

# THE MONKEY QUEEN

## *Educator Study Guide*

Based on the original new play *The Monkey Queen* by Diana Tso  
Produced by Red Snow Collective  
Running November 16<sup>th</sup> – December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018

"Reality crosses the border with an ancient legend  
through the female perspective of the warrior  
in a fantastical landscape close to home"



THE MONKEY  
*Queen*  
猴婬

World Premiere  
NOV/ 16 – DEC/ 2 2018  
Theatre Centre Incubator  
1115 Queen St. W, Toronto

General admission \$32 /Arts-workers \$26  
Students & Seniors \$22 /Preview \$20 /Gala \$48  
Box Office: /416.538.0988 /boxoffice@theatrecentre.org

Preview: November 15/7:30pm  
Gala Night: November 17/7:30pm  
Tuesdays-Saturdays/7:30pm  
Saturday & Sunday Matinee/2pm

Red Snow Collective

PLAYWRIGHT  
Diana Tso  
DIRECTOR  
William Yong  
CAST  
Nick Eddie and Diana Tso  
MUSIC COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER  
Nick Storrington & Brandon Valdivia  
LIGHTING DESIGNER  
Rebecca Picherack  
PRODUCTION DESIGNER  
Elysha Poirier  
COSTUME DESIGNER  
Robin Fisher  
CLOAK, ACCESSORIES  
William Yong

redsnowcollective.ca

Canada Council  
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DU CANADA  
ARTS  
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ONTARIO

Poster photo by David Yoon. Poster design by Elysha Poirier

*Reality crosses borders with an ancient legend through the female perspective of the warrior in a fantastical landscape close to home.*

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## Play Information

<i>Playwright</i>	Diana Tso
<i>Director</i>	William Yong
<i>Performers</i>	Nick Eddie and Diana Tso
<i>Music Composers and Sound Designer</i>	Nick Storrington and Brandon Valdivia
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	Rebecca Picherack
<i>Projection Designer</i>	Elysha Poirier
<i>Costume Designer</i>	Robin Fisher
<i>Scenic and Set Designer</i>	William Yong
<i>Technical Director and Set Construction</i>	James Kendal
<i>Stage Manager</i>	Neha Ross
<i>World Premiere</i>	16 November to 2 December 2018
<i>Preview</i>	15 November @ 7:30pm
<i>Gala Night</i>	17 November @ 7:30pm

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Saturday matinee November 17 and Sundays Matinees @ 2pm  
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*Box Office*  
Phone: 416.538.0988  
Email: [boxoffice@theatrecentre.org](mailto:boxoffice@theatrecentre.org)  
[redsnowcollective.ca](http://redsnowcollective.ca)

Supported by Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, and Toronto Arts Council

**Intended Grades:** Grades 7-12

**Curriculum Connections**

*The Arts:* Dramatic Arts Grades 7-12, Dance Grades 7-12

*English:* Grades 7-12, English as a Second Language and Literacy Development

*Geography:* Grade 9 Canadian Geography

*Equity Studies:* Grade 11 Gender Studies, Grade 12 World Cultures

**Major Themes:** The hero journey/quest, coming of age, overcoming adversity, developing compassion for the world and others, female-focused stories

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**Synopsis of *The Monkey Queen***

Conceived and written by Diana Tso

In **THE MONKEY QUEEN**, the ancient mythology of The Monkey King in Wu Cheng'En's *Journey to the West* has been re-envisioned through the playwright's own heritage. In this modern version, The Monkey Queen is born in Canada and travels East towards China in search of her identity as a female warrior. Her epic path across the Canadian landscape combines dramatic styles from both eastern and western storytelling aesthetics.

*"My Asian roots and my European theatre training and upbringing in the west are reflected in the weaving together of both these dramatic styles," says playwright Diana Tso.*

*"This ancient mythology of my ancestral roots ignited my imagination in re-envisioning the story through my personal journey as a Chinese-Canadian artist."*



*Photo, David Hou, 2018.*

## Synopsis of *The Monkey King*

The legend of the Monkey King begins on the Eastern continent, where a magical rock sat atop Flower-Fruit Mountain. Slowly, over many years, the rock grew a stone egg and from that egg was birthed . . . a monkey! This monkey lived and played happily with other monkeys on the mountain until, one day, he found a special cave. Because of his cleverness and courage, the other monkeys crowned him The Monkey King.

