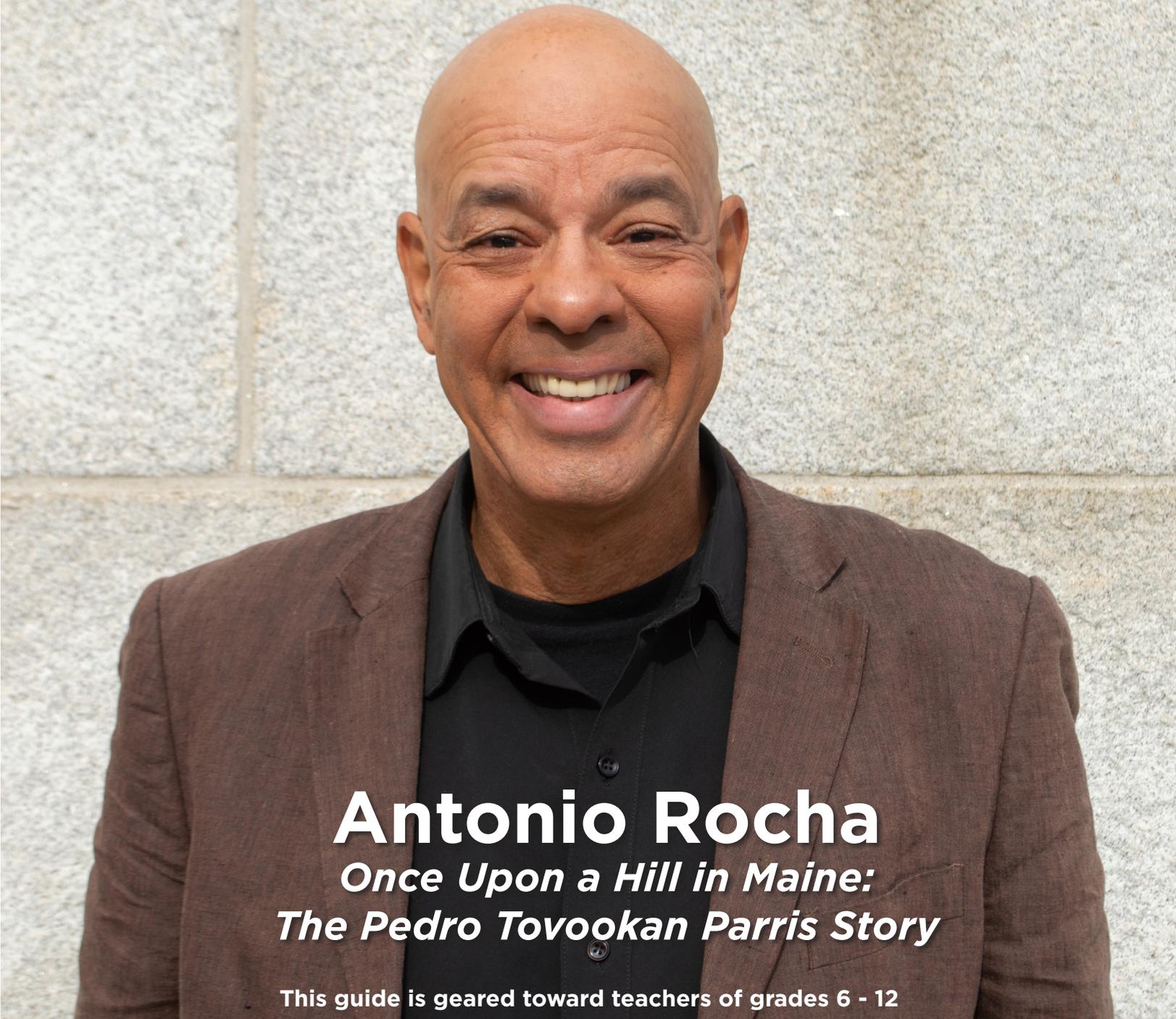




EDUCATOR GUIDE



Antonio Rocha

*Once Upon a Hill in Maine:
The Pedro Tovookan Parris Story*

This guide is geared toward teachers of grades 6 - 12

Sponsored by:



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in memory of Harriet

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About This Guide

Use this guide to help your students anticipate, investigate, and reflect upon your live performance experience. This guide is geared toward teachers of grades 6 - 12.

