

School Matinee Series Study Guide

2019/20



**Hopkins Center
for the Arts**
at Dartmouth

CARTOGRAPHY

by Kaneza Schaal and
Christopher Myers

Information for Teachers

Please review this study guide for context about the production as well as discussion questions and activities that will help your students engage with the performance videos. This guide includes suggestions for facilitating activities both synchronously and asynchronously to account for different remote learning environments. For short tutorials on digital classroom tools, visit the following links:

- Zoom Breakout Room Feature Tutorial
- Zoom White Board Feature Tutorial
- Google Classroom Overview Tutorial

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About the Show

Christopher Myers and Kaneza Schaal began developing *Cartography* after working with young **migrants** and **refugees** in Munich, Germany. Although separated by language and tradition, the young people had critical commonalities with their experiences of migration. The stories told in the show are inspired by youth from around the world from countries including Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea and Mali. *Cartography* fuses dance, film, map-making and technology to explore the challenges, wonder and **resilience** of young lives in motion. The sea is a significant force in the show, a reminder of the role it plays in the lives of migrating children and families who often must cross its uncertain waters. A moving image of the sea is projected onstage, which the actors control with the timbre of their voices and their movements. This contradicts the experience of most migrants who are often at the mercy of the sea. The company also encourages audience members to use their cellphones during the performance to consider their own maps, the maps of others and the maps we have yet to draw in our lives.

To catch a glimpse of *Cartography*, watch the following clips of the performance—and refer to the pre-performance discussion questions before watching!

- What is a map?
- “Fences” monologue
- Interactive mapping with the audience



Cartography set with cardboard boxes and a sound-sensory moving projection of the sea

About the Artists



Cartography director Kaneza Schaal

Cartography's director **Kaneza Schaal** is a New York City-based theater artist. She received a 2016 Creative Capital Award to develop her next work: *Jack & Jill*, a multimedia comedy of errors that draws on social codes and trainings, from prison reentry programs to debutante balls. Schaal's piece *Go Forth* premiered with Performance Space 122 (now Performance Space New York) and was presented at the Genocide Memorial Amphitheater in Kigali, Rwanda; Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's River-to-River Festival, NYC; and Wesleyan University Center for the Arts, CT. Schaal has worked with acclaimed companies and artists such as Elevator Repair Service, The Wooster Group and Richard Maxwell/New York City Players. For the past eight years, she has worked on annual performances at The Kitchen, NYC, with recent teen **immigrants**, as well as intergenerational collaborations between elders and teens through New York Theater Workshop, NYC.

Cartography's writer and designer **Christopher Myers** is an award-winning author, illustrator and fine artist. Myers is the acclaimed illustrator of books such as *Love: Selected Poems by E. E. Cummings*; *Harlem: A*

Poem, a Caldecott Honor Book; and *Jazz*, a Coretta Scott King Honor Book. He is the author-illustrator of *Black Cat* and *H.O.R.S.E.: A Game of Basketball and Imagination*, both of which are Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor Books, as well as *Looking Like Me*, *Wings* and *Fly!* Myers has curated fine arts shows in Vietnam and worked with national and international artists such as traditional shadow puppet makers, young musicians and weavers. He has designed theater that has travelled from Performance Space 122 in New York City to the Genocide Memorial Theater in Kigali, Rwanda, and has collaborated with Hank Willis Thomas on a short film *Am I Going Too Fast?* which premiered at Sundance.



Cartography writer and designer Christopher Myers

Cartography's cast includes:

Janice Amaya, a Salvadoran-American actor, oral historian and founding member of The Hummm theater collective;

Noor Hamdi, a New York-based actor and son of Syrian immigrants who loves projects that focus on Middle Eastern people and their **diaspora**;

Victoria Nassif, who has been in productions such as *New York: Bullet Catchers* (Judson Memorial Church) and *Measure for Measure* (New York Classical Theatre);

Vuyo Sotashe, an award-winning South African vocalist, performer and composer;

Malaika Uwamahoro, an actress, poet and activist born in Rwanda; and associate performers Cheyanne Williams, Eden Zane and Abrielle Kuo.



Cartography performance with Victoria Nassif, Vuyo Sotashe, Malaika Uwamahoro, Janice Amaya and Noor Hamdi



"Steppes of Augrudeen Map" by Deven Rue



The TEAM performing Anything That Gives Off Light



Performance of Ping Chong + Company's Undesirable Elements series

Contextual Background

What Does "Cartography" Mean?