The Monkey King enjoyed life, but began to grow sad. He realized that he was mortal, and would one day die. And so, he decided to give up his kingdom to find a Taoist master to help him gain immortality. This master helped the Monkey King develop his magical powers, such as his ability to fly, shape-shift, and transform in 72 different ways.

Now calling himself Su Wukong (Monkey Awakened to Emptiness), he grew mischievous, and fell into disfavor with the gods. To appease him, the Jade Emperor gave Su Wukong a new and important title: Guardian of the Heavenly Horse Stables. But Su Wukong grew upset when he realized that he was not invited to a special banquet for the Empress at the Jade Palace. He snuck into the garden and stole the peaches of eternal life, as well as the elixir of immortality inside the palace. The Jade Emperor was left with no recourse, and so the Buddha stepped in and challenged him to an impossible feat: to get on to his giant hand and jump off of it.

Though he tried, Su Wukong could match the Buddha's powers. Thinking he had found the five pillars at the edge of the universe, Su Wukong urinated on them to mark his territory. But soon, he discovered that they were in fact the Buddha's fingers, and that he had not conquered the task Buddha set for him after all! As punishment, Buddha trapped the Monkey King under a mountain, where he remained for 500 years.

Finally, when a monk needed guidance on his journey to find sacred scriptures in what is now known as India, Buddha arranged for Su Wukong's release from the mountain. Su Wukong learned to obey his new master monk, but he still could not suppress his mischievous spirit. Throughout their journey together, Su Wukong used his clever tricks to protect the monk, and they had many adventures together.



颐和园长廊上的彩绘：孙悟空三打白骨精, Public domain

## Pre-show Discussion Questions

Why do we tell stories?

What can we learn from stories from different eras, cultures, and perspectives?

How does point of view change or alter the telling of a story?

How can theatre be used as a vehicle for telling stories that are often under-represented?

Who were your heroes growing up?

What stories are most often told today? Who is represented, and who is invisible?

How can stories reflect who we are? Our community? Our cultural backgrounds?

What makes a hero?

What is the quest or the hero's journey? (see *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* in Resources and Summative Activities)

Why are hero stories, such as the mythical quest, so often told from a male perspective?

What does it mean when we talk about stories being patriarchal or Eurocentric?

How might the structure of the quest be seen as patriarchal and/or Eurocentric?

How could it be altered to be less so?

### Advice for exploring stories from cultures that may not be our own

When taking students to see live theatre based on stories from cultures that may not be our own, it is important to prepare them for the experience. These tips might be useful for getting students prepared to work with *The Monkey Queen*:

- Provide students information about the play or have them conduct research to give the story cultural context. See the Resources provided for the origin story of *The Monkey King*.
- Rather than simply *retelling* the story through performance, allow students to make connections between the story and their personal experience, and/or to larger themes in the work.
- When working in role, emphasize that we don't want to speak *for* others, or reduce cultures to simplistic or offensive stereotypes. If students are not taking the work seriously, do not let it go—address the behaviour immediately
- Do not ask students to be experts on their culture and teach it to the rest of the class. If students volunteer information about stories explored, welcome it, but don't make assumptions about what they know based on their cultural backgrounds
- Bring in experts and knowledge keepers to bring context to the work, using the adage 'nothing about them without them.' For example, bring in an Indigenous Elder from your list of board-approved guest speakers to share trickster tales or creation stories, or in an expert in Chinese literature and/or theatre traditions. If this isn't possible, use first-person sources from vetted experts, such as videos and published writing. Whenever possible, have the voice of the expert in the room.



## Interview with Diana Tso, creator of *The Monkey Queen*



### **What inspired you to create the story of *The Monkey Queen*?**

Since I was in kindergarten I loved the monkey king stories and imagined myself as this legendary superhero. When I became an actor, there was a new play, which starred the Monkey King. Unfortunately they were not auditioning women for this role. *How could I turn a thorn into a rose?* I thought to myself. One day, I was invited to a private storytelling jam where a live violinist accompanied our storytelling. Of course I told an excerpt of the monkey king stories. During our coffee break, I had an epiphany! I was not the monkey king and would never be because I was *the Monkey Queen* and I had to create her. So that's what I did! In 2009 I got a grant from

the Ontario Arts Council to write this and debuted it at the 2010 Toronto Storytelling Festival. I have been touring it to festivals, libraries and schools ever since, and then decided to adapt it into a theatre play in 2013.

