

MOONBOW
MIRACULOUS

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT BY
Kirk Shimano



CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDE

Introduction

Moonbow Miraculous is a series of vignettes exploring the theme of coming out, reflecting the infinite diversity of experience by adding everything from robots to talking donuts into the mix.

Playwright Bio

Kirk Shimano is a playwright based in Vancouver, British Columbia. His works tend to live on the intersection of Gay Street and Nerdy Avenue, having explored the human side of lovesick zombies, overbearing Mesopotamian deities, and insecure robots. A previous resident of San Francisco, he has worked with a number of theatre companies in the Bay Area indie scene.

By day, Kirk works as an engineer in the movie visual effects industry, an experience he dramatized in his Hero Creature Work. He makes tools for artists who illuminate imaginary things with lights that do not actually exist.

Synopsis

This play is a series of vignettes on the topic of discovering one's self and claiming one's identity. It seeks to celebrate bravery and to welcome all, no matter how they identify. The moonbow allows characters to be brave and speak their truth in this play.

Prologue / Interlude / Epilogue

The Lost One goes in search of The Weatherling to ask them to make it rain. The Weatherling refuses, instead inviting them to stay and observe the moonbow, whose magic influence encourages individuals to share their true selves. This will be the guiding light for the play.

Scene 1: I'm Super Nervous About This

The power died during Kai and Sam's movie night. Sam uses this opportunity to finally come out to Kai...as a superhero. This vignette explores having the courage to take a leap of faith and trust a friend.

Scene 2: I Scare Myself Sometimes

Urgh has agreed to let Oof tag along to learn about the nightly work of a monster-in-the-closet. But why is Oof so interested in this trip? Does Oof realize they have much more in common with Urgh than the humans they currently identify with?

Scene 3: I Donut Believe You

A raspberry donut has been placed on the strawberry rack. While this raspberry donut knows what they are inside, getting a neighboring strawberry donut to see the truth is a complicated proposition.

Scene 4: A Sharp Left Turn

A left-handed apprentice in a strictly right-handed world refuses to bury themselves under the weight of tradition. Ultimately, the apprentice is forced to defy the stewardship of their guardian and find a place where they can be their true self.

Scene 5: Vamping For Time

It is time for The Ancient One and The Youngling to arise out of their coffins and conquer the night, but the Youngling is not ready. The Ancient One is disappointed at first, but comes to realize that no one should be forced to take steps they are not ready for.

Scene 6: Non-Binary

Alpha and Beta are two robots that communicate only in ones and zeroes. When Beta's language expands beyond the binary, the two of them come to embrace a world much larger than they had originally envisioned.

Characters

Prologue / Interlude / Epilogue

LOST ONE: a wanderer in search of a cure

WEATHERLING: a strange being with strange powers

Scene 1: I'm Super Nervous About This

SAM: a kind, unassuming individual with a super big secret

KAI: a supportive friend

Scene 2: I Scare Myself Sometimes

URGH: an old pro, serving scares and proud of it

OOF: a monster with an identity crisis

Scene 3: I Donut Believe You

STRAWBERRY: a strawberry donut

RASPBERRY: a raspberry donut

Scene 4: A Sharp Left Turn

GUARDIAN: a skilled craftsman dedicated to the old ways

APPRENTICE: an eager student, unafraid to ask questions

Scene 5: Vamping For Time

THE ANCIENT ONE: an immortal child of the night

YOUNGLING: another immortal, but newer to the game

Scene 6: Non-Binary

ALPHA: beep, bop, boop. Just your average everyday robot

BETA: beep, bop...boop? A robot with questions

Themes

Childhood, happiness, individuality, kindness, self-reflection, relationships, theatre

Pre-Read Questions

- ★ What does identity mean to you? How do you identify?
- ★ When was one time you had to be courageous?
- ★ What would you do if someone decided your identity for you?
- ★ Can you change your identity? Do you believe people can change?
- ★ Does anyone see you as different from how you identify? How do you deal with that?
- ★ Have you ever heard of a moonbow? What do you think moonbow means?
- ★ What does a secret mean to you? Have you ever held a secret close to your heart?
- ★ When was one time you told someone a secret about yourself? How did they react? How did you feel giving voice to the secret?

Pre-Read Activities

Research Project: What is a moonbow?

