

RESOURCE AND ACTIVITY GUIDE

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Green Thumb Theatre acknowledges the support of









Green Thumb's offices are located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwmə0kwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlílwəta? (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. As a touring company, Green Thumb Theatre's work often takes place throughout the traditional homelands of most of the Indigenous Nations and cultures across British Columbia and beyond.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Green Thumb Theatre is committed to telling stories that spark empathy and provoke critical thinking and dialogue. This resource and activity guide is intended to help educators facilitate classroom discussions before and after the performance and to delve deeper into the themes of the show.

ABOUT GREEN THUMB THEATRE

Founded in 1975, Green Thumb Theatre creates, produces, and tours plays that explore social issues relevant to the lives of children, youth, and young adults. Green Thumb provides theatre that celebrates the language and stories of today's generation and culture to stimulate empathy, debate, and critical thinking. Green Thumb has performed for over 4 million people and has toured to every province and two territories in Canada, 36 US States, and 11 countries overseas. Original plays commissioned by Green Thumb have been translated into 9 languages and produced by more than 200 theatre companies worldwide. Green Thumb Theatre is a registered charitable not-for-profit organization. www.greenthumb.bc.ca

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CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Myrtle Vince Emma Ross Eric Breker*

PRODUCTION TEAM

Playwright
Director
Stage Manager
Costume Design
Set & Props Design
Sound Design
Video Design
Study Guide Author
Promotional Illustrations
Study Guide Design

C.E Gatchalian
Leslie Dos Remedios*
Mandy Huang*
Melicia Zaini
Jennifer Stewart
Matthew MacDonald-Bain
June Hsu
Nitasha Rajoo
Grae Salisbury
The Art Left Creative Group

GREEN THUMB THEATRE LEADERSHIP & STAFF

Artistic Director
General Manager
Production & Facilities Manager
Company Manager
Accountant
Development & Outreach Officer

Anita Rochon Shannon Maung Liam Kearns Tim Carlson Susan Cai Stephanie Durán

^{*}Appears courtesy of the Canadian Actor's Equity Association







ABOUT THE PLAY

PEOPLE LIKE VINCE by C.E. Gatchalian

Myrtle is having a hard time making friends at her new school, but when Myrtle's Uncle Vince arrives in town, she finally feels like she has someone who understands her and with whom she can really be herself. Their friendship becomes the closest and most important relationship in Myrtle's life but, sometimes, Vince's behaviour confuses her – and even causes the other kids at school to make fun of her. So, when her Uncle Vince stops coming to see her, Myrtle must learn how to deal with and accept his lifelong struggle with mental illness.

CONTENT ADVISORY

Understanding Mental Health Themes in the Play

People Like Vince offers an age-and stage-appropriate, compassionate introduction to the topic of bipolar disorder. Through the character of Myrtle, students witness the impact of isolation, the importance of meaningful relationships, and the emotional complexity of loving someone with a mental illness. The play is designed to promote empathy, challenge stigma, and encourage open dialogue and awareness around mental health, making it a valuable tool for social-emotional learning and classroom discussion.

THEMES

Mental Health, Family Relationships, Navigating Difference

CHARACTERS

MYRTLE: 12 years old

VINCE: Myrtle's Uncle and best friend

PREPARING TO WATCH A SHOW

Sometimes, when young people attend a live theatrical performance for the first time, they may not realize how different it is from watching a movie or a television show. You can help them prepare for a live theatre experience by:

- Giving them a chance to use the bathroom or get a drink of water before the show begins.
- Reminding them that photos and recordings of any kind are not allowed.
- Reminding them that the actor(s) can see when they're moving around or hear if they're speaking during the performance.
- Letting them know there will be time to ask questions of the performers at the end of the show.
- Encouraging them to be active listeners by asking them to focus not only on the story, but the set, costumes, and sound design.
- Including the questions and activities from this study guide in your discussions before and after the show.

PEOPLE LIKE VINCE



WHAT IS BIPOLAR DISORDER?

A person with bipolar disorder has extreme changes or swings in moods, from mania to depression. This illness is called "bipolar" disorder because of the two "poles" of mood. It is sometimes called manic depression because people have periods of mania and periods of depression.

The word "manic" means a person feels overly excited and confident. They may then quickly change to feeling confused, irritable, angry, and even full of rage.