### **This show is part of a trilogy of works. Can you tell us a little bit about the other two parts of the story?**

Part one is in Canada. Part two is in India. Part three is in China. My story is inspired by the monkey king stories from the novel "The Journey to the West"; as such, the quest of Monkey Queen is a journey to the East as I was born in Canada, travelling towards China to connect with my ancestral mythologies. I am also inspired by the monkey stories in the "Ramayana" epic from India; one of my storytelling mentors Rubena Sinha and I tell the Monkey King and Monkey Queen excerpts together as a duet; thus my second part of the trilogy was set in India. In 2016, supported by the Ontario Arts Council, I travelled to India with Rubena for my research on the "Ramayana" stories to write the second part of my trilogy, which debuted at the 2017 Ottawa Storytelling Festival. Once I complete the third story, I will continue adapting the rest of the trilogy into theatre plays and tour it to national and international festivals and theatres.

### **In your previous two plays, *Red Snow* and *Comfort*, you drew from Chinese history, specifically on the history of WWII in Asia. This play focuses on what is perhaps China's most famous and well-known story. Why are you drawn to Chinese history and stories in your work?**

My search and exploration of my cultural heritage, as well as my ancestry and my identity, draw me to Chinese history and mythology and how to re-imagine it from my perspective in the contemporary world.

The stories and history I grew up with in Canada never spoke about the stories of the Chinese, except for the Chinese railway workers. I found and researched the stories and history on my own. Since the history of the World War Two did not give voice to a forgotten holocaust in China and the sexual slavery of women, I felt the responsibility and need to bring light to these stories, which ignited me to write *Red Snow*, inspired by the Nanking Massacre and *Comfort*, inspired by the comfort women and the resilience of women in war.

**Theatre performance styles in Eastern cultures are quite different from Western traditions of performance. How do you meld Eastern and Western styles when you are writing and/or performing?**

It's a reflection of who I am as a person and an artist that is shaped by my experiences from the place I was born, from the roots of my ancestors, from the places I have lived, from the elders I have learned from, and from stories I am connected to through the people and lands that have moved my heart and my imagination.

**This show is incredibly physical! How do you train for such a show, and how does the director, William Yong, who has a dance background, help you in that process?**

I try my best to warm up daily with my physiotherapy exercises, some yoga stretches, some lightweights and tai chi and meditation. Some days I add jogging on my trampoline and 2 minutes of skipping to the routine. In our workshop development the director incorporated 30-40 minutes of dance warm-ups and exercises, as his training is as a professional dancer and choreographer.

**One of the most powerful themes in *The Monkey Queen* is the absence of female-focused stories and heroes in our culture. What kinds of stories would you like to see better represented in theatre, film, and/or pop culture?**

Because world mythologies and histories are dominated by male protagonists and male writers, we need to empower women's voices and bring light to women's stories, myths, histories, and perspectives to create equity and a more holistic vision of the world that moves towards balance and diversity.



*Photo, David Hou, 2018.*

## Post-show Discussion Questions

### *Reflecting and Responding*

What symbols from the play stand out to you?

Why tell this story with only two actors?

How are music, movement, and visuals used to tell the story?

### *Making Connections*

Why set *The Monkey Queen* in a fantasy world that resembles Canada? What landscapes do you recognize?

- Rocky Mountains – British Columbia – her birthplace
- Dragon Graveyard – Alberta Dinosaur Provincial Park
- Golden fields – Prairies
- Snowlands – Nunavut
- Iron fan at the bottom of the Five Fingered Great Lake – Ontario, Great Lakes
- Cave that Leads to Paradise behind Rain Curtain – Niagara Falls
- Island with red earth – Prince Edward Island
- Last place she stands surrounded by mountains – Bay of Fundy

*The Monkey Queen* tells an epic story, but also contains interludes in which the main character speaks to her best friend in present day. Why might the playwright have chosen to structure the story in this way? How might each of these interludes connect to the story of *The Monkey Queen*?

- Diana talks of wanting to be The Monkey King as a child
- Diana discusses her admiration for Wonder Woman
- Diana tells her friend about the Bad Boys
- Diana tells the story of her family members dying in a plane crash

In what ways is *The Monkey Queen* similar to and/or different from its origin story, *The Monkey King*? Wonder Woman? Other heroes or heroines from literature, film, and comics?

