



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1989 Volume III: Family Ties in Latin American Fiction

The Family on Stage in the Americas

Curriculum Unit 89.03.04
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I agree with that famous line of William Shakespeare's which states that "All the world's a stage." As a teacher of drama I expand upon that idea in my teaching philosophy by saying, that the players who get the best parts in life are most often, the ones who prepare themselves well for life's future roles. Therefore, I am very concerned when new students come to me with a negative attitude toward the English language because one of the major skills required for success in today's world is the ability to communicate effectively. I find that the majority of my students in the seventh and eighth grades are inhibited in their use of language in general. Moreover, in the case of speech, students seem even more reluctant to share themselves.

One of my primary goals of teaching drama is to help students overcome their fear of spoken language. I try to make language friendly and personal and fun. Unless I find ways to help my students have a more positive, self-confident attitude about themselves, I cannot hope to be successful in teaching acting technique.

The actor relies heavily on language to communicate his art to the audience. Unfortunately, for the adolescent beginning to study acting, his/her ability to use language effectively is linked to his/her self-esteem. Therefore, any criticism of a student by the teacher with regard to language is generally received by the student in a negative fashion. This produces a situation which is counter-productive in the student/teacher relationship. In drama it is essential that the student trust his/her teacher because the nature of acting requires the actor to take risks in the aspiration of his art. An actor must have the confidence to explore new and untried ground. I try to select material for students that helps them gain further mastery of the English language, while at the same time, allows them to experience the fun of trying new and different roles. This unit "The Family on Stage in the Americas" is designed to provide the secondary school student with a basic understanding of acting technique while providing the student with opportunities to improve his/her ability to communicate with confidence.

The language of contemporary literature lends itself for study by this particular age group because it closely resembles conversational speech of today. Any barrier to interpretation caused by unfamiliar vocabulary, archaic or strange usage is practically non-existent. In addition there is little need to provide historical background to the students, who generally have little or no knowledge of generations other than their own. I have placed two further restrictions upon the material selected for use in this unit.

In order to expose and introduce students to the work of many writers I will use the form of the monologue in this unit. Students will be able to study selections from many works before making a decision on a character

they wish to develop during the marking period. When a student develops a role for the stage for the first time, it is helpful if the student can identify with the character. Therefore, I have deliberately chosen monologues which have family members as characters so that students can draw from personal experience while building a character.

The list of monologues found below provides the basic material for the unit. The characters in the monologues are from a wide range of family types and backgrounds.

1. "The Captive" by Jorge Borges
2. "Macario" by Juan Rulfo
3. *The Amen Corner* by James Baldwin
4. *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller
5. *The Little Foxes* by Lillian Hellman
6. *Take a Giant Step* by Louis Peterson
7. *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry
8. *A Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window* by Lorraine Hansberry
9. *I Never Sang for my Father* by Robert Anderson
10. *Does a Tiger Wear a Necktie?* by Don Peterson
11. *Growing Up Puerto Rican* edited by Paulette Cooper
12. *West Side Story* by Arthur Laurents and Stephen Sondheim
13. *Me, Candido* by Walt Anderson
14. *I Too Speak of the Rose* by Emilio Carballido
15. *Orchids in the Moonlight* by Carlos Fuentes
16. *All the Way Home* by Ted Mosel, based on *A Death in the Family* by James Agee
17. *In the Beginning* by Humberto Constantini

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING THE UNIT

I. Introducing the Material to Students

In order to provide a focus for the monologues that will be used in the unit, I will hold a class discussion. The “family” is a wonderful topic to explore as a group because we share a common interest in the subject; we are all family members. As a group we will try to gain a better understanding of family dynamics by discussing the ways in which people are bonded together into the unit we call the “family”. WE will examine family relationships formed by blood and legal ties, as well as family bonds formed by society, culture and economic interests. As ideas are exchanged around the room, I will compile a list of factors, which the students feel define the family in terms of bonding. This list will be photo-copied and distributed to each class member as they are introduced to the monologues. These monologues will first be read silently. Students will use the list to guide this reading. They will be able to compare their ideas about family ties with the ideas suggested by the authors in the various scripts. At the end of the silent reading session (about two class periods), the class can amend its original list while discussing a variety of ways family ties are expressed in the different monologues.

