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The Arts in Common Core:

Strategies to Teach Common Core Standards Using the Performing Arts

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Abstract

There are many benefits of integrating dramatic activities and learning opportunities into the everyday life of one’s classroom, both academically and socially. Creative drama and imaginative activities provide students and teachers with abundant opportunities to develop a wide range of real world problem solving skills, literacy abilities, communication skills, and group work techniques. However, teaching or even using drama alongside more traditional instruction methods may seem intimidating to some teachers. The purpose of this thesis is to review the existing literature regarding the integration of drama in schools and provide a practical guide for using similar methods in the classroom. The examination is focused on the use of drama in elementary (kindergarten through fifth grade) reading and language arts classes. A summary of current and proposed standards in Reading Language Arts and Theater is also provided. Finally, lessons and activities to help teachers integrate drama into their own classrooms are provided. This thesis is the result of the academic convergence of two of my passions: teaching and acting.

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Introduction

Let me provide an anecdotal example of the average condition of arts education in last 20 years. I attended a rural school (k-12) and had an average of 60 students per grade each year of my education. In grades k-5 addition to “core” academic subjects we had two thirty-minute music lessons, two thirty-minute physical education lessons, and one thirty-minute library lesson each week. Aside from craft projects and drawing opportunities, the only exposure we had to the fine arts was from a volunteer community artist who visited each grade three or four times a year and showed us step-by-step how to draw one particular and seasonally appropriate picture. I remember a scarecrow in particular with a rounded triangle for a nose, knee patches, and big eyes. That is it. It hurts me to think that I may have gone to school with many artistic geniuses, who were never discovered by their teachers, or themselves, due to lack of opportunities and support.

As we got older, creative outlets became scarcer as holiday crafts and art projects gave way to vocabulary assignments and essays. In grades 6-8, music was an optional elective class, and only eight weeks of art and drama each were required or even available over the course of three years. High school had band, choir, and guitar classes available as well as introductory and intermediate art (drawing and painting with the possibility of some pottery) classes. In total, only one credit of these “fine arts” courses was required for graduation. However, we had no academic drama to speak of; it existed solely as an extracurricular with much more emphasis on performance than the cultivation of acting skills, like character development or discovering the objectives of a scene, and understanding of technical aspects such as lighting or scene design.

This thesis not only examines some of the ways that theater education and integration can benefit students, but also provides teachers with practical ideas for use in their classrooms. There is often a great deal of stress that accompanies teaching an unfamiliar subject. This stress is not beneficial to either the teacher or the students. The goal of this thesis is to provide an overview of the existing research on classroom drama and its effects on students' acquisition of literacy and language arts skills, and then to provide teachers with practical ways to put drama to work in their own classrooms. With more background knowledge and curriculum support, teachers will be able to reap the benefits of theater integration at a lower level of stress.

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Historical Background

The value placed on arts education by the public, and by educational authorities, has shifted again and again throughout our history. In the Enlightenment period of western Europe education in "the arts," as well as education in general, was a domain solely for wealthy people and no education for the upper classes was considered complete without foundational knowledge in drawing, painting, dancing, and music with a general familiarity of classic theater and literature. At a time when books were becoming widely available, to those with money at least, education became the mark of affluence.

With the rise of compulsory public education in the late 19th and early 20th centuries the visual arts, at least, became incorporated as technical drawing and drafting as preparation for careers as engineers and architects. With the practical progressive nature of society at the time art for artistic reasons began to decline, (Heilig, Cole and Aguilar 137). However, many large city school districts continued to offer very limited art and music education through a plan similar to what many districts use today: one teacher is shared among several schools and each class gets one lesson per week, (Smith 138-9). As the 20th century progressed the arts took on a more prominent role in education with demanding course work and dedicated teachers. Generalized arts education continued to be highly valued in schools until the mid-1950s. However, programs did undergo substantial cuts during the Great Depression, but many rebounded by the end of WWII (Heilig etc. 137).

The general appeal of arts education underwent a dramatic change beginning in 1957, due to the explosion of the Space Race and the Cold War with the Soviet Union (History.com Staff). With this historical development the government and society at large began to pressure the public school system to focus more attention and instructional time on subjects that would later become known as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) (Heilig etc. 137-8). These priorities have remained in some manifestation or another for the last 60 years. At present the United States seems to be competing with the rapidly industrializing Asian nations, such as Japan and India, both of whom excel on the technological development front.

Review of Literature

This review represents a general cross-section of available scholarship on drama integration in elementary classrooms. Any study that was part of one of the meta-analyses discussed was not examined on its own. With the exception of *Have a Think About It,* all resources were found in online databases (ERIC, Professional Development Collection, Teacher Reference Center, MasterFILE Complete, JSTOR) with the search terms “elementary AND (literacy OR reading OR communication arts) AND (drama OR fine art OR performance art)” or “drama AND (literacy OR language arts) AND (elementary OR primary).”

Meta-Analytical Studies

This review of literature begins with Ann Podlozny’s article, “Strengthening Verbal Skills through the Use of Classroom Drama: A Clear Link.” This is the report of a massive meta-analysis carried out by Podlozny and published in *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* in 2000. It is the overarching review of seven separate meta-analyses that examined eighty studies released between 1950 and 1998. The seven analyses were done in the areas of classroom drama as related to: 1) oral measures of story understanding, 2) written measures of story understanding, 3) reading achievement, 4) reading readiness, 5) oral language development, 6) vocabulary, and 7) writing. In all areas except vocabulary Podlozny was able to find results that show a statistically significant, positive, cause and effect relationship between the type of classroom drama used in the study and the communication arts skill being measured. While there also appeared to be a link between drama and vocabulary, it was not large enough to be classified as “significant” and valued in a quantitative data driven review.

For each study, in addition to having statistical analysis done on overall student achievement outcomes were reviewed in regards to nine aspects of the study itself. These aspects included: Type of Plot [of drama] (structured, unstructured, or a mix), Role of Leader (leader-in-role, facilitator, or removed), Degree of Transfer, Amount of Drama Instruction (generally reported in total minutes), Age of Students, Type of Population (particularly low SES, remedial readers, and average), Study design (true experimental studies or quasi-experimental) (Podlozny 244-5) .

Depending on the skill being measured, participants ranged in age from two years to eleventh grade (approximately 17) with the youngest students being studied in the reading readiness analysis and the oldest being included in written measures of story understanding, reading achievement, and vocabulary. Most studies ranged from kindergarten or first grade to approximately fifth. Five out of the seven meta-analyses performed by Podlozny found there to be no significant relationship between the age of the participants and the effect size. Older students gained more in oral language development and younger students more in writing. Results in regards to type of plot were also mixed. Written measures of story understanding, reading achievement, reading readiness and writing showed larger effect sizes when drama instruction with a structured plot was used, while oral language development showed larger effects when unstructured or a mix of structured and unstructured drama activities were used. When reported, the facilitator-in-role proved to be more effective than other leader roles, pointing to the importance of modeling for successful skill development (Podlozny 265-7).

