



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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Contemporary Drama: A Unit In Boundary-Breaking

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How do you approach contemporary drama in your classroom? If you are like me, it is probably with a ten foot pole. Each year as I make my obligatory trek through Sophocles and Shakespeare—sometimes even venturing to do a Williams or Miller—I wistfully sneak a look at a Beckett, a Stoppard, a Rabe a Shepard, or an Albee and wonder how in the world can I make their plays accessible to my students. The anxiety I suffered just glancing at a page of Beckett was enough to send me scurrying back to the safe pages of Oedipus “All In The Family.” After all, what are these playwrights really saying? I knew only too well that to assign a play, or even a scene, from these playwrights was to ask for revolt. If the story line is not immediately available, the play is gently set aside and our awesome competitor, the T. V., is turned on.

Nevertheless, this year, with cynicism safely in stow, and suffused with Institute-subsidized courage, I ventured again into the forbidden pages. The question for me became: how do I teach these playwrights? Fortunately, my drama seminar posed a question early in our meetings which greatly influenced the formation of my unit. The question turned around the nature of drama, and its consideration in the classroom. Do we want to present drama as a verbal medium, with the linear, expository values of the written script prevailing; or should we consider drama as a multi-dimensional medium, existing simultaneously as both sound and action? As an English teacher, I have felt more comfortable with the former approach; as a frustrated actor, I have always felt that not teaching the play as part of a larger process cheated my students of a valuable experience. I recognized that what was done in preparation before engaging the text is as important as embracing the text itself. Furthermore, I realized that in order to make these plays teachable, specific connections had to be made between the plays and the life concerns of my students. The challenge for me was to establish a link between the two, to find a common thematic concern in the plays that would be relevant to my students. I found part of the linkage I was looking for in the Gestalt Therapy of Fritz Perls, particularly in his concepts of ego boundary and paradox of “character.”¹

Perls’ notion of ego boundary fascinated me primarily because it gave me a valuable insight into the maturation process of our students. Simply stated, the ego boundary defines—at any one time—the sense of self. It is characterized by two phenomena: identification and alienation. Whatever one identifies with is included within the notion of self. Inside the boundary feelings of security, familiarity, and wholeness prevail. Whatever is beyond the boundary is alien. There lurks the enemy, where suspicion, strangeness, and unfamiliarity reign. To take an example from sports, if you are in favor of Title IX’s equalization mandate for men and women’s sports programs in high school and college, part of how you perceive yourself is wrapped up in that identification. Outside your boundary lurks the enemies who oppose such equalization. In addition,

the ego boundary is fluid—there is no reason why people on either side of the women’s sports issue can’t change their minds—and hence is capable of expansion and contraction. Perls’ concept recognizes that boundaries will always exist—after all, the inside (ego) can never completely absorb the outside (environment). Nevertheless, the ego boundary can change. Through dissatisfaction with present boundaries and contact with outside boundaries, integration of inside and outside can take place, expanding the limits of the ego boundary. It is by this process of awareness—contact—integration that self-growth occurs.

Perls goes on to suggest that in the process of growing up, two choices can be made: either to overcome frustration; or to be spoiled. Frustration, for Perls, is a positive force, a prerequisite to change, arising out of the dissatisfaction with one’s ego boundary. All self-growth, Perls contends, evolves out of frustration. otherwise there would be no reason to discover anything outside one’s present boundaries. Conversely, to be spoiled results from an absence of frustration, where the young person learns instead to control and manipulate his environment and in turn becomes dependent upon it. Energies that should be invested into expanding the ego boundaries and so leading to self growth and regulation are now poured into managing what is outside his boundaries. The danger of “spoiling the child” is that it leads to what for Perls is a paradox of “character.” If frustration is a positive force, character is a negative outcome. The more character a person has, the more he is set in his ways. The more rigid one’s ego boundary, the more predictable become one’s reactions. Paradoxically, the more the character, the less the potential for self-growth. When one’s responses to his environment are fixed, the more impenetrable the barriers.

In light of Perls’ self-growth framework, I see our students caught in a dilemma. Their ego boundaries are in a state of flux, the limits of which are being challenged daily on many fronts as they confront new experiences and feelings. They also stand in danger of acquiring “character”—in the Perlsian sense. Minds have been made up. Attitudes have rigidified. Responses are predictable. How often have we heard the tautological response to the request to do something new: “I don’t want to do that.” “Why?” Because I won’t like it:—What is perceived as strange is outside the boundary and therefore alien.

