



Salvage the Senses

Curriculum Unit 83.05.05
by Joyce Morris Listro

Today's student must be prepared to enter a continually demanding world which requires him to possess an ever increasing number of skills. His success depends greatly on his ability to listen, observe, evaluate, follow directions, and make decisions.

The student should be able to evaluate his strengths and weaknesses. He must learn to appreciate and build on what he does well and to admit difficulties and be prepared to work toward improving these problem areas.

It has been said that:

Every art has had its geniuses who created masterpieces without the apparent aid of an instructor or teacher . . . this is true, but it's corollary—that every gift will find expression—is not true. Many of those most gifted have perished unknown, because they lacked a consciousness of form and a deductive mind that orders and arranges.

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The same might be said of several students who have not had the opportunity to develop the type of skills necessary for the critical thinking which will be required of them in future years.

The field of drama provides a multitude of opportunities for the teacher to help students develop the aforementioned skills which are essential to academic as well as social success.

Brian Way in *Development Through Drama*, Chapter 2, does an excellent job of stating the reasons for using drama in education. The chapter, titled "Consider a Human Being", basically states that schools exist not to develop actors, but to see that each person develops the strengths necessary to function in life. Way stresses that this development is a lifelong process and not everyone will reach the same level at the same time. He goes on to elaborate on the necessity for strengthening the individuals use of the five senses and stresses the importance of concentration—the individuals ability to give his/her full attention to a particular task—as being vital to successful development.

In this unit I propose to provide students with tools which will enable them to:

1. Develop keener awareness of the five senses.
2. Use this awareness to improve ability to:

- a. listen and follow directions.
 - b. visualize and respond to non-verbal forms of communication.
 - c. use critical thinking skills (sequencing, cause/effect, inferencing, predicting outcome).
3. Understand designated terminology as related to drama.
 4. Develop an appreciation for drama and an understanding that the creative process requires the dedication, patience, cooperation and combined talents of many people.

The unit is designed to cover an eight week period. While ample time must be given to introducing the unit (see lesson plans—Day #1) and for selected activities and explanations, the time allotted on a daily basis is minimal.

The form in which I have chosen to present this unit allows the teacher the option of picking and choosing those activities which he/she feels their students might most benefit from. While the unit is primarily designed to work with sixth grade average and below average students who have great difficulty concentrating, certain of the activities mentioned may be used at a variety of levels and adapted to a wide range of abilities. Some suggestions for this are made in the unit itself.

Each day's activities are to begin with an exercise designed to develop sensory awareness and make students aware of their own senses. The exercises numbered 1-21 have been adapted from techniques given by Brian Way, *Development Through Drama* ; Pamela Walker, *Seven Steps to Creative Children's Dramatics* ; Constantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares* and *Building a Character* ; Viola Spolin, *Improvisation for the Theatre* ; John Hodgson and Ernest Richards, *Improvisation: Discovery and Creativity in Drama* ; and other sources listed in the bibliography.

While most exercises are of a short duration and can be used in conjunction with any classwork being presented, as the student becomes more adept at handling these exercises, those of a longer variety will be attempted. Two of these I will mention now, although included in the set of exercises following.

There are available through the library, as well as certain book stores, tapes of old radio shows and plays. I have chosen two— *Sorry Wrong Number* and *Sherlock Holmes— A Scandal in Bohemia* to use with my students. By providing worksheets to guide students in developing listening skills, not only will auditory skills be sharpened, but also the students' ability to use critical thinking skills while listening. Once students have become aware of the technique of listening, they come to enjoy and appreciate this form of entertainment. Often this activity leads to student initiated discussions of history and a variety of theatrical techniques.

The second valuable tool for development awareness is improvisation—verbal and non-verbal. Non-verbal communication, particularly in the form of mime, affords the opportunity for students to develop powers of observation. Verbal improvisation demands that the student involve himself totally. Concentration must be on the situation and the others with whom he is creating. He must listen, think and respond to the action and

dialogue of those around him. These improvisations can be taped and later written into short scenes.