The overall conclusions of this meta-analysis showed that drama instruction in schools had a very measureable and positive impact on student achievement and growth in a wide range of the communication arts sub-disciplines. However, there remains much room and a strong need for more well-constructed studies on the optimal amount of time used for drama and how contributing factors influence the successful outcomes (Podlozny 268). While Podlozny did find many empirically-based and well-structured studies, many reports on drama in the classroom provide purely observational and circumstantial data that is presented without any form of control.

Over the next few years, more empirical studies began to be published. “Imagery-Based Learning: Improving Elementary Students’ Reading Comprehension with Drama Techniques” is one of the well-constructed and rigorous studies called for by Podlozny’s meta-analysis. The researchers used pre-test/post-test structure with randomized control groups and experimental groups in four fourth grade classes in Chicago elementary schools. All of the schools had very high concentrations (at least 80%) of students from families living at or below the poverty line and populations that strongly represented African American and Hispanic students (Rose et. al. 58). For their purposes the authors defined reading comprehension as “the ability to understand and retain the details, sequence, and meaning from written material,” (Rose et. al. 55).

The writers began by reviewing previous arts and basic skills research, mentioning several of the meta-analyses Podlozny referenced in her article. They analyzed in greater depth, however, research that linked the ability to create cohesive visualizations of an entire text to better reading comprehension. Rose and his colleagues theorized that the mental processes necessary to engage in drama might help students build the visualization skills to improve reading comprehension. They found several aspects of imagery-based information to be the focus of their study, and consequently of student learning. The areas of focus were story elements (who, what, where), sequence elements (beginning, middle, end), perception elements (see, taste, smell, hear, touch), and evaluative elements (interpretation, critique, opinion) (Rose et. al. 56, 59).

The curriculum used in teaching these various elements was designed by the Chicago area arts education organization, Whirlwind. Instruction focused on one set of elements at a time in five-session blocks, two one-hour sessions each week. Lessons were implemented by teaching artists associated with Whirlwind. In each stage students experienced a story, identified the targeted elements in that story, recreated these elements by means of crafting props, and finally retold the story through dramatic interpretation. The researchers used the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) as one of two means of assessment. The previous year's ITBS results served as the pre-test, and the post-test came shortly after finishing the study. A pre- and post-test performance assessment was also used. Students were rated in four areas by a panel of scorers. This study found, after controlling for any possible differences between the control groups and the experimental groups, the students who had taken part in the drama instruction showed an average of three more months of skills growth than those who continued with their basal program without drama instruction. A statistical analysis of their results shows that the *Reading Comprehension through Drama* instructional program significantly enhanced students' overall reading comprehension (Rose et. al. 60).

Other experimental research analyses were presented in a subsection of the ERIC Digest report "Literacy Instruction through Communicative and Visual Arts" entitled "Using Dramatic Activities in Language Arts Classrooms." Though brief, this article provides valuable research-based information on aspects of literacy development drama can help support. In just over one page, the author outlined major findings from six studies ranging from 1998 to 2002. Among these was McMaster's meta-analysis of 1998 which found nine key areas drama can help develop. Drama supports student growth by: 1) developing affect, 2) providing a source of scaffolding for emergent readers, 3) developing symbolic representation skills, 4) serving as a meaningful context for repeated readings (to improve and support students' fluency development), 5) being a rich source for vocabulary growth, 6) helping students gain understanding of syntax, 7) familiarizing students with different "forms of discourse", 8) encouraging self-monitoring strategies for comprehension, and 9) serving as an assessment tool (Lin 3). The author also discusses drama's effectiveness with at-risk readers and English

Language Leaners, as well as how drama can be integrated with other art mediums, such as music, to provide an even richer learning environment.

Qualitative Studies and General Interventions

Moving from data analyses to more qualitative sources, *Have a Think about It: Drama for Mental Agility* offers a wealth of observational detail but very little numerical data. This booklet provides a very different type of information from the above mentioned articles; it deals with the specific case of Bexhill Primary School in Sunderland, England. The booklet outlines how several teachers formed a Teacher Research Team (TRT) and worked to bring drama activities into their classrooms to help children develop higher level thinking, ultimately improving their performance on standardized tests. As an introduction, the authors, Shirley Brice Heath and Shelby Wolf, detail a story and some of the questions that appear as part of England's Key Stage 1 Tests (Heath and Wolf 5). Students who take this test average seven years of age. The questions include several that necessitate putting oneself in the position of a character and thinking from his or her point of view. Many young students especially, struggle with this task.

As suggested by the title, the key ability the TRT was hoping to grow in their students was "mental agility." Mental agility describes "the ability to think flexibly and anticipate twists and turns in problems," (Heath and Wolf 8). This text offers no measureable numeric data to support or disprove the idea that practicing drama in class would improve students' speaking and listening skills and increase their capacity for empathy and creative thought. It did, however, detail some of the strategies and techniques the Bexhill teachers used to integrate drama into their instruction, as well as provided anecdotal information on individual students' growth in specific abilities. They played classic drama games, practiced "hot-seating" (an activity where one student is asked to take on the role of a historical or fictional character and respond to questions posed by the teacher or other students as that individual, this if often referred to as working "in role"), worked with guest artists from the community, and engaged with texts through self-written or improvised scene work (Heath and Wolf 20,28,36). Another important aspect of *Have a Think about It* was the included vignettes that detailed student and teacher exchanges to show turning points in the students' conceptual understanding.

One of the activities the authors discuss extensively is titled "Taking Character to Court." In this lesson students listened as the teacher read aloud and showed pictures from *Hansel and Gretel.* The students quickly and easily engaged in a group discussion about the characters and their relationships. The teacher had students brainstorm all the stepmother's faults and flaws as a group, and then individually the students worked in-role to find possible excuses for the woman's behavior. After this preparation, the teacher began by acting as the stepmother and assigned a student to play the judge and a student to play the prosecuting attorney while the rest of the class formed the jury. After a short trial the stepmother was either convicted or acquitted and a new group of students stepped up to fill the roles. This process continued until all students had the opportunity to play at least one of the main roles (Heath and Wolf 36-44).

The summary confirms that the TRT believes that their work helped their students "gain sufficient practice to achieve fluency in either the thinking or the speaking/writing skills called for in Key Stage test questions," (Heath and Wolf 46). Drama allows students of all levels and experiences the chance to step into the skin of another person and think, speak, and act as this other.

