

**To Write or Not To Write, That Is the Question:  
Incorporating Playwriting and Dramatization Techniques to Promote Communication  
Skills, Writing Skills, and Reading Comprehension in School-Aged Children**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Gangs have claimed many of our youths today. Since the early 1990s, gang activity has risen throughout Houston, Texas. One area in particular where an increase is prominent is in the Southwest region of Houston. In fact, the fastest growing groups in gang membership today are Hispanic males ranging from eleven through seventeen years of age; members experience low self-esteem, issues of belonging, and education is no longer a priority to many of these students. Oftentimes, these students reject the viewpoint that “one-size fits all,” which they rightly should. Consequently, these students irresponsibly search for alternative means of obtaining an education. Sadly, however, these are the profiles of several of my students.

As a Resource English Language Arts teacher at Sharpstown Middle School, where the overall population is 67% Hispanic, and of that 25% are ESL (English as a Second Language) students, 25% LEP (Limited English Proficiency) students, and 16% receive Special Education services (Houston Independent School District Profiles 2005-2006), I have witnessed firsthand the enormous challenges my students are faced with while attempting to acquire the necessary skills to sufficiently employ the conventions of the English language, both in written and oral form.

Therefore, I propose a unit that will tackle both plights by incorporating playwriting, reading, dramatization, and other non-traditional techniques that will assist in setting the foundation for developing writing and oral language skills as well as building self-esteem in the special education resource classroom. In this unit we will focus on how to implement the reading of plays and/or parts of plays as an instructional strategy to enhance the reading comprehension skills, the writing skills and the oral communication skills of middle school age remedial readers. In conjunction to exploring and teaching playwriting techniques, teaching the elements of a play – specifically characterization, plot, setting, themes surrounding self-esteem, dialogue, and conflict – will be incorporated into selected activities through dramatization. By doing this, all the elements necessary to (1) understand various texts, (2) write effectively, (3) and appropriately communicate orally will be embarked upon with an “enjoyable” and hands-on approach through playwriting and performing.

## **OBJECTIVES**

This unit will satisfy HISD objectives in Reading, Writing, English, Drama, and Character Education. The students will:

- Discover the accessibility of the text when performed
- Listen purposefully to the text
- Determine actions implied by the text
- Demonstrate their ability to show emotion or actions by retelling, role-playing and/or dramatizing

- Demonstrate an ability to develop characters in drama
- Explore different literary themes as they engage in the process of generating ideas, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing or presenting
- Use strategies to adapt writing for different purposes
- Demonstrate competence in the general skills and strategies of the writing process
- Use a variety of verbal and nonverbal techniques for presentations and demonstrate poise and self-control while presenting

## **RATIONALE**

In this unit, my goal is to take the instructional strategies and the concept of playwriting and dramatization, integrate them into my core subject teaching area (Resource English Language Arts), and teach students the conventions of the English language, story elements, playwriting process, and communication skills of both written and oral form revolving around one central theme, self-esteem. After identifying and understanding how written language is thought to be the foundation of many multi-media activities and investigating its true origins, we will begin to analyze the playwriting process, writing conventions, dramatization, and story elements.

In a recent collection of writing samples produced by my students, I have noticed a continuous pattern of an increasing lack of understanding of the conventions of English language both in written and oral communication. As a Texas Observation Protocols Rater (TOPR) and a Resource ELA teacher, I believe that this lack of understanding stems from the fact that the majority of my students are not native English speakers, and grasping the English language has posed a great challenge for them despite my attempts to use various traditional instructional methods collectively with alternative instructional methods.

In addition to their language barriers, my students are also facing other factors that impair their ability to process information and use that knowledge appropriately when compared to their English speaking peers, thereby encroaching upon their ability to produce original compositions or oral speeches when given the task to do so. As a result, I am constantly striving to find alternative teaching methods that will increase their understanding of the English language and the conventions of written language as defined by the TEKS.

Although today verbalization is the basic means by which humans communicate needs and wants, communication does not end with the spoken word. In fact, all cultures have told stories enhancing them with body language, dance, literature, and drama. Like reading and music, theater extracts emotions that help us to remember those experiences that made lasting impressions upon our lives. Since ancient times before there were words, stage shows have been at the heart of communication, language, and entertainment. Unlike film, the performing arts have many purposes, such as to help us revisit places we have long forgotten, places we dream of going, and places we never want to journey. Many cultures use theater to a tell a story, to pray to the gods for wealth and well-being, and of course for relaxation and entertainment purposes. Today, movies, television, and video games have their own language. It is the language of our students. It is a tool used on a daily basis to help students concentrate, focus, learn and escape from their daily realities. However, it is through the performing arts where our students grow academically, emotionally, and socially.

