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CURTAIN!
THE EFFECTS OF DRAMA-IN-EDUCATION
IN A NINTH-GRADE APPLIED ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study documents the observed and reported experiences of incorporating drama-in-education strategies into the study of short stories in a ninth-grade applied English classroom. Using noted experts, including Neelands and Goode (2003), Swartz (1995), and Perry (2005), the study defines drama-in-education as the experience of behaving as though one is other than himself or herself, in another place and time. Students are led through an improvisational learning experience through play, with the teacher acting as both facilitator and participant. Over the course of the study students explored five short stories, including “The Lady, or the Tiger?” by Frank R. Stockton, “The Most Dangerous Game,” by Richard Connell, “Rules of the Game” by Amy Tan, “The Cask of Amontillado” by Edgar Allan Poe, and “The Scarlet Ibis” by James Hurst. The teacher-researcher incorporated varied drama-in-education strategies into the study of each short story, experimenting with roleplay, writing in role, tableaux, and writing and performing in dramatic form. The author suggests that the utilization of various drama-in-education strategies, not only in applied, or average, English classes but also in any learning environment, may improve engagement, creativity, reading skills, a sense of community, motivation and enthusiasm, and frequency of independent reading. The author finishes with contemplating the possibilities of incorporating drama-in-education with other ability levels, subjects, and grade levels.

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RESEARCHER STORY

Although I've always known I wanted to be a teacher, there is one defining moment that drew me into secondary English education, leading directly to my research question. In the fall of 1996, when I was a junior in high school, my fellow honors English classmates and I encountered *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer. Approaching Chaucer for the first time was quite intimidating; after all, in my mind Chaucer wrote in "Old English" and was impossible to understand. But fortunately I had an excellent teacher who turned me on to the tales and brought the dead to life.

After studying the tales in cooperative learning groups, my teacher assigned us the task of developing our own tales and writing them in iambic pentameter. We were to select a job or occupation and write about the experience of working in that particular field. Beyond that, we would share our tales with the class and then venture out on our own pilgrimage into the mild autumn air.

As I reflect on the assignment, I am staring at a photograph of a younger me, donning a stiff yellow apron with white polka dots, clenching a mauve "Mom" mug and a pink sponge in my yellow rubber-gloved hands. I am sporting a red and white paisley bandana atop my head, with a rolled-up newspaper peaking out of my apron and a white dishcloth slung over my shoulder. That was my moment....

I was so excited. Chaucer's language and writing style seemed awkward at first glance; but now that I was able to use his rhythm and idea, I couldn't wait to get started. I wanted to make a story that would be as entertaining and humorous as his. (Ah...the naiveté of a 16-year-old dreamer....) I worked diligently at home

that evening, searching for the perfect words, the perfect rhythm, the perfect rhymes.

They call me a “housewife.” That’s my career,
But I prefer “domestic engineer,”
Because I deserve a worthy title,
For I am extremely far from idle.
I tackle each dirty dish with vast might.
If they’re deserted, what a horrid sight!
No speck of dust can be unseen by me.
As I rage into war, all dust must flee.
Debris is frightened by sights of my broom.
It surrenders as I walk in the room.
My next treacherous task is the laundry.
Its stench may arise, but it’s cured by me.
Next, I depart to the ironing board.
The clothes seem to be a furious hoard.
But the work is not finished already.
Sewing requires my hands to be steady.
The children race home from school like a fleet,
And demand, “Oh, Mom! What is there to eat?”
“I just returned from the grocery store,
Using my coupons so I can buy more.”
My husband depends on my services.
He believes his work is such a crisis,

But no one compares to what I do here,

For I am a domestic engineer.

True, I was no Chaucer, but I was so proud of my work. The day we shared our poems was much more than an open mic night at a coffee house. We were instructed to make our stories convincing by dressing as our narrating character. One by one we stood in front of the class, not only reading our poems but also animating them with our body language and voice inflection. At the conclusion of the readings, we took a “pilgrimage” outside, where our teacher ultimately took our pictures in role. That is the picture I reflect on today.

Because I was involved, because I had a voice, and because I played a role, I thought, *That is exactly what I want to do for other teenagers*. The whole class was engaged in the lesson. We listened intently to what our peers had written, and we grew together as a learning community. That assignment was one of the most exciting learning experiences I have ever had.

Though years had passed, and I had moved on to college and had attained a teaching position, I never forgot that Chaucer assignment. In fact, I carried that photograph with me, reminding me that my lessons and assignments should be fun and engaging. Yet somehow, that theory is easier said than done. When I was hired in August of 2002, I had only two weeks to prepare for the coming school year, teaching both freshmen and seniors. The freshman year consists of an overview of the various literary genres, and I decided to begin with short stories and build my way through the novel, drama, and the epic poem. My philosophy was that short stories were an appropriate springboard into further literary study.

However, I had a very brief time to read and decide on the stories the class would study and to develop lessons and evaluations to correspond with those selections.

As a result, I was scrambling day to day, developing plans as I went along. As I reflect on my experience, I cannot say there was much coherence in what I was doing. Therefore, I do not believe the students were truly engaged in the readings, and I doubt their levels of comprehension and analysis were anything more than adequate. I was not seeing the connections, enthusiasm, and cooperation that I had hoped to see. When I was working on my undergraduate degree, I had envisioned students overcome with enthusiasm for literature. After all, if I am excited about it, everyone else should be excited, right?

As the year progressed, the students engaged in the literature to a greater degree. When studying *Romeo and Juliet* the third quarter, the students dressed up and acted out the scenes and roleplayed a director by cutting the script. They worked in pairs and in groups more often and seemed to make more valuable connections to the text. I felt that the class had grown together and I knew my students much more at this time; unfortunately, it was the second semester. I wish I had been able to know them earlier.

I revised my short story unit the following year, yet I still did not see the results I had hoped to see. There were still many students who disappeared into the background, giving me no indication of how they were responding to the short stories. During the second marking period that year I implemented literature circles for the first time and saw great results. Using suggestions from Harvey Daniels (2002), students selected novels on their own and read and discussed them in small groups. The students were engaging in the novels in meaningful

ways and expressing their responses both in double-entry journals and in small group discussions. With the double-entry journals students made two columns, recording observations from the books in the left column and responding to these observations with personal thoughts in the right column. I was inching closer, but I knew I needed to nab them right from the start.

An unexpected answer presented itself during my graduate studies. As part of my graduate degree program, I enrolled in a course called Drama in Education. Prior to starting the class, I was excited to learn new strategies for teaching *Romeo and Juliet* to my ninth-graders. I imagined myself memorizing scripts, learning about stage presence, and acting out scenes with my colleagues—all with the intention of using my own experiences to help my students better interpret the play. Based on my prior experience with freshmen, 14- and 15-year-olds are unpredictable when it comes to *Romeo and Juliet*. Some are so enthused to act out the play and dress up that they lose their understanding of the story in the meantime. Others are more reserved and reluctant to act but impress me with their interpretation of the drama. And, of course there are many others somewhere in between. I was hoping Drama in Education would help me reach all of my students, regardless of their personalities and abilities.

My expectations for the course turned out to be a bit off the mark. Anne Finlay, the instructor, introduced me to a new way of looking at drama—the same type of drama my eleventh-grade English teacher used when teaching *The Canterbury Tales*—drama-in-education. The only definitions for drama I had prior to the course were (a) performing a play on a stage for an audience and (b) problems or excitement (e.g., Heather’s life is filled with so much drama—one

day her boyfriend is breaking up with her and the next her grandmother is dying). Yet, here I was, morphing my body into an emotion, participating in an improvisational “archeological dig,” and using chairs to build a “town hall.”

By the end of the course I had adopted a new way of looking at drama-in-education. I now saw it as an engaging learning process, whereby students are temporarily removed from the immediate and suspended in an imaginary world where they form their own ideas, make their own interpretations, and answer their own questions. Drama does not necessarily need to take place on a stage; nor does it need to be performed for an audience. Rather, drama-in-education can take place at any time, in any classroom, and with any students. Before taking a close look at incorporating drama-in-education in my classroom, let’s first take a look at what the literature tells us about the strategy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is Drama in Education?

Drama. When most people hear this word, they think of actors and actresses, plays, props, and scenery. Of course drama-in-education can mean much more. In the early 20th century Caldwell Cook's book *The Play Way* (1917) painted a different picture of what drama can be. "Cook believed that children learn better from doing and experiencing than just reading and listening" (Booth, 1994, p. 41). His theory has been embraced and expanded by many educators over the years and has led to a much broader definition of drama-in-education. Although educators, organizations, and theorists define drama-in-education in varying ways, these definitions all revolve around the basic concept of engaging students in their learning. Let's see what these individuals have to say about drama-in-education.

According to two researchers I learned about in Drama in Education, Neelands and Goode (2003),

Theatre is the direct experience that is shared when people imagine and behave as if they were other than themselves in some other place at another time. This definition seeks to encompass all forms of creative imitative behaviour—from the loose and spontaneous imaginative *play* of young children (which becomes internalized, but still used in later life as a way of rehearsing conversations and events to come) through to a more formal experience of *the play* performed by actors for an audience. (p. 4)

Here Neelands and Goode show us that dramas simply means taking on a role. This role can range from winning a beauty contest as Barbie in the comfort of one's living room to poisoning oneself as Romeo at the Globe Theatre.

The NCTE, or National Council of Teachers of English, defines the term in its guideline "Informal Classroom Drama." The Council labels drama as ...an activity in which students invent and enact dramatic situations for themselves, rather than for an outside audience...[This] drama...is spontaneously generated by the participants who perform the dual tasks of composing and enacting their parts as the drama progresses. This form of unrehearsed drama is a process of guided discovery led by the teacher for the benefit of the participants. (DeBlase, 2005, p. 29)

Purves, Rogers, and Soter, in their book *How Porcupines Make Love III* (1995) agree, writing, "It can take place in the classroom, it is largely unrehearsed, student and the teacher usually role-play real people, and it is not 'theater'; that is, it is informal and without actor/audience separation" (p. 105). This definition is in sharp contrast to the traditional view of drama. Here, students are not performing for parents in a crowded auditorium, poised with videocameras in hand. Instead, the drama is done within the realm of the classroom and is spontaneous. The students do not hover over scripts for hours in an attempt to memorize someone else's words. The students involved in classroom drama use their own ideas and their own words as a way of guiding their own learning. As with the traditional view of drama, in classroom drama students take on the role of someone or something else. They use this different perspective as a way to see the learning material through a new set of eyes. Although they are engaging in the material as

participants, they are also acting as spectators, depending on the responses of other students to create meaning.

Tonya Perry (2005), an editor for *English Journal*, writes the following regarding drama: “Drama is a performance tool that teachers can use to enhance thinking. Students can interact with the text and each other to develop a more complex understanding of the literature” (p. 120). In her view, drama is a tool, a strategy, that teachers can use to help students interact with literature. Instead of simply reading a text in class and assuming students have an immediate, complete grasp on the story, using drama-in-education strategies can be used to challenge the material and the students’ understanding. Unfortunately in many classrooms, teachers are, as Paulo Freire (1970) identifies them, depositors, while the students are depositories (p. 72). In other words, teachers fill the students up with knowledge, and sadly this knowledge has no meaning, no value. The students, because they are not actively engaged and because they are not challenging the material, working to find meaning, simply become containers to be filled (p. 72). Students instead need to dive into the material, swim around, and reach the other side with new interpretations.

I Get it Now, but What is the Point?

Sure, the use of drama can be extended into an informal classroom setting, but why should teachers use it? Louann Reid (2005), editor of *English Journal*, quotes Betty Jane Wagner, who says:

The goal is to learn *through* drama—for example, to explore the world in which a novel is set, to understand a historical event, to experience conflicts between different cultural groups, to see what

other walks of life feel like. Drama in education enables participants, either during the drama itself or after the drama in a discussion, to look at reality through fantasy, to see below the surface of actions to their meaning. (pp. 10-11)

Additionally, according to Larry Swartz (1995), dramatic activities are “...verbal and non-verbal activities to stimulate imagination, promote social growth, and develop improvisation skills” (p. 10). Additionally, he, along with several other authors and researchers, believes that “...literature can be the focus and springboard of drama explorations...” (p. 9).

Participating in drama, in itself, does not necessarily constitute learning. However, when drama is used as a tool to comprehend a story, an event, or a culture, students can gain a better understanding. Through stepping into another’s shoes, as the cliché goes, students can gain a deep understanding, through empathy, of what a character, historical figure, or different type of person sees and feels. Their imaginations and willingness to open up to new opportunities aids students in experiencing what cannot be experienced in the world of reality. We cannot literally travel back in time to be stacked tightly on a slave ship. Nor can we ever step into the pages of a book and ask characters questions. But by using an open mind and a *purposeful* dramatic activity, students can have these experiences in a very real way.

Let’s take a look at a specific example of how a teacher might incorporate drama-in-education with the intention of developing empathy and understanding in his or her students’ lives. Melissa McQueen (1996) shares her student-teaching experience of watching her cooperating teacher enlighten senior honors and

advanced placement English students with Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery." In "The Lottery" a small town conducts an annual lottery but not for the reason that we may presume. Instead of the winner earning money or something of value, the winner is stoned to death. The town uses this winner as a scapegoat and believes that the killing is essential for a plentiful harvest.

McQueen has noticed what many of us English teachers have noticed: when trying to cover an entire literary and grammar book in one year: students often lose the emotional connection that is so vital. After reading and discussing "The Lottery," the students unanimously agreed that what was done to the scapegoat was horrible, but such a horrific event could never happen today. The students then recorded their feelings about the story in their journals, reporting being disturbed by the events. The cooperating teacher next conducted a lottery of her own for the class to take part in, informing her students that if they wished to have the lottery, the lottery winner would be announced at the end of class. Those participating in the lottery would receive a free 100, and the lottery "winner" would receive a zero for an assignment. Ironically, though having recently discussed the horror of the short story, in both classes the students unanimously voted to have the lottery. The lottery was played out just as it was in Jackson's story. After the lottery the students discussed the theme of the story (p. 656).

What McQueen and the cooperating teacher found was that the students had understood the theme of "The Lottery" but were unable to apply it to their own lives. Once the students in the advanced placement class realized what they had done, everyone sacrificed his or her 100 and took a zero, along with the "winner" of the lottery. The students were shocked that they had not thought

seriously about the loser in the situation. This class had found the compassion that was lost in the story (p. 657). Would the students have reached the same discovery without having participated in the dramatic activity of the mock lottery?

What cannot be stressed enough is that drama, although powerful, is a tool. It is a means to an end, a process, not a product. “[T]he intent is to use drama as a tool to explore the general themes and serve as a catalyst for critical inquiry” (Downey, 2005, p. 33). Used as a tool, drama-in-education can help students analyze and interpret a story, event, or situation. Rather than glossing over information in order to say, “We can check that off the curriculum map!” it helps us look deeper into the material for true meaning. Drama allows us to spend time considering various points of view and it forces us to use the text to support our opinions. Drama also provides us with the opportunity to consider characters’ intentions, the influence of setting on the plot, and the significance of point of view.

Further, Eileen Landay (2005), quoting Madeleine Grumet, writes, “...[N]ew and compelling research explores the unique characteristic of the arts to support human cognition and memory. Studying and creating symbolic representations drawn from more than one symbol system deepens and transforms learning” (p. 45). She continues by stating, “Large-scale studies demonstrate significant correlations between arts education and student achievement, with the largest gains being made by low-income students and English language learners (Catterall, Chapleau, and Iwanaga)” (p. 45). Using the arts, drama included, helps students not only engage in the material but also learn through the activity. As many know, most students are not primarily auditory learners. In fact, according

to Edgar Dale's Cone of Experience, we remember 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear, 30% of what we see, 50% of what we hear and see, 70% of what we say or write, and 90% of what we say as we do something (Boulmetis, 2000, p. 1). Reflecting on Howard Gardner's (1993) Theory of Multiple Intelligences, students use varying avenues through which to learn, including kinesthetic, spatial, and interpersonal skills—all elements represented in drama. Drama-in-education enables students to use their different strengths to make meaning for themselves.

Along with aiding low-income students and English language learners, as mentioned above, drama activities can also support the learning for reluctant readers. According to Anna Quinn (2005), "We ask students to reflect on and interpret stories they may not have experienced. Good readers visualize stories in their minds, hear the characters' voices, and see their gestures. Teachers can help reluctant readers enter the action of the story by using drama" (p. 47). Using drama enables such students to imagine what foreign experiences may be like. They can live vicariously through a character from the hills of West Virginia, or they can feel what it's like to ski down the slopes of the Alps.

Finally, as David Booth stresses, "Play is vital to the development of children. We watch as they grow and learn spontaneously in their play time—talking, developing their imaginations, ordering and making sense of their experiences through their own observations and impressions" (p. 24). With the ominous pressure of standardized tests hovering over the heads of teachers and students alike, playtime has been replaced by work time. No longer are kindergarteners playing house; rather, they are writing complete sentences. When

this important play is removed, students do not develop into the social, imaginative, creative individuals they should be. Sure, they may know how to solve $2x + 3t = 14$ but at what cost? Bringing play, through drama-in-education, back into our schools is imperative, even at the high school level.

Why is play important? Lev Vygotsky (1978) answers this question by writing, "...[I]n play, things lose their determining force. *The child sees one thing but acts differently in relation to what he sees. Thus, a condition is reached in which the child begins to act independently of what he sees*" (pp. 96-97). When children are engaged in play, an object can serve as a symbol for another, or act as a substitute. For example, when pizza is not available, a tissue serves just fine. Children can use their imaginations to pretend the tissue is a slice of pizza. They enter into a world of fantasy, governed by rules. They understand that one thing is another. Looking at it this way, using children's play is a great example for teaching the concept of metaphor. The children, although they see a tissue in front of them, do not behave as though it is really a tissue. Rather than being soft, thin, and white, the tissue becomes hot, cheesy, and delicious. Children hold the tissue with care, believing that the bubbly grease could easily spill onto their hands. Reality is suspended.

What Do My Students Get Out of It?

In drama-in-education students are responsible for their own learning because they make their own meaning as they experience the activity. The teacher's role is not one of dictator or distributor of knowledge; instead she acts as facilitator, and even a participant. Because the students are responsible for their own learning, they can reap a multitude of benefits: developing empathy and

understanding; learning about elements of fiction; understanding texts, themselves, and the world; comprehending, interpreting, evaluating, and appreciating texts (DeBlase, 2005, p. 29); developing a strong sense of community (Landay, 2005, p. 39); linking texts to one another and to their lives (Landay, p. 45); having confidence and freedom to write for pleasure (Booth and Neelands, 1998, p. 13); learning how to develop a sense of character and voice in their writing (Booth and Neelands, p. 19); and improving their communication skills (Booth, p.19). Rather than receiving, memorizing, and regurgitating empty facts, students involved in and engaged in drama learn, apply, and retain meaningful skills that last far beyond the classroom. For example, practicing the art of applying a story's theme to one's own life is a strength that can be applied in future high school and college classes, in addition to being used in independent reading. By students continuing to ask, "What does this story mean for me?" they will likely develop into lifelong learners.

To illustrate the life-changing power of incorporating dramatic activities, Daniel Mindich (2000), an English teacher at Camplain Valley Union High School in Hinesburg, Vermont, shared his findings of a roleplay activity that influenced his students beyond the classroom. Mindich found early in his teaching career that although students were quick to disagree with prejudice and aggression, they rarely considered the forces that caused these conflicts. As a result, Mindich decided to develop a roleplay activity he called Ada Valley. Through Ada Valley, Mindich hoped to see his students realize those factors that come into play, causing groups of varying backgrounds to come into conflict. He

also wanted his students to understand that fault in these situations is difficult to place (p. 128).

When Mindich introduced his students to Ada Valley, he explained that there were three ethnic groups present: an indigenous group, well established settlers, and a new immigrant population. He explained that none of the groups were either good or bad. The indigenous group, or Wanyamans, had lived in the area for as long as anyone could remember and raised domestic bears and lived as nomads. When the settlers, or Kakungans, came in, the Wanyamans welcomed them, even though they took over a great deal of the land. The Kakungans lived simply and used the fishing industry to make money. Lastly, the Ho-hums, from the neighboring country, recently moved in to work in the Kakungan's factories. In total, the Wanyamans composed 20% of the population, the Kakungans were at 56%, and the Ho-hums made up 24% (p. 129).