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The great thing about the arts is that they can often evolve to meet their context. That means that many of the activities shared are flexible to a lot of different contexts depending on how you choose to frame them in your class. We know you all are experts on your classroom and students, so we invite you to use these lessons and activities as guideposts and adapt them to fit your classroom management style, range of student ability, and time constraints.

LEARNING CONNECTIONS

Social Studies: Maine history, Middle Passage
Theatre: Mime and Pantomime

LEARNING STANDARDS ICON KEY



Educators, we invite you to share with us what you did in your classroom around this guide or the production. You can email eschildkret@portlandovations.org or reach us via [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#).

We want to hear and see what great learning is happening in your classrooms.

Introducing the Performance

It is often helpful to share some context with your students before they attend a live performance. Read below for more information on the performance you're coming to see.

About Antonio Rocha

Antonio Rocha (pronounced haw-sha), originally from Brazil, began his career in the performing arts in 1985. In 1988 he received a Partners of the Americas grant to come to the USA to perform and deepen his mime skills with Mime Master Tony Montanaro. Since then he has earned a Summa Cum Laude Theater BA from USM (University of Southern Maine) and studied with Master Marcel Marceau. Mr. Rocha's unique and award winning solo fusion of mime and storytelling with mesmerizing voices and sound effects has been performed from Singapore to South Africa and many places in between, including 20 countries on 6 continents as well as in 44 US states. Some of the venues include The Singapore Festival of the Arts, Wolf Trap, The National Storytelling Festival, The Kennedy Center, The Smithsonian Institution, The National Geographic, The Tales of Graz in Austria, Dunya Festival, The Timpanogos Storytelling Festival, Cave Run Storytelling Festival as well as thousands of school performances. Antonio Rocha also loves to teach his craft and often facilitates workshops, not only for performers, but for those who want to incorporate storytelling into their business presentations and classroom.

A two-time TEDx speaker, Mr. Rocha is a proud recipient of the coveted Circle of Excellence Award by the National Storytelling Network, and most recently the 2024 Maine Arts Commission Fellowship for the Performing Arts.



WATCH: [Transitions in Eloquence | Antonio Rocha | TEDxDirigo | 2011](#)

WATCH: [A Walk to Remember | Antonio Rocha | TEDxDirigo | 2019](#)

What To Expect

The Performance

- The performance is about 45 minutes long, followed by a 15 minute talkback.
- Antonio Rocha narrates and plays multiple roles in the performance.
- This story discusses the middle passage in detail. Some parts of the story may be disturbing or upsetting.

The Sound

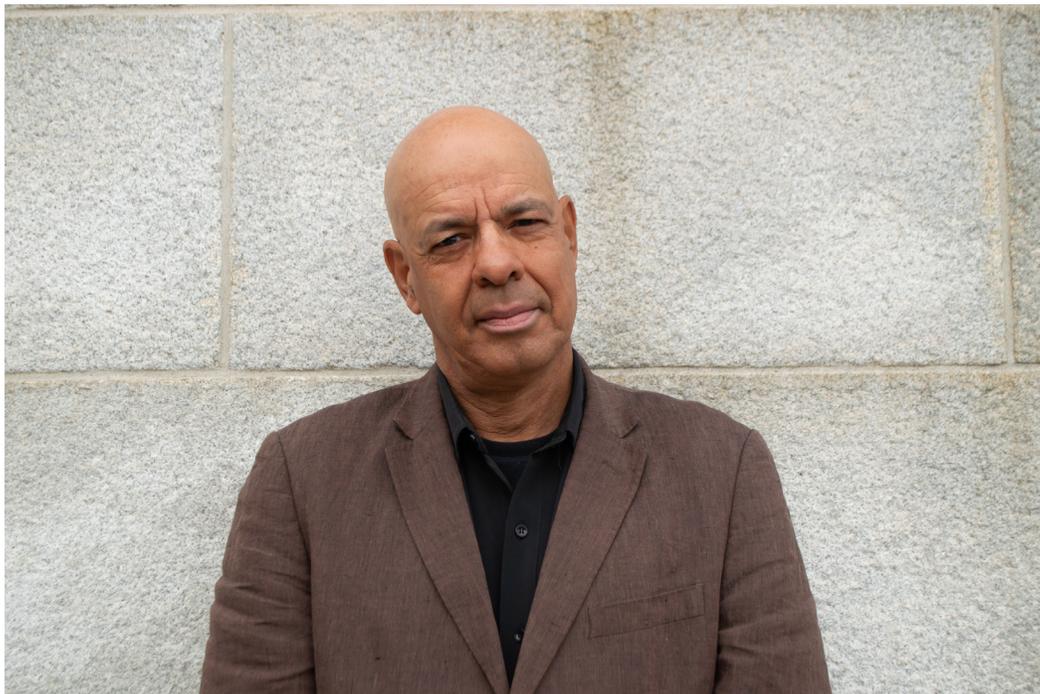
- Antonio speaks, sings, and creates his own sound effects.
- The performance features a violin.