## **UNIT BACKGROUND**

This unit is designed for all ages and functional levels. However, my sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students functioning at two grade levels below or more are my primary focus for developing this unit. Many of my students have low academic as well as social skills, which result from having medical deficiencies and/or language deficiencies. These students, however,

are not “unteachable.” Many of my students, as with many other students, take in and put out information not in the “traditional” way. Unfortunately, they are often ignored and placed in Special Education classes for most of their academic careers, until they eventually drop out of school. The biggest problems I have seen thus far in my students are their reading skills and writing skills. Oftentimes I am told “I don’t like to read; it is boring,” while others declare, “I don’t know what to write about, or it takes too much time.” Yet, these excuses are deeper than that. These students have been allowed to “cop-out,” and little has been expected of them.

Therefore, by giving students alternative means of learning and delivering information, I believe the attitudes they hold will change. For these reasons, my ultimate goal is for my students to learn the basic skills of writing so that they are able to compose short, dramatic scenes centered on the theme of self-esteem. The plays will involve two characters and a major problem/conflict that both characters have to participate in to resolve. At the end of this unit, students will become more confident readers, get a keen understanding of the writing process, and develop stronger English language skills as well as a greater appreciation for the process of playwriting, the acting of plays, and the freedom of expression that is linked to creativity.

According to Richard J. Deasy in *Themes and Variations: Future Directions for Arts Education Research and Practice*, “Studies find support for the role of drama in assisting in the development of critical academic skills, basic and advanced literacy and numeracy...”(7). Deasy also goes on to say that “there are strong positive academic outcomes when utilizing drama in preschool and early grades as a technique for teaching and motivating children which develops higher-order language and literacy skills” (7). While implementing playwriting techniques centered on the theme of self-esteem, I will teach my students how to identify the elements of writing, how to write with a purpose, and at the same time how to use a variety of forms to address a specific audience. By teaching these skills, my students will become authentic writers in their own sense.

We will begin the unit with questions focusing on why we write. Why is written communication so important? Students will be prompted to discuss favorite stories, plays, movies and music videos in order to explore and discuss acting, dramatization and stage presence styles. Along with whole class discussions, several media video segments will be viewed so that students can compare how television shows are different from movies and how movies are different from plays and books. Students will also have the chance to explore how music videos begin with written lyrics to which a beat is added later. Students will come to understand that everything they see, hear, and read begins with the basic elements of writing.

So why use playwriting as a tool to promote the conventions of effective written and oral language? According to a new study conducted by the Social Science Research Unit *Children Engaging with Drama*, “...pupils who engaged in drama made significant gains in ‘oracy’ skills” (“Arts Education”). In addition, Pelligrini, *et al.* in “A Longitudinal Study of Predictive Relations among Symbolic Play, Linguistic Verbs, and Early Literacy,” have argued that the dramatic play and processes of dramatic interaction are central to children’s language acquisition (219-35). Consistent with Booth and Neelands’ *Writing in Role: Classroom Projects Connecting Writing and Drama*, dramatic structures such as role-playing have been found to support writing development in more effective ways than discussion and modeling. Findings by Neelands, *et al.* in *Writing in Imagined Contexts: Research into Drama Influenced Writing* suggest that students’ attitudes toward writing improved when drama was used (19).

### **Playwriting and Dramatization: An Academic Tool for Teaching the “Whole” Student**

The way we teach today’s students must change. It is no longer acceptable, effective, or ethical to use skill and drill practices on a generation of students that requires and demands a new

approach to education. No longer will the “traditional” way of teaching suffice. Students today are less and less responsive to the 60 or 90 minute lectures delivered in one classroom, by one teacher, on a daily basis across the nation. Moreover, they are even less interested in acquiring knowledge from the traditional state-mandated textbooks provided for them to explore, discover, comprehend, and regurgitate on demand. Standardized tests are no longer adequate tools to measure intelligence. A new way of teaching is required to reach the vast and diverse group of students that sit in our classrooms every day. So the question is posed. What alternative instructional strategies and techniques can we use as educators, administrators, school districts, and policy makers to put into action for this new generation of learners?