Mindich set up groups that represented each ethnic group in Ada Valley, divided by population percentage. Then he explained the tension among the groups. The Kakungans felt threatened by the Ho-hums because they had a keen business sense, buying up one of the fish fuel refineries in fact, and had different traditions—singing and dancing late at night and wearing bright clothing. As a result, the Kakungans cut off immigration. Further, the increasing population had made the Wanyamans realize that their once ideal life was now disappearing. The event that brought everything to a major problem was that a Ho-hum student had been killed. The town then decided to hold a meeting to discuss the issues that faced the valley (p. 130).

At this point the roleplay began. Each group met to create a national identity. They made posters and wrote anthems. The groups then created a character who represented one way of thinking for their particular group. Next, the students wrote opening speeches and chose one person to represent the group at the town meeting. Once each representative had spoken, the floor was open for debate, Mindich acting solely as facilitator. The meeting ended when talk came to a final decision—war, cooperative resolution, or compromise. The end typically came after three or four hours of class time. After the roleplay, the students discussed what happened at the meeting. Finally, Ada Valley concluded with a three-part project: a polished form of one of the informal pieces written earlier (a freewrite describing their character or an opening speech), an analytical essay on the issues in Ada Valley, and an artistic interpretation of the situation (pp. 130-33).

Through the roleplay Mindich found that students were able to empathize with people in similar conflicts. He also found that the simulation reminded students to think before judging or voicing an opinion, considering the difficulty of negotiation. The students further realized that working and living together involves much more than being nice to one another. Finally, they thought critically about “who speaks for a group, how decisions get made, how frustration can accompany working out a complex issue, and how willingness to sacrifice is at the core of all successful negotiations between parties with clashing interests” (p. 133).

Mindich’s research shows that drama can allow students to see the world in a new way. His students learned more about themselves, about cooperating

with others, and about conflict resolution through the roleplay exercise. Mindich was able to set up the activity in such a way that the students thought about the bigger picture and how they could apply what they had learned to how they behaved in their own lives.

Drama can be an enriching experience that is unlike our required curriculum. As Booth and Neelands write,

Drama allows children to use reflective language in the classroom for a greater variety of purposes than many areas of the curriculum allow. Its very nature encourages children to imagine, predict, hypothesize, and evaluate as they explore situations, solve problems, make decisions, create new contexts, interpret new information, and reassess previous attitudes. (p. 30)

As Booth and Neelands point out, it is the reflective language that pushes students to develop these skills. I believe a major aspect of true learning is reflection. Just as John Mason (2002) advises educators to reflect on their teaching, I think it is equally valuable for students to reflect on their learning. When we reflect on the material and reflect on our experiences, we can gain a better sense of who we are as individuals—our learning styles, our interests, our strengths—while at the same time grasp the intended learning objectives. Whereas students often demonstrate learning through an objective test in many classes, drama activities require students to look much deeper into the material.

Alistair Martin-Smith (1998) also found that, after using various drama activities across the curriculum, "...teachers had reported significant gains for pupils in the areas of creativity, mental flexibility, and problem-solving skills..."

(p. 87). When students are asked to use their imagination, these qualities are involved. Using creativity helps to make the drama more exciting, more interesting and more fun. Throwing on a wig and roleplaying a character sounds much more creative and enticing than writing a five-paragraph essay on three qualities this character possesses. Mental flexibility also makes for a more engaging learning environment. Students are asked to use higher-level thinking skills to analyze and interpret the material. In order to create a tableau of a key scene from a short story, students must first understand the story. Then they must be able to recognize how events are related. In addition, students must evaluate which scenes play the most important roles in the story. Finally, they need to stretch their minds to discover how best to represent that scene through their bodies, gestures, and facial expressions. Regarding problem-solving skills, students, when presented with a task, must work their way through from scratch. All of those decisions they need to make along the way help them to solve problems creatively and quickly.

John Dewey (1938) believed in the importance of providing meaningful experiences for students that allow them to grow and learn. In his words,

...[G]rowth depends upon the presence of difficulty to be overcome by the exercise of intelligence. Once more, it is part of the educator's responsibility to see equally to two things: First, that the problem grows out of the conditions of the experience being had in the present, and that it is within the range of the capacity of students; and, secondly, that it is such that it arouses in the learner

an active quest for information and for production of new ideas.

(p. 79)

Not only must the lesson be close enough to the students' current abilities, but it must also be interesting and engaging. For students to effectively work through a challenging situation, they must have an internal desire to pursue the task. Drama-in-education is one way of cultivating this motivation.

Elizabeth A. Fischer (2000), an English teacher at Bernards High School in Bernardsville, New Jersey, shares her story of how we might motivate students and watch them grow. After finding that her students were not making authentic connections to the text, Fischer decided to revamp her *Canterbury Tales* unit. She felt as though she were suffering from a split personality because she had considered reading literature and writing two entirely separate entities. To resolve her problem, she decided to use the two modes of communication together, choosing to incorporate reader response, allowing students to make their own meaning of the text through responding in personal, self-selected ways (pp. 40-41).

For this unit the students read "The Miller's Tale" from Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* for homework. The tale tells the story of Nicholas, a man in love with a married woman named Alison. Through tricking Alison's husband John into believing a flood is inevitable that night and securing tubs to the roof, where John sleeps that night, Nicholas and Alison are able to sneak away to have sex. However, their plan is later foiled when Absolon, another man in love with Alison, causes a disturbance and awakens John.

In class the next day the students used the first 10-15 minutes to write in their response journals. This writing could only peripherally relate to the text. In other words, the students needed to make connections to the outside world. Then, in groups of four or five, students shared their journal responses. Once the groups had discussed the responses, they presented three of the responses to the class. The group tasks varied. For example, one group representing Nicholas sent a letter to a group representing John for a response. When all groups had presented, the class evaluated the responses for validity. For closure, the students listed what they learned from the tale, what ideas the tale's content and form gave them to use in their own writing, and whether their initial views of the tale had changed (pp. 43-44).

Through her teacher action research, Fischer found that the students' responses were valuable and insightful. When asked to sort them by validity, the students had no problem backing up their remarks with evidence from the text. She further found that when students had more choice and flexibility in what they wrote, they were more willing to participate. Also, they were able to show as much understanding with creative activities and creative writing as they would in a formal essay. As a result, Fischer no longer assigns formal essay (pp. 44-45).

Though *The Canterbury Tales* is a challenging text for many high school students, because Fischer allowed her students flexibility and choice in their assignments and encouraged fun roleplay activities, her students grew, working through the challenge. They developed an internal drive to make sense of the tales for themselves. We do not need to feel like Superteacher, spewing out all the information we know about our subjects, to have an impact on our students. In

fact, the more we allow them to have meaningful experiences and to learn independently, with our assistance as needed, the more they will be able to grow into responsible, caring, well-rounded individuals.

What Are Some Drama Activities I Can Use with My Students?

Roleplay

In roleplay, students act as though they are someone or something else, possibly in another place and time. As Booth puts it, "...there is the self that one begins with, and the *other* that one takes on...*Role* is the juxtaposition of these two parts, so that the learning is viewed internally but from a new or different perspective" (p. 21). As an example, Perry describes an activity she used with her students when studying *The Diary of Anne Frank*. In the story Anne Frank tells the frightening tale of hiding from the Nazis during World War II. Disappointed with her students not taking the story seriously, laughing and snickering at inappropriate moments, she devised a roleplay situation to enable the students to empathize with Anne Frank. Because Perry's students were so far removed from the horror of the Holocaust, they did not seem to understand why it was so important to remain completely still and quiet. Perry used the lesson I describe in the following paragraph to illustrate the importance of thoughtful, reverent study of the Holocaust (p.122).

As the students entered the room, Perry asked them to maintain silence. She then instructed the students to imagine that they were hiding from the Nazis, as Anne Frank had done. Next she began showing video clips of the war, stating

that if anyone discovered their location, what was about to happen in the video would happen to them. The video included shots of soldiers pulling the Jews out of their homes and relocating them to ghettos. It also showed Jews being forced onto trains that drove to concentration camps, having to separate from their families and live in detestable conditions. Next, Perry instructed her students to move to the center of the room, or the “attic,” and sit quietly for five minutes (p. 122).

Through the experience of living as a Jew in hiding, students grew more reflective, understanding through empathy, what Anne Frank may have been feeling and experiencing. Perry’s interpretation is as follows:

Reading the dramatic text alone will not render the deep understanding we want for students. Students need to grapple with the meaning of words and thoroughly understand the context of the time period. Students can call words and follow stage directions, but the true test of thinking beyond the dramatic surface is the students’ ability to understand the meaning and apply this thinking beyond the author’s words. (p. 122)

Just about any student can read the story, but in the typical English/language arts classroom, how many of these readers truly understand it? By the words “truly understand,” how many feel the struggles of the characters? How many know the difficulty of remaining still and quiet? How many grasp the fear the Jewish people had of being caught? How many understand the consequences of being found? Through the experience of becoming a Jew in hiding during World War II, students were better able to empathize with those in the story.

Perry's lesson is only a sample of what one could do, using roleplay as a tool. If you are a biology teacher teaching the parts of a cell, you may have students roleplay the various parts and act out their respective functions. Or you may be a health teacher who is teaching her students what to do in various emergency situations. You might choose to develop emergency scenarios and ask students to roleplay the individuals involved. Through roleplay the biology students are connecting what they have learned to concrete ways of seeing the unseen. What better way to make the microscopic visible than to make it life-sized? And for the health students, how better to ask them to apply what they have learned?

Hotseating

According to Larry Swartz, "In hot seating, students assume the role of a character from a novel, poem, play, or story. When they take the hot seat, they are interviewed by classmates or group members who want to discover more about the character—how she or he feels about events, people, and places" (p. 141). Using hotseating benefits both the one being hotseated and also his/her fellow classmates. The student being interviewed needs to think on his/her feet and respond as the character would. To do so, the student must have a full understanding of the intentions, desires, and experiences of the character. The rest of the class also benefits because they are challenged to ask questions for which the answers are not provided in the text. They must use their imaginations, creativity, and internalization of the material to formulate intriguing questions that only the character can answer.

Writing in Dramatic Form

Although a major point about drama-in-education has been that it is informal and spontaneous, including much more than performing a play for an audience, writing and performing scenes is a way of using classroom drama. Anna Quinn used such a method in her teaching of “A Rose for Emily” by William Faulkner to English Composition II students at Blue Mountain College. “A Rose for Emily” is about a woman named Miss Emily who apparently kills her paramour Homer Barron and keeps his skeleton in an upstairs bedroom. Quinn’s students wrote and performed scenes from the story, and Quinn noted the following, quoting from her observation journal:

‘Tammy is excited as she contributes lines to Natalie and reacts to what Natalie says....As I came into the classroom on Friday, Robin and Karen were busily working on their skit before class started....Dave was so excited about the activity, he wrote two skits.’ I overheard Amanda say, ‘This is fun. I’ll bet this is the way they write the TV shows.’ Tammy and Dave were two of the students who had scored the lowest on the reading test given at the semester’s outset. Robin was usually playing when I came into the classroom, never working. (p. 48)

Based on these responses, it doesn’t take the smartest students, the most creative students, or the hardest-working students to find success with drama. Students whom many teachers would not predict as enjoying such an activity and working hard were busily engaged in the lesson. Before using the drama, many students had not comprehended the story in their initial reading. After the drama, Quinn found that “...they understood the sequence of the story much better” (p.

48). Her research provides support for the research done on drama, claiming that drama improves comprehension and motivation for learning.

Writing in Role

When students write in role, they take on the persona of someone or something else, responding as that individual would. Through the process “[w]e write to see what we think we have said” (Booth, p. 124). Quinn writes of her experience in teaching Robert Browning’s “My Last Duchess,” using the art of writing in role. In the poem a duke recalls his former wife who was, in his mind, too friendly with other men. The poem implies that the duke was responsible for her ultimate death. Quinn’s students took on the role of the ambassador, writing a letter to his boss, the count, “...explaining why he believes the count’s daughter should be protected from the duke” (p. 49). Through the drama, Quinn found that students were constructing meaning out of the poem. She references Jeffrey D. Wilhelm, who states, “[R]eaders build and own this meaning’ (111)” (p. 50). The students used the evidence presented in the poem to make inferences about the ambassador’s reaction and suggestions. These inferences were used in a meaningful assignment that demonstrated full understanding of the ideas in Browning’s poem.

Perry describes a dramatic activity she used with her students that also asked the students to take on the role of someone else. She put a twist on the typical author report by asking her students to write their research findings, not in

the third person, but in the first person, assuming the role of the author. Through the assignment, Perry found that students were seeing the author's life through his or her eyes. Additionally, "Students began to draw conclusions about the writing instead of relying solely on expert opinion" (p. 122). The writing forced the students to think for themselves, and the information became more relevant and important to them.

Tableaux

Tableaux, or frozen pictures, are another great way to engage students in the material through drama. In tableaux, students use their bodies, gestures, and facial expressions to tell a story. The tableau may be of a key scene, an emotion, a theme, and so on. According to Downey, "In a tableau, an event or experience is distilled into a single image, like a snapshot. The actors might represent a real or an abstract image, highlighting power dynamics, emotions, and relationships by their gestures and their bodies' positions in relation to one another" (p. 34).

Downey illustrates how her students used tableaux to summarize the major events in the poem "Hangman" by Maurice Odgen and then used their problem-solving skills to show what changes could have been made to prevent the violence. In the poem a hangman comes to town, killing one person after another. The narrator stands back and allows the hangman to complete his task; after all, the hangman is after others, not the narrator. However, at the end of the poem there is no one left except the narrator—the one the hangman was truly after. First, in groups, students created four tableaux to show the major events. After presenting these tableaux, students returned to their groups and identified where a more positive action could have taken place to prevent the violence to come.

Next, they presented the tableaux again, but this time they changed their second and/or third scenes, and as a result, their final pictures reflected a more positive ending (p. 37).

Downey writes the following of her observations of the activity:

I have found that when students analyze and reshape the story of 'Hangman,' they exude a sense of power that was not present when they were dramatizing the poem as written. They become agents of change. They better recognize the complexity of the issues, the challenges and dangers of actively addressing injustices head-on, and the necessity to do so....Engaging in educational drama humanizes figures of historical import while magnifying the courage it takes to confront justice. (pp. 37-38)

How many teachers can say the same of their students following a long lecture?
After an objective test? The power drama holds for our students is incredible.

PILOT STUDY

Considering Neelands and Goode's theory of theater (drama), my English classes would be ideal settings for students to experience drama-in-education. Realizing that drama is not limited to performance on a stage but that it is a strategy that can aid students in experiencing new adventures, I determined that using the technique would be ideal in allowing my students to plunge into literature. Although many of the literary selections I ask students to read take place in unfamiliar times and places, there is a variety of activities available for students to see a story from the point of view of the characters involved, thereby encouraging the students to empathize with the characters. Additionally, using such strategies increases active engagement in the texts; as a result, students are more likely to understand, analyze, and connect with the story. In her secondary reading instruction text *Yellow Brick Roads* (2000), Janet Allen states that

...when the conditions for learning are right and students spend their days with engaging texts, generating and pursuing questions that are intriguing to them and getting feedback that helps them understand there is something larger than the lives they know, it becomes more difficult for them to continue in their unwillingness to learn. (p. 14)

I knew that I had engaging texts, and using the engaging activities would most likely pull in students of diverse backgrounds, interests, and learning styles, regardless of their enthusiasm for learning.

For my final paper in Drama in Education, I wrote a unit plan incorporating drama-in-education strategies. While *Romeo and Juliet* might seem like a more obvious choice, I instead selected my short story unit, hoping to enliven the learning experience at the beginning of the year, when it is so crucial to “hook” the students. Sure, *Romeo and Juliet* is a great unit for using drama-in-education strategies, but what would be the results of using drama in an unexpected place—the short story unit? Purves, Rogers, and Soter (1995) claim that drama can be used with a variety of literature, short stories included. Surely drama-in-education could work just as well for the imagination, social growth, and improvisation in this unit, right?

That fall I utilized several of the techniques I had learned in the course in both my college preparatory and applied English classes. I wanted to incorporate dramatic activities into my classroom because I felt that students could reap many benefits from participating in drama. First, I believed that as the short story unit progressed, students would grow more comfortable with one another and feel part of a community of learners. I also felt that students’ reading skills could improve through tying drama to the reading. Additionally, I believed the use of drama could increase the rate of participation in both class discussions and in the students’ willingness to participate in voluntary drama activities. Further, I thought that students’ creativity could increase, and the students could come to think of themselves as creative individuals. Finally, I felt that drama-in-education

could influence students' attitudes toward reading to grow more positive in nature, encouraging students to read for pleasure more frequently.

Considering the possible benefits of incorporating drama-in-education and reflecting on the methods I had previously used to teach short stories, using drama strategies was certainly worth a try. In the past, in both college preparatory and applied classes, I sometimes fell prey to the trap of assigning a short story to read for homework, giving a reading check (i.e., quiz), and being disappointed with the results. Some students would not read at all; many would read but not comprehend the story; a few would read and understand the story; and even fewer would read, understand, and be able to interpret and analyze. Of course there could be an infinite number of reasons for these varying responses to the reading. Maybe I did not adequately prepare students for the independent reading. Perhaps I needed to equip my students with important reading strategies. Maybe they were not excited enough about the class or the assignments to be motivated to read. Or possibly the students simply did not care. Whatever the reasons, the majority of the class not being engaged in the stories showed my current strategies were not working.

Though my first attempt at integrating drama-in-education into the study of short stories was an informal study, I did find that, overall, students were engaged in the literature. I incorporated many drama-in-education activities into the study of short stories, but I will share only a few of the most important here. In "The Lady, or the Tiger?" by Frank R. Stockton, a semibarbaric king discovers a secret relationship between his daughter and an unworthy subject. The king sentences the young courtier to a "trial" in his amphitheatre, whereby the man

must open one of two doors, though he does not know what either holds. Should he open the door to a tiger, he is considered guilty of a crime and devoured; should he open the door to a lady, he is considered innocent and married. Through bribery the princess learns the secret of the doors and leads her lover to the door on the right, though Stockton ends the story without revealing what was behind the door. After reading the story and completing a discussion web, whereby the students considered whether the princess would have chosen the door holding the lady or the tiger for her lover and recorded reasons supporting both alternatives, students roleplayed the lady and the tiger. One student volunteered to be the lady and, donning a homemade wig and in character as the lady, worked her hardest to convince the class that it was she to whom the princess led her lover. Another student volunteered to be the tiger, tiger mask and all, and attempted to convince the class that in fact it was he behind the door. Both individuals used the arguments they developed through their discussion webs to present their cases.

Later, before reading “Rules of the Game” by Amy Tan, I wanted my students to understand characterization so that when we read the story they would be able to pick up on clues that show us the personalities of the characters and also the relationships between characters. To achieve that goal, I set up “crime scenes” around the room and assumed the role of a detective, asking my “crime scene investigators” (i.e., the students) to analyze the evidence and solve the crimes. The scattered crime scenes all contained women’s purses as the only pieces of evidence left behind. Each purse varied in style and held a wide range of items, including checkbook ledgers, fast food menus, and horoscopes. The class broke up into investigative teams and drew conclusions about the owners of the

purses, as far as personalities, hobbies, interests, and lifestyles. They also made decisions about what type of crime was committed, where it occurred, and how it occurred.

At another time, after reading “The Scarlet Ibis” by James Hurst, the students, again in small groups, performed tableaux vivants, or living pictures, illustrating what daily life may have been like for Doodle, a disabled young boy. I asked that they approach the activity in a mature manner, and the idea was not to make fun of Doodle but to understand his daily struggle. Each group member portrayed a character from the story and showed Doodle’s interaction with the characters. Through the activity I was hoping they would understand Doodle’s life with greater empathy and be able to relate the scarlet ibis to Doodle.

Through the implementation of drama-in-education strategies, I noticed greater rates of not only comprehension but also interpretation and analysis. Students were able to place themselves in the shoes of a character and understand that character’s intentions, thoughts, and feelings. It was a pleasure to see reluctant students taking an active part in their learning through roleplay and tableaux. Although I gave no formal surveys, my impression, through their responses, was that my students were able to empathize with characters, even though they shared no common experiences. The drama activities seemed like a valuable link to making a connection to the characters.