Having re-thought and clarified some of their ideas about family ties, the class is ready to begin a second reading of the monologues. This time they will read them aloud. The purpose of this activity is two-fold. The first reason for reading aloud, is to facilitate a higher level of comprehension for the group as a whole. Any unfamiliar vocabulary, problems of usage, or pronunciation can be explained at this time, thereby increasing the general knowledge of the entire class. The other reason for this second reading is to provide the teacher with an opportunity to assess the reading levels of the class. Students who have reading deficiencies almost always suffer from lowered self-esteem. In addition, the student who has reading difficulties may also have trouble memorizing lines. This becomes an important consideration later on when the student selects a monologue for performance. Students with reading disabilities may need abridged versions of their scripts in order to give a successful performance. Since the purpose of this unit is to help students gain confidence in oral language expression, I am not overly concerned about the length of the memorized piece. It is very important that students do not feel overwhelmed by the material they select to perform. It is my goal to make the student’s first attempt at performance a successful and ego-enriching experience.

II. BUILDING THE CHARACTER

A. SCRIPT ANALYSIS

Following the completion of the oral readings, the class is ready to learn how to build a character for the stage. The first step in this process is to complete a thorough analysis of the script. I have prepared a worksheet designed to guide students through this process. The worksheet should be introduced to the students as an in class activity. Using monologues from the unit, I lead students through each step of the activity. Sample worksheets can be found at the end of the unit, under activities together with synopses of several monologues.

B. THE CHARACTER ANALYSIS

The next step an actor undertakes, when preparing a role for the stage is to complete a character sketch. This step gives an identify to the character. The actor, at this point begins to make choices which give the character a physical form, psychological make-up, intellectual framework, habits, talents, goals, and

weaknesses. All this work is done by the actor so that his character will appear to be real. The actor accomplishes this task by asking himself the following questions: *Who* is this character? *What* does the character want? *Why* does the character do what he/she does? I have underlined the three words in the preceding sentence because these are the main concerns of the actor as he creates the role. If a student-actor can give sound answers to those questions then he/she is well on the way to building a believable character. Once a character has an identity with objectives that are motivated, then the actor can, in rehearsal, make choices about actions and emotions that are appropriate for the character as he/she interacts with other characters in the play. To give a structure to this method of interpretive character building I have included an outline that I often use myself when developing a role. For practice in using this outline, the class should complete the first one as an in-class group activity. Examples of character sketches can be found with the lesson plans.

III. REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE

Students, after completing the script analysis and character sketch are ready to move from theory to action. This is done in what many actors call the rehearsal and performance process. This process requires the student to memorize lines, select appropriate actions for these lines and finally to execute these actions while speaking the lines in front of an audience. Since most students have little or no experience in the formal rehearsal process it is a good idea to once again explore and introduce this activity as a group. The play is the usual element which provides structure to this activity. I have deviated from tradition a bit by selecting a short story instead of a play to introduce students to the rehearsal process. I have chosen this particular work "In the Beginning" by Humberto Constantini, for a variety of reasons. First of all it is very easily dramatized. The narrative is written in very short paragraphs, each containing only a few lines. The beautiful rhythm of the lines suggests a variety of dance-like movements that would be easy to stage and execute. In addition, the boys in the class should like the work because it is very violent and has many episodes of battle. The work can be adapted to meet the needs of different size classes because many of the paragraphs repeat themselves much like the refrain in a song and can be easily deleted if necessary. In the past I have found that students lose much of their fear of memorizing lines when they experience it first as a group activity. I write out each line on a separate piece of paper, giving each student one line which is numbered in sequence. The students read their line aloud several times. Then they try to say their line without looking at the paper. When the class can repeat the piece without error they switch papers. Usually they need only one or two readings the second time in order to memorize their new line. By the time students have switched lines five or six times, most of them have memorized the entire piece. This is an excellent activity to improve listening skills as well which an actor must have if he is to pick up his cues. Another benefit of this activity is that it teaches group cooperation. A group that works well on stage together usually reaches a higher level in performance. But memorizing lines is not the only consideration here. Students must be able to be heard and understood by an audience. Therefore I have included a segment on stage speaking for use by the teacher.

