TEACHING DRAMA IN LITERATURE CLASSES AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

by

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INTRODUCTION

Most teachers of literature agree on certain basic goals for their students. These are that students (1) will achieve social sensitivity and maturity through their experiences in reading, (2) will develop an appreciation for literature, (3) will enlarge their reading and communication skills, and (4) will grow in their ability to think critically about literature and life. Yet drama, an invaluable means for reaching these goals, receives little emphasis in the total English program.

Of the literary types taught in America's secondary schools, drama has been the most neglected. Several reasons are apparent for this neglect, two of which are inadequate time and inadequate teacher preparation.[1] In an already overcrowded English program, most teachers find little time in which to teach more than one or two major plays during the school year. Another basic reason, however, is that colleges rarely prepare teachers to feel confident teaching any drama other than Shakespearean. Thus, many students leave high school familiar with only one area of drama. This is both unfortunate and unrealistic.

Those who argue against the study of world drama in secondary schools usually believe that "the student who learns to understand and appreciate Shakespeare will be able to under-

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[1] Gladys Veidemanis, "Drama in the English Classroom," The English Journal, LI (November, 1962), 544.

stand and appreciate the works of most other dramatists, early and modern."[2] Studying one tragedy, however, will not enable the student to understand and appreciate other dramatic works. The teacher must provide experiences in which the student can transfer understandings from one situation to another.

But even with carefully planned experiences, total transfer cannot occur, for there are, in fact, some quite obvious and important differences between the drama of Elizabethan England and the drama of other periods; for example, the vocabulary, plot structure, and characters in modern drama present fewer difficulties than do those of Shakespeare's plays.[3]

In addition to learning to appreciate various dramatic works and types, the student needs to read widely in world drama so that he gains an awareness of and a feeling for humanity. Frances Erickson found that students believed the teacher's aims in teaching language arts should be to help students "to develop a mature outlook on life," "to establish basic ideals," and "to become sensitive and understanding."[4] Drama, because of its direct involvement of students in the

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[2]J. Weston Walch, Devices in Teaching Literature (Portland, Maine: J. Weston Walch Publisher, 1960), p. 41.

[3]Abraham Bernstein, Teaching English in High School (New York: Random House, 1961), p. 276.

[4]Frances Erickson, "What Are We Trying to Do in High School English?" Teaching English in Today's High Schools (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965), p. 17.

experiences of men and because of its concern with values and ideals, can help students realize the goals they consider necessary for becoming responsible adults.

A definite need does exist for studying world drama in the high school. The unrealistic emphasis upon Shakespearean drama will not suffice, nor will an equally unrealistic shift to modern drama. "One can be a teacher of literature only by being committed . . . to a belief in human constants which reappear, in whatever challenging diversity of dress, in all periods."[5]

Once the value of drama study is accepted the teacher faces two demanding tasks, selecting the play and teaching it. When choosing the play, the teacher of literature must be alert to students' needs and interests, or the selected play may be unappealing to adolescents or beyond their levels of comprehension. This sensitivity to adolescents' needs and interests should remain important throughout the study of drama. Unfortunately, the approaches and activities used in teaching plays are often repetitious and trite. The educational literature on the teaching of drama indicates that a need exists for an appraisal of the methods used in teaching plays to high school students.

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[5]Robert B. Heilman, "Literature and Growing Up," Teaching English in Today's High Schools (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965), p. 47.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

It was the purpose of this study to investigate the current methods of selecting and teaching plays and to develop a guide for the teaching of drama in the secondary school.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The investigation revealed innumerable approaches and activities for teaching various plays in the secondary schools. Inclusion of each of these, however, was impossible and not the purpose of this paper.

The paper was limited to a discussion of the more successful approaches for teaching the drama. When appropriate, suggested activities were included. The scope of the study was general, so that this paper could serve as a guide for the development of creative and meaningful methods for teaching all drama.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SELECTING PLAYS

To help students achieve the goals that they and educators consider important, the teacher of literature is responsible not only for choosing plays that will develop improved reading skills, but also for choosing ones that deal with acceptable subject matter and that enlarge the adolescents' social sensitivity.

Determining Appropriateness for Adolescent Study

Not all plays deal with subject matter suitable for study by adolescents. Even certain Shakespearean plays are better postponed until the students are older and more experienced.