It is in the notion of boundaries that I see a direct connection with my students lives and concerns. For them life is a series of boundaries against which they push and shove with the intensity of trapped animals. They move, change directions, rattle about peripatetically, but always within frameworks that limit the extent of their range. At times, these boundaries must seem like absolute bondage. If their intense energy is not given a chance to express itself, harmful rage can result. Our students are questing for a way that will permit them to understand and deal with the confusion of their lives as well as to define the limits and responsibilities that an ordered life entails. They are like so many bottled genies looking for their Aladdins to free them from their fearful prisons.

These boundaries take many forms. The boundaries that separate the adolescent from the adult world, for example, present the young person with formidable obstacles which he challenges at great risk. Conflicts arise—boundary moments—when the feelings and desires of the adolescent run counter to society’s imperatives. The guiding metaphor is the wall. Compulsory socialization, the masks adults wear, barriers to communication, all cause conflict for the adolescent when he experiences them as restrictive forces in his maturation process. In addition, the adolescent faces a myriad of other boundary situations, with questions regarding the body, religion, school, the past, love, sex, parents, careers, and on and on. Almost any point where dissatisfaction with present boundaries is felt, where conflict arises, and where change is possible, can be viewed as a boundary moment. How the adolescent chooses to deal with these moments affects not only his view of himself, but the direction and nature of his future growth. In the contemporary plays I have read, to suggest that the idea of boundaries is a common thematic concern, I realize, is to risk oversimplification.

Nevertheless, since the objective of my unit is to bridge the gap between drama and my students' lives, the role of boundaries—particularly as it results in the “character” paradox—will be useful to help students see the plays as having meaning for their lives.

The clue to this thematic connection for me is provided in some lines in Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, when toward the end of the play Guildenstern probes to the heart of the dilemma in which he and Rosencrantz are ensnared:

“Where we went wrong was getting on the boat. We can move, of course, change directions, rattle about, but our movement is contained within a larger one that carried us along as inexorably as the wind and current”....

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Guildenstern's recognition of the boundary separating them from their environment—the larger play in which they are merely parttime players—underscores the utter futility of their situation. Their unequivocal dependence upon their environment rigidly defines their characters. The more they try to manipulate their situation, the more they are manipulated by it. They never take charge of their own script. They have become Persian characters: responses predictable, choices removed, growth impossible. Though we watch the twisting and turning of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern with a certain calmness (after all, we know what is going to happen to them), we nevertheless share with them their growing loneliness and fear as their end (ours?) approaches. That larger universe of which we are all a part—“movement is contained within a larger one”—is never penetrated—and it is frightening. Because the outside boundaries appeared so impregnable, the question raised by the play—just how much control do we have over our own fate?—is one that has special meaning for our students. They too are like characters acting in a script they didn't write and over which they have little control. The frustrations they feel in trying to gain control are real. How do they use their frustration to insure growth, if the obstacles are so formidable? How do they control their own script?

In other plays that I read, I was impressed by how many characters were trapped into roles that limited their choices and restricted their actions. Beckett's tramps in his *Waiting For Godot* are so dependent on the missing Godot (the outside) that they are deprived of free choice. The boundary is so impenetrable that choice is rendered meaningless. Thoroughly severed from the larger world, their incessant verbal chatter—like a minstrel's or clown's patter game—provides at times their only assurance they are alive. Similarly, for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the social context in which they exist regulates them so severely, that they are uncertain even of their own names. The frantic word games they play—the tennis question game, for example—offers their only sense of identity. To stop talking—at least metaphorically—would be to stop living.

In David Rabe's *Sticks and Bones* the theme of boundaries is presented in a different fashion. We meet three members of the Nelson family—Ozzie, Harriet and (yes:) Ricky—whose ego boundaries are firmly fixed in traditional waspish middle-class values. Their comfort and security is shattered by the return from the Vietnam War of another son, David, whose ego boundaries have been exploded by his war experiences. The inevitable conflicts that result from the clash of boundaries lead to a bizarre and violent climax. The play presents a challenging question. How do we get others who are strapped into social and psychological straight-jackets to loosen their mental straps and change? To use Perls' framework: how do we penetrate the fixed ego boundaries of others? Perls might question whether we should even try. Also, what are we to make of the despairing ending: David is permitted to commit suicide with the help of his family. Is it an admission of hopelessness; or are we to find his actions heroic?

Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* poses a similar question. How do we get through the boundaries that separate one self from another? Jerry's attempt to make contact with Peter through the social barriers that separate

them succeeds only in a paroxysm of violence, at the expense of his own life.