The Lights

- In most places, lighting will be very simple. The performance uses a general wash of light to ensure audience members can see Antonio's performance.
- The stage will never go fully dark in this performance.

Resources

- Learn more about accessibility at Portland Oventions: portlandovations.org/about/accessibility/



Being an Audience Member

An audience member is a part of a larger community—an audience—and you all work together to create your theater experience. Audience members play a special and important role in the performance. The performers are very aware of the audience while they perform. Sharing their hard work and joy with you is one of the best parts of being a performer. Each performance calls for different audience responses. Lively bands, musicians and dancers may desire audience members to clap and move to the beat. Other performers require silent focus on the stage and talking from the audience can be distracting. A theater is designed to magnify sound and even the smallest whispers can be heard throughout the auditorium. *Once Upon a Hill in Maine* is a reflective performance. As you watch, consider how this story connects to your community.

As you enjoy the show, think about being a part of the performance.

- What are the differences between attending a live performance and going to a movie or watching television?
- What are some different types of live performances? How many can you name?
- What kind of responses might an audience give to different types of performances?
- What are the different cues that a performer will give you so that you know how to respond? For example, might they bow or pause for applause?



The interior of Merrill Auditorium

Essential Questions

Who was Pedro Tovookan Parris?

Pedro Tovookan Parris came to Portland, Maine in 1846 in part to testify in the trial of Captain Cyrus Libby who was complicit in the illegal trade of enslaved Africans. Born in Mozambique, Pedro was captured at the age of 10 by a neighboring nation during a war. Later he was sold into Brazilian enslavement and transported as a captive to Rio de Janeiro on a brig called the Porpoise. The Porpoise was built in Brunswick, Maine by Joseph Badger, owned by George F. Richardson a merchant and banker, and captained by Cyrus Libby of Scarborough. The Porpoise docked in Rio de Janeiro in 1845, when the trade of enslaved Africans had been illegal for nearly 40 years. Trans-oceanic slave commerce was abolished in 1808. By 1820, the transportation of enslaved Africans was considered piracy, and punishable by hanging. However, few captains tried for transporting enslaved people illegally were convicted. On board the ship, Pedro was instructed to say he was free should anyone ask. Upon arrival in Rio de Janeiro, American Consul to Rio, George William Gordon, seized Porpoise, arrested Cyrus Libby, and took custody of Pedro and another boy called Guilherme. They were not quite teenagers at the time. Gordon brought Guilherme and Pedro to Portland, Maine to testify against Cyrus Libby in his trial. Cyrus Libby was acquitted by the first circuit court in Portland. Following the trial, Guilherme was taken by a family in Massachusetts and later on became a barber.

