A handbook for using creative drama and readers theatre concepts to better prepare second graders for the California Standards Test in English Language Arts

Pilar Alvarez

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A HANDBOOK FOR USING CREATIVE DRAMA AND READERS THEATRE CONCEPTS TO BETTER PREPARE SECOND GRADERS FOR THE CALIFORNIA STANDARDS TEST IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts in Theatre Arts

by
Pilar Alvarez
December 2011
A HANDBOOK FOR USING CREATIVE DRAMA AND READERS THEATRE

CONCEPTS TO BETTER PREPARE SECOND GRADERS FOR

THE CALIFORNIA STANDARDS TEST IN

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

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December 2011

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ABSTRACT

For eleven years the majority of Los Angeles Public School (LAPS) Second Graders have been testing at a Basic, Below, or Far below basic level on the California Standards Test (CST) in English Language Arts (ELA). These low-test results suggest that these students have a limited understanding of the California ELA Content Standards.

I have developed a handbook for educators that uses creative drama, readers theatre and theatre arts concepts to better prepare LAPS Second Graders in the area of English Language Arts. This handbook was first inspired by my work as a literacy and drama teacher supporting Second Graders who are struggling readers. I drew on a number of sources in developing this handbook, including coursework and workshops in the area of literacy education and theatre. I also reviewed literature focused on the connection between theatre education and literacy development. I carefully examined the ELA content standards so that they served as a basis for the many activities included in this handbook. Through my research and experience with youngsters, I learned how children’s reading comprehension improved through the process of analyzing scripts while preparing for readers theatre
performances. In order to successfully prepare participants for a performance the handbook includes significant time allotted toward performance skills and character development. My readings on theatre as a tool for teaching ELA concepts led me to creative drama, a theatre form that has proved successful in teaching word recognition and vocabulary building through descriptive character development.

Based on my experiences as an educator, my extensive research on creative drama, readers theatre and the ELA Standards, I have no doubt that this project will, if implemented, enhance participants' ELA.
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

ABSTRACT ............................................................. iii

CHAPTER ONE: THE PROJECT PROPOSAL

Introduction to the California Standards Test and the Standards Testing and Reporting Program. .................. 1

Statement of the Problem ........................................... 2

Purpose of the Project ............................................... 4

Description of the Project .......................................... 5

Significance of the Project .......................................... 6

Limitations of the Project ........................................... 6

Review of Related Literature ....................................... 7

Methodology .................................................................... 13

Conclusion ....................................................................... 17

APPENDIX A: THE HANDBOOK ........................................ 22

APPENDIX B: RECOMMENDED TEXTS ............................... 92

REFERENCES .................................................................. 109
CHAPTER ONE

THE PROJECT PROPOSAL

Introduction to the California Standards Test and the Standards Testing and Reporting Program

Each spring the majority of California’s public school students, grades two through eleven, take the California Standards Test (CSTs) in English Language Arts (ELA). According to the Standardized Testing and Reporting Program’s website in 2011, the English-Language Arts Standards Tests consist of 65-75 multiple-choice questions (depending on the students’ grade level) along with a writing test component for seventh graders.

The CSTs “describe what students should know and be able to do in each grade and subject tested” (Standardized Testing and Reporting Program 1). They are an integral part of the Standards Testing and Reporting Program (STAR 1), which were created in 1998. STAR currently consists of four different forms of assessments administered to students in California Public Schools.

The STAR program is meant to give students, parents and teachers a better understanding of a student’s strengths and weaknesses and, as a result, potentially improve
Only students with written parental exemption are released from taking part in the STAR program. After the CSTs each spring tests are graded and given a statement of performance: Advanced, Proficient, Basic, Below basic and Far below basic. An Advanced statement of performance means a student has demonstrated a "comprehensive and complex understanding of the knowledge and skills measured by (the) assessment". A ranking of Proficient means a student's knowledge of the tested material is competent and adequate. A student categorized as Basic from their test results is considered to have a "rudimentary understanding" of the tested material. Any student given a test result of Far below or Below basic is thought to have a "flawed understanding" of the test's content area (Standardized Testing and Reporting 4).

Statement of the Problem

The California Department of Education's (CDE) goal is for all students to perform at the Advanced or Proficient level (Standardized Testing and Reporting Program 1). Unfortunately, since the beginning of the CSTs the majority of Los Angeles Unified students' test results have not met the CDE's projected goal. Nearly 60% of students in 2010
tested at a basic or below level on their CST ELAs ("Standardized Testing and Reporting Results").

Many California teachers accredit the large portion of low testing students to the test prepping approach often used in California’s public school. Many teachers are focusing more on preparing students for test taking then on actually teaching ELA standards. Students are spending valuable class time being drilled on test question formats with sample tests (Posnick-Goodwin).

Sherry Posnick-Goodwin interviewed various California public school teachers and principals for the California Educator Magazine on test prepping. One interviewee claimed that "drill and kill" instruction has become the norm at most schools. Many educators Posnich-Goodwin spoke with objected to the test prep approach. One Anaheim teacher believed that while the approach contained the possibility to teach some test taking skills it doesn’t teach students the content and concepts covered by the CSTs. In fact, the department of education has officially discouraged teaching to the tests, their desire is for students “to understand critical thinking skills that demonstrate what they know and can do in assessments” (Posnich-Goodwin).
Posnick-Goodwin also found that Educators blamed test prepping, and repetitive practice tests for creating more stress for students in connection with the CSTs. Students have become fixated on recognizing test question wording and format as opposed to utilizing their previous ELA knowledge during the CSTs.

Purpose of the Project

It is apparent from the consistently inadequate CSTs ELA test scores that the majority of California public school students need additional help in order to boost their test scores and, more importantly, improve their knowledge of ELA content standards.

In order to better prepare second graders for their upcoming ELA CSTs I have created a handbook that can be used by educators working with Los Angeles public school students. The handbook is a guide for an eleven weeklong course intended to teach and recapitulate the California Standards through readers theatre and creative drama.

This handbook draws on a sociocultural educational approach that uses symbolic movements (gestures), theatrical character development and read alouds to teach ELA concepts. Underlying this approach is the assumption
that learners gain important literacy abilities as they are actively engaged in making meaning of oral, written and performed text. A major component of the program is collaborative learning; participants will work together to create characters, scenarios and texts (Stone 7).

While immersed in a non-traditional academic environment, participants will spend time developing necessary critical thinking and comprehensive skills that will deepen their understanding of ELA content standards. This program will assess its participants mostly through informal performances, rehearsals and the dialogue inspired by them. These assessments will serve as a functional and engaging alternative to the test drilling occurring in daytime classes.

Description of the Project

The proposed program is intended to commence at the beginning of the school year for incoming second graders. The proposed program meets for one hour and a half, twice a week and culminates in a readers theatre performance created by participating students. The program's content includes all reporting clusters second graders are tested on in the California Standards Language Arts Test: word
analysis, reading comprehension, literary response and analysis, writing strategies and written conventions (California Standards Test Released Test Questions 4).

Significance of the Project

This approach will potentially improve the ELA CST test scores of second graders by engaging learners in a multidisciplinary active approach. The proposed project provides early literacy intervention that will put attending second graders at an advantage in the future while taking their yearly ELA CSTs. More importantly it could improve its participants knowledge of English Language Arts content standards.

Limitations of the Project

The project is geared towards second graders, the youngest age group taking the CSTs. Students up to grade eleven take the CSTs. English language learners, students with individualized education programs and mentally disabled students do not take the CSTs. The aforementioned students are still assessed by the STAR program through alternative standardized tests (Standardized Testing and Reporting Program 3).
Teachers that find this handbook useful may choose to take the general structure of the program and adapt it in order to advance the education of students of all ages and education needs.

Review of Related literature

Teachers have been using theatre arts in their instruction of the English Language Arts for years. In an interview for the article "Rethinking the Core: Teaching Theater and English in the High-Stakes Testing Climate" Tonya Perry interviewed English teachers who also taught theatre arts in the classroom. One teacher spoke of how well behaved her students were in theatre class, in fact students who acted out in English class never did so while in theatre class. The students were so engaged that they did not view theatre as "work" (107).

Creative drama is a form of theatre that has been accredited with "enhancing a child’s learning experiences" (Ross, Roe 383). Creative drama is an improvisational "process centered form of theatre" (Salisbury-Wills 6). For example, a creative drama class exercise may involve an instructor guiding their class through the dramatization of a familiar story (Ross, Roe 383). This process gives
young students the opportunity to understand concepts and stories in their own words and/or movements (Wills 6). Creative drama is not just limited to story dramatization, it includes "all forms of improvised drama" (Ross, Roe 383).

Creative drama provides a sense of play for students (something often lacking from traditional public school classes) while providing many opportunities to advance student knowledge of ELA concepts. Creative drama provides a way for students to improve their "reading proficiency in a way that makes reading fun" (Ross, Roe 383). It "engages students in learning by doing, and naturally integrates the traditional language arts (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). It is evident that drama in the classroom benefits students in many ways" (Morrison, Chilcoat 110).

Children who know they will be performing content presented to them in the near future pay closer attention. They know that they have a purpose for listening and heed important details because they know they'll be interpreting the story later on (Ross, Elinor, Roe 384).

