STRONG INSIDE
Adapted by Tyrone Robinson from the book by Andrew Maraniss

Presented by Vanderbilt University

World Premiere
September 7 – 26, 2023

TN Academic Standards for Grades: 4 - 8

Time-Estimates: Icons are in 15-minute increments but may take a little less or more time depending on class size and other factors. (If the clock is shaded in full, the activity may have a homework assignment or be extended over two or more class sessions.)

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Look For These!

Subject area icons show what curricular topics each activity addresses.

Tennessee State Standards for all activities are on page 9.

Visit NashvilleCT.org today!
About the Show

**Strong Inside** is a brand new show based on a true story! NCT commissioned an adaptation of the biography by Andrew Maraniss. This means that the script will be going through drafts and revisions all the way up until rehearsals start in August 2023, and there will continue to be changes until opening night. Coming to see this show means you and your students are an important part of creating something new.

**About STRONG INSIDE (Young Readers Edition) From Penguin Random House**

Perry Wallace was born at an historic crossroads in U.S. history. He entered kindergarten the year that the Brown v. Board of Education decision led to integrated schools, allowing blacks and whites to learn side by side. A week after Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, Wallace enrolled in high school and his sensational jumping, dunking, and rebounding abilities quickly earned him the attention of college basketball recruiters from top schools across the nation. In his senior year his Pearl High School basketball team won Tennessee’s first racially-integrated state tournament.

The world seemed to be opening up at just the right time, and when Vanderbilt University recruited Wallace to play basketball, he courageously accepted the assignment to desegregate the Southeastern Conference. The hateful experiences he would endure on campus and in the hostile gymnasiums of the Deep South turned out to be the stuff of nightmares. Yet Wallace persisted, endured, and met this unthinkable challenge head on. This insightful biography digs deep beneath the surface to reveal a profound and inspiring story of an athlete turned civil rights trailblazer.

**Know Before You Go Tips & Info**

NCT puts together tips for families and schools to help prepare their children for their experience. Because the script is still in development, we don’t have exact ratings yet. NCT Education Staff will develop and update these tips on our website throughout the rehearsal process. In the meantime, please see below for more information about current content and what to expect as the script stands at present - knowing that this is subject to change.

- Themes for Social and Emotional Learning: resilience, identity, justice, community, perseverance
- Language: Hurting words are used against the protagonist, Perry, throughout the show. As a young child, he is bullied with words like “nerd” and “Mommy’s boy.” The word Negro is used.
- Violence and Scariness: This show explores and depicts racism and segregation during Perry’s life. It includes a scene of an historical sit-in. During this moment, a character pours water over another character. The scene references police pulling and beating people down and making arrests. There are some screams, boos, and jeers throughout the show. At one moment, a character yells, “We gonna kill you!” to another.
- Sensory Advisories: There are theatrical effects involving sound and lighting throughout the show. Video footage is displayed. See the “Violence and Scariness” section.
- Potentially Anxious Moments: See the “Violence and Scariness” section.
- Other things to know: There will not be an intermission. This play is based on the biography **Strong Inside (Young Readers Edition): The True Story of How Perry Wallace Broke College Basketball’s Color Line**. A confederate flag is depicted in one moment in the show.

**Social Story**

NCT creates a Social Story™ for all shows, camps, classes, and field trips. A Social Story is a tool to help improve a person’s understanding of expectations during an unfamiliar event and was originally designed to support people who are neurodivergent. However, this can be a useful tool for anyone who is unsure about what to expect from a new experience. We are sharing these resources to make NCT productions inclusive for ALL patrons. If you have any questions about our inclusive practices or want to see examples of previous social stories, visit: [https://nashvillechildrenstheatre.org/edi-policies/](https://nashvillechildrenstheatre.org/edi-policies/)

**Sensory Room**

NCT has a space in the back of the theatre dedicated to providing a safe, comfortable place for students and adults alike to self-regulate. In the room, you can view the performance, control the sound, and access sensory-friendly tools.
Theatre Etiquette

Share the following definition and info with your students. The Social Story™ described on page 1 is also a great tool!