It is always important for teachers to be aware of the pedagogical theories and reasoning behind the methods they are using. Understanding the logic behind they work they are doing can help teachers teach more effectively and target their instruction to student needs. "Using Drama Activities in Literature-Based Reading Programs" helps fill this need. It is an article which carefully describes a multi-session lesson thread primarily utilizing a picture book and a variety of drama activities. This provides a practical guide for teachers looking to integrate dramatic methods into their classes, and pedagogically-based explanations for why each activity is worthwhile. Margery Hertzberg provides information on theory/practice relationships for each activity in the realms of both drama and English; she identifies drama as not only being an effective teaching tool for language arts, but also as a curricular aim in and of itself. “At a time when some politicians and senior educational policy makers are suggesting that the Arts are a 'soft option', it is important that teachers…articulate the educational reasons for the Arts, in this case Drama, [to] remain in teaching programs,” (Hertzberg 1).

Because this article is in essence a lesson plan, there is no data, empirical or observational, to show whether the methods used are more effective than traditional approaches would be. The article does state that the unit was successfully tried with a group of eight-and-nine-year-olds, and outlines the particular mental processes and learning activities students will use to complete the objectives. The author believes it would be equally successful with students in the upper primary grades and particularly with ELL students. Each of the four stages of story work (getting ready for the text, getting into the text, coming back to the text, and going beyond the text) have high levels of student participation and engagement, and therefore should increase academic achievement for these reasons if for no others.

The procedures include reading the story multiple times and then starting with the characters and themes of the story to build students’ own works of dramatic presentation. Some of the drama activities Hertzberg uses include “hot-seating” (described above as answering questions in-role), depiction (or tableau), “tapping-in” (a variation on tableau where students are allowed to verbalize their characters’ thoughts or feelings), and structured improvisation. Structured improvisation was the most involved of the activities and provided students ample opportunity to practice both English skills and drama skills. The rationale behind this article is the need for drama-based curriculum materials that are firmly grounded in educational theory and learning principles.

Sheila Alber and Carolyn Foil share strategies for the use of drama in vocabulary instruction for all students. In the article “Drama Activities that Promote and Extend Your Students’ Vocabulary Proficiency” they explain that vocabulary knowledge is a key piece to general comprehension: “Students with more advanced vocabularies will be better readers,” (Alber and Foil 22). In the effort to increase students’ vocabularies, several areas must be considered. Firstly, students must *learn* the new vocabulary presented in their literature or content reading. This is the area where the authors use drama-type activities most successfully. They recommend several variations of what basically amounts to the game charades. These include teachers teaching an action along with a word; for example, one might teach the word ‘frigid’ accompanied by a shiver. Students are then asked to do these actions as they practice the words and to work in partners to do the action or act out words and guess. In a variation of this, students can create their own actions and then teach the rest of the class.

Traditional charades is also a recommended drama activity. Abler and Foil also suggest putting a character trait example on a card and having students read and dramatically enact the example while others guess. For example, “for...the word *shrew* a student writes [then acts] “She pointed her finger at the boy and screamed, ‘Don’t put your feet on the furniture! How many times do I have to tell you!’’’ (Alber and Foil 24). Another option for guided practice and reinforcement is to have students work in small groups to design skits that exemplify a situation vocabulary words might be used in. If multiple groups are given the same word to work with, fruitful conversations about how the same word can be used in a variety of contexts can be facilitated. They also suggest a similar activity in which a small group works together to write a story using as many vocabulary words as possible. When the story is finished, they take turns reading it aloud while the rest of the class watches for the special words (Alber and Foil 25).

The very brief "Drama Rhymes: An Instructional Strategy" is the work of a kindergarten teacher outlining the theory and practice of using dramatizations of nursery rhymes to help young students develop phonological awareness and oral language skills. Phonological awareness is a very strong predictor of future reading success. "Research indicates that activities that guide children's attention to the sounds within spoken words and to the relationship between print and speech can facilitate learning to read…Adding dramatization to nursery rhymes enhances and is developmentally appropriate for teaching phonological awareness for children in preschool through third grade," (Roush 584).

Process Drama

In a departure from simply integrating individual drama activities into classroom instruction, some educators advocate for more intensive and involved drama explorations referred to as "process drama" or "creative dramatics." The article "Drama on the Run: A Prelude to Mapping the Practice of Process Drama," lays the theoretical background for teachers to use process drama in their classes. They begin by discussing the growing practice of guest artists coming into schools to work with students in the defined role of artist, while the classroom teacher remains in the defined role of teacher. They argue that while this can be beneficial for students, it is not the only way to promote and practice arts in schools. They instead believe that preparing teachers should be trained to become, "*teacher-artists* who would have the ability to meld their pedagogical understanding and skill with an aesthetic craft and sensibility…" (Bowell and Heap 59). Bowell and Heap describe their aim as that of "…exploring and coming to understand more fully, clearly, and precisely how the teacher functions as an artist within the particular genre of applied theater known as process drama," (Bowell and Heap 59).

The authors define "process drama" as, "…a form of theatre applied within an educational context in which learners, in collaboration with the teacher, create dramas for exploration, expression, and learning," (Bowell and Heap 60). As is implied by the name, process drama is primarily concerned with the *process* the students and teachers go through as they explore their subject. Process drama rarely results in a public or shared performance, and when it does the performance is generally brief and simple. Despite the hours of work both in class and on their own, what students can present at the end of a process drama unit often doesn't look like much. This is precisely because performance is not the point; the *process* is what is important.

Bowell and Heap provide six question threads that the teacher must address before beginning a process drama: "With which area of human experience does the teacher wish the pupils to engage? (theme), What particular fictional circumstances will be created by the drama to explore the theme? (context), Who are the teacher and pupils going to be in the drama? (role), Which viewpoint will the roles have in order to create tension in the drama, and how distant will the roles need to be? (frame), What artifacts, personal items, sounds, images, and so on will be needed to bring significance to the drama? (sign), What ways of working will be used in the drama? In which combinations? For what purpose? (strategies)," (Bowell and Heap 61).

Next, the authors stressed the wide variety of roles the teacher must take on simultaneously; she or he must be a playwright, director, actor and teacher throughout the process to ensure that the drama is moving in meaningful ways and that the educational objectives are being met. The term they used to describe this four-part awareness was "quadripartite thinking." They suggested that in order to be successful in all these roles, the teacher must have an active awareness of her or himself in each role all the time. At no point in their article did the authors provide information on process drama as it is directly related to the curriculum in schools. The article is about helping the teacher prepare for a process drama, and not the practice of implementing one in a classroom.

