

# Study Guide for Teachers

**David Harrell**

In

## ***A Little Potato and Hard to Peel***

**Presented by  
Young Audiences  
(866) 500-9265  
[www.yanj-yaep.org](http://www.yanj-yaep.org)**



### **ABOUT THE PROGRAM**

In this version of his inspiring and humorous program, David Harrell shares the highs and lows of growing up without a right hand. Portraying colorful and influential characters from his own family, TV and film, David shares with his 3-6 grade audience the importance of not being defined by your own limitations.

### **LEARNING GOALS**

1. Students will identify positive character traits within themselves and in their classmates.
2. Students will discuss the important aspects of telling a story.
3. Students will watch a performance of a one-man show.
4. Students will create a story of their own highlighting their own positive characteristics or someone they consider a hero to them.
5. Students will develop a better understanding of the diversity that surrounds them.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS**

In 1998, while working for a children's theatre called The Phoenix Theatre Circle in Columbus, OH, David Harrell was encouraged by the artistic director to take some of the stories of his life and create a one-man show. He thought David's story would be interesting and encouraging to students and young audiences. Eventually David moved to Raleigh, NC and began to workshop his idea of a show and created his first solo show called *The Quest*. In 2008, David moved to New York City and began to restructure *The Quest*. Through workshops and classes it developed into a new show called *A Little Potato and Hard to Peel*. In 2009, David Harrell produced *A Little Potato and Hard to Peel* in New York City and was nominated for a New York Innovative Theatre Award for "outstanding solo performance". In 2012, he created a new play, *The Boy Who Would Be Captain Hook*, which is about how David was chosen to play Captain Hook on the playground at school when he was a child.

David Harrell performs his shows in theatres, schools, colleges, and conferences around the country. He hopes his work entertains, enlightens and educates students to not be defined by limitations.

## **BEFORE THE PROGRAM**

### **Recognizing Diversity**

Before the performance students will be given an assignment to write five positive characteristics about themselves. This will probably be difficult. The students will keep these for themselves. They will then be assigned to write one positive attribute of each person in the class. The teacher should ask the students to not put their names on this assignment. The teacher will collect the list of attributes. The teacher may then have a discussion about how often it is easier for others to see our strengths than for us to see our own, or for others to understand our strengths are admirable. That could also lead to talking about the diversity of the class and how we can locate positive characteristics within our differences.

How do you tell a story?

The teacher will then lead the students in a discussion of how to build a story and brainstorm different ways that someone might tell their life story. The teacher can guide the discussion into areas they have already studied. Then the teacher will point out that the students will be seeing one example of when they see the play *A Little Potato and Hard to Peel*.

## **AFTER THE PROGRAM .**

### **Students tell their story**

After the show the teacher can lead a discussion about the play and what the students learned about storytelling and theatre. In the following days, the teacher should complete a list of positive attributes for each student in the class.

The students will write a monologue of a story of an event they have experienced or one they hope to experience in which they overcome obstacles. The teacher can give as much time as they feel the students need to complete the assignment. A presentation of their work should be performed in front of the class. Students should be encouraged to use physical movement, gesture, different sounds and/or speech to create characters in their monologue.

Although this is not an official Anti-Bullying Campaign this program can provide the teacher an excellent opportunity to discuss bullying, what the students thought of how David dealt with the challenges he faced during the play and how they can do a better job accepting and including others who are different.

## **VOCABULARY WORDS**

**Gesture-** A movement usually of the body or limbs that expresses or emphasizes an idea, sentiment or attitude

**Glitch-** A minor problem that causes a temporary setback

**Shriner's Hospital for Children-** A network of 22 non-profit hospitals across North America that provide medical services to children under 18

**Prosthesis-** An artificial device to replace or augment a missing or impaired part of the body

**Diversity-** The inclusion of different types of people

**Inclusion-** The act or including: To take in or comprise as part of a whole or group

**Perseverance-** Continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition

## **ARTIST INFORMATION**

David Harrell is an actor, speaker and disability advocate, originally from Brunswick, Georgia, now residing in New York City. His award-nominated solo play *A Little Potato and Hard to Peel* and his new adaptation *The Boy Who Would Be Captain Hook* have entertained audiences from New York City to the depths of Southern Georgia—from off Broadway houses to the US Department of the Interior. He uses his hysterical comedic sensibilities, powerful stories and a crazy cast of characters from his life's journey growing up with a disability to challenge, entertain and educate audiences to not let circumstances peel away the core of their humanity.

David holds a BFA from the University of Southern Mississippi and a MFA from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in theatre performance. He was nominated in 2010 for a New York Innovative Theatre award for "Outstanding Solo Performance" and his show has been selected to the One Man Standing Festival with the Emerging Artists Theatre, the Greensboro Fringe Festival and the United Solo Festival, the largest solo play festival in the world.

As an actor he has performed with theatres in New York City and across the country over the last 15 years, he has appeared in independent films, web series and the New York City institution *Law and Order: SVU*. As a Disability Advocate he has worked as the Accessibility and Outreach Director for the Raleigh Ensemble Players in Raleigh, NC and currently serves as the Disability and Programming Associate for Inclusion in the Arts in New York City.

David Harrell's unique and powerful life story reminds us that we will all face challenges in our lives. People will place limitations on our abilities and we may place limitations on ourselves but we do have a choice to not be defined by these limitations. We can choose to live our lives with dignity and courage, we can all be little potatoes and hard to peel.

## **RESOURCES**

"Including Samuel" Documentary Film by Dan Habib

Imperfect: An Improbable Life by Jim Abbott & Tim Brown

Five Fingers, Ten Toes: A Mother's Story of Raising a Child With Limb Difference by Katie Kolberg Memmel