A person with depression feels very sad or may lose interest in things they used to enjoy. Sometimes people with bipolar disorder are diagnosed as having major depression by mistake.

People can also have symptoms of mania and depression at the same time. These periods are called mixed episodes. They may have normal moods between mood swings.

Source: https://keltymentalhealth.ca/bipolar-disorder

HOW CAN I EXPLAIN BIPOLAR DISORDER TO YOUNG PEOPLE?

You may wish to discuss bipolar disorder as: Some people's feelings sometimes zoom really high, like they have a load of energy and feel like they're on top of the world. Other times, their feelings go really low, they might feel sad, tired, or like they don't want to do anything. These changes can happen quickly and make it hard for them to do everyday things.

Sometimes people have big feelings or act in surprising ways. This does not make them bad or scary, it means they might need extra support. Remember, everyone deserves kindness, even if they are different.

Please refer to the resources page of this study guide for further reference. It is recommended that teachers, school administrators and school counsellors are informed that certain scenes in the play may be emotionally sensitive for some students (and adults!). Students should be made aware of the play's themes in advance to help them prepare for the content.

Schools are encouraged to be prepared for a range of emotional responses and questions from students following the performance, and to provide appropriate support as needed. This study guide can help.

DISCLAIMER

The materials in this study guide are intended for general informational purposes only and should not be considered professional advice.
They are not a substitute for the specialized training, subject matter expertise, or judgment of qualified healthcare, mental health, or school counselling professionals.

VINCE: I'm bipolar.

MYRTLE: What is that?

VINCE: When I'm sad, I'm really sad, I mean really, really sad, so sad that I can barely get out of bed. And when I'm happy, well, I just have so much energy. One time, I was so hyper that I didn't sleep for nine straight days. In those nine days I finished fifteen paintings and flew to Jamaica and Paris. Then I got sad again. See, I can't tell how happy or sad I'm going to be.





INTERVIEW WITH THE PLAYWRIGHT C.E. Gatchalian

Why is this story important to share?

Because it sheds light on something we don't talk about enough—how young people are affected by mental illness in their families, and how deep love and loyalty can coexist with confusion, fear, or social stigma. Myrtle's story is about standing by someone who doesn't always fit in, and it asks us to question why difference is so

often treated as something to be ashamed of. Sharing this story helps break the silence and reminds us that understanding and compassion are choices we can all make, even when it's hard.

What do you hope audiences take away from meeting Myrtle and Vince?

I hope audiences see the beauty and complexity of their relationship. Myrtle sees Vince fully—not just his illness, but his humour, creativity, and warmth. And Vince sees her in a way others don't. They bring out the best in each other. I want audiences, especially young people, to come away feeling like they, too, can embrace people who are different—and that it's okay to love someone fiercely, even if the world around you doesn't always understand.

There is a recurring motif of fishing in the play. What significance does nature hold in the story?

Nature is a space of refuge in the play. It's where Myrtle and Vince can be themselves—where they can talk, be quiet, play, and just be, without judgment. The act of fishing becomes a metaphor for patience, presence, and connection. For Myrtle, it's also a way of holding onto the bond she shares with Vince when the rest of her world feels unstable or unkind. Nature offers a kind of nonverbal wisdom in the play—it doesn't need to fix anything, it just holds space for what is.

What was the hardest part about writing this play and how did you overcome it?

Writing about mental illness in a way that's truthful but also accessible to young audiences was a big challenge. I didn't want to "sanitize" the experience, but I also didn't want it to feel overwhelming or didactic. The key was staying inside Myrtle's perspective—centering her love, confusion, and strength. She's not trying to explain or diagnose her uncle—she's trying to stay connected to him, and that's what makes the story human. Leaning into her emotional truth helped me find the balance.

What curiosities do you hope young people leave with after seeing the performance?

I hope they leave wondering what it really means to be "normal." I hope they're curious about what mental illness actually is, beyond the stereotypes. I hope they ask: How do I support someone I care about who's going through something hard? What does it mean to be a true friend? How can I be kinder to people—and to myself? But mostly, I hope they leave with a bigger heart and a little more courage to love boldly and think for themselves.