Throughout the play there are references to the Great Turtle. What connections might this have to Turtle Island, the name that many Indigenous peoples use to describe Canada?

### *Analyzing Themes and Symbols*

In the beginning of the play, the Monkey Queen destroys things and disappoints the Shaman Woman:

SHAMAN WOMAN : Monkey Queen, you have just destroyed the golden fields of compassion, generosity and kindness; it will take a millennium for new fields to grow.

I found a thread of gold that had escaped Monkey Queen's fire and wove it into the



Crown of Compassion, placing it on Monkey Queen's head.

This will guide you to become a true warrior; you must learn to defeat without destroying.

But near the end of the story, the Monkey Queen transforms into a carp and restores the waters with fish and other natural things. How has she been changed by her quest?

What does the Monkey Queen learn about being a hero? How does this relate to what she says about Wonder Woman earlier in the play?

What does Phoenix symbolize?

Why might this creature appear at the end of the play?

### ***Final Thoughts***

What isn't resolved at the end of the play? What questions are you left with?

Why might some of this story be left open to interpretation?

*Photo, David Hou, 2018.*



## Drama Activities based on *The Monkey Queen*

**Who is the Monkey King? Statue and Clay:** Introduce students to the origin story of *The Monkey King* through a picture book, film excerpt, or research (see Resources for suggestions). In pairs, invite one student to ‘mould’ the other student as clay into a statue of The Monkey King through guided movements or verbal instructions.

Present groups of statues in a **gallery walk** and have students brainstorm words and qualities they associate with the Monkey King as they view the statues. **Thought track** statues to ‘hear’ the Monkey King speak aloud and introduce himself to the group.

**English Language Learner Extensions:** Read the summary of The Monkey King story aloud together, defining key words. Use vocabulary, such as adjectives, to describe The Monkey King. Pair these words with the statues, having them speak aloud. Use sentence stems such as ‘I am the Monkey King, and I am . . .’ if helpful to students.

**A Story from Childhood:** Experiment with different ways of telling stories through drama by having students, in trios or small groups, share an adventurous or humorous story from their childhood.

After telling their stories, the listeners must recreate one of the stories as it is being narrated, using movement or frozen images. More experienced students can try incorporating these **flashbacks** into the telling of the story to a friend in the present, as they shift back and forth in time.

**English Language Learner Extensions:** Students can present their flashbacks in their mother tongue and provide English translations to help the audience’s understanding. Or, present the stories in three key still images with **captions** (one-sentence descriptions).

**The Role of the Narrator:** Distribute copies of picture books, folk, or fairy tales to students, and ask them to recreate a scene from one of the stories, leaving the narration in tact. They should experiment with a) one narrator b) shared narration c) narration from *inside* the story as a character.

**English Language Learner Extensions:** Provide books and stories from students’ cultural backgrounds and countries of origin, or encourage them to bring in stories that they know. Use simplified versions (such as children’s books with minimal text). By practicing narration, students can focus on correct pronunciation and building confidence with spoken English.

***Columbian Hypnosis (from Augusto Boal):*** Students form pairs and assign roles A and B. A is the leader, and places their hand a reasonable distance from B's face. Acting as though the hand is a magnet, A slowly leads B in movement, with the face following the hand. Encourage students to experiment with levels, angles, and use different parts of the body to lead, traveling through the space.

***Shadows:*** Same activity as above, but this time B stands behind A and follows the movement in unison, as if they were a shadow.

***Mirrors:*** Same activity, but standing face to face, as though looking in a mirror.

***Movement inspired by The Monkey Queen:*** In trios or small groups, invite students to create their own movement sequences based on the following moments from *The Monkey Queen*:

- The Monkey Queen writing with giant calligraphy brush
- The Monkey Queen dancing with the Ice Prince
- The Monkey Queen transforming herself into a thousand Monkey Queens
- The Monkey Queen discovering the Iron Fan

Consider offering simple props for students to use in their movement, such as fabric, scarves, wigs, bamboo sticks, noisemakers, etc.

***English Language Learner Extensions:*** Ask students to state a word or phrase that describes the moment they are showing us, and to practice speaking it aloud when they present their movements. Or, ask them to write 1-2 lines of dialogue to use in the presentation.