Creative drama has also been credited for advancing student vocabulary and comprehension skills. Portraying characters gives students the opportunity to advance their
vocabulary while creating synonyms and antonyms for the descriptive words their character portray (Ross, Elinor, Roe 384-385). While dramatizing stories and words students display their comprehension of the content of the text. Also, any misconceptions of words or texts are obvious when dramatized for a teacher, possibly providing a more active and enjoyable form of assessment for students (387).

Creative drama has been successfully used as a form of supplementary reading instruction for students. Second graders receiving supplementary reading instruction through creative drama who dramatized stories developed a greater ability to recognize and recall details from stories than students who received a more traditional form of instruction. Creative drama students have surpassed students receiving traditional instruction at story summarization and recalling the chronological order of stories (Johnson 4).

Readers theatre has also been able to make critical strides with ELA students. Readers theatre is a form of theatre in which various forms of literature (poems, letters, stories) are staged and dramatized (Yordon 11). In readers theatre the main emphasis is on the reading of the script, actors do not memorize their lines. While the
focus of readers theatre is on our “auditory sense” the staging of a readers theatre production can still be creative and dramatic while remaining simple and suggestive (Yordon 11-12). Readers theatre has proven to make a positive impact on the reading fluency of struggling students by allowing them to “see and hear words simultaneously” (Flynn 361).

While character portrayal in creative drama has the potential to enhance participating students’ word comprehension skills, readers theatre offers similar learning opportunities. Second graders rehearsing readers theatre scripts have the opportunity to develop a greater understanding for their rehearsal text while portraying their characters’ emotions and perspectives within a written text. This process “has been found to improve the comprehension and fluency and critical thinking skills of second graders” (McKay 141).

Students who are involved in readers theatre are more likely to retain the material presented in the scripts they read. This may be due to the readers theatre rehearsal process. Students involved in readers theatre productions rehearse their scripts numerous times in order to perfect their performance (Flynn 362).
The performance elements of readers theatre establish a student’s relationship with a text. By expressively reading stories out loud students develop a deeper comprehension of the written work (Poe). The gestures that students execute while performing readers theatre scripts not only makes for a “more dynamic performance” but are another reason why students increase their retention of the read material (Flynn 362).

The readers theatre writing process is another major component in increased literacy. Readers theatre encourages students to devote time to writing. While creating scripts students become excited about the writing process because they are composing scripts with a particular audience and intent in mind. (Latrobe 13)

The readers theatre writing process enhances student comprehension of the given textual content and format/construction. While creating readers theatre scripts students must asses the text and decide “what parts will be in the voice of the various characters; what parts will be interpreted by a narrator”(McKay 142). Students must also analyze how the text is constructed and decipher “where shifts in mood, tone, character, feelings, and events will take place”(McKay 142). This sort of text work
creates more enthusiasm over reading while enhancing student textual interpretative skills. It is also credited as “one of the most valuable aspects of teaching and learning” (McKay 141).

While working with second graders in a nine-week readers theatre program Susan Keehn found that her students “made statistically significant growth in oral reading fluency” as well as improving their comprehension and word recognition skills (60). After the readers theatre performance Keehn found that, on average, participating students experienced a thirty word per minute increase in their reading rate (61).

Millin and Rinehart studied the affects of readers theatre on a second grade ELA class. One half of the class received “skill based orientation to instruction educational approach” that utilized worksheets, “practice pages”, and silent reading (72). The other half of the class participated in readers theatre activities. The readers theatre students regularly rehearsed their scripts while focusing on facial and vocal expression.

During the program’s post assessments readers theatre students received higher “reading and comprehension scores” (87). Those students also improved their vocabulary, word
comprehension and oral reading skills. The participating classroom teacher found that the readers theatre students were more motivated to read and put time into improving their reading skills (88).

While applying creative drama and readers theatre to ELA concepts educators have consistently seen student growth. Students have improved their reading comprehension, word recognition and writing strategies skills while participating in theatre arts and readers theatre activities. All afore mentioned ELA concepts are major components of the CSTs.

Creative drama and readers theatre have proven to be successful learning tools for second grade ELA and reading students. By using creative drama as an introduction to creating a readers theatre piece students will build gestural, facial and vocal expression skills. Those skills have been credited by various educators and researchers cited in this chapter for enhancing the benefits of readers theatre for ELA students.

Methodology

Before beginning my thesis project I spent over three years working at various at risk public school in Los
Angeles. Most recently, this past fall I began working at
the after school program at Barack Obama Charter School
(BOCS) in Compton, CA. At BOCS I worked primarily with
second graders who were at a Basic or Below basic reading
level.

Searching for ways to aide my students struggling with
their remedial reading skills, I became interested in
implementing my theatre arts knowledge in the strengthening
of the literacy skills of youngsters.

While beginning my initial research on the STAR
program's website I discovered my students were far from
alone in struggling with the English Language Arts content
standards. In 2010 51% of all LAUSD second graders scored
basic, below and far below basic on their CST (Standardized
Testing and Reporting Results). Upon even further research
I discovered that over the past eight years (since 2002)
the majority of second graders score at a Basic, Below or
Far below basic level on their California Standards Test
(Standardized Testing and Reporting Results).

At the same time that I was working in Compton I was
attending a Readers Theatre course at CSUSB. In this
course I saw enormous potential in creating readers theatre
texts with students at a Basic or Below writing level. A
readers theatre script is not an original work, it is adapted from already existing text. These texts can be any written work, more importantly they can be selected to suit the reading level of any student (even materials students are already familiar with). While researching the effects of readers theatre on youngsters in the classroom I saw many examples of it being used as a fantastic way to engage youngsters in reading.

While conducting further research into Readers Theatre, the concepts of repetition, gestures, out loud reading, facial and vocal expression proved to be integral in using readers theatre to improve knowledge of ELA concepts. Therefore a major component of the project had to include a performance as well a substantial amount of rehearsal time.

In order to successfully prepare potential participants to present a readers theatre performance they must have solid knowledge of theatre arts concepts. After coming to the above conclusion I began my research on teaching ELA concepts through theatre arts. Creative drama proved to be a successful approach with second grade ELA students in aiding the development of gestural, vocal and facial expression. Creative drama also serves as an accessible introduction to character portrayal and development.
Once I had a clear idea of the content, purpose and final outcome of the program I then devised the structure of the program. Other readers theatre programs benefited from a nine-ten weeklong process. Because I was also incorporating creative drama concepts I found that I needed to add an additional week or two in order to cover vital material.

Due to the test prep teaching style that California public school students are being bombarded with I wanted to find a more engaging way to assess program participants in order prepare them for their upcoming CSTs. The advantage of readers theatre and creative drama is that rehearsals and performances can serve as a form of informal assessment that differs greatly from the traditional test prepping approach.

While I made the conscious decision in the project to veer away from traditional assessments I found previous ELA CST sample tests to be useful resources. While obviously test questions differ from year to year the STAR program’s goal is to make the test as “close to the previous year’s test as possible” (What’s So Bad About Teaching to the Test?). Instead of using test information to drill program participants, I decided to use test stories and questions
to inspire dramatization and classroom discussion which could enhance comprehension and critical thinking skills.

While searching for additional texts to dramatize or adapt into readers theatre texts I sought out texts that contained the same qualities of literature that had proven to work well in my research. Teachers often found that various types of literature containing "straightforward" and simple stories or expressive characters or engaging dilemmas were easily adapted into scripts and enjoyed by students (Martinez 330). I also decided to select a few pieces that included animal characters. In my personal experiences with second graders I have found that they find animal characters accessible and fun.

Conclusion

Since the CST's inception thirteen years ago, Los Angeles Unified students have continually tested at a Basic, Below or Far below basic level, indicating that they have a limited understanding of the tested material. Unfortunately, many teachers respond to their students' low performance on tests by teaching in ways that
place a disproportionate emphasis on test taking techniques while not giving ample to time to learn challenging content, reflected in many of the ELA standards. The handbook that I have created serves as a way to provide young students with challenging, authentic, and meaningful learning experiences that contrast with what I term test-prep teaching approaches that constitute teaching to the test. For many this takes the form of direct instruction focused on discrete skills devoid of any real purpose.

The program described in this handbook uses creative drama and readers theatre concepts that have been shown to enhance second grade students’ ability to recognize and understand words, comprehend texts, think critically, and express their ideas in writing. While all of these literacy skills and practices are referenced in the second grade ELA standards and are the focus of items on the ELA CSTs, they tend to be taught as isolated skills removed from any meaningful context. I have no doubt that teaching these concepts in this active way will deepen program participants’ understanding of ELA content standards.
During my time as a theatre arts and literacy instructor in school and afterschool programs I have seen creative drama and readers theatre improve the ELA skills of my second grade students. Rhythmic, active games that involve breaking down the syllables of words have improved my students' understanding of syllables. Students who dramatize words by creating tableaus representing emotions and actions have improved their understanding of vocabulary words. Students who dramatize stories and develop characters through creative drama and readers theatre techniques have improved their critical thinking skills, such as taking another person's vantage point and generating justified conclusions.

My students in creative drama and readers theatre classes tell me that they enjoy learning in this way because it is fun and gives them something to do that is real and that other people will be able to enjoy. Teachers have told me that their students exhibit deeper comprehension of classroom reading materials and stronger critical thinking skills after participating in readers theatre activities or creative dramatizations of required texts. From my vantage point, these approaches to literacy
instruction provide students with an immediate purpose for engaging with and analyzing texts via their performances that they find particularly motivating.

