



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
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## **Drama For Those Who Do Not Like Or Understand Drama**

Curriculum Unit 83.05.03  
by Edward D. Cohen

Drama has been taught in U.S. schools for over two hundred years. The drama taught today differs greatly from the drama taught in the early days of American public education. Each in 1882 teachers only taught the plays of Shakespeare, or the Greek classics. In 1882, Professor Brainard Kellogg's plan of study for perfect possession, in his edition of Shakespeare's *Tempest*, stated, "The student ought first of all to read the play as pleasure, then read it again with his mind upon the characters and the plot, and lastly to read it for meanings, grammar, etc." <sup>1</sup> No contemporary plays were studied and no short plays were studied, mostly because the one act play was hardly in existence. The plan of study was made for students who were excellent readers. Nothing was said about students who were not good readers or about the student as an interpreter, or as a member of an audience seeing a play. Also, nothing was said about the use of audio-visual aids to enhance appreciation and to increase comprehension. These aids are a product of the modern age of drama and were not in existence at that time.

This curriculum unit is being designed for a specific group of students. These students have reading levels ranging from the third grade to the twelfth grade. They will be either juniors or seniors, with average or below average skills in English; including reading, writing and speech. The unit will be directed toward urban youth, a majority of whom are Black and Hispanic, and whose exposure to drama has been largely through watching television and going to the movies.

I have set up several universal goals and some specific objectives in this curriculum. My major educational goal is to increase my students' maximum growth as individuals and as members of today's society. Individually, I would like to have my students increase their creative and aesthetic development. I want this unit to improve their ability to think critically. I want to see improvement in their social growth and in their ability to live and work cooperatively with their peers and elders. The students will have a chance to improve their communication skills, and they will develop a better understanding of drama and theater arts.

This curriculum unit will be divided into a series of mini-units. I will have mini-units on the history of the theater, and theater games. I will have a mini-unit on full length plays, a mini-unit on one act plays, radio plays, and a television play plus a mini-unit on staging a play.

This curriculum will run between fifteen and seventeen weeks. A tentative schedule would run as follows:

Weeks one, two—Introduction. The class will learn something about the history of the theater, the language, and important words and phrases used in drama.

Week three—We will have guest lecturers discussing various aspects of the theater and we will discuss how to read a play. We will also be working on warm up games as an on going project.

Weeks four, five, six and seven—We will study the two major plays, *Raisin In The Sun* and *Death Of A Salesman*.

Weeks eight, nine and ten—We will study *A Land Beyond The River* .

Week eleven—We will visit New Haven theaters and hear more guest lecturers.

Weeks twelve and thirteen—We will work on one act plays.

Weeks fourteen and fifteen—We will work on radio plays.

Weeks sixteen and seventeen—We will read *Dino* .

The last week will be for review, testing and feedback from the students. The curriculum is constructed so that if time becomes a factor, mini-units can be dropped or shortened.

The curriculum will cover a broad range of language skills. It will emphasize reading, including one act plays, regular full length plays, radio and television plays. The plays to be read include *Raisin In The Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry, *A Land Beyond The River* by Loften Mitchell, radio plays such as *The Fall Of The City* by Archibald MacLeish, and the television play, *Dino* , by Reginald Rose.

My students will also write a great deal in this unit. They will be asked to write reviews of the plays we will study. They will rewrite scenes from their own perspectives. They will research and write about all aspects of the theater. These will include short paragraphs on the roles of the author, director, the stage manager. They will write about the importance of scenery, properties, costumes, blocking and special effects lighting. We will have spelling and vocabulary tests, along with word games based on theatrical terms. Through their writing I would hope to accomplish the following goals. I want the students to develop good sentence structure and good paragraph structure. They will work on selecting and developing a theme and working it through to conclusion. We will concentrate on punctuation and correct spelling.