Included in the unit is a play structure sheet. As well as providing students with the skills to develop concentration, these awareness activities offer an excellent opportunity to lead into a discussion of plays and an awareness and appreciation of theatre. I have provided a working diagram from which students can visualize the various elements in the structure of the play. (While recognizing that not all plays are constructed in the same form, it is important that I provide the students I service with a developmental concrete form which they need in order to comprehend abstract ideas.) In decoding this vocabulary, students will review basic decoding skills such as: syllabication, prefixes, roots and suffixes.

Because of the level of students I work with, I have chosen to use a variety of one-act plays. As an introduction I have chosen, *The Swiss Chalet*, a mystery from John Murray's *Mystery Plays for Young People*. Initially, we would read the play together. Following this first reading we would use the play structure sheet to discover the structure of the play, as well as recognize the purpose and placement of various scenes. Scenes will be studied to see how they help move the action forward.

SUGGESTED EXERCISES FOR DEVELOPING SENSORY AWARENESS

Duration The length of the exercises is not of primary importance. Some exercises may only take 15-30 seconds. What is important is consistency. Some type of exercise should be utilized at the beginning of each class.

Note I have used these exercises in conjunction with a behavior modification system developed by Miss Ethel Papa, a teacher in the New Haven School system.

Space While the majority of these can be executed in a minimum of space, some exercises may necessitate a larger area. Many may be done with students working from their desks or standing behind or to the side of same. As concentration grows, students are able to handle movement and less rigid structures will be required.

Students Preparing the student for this type of activity will be discussed under lesson plans. While very little preparation will be required for these earlier exercises, later exercises will demand more explanation.

Exercises numbered 1-6 are observation, memory, and coordination activities which ask students to observe specific information and commit it to memory. Students may be asked to give information back in some form, either verbal or non-verbal. Some provide excellent opportunity for reviewing basic skills (i.e., #1).

1. WORD PLAY

Place seated at desks

Students entire class

Time teacher should be able to assess the level of students and anticipate—no longer than 8-10 minutes.

Means This exercise can be done using any of the following: nouns, adjectives, adverbs, colors, numbers, names—or teacher could create types of words which are applicable to their subject matter.

One student is asked to give a noun. Second student repeats noun given by 1st student and gives one of his/her own. Next student repeats the first two and gives one of his/her own. Continue throughout the class. Once students gain confidence, the task can be made more complicated.

Note In the beginning, students may tend to use proper nouns. I let them do this to realize that if they do concentrate, they can remember up to 27 things in sequence. Before beginning, I might also remind them to focus on the individual speaking, as this can also help them to remember. This is particularly important with lower level students. As students grow, I discourage use of proper nouns. Higher level students will be less likely to do this, but you might want to set it as a rule initially.

2. FOLLOW MY HAND

Place chairs pushed in—students standing behind or to the side of the desk

Students entire class

Time no more than 4-5 minutes—It will be necessary here to build students concentration to where they will be able to sustain longer periods. Again, time is initially dependent on the ability level of your students.

Means Teacher faces students. He/she tells students they are to follow her movements. (Students will immediately compare this with Simon Says). Explain students are to start with right hand; this means teacher will start with her left. Teacher raises left arm up to center—right arm follows. Left arm up, right arm follows. Start slowly making sure all are getting the idea. As soon as students are all with you, you may pick up speed and make movements more complicated. Students may also enjoy being the leader.

3. WHERE'S THAT LINE?

Place seated at desks

Students entire class

Time no more than 5 minutes

Means (Make sure students are sitting up straight—feet and hands quiet and eyes on you). Ask them to look for all the straight lines in the room. Jot answers on board. Next, ask them to look for any squares in the room. Jot answers on board. Finally, ask students to search for circles in the room. Jot answers on board.

Homework Look around your kitchen tonight. Find five objects (amount can change depending on the level of students) in your kitchen. Notice the way straight lines, squares and circles have been combined to make these objects. Draw as best you can these objects and be prepared to share your findings with the class.

4. WHAT NEXT?

Place seated at desk

Students entire class

Time no more than 5 minutes

Means Tell students to watch your movements carefully. Plot a set of movements and actions for yourself. Ask students to state in sequence the movements and actions you performed. Later, this can be adapted so that students will reenact the exact movements.

5. CONCENTRATION BOARD

Place seated at desks

Students entire class

Time 2-3 minutes

Means Teacher arranges a board in classroom on which a variety of shapes and forms are arranged. Students are asked to study the arrangement closely. Students are not allowed to copy the arrangement. Some may attempt to do so.