**etiquette:** the customary code of polite behavior in society or among members of a particular profession or group.

It takes many, many people and lots and lots of work to create a show on stage. Some are crew working behind the scenes and some are the actors who perform on stage right in front of you. They are all working to put on the best performance possible for you and everyone else in the audience.

Unlike watching television or a movie, the performers and the crew can see and hear the audience members. That’s why it’s the audience’s job to watch and listen carefully to the action onstage, and to show their support by laughing and clapping at the right moments. The audience helps the performers and crew to concentrate on doing their job when we practice the rules of theatre etiquette.

**Dos and Don’ts:**
- **Do** listen to the people giving instructions when you arrive. These staff members are part of the show, too, and they will help you know where to go and what to do.
- **Do** laugh if the show is funny, and clap after songs and at the end of the show. When you react to what’s happening onstage, you show the performers that you appreciate their hard work.
- **Don’t** talk during the performance. Whispering is still talking, so make sure you are only speaking in an emergency.
- **Don’t** eat, drink, or chew gum in the theatre. It can make a mess that’s hard to clean up, and also distract other people trying to watch the show.
- **Do** stay in your seat for the entire show, and keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself. Standing up will block someone else’s view, and it’s no fun to have your seat kicked by the person behind you!
- **Don’t** use cell phones or other electronics during the show. This one is for the grown ups! You may think you’re just checking it for a moment, but those glowing screens are a major distraction for everyone. Trust us… we can all see your screens.

**Theatre Etiquette Worksheet**
Hand out the worksheet on page 6. As a class, go through the different event locations listed on the worksheet and discuss each event. What can you do there? What can’t you do there? Why? Fill out the worksheet using A (Always), S (Sometimes), and N (Never). Ask students why they think we behave differently at these different places. 

*Adapted from The Louisville Orchestra*

*Pictured to left: Patrons sitting nicely watching a show in NCT’s theater*
Pre & Post Show Activities

Books make great theatre! Many playwrights, lyricists, composers, and screenwriters transform some of our favorite books into wonderful plays, musicals, or movies. When adapting a book, however, often changes are made to plot, characters, etc. Sometimes these changes are made to accommodate timing (the length of the play) and the many elements that are involved in bringing a book to life (such as set, costumes, cast, etc.). Even when the adaptations are based on true stories, sometimes changes will need to be made to fit the needs of the play.

Definitions to share with your students

- Adaptation – something that is changed so it can be presented in another form
- Playwright – a person who writes plays
- Author – a person who writes something such as a book or an article
- Biographer – a person who writes an account of someone's life

Pre-Show Discussion

As a class, read a few excerpts from Strong Inside (Young Reader’s Edition). 

Note: as you select excerpts, be aware of the note about racially-charged language at the front of the book.

- Why do you think the show’s creators would want to take this story and put it onstage?
- Why is studying the Civil Rights Movement important today? In the United States? In Middle Tennessee?
- What parts of the story are you looking forward to seeing performed on stage?
- The sport of basketball is central to Perry Wallace's story. How do you think the artistic team will bring a sport to life on stage?
- What role does the audience play in the show?
- What is different about telling a fictional story vs. a true story onstage? What do you think the playwright and artistic team need to think about?

After the Show: Theatre Review Worksheet

Once your class has attended NCT’s production, ask your students to reflect on the performance using the upper elementary or middle school Theatre Review worksheets at the end of this guide. Once students have completed their reviews, use the prompts from the worksheet to lead a class discussion.

- Optional: ask students to write letters to the actors and artists here at NCT! We LOVE getting mail and reading your questions, favorite parts of the show, and more! Letters can be sent to: Nashville Children's Theatre, 25 Middleton St., Nashville, TN 37210 or emailed to: info@nashvillect.org

Bonus Discussion

Strong Inside is part of NCT's 2023-24 season, which is themed "Courageously Me." Discuss:

- A season is a series of scheduled performances typically tied together by a theme.
- What does it mean to be courageously yourself | What does this theme mean?
- Why do you think NCT chose Strong Inside as one of the season's shows? | How does it fit the theme?
ELA Connection: From Interview to Biography

Biographer Andrew Maraniss spent 8 years researching and writing *Strong Inside*. He interviewed over 100 people as part of his research! In this lesson adapted from Edutopia, students will practice interviewing a fellow student in class and write a biographical article about them.

