Sample High School Fundamentals I Learning Plan

Big Idea/ Topic

Dynamic Dialogue

Connecting Theme/Enduring Understanding:
Exploring the connection between the theatre arts including performance with language arts and literature.

Essential Questions:
What is the difference between dramatic and traditional literary writing?
What are the steps of the playwriting process?
Why are dramatic characters, dramatic dialogue, and dramatic plot structure necessary for a theatrical script?
How does formatting for a theatrical script differ from traditional literary writing?
How are the Aristotelian elements of theatre taken into consideration in playwriting?
What are the technical concerns of a script?
What are some methods used to develop scenes?

Standard Alignment

CREATING
TAHSFT.CR.1 Organize, design, and refine theatrical work.
a. Recognize and/or employ realistic and conventional speech patterns within dialogue or dramatic verse.
b. Incorporate dramatic elements through improvisation.

TAHSFT.CR.2 Develop scripts through theatrical techniques.
a. Differentiate between dramatic and traditional literary writing and utilize common steps of the playwriting process.
b. Assess the need for script analysis, concept development, and directorial and technical concerns of a theatrical script.
c. Construct and critique elements of dramatic structure, character, and dialogue.
d. Create and perform scenes for audiences.

RESPONDING
TAHSFT.RE.2 Critique various aspects of theatre and other media using appropriate supporting evidence.
a. Generate and use terminology for critiquing theatre presentations.

CONNECTING:
TAHSFT.CN.1 Explore how theatre connects to life experiences, careers, and other content.
d. Explore various careers in the theatre arts (e.g. performance, design, production, administrative, education, promotion)

TAHSFT.CN.2 Examine the role of theatre in a societal, cultural, and historical context.
a. Identify and analyze plays and dramas from a variety of historical periods and cultures.
b. Explore the works of milestone playwrights and plays, and the relevance of historical theatre.
c. Recognize historical events that have influenced the role of theatre and how theatrical events have impacted cultural development.

Instructional Design

*This lesson has a flexible timeline but can be accomplished in 1-2 days.
This lesson is intended to reach students in a virtual setting, whether plugged or unplugged. See the bottom of the lesson for a list of unplugged supplies.

FOUNDATIONAL INFORMATION:
Plot structure, dramatic dialogue, theatrical genres, dramatic characters, and play formatting

CONCEPTS:
• The role of the playwright
• Strengthening plot structure
• Capturing unique character voice
• Dynamic Dialogue
• Writing a play
• The process of the playwright
• Establishing characters, conflict, and the path to conflict resolution.

VOCABULARY:
Relationship, character, importance, beats, objectives, tactics, conflict, moment before, plot, character, theme, lexicon, music, spectacle, plot structure, Freytag Pyramid, Exposition, inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action, denouement, dramatic dialogue, dramatic characters, dramatic structure, genres, scripts.

LINKS:
Dynamic Dialogue Video
Text into Action Dynamic Dialogue PowerPoint

Part 1:
Student Journal Prompt:

Gimme the Cookie.
Write a short dynamic exchange. This writing exercise helps students identify and utilize different tactics within the dialogue of a scene. Two characters both want the last cookie on a cookie tray. Using creative, non-violent tactics, have the characters attempt to convince one another that they deserve the cookie. The scene is over when one character achieves the objective of getting the cookie.

Journal for Ten Minutes fleshing out the cookie scene. When complete share various scenes from volunteers in class.

Unplugged option: The student can share the written dialogue with the teacher. The teacher should share their own in this scenario as well to spark a conversation about dynamic choices.

Part 2:
Presentation
In a live or recorded session present the information from the example lesson video, and the PowerPoint, on a synchronous digital platform such as Google Meet (How it Works: Google Meet), or create an asynchronous video of your own.

Sample Video:
[Dynamic Dialogue Video](#)

As a class or in small groups try to establish the super objective of a famous character from a play or movie. List some obstacles, tactics, and objectives that character employs throughout the plot.