MY QUESTION

After conducting a pilot study of incorporating drama-in-education into the study of short stories, I desired to know more. I wanted to use more formal research methods, both qualitative and quantitative, to determine if and how my initial interpretations were accurate; therefore, I used a fresh group of students this year, asking: What are the observed and reported experiences of incorporating drama-in-education into the study of short stories in a ninth grade applied English classroom?

Why did I believe drama-in-education strategies were a good choice for my applied students? As I learned, drama is a reliable way to engage students in learning. Drama, as mentioned, is not limited to performing a play, so I had many options from which to choose. I could use roleplay, hotseating, writing in dramatic form, writing in role, and tableaux, among others. I was hoping to see students taking an active role in class and therefore being responsible for their own learning (Booth, p. 24). Thus, I was hoping to see all students participating in class on a regular basis.

Also, as drama-in-education encourages students to use their creativity (Martin-Smith, p. 87) and personal interpretation, I wanted to observe my students expressing themselves freely, without feeling the constraints often placed upon them in high school. Unfortunately in many high school classrooms students are deprived of using their creativity and personal interpretation because teachers are there to tell the students what to think. Instead I hoped to see my students using higher-level thinking skills to create their own meaning.

In addition, I hoped to see drama aid students in improving their reading skills (DeBlase, p. 29), since acting out a scene or taking on the role of a character can help them understand a story. In order to become a character, one must understand that character's thoughts, feelings, and intentions. As a drama activity proceeds, students may learn more about why a character behaves in a particular manner since he or she has jumped into the character's skin. Hence, not only can comprehension levels increase, but students can also better interpret and analyze a story through being engaged in drama-in-education activities.

Another way that I wished for drama to impact the students was through developing a sense of community (Landay, p. 39). I have found that students do not know everyone in a class at the beginning of the year; in fact, they may know only half of their fellow classmates. The freshman year is such a challenging year for many because they go from a school with two grade levels to a school with four grade levels. At the high school, they sit at the bottom of a tall totem pole, and unfortunately many students disappear in the shuffle. Yet the freshman year can be so exciting because students are finding themselves, figuring out who they are. By engaging my students in drama, I hoped to see them make long-term friendships, learn how to cooperate with and respect others, and learn more about themselves.

Increased motivation and enthusiasm (Dewey, p. 79) for reading and learning were two more goals I was hoping to see the students achieve. Too often I hear students complaining about a particular class being boring; they dread going to the class and have no excitement once there. Though there is no magical solution for turning students on to learning, I hoped to see that, through

incorporating drama-in-education strategies, my students would be eager to come to class and learn.

Lastly, I hoped to see that, through the engaging drama activities, even reluctant readers would be involved and excited (Quinn, p. 47). As a result, I wanted to see if drama would encourage these students to read for pleasure on a regular basis. In a time when video games and television reign, danger looms for books. I wanted to show my students how exciting reading can be and therefore see a positive correlation with independent reading.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design

I began my research in August, at the start of the 2005-2006 school year. The high school where I teach is a large school of nearly 3000 students. We obtain our sizeable student body from an approximately 50 square mile radius, drawing in a diverse population from urban, suburban, and rural areas. I had selected a ninth grade applied English class to study that held a range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and learning styles and abilities. Using the first unit of the year, short stories, I planned to spend approximately three months on the study.

Methodology

Because I had many areas I was studying, I felt it important to employ a variety of data collection methods. Hence, triangulating the data, as noted by such researchers as Ely, et al. (1991), was crucial to representing my students in the most accurate manner. In other words, I needed to gather data through various collection methods and compare the results. For example, a participant observation could be compared to a journal response and a student survey. After all, although this is a story of how drama-in-education worked or did not work in *my class*, it is above all *my students'* story.

Field Log

I used a field log on a daily basis to keep a record of my observations. The observations included the responses I saw as a participant or nonparticipant when incorporating drama-in-education strategies and how students behaved and reacted toward one another. I sought to record observation notes in class when

possible, so as not to forget what had transpired. I used MacLean and Mohr's (1999) suggestions for compiling a field log—taking “informal notes about puzzling things that happen[ed] in [my] classroom,” recording “dates and times, careful quoting, observations, and reflections.” I also numbered my pages and lines and limited my note-taking to the right side of the page, recording personal notes in the wide left margin (p. 12). These personal notes were reflective in nature, for according to MacLean and Mohr, “Observations are not complete...without reflection” (p. 28). Following the authors' suggestions further, my field log consisted of the following entries: “Descriptions of events and interactions that occur[red],” “[b]its of conversation,” “[s]urprises,” “[r]eflections on what [I saw] happening, speculative writings, questions, and tentative hypotheses about why certain things might be occurring,” “[p]eriodic descriptions of [my] assumptions and preconceptions about [my] question,” “[t]houghts and reactions to the research process itself,” and “[t]eaching ideas that [came] out of [my] research and descriptions of what happen[ed] when [I] tried out the ideas” (pp. 14-17).

Surveys

In addition to the observational notes, I kept various pieces in my field log, including surveys (See Appendixes A-F). MacLean and Mohr profess that a survey “...gives you a broad base for understanding your students' ideas in regard to your research question, a profile out of which a more specific study may take shape” (p. 41). There were several surveys I planned to have my students complete over the course of the unit. First, I would ask them to complete a survey prior to my implementing any drama elements. This survey would serve as

baseline data, allowing me to compare future survey results. Hubbard and Power (2003) define baseline data as “information you collect at the beginning of the project to determine the ‘starting point’ of understanding” (p. 62). Then I planned to have the students answer survey questions following the study of each short story. The questions, aside from story-specific questions, would be identical; therefore, I would be able to analyze the data by noting change over time. At the end of the unit I planned to distribute a final survey and compare the results with the other surveys previously collected.

One-on-One Interviews

Before starting the unit I intended to interview the same five to six students on three occasions: before studying short stories, in the middle of the unit (after the third story), and at the conclusion of the unit (see Appendixes G-I). I chose to stay with the same students because I wanted to see how their attitudes, motivation, and feelings toward class, their peers, and reading changed. I also planned to select students of varying academic abilities in order to see thoughts from different perspectives. Rather than conducting an improvisational interview, I intended to prepare a list of questions in advance that I would ask each student individually. I wanted to make the interviews as standard as possible so that comparisons were more reliable, though I also was open to asking additional questions if they became relevant. I followed the tips offered by Hubbard and Power for interviewing, including the following: “Listen actively,” “[b]e flexible in your questioning,” “[a]llow the interview to continue long enough so that important points are able to surface,” and “[w]rite down key information” (p. 63).

Journals

As part of my regular curriculum, my students write journal entries on a regular basis. For this study, I added several new prompts, totaling five that focused on the stories we would be reading. In these journals the students were be asked to take on the role of a character from one of the stories we read or to imagine a similar situation. I wanted to look for their ability to take on a role and use evidence from the text to creatively answer the prompts. Using journals allowed me to see if the students were not only comprehending the story but were also analyzing the story and applying it to their lives. MacLean and Mohr advise collecting such student work in one's field log (p. 37).

Independent Reading Chart

I chose to have my students keep a chart that measured their independent reading (see Appendix J), one form of anecdotal records mentioned by Hubbard and Power (p. 41). This independent reading, or reading for pleasure, included anything not assigned in a class. The reading could be a book, short story, poem, newspaper, or magazine. The students would record the date, time spent reading, genre, and reason for reading. I collected these charts once a week.

Student Work

I collected any work that the students produced so as to compare the results to my observations and their survey and interview data. Student work could include a discussion web for "The Lady, or the Tiger?" or a film script version of "The Most Dangerous Game." I intended to use the student work to analyze the degree to which students understood, interpreted, and analyzed the short stories. Hubbard and Power advocate the saving of all student work for the

influence it holds, stating that “[j]ust the sight of a reading log or student draft of writing can often jog your memory, recreating the experience of how it was created within the classroom context” (p. 59).

Participation Checklist

The purpose of the participation checklist (see Appendix K), another form of anecdotal record mentioned by Hubbard and Power (p. 41), was to record the number of times students participated in class, either in voluntary activities or discussions, and determine whether there was a change over the course of the unit in the frequency of participation of individual students and a change in the number of students who participated. I tried marking the chart on a daily basis; however, after discovering early in the study that the maintenance of the participation checklist was actually interfering with my mental involvement in class, I placed this method aside.

Trustworthiness

“He who knows others is wise. He who knows himself is enlightened,” according to Lao Tzu. Though I studied others and learned from them, it is just as important to understand myself and my personal interpretations. Acknowledging my own point of view is vital to analyzing the data in the fairest way possible. As I embarked on my study, I was careful to keep my stance, or as Ely, et al. (1991) define it, “...the various perspectives through which we frame the collection and interpretation of data...” (p. 32), in mind. I realize that I approach my study with certain preconceived ideas and assumptions about myself and my students.

One point that I was consciously aware of throughout my study was my natural excitement about literature. I understood that I may have had a difficult time understanding my students' perceptions of reading and responding to literature. My experience in high school was, I'm sure, very different from theirs in many respects; but one obvious difference is that I was always in honors and AP English, while these students are in an applied English class. I did not pretend to understand the experience of applied students, but at the same time I did not feel as though I could not connect to them because of the difference. Instead I recognized that our personal lives vary, but we were still human—we still had the same basic needs and desires. In addition, I tried diligently to know each of my students...to learn their backgrounds, experiences, interests, and goals. As I have previously stated, freshmen are unpredictable. Only through learning about them on an individual basis would I learn what worked best for them.

I also understand that because our backgrounds and past experiences vary, I may have different interpretations than my students have. As I am no longer a teenager (thank goodness!), it is impossible to accurately estimate the understanding of my students without their input, without their voices. Therefore, as stated in my methodology, I looked at a variety of data and used it to consider my students from a multiplicity of views. I may have observed my students taking part in the activities and assumed that they were engaged and excited; however, their survey results sometimes contradicted my perspective. To be a trustworthy reporter of the data, I must present all sides of the story, rather than living in my own Pollyanna world.

Ensuring trustworthiness is a vital element to this study; hence, I followed M. L. Holly, J. M. Arhar, and W. C. Kasten's (2005) ethical guidelines for teacher action researchers. First, they suggest obtaining permission to conduct the study (p. 176). I obtained proper permission from three sources: Moravian College's Human Subjects Review Board, my high school principal, and participants' parents/guardians. Please refer to Appendixes L-N for these consent forms.

Another point Holly, Arhar, and Kasten suggest is involving participants (p. 177). Everyone in my applied English class was involved in my study. My personal views may vary greatly from the students', but I took all of their ideas and points of view into consideration. To ensure that I am accurately representing them in my thesis, I used participant checks to ensure that I was understanding the data. For example, when I interviewed students individually and did not understand what they were trying to say, I rephrased questions or asked them to clarify themselves.

Next, I realized that I needed to ensure confidentiality (p. 177). Confidentiality is based upon respect. From the first day of class, I have stressed two important issues with all of my students: (1) we must all show respect for one another, and (2) if they share any information, either in verbal or written form, that is of an abusive, a suicidal, or an illegal manner, I am legally obligated to report the incident. Although I work hard to build a respectful, trusting environment, the students must also understand that I have professional obligations. I strive to convince the students that what they say or write in private will remain private. However, I must also make them realize that I am not their friend; I am their teacher. Some issues cannot be kept private.

I also needed to ensure anonymity (p. 177). I used pseudonyms for all of the students I report on in my thesis. These replacement names are known only to me; students did not have access to the list of pseudonyms.

Additionally, I informed participants of the right to withdraw (p. 177). This right was clearly stated in their consent forms that I sent home the first day, and I also made them aware of it verbally. I informed them that they may withdraw at any time without penalty. Also, I explained that they would still be participating in the same activities as part of the regular curriculum, but their responses and assignments simply would not be recorded in my data collection or reported in my thesis.

Another important point is to build relationships of trust (p 177). My students entrusted me with the responsibility of representing them fairly and in the most accurate way possible. In addition, I'm sure they wanted to feel that they could genuinely be themselves and have natural reactions and impulses. I did not want a fake study. Because I wanted my students to display their true selves, I made this point clear throughout the study, asking them to respond as honestly and naturally as possible. I told them that if they did not like something or did not agree, they could share that honest opinion with me, and I would not look down upon them for their views. I let them know that I needed their honesty to conduct a worthy study, for without their honesty my research would not be as useful to me or others; nor could I learn as much from my reflections alone.

Next, the authors believe that a teacher researcher must be self-reflective (p. 177). As a teacher, I feel that I naturally reflect on my practice every day. This reflection occurs before class, during class, after school, and even when I lie in

bed waiting for sleep. But doing this study meant that I needed to consciously reflect and take notes on my reflection. I needed to take a look at what was going on in my classroom and consider ways to improve. Therefore, I set aside time each day to reflect on my class and my study. I took notes in my field log on progress and digression, personal feelings about the lessons, and interpretations of students' reactions. Additionally, as part of the requirements for the course I was taking while conducting my study, I read works by John Dewey, Paolo Freire, Lev Vygotsky, and Lisa Delpit and used their philosophies and experiences to reflect on my study and apply their words of insight and advice to my classroom.

Finally, through the course I was able to form a teacher action research support group who challenged me to reflect on my study. MacLean and Mohr stress the magnitude of forming a research group, stating, "Mutual support is important to both the researcher and the research" (p. 19). They continue by listing the ways in which such a group may be beneficial:

What usually happens when small groups meet is that teachers read and discuss their research logs, data, attempts at analysis and findings, and drafts of articles. The group challenges each other's assumptions, methodology, responds to drafts, and often lends personal as well as professional support. The group also validates the members' research data and analysis by questioning and offering a variety of interpretations in addition to those of the researcher. (p. 21)

Together we brainstormed ways to gather data from multiple perspectives, and we used the data to understand what was happening in my classroom. We met on a

weekly basis, reading one another's work and offering helpful advice. The other two members of my group not only helped me write a trustworthy and organized thesis, but they also helped me to stay focused and sane, empathizing with my daily struggles and frustrations.

THIS YEAR'S STORY

Here We Go...

Recently a gentleman made a comment to me: “Teachers have the best job in the world—they have their summers off!” I must agree with him, though not from the same perspective. I agree that I do have the best job in the world—it is unbelievably rewarding to watch a child grow and learn before your eyes. And I also agree that it is gratifying to have two months to reflect on the past school year, noting what was and was not successful, and to use that time to plan better lessons for the coming year. I believe that is an important mark of a good teacher—to learn and make improvements through reflection. My goal for this study was to do just as John Mason advises educators to do—“to stand outside of the incident and consider it as an object to be analysed, generalised, and used to inform future practice” (p. 56). This year I set out to reflect.

I began my research the first week of school, having been granted permission from Moravian College’s Human Subjects Internal Review Board to conduct the study. I was assigned to teach two ninth-grade honors and three ninth-grade applied English classes. Because I felt that selecting an honors class to study would be “too easy,” I wanted instead to take on the challenge of studying an applied class. Most honors students will do whatever I ask of them and will do it ten times better than I expect. Applied students, however, often struggle with reading and writing and are often reluctant to participate in discussions on reading selections. Furthermore, these students are less likely, from what I have seen, to enjoy reading and to read independently for pleasure. Lastly, the mix of students in an applied class contrasts the population of an honors class; I was more likely

to encounter students of racial and ethnic diversity. Though I would be teaching three applied English classes this year, I wanted to narrow my study to one class so that the data would be manageable. When selecting the class I was sure to choose one where I would have plenty of time immediately following the period to write and reflect. This criterion was vital for me so that my memories of what had transpired were fresh in my mind. The class I selected was composed of 19 students of varying cultural, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Before starting my short story unit, I had several goals to meet. First, I explained my intended study to my chosen class, making sure they understood the purpose and expectations. I made it clear to them that they were not required to participate in the study, though they would still be participating in the daily activities as part of the regular curriculum. I also let them know that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Furthermore, I made them aware that at no time would their names be used in my reporting; instead I would be using pseudonyms that would be known only to me. Honestly, I was a tad frightful that I would be bombarded with resistance, but I was pleasantly surprised to sense a general excitement in the class. Though it was the first day of school, which is typically a day of student silence, this class was already engaged. There were smiles, questions, and laughter, giving me a sense of assurance that I could find success with my study.

That day I sent home consent forms for the parents and guardians to sign, granting me permission to include their children's stories in my data collection and published thesis. I included the same information in the form that I shared with the students that afternoon. By the end of the week I had received nearly all

of the parental consent forms—17 out of 19. The final two forms were never returned to me, though these students were still expected to participate in the same activities as their classmates.

Pre-Study Surveys

On the first day of school I asked my students to complete pre-study surveys. The purpose of the survey was to gather baseline data. I planned to use the initial survey results to compare responses as the unit continued. Questions focused on the areas I planned to study: feelings toward class participation, reading, creativity, and sense of community. The first seven questions asked the students to rate their agreement or disagreement on a scale of 1-5, and the subsequent eight questions were open-ended. My original plan was to use the surveys to rate not only individual students but also the class as a whole to mark change. However, as I soon realized, several students had such poor attendance that it would be more reliable to study individual changes over time. I made this decision for two reasons: these regularly absent students were rarely present to complete the surveys in a timely fashion, and because they were routinely absent they did not share the experiences of those with good attendance.

Though most of the data collected in this first survey would be used to compare future responses, two related questions held immediate relevance. The following questions confirmed what I had believed before setting out on this study—most students do not know many of their classmates well at the beginning of the year. *Before walking into this class on the first day of school, how many students' names did you know? (Provide the specific number.) Of these students, how many did you know well? (Provide the specific number.)* Though the first

question resulted in numbers ranging from zero to 16, the latter resulted in numbers from zero to six. There is such a large student population in our high school that it is difficult for these students to get to really know one another well. Through the course of the unit I planned to use observational notes to track their interactions with one another and use survey and interview data to follow their feelings of comfort and trust to see if a sense of community would develop.

Another question that verified what I had felt prior to the study was: *What is your definition of dramatic play/roleplay?* The students' responses helped me construct the following poem.

Poem: What is Drama?

Acting

Romeo + Juliet

Drama

Something with a lot of action in it

Act something out

Acting out a story

I do not know

Like a first person kind of view

When someone/thing is in suspense

A definition is The diary of anne frank

When you emphasize what you talk about

To act more than really happen

Acting

Though I hadn't originally planned the poem to turn out as it did, I now see that the very shape of the poem speaks aloud the ideas of the students. Observing the shape, I see a girl wearing a poofy skirt, a girl who looks as though she is on a stage performing. A word that is often repeated in the students' responses is acting. Before I spoke to them about my ideas of drama-in-education, they expressed their thoughts of drama centering around acting...maybe acting out a play or a story. As we worked our way through the short story unit, I hoped to open my students' minds to an expanded perspective of drama-in-education, including taking themselves to another place and time and behaving as though they were someone or something else.

Independent Reading Charts

Another data collection form that I asked my students to complete was what I called an Independent Reading Chart (see Appendix C). The charts instructed students to record their time spent reading, the genre of the selection, and the purpose for reading. I asked them to complete the charts on a daily basis and submit them once a week. My goal for the Independent Reading Charts was to track changes over time for individual students to note any possible correlation between the drama activities and reading for pleasure. Though I realized the impossibility of stating that using drama caused students to read more on their own, I was interested in seeing if students' rates of independent reading would in fact increase. If I saw a positive correlation, I planned to consult students on an individual basis and learn from them their personal beliefs for the changes.

When I introduced the Independent Reading Charts, several students asked what to do with the charts if they did not read at all. I told them that I would be

collecting them regardless, so I would still need them to submit the charts with their names at the top. This question, unfortunately, did not surprise me. Based on my experience with freshmen, many of them, particularly in applied English, do not read for pleasure. I asked my students to be honest about their reading. If they did not read, they could be honest and submit a blank sheet. I explained to them that I would rather have the students turn in blank sheets all quarter than to have them lie about reading for 14 hours.

Interview #1

On the third day of school, I informed my students that I would like to interview volunteers and that I would need to interview these same individuals at three intervals during the course of my study. I was anxious when requesting volunteers, as I was afraid that there might be little interest. I imagined that they would be too shy or nervous to be interviewed, but they shocked me. After coordinating my schedule with those of the volunteers, I had six willing participants for my one-on-one interviews. I planned to meet the students in their study halls over the next few days. Using study hall time was important for me because I did not want to take up valuable class time, and the setting of study hall was neutral territory. I wanted the students to feel comfortable, and the classroom may not have been the most comfortable place at the beginning of the year. Based on the students' responses, I composed the following layered story, following the description by Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul (1997) of piecing together various perspectives (pp. 78-80). Here I have layered the stories of three individuals I interviewed, using the same set of questions.