> Those Shakespearean works requiring greater maturity and sensitivity for appreciation should be left to college classes. Lear and Antony and Cleopatra, for example, probably fall in this classification, both requiring a particularly adult perception of the experiences of parenthood, married love, old age, disillusionment, cynicism.[6]

Of the Shakespearean plays taught to secondary school students, Martin found the "big four" to be Julius Caesar, Macbeth, Hamlet, and The Merchant of Venice.[7] Although some teachers believe that The Merchant of Venice, because it treats anti-Semitism, is not appropriate for classroom use, Alan Shapiro suggested teaching the play as a study on prejudice.

> The first four acts of The Merchant of Venice do not make pleasant reading; but reading and discussing them are important for the student, for only through frank discussion of prejudice--its origins and effects--can the student learn about it.[8]

Not all authorities were in agreement as to the

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[6]Gladys Veidemanis, "Shakespeare in the High School Classroom," The English Journal, LIII (April, 1964), 245.

[7]Martha Wing Martin, "Shakespeare in Today's Classroom," The English Journal, XLIV (April, 1955), 228.

[8]Alan Shapiro, "Should 'The Merchant of Venice' Offend Jewish Students?" The English Journal, XLI (October, 1952), 432-433.

appropriateness of Shakespearean drama for slow learners. David Turner stated that some teachers teach Shakespeare as though to have read him is a status symbol:

> Are we really studying a subject for its intrinsic merit, or merely because acquaintance, however vague, with certain key names somehow gives status? If this latter tendency is being encouraged, as I believe it is, is it not directly contrary to all the standards and critical faculties we are trying to inculcate in our students? Standards simply cannot be adjusted to every changing whim or even to suit varying ability levels. If it is a fact that Shakespeare is too difficult (and why pretend he is suitable for everyone?), why not study modern playwrights . . . ?[9]

Bernstein, however, wrote that Shakespeare can be taught successfully to slow classes as well as to bright ones.[10] A panel of high school teachers discussing Julius Caesar decided "that even the slower learners could read the play with profit, aided by a patient teacher and possibly by simplified prose synopses."[11] The educators who wrote Teaching Literature in Wisconsin presented a strong argument for teaching Shakespeare to slow learners:

> If it is assumed that the slow student cannot learn anything from these greater works, his literary deprivation is merely continued and increased. This must be avoided.

Of course, the slow learner will not be expected

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[9]David A. Turner, "Shakespeare and the Status Seekers," The English Journal, XLIX (December, 1960), 635.

[10]Bernstein, op. cit., p. 190.

[11]Oscar M. Haugh, "Teaching Shakespeare's 'Julius Caesar,'" University of Kansas Bulletin of Education, 11 (May, 1957), 104.

> to attain any great depth of understanding, but his feeling of pride in accomplishment, while working with the same basic material as does the more able student, will greatly enhance his development in literary experiences and in self-esteem. Pride in himself, attained through the study of a great piece of literature, will motivate the student to further such experiences.[12]

There is, nevertheless, no justification in frustrating a class which lacks the needed reading skills and maturity for understanding certain plays. A simplified approach to Shakespearean drama might be successful with one class of slow learners, while reading an appropriate modern play might be a much more profitable experience for another such class.

One-act plays are often helpful in introducing a class to drama, and many excellent one-act plays are available that would appeal to senior high school students. Short plays, such as Rachel Field's The Fifteenth Candle and John Hughes' The Ship of Dreams, ease the transition from the short story to the play.

Most of the problem of appropriateness is met when selecting modern three-act plays for the classroom. The sensationalism with which some playwrights inject their plays has, unfortunately, almost paralyzed the teaching of modern drama in high schools.

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[12]Angus B. Rothwell, State Superintendent of Schools, Teaching Literature in Wisconsin (Department of Public Instruction, Madison, Wisconsin, 1965), p. 136.

> The character of much of our modern drama, with its emphasis on complex adult conflicts and a frequently frank treatment of sex, has made many teachers understandably reluctant to venture beyond Our Town or Life with Father.[13]

The teacher can avoid choosing plays emphasizing the sordid, but avoiding all profanities and unpleasant subject matter will be difficult. Even Carson McCuller's tender play The Member of the Wedding is not free from them; yet the play is appropriate in every way for study by adolescents.