PRE-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These discussion questions aim to stimulate creative and critical thinking while providing an opportunity to hypothesize about the production:

Elementary Questions

- 1. What makes you special?
- 2. What makes you different from other people?
- 3. Why do you think it's important to talk about our feelings and moods?
- 4. What do you think the title People Like Vince means, and what kind of person do you imagine Vince might be?

Intermediate Questions

- 1. How do you define mental health?
- 2. How do we celebrate and accept people who come from different backgrounds?
- 3. How can we be good friends when someone is going through a difficult time?
- 4. What gives people hope during difficult times?

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PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY #1

Mindful Breathing (All Ages)

These are fun and easy breathing exercises that can help students become more aware of their feelings, calm their bodies, and focus their minds. It is a great tool to use anytime they feel nervous, sad, or overwhelmed, just like Myrtle might have felt in the play.

Grades 2-4



Rainbow Relaxation: Mindfulness for Children [YouTube 3.46 minutes] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIbBI-BT9c4



Belly Breathing: Mindfulness for Children
[YouTube 4.05 minutes]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RiMb2Bw4Ae8

Grades 5-8



Coping Skill: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Grounding Technique [YouTube 1.51 minutes] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8IM8pgMgjEs



PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY #2

Embed Ongoing Mental Health Conversation (All Ages)

Check-ins help establish group dynamics, reinforce wellness and well-being and foster connectivity, communication and community. It also empowers students to be self-reflective and self-aware. Here are some questions that can be used and adapted to meet the needs of your class:

- · How are you feeling right now?
- If your mood were a weather report, what would it be and why?
- What colour do you feel like today and why?
- What's one word to describe your day so far?
- If your feelings were an animal, what would they be?
- What's something that made you smile today?
- Is there anything on your mind that you'd like to share?
- What do you need today to feel your best?
- · What's one thing you're looking forward to today?
- What is one thing you want to achieve today?





PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY #3 Heroes Can Be Ordinary People (All Ages)

INSTRUCTIONS: In the play, Myrtle says that heroes are people of distinguished courage or ability, admired for their brave deeds and noble qualities. Individually or in small groups, have students discuss, research, and share:

1. Who are the heroes in your life? Why? What makes them stand out?

Or

2. Who is a Canadian unsung hero? What impact have they had on their local, provincial, territorial and/ or national community?

Like how Myrtle gave a presentation about Uncle Vince in the play, students can highlight an unsung hero in their own lives; someone who may not always be noticed but has made a big difference to them.





PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY #4 Mood Roller Coaster (Grades 2-5)

A mood roller coaster illustrates how our feelings can fluctuate over time. Sometimes we feel happy and excited (like going up the hill!), and other times we might feel sad, angry, or confused (like going down quickly or turning in loops). It helps students see that:

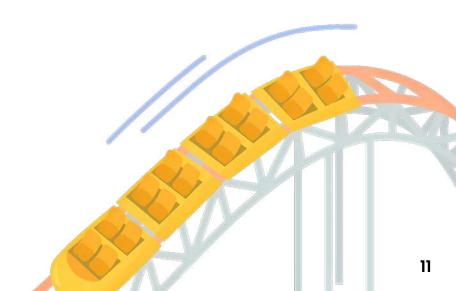
- · Emotions are normal and always changing
- It's okay to have good days and hard days
- · We can name our feelings and learn ways to manage them

INSTRUCTIONS: Have students draw and create their own mood rollercoaster. The questions below can help guide their creation:

- · What was a high point on your roller coaster today?
- Did you have any dips or loops? What helped you get through them?
- When did you have moments of joy or happiness today?
- · What moments felt hard and difficult today?

CONNECTION TO THE PLAY: After watching People Like Vince, teachers can guide students in a discussion using the following open-ended questions or invite them to draw a mood roller coaster showing how the characters' emotions changed throughout the performance.

- What do you think Myrtle's mood roller coaster looked like during the play?
- · How do you think Uncle Vince's emotions changed during the play?





POST-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These discussion questions are designed to encourage reflection and deeper analysis of the performance. Students should be encouraged to think critically about the characters, themes and key moments of the production.

- 1. What did you learn from the play?
- 2. What do the characters learn about each other?
- 3. What do you think nature represented in the play?
- 4. In what ways did Vince change Myrtle's life?
- 5. In what ways do you think Myrtle changed Vince's life?
- 6. What do you think happens next to Vince and Myrtle?