I have created some of the exercises in my handbook based on my own experiences as a theatre arts instructor and student of creative drama and readers theatre. I have also selected many exercises developed by well-known theatre educators such as Viola Spolin and Barbara Salisbury-Wills. Viola Spolin developed theatre games inspired by her work with young children that advanced the improvisational theatre movement in the 1950s. Her work consisted of simple games that developed spontaneity and play in her students. Creative drama is at its core an improvisational theatre method used to actively involve participating performers. Barbara Salisbury-Wills, a prominent figure in theater education and creative drama, was a leading advocate for incorporating arts in the school. She served as the president and executive director of the American Alliance of Theatre and Education, an organization committed to advancing the work of theatre educators.
I have talked with elementary school teachers who have told me that they are frustrated by having to teach to the test, which means teaching skills in isolation and in ways that bore their students. These are teachers who long for the days when they could spend time teaching students via creative approaches. When I ask them if they have had opportunities to use drama in their classes, they tell me no that their principals and administrators don’t allow them to do anything other than teach the required curriculum.

This handbook describes a kind of practical and motivating form of early literacy intervention that many teachers are longing for. It is a much-needed contrast to the test prep approach that is being pushed on already struggling students. Based on my experiences as a teacher, my conversations with educators and students I have no doubt that this program will, if given a trial, help second graders enhance their comprehension of ELA concepts.
APPENDIX A

THE HANDBOOK
Program Overview

This program should take place during the Fall Semester. It is meant to better prepare second graders for the English Language Arts California Standards Test, typically taken between the months of March and June.

It is ideal for the eleven weeklong program to begin during the second half of September and finish during the end of December. This would allow for the final performance to happen during the final weeks of the fall semester and during the peak holiday season, a popular time for a school production. The program should meet twice a week for eleven weeks. Each program day is meant to take no longer than one and a half hours.

Special Notes

• Written segments in quotations are meant to be a script to use while communicating with participants. Feel free to use the dialogue as written or change it and simply use it as a guide.

• Whenever possible write down vocabulary, phrases and sentences discussed that relate to the strands, standards or objectives of the lesson on a large viewable surface.
I recommend using a white board, if you have access to one.

• You should be continually assessing your participants' comprehension of the material. They best way to achieve that is by observing their participation in discussions, drama games and informal performances. There are reflection/post activity discussion questions presented at the end of each lesson.

An Introduction to Playmaking and Performance

Day One

Strand/Reporting Cluster:

Word Analysis Strand/Cluster

1.2 Decoding and Word Recognition: Apply knowledge of basic syllabication rules when reading

1.3 Decoding and Word Recognition: Decode two-syllable nonsense words and regular multisyllable words.

Objectives:

Introduce the group to qualities that make a good performer. Make sure everyone understands what a syllable
is and how to find the number of syllables in a word.

Materials/ Preparation:

White board & dry erase marker

Rhythm sticks (one set per participant)

Motivation:

“Does anyone know what a syllable is? Yes, it’s a beat in a word. You can find out the number of syllables in a word by clapping or making a noise along with the beats in the word. (Pass out rhythm sticks). Let’s test it out. How many syllables does my name have?” Beat out the syllables in your name with the rhythm sticks.

Go around the room doing everyone’s name, going one at a time. As they do that write down everyone’s name on the white board, with a dash in between syllables, for example Jes-i-ca. If the group catches on quickly they can do the activity while marching in a circle, backwards, forwards and sideways.

Expectations

Welcome the group to our creative drama and readers theatre
program. "In this program we’re going to practice performing by playing games and doing activities that actors do. By doing these fun activities we are going to better understand things we’re learning in English/Language Art class. On the last day of the program we’re going to perform for our friends and family a show that we create!"

Presentation:

"In this program we are going to perform/act for each other. Who are actors you enjoy watching perform in the movies, tv shows and plays you view?" Make a list of performers members of the group enjoy watching. "Why do you enjoy watching those characters perform?" Here’s a personal example I have used to facilitate this conversation: "When I was young I enjoyed watching movies starring Jim Carrey because I liked his funny, expressive facial expressions". Make a list of all of the things they like about their favorite performers.

Inform the group that we have just made a list of strong performer qualities and we will strive to do all the things mentioned on this list while performing in this program. "In order for us to be successful performers in
this program we need to feel safe and comfortable performing in front of each other. We are going to create a contract that will include a list of promises we will make in order to make this feel like a safe place.” Take student suggestions; use examples to get things going. For example, “in order to me to feel comfortable performing in front of others I want the group to listen and not have side conversations when I perform in front of them”. Write down all suggestions. Let them know that you will finish the contract during the next day of the program.

Playing:

“Now we’re going to play a guessing game that involves acting. You are going to dramatize different verbs. But first, what is a verb?” (an action word, something you can physically do). After that, ask the group for examples of verbs. Have them think of their favorite verbs (things they like to do). Write down all appropriate verb suggestions.

Remind them of the list of strong performer qualities they just completed. Ask for volunteers, one at a time to go up in front of the class. As they come up ask them to
dramatize one of the verbs from the posted list. The rest of the class will guess the word, when they guess the word have them clap out the rhythm. When someone guesses the word have him or her cross it off of the word list on the board. If time, finish the day with a rhythm circle, repeating our verbs for that day.

**Reflection Questions:**

“What were some of your favorite verb performances today, why? Which words presented today had the least amount of syllables in them? Which had the most?”

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**Day Two**

**Strand/Reporting Cluster:**

**Word Analysis Strand/Cluster**

**1.5 Decoding and Word Recognition:** Identify and correctly use regular plurals (e.g., -s, -es, -ies) and irregular plurals (e.g., fly/flies, wife/wives).

**Objectives:**


To find out the syllables in multisyllable words and know how to spell various plural words.

**Materials/ Preparation:**

Contract (On a large poster board write down all of the promises the group previously made. Write down the performer qualities on the poster board as well. To make the contract more visually pleasing attach some images of the performers mentioned the previous day.)

White board & dry erase marker

Rhythm sticks (one set for each participant)

Oversized and colorful posters of the following objects: a dish, a leaf, a piece of candy, and a big pencil. Have a large list of each object written down in singular and plural form. Pencil-Pencils, Dish-Dishes, Candy-Candies, Leaf-leaves

Have all the objects placed in different locations in the room and the singular form of all the objects written on the board (the pluralized version of each work should be written down too, but hidden from view).
Motivation:

Bring in the adapted contract. Review the contract with the group and have each member of the group sign their name to the contract.

Below is a variation of the game "Thankful" from Salisbury-Wills' Theatre Arts in The Elementary Classroom: Kindergarten through Grade Three (147).

"Let's make a list of the things we are thankful for. Things we feel lucky to have in our lives (for example our families, friends, toys)." While writing down your students' suggestions, keep singular words and plural words in separate lists (if students only give suggestions consisting of plural or singular words don't worry).

Ask for volunteers to act out some of the singular words. Have a volunteer help us figure out how we would act out our thankful word, perhaps the word is dog. Feel free to guide the volunteer with questions: What noise does a dog make, how many legs do they walk on, how does that affect how they walk and move? "Now let's figure out how we would
act out a plural word. How would acting out dog be different from acting out dogs?” Eventually guide the students to realize that all we need are multiple people impersonating a dog in order to portray the word dogs.

Divide group in half, each side will choose one of the plural words (if there were no plural word suggestions pluralize one of the singular words) to pantomime for the other side. After each half performs have the other half guess their word.

Expectations/Presentation:

“Today we’re going to do another guessing game in teams (divide the group up so that there are four team players on a team). This time you’re going to find things in the room. I will give you hints about these objects. The first person that touches the object wins a point for their team. Team members can give their teammates clues, but I recommend doing it quietly so the other teams don’t hear you.”

Playing:

Divide the group into two teams. Place them all at the
same starting point and give out the following hints. The first person that touches the object gains a point for their team and should then tape the object next to the corresponding word on the word list.

"This is something that falls off a tree." (Leaf)

"This is something you need in order to take a test." (Pencil)

"This is something you might get on Halloween while trick or treating." (Candy)

"This is something your dinner comes on." (Dish)

Draw the group’s attention towards the board with the posted drawn objects. “Imagine that instead of one pencil there are 5 or 6. The word next to the pencil wouldn’t be pencil, it would be pencils. What do we need to do to the word pencil to change it into pencils? (You add an s.)”

Do that for all the words. Candies would change into candies because it ends with a y. Dishes would change to dishes because the word gains another syllable when you add an s sound to it (feel free to clap the syllables in the word out for the class). Dish is one syllable, dishes is
two. Leaf is a special irregular word because it goes from leaf to leaves.

**Reflection Questions:**

“Did all of the words have the same plural ending? Why is that?”

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**Day Three**

**Strand/Reporting Cluster:**

**Word Analysis Strand/Cluster**

**1.7 Vocabulary and Concept Development:** Understand and explain common antonyms and synonyms.

**Objectives:**

For the group to understand the meaning and differences between antonyms and synonyms.

**Materials/ Preparation:**

White board & dry erase marker

**Motivation:**

Below is a variation of the game "Hands Tell" from 33
“Find a place in the room where you can move around. We’re going to do an exercise focused on moving our hands. When I give you a direction, just move your hands. Move them as if they were happy hands. Angry hands, mad hands, powerful hands, strong hands, weak hands.”