The following day before students arrive, change one or two things on the board. Check to see if students recognize the changes. Keep to a minimum of changes initially. As students become more adept the changes you make can become more subtle.

6. MUSICAL FEET

Place standing beside desk

Students entire class

Time no more than 5 minutes

Materials drum

Means Check to make sure students posture is correct. Explain that you are going to beat the drum in sets of eight. They are to hold feet together for the first four counts or beats. On the fifth beat they are to move the right foot forward. On the sixth beat bring the right to the left. On the seventh step right to the right. On the eighth bring the left to the right. Repeat exercise.

This can also be reversed. Hold four, on five—left to left, on six—right to left, on seven—left back, on eight—right back to left.

This can also be done to different tempo musics since most musical forms can be counted in eights.

There are several ways this exercise can be adapted.

Exercises 7-9 involve basic sound exercises; and while observation and memory are also necessary, stress is more on the ability of the student to listen and also recreate certain sounds.

7. CLASSIFYING SOUND

Place seated at desks

Students entire class

Time no more than 5 minutes

Materials sound effects record or several teacher prepared sounds

Means Teacher puts on board the words: long, short, staccato, sustained, harsh, smooth or any other applicable. Explain and give an example of each type of sound. Explain that there can be overlapping. A sound can be short and smooth or long and smooth. Try to give examples. Next play or demonstrate a series of sounds and ask students to classify them.

Homework Tonight listen and find at least two examples for each category.

Note The library can be a resource in finding this type of record.

8. CAN YOU HEAR?

Place in seats

Students entire class in pairs

Time no more than 8-10 minutes

Materials The following paragraph mimeographed for all students. Half the students will also receive questions to follow reading of the paragraph.

The thoughts of traveling 500 miles to visit her aunt and uncle in Indiana excited Mary Jane. Even though her mother had been a little apprehensive about her traveling such a long distance by herself, Mary Jane's father had insisted it was too good an opportunity to miss. So here she was alone on the stagecoach headed for an unfamiliar place.

She glanced around the carriage. Many of those who had begun the journey with her had long since reached their destination and the coach was now filled with a new group of travelers.

Mary Jane was particularly interested in a young girl about her own age who appeared to be accompanied by a rather old, distinguished looking gentleman. The girl seemed very shy and it was difficult to see her face, as it was concealed by a large pink hat. Her hands were clasped tightly in her lap and she had not spoken since first stepping foot inside the carriage.

Questions:

Why was Mary Jane going such a long distance?

During what time period is this story set?

Why was Mary Jane interested in the young girl on the coach?

Note Teachers may use paragraphs of their own from literature and also from content area books

such as social studies, science, etc. Students concentration will be affected by the interest level of the material they are reading. This should be stressed.

Means Half the class will receive the paragraphs to read. The other half will receive the questions. Group A will be asked to read the paragraphs. Group B will cause distractions by making a series of noises, movements, and reactions. Students work in pairs.

Stop students after a short time. Ask Group A to answer questions. Group B will help A see if answers are correct.

9. REPEAT THAT SOUND

Place in seats

Students entire class

Time no more than 5 minutes

Materials variety of objects from which you can create a series of sounds.

Means Teacher reminds students that concentration means eyes are on the subject, feet and hands are quiet and there is no verbal communication. Ask students to close their eyes and listen to the sounds you will make. At first keep # low and do it slowly. After five sounds, stop and have students try to repeat them in sequence.

Note As students become more adept at this skill, increase number and speed.

Exercises 10-13 are more difficult and should not be attempted with lower level students until some expertise has been gained with earlier exercises. Students here are asked to incorporate several skills—observation, sound, feeling, recreating feeling, coordination, and cooperation.

10. RECALL THE FEELING

Place standing to the side of the desk

Students entire class

Time no more than 5-8 minutes or at teacher's discretion based on level of students

Materials small ball, larger ball

Means As you prepare students, have the small ball in your hand. Pass it from hand to hand. Throw it in the air. Explain to students you are going to pass the ball to the first person in the row. That person is to feel the ball (caution students on the danger of mishandling the ball) and pass it to the next person who will handle the ball and then pass it on. Make certain students feel the weight and the size of the ball, how it looks and feels as they throw and pass it. The ball will make its way back to the teacher.