Since one of the goals for the student of literature is emotional maturity, the teacher can help his students achieve this by indicating the difference between a playwright's use of frankness to build the semblance of reality and the use of vulgarity to attract an audience through shock and sensation. The purpose of the play is a criterion for judging the appropriateness of a play for adolescents. For example, one probably would not teach Williams' Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, but he might teach O'Neill's Desire under the Elms, which transcends physical passion and moves into the dark and moody setting of naturalistic tragedy. And, although it hints at the ravages of venereal disease, Ibsen's Ghosts is an impressive experience for the more mature adolescents because it deals with something of far greater concern to mankind than human dissipations. It attacks outdated ideas that haunt and destroy lives and societies.

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[13]Veidemanis, "Drama in the English Classroom," 544.

Some plays, of course, should be avoided, not so much because the sordid is present, but because it is untastefully prominent and serves no substantial purpose for being there.

The appropriateness of a play for classroom study, then, depends on the level of maturity it demands, the levels of comprehension and reading ability necessary for understanding it, and the suitability of the play's theme and subject matter. The play must also meet another requirement; it must serve as a means by which the adolescent's world is made larger.

Increasing Adolescents' Social Sensitivity

> The schools, to the degree that they are responsive to the problems and requirements of society, are searching for ways to increase social sensitivity. Education is discovering that among the means for changing human behavior, those which appeal to the reason and intellect alone are less effective than those which also involve the emotions and the imagination. Pageantry, drama, literature, and art, all supported by information and knowledge, offer the best means for educating a total human personality sufficiently to change his behavior.[14]

One of the major aims of literature study in today's high schools is that of increasing the adolescent's concern for others. The growth of this concern, however, depends on two related factors. These are the teacher's understanding of adolescent psychology and the student's acceptance and understanding of himself and others.

Most educators recognize the following as important

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[14]Walter Loban, Literature and Social Sensitivity (Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1954), p. 4.

needs of adolescents:

> (a) to belong, (b) to achieve, (c) to feel secure economically, (d) to be free from fears, (e) to have love and affection (especially in the home), (f) to be free from feelings of anxiety, (g) to share in decision making, and (h) to understand the world.[15]

While the teacher cannot hope to select plays that will help the student meet each of these needs, he can choose plays that contain conflicts with which the adolescent is concerned. The teacher must, therefore, know his class well and must recognize the needs of the adolescent group in general.

Through the methods used in choosing and teaching plays, the teacher can help the adolescent feel that he is an important member of his peer group, accomplish worthwhile goals, grow in the ability to make decisions, and develop insight and understanding. Loban found, however, that complete freedom from anxiety is not conducive to social sensitivity. Experience with anxiety is, in fact, necessary before an adolescent can empathize with a fictional character.[16]

Irvin Pooley recognized that

> Drama in the classroom . . . has an advantage or two besides giving more people a chance to act. Casting against type in the classroom is easy, and plain girls get a chance to be heroines and timid boys a chance to be heroes. Many get the release--the vacation, if you will--of being someone else for a little while.[17]

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[15] Ibid., p. 24.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Irvin C. Pooley, "Drama in the Classroom," The English Journal, XLIV (March, 1955), 151.

Plays chosen to develop social sensitivity in adolescents should "frequently include characters close to their own age and of their own sex if identification is to operate in its most effective form."[18] In addition, the teacher should introduce the class first to characters with whom adolescents can identify easily and pleasantly,[19] such as Sophocles' Antigone, or Katryn of I Remember Mama, or Billy Budd of the play Billy Budd by Coxe and Chapman; then he should move on to less pleasant and more complicated characters, such as Hamlet, or Biff of Death of a Salesman, or Laura of The Glass Menagerie.

When selecting the play, the teacher should also concern himself with the way in which the playwright asks for responses from his audience. Some plays call for reactions based on sympathy; others call for reactions based on sentiment. Loban explained the difference:

> Sentimentality is a substitute for real thought, real emotion, real sympathy. It is a mechanism of immature self-satisfaction, employing the outward appearances of sympathy. Frequently sentimentality betrays its artificial quality by a lack of proportion between the emotion displayed and the cause of the emotion.[20]

Comparison of a mediocre television show or movie and an outstanding dramatic work studied by the class will clarify this difference for the students. The teacher could also

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[18] Loban, Literature and Social Sensitivity, p. 32.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., p. 7.

assign a short story of dubious quality, such as O'Henry's "The Gift of the Magi," and have his class compare the proportion of the emotion displayed and the cause of the emotion with those found in a play such as A Raisin in the Sun, in which the reasons for the family's disappointment are significant and logical.