Have the group sit down, ask them if when we were acting these words out with our hands did any words seem similar, almost the same. After the group responds tell them that a synonym is when words mean almost the same thing. Ask them if any words seemed like the opposite of another word used (that’s an antonym).

Below is an adaptation of the game “Carbon Copies” from David Farmer’s book *101 Theatre Games and Activities* (384-388).

“Now that we know what synonyms and antonyms are let’s use that knowledge in another game.” Divide the group into pairs, giving each member of the pair the number 1 or 2.
“In this game those of you given the number one are going to sculpt their partner into a position.” Tell the number ones to pick any emotion, then they should sculpt their partner to look as though they are experiencing that emotion. If clarification is necessary, sculpt a student volunteer to perhaps look mad by crossing his or her arms and asking them to pout their lips and furrow their brow. Give the group about five minutes to “sculpt” their partner. Then have the sculptors sit down and look at their sculptures. Ask the class if there are any sculptures that look alike. Ask similar looking sculptured participants to stand together. Once all similar participants are grouped together have the group guess what emotions they think each group’s sculptors were trying to portray. After the group guesses have each pair share their emotion.

Expectations

“Today we’re going to have fun acting out synonyms and antonyms. We’re going to use the performance skills we worked on during the last few meetings to do it.”
Presentation:

Ask the group if they remember what the word antonym and synonym mean. Keep those word definitions in mind while we play the following game.

Playing:

Below is a variation of the game "Surprise!" from Salisbury's Theatre Arts in The Elementary Classroom: Kindergarten through Grade Three (103).

"Let's pretend that we each have a big, heavy package behind us. Together, let's pick up that package and feel it in our hands. Unwrap it slowly together, as we're opening it we see there's a puppy inside. Show me how you would react if you opened a package to see a little puppy inside. (Give the students a few moments to react)"

"Now let's unwrap another package, this one is small and light. Feel it in your hand. Unwrap it, there are brussel sprouts inside. Show me how you would react if you opened a package to see a plate full of brussel sprouts."
Reflection Questions:

"How did the puppy package feel when you pretended to open it? (Heavy) How did the brussel sprout package feel? (Light)." As participants say words write down pairs of antonyms and synonyms that have been said. "How did you react when you opened up the box with the puppy? (Happy, excited) How did you feel when you opened up the box with the brussel sprouts? (Annoyed, angry, grossed out)." If participants give answers different then the ones expected, great, use them. It will make the activity even more interesting.

Day Four

Strand/Reporting Cluster:

Word Analysis Stand/Cluster

1.9 Vocabulary and Concept Development: Know the meaning of simple prefixes and suffixes (e.g., over-, un-, -ing, -ly).

Objectives:

To understand the differences and meaning of various prefixes and suffixes.
Materials/ Preparation:

White board & dry erase marker

The preceding prefixes and suffixes definitions should be written down on board: Re- (again), un- (not), -ing (present), and -ly (characteristic of) (Most Common Prefixes and Suffixes).

Motivation:

"Today we're going to play the game machine. In this game we are going to create a big machine with our bodies, we will be the machine. We start off with one person doing a small physical action like bending their elbow and making the noise they think a part of the machine would make (show them an example). We're going to add people, one at a time to our machine, if you join in the machine try to add on to what the person before you did."

Ask for a volunteer to start and then add in new participants one at a time stopping at around five people. After the machine has been created stop the machine. Ask the group how the machine changed as we continued to add people to it.
Expectations:

“We just created a big machine by adding more and more people to it, now we’re going to make words by adding a group of special letters to words you already know. When we add letters to the beginning of a word that group of letters is called a prefix. When we add it to the end of a word the group is called a suffix.”

Presentation/Playing:

“The two prefixes we’re going to use today are re- and un-. Re means again, if I put re- in front of the verb it means you have to do that action word again. If you add a un- in front of the word it completely changes the meaning of the word. Take the word real, if you put the prefix un- in front of it then it becomes unreal, meaning not real. We’re going to get on our feet and act some words with prefixes to better understand this idea.”

Ask for two volunteers, tell one of them to act out the word cook. Tell another that they are going to act out our prefix re- (meaning again). Help that volunteers come up with a movement that could mean to do something again.

Have them perform for the group. Do the same with the word
happy and the prefix un-.

"Now that we understand prefixes let's move on to suffixes. If a prefix goes in front of a word, where does a suffix go? Yes, after. Now let's take the word jump, show me what a jump looks like (make sure they only jump once, but if they keep on jumping that could be an opportunity to show the difference between jump and jumping). Now, if you added the suffix -ing to it, it becomes jumping, meaning that you are jumping right now.

Have the group show you jumping, make sure they jump for a little bit of time so they feel the difference between the two words. If time permits feel free to add -ing to a couple more verbs. After that do the same with the word quiet and -ly (-ly means characteristic of). You can be a quiet person, but you do things quietly. Have the group act out other words with -ly added at the end (weak, strong, loud, pretty). If time permits, combine the two suffix's in a sentence "I want to see you jumping quietly or cooking strongly" and have the class follow the directions stated in your sentence.
Reflection Questions:

Ask the group to write down a word using one of the prefixes (They can use one of the words from today.) Ask them to circle the prefix in the word. Have them do the same for a word, using one of the suffixes we learned about.

Lesson Five

Strand/Reporting Cluster:

Word Analysis Strand/Cluster

1.8 Vocabulary and Concept Development: Use knowledge of individual words in unknown compound words to predict their meaning.

1.4 Decoding and Word Recognition: Recognize common abbreviations (e.g., Jan., Sun., Mr., St.).

Objectives:

Learn abbreviations for months and days of week. Guess the meaning of compound words by acting them out.

Materials/ Preparation:

White board and dry erase marker
Rhythm sticks (one set per participant)

Compound word list

Have a list of the months of the year (the full words and their abbreviated forms)

Motivation:

"What do the words on the board have in common (they’re the 12 months in a year). Today we’re going to learn the abbreviations for them. Has anyone heard of an abbreviation? (It’s a short form of a long word)."

Have the group chant the 12 months of the year, beating our their syllables with the rhythm sticks. Then beat out their abbreviations (written on the board). Stop and ask the class what felt different between those two chants (the first chant was longer.) Make sure they know that’s because the abbreviations were shorter, they have less syllables.

Expectations:

"Today we’re going to learn about compound words. A compound word is when you take two different words and put them together in order to make a different word."
Presentation:

"We’re going to play a version of charades. I’m going to have two volunteers come up and perform for us. I’ll give them each a word that they will perform for the group. After we guess their words we will put the two words together to make a compound word."

Playing:

Play the aforementioned game using the compound words airplane, treehouse, lunchbox, sandbox and rainfall. After volunteers perform the two words in each compound word ask for the meaning of each individual word. Then have them make educated guesses on the meaning of the compound word the two words create when put together.

Reflection Questions:

"Which words were easy to guess the meaning of? Did the meaning of any compound words surprise you? Why did those words surprise you?"
Day Six

Strand/Reporting Cluster:

Word Analysis Strand Cluster

1.10 Vocabulary and Concept Development: Identify simple multiple-meaning words.

Objectives:

To understand that some words have different meanings.

Materials/Preparation:

White board and dry erase marker

The list of multiple meaning words should be written down on the white board (Watch, bark, fly and well).

Motivation:

Below is a variation of the game “Humpty Dumpty” from Salisbury Wills’ Theatre Arts in The Elementary Classroom: Kindergarten Through Grade Three (69).

“Today we are going to do very short narrated performances for each other. Does anyone know who the narrator is in a story? (They’re the person who describes what’s going on in the story.)
“Who knows the rhyme Humpty dumpty? Say it with me if you do. Humpty dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the King’s horses and all the King’s men couldn’t put Humpty Dumpty back together again.”

Take volunteers, one Humpty Dumpty, one narrator, and a few kings men/women. Cast a different set of actors for each sentence. They will perform each sentence, one at a time, for the class with the narrator saying the words while Humpty Dumpty and the others depict the action in the poem.

Before they perform ask the group the following questions:
“Who was Humpty Dumpty? Why was he sitting on the wall? What caused him to fall? If he really were some sort of egg, what happened when the shell broke? What might have been inside? Why were the King’s men called? What did they do? What did they do when they saw what was inside the shell? What happened?” (Salisbury 69).

Expectations:

“We are going to act out a few sentences, these sentences will have a special twist to them. First I’m going to divide you into four groups. When you perform one person from your group will be the narrator and the rest of the
group will act out the action in the sentence.” If you think that the groups will have trouble deciding on a narrator, select one for each group.

Presentation:

Ask the group to imagine it’s a hot, sunny and sweaty day, you’re extremely thirsty. Tell them all to pretend to drink a cool drink out of water glasses. Now tell them to put on sunglasses to shield them from the sun. But, wait we used the word glasses twice. “Did it mean the same thing both times? Why is that?” Explain to the groups that some words actually have more than one meaning. “The two sentences each group will perform both have the same word in them, but they mean different things in each sentence. If you hear the same word twice, raise your hand.”

Playing:

Pass out the following sentences to each group.

Group 1

I like to watch my dog chase my cat.

I looked at my watch to see if I was late for class.
Group 2

My friend’s dog always barks at me when I come over.

We carved our names on the bark of the tree.

Group 3

Sometimes I wish I was a superhero so I could fly.

The fly kept on buzzing in my ear.

Group 4

The teacher could tell that s/he studied so hard because s/he did very well on the test.