The teacher then puts the ball away, and begins to pass an imaginary ball. Teacher instructs students to make sure they have the same size as the one just used. Tell students they are now going to pass the imaginary ball. They must watch carefully the person from whom they are catching the ball and concentrate on the size, shape and feel.

Note On different days this can be repeated using the large ball, or teacher can use other materials. It would be good to get students to recognize and compare large to small—heavy to light—hot to cold.

11. MAKE THE SOUNDS

Place seated at desks

Students entire class

Time 5-10 minutes (can be longer as concentration and ability grows)

Materials Use the following paragraphs or short story that uses a lot of sound effects. Teacher can make up stories or once students understand the exercise, students may write sound stories.

Randy didn't think it would take him that long to get to where his father worked. He had taken his bicycle to the garage to fill the tires with air and was now headed down Main Street. Just as he reached Forest and Main, he saw a large garbage truck picking up trash from Mrs. Fan's house (sound). Mrs. Fan's dog, Peppy, who was usually fenced in the backyard, was gingerly running up and down barking and snapping (sound) at the truck.

Traffic on Main Street was particularly heavy this morning and Randy saw Mrs. Fan trying unsuccessfully to get Peppy back in the yard as cars sped back and forth (sound) in front of the dump truck. Randy jumped off his bicycle and ran across the street to help Mrs. Fan as several cars honked (sound) their anger.

All of a sudden Randy heard the screech of cars (sound) and a loud crash (sound) as several cars came to a sharp halt (sound). Everyone rushed out of their cars and began to argue (sound). Randy heard the sound of a police car (sound).

As the policeman walked up to survey the damages, Randy heard a rustle (sound) in the bush next to him and a little short bark (sound). He looked down to see the source of the whole problem.

Means Teacher can have entire class work together or divide into groups or have certain individuals take certain sounds. Once this is done teacher starts to read the story. When you reach a sound point to group and instruct them to make that sound. Continue this way until end of story.

Note It may take some students longer to get into this type of activity than others. You may want to repeat the story and tape it. Students enjoy hearing themselves.

12. MIRROR IMAGE

Place small area in front of room or on the side of desk

Students working in pairs

Time 5-10 minutes

Means The idea is to mirror each other. Instruct students to keep movements smooth. The idea is to work together and concentrate on each other not to confuse each other.

Note This is a very difficult exercise for students to get into, and may require much coaching from

the teacher. Remind students about concentrating on each others moves.

This exercise should be repeated often with different combinations of students.

13. HAND BINGO2

Place seated at desks

Students entire class

Time can be an entire period

Materials Bingo game

Means Teacher is the caller; however, instead of calling numbers vocally, the teacher gives the numbers so that students have to concentrate and count and add the numbers. For example, if the number is 0-57, the teacher will make an O with hands—then with hands will make 57—could be two hands 5 times then one 5 and one 2. Teacher can adapt this in several ways.

These next two activities, 14A-14B, are vital in establishing a firm foundation for all improvisation Which will occur in the class. Exercise 14A introduces the Where, Who and What. Exercise 14B introduces stage directions and allows for developing imagination in creating more elaborate improvisations and setting.

14A. WHERE, WHO, WHAT

Place start seated at desks—later groups in front

Students entire class in groups

Time could be up to a period or more

Means Teacher will explain the terms:

Where?—Place where action is taking place (i.e., kitchen)

Who?—Persons in scene (i.e., brother/sister)

What?—The situation (i.e., arguing about a lost notebook, or the last piece of bologna)

Divide class into groups. Have them develop a where, who, what. Call each up to the front to do the scene.

14B. WHERE, WHO, WHAT

Place seated at desks

Students entire class in groups

Time could be up to a period

Materials each group is provided with a painted piece of plywood and chalk. Also, ditto of floorplan suggestions on pg. 93-94 of Viola Spolin's, *Improvisation for the Theatre* .

Means Teacher will first go over basic stage directions—upstage, downstage, stage right, left, center, etc. Explain that in every play or story there is a where. Give several examples and do one on board. If our where is a kitchen, what do we find in a kitchen? How would we place things? Whose kitchen is it? How many people live here? How old is it? Are the people young or old?

