



Title: Language Takes the Stage: English 9 and the Performing Arts

Length of Course: Full Year (2 semesters; 3 trimesters; 4 quarters)

Subject Area – Discipline: English (“b”)

UC Honors designation: No

CTE Sector: Arts, Media and Entertainment

CTE Pathway: Performing Arts

Grade/Level(s): 9

Course Overview:

Who are we and what do we contribute to the stage of life? In *Language Takes the Stage*, we consider what theatre is and why people feel compelled to create it. In addition to analyzing, researching, and writing about text, students take an active role in transforming text to actual performances. Language, theater, culture, and self are the driving themes of this course. We compose monologues, write narratives, act, argue character interpretation, invent, improvise, and otherwise consider how the story is told and how the story is used to influence and communicate with the world around us. Quite simply, we travel the path from page to stage.

Course Content:

Recurring Assignments:

Performance Writer’s Journal: Throughout the course, students create and add to a digital interactive Performance Writer’s Journal that compares and contrasts the universal themes and sociopolitical issues in the texts and films studied. Entries will focus on textual analysis and author’s craft in developing the elements of story, as well as aspects of performance, including facial expressions, movement, voice, speech, spatial relationships, and technical aspects such as props and costumes. Students complete entries after performing theatrical pieces to reflect upon these themes and their effectiveness.

Character Journals: At the beginning of the year, students create a journal based on a character that functions as their alter ego. (For students who are particularly visual or technically adept they could have the option to create a character electronically in a program such as <http://xtranormal.com>.)

Throughout the year, students respond through the voice of their character to given questions, and comment on current events and class discussion. Character complexity is

developed in the journal through research and response, and used later in the year for improvisation, scene work, and for the final project.

Reading Logs: Students maintain dialectical reading logs electronically that reflect on class readings with proper citations. Some entries will be prompted by the teacher and others will be student choice.

Word Theater: Based on the research of Total Physical Response (TPR) on student comprehension and retention of vocabulary, students keep a personal dictionary with words selected or assigned from the unit. A variety of strategies are used to recognize and integrate key vocabulary. For example, through the use of improvisation, students act out and demonstrate the meaning of new vocabulary words. Students annotate definitions with non-linguistic representations and add language specific to the theatre to explain how a selection might be staged (e.g., stage blocking templates)

Unit 1- Theater and Culture

Essential Questions: What is storytelling and how does it reflect the values of a culture? What is theatre and how has it reflected the values of a culture throughout history? Why does man seem destined to imitate, explain, and create stories that reflect ourselves?

In this unit, students are introduced to the concept that throughout history, every culture has produced various forms of storytelling which has manifested itself through many different art-forms, including literature and often through the use of performance which we call theatre. Students examine how we define culture, describing the traditional anthropological definition of culture and then comparing it to the culture of their contemporary surrounding society, considering such things as what the theatre of their surrounding society (e.g. conventional theatre, the theatre of reality TV, the theatre of fashion, and the theatre of sport) says about their culture. Throughout the unit, students learn and apply the tools of language analysis, gaining an understanding of how syntax, diction and punctuation affect an audience's understanding of a given text.

Unit 1 - Assignments

Oral Research Project: Students choose a culture and historical time period to research, for the purposes of answering the question, "Why do people create theater, and how does the style of the theater they create reflect their values and beliefs?" Students deliver the results of this research in an oral presentation to the class.

Speech/Soliloquy Project

Students learn about theme and then apply what they've learned, identifying the theme from each of three given speeches (such as Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have A Dream," Queen Elizabeth's speech to the troops at Tilbury, or a selected Shakespearean monologue). Students then produce an original monologue designed to communicate the same theme and perform this monologue live for the class.

Cultural Collage: In order to explore the form and relevance of theater in contemporary society, students examine how we define culture today by creating a Cultural Collage. After describing the traditional anthropological definition of culture, students then define

theater in the context of contemporary society. This examination should answer the question, "What does the theatre of our surrounding society (conventional theatre; the theatre of reality TV; the theatre of fashion, and the theatre of sport) say about our culture?". Students' final products for the cultural collage will include representations of cultural icons and excerpts from popular theatre that highlight the similarities—and differences—of the meaning and manifestation of "theater" from earlier times to today.