- ★ In groups, students will research what a moonbow is.
 - » What details can you find out?
 - » How does a moonbow happen?
 - » Does a moonbow have any special meaning to people? Spiritual meaning? Supernatural meaning? Is it a symbol for anything?

- » How rare is a moonbow? Where are some places in the world where they have appeared?
- ★ After completing their research students will create a presentation in which everyone in the group must take part. It can be:
 - » A live oral presentation with a visual component such as a slide deck
 - » An original scene
 - » A recorded presentation (filmed scene, or oral presentation with visual component)

Creating Brave Spaces

- ★ As a class, discuss what each student needs to feel brave.
 - » What does bravery mean to each student?
 - » What helps each person feel brave?
 - » How can the classroom become a brave space for the student?
 - » What will help students feel comfortable and courageous when discussing identity?
 - » What do they need from each other? What does each student need from the teacher?
- ★ Create a list of what is discussed and what is needed to be brave. Hang this list in the classroom so students remember that they have a place to be brave and to be heard.

Moonbow Drawing

- ★ Show students different pictures of moonbows. As a group, discuss what you see.
- ★ Individually, give students a short amount of time to draw their own moonbow with the colors they want.

- ★ After time is up for drawing, discuss identity with students.
 - » What does identity mean to each student?
 - » How do they identify?
 - » Has anyone ever tried to tell them their identity?
- ★ Once students have pondered these questions go back to the moonbow drawing.
- ★ Below the moonbow (on the inside) have students write words people have tried to identify them with or have described them as. Words that they do not claim, but have been told they are. Possible categories include:
 - » Family identity
 - » Social identity
 - » Background
 - » Physical appearance
- ★ Above the moonbow (on the outside) have students write words they identify with. For possible categories look at the ones provided above.
 - » This exercise symbolizes students claiming their identity and rising above what people have told them by using the power of the moonbow.
- ★ After completing the drawing, have students present their moonbow. Some students may not be comfortable sharing everything they have written and that is okay. Make sure to provide students with a brave space where they can be vulnerable and share their identity in the classroom.

Monologue: I Am...

- ★ Give students a set amount of time to do a free write starting with the words “I am...”
- ★ Remind students that in a free write, they shouldn’t go back and edit. It’s a stream of consciousness where the pencil never leaves the paper.

- ★ Once this time is up, have students reflect on what they wrote. What did they learn about themselves through the free write? Any new discoveries? What identities did they claim?
- ★ Now have students edit their free write into a monologue. Allow students to create a character from their free writing.
 - » How does this character feel? How do they identify? Do they have an inner or outer conflict surrounding their identity?

Monologue: I Will Be...

- ★ Have students reflect on who they think they are right now. What makes up their identity?
 - » Family identity
 - » Social identity
 - » Background
 - » Physical appearance
- ★ Then, based on this information, have students write a monologue from their perspective, ten years in the future. Where will they be? What do they think will stay the same? What will change?

Identity Quotes

- ★ In pairs, give students a set amount of time to research quotes about identity.
- ★ Have students pick out their favorite one to present to the class.
 - » What does it mean to them?
 - » What is the person saying the quote trying to say?
 - » Why was this the pair's favorite?
- ★ After sharing, have students write out the quote on fun colored construction paper.

- ★ After they are written, create an identity wall in the classroom where you can hang all these quotes to remind students why their identity is important!

Close Reading Analysis Questions

Close reading is an analysis tool. Students read a text multiple times for in-depth comprehension, striving to understand not only what is being said but **how** it's being said and **why**. Close reading takes a student from story and character to drawing conclusions on author intention. Close reading prompts students to flex their thinking skills by:

- ★ Teaching students to engage with a text.
- ★ Teaching students to be selective. We can't highlight everything in the text, only the most important elements.
- ★ Teaching students to make educated decisions. All conclusions and opinions must be backed up with a text example.

Have students analyze *Moonbow Miraculous*, individually or in groups, using the following text-dependent questions:

Read One: What is happening?

1. What is your first impression of the play?
2. Why does The Lost One come searching for The Weatherling? What does The Lost One want?
3. What is Sam's secret in scene 1?
4. What lesson(s) is Urgh teaching Oof in scene 2?
5. What does Oof think about themselves? How does Oof feel in scene 2?
6. What is the conflict in Scene 3? How do the donuts feel about the conflict?
7. What brings joy to The Lost One in the interlude? What makes them sad?