Since this is a unit on drama, I will stress oral communication and listening skills. The class will spend a great deal of time reading plays aloud. This will be done in the following manner. 1) Large Group Readings. The entire class will be involved, as members of the class take different roles. This is the traditional method we use today. 2) Small Group Readings. I will divide the class into four or five small groups and they will study different actions of the play. The groups will then come together for the reading of the play and for group discussions on how each section approached their task. 3) Individual Readings. I will assign the students specific pages that they would have to study and present to the class. 4) The teacher would read alone and ask the class for their interpretations of the readings. The class will be asked to commit to memory certain passages from the plays we read. In *Raisin* , I would use Walter's speech to his son Travis on what the future

holds and Walter's speech to his mother on what life is all about. I would use Mamma's speech to Beneatha on family love that begins "there is always something to love." These speeches contain some value lessons that I would like my students to retain. They will write out these value lessons and give examples from their own experiences. From *Death Of A Salesman*, the class would memorize Willie's speech about the death of a salesman and Linda's speech at Willie's funeral. The class will also put on radio dramas which are short and do not require long preparation periods. The class will also have some group discussions about each play, dealing with plot, characterization and the staging of the play. Each student would have a role in these group discussions, which would number about ten before the unit was finished.

I would also plan some field trips for the class. These would include visits to Long Wharf and the Yale Rep. theater. I would like the students to get a first hand look at live theater. I want them to experience the sights, sounds and smells of backstage, see live actors preparing for a performance, putting on make-up, checking costumes, setting light cues, setting the stage and feeling the tensions of staging live drama. The students will write their impressions of these visits. I would also invite different members of New Haven's theater community to come into class and speak with my students. The guests would talk about theater in general and about their specific jobs. I would ask directors, stage managers, actors, lighting and scenery experts and maybe a playwright, to give the students first hand impressions of their jobs and what drama means to them.

In the unit on the history of the theater I will use as a supplementary text *Golden Ages of the Theater* by Kenneth Macgowen, William Melnitz and Gordon Armstrong. This book gives one of the best available up-to-date short histories of the theater. I will discuss with the class how theater developed from the Greeks and Romans. We will discuss the fact that up to the time of the Greeks, there was no written or pictured history to tell us exactly how early theater looked, or how it evolved. The class will study the plots and characters developed by the Greek playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, for their content and values. We will not read these plays. I will give a short synopsis of the plays and show the class that the conflicts and situations written by these ancient writers are just as prevalent in today's society. I want the students to know that the same themes and plots are found in our modern drama. The students will write time lines as we discuss the history of the theater, so that they can put this brief history into perspective. We will note that the first plays were given in the open air. We will learn about the chorus that chanted and danced about an altar. We will learn that the actors all wore masks and that all the participants were male. We will learn that the Greek theater contained three types of plays: tragedies, which dealt with heroic legends; satyr plays and comedies. I will discuss and show examples of each type of play. I will discuss the Dionysiac Festivals of Athens, pantomimes, Greek Chorus and all the elements that went into theater of that time.

We will go on to Medieval theater and will have a discussion on its origin. We will study the introduction of mimes and jugglers. We will briefly look at liturgical and church drama, passion plays, morality plays and the beginning of professional acting. I will lecture on their development and the role they played in the growth of theater. The students will research this time frame as homework assignments and will write on these subjects. These papers will be read in class, and handed in for credit. I want the class to have a working knowledge of this age of the theater. I want them to remember the different ages of the theater with one or more specific plays or events highlighting that era.

We will continue through the Renaissance Theater in Italy during the 1300's and Spain's Golden Age in the 1600's. We will end with a look at the English theater of Shakespeare, the theater of France and the theater of today. <sup>2</sup> The class will be given different ages of the theater to report on and, for extra credit, students will explore in depth playwrights of these times, starting with the Greeks and Romans and continuing up to the great writers of the modern era. At the conclusion of this mini-unit I will give a comprehensive test.

The second mini-unit will continue theater terminology and introduce theater games and play reading. I will use three supplementary texts, *Theatre Games* by Clive Barker, *Drama A To Z A Handbook* by Jack Vaughn and *How To Read A Play* by Ronald Hayman. By using theater games I want my students to improve their real physical skills, their vocal skills and listening skills. They will be introduced to mime skills, which will help stimulate their physical state and activities which are not real for them. They will imaginatively explore situations of time, space and character which would be new to them, and they will experience new patterns of behavior which would stimulate their thinking, and finally, through these exercises the class would interact with other students and they would become aware of each other as individuals as well as members of the large group.