IV. STAGE SPEAKING

When teaching stage speaking and voice projection to the adolescent, it is important to remember that he/she may not have a fully developed vocal mechanism. Ideally, students in the twelve to seventeen age group should perform in smaller spaces so they do not overwork their voices. However, there are a few simple rules which when followed, serve to protect the student from injuring his/her voice. Proper breathing technique gives the vocal mechanism the support it needs to function without strain. This correct form of breathing is known as diaphragmatic breathing. Very simply what happens during this process is this; the actor inhales air through his/her nostrils in such a way as to inflate the abdominal cavity with air. The teacher can test students' ability to breathe in this manner by asking them to put a hand on their abdomens and inhale. If the

hand on the abdomen is pushed up by the force of the inhalation, then the student is breathing diaphragmatically. If, however, the student inflates the chest cavity, he/she will lack support for their voice. Students can practice diaphragmatic breathing by doing the following exercise. Ask students to imagine that their abdominal cavities are balloons which they are to fill with air. Then ask them to release this air in a steady stream much in the same way they would let the air out of a balloon by pulling the neck of the balloon taut. The student should try to imitate the hissing sound made by the balloon as it gradually deflates. This sound can be made by putting the tip of the tongue firmly against the teeth and parting the lips ever so slightly. The sound emitted is heard as a tse-type hiss. It is very important to remember that projection of the voice without proper breath support can permanently damage the vocal folds. Therefore, never ask a student to use his/her voice in a way that is uncomfortable to him.

Another skill that students can learn in order to insure an adequate supply of air when speaking is to understand the function of punctuation in stage speaking. For the actor, punctuation serves several purposes, one of which is to provide the actor with pauses and rests between words so that the actor can inhale. I continually remind students to take a breath after each period or other punctuation marks which indicate the end of a sentence. If students grasp this idea early on in the marking period, then they will by the end of the term be able to speak a sentence in which the last word spoken in the sentence is as loud as the first word spoken.

The other basic requirement for good stage speaking in addition to being heard, is good diction. Students must enunciate clearly and precisely if they are to be understood by an audience. The rate at which students speak will also be a determining factor in the clarity of their speech. When inexperienced actors perform they almost always race through their lines. This is due to nerves. Unfortunately, no matter how many exercises I give students to slow them down, the behavior still persists until they become comfortable on stage. However, much can be done to improve a student's diction with lasting results. First of all it is necessary for students to be able to hear themselves. By this I mean that the student must be able to identify differences in sounds. For example, he/she must be able to hear the difference between a consonant when it is enunciated and when it is not. In stage speaking the goal is enunciate all final consonants. This is different from the way we normally speak in conversation. In conversation we only enunciate final consonants when they are followed by a word that begins with a vowel or at the ends of sentences. Therefore, the actor must do more than is normally required when speaking. He/she must make a conscious effort to enunciate final consonants. When students reach the point in the class where they are going to be delivering lines, it is a good idea to begin the class with exercises that warm-up the voice and give the student a chance to practice his diction.

These exercises can be done in less than five minutes of class time. The important thing that these exercises do is to focus the student's attention on his/her speech for a few moments during each session. It is the repetition of these exercises that over time, leads to an improvement in the student's diction. After the students become familiar with the exercises, I have a different student lead the others at each class which helps build confidence in the student speakers. Listed below are several vocal exercises designed to improve students' diction.