POST-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY #1 Understanding Uncle Vince (All Ages)

Curriculum Connectons: Physical Education | English Language Arts

INSTRUCTIONS: Uncle Vince is funny, creative, and a little different. He sometimes talks a lot and gets very excited. Some people don't understand him, but Myrtle loves him a lot. This activity focuses on learning about our differences and fostering dialogue for kindness and understanding.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- · What did you notice about Uncle Vince?
- How do you think Myrtle felt when Patty said she couldn't play with her anymore?
- Why do you think Patty's mom called Uncle Vince "crazy"?
- Is it okay to call someone "crazy"? Why or why not?
- What would you do if someone said your family was weird or different?

 Why do you think it might be hard for someone to do everyday things if their feelings change a lot?

What questions or curiosities do you have?





POST-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY #2 Be an Artist – Kandinsky (All Ages)

Curriculum Connectons: Arts Education | English Language Arts | Physical and Health Education

INSTRUCTIONS - Option 1: Project the images *on the next page* and, as a class, discuss the following:

- 1. What do you see when you look at Kandinsky's painting?
- 2. What colour stands out? How does it make you feel?
- 3. What shapes stand out?
- 4. Why do you think this style of art is called abstract art?
- 5. Why do you think Uncle Vince likes this artist and his work?

INSTRUCTIONS – Option 2: Use the following YouTube link to have students create their own original piece of art.

Kids Art Lesson - Wassily Kandinsky Abstract Art [YouTube 4.48 minutes] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6nZjVNaJLg

VINCE: Here, Myrtle, check this one out. This one's by Kandinsky, one of the greatest painters of the twentieth century.

MYRTLE: [looking at it] I don't get it.

VINCE: Don't think so hard. Clear your mind and just look at it.

Pause.

MYRTLE: [hesitant] Um...well...it looks like a lonesome sea monster. Is that right?

VINCE: Myrtle, there's no right or wrong in the kingdom of art. If that's what you see, then that's what it's about. As Picasso said, "People who try to find meaning in a painting are usually barking up the wrong tree." That's the great thing about art—it can be whatever you want it to be, and no one can tell you that you're wrong...or crazy.

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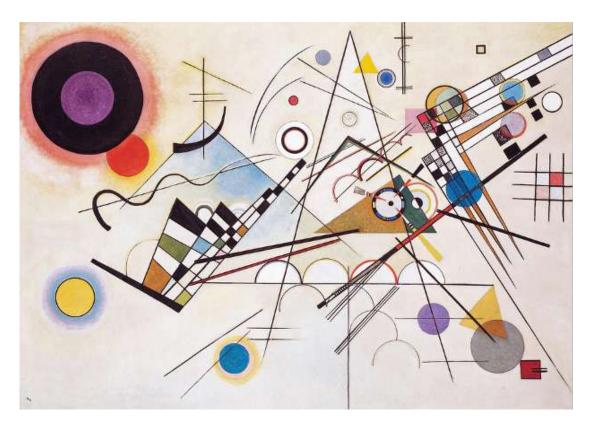


IMAGE 1: Kandinsky's Composition VIII, 1923



IMAGE 2: Kandinsky's Composition VII, 1913



POST-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY #3 What's In A Name? (Intermediate Activity)

Curriculum Connectons: Art Education | Social Studies | English Language Arts

INSTRUCTIONS: Myrtle does not like her name and feels it forces her to stand out. This activity focuses on identity and the meaning that names can have in shaping who we are. The questions below are meant for quiet self-reflection, giving students time to think about their own name and what it means to them. Sharing is completely optional; students should only share their thoughts if they feel comfortable.

To begin, ask students to write or draw their name in the centre of a piece of paper.

Look at your name.

- · How do you feel when you see it?
- Do you like your name? Why or why not?
- Do you have a name that is used for attendance, but another name you like to go by? A
 nickname or calling name?

Think about where your name came from.

- Do you know the story of how you got your name?
- Were you named after someone special?
- What does your name mean (if you know)?

VINCE: ...Myrtle...Myrtle...what a nifty name that is.

MYRTLE: As if. I know how lame my name is, but thanks for trying to make me feel better.

VINCE: It's not lame at all.

MYRTLE: Please. Mom let me in on the family secret, if it weren't her old Aunt Myrtle's dying wish she would have named me something normal, like Rebecca or Ashley.