The family in Sam Shepard's *The Curse of The Starving Class* are all victims of the American Dream, a mythic boundary that has the force of reality for many. Each family member clings hopelessly to the illusion of self-control, each making a gesture to escape from the failed circumstance of their lives. Their gestures, of course, are futile; and instead of attaining the freedom they long for, the family disintegrates before our eyes. Symbolically, their collective failure is a failure to mature. As Weston, the father, at one point says: "I kept looking for it out there somewhere. I kept trying to piece it together. It all turned around on me.....And all the time it was right inside... ³ His blind faith in the future—in the Dream (outside)—prevented him from understanding the reality of his life. The preceding pages provide the rationale for my unit: to connect the innumerable boundary-conflict moments that our students experience and similar concerns in the plays. What follows is a sequence of activities that I have designed to lead through these boundary moments to the plays and, hopefully, back again to the students: life experiences. The following model is a series of simulation games designed to give students some practice in weaving through their maturation tangle. The sequence of activities leads to the use of improvised dialogue experiences to help them work through some boundary-conflict moments. Cuttings from the plays will be used as part of a larger structure that is planned to permit students to define, work through, and experience dramatically concerns that are relevant to their life experiences.

My major objective is to get students to identify and define a series of boundary moments, recreate them visually, and experience them dramatically. Through the use of improvised dialogue my intention is to permit students to bring their boundary moments to life, and to experience them as if they were happening NOW: The learning that I expect will be in large part social: by understanding what they do in the improvisation, by acting things out in the present, they can come away from the activity with knowledge, now a part of themselves, which they can use in their own real life experiences.

Furthermore, I expect students to experience the plays as well. Since I am only using cuttings from the plays, primarily as analogues to the boundary experiences our students encounter, I hope they will provide an entry into further exploration and interpretations of the plays beyond the scope of my unit. If you do choose a play for close analysis, make sure you know the play well. I don't have to tell you that they are difficult to read. The pages are often sparsely printed, the stage directions -scanty, and the dialogue elliptical. More often than not, there is more happening below the surface of the dialogue—which I've tried to suggest in my brief comments on the plays—as in the action the words imply.

Since what I am presenting is a model. I mean for you to consider it merely as a blueprint to build from. What follows is more or less an outline of strategies offered to achieve the objectives of my unit. Suggestions will be given for the following sequence:

1. Preliminary Boundary Breaking: Removing classroom barriers.
2. Helping students define their boundary situations.
3. Ways to imagine these moments as dramatic scenes.
4. Developing the scenes into scenarios for improvisations.
5. Using cuttings from selected plays illustrating boundary moments.
6. Using the improvisations and plays as source material for written scripts.

To get students to perform in front of their peers requires in itself the breaking of several boundaries. If you ever hope to have your students perform in a boundary breaking improvisation, preliminary steps must be taken. First of all, the traditional classroom setting itself presents particular boundaries. I find that students, as a group, really know little about each other. Even though they share the same concerns, are under the same pressures and conditioned by similar stimuli, their real knowledge of each other is surprisingly superficial. Too often, the rigid structuring of classroom activities—while often necessary—perpetuates rather than alleviates the separation.

This first activity is designed to break down some classroom boundaries. The objective is to get students to open up to each other a little, to reveal something about what they value. The role of the teacher at this point is crucial. This activity must be conducted in as non-threatening a climate as possible, with the teacher setting the tone.

Begin by having the students sit in a circle with chairs close together. For some students this is a boundary they have difficulty crossing. Be firm, but understanding. If a student refuses to sit in a circle, don't insist. We'll hook him later. The first boundary -breaking activity is a structured conversation. This activity is not one of role playing—that's later—but instead a group interaction experience. To describe briefly, the structured conversation that I have used in my class follows a simple format. After the class has formed a circle, the group leader (teacher) proceeds by asking a question from the structured conversation questions. (See Appendix One for questions). Each student in the circle answers in turn. When each student in the circle answers the question (each student *must* answer), the group leader asks the next question and the process continues. During the question and answer period no disagreements or debate is allowed. Each student is to listen as each member of the class answers, collecting answers in his head and trying to develop an idea of each person. After completing the 1st set of questions, which and how many questions you use, will depend on the alertness of the group, the amount of class time available, etc., I move on to the 2nd set of questions, the synthesis set. These questions, asked in the same way as the first, are to be answered in light of the responses to the 1st set. While the structured-conversation questions are designed to give some insight into the "life stance" of each group member, the synthesis set creates interaction by group members. This activity is designed to build a sense of community in the class by removing some boundaries of distrust and isolation through deeper awareness of their classmates. It also tests concentration, memory, and listening skills as well. I have found that, as a result of this interaction game, class members feel less tension, are more trustful of others in the class, and are more willing to share with each other. They are also more willing to take further risks when asked. And it is with taking more risks and challenging more boundaries that the remainder of my unit is concerned.