For years the question has been raised, how do the “arts” impact the educational and social development needs of students? What are the advantages of integrating the “arts” into core subject areas? Where would the funding come from to support such programs? And who would implement these programs? As a result of these questions, there has been much controversy over the idea of having the arts in mainstream education. Despite the fact that there have been great strides in school reform, in which many produced a number of significant and ground-breaking alternatives to educational instructions over the past decade, several schools consistently neglect to recognize them.

Although there are massive collections of research and studies that have proven and validated the positive impact that art integration within a core subject area has on a multifaceted student body, politicians and school reformers alike refuse as well as ignore this concept of educating through the arts as being a viable teaching strategy. Even today as a nation dedicated to the idea of “No Child Left Behind,” coupled with the emergence of new studies and the reports of successfully implemented programs in the classroom worldwide, there is still hesitance among policy makers, school boards, administrators, and teachers to incorporate this concept. Traditionally, art programs in schools were viewed as elective, an isolated activity to give students a “break” from “real” learning. These “breaks,” as they were once called and still are in some areas still today, allot 30 minutes a week on a rotating block schedule to allow students to explore education in a different way. Since art education has proven to be so effective in the learning process, why not instead of isolating the arts incorporate their unique and inventive instructional techniques to teach an array of learning abilities?

My overall goal is to take the instructional strategies and the concept used to teach the playwriting process and dramatization and integrate them into my core subject teaching area of Resource English Language Arts. With these strategies, I will teach my students how to apply the conventions of the English language into their writing, and how to use the appropriate communication skills both written and oral form to convey information. Furthermore, while teaching each skill, one central theme of self-esteem will be incorporated into each activity.

### **Playwriting and Drama to Improve Self-esteem**

The arts have provided strong evidence that drama is a very effective instructional tool to teach reading and writing skills in an elaborate and diversified way for students of all ages. For example, Edward C. Warburton in “Access to Arts Beyond High School: Issues of Demand and Availability in American Higher Education,” states, “Art programs have been shown to increase academic performance, reduce absenteeism, develop thinking and social skills, improve self-esteem, and make important connections to the world outside of school” (11). These are major qualities that teachers strive to teach her/his students on a daily basis. Self-esteem involves feelings of self-worth stemming from the individual’s positive or negative beliefs about being valuable and capable. From the late 1970s to the early 1990s, Americans assumed as a matter of course that students’ self-esteem acted as a critical factor in the grades that they earn in school, in their relationships with their peers, and in their later success in life. Given this assumption, many

American groups created programs to increase the self-esteem of students, assuming that grades would increase, conflicts would decrease, and that this would lead to a happier and more successful life.

Today's teenagers deal with various issues and have many concerns. Some they can control, while others they have no control over. These issues often impact not only their academic development, but also affect their emotional and social development as well. One area in particular is one's self-esteem. Self-esteem is a vital part of development at all stages of one's life. Without a healthy self-image and outlook on life, students, especially those coming from a lower social economic status background, tend to do poorly in school. However, studies have shown how the higher one's self-esteem is the higher one's academic achievement is. But how do you motivate a student with low-self esteem issues to participate academically and socially in class? Joyce Kennedy in "Student Empowerment through On-Stage Theater" argues that "after performing for a student and faculty body of 450, students reported higher levels of self-esteem and confidence while developing interpersonal skills and an appreciation for learning" (184-6). Other studies have found that exposing students to the performing arts enhances their development of self-esteem (Regan 13-15), and is an "...effective way of teaching understanding, morals, and aesthetics" (Bedard and Schwartz 4).

With this in mind, I have chosen to use playwriting and dramatization to build not only self-esteem, but also to improve written communication skills. I will begin by teaching students the basic concepts of playwriting and drama in conjunction with story elements. These concepts will be conveyed through the classics. I have chosen several books that my students will use to identify the basic elements of dramatic writing, such as Stephen Sossaman's *Writing Your First Play*. For example, I will give my students a formula: objective + obstacle=conflict. With this formula, students will be required to identify each element from select readings (Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). From there, students will then have to identify with a character from the play and become very familiar with every aspect of that character. This activity will lead the way to understanding characterization/character. In this activity I will use the strategies given in Maisel's *What Would Your Character Do? Personality Quizzes for Analyzing Your Character*. Here, the author gives a series of scenarios in which a character has to decide which path to take. From there, we will look at the answers the students have chosen and ask whether their character has high self-esteem or low self-esteem. This whole class Q & A discussion will serve as information for future activities when writing their own short dramatic scenes focusing on self-esteem.