Shakespeare Translation: Students examine Shakespeare's "Seven Ages of Man" and do a written translation of it to modern language (colloquial, slang, regional), in order to illustrate their understanding of both iambic pentameter and allusions and how those features of writing affect our understanding of the work itself.

Fairy Tale Play Project: Students examine a Grimm's fairy tale and identify the embedded moral lessons and values. Students view Sondheim's *Into the Woods* to experience a dramatic adaptation of a written work. Students interpret the moral lessons of the fairy tales into Morality Plays which are performed live before class. In their original dramatic adaptation, students focus on narrative, character development, conflict, and the "moral." Students write, rehearse, and perform in class using the acting techniques which they learned before performing their monologues.

Comparative Critique: After reading the play and watching a video version of *A Raisin in the Sun*, students write an essay in which they analyze the content presented in both formats and compare and contrast how each format presents the basics of story structure: plot structure, characterization, setting, style, theme, and historical/cultural accuracy.

Unit 2: The Story

Essential Questions: How does one tell a story in a manner and style that affects, moves, and evokes pathos in a listening, viewing, and/or reading audience? What constitutes effective storytelling? How does a storyteller put effective storytelling techniques into practice?

In this unit, students are introduced to the basics of storytelling elements and technique (voice, plot, characterization, setting, theme, style), examining how story is told in literary and visual and performing arts. Students then adapt stories from other genres to theatrical presentation. The unit begins with the reading of such books as *The Hunger Games* (not a required text--teachers may choose another novel with similar themes), with viewing such movies as *The King's Speech*, and with a brief examination of popular culture in print media, on the internet, in social media, in concert. Students evaluate, compare and contrast, and draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the telling of stories through these different genres, focusing their analysis on how such elements as figurative language, points of view, irony, symbolism, imagery, syntax, and diction contribute to the overall effectiveness of a given work.

Unit 2 - Assignments

Informative/Descriptive Essay on Theatricality in Popular Culture--An Examination of Voice and the Authentic vs. the Public Self: Students write a research-based, informative/descriptive essay examining pre-meditated theatrical created image. Students examine the power of theatrical presentation in word, in posture, in costume, tone, fluidity, imagery, applying their analysis to their choice of a contemporary work (such as the scene in *The Hunger Games* when the tributes enter the amphitheater in chariots anxious to create an impression that will garner fame, favor, and sponsors, or the excerpt from *The King's Speech* when King George addresses the British nation via radio with the goal of calming and reassuring the nation pre-World War II) and to the impressions of celebrities conveyed on "The Wonder Wall" (<http://wonderwall.msn>) Students analyze how authors portray characters working to present themselves to society for approval, comparing this portrayal with how celebrities construct their own public image. Students then refine and recreate a character of their choice in their Character Journal, in consideration of how this character wants to present him/herself to the world. Students answer the question: If your character was seeking society's approval, how would your character recreate his/her image in this particular public situation?

The Authentic Self as Cartoon: Students read Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Throughout the text, Alexie draws cartoons of himself in various situations revealing an authentic voice and how the speaker perceives himself. Using this model, students construct their own cartoon self and add that "self" to the Culture Collage created in Unit 1.

An Absolutely True Scene Adaptation and Performance: Students adapt scenes from Sherman Alexie's novel, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*, and perform these scenes applying the concepts of good storytelling and good theatre: plot sequence, character development, a complementary setting, style, and theme.

Slam Poetry - The Poet vs. the Speaker; The Actor vs. the Character: Students create and perform original poetry without the use of props, costumes, sets. The original narrative poems should demonstrate an obvious auditory quality and embody and convey a persona.