While trying to get some water, s/he fell down a well.

Guide the groups through at least ten minutes of rehearsal. When the group performs for the class remind the audience to raise their hand if they hear the same word twice.

Reflection:

After each group has performed their two sentences ask the observing groups what word they heard in both sentences. Ask them what the word meant in each sentence. How did the groups show us the different meanings of their words?
Understanding Texts

Day Seven

Strand/Reporting Cluster:

Reading Comprehension Strand/Cluster

2.4 Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: Ask clarifying questions about essential textual elements of exposition (e.g., why, what, if, how).

2.5 Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: Restate facts and details in the text to clarify and organize ideas.

Literary Response and Analysis

3.4 Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: Identify the use of rhythm, rhyme, and alliteration in poetry.

Objectives:

To understand the use of rhyme in poetry. To be able to ask and answer clarifying questions about a piece of text.

Materials/ Preparation:

White board and dry erase markers
The story “A Lesson Learned”

Motivation:

Below is a variation of the game “Follow the Leader” from Salisbury’s *Theatre Arts in The Elementary Classroom: Kindergarten through Grade Three* (137).

Sit the group in a circle and ask them to do exactly what you do while you make rhythmic movements. Start to move different parts of your body (hands, shoulders, arms, head...) at different paces. Choose one person to leave the space, they’re going to be a guesser. When they’re gone ask another person to be the leader, when the guesser comes back their job is to guess who the leader is. Encourage the leaders to change the rhythm to keep things interesting. Once the participants have grasped the game add a little bit of text. Have selections of a poem written down on the board, I recommend using “Diamond Cut Diamond” included in Appendix B. We will be reading that poem in the next unit, this could be an opportunity to introduce them to the poem. The next leader is not only going to set the rhythm for how we move but also the rhythm of the poem. Before the next guesser comes back ask the
new leader what rhythm they think would suit the poem. Repeat the same text a few times so the students can experience saying the poem at different tempos.

Every time the poem is performed at a different rhythm ask the group how that pace affected the poem. “How did it make the poem feel? Happy, sad, lazy, excited?” Also ask them which rhythm suited the poem the best and why.

Expectations:

“I’m going to read you the story “A Lesson Learned”. During the story I want you to make the sounds of the action in the story. I only want you to do so when I raise my arm. When I put down my arm down stop making sounds and listen.” Practice making noises with them on cue (like rain or a baby crying)

Presentation:

Read the story “A Lesson Learned” (see Appendix B) aloud.

Playing:

While reading the story whenever you want the group to make a sound from the text raise your arm. Before you begin
explain to the class that the height of your hand correlates with the volume level you desire from the class (Theatre Arts in the Elementary Classroom: Kindergarten through Grade Three 106)

Reflection Questions:

After the reading tell them you’re going to ask them a few questions. Instead of telling you the answer, they should make the corresponding sound.

“What sound did the father make while sleeping?”

“What sound did they hear after they saw a flash of lightning?”

“What is the sound that made the dog wake up?”

Then have the group pair up and ask each other two of the following questions. Then ask them to make up one “test” question about the story to ask their partner.

“How did the children walk down the hall so that they would be quiet?”

“Who was ‘snoring peacefully’ while the two children snuck downstairs to watch television (Salisbury 106)?”
The last line of the story states that the two children "weren't tempted to watch a monster-show again for a long, long time" (Salisbury 106). Why do you think they would not want to see a monster show after that night?

**Day Eight**

Strand/Reporting Cluster:

**Literary Response and Analysis/Strand Cluster**

3.1 **Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text:**
Compare and contrast plots, settings, and characters presented by different authors.

3.4 **Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text:**
Identify the use of rhythm, rhyme, and alliteration in poetry.

**Objectives:**

To find words that rhyme with each other and identify the use of rhyme in poems.

To compare and contrast the two stories "The Drum" and "The Blue Feather."
Materials/Preparation:

White board and dry erase marker

The two stories "The Drum" and "The Blue Feather"

Motivation:

Below is a variation of the game "Rhymes" from Spolin's Theater Games for the Lone Actor (142).

Tell the group that we're going to play a rhyming game. Have them circle up and get into the center of the circle. You're going to say a word, point to a person and count to ten, by the time you count to ten that person is going to try say a word that rhymes with your word. The next person to find the rhyming word gets to be the next leader. Continue until everyone has at least one chance to guess.

"Was it hard coming up with words the rhyme with each other? Was if fun? Why?" Ask the class if they remember a short poem we performed that had rhyme in it (Humpty Dumpty). "Why do you think the author went through the trouble of making it rhyme?"
Expectations:

Explain that you’re going to read two stories to them later in the day. Everyone should pay close attention because at different points in the story you’re going to call out “picture”. When you call out “picture” participants who raise their hands will get a chance to get on stage and create a still picture, called a tableau, depicting the action in the story. But before you read them the story do the following activity described in the next section, it will help them understand how to express action through movement and still pictures.

Presentation:

Below is a variation of the game “Playground” from Viola Spolin’s Theatre Games for the Classroom (49).

Divide into groups of 3 or 4. Tell each group that they are going to decide on one playground game that they would like to dramatize. Let them know that they will just be using their bodies to portray their playground game (pantomime). As a group decide on what objects are included in your game and where they should be placed. Give groups around five minutes to rehearse their playground
game.

After the exercise, have the groups show each other a frozen image (tableau) of the playground game their group rehearsed. Ask the observing groups to guess the playground games each group depicted.

Playing:

Read the stories "The Drum" and "The Blue Feather". Both tales are included in Appendix B.

While you read the stories call out picture at points in the story where there is action going on. Have the group make tableaus/stage pictures of those sections and then move on with the rest of the story.

Reflection Questions:

Ask questions about the story comparing and contrasting the two stories.

"Where do these stories take place? At the end of the stories what happens to both Sonu and Mia?" (California Standards Test Released Test Questions)
Day Nine

Strand/Reporting Cluster:

Literary Response and Analysis Strand/Cluster

3.3 Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text:
Compare and contrast different versions of the same stories that reflect different cultures.

Objectives:

Participants will compare and contrast two stories from different countries about the sun and moon.

Materials/Preparation:

White board and dry erase marker

The two sun and moon stories

Motivation:

Below is the game “When I go to California” from Viola Spolin’s Theatre Games for the Classroom (60).

Have the group stand in a circle. “In this game we are going to pretend that we are going on a trip to another city.” Ask the class for the name of a city. Start the game by saying “When I go to (name of the city) I’m going
to bring my backpack. Now, the next person in the circle will repeat what I just said and add another item to bring". For Example "When I go to San Jose I’m going to bring a backpack and a map". As we go around the circle each member of the group will add another thing to bring on our trip. Once the group has mastered the game have the students pantomime the object they want to bring instead of saying it. For example you would say "When I go to San Jose I’m going to" and instead of saying bring my backpack pantomime putting a backpack on. Then the next person would pantomime putting on a backpack and holding a map. People in the circle will repeat the actions that came before them and add on the action of bringing the item they previously said in the first round of the game.

Expectations:

Explain to the group that they are going to act out two short stories today. You will be the narrator and they will act out the story silently. Ask them when they have used just they bodies to portray an action or object (they did it during the presentation section of your last class and they just did it earlier today). Tell them that you are first going to read the story so they can become
familiar with it, then you’re going to ask for volunteers to perform.

**Presentation:**

Read the different sun and moon stories included in Appendix B.

**Playing:**

Read the stories again but this time have volunteers silently act out the two stories while you narrate.

**Reflection Questions:**

"How are the sun and moon different in the two stories? What do the two stories explain?" (California Standards Test Released Test Questions)

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**Day Ten**

**Strand/Reporting Cluster:**

**Reading Comprehension Strand/Cluster**

2.5 Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: Recognize cause-and-effect relationships in a text.
3.2 Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: Generate alternative endings to plots and identify the reason or reasons for, and the impact of, the alternatives. 

Objectives: 

For the group to create their own endings to the story "Why the Sun and Moon Live in the Sky"

Materials/Preparation: 

White board and dry erase marker

Motivation: 

Divide program participants into groups of 3 or 4. The groups are asked to come up with a selection of random sounds - with each group member making one vocalized sound. Next, the group decides on a sequence in which these sounds are made and practices it. Each group performs its sound sequence in turn to the whole class. Now the groups are asked to make up a story in which these sounds occur - in the sequence already decided upon. The story can be narrated or acted (Farmers 592-593).
Expectations:

"We’re going to create our own endings to one of our favorite stories that we previously read. I’m going to quickly read it to you and then we’re going to come up with other ways for the story to end."

Presentation:

Reread one the stories the group has read previously that they found the most enjoyable. I’ll use “Why the Sun and Moon Live in the Sky” as an example.

After the story, ask the following questions: Why did the Sun and Moon leave their house and go up into the sky? What if instead of the house filling up with water the house broke and all the water spilled out? Would the story have ended differently? Write down the class’s alternative endings. Have the group vote on their top two story endings.

Playing:

Divide the participants into two groups, assign each group one of the new endings. Each group will perform one of the two new endings to the story.
Reflection Questions:

"How were the two stories different from the original story? What happened in the story that made the stories end differently than the original?"

Day Eleven

Strand/Reporting Cluster:

Reading Comprehension Strand/Cluster

2.1 Structural Features of Informational Materials: Use titles, tables of contents, and chapter headings to locate information in expository text.