In contrast to “Drama on the Run,” “Process Drama: A Special Space and Place for Writing” details the thorough study of one teacher’s use of process drama in her classroom. The researcher in this study, Jennifer, spent time each day in Sylvia’s combined second and third grade classroom for the first twenty weeks of school observing process drama learning. Sylvia taught at “an urban, public elementary school…The school was an alternative or magnet school that had an ‘informal education’ focus…[where] the arts were integrated into the curriculum through the collaborative efforts of the classroom teachers and the dance, art, and music teachers,” (Schneider 39). For the sake of this study, “process drama” was defined as “a method of teaching and learning that involves students in imaginary, unscripted, and spontaneous scenes,” (Schneider 38). In all of Sylvia’s dramas students were allowed ample time to work in-role and develop the scenes they wished to present. In this case process drama did result in a performance or presentation, but the important aspects of the drama work all happened beforehand and many were likely not visible in the end product.

Jenifer Schneider detailed two major process drama units, “Journey to Peace Valley” and “The Immigration Drama,” each of which lasted at least eight weeks and involved students in many subject areas, with a focus on different types of authentic writing. The author provided detailed descriptions of how each drama progressed, from initial introduction to final performance for other students or parents and many of the intervening projects and components. However, there were no measures of how successful these process dramas were as an avenue for skills development. The study took place entirely with one class so there was no control group possible, nor was there any pre-test post-test data. This article emphasized how the drama structure provided students with reasons to write and subjects to write about from various perspectives. “… [information about a character] allowed them [the students] to view the world from multiple perspectives—a necessary ability for effective writers,” (Schneider 50). Several writing samples were provided that showed high levels of achievement for the age group, but works from the same child are not addressed, so the reader is unable to see how students may have grown. In conclusion the article notes the variety of methods used: “Both in and out of role, she [the classroom teacher] used whole-group instruction, modeling, and individual conferences to instruct the students’ writing,” (Schneider 50).

Drama to Support Special Populations

In addition to enriching the overall classroom environment and learning practice, drama interventions can prove especially successful with students who need additional support. “Drama’s Potential for Deepening Young Children’s Understandings of Stories” is one small-scale qualitative study from Donna Adomat who has written numerous papers on the subject of drama in elementary education. However, this one does include some numeric growth indicators. Ten first graders who had been identified as “lowest achieving” at the start of the school year were selected to receive drama-based interventions over the course of seven months. The group included students from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, with the majority coming from lower SES households. Additionally, three of the students spoke a language other than English at home (one Italian, two Spanish). Students worked in their drama groups approximately once a week as part of their reading interventions, (Adomat 345).

Adomat used a variety of techniques to monitor student progress and record data including: “transcriptions of audiotapes and videotapes, field notes, interview with teachers, student reflection on drama activities through discussion and writing, observations of students in other classrooms, and drama activities,” (Adomat 345). In analyzing her data, Adomat found three distinct categories of literary understanding: textual, personal, and social.

Through the next section of the article, the author explained her process of planning drama lessons and outlined some of the activities and strategies she used with students. For each lesson, she began by choosing a story to be the focus of her lesson, then brainstormed possible themes or issues integrated within the book that could be explored by students. After having chosen a theme she focused on one to three particular questions for students to explore. Students then took on different roles in the story, either as characters actually in the story or as those that could be implied from context. With each of the three drama strategies the author presented, she discussed a different story. Role playing activities were detailed, along with hot-seating, and tableau. Throughout these activities, students tackled many challenging literacy and comprehension concepts including writing in role, questioning, explaining, inferring, describing character traits, and identifying the climax. "Children were able to express their literary understanding through multiple modalities: language, movement, gesture, and voice intonation," (Adomat 349).

This study did not have a control group; however, the students who participated showed significant improvement in reading skills by the end of the program. As demonstrated by end-of-year standardized testing, students in this program showed "significant" growth in all areas of reading and writing, and eight of the ten students were removed from low-achievement reading support, a result referred to as "unprecedented," (Adomat 349).

Drama can also be beneficial to English Language Learners (ELL) in the elementary setting. "Using Drama and Movement to Enhance English Language Learners' Literacy Development" summarizes previous research in this area, outlines techniques that can be used with students, and provides potential resources for teachers. The authors of this article suggest many subdomains of literacy which may be supported through drama education including: decoding skills, fluency, vocabulary, syntactic knowledge, and metacognitive thinking. Furthermore, they divide all possible drama into "formal" or "informal". Informal drama is when "…children create their own drama using props… [or] use puppets or act out stories they recreate…" (Rieg and Paquette 149). Formal drama involves the creation or performance of pieces with specific dialog.

Reig and Paquette discussed how drama can help build ELL students' skills in vocabulary and writing, as well as how drama can be integrated in to other content areas such as science, math, and social studies. The authors show how poetry can be used to guide student dramatizations. They suggest poems that "…present mini-dramas or express strong emotions, attitudes, feelings or opinions…" They also note that "books and poems that lend themselves to repeatable patterns and concrete actions…are most appropriate for less proficient students," (Rieg and Paquette 150). Reader's Theater is also noted as a helpful and appropriate way to build ELL literacy skills. Rieg and Paquette go on to discuss "Total Physical Response" (TPR) and "Language Experience Approach" (LEA), two well-established techniques for teaching young ELL students. While neither TPR nor LEA are drama programs in the traditional sense, they both use movement and authentic experiences to help students with vocabulary and grammar acquisition. The article ends by giving suggestions of websites and other resources teachers might find helpful for use in their classrooms.

Reader's Theater and Fluency

The article "Take it to The Stage" explores the possibilities within Reader's Theater (RT) for young students. The author, Marybeth Kozikowski, is a public librarian and shares some of her experiences with using RT as an enrichment program with fourth and fifth graders, as well as citing experts in children's literacy who endorse it for the many social and academic opportunities it can offer students. She describes RT as, "that rare program whose minimal cost yields immeasurable results," (Kozikowski 36). She quotes a children's literature consultant, Judy Freeman, who says that, "readers theater is the closest thing to a silver bullet that we have [for reaching common core goals], and it doesn't involve high-stakes testing or drill-and-kill worksheets. It's so ridiculously easy to implement, it's a wonder it hasn't become part of every classroom's curriculum," (Kozikowski 38).