8. Describe the relationship between the apprentice and the guardian in scene 4. What is the conflict? How are their views similar? How are they different?
9. What is supposed to happen in Scene 5 when The Ancient One says arise? What actually happens?
10. What happens in Scene 6 when Beta says 2, 3?
11. How has The Lost One changed at the end of the play?

Read Two: How does it happen?

1. In the casting note, the playwright states that the characters are “appropriate for any gender, race, age or other human characteristics.” Based on this statement, how would you cast the play?
2. Why do you think that the playwright uses The Lost One as a repeated character in the play? How does this help guide the story?
3. How do you think the playwright came up with the name for each scene? Why do you think he chose those titles?
4. How does the darkness/nighttime help set the mood and tone for each scene?
5. How would you costume Urgh and Oof in scene two? What kind of creatures do you think they are?
6. How does the playwright use vignettes to tell his story? How do they all tie together?
7. How would you block/stage Scene 3 with the donuts?
8. What literary technique is the playwright using in Scene 3 to bring the donuts alive? How does this help you visualize the story?
9. Why do you think the playwright includes an interlude?
10. Why do you think the apprentice and guardian have to wear a red glove on their right hand? What do you think red symbolizes?

11. Why is the author repeating zero, one in Scene 10? How did this repetition build suspense in the scene?
12. If the play were to continue, what do you think would happen to The Lost One?

Read Three: Why does it happen?

1. What is the playwright trying to say about identity? Cite the text to support your answer.
2. In your opinion, why is the moonbow important to the play? Why do you think the playwright chose a moonbow instead of a rainbow?
3. If you could name the scenes something different, what would you name them and why?
4. Compare and contrast your own personal experience with identity with what happens in the play.
5. Is identity flexible? Does it change over time? Discuss how you came up with your answer.
6. Scene 4 talks about there being a “right way.” Do you believe in right and wrong ways? Do you think there’s only one way to do things? Why or why not?
7. How does the playwright want you to respond to this play?
8. The play ends with “It’s a new day. Let’s go decide what to do with it.” How does this ending make you feel? What does a new day mean to you?

Post-Read Questions

- ★ What is one question that you still have about the play?
- ★ Would you end the play differently? Why or why not?
- ★ Is it hard to be courageous? Is it hard to be yourself?
- ★ If no one could tell you what to do or who to be, how would you identify yourself? What would you do?

- ★ Which was your favorite vignette? Why? What did you take away from it?

Post-Read Activities

Playwriting Exercise

- ★ Discuss the different vignettes in the play. What ties them together? How are they similar? How are they different?
- ★ Put students in groups of four and have them write their own vignette on the play topic. Tell them this would be a vignette that they could add to the play. It should tie in with the theme and go along with the playwright's story.
- ★ After a set amount of time, have students perform the vignettes they wrote for each other.
- ★ After each performance, discuss the group's work with the audience.
 - » How did it tie in with the play?
 - » What is the group saying about identity?
 - » How did the vignette make the audience feel? Was it funny? Was it sad?
 - » Was there a character that stood out? Why?

Staged Scenes

- ★ Divide students into small groups and assign each group a moment in the play. You should be able to present the whole play.
- ★ Give students time to rehearse.
- ★ Each group will present their moment.
- ★ Discuss the scenes afterward.
 - » How did seeing the scenes acted out differ from reading them?
 - » Why is it important to act a scene as well as read it?

- » Did any of the presentations offer a different interpretation of the characters than yours?

Character Voices & Walks

- ★ Several of the characters in the vignettes are not human (e.g., Donuts, Oof).
- ★ Have students walk around the space in a neutral position. Then say the name of a character in the play.
- ★ Tell students to walk around as that character. What is this character's posture? Are they fast or slow?
- ★ Then have students explore the character's voice as they interact. What does this character sound like? Does this character enjoy interacting with others? What does it want?
- ★ Then have students shake it off and do the same with another character.
- ★ When you are done with characters, tell students to pick their favorite character and walk around and interact as them. How do different characters speak to each other? How does the character feel about social interaction with someone else? Do they look people in the eye as they walk?
- ★ Once the activity is done, debrief and discuss as a class.
 - » Which character was your favorite and why?
 - » What inspired your choices for your character?
 - » What similarities did you notice between people's characters? What differences?