We would work on the body first. We will look at the Harvard University chart. <sup>3</sup>This chart gives four grades for the mechanical use of the body. We will begin to use games such as Fight In The Dark. In this game a square is formed by chairs facing outwards, leaving a small gap in one corner. The chairs are occupied by the observers. In the center of the room formed by the chairs is an imaginary jewel. One student guards it. Another student is a thief who enters through the gap. The room is imagined to be in total darkness. The thief tries to find the jewel, trying to avoid the guard, who tries to stop the robbery. The game can be played with open eyes or blindfolded. This game sharpens all the senses.

From this exercise we would move to games involving movement. We would play tag and other variations such as Cat and Mouse. These are good games because of the violent release of energy. We would play simple movement games such as Two Circle Tag and Team Tag and Red Rover. They are all good sources of student energy releases. One of the best games in this category is Blind Man's Buff. Speed of Reaction games would be next. Musical Chairs is a good example of this type of game. Our games would end with some examples of mime and improvisation.

The second part of this unit would deal with terminology. We will use a drama workbook which will serve as both a reference tool for the student and a general source of information. Each day we will study twenty or so new words and phrases, using words from *act* to *wit* and *humor*. I will also list words which we will be using in the unit. These words would include *foreshadowing*, *empathy*, *sub plot*, *trilogy*. In using these words I want my students to have a working knowledge of the language of the theater.

The final part of this mini-unit would be a lesson on how to read a play. We will review what makes a play a play. I will discuss how to read and interpret stage directions, how to coordinate the effects of colors, costumes, groupings and positions on stage to create drama. The class will have a one day lesson on writing dialogue and we will write some line by line dialogue with each student adding his line. I will discuss how a play is staged and give examples from the text. When the unit is complete I will give a comprehensive exam, and we will be ready to look at the first of our three full length plays, *Raisin In The Sun*.

The methodology I will describe for *Raisin* will be basically the same for the major plays we will study. These plays will include *A Land Beyond The River* and *Death Of A Salesman*. The overall objectives for this unit are based essentially on interaction between the play and my students. I would like to promote the student's skill and understanding in responding to the drama as a life experience and an art form, and to develop the student's skill in recognizing and understanding the basis of dramatic concepts and terms that have been introduced in earlier mini-units. The students will be required to use critical reading skills as they read individually and in group settings. They will use their writing and speaking skills, as well as their listening skills, as we work together to develop convergent thinking skills.

We will read the play aloud. We will analyze and interpret the roles so that we have two levels of response: literal recall and inference and interpretation. In this manner the students will understand the facts about the characters, setting and plot, and on the second level they will begin using their minds to come up with opinions, hypothesis and interpretations about the formal elements of the play such as theme, symbolism and tone. While they are digesting all of this I hope they will also be reading the play for their own enjoyment, because drama should be fun and something the students look forward to.

Some of the guidelines that I will give the students to think about as they read the play are as follows:

### *Character*

Who are the characters both major and minor?

What are their relationships to one another?

What kind of people are they?

Are you able to identify with one particular character? Which of the following means of characterization does the author use?

- a. Direct Description, in which the author tells you what a character looks like, what he is wearing, etc.
- b. Speech, through what a character says or how he says it; or what others say to him or about him.
- c. Action, by showing what a character does, fails to do, or chooses not to do.
- d. Reaction, by showing how a character reacts to others and or how others react to him.
- e. Author's statement, in which the author speaks directly to the reader about a character. This can be accomplished by a background chorus, or a narrator or a character who represents the author's point of view.

### *Plot*

What happens in the play?

What is the plot line?

Does the story go straight ahead in time or are there flashbacks?

Is more than one story being told?

What conflicts can you find?

What is the climax or turning point of the play?

### *Setting*

Where and when does the play take place?

Does the story shift from one setting to another?

Is the setting important to the story?

Is the time present, future or past?

Is time a vital factor in the story?

### *Theme*

Does the play have a theme or underlying idea? If so, what is it?

Is the title related to the theme?

Is the author trying to show you a new, different or better way of looking at life?

Does he say anything important about life or people?

Does the author tell his ideas directly or must you read between the lines?

### *Technique*

Does the author use such devices as foreshadowing and symbols?

Do the situations and characters seem believable?

Does the author depend upon coincidence or are the events developed logically and inevitably?