The next activity, now that some rapport has been established among class members, is to generate a list of boundary conflicts from the Boundary-Breaking activity. The objective here is to translate the student responses into specific adolescent concerns. The concerns should be stated so that they can be imagined as dramatic scenes, to be used later for improvisations. As an example: To the question, "What is the greatest problem in the U. S.," answers perhaps covered the following range: jobs, unemployment, inflation, war, poverty, racism, pollution and so on. From these general responses the teacher should discuss with the class where these problems cause specific conflicts for young people. In the area of jobs and unemployment a specific boundary conflict might be visualized as the frustration in not getting a job which in turn might lead to crime, violence, drugs, drinking or family problems, etc. The point is not to discuss the social issues involved in these problems but to locate those moments where the problems become real for the student, to define the boundary moment, and to imagine it as a dramatic scene. Once this has been done, the next step is creating an improvisation situation in which students can face the boundary conflict through acting. Consider the

following scenarios which might evolve from the above boundary conflict:

S. (1) Father, unemployed, comes home drunk and beats up wife. The son, 17, intervenes. How does he deal with his father's violence, frustration as well as his own newly acquired role as mediator?

S. (2) Young man, 16, wants to buy a birthday gift for his girlfriend (he is under a great deal of pressure to do this) but has no job, no money. His friends pressure him to join them in burglarizing a house from which he can expect to get some money. He is uncertain.

S. (3) Young girl, 18, becomes pregnant but is unmarried and boyfriend has no job. He wants to get married and wants her to have the baby. She is uncertain.

Each of these scenarios presents specific boundary conflict questions. Here are some suggestions:

S. 1. A How does son expand his own boundaries to take on adult role in family as mediator between his father and mother?

B How does he deal with his resentment toward his father? What kinds of responses does he make to his father's behavior?

S. 2 A Is this a conflict to uphold social morality in face of personal dilemma?

B Since the crossing of this boundary may lead to disaster, are there certain boundaries that should be preserved?

C If economic entrapment causes dilemma, how does one deal with the society that enforces the morality but doesn't provide economic opportunities?

D How does one deal with demands that arise out of the relationship and that require performance (i. e. getting a gift)?

E What would happen if the gift is not purchased? What are the young man's fears?

F How to deal with resultant rage and frustration—how is it to be directed?

S.3 A Whether or not to have baby?

B Should the boyfriend's lack of a job influence her decision? C How do each of them deal with any parental conflicts that arise?

D How does the young man expect to take on adult responsibilities without job to support family?

E What is the role of love in their relationship?

F Is the girl's pregnancy the result of not facing certain boundaries earlier?

These questions can be used either for a follow-up discussion after the improvisation is performed or as coaching questions to use before and during the improvisation to help student actors develop their dialogue.

The possibilities for additional improvisations are enormous, depending only upon the experience, energy, and imagination of the class and teacher. Since many of the suggestions for improvisations will arise out of the stuff of personal experience, the teacher must use tact to maintain the attitude that the improvisations reflect student concern in general. Try to avoid embarrassing any student by permitting a personal connection to be made. If this should happen, it is hoped that the earlier boundary-breaking activity together with the activities to follow will have built enough mutual trust and responsibility to sustain an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding.

Before you can expect students to perform in the boundary-conflict improvisations, you should lead your students through the following series of dramatic exercises. There are any number of different dramatic activities that could be used as preliminary warm-ups in order to create a classroom atmosphere where students would feel free to participate in an improvisation. What follows is only a limited suggestion. Included in my appendix will be a number of additional exercises for specific dramatic activities. Whichever activities you use, there are at least three boundaries that must be considered and transcended. The first concerns the importance of concentration; the second, the matter of building trust; and the third crossing the boundary from the purely verbal to the physical. Concentration, trust, and physical action are the basic ingredients in any acting experience.

1. Concentration: listening is an important skill, and one that is often ignored. It is doubly important in acting because of the *dependence* each actor has upon the other. Questions of timing, movement and emotional response all depend upon total concentration for their effectiveness.

Exercises:

1. Labyrinth: This is a familiar exercise that has several variations.

Procedure:

Construct a maze of chairs or other items handy in the classroom. Blindfold one person, instructing him that he must traverse the maze by listening to and following the directions of a classmate guide.