1. The tip of the tongue, the lips and the teeth. (repeat 10 times)
2. How now, brown cow. (repeat 15 times slowly)
3. Red leather, yellow leather. (repeat 20 times aloud)
4. Mama's a mean mama. (repeat 20 times aloud)
5. Baby's a bad baby. (repeat 20 time aloud)

The teacher should walk among the students listening to their speech. If the teacher hears that the student is not enunciating final consonants, the teacher reminds the class as a whole of the importance of the exercises and asks each student to say the exercises individually. One last word about stage speaking. If the teacher feels, after working with an individual student for a while, that the student has a speech problem, then the teacher should consult with the school's speech consultant. This person can then meet with the student to professionally assess the difficulty. Very often the speech therapist will offer suggestions to the teacher which will help the student correct the difficulty.

V. ON THE WITH ACTION

Once the students seem confident with their lines, they are ready to add the next element necessary for dramatic expression, physical actions. This element, when added to the element of the spoken line, brings with it additional possibilities for artistic interpretation. The actor's body serves as the vehicle for this kind of expression. He/she uses physical actions in order to clarify his/her character's intentions to the audience and to express more fully the emotions felt by the character in the work being dramatized. When speaking of a character's intentions in drama, I refer to the wants and desires of that character. If an actor is to be successful in creating a role for the stage he/she must not present the character in an ambiguous manner. To do so would only confuse the audience and ruin the efforts of the entire company. In real life, people often use words in ways that conflict with their dictionary definition, masking their true intentions. For example, it is not an uncommon occurrence in day to day living to say "no" when in fact you mean to say "yes". I, for one, often say "no" when asked if I want dessert. If I am to be truthful, however, I must admit that it is a rare day when I do not desire sweets. I say "no" for one of two reasons; either I am concerned about my weight or my health. In saying "no" I am in truth only practicing self-restraint. If an actor were to re-create this situation on stage, he would look for a way to express this truth and show self-restraint. The easiest way to do this is by choosing a physical action. In this instance, all that may be required to indicate the character's true desire is a sad shake of the head by the actor as he/she refuses the treat. In other words, the actor reveals the character in his true form through actions. On stage one tiny little action speaks louder and has more impact on an audience than a whole page of dialogue delivered in an uninspired fashion.

The teacher can help the students understand the concept of physical actions by having them locate verbs in the text of "In the Beginning" that indicate ordinary physical activity. After making a list of these verbs, select one (I will use the verb *squat* for purposes of illustration) and ask students to define the meaning of the word with a physical action. Most students, with little thought or hesitation, will quickly assume a squatting posture. Ask them to maintain the posture but adjust their bodies so that they are expressing a different attitude. By different attitude I mean, a different emotion. For example, the curiosity of a young child squatting to find a ball that has rolled under the couch, is expressed quite differently than the squat of an old man crippled by arthritis, who bends down to pick up the newspaper. In both cases the person would assume the same posture, but the facial expressions would be quite different. Continue this activity, asking students to express a variety of emotions while in a squatting position. If necessary the teacher can coach the group by suggesting the different emotions. Fear, anger, joy, pain, confusion, resentment, sadness, and disbelief, are emotions that are easily expressed.

By now the class, having practiced the idea of physically expressing attitudes and emotions, is ready for a challenge which will force them to think even more creatively. Ask students to substitute actions for words in the lines they have memorized from the text of "In the Beginning". What should result as a consequence of this activity is a very primitive form of what I call mime/dance. This reversed form of learning, whereby the student learns the meanings of words by concrete examples of their chosen actions, helps students to more fully understand the meanings of words when they are used in the abstract forms of reading, writing, and

speaking. The teacher can refine this activity and bring it to performance level by adding more rehearsals if time permits. What is important in this exercise is that the student becomes familiar with the concept of physical expression of ideas and emotions so that he/she is not so totally dependent on speech for purposes of communication.

