



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1983 Volume V: Drama

Acting Out or “As the School Turns”

Guide for Curriculum Unit 83.05.02
by Richard N. Canalori

Within any classroom, there is a tremendous amount of energy. Properly channeled, and developed through drama, this energy can be invaluable as a teaching tool. It can afford an outlet for students to express themselves, while at the same time helping students to better understand themselves and others. This unit is primarily for grades seven through nine. Its major objective is to introduce students to the idea of drama in their own lives, and then to transfer that idea to the works of others. The time frame for the unit will vary according to available time, but one marking period is recommended.

The unit is divided into three main sections. Section I focuses on improvisational games and activities. The activities described in this section serve two main functions. First, they are non-threatening and help alleviate any anxiety students may feel about performing in front of their classmates. Second, they establish the fact that the things children say, and the way in which they are said, are important. Section I concludes with a shared improvisational writing activity. This activity assists in the transition to the written script by discussing the strengths and weaknesses of each scene developed.

Section II focuses on the study of existing drama. Three one act plays are discussed first, and finally the full length drama “A Raisin in the Sun.” The activities in this section serve to identify the major elements of a play. The works discussed all deal with problems faced by children. While written in styles very different from one another, they offer an opportunity to discuss values. The question of why certain choices were made by a particular character in a play may assist students in choices they must make in their own lives, an area of study known as psycho-drama.

The final section of this unit builds upon the skills introduced in Sections I and II and uses these skills to help write original one-act plays. Types of plays, the major components of a script, and the reason for including certain scenes will all be discussed. While not a necessary outcome of the unit, the possible production of one or more of the original works is certainly a desired outcome.

(Recommended for Grade 7 through 9 English)

Key Words

Drama Teaching Pantomime Staging

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

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

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