We will begin the play by looking at Langston Hughes' poem which gives the play its title. We will discuss dreams, dreams not fulfilled, and the tone of the poem. The students will write their responses. I feel that because a play is both a visual and oral experience, setting is always important. In *Raisin*, setting is especially important because all the action takes place in the same room. The class will read Lorraine Hansberry's very explicit description of the Younger apartment. For extra credit, I will have my students with artistic ability draw or paint their impressions of the room and major characters. I will emphasize the fact that the cleanliness of the room, however, is as important as its shabbiness. Everything is polished and clean. I want the class to understand that the room reflects pride in the midst of poverty.

Once the setting is established, we will discuss the plot. I want the class to understand that while the play concerns the dignity of a Black family, the theme is universal. It is the American dream. The play deals with concerns for common human qualities shared by people of all colors. The author states: "The thing I tried to show was the many gradations in even one Negro family, the clash of the old and new but most of all the unbelievable courage of the Negro people." <sup>4</sup>

The reading of the play will be done in the following ways: I will assign roles to students to study for

presentation the following day. The students will select a director to help stage their reading. We will read much of the play aloud as a class project. We will have individual readings of specific passages. I will read sections of the play to the class.

While we are reading the play, the students will be writing their impression of it. I will be giving them a series of reading comprehension quizzes as we go along. Questions will test recall and interpretation. The class will define relationships between family members, the dreams of the major characters, the conflicts brought on by those dreams and the insurance check, Mama's feelings toward different members of the family, Ruth's and Walter's struggle to keep their marriage intact. We will study the different philosophies held by Asagai and George Murchison. The students will write out these differences and they will explain that Asagai thinks that Black Americans should be proud of their heritage and live according to the traditions of African culture. The class will note that George has tried to become a part of the white American culture. He wants to live just as his white college counterparts do. He represents what Beneatha calls "an assimilationist Negro." As we read the play, the class will see that George and his ideas are rejected by Beneatha and that Asagai wins her over. The class will discuss Beneatha's problem, to follow Asagai to Africa or remain at home.

We will write and discuss the problems involved when Carl Lindner comes in. Lindner's appearance signals a new set of problems for the Younger family. How will they go about integrating a formerly all white neighborhood? How will they themselves be treated by their new neighbors? Lindner gives us some clues which will be pointed out to the class. They will write their reactions to these situations. Words like integrate and segregate will be added to our spelling and vocabulary lists. We will discuss the climax which occurs in Act Three and the hopeful note that the play ends on.

When we begin our study of *Death Of A Salesman* I will draw the parallel of dreams playing a major role in the drama. I will have the class recall what Greek plays were concerned with dreams. The students will see that some dreams can be harmful to the emotional stability of the dreamer, in this case, Willie Loman. We will draw contrasts between the emphases in the two plays on responsibility to family as a dominant force. The class will write on the different types of family relationships found in the plays. We will discuss and write on the social commentary found in the play. The students will write on issues such as truth, ethics of the business world, money and success. We will discuss and write about the psychological factors in the play. We will discuss relationships between parents and children, sibling rivalries and friendships. The students will write their opinions on these subjects as we read the play aloud. The class will also write narrative summaries of the action so that they will always have a clear picture of the action. Since the play is difficult to read, because of the flashbacks, we will have exercises on the actual chronology of events. The students will be given lists of scenes from act one. If the event happened in the present, the students will write in *present*. If the event happened in the past, then they will write in the word *past*. Scenes will include when Bernard comes to Biff study math. (past) Uncle Ben trips Willie. (past) Willie returns from Yonkers. (present) The students will then be asked to put all the events in the order they happened in the act.

The class will be asked to write on the conflicts in the Loman household. They will be able to choose Willie's conflict about his past job choices, his feelings and actions toward Biff, Linda's love of her sons and Willie, Happy's problems with his desire to get ahead and the lack of satisfaction when he does succeed, and finally, Biff's conflict with his wishes and his father's demand that he be a businessman. The class will be asked to distinguish between reality and fantasy in the play. The students will be given passages from the play and they will have to decide whether they were real or part of Willie's fantasy. Quotes will include "But the funeral, Ben, that funeral will be massive:—that boy will be thunderstruck, Ben, because he never realized I am known."

In teaching *A Land Beyond The River*, I will discuss with the students the fact that like *Raisin* the theme of the play concerns interracial conflicts. Both plays depict the Black man's point of view about black-white relationships. They both dramatize the validity of that point of view but they stress different aspects of those relationships. We will discuss the fact that *A Land Beyond The River* describes a struggle for integration within a Southern community, and that its message is that the success of this struggle could be the answer to interracial conflict. *Raisin*'s main emphasis, as we have discussed, is focused upon the individual's search for personal dignity with the struggle for integration playing a smaller role.