Variations:

1. Have several persons direct one person
2. Have one person direct several persons
3. Have several labyrinth games playing at same time through separate mazes, or same maze.
4. Play music during the exercise.

2. tic/tac/toe: or any group of three rhyme words will do. Procedure: Played by all members of the class. Class forms standing circle (use same method as noted in Boundary-Breaking Activity). On signal from teacher, one student says the first word (tic) in the word cycle, the student to his left says the second and so on, continuing

around the circle repeating the three words. After a rhythm has been established, the teacher signals again (clap of hands will do) and the students begin to move out of the circle and around the room continuing to repeat the words in the same sequence and order as spoken in the circle. If someone misses his turn, quickly reform the circle and repeat process until group can move outside the circle and maintain the three word sequence without error for two minutes.

3. Trust: If a student is going to risk performing in front of his peers, it is important that he feel a responsibility toward and have the emotional ability to rely upon them. Trust exercises build this confidence.

Exercises:

1. Trust in a Circle

Procedure:

From five to eight students make a circle, around a student who stands in the middle, relaxed, with his eyes shut. Keeping his feet firmly planted on the floor, the student leans forward, backwards and sideways until he falls into the arms of the students in the circle. When they catch him, they push him upright again. The catchers must let the falling student fall enough so he experiences the fall, but not far enough to fall down. After the student experiences his fall several times, his place is taken by another from the circle. As students build more trust in each other, the circle can be widened to permit a greater fall.

This exercise requires both concentration and cooperation. The members of the circle must act collectively to push the falling student back up-right (since a falling person is dead weight), and the falling student must concentrate to work through his fear of falling and learn to give his trust to his classmates. They in turn must prove worthy of that trust catching him when he falls.

2. Physical Action: The following exercises are intended to get the student to start moving and using his body.

Exercise:

1. Sound and Movement In Lines:

Procedure:

This exercise works well with small group of 6-8 students. Students form two equal lines facing each other about ten feet apart. One student begins a sound and movement of any type and moves toward someone in opposite line. When student in opposite line realizes he has been chosen he begins to imitate the same sound and movement while moving toward the approaching student. They meet in the middle between the two lines and share briefly before moving off to the opposite line. The first student drops the action when he reaches the line. The second student is now the principle actor: when he reaches his line he transforms the action he received into a new sound and movement. He moves out across the space choosing someone on the opposite line and repeating the process. Continue the game until each student has had a chance to be chosen and transform the action into his own.

3. General Improvisations: What follows are suggestions for general improvisations to prepare for the specific boundary conflict improvisations to follow. They will also provide practice for integrating the three above concepts, and as a test to see how well the students have crossed the particular boundaries involved.

Exercises:

1. Conflict/Opposition:

Procedure:

Set up a cleared acting space in center of room. Students chosen for the scenes come to center and take seats. Have student actor(s) in conflict sit opposite each other. On signal from teacher the students improvise the scene. Let the scene play long enough to build intensity, but not so long that the tension wanes. On signal from teacher, scene ends.

The objectives that you are aiming for in these exercises are to get students to project the role each is playing to the audience, to develop concentration through interaction with their partners in the scene and to make use of the imagination to develop role. The teacher should use his own judgement in deciding how much coaching he does before and during the scene.

Scenes:

- A. card game: one cheats (3 players)
- B. husband comes home late from playing cards (2)
- C. husband wants mother-in-law to leave (2)
- D. husband wants to go out with the boys (2)
- E. daughter comes home from date; father suspects she has done something she shouldn't have; mother defends her (3)
- F. characters in bomb shelter; decide who must live/die (5-7)
- G. argument: which (rock group, politician, team, etc.) is best (3-5)
- H. Three players try to get fourth to take drugs (4)

After completing these scenes your class should be ready to go on to the scenarios they have developed from the Boundary-Breaking activity.

Once you have completed a series of Boundary-Breaking improvisations, I would introduce a cutting from a play into the sequence of activities. The students will be fresh from working with boundary conflicts using improvised dialogue; they will be ready now to discover and interpret through acting boundary conflicts in the plays. What follows is, again, representative of what I would do with a play cutting.

Cutting #1 from Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* (p. 12-22) Opening dialogue between Jerry and Peter. There are three problems to keep in mind when leading students through the play cuttings:

1. problems with the text
2. problems with performance

3. problems with leading students to understanding

Step 1: Choose two students (good readers) to take parts of Jerry and Peter. Sit them opposite each other and have them read the scene cold, without any preliminary comment or interpretation. After they finish reading ask the following questions:

1. Why does Jerry talk to Peter?
2. What do you think he is feeling?
3. What is Peter's reaction to Jerry?
4. What do you think he is feeling?

