Course 1, Unit 2: Skits and One-Act Plays

Content Area: **Performing Arts**
Course(s): **English Language Arts, Performing Arts**
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **8 Days**
Status: **Published**

Unit Overview

In Unit 2, students will draw inspiration and concepts from the introductory unit to compose short plays and perform them. These small-scale compositions may come from any of the three main genres (drama/tragedy, comedy, and historical/biographical), but typically they will be comedic sketches. All integral plot elements will be evident along with basic characters and conflicts, with the latter coming to a full resolution at the end of each skit or play. The performance element of this unit enables students to see their work come to life and to evaluate its effect. It will also introduce young playwrights to the wild variables that prevail once a script is in the hands of others.

Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.a	Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.b	Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.e	Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.5.a	Interpret figures of speech (e.g., verbal irony, puns) in context.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.6	Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.
LA.8.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2	Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
LA.8.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3	Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
VPA.1.1.8.C.4	Define the areas of responsibility (e.g., actor, director, producer, scenic, lighting, costume, stagehand, etc.) and necessary job skills of the front and back-of-house members of a theatre company.
VPA.1.3.8.C.1	Create a method for defining and articulating character objectives, intentions, and subtext, and apply the method to the portrayal of characters in live performances or recorded venues.
VPA.1.3.8.C.2	Create and apply a process for developing believable, multidimensional characters in scripted and improvised performances by combining methods of relaxation, physical and vocal skills, acting techniques, and active listening skills.
VPA.1.4.8.B.1	Evaluate the effectiveness of a work of art by differentiating between the artist's technical proficiency and the work's content or form.

VPA.1.4.8.B.2	Differentiate among basic formal structures and technical proficiency of artists in works of dance, music, theatre, and visual art.

Essential Questions

1. How do I apply essential dramatic elements into my own original short composition?

2. What inspiration can I draw from the course exemplar, other performance pieces I've experienced, and the work of my peers?

3. How can I include advanced literary devices such as symbolism, irony, and metaphor in order to add depth and meaning, even to a short piece?

4. How can I make setting, characters, and events interrelate in in my original short play?

5. What terms apply to all of the techniques, skills, and elements I am employing as a playwright?

6. How might I evaluate the technical structure, the content, the form, and the performance of not only my own work but that of others?

7. What are the challenges in developing characters and conflicts in a short play?

8. What are the different capacities in which people function in the production of a play?

9. What do I expect from people as they stage my work?

Application of Knowledge: Students will know that...

- Advanced literary devices such as symbolism, irony, and metaphor add depth and meaning to a play.
- Characters have motivations and attributes that are revealed through dialogue and action.
- Characters, setting, events, and circumstances interrelate in order to exert an effect on an audience.
- Conventions, techniques, and elements have names that effective playwrights know and use.
- Evaluation of a play's techniques, content, form, and performance on a formative basis will yield a more artistic and effective final product.
- Integral, unified plots have specific components and elements.
- People carry out various functions on stage and behind the scenes in order to bring a play to performance.
- Plays, as works of literature, contain themes that develop with the plot.
- Short plays, sketches, and skits--while providing new playwrights the advantage of a simple format--possess the challenge of a tight workspace where essential dramatic elements are concerned.
- The vital work of a playwright is subject to interpretation by performers, directors, crew, and the audience.

Application of Skills: Students will be able to...

- Analyze and discuss themes as they develop with a plot.
- Apply dramatic elements and literary devices as they compose an original dramatic work.
- Bring about an interrelation of characters, setting, events, and circumstances as they compose a play.
- Compose a play that reflects the effect it will have on the audience, while making the most of prospective actors, directors, and crew.
- Develop characters and reveal their motivations.
- Identify and analyze character motivations and attributes revealed through dialogue and action.
- Identify components in a plot sequence.
- Recognize advanced literary devices such as symbolism, irony, and metaphor in a play.
- Refer by name to dramatic elements, literary devices, theatrical techniques, and technical capacities carried out in the creation and performance of a play.

Assessments

Formative

Self-assessment by checklists of elements, devices, and concepts

Peer assessment using similar checklists and engaging in discussion

Periodic consultation with the teacher

Evaluative discussions during rehearsals of short plays

Summative

Student self-assessments based on a rubric for composition, content, and performance

Peer assessments based on a rubric for composition, content, and performance

Evaluation by teacher based on a rubric for composition, content, and performance

Suggested Activities

Skits and Short, One-Act Plays

Day 1—Skits without words; skits with words

Day 2—Mini-one-acts: conflict, transformation, and resolution

Day 3—Mini-one-acts: stage direction

Day 4—Mini-one-acts: scene and props

Day 5—Mini-one-acts: distinctive characters

Day 6—Final process assessment, selecting scenes for performance

Day 7—Rehearsals

Day 8—Scenes in performance

Activities to Differentiate Instruction

Students who struggle with the concepts of plot elements and dramatic components benefit in this unit from the simplified, one-act or one-scene format of the plays they will compose.

Students of higher levels of ability and insight have the opportunity to include more elements and to deepen or expand the application of their skills.

Nonverbal elements of performing engage speech-impaired and LEP students.

The performance element of this unit provides for differentiated activities based on the capacities in which students participate (actor, director, crew).

All students approach the materials and concepts of this unit from various angles: as writers, performers, audience members, and critics. The engagement of a wide spectrum of individual student dispositions activates all students.

In compliance with 504 plans and IEP's, teachers will review applicable documents, consult appropriate personnel connected with special-needs students' cases, work closely with inclusion teachers and classroom aides, and communicate with parents in an effort to see to the specific needs of all students.

Integrated/Cross-Disciplinary Instruction

Consistent with the concept of differentiated instruction, students should learn the knowledge and skills of this unit in conjunction with concepts from various content areas. The diverse genres of drama and performance make this highly feasible. Here are some of the obvious correlations:

- historical drama: social studies
- science fiction: science
- allusion as a device in dialogue: literature, social studies, art, music
- blocking and choreography: physical education
- directing: social skills

While some teachers will provide instruction that includes specific concepts from various content areas, all should direct students to specific text and online resources pertinent to various content areas. Also, teachers will consult grade-level content area teachers on concepts covered in their classes, allowing subjects, lessons, and experiences to reinforce each other.

Resources

Unit exemplar:

"A Defenseless Creature" from *The Good Doctor* by Neil Simon

"A Defenseless Creature" video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=944EaBmpUNY)

Additional resources:

Freytag's Pyramid (http://www.ohio.edu/people/hartleyg/ref/fiction/freytag.html)

Gordon State College play writing format guide and exemplar
(http://ptfaculty.gordonstate.edu/lking/CPF_play_formatting2.pdf)

Peer and self-evaluation checklist and commentary sheet

Peer, self-, and teacher evaluation summative rubric

Zoom Playhouse, PBS (http://pbskids.org/zoom/activities/playhouse/)