Since *A Land Beyond The River* is based upon actual events, the class will research the battle for integration in the United States during the 1950's. They will write their responses and we will discuss it in class. We will write character sketches for the leading roles. These will include Laura, Turnham, Ben Ellis, Philip Turnham, Joseph Layne, Dr. Willis, Martha Layne, Mr. Cloud, the Raigens and the Waters. The research should take two days and the character sketches will be written as the class reads the play.

We will look at the theme of the play which is a call for integration and equality among peoples. We shall look at the social themes that include the importance of justice, retribution, love and compassion in human relations. The class will study and write about the goals of this small group of Blacks led by Reverend Layne. These goals include school buses, repairing the school floor, equal but separate schools and finally, integrated schools.

As we read this play aloud, the class will be writing homework papers about the plot, characterization and settings. They will be asked to compare and contrast Phil Turnham's approach to handling white racism to that of Bill Raigen's. They will be asked how they would handle this problem if they were part of this community. They will be asked to write about the role that children play in the drama. They will learn that the children are the focus of the Black's legal problems for buses, better schools and integration. The students will be asked to point out where humor comes in the action. They will be asked to comment on the singing of spirituals by the community. I want them to answer that when the community is united and working on a project they sing. At the conclusion of each major play we will have a full period exam made up of objective and essay questions to evaluate the student's response to this mini-unit.

We will have a short mini-unit on the staging of a play. Here, I would invite members of the New Haven theatrical community into the classroom to discuss their specialties. These guest appearances would include both amateurs and professionals. I would invite a playwright, director, stage manager, scenery designer, property manager, set construction people, publicity and front house people. If possible, I would like a group discussion by these guests so that we could hear as many different views of the theater at one time as possible. The class would research these positions and we would have some role playing situations, involving duties and responsibilities of these jobs. As extra credit assignments, I would try to get some of my students to serve as apprentices for short periods of time, in these positions. The students would write up their experiences and share them with the class. At this time also, I will take the students to some of the theaters in New Haven, so that they can see live drama. Most of the students have not experienced this and it would do much to enhance their appreciation of drama. I would arrange backstage tours so that the students could see first hand what they have been studying in the classroom. We would also stage scenes from our readings with class members taking the roles of the experts we have studied and talked with. This will serve as the evaluation tool for this mini-unit.

Finally, we would have a mini-unit on the one act play, radio play and television play. We will discuss the differences between one act and full length plays. I will use Clayton Hamilton's definition of a one act play.



“The one act play is admirable in itself, as a medium of art. It shows the same relationship to a full length play as a short story shows to the novel.”<sup>5</sup> We will discuss what to look for in a one act play. I will set up a list of questions to help us study the one actor. These questions will include: (1) Has it a good plot? (2) Are the characters alive? (3) Is the dialogue helpful? (4) What is the idea of the play? (5) What is the atmosphere? (6) Does the setting contribute much? (7) Are the situations effective? (8) Is the language suitable? The class will discover that a one act play is economical in construction, saying nothing that does not develop the plot, reveal character or produce the intended effect. The one actor confines itself to one prominent character. The class will know that the ending of a one act play must be final. The play must definitely be over when the curtain comes down.<sup>6</sup>

We will study the play *The Valiant*. I will use the text *Drama In The Secondary Schools* by Joseph Mersand. This book gives a detailed procedure for teaching the one act play. We will first look at the cast of characters and the setting, using the words of the author. The class will sketch out what they visualize. We will read the opening lines and look for development of the plot, what is happening at the present time? and what is revealed about the personalities of the speakers. We will analyze the means with which the author reveals the traits of the characters in the play. Usually there are four in number: (1) remarks about the person, (2) speech of the person, (3) actions of the person, (4) reactions of others to the person. We will check conflicts set up by the author, the climax and the ending of the play.