**Step One: Review the Basics**
First, convey the fundamental goals of an interview, which are to:
- gather information;
- seek out different perspectives (in other words, remind students that an interview is not the place for expressing their own opinions);
- and "pull out as much information from your interviewee as possible."

**Step Two: High-Quality Questions?**
Allow students to practice their questioning skills on you. Invite students to ask you a series of respectful questions: first, a series of closed (yes/no) questions and then a series of open questions. Discuss the difference between the two interviews. Finally, work as a class to create guidelines about what makes for a good interview question based on what students have witnessed. These might include:
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Ask follow-up questions.
- Keep questions brief.
- Rephrase a question if the interviewee evades or misunderstands a question.
- Embrace pauses and silence, and allow interviewees time to think.

**Step Three: Student Interviews**
Place students in pairs. Instruct them to create a set of interview questions to ask their partner, and have students conduct their interviews. If time permits, you might have students complete an "about me" sheet like the one at Read Write Think. This will get students warmed-up to talk about themselves, and also provide background to the interviewer so they can ask more specific questions. As they interview, encourage students to take detailed notes (and possibly audio record the interview for future reference).

**Step Four: Write the Article**
Ask students to write, read, and revise a biographical article about the peer they interviewed. Consider having students fact-check the piece written about them as part of the revision process.

*Extension: Have students share their biographies in class. This could be a presentation of what they learned about their peer, having students trade and read articles in small groups, etc.*

**Step Five: Reflect**
As a class, discuss the interviewing and writing process.
- What challenges did you encounter during the process?
- What did it feel like to be gathering and telling someone else's story?
- How does this experience affect the way you think about the work of biographers or news reporters who interview people and write about their experiences?
STEAM Connection: Basketball Science

Science Buddies has an excellent collection of projects that will guide students to investigate basketball science and the math and physics behind hoops success. Click the heading of each activity below for a detailed lesson plan, each of which will take 1-3 class periods to complete, or go to https://bit.ly/basketball-science.

**Under Pressure: Ball Bouncing Dynamics**
If you drop a ball, how high will it bounce? What happens to the height of the bounce if you release some air from the ball? How does the bounce height of different types of balls compare? In this science project, students investigate the relationship between air pressure and how a ball bounces.
- Terms and Concepts: air pressure, forces, energy, motion, gravity
- Key Questions:
  - How high will a ball bounce?
  - Will the air pressure change the bounciness of a ball?
  - How can you measure the height a ball bounces?

**Bouncing Basketballs: How Much Energy Does Dribbling Take?**
Does dribbling on the sidewalk or at the local park court feel different than dribbling in an indoor gymnasium? Why? In this hands-on science project, students experiment to find out how different surfaces affect how a ball bounces. Does it take more force to dribble on certain surfaces than others to keep the ball under control?
- Terms and Concepts: energy, kinetic energy, potential energy, gravity, inelastic collision
- Key Questions:
  - In a typical game of basketball, when does the ball have more kinetic energy than potential energy and vice versa?
  - Why does a basketball eventually stop bouncing if you just let it go and do not dribble it?
  - What examples of inelastic collisions have you seen? How is the energy transformed?
  - What surface will absorb more energy, a soft or hard one? Why?

**Nothing But Net: The Science of Shooting Hoops**
To increase the chances of scoring, players want to use the best shooting technique and form. Does science hold any clues about where you should begin a shot for the best chance of making it? In this science project, students experiment to see if starting with the ball at chest height, chin height, or over the head makes a difference in the percentage of successful shots.
- Terms and Concepts: arc, trajectory, backspin, basketball shooting percentage, physics of projectile motion
- Key Questions:
  - Which trajectory do you think improves your chance of making a basket: higher or lower? Explain why.
  - Do you think that there will be a relationship between the ball’s starting position (chest height, chin height, or over the head) and the ball’s trajectory? Why or why not?
IT'S SHOWTIME! - Theatre Etiquette Activity