Try to lead students to establish the line motivations of each character, to get beyond the words to the dramatic interaction that the words imply. Get students to see that the two characters are in opposition to each other. Discuss the simple opposition (Jerry intrudes upon Peter who doesn't want to be bothered). Once the idea of opposition is established, with Jerry the aggressor, Peter the resister, have students re-read the scene, this time communicating the sense of opposition in both sound and movement. Have Jerry stand, and perhaps walk around Peter, who should remain seated throughout.

After this reading, discussion should consider questions of character and boundaries.

1. What boundaries separate the two?
2. What are boundary conflicts?
3. Discuss characters in terms of ego boundaries. Is Peter a rigid character? How can you tell? Is Jerry?

Try to lead students in the discussion of boundaries beyond the simple opposition to an understanding of the social barriers that separate the two; the sense of exclusion that Jerry feels, and the rigid nature of Peter's ego boundary (class, social difference) that resists Jerry's attempt to make contact.

Step 2: At this point I would try to get students to experience dramatically some of the emotions that underpin the scene—what the characters are really feeling. During this activity make connections with their earlier improvised dialogue practice. All of the following activities will be important in establishing the basic emotional moods of the characters and in providing the basis for the interpretation and understanding of two additional cuttings I would use from this play.

Begin with an animal improvisation (see Spolin, p. 262 and Dezseran, p. 97 for coaching details). Try to get student(s) to make his animal identifiable through sound and movement. Ask student who played Jerry to try a dog improvisation. Once he has mimicked the dog to your satisfaction, ask him to explore ways of translating the dog into a human being. What specific habits does the dog have that resemble those of a human? Jerry is like a dog in that he circles Peter, looking for a way to approach him, alternately holding back and snapping, but always on the prowl, waiting until he can make contact (violently, as it turns out). Of course, seeing Jerry

as a dog is important in playing the next cutting I would use, that of Jerry's story about his landlady's dog. Next, ask the student who played Peter to improvise a cat. Coaching should lead the student to play a cat who is threatened and immobilized, waiting for his attacker to make the next move. Let the two students improvise the opening scene: first of all without words, just animal movements, then using animal sounds, and finally, - transferring animal characteristics to Jerry and Peter, re-reading the scene from the script. Remind the players to remember both their feelings and their physical movements as animals.

The following activities are designed to physicalize through sound and movement the emotional opposition of the two characters that results from the barriers between them. They can be used before, with, or after the animal improvisation.

1. Have students form a tight circle facing outward. Another student tries to break into the circle using any means at his disposal short of physical force.
2. Man in the Glass Booth: One student sits on chair enclosed in imagined unbreakable glass booth. Second student tries to gain entry, while student inside ignores his efforts.
3. Student sits on chair unable to move off it while one or more students try to get him to move from his seat using any means short of physical force.

After each of these activities, have players involved perform the scene, using the emotions of frustration, anger, rage, etc. that they felt in the improvisation, and incorporate it into their reading of the scene.

Step 3: When students have experienced the scene dramatically, you can either go on to the next cuttings (pg. 36-43; and pgs, 50-62) or discuss with the class the connections they see between the boundary conflict in the play and their own experiences. Boundaries between social, racial, and ethnic groups will obviously be mentioned. Perls has pointed out that the closer the boundaries, the greater the danger of conflict and hostility. At this point, it will be easy for students to make up scenarios suggested by the play that dramatically recreate their own experiences. From the scenarios have students either act them out using improvised dialogue, or:

Step 4: Script Writings

Students can be asked to write scripts suggested by the improvisations. This assignment can be managed in the following ways:

1. Make tapes of the improvisations and have students transcribe the tape. Make up copies and distribute to class for revision, elaboration and/or performance.
2. Have the group performing the improvisations write a script.
3. Write scripts suggested by improvisations but consider other aspects of conflict and leading to other outcomes.
4. Use list of Boundary-moment conflicts generated in Boundary-Breaking activity for script-writing ideas.