Unplugged Variation: Have the student read the information in the handout along with the slides provided in the unplugged packet. The student can identify super objectives, obstacles, objectives, and tactics of a character from a play, movie, or television show citing examples in their journal.

Part 3:
Student Assignment:
1." Break Up" Active Dialogue

Student Instructions:
Write a short scene for where a character is "breaking up" with another character in a public place. The objective of the original character is to end the relationship, but it is complicated by the obstacle of the other character's desire to stay together. Use the physical environment to create additional tension and conflict. Raise the stakes and tactical choices for each character as expectations fail throughout the scene.

2."I've Got A Secret" Scene Major Assessment

Student Instructions:

Write a two-person dialogue where one character has an objective they do not want to disclose to the other character. The character with the secret objective should still pursue it actively within the context of the scene. Make sure to base the dialogue active and based on the increasing conflict.

Requirements
- Proper Theatrical Script Formatting
- Clear Beginning, Middle, and End
- Evidence of super-objective, obstacles, and tactics.
- Effective Dialogue Choices.

For both projects, there are multiple options for sharing the work and receiving feedback.
1. Have the students post their monologue or scene to a classroom forum and read and respond to two of their classmates' posts. They should comment on the effective use of language to clarify information about the character.
2. Synchronous Digital Platform sharing- The project could be shared on a digital platform reading the scenes aloud and offering immediate feedback from the class.

Unplugged Option: As a low-tech option, students can simply mail their scenes to the teacher. Copies of the Slide Deck from the presentation are included in the unplugged packet.

Evidence of Student Success
Diagnostic: Journal Entries

Formative: Teacher Observation and Discussion during and after the presentation.
Summative: "Break Up" Active Dialogue Rubric, and "I've Got A Secret" Scene Major Rubric

Distance Learning Supports

Ideas for Differentiation:
Our goal is for all students to be actively engaged using the body, the voice, speaking, reflecting, and writing. Below are changes to the lesson to help achieve that goal for students who need additional support. or increased rigor. Note: Be careful using these lessons for all students.

- Consider allowing students to record their thoughts in a variety of ways: using the talk to text/dictate feature, making an audio recording of their responses, drawing pictures, circling and/or labeling on their diagram or PowerPoint printouts, etc.

- Students requiring a simplification will write simplified versions of the scenes or monologues. For additional simplification students could improvise scenes based on the assignment prompts rather than writing them out.

- For low-tech and unplugged adaptation students can work one-on-one with teachers on the phone with focusing on a smaller assignments or oral improvised dialogue.

- For students needing an extra challenge, they can further develop both scenes in each assignment by expanding the length or continue with creating subsequent scenes based on the ones crated by the prompts.

Unplugged Supplies: Lesson checklist, Journal, printed PowerPoint slides, and/or copy of lecture notes, assignment handout, copy of assignment rubric.

Engaging Families

Materials included to support unplugged learners: Lesson checklist, Journal, printed PowerPoint slides, copy of lecture notes, assignment handout, copy of assignment rubric

Optional materials to support learning:

School Theatre: Acting Resources

Working Title Playwrights

Texas Arts Tactics List

Lesson Checklist

Part 1:
- o   1. Complete the part I Journal Prompt

Part 2:
- o   2. Read, watch, or listen to the information about Dynamic Dialogue and Theatrical Realism and Actor Techniques for Playwrights
- o   3. Discuss the super objective, obstacles, objectives, and tactics of a character from a play, movie, or television show.

Part 3:
- o   4. Complete the "Break Up" writing assignment
- o   5. Complete the "I've got a Secret" writing assignment
- o   6. Be sure each scene has a clear beginning middle and end.
- o   13. Submit both scenes to your teacher
- o   14. Read examples from your peers and leave critical feedback comments on at least two.