Layered Story: Interview #1

Gloria

Yeah, I consider myself a good reader because I like to read some books, like science fiction, *Harry Potter*, and *Red Hall*. I don't read all the time, but sometimes, and I understand what I read. I feel comfortable in class, but I don't like to talk to people a lot unless they're my friends. I only participate sometimes—if I feel confident in my answer, I like what we're talking about, and I'm in a good mood—but I don't like to participate in discussions of stories. I read for pleasure sometimes. I like to read science fiction and fantasy...fairly long books, and I also like to write my own stories. I think I am a good writer, but I could better myself by using more vivid words. I'd like to learn how to use words effectively. To become a better writer, I should read different genres of books. I think I am pretty good at creativity because I write my own stories. I use characters from a video game and develop my own characters.

Jimmy

I'm, like, a little bit of a good reader because sometimes I miss stuff in the books, and I have to reread them to figure it out. In English classes I'm, like, a little bit nervous when they ask me about verbs and adjectives because I'm not really comfortable with them. Sometimes I participate...if I know an answer I like to share but not if I don't know the answer. I like poetry, so I would participate in that and short stories, I guess. I don't read on my own all the time, and it's not really for pleasure, maybe for school. When I read on my own I read mysteries and short stories. Maybe I could be a better reader by focusing on reading the book and looking at the main point. Maybe my teacher could teach me some

tricks. I think if I didn't skip anything that would help, too, because I sometimes like to skip if it's a boring part. I think I'm pretty creative, probably a 7/10 because my parents call me a smart talker. I pretty much know what to say in any situation.

Mariah

I am a good reader because I read in my spare time. I am really confident in English classes! Last year I could spell really good, so my teacher would ask me how to spell things. When I have something to say, I say it, so I like to participate in class. I'm really outgoing, and I won't keep things to myself. Even if I'm not comfortable or don't feel good, I'll still participate. I like to read horror and mystery novels and contemporary fiction on my own. If there were more books on the ninth grade book list that I'm interested in, I would be a better reader. If I tried to read books that I may not be interested in, I could extend my reading. I am really creative. I'm just really outgoing, I have a lot of opinions, and people tend to agree with me.

When I interviewed the six individuals, I found that they all had different styles and interests. Factors that I was studying, including reading skills, participation, and creativity, varied widely among these students. I chose to represent the range by taking a close look at the feelings of three of these students. What I noticed about Gloria was that she seemed intelligent and interested in learning. She enjoyed reading, but she was much quieter and more reserved than Mariah. Gloria did not usually participate unless she felt confident in her answers. Jimmy seemed reserved as well and unsure of himself. Mariah appeared to be

confident, articulate, and well-read, and I wondered why she had been placed in an applied English class. She liked to read, and her answers were more fluent than most of the others I interviewed. After reflecting on the interviews, I was looking forward to tracking all of their responses and their classroom behavior as the unit progressed. Would Gloria open up in class and be willing to participate freely? Would Mariah prove to be the outstanding participant I expected her to be, and would she express a profound interest in class as I hoped? Would Jimmy gain confidence, and would he read more independently?

The other three I interviewed—Tom, Matt, and Julia—also ranged in abilities and personalities. Tom seemed to lack essential skills and would need help. He did like to read, but I wasn't sure his reading was on grade level. I found that when he answered my questions, Tom started out with, "I don't know," quite a few times. I was not sure if he did not understand me or if it was something else.... As for Matt, this was his first English class outside of ESL. He also did not answer my questions well, and I often struggled to understand what he was trying to say. Julia, on the other hand, appeared articulate and interested in class; and I wondered why she, along with Mariah, was in an applied class. Based on my initial impressions, I was interested to see if Tom and Matt's reading and writing skills would strengthen over the next few months and if Julia would live up to my expectations of being a star student.

“The Lady, or the Tiger?”

“The Lady, or the Tiger?” by Frank R. Stockton was the first short story my students read. The story takes place during the time of the gladiators and involves a love affair with a princess and an unworthy subject. The king discovers

the romance and, being the semibarbaric ruler that he is, is enraged and objects to the relationship. The king orders the subject to be thrown into an arena, where the guilt or innocence of the man will be determined. If the subject opens the door to a lady, he is considered innocent and is married on the spot as a reward. However, if the man opens the door to a tiger, he is instantly devoured as a sign of his guilt. As it turns out, the princess has bribed her way into learning the secret of the doors, and the story ends with the princess directing her lover to the door on the right. The reader never learns who is behind the door.

Class Story

The major literary element I wanted my students to study in this selection was plot. Instead of reading the story and then showing them where each part of the plot pyramid was located (i.e., exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution), I borrowed an idea from Janet Allen (2000), first asking my students to construct their own story as a class. Allen explains, “As students dictate, the teacher acts as scribe and guide, documenting the words students use to express themselves” (p. 24). What I hoped to accomplish through the activity was to become more familiar with my students—their personalities, abilities, creativity, and willingness to participate—and to use the class story as a more interesting and engaging springboard into studying plot. This activity, along with the surveys and interviews, would serve as baseline data for further comparison.

On the day of this lesson, 14 students were present. I asked them to develop a list of 14 random words as I recorded the list on the board. Then I explained that we would be using all 14 words in our story. The story, although it might be silly, needed to make sense and have a beginning, middle, and end. I

gave the option of going around the room or having them chime in when they got the vibe. There were three votes for going around the room and four votes for the vibe. Only 7/14 voted, which disappointed me, but there were enough votes to have a majority vote for the vibe. I explained that I would be recording the story on the back board, so I needed a volunteer to check off the words on the front board as we used them. Many students raised their hands, but I selected Barry because he hadn't seemed to participate as much as the others whose hands were up. He looked very happy as he casually trotted up to the board, wearing a goofy half-smile on his face. Others seemed disappointed that they had not been selected until I noted that he was not excused from offering a sentence. Then I heard several "Oh's." When I first saw so many excited volunteers for checking off the words, I was misled into believing they wanted to participate for the sake of engagement. However, after their response to Barry's being chosen, I surmised that most only wanted to volunteer to be exempt from actually writing the story.

After introducing the activity and making it clear that all students were expected to offer a sentence for the story, I heard Gloria say, "Oh, I hate school." She put her hand to her forehead, as though devastated, distraught, upset, angry, or disappointed. This reaction surprised me, considering that Gloria had recently shared with me in her interview her excitement for writing.

The story moved along fairly well with several students eager to participate, including Mariah, John, George, and Paul. However, once the class realized that Paul's sentence did not connect at all with the previous sentence and he refused to try the sentence again after my suggestion, Paul withdrew for a while. Instead of following along with the story, Paul wrote the words "Your

mom” twice in his notebook and avoided participating, even mumbling to himself. There were three students who seemed to be avoiding the activity: Dave, Gloria, and Nicole. When everyone else had already participated and these three were sitting in silence, I needed to ask for a show of hands of those who had not yet offered a sentence. Gloria and Nicole admitted they had not participated yet, but Dave did not. Only after gently confronting him did Dave give a sentence. Then Nicole offered a sentence. She did not seem resistant, only shy and unsure of herself.

Gloria was the last student to contribute a sentence for the story, and it was not even a sentence she constructed on her own. Barry had said the sentence aloud a couple of times first. What Gloria originally offered was, “And then he [Michael Jackson] woke up and got ready to go to court.” Based on the previous sentence, “Michael Jackson woke up, and it was all a nightmare,” Gloria’s sentence repeated the fact that he woke up. Students were saying, “Wait, that doesn’t make sense. The sentence before that said that he woke up.” I consulted Gloria before changing anything, and she agreed to remove the “waking up” part. I felt terrible when this incident occurred because not only did she seem turned off to the idea from the start, but she also was being criticized for the sentence she had offered. Would this unfortunate incident prohibit Gloria from wanting to participate in the future? Would students treat Gloria with respect in the future, and would Gloria be able to feel part of a community of learners?

The final story turned out as follows:

1. mom
2. eggs

3. chicken
4. words
5. teacher
6. Michael Jackson
7. door
8. Rick James
9. poster
10. litter
11. bug
12. penguin
13. Jo-Jo
14. beanbag

Michael Jackson sat in the teacher's beanbag chair. As Rick James's mom was cooking chicken and eggs, Michael Jackson got up and shut the door. Then he went back to the chair and read the words on Jo-Jo's poster. Then, the litterbug came into the room and yelled at the penguin next to Michael Jackson for dropping a piece of paper on the floor. Then the penguin slammed Michael Jackson in the face and cried to Blanket and took his blanket. And the mom came in and killed the bug. Then they ripped up the Jo-Jo poster. And then Jo-Jo jumped out of the poster and beat them all up. And then they had to go to the hospital. And Jo-Jo died. Then they all had broken legs. Then they all had to take medicine. Michael Jackson woke up, and it was all a nightmare. And then he got ready to go to court.

Despite its faults, the story belonged to the class. They worked together as authors to pull unrelated words together to make some sort of sense. Once the story was finished we discussed the plot pyramid, using their story as a model for breaking the plot pyramid into its individual parts. As I stated earlier, my main objective for the activity, other than discussing plot, was to understand the dynamics of the class. I would later use this initial experience for comparison to future drama-in-education activities.

Making Your Mark

Following our reading of “The Lady, or the Tiger?” the class participated in a quick activity I call Making Your Mark that would eventually lead into a drama-in-education activity. I drew a continuum on the board, labeling the far left “Lady” and the far right “Tiger.” Next I made a vertical line in the center to mark the neutral territory. Then I explained that the students would be coming up to the board to make their marks. The marks represented where their opinions layed. In other words, whom or what did they feel the princess chose to be the fate of her lover? If the students were strongly convinced that the lady was behind the door, they would place a mark on the far left. If they were leaning toward the tiger but had some doubts, they might place their marks between the center and the far right. Next I said, “If you really aren’t sure, you could go either way....” Then Judy immediately shouted, “Put it in the middle!” Yeah—they got it. They all went up to the board and made their marks.

There is definitely something symbolic in this part of the activity—every student has a voice, and all voices matter. All points are recognized. The way they made their marks shows that they have different styles. Some used vertical lines,

others used asterisks, one made a circle, and one made a smiley face. When everyone was seated, I made comments about what I noticed. There were quite a few clustered toward the center, three nestled near the tiger, three closing in on the lady, and one leaning toward the lady but not completely. In my view, if students' opinions vary from one extreme to the other, Stockton's story still has relevance in the lives of adolescents today. Their diverse points of view would serve us well to begin the activities to come.

Discussion Web

Using the results of Making Your Mark, I led the students into a Discussion Web. I stated that although there were several who were undecided, the activities we were about to do should help them make a decision. I then asked the students to write their names on the Discussion Webs and cross out "Reasons Yes" and substitute those words with "Lady." Before I could say it, Judy shouted enthusiastically, "And for 'Reasons No,' 'Tiger!'" I was so excited to see her feeling comfortable shouting things out (appropriately, of course) this early in the year. I then asked what they thought the "Central Question" would be, and the class came up with the question immediately: *Who came out of the door?*

Next I explained that I wanted them to list a minimum of three reasons why the princess may have chosen the lady and three reasons why she may have selected the tiger. I asked them to use evidence from the text to support their reasons. For example, they could not write, "The tiger threatened the princess," as this incident never happened in the story. Using a question Jimmy asked about using one-word answers, I further explained that students needed to provide text

support for each reason. Instead of writing, “She was jealous,” the students needed to supply the “why” behind the motivation.

Then I allowed the students three minutes to work independently on completing the Discussion Webs, followed by two minutes of working with a partner. They worked very well independently, being both quiet and well behaved. It was a pleasure to see everyone working. Working with partners also turned out well. The students seemed eager to get together and had interesting ways of forming groups. On one side of the room, Mariah chose a group for herself, speaking to Julia and Nicole, saying, “This will be a trio.” On the other side of the room I saw Dave snap his fingers and motion for Jimmy to come to his desk to work. The partnerships and triads worked well, with no one being left out and with students discussing the story the entire time.

Lady and Tiger Roleplay

We were now ready for the major drama activity of the day: roleplaying the lady and the tiger. Following the Discussion Web, I announced that we had two very special guests joining us who had traveled through time and across the ocean to help us make a decision about who was behind the door. I asked if anyone knew to whom I was referring. George asked if someone was hiding in the closet. I said that, no, these two individuals were in the classroom among us. Then several guessed that I was referring to the lady and the tiger and they were the characters. I asked for two brave volunteers. Four immediately volunteered to roleplay the characters, a relief for me who was afraid no one would be willing. To select just two students, I tried to use a fair method—guessing a number between one and twenty. Though I had confidence in the one awarded the job of

portraying the lady, I was a bit unsure when it came to the tiger—Jimmy. When I had interviewed him previously he had seemed hesitant, and when he had read part of the story aloud he was very quiet. I was not confident in his being believable and animated.

I explained that both characters would try to convince the class that she or it was truly the one behind the door. The characters would need to provide reasons that were supported by the text, though they could also spin off into reasonable explanations of what may have happened once the door was opened.

Jimmy, the tiger, went first. I encouraged him to take on the role of the tiger, to act like a tiger. I mentioned that tigers make noises that people don't—they roar. Jimmy said, "Okay, I can do that." I placed a scarf on his head for "head protection" and then placed the tiger mask on him. As I walked toward a seat, I thanked the tiger for traveling so far to meet with us today and asked him to begin convincing us that he was the one behind the door.

Jimmy first explained that the princess chose him as the fate for her lover because she was jealous and did not want the courtier to be with anyone else. The roleplay then took an extended angle with the class asking the tiger intriguing questions:

George: How hungry were you?

Jimmy (Tiger): I'm not hungry now.

Ms. Hary: How long did they starve you ahead of time?

Jimmy: One week.

George: What did he taste like?

Jimmy: Umm...not like an animal. It was messy. There was blood

everywhere, like barbeque sauce.

The individual who portrayed the lady was a nonparticipant in my study.

I would consider the roleplay activity successful because the comments on the part of the volunteer characters directly related to the story. Their reasons for being selected were reasonable and believable, and at the same time they “got into character.” They looked beyond what was presented in the story and made hypotheses about what may have happened once the door was opened. I feel the Making Your Mark and the Discussion Web activities helped them to succeed in the roleplay because they had already brainstormed their ideas of whom the princess chose. Though the roleplay was improvised, the class was prepared for engagement in the activity. At the end of the roleplay, we discussed the characters’ stories, and I asked the class to vote for who or what they believed was behind the door. Purves, Rogers, and Soter (1995) believe “The discussions or reflection sessions you have during the dramatic activities or afterward provide an opportunity to discuss what happened and to explore what the students have learned about the events, the characters’ personalities and feelings and relationships, and about the issues or themes in the story...” (p. 110). Though several students were unsure during Making Your Mark, every student had made a decision by the end of the period. Interestingly, the opinions were split down the middle. I was pleased to see students for students find an equal number of reasons to support both sides of the issue. Though “The Lady, or the Tiger?” takes place hundreds of years ago, there is a universal humanity to the characters. As a result, my students were able to make connections to the lady and draw valid conclusions about her desires, emotions, and actions. I also feel that continuing to

use these drama-in-education activities in the future will be a helpful guide for students diving into the story. After working through the reasoning of the princess with the activities, all students were able to make solid decisions.

Journalist Journal

After finishing our discussion of “The Lady, or the Tiger?” I used a tip from Purves, Rogers, and Soter (1995), who believe “Dramatic activities...provide a stimulus and a focus for many different genres and functions of writing” (p. 111). I assigned the following journal entry: You are a journalist asked to report on the final events of the young courtier’s experience in the amphitheatre. Not only were you in the crowd yourself, but you have also interviewed the princess. Your article is due to *The Amphitheatre Times* by the end of the period. In order for your editor to publish the article, you must provide sufficient details describing the event. You must also be certain to report on three reasons the princess gave you in the interview for making her selection (minimum 10 sentences). I used the students’ journal entries to compose the following pastiche, where multiple perspectives are presented simultaneously (Ely, 1997, et al., p. 96), constructed with their own words (spelling and grammar in tact).

Pastiche: The Lady or the Tiger?

Lady

she didn't want to send him to
death because we can still be
friends

she wanted him to live to have a
happy life

Tiger

he can not be parading around with that
horribal woman

I am no longer in love with him

I still love him any ways

*she loved him and didn't want to
see him die or get hurt*

I'm quite mad

I didn't want another woman to have him

I loved him but if he went with the lady

I would never see him agean

My dad would banded me from the casile

Honestly, I was a little disappointed with the journals because, although several students convincingly took on the role of a journalist, most of them did not provide three reasons for the princess' choice. Overall there were few details about the course of events following the opening of the door. Reflecting on the entries after reading through them a couple of days later, I wondered if I had not allowed them sufficient time to write the journal entries, as I had allowed about 15 minutes to compose. In fact, Tom asked me at the end of the period if he could finish his journal entry the next day. I also wondered if I had not provided enough modeling; hence, the students had not been fully aware of my expectations for the style of the writing. I believe there is value in this journal because it allows students to summarize what they have learned from the discussion web and roleplay activity. Their success with the journal depends on their involvement with the lesson and their understanding of the workings of the princess' mind.

Reflecting on the insufficient time in class to compose, as I transitioned into the next short story, "The Most Dangerous Game," I planned to allow more class time to write. I hoped that the additional time would foster more developed

and creative work in which the students could take pride in their efforts and in which their hard work was evident.

“The Most Dangerous Game”

Before embarking on Richard Connell’s classic short story “The Most Dangerous Game,” I set a few goals for my students. In this story Rainsford, a hunter who is shipwrecked on an island, encounters Zaroff, a man-hunter. Zaroff sets a proposition for Rainsford, whereby Zaroff will hunt Rainsford for three days. If Rainsford eludes Zaroff, Zaroff will concede. In the end Rainsford does escape Zaroff and wins the game. “The Most Dangerous Game” is a thrilling story with intriguing characters and an eerie setting. I wanted my students to understand how suspense, characterization, and setting worked within the selection, for they would eventually be composing and performing a film script version of the story for themselves. To explore the element of suspense, I incorporated a popular film *The Outsiders* that uses dramatic techniques to keep a viewer guessing.

***The Outsiders* Suspense**

We started with a brief discussion of the students’ ideas of suspense. I wanted to know what their background knowledge told them regarding the definition of suspense and also what it is that movie directors do to create suspense. John, not usually a participant in class, offered several answers during this discussion. The students offered many responses, noting the following ways in which directors create suspense:

1. darkness
2. screams
3. being alone/isolated

4. creepy/eerie music
5. noises (sounds were imitated)
6. loud music

Next I showed a short clip of *The Outsiders*, which most of the class had either read or watched previously. I chose to use a film with which the students were familiar so that they understood the events leading up to the scene I showed. The clip was of Ponyboy and Johnny fighting with the Socs. While the Socs were drowning Ponyboy in a fountain, Johnny kills one of the Socs. During the viewing, I had asked the students to jot down a list of ways in which the director created suspense. At the conclusion of the scene, we discussed their responses, and even Nicole, who at the time rarely spoke in class, joined in. The class' responses included the following:

1. darkness
2. pulling out knives
3. being alone
4. isolated in the park
5. image of blood
6. Ponyboy drowning
7. music
8. running

The students definitely had a great understanding of suspense, which I had hoped would lead them into locating the suspenseful parts of “The Most Dangerous Game” and ultimately into developing their own suspenseful elements in their film scripts.

Setting the Scene

Because “The Most Dangerous Game” starts off on a yacht in the Caribbean Sea and because none of my students had ever experienced sailing on a yacht in the Caribbean, I took them there through a drama-in-education activity to help them understand Rainsford’s perspective at the beginning of the story and understand how he was stranded on the island. Of course we could not afford to take a real trip, but using bulletin board paper and a relaxation CD was nearly as effective. Before the students entered the room, I prepared the setting. I taped a long strip of blue bulletin board paper down the center of the room, representing the sea. I also set up the CD so that it would be ready to play when we were in role.

