

**Grades: 4-5**

**Xavier Riddle and the Secret Museum,**  
**“I am Zora Neale Hurston/ I am Charles Dickens”**

Inspired by the best-selling kids book series, Ordinary People Change the World, by New York Times bestselling author Brad Meltzer and illustrator Christopher Eliopoulos, XAVIER RIDDLE AND THE SECRET MUSEUM follows the adventures of Xavier, Yadina and Brad as they tackle everyday problems by doing something extraordinary: traveling back in time to learn from real-life inspirational figures like Marie Curie, Harriet Tubman and Jackie Robinson when they were kids. Each adventure will help young viewers make the connection between the skills that made these historical figures heroes and those same qualities within themselves, helping them discover that they, too, can change the world.

I am Zora Neale Hurston - Xavier and Yadina are eager to read a new comic Brad has written, but Brad isn't so sure he can share this particular story - it's very personal. What should he do? To the Secret Museum! Our heroes are sent back in time to meet an exceptional storyteller: Zora Neale Hurston. We meet Zora as she enjoys listening to the tall tales being told on the porch of her corner store, before launching into a few tales of her own. Listening to Zora tell her own personal stories, and watching her light up as she does, helps Brad to feel more comfortable with the idea of sharing his own story with his best friends. Because stories are best when you share them with others.

I am Charles Dickens - Yadina is left feeling bored on a rainy day after she's already played with ALL her toys - there's nothing left to have fun with. With no new toys to play with, there's only one thing left to do... To the Secret Museum! Our heroes are sent back in time to meet someone who was seldom bored: Charles Dickens. After a playdate with a young Charles, which involves zero toys but oodles of fun as they jump over "shark infested waters" and swim with a funny octopus named Fanny, Yadina realizes that she doesn't need anything new to play with, because her imagination can make everything more fun.

**After watching this episode, choose from the following questions and/or tasks to extend your learning**

**Question Box 1**

Zora Neale Hurston:

- Why is Brad hesitant to let Xavier and Yadina read his new comic?
- What is Zora known for and how can she help Brad?
- What are tall tales? Why do you think Zora likes to listen and tell her own tall tales?

***Continued on the next page...***

- Describe Zora's demeanor and body language as she tells stories of her own.
- What does Zora mean when she says, "stories are best when you share them with others"?
- Read more about [Zora Neale Hurston](#)

Charles Dickens:

- What is Yadina's problem that needs to be solved?
- Describe Yadina's experience with Charles Dickens. What do they do together? How does she feel?
- What does Yadina learn from Charles Dickens?
- Do you agree that "an imagination can make everything more fun"? Why or why not, explain.
- Read more about [Charles Dickens](#).

### **Question Box 2**

- What similar characteristics do Zora Neale Hurston and Charles Dickens share?
- How did these characteristics help them both become great writers?
- Do you have characteristics that will help you to become great at something? What would you like to do? How will your attributes help you achieve your goals and dreams?
- What did/do you enjoy about this program?
- What is the one thing you particularly want people to notice when they watch this TV program?
- Now that it's over, what are my first thoughts about this overall project?

### **Box 3 (Tasks)**

- Create a storyboard of the show
- Research more about Zora Neale Hurston. What did you learn?
- Research more about Charles Dickens. What did you find?
- Let your imagination run wild! Write your own tall tale.
- Pick a tall tale [story starter](#) or write one of your own.
- Be sure to include the elements of a tall tale:
  1. The hero of the story is a super-human person who is often unusually large or strong.
  2. The hero of the story believes he/she is a common person and uses ordinary language and doesn't realize there is anything extraordinary about his/her behavior.
  3. There is a problem that needs to be solved. The solution the hero comes up with is usually funny or outrageous.
  4. Details of the story are exaggerated beyond belief. There is no doubt the story is not real!
- Are you up for a challenge? Rewrite your story into a comic strip format either [on paper](#) or on a [digital format](#).
- If Zora Neal Hurston published a book of stories, she wants 14 short stories. She has 3

***Continued on the next page...***

right now, she heard twice as many stories when she was at the corner store. How many more stories will she need to collect to put in her book? Explain your thinking.

**Box 4 (Enrichment)**

- Discuss a time when you had an idea or story that you were embarrassed to share. Did you overcome your embarrassment and share? How? If you didn't, research and discuss ways that could help you overcome being embarrassed.
- Stories are meant to be shared. What stories do you want to share?
- Describe a time when you've used your imagination to make things more fun.
- Create a reader's theater play from your own tall tale. Get some friends to act out the parts!

**Box 5 (Extend/Real-Life)**

- Read comic strips from the newspaper. Tell why each is funny or exaggerated. Tell why an imagination, a sense of humor and a love of sharing stories help comic strip writers.