Objectives:

Create a table of contents for our class "book" that includes all written work previously presented in class.

Materials/Preparation:

White board and dry erase marker

Have a chronological list (table of contents) of all the stories and poems we have read so far in class. This list should include Humpty Dumpty, Diamond Cut Diamond, The
Drum, The Blue Feather and the two sun and moon stories.

Assign six different parts of the room a number from one through six. Ideally you should tape out a chart with masking tape. The chart would have three columns and two rows (or vice versa). The spaces should be large enough for four to five students to comfortable stand in.

Motivation:

Explain to the group that we are going to portray some of our favorite characters from the stories and poems we have read so far in class. As a group make a character list (for example: Sun, Moon, He Cat, She Cat, Humpty Dumpty)

Play the game party guest with the group incorporating the characters list. Ask for a party host and three volunteers. The host should go to the back of the room and cover their ears. The three remaining participants will chose one of the characters from our list to portray. Then the host comes back and pretends to prepare for a party. The other performers enter, one at a time, depicting their character. Everyone pretends that they are their character at a party until the host guesses each character.
Class expectations/Presentation:

"Today we're going to make a book of images from the some stories we've worked on so far in class. I have the table of contents with all the chapters (each chapter is a story or poem we've worked on)." Divide the participants up into groups and give them each a piece of paper with their chapter and a short sentence summarizing the story/poem. The group's job is to come up with a stage picture that will show the rest of the class their chapter. Don't tell the other groups because it's a surprise."

Playing:

Each group has around ten minutes to come up with their picture. After each group does their performance ask the class which chapter do you think they're depicting and why? Once all the group's chapters have been guessed write them down in order. Number the list 1-6 in order. You should have assigned six different places in the room a number. Place each group in the numbered area of the room that correlated with their story's number. Perform all six tableaus again in order.
Reflection Questions:

"In what numbered part of the room would you find the tableau for "Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky"? Which tableau would you find in the number 3 area of the room?"

Creating A Readers Theatre Performance

Day Twelve

Strand/Reporting Cluster:

Writing Strand/Cluster

1.1 Organization and Focus: Group related ideas and maintain a consistent focus.

Objectives:

Introduce the group to readers theater. Have participants select the theme of their readers theatre performance.

Materials/Preparation:

The stories and readers theatre scripts for "The Traveler and the Purse" and "Diamond Cut Diamond" included in Appendix B.
Motivation:

"Today we’re going to begin the process of creating a Readers Theatre script that we’ll perform in five weeks. Has anyone here seen a play? Did the actors have scripts in their hands? (No) Well, in readers theatre actors use scripts and the actors don’t move around on stage as much. In readers theatre your voice is really important. So we’re going to do a game where we get to try different things with our voices."

Expectations

Now, before we create our own readers theatre play we need to find out how readers theatre scripts are made. Readers theatre scripts are taken from already written texts like picture books, fairytales, poems, songs and newspaper articles.

Presentation:

Pass out the first story and the readers theatre adapted script of “The Travelers and the Purse”. Have the group look at the story and the script, do they look different? How? (One is a block of writing while the other is all
dialogue with quotation marks around the words) Take turns reading the story aloud. After reading the story tell the class that in order to turn the story into a script the writer has the characters from the story say any dialogue their characters would speak in the story. Readers theatre scripts also usually have a narrator who says most of the things the characters do. Ask the group to guess who they think the characters in the script are going to be based on the story we just read. Then read the script.

Playing (The vote):

"Now that we know a little bit about readers theatre scripts let's begin the process of making our own script. Before we find stories to turn into scripts I want us to choose a theme for our script. For example some themes can be ideas brought up in the story or a lesson that the story teaches. The story we just read could have the theme of sharing or fairness or if you don't share the good things with people you can't expect them to share the blame when you're in trouble. So what are some themes that we find interesting?" (If no one has any ideas start them off with universal themes they'll relate to like caring, friendship, family or leadership)
After the group has compiled a list of themes have the
group vote on their top three, then do a final vote between
those three themes. Tell the class that you will be
bringing in written work (related to our theme) that we
will turn into scripts.

Reflection Question:

“What were the main differences between the story and the
readers theatre script we read today?”

Day Thirteen

Strand/Reporting Cluster:

Writing Strategies Strand/Cluster

1.2 Organization and Focus: Group related ideas and maintain
a consistent focus.

Written Conventions Strand/Cluster

1.1 Sentence Structure: Distinguish between complete and
incomplete sentences.
Objectives:

Improve our sentence writing and select the work we will adapt into readers theatre texts.

Materials/Preparation:

Bring in 6-10 pieces of text that relate to the theme decided on by the class. Bring in pieces that are age appropriate and have relatable characters. Bring in a variety of texts including songs, poems, pictures books and articles. Each piece of text should take no longer than five minutes to read aloud.

Motivation:

Today we’re going to divide up into partners to read potential stories for our script. We’re going to write a quick sentence about the story so let’s play a fun game about sentences.

One basic sentence structure is subject – verb. Let’s make our own sentence. Fist we need a subject (a noun– person, place or thing). Have a volunteer act out a noun (for example cat). Now ask for another volunteer to act out a verb. (for example eat). Say the sentence the cat eats,
instruct the volunteers to act out their word when they hear you say it in the sentence. There are different kinds of sentences, but when you’re writing today make sure they all have a subject and verb in them.

Class expectations:

“Today we’re choosing the material for our script. We’re going to pair up and read the written works I brought in that fit our theme. Each pair will write two sentences about the story they read. They will read those sentences aloud to the class and then the class will vote on the stories they want to turn into scripts.

Presentation:

Pass out written materials to participants and give them at least twenty minutes to read and write.

Then have participants read their sentences out loud.
Write the story titles and sentences on the white board.

Playing(The vote):

We are going to have two rounds of voting to decide on what will be in our script. The group can vote for up to three
stories. Our readers theatre script will include the top three stories we vote on. (Have students close their eyes while voting.)

**Reflection:**

Write one sentence (including a subject and a verb) about one thing you did in class today.

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**Day Fourteen**

**Strand/Reporting Cluster:**

**Written Conventions Strand/Cluster**

1.5 **Punctuation:** Use quotation marks correctly.

**Objectives:**

Make sure the group knows how to use punctuation marks.

Have participants decide on the characters in their scripts and begin their scripts.

**Materials/Preparation:**

Divide participants into three groups, one for each piece of text. While creating these groups make sure that strong
and weak readers and writers in the class are distributed evenly. Also, take into account who voted for each text during the last class.

Print out enough copies of the text for each script-writing group.

Motivation:

Divide participants up into their writing groups. Pass out scripts and have the group members read them aloud, taking turns.

Expectations:

"The first step in our writing process will be writing a short introduction to our piece. Write one sentence about how the text fits the theme we selected."

Presentation:

"The next step in our writing process is going to be choosing the characters in our play. Based on what you just read, who should be the characters in the play. If your piece doesn't have a narrator, give it one." (Go around to each group checking that everyone has a character list)
Once the character lists are complete have the students read the text again. This time pay close attention to the things the characters say and do. Have each member of the group write down one descriptive word for each character.

"Read your text aloud again. This time, have only one member read a sentence at a time. After that sentence is read decide which character should read it. If it’s a sentence describing what the characters do give it to the narrator. If it doesn’t fit any of the characters take your pencils and cross it out. Once a line has been given to a character everyone should write down the character name above the sentence, also write quotation marks around the sentence."

Most likely this will take more than the class time. Fifteen minutes before class is over have the class stop writing and collect all the papers. Tell the group we’ll finish writing next class.

Playing:

Play talk like again but this time using the character list from each group. Have each group perform the title of their text in the voice of two of their characters. Have
the class guess who their characters are.

Reflected Questions:

"How could you tell which line to give to who? Did you cut any lines? Why?"

Day Fifteen

Strand/Reporting Cluster:

Written Conventions Strand/Cluster

1.5 Punctuation: Use quotation marks correctly.

Writing Strategies Strand/Cluster

1.2 Research: Understand the purposes of various reference materials (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus, atlas).

Objectives:

For each group to complete the first draft of their script.

Materials/ Preparation:

Scripts from last class (Look over, see if any group is having problems.)

Script introductions from last class (Circle any misspelled
words)

Pencils

Dictionaries (at least one for each group)

Motivation:

“When reading a story has anyone come across a word they did not know the meaning to? When writing have you ever wanted to use a word that you did not know how to spell? To those that said yes, what did you do? (Maybe they guessed the spelling) Well, now if you’re unsure I want you to try to look up the word in the dictionary. All the words are listed alphabetically with the correct spelling and meaning. It might be hard to look up if you don’t exactly know how to spell the word but still try. And feel free to ask me or another student for help.

Pick a word that you saw misspelled in a script’s introduction. Ask the group to show you what they should do if they want to use the word and don’t know how to spell it?” Call on a student until someone goes over to a dictionary and looks it up. Help them find the word and have them spell it on the board.
Expectations:

Tell the group that they’re going to finish their stories today. Tell them that you also looked over their introductions and circled misspelled words and that you want them to correct those misspelling.

Presentation

Divide into writing groups and have them finish their scripts. It is important that they complete the first draft of their scripts today. Give each group a dictionary.

Once they have assigned all of the lines have them write out a copy of their script for you. (Have the script from the first day of unit 3 as a guide for a script template)

At this point in the writing process make sure everyone understands the script writing process. Address any issues a group maybe finding troubling.