***Creating Characters and Landscapes:*** Invite students to walk through the space, experimenting with walking at different paces, with different qualities of movement, etc. Call out a number ('Number 5!') to cue students to quickly form groups of that number. Once in their groups, ask them to create characters, animals, and/or landscapes from *The Monkey Queen*, such as:

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| • The Mountain Demon                    | • The Western Mountains            |
| • The White Bone Demon                  | • The Dragon Graveyard             |
| • The Ice Prince                        | • The Golden Fields                |
| • The Polar Bear Spirit                 | • The Snowlands                    |
| • The Dragon King of Five Fingered Lake | • The Northern Lights              |
| • The Giant Golden Willow Tree          | • The Cave                         |
| • The Phoenix                           | • Paradise behind the Rain Curtain |

**English Language Learner Extensions:** Adapt this activity into a game. Teach students each of the symbols/locations and practice saying it aloud. Create a shape together, as a group, for each one, pairing the spoken text and the movement. Then, play a ‘guessing game’ round during which you make the shape, and they must ‘call out’ what it is. Use an anchor chart with the written terms so that students can reference them to help with correct pronunciation and reading comprehension.

**Landscape Extension:** In their final groups, students should create a series of images based on the following excerpt from *The Monkey Queen*, focusing on smooth movement transitions from one image to the next.

She told me to star soar the constellations, slide down the Northern Lights, find the Iron fan at the bottom of the Five Fingered Great Lake, cross the Great Turtle’s back to the Cave that Leads to Paradise behind Rain Curtain.

**Shapeshifting:** One of the Monkey Queen’s greatest powers is her ability to shape shift. Lead students in a practice transformation, from the pose of a fox into eagle. Begin with a still image of the fox. How can the fox transform into an eagle using fluid movements? Give students time to bodystorm, working alone or with a partner. Then, give students options for further transformations.

*Transformation A:* Monkey Queen into owl, spider, rabbit

*Transformation B:* Monkey Queen into porcupine, cougar, snake

**English Language Learner Extensions:** Use images of the various animals to help students identify them as they create them with their bodies. Create a **word wall** of animals to help students learn vocabulary associated with the play.

**The Four Elements:** Divide students into four groups, and assign each group one of the four elements (air, water, fire, earth). Each group should brainstorm words associated with their element (**nouns, adjectives, and verbs**). Then, on their feet, students should body storm a series of movements and/or sounds associated with their chosen element. Present element performances, one following the other and/or overlapping.

***Soundscapes:*** Building on the soundscapes created in the Four Element activity, provide students with the following excerpt from *The Monkey Queen*. Invite them to create a soundscape based on the text, using their voices, bodies, and simple objects (optional).

When they have created their soundscapes, ask groups to layer in the spoken text, experimenting with choral speaking techniques. Finally, present both sound and text together.



I gazambled down the mountain, swinging and ricocheting

MONKEY & ACTOR 2 ricocheting

ACTOR 2 through the trees

MONKEY tumbling through snow and mud

MONKEY & ACTOR 2 when the mountain began to rumble

MONKEY I looked back to see a tsunami of snow crashing down the mountain. I shapeshifted into an owl soaring high, watching it collapse the forest below. Then gigantic granite arms erupted out of the mountain trying to snatch me from the sky, followed by a giant granite head, body and legs.

MOUNTAIN DEMON I am the Mountain Demon, this is my land; you shall not pass!

MONKEY I landed on the tip of the demon's nose and changed back into myself. I am the Monkey Queen. I was born of these mountains. I shall go where I please! The Mountain Demon's rocky jaws dropped opened revealing sharp diamond teeth. He inhaled

MOUNTAIN DEMON I inhaled, swallowing wind, trees and Monkey Queen with my demon breath.

*Photo, David Hou, 2018.*



## Summative Activities for *The Monkey Queen*

### ***Learning about Canada***

This cross-curricular activity makes links to Grade 9 Geography and might be suitable for ELL learners new to Canada. After identifying the regions of Canada alluded to in the play, locate them on an interactive map of Canada, such as Google Maps. Consider assigning students specific regions to research. What does the landscape look like in this region? The weather? What visual landmarks are there? Encourage them to present their findings orally, or as a visual essay, with photographs to accompany their research.

### ***Creating New Hero Tales***

Using the drama convention of **role on the wall**, have students make an outline of a generic hero (such as The Monkey King) on large paper. Inside the outline, they should list qualities often represented by heroes in the stories we know from myth, literature, and film (i.e. brave, strong, young, independent).