Selected Dynamic Dialogue Slides

Theatrical Realism and Actor Techniques related PowerPoint Slides:

Expectations of Actors
Approaches to Western Acting for the Vast Majority of History
- States of Being
- Reading Lines/Oration
- Variation in pitch
- Volume
- Movement

Great Changes
Social changes:
- Industrial revolution (steam engines, mechanical looms, railroads, photography, telegraphs)
- Migration and immigration
  - London from 900,000 (1800) to 4.5 million (1850)
  - USA from 5 million (1800) to 23 million (1850)

. . .New Ideas
- Biology
  - Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species* (1859)
- Economics
  - Karl Marx, *Das Kapital* (1859)
- Philosophy
  - Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1885)
- Psychology
  - Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900)

Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938)
- Son of a wealthy family
- Directed amateur troupe of the Society for Art and Literature in Moscow
- Innovative productions of Tolstoy, Shakespeare
- Influenced by Antione, Meiningen troupe
  - 1890 Meiningen tour showed importance of mise-en-scene

Stanislavski's "System"
- Creation of inner creative mood "Through consciousness to the subconscious"
- Observation of reality Given circumstances, objectives, through-line
- Magic if and emotion memory
- Moment-to-moment acting, illusion of the first time
- Working within the ensemble

Michael Chekov Showing vs Doing
Presentational Acting
- States of Being
- Expectations of Actors

Representational Acting
- Doing a Task
- Keeping Warm

Objectives, Tactics, and Obstacles (Briefly)
- Super Objective- Character's overall goal
- Objective- A specific desire of a character within a scene. This desire drives the character to speak and interact with others. The character want to (Action verb).
- Tactic- The way in which an objective is pursued. Characters can use multiple tactics to achieve the same objective. By _____ing.
- Obstacles- The thing that stands in the way of a character achieving the objective.

Battle Oriented Objectives
You can't be neutral on a moving train
- Theatre is the height of human conflict
- Objectives need to be battle oriented
  - Advance, Avoid, Retreat

Examples
- A character is running a race. What is the super objective?
  - (To win the race)
- A log falls in the middle of the path. What is the log considered?
  - (an obstacle)
- The new immediate objective is to get past the log. What are some tactics the character could use to get past the log?
  - (jumping, digging under, running around, sawing through and so on)

Finding a Characters Objectives in Literature
- This can be further explored selecting well known stories such as The Three Little Pigs, or the Wizard of Oz.
- Select individual characters and try to determine what the super objective, various obstacles and resulting objectives, and tactics used.

Psychological Gesture
- If we define *gesture* to mean a movement that has intention, we could say that the Psychological Gesture is a movement that expresses the psychology of the character. Chekhov defines the psychology to consist of the thoughts, feelings and *will* of a human being.
- http://www.michaelchekhov.net/gesture.html

Objective Verbs
- Expanding your vocabulary helps
- http://texasartsproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/TacticList21.pdf

Presentation Handout from Dynamic Dialogue Video:

Theatrical Realism and Actor Techniques Presentation Script

In the late 1800s, significant changes took place all over the world. The industrial revolution led to the invention and common use of steam engines, mechanical looms, railroads, photography, telegraphs, etc. This shift in access to increased productivity, faster transportation, communication, and direct visual documentation drastically changed how people could observe the world around them. For the first time, people could communicate within seconds across the globe, travel to locations in days rather than months, and see pictures of events that once had to be interpreted through relatively stylized paintings. This was the first time that families could see the true carnage of war on their loved ones without relying on a more distanced and interpreted form of visual art.

All of this led to changes in ideas across multiple disciplines.
For example:

- Biology: Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species* (1859)
- Economics: Karl Marx, *Das Kapital* (1859)
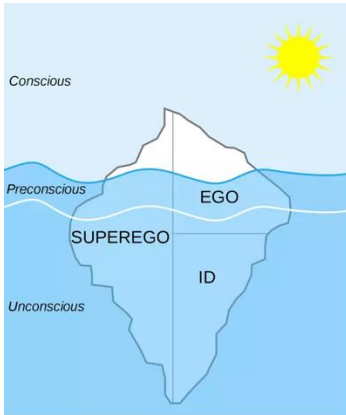
Conscious

Preconscious EGO

SUPEREGO

ID

Unconscious

- Philosophy: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good, and Evil* (1885)
- Psychology: Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900)

For our purposes, this shift in understanding psychology is the most important to understand. This reinvention of how we functioned in the world finally turned inward in a significant way and started to look at why we do what we do and how we function in the world.