Short Story Project: Students read and analyze short stories such as "Most Dangerous Game," "Masque of the Red Death," and "Lambs to the Slaughter," examining how figurative language, point-of-view, irony, symbolism, imagery, syntax, and diction contribute to the overall meaning of the work. As they look at the story, students consider the function of the setting, both as literal context and as symbolic representation. Students, through Socratic Seminars, answer the question: "What makes the story effective?" After watching either live or recorded theatrical performances based on the short stories they've read, the students apply their understanding of genre, setting, and style to the writing of original critiques of these performances. Students answer: what effective storytelling techniques does the playwright put into practice? Students

demonstrate their understanding of the story and its role in theatre, and extend their understanding through the writing of original dialogue. In the dialogue, the students apply staging techniques (blocking), as well as characterization and "actor delivery" (articulation and projection) techniques as they prepare to perform.

Unit 3: Hero's Journey

Essential Questions: How do authors and playwrights mirror their times, place, politics, and personal issues? How do these universal themes resonate with us today?

Students continue their study of stories and theatre, using Text Annotation and Reading Logs, by examining the historical roots of oral storytelling and drama in other cultures. Ongoing word study based on Greek and Latin roots using Word Theatre continues throughout this unit. Students read portions of Fagles' *The Odyssey* and Zimmerman's *Metamorphoses* to gain an understanding of oral tradition and the hero cycle, and also to recognize how these tropes reverberate in modern literature, theatre, and even popular culture. They read at least one myth, "The Judgment of Paris," and rewrite and perform it in groups applying basic dramatic structure.

Unit 3 - Assignments

Reading Logs: In preparation for writing their argumentative essay at the end of this unit, students create reading logs for *The Odyssey*, delineating Odysseus' interactions with Penelope, Athena, Telemachus, and his men.

Research PowerPoint Oral Presentations: Students choose a historical period and prepare a Power Point presentation with a citation slide at the end that shows how costumes were used in theatrical performances of that period. Students present orally or use multimedia on how the dress and aesthetic style of a character illustrates the historical and cultural themes (5-7 minutes in length).

The Judgment of Paris Scene: After reading "The Judgment of Paris," students partner and rewrite the myth as a scene changing Paris's choice. The new ending should reflect the students' insights into the politics and values of Ancient Greece.

Reader's Theater: In order to demonstrate understanding of archetypes and the importance of historical and cultural perspectives, students work in groups to select a portion of *Metamorphoses* that they will script and present to class in a five-minute Readers' Theater performance.

Argumentative Essay: Students develop and strengthen skills through drafting and revising a multi-paragraph argumentative essay responding to the following prompt: Would Odysseus' characteristics doom him to failure in the modern world? Take a stand and support your position with research from this unit. Use correct MLA citations and prepare a works cited list.

Unit 4: Shakespeare: Yesterday and Today

Essential Question: How is Shakespeare relevant to modern society? How do his portrayals of male and female characters provide insight into interpersonal relationships today?

In this unit, students read, view, and perform a selection of Shakespeare's works, including *Romeo and Juliet* (and/or *Othello**) and the "Dark Lady" sonnets, comparing and contrasting Shakespeare's female characters with the women portrayed in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Based on their beginning study of Shakespeare, students select scenes and monologues to be staged. Groups perform oral readings of scenes and monologues, applying their theatrical research while comparing and contrasting the language of the Renaissance with that of today.

*Assignments are written with *Romeo and Juliet* in mind, but could easily be adapted for use with *Othello*.

Unit 4 - Assignments

Reading Log: Students read *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *Romeo and Juliet* and respond to Reading Log Guided Questions in preparation for writing a persuasive essay that compares and contrasts the relative power and agency of the female protagonists in these works. Students cite textual evidence to support answers using the following questions on character and theme, comparing and contrasting *A Thousand Splendid Suns* with *Romeo and Juliet*:

- Do you think the protagonist of this book can be happy?
- How is Laila different from the women in Shakespeare's works? How is Mariam different?
- What surprised you about *A Thousand Splendid Suns*?
- What do you wish you could change about each of the women's lives?

