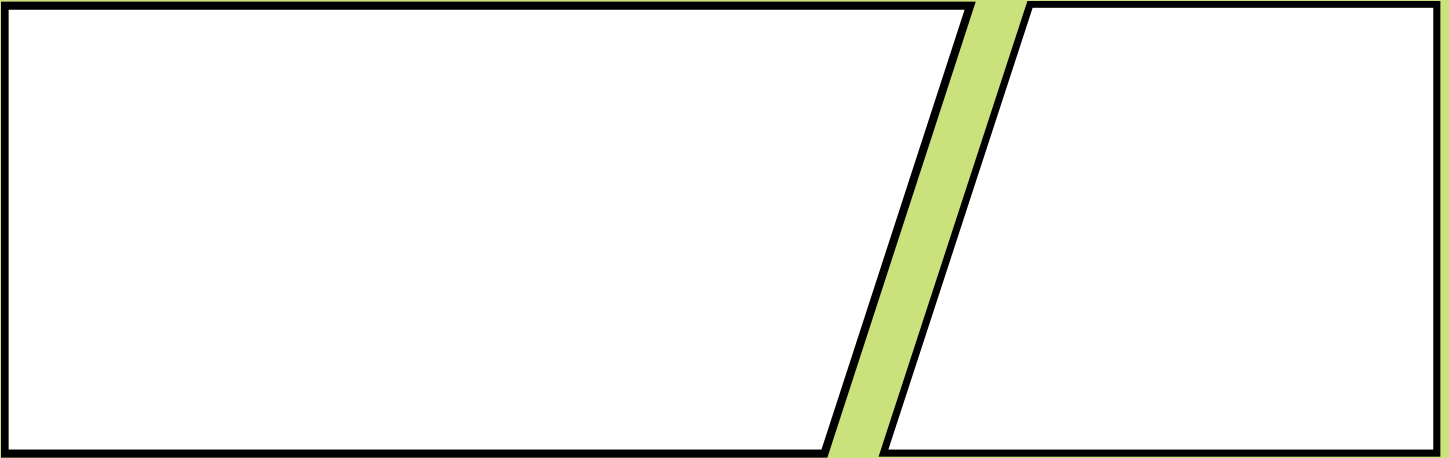


### Tips for Great Comics:

- Every story needs a beginning, middle, and end.
- Give your characters something meaningful to say — a message, a mission, or a moment of courage.
- Use your imagination! There are no limits in JSonic's universe.

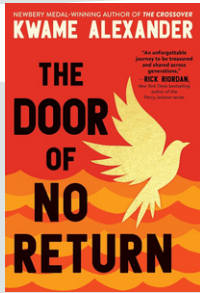


# ***WRITE YOUR HERO'S STORY!***

Two comic-style speech bubbles with black outlines and a light green background. The bubble on the left is a parallelogram, and the one on the right is a rectangle. They are positioned side-by-side, separated by a thin vertical line.A large, empty rectangular box with a black outline, intended for writing a hero's story. It is centered horizontally and occupies the middle section of the page.Two comic-style speech bubbles with black outlines and a light green background. The bubble on the left is a parallelogram, and the one on the right is a rectangle. They are positioned side-by-side, separated by a thin vertical line.

# Read About It!

Keep the conversation going! Check out this list of books connected to the ideas and themes in 'J Sonic & the Unknown'!



## The Door of No Return

By Kwame Alexander  
Ages 10-18



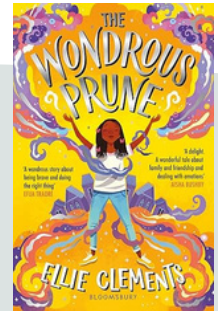
## Akata Witch

By Nnedi Okorafor  
Ages 12-17



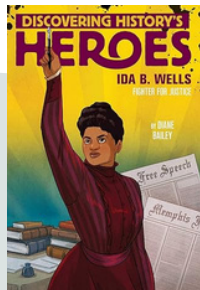
## Last Gate of the Emperor

By Kwame Mbalia & Prince Joel Makonnen  
Ages 12-17



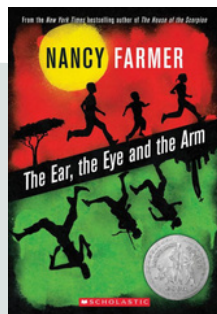
## The Wondrous Prune

By Ellie Clements  
Ages 9-11



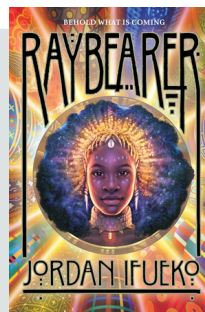
## Discovering History's Heroes: Ida B. Wells

By Diane Bailey  
Ages 7-10



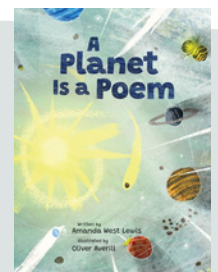
## The Ear, the Eye and the Arm

By Nancy Farmer  
Ages 11-14



## Raybearer

By Jordan Ifueko  
Ages 12-18



## A Planet is a Poem

By Amanda West Lewis  
Ages 8-12



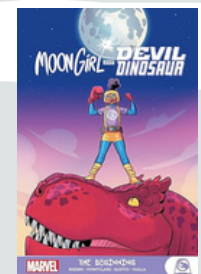
## War Girls

By Tochi Onyebuchi  
Ages 12-17



## Future Hero: Race to Fire Mountain

By Remi Blackwood  
Ages 7-10



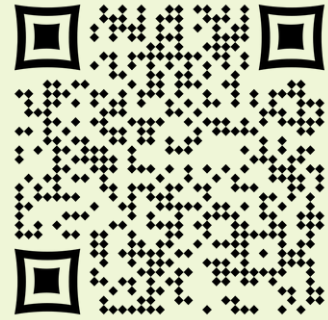
## Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur: The Beginning

Reeder/Montclare/Bustos/Failla  
Ages 10-14

# Extend It!

The play is just the beginning - there's always more to learn. Scan the QR code or [click here](#) to dig deeper into what interests you!

- ★ Check out another play from the TYA BIPOC Superhero Project!
- ★ Learn more about the universe!
- ★ Watch kids perform spoken word!



## Extend the Experience!

Bring a professional Teaching Artist to your classroom to lead an arts-based, standards-driven lesson connected to the play.

Email us at:

[CPEducation@childsplayaz.org](mailto:CPEducation@childsplayaz.org)

## #SHAREWITHUS

Follow us on social media and share your comments & photos!

**#ChildsplayAZ**

**#JSonicAndTheUnknown**

We also love getting mail!

**Childsplay Theatre**

**Education Team**

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**Tempe, AZ 85281**

## About Childsplay

Our mission is to ignite imagination, wonder and joy by creating strikingly original theatre and learning experiences that inspire young minds to explore and soar.

For more information:

[childsplayaz.org](http://childsplayaz.org)



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