

APOLLO

Apollo Launches Apollo Stories, a National Digital Learning Hub for Educators

Initial rollout includes lessons inspired by Ta-Nehisi Coates’s influential book
Between the World and Me

Site aims to be a resource for educators by providing lessons engaging justice, community activism, cultural exchange, self-discovery and more



Harlem, NY – (September 27, 2023) — The Apollo announces the launch of **Apollo Stories**, an interactive digital learning hub that aims to connect students and educators across the country with the programs and legacy of the famed Apollo, providing lesson plans, resources and activities that explore themes of social justice, cultural exchange, identity and more. The inaugural lessons are built around The Apollo’s world premiere stage adaptation of Ta Nehisi-Coates' *Between the World and Me*. Geared towards activating and amplifying the voices of high school-aged students, the program reflects The Apollo’s commitment to utilizing the arts and humanities to foster conversation centered in the Black experience—all while creating an expansive and generative community for teaching, learning, creativity, self-expression, and for giving young people a framework to understand and navigate issues of contemporary America. The Apollo Stories project is now live at stories.apollotheater.org.

“Apollo Stories will contribute to The Apollo’s vision for a new, diverse American canon and cultivate forward-looking conversations on topics about race, identity, and artistic expression. We are launching in the midst of a movement to ban books and curriculum on the Black experience—including *Between the World and Me*—from our public schools. These troubling actions are a reminder that the work of overcoming social injustice is far from over,” said **Kamilah Forbes, The Apollo’s Executive Producer**.

“Now more than ever, there is a community need for discourse on Black history and Black artistic expression, for which The Apollo has been a community hub for decades.”

The new educator-created initiative provides educators with strategies, lesson plans, and writing prompts adaptable to educator’s curriculum that explore themes of Black joy and resilience, as well as difficult subject matter including inequity and forms of trauma. The first lessons of Apollo Stories, centered on the critically acclaimed book *Between the World and Me*, examines the Black American experience in the form of a letter from author Ta-Nehisi Coates to his teenage son, navigating some of the most pressing and challenging questions about America’s history and ideals. The program will focus on three critical themes from the text—race, the Black body, and the American dream—through more than 30 lessons, workshops, and activities. In future iterations of Apollo Stories, students will be encouraged to add their original works to the platform, incorporating young voices into the platform.

Following *Between the World and Me*, Apollo Stories will release lessons centered on the new musical work *The Renaissance Mixtape*, a collaboration between the nonprofit and music and multimedia group Soul Science Lab. New projects will be added on a rolling basis.

Behind the curation of these lesson plans is a rotating cohort of “fellows” chosen by The Apollo that represent a cross section of educators from across the country, spanning New York City to Mississippi to Georgia and the Bay Area. Following publication of the lesson plans, all participating educators are invited to expand upon the material and submit their own ideas and related lessons, as well as the resulting student work, organically growing the catalog of shared content. The Apollo will moderate all submitted content.

The Apollo Stories project is led by The Apollo Education Department, Arts Educator Benton Greene and Apollo arts consultant James Kass. The initiative is supported by JPMorgan Chase and the Ella Fitzgerald Foundation, along with a handful of community partners including: The Kennedy Center, The Black Teacher Project, National Equity Project, The XQ Institute, Bright Research Group, and Youth Speaks/ Brave New Voices.

"At this pivotal moment in our nation's history regarding the issue of race, it is essential that we provide educators, parents, and students with meaningful resources and knowledge to encourage conversation and help build bridges between diverse communities, said Justin Grant, Executive Director of Community Development for JPMorgan Chase’s Advancing Black Pathways. "We are proud to support and amplify the Apollo Stories project, which is in line with our mission to promote racial equity in the communities we serve. We anticipate that this endeavor will have a lasting, far-reaching impact for generations to come."

As Apollo’s Artist-in-Residence from 2019-2023, Ta-Nehisi Coates’s ongoing collaboration with The Apollo includes the upcoming **[at] The Intersection: The Apollo’s Inaugural Festival of Arts & Ideas**, as well as past onstage conversations with Oprah Winfrey about his debut novel *The Water Dancer*; and Lupita Nyong’o and the late Chadwick Boseman about the film *Black Panther*. *Between the World and Me* also premiered on HBO, in a special directed by Apollo’s Executive Producer Kamilah Forbes that combines elements of The Apollo’s production, powerful readings from the book, and documentary footage.

Learn more at stories.apollotheater.org.

About The Apollo

The legendary Apollo—the soul of American culture—plays a vital role in cultivating emerging artists and launching legends. Since its founding, The Apollo has served as a center of innovation and a creative catalyst for Harlem, the city of New York, and the world. In 2024, The Apollo will open The Apollo’s

Victoria Theaters, which will include two new theater spaces, and begin the renovation of its Historic Theater, marking the first ever expansion and renovation of The Apollo in its nearly 90-year history. Read more about the project here: www.apollotheater.org/renovation-restoration-and-transformation/

With music at its core, The Apollo's programming extends to dance, theater, spoken word, and more. This includes the world premiere of the theatrical adaptation of Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me* and the New York premiere of the opera *We Shall Not Be Moved*; special programs such as the blockbuster concert *Bruno Mars Live at the Apollo*; *100: The Apollo Celebrates Ella*; and commissioned works like *The Blues and Its People* featuring Russell Gunn and *The Gathering: A Collective Sonic Ring Shout* co-presented by American Composers Orchestra and co-curated with National Black Theatre. The non-profit Apollo is a performing arts presenter, commissioner, and collaborator that also produces festivals, large-scale dance and musical works organized around a set of core initiatives that celebrate and extend The Apollo's legacy through a contemporary lens, including the *Women of the World (WOW)* Festival as well as other multidisciplinary collaborations with partner organizations.

Since introducing the first *Amateur Night* contests in 1934, The Apollo has served as a testing ground for new artists working across a variety of art forms and has ushered in the emergence of many new musical genres—including jazz, swing, bebop, R&B, gospel, blues, soul, and hip-hop. Among the countless legendary performers who launched their careers at The Apollo are Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday, James Brown, Stevie Wonder, Gladys Knight, Luther Vandross, Fat Joe, H.E.R., D'Angelo, Lauryn Hill, Jazmine Sullivan, Machine Gun Kelly, and Miri Ben Ari; and The Apollo's forward-looking artistic vision continues to build on this legacy. For more information about The Apollo, visit www.ApolloTheater.org.

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