### **Playwriting and Oral Skills**

Integration of the arts in a core subject area has been an ongoing controversy among traditional and liberal methods of delivering instructions. However, research after research has proven the benefits of utilizing strategies found in art education curriculum, and by incorporating them in mainstream education, students make noticeable gains not only in their critical thinking skills but also in their oral and expressive language skills.

Consistently, evidence has shown that when the art education curriculum is used to teach language skills to students whose native language is not English and students with learning disabilities, great academic and social gains occur. In *The Effects of Creative Drama on the Social and Oral Language Skills of Children with Learning Disabilities*, Rey E. de la Cruz argues that "when students in a study participated in a creative drama program, students showed significant improvement in oral expressive language skills when compared with the controlled group" (20). As a Special Education teacher in a resource reading/English classroom, I recognize that all my students encompass one or both barriers mentioned in the study, and I am choosing to implement instructional techniques used by the art education curriculum.

## LESSON PLANS

### Lesson One: Understanding Story Elements

Resource English Language Arts (4-8)

#### *Overview*

Review the basic elements of a story. 1. Use the terms characters, setting, plot, problem, and resolution (conflict) and remind students how Shakespeare introduced them to the main character (Nick Bottom) and the setting (Haunted Woods) in the beginning of the play. Have students predict what the author will do in the next portion (the middle) of the book based on the information they know about narrative text structure.

- Tell students that authors write plays to tell a story; however, the characters they choose and the way in which they develop the characters is a very important part of the story. Ask students to share memorable characters they can recall. (Can you recall any characters you found memorable in books you have read? Any characters you especially liked or found interesting?) As students offer names of characters they liked or found interesting, extend their responses to include a reason (why) the characters they name are memorable.
- Tell students that reading stories helps us understand how and why people or characters behave the way they do. We can develop insight into how circumstances or events in our own lives lead to the actions we take and learn from stories ways in which we might behave. Reading about fictional people (characters) shows us how certain actions we take can lead to certain consequences. Reading about fictional characters also gives us an opportunity to reflect – or think about – how we might feel in similar situations and how our feelings may cause certain events to happen or how we can best manage or direct our own feelings.
- Provide one or two specific examples from your own experiences in other books you have read with the class this year to elaborate on how you have learned about low self-esteem and how it can have a negative impact on one’s life. You may also choose to offer some personal connections you have made with texts you have enjoyed.
- Explain to students they will be studying about characters and characterization. Tell students there are several dimensions or attributes of characterization they should think about and pay attention to as they read plays and dramatic scenes. Tell students doing so will help them better comprehend, or understand, the plays they read.
- Use the blackline “Pay Attention to Characters” as an overhead transparency to explain in some depth facets of characterization they will most likely encounter in well-written stories.
- Tell students after reading today they will discuss how Shakespeare explores some of these dimensions of character as he writes about Bottom, Titania, and Oberon.

#### *Key Vocabulary*

- Setting
- Genre
- Characterization
- Character Development
- Plot
- Problem/Resolution
- Story Elements

### ***Key Concepts***

- Response to drama & plays
- Characterization
- Monitoring comprehension, clarifying
- Creative writing, stories

### ***Objectives***

Students will:

ELA.8.3.01 - Write in personal, creative, and academic (literary annotation/response, open-ended, response, critical review, persuasive speech, character journal) forms to address specific audiences and purposes using standard organizational structure.

ELA.8.2.04 - Read widely from a variety of narrative and expository texts (i.e., realistic fiction, folktales, fables, dramas, historical fiction, and poetry) to participate in independent and teacher-directed author and genre specific studies.

ELA.8.2.05 - Recognize and analyze the use of narrative text elements including characterization (internal consistency, traits, motivation, conflict, and point of view), plot, setting, and problem/resolution and their influence on a story's development.

### ***Student Practice***

Tell students they will be responsible for reading pages 10-23 in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* during the Independent Reading portion of the block.

- Explain you will have a follow-up discussion with the whole group following the reading block.
- Tell students they may read silently or use partner reading during this period. Post questions for students to consider as they read.
- Have students move into their small work groups to begin the reading block activities.
- Allocate approximately 15 minutes per group per activity. Use a timer to keep on track.

### **Independent Reading**

Read pages 10-23 in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Reflect on the comprehension questions and be prepared to discuss the characters in a class discussion.