I will follow this same method in dealing with radio plays. I will use as my text *Radio's Best Plays* by Joseph Liss. I will explain the differences between radio plays and plays performed on the stage. We will discuss the fact that radio plays are heard and not seen, so that they must present as much detail as possible early on, so that the listener can imagine the action as the plot unfolds. We will discuss mood created by music, the use of sound effects. We will read *The Fall Of The City* by Archibald MacLeish. The students will be assigned the twelve speaking roles, which they will study. We will have a sound effects person, a chief engineer who will cue the music. We will have a director and we will record the play. The class will listen to the recording and discuss the plot, characterization, realism and the production. I will bring into class some radio plays recorded by National Public Radio, so that the students can hear professional actors performing radio plays.

We will also look at a very successful television play *Dino* by Reginald Rose. This play about a rebellious teenager who returns to his family and community after a stay at reform school, shows another facet of drama. From the working script we will look at T.V. stage directions used in producing this play and we will read it for its dramatic appeal to teenagers. We will see that T.V. drama highlights characterization and setting and dialogue. Much of the past action is voiced by one of the characters and like the one act play, action usually revolves around one or two main characters. In this case, it is Dino. Settings are important because actions must take place in only a few locations because of the cost. We will read *Dino* aloud and will look for all those aspects mentioned above. I will continue to ask reading comprehension questions about the plays we read in class and we will have group discussions about the plays. The better students in the class will try their hands at writing a short one act play or a radio or T.V. play. This will be an extra credit assignment and all class members will write dialogue they would like to see added to any of the plays. The class will prepare and present scenes from all the plays for their own enjoyment.

I want the students to enjoy this unit on drama. I want them to have a better understanding of the world of drama and that through this study get insight into their own feelings about themselves and about the world they live in. The study of drama is an excellent way to accomplish this goal. I hope to have fun as I teach drama for those who do not like or understand drama.

## Notes

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1. Joseph Mersand, *Teaching the Drama In Secondary Schools*, p. 6.
2. Kenneth Macgowen, William Melnitz, Gordon Armstrong, *Golden Ages of the Theater*, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 7-12.
3. Clive Barker, *Theater Games*, p. 39.
4. Alice Childress, *Black Scenes*, p. 98.
5. Joseph Mersand, "Teaching the One-Act Play," *Teaching the Drama In Secondary Schools*, p. 137.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

## Lesson Plan 1

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To be used in Week Two along with History of Drama.

### **Objectives**

1. To Introduce Theatrical Terms To The Students.
2. To Give the Students A Working Knowledge of the Language of the Theater.
3. To Increase Student Writing and Thinking Skills.

***Explanation During the entire curriculum, the students will be dealing with all aspects of the theater. To understand its language, the students must know terms and key words and phrases commonly found in works on dramatic literature, dramatic theory and the history of the theater. They will learn this language by writing these words and phrases, speaking them, and memorizing them as part of spelling and vocabulary lists. They will be used in word games and will be posted on bulletin boards throughout the room. This mini-unit will take one week.***

**Text: *Drama A To Z A Handbook*, by Jack Vaughn.**

Day One: The class will receive a memo sheet containing a list of the most important words and phrases. The class will be divided into small groups and each group will be responsible for finding the meanings of fifty words. These words will include act, actor, antagonist, character, characterization, climax, etc. The class will come together as a whole to discuss their findings.

Homework: Write out definitions to be handed in for credit.

Day Two: A new list of words will be handed out. This list will contain questions and answers about the theater, using these key words and phrases. The class will have to answer the questions, using the words they have learned. Example: A protagonist is (a) the hero, (b) the villain, (c) the director's assistant.

Homework: The class will write out ten questions using their own words and phrases.

Day Three: We will do a quick review of the past two days' assignments and then a group of words will be introduced. We will play word games and puzzles with these words. Games will include crossword puzzles, and find the word puzzles.

Homework: The students will be given key words and phrases. These words will include setting, theme, plot. The class will write in their own words what they mean. They will paraphrase the meanings found in the text.

Day Four: We will have a visit from a director of the local theater scene who will give a lecture on theater language. I will give him a copy of the words we have already learned.

Day Five: The class will have a comprehensive quiz on the terms and a spelling and vocabulary test and if there is time the boys and girls will have a contest quiz to see who has retained the material the best.

## Lesson Plan 2

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To be used in Week Three and to continue at teacher's discretion.

### **Objectives**

1. To Loosen Up Students' Bodies and Imaginations.
2. To Release Student Tensions.
3. To Lessen the Distance Between Student Intentions and Achievements.
4. To Train Students To Use Their Bodies and Minds In the Stage Roles They Will Play.
5. To Make the Non-Acting Student Aware of the Various Means the Actor Uses to Rehearse and Perform.

