

## Sample High School Fundamentals / Learning Plan

### Big Idea/ Topic

#### Final Staged Readings

#### Connecting Theme/Enduring Understanding:

Exploring the connection between the theatre arts including performances 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 the 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 5-10 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, dramatic dialogue, 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:**

[Staged Reading Video](#)

[Critical Response PowerPoint](#)

### **Part 1:**

#### **Student Journal Prompt:**

“Probably the greatest gift a staged reading offers a playwright is the opportunity to discover what works and what doesn't. It can answer questions you may have about your play and present new ones, as well. It's a way to get a fresh perspective on your work and get creatively re-energized. A staged reading is intended to launch you into your next re-write; it is not, therefore, for those who feel that the play is already "done" or "perfect." You may also use your staged reading as an opportunity to showcase your play for any local theater companies and/or directors who may be interested in producing your work.” - The Playwrights' Center of San Francisco

#### **Journal for five minutes about the following topic before engaging in the lesson:**

What do you hope actors with full rehearsals of your work will bring to your staged reading that may not have been there in the critical response sessions?

### **Part 2:**

#### **Presentation**

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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:  
[Staged Reading Video](#)

**Unplugged Variation:** Have the student read the information in the handout along with the slides provided in the unplugged packet.

### Part 3: Assignment Formal Staged Readings

Student Instructions:

Using your final draft of your ten-minute play, gather participants, rehearse, stage, and film a formal staged reading of your play.

Document three to five rehearsals with rehearsal signed rehearsal reports. This should include the initial readthrough, sitting and blocking rehearsals, and at least one dress rehearsal before the filmed performance.

Submit the draft of the script you started with and a copy of the final draft of the script with notes on the reason behind making changes based on the rehearsal process.

#### The Filmed presentation will be assessed based on:

- The documentation of Rehearsals
- The documented explanation of changes based on the rehearsal process
- The choices in the staged reading that reflect the notes on script changes and rehearsal documentation.

**Unplugged Option:** Complete the full process of using parents or others but don't film the event. Document the rehearsals and the details of a full feedback process after the final staged reading.

Evidence of Student Success
<b>Diagnostic:</b> Journal Entries <b>Formative:</b> Teacher Observations and Rehearsal Reports <b>Summative:</b> Final Staged Readings

Distance Learning Supports
<b>Ideas for Differentiation:</b> 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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>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.</li></ul>



- Students requiring a simplification can participate in a simplified version of the reading or only read a portion of the text.
- For low-tech and unplugged adaptation students can work one-on-one with teachers on the phone or can host a critical response feedback session at home with parents or others.
- For students needing an extra challenge can attempt a staged performance of the play.

**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](#)

[Liz Lerman: Critical Response](#)



## Lesson Checklist

### Part 1:

- 1. Complete the part I Journal Prompt.

### Part 2:

- 2. Read, watch, or listen to the information about the Final Staged Reading

### Part 3:

- 4. Finish your ten-minute play script.
- 5. Gather participants.
- 6. Rehearse the reading a minimum of 5 times.
- 7. Film a formal staged reading of your play.
- 8. Submit the film.
- 9. Watch the staged reading of others and provide feedback.



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## Critical Response Slides:

<h3>Critical Response Method</h3>  <p>Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process is a method for giving and getting feedback on work in progress, designed to leave the maker eager and motivated to get back to work.</p> <p>Liz Lerman's critical response process: by Liz Lerman and John Bonwell ISBN-10: 0972738509</p>	<h3>Critique is Critical to Revision</h3> <p>Dramatic Writing GSE related to evaluating, critiquing, and revising work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TAHSTL.RE.1 Evaluate various aspects of dramatic arts literature using appropriate supporting evidence.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. Develop and apply a set of comprehensive criteria for theatre text analysis.</li> <li>e. Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.</li> </ul> </li> <li>TAHSTL.CR.3 Produce clear and concise writing that includes the conventions of standard English grammar and usage.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Devise and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<h3>Roles in the Process</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Artist</li> <li>The Responder</li> <li>The Facilitator</li> </ul> 
<h3>The Artist</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offers a work-in-progress for review and feels prepared to question that work in a dialogue with other people.</li> </ul>	<h3>The Responder</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engages in dialogue with the artist, with a commitment to the artist's intent to make excellent work.</li> </ul>	<h3>The Facilitator</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiates each step, keeps the process on track, and works to help the artist and responders use the process to frame useful questions and responses.</li> </ul>
<h3>Steps 1 &amp; 2</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Statements of Meaning:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responders state what was meaningful, evocative, interesting, exciting, striking in the work they have just witnessed.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Artist as Questioner:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The artist asks questions about the work. After each question, the responders answer. Responders may express opinions if they are in direct response to the question asked and do not contain suggestions for changes.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<h3>Steps 3 &amp; 4</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Neutral Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responders ask neutral questions about the work. The artist responds. Questions are neutral when they do not have an opinion couched in them. For example, if you are discussing the lighting of a scene, "Why was it so dark?" is not a neutral question. "What ideas guided your choices about lighting?" is.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Opinion Time:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responders state opinions, subject to permission from the artist. The usual form is "I have an opinion about _____ would you like to hear it?" The artist has the option to decline opinions for any reason.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<h3>Sources and References</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://lizlerman.com/critical-response-process/">https://lizlerman.com/critical-response-process/</a></li> <li><a href="http://www.brooklynartscouncil.org/files/downloads/Critical_Response_Process.pdf">http://www.brooklynartscouncil.org/files/downloads/Critical_Response_Process.pdf</a></li> <li><a href="https://arts.vcu.edu/dance/news/liz-lerman-dance-exchange-visit-vcu/">https://arts.vcu.edu/dance/news/liz-lerman-dance-exchange-visit-vcu/</a></li> </ul>

