

Study Guide for Yuri Lane's *MeTube*

By Alexis MacLennan

Every spring, the Chicago Humanities Festival offers **Stages, Sights, and Sounds**, a mix of the best theater, music, dance, puppetry, and visual art the world has to offer. 2010 features three international companies making their Chicago debuts: Scotland's Visible Fictions, Israel's The Galilee Multicultural Theatre, and France's Vélo Théâtre. Two Chicagoans, Frank Maugeri of Redmoon Theater and beatboxer/vocal percussionist Yuri Lane, treat us to brand-new work. At the audience's request, we also welcome back Leah Mann and Ela Lamblin, the dynamic duo behind Lelavision, whose stunning physicality and musical sculptures made it the runaway hit of the 2008 festival.

We have prepared study guides for each of the 2010 performances. These materials will help teachers ready their classes for the 2010 **Stages, Sights, and Sounds** and provide activities and ideas to explore with students long after the Festival is over.

ABOUT THE CHICAGO HUMANITIES FESTIVAL

The Chicago Humanities Festival (CHF) creates year-round opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and economic circumstances to explore, enjoy, and support the arts and humanities. We accomplish this by presenting programs throughout the year, culminating in two annual Festivals of the Humanities, one in the spring specifically for children and families and one in the fall for the general public. The CHF's mission of providing broad access to the humanities – at a low ticket price – depends in part on the generosity of its most committed and enthusiastic supporters.

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Lesson Plan:

MeTube Yuri Lane

MeTube is a personal journey through the world of YouTube celebrity that confronts issues of authenticity, originality, and self-image through beatbox and live video performance. This one-man show is Yuri Lane's semi-autobiographical tale about becoming the number one video on YouTube, and the journey of self-examination that it takes him on. The show explores our identity as represented through technology, the "new selves" that we have created on the internet. It illustrates the positive and negative sides of technology like YouTube: it gives you the ability to communicate with people all over the world, but when you use it you are also exposing your life to public scrutiny. You never know who is consuming the content you put on the internet, or why.

MeTube demonstrates how we might use technology to communicate, and the possibilities of using technology creatively and artistically. It also offers some things to think about before using sites like YouTube. There are things to look out for, Lane reminds us; once you put your work or words out there, everyone can see it. *MeTube* cautions that on the internet everything is transparent, and you must know what you are talking about, and think about the repercussions of what you say.

MeTube is also about the art of listening and of storytelling. It reveals the ways we can communicate without language. *MeTube* encourages listening to the world around you, learning about a place through sound. Each character in the story has a unique sound expressed through beat box. *MeTube* also has an interactive element, and viewers become characters in the show as they share their comments live on YouTube. In the end the message of *MeTube* is about the power of the human being, reminding us that, with all the technology we have, communication, creativity, and self-expression still depend on human contact that isn't available through the Internet.

STAGES SIGHTS & SOUNDS

CONTENTS

In this guide you'll find:

- Two lesson plans are recommended for 8th and 9th grades.
- The activities will take one class session, and require a three- to five-day take-home assignment.
- This activity can be used in preparation for or in response to the **Yuri Lane** performance of *MeTube*.

ACTIVITY: SETTING THE SCENE**Overview:**

In *MeTube*, Yuri Lane relates scenes from his experience using sound and dialogue. In this lesson, students practice “setting the scene” through sensory details and dialogue. Writing a personal narrative is an important skill for high school students as they begin to think about college admission essays, but also as many students embrace technology to express themselves and share personal stories on the internet. Writing about something they experienced firsthand is a good way for students to explore what makes an engaging and realistic scene, to practice using good writing techniques when writing about themselves, and to exercise the “show; don’t tell” principle.

TIMEFRAME: One class session.

Students Will:

- Write a short scene from a first-person point of view.
- Establish time, place, and characters through description.
- Engage the reader through sensory detail and dialogue.

Give students an example scene to brainstorm as a class. Divide the board into two columns, “see” and “hear” and ask students to give examples of these sensory details for your scene.