VINCE: Yeah, Aunt Myrtle sure knew how to lay it on. But look at it this way: having a "normal" name isn't all it's cracked up to be. There are tons of Rebecca Smiths and Ashley Whites in the world-but only one-singular-Myrtle Plodget.

 ${\tt MYRTLE:}$ Thanks. But I'd rather be one of tons than the one who sticks out because they're weird.



POST-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

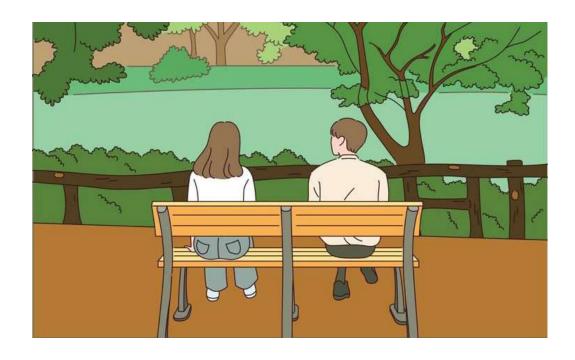
ACTIVITY #4 Future Meeting (Intermediate Activity)

Curriculum Connections: First Peoples Principles of Learning | English Language Arts

Uncle Vince leaves a note for Myrtle at her birthday party. Later, during her class presentation, Myrtle says:

"I never got a chance to tell Uncle Vince how sorry I am. I guess this project is as close as I'll get for now. Uncle Vince, I was wrong. I'm sorry. I'm sorry for lying and for pushing you away. I was so worried about trying to have more friends at school that I ended up hurting the best friend I've ever had."

INSTRUCTIONS: Write the next scene where Myrtle and Uncle Vince meet. Use dialogue to show what they say to each other and how they are feeling. Think about where the scene takes place. Is it in an art gallery, a quiet park, or another special place? Be creative and show how they talk to each other, what they want to say, and how the scene ends. Try to make the moment feel real and full of emotion.





RESOURCES

First Peoples Principles of Learning

- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place)
- · Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions
- · Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story
- · Learning involves patience and time
- · Learning requires exploration of one's identity

https://www.fnesc.ca/first-peoples-principles-of-learning/

B.C. Curriculum Connections Physical and Health Education – Big Ideas:

- · Our physical, emotional, and mental health are interconnected
- Developing healthy relationships helps us feel connected, supported, and valued
- Learning about similarities and differences in individuals and groups influences community health

English Language Arts - Big Ideas:

- Everyone has a unique story to share.
- Curiosity and wonder lead us to new discoveries about ourselves and the world around us
- Stories can be understood from different perspectives
- Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world
- Questioning what we hear, read, and view contributes to our ability to be educated and engaged citizens

Arts Education – Curricular Competencies:

- Express feelings, ideas, stories, observations, and experiences through creative works
- Personal and collective responsibility associated with creating, experiencing, or sharing in a safe learning environment
- · Take creative risks to express feelings, ideas, and experiences
- Express feelings, ideas, and experiences through the arts
- Describe, interpret and respond to works of art



RESOURCES

Key Terminology | Key Terms have been adapted from the following resources:

- Canadian Mental Health Association B.C. Division: https://bc.cmha.ca/
- The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health: https://www.camh.ca/
- Kelty Mental Health Bipolar Disorder: https://keltymentalhealth.ca/bipolar-disorder

Bipolar disorder is a mood disorder that can cause a person's moods to change back and forth between extremely high moods, called mania, and extremely low moods, called depression.

Depression is a mood disorder that can affect a person's attitudes and emotions, making them feel unusually sad or irritated for more than two weeks at a time. When someone is feeling depressed, they might:

- Be withdrawn or not interested in their favourite activities
- · Look sad or feel tearful
- · Have long moments of silence and being withdrawn
- · Be very tired or listless
- · Be constantly irritable
- Not be able to concentrate or be forgetful
- Not have the energy to do everyday activities or chores

Depressive episodes are more than feeling sad or lacking energy. It is a state that can affect relationships, work, school and social activities and interactions. Other symptoms can include loss of appetite, weight loss and sleep disturbances. Depressive episodes can make it hard for people to think clearly and stay safe.

