

### **Celebrity Collision Exercise: Created by Jonathan Lethem**

This exercise may be used for a large or small group and will take 60-90 minutes. First, we will have the students select two notes card from a hat. Each note card will have the name of some celebrity on it (If a student doesn't know who their celebrity is, they will have an opportunity to choose another card.). Each student will be asked to write a comical or serious piece about encountering at least one of the celebrities on their cards (If possible, encourage the students to try to incorporate both celebrities into the encounter.). The students will then be broken into groups, which will be supervised by Butler mentors. In these groups, each mentor will make sure each student understands the assignment thoroughly and will coach/help the students with their writing. If the students are having trouble getting started, first ask them to try to think of a setting for this imaginary encounter, and then have them hypothesize how the celebrities on their cards would act in this setting. And finally, ask the students how they would act if they too were in this setting seeing their celebrities act in this manner. If the students get done with their pieces quickly, feel free to let them choose two more cards in order to repeat the process. The whole point is for us as mentors to get settled in with the students in order to foster a comfortable atmosphere so that they will be willing to accept some of our more serious writing prompts later. Here are some fun examples:

#### **Example of Celebrity Collision piece by Jonathan Lethem:**

John Coltrane and Miles Davis and Drew Barrymore and I were backstage at a nightclub in Chicago. Miles Davis was berating John Coltrane for playing a twenty-minute solo. I was trying not be noticed. Drew Barrymore was picking through a box of chocolates an admirer had sent backstage, biting into several of them to examine the filling. John Coltrane said: "I don't know how to stop playing." Miles Davis said: "Just take the damn horn out of your mouth." Drew Barrymore said: "Or if you wanted to you could just begin playing very softly, until you were so quiet that the others could play over you." Miles Davis said: "That would be fine too, yes."

#### **Example of Celebrity Collision piece by Chris Speckman:**

Drew Barrymore, Prince, Sean Connery, Jay Leno, the Pope, and I were at a chili cook-off in Boise, Idaho. As Drew Barrymore and I walked past the steaming pots, Sean Connery said his chili would surely be the winner because his recipe was distinguished and saucy. Or something like that. We were too infatuated with his accent to care. Jay Leno countered that his chili would win because it appeals to the elderly demographic and young people don't waste their time judging chili cook-offs anyway. Drew Barrymore tugged on my sleeve and said, "I used to be young and hip, and I think chili is cool! The secret ingredient in mine is strawberry jam." Prince's chili wasn't sure what it wanted to be, and the unintelligible symbol explaining the recipe did little to help matters. I figured I was a shoo-in to win the cook-off until the Pope reminded me that his chili was infallible. But at the end of the day, after tasting everyone's chili, Drew Barrymore told us we were all winners and passed gas discretely.