

Elk Grove Unified School District
Visual and Performing Arts Resources
Theatre

Grade 4: Lesson 4

Title: Creating Gold Rush Reader's Theatre

Standards Addressed

Artistic Perception

Processing, Analyzing, and Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to Theatre

- 1.1 Use the vocabulary of theatre to describe theatrical experiences, such as *plot, conflict, climax, resolution, tone, objectives, motivation, and stock characters*.

Creative Expression

Creating, Performing, and Participating in Theatre

- 2.2 Retell or improvise stories from classroom literature in a variety of tones (gossipy, sorrowful, comic, frightened, joyful, sarcastic).

Aesthetic Valuing

Responding to, Analyzing, and Critiquing Theatrical Experiences

- 4.1 Develop and apply appropriate criteria or rubrics to critique performances as to characterization, diction, pacing, gesture, and movement.

Connections, Relationships, Applications

Connecting and Applying What is Learned in Theatre, Film/Video, and Electronic Media to Other Art Forms and Subject Areas and to Careers

- 5.1 Dramatize events in California history.
5.2 Use improvisation and dramatization to explore concepts in other content areas.
5.3 Exhibit team identity and commitment to purpose when participating in theatre experiences.

Time: 50 minutes

Floor Plan: Classroom with an area for presentations.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of literature, such as poetry, stories, documents, etc. (One copy for each person in the group.)
- Excerpts from early California newspapers (provided with this lesson)
- Overheads from this lesson

Purpose:

The students will create a reader's theatre style theatre using literature or documentary information.

Background:

Reader's theatre involves a group reading of a literary script focusing on dialogue between two or more characters using voice rather than movement. The audience uses imaginary setting and action. Reader's may sit or stand and should focus on voice because of the imaginative participation role of the audience (no stage makeup, props, costumes, or scenery are required).

Key Questions:

How will the students work together to create a reader's theatre from newspaper clippings from the Gold Rush Era?

Vocabulary:

- * *Character*—the role played by an actor as he/she assumes another's identity (physically, mentally, and emotionally).
- * *Levels*—(high, middle, low) visual interest is added to a play through the use of multiple and/or changing levels (high level—standing, middle level—shoulders to knees, low level—near the ground).
- * *Dialogue*—the words spoken by the actors in a play.
- * *Tableau*—a scene on stage with silent, motionless actors.
- * *Rehearsal*—to practice in preparation for a public performance.
- * *Performance*—a public, theatrical presentation before an audience.

<u>Steps of the Lesson</u>	<u>Thoughts for the Teacher</u>
1 Set up purpose/goals What is reader's theatre?	How are you making your purpose clear to the students? Through the use of a model and clear directions.
2 Engage students The students will become engaged in Step 3 of the lesson.	How can I effectively get the students interested in the content of the lesson? Through reading the model aloud. Reader's theatre is fun for many students even if they are weak readers because they are allowed practice time.
3 Learning Sequence See actual lesson sequence below.	What are the BIG idea(s) of your presentation? How will students understand/experience the material that you present? Reader's theatre will develop a greater understanding of the material, as well as allow for creative expression.
4 Assessment The students will perform a reader's theatre.	How will you allow your students to deepen their understanding of content presented? (Reflect, revise, retell, refine, practice) Create a reader's theatre which retells a selection of writing and use a rubric to score the final product.

Actual Lesson Sequence

1. Tell the class life is full of contradictions and impulses. We can exploit conflict to create interesting performances. Within a line of poetry or narrative there are often competing impulses, two ways of thinking about something at the same time.
2. Put the model of the Pledge of Allegiance on the overhead and read it with the class.
3. Ask the students to stand and do space walk (see below) as a warm-up. Then put the students into groups of about four.

Space Walk: Have the class walk around the room. Do not talk. This is a silent activity. Move without making any noise. Freeze. High, low. Freeze in an interesting position. You are walking on the deck of a tall sailing ship in the San Francisco Bay. It is 1848. Pick up your bags. Walk down the ramp. Look around, let me see you have arrived in the Golden State. Now you are walking, trudging to Sacramento. It is hot—104°. Finally you arrive. Now it is time to outfit for the gold fields. Go into a store. Choose the tools you will need. Make your purchase. Load up your mule. Head for the hills. Look for a good spot. Unload and start to pan for gold. No luck. Find a partner and build a sluice box or rocker. Using a pick, dig out some dirt and rocks and keep on prospecting. You find gold. Oh darn, it is fools gold. What, more gold! You have discovered the mother load. Now you are on easy street. And freeze.