Mania is a very high-energy mood that usually lasts for at least a week. When someone is feeling manic, they might:

- Feel super happy or excited, or very angry and upset
- · Have an increased pace of speech
- Develop numerous ideas all at one time, or have racing thoughts
- · Get distracted easily
- · Sleep very little, but still feel full of energy
- Start a lot of big projects that they can't finish
- · Spend too much money or take big risks

Medication. Doctors might prescribe medications to manage the condition and prevent episodes of mania and/or depression. The key is personalizing medical treatment to address the symptoms and needs of the individual.

Not everyone feels happy during mania. Some people might feel irritable, or may be terribly angry, disruptive and/or aggressive. Mania can make it hard for people to think clearly or stay safe.

Mood(s) are our emotional state or feeling (happy, cheerful, sad, worried, etc.).

Triggers are situations that can provoke either mania or depression in someone who has already had a history of illness and/or trauma.



RESOURCES

Indigenous, Teachers, Parents and Guardians, and Youth

Indigenous Toll-Free Crisis and Support Line:

- KUU-US Crisis Line Society https://www.kuu-uscrisisline.com/services-programs/24-hour-crisis-line
- 24-Hour Support Line [toll-free] 1 (800)-588-8717
- 24-Hour Support Line [for Child/Youth] 1 (250) 723-2040
- Chat & Text Support [all] 1 (778) 601-8009
- Kids Help Phone Support for First Nations, Inuit and Métis Youth https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-involved/support-for-first-nations-inuit-and-metis-youth/

Teachers

- Healthy Schools Toolkit Mental Health and Wellness https://www.interiorhealth.ca/sites/default/files/PDFS/healthy-schools-toolkit-mental-health-wellness.pdf
- CASEL Fundamentals of Social Emotional Learning https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/
- Here to Help- Bipolar Disorder https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/bipolar-disorder
- Kelty Mental Health | Bipolar Disorder https://keltymentalhealth.ca/bipolar-disorder
- Open Mind BC Mental Health Tools & Resources for teachers https://openmindbc.ca/teachers/
- Bipolar Disorder| Teach Special Education https://www.teachspeced.ca/bipolar-disorder
- Talking to Kids about Mental Health https://keltymentalhealth.ca/info/talking-youth-about-mental-health

Parents and Guardians

- Health Link BC https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-library/search-health-topics
- Kelty Mental Health- Building the Foundations of Mental Wellness https://keltymentalhealth.ca/healthyliving
- Mental Illness in Children and Youth https://bc.cmha.ca/documents/mental-illnesses-in-children-and-youth-2/
- CAMH Bipolar Disorder https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/bipolar-disorder
- Bipolar Disorder Myths and Facts https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/bipolar-disorder-myths-and-facts
- Bounce Back BC https://bouncebackbc.ca/
- Mental Health 101- https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-101
- Talking to Youth about Mental Health https://www.bcchildrens.ca/health-information/health-and-well-being-guidance/talking-youth-about-mental-health

Youth

- Mental Health Literacy https://mentalhealthliteracy.org/
- Kids Help Phone Line Resources https://kidshelpphone.ca/
- Jack.org https://www.jack.org/
- Kids Help Phone https://kidshelpphone.ca/
- Call [toll-free] 1 (800) 668-6868



SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS & OPINIONS!

We love getting mail and your students' feedback!

GREEN THUMB THEATRE

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5522 McKinnon Street, Vancouver, BC, V5R 0B6

Email: info@greenthumb.bc.ca

Phone: (604) 254 -4055 Fax: (604) 251 -7002

WRITE A LETTER!

Ask your students to write us a letter/email to share their thoughts and opinions on the performance of **PEOPLE LIKE VINCE** by C.E. Gatchalian. Send it to us at Green Thumb!

WRITE A REVIEW!

Have your students write a theatre review about this performance of **PEOPLE LIKE VINCE** by C.E. Gatchalian. Send it to us at Green Thumb! A theatre review usually includes the following:

- A brief summary of the story
- · A comment on the quality of the play itself
- A description of the costumes and set, and a comment on whether these were interesting and appropriate
- A comment on the actor's portrayal of the characters and on the director's skill at pulling the whole show together

There are many examples of reviews in newspapers and online that you could use to introduce the concept and format of a theatre review. For help getting started, take a look at "How to Write a Play Review" on Wiki How: https://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Play-Review

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