Cartography is the study and the creation of maps. It is a practice that has existed since ancient times and uses symbols to represent places and landscapes. Modern cartography includes the use of digital satellite images and aerial photography. Physical and metaphorical maps are key themes in this play.

The Creation of *Cartography*

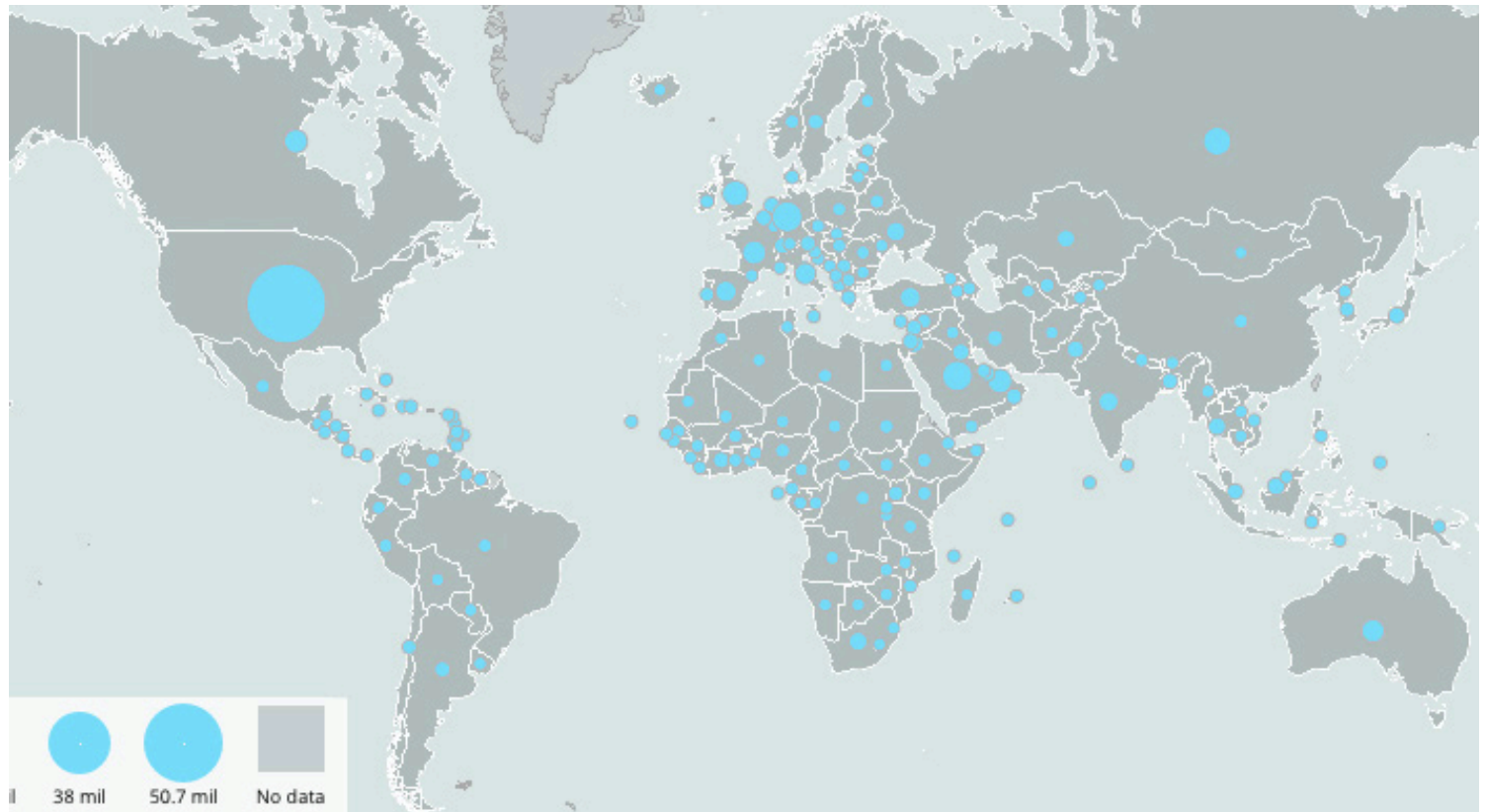
This production is characterized as "devised documentary theater" because it draws from both devised and documentary methods of making theater. While other plays begin with the playwright's script as a foundation, the script of a devised theater piece is developed by an ensemble and often involves **improvisation** around particular topics and themes. Often with guidance from the director, writer and **dramaturg**, the group determines how to fine tune the script and the staging into a final performance. Every theatrical ensemble approaches devising a little differently, but the process entails a lot of trust and collaboration. Professional theater companies such as The TEAM and The Wooster Group make their work using devising methods. Documentary theater draws from true stories and interviews with real people. These stories are reflected in the script, sometimes using people's exact words, and by having actors perform their own stories. Ping Chong + Company is an example of an established documentary theater company.