VI. SHOW TIME

A. Group Performance

The class has worked together as a group learning to memorize lines, to deliver them in a more precise manner, and to express ideas and emotions in a physical way by using their bodies. Now they are ready to combine these elements of expression into a unified work. Students will now integrate the skills that they have been learning by combining the action with the word. The teacher, at this point, becomes the director and provides the class with a concept for the work they have memorized as a group. I often use the concept of unity when directing a work like "In the Beginning" which tells kind of an epic story. I use the circle as the single symbol for unity. Students form as large a circle as the space of the room permits. Each actor moves toward the center of the circle as he/she, with whatever actions are appropriate to the meaning of the text, delivers his/her line(s). As the story progresses students are pulled closer together, until at the end they occupy the center of the circle. It is the function of the story to unite the group of actors. Each line of the text ties and binds the actors in their effort to give the story new life and a different reality. The first attempts at this may not be too successful, however, if the teacher is patient and persistent students can master this activity. A new sense of trust emerges from the group when they learn they can perform as a unit. I think group confidence, learned from experiences such as the one I describe, can lead to a new sense of personal confidence. The next part of the unit gives the individual student the opportunity to explore his/her own potential as an actor/artist while reinforcing the skills introduced in the unit thus far.

B. Individual Performance

This last section of the unit is really a repeat of the process, only this time students will work individually to build character from a monologue. Students should be given the opportunity to re-read the monologues introduced earlier in the unit before they begin. The student selects one monologue which he/she will commit to memory. Using the worksheets on script and character analysis to guide them, the student will build a character from the text of a monologue. The final objective of this section is the performance of the memorized text before an audience comprised of fellow classmates. The time required for this section of the unit is about ten class sessions. Students must memorize a minimum of five lines in order to receive a passing grade for this activity. I set aside the first fifteen minutes of each class for students to work on memorizing their lines. They spend the remainder of class time working on delivery. The age old adage "practice makes perfect", applies itself well in this situation. The ability to communicate effectively is not an innate characteristic of human behavior. It is one that is learned and must be practiced. In drama class we practice speaking, by using the words of others. This makes the business of communicating a little easier because we do not have to think of what to say. We are free to concentrate on the other factors which facilitate communication: voice and body language. During each class session, the individual student will seek to form an identity for the character they select to build by using his/her body and voice to communicate to others "who" the character is, "what" the character wants, and "why" the character does what he/she does. The teacher should encourage students to show "who" their character is by way of physical action, and at all times to try to make what they are doing appear to be real.

By analyzing and building a character for the stage, the student learns more than a role. He/she learns a

process which can help him/her discover elements of his/her own identity. The analysis of a fictional character is a search; it is a process of questioning. This questioning ultimately leads to the formation of an identity for the character. The actor tests the validity of this contrived identity in rehearsal. In life, we test the validity of our own identities in the routine of daily living. Professional actors say that a character is never complete. Possibilities for new discoveries are always present even in performance. Is that not true of life? Our identities are never really complete but if we know, at any given time, who we are, what we want and what motivates us, then to some degree we have a measure of control over our lives. This self-knowledge gained in living a thoughtful life can guide us when making choices, it can also comfort us when the fates do not work in our favor. Students, at the secondary school level, are only beginning to play the many roles that life assigns. The experience of a drama class, one which gives students opportunities to explore, practice and create, can help them play the roles assigned to them in youth with more self-esteem and confidence.

MATERIALS FOR TEACHERS GUIDELINES FOR THE ANALYSIS OF A PLAY, SCENE OR MONOLOGUE

This worksheet is a means of gaining better understanding of the work to be performed. Without a good understanding of the written work the actor cannot hope to create believable character on the stage. Therefore, the first step an actor completes when building a character is to consider the following elements.

Setting: The setting tells the actor much more than the location of the play. As you read, be sure to note the following:

1. TIME IN THE PLAY

- a. When in the context of historical time does the play take place?
- b. What time of year is it?
- c. What time of day is it?

2. PHYSICAL LOCATION OF THE SETTING

- a. What nation does the play occur in?
- b. Does it take place in the city or in the country?
- c. Is the setting isolated and hidden, or open to public view?
- d. Is the setting located in the interior of a building or is it outside?

3. WEATHER

- a. Is it sunny or raining?
- b. Is the climate of the drama a friendly or a hostile one?

