



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1995 Volume II: Film and Literature

Teaching Acting Technique and Building a Character through Cinema

Guide for Curriculum Unit 95.02.09
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This curriculum unit will be directed toward second and third year acting students at the Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School. These students will have a strong background in improvisation, storytelling, and play and character analysis. We will emphasize acting technique and building a character based on the Stanislavsky system.

The acting style of most American actors is based on this system, which is known as American Method Acting. I plan to teach acting technique and character-building through the practical application of some of the tenets of American Method Acting.

This course will revolve around three films of Marlon Brando: "On the Waterfront," "A Streetcar Named Desire," and "Viva Zapata!" These three films are directed by Elia Kazan, one of the founders of the Actors' Studio, where Brando studied the Method.

"On the Waterfront" will be studied with the final shooting script. "A Streetcar Named Desire: Acting Edition" will be our text for the film of the same name. Selected material on the life and times of Emiliano Zapata and a novelette of Viva Zapata! will be used for the third film.

By studying professional actors in films and the Stanislavsky system, the students will develop their critical and technical skills.

(Recommended for Drama/Acting, grades 11-12)

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