

DRAMA

Module 1: INTRODUCTION...DEVELOPING A GUIDING PHILOSOPHY

Module 2: INTERPRETING THE DRAMA

Module 3: PRACTICING THE DRAMA

Module 4: APPRECIATING AND PRODUCING THE DRAMA

Module 5: ADAPTING AND INTERPRETING THE DRAMA

Outcomes for the Session:

Participants will be able to meet the ELA Standards for Drama..

The Teacher's Manual and Binder (that accompany the textbook) address the questions inherent in the ELA Standards:

What do I want students to know and be able to do?

How will I measure if the students have met the standard(s)?

What instructional techniques, activities, materials, or modes of presentation will help all students to meet the standard?

How will I examine student work to provide feedback and document student progress toward "at the standard?"

Overview of Session

Module 1: INTRODUCTION...DEVELOPING A GUIDING PHILOSOPHY

(Break)

Module 2: INTERPRETING THE DRAMA

Module 3: PRACTICING THE DRAMA

(Break)

Module 4: APPRECIATING AND PRODUCING THE DRAMA

Module 5: ADAPTING AND INTERPRETING THE DRAMA

Total time: 6 hours & 15 minutes

Module 1: INTRODUCTION...DEVELOPING A GUIDING PHILOSOPHY

Exercise A: Discussing the Relationship of Drama to the ELA Standards

What the course will do for the student...

They will learn

- To read and comprehend dramatic literature (E1a, E1b, and E1c)**
- To produce responses to dramatic literature (E2b, E2c and E2f)**
- To work with an adult director and other students in preparing, performing, and evaluating dramatic literature (E3a, E3b, E3c, E3d, and E3e)**
- To demonstrate mastery of language in oral and written responses to dramatic literature (E4a and E4b)**
- To produce text analysis of dramatic literature and an original monologue (E5a and E5b)**
- To write an original speech on a subject related to Drama (E6a and E6b)**
- To plan a document on technical theatre production (E7a and E7b)**

You can make these expectations clear by walking through the Table of Contents. For example, Part Two of the textbook contains a “Treasury of Scenes and Monologues.” This section provides ample opportunities for performance and evaluation. Furthermore, the student can use the passages for text analysis. Students may also be assigned to write reports on the playwright or the time period in history that provides the larger setting for the work.

Part Three, on the other hand, focuses more on reading and comprehending dramatic literature. The links between the standards and the text are fairly straightforward in the wording used in each section.

Exercise B: Drawing Important Distinctions

Emily Dickinson once said of another writer: "She has the facts, but not the phosphorescence."

The textbook provides the facts... YOU must add the phosphorescence. As David Byrne (of the Talking Heads) warns, "Facts are useless in emergencies.."

The challenge, then, is to provide "real" help to teachers who have different motives and approaches. Let me explain (with much assistance from Prof. Dutch Fichthorn). In Drama/Theatre education, you meet everyone from the grizzled ol' lover of the bard to the first year "volunteer" who mistakenly admitted that she played Daisy Mae in her high school production of *Li'l Abner*. The more experienced teacher will want new stuff. Daisy Mae will want anything she can get her hands on. Therefore, the materials covered should go beyond the textbook and the ancillary goodies that can be studied later.

First, however, if you're going to talk the talk, then you need to draw the curricular distinction between "drama" and "theatre." Although these terms are used interchangeably in course titles, course descriptions, department titles, and thinking, they stand for two different approaches. "Drama" refers to the study and interpretation of the "text" and the use of performance technique to express that interpretation. Some English departments have courses in "Dramatic Literature." Those favoring the "drama" approach do not teach performance skills although they might use them. For example, this approach spawns the the English class scenes of Shakespeare and the costume designs that decorate the walls. The teacher is not interested in teaching acting or costume design, only giving the students the experience of interpreting a script through active participation. The payoff is that the students interpret "the word" through performance.

The "theatre" approach is teaching the artistic skills of stage production: scenery, make-up, acting, etc. This approach is steeped in the class play, one-acts or the musical. The assumption is that the classroom is an extension of the afterschool activities.

The lives of some teachers have been made more complicated by counselors. These counselors treat drama as therapy. The assumption is that "acting out" is the same as "acting." The psycho-drama psychology of the 60's returns. Few teachers prepare to "cure" these children. Two books to recommend: *Discovery of Self Through Drama and Movement* by Jenny Pearson and *Acting Techniques of Everyday Life* by Jane Maria Robbins.