Comparing Different Genres: Students observe a scene from Franco Zeffereilli's *Romeo and Juliet* and then the same scene from Baz Luhrman's *Romeo and Juliet*. Students compare and contrast, using the language of theater, how the original text has remained relevant in today's culture and society as well as how Shakespearean scripts can be performed in different time periods and still be true to the text and characters. Whether students produce an oral presentation or a written essay for their compare and contrast assignment is at the discretion of the teacher.

First Folio Technique Performance: After viewing multiple, filmed versions of *Romeo and Juliet*, students prepare a contemporary interpretation or improvisation of the opening prologue that demonstrates understanding of the play's tragic theme. Students deconstruct and then perform a monologue or soliloquy from *Romeo and Juliet* using Shakespeare's First Folio Technique. The First Folio Technique allows for students to create acting choices, emotionally and physically, based on the clues Shakespeare embedded in the original script itself.

Shakespearean-Inspired Power Wheel: The Power and Control Wheel (see link in Supplemental Instructional Materials) is introduced as a way to discuss socio-political and

gender issues among the characters studied in this unit. Who was the more powerful female character and why? What choices were available to her in the society she lived in? To better understand the themes in this unit, students transform these stories to dramatic works. In groups of 2-3, students execute improvisational techniques inspired by the Power Wheel, tying them to themes from *Romeo and Juliet*, and motivating discussion and quick writes about modern situations with the same themes.

“Dark Lady” Essay and Character Sketch: After reading a selection of the "Dark Lady" sonnets and analyzing meter, rhythm, and form, students choose one sonnet to explicate in literary analysis essay. Then students look at the poem through a different lens, as playwrights, and craft a short character sketch describing the speaker of the selected poem. They explore the physical and emotional choices that an actor would make to bring the poem to life (see Stanislavski text) and add stage directions to their sketches, with the goal of enhancing the physical and emotional choices made by the actor to portray the character as fully as possible.

Persuasive Essay: Students utilize the information in their reading logs for this unit to write a persuasive essay comparing and contrasting the relative power and agency of female protagonists in *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

Unit Performance: Students adapt and perform a scene of their choice from *Othello* or *Romeo and Juliet*, demonstrating understanding of both theme and First Folio techniques.

Unit 5: Page to Stage

Essential Question: What is the path from page to stage?

In this final unit of the course, students gain foundational skills in researching, analyzing, and planning a theatrical performance. Through these literary and performance-based elements, students communicate a personal understanding of theater, script analysis, character research, as well as the universal themes of great literature, while working collaboratively as playwrights, designers, and actors. In preparation for their own productions and for writing an academic precis paper, students also read critiques of professional performances chosen from the Stanislavski text.

Unit 5 - Assignments

Academic Precis Paper: Students read and analyze professional critiques (using the Stanislavski text) of dramatic performances (expository text) with accompanying marginalia. Students use their reading notes to prepare a formal precis paper and present their findings to the class in a 3-5 minute presentation with time allowed for follow-up questions.

Monologue Performance: Students choose a selection from *The Ultimate Scene and Monologue Source Book* and plan, memorize, and present a monologue performance that includes appropriate performance techniques.

Informational Essays: Students write an informational essays about effective stagecraft based on their research of professional critiques following MLA format and correct citation.

Production Schedule: The culminating unit project begins with formulating a production schedule for 10-minute plays that grow from the scene adaptation performances the students completed at the end of Unit 4. The schedule must include design and performance decisions and how those decisions impact the production schedule.

One Act Play: Students write, produce and perform a one act play to demonstrate their understanding of dramatic structure, literary analysis, script analysis, character development and technical aspects of theatrical production. Plays are performed over a 3-week period and assessed with an aesthetic rubric.