There are no playing and reflection sections in this lesson, at this point in the program the group needs to
focus on finishing the scripts. The instructor should assess participants when reading over their scripts.

**Day Sixteen**

**Strand/Reporting Cluster:**

**Written Strategies Strand/Cluster**

1.4 Evaluation and Revision: Revise original drafts to improve sequence and provide more descriptive detail.

**Objectives:**

For each group to share the first draft of their scripts and make any necessary changes.

**Materials/Preparation:**

Scripts and introductions from last week’s class. (Make multiple copies of each)

**Motivation:**

“Our scripts are almost done and we are very close to beginning the rehearsal process. Today I want us to share our scripts with each other so we can help other groups perfect their scripts.

As a teaser we’re going to share a part of our scripts with
each other. Have each group decide on about five lines of dialogue to share with the group.”

Expectations:

For the rest of the day you’re going to give each group another group’s script in order make corrections.

Presentation:

If a participant thinks a word in the script or introduction is misspelled they should look it up in the dictionary. If it is misspelled they should circle it and write the correct spelling above the word.

Give the groups back their own scripts in order to read revisions.

No playing section today either, students need to focus on writing.

Reflection Question:

“What was strong about the script you read and what needed work?”
Day Seventeen

Objectives:

Hold auditions for the play.

Materials/Preparation:

Type up all the scripts. Make enough copies for each group member. Look over the number of characters in each script, if there are more characters than group members decide which multiple parts will be given to one actor. If there are more group members than characters decide which parts you will double cast. Make any necessary changes to the script that arise. I recommend pre highlighting all the lines (giving each actor a different color highlighter) and putting all the scripts in folders (each group should have a different folder color).

Motivation:

Tell the class that before we begin our auditions today we’re going to play a quick game. Have the group circle up. Tell them to think of one movement that represents how they feel today, this movement is called a gesture. If
they’re excited for auditions maybe their movement is to jump up in the air. If they’re nervous maybe their movement is biting their nails.

**Expectations:**

Commend the groups on their hard work creating the scripts!

For the auditions tell the class that you’re going to have all the group members read the lines of every part in their play.

**Presentation:**

For the auditions have the actors stand at one side of the room and you and the audience sit as far away as possible. Have the students watching take turns being the stage manager. When each group goes up have the stage manager pass out their scripts. Tell the auditioners to read the part highlighted in their script. After a few lines call out “switch” and have the students pass the script to the person to the left of them and continue reading. Do this until everyone has had a chance to read all the parts.
Reflection Question:

"What auditions were the most fun to watch and why? List at least two parts you think would be fun to play."

Day Eighteen

Strand/Reporting Cluster:

Written Conventions Strand/Cluster

1.6 Capitalization: Capitalize all proper nouns, words at the beginning of sentences and greetings, months and days of the week, and titles and initials of people.

1.7 Spelling: Spell frequently used, irregular words correctly (e.g., was, were, says, said, who, what, why).

1.8 Spelling: Spell basic short-vowel, long-vowel, r controlled, and consonant-blend patterns correctly.

Objectives:

Announce the cast

Have actors write a character profile as a form of character development.
Materials/Preparation:

Scripts

Lined paper

Pencils

All plays should be fully cast.

Motivation:

Announce the cast for the three skits in our readers theatre play. When you announce the cast give each actor a one-sentence description of their character.

Based on their knowledge of the characters (they have spent a couple of weeks creating these scripts) have each actor create a simple gesture for their character.

Expectations:

"Now that we know our characters let’s do some character development, this will help us better understand our character."
Presentation:

Below is a character development exercise used by Sklar in his book *Playmaking: Children Writing & Performing Their Own Plays* (37)

Have participants write down the following on a piece of paper.

Name:

Age:

Family:

Wish:

Fear:

Habit:

Have each student write down the corresponding information for his or her character. The profile will include their character's name, age, family members, one wish in life, one thing they fear the most, and one thing that they really love to do (habit). Tell the group that they will use their knowledge of their characters to fill out their
character profile and to use their imagination to answer any questions they’re not sure about.

**Playing:**

Actors will then use their character profile to help them create a short story about their character.

In the character story "three things happen: the character wants something, it tries to get it, and it succeeds or fails." Example of one of his students, Maria."One day Greedy Bear was walking and he found $50. He showed it to this brothers and sisters but he did not share it. He brought ice cream cakes, and chips. After he ate it all, his teeth got very ugly and he never ate junk food again (Sklar 38)

**Reflection Question:**

How did you know what to answer in your character profile? What questions were easy to answer because they were answered in your readers theatre script?
Day Nineteen

Strand/Reporting Cluster:

Reading Comprehension Strand/Cluster

Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text:
Interpret information from diagrams, charts, and graphs.

Objectives:
Block the first scene. Introduce the class to the different parts of a stage.

Materials/Preparation:

Scripts (write all the blocking in them in the coding in Appendix B stage chart)

Write down a large version of the stage chart from on the white board.

Before the day starts block all of the scenes, decide where all the characters should stand during the readers theatre production. Decided, when, where and if they move during the scene. When creating the blocking keep in mind that the narrator(s) should be stationary. All of the
characters should be facing out. Avoid just placing the characters in a straight line, yes readers theatre is more about the voice than it is movement but that doesn’t mean you can’t be creative. Try to incorporate the gestures the students creating during last class into the staging of the play. Instead of having characters that aren’t in a scene onstage try having them turn their back to the audience (Yordon)

At this point in the creative process you should be working in the area where your final performance will occur.

Motivation:

“A long time ago stages were not a flat surface like they are now. The back part of the stage was actually a lot higher than the front part of the stage (stages were raked). The audience area was just a large open space and they had to rake the stage so that the audience could see the entire stage. That is why the back part of the stage is called upstage and the front part of the stage is called downstage. Stage left is the left part of the stage (from the perspective of the actor, not the audience) and stage right is the right part of the stage.”
Show them the stage chart on the white board. Pointing out all of the stage areas. Have the group go onto the stage/playing area. Tell the class to go to the part of the stage area that you call out, then just point to the stage area. In order to make it more of a game you can send people out of the game who go to the wrong area. The winners are the last people standing onstage.

Rehearse:

Note on rehearsal process- all actors should take part in the motivation activity but only one group will rehearse their skit a day. Feel free to utilize the people not performing during rehearsal. They can be stage managers, making sure the actors are properly reading the script. If you would rather not incorporate them that way then have them act as the audience. Explain to them proper etiquette for audience members: They should sit quietly, clap at the end of the skit, and listen to the actors on stage. If you have a large space and a productive group that can work on their own or other adults to assist, the students not performing during your rehearsal can read over their scripts while you're working with the other skit.
Reflection:

At the end of all rehearsals have each actor share one thing they did well today in rehearsal and one thing they would like to improve upon. If you notice that a group of students want to improve in the same area select activities to do during the motivation section of class that will aid them in that process.

Day Twenty

Objectives:

Block the second skit. Work on vocal expression.

Materials/Preparation:

See day nineteen

Motivation:

Below is a variation of the game "Gibberish Interpreter" from Spolin's book Theatre Games for the Classroom (130).

Tell the group that we are going to play a game using gibberish to communicate. We're going to pretend that we have a visitor from a foreign land. Ask for a volunteer to
be a visitor; they will be using gibberish to communicate. Have the class decide on a make believe name for where this person comes from. Ask for a volunteer to be our interpreter, they will listen to our visitor and tell us what they’re saying (they know how to speak gibberish). Let the group ask the visitor questions on at a time about their homeland. The interpreter will then phrase the question in gibberish for our visitor who will also answer in gibberish, then the interpreter will tell us the answer.

Rehearsal:

See day nineteen

Reflection:

See day nineteen

Day Twenty-One

Objectives:

Stage the last skit.

Vocal projection

Materials/Preparation:
Motivation:

Have the group circle up and do a couple of tongue twisters like "toy boat" or "red leather yellow leather". Begin very slowly as a group and then get faster. Make sure they are speaking clearly.

Divide program participants into groups of two, make sure that group members are paired with fellow cast members they share a scene with. Give them two lines, one line each, from their shared scene. Assign each person in a pair either a one or a two. Send ones off to one side of the room and twos off to the other side of the room. One at a time have each pair do the lines in their scene. If participants cannot be heard by their partners make them repeat the line until they project properly. Make sure that the group does not yell.

Rehearsal:

See day nineteen
Reflection:

See day nineteen

Day Twenty-Two

Objectives:

Conduct the final rehearsal before the performance. The performance should directly follow this class.

Materials/ Preparation:

Scripts

Motivation:

Sound Circle

Have the group circle up.

You can pass sounds around the circle: The first person makes a vocal sound. The next person copies that sound and adds another - and so on around the circle. So the first person might go: "Whoooh!". The next person could go "Whoooh! Eee-owww" and the third person "Eee-owww, Plonkety-plonk." Of course you can be a lot more
imaginative with your sounds than this (Farmer 625-627).

Rehearsal

Run through the entire show at least twice.

After the rehearsal take the time to congratulate the class on all their hard work. If you have time go around the circle telling each student something you are proud of him or her for.

Post Program Recommendations

Record the final performances and sell or give out to parents (depending on project funding) so that program participants can watch it and feel proud of the work they did.