The handouts and video clips that are suggested in the other Modules should provide meaningful options for whatever approach the teacher desires.

Module 2: INTERPRETING THE DRAMA

This module corresponds to Part One of the textbook. Although you can do the activities in the book to get a sense of what is possible, you might also try some exercises suggested in **Handout E**. This handout is an excerpt from the Johnstone book *IMPRO* (used to teach improvisation at Carnegie Mellon). Especially recommended is the exercise that asks students to go around the room calling out different names for objects that they see. For example, a student might rename an eraser by calling it a leather elbow patch. After the students have renamed about ten objects, Johnstone claims they will begin to see things more vividly than before...a must for actors who need to develop "a sense of place."

HANDOUTS H & I have vocal exercises to supplement the voice and diction materials in Part One.

The handouts that accompany this script are from the following sources:

Tony Figliola...Holy Ghost Prep, Philadelphia, PA
Debbie Simon...Milton Academy, Milton, MA
Dutch Fichthorn, Nebraska Wesleyan, Lincoln, NE
Rosie Blunk, Sioux Falls Lincoln, SD
Becky Gibel, Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center, CT
Sharahn McClung, Carnegie Mellon, PA
Katie Johnson, Juilliard, NY
David Lindsay-Abaire, Juilliard, NY

Module 3: PRACTICING THE DRAMA

This module combines the last of Part One of the textbook (acting skills) with Part Two (scenes). You will be pleased to know that you have a number of additional scenes in the binder. Spend some time highlighting the diversity of choices available to students. They can hone their acting skills on plays written by such contemporary giants as John Guare and August Wilson as well as Shakespeare.

Teachers can be paired up to do scenes as way of stimulating discussion about the challenges for students. If you call the National Forensic League (920-748-6206), you can arrange to borrow--for free--the

Bradley tapes on interpretation. The tapes cover all of the skills necessary for a student to take the words on the page and breathe life into them.

A good strategy is to do duo interpretation scenes as well as the traditional duet acting scenes. **Handout L** contains the fine points of Duo Interpretation. Read and then discuss the conventions that are unique to this approach to performing. Note, for example, how the actors are not allowed to touch or look at each other.

Handouts F & G are especially useful for teaching character and scene analysis. These handouts introduce the students to acting teacher Uta Hagen's famous nine questions.

Module 4: APPRECIATING AND PRODUCING THE DRAMA

This module covers Part Three and Part Four of the textbook. As students prepare notes for a production, remember that this is an excellent opportunity to formalize that process into a public document (thus, satisfying that particular ELA Standard).

Perhaps, there is no more effective way to appreciate Drama than to produce your own works. **Handout B** provides some creative ways for students to polish their writing skills. Show them the monologue by David Lindsay-Abaire. Now an award-winning playwright (with several successful NY productions--the critics raved), David wrote this monologue in tenth grade. Students learn best from examples and this one should inspire them.

The other two activities teach students that works of literature speak to each other. Study how Steve Martin borrowed from Edmond Rostand. Students will enjoy creating their own "nose insults." The *Six Degrees of Separation* exercise teaches students how to make connections. As writers, they will learn the value of using concrete details in their writing.

Have teachers try these exercises before assigning them in class. It is important to understand the challenges inherent in producing any creative work. Some students will need extra guidance in the John Guare writing assignment. A high level of conceptual thinking is required.

Module 5: ADAPTING AND INTERPRETING THE DRAMA

This final part of the textbook allows the students to pursue other art forms that are related to drama. This section creates an opportunity to expand the course into "speech" activities (E3 Speaking, Listening, and Viewing).

To help the teacher, we have provided a number of support materials. **HANDOUTS M, N, O, P, Q, R, S** explain everything you need to teach interpretation but didn't know what to ask...much of this material is as beneficial to young actors as it is to beginning interpers...writing introductions, cutting material, approaching characterization, developing

technique, etc. Read through the different handouts. Also, study the additional handouts that have not been referred to in this outline. Teachers will find them to be an invaluable addition to the many excellent activities in the textbook and binder.

Some teachers may want to take advantage of the network of teachers that now exists around the world. **HANDOUT A** lists names and addresses of teachers that be contacted to arrange educational experiences for students beyond the classroom.

In his book *Audition*, Michael Shurtleff asks "What are you fighting for?" This question relates both to acting and to teaching. Shurtleff says, "The story of Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* is not about three sisters who didn't make it to Moscow; it's about fighting like hell to get there all through the play."

You, dear teachers, must answer Shurtleff's question.

If questions arise, call me...505-293-1095
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