Another test of students' sensitivity is their ability to determine degrees of selflessness among the characters within the plays that are studied. A comparison of The Glass Menagerie and O'Neill's Long Day's Journey into Night would emphasize the degrees of sensitivity.

> . . . where the characters, every one, of The Glass Menagerie are driven by self-pity, and focused almost pathologically inward, those of Long Day's Journey mesh with one another, feel one another's anguish and loneliness and share one another's fate.[21]

Objectivity on the reader's part is essential for honest responses to literature. According to Robert Heilman

> . . . literature of quality . . . ministers to sympathy and understanding without making them too easy and without getting sloppy about it. It engages sympathy, but keeps the object of sympathy in full perspective. It elicits at once warmth of feeling and coolness of judgment.[22]

The teacher, therefore, must select plays that give an acceptable portrayal of life. It is perhaps better to avoid selecting plays presenting obvious moral lessons, stereotyped characters, or superficial plots that always end

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[21]Morris Freedman, "O'Neill and Contemporary Drama," College English, XXIII (April, 1962), 572.

[22]Heilman, op. cit., p. 44.

happily or thrive on sentimentality. Although drama is important for helping adolescents gain insight and understanding, David Holbrook stated that much being done with drama in today's schools is useless. "The failing of most available plays," he wrote, "is in not really providing any essential drama at all--they have no moral concern to celebrate possible attitudes to life."[23]

From his study of sensitivity Loban concluded that

> . . . the importance of considering the psychology of adolescents and the need for interaction between learner and subject matter are considerations no thoughtful curriculum committee can long ignore.[24]

ACTIVITIES AND APPROACHES

Suggestions for Starting the Study of Drama

Determining objectives. The teacher of literature will avoid many of the pitfalls of teaching drama if, previous to the study, he decides on the objectives for his class. Vague objectives can ruin for the students and the teacher what could be a rich literary experience.

The ultimate goal in teaching or studying drama is not that the student will read Shakespeare or know that Chekhov was a great Russian playwright. Such goals are superficial. The teacher needs, first, to think in terms

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[23]Ibid.

[24]Loban, Literature and Social Sensitivity, p. 19.

of general goals for the student, such as the following:

> The purpose of reading many plays . . . is to help him develop his capacity for appreciating dramatic literature so that he will select it more wisely on television, screen, and stage, and thus find richer delight in what he does select.[25]

After deciding on the general direction for the study, the teacher will want to develop more specific objectives. Veidemanis suggested the following objectives for a four-year program, but these could feasibly be modified to fit into a unit devoted to drama:

> 1. Develop pleasure and skill in reading and interpreting drama, and acquaint students with some significant dramatic works and lists of plays for future reading.
>
> 2. Acquaint students with the dramatic tradition, the role of drama in the history of man.
>
> 3. Develop critical standards and taste in drama, film, TV.
>
> 4. Encourage interest in play-going and supporting community ventures in drama.
>
> 5. Increase students' understanding of the importance of drama as a source of insight into personal and social problems.[26]

By keeping such objectives in mind and by rephrasing them in terms of pupil objectives, the teacher will be able to guide the students through a profitable and pleasurable literary experience that will have lasting value for them.

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[25]Walter Loban, Margaret Ryan, and James R. Squire, Teaching Language and Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1961), p. 323.

[26]Veidemanis, "Drama in the English Classroom," pp. 545-547.

They will also help the teacher to remember the larger ideas with which he and his class are involved and to avoid petty drills and details.

> A literary experience is not likely to result from the teaching of literature by centering in parroting. Memorizing facts about authors or about literary periods, lists of characters or of vocabulary, definitions of types of literature is not likely to lead to a literary experience. Nor is a literary experience the outcome of drawing two sides of a triangle to represent a plot, labelling the angles and putting a finger on a spot called climax.[27]

A set of clear objectives will ultimately influence the type of test that is given over the study of drama. The most important step that the teacher takes in beginning his plans for teaching plays is that of developing meaningful objectives.

Determining point of view. The objectives will also be of particular importance in the decision the teacher makes on the point of view from which the play will be seen and studied. Drama is usually taught with an emphasis on historical survey, theme, or literary type. Each, of course, has value, and each belongs to some degree in the drama program. Too often the teacher of literature will stress one approach, ignoring the possibilities inherent in the others.