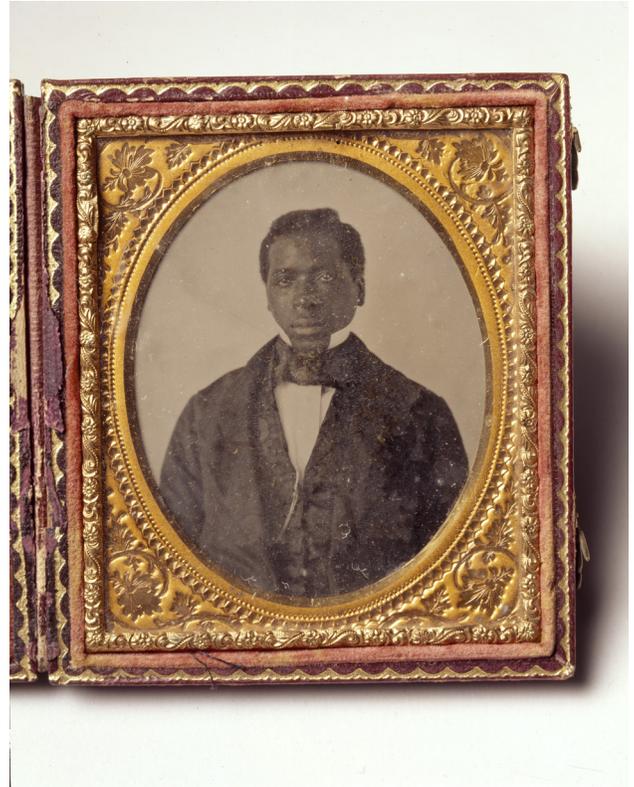


Photo Courtesy of Historic New England

Pedro was taken in by the family of Virgil D. Parris, US Marshall for Maine, in Parris, Maine. He lived with them for the rest of his short life. During his time in Maine, Pedro learned to read and write, and became a public speaker. He was an accomplished visual artist. Town records show that Pedro was well-loved by his community. He died at the age of 27 in 1860 of pneumonia.

How was *Once Upon a Hill in Maine* created?

With lots of research. After doing a lot of reading, Antonio then had to select the information that is most important to deliver in a short performance. He determined which historical events and people he wanted to include in his telling.

Once he decided on his story, Antonio began to map it out. Antonio does not sit and write a story. He writes the important facts on sticky notes called story triggers: simple notes, one to two sentences, stating either a historical fact, a song, or a mime sequence. Then he places them on a large sheet of paper on the wall. He keeps on adding the notes and moving them around as he finds necessary. Once Antonio feels that a sequence is ready, he then performs the sequence and times it. More notes are stuck to the wall, or removed, or simply moved to another section of the arc, then he performs again. Little by little, a series of images—not words—follow. These are either narrated verbally or through mime, then, after a while, it is ready to be premiered.



When the story is told for the first time, it begins to take shape, for now we have a key element added to the mix—the audience. Where do they laugh? Where do they go into complete silence? This new set of information sets a new rhythm. If necessary, more information can be added, some taken away, and so the story deepens and creates its own groove in the mind of the performer.

Want to try story triggers with your class? Check out the activity on page 10.

What is Mime?

Mime is a theatrical technique used to convey elements of a story like action, character, and emotion using only gesture and movement. Although it's an essential element of theatrical performance, mime is also considered an artistic discipline in its own right, the art of storytelling through body movement. Mime plays an essential role in many historical theatrical traditions, including Indian Natya, Japanese Noh, and Italian Commedia Del Arte. In *Once Upon a Hill in Maine*, Antonio weaves together all the pieces of a particular sequence—mime, spoken word, and sound effects—to create a historical, yet poetic, performance arc.



Harlequin, in a nineteenth-century print

What is the Storytelling Industry?

While storytelling is an important part of how humans communicate with one another, it's also a thriving industry. Professional storytellers like Antonio use voice, gesture, music, mime, and puppets to tell stories in festivals, classrooms, and performance venues all over the world. Online venues like the MOTH and TED talks bring professional storytelling into homes. The oldest storytelling festival in the United States, the National Storytelling Festival, happens yearly in Jonesborough, Tennessee. It has existed for over 50 years and features artists from around the world.



PRE-PERFORMANCE LESSON ACTIVITIES

Here are some ideas for lesson activities that expand on the essential questions, topics, and themes of *Once Upon a Hill in Maine*.