4. Hand out copies of literature or documentary information to each group of students. The students are to go through the process outlined below to create a reader's theatre. The students may write directly on the selections you give them. Each group should have a different selection and each student in the group should have a copy.
 - As a group, read the literature selection aloud. Take turns reading while the rest of the group listens.
 - In your group, explore the meaning of the words. Be sure you understand what the selection is saying. Who is the speaker? What are the important ideas in the selection?
 - Now, as a group read the selection again. As you read, look for the words or sections that bring pictures to your mind. Underline these words or phrases that you find most interesting.
 - Now you may divide the lines. You will perform the literature as if it is dialogue. Each change in thought represents a new speaker and group of speakers. What you may not do is just assign line one to person one and so on.
 - Once you have created your dialogue, stand up and practice. Create interesting pictures as if posing for pictures, using tableaus and arranging speakers at different levels (heights). Get on your feet and try it. Adding movement will help to dramatize your literature.
5. Present your creation to the class.

Assessment:

Peer/teacher observation based on rubric.

Advanced: The students include, in a complete manner, all the words of the newspaper clipping which have been turned into dialogue. The speakers use clear and correct diction, articulation, and projection. The movement or staging of the performance is interesting to view and made with clarity. The performance is unique and expressive.

Proficient: The students include, in a complete manner, the words of the newspaper clipping which have been turned into dialogue. The speakers use adequate and mostly correct diction, articulation, and projection. The movement or staging of the performance is adequate and somewhat entertaining.

Approaching: The student does not include, in a complete manner, all the words of the newspaper clipping which have not been turned into dialogue. The speakers do not use adequate and correct diction, articulation, and projection. They may be difficult to hear or understand. There is little or no attempt at movement or staging. The performance is not entertaining.

Other Considerations:

- The lesson included different length selections to accommodate different reading levels.
- Have enough copies of the directions printed out on separate sheets of paper or cards. As you go around the room give each group a copy of the step they are on. That way the students are not overwhelmed with the number of steps. Otherwise the directions can be put up on the overhead.

Possible Extensions:

- Have the students add movement, props, etc.

Sources:

Carlisle, Barbara and Drapeau, Don, Hi Concept-Lo-Tech—Theatre For Everyone In Any Place, Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann, 1996. ISBN #0-435-07001-0
The Sacramento Bee, Sesquicentennial Edition, January 18, 1998.

Creating Reader's Theatre From the Pledge.

Original text:

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Becomes:

Speaker 1: I pledge allegiance

Speaker 2: to the flag of the United States
of America

Speaker 3: and to the republic

Speaker 4: for which it stands

All: one nation

Speaker 1: under God,

Speaker 2: indivisible,

All: with liberty and justice for all.

1

Who goes to California without a tent will sleep in the open air. This being true, miners and others should provide themselves with India Rubber Tents, Air Beds, Pillows, Rubber Camp Blankets, Long Mining Boots, Gold Bags, Isthmus Bags, (for pack mules), Portable Boats and a variety of other indispensable articles made expressly for the purpose, and for sale at the GOODYEAR RUBBER EMPORIUM, 159 Broadway, Rathbun's Hotel.

-Ad in the New York Herald, Dec. 28, 1848.

#2

HO! HO! HO! FOR CALIFORNIA! HO! LAST NOT LEAST!--Persons going out to the gold regions are seriously advised to take, among other necessities, a good lot of tombstones. A great saving can be effected by having their inscriptions cut in New York beforehand. These articles can be had in all variety to suit the gold country, at short notice, at the marble yard of MR.

Taunitz, 536 Broadway.

-Ad in the New York Herald, Dec. 18, 1848.