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[27]Marion C. Sheridan, "The Teaching of Literature in Secondary Schools," Perspectives on English (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1960), pp. 29-30.

> One common shortcoming of our present procedures is that we often end up by doing practically the same things with a dramatic work on every level and ignoring what the student has done before. There is surely room in our curriculum for handling drama by several methods--as a type or within thematic or chronological units--but surely it shouldn't be handled as a type on all four levels, nor should the history of drama or the Shakespearean theater be discussed in detail every time students start a drama unit.[28]

Spiller stated that the historical approach has been overemphasized, but he suggested that the new critical approach, too, has been overstressed in literature programs. According to Spiller, the teacher should strive for a "balance between the two functions" and should use his "historical knowledge from the inside out rather than from the outside in."[29] In illustration, Spiller suggested using Hamlet's play within a play and moving from there outward to discussion of the Elizabethan theater.

Shakespearean drama suffers the most from an overemphasis on its historical setting. So fascinating and colorful are the personalities and events of Elizabethan England that the teacher often dwells at length with lectures, reports, and written assignments on Shakespeare's times. As Veidemanis pointed out, there is "too much time spent on unrelated art and history projects; too little

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[28]Veidemanis, "Drama in the English Classroom," 549.

[29]Robert E. Spiller, "Is Literary History Obsolete?" Teaching English in Today's High Schools (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965), pp. 66-73.

concentrated attention on the written context itself."[30]

One teacher, for instance, encouraged his class to imitate television panel shows, dividing his class into four committees, which were Life of Shakespeare, Living Conditions in Shakespeare's Time, The Theatre in Shakespeare's Time, and Historical Background of Macbeth. Two of the three weeks allotted to the study of Macbeth were spent on these presentations, the third week was spent on the play.[31]

The historical approach does, however, have several advantages.

> If properly used, it enables the student to see something of the development of literary tradition, to follow the rise and decline of conventions, and to study authors and works against the background of relevant social, intellectual, political, and economic realities.[32]

Studying a play as genre is worthwhile, for

> . . . it forces the student to look upon literature as literature, not as an adjunct to philosophy, psychology, or the social studies. It invites the student to discover the variety and the range possible within each type at the same time as he becomes increasingly aware of the inescapable limitations that each form imposes upon the writer.[33]

Studying a play by this approach also has its disadvantages, for categorizing a play as to type or purpose can sometimes be frustrating and useless. Not every play is

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[31]Charles E. Bartling, "On Teaching 'Macbeth' and Shakespeare," The English Journal, XLIX (January, 1960), 38-39.

[32]"A Curriculum Arrived at by Consensus," Freedom and Discipline in English, Report of the Commission on English (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1965), p. 51.

[33]Ibid., p. 53.

going to fit neatly into a category. Much time is lost and very little of significance is gained, for example, by manipulating Shakespeare's, O'Neill's, or Miller's tragedies until they conform to Aristotle's theories of tragedy. One should remember that Aristotle was not prescribing what the artist must do, but describing what artists had been doing.

Literature is not so easily appreciated or understood that application of a mere formula or placement within historical context will suffice. Drama, like man, possesses a soul, and to know drama one must know both its soul and the soul of man. A person who cannot define the word tragedy can still ache deeply for Willy Loman, can still sit dry-eyed and awed before the blind Oedipus, because he knows that he has witnessed the magnificent.

The play's position within its history or genre should be presented as supplement to the play itself. The class could, for instance, present "panel discussions on important books on theatrical personalities or historical developments . . . ."[34] In preparation for Julius Caesar, Ryerson's students read "an abridgement, not a simplification of North's Plutarch, which is . . . cut to about fifteen pages, and the provoking Elizabethan details retained."[35]

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[34]Dwight L. Burton, Literature Study in the High Schools (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1964), pp. 242-243.

[35]Edward Ryerson, "'Julius Caesar' Once Again," The English Journal, XLVII (January, 1958), 6.

But such activities should be limited and of secondary concern.

Another possibility for presenting some background knowledge to students as they study the drama is to draw upon resources available within the school itself and within the community. The study of Greek, Roman, or Elizabethan drama, for example, provides an excellent opportunity for the correlation of world history and English, or a study of Hamlet's personality in the psychology class could be stimulating. Interesting also would be a look at Street Scene or An Enemy of the People from the angle of the sociology class.

