

## ***The Circuit* Monologue Project Lesson**

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**Summer 2014**

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### **Objectives**

This project is designed to enable students to engage on multiple levels with the history of migrants in the United States, the complexities of immigration, and critically analyze the plot, themes, and characterization of Francisco Jimenez's autobiographical collection of short stories, *The Circuit*, and foster close textual reading skills through working with choice, interpretation and individual creative writing.

### **Overview**

The history of immigration in California is rich with personal stories that helps gain insight to the complicated history, laws, and geography. This project asks students to embody a character from *The Circuit*, or invent one, in order to perform a monologue that explores the complexity of the immigration debate by looking at a particular experience and place in time. This project utilizes Francisco Jimenez's *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child* but could be used with Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, TC Boyle's *The Tortilla Curtain*, or any novel, short story or text dealing with immigration. This project can also be used as a culminating project for a study of literature or as part of a greater unit of study on immigration and the movement of people.

### **Procedures**

1. Lead students in the reading and discussions of *The Circuit* by Francisco Jimenez through literature circles, small and large group discussions and informal writing responses answering comprehension questions and those related to literary elements, author's intent and storytelling technique and historical connections.
2. Pass out "The Circuit Monologue Project Activity Guide" and go over the overview reading the "Creating the Monologue" section aloud answering questions and clearing up any discrepancies.
3. Students then should complete the word web identifying themes, ideas and emotions presented in the story of their choosing, complete the free write, and identify a character and complete the "interview". Students determine the theme/topic that they relate to/find the most compelling from the story and which character is linked to that theme (or invents one)

4. Watch Anna Deavere Smith's "Twilight" and review the written "script" to the monologues included in the film. Have students complete the analysis handout called "Anna Deavere Smith Twilight Discussion Guide"
5. As students to complete the "Character Information Sheet" and the "Character Monologue" sections in the project packet, writing a profile of the character of their choosing to begin the work of writing a monologue from that character's perspective on the events of the story
6. Students perform monologues and evaluate each other's performances using the "Performance Evaluation" forms included in the project packet and giving real time feedback. While individuals could perform over a period of time, small groups could also work together to link their monologues to create a "conversation" between characters
7. Class then reflects on the project in order to determine what was learned, what was successful, what could have been improved upon

### **Connections / Adaptions**

#### *Interdisciplinary Connections:*

This project can be done with an interdisciplinary component in Drama. Students learned dramatic techniques and dramatic presence before reading the "The Lottery." In both Humanities and Drama, students worked to choose a character from the story- real or imagined- and to then write and perform a monologue that went with the story either during or after the event. Students then performed their monologues in character.

### **CCS for ELA & History/Social Studies**

#### *For Language:*

##### Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances of word meanings.

#### *For Reading*

##### Key Ideas and Details

2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

#### *For Literature*

1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matter uncertain.

*For Writing*

Text Types and Purposes

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Range of Writing

10. Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

**Sources**

Jimenez, Francisco. *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child*. University of New Mexico Press, 1997.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bridges: Humanities & Drama: The Circuit

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Circuit

By Francisco Jimenez

## Monologue Project

*We have worked to explore the themes and events of the collected stories in Francisco Jimenez's book *The Circuit*. Now imagine what would happen if you had the power to voice some of the concerns, emotions, and reactions of the characters in the story and the people in the community. It is time to find out! For this project, you will choose a character from any of the stories in *The Circuit* (or invent one) and create a poetic monologue. Literally, you will become that character by exploring the ways that the character thinks, speaks and moves in relation to the events and themes of the story.*

You will perform your monologue on: \_\_\_\_\_

## Creating the Monologue

**DIRECTIONS:** Follow the steps below to create your monologue.

1. Choose a character from a story in *The Circuit*. You may choose a major character from the story such as Mama, Roberto, and Trampita or a minor character like Mr. Ito or Mr. Lima or the couple that comes to the door selling their possessions. You may also choose to invent a character you think fits with the stories of *The Circuit*.
2. Write a description of the character that you chose.
  - Who is this character?
  - What are the characteristics of this character? (What is his/her personality? What does s/he look like? How does s/he stand/move/gesture? What does s/he sound like?)
  - Who are the important people in this character's life? What are their relationships?
  - What does a typical day for this character look like?
  - Does this character work? What does this character do for fun?
  - What problems or conflicts does this character have? Explain.
3. Write a short biography of your character. This should be one page or less.
4. Write a draft of your monologue using line breaks to indicate natural pauses in speech. This monologue is the script for your performance. The more you work on your monologue and be creative with it, using "um"s and lines breaks, the easier it will be to perform it to sound more naturally like the character you chose.