Freud posited that the human psyche, or personality, was not driven entirely by conscious choices, but rather by three parts, the Id, Ego, and Superego. The Id is essentially the impulsive, pleasure-based, and unconscious driver of one's actions. The Ego is the conscious mediator between the unrealistic id and the external real world. This is the part that makes decisions. The Super-Ego incorporates the values and morals of society.

While others also suggested that human behavior had multiple motivating factors, the Interpretation of Dreams was the first text to give any form or definition to the function of the conscious and the subconscious. While our understanding of human impulse and decision making has changed dramatically over time, this text is still considered by many to be the birth of human psychology.

All of these changes in the world posed a significant challenge for artists as well.
The old format of often unrealistic performances was no longer appealing to the audience. Audiences began to crave "real life" on stage.

One prominent actor took this challenge in a revolutionary way.

Stanislavski's System
Constantine Stanislavski was an actor and director that struggled with the inconsistency of performance on stage. He found that one performance would engage the audience and the next night the same choices could be made but the performance would fall flat. He developed a system that would aim at creating "real life" on stage every time. The key principles of his system are:

- Creation of inner creative mood
- "Through consciousness to the subconscious"
- Observation of reality

- Given circumstances, objectives, through-line
- Magic if and emotion memory
- Moment-to-moment acting, the illusion of the first time
- Working within the ensemble

To that end, he developed a script interpretation tools that focus on achieving conscious access to the subconscious.

The script interpretation tools for how actors use the lines are as follows:

- **<u>Super Objective-</u>** Character's overall goal
- **<u>Obstacles-</u>** The thing that stands in the way of a character achieving the objective.
- **<u>Objective-</u>** A specific desire of a character within a scene. This desire drives the character to speak and interact with others. The character wants to <u>(Action verb).</u>
- **<u>Tactic</u>**- How an objective is pursued. Characters can use multiple tactics to achieve the same objective. By_____ing.

For Example:

A character is running a race.

What is the **[super objective]? [To win the race]**

A log falls in the middle of the path.

What is the log considered? **[an obstacle**]

The new immediate **[objective]** is to get past the log.

What are some **[tactics]** the character could use to get past the log? Jumping, digging under, running around, sawing through, and so on.

Often objectives and tactics are framed in terms of what the character is trying to do to another character to obtain the goal. For this reason
A resource is included with your module resources as a great source for actor verbs for making choices on stage.
http://texasartsproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/TacticList21.pdf

If the actor would use this approach to understanding the way a character would say a line, it follows that the playwright could enhance the process if the words and choices also fit this goal-oriented thought process.

Beats and Objectives
The use of the super-objective, beats, objectives, and tactics is so fundamental to the contemporary actor's use of the text that it has been restructured and reinvented for decades.

In 1984 Robert Cohen wrote the book <u>Acting One which provides</u> an acronym that helps focus actor choices in how lines are interpreted to have conflict-driven choices on stage. The playwright can use this thought process as well. This shorthand approach can also help the playwright.

He uses the term GOTE

The actor/playwright should ask the following questions. What is the character's:

G-goal
O-Obstacle
T-Tactic
E-Expectation of outcome after the tactic is employed.

When engaging in the imaginative research of what a character would say in a given situation, the playwright must understand the answers to these questions.

In scenes with dynamic dialogue, there is a high level of importance for all characters in achieving their objectives. We refer to this as the "stakes" of a scene. Characters must have a sense of urgency and a need to achieve their objectives; if it isn't important to the character, it's certainly not going to matter to the audience. If dialogue is feeling stale, the playwright can raise the stakes for the characters in the scene by going back and looking at the use of language to reflect the character's immediate objectives and tactics. Answering the questions for GOTE.