ACTIVITY: Iceberg of Identity

Iceberg of Identity invites participants to consider how identity markers influence and shape our perspective of others and ourselves. This strategy invites participants to interrogate a multifaceted construction of identity and its relationship to privilege. It's a powerful way to begin a conversation about this performance.



Materials:

Post-it notes
Pencils or pens
A large writing surface like a white board

Procedure:

1. Invite students to brainstorm a broad range of identity communities based on a range of markers (e.g., religious communities, race/ethnicity groups, socioeconomic status, familial relationships, and/or hobby/vocation).
2. Based on these identity communities, ask each student to compile an individual, written list of “identity markers,” which society may use to describe them (e.g., female, black, liberal, daughter, girlfriend, young adult).
3. Once students have created their list of identity markers, ask them to choose 5 markers from the list that they feel comfortable sharing. Write each on a separate post-it note or small piece of paper with tape.
4. Draw a picture of a large iceberg outline in the water on a chalk/white board. It's important the drawing includes parts of the iceberg formation above and below the water level. Invite participants to place each of their 5 individual “markers” onto the iceberg image based on whether the identity marker is seen (placed above the water) or can be hidden (placed below water level) from others.
5. As a class, observe where identity markers are placed. Invite students to share their observations of the iceberg. Discuss where identity markers are placed and why they may be placed there. See “Reflection” below for some ideas for discussion questions.

Reflection:

- How did it feel to write down ideas about your identity?
- What categories of identity markers did we choose to include/exclude?
- What identity markers are similarly/differently placed? Why do you think that happened?
- Based on this activity, how are individual and group identities recognized? When are they invisible? Why do you think that is?

ACTIVITY: Story Triggers

Antonio creates his stories by writing key moments and plot points on Post-it Notes. Use this story-telling strategy with your class.

Materials:

Post-it notes
Pencils or pens
Space for students to practice and perform their stories



Procedure:

1. Begin by selecting a theme or topic for the story. A piece of family history, something that happened to you such as an accident, something you tried to do and turned out different than you thought, or a trip you took. You can choose either to assign topics or to allow students to choose their own. Help students identify one or more sources on their topic or theme.
2. Hand each participant (or group) a stack of Post-it Notes. Invite them to write key moments or ideas from their research on the Post-it Notes. These Post-it Notes will become the story triggers. Remember, story triggers should be short, a sentence or phrase.
3. Review the story triggers and select the story trigger that will be the beginning (the inciting incident), the middle (the climax), and the end (the resolution). Place these in order.
4. Select one or two story triggers that will be the rising action. Place them between the beginning and the middle.
5. Select one or two story triggers that will be the falling action. Place them between the middle and the end.
6. Decide which story triggers will be read aloud and which will be performed as gestures. Practice performing the story using these story triggers. What worked? What felt confusing? Revise the story by changing the words, the gestures, and/or selecting different story triggers.
7. Perform the final story for the class.
8. Listening with respect is critical here. Developing a culture of good listeners is a major element in order to make the verbal story grow. The students should not write the story down until the telling of such story has a solid sequence of events, with no holes, with all actions leading towards a clear conclusion. Important Note: The details of these stories come about when the listener has questions to ask the teller about what they would like to know more about the story. These questions should be asked with respect and care. Such as: Let's say the teller says they had a dog. Just by using the word dog. Then, at the end it is ok for the listener to say: 'I would like to learn more about your dog? What was the dog's name and type? When the teller tells the story again, then those details are added. The listener should never: Judge the story, tell the teller they forgot something, etc. Remember the story is being created and needs support to grow.

POST-PERFORMANCE LESSON ACTIVITIES

Use these activities to continue exploring after you've seen the performance.

Post-Performance Discussion Questions

1. What was memorable to you about this performance? What new information did you learn? What would you like to learn more about?
2. What surprised you about Pedro Tovookan Parris' story?
3. How did Antonio's movements and gestures help tell the story? How did his movement shift as the story shifted?
4. How did Antonio mark the beginning, middle and end of the story? What techniques did he use to help audience members follow each moment and plot point?
5. How does *Once Upon a Hill in Maine* offer insight on Maine's connection to the trade of enslaved peoples?