Outside the outline, ask students to brainstorm words that are opposites—words that are not often associated with traditional heroes. In pairs, students should choose three opposite words, or one heroic quality and one opposite term, and use the words to create a new hero who has never existed before. What might an old underdog hero look like? What about a female hero? A hero without super-powers? A hero who is not brave?

In small groups, invite students to create a brief origin story for their new hero that introduces them to an audience. These presentations could be done in 3-5 **tableaux** with narration, or movement with simple dialogue.

***English Language Learner Extensions:*** After completing their role on the wall, ask students in groups to write a short poem called ‘A Hero Is’ using words and terms from their brainstorming. They should practice speaking their poem aloud, alternating lines, and/or speaking in unison, and then present their creations to the class.

### ***Revisionist Tales***

Revisionist tales take traditional or conventional stories and ‘revise’ them with variations from the original. *The Monkey Queen* is a revisionist version of *The Monkey King*, as it changes the gender of the main character, takes her on different adventures, and gives her a different goal for her quest. How might we create our *own* revisionist tales?

Introduce students to examples of revisionist tales, such as *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, *The Paperbag Princess*, or the film *Snow White and the Huntsman*. How are they different from the original? What does changing the gender of a character, the time period or location of a story, and/or telling the story from a different point of view alter the tale? How can revisionist stories help to make often-overlooked people more visible and represented in media, literature, and popular culture?

Invite students to create their own revisionist tales based on *The Monkey King*, folk and fairy tales, or other popular stories. These new tales could be written scripts or devised using movement, tableau, and narration.

**English Language Learner Extensions:** Rather than revising an existing tale, expose students to a variety of folk tales they may not be familiar with, using simplified versions. In groups, they can practice reading the tales aloud, and then can ‘retell’ their stories using their voices, tableaux with captions, or simple movement and scripted dialogue.

### ***Analyzing The Hero’s Journey or Monomyth***

Explore Joseph Campbell’s concept of the *monomyth*, the 14-stage hero’s journey described in his book *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*.

- What well-known stories follow this monomyth? (*Star Wars* and *Lord of the Rings* are excellent examples)
- How does this story follow a traditional, and some might argue, *patriarchal* structure? (for example, the hero is typically male, embarks on an external journey that involves physical battle, is linear and has a clear and attainable goal, and provides closure at the end of the story)
- In what ways does *The Monkey King* fit the structure of the monomyth?
- What might alternatives to the monomyth look like? What structure might a more feminist or female-centred story have? (for example, a female protagonist, an internal journey, a cyclical structure, more ambiguity in its ending).
- In what ways does *The Monkey Queen* diverge from or ‘play with’ the traditional structure of a hero’s journey? Would you describe this as a feminist tale?

### ***Adapting The Monkey King***

Read a variety of versions of *The Monkey King*, such as picture books, stories, and/or film (see Resources for examples). Give students the task of adapting the story into a new form or for a new audience. For example, they could create *The Monkey King* as a dance piece, radio play, scripted performance, or children’s play.

### ***Female Warriors Research Project***

Invite students to research famous female warriors from myth, history, and literature. They can use their findings as the basis for storytelling and performance, such as a docudrama. Some possible subjects to research might include:

- |                               |                            |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Joan of Arc (France)        | • Artemis (Greece)         |
| • Artemisia of Caria (Persia) | • Grace O’Malley (Ireland) |
| • Triệu Thị Trinh (Vietnam)   | • The Amazons              |
| • Nakano Takeko (Japan)       | • Hel (Norse mythology)    |
| • Queen Boudicca (Celts)      | • Hua Mulan (China)        |
| • Zenobia (Syria)             |                            |

For other ideas about exploring different types of heroes in the drama classroom, consult the Grade 9 Heroes unit from the Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators (CODE) in Resources

***English Language Learner Extensions:*** Encourage students to research and present information on warriors from their own cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin.

### ***Exploring Stories from World Cultures***

Expose students to heroic tales from various parts of the world, and/or have students research examples of global tales. What characteristics or ‘tropes’ do we often see in these tales? (i.e. heroic quests, animal companions, trickster-like figures, magic, etc.)

Invite students to create **their own original hero tales** using some of the tropes they have identified. They can create new characters, storylines, and fantasy worlds through script work or devising, and use the creative process to transform these into final performances.