### **Reading Practice**

- Use Shared Book Experience or Choral Reading for approximately five (5) minutes to read the assigned portion of text.
- Allow students to read orally with a partner for approximately five (5) minutes from the text.
- Listen as students read to inform instruction you provide for the final five (5) minutes of this period. Focus attention on decoding, or word attack, needs you note

### ***Assessment***

In a whole class discussion, have students bring their excerpts to the discussion circle (reference).

- Discuss what they have learned about the characters in the play and how those characters developed (changed) throughout the play.
- After discussion, use the character map in B4 to note (cite evidence) characteristics of (student choice: Nick, Titania, or Oberon).

- Tell students they will be using this information later in today's lesson to help them compose a written response to the play.
- As you model creating a character map, be sure to explain and elaborate by example each of the "spokes" on the character web "wheel." (E.g., physical description, relationships, etc.) Use individual writing responses to redirect and clarify student understandings regarding written response criteria.

### ***Closure***

Students will compare two characters from the play using adjectives. Students will then draw an illustration of those characters from their descriptions alone.

### **Resources and Materials**

- Main Character list (teacher made)
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, by William Shakespeare (excerpts pp. 8-9)
- *The Tempest*, by William Shakespeare (excerpts pp. 8-9)
- *Twelfth Night*, by William Shakespeare (excerpts pp.8-9)
- Pay attention to Characters (B04 blackline transparency & students' handout)
- Options Publishing Inc. *The Writer's Thesaurus 4,455 Words* (Beginners, Level I and Level II)
- Overhead
- Post-it-notes
- White-board/chalkboard
- Markers/chalk

### **Modification Notes**

Selected tests and quizzes can be read orally and extended time may be given for assignment completion to accommodate special education modification requirements.

## **Lesson Two: What Would Your Character Do? Understanding Characterization**

Resource English Language Arts (4-8)

### ***Overview***

In this lesson students will become familiar with the process of writing a play. It is important to continue to use vocabulary associated with understanding the basic elements of a story, however begin to incorporate new vocabulary that the students will need to know in order to complete writing assignments. Students will read a variety of short plays written by various classical authors as well as contemporary authors as models for their own writings. In this lesson students' primary assignment will be to create and develop two characters for their original dramatic scenes.

### ***Student Practice***

Tell students they will be writing a one-act dramatic scene. Ask students to share what they know or don't know about a dramatic scene. Put students into groups of fours and give each group individual copies of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Assign each group specific pages and tell them that they will be responsible for reading them during the Independent Reading portion of the block.



- Explain you will have a follow-up discussion with each group following the reading block.
- Tell students they may read silently or use partner reading during this period. Post questions and provide hand-outs for students to consider as they read. Example; who are the main characters? What is it that they want? What is stopping them from getting it? How did they eventually accomplish their goals? How did the character(s) change throughout the play? And how did the author use voice/tone to make character(s) come alive? How could you (individually or as a group) make the character better and why?
- Have students move into their small work groups to begin the reading block activities.
- Allocate approximately 15 minutes per group per activity. Use a timer to keep on track.

### ***Key Vocabulary***

- Voice
- Tone
- Characterization
- Character Development
- Protagonist
- Antagonist
- Foil
- Dynamic Character
- Static Character

### ***Key Concepts***

- Response to drama and plays
- Characterization
- Recognize and identify character changes (direct and indirect)
- Monitor comprehension, clarify
- Process of writing

### ***Objectives***

The students will:

ELA.6.2.13 - Analyze, with simple annotations, how an author uses literary elements, word choice, sentence structures, and form.

ELA.6.2.14 - Locate and collect examples from published fiction to illustrate how various authors use figurative language, syntax, and diction to affect meaning and as models for individual writing efforts/imitations.

ELA.8.2.04 - Read widely from a variety of narrative and expository texts (i.e., realistic fiction, folktales, fables, dramas, historical fiction, and poetry) to participate in independent and teacher-directed author and genre specific studies.

ELA.8.2.05 - Recognize and analyze the use of narrative text elements including characterization (internal consistency, traits, motivation, conflict, and point of view), plot, setting, and problem/resolution and their influence on a story's development.

ELA.8.3.03 - Write compositions in which he/she consistently engages the reader with a natural and distinctive voice.