Before taking part in the drama-in-education lesson, we previewed the text together, making predictions about the meaning behind the title and corresponding illustrations and asking questions we would like answered along the way. Then I invited my students to take an adventure with our protagonist, Rainsford. I asked them to join me on the yacht. I turned off the lights and closed the shades, since in the story the characters are enveloped in pitch blackness. Then I started the CD—calming ocean waves rocking us back and forth. Once the students sat on the blue paper, there was a general interest and excitement. Of course there were a few who were resistant and refused to move from their seats, but then there was George. As soon as he had walked into the classroom he asked me if the blue paper was water, and after hearing my response he asked if he could “go swimming.” Now that it was a more appropriate time in the period, George asked again, “Can I go swimming now?” Not only did George go

swimming (as Rainsford ironically would be doing in the story), but he also lay down on his stomach and exclaimed, "I'm on a boogey board." Apparently the props were convincing enough for at least one student.

We read the story together for the remainder of the period, changing the ocean waves to jungle noises once Rainsford swam to shore. For the most part the students seemed engaged in the story, and based on their survey responses to the question of whether they enjoyed the activity and whether it was helpful, most were positive in their comments. Below is a poem, constructed from their survey results, using their own wording.

Poem: Come Away with Me

Yes: It was comfortable

Yes: It was pretty cool

No: It was stupid

Yes: You got to feel like you were actually in the story

Yes: we no very we are

So-so: some thing to do

Yes: I felt like I was rainsford

Yes: It was intresting and I enjoyed them because It was different.

No: I understand the story perfectly its very simple

Yes: it made us feel like we were in Rainsford position

Yes: It help understand what was going on

No: I don't how ocean and Jungle sounds will help me

Strangely, again I see an image in this poem: a ship. I imagine the ship being composed of my students, departing on an experimental adventure in drama.

Though most of them went along for the ride, I cannot help reflecting on the final line that, to me, represents the “ocean” of the image. This student, Jimmy, along with two others, had a negative reaction to the activity. Their comments show me that drama-in-education will not work for every student all of the time. Though in some future activities these students found interest and engagement, drama did not resonate with them this particular time.

Setting the Traps: An Illustration

To help the students visualize the traps Rainsford set for Zaroff while being hunted, I asked the students to draw the traps. My hope was that their visual understandings would help them when writing and performing their film scripts shortly. We had read a great deal of the story together, but on the final day of reading I was out sick. In my lesson plans I asked the students to get together in small groups to finish reading the story and then to draw, as a group, the three traps Rainsford set. When I returned to school and saw the drawings, I was disappointed. I found three drawings of a bear trap, when there was absolutely no mention whatsoever of a bear trap in the story. There was also one drawing of a swamp. There was a Death Swamp mentioned in the story, but it was not used as a trap. I questioned whether the students understood the story or even cared.

As it turned out, after speaking with the class about the situation, most of the students had not finished reading “The Most Dangerous Game” the day I was out. Oddly, most of them had not finished reading the story but had completed the drawings, hence the inaccuracies. I wondered if their being graded on the drawing had an influence on what they decided to spend time working on that period. To

resolve the problem, I gave the students a few minutes to finish reading and revising their drawings if necessary.

During this time John dropped his pencil. Because the class was very quiet at the time, the dropped pencil was alarming. Judy exclaimed in response, “What a putz!” and giggled.

I began, “Judy...”

Immediately Judy apologized, but I questioned the sincerity.

Soon after this incident, a student told Barry to “Shut up,” which is not acceptable in my classroom. I was hoping that through the drama activities the students would develop a sense of community and treat one another with respect, thinking before blurting out disrespectful comments. As “The Most Dangerous Game” was only the second story we read, I considered the next three stories opportunities to improve student relations.

Writing a Film Script

Using a suggestion from Purves, Rogers, and Soter (1995), to articulate their response to the written story (p. 145) and to enhance their understanding of the plot, setting, characters, and suspense in “The Most Dangerous Game,” I asked my students to work in groups to write and perform a scene from the story.

The script would need to include the following:

- a. List of characters with descriptions
- b. Description of setting
- c. Dialogue/monologue; no narrator
- d. Action
- e. Stage directions

- f. Description of how things are said (whisper, confidently)
- g. Music
- h. Sound effects
- i. Lighting
- j. Props

I had previously broken the story into six scenes of fairly equal length, and the groups had a choice of which scene they would dramatize. I allowed the students to select their own groups as well because I wanted them to feel as comfortable as possible for their first major assignment. They would have several days to write the scripts in class and had a choice of videotaping or performing the scene live. Additionally, I asked the groups to keep a daily log of their activities in order to track their progress, recording the work they completed each day. The purpose of the logs was to keep the students regularly accountable for their efforts, and the students would submit them at the culmination of the project with the script. Those days of composing and rehearsing the film scripts proved to be a trying experience, and I created a brief drama to explore how those days played out.

Drama: To Write or to Fight?

Scene 1: Monday, October 3. Day 1.

PAUL: *(to Matt)* Shut up! Paul immediately covers his mouth and opens his eyes wide. He must have realized Ms. Hary heard him, but did he feel regret or did he feel sorry that he got caught?

Moments later...

PAUL: *(to Matt)* Your mom ago.

MATT: Ooh...Miss.

PAUL: *(to Ms. Hary)* Why can't I say "your mom?" What's so bad about it?

Moments later...

PAUL: *(to Matt; kicking desks among group)* Shut up.

Moments later...

PAUL: I'm gonna smack him in the face!

Scene 2. Tuesday, October 4. Day 2.

PAUL: *(to Matt)* Shut up!

Moments later...

PAUL: *(to Matt)* Shut up!

Scene 3. Wednesday, October 5. Day 3.

PAUL: *(to Matt)* You made me write in the book! You idiot!

Moments later...

MATT: Chinese, Japanese...

At this point Paul stopped Matt from continuing the rhyme and asked him where he heard it, explaining that the rhyme was racist. Though Paul was the cause of many disrespectful situations in the preceding drama, he was still able to recognize something disrespectful coming from someone else. I was proud of Paul for stopping Matt, and I think this incident may have had an impact on Paul, as I noticed very few disrespectful comments flying out of Paul's mouth after this point. His attitude truly did improve over the course of the short story unit.

Despite the above discord, the groups did accomplish great feats over those several days. For example, in one group George and John worked cooperatively to diligently construct their set, while Gloria gleefully wrote the script, her forte. In another group Judy and Norah went to the writing lab to type

their script, pulling their ideas together to transfer the short story version into a script. Elsewhere Mariah and Julia worked on constructing props that would complement their dialogue and action. Students hurled a multitude of questions my way in their attempts at making their scripts and performances the best they could be. From “Do we have to go word-for word from the story?” and “Do you have poster board?” to “Can we bring in a water gun?” students used me as a resource and guide who aided them in making wise decisions. When they weren’t asking questions they were using me as a sounding board, bouncing their ideas and apprehensions off of me. One day after class Tom commented, “General Zaroff has a lot of lines.”

I then asked, “Did you work out who’s who?”

Tom replied, “No, well, Paul is the director, and he’s going to make the decision.”

Not satisfied with Tom’s answer, I asked him, “Are you okay with him deciding?”

To this question Tom said, “Well, not really because I’m not good at reading in front of the whole class.”

Tom’s willingness to talk with me about his feelings opened up an opportunity for me to show him both sides of the situation and allow him to make his own decision. On the one hand, although Paul was serving as the director, he was not permitted to make all of the choices affecting the group. On the other hand, it was important for Tom to grow more comfortable in front of the class, as there would be many more presentations down the road, both in this class and in his other classes. In the end Tom did agree to portray General Zaroff in their

performance, and I believe doing so gave him more confidence in front of the class.

Aside from the expected off-task behavior now and then, most of the students worked cooperatively on the assignment, incorporating their understanding of suspense, characterization, and setting into their film scripts, meeting my initial goals for “The Most Dangerous Game.”

Performing a Film Script

The groups used a great deal of creativity to throw themselves into a strange setting and into the lives of characters with different experiences and attitudes. Here are vignettes, or “...compact sketches that can be used to introduce characters, foreshadow events and analysis to come, highlight particular findings, or summarize a particular theme or issue in analysis and interpretation” (Ely, et al., 1997, p. 70), of what I observed in two presentations. The vignettes illustrate the understanding and interpretation the students gained after studying their scenes over the course of several days. Being deeply engaged in the story may have helped them use their imaginations to take the written word and translate it into action. Additionally, just as my model at the beginning of the story did not require an elaborate set-up, the students succeeded in using basic props to show their personal interpretations.

Vignettes: And...Action!

Scene 1: George, John, and Gloria

The lights are out, and the sounds of the ocean set the stage. Gloria and George are standing on chairs, as though they are on the deck of a yacht. John is holding up a hand-drawn yacht, labeled “The Most Dangerous Game.” George is

searching for the island. The music of the CD is a bit loud, so I ask Judy to turn it down slightly before the action of the scene begins. The group has blue paper on the floor, representing the ocean. Gloria has emotion in her voice as Whitney claims that Captain Nielson “would go up to the devil himself and ask him for a light,” while George strokes his chin in thought. Then George snaps his fingers to imitate the sound of gunshots, leans over, falls, and “swims” to shore. He lies on the desk (the shore), as though he has just surfaced on the island. There is green paper below him, representing the wild foliage.

Scene 6: Barry, Jimmy, and Dave

Creepy music is playing, including sounds of the jungle. The lights are off. Rainsford’s character blows smoke from his “cigarette” and walks away. There is a “tree” and a “log,” letting us know that Rainsford is in the jungle and ready to set a trap. Rainsford stomps and motions with his arms, giving the image of climbing. A group member throws a log at Zaroff, causing Zaroff to fall and grunt, holding his shoulder in pain during his departure. Rainsford then digs a “hole” with “sharpened sticks” and covers the hole with green paper (foliage). The trap is set for Dave, on all fours and barking as Zaroff’s dog, to fall into the pit. Rainsford then attaches a “knife” to a “branch” using a rubber band, and the “knife” hits Ivan. Next Rainsford jumps into the “water” and makes a splashing sound. Finally, the group turns on the lights, makes a loud bang, and we see Zaroff fall to his death.

I was so proud of my students for illustrating their grasp of suspense, characterization, and setting through the use of props, scenery, and impressive acting skills. They utilized the techniques we had discussed earlier, including

darkness and eerie music, to create a suspenseful atmosphere that held our attention. Further, through their interpretations of the characters, I could see that they had used context clues to make inferences about the characters' behavior, speech, and thoughts. Reflecting on the students' success with the assignment, I believe that a mere reading of the text would not have been enough for the students to empathize with the characters, draw conclusions regarding their internal natures, and interpret their speech and actions. Taking on roles had a profound effect on their reading skills, yes, but I also sensed a community forming in my classroom through the interaction and cooperation.

Feature Film

Next, I wanted the students to compare and contrast their reading and performance of Connell's story with a film version, which was quite different from the story we read in class, and I was also hoping my students would pick up on the differences. But I was also interested in seeing which version they preferred, since most teenagers with whom I have worked tend to prefer watching movies over reading. Here is a drama that illustrates the students' reactions.

Drama: What is This?

Setting: The students are watching The Most Dangerous Game. Julia, Mariah, and Nicole are lying on their stomachs on the floor. George is relaxing in the back, lying on a beanbag chair and pillows. The rest of the students are seated at their desks.

Reflections from Friday...

JULIA: (in response to hating the movie) I'm going to make my own movie. Does anyone want to make a movie with me? Three boys' hands shoot up. Any girls?

Monday, October 17

GEORGE: *(in response to hating the movie)* Can I sleep?

MS. HARY: No. It gets more exciting today.

PAUL: Why does he only have one day in the movie?

MS. HARY: That's the way they adapted it. You're right. In the story he had three days.

PAUL: That's stupid.

MARIAH: Wait. She's going with him?

MS. HARY: *nod*

BARRY: Who's that woman with him?

MS. HARY: She was stranded before him.

GEORGE: What happened to his pistol?

MS. HARY: Exactly!

MARIAH: It's a crossbow.

MS. HARY: He'll come back with a gun later.

MARIAH: Why does he have a horn?

MS. HARY: He's calling the dogs and Ivan.

GEORGE: Don't they have 12 dogs?

MS. HARY: *nod*

Tuesday, October 18

TOM: Ms. Hary, they should make one in color.

MS. HARY: Maybe you should do it.

From the comments I heard, I could see that the students had a genuine understanding of "The Most Dangerous Game," as they were able to critique the

film version, using evidence from the original story. Overall the students did not enjoy the film version and preferred the story we read. Looking at the survey responses, my perceptions match up with their thoughts. Students wrote comments such as “Too many things were different. Almost none of the vocal parts were alike,” “...it was corny,” “Bad not close to story,” and “It was not even like the story I did not like it.”

As we were about to move on to “Rules of the Game,” knowing that the students would be watching a brief clip of *The Joy Luck Club*, I hoped their interpretations of the characters would again be evident in their responses to the film, in which we see Waverly as a young woman reflecting on her childhood experiences. However, this time I was hoping for more positive comments since the film version coincides much more closely with the short story.

“Rules of the Game”

“Rules of the Game” by Amy Tan is the story of a young chess prodigy. The protagonist, Waverly, or Mei Mei as her family calls her, tells of the conflicts she experiences with her mother. The foremost goal I had for my students with this story involved characterization. I wanted them to understand the attitudes and intentions of both Waverly and her mother and realize the reasons for the characters’ behaviors.

Crime Scene Investigation

To prepare the students for delving into characterization, I conducted a roleplay scenario, calling for my students to be crime scene investigators. I introduced the activity by thanking everyone for volunteering to help us out in the crime scene investigations because our staff could not handle all of the incidents. I

told them that the only pieces of evidence left at each scene were purses. They were to carefully inspect the contents of the purses, being careful not to tamper with or contaminate the evidence. After all, there may have been vital DNA evidence on the items. I handed out activity sheets that detailed their goals and explained the task. They were to list all items found in the purse, describe the owner of the purse, detail the crime, and reenact the crime scene. I also explained that in order to receive their paychecks they needed to do a good job.

Paul immediately asked, “Are we getting paid for this?”

I answered, “Let me take myself out of character for a moment. What do you think a paycheck is?”

Someone responded, “Points.”

I added, “Yeah, a grade.”

The class counted off and formed groups. Below is a sampling of the comments I heard while the students were working as crime scene investigators.

Pastiche: CSI

Oh...can I be Mr. Brown? Erase my first name and write Mr. Brown.

Does it have to be a girl?

It's probably her friend!

She's a big spender.

She has seven kids.

Eight.

Seven.

There is one American.

She's obese.

But she has a weight loss thing.

Maybe she's skinny now.

Then why does this say Bertha?

She's pregnant....But she's still pregnant.

Gothic...oh, that's just dirty.

She still might be skinny.

Test it out.

That could be DNA on top of that, and you just messed it up.

YOU COULD HAVE JUST WASHED THE DNA OFF OF IT.

OH! OH! I GOT AN IDEA!

We solved the mystery! We think it's...

Based on the students' responses while working toward solving the mysteries, I saw true engagement. Students were working cooperatively and combining everyone's ideas as they reached their conclusions. Their final reenactments showed creativity and logical reasoning, as their results connected to the evidence found in the purses in a fun and interesting way. Setting up the scenario in the way I did, where the situation intrigued their curiosity and all students were expected to play a role, encouraged participation from all members of the class, and the students also got to work with peers whom they may not have worked with otherwise. I felt that students were becoming more familiar and comfortable with one another, strengthening the sense of community.

In relation to the growing community, a moment toward the end of the period that day encouraged me that respect among all students was possible. My

candy basket, that had usually been filled, had dwindled down to just one piece of candy. Paul approached my desk and asked, “You don’t have anymore candy?”

I replied, “Is it all gone? There’s a caramel.”

Judy, who had just approached my desk, said, while picking up the caramel, “Oh, thanks!”

At this point I was a little fearful. I had moments of trouble with these two particular students being disrespectful toward other students. However, instead of Judy popping the caramel into her mouth, she handed it to Paul and said, “No, I wouldn’t do that.”

I then said to Paul, “You might not want to have the caramel with your braces.”

Paul replied, “Good point,” and returned the candy to Judy.

I felt that was a big step for both of them toward being respectful of one another and growing into our community.

Vocabulary Review

When reviewing for “The Rules of the Game” vocabulary quiz I asked the students to break into groups and act out the words for the rest of us. It would be the class’ job to guess the words that were being portrayed. Each group randomly selected five to six words that they would be performing. The students proved themselves to be comfortable with and even excited about performing for the class. Below is a recreation of pieces of the activity.

Drama: Vocabulary Review

Setting: Vocabulary review for “Rules of the Game.” In groups.

MS. HARY: *(to Leo, who just returned from an extended absence)* Do you want to participate?

LEO: No. I'll just guess.

BARRY: No. It's fun. You can work with us.

Later...

BARRY: Can I act out all six?

MS. HARY: This is the last class to do this, so technically if you destroy them (the sheets) it's okay.

JUDY: No! That's destroying trees!

GEORGE: Can we go first?

MS. HARY: This group already asked.

GEORGE: Can we play rock-paper-scissors for it?

MARIAH: *Acting out her word.* Shut up. I'm not ready for guesses.

GEORGE: Can you please refrain from using that word?

JUDY: Can I use my group?

MS. HARY: *Nod.*

JUDY: Group...

GEORGE: *(with excitement)* Ooh...what do you want me to do?

Next group...

DAVE: Let me see. I'll help you.

Reflecting on the above drama, I realize how excited students were to participate in class. They expressed eagerness in their voluntary willingness to help one another out by acting out the words. I was also thrilled to see that the students competed with one another over which group would be the first to

present their words. How often do students contend for the chance to go first? Lastly, I was pleased to see that students were recognizing disrespectful comments and were comfortable enough with each other to bring the disrespect to a halt.

“The Cask of Amontillado”

When studying Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Cask of Amontillado,” some concepts I wanted my students to internalize were the importance of setting, the theme of revenge, and the unreliable narrator. In the story we are introduced to Montresor, the narrator who has vowed revenge upon Fortunato for an insult. As readers, we are gradually led into the psychotic mind of Montresor, whose idea of revenge is murder. Montresor offers Fortunato, a wine connoisseur, quite a bit of wine, which Fortunato cannot resist. Being intoxicated, Fortunato does not realize that Montresor has chained him to a wall. Montresor quickly builds a stone wall around Fortunato and throws in a torch to burn the unfortunate Fortunato.

Party and Die

After a brief discussion of Edgar Allan Poe, an author the students had studied last year, I started out the story with a lively experience at “Carnival.” Because the story takes place during the Carnival season, which plays a crucial role in Montresor’s freedom from retribution because of the excitement, debauchery, and noise, I wanted my students to have a first-hand experience of the celebration. As with most drama-in-education activities, I could not take my students to the real Carnival, so I brought Carnival to them. I decorated the room with colorful streamers hanging from the doorway and draped across the ceiling. I also had the CD player set to boom out the incomparable music of the disco era.

In addition, I had a basket full of candy, ready for my sugar-loving pupils. Finally, I prepared inflated balloons to surprise my students. My goal was for my students to lose themselves in playing and partying, nearly forgetting that they were in a classroom. Many teachers would nearly have a heart attack if their students would appear to be out of control with goofing around. However, that was my point. When we read “The Cask of Amontillado,” we often think, how could Montresor possibly have gotten away cleanly with his horrid deed? But when students understand that no one was paying attention because they were enraptured in the spirit of Carnival, the mystery is solved.

All was set. We discussed carnival so that the students understood what it was all about. Some students had prior knowledge of Carnival, but it took some prodding for them to understand the full scale of the event and the history behind it. Though few had heard of Carnival, everyone had heard of Mardi Gras; so they were able to make a connection between Carnival and its spin-off, Mardi Gras. Students were excited to share their ideas of the celebration and their experiences with Lent.

Once I felt the discussion was coming to a close, I asked the students to join me at Carnival. I turned on the music, brought out the candy, and asked them to enjoy themselves. The excitement and volume quickly rose. I allowed the students to party at Carnival for about five minutes. Then I abruptly turned off “I Will Survive” by Gloria Gaynor and gently asked everyone to return to their seats.