#3

"A smart woman can do very well in this country - true there are not many comforts and one must work all the time and work hard but there is plenty to do and good pay. If I was in Boston now and know what I now know of California, I would come out here if I had to hire the money to bring me out. It is the only country I was ever in where a woman received anything like just compensation for work.

-Unsigned letter to a San Francisco newspaper, 1850.

#4

"Hurrah for California! The greatest place in all creation, where gold is dug as 'taters (potatoes) are in this 'ere (here) Yankee nation. ..O! won't it be a glorious time when gold runs down like water. And nobody won't have to work and nobody had oughter. For who would plough (plow) , or sow, or reap, or endure labor's knocks. When he can slap with either hand a 'pocket full of rocks."

-Cleveland Plan Dealer, April 5, 1849

#5

"Oh, what was your name in the states? Was it Thompson or Johnson or Bates? Did you murder your wife, and fly for your life? Oh, what was your name in the states?"

-Popular California song, 1849.

#6

"The emigrants now leaving us for California appear to be remarkably orderly, respectable and intelligent. They are men of energy and enterprise, and full of enthusiasm ... The finest portion of our youth...So much the better for California.

-New York Herald, 1849

#7

It was a rainy afternoon when Mr. Marshall arrived at my office in the Fort, very wet ... He told me that he had some important and interesting news which he wished to communicate secretly to me ... then Mr. M began to show me this metal, which consisted of small pieces and specimens ... I declared this to be gold of the finest quality, of at least 23 carats ... by the sudden discovery of gold, all my great plans were destroyed.”

-John A. Sutter, Hutchings, California Magazine, November 1857.

#8

“The discovery of these vast deposits of gold has entirely changed the character of Upper California. Its people, before engaged in cultivating their small patches of ground ... have all gone to the mines, or are on their way thither. Laborers of every thread have left their workbenches, and tradesmen their shops ... I have no hesitation now in saying that there is more gold in the country drained by the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers than will pay the cost of the present war with Mexico a hundred times over.”

-Report of Col. Richard Barnes Mason, military governor of Californian, to the adjutant-general in Washington, Aug. 17, 1848.

9

“There are all kinds of people on earth that you will meet some day ... They will be looking for a certain stone. They will be people who do not get tired, but who will keep pushing forward, goin', going all the time...”

These people do not follow the way of our Great-Grandfather. They follow another way. They will travel everywhere, looking for this stone which our Great-Grandfather put on the earth in many places.”

-Sweet Medicine, Indian leader.

#10

Touch me gently,
friend of mine;
I'm all that's left of '49.
Many a long-forgotten
face
Hath watched me in
my good old place;
Many a heart once true
and warm,
Hath watched through
me the threatened
storm;
A moral on my face cast,
Which all must truly
learn at last.
Man' hopes and fears
are all, alas!
Like me, a fractured
pane of glass.

**-Poem found pasted on a
Hangtown cabin window, 1865
(Hangtown is now Placerville)**

11

“A frenzy seized my soul ... Piles of gold rose up before me ... castles of marble, thousands of slave ... myriads of fair virgins contending with each other for my love were among the fancies of fevered imagination ... In short, I had a very violent attack of the gold fever.”

-Herber Howe Bancroft, historian and argonaut

#12

For San Francisco Direct:

A first-class ocean steamship, of 18,00 tons, will be dispatched for the above port early in the month of February... This will be undoubtedly the best possible way of reaching the gold mines in the shortest time-avoiding all contingencies which are feared may happen on other routes ... For passage, apply to J. Howard and Son, 73 South Street.

-Ad in the New York Herald, Dec. 29, 1848

#13

A Husband Wanted:

By a lady who can wash, cook, scour, sew, milk, spin, weave, hoe, (can't plow), cut wood make fires, feed the pigs, raise chickens, rock the cradle (gold rocker, I thank you Sir!) saw a plank, drive nails, etc. Could read--and you can see she can write. .. Now, for her terms. Her age is none of your business. She is neither handsome or a fright, yet an old man need not apply, nor any who have not a little more education than she has, and a great deal more gold, for there must be \$20,000 settled on her.

Address Dorothy Scraggs, with real name. P.O. Marysville.

-Marysville newspaper ad, 1849.