Ex. Asking a crossing guard for directions on a busy downtown sidewalk.

See

Bright orange vest
Green, yellow, red traffic lights
Black, gray, and navy suits
walk

Hear

Traffic whizzing by
Ambulance sirens
Heels clicking briskly on the sidewalk

Ask students to think of a specific encounter they have had that they could narrate in one or two paragraphs. This could be a trip to the dentist, an interview, a store clerk, even a phone call, as long as it has both a conversation and a setting they recall well enough to describe in detail.

Have students write down their encounters. Encourage them to focus on what they are doing, saying, thinking, and sensing. The idea is to communicate where they are and what they are doing without saying, for example, “I’m by a fountain in the park, talking to a lady about her dog.”

Ask a few students to read their scenes to the class and see if others can guess where the scene took place based on the details provided.

EXTENSIONS:

Have students try keeping a “senses” journal for a few days, writing down details of what they see and hear in the course of a normal day.

ACTIVITY: ONE-MINUTE AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

Overview: *MeTube*, a semi-autobiographical story about identity and self-expression, provides an excellent starting point for talking to students about how they represent themselves on the Internet, and how they can express themselves positively and creatively using the new media available to them.

According to Lane, the average person will give his or her full attention to something on the Internet for about one minute. This lesson will draw on the themes of *MeTube* (authenticity, originality, and self-image) and challenge students to create videos or oral presentations expressing who they are in one minute or less.

TIMEFRAME: One (1) class session; one (1) take-home assignment (lasting three-five days).

Students Will:

- Discuss what it means to be authentic and original in expressing yourself.
- Define identity and create an identity map.
- Write about what they think is most important to share with others about themselves and why.
- Create one-minute videos or oral presentations about themselves.

IDENTITY

Write “Identity” on the board and ask students to define it, writing their suggestions on the board. Have them brainstorm all the forces that act on our identities and add those to the board as well.

Distribute plain sheets of paper for students to create their identity maps. Students should write “Me” in the center and circle

it. Ask them to write all the things they think of as part of their identity around the circle, and show how they connect to each other and the circle. Ask them to consider all of the factors that inform who they are – race, family, gender, religion, ethnicity, education, social class, attitudes, interests, passions, responsibilities, beliefs, concerns, and so on. They should focus on the present, not the past or the future.

Here is a link to an example of what a finished identity map might look like:

<http://graphics8.nytimes.com/images/blogs/learning/pdf/2010/20100211socialmapexample.pdf>

If there is time, or as a homework assignment, have students use their identity maps to write about what they would most want to express about themselves if they only had one minute to do so. Ask them to write a rough draft of their one-minute autobiography and time themselves reading or performing it.

EXRESSING YOURSELF

Ask students to brainstorm (as a class or in small groups) what it means to express yourself. Ask students how they express themselves, keeping track of their ideas on the board. Is it important to be authentic when expressing yourself in person? What about on the internet? How important is it to be creative or original when expressing yourself?

If your class will make videos of their one-minute autobiographies:

Ask students to think creatively about how they can express their identities through a one-minute video.

Have them write down ideas for how to “show, not tell” who they are in their videos including where they will shoot the video and what they will say and do in the video. However they choose to structure their videos, remind students that they should be the focus of and only character in their videos.

Here are some related examples you may want to look at or share with your class:

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/02/22/education/tufts.html>

They are videos made by high school students to supplement their applications to Tufts University.

The students should make their videos as a homework project over the course of three days to a week. Be sure to check with students about their progress and whether they are having any problems with technology or equipment.

Have students share their videos with the class.

If your class will do oral presentations:

Ask students to think creatively about how they can express their identities through a one-minute presentation. Have them write down ideas for how to “show, not tell” who they are in their presentations. Students may choose to make their presentations performative, following the example of *MeTube*, or to narrate a story from their life. However they choose to structure the presentation, remind students that they should be the focus of their presentations.

Students should be able to prepare their presentations over the course of 2-3 days. They should be memorized if possible.

Have students give their presentations in front of the class.