Plot: The word plot refers to the incidents, events and other occurrences which create a continuous movement within the world of the play. It results from a collision of opposing forces, or conflict. In serious drama, plot is a cause-and-effect progression. In comedy, plot is a series of changes that have no immediate cause, and the unexpected becomes the expected. As you read the play, make a list of all the events and try to determine their cause-and-effect relationships. Then make a list of the conflicts. Do the conflicting events of the play indicate that the play is moving toward a happy or positive resolution for the main characters, or do you think that the events of the play are moving it to the point of disaster?

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The Initial Situation: Main characters can best be understood in terms of conflict. In the beginning of the play, how do the main characters become involved in situations that lead to crisis? Do the characters make deliberate choices about their involvement in situations or are they victims of fate?

The End Situation: Compare the central characters' situation at the end of the play with their situation at the beginning. Have they reached their goals, satisfied their desires?

CHARACTER ANALYSIS 2

I. Physical Silhouette

1. character's age, weight, and height
2. type of speech
3. characteristic way of walking
4. particular mannerisms or idiosyncrasies
5. nationality, section of the country
6. level of vitality

II. Character Biography

1. childhood
2. educational background
3. occupation
4. hobbies
5. home-life
6. social life
7. style of dress
8. level of I.Q.

III. Psychological Silhouette

1. What is the character's environment like?
2. What is his/her self-concept? (The way he/she sees self)
3. How does the character behave under emotional stress?
4. What is the character's outlook on life? (optimistic/pessimistic)

IV. Sensory of Physical Images

1. animal
2. flower
3. house
4. color
5. music
6. type of beverage
7. season of the year
8. odor
9. type of literature
10. furniture
11. transportation
12. household implement

V. Objectives

1. What is the character's super objective? (overall objective)
2. What is the objective of each scene? (specific goals)

VI. Questions to ask when tackling a role....

1. What are you? What do you do in life?
2. What do you want out of life?
3. What does the character do to get what he/she wants out of life?
4. What is your relationship to other characters? How do you feel toward them?

5. What do the other characters say about you? Are they truthful?
6. What are the character's likes and dislikes?
7. What actions are implied in your lines?
8. What are your beliefs and convictions?

A Synopsis of "Macario"

This monologue is in fact a short story which I have edited and reduced into a workable piece for performance. This short narrative tells the story of a simple-minded orphan American boy named Macario, who tells what he sees. In the telling of the story, Macario debunks many of the traditional beliefs and myths about Mexican Society. In the story there are three characters: the Godmother, a figure of authority, from whom all aspects of human goodness have been removed; Felipa, Macario's nurse, who is totally giving and natural in her expression of human qualities; and the boy Macario, who is the middle figure, placed between the two women of opposite character.

As the story opens Macario is sitting, with a plank-type board in his hand, waiting to smash to smithereens unsuspecting victims (frogs), which hop out of the sewer breaking the night-time silence with their croaking noises. The murder of frogs is not an activity that particularly appeals to Macario. He is merely following the orders of his Godmother, who is annoyed by their racket. As Macario waits for his victims to appear he reveals to us the details of his present situation.

Sitting by the sewer, Macario reminisces aloud. He speaks first of his Godmother. The picture he creates for us is of a cold repressive figure who controls him by inducing fear. Macario then tells us of his major character defect which is his insatiable appetite. This behavior is considered by his Godmother to be sinful. Godmother instills a fear of God in the boy hoping to correct this sinful behavior. There are other activities which Macario engages in that Godmother strongly disapproves of, the most offensive being head-banging. When Macario is frightened he likes to bang his head against hard objects. Godmother says he does this because he is full of devils and that he will be damned to hell for doing this. Because Macario is in many ways an "innocent" he trusts her. He believes all that she tells him.

Macario then begins to reminisce about Felipa, his nurse. Felipa seems to understand his need for extra nourishment. She often gives him her portion of food. When Macario was younger, Felipa would secretly nurse him at night. She would lie beside him and allow him to suck the hot sweet milk from her breast, giving him comfort until the night had passed.