Collect all written work (including stories that were written/adapted during the program and the final performance script) bind them and offer copies to parents. At the very least keep a copy of the written work and videotape in the school library. This will remind participants of the work they did and create more excitement for future program participants.
APPENDIX B

RECOMMENDED TEXTS
"A Lesson Learned"

Below is the text for the activity "A Lesson Learned" from Salisbury's Theatre Arts in The Elementary Classroom (106):

A LESSON LEARNED

Robert and Juanita were brother and sister. And they knew better than to do what they did. But late on cold, windy night (sound), they tiptoed down the hall (sound) to the television room. Robert, who was older, told Juanita he wanted to watch a monster show TV. He told her not to be afraid (sound). Everyone else was in bed sleeping. They could hear their father snoring peacefully in the other room (sound). The two children huddled together, their eyes large with fright, as they watched the show. They heard the monster's steps even before they saw it (sound). And they heard its mean laugh (sound). Then it appeared and snarled (sound) and said to the young girl it was planning to capture, "...(sound)..."
At that moment the TV and all of the light in the house went off. Again they heard the wind (sound). They saw a flash of lightning and heard the thunder boom (sound). Juanita started to cry and she said to Robert, '... (sound) ...' A siren sounded in the distance (sound). The noise of the siren woke up their dog who howled at the noise (sound).

Soon they hear footsteps coming down the hall (sound). Was it the monster they had just seen on TV? Even Robert was afraid. He said, '... (sound)...' A flashlight shone in the room and they heard a voice whisper, 'Are you alright?' Juanita and Robert jumped up and hugged their father and they all, even the dog, ran down the hall (sound) and stayed with their parents until the storm was over. And guess what? They weren't tempted to watch a monster-show again for a long, long time."

"The Drum" and "The Blue Feather"

Below are the stories "The Drum" and "The Blue Feather" (California Standards Test Released Test Questions).

Story 1: The Drum - A Tale from India

Long ago in India, a boy named Sonu and his mother were walking home from the market. Along the way, Mother stopped and picked up a stick.

"Here is a fine stick, Sonu," she said. "I'm sorry it is not a drum. I know that you have been wishing for one."

"Thank you, Mother," said Sonu, taking the long piece of wood. He knew that she would buy him a drum if she had the money.

Soon they met a woman who was trying to start a fire. Her fire would not light. "Here," said Sonu, handing her his stick. The woman used the stick to start the fire. Then she gave Sonu a chapati, a round, flat bread.

Next Sonu and his mother met a man and a little
girl. The girl was hungry, so Sonu gave her his bread. "Here, take this drum," said the man. "Someone gave it to my daughter, but she doesn't need it."

Story 2: The Blue Feather - A Tale from Brazil

Mia lived by the great Amazon River. One day her mother gave her a pretty blue feather.

Mia wanted to show the feather to her friend Náli. She put the feather in her basket and told her mother where she was going. Nali lived nearby in a hut by the river.

Walking on the path along the river, Mia saw a red flower. As she bent to pick up the flower, the wind blew the blue feather up into the air! Mia could not catch the feather. She sighed and put the red flower in her basket.

Then a yellow butterfly flew in front of Mia. Running to catch the butterfly, Mia dropped her basket. The red flower fell out, and the wind carried it out onto the river.

Mia sighed and picked up her basket. Looking up, Mia saw the yellow butterfly land on a branch
where there was a bluebird. The bluebird flew away, dropping one of its beautiful blue feathers near Mia’s feet!

Happily, Mia picked up the feather and hurried to her friend’s house.

“California Standards Test Released Test Questions.”
"The Story of the Sun and the Moon" and "Why the Sun and Moon Live in the Sky"

Below are the stories "The Story of the Sun and the Moon" and "Why the Sun and Moon Live in the Sky" (California Standards Test Released Test Questions).

The Story of the Sun and the Moon

A Native American Tale from New Mexico

Many years ago the sun did not shine up in the sky. It lived on the land. The moon also lived on the land. At this time, the people kept the sun and moon inside a box. The sun was so close to the earth that the land became very hot. It was also very dark at night because the moon was trapped in the box.

Little Wolf walked across the land. He tripped over bushes and rocks. He burned his four soft paws. He could not hunt for his food.

"I know what I must do," thought Little Wolf. "I must let out the sun and the moon."

Late that night Little Wolf went to the box. He
pulled open the cover. Out jumped the sun and the moon! They flew way up into the sky.

The moon shone first. This made the night. There was just enough light for Little Wolf to hunt.

The sun shone next. This made the day. Little Wolf could walk without burning his feet.

Little Wolf was happy. The people were happy too. The sun and the moon stayed up in the sky, where they still are today.

Why the Sun and Moon are in the Sky

An African Tale

Long ago, the sun and the moon lived on the land. They lived in a house. The house was as big as a lion. It was just big enough for the sun and the moon.

The sun and the moon had many neighbors.

"Come in and visit!" said the sun. The neighbors could not visit. The little house could only hold the sun and the moon.

The sun and the moon wanted their friends to visit. "We must build a bigger house," they said.
So together they worked. They worked until they had built a big house. It was as big as an elephant.

"Now, please come and visit," said the sun. The neighbors looked at the big house. It looked big enough. They came to visit. Then the neighbors brought all their family.

"No, wait!" said the moon. "The house is not big enough."

The neighbors brought all their friends.

"No more!" said the sun.

Before long, there was no room in the house. The sun and the moon climbed up onto the roof. Soon there was no room on the roof. The sun and the moon looked up. "There is plenty of room up there," they said. They flew up into the sky.

"This is better," said the sun. "Yes it is," said the moon. So they decided to stay up in the sky forever.

"California Standards Test Released Test Questions."

Below is the story "The Travelers and the Purse" and a readers theatre script adapted from the aforementioned story (Sloyer 28-29).

The Travelers and the Purse

By Aesop

Two men were traveling together along a road. Suddenly one of them stopped and picked up a purse. Someone had lost it on the way.

"Look what I have found!" he cried. "It is very heavy. It must be full of money."

Quickly he opened it. "How lucky I am!" he said when he saw that it was full of money.

"You should say how lucky we are," his companion said. Aren't we traveling together? Travelers should share both their good luck and their bad."

"No indeed!" the other said. "I found it and I am going to keep it!"

He had no sooner said this than they heard a
cry of “Stop, thief!” They looked behind them.
A mob of people were streaming towards them. And everyone in that mob was armed with a heavy stick.
The traveler who had picked up the purse grew pale with fright.
“We are lost if they find the purse upon us!” he cried. “They will think we stole it!”
But his companion did not share his fright.
“Don’t say we are lost”, he said. “You would not say we before. So now say I am lost.”
If you do not share your good fortune with others, don’t expect them to share your misfortunes.

Adaptation of “The Traveler and the Purse”

Storyteller I: Two men were traveling together along the road. Suddenly one of them stopped and picked up a purse. Someone had lost it on the way.
Traveler I: “Look what I have found!” he cried. “he cried. “It is very heavy. It must be full of money.”

102
Storyteller II: Quickly he opened it.

Traveler I: “How lucky I am!” he said when he saw that it was full of money.

Traveler II: “You should say how lucky we are,” his companion said. Aren’t we traveling together? Travelers should share both their good luck and their bad.”

Traveler I: “No indeed!” the other said. “I found it and I am going to keep it!”

Storyteller I: He had no sooner said this than they heard a cry of

Storyteller II: “Stop, thief!”

Storyteller I: They looked behind them. A mob of people were streaming towards them. And everyone in that mob was armed with a heavy stick.

Storyteller II: The traveler who had picked up the purse grew pale with fright.

Traveler I: “We are lost if they find the purse upon us!” he cried. “They will think we stole it!”

Storyteller I: But his companion did not share his fright.

Traveler II: “Don’t say we are lost”, he said.

103
“You would not say we before. So now say I am lost.”

*Storyteller II*: If you do not share your good fortune with others, don’t expect them to share your misfortunes.

Below is the poem "Diamond Cut Diamond" and a readers theatre script adapted from the aforementioned story (Sloyer 34).

Diamond Cut Diamond

By Ewart Milne

Two Cats
One up a tree
One under the tree
The cat up a tree is he
The cat under the tree is she
The tree is witch elm, just incidentally.
He takes no notice of she, she takes no notice of he.
He stares at the woolly clouds passing, she stares at the tree.
There's been a lot written about cats, by Old Possum, Yeats and Company
But not Alfred de Musset or Lord Tennyson or Poe or anybody
Wrote about one cat under, and one cat up, a tree.
God knows why this should be left for me
Except I like cats as cats be

105
Especially one cat up

And one cat under

A witch elm

Tree.

Adaptation of "Diamond Cut Diamond"

Two Cats: Two Cats

He Cat: One up a tree

She Cat: One under the tree

He Cat: The cat up a tree is he

The cat under the tree is she

Tree: The tree is witch elm, just incidentally.

He Cat: He takes no notice of she,

She Cat: she takes no notice of he.

He Cat: He stares at the woolly clouds passing,

She Cat: she stares at the tree.

Poet: There's been a lot written about cats, by

Old Possum, Yeats and Company

But not Alfred de Musset or Lord Tennyson or Poe

or anybody

She Cat: Wrote about one cat under,

He Cat: and one cat up,

Tree: a tree.
Poet: God knows why this should be left for me
Except I like cats as cats be

He Cat: Especially one cat up

She Cat: And one cat under

Tree: A witch elm Tree.

## Stage Diagram

### Backstage

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### Audience

108
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