***Explanation In looking at acting skills, Clive Barker states that the work of an actor falls into five main areas:***

1. He exhibits real physical and vocal skills.
2. He exhibits mimetic skills.
3. He imaginatively explores situations of time, space and character that are not real to him.
4. He exhibits patterns of human behavior which are not natural to him.
5. He interacts with other human beings. <sup>5</sup>

The warm-up theater games the students will participate in will help to sharpen these skills, while giving the student a chance to let off a little steam during this period. These games and exercises will not fit into a time frame. They will take place at the beginning or end of the period and will take about fifteen to twenty minutes.

**Text: *Theatre Games* , by Clive Barker.**

*Suggested Games*

1. Gunfighters speed-of-action. Place a pencil in a pocket with the end of it protruding far enough to be grasped easily by the hand. Balance a matchbox on the back of the hand and extend the arm parallel to the floor at shoulder height. The student must take his hand away from under the matchbox, grasp and draw the pencil and hit the matchbox before it hits the floor.
2. Fight in the Dark. Described in detail in prose section.
3. Two Circle Tag and Cat and Mouse. In these games, touch can only be made on the head and only when the student being pursued has his feet on the floor, movement will alternate between running and jumping. Two Circle Tag has the students standing in front of any of the pairs in the circle. The rear member of the pair then becomes the hunted and must evade capture.

## Lesson Plan 3

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To be used in Weeks Four and Five

### **Objectives**

1. To Read Aloud *Raisin In The Sun* .
2. To Increase Students' Reading and Listening Skills.
3. To Help Students Interpret the Dramatic Genre.
4. To Help Students Increase Their Creative and Aesthetic Development.

***Explanation We will use Raisin In The Sun by Lorraine Hansberry as one of our major studies of a full length play. This mini-unit will cover three weeks. The class will read the play in the following manner: They will be broken up into small groups for the purpose of studying different actions of the play. They will be brought together for the reading of the play and for group discussions on how they approached their tasks. The class will read certain parts of the play as a large group exercise. Auditions will be held for specific roles, to give the class a feeling of "trying out," as it is done on the professional stage. Individual members of the class will be assigned specific passages to study and read to the class. The teacher will read alone and ask the class for their interpretations of the readings. Each class member will be asked to commit to memory certain passages from the play. They will deliver these lines as they act out the scenes containing these speeches.***

**Text: *Raisin In The Sun* , by Lorraine Hansberry .**

Week One: We will begin the mini-unit by reading Lorraine Hansberry's letter to her mother before the show opened in New Haven. The letter will show the students what Ms. Hansberry wanted to accomplish by writing the play. It is found in *Black Scenes* , by Alice Childress. We will introduce the characters and the setting of the play. We will contrast the setting with the homes of the students, and they will write this out as a homework assignment. We will meet the Younger family and try to draw some conclusions about them before we really get to know them. We will save these written papers and reread them at the conclusion of the play. We will audition for roles and read the first scene aloud. We will continue to read aloud in the manner described above. We will also be doing our warm-up exercises as we read the play.

### **Homework**

1. Write out character sketches of the Younger family.
2. Answer five study guide questions from Scene One.
3. Pick out five new words from the play and give definitions.
4. Write out what the Langston Hughes poem means to you and tell how it fits into the play.

## A Bibliography for Teachers

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Barker, Clive. *Theatre Games* . New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1977. Useful techniques for student warmups in the classroom.

Childress, Alice. *Black Scenes* . New York: Zenith Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971. A paperback edition featuring scenes from Black playwrights which can be performed in the classroom.

Cohn, Ruby. *New American Dramatists 1960-1980* . New York: Grove Press, 1982. A paperback giving biographies, surveys and analysis of new modern writers. Good for background on modern theater.

Courtney, Richard. *The Dramatic Curriculum*. New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1980. This text relates the teaching of drama to the entire school curriculum.

Hayman, Ronald. *How To Read A Play* . New York: Grove Press, 1977. A paperback text that helps the reader understand some of the technical aspects of play reading. Good background material.

Hill, Errol. *The Theater of Black Americans* . (Volumes 1,2) New York: Prentice-Hall, 1975. A collections of critical essays dealing with Black companies of players and audiences and critics of Black Theater.