5. Practice your monologue. Practice the character's speech patterns, pauses, gestures, and body language. On \_\_\_\_\_, you will perform your monologue in front of your classmates. You may, but are not required to, memorize your monologue and perform it in costume.

# The Circuit

By Francisco Jimenez

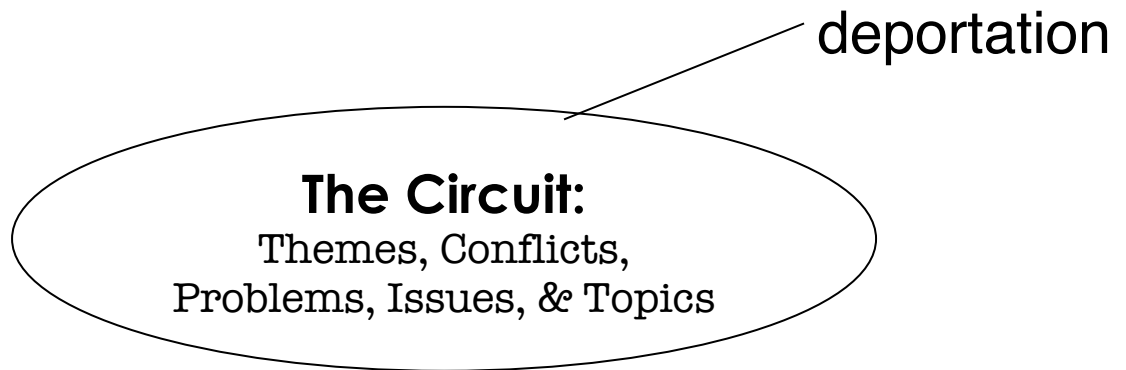
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## Monologue Project

*The Circuit is a layered collection of interconnected short stories that reveal the life of migrant workers in U.S. history in many ways. It deals with difficult ideas and asks us to think about the American Dream, the role of family, the nature of work, and push and pull of immigration. Through the Monologue Project we will work to give voice to these issues and topics and make these voices heard. The first step is to identify some of the themes and topics of The Circuit and the complexities around them.*

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**DIRECTIONS:** In the space below, brainstorm the topics, themes, issues, and problems that characters face in *The Circuit*. Think of at least 5 things.



Now choose one theme or issue from above that is important to you. Then do a free write on that issue and how it affected characters in *The Circuit* including what problems it created, who

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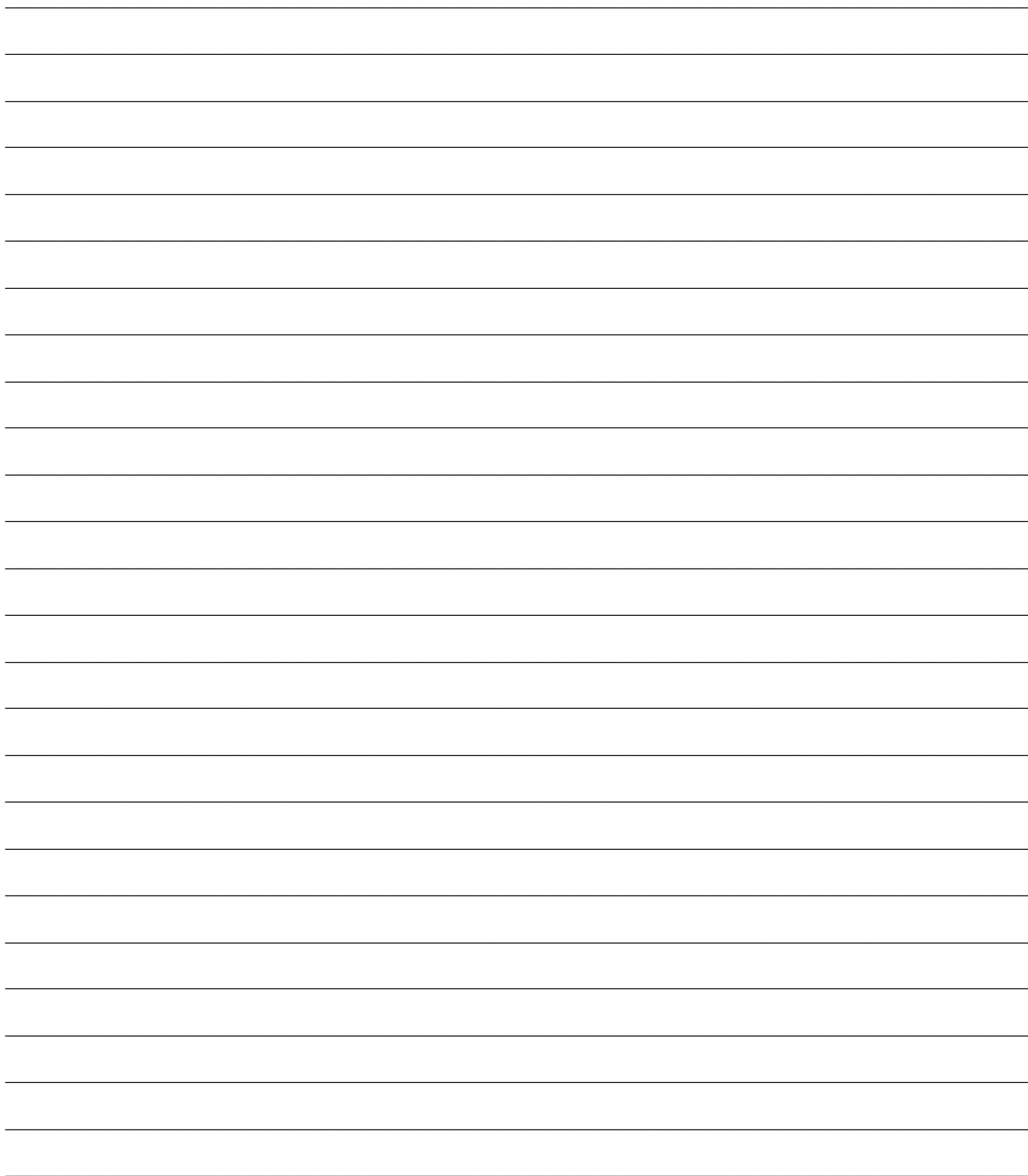
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Which character was affected the most by this issue or topic. In order to get more information and to see how that character dealt with or felt about the issue, you will write five questions to ask that character. Then, answer the questions in the point of view and voice of that character.