Kozikowski discussed some of the more intangible benefits of RT, including increased confidence, leadership opportunities, teamwork, and an appreciation for the joys of reading. She also outlined the program she uses with students: three one-hour workshops on three consecutive days. On the first day students choose a small group RT and get their parts in the all-inclusive one. On the second day they practice performing and learn tricks such as projecting, holding their scripts, and facing out. The third session is the performance for parents and friends. There are two processes for adapting a book into a RT script. Either students can be guided to write their own, or prewritten scripts can be used. While experts tend to advocate involving students in all aspects of the process, the author uses already written scripts as she works out of a public library and would need a much larger time investment from students if they were to write their own. She ends by recommending several websites that provide free RT scripts for teachers to download and numerous books and poetry collections that are easy to adapt.

An article from New Zealand, by Don Long and Meryl-Lynn Pluck, also treats on Readers' Theater as potential by which to improve reading skills. Specifically, they link RT to growth in fluency. “It is widely regarded that reading fluency is a key reading proficiency and lack of it is a significant contributor to children's reading difficulties…” (Long and Pluck). The authors state that fluency often gets the least direct attention in elementary classrooms. This article went to press ten years ago, and in the intervening time instruction has changed somewhat. It is generally agreed that repeated readings are among the best ways to build students' fluency. However, as fluency has become of more interest to educators and policy makers over the last decade, it had come to mean almost exclusively speed. “Fluency” instruction is often separate from the rest of the reading instruction and is treated as training for an oral reading race. Students work to improve their reading rate and often learn to read very quickly in an expressionless robotic manner (Rasinski 2-3). This type of program neglects one of the most important and variable aspects of fluency: prosody, commonly referred to as “reading with expression”

(Rasinski 4). Prosody includes how a reader changes the pitch, speed, and volume of his or her voice as well as how he or she responds to punctuation in a text. It invests a text with more meaning than can be gleaned from the words alone.

Long and Pluck ask ‘how can we get students to read a passage enough times that they become fluent at it?’ They answer with RT. Specifically, students need an authentic reason to read a text repeatedly if they are going to develop well-rounded reading fluency. The knowledge that they will be presenting their readings for an audience is enough to motivate most students to work hard and strive for truly fluent reading.

Standards in Language and Fine Arts

Common Core Creation and Misconceptions

The process of developing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) began in 2009 by a coalition of state leaders including members of the National Governor's Association and state Superintendents of Education. State standards for education were not new; many states began implementing standards nearly 20 years before CCSS in the early 1990's. However, as time went on it began to be clear that these independently developed standards presented a very murky picture of education in the United States. What one state recognized as "proficient" might have been a much lower academic standard than another state's "proficient" and at the same time a more rigorous standard than a third state (National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices (NGACBP), "Development Process"). It is important to note that the federal government was not involved in the design of the standards.

This dynamic points to one of the most common misconceptions about CCSS. Many people believe that the Common Core represents the "lowest common denominator" of already existing educational standards. In fact, the opposite is true. The development committee worked to base the standards on the most academically challenging and progressive state standards; in addition, they consulted international standards and guidelines from educationally successful counties. Consequently, all states that have adopted the CCSS have either approximately maintained their level of academic rigor or raised it to new levels (NGACBP "Myths vs. Facts").

Another issue some of the public, and some teachers, take with CCSS is that they believe the standards specifically dictate the material that will be taught in classrooms. This is not true. While the CCSS do provide a list of example texts for each grade level they merely provide suggestions and guidance to teachers. "The exemplars of high-quality texts at each grade level provide a rich set of possibilities and have been very well received. This provides a reference point for teachers when selecting their texts, along with the flexibility to make their own decisions about what texts to use" (NGACBP "Myths vs. Facts"). The standards only state what the end outcome must be: the knowledge and skills learned. In other words, the CCSS shows what the destination must be which is to be reached through education, but allow individual school districts and teachers to determine the path their students will take to get there. It is the intent of CCSS that teachers are left with the freedom to use whatever methods and curriculum they believe will be most effective with their students (NGACBP "Myths vs. Facts").

The CCSS are divided into two categories: College and Career Readiness Standards and the K-12 Academic Standards. The College and Career standards were written first as the stated expectations for what students should be able to accomplish upon graduation when they must take their place in the adult world. The development team then worked backwards to create grade level standards that would build to the final goal. As an example, take CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3 (English Language Arts & Literacy, College and Career Readiness, Reading Standard 3): "Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text." The kindergarten standard for this strand is "With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story." By the end of fourth grade students are expected to be able to "Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions)." The standards begin by simply asking students to identify these story elements and steadily build on their skills until graduation when *analysis* should be possible. This structure exists for each and every one of the English Language Arts and Mathematics standards of the Common Core (NGACBP "English Language Arts Standards").

Montana Theater Standards

While currently, CCSS only exist in English Language Arts and Mathematics, there are recommended standards published at the state and national levels for all subjects. Currently, Montana is revising the state standards for physical education, the arts (music, dance, theater, visual art, and media arts), and science, in other words all of the content not dealt with under the banner of CCSS. The standards published at present were last revised in 2000. However, a draft of the proposed arts standards, drawn up in February of this year (2016) is available on the Montana Office of Public Instruction website. The proposed standards closely follow the National Core Arts Standards published by the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education in 2014 (Montana OPI "Content Standards Revision").

Current Montana arts standards treat modes of art (dance, music, theatre, visual arts) through six connected content standards that include goals such as "Students create, perform/exhibit, and respond in the Arts," (Standard 1) and "Students analyze characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others," (Standard 4). They also only supply benchmarks for the ends of 4th, 8th, and 12th grades, not for every year like CCSS. Each standard does, however, have an average of five subtopics that are addressed within the broader category. For example, under Standard 1 by the end of fourth grade students will: "1. identify their own ideas and images based on themes, symbols, events and personal experiences, 2. Use a variety of materials and sources to experiment with an art form, 3. Present their own work and works of others, 4. Collaborate with others in the creative process, 5. Describe how a variety of materials, techniques and processes cause different responses," (Montana OPI "Montana Standards for Arts").

The national standards, and subsequently the new (proposed) Montana standards, divide the arts to be dealt with individually through 11 anchor standards. The new Montana standards are exactly the same as the national standards in the wording of the anchor standard with the exception of number eleven which adds a bit about Native American arts. Standard 1 is “Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work,” It goes on to describe what students in kindergarten, first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth-eight, and ninth through twelfth grades should be to do. In precisely worded guidelines, these standards explain all the ways students should be able to relate to and participate in drama, as well as other art mediums in other standards documents (*National Core Arts Standards*).

The fact that there are arts standards, and specifically theater standards, may come as a surprise to many people. The arts are generally not emphasized in our school system; the main reason behind this lack of emphasis is that mandated standardized tests are required only in reading and math. Consequently, these subjects get the most attention and others receive less instructional time. However, students still need to develop skills and gain content knowledge in subject areas such as science and social studies, both as a foundation for later academics (potential science fields) and as useful life skills necessary to be productive and informed adults. It remains, then, that the only plausible way for this to happen in the current educational climate is through the integration of two or more subject areas into a single lesson that works toward the goals of the tested standards.