King, Woodie and Milner, Ron. *Black Drama Anthology* . New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1972. Twenty-three selections from a rich field of talented Black artists. Authors include: Elaine Jackson, Lofton Mitchell, Langston Hughes, and Lorne Ellison.

Liss, Joseph. *Radio's Best Plays*. New York: Greenberg Press, 1947. A collection of radio plays produced from 1937 to 1947. Includes scripts, sound effects, music cues and background material. Good classroom text for teaching short plays.

Macgowan, Kenneth and Melnitz, William with Armstrong, Gordon. *Golden Ages of the Theater* . Englewood, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1979. One of the best up-to-date short histories of the theater. Covers the Greeks and Romans, Medieval theater, Renaissance theater in Italy, Spain's Golden Age, Baroque theater in France, Elizabeth I's theater of England and modern theater. Excellent source material.

McCaslin, Nellie. *Creative Dramatics in the Classroom*. New York: David McKay Co, Inc., 1968. A text concerned with new dimensions for learning, using creative dramatics. The book shows how creative dramatics can develop confidence and feelings of selfworth for students.

Mersand, Joseph. *Teaching the Drama in Secondary Schools* . Jersey City, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1969. A textbook detailing the history of teaching drama in secondary schools. The last half of the text giving details on how to teach the one-act play.

Paterson, Lindsay. *Black Theater* . New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1971. A collection of scenes from plays by Black playwrights. Plays include *St. Louis Woman* , *Take A Giant Step* , *In Splendid Erron* , *Raisin* , *Purlie* , *The Dutchman* .

Redmond, James. *Themes In Drama* . Cambridge, England: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979. A group of reviews and articles on the dramatic and theatrical activity of a wide range of cultures and periods. Wide ranging articles about world wide theater. General information for teachers.

Stylan, J.L. *The Elements of Drama* . Cambridge, England: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1960. A text dealing with an introduction to the drama, singling out and discussing its various elements with quotes from many plays. Good background material for teachers.

Vaughn, Jack. *Drama A To Z A Handbook* . New York: Frederick Unger Pub. Co., 1978. A general reference tool and a good source of information with 500 alphabetical listings of articles defining and discussing words and phrases commonly found in writings on the drama.

Way, Brian. *Development Through Drama* . Clifton, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1967. A how-to-do book on using drama with young people. Good teacher's aid book.

## Reading List For Students

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Adams, William and Conn, Peter and Slepian, Barry. *Afro-American Drama* . Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1970. A play book containing *A Raisin In The Sun* , *A Land Beyond The River* , *Purlie Victorious* .

Childress, Alice. *Black Scenes* . New York: Zenith Books, Doubleday & Co., 1971. A paperback edition featuring scenes from Black playwrights which can be read in the classroom.

King, Woodie and Milner, Ron. *Black Drama Anthology* . New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1972. Twenty-three selections from a rich field of talented Black writers, including Loften Mitchell, Langston Hughes, Lorne Ellison.

Liss, Joseph. *Radio's Best Plays* . New York: Greenberg Press, 1947. A collection of radio plays, including scripts, sound effects.

Miller, Arthur. *Death Of A Salesman*. New York: Penguin Books, 1949. The text of the Pulitzer Prize play, in paperback form.

Murry, Alma and Thomas, Robert. *Major Black Writers* . New York: Scholastic Black Literature Series, Scholastic Book Service, 1971. A good resource book containing scenes from well known Black writers.

Newman, Katherine. *8 Ethnic American Plays* . New York: Washington Square Press, 1975. An anthology of short plays, including *Dino* , which can be presented in class.

Patterson, Lindsey. *Black Theater* . New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1971. A collection of short scenes from famous Black playwrights, including *Purlie* .

Vaughn, Jack A. *Drama A To Z A Handbook* . New York: Frederick Unger Pub. Co., 1978. An excellent reference book and text for students containing five hundred terms used in the theater.

## Visual Aids

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16 millimeter Film. *Raisin In The Sun* . 1961. Featuring Sidney Poitier, Ruby Dee, Claudia McNeil, Diana Sands. This is practically a photographed stage play. Adheres to original stage play.

16 millimeter Film. *Death Of A Salesman* . 1952. Featuring Frederic March, Mildred Dunnock, Kevin McCarthy. A moving and forceful filmization of the stage play.

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