I turned out the lights and pulled down the shades, creating a dark contrast to the lively environment of Carnival. I explained that we would now be exploring the second major aspect of the setting in “The Cask of Amontillado”: the

catacombs. We talked briefly about their background knowledge of catacombs, and I helped them fill in the holes, all the while speaking slowly and emphasizing the grotesque nature of the underground burial tunnels. Next I asked them to close their eyes and imagine they were in a catacomb. I asked them to imagine the stench, the dampness, the fear. As they sat with their eyes closed, I read “Experiment in Horror” by Arch Opler, a radio broadcast I found in Harry Noden’s *Image Grammar* (1999, p. 62). The passage uses the repetition of words to create an eerie effect and ends with a shrill scream, sure to make a few students jump, and jump they did. Some students were so engaged in the setting of the catacomb and in the images evoked from the passage that they jumped with the sound of my scream.

Why would I want to scare my students? It was not so much the fright as it was the understanding of this part of the setting. They would later read the story and be able to make a connection between their experience and the experience of Fortunato. No one would be able to hear him scream in the story. He would be trapped in a dark, damp, creepy catacomb for eternity. Whereas in past years I had students asking me how Montresor could possibly perform the murder without retribution, this year I was the one asking the question, and my students were answering the puzzle. Zemelman and Daniels (1988) support such guided imagery because “...it draws so naturally on students’ creative abilities while helping them integrate concrete experiences with more abstract thinking processes” (p. 163).

The next day the students asked if I would read the passage again. Overjoyed with their interest in the activity, I did read it again; but of course “Experiment in Horror” is most effective when first heard. The students knew

what to expect, though this time I think they paid closer attention to the words—to the effect of repetition.

Bringing “Cask” to Life

Because students have had a difficult time understanding “The Cask of Amontillado” in the past because of Poe’s vocabulary and style, I decided to act out the story with a volunteer who would play Fortunato. I allowed the class the choice of following along in the book or simply watching and listening. I then asked for a volunteer to help me out. George immediately volunteered, but when I informed him that the activity involved acting, he quickly backed out. Judy then volunteered. Ahead of time I had prepared a script for her, highlighting Fortunato’s lines and scribbling in his actions. I turned out the lights in order to create a mood, and I only stopped now and then to check comprehension and analysis. Judy and I incorporated props and costumes, Judy garbed in a jester’s cap and mask and I clothed in a black robe and matching mask. I had set up bottles along the center of the room, representing wine bottles, for our occasional drinking during our travel through the catacombs. In addition, I set up dolls to represent the bones I would throw aside to uncover the building stone and mortar. Finally, I had streamers in place at the “recess” of the catacomb to use when “chaining” Fortunato in place.

As Judy and I told the story, carrying our paper torches, I saw how full of enthusiasm she was. She played a very convincing role, following all directions on her script and being willing to use whatever props and costumes I had prepared for her. Judy seemed to be enjoying herself, putting her best effort into her character. I believe performing “The Cask of Amontillado” definitely aided the

students in their immediate understanding. Whenever I stopped to make sure the students were comprehending the plot and perceiving the complexity of the characters, they amazed me with their full grasp of the story. If a student had a question about what was occurring, rather than my jumping to the rescue, other students were helping this student to understand. For example, when I began “shackling” Judy to the wall, all it took was a gentle explanation from a student for others to realize that Fortunato was too intoxicated to resist.

Interview with a Villain

Once our reading and discussion of “The Cask of Amontillado” was complete, the students set out to conduct an interview with one of the characters. To prepare for the writing assignment, the students brainstormed questions to ask both Montresor and Fortunato—questions that could not be answered from reading the story. First the students got together in small groups and developed three questions for each character. Then the students wrote their questions on the board, followed by my typing, photocopying, and distributing the compilation. I asked them to select one character they would like to interview. Using either the questions developed by the class or questions they created on their own, I instructed the students to interview either Montresor or Fortunato, asking the character three questions and answering the questions as though they were the character. In order to convincingly answer the questions, it would be imperative for the students to have a relatively complex understanding of the nature of the characters, including their manners of speaking, intentions, and backgrounds.

Unfortunately, the turn-in rate for the interviews was quite poor; in fact, only five students submitted the assignment, and the results were disappointing.

I'm still not sure of the reason behind the poor effort. Maybe students did not understand the assignment. Perhaps they were busy with assignments for other classes. Or possibly because we were near the winter break student motivation and work ethic had decreased. Because of the results I decided not to grade the assignment but to still take it into consideration for my study. I believe a more effective drama strategy for next year may be to actually conduct the interviews in class. Some students can take on the role of either Montresor or Fortunato while others can roleplay the interviewer. Below is a pastiche of the interviews, using students' exact words and spelling.

Pastiche: "The Cask of Amontillado" Interviews

Julia: How long did it take you to realize that Montresore was serious about murdering you?

Fortunato: Well, you see, I had been drinking too much and in the beginning of this, it did not seem like anything but a friendly stroll. It was when I sobered up that I noticed he was really trying to kill me, deserted away from all the people.

Tom: How did fortunato insult you.

Montresor: He insulted my family. He stole my money. And my wine.

Matt: How long did it take you to think up your plan?

Montresor: I take me five day. Because is my best friend and it is my first time to kill some one. He just say bad word to me.

Dave: Do you regret killing Fortunato?

Montresor: No because He would get on my nerves a lot.

Mariah: Did you ever go back to visit fortunato's "grave"?

Montresor: Yes I went back when I became cursed with a horrible disease & knew I would soon die.

The reason I was disappointed with the results of those who submitted the assignment was that I did not feel that the answers were thorough. I asked the students to provide specific details and to write at least three complete sentences for each response. As I read the interviews I did not feel as though I could see the interviews unfolding before me. There was not much substance. I wondered if I had not provided enough time in class to work on the assignment, allowing the students to ask me questions as they wrote. I further believe modeling effective interview strategies would have benefited the students in composing their own questions and answers. I could have asked a volunteer to ask me a couple of the student-generated questions, and I could have answered the questions in role as either Montresor or Fortunato.

For the next story I planned to provide more class time for their writing assignment and to also model my expectations. Combining the two changes, would the results be more impressive?

“The Scarlet Ibis”

“The Scarlet Ibis” by James Hurst is a story of a young boy Doodle and his brother, whose name is not given. When Doodle was born he was not expected to live because he was born with serious challenges. Doodle does survive but is not able to do the things that most children his age are capable of doing. His brother pushes him to go beyond his limits, eventually leading to Doodle’s untimely death.

A “Different” Journal

Because “The Scarlet Ibis” focuses on a boy who has special needs, I wanted my students to be prepared to take the story seriously. As I had

discovered, this class is full of energy and laughter, and I did not want them to scoff at Doodle's disability. As a result, I started out the story with a quick journal entry. I asked the students to reflect on those people we consider to be "different." Different could mean being disabled, of a different race or culture, of a different social circle, and so on. I asked the students to write about how these "different" people are treated at our high school, in our community, and in our nation. Below is a poem I constructed, using the students' ideas and words. I have used a mix of their words and my own.

Poem: Them

People laugh at them
Taunt them
Pick on them
Beat on them
People treat them badly
Treat them like an object
Treat them like they're not there
Judge them
Ignore them
Make fun of them
Point at them
Bully them
Curse at them
Help them!

Disable Me

To further prepare my students for “The Scarlet Ibis,” I set up a drama-in-education activity that would require a serious attitude from every student. Before introducing the activity, I discussed with the class the importance of being kind, considerate, and open to what we were about to do, offering my wishes and listening to their ideas of what was required of them to make the activity successful. I wanted them to have a sincere and compassionate attitude rather than a mocking one. I explained that the intent was not to make fun of those with disabilities but to understand the challenges they face on a daily basis.

Next I explained that I would need three volunteers. One individual would lose the sense of sight, another would lose the ability to walk or stand, and the final student would not have the ability to speak or write. I had several willing volunteers immediately (strangely all boys), and I narrowed them down to George, John, and Jimmy. Though a mix of boys and girls would be ideal, I did not want to make anyone feel uncomfortable. Then I allowed the students to confer and decide who would take which role.

George started us out with being “blind.” I snapped my fingers and took away his ability to see. He shut his eyes and vowed not to open them. Then I handed him a small box with a variety of items in it, including paper clips, rubber bands, erasers, and pens. I asked George to locate the red rubber band, and he could use the help of his classmates. One by one George pulled out rubber bands—a green one, a blue one, and a yellow one. Though he was struggling to find just the right one, I was amazed at how supportive the class was. They were encouraging him and giving him tips. Finally George put a new idea to use. Feeling his way toward the front desk, he dumped the contents onto the desk.

Soon enough he found the red rubber band. The activity continued with George locating a blue pen, a pencil top eraser, and a blue paper clip. Though many students would concede to the temptation to open their eyes, George held to his integrity and kept his eyes closed. Not only was I impressed by George's honesty and valiant effort, along with the supportive nature of the class, but I was also excited to see that some of the reluctant participants in the class were excitedly helping George, including Norah and Dave.

John was our next volunteer, losing the ability to walk or stand. Knowing his disability ahead of time, John was resourceful and plopped into my chair with wheels at the snap of my fingers. John's task was to maneuver himself around the room, collecting various items. The items were spread far apart, and some were at a level that would be quite difficult to reach. From John's perspective, he was not able to see all of the items, and I was pleased to see the whole class collectively searching for the objects. As an object was found John wheeled himself about the room, with students assisting him in moving desks. Even Gloria, a student who seemed to blend into the classroom environment because she rarely made a peep, was moving desks to accommodate John.

Finally it was Jimmy's turn. I removed his ability to speak or write and asked him to communicate a message I had typed on a piece of paper: I am hungry. I did not eat breakfast. I want cereal. He was not allowed to show the message to anyone; instead he would need to communicate through charades. Jimmy decided to use a mix of mime and acting to get his message across to the class, and although he was doing a fair job, he found an even more resourceful way of communicating. Using the suggestion of a classmate and checking with

me for approval, Jimmy mouthed the words. Sure, Jimmy was not the best “mouther,” but the students understood what he was trying to say.

Once the students had finished their tasks, I asked each one of them how it felt to lose an ability (or abilities), what challenges presented themselves as a result, and how they overcame these challenges. I was pleased to see these boys, who researchers claim are “...reluctant to...talk about feelings [because] such discussions...make them vulnerable to being ‘shown up’ or ‘laughed at’ for breaches of male protocol” (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002, p. 13), opening up and sharing their emotions with the class. They expressed the frustration in how long their tasks took to complete and the frustration of not being able to make a connection to others, though they also noted the appreciation for those students who assisted them.

I was quite impressed with the creativity of this class, for I had not seen such resourcefulness in other classes. I was also very pleased to see that they were able to handle a serious situation with respect and understanding. No one was making fun of anyone, and they were all supportive in helping out those whom I rendered “disabled” with the snap of my fingers. I was further impressed to see that those who were not usual participants were contributing, including Gloria, Dave, and Matt.

Farewell to Doodle: A Reflection in Tableaux and Eulogies

After reading “The Scarlet Ibis,” I asked my students to represent the story in tableau form, breaking up the scenes among small groups. I also asked them to write a eulogy from the perspective of one of the story’s characters that they would read to “Doodle” at the conclusion of the activity. I explained my vision

for the students. The groups would present the tableaux vivants (living pictures) in chronological order. As a group came forth, all members would be initially frozen. Then, one at a time, a member, representing a character, would unfreeze, say a line, perform an action, and refreeze. Through the tableaux vivants we would see the most salient points in the story, put together in such a fashion that we would see the story unfold before us. As a group finished, without applause, that group would be seated, and the next group would take the stage. Once the final group had presented, we would use the eulogies for a funeral service. The “Doodle” from the final scene would lie in the same position in which he fell, and the class would encircle him, reading their eulogies one by one. I asked the students to take the activity seriously, but I also pointed out that I did not want the activity to be depressing; instead I wanted them to view it as a celebration of Doodle’s life.

I allowed the students to self-select their groups. Though most students quickly formed groups, three students remained: Gloria, John, and Barry. I suggested they work together, noting that Gloria would be excellent to work with because of her great writing skills, and they were all fine with doing so. These are students whom I had never seen work together voluntarily, so I was happy to see them working cheerfully.

The tableaux vivants turned out well. I was excited to see the students taking the activity seriously, without mocking the condition of Doodle. When we reached the funeral service, I was further impressed with the thought the students had put into the eulogies. Although they did not have much time to write, I saw that they had made sure to use specific references from the story to support their

statements. Remembering my dissatisfaction with “The Cask of Amontillado” interviews, I did provide them with class time to compose, and I believe that decision influenced the outcome of the eulogies. During that time the students asked me several questions, ranging from “How should I begin the eulogy” to “How does this sound?” They were able to use me as a source for their writing, whereas for the interviews they were on their own. Below is a layered story of their eulogies, taken from the perspectives of various characters. Again, the words are written exactly as presented by the students.

Layered Story: Saying Goodbye through Eulogy

Barry, John, and Gloria

At first I thought will Armstrong was not cable of doing much. That why we named him doodle. When he learn to walk I Was so happy and I thought he never learn but he prove me wrong. I almost starting see him as regular but now he gone and I’m so sad. But I always remmber you Doodle I mean will Armstrong.

Matt, Tom, and Paul

Doodle was born October 8, 1906. I told him not to touch the bird. But he is much happier now, being up there. I cared about him dearly but It was his brother’s fault.

Judy and Norah

Doodle was a speacial boy. Always happy or stubborn. He was fun to hang out with. I will always love and miss him. I remember all the good times we had running. But then again I feel guilty. We shall mis him.

Nicole, Mariah, and Julia

Doodle—I'm so sorry you died. I really did not mean to push you so hard. Even though I knew you couldn't take all of it. I just wanted you to learn. I was so selfish. I didn't want you to be teased in school. I'm so sorry.

Jimmy, Dave, and George

Doodle was a great son. He was a very strong person. Hes defetly a Armstrong. Now hes in a better place. We will all miss you William Armstrong.

Journal: Make a Difference

To end our study of "The Scarlet Ibis," I asked my students to return to their journals and write a final reflection on what they can personally do to help those who are "different"—to make a difference for the different. Below is a poem that infuses their ideas and words with my understanding of their plans.

Poem: Them and Me

Sit with them
Look past the exterior of them
Talk with them
Tell others to stop making fun of them
Stick up for them
Hang out with them
Be friends with them
Encourage them
Get to know them
Get an adult to help them

Be nice to them

Help them!

METHODS OF ANALYSIS

When it came to analyzing my data, I followed the suggestions of experts in the field. First, I considered Hubbard and Power's definition of data analysis as "...a way of 'seeing and then seeing again.' It is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the data, to discover what is underneath the surface of the classroom" (p. 88). I frequently referred to my log, reflecting on the recorded observations and various other data, jotting down notes in the wide left margins or inserting reflective thoughts in brackets in my typed observations. With the overload of data that I collected over the course of the study it was important to not allow the data to go stagnant. My constant review of the information helped me make future changes in my teaching methods, and it also helped me gain insight into the workings of my students' minds.

Along with reflection, I sought to organize my field notes through the process of coding. In the wide left margin, along with the reflective notes, I developed and recorded codes. These codes were single words or phrases that gave a brief summary of important ideas found in the field notes to the right. According to Hubbard and Power, "That's the most challenging job for a teacher-researcher—to figure out what codes to use in looking at data, and then to determine if the codes point to a pattern or theme" (p. 90).

Once I had a healthy list of codes, I indexed them to see if there were recurring codes that could help me grow as an educator, allowing me to see where my students needed help or what I should be changing, in addition to seeing where growth was happening. This index was "...a table of contents of sorts that list[ed] the many categories [I] noted as well as the pages in [my] field notes

where they occur[red]” (Hubbard and Power, p. 99). I continued to build on the index as my field log grew.

Coding and indexing as a form of organization was not enough; I needed to discover the themes that lay within these codes. Mason writes, “Detecting themes goes beyond looking for similarities between accounts, whether in the words used, the contexts, or the structure of situations. What is sought is something similar in the feeling of the incidents as you re-enter them...” (p. 65). The reoccurrence of particular codes or contrast in codes held the potential of revealing salient themes for my classroom. These themes could expose an increase in student achievement, a growth in the learning community, or a respect issue with which students were struggling. The potential these themes held in dictating my future practice was vital for student success. In order to find these themes I created bins in a graphic organizer. I sorted the codes into related boxes and then extracted common threads from within the bins (see Figure 1).

I also wrote memos during the course of the study that helped me actively reflect on my data with the purpose of seeking out themes and preliminary findings. Hubbard and Power use a definition from Glaser in illustrating the need for writing memos: “Glaser (1978) defines a memo as ‘the theorizing write-up about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding...It can be a sentence, a paragraph, or a few pages’ (43)” (p. 110). I wrote these memos a few times, compiling the data into preliminary theme statements. In other words, I analyzed the data that I had collected and made hypotheses about what I believed was occurring with my study.

Figure 1. *Bins and Theme Statements*

<p>Research Question: <i>What are the observed and reported experiences of incorporating drama-in-education into the study of short stories in a ninth-grade applied English classroom?</i></p>	<p>1. <u>Engagement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various activities • Increased participation • Daily log 	<p>2. <u>Creativity and Personal Interpretation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem-solving • Making connections
<p>3. <u>Reading Skills</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehension • Drawing conclusions • Scanning 	<p>4. <u>Sense of Community</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compromise • Cooperative learning • Respect • Student suggestions 	<p>5. <u>Motivation and Enthusiasm</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roleplay • Student reactions to films • Writing and performing film scripts • Voluntary participation
<p>6. <u>Involving Reluctant Students</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion web • Purse activity • Tableaux vivants • Toilet paper game • Trap drawings • Writing eulogies 	<p>7. <u>Individual Challenges</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disengagement • Fear of performing • Nonparticipation • Failure to follow directions • Absenteeism • Student frustration • Teacher frustration 	<p>8. <u>Group Challenges</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disrespect • Group strife • Off-task behavior
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Theme Statements</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When students participate in drama-in-education activities they become more accountable for their own learning, increasing participation and potentially increasing student achievement. 2. The incorporation of drama-in-education strategies can lead to enhanced creativity and personal interpretation of texts, including improved problem-solving and connection-making skills. 3. Using drama-in-education with short stories may advance reading skills such as comprehending, drawing conclusions, and scanning. 4. Through compromise, cooperative learning, respect, and student suggestions in relationship with drama-in-education, a sense of community can form in the classroom. 5. When students are engaged in roleplay activities and given opportunities to provide their reactions to films, and write and perform film scripts, voluntary participation in class increases. 6. A wide array of drama-in-education activities, including discussion webs, detective activities, tableaux vivants, trap drawings, and the writing of eulogies involves even the most reluctant students. 7. Though incorporating drama-in-education into one's curriculum may result in positive outcomes, there are several challenges that may arise, including disengagement, fear of performing, nonparticipation, failure to follow directions, absenteeism, student frustration, and teacher frustration. 8. In addition to the above challenges, challenges among groups may also arise, including disrespect, group strife, and off-task behavior. 		

Additionally, I wrote reflective memos along the way, using the wisdom of education experts in comparison with my findings. As I read the works of Dewey (1938), Vygotsky (1978), Delpit and Dowdy (2002), and Freire (1970) I searched for quotes that applied to my study. I then pulled out these quotes, recorded my understanding of the quotes, and noted how they applied to what I had found thus far in my data collection.

Lastly, I used quantitative data analysis methods to discover meaning in the surveys and independent reading charts. For the surveys I averaged the numbers the students circled, ranging from 1-5, attempting to see if there were changes over the course of the unit. For the independent reading charts I added up the number of minutes spent reading each week and decided if there was any change there as well.

FINDINGS

The most valuable theme I discovered in my research is that *when students participate in drama-in-education activities they become more accountable for their own learning, increasing participation and potentially increasing student achievement*. Drama-in-education encourages the participation of every class member, whether through taking on a role, discussing reactions to an activity, or writing a response to an experience. The closer the students are to the lesson, the more active they become in their learning and the more likely they are to retain the information and apply it to their own lives. We have all seen the clichéd classroom displayed on television where the instructor monotonously drones on at the front of the classroom while bored, tuned-out pupils nose-dive on their desks. How truly valuable was that 45-minute lecture? For students, particularly the working-class children in my class, to gain the most learning, they must be actively engaged. In fact, according to Patrick Finn (1999):

As working class children progress through school, their reading scores fall farther and farther below their actual grade level. We presume they don't have the basics, and we give them more phonics. They don't need more phonics. They need to be introduced to and made to feel welcome in a community where...[they] do not feel powerless, where they have choices regarding the topics they will study and the materials they will use and where they are given freedom to work with others...and to move around the room. (pp. 90-91)

Changing my past methods for teaching “The Cask of Amontillado” showed me how vital it is for students to be active participants in class. In past years, after a quick prepping, I would simply ask students to read the story for homework. I followed up their reading with a quiz and discussion and learned that even college preparatory students struggled to comprehend and interpret this challenging text on their own. Last year, during my pilot study, I incorporated the Carnival and catacomb experience and saw in our final discussion that students’ interpretive skills were better than those demonstrated by students in previous years. Last year I also dramatized the story with a volunteer; however, I only dramatized it after students had read the story on their own. I found that although I had prepared them more for the reading, the students still struggled to comprehend the story on their own. The dramatization helped them to make the connections with the plot that simply did not occur when students read the selection on their own without participating in corresponding drama-in-education activities.

