

Elements of Theatre: Language & Text

(Period 5)

Facilitator: Seth H. Olson

Office: Black Box Office

Email Address: Seth.Olson@vansd.org

Office Phone: (360) 313-4600

Office Hours: Mon & Thurs 8:30 – 9:30AM; Tues & Wed 4:05 – 5:00PM; Enrichment A

Course Description:

Students in Language & Text will become more sophisticated viewers and creators of theatre works. They will be able to compare and demonstrate various contemporary and classical acting techniques and place work and events in history (time) and locale (place). Acting techniques will include breath support, diction, emphasis, and inflection, as well as movement that supports consistent characters in a variety of performance spaces. Students will apply elements of production, design, and script analysis toward formal and informal presentations. Through creating, performing, analyzing, and critiquing dramatic performances, students will learn how representative dramatic texts and performances reflect and affect life.

Educational Goal:

Elements of Theatre: Language & Text expands the aspects of performance from previous levels, exploring ways to create characters who are reflections of real life in a time of conflict. We will be integrating the National Theatre Standards from the American Alliance for Theatre Education:

- ◆ **Analyzing Scripts** for performance, production, and design elements, as well as reading and analyzing scripts as an outside assignment (Content Standard #1);
- ◆ Using **Movement, Voice, and Acting** skills to play the action of a scene, in the manner of the character, within the given circumstances (Content Standard #2);
- ◆ Working as an **Ensemble** in daily warm-ups, active listening, and active engagement, using self-initiative to return to a focused neutral (Content Standard #2);
- ◆ Participating in supportive **Production** roles (Content Standards #3, #4, and #5); and
- ◆ **Reflecting** on activities, performances, and effective choices (Content Standard #7);
- ◆ Studying **Theatre History** with a focus on classical texts (Content Standard #8);
- ◆ Participating in the Theatre Showcase and Informance on **Thursday, January 30th, 2014**; and our Final Exhibition on **Wednesday, June 11th, 2014**.

Etiquette & Attire:

Students need to **come to class dressed** in comfortable clothing which allows for free and active movement. Short skirts, flip flops, heels, jeans, and any other clothing that limits movement are prohibited. Accessories which pose a safety hazard, restrict movement, or are distracting will need to be removed for the duration of class. No hats or headwear, and long hair needs to be secured away from the face. Food, drinks, and gum are not allowed in the Black Box: No exceptions. Water, however, is strongly encouraged.

If “performance” clothing is required, students need to be prepared with neutral dress pants or skirts, a shirt or blouse, and hard soled shoes (dress shoes for boys; low thick heels for girls). Materials may be obtained from the costume shop with permission.

Course Outline: A Tentative Map

Semester 1

Unit I: Basics Boot Camp (5 weeks)

- What do you want, what's in your way, and how are you going to get it?
- How do I implement my voice and body to achieve a goal?
- How do I support the ensemble and take appropriate performance risks?

Unit II: Realism & Plays (3 weeks)

- What is Realism as a movement in theatre?
- How are plays constructed to tell a story or represent an idea?

Unit III: *Bus Stop* (6 weeks)

- How do I read in a Realistic play?
- How do I act in a Realistic play?

Unit IV: Introduction to Heightened Language (3 weeks)

- How does heightened language differ from Realistic language?
- How do I prepare a Greek or Medieval piece of text?

Semester 2

Unit I: Poetry, Prose & Shakespeare (4 weeks)

- Who was Shakespeare?
- How does Shakespearean text differ from Realistic text?

Unit II: *Much Ado About Nothing* (6 weeks)

- How do I read a Shakespearean play?
- How do I act in a Shakespearean play?

Unit III: Scene Work (4 weeks)

- How do I produce a scene for presentation?
- How do Moliere and/or Wilde differ from Shakespeare?

Unit IV: Final Exhibition (4 weeks)

- How do I produce an evening of theatre?
- What have I learned from class this year?

Evaluation of Student Achievement:

I grade to let you know: (1) how well students are performing on specific assignments; and (2) how well students have performed on learning goals/standards throughout the semester/year. Any grade given to a student is a teacher judgment based on a variety of different sorts of evidence.

Assignments will fall into one of four categories, each contributing to a percentage of the student's overall grade:

1. 10% - Class Work (i.e. coming to class dressed down and focused)
2. 30% - Traditional Assessment (i.e. tests, quizzes, etc.)

3. 30% - Performance Assessment (larger, long-term, collaborative projects)
4. 30% - Portfolio (reflections at the end of performances and the semester)

All assignments, regardless of the category, will be assessed using a four-point assessment tool called a rubric. The baseline for the rubric is a **3**, where a student has **achieved** the expectations of the assignment. Students who **surpass** expectations will receive a “grade” of **4**. Students who are **developing** the skills or knowledge assessed on an assignment will receive a **2**. Finally, students who **attempt** to use the skills or knowledge but are not as successful will receive a **1**. Assignments **not turned in** will be scored as **0**.

Consequently, I use a four-point grading scale to determine the overall letter grade (i.e. A, B, C, etc.) for each semester. The breakdown of grades and percentages is as follows:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent Range</u>
A	100.0 - 92.51%
A -	92.50 - 85.91%
B +	85.90 - 77.51%
B	77.50 - 70.01%
B -	70.00 - 62.51%

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent Range</u>
C +	62.50 - 55.01%
C	55.00 - 47.51%
C -	47.50 - 40.01%
D +	40.00 - 32.51%
D	32.50 - 25.00%
F	24.99 - 0.00%

This grading scale is the standard for the building and is used by many of the high school and middle school teachers at VSAA.