Character Identities

- ★ Divide the students into groups of four and assign each group a character from the play.
- ★ Have students answer different questions about identity as their character. Examples of questions are provided below:

- » What is your name?
 - » How old are you?
 - » How do you describe yourself?
 - » What is your job?
 - » What part of your identity do people first notice about you?
 - » What is one thing you love about yourself? What is one thing you would change about yourself?
 - » What is one thing you wish people knew about you?
- ★ After students answer these questions, have them introduce their character to the class.

Guess Who?

- ★ Pick a few students to be characters that will come up to the front of class. Have them pick which character they will be from a hat. Have different names of characters in the hat, so each student who acts will be a different character.
- ★ Then have students come to the front of class and say hello. They should be sitting/standing and talking like their character when they get to the front of class.
- ★ As a class, have students ask the character yes or no questions about their identity.
- ★ Once students believe they know what character it is, they can raise their hand and guess!

Set Design

- ★ For many of the scenes the stage is dark and there isn't much description of the set. Have students imagine the world this play takes place in.

- ★ What does it look like? What textures are in this world? How does it look different with and without light? Are there any popular locations in this world? How do the characters exist in this set?
- ★ Draw a sketch of the set you would have the play take place in.
 - » Given that these are vignettes, would the set designer use the same set for all the vignettes? Are there moving pieces to this set?
 - » Encourage students to get creative to discover how the world around these characters affects each person!

Playwright Process

Playwright Kirk Shimano talks about his process of writing *Moonbow Miraculous*. Have students read and then discuss/reflect on how their perception of the writing process compares to the playwright's.

What was the inspiration for writing this play?

The process of “coming out” can be a simple statement where one person helps their loved ones to understand them better, but there are so many different ways this can be experienced. I wanted to write a play that explored this variety, enjoying the highs but acknowledging the lows so that we could all share in the many emotions that come with realizing yourself and sharing this realization with others.

I wanted to infuse this with as much fun and imagination as possible because I want everyone to feel welcome to join in on the ride. At some point in our lives, we will all face the challenge of having to define what we are (and what we are not), and I hope sharing this fun journey makes that process feel a little less lonely.

What challenges did you encounter during the writing process?

With a series of vignettes, it's always a challenge to make all of the different pieces fit together as a whole. Oddly enough, part of this meant making sure that each vignette felt as unique as possible, because they had to each be equally special in order to fit together as a set.

Another key component was thinking about how the story of The Lost One frames all of the other stories. They get the most opportunity to grow and change, so that has to stand in for some of the progression we can't fully see realized in the smaller stories.

As a playwright, what is your favourite moment/character in the play and why?

My favourite moment is when Beta the robot says "three" for the first time. My hope is that by this point the audience have become experts in understanding the rhythm of these stories, so they immediately understand the large significance in such a small shift in dialogue. I hope it brings that spark of shared recognition that brings us to the theatre in the first place.

Which is harder for you, first drafts or rewrites?

First drafts, definitely. When I'm writing a first draft I'm always unsure if I know enough about where the story is going. When I'm working on rewrites, it's much easier to imagine the play in my head and to enjoy as a member of the audience eventually will.

What's your writing process like?

I usually start with a very rough outline — no more than a few pages for an entire full-length play — just to feel like I have a roadmap of where I'm going. The most important element is always understanding the emotional stakes of the story. Whenever I get lost, my first step is always to imagine myself in the place of the characters and decide which resolution would be most satisfying.

With vignettes like this, it's almost like planning seven different mini-plays at once. I had an outline for each with the key motivations behind each scene. Then, bit by bit, I worked through how to build up the conflict between each of these pairs of characters to their highest points.

What engages you about playwriting?

I always enjoy bringing fantasy and storytelling to situations that feel relatable. I love to start with a premise that might sound like it's a little "out there" but then reach a place that can be relatable to all sorts of different people.

I also look forward to seeing the way my writing is then interpreted by all of the theatre-makers who take on the play. If you're writing a short story or a poem you never get quite the same picture of what's going on in your reader's head, but with a

play you get to see a vision realized on stage that's partly the work of the author and partly the work of everyone who worked together to realize it.