HEY, KIDS!
LET’S PUT ON A SHOW!

Theater in the English Language Classroom

Danielle Capretti
AIMS

- To highlight how theater in the classroom enhances the English learning experience
- To provide a roadmap for creating an English-language performance with students
WHY SHOULD YOU USE THEATER WITH YOUR STUDENTS?

- Provides practice in language skills
- Offers “learning through doing”
- Portrays authentic language in action
- Opens doors to multi-disciplinary studies
- Creates opportunities for those with other skills (e.g. artists, videographers, musicians)
PERFORMANCE PLANNING

- **Text** - selecting a script
- **Casting** - choosing student actors for roles
- **Preparation** - working with words and movement
- **Performance** - putting on the show
THE SCRIPT

Where can you find scripts for your students?

- Search for authentic play scripts
  - In print or online

- Ask students to write the script
  - Based on dialogue prompts
    - A: Did you hear about Alma? She’s so lucky!
    - B: No! What happened?
    - A:
  - Based on a story (story into dialogue, prequel, or sequel)

- Write the script yourself
Goodnight Moon
by Margaret Wise Brown

Narrator 1: In the great green room
Narrator 2: There was a telephone
Narrator 3: And a red balloon
Narrator 4: And a picture of ...
Narrator 1: The cow jumping over the moon.
SCRIPTS FOR SECONDARY LEARNERS

Reader’s Theater Edition #12
The Hidden One: A Native American Legend
Told by Aaron Shepard

The invisible hunter at the end of the village is sought as a husband by every village maiden—but will Little Scarface even dare to try?

GENRE: Folktales, Cinderella tales
CULTURE: Native American
THEME: Self-esteem, heroines
READERS (Actors): 13
READER AGES: 7 and up
LENGTH: 8 minutes
Abigail Adams: I call to order the first Women's Continental Congress...

Martha Washington: What? You told me this was going to be a sewing bee.

Abigail Adams: I find the fact that our husbands are excluding us from participating in the Continental Congress improper.

Deborah Franklin: She's a hothead like her husband.
SCRIPTS FOR PROFICIENCY STUDENTS

Eugene O’Neill
Knapp: I know you have to put up with a lot, Mary, and I wish I could do something to make it easier for you. I don’t know what’s going to become of us—now.

Mrs. Knapp: Oh, we’ll manage to get along as we have been doin’, I expect.

Knapp: But—Mary—something terrible has happened. I’m almost afraid to tell you.

- From Warnings by Eugene O’Neill
COPYRIGHT AND SCRIPTS

- Public domain: pre-1923
- Educational use
- Fair use - use a small part of text in class

http://fairuse.stanford.edu/
CASTING

How do you choose student actors for roles?

Photo: Eagle Brook School
https://www.flickr.com/photos/eaglebrook/22310403455
CASTING

• Choose the actors yourself

• Organize an “audition”
  • Pick an important part of the script
  • Ask students to read
  • Give a direction
    • (e.g., “Pause at the commas, please.”)
  • Ask students to re-read
  • Choose the best actors for roles

• Conduct a “read-through”: switch parts and choose the best actors
PREPARATION - “TABLE WORK”

What the script means and how to say the words

- Reading - Comprehension
- Vocabulary - Definitions
- Speaking
  - Pronunciation of words
  - Word and Sentence Stress
  - Intonation
  - Rhythm (especially pausing)
"TABLE WORK"

AMANDA: Deception! Deception! How old are you, Laura?

LAURA: Mother, you know my age.

AMANDA: I thought that you were an adult; it seems that I was mistaken.

LAURA: Has something happened, Mother? Mother, has--something happened?

AMANDA: I'll be all right in a minute; I'm just bewildered - by life...

LAURA: Mother, I wish that you would tell me what's happened!

from *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams
AMANDA: Deception! Deception! How old are you, Laura?

LAURA: Mother, you know my age.

AMANDA: I thought that you were an adult; it seems that I was mistaken.

LAURA: Has something happened, Mother? Mother, has--something happened?

AMANDA: I'll be all right in a minute; I'm just bewildered - by life...

LAURA: Mother, I wish that you would tell me what's happened!

from *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams
“TABLE WORK”

VOCABULARY

AMANDA: Deception! Deception! How old are you, Laura?

LAURA: Mother, you know my age.

AMANDA: I thought that you were an adult; it seems that I was mistaken.

LAURA: Has something happened, Mother? Mother, has--something happened?

AMANDA: I'll be all right in a minute; I'm just bewildered-- by life...

LAURA: Mother, I wish that you would tell me what's happened!

from The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams
AMANDA: Deception! Deception! How old are you, Laura?

LAURA: Mother, you know my age.

AMANDA: I thought that you were an adult; I was mistaken.

LAURA: Has something happened, Mother? Mother, has - something happened?

AMANDA: I'll be all right in a minute; I'm just bewildered - by life...

LAURA: Mother, I wish that you would tell me what's happened!
PREPARATION - BLOCKING (MOVEMENT) BASICS

Which is the better blocking?

Audience
Which is the better blocking?
How do we block the actors in this classroom?

(Front of room)
PERFORMANCE!

How can we best prepare our actors for performance?

- Memorization or “Reader’s Theater”
- Warm-ups
  - Breathing
  - Physical Warm-up
  - Tongue-twisters
    - “The lips, the teeth, the tip of the tongue.”
- Speed Run
RECAP

- Text
- Casting
- Preparation
  - Table Work
  - Blocking
- Performance
HEY, KIDS!
LET’S PUT ON A SHOW!

“BREAK A LEG!”