- **Extra credit is not an option**, BUT students are encouraged to reattempt a project for a new grade. Unacceptable or potentially failing work may be resubmitted by the end of the particular quarter in which it was assigned.
 - **First Quarter:** September 2 through November 5, 2015
 - **Second Quarter:** November 6, 2015 through January 28, 2016
 - **Third Quarter:** February 1 through April 1, 2016
 - **Fourth Quarter:** April 11 through June 15, 2016
- **Late work:** Late work will not be given full credit; however, it will be accepted only through the end of the particular quarter in which it was assigned. (See above)
- **If you know you will not be able to complete an assignment on time, speak with me in advance, not the day it is due! Together we will work out a plan.** Homework is due promptly at the beginning of class.
- **Our class is part of a pilot group implementing Standards-Based Grading in our arts disciplines. Standards-Based Grading involves reporting what a student should know and be able to do at the completion of a course. While this won't change the activities in class, it will alter what you see in the online grade book. This change will begin during the second quarter of the first semester.**

Attendance and Participation:

Every student needs to be in class on time every day. If you have a parent-excused absence, get information about class assignments and make up the work within the number of days you were absent. Be here consistently, because your classmates and I truly value your presence in our Focus Circle. Theatre is a collaborative art form, and rehearsal becomes difficult when you are not there!

Full participation and engagement in ALL work in class is expected. Students will be graded down for lack of preparation, non-participation, and excessive tardiness. Active engagement is a requirement for moving on to Performance Ensemble. Participation includes, but is not limited to: inquiring, discussing, creating, listening, reflecting, critiquing, and making connections. You will work together with various groups and with various grade levels.

Showcase/Informance & Final Exhibition:

All students are required to participate in our morning Theatre Showcase and evening Theatre Informance on **Thursday, January 28th**. Students will present work from class and articulate what they have learned and how they have grown.

To demonstrate knowledge and skills learned throughout the year, students will present work from class in front of a live audience in a Final Exhibition. Work may come from any of the activities explored throughout the year.

Students will present their work for an audience on **Wednesday, June 8th** during class and after school. They will develop their character and scene as a complete work within itself (not as part of the play as a whole). They will also gather and reflect on evidence of their thinking and rehearsal in their acting journal.

The performance will be assessed on the work as an ensemble, the effectiveness of character choices, and the use of technical elements to support the scene. The portfolio must display evidence of thought, knowledge of classical text, and reflections of growth throughout the process.

Acting Journal:

Reflection is a large part of being an actor. Students are required to keep a composition book which will function as an Actor's Journal. Students should bring the journal to class EVERY DAY and keep EVERYTHING from notes to reflections to scripts in the journal. Journals will be submitted at the end of each quarter for grading. Journals will be evaluated on completion, depth of reflection, and organization.

Tech Hours:

As members of upper level theatre class, you are expected to clock tech hours EACH semester. If this is your first year of an Elements class, you need **5 hours**; if it's your second or third, you need **10 hours**. Hours can be obtained through a variety of experiences: tech club, costume club, Children's Theatre, or ushering VSAA performances. Your tech hours will be part of your grade, and you have until the end of the semester to submit them.

Tech hours may be obtained through outside of school productions. If you help with lights or sound for your church or a band or another theatre company, those will work! Ushering for any other group, besides VSAA, will not count. If you have an experience you think might work, but you're not entirely sure, please see me for more information.

Play Reading Journal:

Students will be expected to read plays EACH semester. To increase your exposure to theatrical work, you must select plays that you have not read before or that are not required reading for another class, and you must complete the entry using the template provided by Mr. Olson. These journal entries should be typed and submitted **separately** from their Acting Journal. More information will be provided in October.

My Educational Philosophy:

My philosophy of teaching is based on the premise that I am a teacher first and everything else (actor, vocalist, director, etc.) second. Further, I believe successful teaching occurs when students become self-empowered learners, capable of extending their learning far beyond where my own education has thus far taken me. I view all my roles—artist, scholar, citizen—as contributing to my effectiveness as a teacher. I have added significantly to my pedagogy since my arrival at VSAA, and my interests have deepened as I see rich connections between collaborative and interdisciplinary learning, the twin tenets of our school.

I look for students to participate as knowledgeable, collaborative, reflective, creative, and critical members of our community. Fortunately, theatre classes are the perfect setting for meeting these expectations. I encourage classroom discussion, fostering a respect for other viewpoints. I believe teaching must involve purposeful activities, moving away from memorization and recitation towards knowledge that goes beyond superficial understanding. I believe students learn best through integration, collaboration, and inquiry. I believe in order for theatre classrooms to be meaningful and purposeful, instruction must incorporate a wide range of instructional tools: books, magazines, newspapers, timelines, internet sites, and other media. Theatre teachers have so much information to convey and need many options for teaching it.

Theatre class should be a place where students make contact with live theatre. As all cultures have developed some form of theatrical express, the study of theatre offers fertile ground for exploring other times, ethnic groups, and cultural perspectives. Skills and concepts taught in theatre classes have power and application across the curriculum and throughout our lives. Even if you're never on stage, the opportunities to learn through theatre are immeasurable.

Learning is not as a passive process in which students receive information and grades. I believe in mutual responsibility and learning as a two-way street. I must come prepared to offer them the tools of learning; they must come prepared to use them. I believe I bring excitement and a positive attitude about teaching and learning to each class. I enter the room prepared to work my best to stimulate interest in and thinking about my subject matter. I expect my students to enter each class prepared and willing to be actively engaged with me, other students, and the material. Together we can achieve more than working separately.