To promote an understanding of the theatre, the teacher might wish to call upon members of the community's little theatre group. During the class's study of a play, a member might talk to the students about the limitations of the theatre, about the types of theatres, or about how one can participate in little theatre productions. Since stage directions are so vital a part of the written play, a representative of the group could demonstrate the use of stage directions in guiding the actor upon the stage.

Since art is the imposing of a pattern on an experience, one of the best approaches to teaching the unit on drama is to guide the students toward finding a pattern

to the play.[36] By looking for this pattern, a repetition of likenesses and differences, images and language, students will discover that the play has something to say, that it has form, and that it fits into the larger pattern of life.

Such an approach would include the others, especially those emphasizing literary themes and analysis. Analysis is necessary no matter which approach is chosen, for through analysis pattern is accentuated and meaning is clarified.

> Analysis is not incompatible with appreciation; it is more likely to be the source of appreciation. It is by analyzing, weighing, and evaluating that the reader develops appreciation of the artist who has pondered and planned, struggled to communicate his vision,--and succeeded.[37]

Thematic units will increase appreciation as students discover the play fitting into a more logical and larger framework than either the historical or genre method will allow.

> Students need . . . to discern for themselves the recurring themes, dilemmas, and human needs reflected in drama of every age. They should have the opportunity to discover that an Antigone joins hands across the centuries with a John Proctor of The Crucible, choosing personal integrity to a life of dishonor; that a Medea shares the agony of jealousy with a passionately tormented Othello; that a fervid Lavinia in O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra emulates the

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[36] Omalee C. Garten, "Literary Criticism and Teaching the Drama," The University of Kansas Bulletin of Education, 21 (May, 1967), 116.

[37] Sheridan, op. cit., p. 37.

vindictiveness and persuasiveness of her Greek counterpart.[38]

The thematic approach makes drama more personal and awakens the student to points of view other than his own. "It appeals to the student who is concerned with ideas, and it confronts him with perennial questions and problems, allowing him to see how writers of different eras have dealt with them."[39]

Winifred L. Dusenbury, in her book The Theme of Loneliness in Modern American Drama, discusses the differing aspects of one theme and the American plays illustrating each aspect. She includes the following plays, which would be appropriate for a unit on loneliness:

Personal failure: Death of a Salesman
Homelessness: Of Mice and Men
An unhappy family: The Member of the Wedding
Mourning Becomes Electra
Socioeconomic forces: Street Scene
Winterset
The Hairy Ape
In the South: The Glass Menagerie
Conflict between the material and the spiritual:
The Great God Brown
The lonely hero: Abe Lincoln in Illinois[40]

To these could be added other plays and other literary works, but few teachers would have the time for such an extended unit. The teacher would choose, instead, two or

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[38] Burton, op. cit., p. 228.

[39] "A Curriculum Arrived at by Consensus," Freedom and Discipline in English, p. 52.

[40] Winifred L. Dusenbury, The Theme of Loneliness in Modern American Drama (Gainsville: University of Florida Press, 1960).

three of these and bring in short stories, poems, and perhaps a novel that deal in some way with the theme of loneliness. Rather than striving to teach a thematic unit solely in relation to one literary type, the teacher will experience greater success by integrating drama with other literature. Burton created one such unit called "Facing Reality," in which he included titles of plays, short stories, essays, and novels concerned with theme of facing reality and activities for the successful development of the unit.[41]

Motivating students' interest. Besides determining objectives and point of view, the teacher must also determine ways in which he can involve the adolescents so that they believe the study is meaningful and worthwhile.

Teaching drama has, at the start, one important advantage over teaching some other types of literature. Young people enjoy reading plays. Drama, dealing so directly with human conflict, attracts the interest and curiosity of all students for the reason that man, being a creature of imagination, has always participated in forms of playacting. The games children play, the business and social formalities of adults, the ceremonies of church and state rely to a great extent on the spectacle and make-believe of the theatre.

This natural enthusiasm for drama can be smothered by an insensitive teacher, but it is there for the teacher who

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[41]Burton, op. cit., pp. 248-251.

approaches the study of drama with an understanding of adolescent needs and interests and with an awareness of the inherent drama of life.

Another advantage found in the teaching of drama is the organization of the play, which, because of the limited time for presentation and the heterogeneity of the audience, must be clearly developed.