Note After you have done one together on the board, give each group a where and have them plot out a floorplan. Next they are to develop the who (people who will appear in the room) then the what (the situation which has brought them together). They might even want to give an opening line for the characters.

Have each group improvise their where, who, and what.

This can be repeated in many different ways and even taped for turning into presentations.

Exercises 15-20 are further exercises to increase a combination of concentration and awareness skills. They are included at this point to add variety to the activities students have been doing up to this point. Exercise 17 is particularly valuable for it also is reinforcing use of syllabication.

15. WHO'S THERE?

Place seated at desks

Students entire class at different times

Time discretion of teacher

Means One student is asked to step outside the door. He is to decide where he is, who he is, and why he is there. Also, what the weather is like, the time of day, etc. He then is to knock at the door as the character might. Students try to figure out "Who's There".

16. MOVING—WHERE?

Place area in front of room

Students any number depending on the space available

Time 5-10 minutes

Materials record or tape player and some type of music—more classical or expressionistic (something which will express feeling and emotion).

Means Ask 4-6 students to walk around in rhythm with the music. At certain times ask them to stop and look at different objects. Make sure they are really seeing them. (This is good for developing observation skills).

17. DEVELOP THE WORD

Place first at desks, later at area in front of room

Students groups of 4

Time exercise may take more than one sitting—perhaps one sitting for preliminary work and second for presentation

Materials list of words which can be divided into syllables and acted out

Means Each group is given a word. They are to break it into syllables. Students are to disregard the spelling of the syllable, but are to relate to the sound. For each syllable they are to create a where, who, and what. Then they are to act out the syllable.

For example—the word figure. The fig might be ripening on a tree that Grandpa has planted. It may be the only fig that Grandpa has been able to grow and he is thrilled at his success. The who might be Arthur, his five year old grandson, who has come to spend the afternoon. The what—Arthur accidentally knocks the tree over and the fig falls off and is stepped on.

The “ure” could be used as “your”. The where: in kitchen; Who: mother; What: lost earring.

Two syllable words should be used rather than three because of time limit in class. Some preliminary work may be assigned as homework.

18. WHISPERING AND SHOUTING

Place area in front of room

Students small groups

Time 5-10 minutes

Means Students create a where, who, and what. They are asked to act the scene three times. First they whisper. Next, they yell. Then in regular tones.

19. KEEPING CONTACT

Place front of room

Students individuals

Time discretion of teacher

Means Each individual will show or teach something to the class. Individual must work to establish eye contact with each member of the audience.

20. PUZZLE FUN

Place seated at desks

Students entire class

Time discretion of teacher

Materials Teacher adapted dittos from the game Mr. Mighty Mind

Means pass out ditto sheets. Have students cut out the pieces necessary to complete the puzzle. The object is for students to see how the pieces will fit in the correct way to make the design on the ditto. Exercises in this game go from very simple to more complex. Teacher can choose those which are in line with her students.

Exercises 21 and 22 both depend heavily on the student's preparation in exercises 14A and 14B. Both are variations of improvisation and rely on the student's knowledge of Where, Who and What.

21. SIGHT-IMAGINATION

Place seated in groups

Students entire class

Time discretion of teacher

Materials several different objects (i.e., rings, fork, child's toy, anything)

Means It might be wise to first do one together as a class. Choose an object. Pass the object around the class. Have students look and feel the object carefully. State that you will give the class a where (place) and a time. They are to create a story that takes place during that time about that object.

After doing one with entire class, you may want to give each group the same object, but a different where and time. There are several variations that can be created from this exercise.

Note These can lead to forming of scripts or improvisations. At times, teacher may wish to give a beginning and ending line to set purpose.

22. PICTURE PERFECT

Place area in front of class

Students small groups

Time discretion of teacher

Materials several pictures or groups posed (perhaps from art books or magazines), different types of music, record or tape player, box of various props.

Means A group of students is given one of the pictures. They are told to make the picture with the students in the group. When called to the front of the class, they form the picture. When the music starts they bring the picture to life. There is no vocal during this, just movement. When the music stops, they freeze.

Note This can be fun, repeated with different types of music. Also can be done verbally.

The two activities listed here are vital in the transfer of sensory awareness activities.