### ***Independent Reading***

- Read assigned pages in *The Tempest*. Reflect on the comprehension questions and be prepared to discuss the characters in a group discussion, as well as in a class discussion.
- *Reading Practice*
- Use Shared Book Experience or Choral Reading for approximately five (5) minutes to read the assigned portion of the play.
- Allow students to read orally within the groups for approximately five (5) minutes from the play.
- Listen as students read to inform instruction you provide for the final five (5) minutes of this period. Focus on how well students answer each discussion question.

### ***Assessment***

In a whole class discussion, have students bring their excerpts to the discussion circle.

- Discuss what they have learned about the characters in the play and how those characters developed (changed) throughout the play.
- After discussion, ask students to give you different situations that they have encountered.
- Tell students they will be using this information to analyze their characters and how they would act in each situation.
- As you model creating different personality traits, be sure to explain and elaborate by example each of the “traits.” (E.g., physical description, relationships, etc.) Use individual writing responses to redirect and clarify student understandings regarding written response criteria.

### ***Closure***

Students will exchange papers within their groups, responding to each situation with one or two words, (*i.e.*, good, why, what else could he/she do, etc.)

### ***Resources and Materials***

- Personality Traits list (teacher made)
- *The Tempest*, by William Shakespeare
- Options Publishing Inc. *The Writer’s Thesaurus 4,455 Words* (Beginners, Level I and Level II)
- Overhead
- Post-it-notes
- White-board/chalkboard
- Markers/chalk

### ***Modification Notes***

Selected tests and quizzes can be read orally and extended time may be given for assignment completion to accommodate special education modification requirements

### **Lesson Three: Writing Your Own Short Dramatic Scene**

Resource English Language Arts (4-8)

### ***Overview***

Before you begin, tell students that writing a dramatic scene gives them the opportunity to let their imagination soar.

In this lesson students use information acquired in previous lessons on the process of writing a play and create an original short dramatic scene or write an adaptation of a classical play, such as *Romeo and Juliet*, and adjust it for today. Students will have access to a variety of short plays written by various classical authors as well as contemporary authors as models for their own writings. In this lesson students' primary assignment will be to take their two characters they previously created and give them drama!

Note: Prior to this lesson, students should be familiar with dialogue. There are several activities available to enhance the understanding of "natural" dialogue.

### ***Student Practice***

Tell students they will be writing a short dramatic scene. You may want to put students into groups to work for editing and/or revising purposes. However, students are encouraged to work individually on their plays. Have a variety of plays available where students can access them easily for reference. Give each student a rubric for each element required in creating an "excellent" short dramatic scene. Explain to the students that you will be coming around speaking with each one of them.

- Before students start go over the rubrics with them making sure the requirements are clear and every student understands all the requirements.
- Remind students about the formula: objective + obstacle= conflict. Tell students the more a character wants something the better the scene will develop.
- Remind students that once the objective is achieved, the conflict is over and the scene should end.
- Tell students that computers are open and may be used during this period.
- Allocate approximately 20 minutes between each check of students' progress. Make sure you and your students are referring to the rubric.

### ***Key Vocabulary***

- Voice
- Tone
- Dialogue

### ***Key Concepts***

- Response to drama and plays
- Create original short dramatic scene or adaptation
- Monitor comprehension, clarify
- Process of playwriting

### ***Objectives***

The students will:

ELA.6.2.13 - Analyze, with simple annotations, how an author uses literary elements, word choice, sentence structures, and form.

ELA.6.2.14 - Locate and collect examples from published fiction to illustrate how various authors use figurative language, syntax, and diction to affect meaning and as models for individual writing efforts/imitations.

ELA.8.3.02 - Produce well-organized, cohesive written forms.

ELA.8.3.03 - Write compositions in which he/she consistently engages the reader with a natural and distinctive voice.

ELA.8.3.12 - Critically examine own writing and others' and revise for meaning and content.

ELA.8.3.13 - Edit drafts for spelling, usage, clarity, organization, and sentence fluency and parallel structure independently and as part of peer review process.

### ***Independent Writing***

Write first draft of short dramatic scene. Reflect on the comprehension writing process and be prepared to discuss the characters in a group discussion, as well as in a class discussion.

### ***Reading Practice***

- Allow students to read orally within the groups for approximately five (5) minutes from their first draft.
- Listen as students read to inform instruction you provide. Focus on how well students respond to each others' scenes.

### ***Assessment***

In a whole class discussion, have students bring their drafts to the discussion circle.