INSTRUCTIONS: Look at the different events listed across the first row in the table below. For each event, write an A for ALWAYS, S for SOMETIMES, or N for NEVER with the listed behavior expectations. Note the different behavior expectations there are for different events we attend.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEHAVIOR</th>
<th>SPORTS GAME</th>
<th>RELIGIOUS SERVICE</th>
<th>LIVE THEATRE PERFORMANCE</th>
<th>ROCK CONCERT</th>
<th>MOVIE THEATER</th>
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Theatre Review

Show title: ___________________________ Date of show: ____________

1. What was the play about? What was its message?

2. Who was your favorite character/actor? Why?

3. What did you think of the visual aspects (costumes, set, lighting, etc.)?

4. How did the play make you feel? Why?

5. Why should people see this play?

Use the back or separate sheet of paper for additional comments if needed.
Writing a Theatre Review

A "review" of a performance is a carefully-crafted piece of writing typically featured in the news of an individual's opinions about a show being performed in the community. Most theatre reviewers or "critics" are well-versed in theatre. From the review, readers should get a sense of what the play is about in addition to the reviewer's personal judgments of the play's many aspects including, but not limited to, the acting and design.

After seeing a production at Nashville Children's Theatre, write your own review of the performance. Follow the structure below to help craft your critique.

- **First Paragraph**: Exciting opening/introduction
- **Second Paragraph**: Brief summary of the plot of the show
- **Third Paragraph**: Your opinions on the acting
- **Fourth Paragraph**: Your opinions on the visual/design aspects of the show (costumes, set, lighting, props, etc.)
- **Fifth Paragraph**: Final reactions/conclusion

Make sure to mention show specifics such as listing the director, actors, and designers by name. Reference the show's Virtual Paperless Program, the program listing the show's details, for names. (The QR code is on the bookmark you should have received after the show.) In addition, the more descriptive you are with your opinions, the stronger the critique will be.
TN Academic Standards for Activities Grades 4-8

Page 3
Pre-Show Discussion
ELA: SL.CC.1, 8.RI.KI.1, 7.RI.RRTC.10
SEL: 4-8.3C.1, 4-8.3C.3, 6-8.4A.1, 4-5.4A.4
Social Studies: 5.24, 5.50
Social Justice: D10, J13*

After the Show: Theatre Review Worksheet
ELA: 4-8.RI.KI.2, 6-8.W.TTP.2, 4-8.W.PDW.4, 4-8.W.RW.10

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From Interview to Biography
ELA: SL.PKl.4, W.TP.2, W.TTP.3, W.PDW.5
Social Justice: I3, D8

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Under Pressure: Ball Bouncing Dynamics
Science: 4.PS3.1

Bouncing Basketballs: How Much Energy Does Dribbling Take?
Science: 4.PS3.1, 4.PS3.2, 5.PS2.1, 5.PS2.2, 6.PS3.1, 6.PS3.2

Nothing But Net: The Science of Shooting Hoops
Science: 5.PS2.1, 5.PS2.2, 8.PS2.3

Info for Teachers
Free Educator Preview for Strong Inside
September 7, 2023
Reception/Workshop: 5 pm
Performance: 6:30 pm

Enjoy wine and cheese as you are introduced to activities you can use in your classroom. To reserve a spot visit NashvilleCT.org or contact Abby at abbybaker@nashvillect.org. Event qualifies as PD. Childcare provided.

Questions regarding field trips and school offerings? Contact Abby at abbybaker@nashvillect.org.

Seeing an NCT performance, as well as the activities in this guide, help students build the 4 C's of 21st Century Learning: Communication, Creativity, Collaboration, and Critical Thinking!

To schedule a workshop with one of NCT's Teaching Artists, contact Jackie at jkomos@nashvillect.org.

About Nashville Children's Theatre
Believing the culturally curious child is the future, Nashville Children's Theatre nurtures the next generation of global citizens by providing transformational theatrical experiences which reflect our evolving community, instill profound empathy, and foster personal discovery.

"For more information regarding the Social Justice standards referenced in this guide, visit https://www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks/social-justice-standards."