It should be apparent at this point that the process outlined in the preceding pages can be repeated indefinitely, a theme with many variations, as inexhaustible as the supply of student boundary-conflict experiences and contemporary plays that illuminate those experiences. When choosing a play to teach with the unit, keep in mind that the basic focus of my unit is upon the student. Even though emphasis is upon what happens before the play is considered, it is not my intention to diminish the importance of the play—after all, it is in the form of the dramatic experience that our life experiences are reflected and given shape. It is more a recognition that plays are not discrete objects to which we go to read or watch passively, but analogues of our lives which we encounter. It is in this interrelatedness of words and actions, of actor and audience, of mind and body that my unit has been concerned. If out of this process a slight appreciation of differences is reached, a partial integration of opposing forces is achieved, resulting in even a small expansion of the boundaries that separate the self from others, I will be pleased.

Appendix A

Structured Conversation . . . Boundary Breaking

1. Who is the man most relevant to our times?
2. What is the title of the last book that you read?
3. What is the best movie that you have ever seen?
4. When you think of *reality*, what comes to your mind first?
5. What is the most beautiful thing about people?
6. What physical thing do you want to build more than anything else?
7. What is the most sacred thing you know?
8. What is the ugliest thing you know?
9. What leisure time activity pleases you the most?
10. What event of the last three months stands out in your mind the most?
11. What force of history are you most aware of as you plan your life?
12. On what basis do you select your friends?
13. What is the most overwhelming thing you know? The thing that makes you feel most humble'?
14. What is the greatest problem in the United States?
15. What is the best regular program on television?
16. What is the greatest value that guides your life?
17. If you could be any animal other than man... what animal would you choose to be?
18. If you could smash one thing and only one thing, what would you smash?
19. What is the greatest crime one man can commit towards another?
20. What is the best book you have ever read?
21. What do you want to be doing ten years from now?
22. For what do you think you would lay down your life?
23. What do you feel when you stand on the shore of an ocean? (Or a very large lake)
24. How would you symbolize the human soul... like a rose... Like a sunset..how? (The above are only examples)
25. If you were making a phonograph record and you wanted to put the sound of violence on that

- record... what would you use for violence?
26. What sound would you put on that record for beauty?
 27. If the atomic bomb was going to fall in ten minutes...what would you do in the last ten minutes?
 28. If you could travel to any place in the world...where would you go first?
 29. How many children make the ideal family?
 30. What is your favorite sport?
 31. What emotion is strongest in you?
 32. What would you like put on your grave stone?
 33. Select a word that best describes your total life at this moment of time.
 34. What is your biggest worry?
 35. What is the most beautiful thing you have ever seen?
 36. What do you think people like in you the least?
 37. What do you think people like in you the most?
 38. When you think of tragedy, what do you think of?
 39. What person has most influenced your life?
 40. What would you like to be talented at that you are not at the present time?
 41. What gives the most security?
 42. What institution is most in need of changing?
 43. What word best describes advertising?
 44. Select the one word that best describes a sunset.
 45. When do you feel most lonely?
 46. When do you sense being alive the most?
 47. When you think of soft green grass...what do you think of?
 48. What television advertisement bothers you the most?
 49. Select a word that you feel describes people your age.
 50. In school you have seen certain people all year and you have not spoken to them... why?
 51. What is the biggest waste you know of... in terms of a product?
 52. What embarrasses you the most?
 53. What do you want to be doing ten years from now?
 54. Who is the best candidate on the political scene?
 55. What future discovery are you looking forward to the most?
 56. What is your greatest fear?
 57. What is the greatest piece of music ever composed?
 58. What do you love the most?
 59. When you think of children under age three... what comes to your mind?
 60. What color is love... if you have to paint love?
 61. If you had to use another word for God...what word would you use?
 62. What person would you follow the farthest?
 63. What one day in your life would you like to live over?
 64. What is the most powerful force loose in the world today?

Synthesis Set

Answer these questions in light of the answers given by the group members.

1. Which person did you learn the most about?
2. Which person is the most humanitarian?
3. Which person do you want to learn more about?
4. Which person did you think was the most honest?
5. Which person did you think hid herself from you the most?
6. Which person do you think you could get along with best over a long period of time (boy or girl)?
7. Which person did you think had the deepest insights?
8. Which answer surprised you the most?
9. Which person is most sensitive to life?
10. Which person is the best planner?
11. Which person enjoys life the most?
12. Which answer do you want explained here?
13. Which person has the most "soul"...the most personness?
14. Which person do you feel will make the best leader?
15. Which person would make the best leader?
16. Which person has the most promise... the most unfulfilled potential?
17. Which person do you feel is most like you?
18. Which person do you feel is least like you?
19. Which person is most balanced...well rounded...in the four areas: mental, physical, social and spiritual?
20. Which person has the most charisma...the capacity to make you want to believe, to follow them, to be with them?

