

**To what grade level did you teach this lesson?** Grade 8

**How many students are in your class?** 11

**What is the ratio of male to female students in the class?** 8 male, 3 female

**Does the class include special education students?** No

**Does the class include gifted/talented students?** Yes

**Does the class include students of color or diverse ethnicities? If so, please describe.**

Bi-racial and Hispanic

**Describe the students' prior knowledge or the focus of any previous related lesson:**

This lesson plan came within the context of my playwriting unit. The unit walked students through background information, techniques, and strategies pertaining to playwriting. Just prior to this lesson, discussions were held on how playwrights come up with ideas for their works. We talked about some possibilities like personal experiences, things they may have witnessed, read or issues they felt strongly about. We then discussed possible topics and ideas for our play. As a class we discussed main topic ideas such as gender identity, discrimination, and social bias. The students chose to go with discrimination combined with social bias. They felt like the two went hand-in-hand. They said you couldn't have one without the other. We discussed this topic related to current events, issues the students encountered in their everyday lives, including school, and what they saw and experienced in our own community. We discussed these at length. Then, we broke out the discussions into subtopics that became the vignettes they wrote about through monologues or one act dialogue scenes.

**Describe the purpose of the lesson as it relates to diversity:**

John W. Bate Middle School was included as part of a project with the Kentucky Center for the Arts and the Arts Literacy project they sponsored. Certain schools (high schools and middle schools) across the state were invited to participate in the program. The program was titled, "Bearing Witness." The program actually featured the arts: performing and visual. It also focused on literature as the basis. The literature and arts related to the Holocaust events. As part of this program, I adapted literature to my 8th grade theatre class's abilities and interests. So, when the time came for our playwriting unit, I was able to engage my students in more contextual issues they experience within their lives from a social, community and current events keeping in mind what we studied in the Bearing Witness program of study.

**Describe any modifications, if necessary:**

There were no modifications or deviations from the lesson itself; however, based on continued discussions of ideas and situations the direction the following lessons planned were modified to keep the creativity moving forward.

**State what the students will demonstrate as a result of this lesson. Please keep the description student centered, i.e., “Students will . . . “ “I can . . . “**

Students demonstrated being able to process concerns and personal issues such as gender identity, discrimination, and social bias from an analytical perspective, then put those ideas and thoughts into a theatre work such as a monologue or one act scene. As a result, the students were able to provide their insight, feelings, emotions, and stance on the issue they felt most passionate about; and they were able to accomplish this through the literary process of playwriting.

- I can identify a community issue so I can interpret it through multiple perspectives in a theatre work.
- I can analyze a theatre work so I can explain how cultural perspectives influence the evaluation of the work.
- I can apply my personal interests, preferences, and beliefs so I can effectively evaluate a theatre work.
- I can explain and apply critical analysis, background knowledge, research, and historical/cultural context so I can develop them into original ideas for a theatre work.
- I can create a character so I can articulate his/her thoughts, objectives, and motivations in a theatre work.

**Please describe your instructional strategies:**

There were many strategies that I included in the development of these works. Analysis was a key component of the process. We analyzed works created by other playwrights. We used improvisation techniques that gave the students the opportunity to use extemporaneous speech activities with related topics or ideas that they talked about off the top of their heads. This gave them the opportunity to talk about their topic from personal feelings and experiences. We discussed Aristotle's Unity of Time, Place, and Action to help them center their ideas to one specific moment. Additionally, I incorporated lots of activities where the students were able to create tableaux from suggested emotions, words, and events.

We did lots of character walks where we would walk about the room and at suggestions from me or another student, they would replicate that idea into their body movements, gestures, and facial expressions. Furthermore, at the beginning of each class, students would meditate for 5 minutes, then without speaking would be required to write for 5 minutes on a topic that I chose. Most topics chosen were from news stories, writing topic lists or any other ideas that I was able to come up with. This helped put them into an analytical mind frame for discussions and work on their pieces.

**List the Kentucky Core Academic Standard(s) being addressed in the lesson; please include the written language of the targeted standards:**

The Kentucky Arts Standards are different from the Kentucky Core Academic Standards as they focus on the different areas of the Arts. There are four main focus areas associated with the arts, including, Creating, Performing, Responding, and Connecting. Within those four areas, there are 11 Anchor Standards that address specific criteria in each area. Keep in mind that these standards are Performance-based standards and are different from the Academic-based standards, although there are correlations between the two. Nevertheless, they still guide my instruction in theatre education. I included these standards in part “b” of this section so you are able to see the correlation between the standard and the objective for student learning outcomes. However, the Arts standards addressed are as follows:

- TH:Cn10.1.8a. Examine a community issue through multiple perspectives in a theatre work.
- TH:Re8.1.8b. Analyze how cultural perspectives influence the evaluation of a theatre work.
- TH:Re8.1.8c. Apply personal aesthetics, preferences, and beliefs to evaluate a theatre work.
- TH:Cr2.1.8a Articulate and apply critical analysis, background knowledge, research, and historical and cultural context to the development of original ideas for a theatre work.
- TH:Cr1.1.8c Develop a scripted or improvised character by articulating the character’s inner thoughts, objectives, and motivations in a theatre work.