While I promote independent reading as much as possible and assign my students independent reading projects in order to improve reading skills, when “The Cask of Amontillado” rolled around this year I wanted my students to find immediate success with the story, so I decided not to ask them initially to read the story alone. Instead I chose to use the same preparatory activities but to then immediately dramatize the story with the aid of a student volunteer who would portray the unfortunate Fortunato.

With Judy as my sidekick and using rudimentary props, I was delighted with the class’s instant understanding. Though I wish it weren’t true, it is no

secret that many students, particularly students in the applied track, do not like English class. In fact, many will say that they hate English, or that English is their worst subject, or that they despise literature. However, when Judy and I performed “The Cask of Amontillado,” every student in that room was intent on the activity. Though they had the option of reading along in their textbooks, most students chose to focus solely on our interpretation of the text. Every time I interrupted the story to ask comprehension and interpretation questions, the students were on track 100% of the time.

Reflecting on myself as a learner, I realize that I struggle terribly when someone is reading a story to me. My mind wanders, and I cannot focus on imagining the story in my mind’s eye. Personally I prefer to read silently at my own pace to allow my brain time to wrap itself around the story. I’m sure I’m not alone in this struggle. However, recognizing that these applied students most likely would have stumbled over many of Poe’s words, the oral reading was helpful in their overall understanding. According to Allen, “The time when someone else reads to us is magical, at least in part, because the act of decoding is done by someone else. This allows readers to carry out the cognitive task of forming pictures in their heads as they listen to the words” (p. 46). But there was something different that day that made the experience much more than an oral reading. Every student was actively engaged. As Montresor, I was directing my storytelling to the class. Therefore, they were a part of my story. Also, all around them were signs of the setting. Allen advises using artifacts, lighting, and music “...to draw students into the mood or tone of the text” (p. 52). The lights were extinguished, there were wine bottles on the ground, and there were “skeletons”

lying near them. As a result, the students were transported to the setting of Poe's story. Additionally, their interpretive responses were essential to the lesson, so all students followed along. I believe their success with the story was directly related to their active engagement through drama-in-education.

When I evaluated the survey results in response to their enjoyment in this activity and the degree to which it helped them learn, all but one student who answered this question had a positive reaction. Students expressed their feelings of having fun, being interested, being able to understand the story, and being able to imagine the situation. I further learned that dramatizing the story had a profound impact on every student, especially Gloria. She noted, "I think acting out the story helped to imagine it in different ways. I guess it was fun too but I wouldn't want to go up and act it." Gloria has been the most reluctant participant all year. I don't believe Gloria, even now, would volunteer to play a similar role in a similar situation. However, although Gloria was not donning a jester's hat and being "chained" to the wall, she was engaged because of the exciting activity. Booth supports this point, writing, "Sometimes the children will simply observe and discuss. This does not mean they are a passive audience, but individuals who want to learn or glean information from the drama they are watching" (p. 70).

Another valuable insight that I learned from my research is that *the incorporation of drama-in-education strategies can lead to enhanced creativity and personal interpretation of texts, including improved problem-solving and connection-making skills*. Because drama-in-education asks students to be engaged in their learning, student must rely upon their own thinking. They must search for answers for themselves, causing them also to rely upon their own

experiences, peers, texts, and a variety of alternate sources. Purves, Rogers, and Soter (1995) claim that “[i]n many English classroom[s], teachers teach and students ‘student.’ As teachers, we stand up in front of the room and impart wisdom with great authority. Students talk when given permission; otherwise they listen (or pretend to listen) or talk to their friends or write notes or worse” (p. 89). Engaging in drama-in-education activities, however, allows the teacher to act not as provider of information but as facilitator, orchestrating her musicians to perform beautiful music in harmony, depending on their own voices and instruments while needing the help of others’ tunes as well. She may guide but not do for her students what they are capable of doing on their own.

When the students worked on writing a film script version of “The Most Dangerous Game,” I saw them express impressive levels of creativity and personal interpretation. Having never seen a performance of the short story, their retellings were accurate, entertaining, and thoughtful. The class found inventive ways of constructing props, for example. While logistics prohibited students from hauling in a yacht, planting a tree, or fetching a dog, the incorporation of drama-in-education allowed students to use their imaginations and make the connections that would otherwise seem silly. So the hand-drawn yacht, the paper tree, and the human dog aided students in stretching their imaginations and creativity.

Had I taught “The Most Dangerous Game” in a more traditional manner, having students read the story for homework and then administering a quiz, I do not believe the students would have put in the effort needed to visualize the story. Knowing how my students typically need assistance in imagining how Rainsford set the traps and how the traps were executed, a superficial reading is not enough.

I believe that because the students had to illustrate their interpretations rather than to provide a summary, they put more work into understanding and visualizing the story. This extra effort, through problem-solving and connection-making, fostered creativity.

I also believe that *using drama-in-education with short stories may advance reading skills such as comprehending, drawing conclusions, and scanning*. Drama-in-education strategies can draw attention to individual reading skills that teachers often assume students already possess and use successfully. Good readers may not understand the difficulties poor readers face when encountering literature. We take for granted that all readers preview a text, reread passages, and make predictions. Unfortunately that is not the case. Struggling readers often feel that people are simply born good readers, and they didn't inherit the "good reader" gene. Teachers may believe these strugglers don't care about reading and it is the students' fault. However, frequently the reason for their difficulty is that they are simply not equipped with the necessary strategies to be successful.

As I reflect on my study, I recognize the growth my students experienced in their reading skills. I recall our work with "Rules of the Game" and see the connection between our crime scene investigation using various purses with assorted contents and the students' abilities later to analyze the author's use of characterization. Though drama-in-education activities are meant to be fun, they are also meant to be meaningful learning experiences. I'm sure when I introduced the purse activity to my students many of them probably felt that I had lost my mind, that I decided to have a play day. But there was a definite lesson to be

learned. If I were to say to my class, “Girls and boys, today we are going to learn about characterization,” I would hear an echo of groans. The term does not sound appealing. However, if I catch their attention with a lesson that is fun and relates to them, particularly with the new television show *CSI* gaining popularity, I have more of a chance of hooking the students. Vygotsky maintains the importance of these learning opportunities, writing, “From the point of view of development, creating an imaginary situation can be regarded as a means of developing abstract thought” (p. 103). Having the practice in using this imaginary sphere develops children’s abilities to use abstract, critical thinking. They are thinking of possibilities—what could be, rather than what is.

Through their investigation, they followed similar techniques that we use to analyze characters. They first took an objective look at the evidence they found in the purse. Then they analyzed all of the data and drew conclusions regarding the personality, career, and hobbies of the purse owner; the time and location of the crime scene; and the actual crime that was committed. In literature we used a similar process, whereby we gather evidence about the character, including his physical appearance, actions, thoughts and feelings, speech, and what the other characters say about him. Then we analyze the information and finally draw conclusions about him. Why did he drop out of college? Why did he hold a grudge against his mother? Struggling readers often fail to make these connections through the characterization the author presents to us. By spending an entire period on the crime scene investigation, I emphasized the importance of taking the time to analyze characters.

When we began reading “Rules of the Game” I flashed back to our investigation, pointing out the similarities between what we had done and what we were about to do. I asked them to focus on the relationship between Waverly and her mother as we read and to consider reasons for their feelings and actions. After reading and discussing the story I assigned the students a list of events from the story and asked them, through analyzing the characters, to describe what each event revealed about Waverly and her mother. I believe that our practice in analyzing characters and drawing conclusions had a direct effect on their overall success with the assignment. They seemed to understand the pressure Waverly’s mother placed on her and realized that her mother only showed her appreciation and pride in Waverly when Waverly was performing well in chess tournaments. They further recognized that Waverly was hurt and angry with her mother for showing her off to random people in the streets, not because she was proud of Waverly but because she was proud of herself for having a daughter who was successful. Could students have identified these qualities had they not done the crime scene investigation? Possibly. But would the analysis have been as meaningful, and would the skill have followed them in the future? Probably not.

I further found that *through such things as compromise, cooperative learning, respect, and student suggestions in relationship with drama-in-education, a sense of community can form in the classroom.* I believe a sense of community is important for any classroom because the students need to feel that they can trust and depend on one another and that their voices matter. If students do not feel comfortable in a class, the likelihood of their willingness to participate and bring a positive energy to the room is slim. But if students feel that they are

part of a community of learners, from what I have observed they are positive and enthusiastic about learning. Additionally, they are interested in one another, wanting to learn about their peers' personalities, hobbies, and experiences. When I step into a room with such a community I feel welcome, and I feel comfortable sharing my opinion without fear of being ridiculed, and I saw my students growing in that direction.

With drama-in-education activities students depend on one another to achieve the goals of the lessons. For example, when students roleplayed the lady and the tiger, their participation was vital to the success of the activity. They needed the class to ask them questions, and the class needed the "lady" and the "tiger" to share their stories. The interaction between the characters and the other students helped all members of the class make decisions regarding whether they believed the princess selected the lady or the tiger as the fate of her lover. Depending on one another in this way helped to develop a sense of community.

Further, when students worked together in groups they depended on one another to accomplish their goals. To illustrate, when studying "The Scarlet Ibis" the students worked cooperatively to write and perform tableaux vivants and eulogies. To be successful they needed to combine their understanding of the story and their ideas of how to effectively present their sections of the story. If they failed to cooperate and allow everyone's creative juices to flow, they would not be able to finish the task on time; hence, everyone's voices mattered. Through the assignment I believe our community was strengthened, as students learned to rely on each other and trust that their opinions were valuable.

Finally, the notion of respect played a fundamental role in establishing a community of learners. Whether students like or dislike one another is irrelevant, as long as they all exhibit respect for their peers. I never set out to make my students all best friends; but I do demand that they respect their classmates. This was a tricky class to tackle this issue with, for we started out with frequent disrespectful comments. Paul, for example, often commanded his peers to “shut up” and regularly used the phrase “your mom” to quiet his classmates. As shown in *This Year’s Story*, Paul gradually put away his cruel comments and blended in with the community of learners. I believe that the drama-in-education activities played a major role in his change.

I can connect my experience with Paul this year with a point Delpit (2002) made regarding a girl named Shannon:

Shannon must not be allowed to determine her own demise. She is dependent upon caring adults to act in responsible ways. Just as we would not allow Shannon to stick her fingers in a roaring flame or ride in our cars without being carefully buckled with a seat belt, we must recognize the impending danger of her proclamation, “I ain’t writin’ nuttin’!” (p. 120)

We all have students like Shannon who refuse to write, or read, or participate in discussion. Too often we allow these students to fail. We’d rather not deal with it. We see the situation as the students making the decision to fail; however, in many cases, this is not so. Most students do not want to fail, but they having problems in their lives that interfere with their success. Our job as these responsible adults is to make sure that these vulnerable children do not slip through the cracks. With

Paul, a classified emotionally-disturbed student, I found that he was resistant to just about everything we did at first. His resistance often led to disrespectful comments that could be hurtful to other students. For the crime scene investigation activity for “Rules of the Game,” Paul was placed in a group with a student he did not like. He made that point very clear to all of us. He asked to go somewhere else or sleep because he could not work with this particular student. Gee, that would make me feel really great about myself if I were this other student! Paul tried desperately to get out of the group, but I suppose when he realized I was remaining calm and had no intentions of allowing him his way, he conceded. As it turned out, Paul worked amazingly well with his group members. He shared ideas, joked around in an appropriate manner, and was engaged in the activity. His preconceived ideas could have prevented him from having that experience of enjoying the activity and growing with our community of learners.

Not only did *I* notice a change in the classroom environment, but *students* also pointed out the difference. On one occasion a student who had been out for a couple of weeks returned and mistakenly used the term “shut up.” When George heard her exclamation, he gently retorted with, “Can you please refrain from using that word?” I added to George’s comment, stating, “Yeah, we don’t use that word in here.” Following my statement, another student jumped in, saying, “You’ve missed out on the relationship we have.” I had never mentioned the idea of developing a relationship as a class, but our community-building had made itself clear. We had started out the year with occasional strife and had ended the short story unit with students being kinder and more respectful to one another. For example, for our last short story, “The Scarlet Ibis,” during the tableaux vivant

presentations, Mariah, who herself had previously exhibited a temper, was now noticing the clever move of a group and commenting nicely on it. To play his role as the scarlet ibis, John had sported a red shirt. Mariah quickly pointed out, realizing the symbolism, “Ahh, he’s wearing a red shirt...that was good.”

Another theme that shone through in my research was that *when students are engaged in roleplay activities and are given opportunities to provide their reactions to films and to write and perform film scripts, voluntary participation in class increases*. Through the process of allowing my students to express themselves in a multitude of ways, I believe they grew more comfortable in class and learned to trust me and their peers; as a result, the level of voluntary participation amplified. When students feel free to express themselves without fear of negative criticism, I feel they are more likely to want to be involved in class. Whenever I introduced a drama-in-education activity, I always let my students know that there was no right or wrong answer. Each person had a unique interpretation of a scenario, and I appreciated the variance in responses.

It was their unique interpretations that made watching film versions intriguing. Purves, Rogers, and Soter advocate the use of films in the classroom, stating that “...film should be studied as an art form in its own right” (p. 143). By the time we watched *The Most Dangerous Game*, the students had already written and performed their personal versions of the story; therefore, they had preconceived ideas of what the characters looked and acted like and also how the sequence of events took place. I did not realize how passionate they were regarding their own perceptions until we watched the video. I found that they were very protective of the original story and despised the way the director chose

to make changes in his rendition. Many questions arose, including, “Why does he only have one day in the movie?” “Who’s that woman with him?” and “What happened to his pistol?” These frequent questions told me two salient things: writing the film scripts helped the student retain what they had read, and the students felt comfortable enough to respond openly with their reactions to the movie.

I further found that *a wide array of drama-in-education activities, including discussion webs, detective activities, tableaux vivants, toilet paper games, trap drawings, and the writing of eulogies involves even the most reluctant students*. Recognizing that in many applied English classes there are many reluctant participants, I selected strategies that would involve every student. Sometimes students who do not participate are afraid of making themselves vulnerable. They may have experienced a great deal of failure in the past and are fearful of failing once more. I wanted to do my part to break this vicious cycle, so the activities I selected required active participation from all members of the class.

Although some students, particularly Gloria, were resistant to the drama-in-education activities at first, I found that they eventually opened up to the lessons and allowed themselves to stretch their potential. Gloria started out the unit stating in her interview that although she felt comfortable in the class, she did not like to talk to others much unless they were her friends. She also disclosed to me that she did not like participating in the discussion of stories. Gloria, as Freire might suggest, could have felt oppressed at the beginning of the year. Freire writes, “The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and

adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom. Freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility” (p. 47). Those who are oppressed have been repressed for all of their lives, and it is all they know. We are often fearful of the unknown. Reflecting on Gloria’s response to writing the class story, maybe she was used to sitting at her desk, having teachers teach at her. She could have grown all too comfortable with that situation and could have been unwilling to accept change. However, in her second one-on-one interview Gloria told me that at first she thought she wouldn’t like the drama-in-education activities, but when the class worked on the film scripts for “The Most Dangerous Game” her classmates let her know that she did a good job. These positive comments helped to boost Gloria’s confidence, and she noted that she would like to do some more dramatic activities.

I realize that I have been painting a beautiful picture of what drama-in-education can do for one’s classroom; however, *though incorporating drama-in-education into one’s curriculum may result in positive outcomes, there are several challenges that may arise, including disengagement, fear of performing, nonparticipation, failure to follow directions, absenteeism, student frustration, and teacher frustration.* No strategy is foolproof. One of the difficulties I faced in incorporating drama-in-education was disengagement—the opposite of my goal. During the first week of school I asked the students to write a story together, and, while many students were willing participants, Paul, after offering a sentence that had no connection to the previous sentence and being criticized by his peers, withdrew. It took the majority of the period for Paul to pick his head back up and return to us. As true as it is that students will not be engaged 100% of the time,

the withdrawal that I observed was not regular, and it did not mean that drama-in-education was a poor technique. In fact, Paul picked himself up for future activities and found success.

Another stumbling block in my study was student absenteeism. Unfortunately I had several students who regularly skipped class and were suspended. Their absence certainly had an effect on their involvement with the class and with their feeling part of the community of learners. When these students were in class they did not often willingly participate, and their attitude was generally pessimistic. They did not carry the positive air that most other students did by the end of the unit. Though it was disappointing to see these students missing out on the learning opportunities their peers were able to share, I soon realized that the positive results I was noticing with the others were most likely related to the drama-in-education activities in which they were taking part. Since these regularly absent students were not present to participate in the activities, they did not share in the respect, sense of community, and joy in class that their classmates did.

Among the other difficulties, I found myself growing frustrated on several occasions throughout the study. I believe that time most certainly played a role in my aggravation, for I never felt that I had enough of it. There were so many activities that I wanted to do with my students, but I had to carefully select the most important activities that would most benefit their understanding of the short stories and their application of literary terms. I also had to make the unfortunate decision to eliminate a story because I did not have sufficient time to present it, for I needed to move on to the novel unit. I further found dissatisfaction in some

of the factors I was studying. I went into the study realizing that drama-in-education was not a panacea, yet at the same time I was hoping for more dramatic results than I discovered. I was expecting to find that incorporating drama-in-education into the study of short stories would radically increase the time spent reading for pleasure, for example; however, I found that the strategy had no effect on independent reading.

The final discovery I made when researching drama-in-education in my classroom was that *in addition to the above challenges, challenges among groups may also arise, including disrespect, group strife, and off-task behavior.* Considering that I was dealing with 14- and 15-year-olds, rather than mature adults (though sometimes it makes no difference, I suppose), there was bound to be dissent among groups. Their hormones are raging, causing them to have mood swings, violent outbursts, and temper tantrums. As much as I was hoping for the incorporation of dramatic activities to create harmony among the members of the class, life was far from perfect. Sure, the respect, accord, and work ethic improved as the unit progressed, but just because we had a few good days in a row, these teenagers did not suddenly change their attitudes and behaviors forever. It is important to follow the advice of Dewey in such a situation, striving for "...a cooperative enterprise, not a dictation" (p. 72). I believe Dewey wished for classrooms to grow into communities of learners, respecting all views and backgrounds. It is crucial for the students, along with the teacher, to adapt and grow. In his view all learning is social, and it is important for every student to be involved in the learning experience rather than having a teacher dictatorship. The teacher should encourage participation from all members of the class. Using

drama-in-education as a tool is a great way to encourage participation from everyone and to watch students grow into a community of learners, pulling together to accomplish a shared goal. Although drama-in-education may not work for every student every time, I believe it will work for some students every time. Students will show growth in various areas; although when a student shows growth in one aspect, growth in other factors is not guaranteed. Refer to Figure 2 for examples of student growth.

Figure 2. Student Growth (Scale of 1-5, 5 being the best)

Gloria

Question	Pre-Study Survey	"Lady" Survey	"Dangerous Game" Survey	"Rules" Survey	"Cask" Survey	"Ibis" Survey
I feel comfortable participating in whole group discussions and/or voluntary activities.	2	3	N/A	3	4	4
I enjoy English class.	2	4	N/A	4	4	4
I feel comfortable around my classmates in English and feel that I can trust them and depend on them.	N/A	3	N/A	4	4	4
During a typical English class, I participate in whole group discussions and or/voluntary activities.	1	1	N/A	3	2	3
I feel respected by my English classmates.	N/A	3	N/A	4	4	4

George

Question	Pre-Study Survey	"Lady" Survey	"Dangerous Game" Survey	"Rules" Survey	"Cask" Survey	"Ibis" Survey
I enjoy reading.	1	1	3	1	N/A	3
When I read, I understand what I have read.	2	2	3	3	N/A	3

Barry

Question	Pre-Study Survey	"Lady" Survey	"Dangerous Game" Survey	"Rules" Survey	"Cask" Survey	"Ibis" Survey
I read for pleasure.	2	4	4	N/A	4	4

Matt

Question	Pre-Study Survey	"Lady" Survey	"Dangerous Game" Survey	"Rules" Survey	"Cask" Survey	"Ibis" Survey
I am creative.	3	3	3	4	5	5

WHAT'S NEXT?