The conflict in the story is expressed as an inner-struggle that arises from two very powerful fears that dominate Macario's thinking. The first one is an exaggerated fear of death instilled in the boy by his Godmother. Over the years, she has reinforced this fear by her attempt to control the boy's aberrant behavior. At night the boy lies awake, waiting for death and the life of eternal damnation that accompanies death when it comes. Macario can only imagine what such a life would be like, but it has to be less horrible than what he experiences in reality when he leaves the protection of his home and ventures out-of-doors during the daytime. When Macario is spotted on the street by the towns people, they assault him with rocks, leaving him with a bruised and bleeding body. Therefore it is easy to understand why Macario prefers the miserable

existence of his bedroom, with its imagined terrors to the reality of his life in the world outside his home.

A Synopsis of “The Captive” by Jorge Luis Borges

Although the genre of “The Captive” is a short story, it works well in this unit as a monologue because it is a superb example of story-telling which is, after all, the oldest form of drama. Jorge Luis Borges was an Argentine writer who died in 1986. Like many of his contemporaries in Latin America, Borges felt a strong sense of duty to write about the conflicts of society. In his stories, Borges expresses these conflicts in terms of the family. He explores the limits of reality by asking questions that he does not answer. “The Captive” is a tale of self-discovery told in less than four hundred words, which makes it possible for students to commit to memory.

The narrator begins the story by informing his audience that he is merely repeating a tale that he has heard from others. Some years ago, a boy, living in a frontier town, was abducted by the Indians. Long after the boy’s parents had given up hope of finding their lost son, news of a blue-eyed savage reached them by way of a soldier who had recently returned from Indian territory. The parents, upon locating this blue-eyed savage, find a primitive young man who has lost both the language and customs of his childhood. For reasons not made clear in the story, the young man decides to accompany these strangers. They lead him to their home in the hope that he will recognize the place as his former home. After several tense moments outside the house, the savage races through the yard and entrance way to the kitchen of the house. Without pause or hesitation the savage reaches into the chimney of the fireplace and takes out a small knife that he had hidden there as a boy. The family is happily reunited again after many years of separation. However, their happiness is not to be long lasting. The family is separated once more because the young savage cannot adopt to the confining ways of his civilized parents and returns to a more natural way of living among the Indians.

The story does not end at this logical point of conclusion. The narrator very cleverly asks us to reflect upon those first emotionally charged moments of recognition and consider the possibilities of what actually transpired in the mind of the savage when the past and the present united. Was the lost son reborn at that instant, only to die once more, or did the savage recognize, as an innocent child would, his true nature.

A Synopsis of “In the Beginning” by Humberto Constantini

I was first attracted to this short story by the simple beauty of its language. It is an epic; a story which tragically re-creates the slaughter of the last of earth’s ancient men, the Neanderthals. This story, much like Genesis in the Bible, is a story of origins and dispossessed people. However, unlike Adam and Eve, the peace-loving families of the Neanderthal community are not cast from their Eden-like homes because they have fallen from God’s grace. The Neanderthals become a dispossessed people when warrior like strangers invade their land. These strangers, called Cro-Magnons, come as hunters in pursuit of wild horses. Without provocation these fierce strangers slaughter great numbers of unsuspecting, friendly Neanderthals. It was a slaughter that was to last for hundreds of years. Increasing numbers of Cro-Magnons crossed the borders from the east in search of wild horses, and occupied the lands that formerly housed families of Neanderthals. The Neanderthals sadly retreated, seeking safety in the recesses of the distant valleys. But the Cro-Magnons

continued to advance, killing the ancient cave-dwellers as they pursued the herds of wild horses, forcing the last surviving Neanderthals to flee from their homeland. The leader of the small band of Neanderthals, a man called Grug did his best to protect the remaining few. But the appetite of the warriors was great and they continued to slaughter the Neanderthals until only five survived; Grug, his two wives and their whelps. Grug fled with his family to a crag high up in the mountains. Here the family hid for several days. Their mountain perch gave them a clear view of the valley below. From there the frightened family watched as the Cro-Magnons slowly ascended from below. Grug and his wives knew there was no escape. On the morning of the sixth day Grug picked up his stone ax and murdered his wife and children. Standing with bloodied ax in hand Grug became a true tragic hero. Instead of waiting meekly for death, Grug cries out in rage and attacks the approaching enemy. Driven by rage Grug kills many Cro-Magnons before he dies. He has, by his last actions, redeemed himself and the memory of his people.