Cartography is inspired by the actual experiences of young refugees, with their stories represented through short scenes or **vignettes**. The play does not focus on individual characters; the actors portray multiple experiences and events.

Migration Statistics

In 2019, the number of people living in a country other than their country of birth reached 272 million. 48% of these migrants were women. There are an estimated 38 million migrant children, and three out of four international migrants are of working age (between 20 and 64 years old). About 31% of the international migrants worldwide reside in Asia, 30% in Europe, 26% in the Americas, 10% in Africa and 3% in Oceania. In mid-2019, the United States had an estimated 50.7 million immigrants. Countries with the highest number of **emigrants** include India, Mexico, China, Russia and Syria.

For more statistics, visit the [Migration Data Portal](#).



Graphic representation from the [Migration Data Portal](#) of the total number of international migrants in mid-2019

Migration in the News

The COVID-19 pandemic is significantly affecting immigrants and refugees around the world. Immigrant workers and families already tend to earn less than native-born workers and are experiencing additional financial hardship due to the pandemic. In the United States, Latino workers make up almost half of the foreign-born labor force and are overrepresented in the service and farming industries, which have been made more unstable. The crisis has distressing implications for refugees and **asylum seekers** who are currently detained in large groups in ICE detention centers with unreliable healthcare access. Asian American immigrants and businesses are experiencing increased public harassment and discrimination. Syrian refugees face dire circumstances; their home country's shaky healthcare system is an added reason to leave. However, the countries that they would immigrate to are discouraging entry; for instance, Greece has suspended asylum applications. If you are in a position to help, consider making a donation or finding additional ways to support immigrant advocacy organizations in your community.



People wait in a food pantry line in Chelsea, Massachusetts. Photograph by Brian Snyder.

For a list of resources for immigrants during this time, visit [Informed Immigrant's resource page](#).

Pre-Show Discussion Questions

Social Studies:

- What does “home” mean to you? What makes a home?
- What does it mean to migrate and what are the social, political and economic causes of migrations?
- How do you think the COVID-19 pandemic is currently affecting refugees and immigrants?

English Language Arts:

- Consider what the word “cartography” means. Based on its title, what can you infer about the themes of this show?
- You will see different examples of **imagery**, **metaphor** and **symbolism** as the characters tell their stories. What do these terms mean and what are examples of each?
- *Cartography* is a play based on interviews from real people. In what ways do you think this kind of play might be similar to other texts about real people and events, such as news articles and textbooks? In what ways might it be different from those kinds of texts?

The Arts and Storytelling:

- Based on what you know through academic study and/or personal experience, how would you describe the experience of being a refugee?
- If you were designing the lighting, the set and the costumes for *Cartography*, what kinds of artistic choices would you make? Why?
- Imagine that you had to tell a story about someone else’s life. What kind of research would you do? How would you tell that story?

Post-Show Discussion Questions

Social Studies:

- What causes people to migrate? How are these factors discussed in the play?
- How do the characters in the play use maps and what do those maps mean to them?
- One of the characters explains that changing places changes people. In what ways were the characters changed through the process of migration?

English Language Arts:

- What imagery from the performance resonated with you? Why?
- One of the characters discusses the “fences” she has encountered in her and her family’s history. How does she use fences as a metaphor for the challenges and barriers in her life? What are the fences in your own life that you would like to tear down?
- Based on what you saw, what do you think the message of *Cartography* is? What do the authors and performers want us to know?

The Arts and Storytelling:

- What are some of the elements of *Cartography*’s set? What do you think these elements represent?
- The cast invites audience members to map their own migrations on their cell phones. When everyone’s maps were displayed together on the screen, what did you notice? How does this relate to your own life’s map?
- *Cartography*’s script was based on interviews with immigrants and refugees. How did the director, writer and performers choose to represent real people’s stories in the show?