As the research presented in the review of literature shows, theater and drama can be a very effective way to support student growth in many of the key domains of English Language Arts. By using theater activities to support student achievement, teachers are not only helping students reach one set of academic standards, but two. Additionally, many of the abilities called for by CCSS can be easily demonstrated and practiced in dramatic contexts, for example acting or role-playing characters may serve as a means of description as opposed to a traditional written form.

Unfortunately, there is not a wealth of past experience to guide today's teachers in the use of classroom drama. Few teachers have personal experience, whether from their own school days or teacher education programs, and the common basal readers for Language Arts tend to supply mostly traditional academic structures. Consequently, this makes many ordinary classroom teachers unwilling to attempt to implement drama into their daily lessons. It is never comfortable for teachers to be faced with subjects that they do not feel are their strong suit and due to a lack of training, drama is a weak subject for many teachers. Theater and drama may seem even more intimidating than other things since there is so much room for interpretation and artistic expression; there are not only one or two right ways to "do" drama. There are as many variations as there are teachers and actors.

As numerous authors, including Adomat, Heath and Brice, Podlozny, Rieg and Paquette, and Rose, have shown drama integration to be widely beneficial for communication arts growth and skills acquisition. The skills and abilities developed by participation in drama are equally applicable to a variety of other academic domains from reading to social studies. Drama activities also provide an engaging way to introduce concepts or have students practice specific skills. The plentiful evidence presented in this review clearly shows the benefits of utilizing drama in the elementary classroom.

Drama Integration Lessons and Activities

Up to this point, it has been demonstrated that drama integration can improve students' academic achievement in numerous subsections of the communication arts. In the following pages fifteen activities and lesson starters are outlined to provide teachers with a starting place for drama integration. They are arranged alphabetically by age range, and each activity includes the CCSS for Reading-Language Arts which are addressed.

K- 2 Drama Integration Activities

Caps for Sale
Face Pass
Greetings
Magic Pen
Readers' Theater
Tour Guide

All Ages Drama Integration Activities

Character Call
Guided Visualization
Hot Seating

3-5 Drama Integration Activities

Compare and Contrast Robin Hood
Gibberish Interpreter
Make-A-Monologue
Puppet Show
Self-Scripted Readers' Theater
Speaking Non-sense

K-2 .... Caps For Sale (Reenactment)

By: Katie Dawson
From: Drama Based Instruction Network

This activity was designed for use with the story *Caps for Sale* by Esphyr Slobodkina. However, this activity could be easily adapted for any similarly simply plotted story. Before beginning the action of this activity share the story of *Caps for Sale* by reading aloud and having students follow along if there are enough copies available.

1. Review the story. Make a list of the characters in the story on the board or overhead. Review the events at the beginning, middle, and end of the story. Discuss the problem and the solution of the story.

2. End discussion with a statement similar to: "So it sounds like the cap played a very important role in this story, because (as you said) the cap was what the monkey took from the seller. And, the seller was able to trick the monkeys by pretending to throw down his cap. Let’s take some time now to make this very important prop or object from the story."

3. Hat making: Have students move to their desks and make simple cone hats out of paper. Have all students decorate their hat with markers or crayons. Hats should be very easy to cut out and tape together; creating the hats is not the goal of the lesson.

4. Role play: Split the group into two. Have half the group put their hats away and stand on chairs; they are the monkeys. Have the other half of the group keep their hat on, they are the peddler. Teacher rereads story while all students act out the action. All peddlers and all monkeys do their action at the same time. Afterwards, switch roles and act out the story for a second time allowing each student to try out the other role.

5. Put students into partners to reflect on the activity and the feelings of the monkey and peddler. How did the peddlers solve their problem?

CCSS: (The standards presented here are at the first grade level. For other specific examples please refer to the same strand at other grade levels.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.9
Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.5
Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.1.4.A
Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

K-2* **Face Pass (with feeling cards)**

By: Adapted from Laneer High School
From: Drama Based Instruction Network

1. Have students form a sitting circle in the center of the room. Introduce the activity Face Pass. Hold up a card to demonstrate: on each card is a different feeling that someone might have. I will hold up a feeling card and we will read it together. Then, I will start by showing that feeling to the person sitting on my right using only my face. That person will turn to his or her right and make a face and so on. Each person in the circle will get to practice making the facial expression for each feeling.

2. Tell students: We will go all the way around the circle for each feeling: sad, happy, excited, angry, and confused. You each will only get three seconds so make sure you are ready before it's your turn.

3. Discuss how the faces we saw for different emotions looked different. Examples: There wasn't any confusion about what emotion we were showing was there? What did we just do? We just used our faces in order to show with our bodies a certain feeling. When we are reading stories though we don't get to use our faces, only our voices. What are some ways that we might show how we feel by using our voices?" Allow for student response.

4. Repeat game adding voices to help portray emotion. This time you will say the word "Hey" to the person to your right using your voice to show them how you feel. "Are there any questions? Discuss after finishing: What did you notice about this activity compared to when we just did facial expressions? How might your voice tell someone how you are feeling?"

CCSS: (The standards presented here are at the first grade level. For other specific examples please refer to the same strand at other grade levels.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.1.4.B
Read grade-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.

*This game can be played by all ages

K-2 ....Greetings

By: Julie Meighan
From: Drama Start

Before beginning this game make sure students understand the basic rules of meeting new people and the situations in which they might use these skills.

1. Have the students stand up and walk around the room in different directions, this can be described as "wandering". They have one minute to shake everyone hands and say "Hello, my name is …. Pleased to meet you."

2. After students have played the basic version of this game add another level. When they have greeted everyone in the room, they must continue the process by greeting everyone in different scenarios. The teacher calls out the different scenarios.
   Examples of the different scenarios:
   Greet everyone as if you haven't seen them for a whole year; Greet everyone as if they owe you money (or borrowed a toy and haven't given it back yet); Greet everyone as if they have bad breath; Greet everyone as if you love them very much; Greet everyone as if you don't like them; Greet everyone as if you are suspicious of them; Greet everyone as if you are frightened of them.

3. After the activity is finished, gather students to discuss how their voices and actions changed when they greeted people in different categories. Talk about how the things they noticed could be applied to reading.

CCSS: (The standards presented here are at the first grade level. For other specific examples please refer to the same strand at other grade levels.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.1.4
Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.1.4.B
Read grade-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.6
Produce complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.1.4.A
Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.1.1
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

K-2 .... Magic Pen

By: Mark Warner
From: http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/speaking-and-listening

This activity involves the whole class creating a story together. The story is not written down, and is made up spontaneously by individuals in the class.