Course Materials:

Title: A Raisin in the Sun

Edition: 7th Print Edition

Publication Date: 1994

Publisher: Vintage

Author(s): Lorraine Hansberry

Usage: Primary Text Read in entirety or near entirety

Title: Prentice Hall Literature: Timeless Voices, Timeless Themes

Edition: 2005

Publication Date: 2005

Publisher: Prentice Hall

Author(s): Kate Kinsella, Kevin Feldman, Colleen Shea Stamp

Usage: Primary Text – Excerpts

Title: The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm

Edition: Third Edition

Publication Date: January 1, 2003

Publisher: Bantam

Author(s): Jacob Grimm, Wilhelm Grimm, Jack Zipes

Usage: Primary Text Read in entirety or near entirety

Title: The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

Edition: 2009

Publication Date: 2009

Publisher: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers

Author(s): Sherman Alexie

Usage: Primary Text Read in entirety or near entirety

Title: An Actor Prepares

Edition: Reprint edition, 1989

Publication Date: 1989

Publisher: Routledge

Author(s): Constantin Stanislavski

Usage: Supplementary or Secondary Text Excerpts

Title: The Ultimate Scene and Monologue Sourcebook, Updated and Expanded Edition

Edition: Second

Publication Date: 2007

Publisher: Backstage Books

Author(s): Ed Hooks

Usage: Supplementary or Secondary Text Excerpts

Title: The Odyssey

Edition: Any

Publication Date: Any

Author(s): Homer

Usage: Primary Text Read in entirety or near entirety

Title: Mythology

Edition: 1998 reprint

Publication Date: 1942

Publisher: Back Bay Books

Author(s): Edith Hamilton

Usage: Primary Text Excerpts

Title: Metamorphoses

Edition: 2002

Publication Date: 2002

Publisher: Northwestern University Press

Author(s): Mary Zimmerman

Usage: Primary Text Read in entirety or near entirety

Title: Romeo and Juliet (The New Folger Library Shakespeare)

Edition: 2011

Publication Date: 2011

Publisher: Simon & Schuster

Author(s): William Shakespeare

Usage: Primary Text - Read in entirety or near entirety

Title: A Thousand Splendid Suns

Edition: 2008

Publication Date: 2008

Publisher: Northwestern University Press

Author(s): Khaled Hosseini

Usage: Primary Text - Read in entirety or near entirety

Title: Othello (The New Folger Library Shakespeare)

Edition: 2004

Publication Date: 2004

Publisher: Simon & Schuster

Author(s): William Shakespeare

Usage: Primary Text - Excerpts

Title: The Hunger Games (may substituted another novel with similar themes)

Edition: First

Publication Date: 2008

Publisher: Scholastic

Author(s): Suzanne Collins

Usage: Primary Text - Read in entirety or near entirety

Supplemental Materials:

They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing "with Readings"

Edition: Second

Publication Date: November 15, 2011

Publisher: W.W. Norton & Company

Authors: Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, Russel Durst

Universal Archetypes- www.pbs.org/mythsandheroes/myth_archetypes.html

Dark Lady Sonnets by William Shakespeare: <http://hudsonshakespeare.org/index.htm>

First Folio (Romeo and Juliet and Othello)-

<http://web.archive.org/web/20080504221015/http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/ShRJF.html>

Socratic Method- www.studyguide.org/socratic_seminar.htm

Power Wheel- <http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org>

"I Have a Dream" speech:

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkhaveadream.htm>

Queen Elizabeth I's speech to the troops at Tisbury:

<http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/elizabeth.htm>

Jacques's speech from *As You Like It*:

http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/asu_2_7.html

Hamlet's soliloquy "To Be...":

http://www.monologuearchive.com/s/shakespeare_001.html

George the Sixth's Speech: <http://awesomestories.com>

Henry V's St. Crispin's Day Speech: <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/henryv/henryv.4.3.html>

"The Masque of the Red Death" by Edgar Allan Poe:

<http://www.readbookonline.net/readOnline/483>

"The Cask of Amontillado" by Edgar Allan Poe:

<http://www.eastoftheweb.com/shortstories/UBooks/CasAmo.shtml>

<http://www.xtranormal.com>

<http://www.pinterest.com>

Videos/Movies

Romeo and Juliet

Directed by Baz Luhrman

1996

Romeo and Juliet

Directed by Franco Zeffirelli- 1968