Cartography performance with Malaika Uwamahoro, Noor Hamdi, Victoria Nassif, Janice Amaya

Learning Activities

The Story of My ... (Grades 6–12)

In *Cartography*, the characters describe the objects they brought with them when they left home—such as “lemons to fight seasickness” as well as their **passports** and **visas**. Objects can be incredibly meaningful to our **identities** and connect to profound moments in our lives. This activity allows students to use objects as an access point into storytelling, memory and creative writing.

This activity as described works best with a synchronous learning format. For example, you can use Zoom breakout groups to facilitate students sharing their stories in pairs. In an asynchronous learning environment, students can either share their stories as recorded videos or short writing samples.

Ask students to choose an object that is significant to them in some way and let them know they’ll be sharing a short story about it with a couple of people in class.

Round 1: Place students in pairs. Ask one student in each pair to go first; they will tell their partner a one-minute story about their object. They can decide the level of depth that they are comfortable sharing. The other person’s job is just to listen. Afterwards, the other person will share. Optional addition: To explore author’s voice, have students tell their story in first person from the object’s perspective, considering how that object would choose to tell its own story.

Round 2: Instruct pairs to “exchange” objects with each other and to find a new partner. They will now tell a one-minute story about their previous partner’s object.

Round 3: Ask students to return to their original partners and tell the stories of their partner’s objects.

Afterwards, ask students the following reflection questions:

- What was it like to share the story of your object? What was it like to share the story of someone else’s object?
- What was it like to hear the story of your own object told by someone else?
- As you retold the story of your partner’s object, in what ways did the story remain the same? In what ways did it change?
- What might this tell us about how stories are created and shared and about what memories are meaningful to us?

Optional extension: Students can use these stories as a fodder for creative writing, such as a poem, monologue or short story. When writing, students can play with perspective, writing as themselves, another person or writing as if they are their object.

Make A Migration Map (Grades 6–12)

This project asks students to creatively map the migration of either their families or another immigrant group and research the historical factors that influenced these journeys.

Based on your instructional goals, ask your students to do one of the following

1. Map their own journey of migration to where they currently live. Encourage them to use both primary and secondary sources; they can ask their family members about their journeys and the journeys of their ancestors. This is an individual activity.

Note: This option can be difficult for students who have traumatic family histories or who are in vulnerable situations, such as being undocumented immigrants. Always give students the option to research someone other than themselves if they are uncomfortable with unpacking their own histories.

2. Map the journey of a particular immigrant group to the United States. In addition to secondary sources, ask them to use primary sources when possible. For instance, they can ask to interview an immigrant in their community who they know personally. They could also, with the support of their teacher or guardian, connect with someone at a local immigrant or refugee center who expresses willingness to be interviewed. Students should choose the interview format based on what the subject is comfortable with. For instance, some might prefer a video chat or phone call while others might prefer to send their responses over email.

Note: Students should ask the interviewee whether or not they would like to remain anonymous, as some immigrants may be undocumented or in unstable positions. This activity can be done individually or in small groups.

Encourage students to create maps as far back as they can go, and to get creative. They could plot the journey on a world map template using colors and graphics, or draw images based on a memory or story about a particular point along the journey. Ask them to do a live digital presentation of their map or to record their presentations and submit online. Afterwards, ask them the following reflection questions:

- What creative and artistic choices did you use to represent the journey of migration in your map and why?
- What was it like to conduct research for your map? If you interviewed a family member or community member, what was that process like? What surprised you?
- What factors influenced this journey of migration?
- What information is missing from your migration map and why? What does this make you want to know more about?