Scott, Foresman and Company, Inc. in its material *Tactics In Reading* (available at a variety of levels) includes a section on sensory awareness and imagery in reading. Students are asked to use their senses in bringing the printed page to life.

The value of radio shows has been discussed previously.

23. TRANSFER THE SKILL

(1)

Place seated at desks

Students entire class

Time discretion of teacher

Materials Scott, Foresman, Company, Inc.

Cards of Sensory Imagery

Means Discuss first the type of exercises we have been doing and Why. Explain that when you read, you must involve yourself totally in the experience in order to appreciate the author's intent and to understand the characters.

There are 4-5 of these cards which deal with the senses and using them in reading. Several exercises for students are included.

Note These do not have to be used all at one time, but may be spread out over the unit as the teacher sees the opportunity.

(2) LISTEN & REMEMBER

Place seated at desks

Students entire class

Time this could take a few class periods

Materials old radio shows, tape player, or record player, ditto on show. (I have included a sample of the first page of ditto for " The Scandal ". Space does not permit the entire worksheets).

Means Ask students what they thought people did before television came along. Try to get radio from them. Discuss differences between radio and television and how radio demanded the listener to use his imagination. Explain that you are going to play the first half of an actual radio drama and ask them to listen carefully. After the first playing, hand out worksheet #1. Ask students to answer questions in complete sentences. Give them a short time to do that. Have them turn questions over. Explain you are going to play the first half again. Remind them to imagine the action, see the characters, what they are wearing, etc. Listen to how the sound creates a feeling. After second listening, have students turn over question sheet and fill in any blanks they left the first time. Follow the same procedure for the second side using worksheet #2 "Bohemia".

(figure available in print form)

Note As students become better at this, you need supply only one worksheet for the entire show.

LESSON PLANS

DAY 1

Objective: to introduce students to the unit and to allow them to experience some preliminary exercises

First ask students how a human being and an instrument can be compared. Ask such questions as: What condition does an instrument have to be in if it is going to play well? It must be well-tuned. Well, just as an instrument must be well-tuned in order to play well; so must an individual be well-tuned if he/she is to function as effectively as possible.

What are some of the ways we can be tuned up? (Try to get students to see that if our senses are well sharpened, we are better able to concentrate and, therefore, will be prepared to learn better).

Advise students we will be working on a series of exercises to help them develop these skills. Explain that many of these can be done at their seats. Some will require some movement. Many times the class will be working altogether. Sometimes we will work in pairs and sometimes in small groups. Some exercises will take only a few minutes while others will take a whole period. There are times when we will have to act as an audience. That is our concentration will be on others. Can anyone tell me how a good audience will respond? As an audience we will learn to evaluate. What is evaluation? How are you evaluated throughout the year. As an audience we will learn to make positive evaluations and make comments that will help each person. Let's make a list of some positive comments an audience might make. Now, let's make a list of some negative things an audience might do. As an audience member, always try to think about how you would feel if you were up there?

We are now going to try a simple exercise. I am going to ask half the class to remain seated and ask the other half to move to the front of the room and stand. (Make sure that students do not sit or lean or hide behind anyone). The standing group is made to stand until the leader (teacher) sees that all are uncomfortable standing and being watched. Those seated are instructed to focus attention on those standing.

LESSON PLANS

Once the teacher sees the first group has become restless, he/she gives a task for them all to do, such as counting the lockers, tiles, books in bookcase, window panes. Allow students to work this task for a few minutes. 1st group sits—2nd group goes up and repeats exercise.

DISCUSSION

How did you feel at first? How did they look? What happened when they were given something to do? How did they look? How did you feel? Try to elicit—when you concentrate on doing something, you do not appear restless and indeed you are not.

DAYS 2-10

Continue doing sensory awareness exercises as outlined previously in this unit or obtained from sources listed in the bibliography. It is important that some type of exercise be utilized each day.

DAY 11

Materials Play Structure Sheets, Script of *THE SWISS CHALET* (or any play the teacher chooses)

Introduction Explain to students that for the past few weeks we have been working on exercises which will help us improve our concentration. Many of these same exercises are used by actors and actresses to help them learn how to create a believable character and to react to others. Since we are doing some of the same things as drama students, this will be a good time for us to talk about plays and drama.