- Discuss what they have learned about writing a dramatic scene and using dialogue
- After discussion, ask students to volunteer in reading their scenes
- Use individual writing responses to redirect and clarify student understandings regarding written response criteria.

### ***Closure***

Students will respond to each volunteers' drafts

### ***Resources and Materials***

- Copy of Rubric (teacher made)
- Various plays
- Options Publishing Inc. *The Writer's Thesaurus 4,455 Words* (Beginners, Level I and Level II)
- Computer
- Overhead
- Post-it-notes
- White-board/chalkboard
- Markers/chalk
- Paper, pens, and/or pencils

### ***Modification Notes***

Selected tests and quizzes can be read orally and extended time may be given for assignment completion to accommodate special education modification requirements.

## APPENDIX

### *INSIDE OUT*

A Dramatic Scene in One Act

by

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#### CAST OF CHARACTERS

RE'RE: 17 years old, All-American athlete RE'RE has been nominated by her peers as this year's most promising and inspiring athlete at New York PS154 as well as this year's prom queen. RE'RE feels that this is a title well deserved and she would like to show her teammates another side of her, that she is not just smart and athletic, but she is also a beautiful young woman as well. All RE'RE'S insecurities and unworthiness come from negative treatment from her mother. However, if RE'RE does not face her mother soon, she will forever live her life inside out.

MAMA: A mother in her early forties, Mama has no clue about how to raise a strong, confident, and self-sufficient young lady. Abused both physically and mentally by her mother and by the one man she has ever loved, Mama is heartbroken and filled with anger. MAMA takes all her pain out on RE'RE, the one person that has never abandoned her. Yet, MAMA'S only comfort is found inside a bottle of prescription drugs.

AT RISE: The scene opens the night of the prom. RE'RE is in front of a long mirror getting ready in her bedroom. Her door is slightly ajar; however, she is not aware that her mother is standing there watching her. As RE'RE is putting on the final touches, her mother walks in high on pain pills and immediately starts destroying her self-esteem.

MAMA

(slurred high voice from taking several pain pills) Hum...Who do you think you are? Doesn't matter what you put on, (smirking to almost a laugh) You st...st...ill ugly little

RE'RE...hum

(RE'RE continues to get ready, not saying a word.)

MAMA

(irritated because she didn't get a response) HEY! Don't you hear me talking to you? Are you stupid child?

RE'RE

(turning away from the mirror with tears in her eyes speaking slowly and very clearly) e.n.o.u.g.h! What is it about you... that that...would make you hate your own daughter so damn much!

MAMA

(shocked from the tone of RE'RE's voice, screaming) Who you tal....

RE'RE

(interrupting MAMA) Is it that I look like him!...The man that rejected you! That left!

MAMA

(raised voice) Shut your mouth! You...You don't know nothi...

RE'RE

(cutting her off again, this time in rage) Well...He left me too...! but instead of you being there for me... you turned against me! You...You walked out on me too...

(Not knowing what to say, MAMA raises her hand to slap RE'RE.)

RE'RE

(stopping MAMA's hand before it reaches her face) Is that how he dealt with you? A slap on the face (tears rolling down RE'RE's face, make-up beginning to smear) Is it?

(MAMA turns to walk away.)

RE'RE

(grabbing MAMA's arm to stop her and looking her straight in the eyes with a shaky voice) Am...am I that terrible? That bad? That you can't look me in the face...in my eyes...Your eyes MAMA...Yours.

MAMA

(With tears beginning to roll down MAMA's face and in a small whisper of a voice) I'm... (MAMA sobs uncontrollably, falls to her knees.)

RE'RE

(watching as MAMA falls to her knees) You never once told me that you are proud of me...that I'm pretty, that you love me.

MAMA

(still sobbing at RE'RE's feet) You...you could never understand, Child!

RE'RE

(in a strong, but caring voice) Understand what?

MAMA

(looking at RE'RE for the first time and really seeing her beauty) I'm sorry baby...I'm so...sorry. I told myself I would never treat my child the way your grandma treated me...But...But...what do you do, when...when that's all you know... (again the tears came hard) Abuse...Neglect...Unworthiness! What do you do? I did this to you (looking up at RE'RE) and MAMA's so...so very sorry.

(MAMA reaches out to embrace her child.)

RE'RE

(Not believing what she has just heard, RE'RE falls to her knees into her mother's arms.)