The character you feel was most affected by this issue: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bridges: Humanities & Drama: The Circuit

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Circuit

By Francisco Jimenez

## Monologue Project

### Character Information Sheet

**DIRECTIONS:** Now that you have chosen a character for your monologue, please fill out the information below.

1. What is the approximate age and gender of the person you chose?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Describe the clothes he/she is wearing. (Be as descriptive as you can.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Describe the facial expression of the person. (Be as descriptive as you can.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Describe the body language and gesture of the person. (Be as descriptive as you can.)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What do you think this person had been doing right before saying this monologue? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What do you think is important to him/her? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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7. Who is the monologue directed toward and why? \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bridges: Humanities & Drama: The Circuit

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Circuit

By Francisco Jimenez

## Monologue Project

### Character Monologue

#### What is a 'Monologue'?

A monologue is an extended, uninterrupted speech by one person only. The person may be speaking his or her thoughts aloud or directly addressing other persons, e.g. an audience, a character, or a reader. As a literary device, it is most common in dramatic genres (plays, opera, animated cartoons, film) but can also be found in prose fiction. The term can also be applied to poems, which usually take the form of the thoughts or speech of a single individual.

**There are 3 Essentials of a successful monologue. They are:**

- Talking to someone
- Display of a powerful/personal emotion
- It is a speech with a point or a meaning

**DIRECTIONS:** Now it is time for you to write the monologue for the character that you chose and that you will perform in class. Start with a few questions to get you started and then write a first draft.

Which character did you choose? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the topic of this monologue? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the character's point of view or point to this monologue? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is this monologue being said to? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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What emotions does this character feel while saying this monologue? \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bridges: Humanities & Drama: The Circuit

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Circuit

By Francisco Jimenez

## Monologue Project

### Performance Evaluations

**DIRECTIONS:** As you watch each other's monologues, fill out the evaluation sheet below as honestly and thoughtfully as possible.

**Name of the performer:** \_\_\_\_\_

- What is something that was done well?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- What is one suggestion you have for the monologue?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Name of the performer:** \_\_\_\_\_

- What is something that was done well?

\_\_\_\_\_

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- What is one suggestion you have for the monologue?

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bridges: Humanities & Drama: The Circuit

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Circuit

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## Monologue Project

### Reflection

**DIRECTIONS:** Think about your experience performing your monologue and furthering your studies of *The Circuit*.

1. What was the experience of the performance like for you? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What connections, themes, and contradictions did you notice? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. How did working on your monologues, performing it, and watching others in the class help you better understand the stories and content of *The Circuit*? Why?

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