



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2000 Volume V: Sound and Sensibility: Acoustics in Architecture, Music, and the Environment

Tuning the Instrument for Actors and Writers

Guide for Curriculum Unit 00.05.01
by Yel Hannon Brayton

The ear is an extraordinary conduit for sound from its outer fleshy cup to its intricate interior. And for those of us lucky enough to have two of them in relatively good working order, sound not only enhances our lives, but our ability to hear and interpret it instinctively protects us as well. Therefore, understanding the "fundamental scientific principles underlying the behavior of sound," as well as "human responses to sound" (as stated in Professor Apfel's summary of the Sound and Sensibility seminar) makes up the spine of this curriculum unit upon which creative writing and theatre pedagogy are fleshed out in the areas of: voice, prose and poetry writing, and reading. Through the arts, which by their nature are interdisciplinary - as they encompass history, language, science, and mathematics- the unit focuses students on "real world" targets with "real world" activities, where they are given ample support to explore a variety of resources and to "experience" their learning. It is my hope that they will gain the kind of bone-marrow learning that results in critical as well as creative thinking, evocative and provocative exposition and persuasive and articulate speech.

"Tuning the Instrument" is designed for 7th and 8th grade Creative Writing and Theatre classes. As these are elective classes, topics are introduced yearly at my discretion. However, Science and Language Arts teachers may find some of the lessons useful as they relate to their curricula with regard to anatomy, and reading and writing respectively. Under Title II of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act - which acknowledged the arts as core subjects comparable in importance to traditional content areas - an arts program, such as ours at Betsy Ross Arts Magnet School, should be aligned to certain criteria as set forth in the document, National Standards for Arts Education (published in 1994). This document is a 142-page book composed by the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, and was funded by grants from the Department of Education, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Cultivating the whole child, building many kinds of literacy, developing intuition, reasoning, and imagination, are some of the aims of this unit that align with the arts program standards.

(Recommended for Theatre, Drama, and Creative Writing, grades 5-8.)

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>