With the approach of our study of *Romeo and Juliet*, I am looking forward to observing my students performing the play on a daily basis. Now that they have put their hands into drama-in-education, I hope to see that they are excited about acting and learning. With the way I saw my students opening up for the short story unit and growing together as a community of learners, willingly participating and working cooperatively, I anticipate an even stronger bond among the class.

I plan to allow the students to act out the play, using props and costumes to supplement the language. Because I saw how well the performance of “The Cask of Amontillado” worked as a result of using props and costumes, I plan to repeat the strategy. And just as “The Cask of Amontillado” is typically a challenging text for applied students, *Romeo and Juliet* is also tricky. Students often have a difficult time familiarizing themselves with Shakespeare’s language, so I hope that incorporating the action, props, and costumes will aid them in understanding and interpreting the drama. Additionally, I plan to allow them to play with Shakespeare’s language in an interesting, interactive way through hurling insults at one another (all in fun, of course). I will provide students with lists of insults Shakespeare used in his plays and allow them to select a three-word insult. Students will then define the words using a Shakespearean glossary, followed by a round of hurling insults. The students will form two families (the Capulets and Montagues, naturally) and take turns using the bard’s language to insult one another. I hope that taking on the role of a Capulet or Montague while

experimenting with Shakespeare's language will decrease the intimidation many students often feel and aid in feeling more comfortable.

Further, I plan not to simply act all day, every day but to also take time to reflect, through discussion and activities, on the storyline and the characters. One of the activities I plan to incorporate is a tableaux vivant in which students will portray their ideas of how the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt occurred and how their deaths affected the other characters. Students will be broken into small groups and will have a choice of lines to present. I will allow them class time to determine their character roles, their lines, and their actions. The tableaux vivants will begin with every character frozen in position. Then, one by one, they will unfreeze, perform an action, say a line, and refreeze in a new position. Through their presentations they will be showing us what happens in their part of the scene.

I further hope to incorporate a journal/diary as a writing in role assignment. Students will select a character, excluding Romeo and Juliet, through whose eyes they will respond to the action in the play. They will not simply record a summary of the plot but will react as though they are the characters. How are these characters affected by the events in the story? What are some concerns or fears they have for other characters? What are their hopes?

I also plan to pause the action regularly to discuss what is happening in each scene. The discussion is necessary to assure that everyone is following along and comprehending what is occurring. It is also vital for students' interpretation of the play. Every time I read *Romeo and Juliet* I see something new; often that "something new" results from a comment made by a student. Shakespeare's

language is alive and means various things to different people. My students' ideas are just as valuable as my own for us to have a full appreciation for the text.

As far as the acting goes, I plan to give everyone an opportunity to act. I want to change characters for each scene; in that way, everyone is able to be heard. If we were to select solid roles at the start of the play, the same students would be on stage all quarter, and the same students would be dozing away in their seats. I want *Romeo and Juliet* to be an experience for everyone, not only a handful. Doing so encourages the participation of all students, which is a goal I hope to attain in future years as well.

Next year when I teach the short story unit again, I plan to use similar activities, but I now know some ways to improve the results. For example, when I gave students the opportunity to compose during class, their writing was much better and the submission rate was much greater than when I simply asked them to write for homework. That does not mean, however, that I refuse to give homework next year; homework is a valuable tool. But for those assignments that directly relate to the drama-in-education activities and show what the students have learned through the process, I will provide them time to write in class. That time given may be all the time they need in order to complete the writing assignment, or it might be five to ten minutes to get them started. I believe giving them that time to write during class allows them the chance to ask me questions. These questions and answers are important for guiding them through their writing so they can be successful.

I would also like to expand my use of story drama, or "improvised roleplay based on story" (Booth, 1994, p. 12). As I mentioned earlier, "The Cask

of Amontillado” interviews did not turn out as I had hoped; as a result, in the fall I plan to allow the students to conduct live interviews with Montresor and Fortunato. We will still brainstorm a list of interview questions, but instead of sending them off to write interviews independently for homework, I will first model what it is I expect of them and then allow them to work in groups to write the interviews. Once the writing is finished, I will ask the students to carry out these interviews live for the class, roleplaying Montresor, Fortunato, and an interviewer. I believe altering the assignment in this way will bring improved results. The students will have practice with writing, working cooperatively, roleplaying, and presenting for a group—skills which are vital for success in life.

Finally, building a community of learners will continue to be a major goal of mine. Foster such a community, I plan to ask my students to participate in a variety of ice-breaker activities during the first week. One of these activities will be a game that I tried this year that I refer to as The Toilet Paper Game. In this game I pass around rolls of toilet paper and ask students to tear off as much as they feel they will need. I refuse to explain what they will need the toilet paper for and see what happens. Some students tear off one sheet while others tear off 25 sheets. Once everyone has had an opportunity to amass their sheets, I explain that each sheet represents one piece of information the students will be sharing with the class. I have found this activity to be successful because students find it unusual and humorous. The peculiarity of the game helps students to relax and laugh, allowing them to open up and feel comfortable in the class.

I would like to incorporate more fun activities at the beginning of the year that will allow students to grow as a community of learners. One of those

activities may be a BINGO game whereby students fill in the BINGO spaces with various personal information that they feel comfortable sharing with the class. Once everyone has completed his/her board, I will ask students to find others in the class who share these qualities, interests, hobbies, and so on. The game will finish not with the first person to “get BINGO” but when everyone has “gotten BINGO.” In that way everyone will have an equal chance to socialize and learn about one another. Feeling comfortable with each other and trusting one another is vital to successfully implementing drama-in-education strategies.

As I look toward next year’s lessons and toward the opportunity to begin anew with a fresh group of students, I find myself growing increasingly excited and energized. I feel fortunate that in this profession we are blessed with the chance to not start all over again but to revise our past work. I look forward to watching Stockton’s lady and tiger come alive before my eyes and to Montresor and Fortunato answering questions that Poe does not explore. A plethora of questions surround me. How will next year’s students respond to drama-in-education? Will I have another Gloria who is shy yet finds confidence in drama? Will I have a Paul who learns the importance of a respectful learning environment? The anticipation overwhelms me. How marvelous it is to be passionate about one’s career!

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Pre-Study Survey

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Student Pre-Study Survey

I. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Use the scale below to answer the statements. Circle the number you feel best represents you.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree

1. During a typical English class, I participate in whole group discussions and/or voluntary activities.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel comfortable participating in whole group discussions and/or voluntary activities in English.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When I read an assigned short story on my own, I understand what I have read.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I enjoy reading.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I read for pleasure.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I enjoy English classes.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am creative.	1	2	3	4	5

II. Read each of the following questions carefully, and answer as accurately and completely as you can.

8. Before walking into this class on the first day of school, how many students' names did you know? (Provide the specific number.)

9. Of these students, how many did you know well? (Provide the specific number.)

10. What are some strategies you use when you read to help you understand the story?

11. What are some strategies/activities your teachers in the past have used to help you with reading comprehension?

12. What is your definition of dramatic play/roleplay?

13. How many of your teachers at your middle school used dramatic play/roleplay activities in the classroom?

14. Select a teacher from middle school who used dramatic play/roleplay. How often did he/she use drama to teach literature?

15. In total, approximately how many times have you participated in dramatic play/role-play activities in middle school?

Appendix B: Student Survey – “The Lady, or the Tiger?”

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Student Survey – Following Short Story #1 – “The Lady, or the Tiger?”

I. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Use the scale below to answer the statements. Circle the number you feel best represents you.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree

1. During a typical English class, I participate in whole group discussions and/or voluntary activities.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel comfortable participating in whole group discussions and/or voluntary activities in English.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When I read, I understand what I have read.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I enjoy reading.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I read for pleasure.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I enjoy English class.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am creative.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel comfortable around my classmates in English and feel that I can trust them and depend on them.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel respected by my English classmates.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I have a complete understanding of “The Lady, or the Tiger?”	1	2	3	4	5
11. Doing the drama activities for “The Lady, or the Tiger?” helped me to understand the story better.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I enjoyed the drama activities.	1	2	3	4	5

II. Comment on the following drama activities. Did you enjoy them? Why, or why not? Did they help you? How? Could they be improved? How?

Class story:

Discussion web:

Roleplaying lady/tiger:

Journal entry:

Appendix C: Student Survey – “The Most Dangerous Game”

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Student Survey – Following Short Story #2 – “The Most Dangerous Game”

I. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Use the scale below to answer the statements. Circle the number you feel best represents you.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree

1. During a typical English class, I participate in whole group discussions and/or voluntary activities.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel comfortable participating in whole group discussions and/or voluntary activities in English.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When I read, I understand what I have read.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I enjoy reading.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I read for pleasure.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I enjoy English class.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am creative.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel comfortable around my classmates in English and feel that I can trust them and depend on them.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel respected by my English classmates.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I have a complete understanding of “The Most Dangerous Game”	1	2	3	4	5
11. Doing the drama activities for “The Most Dangerous Game” helped me to understand the story better.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I enjoyed the drama activities.	1	2	3	4	5

II. Comment on the following drama activities. Did you enjoy them? Why, or why not? Did they help you? How? Could they be improved? How?

The Outsiders Suspense:

Yacht/Ocean and Jungle Sounds:

Trap Drawings:

Writing and Performing Film Script:

Appendix D: Student Survey – “Rules of the Game”

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Student Survey – Following Short Story #3 – “Rules of the Game”

I. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Use the scale below to answer the statements. Circle the number you feel best represents you.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree

1. During a typical English class, I participate in whole group discussions and/or voluntary activities.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel comfortable participating in whole group discussions and/or voluntary activities in English.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When I read, I understand what I have read.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I enjoy reading.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I read for pleasure.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I enjoy English class.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am creative.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel comfortable around my classmates in English and feel that I can trust them and depend on them.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel respected by my English classmates.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I have a complete understanding of “Rules of the Game.”	1	2	3	4	5
11. Doing the drama activities for “Rules of the Game” helped me to understand the story better.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I enjoyed the drama activities.	1	2	3	4	5

II. Comment on the following drama activities. Did you enjoy them? Why, or why not? Did they help you? How? Could they be improved? How?

Purse activity:

Letter to Amy Tan:

The Joy Luck Club:

Appendix E: Student Survey – “The Cask of Amontillado”

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Student Survey – Following Short Story #4 – “The Cask of Amontillado”

I. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Use the scale below to answer the statements. Circle the number you feel best represents you.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree

1. During a typical English class, I participate in whole group discussions and/or voluntary activities.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel comfortable participating in whole group discussions and/or voluntary activities in English.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When I read, I understand what I have read.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I enjoy reading.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I read for pleasure.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I enjoy English class.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am creative.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel comfortable around my classmates in English and feel that I can trust them and depend on them.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel respected by my English classmates.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I have a complete understanding of “The Cask of Amontillado.”	1	2	3	4	5
11. Doing the drama activities for “The Cask of Amontillado” helped me to understand the story better.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I enjoyed the drama activities.	1	2	3	4	5

II. Comment on the following drama activities. Did you enjoy them? Why, or why not? Did they help you? How? Could they be improved? How?

Carnival/Catacombs:

Journal entry on carnival/catacombs:

Acting out story:

Interview with Montresor or Fortunato:

Appendix F: Student Survey – “The Scarlet Ibis”

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Student Survey – Following Short Story #5 – “The Scarlet Ibis”

I. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Use the scale below to answer the statements. Circle the number you feel best represents you.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree

1. During a typical English class, I participate in whole group discussions and/or voluntary activities.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel comfortable participating in whole group discussions and/or voluntary activities in English.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When I read, I understand what I have read.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I enjoy reading.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I read for pleasure.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I enjoy English class.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am creative.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel comfortable around my classmates in English and feel that I can trust them and depend on them.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel respected by my English classmates.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I have a complete understanding of “The Scarlet Ibis”	1	2	3	4	5
11. Doing the drama activities for “The Scarlet Ibis” helped me to understand the story better.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I enjoyed the drama activities.	1	2	3	4	5

II. Comment on the following drama activities. Did you enjoy them? Why, or why not? Did they help you? How? Could they be improved? How?

Blind/Lame/Dumb Activity:

“Different” journal entry:

A Day in the Life of Doodle:

Eulogies:

Appendix G: Interview #1

One-on-One Interview #1 – Pre-Study

1. Do you consider yourself to be a “good” reader? Why?
2. How comfortable do you feel in your English classes?
3. Do you like to participate in class? Why?
4. What factors make you more likely to participate in class?
5. Do you read for pleasure? What do you like to read independently?
6. What are some things I can do to make you a better reader?
7. What are some things you can do to become a better reader?
8. How would you rate yourself on creativity? Why?

Appendix H: Interview #2

One-on-One Interview #2 – Middle of Unit

1. What is your reaction to the drama we are using in class?
2. Do you think your reading skills have improved since the beginning of the year? How?
3. What is your current attitude toward reading?
4. How comfortable do you feel in class? Do you feel that you can trust and depend on your classmates?
5. How much independent reading do you do (i.e., reading for pleasure)?
6. How would you rate yourself on creativity? Why?

Appendix J: Independent Reading Chart

Name _____ Week of _____

Independent Reading Chart

Day	Time Spent Reading	Genre	Purpose/Why?
Sunday			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			

APPENDIX L: HUMAN SUBJECTS INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



MORAVIAN COLLEGE

July 12, 2005

Michelle S. Hary
1734 Third Street
Bethlehem, PA 18020

Dear Michelle S. Hary:

The Moravian College Human Subjects Internal Review Board has approved your proposal: Improving Reading Skills and Reader Response Through Dramatic Play in a Ninth Grade Applied English Class. Given the materials submitted, your proposal received an expedited review. A copy of your proposal will remain with the HSIRB Chair.

It is requested, however, that you consider the following points before continuing your research.

Please note that you should indicate that your data will be published in "M.Ed. thesis."

Please note that it must be made clear to students that they are not required to take part in the research. (See Proposal Form IV.7.D.1).

Please note that all students in the classroom, regardless of whether they participate in the study, must be given equal opportunity to provide feedback to the classroom teacher. Allowing this opportunity prevents those who do not participate from being identified as such. It is possible to report upon data only from those who become the focus of the study. The opportunity for all to provide feedback should be clearly stated in your informed consent forms.

Please note that the "minor details" that you indicate may be altered may not change the content, implications, or tone of any subject responses.

Please note that your Informed Consent form contains a number of grammatical errors and should indicate that data collection and analysis will take place in 2005, not 2004. Also, the faculty sponsor indicated on all consent forms should be your MEDU 702 instructor. Please be certain to provide the correct name and telephone number.

Please note that if you intend on venturing into other topics than the ones indicated in your proposal, you must inform the HSIRB about what those topics will be.

Should any other aspect of your research change or extend past one year of the date of this letter, you must file those changes or extensions with the HSIRB before implementation.

Copies of this letter have been sent to you through e-mail and campus mail. Please retain at least one copy for your files. Good luck with the rest of your research.

Debra Wetcher-Hendricks
Chair, Human Subjects Internal Review Board
Moravian College
610-861-1415 (voice)
medwh02@moravian.edu

Appendix M: Principal Consent Form

August 29, 2005

Dear (principal's name):

During the 2005-06 school year, I will be taking courses toward a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. These courses will help me stay in touch with the most effective ways of teaching in order to provide the best learning experience for my students.

Moravian's program requires that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. The focus of my research this year is the drama-in-education strategies that can be used in my ninth-grade applied English classroom to improve reading skills. In doing this, I hope to learn how to improve the following reading skills: reading comprehension, higher-level thinking skills, and connections from literature to life. I also aim to increase class participation, motivation, and a sense of community within the classroom. Finally, I wish to create an environment where the students are able to enhance their creativity and are motivated to become life-long readers. Developing good reading skills will help a student succeed not only in his/her high school years but also throughout his/her continued education and future life. This study will take place from August 29 to December 23, 2005.

As part of my study on drama-in-education incorporated into the study of short stories, I will be observing the students' status in relation to my objectives. I will use quizzes and journal entries to gauge the students' levels of comprehension, connection-making, application, and creativity. In addition, I will use surveys and interviews to determine the students' attitudes and motivation regarding their sense of community, willingness to read, and frequency of reading independently for pleasure. Further, I will maintain a participation checklist, whereby I will monitor students' participation rates. Finally, the students will all be keeping an independent reading chart, where they will be recording their reading for pleasure. I will use these charts to determine any change in reading patterns.

All children in my classroom will be involved with the drama-in-education activities as part of my regular language arts program. However, participation in this study is entirely voluntary and will not affect the child's grade in any way. Any child may withdraw from the study at any time. If a child is withdrawn, or the parent or guardian chooses not to have him/her be a part of the study, I will not use any information pertaining to that child in my study.

All the children's names will be kept confidential. The name of any student, faculty member, cooperating teacher, or cooperating institution will not appear in any written report or publication of the study or its findings. Only my name and the names of my sponsoring professors will appear in this study. Minor details of the students' writing may be altered to ensure confidentiality. All research materials will be secured in a protected location.

My faculty sponsor is Dr. Joseph Shosh. He can be contacted at Moravian College by phone at 610.861.1482 or email at jshosh@moravian.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about my in-class project, please feel free to contact me at school or email me at harym@eastonsd.org. If not please sign and return the bottom portion of this letter. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Ms. Michelle S. Hary

I attest that I am the principal of the teacher conducting this research study, I have read and understood this consent form, and I have received a copy. Michelle Hary has my permission to conduct this study at (name of school).

Principal's signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix N: Parent Consent Form

August 29, 2005

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

During the 2005-06 school year, I will be taking courses toward a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. These courses will help me stay in touch with the most effective ways of teaching in order to provide the best learning experience for my students.

Moravian's program requires that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. The focus of my research this year is the drama-in-education strategies that can be used in my ninth-grade applied English classroom to improve reading skills. In doing this, I hope to learn how to improve the following reading skills: reading comprehension, higher-level thinking skills, and connections from literature to life. I also aim to increase class participation, motivation, and a sense of community within the classroom. Finally, I wish to create an environment where the students are able to enhance their creativity and are motivated to become life-long readers. Developing good reading skills will help a student succeed not only in his/her high school years but also throughout his/her continued education and future life. This study will take place from August 29 to December 23, 2005.

As part of my study on drama-in-education incorporated into the study of short stories, I will be observing the students' status in relation to my objectives. I will use quizzes and journal entries to gauge the students' levels of comprehension, connection-making, application, and creativity. In addition, I will use surveys and interviews to determine the students' attitudes and motivation regarding their sense of community, willingness to read, and frequency of reading independently for pleasure. Further, I will maintain a participation checklist, whereby I will monitor students' participation rates. Finally, the students will all be keeping an independent reading chart, where they will be recording their reading for pleasure. I will use these charts to determine any change in reading patterns.

All children in my classroom will be involved with the drama-in-education activities as part of my regular language arts program. However, participation in this study is entirely voluntary and will not affect the child's grade in any way. Any child may withdraw from the study at any time. If a child is withdrawn, or the parent or guardian chooses not to have him/her be a part of the study, I will not use any information pertaining to that child in my study.

All the children's names will be kept confidential. The name of any student, faculty member, cooperating teacher, or cooperating institution will not appear in any written report or publication of the study or its findings. Only my name and the names of my sponsoring professors will appear in this study. Minor details of the students' writing may be altered to ensure confidentiality. All research materials will be secured in a protected location.

My faculty sponsor is Dr. Joseph Shosh. He can be contacted at Moravian College by phone at 610.861.1482 or email at jshosh@moravian.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about my in-class project, please feel free to contact me at school or email me at harym@eastonsd.org. If not please sign and return the bottom portion of this letter. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Ms. Michelle S. Hary

I attest that I am the student's legally authorized representative, that I have read and understood this consent form, and I have received a copy.

Legal representative signature: _____

Child's name: _____

Date: _____