Notes

2. This character analysis worksheet is used in the theater department of Hamden High School. I believe it to be the work of Julian Schusberg.

STUDENTS BIBLIOGRAPHY

Borges, Jorge Luis. *The Aleph and Other Stories. 1933-1969* . New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978.

A collection of short stories which includes "The Captive", a selection used in this unit. Jorge Luis Borges, as a writer, is preoccupied with the question of reality and uses the fantastical and supernatural to probe the limits of reality. This element of the supernatural makes his stories appealing to young people who enjoy reading about alternate explanations of reality.

King, Robert and E.M. DiMichael. *Articulation and Voice* . New York: Macmillan, 1978.

A communication textbook for teachers which details the physiology of the vocal mechanism, the uses of the voice and the acceptable standards for speech in the United States. This book provides methods for improving diction and articulation.

Meisner, Sanford. *On Acting* . New York: Random House, 1987.

If you want to know more about what makes good acting, this is the book to read. Written by a man, who many professional theater people consider to be the best acting coach in the United States, Meisner's approach to acting is simple, direct, and effective.

Turner, Darwin T., ed. *Black Drama in America, an Anthology* . Greenwich, CT: Fawcett, 1971.

This anthology is an excellent choice for teachers who want to become more familiar with the work of Black

playwrights. The nine plays published in this book provide a cross-section of characters who express the Black experience in America. One play in this collection is particularly suited for classroom use. *Take a Giant Step* by Louis Peterson cites the experience of a Black male youth growing up in rural New England. This play, when compared with Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, or with James Baldwin's *The Amen Corner* offers the student a very different point of view about growing up Black. One of the monologues in this unit was chosen from this play.

TEACHER'S BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baldwin, James. *The Amen Corner*. New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1968.

The Amen Corner is a play particularly well suited for study by adolescent males. The play explores conflicts of the father, son and the mother, son relationships.

Bentley, Eric. *Life of the Drama*. New York: Antheneum, 1983.

A complete critical analysis of the structure of the genre of the play and its elements written from an academic approach. This book provides detailed explanations of plot and character as well as the types of drama.

Borge, Jorge.

Emerson, Robert and June Grumbach, ed. *Monologues, Men*. New York: Drama Book Publishers, 1976.

A must for drama teachers. This collection of monologues contains 50 speeches from contemporary theater. Some of the speeches contain explicit language and must be edited for classroom use. Monologues from this collection used in the unit are: *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window* by Lorraine Hansberry and *I Never Sang for My Father*, by Robert Anderson.

Gallagher, D.P. *Modern Latin American Literature*. London: Oxford University Press, 1973.

A critical analysis of the works of the major Latin American writers of this century. This book explores the genres of poetry, the story and the novel as found in Latin American literature.

Holt, M.P. and G.W. Woodyard, ed. *Latin America Drama Contemporary*. New York: PAJ Publications, 1986.

This publication contains the works of four well-known Latin American playwrights, Mario Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes, Antonio Skarmeta, and Manuel Puig. The monologue given by the character Dolores in *Orchids in the Moonlight* by Carlos Fuentes is used in this unit. I have edited this monologue for classroom use because it contains suggestive and explicit language. A copy of the edited version is on file with the unit at the Yale-New Haven Teacher's Institute.

Howes, Barbara, ed. *The Eye of the Heart*. New York: Bobs-Merrill, 1973.

A collection of Latin American short stories which features the work of the prominent Latin American writers of this century. "Macario" by Juan Rulfo, and "In the Beginning" by Humberto Constantini, are two stories used in the unit from this collection.

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