1. Find a suitable pen (or other object) which can be passed around the classroom easily. Tell the children that the pen/object which you are holding up is M A G I C because people who hold it can tell wonderful stories.

2. Explain that no one is allowed to talk unless he or she is holding the pen (that includes the teacher!). State a signal for passing the pen or set a timer.

3. Begin telling a story. When you have finished the introduction, give the pen to another child (preferably a more confident one if this is the first time you have tried this activity with the class) and ask them to continue the story for a few sentences.

CCSS: (The standards presented here are at the first grade level. For other specific examples please refer to the same strand at other grade levels.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.3

Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.3

Write [tell] narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1

Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about *grade 1 topics and texts* with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1A

Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1B

Build on others' talk in conversations by responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges.

K-2 .... Reader's Theater

By: Emma Russell
From: Adapted from, Marybeth Kozikowski, "Take It To The Stage"

This activity is very similar to the activity **Self-Scripted Reader's Theater** in the 3-5 grade range.

1. Choose an appropriate readers' theater script. There may be simple scripts included with your reading basal or you can find some on the internet at sites such as: www.readerstheatredigest.com or www.readerstheatre.com.

2. Divide students into groups and assign each group a script at an appropriate level, and assign parts.

3. Discuss with students how they can change their voices to help them tell the story.

4. Give students 20-30 minutes to practice their scenes, making sure to circulate and give feedback to the groups. Discuss appropriate performance and audience roles including when to clap and when to stay quiet, how to hold the script and how to face the audience.

CCSS: (The standards presented here are at the first grade level. For other specific examples please refer to the same strand at other grade levels.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.4
Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.6
Identify who is telling the story at various points in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.10
With prompting and support, read prose and poetry of appropriate complexity for grade 1.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.10
With prompting and support, read prose and poetry of appropriate complexity for grade 1.

K-2 .... Tour Guide

By: Beat by Beat Press
From: bbbpress.com

1. Pair students and assign one partner "A" and one partner "B".

2. Have everyone close their eyes and think of a physical place (Playground, Bedroom, Kitchen, Classroom, Attic, Grandparents' house, etc.) that is very special to them. Tell them to picture their place in great detail. Imagine the colors, every object in the space, the lighting, and the colors of the walls.

3. After a few moments, have everyone open their eyes. Partner "A" will lead Partner "B" on a 2-minute guided tour of their special place, sitting on the floor facing each other, and describing the physical details of their memory in absolute detail.

4. Partner "B" can ask questions, and the guide may respond briefly. The focus should be on the tour itself.

5. After 2 minutes have them switch roles and now Partner "B" will lead the tour of his or her special place.

CCSS: (The standards presented here are at the first grade level. For other specific examples please refer to the same strand at other grade levels.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1
Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.3
Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.4
Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1.A
Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1.C
Ask questions to clear up any confusion about the topics and texts under discussion.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.4
Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.

All Ages ....Character Call

By: Emma Russell
From: Creative Dramatics THT 289, Prof. Kimberly Shire

1. This activity is used to check comprehension and student engagement during reading. After students have been introduced to all the characters in a story, have them stop reading and put their books down. Explain that you are going to call out a character's name and then count down from three. When you say "go" students will freeze in a position they think that character might hold.

2. For instance, if the class is reading *Jack and the Beanstalk* you would call "Jack, 3, 2, 1, go!" At that moment all students will stand and freeze in position. You should notice a variety of poses.

3. Spend a minute or two narrating what you see without passing judgement on it. Ex: "I see students at different levels, I see arms out stretched, and I see hands clenched." After about 30 seconds have students relax and continue reading.

4. Repeat this procedure several times throughout the reading, specifically each time character development takes place. At the end of the activity, discuss with students how the characters changed over time.

CCSS: (The standards presented here are at the third grade level. For other specific examples please refer to the same strand at other grade levels.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3
Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.6
Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.1.B
Provide reasons that support the opinion.

All Ages .... Guided Visualization

By: Emma Russell
From: Creative Dramatics THT 289, Prof. Kimberly Shire

This activity is very easy to adapt to any subject matter or situation. It is very useful for helping students really become aware of and invested in the setting of a piece of fiction or a historical text. The particular narration presented here was meant to introduce a science text about the planets.

1. When students come into class the lights should be off and the shades closed.

2. Instruct them to find their own space on the floor, and lie down and close their eyes. Begin narrating the following scene to the class. Make sure to provide long enough pauses for students to fully process each question before continuing.

3. Imagine you are lying in your backyard at night. Look up at the sky. Imagine that for some reason the street lights have all gone out so it is very dark out. What do you see? Are there stars? Are there clouds? A gentle breeze begins to blow and clears all the clouds out of your imaginary sky. Now look at the stars. Notice the different sizes, are some stars a different color? How do they look different from each other? Imagine if you could fly up to space and look around. Do you think that stars are the only thing you would see? Are there other things in space?

4. Give students a minute to finish their visualization, and then have them move to a circle at carpet for the next activity.

CCSS: (The standards presented here are at the third grade level. For other specific examples please refer to the same strand at other grade levels.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.3

Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.2

Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

All Ages .... Hot Seating

By: Emma Russell
From: Adapted from *Dramatic Learning in the Primary School*.

1. After having read a story or text with students, discuss each character in the story will have different thoughts and feelings about the events. Ask how we might be able to learn more about each character. Say, wouldn't it be neat if So-and-so was here and we could talk to them?
2. Pick up a prop (a hat of some sort always works well), turn around and introduce yourself as one of the characters. Invite students to ask you questions.
3. After you have answered three questions "in-role" (as the character) take off the hat and call on a student to take over. Have students switch every 3-5 questions. Students may re-ask questions to a new actor and get a different perspective.

CCSS: (The standards presented here are at the third grade level. For other specific examples please refer to the same strand at other grade levels.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1
Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3
Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.6
Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1.C
Ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.3
Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.6
Speak in complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.3.1
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

3-5 .... Compare and Contrast Robin Hood

By: Emma Russell
From: Adapted from Great Minds dot Net

This is only one example of this type of activity; it can easily be adapted to any story that already exists in two mediums. For example, picture book and movie or a short novel and play script are combinations that would work.

1. Students are going to compare and contrast the portrayal of Robin Hood and the other characters in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* by Marcia Williams and in Disney's *Robin Hood*. Make sure that students are familiar with the concept and goals of compare and contrast.

2. Have students read the story in partners and make notes each character. Periodically use the activity described in **Character Call** to check progress.

3. Show a clip from the animated movie that corresponds with part of what they read. Once again, (working in the same partners) students will make lists of character traits for each character that appears.