If the playwright starts developing dialogue from the onset with a focus on character objectives and tactics, they will likely avoid common playwrighting conflict pitfalls.

1. No Conflict—There are no obstacles to the characters' wants. The obstacles she or he is presented with are easily overcome. The problems are minor, and the resulting conflict lacks consequence.

2. Conflict resolved too quickly—The change the characters present is not believable because it occurs too soon or too easily. The conflict does not sufficiently challenge the characters.

3. Conflict does not progress—The central conflict or dramatic action does not affect change in the scene. Change happens independently of the main conflict of the play.

"Break Up" Rubric

Criteria	Exceeds 20 points	Masters 17 points	Progressing 15 points	Needs Improvement 13 points	No Evidence 0 points	Crite Scor
Final Draft Document Mechanics and Formatting	No errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation. Theatrical formatting is correct.	Few errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. An attempt was made in style. Few errors in theatrical script formatting.	Several errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. An attempt made in style. Few errors in theatrical script formatting.	Careless errors, no proofing evident, some formatting errors/missing elements.	Riddled with errors or cannot read because lack of formatting interferes with comprehension.	/
Script Structure	The script has a clear and effective progression. There is a clear and logical change from the beginning to the middle and from the middle to the end.	The beginning, middle, and end are clearly identifiable but have weak transitions.	The script has a beginning, middle, and end, but lacks a clear definition.	The script has elements of a beginning, middle, and end which help the audience understand the progression.	There is no distinguishable beginning, middle, or end.	/
Evidence of Character research in dialogue	Dialogue reveals character, traits, personalities, conflict, mood, and is consistent with style and form. Feels authentic, consistent with character voice throughout script.	Dialogue consistently reveals character, traits, personalities, conflict, mood, and is consistent with style and form. Feels authentic, consistent with character voice throughout script.	Dialogue sometimes reveals character, traits, personalities, conflict, mood, and is sometimes consistent with style and form. It occasionally feels authentic and is sometimes consistent with character voice throughout script.	Dialogue rarely reveals character, traits, personalities, conflict, mood, and is not consistent with style and form. Does not feels authentic and is not consistent with character voice throughout script.	The character voice is generic for all characters and the dialogue does not reflect the given circumstances of the character or the conflict at hand.	/
Unique Character Voice	Characters are dynamic and multi-dimensional and distinctive. There are clear internal and external motivations. The dialogue sounds natural and motivated based on the conflict at hand.	Most characters are dynamic and multi-dimensional. The audience can empathize with some of the character's situations.	Some characters are dynamic and multi-dimensional. The audience can empathize with some of the character's situations.	Characters are mostly one-sided and flat. Characters internal and external motivations are vague. The audience can perceive little into the inner workings of the character.	Character development is almost non-existent.	/
Active Conflict	Conflict is driven by opposing forces, rooted in subtext and serves character and the story. Consistent throughout the script. Aspects of unique super objectives, obstacles, and tactics are the core of the dialogue.	Conflict is mostly driven by opposing forces, rooted in subtext and serves character and the story. Most of the time it is consistent throughout the script. Super Objectives, Obstacles, Objectives, and Tactics are clear throughout.	Conflict is weak. Dialogue is rarely driven by opposing forces, or rooted in subtext and does little to serve character and the story. Not consistent throughout the script. Obstacles and Objectives are clear, but tactics and character choices are not.	Conflict is almost nonexistent, but elements of character objectives and tactics can occasionally be found.	Conflict is almost nonexistent. Character objects cannot be determined.	/

"I've got a Secret" rubric

Criteria	Exceeds 20 points	Masters 17 points	Progressing 15 points	Needs Improvement 13 points	No Evidence 0 points
Final Draft Document Mechanics and Formatting	No errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation. Theatrical formatting is correct.	Few errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. An attempt was made in style. Few errors in theatrical script formatting.	Several errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. An attempt made in style. Few errors in theatrical script formatting.	Careless errors, no proofing evident, some formatting errors/missing elements.	Riddled with errors or cannot read because lack of formatting interferes with comprehension.
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