Presentation Handout from Final Staged Reading Video:

Staged Reading Script for creating your presentation:

## Staged Readings

Once the script is complete, the next stage is to produce a rehearsed staged reading of the entire play for public feedback.

This process is slightly different from the reading of the script sections. A formal staged reading is a rehearsed presentation of the play for a live audience. This is often followed by a talkback where the audience is guided through the critical response process. Much of the same preparation and procedures that go into a fully staged production go into a staged reading as well.

## Participants:

The staged reading will require:

**Director-** The director will interpret the text and lead the cast through a cohesive unpacking of the text and help to make choices for how the reading will be presented to the audience. Preferably the director is not the



playwright, though sometimes it is. The playwright must be comfortable with the choice of director. The director is responsible for the casting and decision making with regards to the performance of the text.

**Actors-** Each character should be played by different actors if possible. The actors will rehearse and read the dialogue from a seated position.

**Stage Manager-** All notes, decisions, and technical concerns that grow out of the rehearsal process are documented by the stage manager, for implementation during the performance. Stage Directions and scene titles should be read aloud during the rehearsal and performance. This is often done by the stage manager.

**Preparing for Rehearsal:**

Once the cast is selected either through an audition process or simply through selecting willing participants a rehearsal schedule is set for preparing the reading for the day of the performance. Where possible the director should be the sole selector of the cast. The playwright is often allowed at the auditions, but not responsible for making the final selections. This distancing of the playwright from the people that will work with the text for the audience helps to ensure that the words on the page are enough to communicate the intended ideas to the actors without outside interference. During the rehearsal process, the script should be treated as a working document at this stage, where suggestions can be made by the director to the playwright for considerations. At no point should the playwright feel that changes MUST be made. The playwright has ultimate control over the script.

**The Rehearsal Process:**

Each rehearsal is documented using rehearsal notes. This is a record of what was accomplished and discussed in the rehearsal.

Rehearsal Report \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Rehearsal Topic: \_\_\_\_\_  
Attendance \_\_\_\_\_

Rehearsal Notes:

Scenes Covered	
Character Notes	
Dialogue Notes	
Blocking Notes	
Lighting Notes	
Sound Notes	

General Notes:

Readthrough:



## **Readthrough:**

The first step in the process is for the director to hold a readthrough of the play. The purpose of the readthrough is for the cast and crew (Playwright included) to have an understanding of the text itself. Some directors suggest that the actors simply read the lines without attempting to heap character choices on them at this initial stage. After the readthrough, the cast will hold an informal version of the same critical response process that has occurred in the early working draft readings. At the end of this stage, the playwright will answer questions and work with the director to determine if any last-minute changes should be made before the rehearsal.

The bulk of the rehearsal process will function like sitting rehearsal for a full production:

## **Sitting Rehearsals:**

Sitting rehearsals usually take place for 3-5 days following the readthrough.

The first rehearsals tend to focus on character backstory. Just as the playwright has to make decisions about a character's background to develop the dialogue, the actor must use the dialogue to make decisions about motivation and background for the character. This could include but is not limited to discussing given circumstances inherent in the text about each character, relationships, locations, super objectives, obstacles, and objectives. The playwright should function solely as a last source of information for the actors. The text should speak for itself as often as possible. If the actors have questions, they should discuss this with the director. Actors should never make suggestions about changing the written word. The director may talk with the playwright about intention. Only where necessary should the playwright make changes to the text to clarify issues in the rehearsal. The playwright does not want to get in the way of the interpretation process.