4. Students will compare their lists looking for similarities and differences in how each character was portrayed. Each group of partners will chose one character and each partner will present one of the interpretations of that character to the class.

CCSS: (The standards presented here are at the fourth grade level. For other specific examples please refer to the same strand at other grade levels.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3
Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7
Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.B
Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 4 topics and texts*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

3-5 ....Gibberish Interpreter

By: Beat by Beat Press
From: Beat by Beat Press dot Com

1. If you haven't already, introduce your students to the idea of speaking in "Gibberish". (Gibberish means speaking with silly sounds that don't mean anything, but still communicate an intention and meaning.) A good way to warm up the class to this idea is with a simple call and response. Speak a phrase in gibberish, and have the kids repeat it. Try to use gestures and demonstrate different emotions and styles.

2. Ask two students to take the stage. Begin with students who are outgoing and confident.

3. One will speak gibberish, and the other will translate the gibberish into English.

4. Give the gibberish student a specific situation to talk about, or take suggestions from the class. (i.e. You have just come back from a walk on Jupiter, and you are telling us, a crowd of reporters, all about it.) You may also have the gibberish student retell the week's reading story or explain how to write a narrative, so the activity can also work to reinforce content.

5. The gibberish speaker should speak only one line at a time, using as many over exaggerated actions and gestures as he/she can. Then the interpreter will mimic the motions and translate the phrase into English. If the gibberish speaker accidentally says a real word, he or she becomes the translator and a new gibberish speaker comes to the front. Allow students to speak for a maximum to 2 minutes before rotating even if no mistakes were made.

NOTE: Encourage the gibberish speaker to be very specific in his/her intention and actions. Encourage the interpreter to think very carefully about trying to make the gibberish make sense.

CCSS: (The standards presented here are at the fourth grade level. For other specific examples please refer to the same strand at other grade levels.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1.B
Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.2
Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.3
Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

3-5 ....Make-a-Monologue

By: Emma Russell
From: Emma Russell

This activity is best suited for use with a chapter book or series. It is important for students to really have the chance to get to know the characters they are writing as.

1. Have each student select a character from the book they are reading. If you prefer, you may choose for them. It does not matter if it is a major character or a smaller one; the students will be able to use their imagination.

2. Talk to students about how sometimes people think things they don't say. Discuss some examples. Explain that they are going to write what their chosen character is thinking. While this is a great time to use imagination, it cannot be completely made up; everything they write must be based in the story. This is called a monologue and should be close to a page of writing.

3. Allow students plenty of work time. As they work, help them by pointing out places in the story they could look to for advice, and reminding them to write in first person.

4. Depending on your time constraints, students may perform their monologues memorized or by reading them; either way students should get practice time in class before they perform.

CCSS: (The standards presented here are at the fourth grade level. For other specific examples please refer to the same strand at other grade levels.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1
Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.4.4.B
Read grade-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.B

Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situation

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.1
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

3-5 ....Puppet Show

By: Emma Russell
From: inspired by Minds in Bloom

For this activity students may use premade puppets, create their own from paper, socks, etc. or use stuffed animals or dolls instead. This activity can also be used to present information on a non-fiction topic or content area information.

1. Divide students into groups of four. Assign each group a short story all students are familiar with, or a section of a longer story the class has been studying. Establish what students may use to create props and how much room they will have to present their show.

2. Allow students plenty of work time. This will be at least 20 minutes, but two or more sessions of 15 minutes each would likely be necessary. During this process students will be required to write a script and practice their show until it runs smoothly. Scripts do not need to be memorized.

3. Students will perform their shows for the rest of the class. If they are sections of the same story, have students present in order.

4. After each presentation, call on two students to give the performers a complement, and one to ask a question. Give the performers the opportunity to ask a question. Then, give them a suggestion of how they might improve their performance next time, (for more details on this method of feedback see Liz Lerman's *Critical Response Process*).

CCSS: (The standards presented here are at the fourth grade level. For other specific examples please refer to the same strand at other grade levels.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7
Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.3
Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.4.4
Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.B
Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

3-5 .... Self-Scripted Readers' Theater

By: Emma Russell
From: Adapted from, Marybeth Kozikowski, "Take It To The Stage"

Having students write their own RT scripts allows students to be actively involved in the learning process; they have more opportunities to engage communication arts skills.

1. Decide whether you want multiple interpretations of one story if you want each group to adapt a different book. Choose short stories for students to work with accordingly. Make sure the books chosen have 3-4 characters (narrator can be a character) and relatively simple setting and plot. Decide how students will be assigned a group and a story and whether or not they can choose roles for themselves or if they will be assigned ahead of time as well.

2. Students will begin by reading their story and writing short descriptions of each character. These can include physical as well as personality traits.

3. Next students will re-read the story and carefully note the plot points they want their script to include. Each of these will become a scene so there should be no more than 5.

4. Students will create tableaus (still scenes) of each of their plot points. Give students 1-2 minutes to design each tableau and have all the groups practice each of their scenes concurrently several times.

5. Once students have a firm understanding of who their characters are and what they are going to be doing, they may begin the process of script writing. Depending on the age and ability level of your students this will take varying lengths of time. Be very careful not to rush students, encourage those who finish early to go back and re-read their script and their story to make sure it really says what they need it to say.

6. At a later date, provide students ample opportunity to practice their scenes. Make sure to give positive constructive feedback during practice: don't hold the paper in front of one's face, look at the audience as much as possible, keep hands out of pockets, speak more slowly than you think you need to, and keep the emotion of your character in mind are all good pieces of advice.

7. Each group will perform their scenes for the rest of the class and any additional audience you feel like inviting: parents, other students, or community.

See CCSS on next page

CCSS: (The standards presented here are at the fourth grade level. For other specific examples please refer to the same strand at other grade levels.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3

Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7
Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.4.4.B
Read grade-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.

3-5 ....Speaking Non-Sense

By: Kelsey
From: http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/speaking-and-listening

Public Speaking is a critical part of our children's education. So why not make it fun, and a little interesting, too!

This game, called "Speaking Non-Sense," is a great way to get kids' bad speaking habits out of the way, and good ones in!

1. Choose a student.
2. Give him or her a topic: It can be anything from Spam to the Holocaust. Things that you are learning about work great as topics.
3. The student must talk for 2 minutes straight about their topic. They cannot say "Um", etc. or use the word "and" more than twice. They must also keep eye contact with the audience at all times and use all public speaking skills.
4. The winner or winners are those who can complete this task using all the rules.

CCSS (The standards presented here are at the fourth grade level. For other specific examples please refer to the same strand at other grade levels.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1.B
Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.4
Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.1
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.3.A
Choose words and phrases to convey ideas precisely.

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