***English Language Learner Extensions:*** After students have researched and read stories about heroes from different parts of the world, ask them to present three key facts in a carousel format, with visual images to help them explain their findings. Then, create an anchor chart of common characteristics and vocabulary associated with heroes.

### ***Origin Stories and Trickster Tales***

Work with a local Indigenous Elder and the Aboriginal Education Centre in your school board to introduce students to the story of Turtle Island, as well as trickster tales such as the story of Coyote. Invite students to research different origin stories and tricksters from history, literature, media, and pop culture and share their research in Powerpoint, Prezi, or another multimedia forms.

### ***Working with Script***

Create performances based on selected excerpts of *The Monkey Queen*, focusing on movement, transitions, shared narration and sound. For example, create different versions of the opening sequence of the play:

#### ***Opening of The Monkey Queen***

I am the Monkey Queen. I was born from the heart of a mountain, a mountain, wrapped in snow and pine. The mountain's heart was made of pink jade stone. Over days, years, centuries, the jade stone was beaten lovingly by the voice of

MONKEY / (*ACTOR 2 echoes Monkey*) Thunder

MONKEY caressed by the hands of clouds

MONKEY / (*ACTOR 2 echoes Monkey*) until one Spring

MONKEY when snow and ice had softened into

MONKEY / (*ACTOR 2 echoes Monkey*) rivers and lakes,

MONKEY the pink jade heart burst out of the mountain's chest, tumbling over

MONKEY / (*ACTOR 2 echoes Monkey*) snow, moss and mud,

MONKEY past the foot of the mountain and there stood

MONKEY & ACTOR (*simultaneously with the same warrior stance*) a pink jade stone monkey

Use characteristics of the storytelling style used in *The Monkey Queen* to present a scene from the play, such as the following excerpt. Use vivid images, fluid movement, and expressive voices in your creation. Or, present the scene as a radio play with voices and sound only or with shadow puppets.

#### MONKEY

I watched the sun, a huge, yellow egg-yolk, rise over the Great Turtle's back casting an orange light on an ancient garden of giant willow trees whose limbs brushed against the fingertips of the grasslands and the music of the wind. Slowly little heads of all shapes and sizes, furry or feathery poked out from behind long strands of leaves and thick trunks, heads full of half dreams, curious to live this day's adventures. Bright eyes blinking, arms and wings stretched out to embrace the slender branches, an orchestra of languages. There appeared a multitude of millions of owls, squirrels, black bears, minks, weasels, foxes, rabbits, swallows soaring through, swirling down, somersaulting over, swinging under a sea of golden willows trees.

In one swoop the animals leapt and fluttered into the river below them, listening to the gurgling of water whispering to them, tugging at their ears and tingling in their furs and feathers. They decided to follow the river to its source and Monkey Queen followed them. The sound of the river began like a stampede of horses galloping on sand. Then the hoof beats turned into the music of bamboos trees clapping a wild wind dance and then crescendoed into the sound of a handful of boulders shaking in a giant's fist. Suddenly they gazed up at a curtain of rain as tall as the heavens stomping its feet madly on the river's face. Frantically they found safety on the islands of rocks before being swallowed up by the angry water.

ACTOR 2 as NARRATOR A voice from the behind the Rain Curtain bellowed, saying that whoever can cross over to the other side of the Rain Curtain and return, they shall honour her as queen of our tribe.

ACTOR 2 as NARRATOR Only the waterfall was heard... And then...

MONKEY Swaying my hip to the left, warming my hip to the right, curling my toes and tucking them under the soles of my feet, sinking my bottom to the bounce and breathe of earth's gravity, listening to my heart beat give the signal, limbs outstretched, I jumped through the Rain Curtain!



## Creative Response Choice Board

As an alternative to the traditional play review assignment, give students the **Creative Response Choice Board** on the following page, and ask them to choose the way in which they would like to respond to the play. These assignments could also be shared with the class through presentations or informal group sharing.