“Red Ladder on the World” by Ferran Feixas

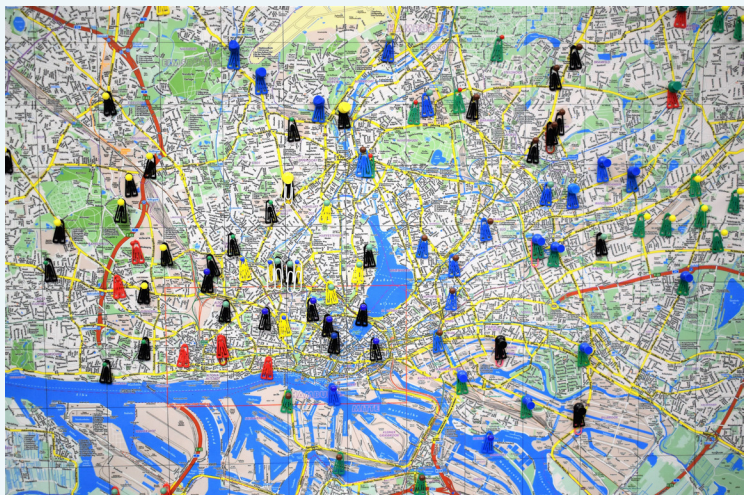
Gestures of Home (Grades 6–12)

This activity invites students to explore their backgrounds and the idea of home in an embodied way.

If facilitating this activity synchronously, you can have students write, reflect and create their gestures in real time. In an asynchronous learning environment, students can record and send in videos of their gestures, and the group can post comments to respond.

First, give students a minute to reflect on *where they currently live*. Ask them to write down words or phrases that describe this place, such as what it looks like, who might be there with them and how it makes them feel. Next, ask students to repeat this reflection and writing process, this time considering *where they were born*. Finally, ask students to reflect and write based on *where they call home*. Home could be the place they live, but it could also be a particular community or even a feeling; they can decide what home means to them.

Note: These prompts can be sensitive for particular students, such as those who are refugees, undocumented immigrants, homeless or do not know their original place of birth. Sharing this information is always optional, and use your knowledge of your students to modify the prompts if necessary.



“Navigation Map” by Waldemar Brandt

Next, give students a couple of minutes to create a short and easily repeatable movement or gesture, concrete or abstract, that represents where they call home. Model a couple of examples. Encourage students to practice multiple times, to try out different gestures and to use the words and phrases they generated as inspiration.

Optional addition: Have each student pair up and take a couple of minutes to share and teach their gesture to their partner. Then, ask them to combine gestures. They could perform one gesture after another or combine elements of each gesture—it is up to them.

Finally, invite individual students or pairs to share their gestures with the whole class. After each student or pair shares, ask the audience to popcorn out words that stick with them, which could be an image, emotion, idea or action that the gesture brought up for them. After all have shared, ask everyone the following closing reflection questions:

- What did you notice about yourself during this activity? What did you notice about the group?
- What did you learn about your understanding of home?
- Based on the movement pieces we created, how might our group define home?



Cartography performance with Malaika Uwamahoro

Vocabulary

Asylum Seeker: A refugee who requests international protection and official permission to stay in a country after arriving there.

Diaspora: The movement, migration or scattering of a group of people away from an established or ancestral homeland.

Dramaturg: A theater professional who contextualizes and helps establish the world of a play through research on elements of the play, such as its costumes, language and set, in collaboration with theater artists and institutions.

Emigrant: A person who moves away from a country of birth to another country.

Identity: How we perceive ourselves and others, and how we form and apply ideas about who we are.

Imagery: The use of figurative language to represent objects, actions and ideas in a way that appeals to our physical senses.

Immigrant: A person who moves to a new country from their country of birth.

Improvisation: The act of coming up with text, dialogue, music or other content on the spot.

Metaphor: A figure of speech that compares two distinctly unrelated things.

Migrant: A person who leaves their home country for reasons unrelated to war, persecution and violence, such as escaping a natural disaster or searching for better economic opportunity.

Migration: The movement of people away from their place of residence, across a state or international border or within a country.

Passport: A government-issued document that verifies a person's citizenship in a specific country.

Refugee: A person forced to flee their country due to conditions such as persecution, war and violence.

Resilience: The ability to withstand, adjust and recover from challenging circumstances.

Symbolism: The use of symbols, such as colors, images or particular words, to signify another idea, theme or quality.

Undocumented Immigrant: A person who resides in a country without official government permission or valid legal documentation.

Vignette: A short incident or scene in a play or story.

Visa: An official document that allows a person to visit or stay in a foreign country for an extended period of time.

Resources

TED-Ed Video “What Does It Mean to Be a Refugee?,” which explains key definitions and concepts related to migration.

The International Organization of Migration’s Glossary of Terms related to migration.

The World Economic Forum’s Video “Watch 125,000 years of human migration in 1 minute,” which explains the history of migration.

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Cartography dossier, assembled by Thomas O. Kriegsmann, ArKtype Productions

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