CURTAINS CLOSE

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Workbook for playwriting analyzes just how well do you know your characters? Test yourself—and your characters—with 30 interactive pop quizzes designed to help you discover exactly what makes your characters tick.
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Examines the predictive relations among dimensions of symbolic play (object and ideational transformations), linguistic verbs, and measures of early literacy. Indicates that use of linguistic verbs predicts concepts of print scores and that symbolic play and linguistic verbs predict emergent writing and reading, respectively.
- Regan, F.S. "A Preliminary Investigation of Current Practices in American Youth Theaters." *Children's Theater Review* 32 (1983): 13-15.
- Sossaman, Stephen. *Writing Your First Play*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2001.  
The beginning writer will learn the secrets to effective structure, intriguing characters, and powerful dialog. This writing-group tested guide breaks down a sometime overwhelming and intimidating task into a logical and manageable sequence. The emphasis on first-draft evaluation and effective revision will help the beginning playwright get it written and get it right.
- Warburton, Edward C. "Access to Arts Beyond High School: Issues of Demand and Availability in American Higher Education." *Arts Education Policy Review*. (Jul/Aug 2006): 11.

### Supplemental Resources

#### Books

- Bucciari, Lisa Rojany and Peter Economy. *Writing Children's Books for Dummies*. Hoboken: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2005.  
This book is a good resource for focusing writing towards children.
- Egri, Lajos. *The Art of Dramatic Writing*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960.  
This book examines a play from the inside out. Egri starts with the heart of any drama: its characters. Egri shows how it is essential for the author to have a basic premise -- a thesis, demonstrated in terms of human behavior -- and to develop the dramatic conflict on the basis of that behavior.

- Hart, Anne. *Writing 45-Minute One-act Plays, Skits, Monologues, & Animation Scripts for Drama Workshops: Adapting Current Events, Social Issues, Life Stories, News & Histories*. New York: ASJA Press, 2005.  
A book demonstrating how to use dramatization in everyday life.
- Hatcher, Jeffery. *The Art & Craft of Playwriting*. Cincinnati: Story Press, 1996.  
Hatcher shares his views on it all—from building tension and plotting a scene, right down to moving a character from one side of the stage to the other.
- Heathcote, D. & Bolton, G. *Drama for Learning: Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert Approach to Education*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995.  
This source uses drama as a tool for teaching.
- Kress, Nancy. *Beginnings, Middles, & Ends: Elements of Fiction Writing*. West Chester, OH: Writer's Digest Books, 1999.  
Kress reveals methods for creating a compelling story from beginning to end, discussing solutions for potential problems at each stage of the creative process.
- Perlber, Deborah. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Writing for Young Adults*. New York: Penguin Group, 2006.  
This comprehensive guide introduces aspiring storytellers to the ins and outs of writing fiction and nonfiction for young adults. Information includes an overview of writing, from dialogue and point of view to plot, setting, and character construction; choosing an agent and publisher; marketing the finished work, and more.
- Schulman, Charlie. "Playwriting: The Process." *The Portable MFA in Creative Writing: Improve Your Craft with the Core Essentials Taught to MFA Students*. New York: New York Writer's Workshop, 2006: 235, 243, 247, 254-255, 265, 270.  
Techniques to improve the craft for the beginning playwright.
- Spencer, Stuart. *The Playwright's Guide Book*. New York: Faber and Faber Inc., 2002.
- Whiteley, Carol. *The Everything Creative Writing Book: All you Need to Know to Write a Novel, Play, Shortstory, Screenplay, Poem or Article*. Cincinnati, OH: Adams Media Corporation, 2002.  
All you need to know to write a novel, play, short story, screenplay, poem, or article can be found in this book.

### **Plays**

- Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.  
This is one of Shakespeare's early comedies and can be used to give students a model for writing plays and exposes them to classical writing.
- . *The Tempest*.  
*The Tempest* is traditionally considered to be William Shakespeare's last play. Its first known performance was on November 1, 1611, at Whitehall Palace in London. It's a great model for students to use for their own plays as well as to introduce students to classical theater.
- . *Twelfth Night*.  
Shakespeare's comedy, *Twelfth Night*, shares much with our era's "Harry Potter" and *Forrest Gump*. It is a wildly improbable, hugely entertaining fantasy. And just beneath the surface are life's darkest, most terrible truths.

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### **Appendix**

- Andrépoint, Deborah. *Inside Out*. (2007)  
Original dramatic scene to use as a model for students to write their own original or adaptation of a play.