## Creative Response Choice Board

<p><b>Artistic Response</b></p> <p>Create an original work of art that connects to a specific moment or image in the play. This piece could be a choreographic dance sequence, a painting or sculpture, or a musical composition.</p> <p>Include an artist's statement explaining your reasons for creating this piece, why you chose the medium you did to explore the play, and what you were hoping to accomplish through your work.</p>	<p><b>Creative Writing</b></p> <p>Write an original composition inspired by the play. This piece could be a monologue written in role from one character's perspective, or a new scene.</p> <p>With your writing piece, include a one-paragraph explanation of why you decided to write your original composition, and how it connects to the play.</p>	<p><b>Play Proposal</b></p> <p>Propose an idea for a new play that tells an old tale from a new perspective. For example, you could change the gender of a well-known hero, tell a story from the villain's point of view, or set the story in a modern location.</p> <p>In your proposal give a brief synopsis, character and setting descriptions, and describe some of the play's important themes and issues.</p>
<p><b>Research and Investigation</b></p> <p>Read <i>The Monkey King</i>, the origin story for the play and track similarities and differences between that story and <i>The Monkey Queen</i>.</p> <p>Summarize your findings in a short report, Prezi or Powerpoint presentation, TED Talk, or bristol board display.</p>	<p><b>Instructions: Choose one of the following creative options for your response to the play <i>The Monkey Queen</i></b></p>	<p><b>Production Book</b></p> <p>Imagine that you were to create your own production of <i>The Monkey Queen</i>.</p> <p>Create a production book that includes some of the following for your show: set and costume designs, props, rehearsal schedule, notes on the script and characters, lighting and sound cues, etc.</p>
<p><b>Letter to Cast and Crew</b></p> <p>Write a letter to the cast and crew of <i>The Monkey Queen</i>. In your letter, describe your response to the show, giving specific details to back up your point of view.</p> <p>Include ten questions you would like to ask them about the process of producing the show.</p>	<p><b>Adaptation</b></p> <p>Adapt a scene from <i>The Monkey Queen</i> into another medium, such as a short story, film, or comic.</p> <p>Include a one-paragraph statement that explains why you chose this scene to adapt and what you are trying to express or highlight in your adaptation.</p>	<p><b>Play Review</b></p> <p>Write a review of <i>The Monkey Queen</i> that includes your own opinion of the production.</p> <p>Format your review into a newspaper style article, including a visual, headline, and ranking of your plays (e.g. three stars out of five, two thumbs up).</p>

## Resources

### Books

*Gods and Heroes: Mythology Around the World* by Korwin Briggs. Workman Publishing, 2018.

*Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls: 50 Postcards of Women Creators, Leaders, Pioneers, Champions, and Warriors* by Elena Favilli and Francesca Cavallo. Clarkson Potter, 2018.

*The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. by Joseph Campbell. New World Library, 2008.

*Illustrated Stories from Around the World* by Lesley Sims. Urborne Books, 2010.

*Journey to the West*, nine volume translation from the original. Available at the Riverdale Public Library and the University of Toronto Library.

*The Little Monkey King's Journey: Stories of the Chinese Zodiac* by Li Jian, Illustrated by Yijin Wert. Tuttle Publishing, 2012.

*Monkey* by Ch'Eng-En Wu, translated by Arthur Waley. Grove Press, 1994.

*The Monkey King's Amazing Adventures: A Journey to the West in Search of Enlightenment* by Wu Cheng'en, retold by Timothy Richard. Tuttle Publishing, 2012.

*The Monkey King: A Classic Chinese Tale for Children* by David Seow, Illustrated by L.K. Tay-Audouard. Tuttle Publishing, 2017.

*The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert Munsch, Illustrated by Michael Martchenko. Annick Press, 2009.

*The Serpent Slayer and Other Stories of Strong Women* retold by Katrina Tchina, Illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman, Little, Brown and Company, 2000.

*The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka, Illustrated by Lane Smith. Penguin Books, 1996.

### Video

*The Forbidden Kingdom*. Chinese-American fantasy-adventure martial arts film featuring Jet Li as the Monkey King, 2008.

*Journey to the West* (CCTV). Chinese television series adapted from the classic novel, 1986.

**Websites**

How the Monkey King Came to Be (YouTube, Off the Great Wall, 2015)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yN3\\_6efimoQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yN3_6efimoQ)

Background and Context on Journey to the West

[http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Journey\\_to\\_the\\_West](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Journey_to_the_West)

List of popular revisionist fairy tales

<https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/revisionist-fairy-tale>

Database of Myths from Around the World - Scholastic

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/mff/myths.htm>

Heroes Unit, CODE

<https://www.code.on.ca/resource/heroes>

First Nations, Métis & Inuit Education Association of Ontario

<http://fnmieao.com>