When the initial discussion of character arcs is solidified, then the director moves through the text with the actors in directorial beats. Directorial beats are short exchanges between characters in a script. These beats usually have a distinct beginning middle and end and are conflict based. A beat usually leaves one or more characters changed in the trajectory of obtaining what they want. At this stage, the information about character background is used to make choices about actor tactics that can be used to achieve their objectives.

This process is a stop and goes discussion and rereading of beats until concrete analysis and choices are made for each section of the script. Other ideas that can be discussed in this process include clarity of plot, pacing, and clarity of dialogue,

## **Blocking:**

A staged reading has limited blocking and technical elements. There are however some decisions that must be made about presentation and movement on the stage during the performance. The performance should not look like an additional sitting rehearsal. There should be nothing obstructing the actors and they should be fully visible to the audience. Music stands are ideal to hold the scripts, but not obstructing the actors. During the blocking rehearsals actor, arrangement and movement should be determined by the director and rehearsed. Some directors feel that characters should enter and exit when the script indicates to do so. It is not necessary to read all stage directions. Any of the activities that can be done in the chair should be. Stage Directions that cannot be performed in the seated presentation should be read by all as Stage Directions. Where possible lighting should be used to make sure actors can be a scene or to indicate time passage and mood. If sound features prominently in the script it should also be determined and practiced during these rehearsals.

## **The Performance:**

The Director should give some information to the audience as a prologue to the reading. This is not a full performance and therefore lacks some of the guiding elements of the set, or the option of reading the script





ahead of time. The director’s speech should be brief but should help contextualize what the audience is about to experience.

**Post-Performance:**

The Director should facilitate a talkback with the audience.

This is best done in the same format as the Critical Response Process discussed in earlier microlessons. Some moderators will also ask the audience to respond to the clarity of plot, pacing, appropriateness of dialogue for the genre, and clarity of the defined objectives of characters.

**Post Staged Reading:**

Many plays have multiple formal staged readings before full productions. The playwright should take all of the information from the process as a whole and make changes as necessary. It is important during this phase that the playwrights do not cave to the audience or director's suggestions at the cost of giving up unique perspectives.

**Final Staged Reading Rubric**

Criteria	Exceeds 25 points	Masters 21 points	Progressing 19 points	Need Improvement 16 points	No Evidence 0 points
Rehearsal Reports	Five rehearsal reports are all signed and document the initial read through, sitting and blocking rehearsals, and at least one dress rehearsal. Notes about changes, discoveries, and choices are detailed in each report.	3 rehearsal reports are all signed and document the initial read through, sitting and blocking rehearsals, and at least one dress rehearsal. Notes about changes, discoveries, and choices are detailed in each report.	At least 2 rehearsal reports are all signed and document the two of the following: initial read through, sitting and blocking rehearsals, and at least one dress rehearsal. Notes about changes, discoveries, and choices are detailed in each report.	Only one rehearsal reports is signed and documents one of the following: initial read through, sitting and blocking rehearsals, and at least one dress rehearsal. Notes about changes, discoveries, and choices are detailed in each report.	None of the rehearsal reports are signed or contain details about changes, discoveries and choices.
Final Staged Reading	The reading choices reflect the notes and changes indicated in both the script and the rehearsal notes. The reading is clearly rehearsed and polished prior to filming.	The reading choices reflect the notes and changes indicated in both the script and the rehearsal notes.	The reading choices reflect some of the notes and changes indicated in both the script and the rehearsal notes.	The reading choices reflect few of the notes and changes indicated in both the script and the rehearsal notes.	The reading is not polished, appears unrehearsed and does not reflect documentation in the rehearsal reports or script.
Script Changes	A copy of the script draft prior to the rehearsal process and a final draft containing changes after the rehearsal process are submitted along with the video. Changes between the two scripts are clearly indicated.	A copy of the script draft prior to the rehearsal process and a final draft containing changes after the rehearsal process are submitted along with the video.	A copy of the final draft containing changes after the rehearsal process are submitted along with the video. The previous draft is not included.	The final draft of the script is included but changes are not indicated.	No final draft of the script is included with the video.
Critical Virtues	The critical peer responses posted are all observant, informed, sensitive, demanding, and articulate.	The critical peer responses posted are mostly observant, informed, sensitive, demanding, and articulate with a very few exceptions.	The critical peer responses posted are often observant, informed, sensitive, demanding, and articulate, but certain categories are lacking throughout.	The critical peer responses posted are rarely observant, informed, sensitive, demanding, and articulate.	The critical peer responses posted are never observant, informed, sensitive, demanding, and articulate.