ACTIVITY: Group Mural

This activity encourages students to work collaboratively in groups to brainstorm visual and text-based responses to a prompt. As a tool for reflecting on a performance, it offers an opportunity for students to express themselves in multiple ways—through art, writing, and in dialogue—to convey their ideas.



Materials:

A large blank piece of paper
Art supplies like markers or colored pencils

Procedure:

1. Consider beginning your group mural by looking at some examples of murals. Check out Creative Portland's map of public murals for examples in Portland. As a group, think about how color, shape, and line function in murals.
2. Invite students to stand or sit very large piece of blank paper on a table, floor, or taped to a wall surface. If you have a large group of students, divide them in to smaller groups each with their own materials.
3. Give students the prompt: Using images and words, record what was most memorable about the performance. (Or any of the other post-performance discussion questions.)
4. After students have had time to work silently on the prompt, gather as a group to observe the mural. Invite students to place a word or image as a respectful response to something made by another student.

Reflection:

- What images/words stand out to you the most?
- Are there specific words/phrases that appear on multiple artworks? What connections can we make across the mural?
- Why did this group offer these responses?

ACTIVITY: Interview an Elder

This exercise offers students an opportunity to collect and share stories by interviewing an elder in their community. This activity is a great way to prepare students to hear a personal narrative and connect it with their own experience. The structure of this activity is purposefully open to allow students creative control over their interviews and artmaking and provide the experience of making choices, both in collecting history and in creating art.



Materials:

An interview partner

Pen and paper or recording device

(optional) art supplies

Storycorps tips for a great conversation:

<https://storycorps.org/participate/tips-for-a-great-conversation/>

Storycorps interview questions:

<https://storycorps.org/participate/tips-for-a-great-conversation/>

Procedure:

1. Select the interview partner. Guide students through selecting someone to interview. Their interviewee should be someone they already have a relationship with and would like to know more about—perhaps a friend, a relative, or a teacher.
2. Prepare questions: Before the interview, ask students to prepare between 3 and 5 questions they'd like to ask. Their questions should be open-ended (ie: not something that can be answered with a “yes” or a “no”). Some questions to consider are “How has your life been different than you imagined?” “What is the most important lesson you have learned?” and “What are you proudest of?” Storycorps has a great resource bank of interview questions as a starting point, linked above.
3. Conduct the interview: invite students to schedule the interview in advance, so that there is dedicated time set aside, and come prepared with something to record answers, either pen and paper or a recording device (like a smartphone).
4. Process the interview: After the interview, ask students to consider what they heard. What did they learn that they didn't know before? What would they like to share with others? Invite students to select one story from their interview to share creatively.
5. Choose a creative method to share the story: There are many ways to share stories. Students may choose to share a story orally, to write a song, or create a piece of art (collages are a compelling way to tell stories in visual form). Ask students to choose the medium they find most exciting and works best for their story.
6. Share stories: Give students dedicated time to share the story they collected with the class in the form of their choosing.

Reflection:

- What was a memorable moment from the stories we heard/saw today?
- What, if anything, do these stories have in common?
- What did you learn about your interview partner that you did not know before?
- How did you decide what to share with the class? Why did you select the method you chose to present your story?
- What was it like sharing your story with the class?

Resources

Learn more about Antonio Rocha:

storyinmotion.com

Explore Pedro Tovookan Parris's archive:

historicnewengland.org/explore/collections-access/gusn/188080

Read a Portland Press Herald article about Pedro Tovookan Parris:

pressherald.com/2018/07/15/story-of-paris-hill-man-connects-maine-to-complexities-of-slave-trade/

Listen an episode of Maine's Black Future which discusses Pedro Tovookan Parris, hosted by Oventions board member, Genius Black and featuring Junes Thete:

themainemonitor.org/maines-black-future-episode-2/





ABOUT PORTLAND OVATIONS

Portland Ovarations, founded in 1931, presents dynamic performing arts events including classical music, jazz, opera, dance, theater, and Broadway. We believe that cultural enrichment should be high quality and accessible to all. Ovarations collaborates with other nonprofit organizations, education systems, and the business sector to promote lifelong learning while celebrating the power and virtuosity of the performing arts. We bring the exhilaration of the performing arts into our communities with free events as part of Ovarations Offstage, connecting artists and audiences. Join us at unexpected “art happenings,” classroom workshops, masterclasses, community discussions, and pre-performance lectures to explore together the relevance and connection of the performing arts to our lives.