**What impact did your lesson plan have on your students to enhance their awareness of diversity?**

I was quite intrigued and surprised at how engaged the students were in developing their pieces. Throughout the writing process, the students were self-evaluating their work, as well as open receiving peer feedback from others. I allowed the students to evaluate one another’s

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work so that they were getting an unbiased perspective on their ideas and thoughts. I did this so they could rely on one another's insights and ideas since they were more familiar with the issues they were addressing from an adolescent perspective. I didn't want my adult perspective to influence how they proceeded with their ideas. Instead, I was the guide that focused on the technical aspects of their writing. Following the unit, I had the students perform a self-evaluation of the process. What I found was interesting and moving. The students told me that they had not looked at the issues they chose deeply until they were required to do it through our playwriting process. They said that they learned more about themselves than they thought about. They didn't realize they had such feelings and passion for topics as they did. They said that the process of being required to think about different issues through meditation and writing allowed them to open their minds to see what they truly felt. When not being able to evaluate their feelings or emotions when they wrote, allowed them to be free to say exactly what they felt. This is how they incorporated their ideas, emotions, feelings, and passions into their works, which made them appear so real. They were astonished that they could write that way. Another comment that I received was how they began to look at issues from all sides, not just their own. They were able to have open and honest conversations with peers, parents, and other people about their topics. They actually began to work on ideas to bring these issues to light and act on them in a constructive and positive way.

**Why did you select this lesson?**

The whole intent and purpose of selecting this lesson was to help students engage in personal reflection and self-evaluation about world, community and school issues and topics they would not necessarily address on their own. I wanted them to be cognizant of the world around them and how they can have a positive and significant impact even though they don't believe they can. When they realized that they had their own opinions, thoughts, ideas, and passions about certain things, they did have the power to pursue these and, possibly, change or impact a situation with a positive result. One way they could do it was through the art of playwriting. They could express themselves in ways they might have been able to otherwise. I wanted them to see that theatre can be just as powerful an outlet for communicating ideas, and for expressing thoughts and feelings in a different and unique way. Sometimes students have a hard time standing up for issues for fear of retribution. This way, they can see how they can accomplish the same thing in just as meaningful a way. I wanted them to see how playwrights will take an idea and sell it to an audience who will buy into it through a visual, mental, and thought-provoking way.

**Why is it important to your school community?**

Leading students through this lesson and unit allowed me to help make leaders who stand up to things they see are wrong and help to make them right. I wanted them to see that they could be a voice to those who didn't feel they had a voice. If they could model such behavior, it would be contagious to others around them, thus making leaders who may one day change the world, or at least their little corner of the world. I wanted them to be able to help others get their voices heard. Once the virus of equality, acceptance, and understanding began to spread, it would infiltrate the majority of the students, pushing the minority who see otherwise out of the way and suppressing those who were the oppressors. I wanted them to take a stand for what they believe in and what they feel is right. I wanted them to see they CAN and DO make a difference.

**Please list the resources needed to teach this lesson:**

I found a plethora of resources to guide this lesson plan. These included current newspaper articles, social media posts, creative writing topics, theatre/drama acting and improvisation games and techniques. I also utilized resources from Drama Teacher Academy and other professional theatre organizations. I pulled examples from my script library, my classroom library, Holocaust studies with the Kentucky Center for the Arts, Bearing Witness professional development trainings. I also pulled from my own playwriting and personal experiences, thoughts, feelings, and ideas.

**Generally, what type of assessment did you use to evaluate the effectiveness of this lesson?**

Formative

**Briefly describe the assessment you found most useful and include your data results.**

For this lesson, there were multiple assessments. These occurred in the form of journal writings, analytical exit slips, feedback sessions, discussions, and observations of activities. As students completed their journal entries, I asked for volunteers to share their writings and then lead a discussion with the class on feedback and other opinions, thoughts, and ideas. This allowed me to see the creativity in their thinking and willingness to be open to suggestions and recommendations that could be incorporated into their works.

**Please share some evidence or data that shows students met the goals and objectives of this lesson:**

Most of the evidence I had for this lesson plan was included in journals that the students took with them at the end of the school year. These were kept in my room and utilized on a daily basis. Additionally, because this is a performance-based class, most of the observations, discussions and reflections were not officially documented. The best evidence of the students meeting the goals of the lesson is to refer to the writings included later in this application.

**In what areas did students exceed goals and objectives?**

When students began incorporating some of their journal writings into their pieces, it was amazing to see how their thought processes changed and, in some cases, even led to self-reflection on where to go with their ideas. I could see how they were able to see in their mind's eye how the storyline was forming and how they were really looking critically at where their ideas came from. They could identify when an idea or thought was leading them away from what their focus or point was and were able to correct or readjust their thinking to be sure they were focusing on what they wanted, or their character wanted, to say. Additionally, they sought feedback from one another. I felt left out, but knew what was happening is exactly what I wanted them to do - rely on one another for feedback, recommendations, and suggestions. This is where I saw the creativity aspect fly off the charts into something I never thought was possible.

**What might you do differently next time?**

I have thought about bringing in local authors or playwrights to provide insight with regards to what inspires their own works and where their ideas come from. This way they can see how the creative process works for different people in varying ways. Previously, I brought in the playwright for "And A Child Shall Lead," Michael Slade; and Holocaust survivor, Stephen "Pista" Nasser, author of the autobiography, My Brother's Voice and performed his play from the same book, "Not Yet, Pista." These individuals discussed with my students their experiences, research, inspirations, and ideas.