Appendix B Additional dramatic exercises

I have supplied brief descriptive notes where necessary. Otherwise where exercises appear in drama source books, I have simply included the author's name and page number. Please consult Bibliography for titles.

1. Concentration

1. Add a number: 3,5,7/3,5,7,9/3,5,7,9,11/etc.
2. Consecutive Numbers: just clap on 7's, don't say number. Clap on 7, combination of 7. or number with 7 in it.
3. Consecutive Numbers: say all numbers Count to 30. Clap at 3, combination of 3, with 3 in it; do same for 5; for both 3 & 5.
The above games follow a simple format. Have students form a circle. Students are to go around the circle repeating the numbers and actions as instructed. If a mistake is made simply begin again.
4. Name 6 game (Spolin, p. 63)
5. Who started the motion game (Spolin, p. 67)
6. Breathing and Talking Together (Pasolli, p. 24)

2. Trust

1. Fingertip Trust (Pasolli, p. 26)
2. Blind Running (Pasolli, p. 26)
3. Physical Action
 1. Tug of War (Spolin, p. 61)
 2. Play Ball (Spolin, p. 63)
 3. Part of A Whole (Spolin, p. 13)
 4. Physicalizing An Object (Spolin, p. 78)
 5. Walking In Space (Pasolli, p. 16)
 6. Touching the Air (Pasolli, p. 17)
 7. Imaginary Objects (Pasolli, p. 17)
 8. Orchestra (Pasolli, p. 27)
 9. Machines (Pasolli, p. 18)
 10. Mirror Images (Pasolli, p. 19), (Spolin, pgs. 60, 66, 75)

Notes

1. For a more detailed discussion of these two concepts, summary comments on which following the next two paragraphs, see: Frederick S. Perls, *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim* (New York: Bantam Books), pages 1-76.
2. Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* (New York: Grove Press), p. 122.
3. Sam Shepard, *Angel City & Other Plays* (New York: Urizen Books), p. 112.
4. Make a game out of forming the circle. Have students sit alphabetically by first name, or last, or the third letter of their first name, their age, or some variation of the above. The object is to focus awareness on each other and away from any self-conscious hesitation they may feel about forming a circle.

A Selected Bibliography

Abel, Lionel. *Metatheater: A New View of Dramatic Form* . New York: Hill and Nang. 1963

Interesting discussion on the death of tragic form; only to be reborn again as "Metatheater."

Albee, Edward. *The Zoo Story, The Death of Bessie Smith, The Sand -box*. New York: Coward-McCann, Inc. 1960.

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? New York: Pocket Books, Inc. 1963.

Biting, scratching, clawing to the bitter end. Searing lacerating explorations into the human condition.

Chaikin, Joseph. *The Presence of the Actor*. New York: Atheneum, 1972. By the director of the Open Theater. Notes and comments on the use of a workshop approach to theater. Includes exercises used in group work.

Dezseran, Louis J. *The Student Actor's Handbook* .

Palo Alto, Calif.: Mayfield Publishing Co. 1975 A series of exercises and games designed to help student actors (and teachers) develop technique.

Lahr, John. *Up Against The Fourth Wall: Essays on the Modern Theater* New York: Grove Press, Inc. 1970.

Lively collection of critical essays on theater in the 60's by the son of Bert.

McCaslin, Nellie. *Creative Dramatics In The Classroom* . New York: David McKay Co., Inc. 1968.

Good introduction to use of drama in classroom; activities range from pantomime to staging a complete play. Also, good ideas on building dramatic activities from stories and poetry.

Passoli, Robert. *A Book On the Open Theater* ; New York: Avon Books. 1970 Detailed history of the Open Theater; good source of exercises used in group work.

Perls, Frederick S. *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim* . New York: Bantam 1969. Perls was a major force behind the self-growth and human potential movement. Includes theoretical discussion of Gestalt Therapy as well as workshop interviews with participants in his dreamwork seminars.

Rabe, David. *The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel, Sticks and Bones*. New York: Penguin Books. 1978. More than Vietnam War protest plays, these plays strike to the moral bankruptcy resulting from that experience.

Shepard, Sam. *Angel City and Other Plays* . New York: Urizen Books. 1980. With a vision that is sometimes comic, sometimes pathetic, Shepard's plays are like nightmarish trips across the contemporary American landscape.

Spolin, Viola. *Improvisation For The Theater* . Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern Univ. Press. 1963. Classic book of theater exercises and games.

Stoppard, Tom. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. New York: Grove Press, Inc. 1967. Witty, philosophical, inventive, reversal of Hamlet. On stage becomes off stage, with the play existing somewhere in between.

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