Land Acknowledgment

Portland Ovarations’ programs are presented on Wabanaki land, home of the Maliseet, Mi’kmaq, Passamaquoddy, Abenaki and Penobscot Nations, their elders past and present, and future generations.

We encourage you to learn more and take action in support of Maine’s Indigenous communities through the following organizations:

[Abbe Museum](#)

Maine’s premier museum dedicated to Indigenous history and culture. Their mission is to inspire new learning about the Wabanaki Nations with every visit.

[Maine-Wabanaki Reach](#)

A Native-led non-profit that supports the self-determination of Wabanaki people through education, truth-telling, restorative justice, and restorative practices in Wabanaki and Maine communities.

Created and written by Dr. Liz Schildkret
Designed by Katie Day
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We want to know what *you* thought about the performance. You can write your answers below or draw a picture on the back of this page. Thank you!

PERFORMANCE: Antonio Rocha: *Once Upon a Hill in Maine*

SCHOOL NAME: _____ **TEACHER NAME:** _____ **GRADE:** _____

YOUR NAME: _____ May we use your name when we share your comments? Yes__ No__

What did you like about Antonio Rocha: *Once Upon a Hill in Maine*? Why did you like that part?

What was something that you learned during the performance?

What would you like to tell other kids about Antonio Rocha: *Once Upon a Hill in Maine*

What types of performance would you like Portland Ovation to offer in the future? (Feel free to share what type of art you are interested in (theater, dance, music), what cultures you might like to see, what topics the art might connect with, or specific artists.)

We want to know what *you* thought about the performance.

Draw a picture of a part of Antonio Rocha: Once Upon a Hill in Maine that you liked. Thank you!



YOUR NAME: _____ **SCHOOL:** _____ **TEACHER:** _____ **GRADE:** _____
Please scan and email to offstage@portlandovations.org or mail to Portland Ovation 120 Exchange St Portland, ME 04101

Please take a few moments to fill out this survey after you attend the performance. You can also fill it out [online here](#). Your response provides valuable insight on the impact, accessibility, and relevancy of the School-Time Performance Series and will allow us to improve and strengthen the program. Thank you.

PERFORMANCE: *Recycled Percussion*

TEACHER NAME: Antonio Rocha: *Once Upon a Hill in Maine* **GRADE(S) OF STUDENTS:** _____

SCHOOL NAME: _____ **CITY/TOWN:** _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

1. From your perspective as a teacher, how would you rate Antonio Rocha: *Once Upon a Hill in Maine*
 Excellent Very Good Good Fair Poor

3. What made this a valuable experience for your students? (If it wasn't, what can we do better?)

4. What was your primary reason for choosing to bring your students to Antonio Rocha: *Once Upon a Hill in Maine*
 I wanted my students to experience the performing arts.
 The performance topic fit with my curriculum goals.
 The date and time of the performance fit our schedule.
 The ticket price is affordable.
 Other (please specify):

5. How did this live performance connect to or enhance your curriculum?

6. Did you use the Educators Guide provided by Portland Ovation before or after attending the performance?
 Yes No

7. Why or why not?

8. What improvements could we make to the Educators Guide to serve you and your classroom better?

MAIL RESPONSES TO: Portland Ovation 120 Exchange Street Portland, ME 04101
 EMAIL SCANNED RESPONSES TO: offstage@portlandovations.org

9. How would you rate the following components of attending the School-Time Performance?

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Reserving & paying for tickets	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Communication about the day of the performance	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Arrival at the venue	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Departure from the venue	<input type="checkbox"/>				

10. What types of performances would you like to bring your students to in the future? (Feel free to share art forms, topics/themes, specific artists, etc.)?

11. A number of generous individuals and organizations make it possible for Portland Ovation to offer these School-Time Performance tickets at extremely discounted rates. Is there anything you'd like them to know in terms of your experiences or its impact on your students?