Course 1, Unit 3: Extended Plays--Drama, Comedy, and Historical Plays

Content Area: **Performing Arts**
Course(s): **English Language Arts, Performing Arts**
Time Period: **Marking Period 2**
Length: **18 Days**
Status: **Published**

Unit Overview

In Unit 3, students will undertake the composition of full-length plays. In this endeavor, process will take on more importance than product. Ideally, students will complete full-length stage plays that are ready to take to the stage; however, many students will likely fall short of such an ambitious goal. Given the limited time of a single-semester class, it is far more important for students to map out a general plot line, then set to work on developing the characters, dialogue, pacing, and interplay that give a drama true life. Students will have ample opportunity to consult peers and their teacher. They will offer advice to others while drawing inspiration from them as well. Again, the course exemplar becomes important; moreover, students will seek out other plays that inspire them. Also, students will have classmates act out select passages of their work in order to see how their compositions may look in production.

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 extended 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, carefully developing them in an extended, full-length play?

4. How can I develop the interrelation of setting, characters, and events over the course of an extended 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.
- 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

Viewing of passages acted out by peers

Summative

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

Peer assessments based on a rubric for composition and content

Evaluation by teacher based on a rubric for composition and content

Suggested Activities

In addition to brief presentations and activities related to the topics below, students will receive extended time during each class meeting for the purpose of composing and consulting.

Day 1—Review of properties of and distinctions between drama, comedy, and history

Day 2—Mapping out the plot (Freytag's pyramid)

Day 3—Drama and history: protagonist vs. antagonist

Day 4—Comedy: protagonist vs. antagonist

Day 5—Seeking out your own exemplars (suggested playwrights and works--Ibsen, Becket, Williams, etc.)

Day 6—Foils: playing characters off of one another

Day 7—Setting: making time and location critical components

Day 8—Stage directions

Day 9—Drama and history, determine your turning point

Day 10—Comedy, timing your turning point

Day 11—Further exploration of plot elements: inciting event and rising action

Day 12—Further exploration of plot elements: falling action and resolution

Day 13—Multiple plot lines

Day 14—Choosing a short passage for performance

Day 15—Directing and rehearsing blocking and body language

Day 16—Directing and rehearsing lines and enunciation

Day 17—Acting out select passages

Day 18—Reflection/self-assessment/teacher assessment

Activities to Differentiate Instruction

Students will select their own topics and develop their own concepts, based on individual interests, enthusiasm, and strengths.

Assessment at the end of this unit will accommodate a spectrum of outcomes between the completion of a single act to the completion of an entire play.

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. Additionally, the rough performance of select passages provides an added dimension of consideration as playwrights make adjustments to their composition.

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

As students seek additional exemplars suited to their emerging styles:

A Long Day's Journey into Night. Eugene O'Neill (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcDBfUrT4r0)

A Raisin in the Sun. Lorraine Hansbury

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead. Tom Stoppard

Waiting for Godot. Samuel Becket (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7_g52JrshE)

Wit. Margaret Edson.

Additional resources:

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

Peer and self-evaluation checklist and commentary sheet (full-length plays)

Peer, self-, and teacher evaluation summative rubric (full-length plays)