How many of you have enjoyed reading plays aloud in reading class? Can someone tell us what a play is? How can we compare a story and a play? How many of you have ever seen a theatrical performance? (Try to elicit from them the definition given on the worksheet titled “Play Structure”). (DO NOT pass out sheets until you have discussed all terms with the students).

Before a play or a television show becomes a reality, before you see it, it is the same as what I am going to pass out to you now. (pass out scripts of the mystery play, “*The Swiss Chalet*”, which have been prepared before). It is a lot of words on a page. It is the responsibility of many people to bring these words (the script) to life for you, the audience, to laugh, cry and respond to.

A key person in achieving this goal is the director (put the word on board). What is the root word of this word? Direct is correct.

Now, what does direct mean? What part of speech is it? When you direct someone you point them in a way to go. That is one role of the director; he helps guide the actors on the stage. He is also the individual who has the overall say on all artistic matters regarding the production. All others involved must consult with the director and he most often has the final decision.

The first thing a director must do when he gets the script is to read it. So tonight, I would like you to read your script. As you are reading, try to visualize the play in your mind. How would the characters react? How would they look and move? Think about seeing the various colors of the clothes and in the room. What is the scenery like? What is the placement of the furniture?

Most important—do not forget to bring your scripts to class tomorrow.

DAY 12

Preparation: terms from play structure sheet listed on board

Review quickly some of the material covered the day before.

Ask students to take out scripts. Explain that the first time a director reads the play, he reads it for interest—to see if he likes it? How many of you enjoyed this play? Why or why not?

The second time he reads it, he will be looking for different things. One of those things is structure. Can someone tell us what structure is? (Try to get close enough answer). It is the foundation on which one builds. A building must have a structure and plays have a structure. That structure is not always the same for each play. However, each may have all or some of the terms we are going to discuss.

Refer to terms on board. Have students decode the words and try using prefixes, suffixes and root to get the meaning of words. Then explain each term. After the explanation of terms, pass out the play structure sheets and read through together the definitions as given on the sheet.

We are now going to read the play again. Thinking about the structure.

We will read it together.

Play Structure

PLAY: “Sequence of situations (involvement) in which characters express themselves through what happens to them, what they do, or fail to do”.³

EXPOSITION : The events that have occurred prior to the opening of the play. It is the information the audience must have in order to understand the characters and their situations. There are several ways in which a playwright will present this information.

RISING ACTION:

CONFLICT: Occurs when an individual or a group has a particular desire, will or value and has difficulty receiving satisfaction or reaching a goal.

Antagonist: obstacle facing the protagonist (could be situations/individual)

PLOT: situations and characterization that move the play forward.

CHARACTERIZATION : the mannerisms, speech, movements, of a particular character that makes him unique.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT : the way a character changes from the beginning of the play to the end.

DIALOGUE : speech between and among the characters. Would the character say this and at this time? What does the dialogue convey about the situation, the character and others.

FORESHADOWING : future action is hinted at.

CAUSE/EFFECT : There can be several through the play.

Cause A may not lead directly to effect X, but may go from A to B to C to D, etc.

CLIMAX: The conflict is resolved. It is the high point of the play when the protagonist and antagonist come together to settle the problem. In some plays there may not be a definite climax as the character makes the decision to submit to the inevitable. There may be several subordinate climaxes before the grand climax. Plays with more than one plot and some Elizabethian dramas may have more than one grand climax.

DENOUEMENT: The conclusion of the play—the resolution. The outcome which must occur to return to status quo.

Notes

1. Dean, Alexander— *Fundamentals of Play Directing* , Rinehart and Co., Inc., New York, 1941, Pg. 12.
2. Gregory, Diane, Sheridan Middle School, April 1983, New Haven, CT.
3. Gassner, John, *Producing the Play* , Dryden Press, N.Y., 1952, Pg. 11.

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Goodman, Burton, *Spotlight on Literature* , Collection 5 & 6, Random House, New York, 1930. Excellent student anthology includes plays and stories by such authors as Poe, Hawthorne, Shakespeare written at a lower level.

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Spolin, Viola, *Improvisation for the Theatre* , Northwestern University Press, 1970. Excellent sourcebook for obtaining exercises. Activities are listed in concrete form. Teacher must be able to take and motivate in own style.

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