> The plot of a play is generally either a very simple story or one, as in some comedies in which, though the action is very complicated, enjoyment depends more on seeing the rush of complications than on an appreciation of the full significance of all of them.[42]

With these two advantages in his favor, the teacher of drama should realize that students' appreciation of plays will increase when they see that drama has something of importance to give them. The play will probably be most successful if it is interesting to adolescents; it will, undoubtedly, fail if the students are not attracted by it.

Interest among adolescents, however, is not absolute; it changes and grows as the young people themselves change and grow during these years of maturation. The teacher's responsibility is to guide the class toward a higher and expanded interest level. Teachers need not limit themselves and their students to one area or level of interest. It is

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[42]Marjorie Boulton, The Anatomy of Drama (London: Roultedge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1960), p. 38.

amazing how interested an adolescent can become in certain areas if he is given an opportunity to learn about them. Interest arises when the teacher successfully clarifies the relationship between the experiences of drama and the drama of real life.

Visualization and interpretation stand most in the way of students' sharing this relationship. While drama is similar in some respects to other literary types with which students are familiar, it is also vastly different, for it is a literature for performance, not for reading silently. Until it lives upon the stage or in the mind of the reader, it is impotent.

To be faced with pages of straight dialogue can be a frustrating experience for a student unaccustomed to reading plays. Early in the study the wise teacher will provide the class with a chance to observe drama and short stories working side by side. A profitable activity could very well be the comparison of a short story to a play developed from the story, such as Susan Glaspell's "A Jury of Her Peers" and her one-act play Trifles.

Although plays contain conflict, character, and plot as do short stories, unlike short stories little description is given to aid the readers in the interpretation of events and characters. Neither are the readers always told how a character speaks his lines or places himself upon the stage. Much is left to the students' imaginations, and the teacher

needs to pose questions that will encourage critical thinking and active imaginations; he needs to encourage students to look for causes and reasons for behavior and events. To develop the skills for reading in depth, Veidemanis suggested that the teacher have students infer such things as character traits, problems, and social class from unfamiliar dialogue passages. She also recommended that the teacher have students select from a list of vocabulary words which suggest character traits and apply these words to dramatic characters.[43]

Since so little information is provided for the reader, he should recognize the importance of reading the introductory descriptions of setting and characters. Practice in interpreting clues from setting can be provided through exercises similar to the following:

> 1. Introduce plays for group and individual study by reading descriptions of setting and asking students to predict something of the nature of the play.
>
> 2. Place in groups students who have individually read different plays; ask each to give details of setting and determine how well the group can interpret clues.[44]

The playwright cannot, as the story writer may, directly tell his reader what to see and sometimes to think. Although some playwrights, such as George Bernard Shaw and Arthur Miller, have sought to aid the reader with introductory

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[43]Veidemanis, "Drama in the English Classroom," 549.

[44]Loban, Teaching Language and Literature, pp. 344-345.

and concluding discussions, the fact still remains that the success of a play depends upon the reader's ability to visualize and interpret. Every word uttered by dramatic characters is significant, and the reader must be alert to subtle meanings. In The Glass Menagerie, for example, Laura's comment, "Glass breaks so easily. No matter how careful you are," foreshadows the tenderness, yet thoughtlessness, with which Jim tells Laura that he will not call again, that he is engaged to be married.

Reliable interpretations result also from an understanding of symbols and figures of speech. This is true not only of Shakespearean plays, but also of modern drama. Modern prose often appears deceptively simple, but some of the most powerful language lives within modern drama. What vast implications are found in these lines from Rice's The Adding Machine, as Charles returns the pitiful Mr. Zero, after a brief sojourn in heaven, to earth to run a super-hyper-adding machine with his big toe:

> You're a failure, Zero, a failure. A waste product. A slave to a contraption of steel and iron . . . . True, you move and eat and digest and excrete and reproduce. But any microscopic organism can do as much. Well--time's up! Back you go--back to your sunless groove--the raw material of slums and wars--the ready prey of the first jingo or demagogue or political adventurer who takes the trouble to play upon your ignorance and credulity and provincialism. You poor, spineless, brainless boob--I'm sorry for you!

How powerfully the following lines from Steinbeck's

Of Mice and Men express man's hunger for a place of his own, but the words are hard and disillusioned.[45]

> I seen hundreds of men come by on the road . . . . Every damn one of 'em is got a little piece of land in his head. And never a God damn one of 'em gets it. Jus' like heaven. Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land . . . . I seen guys nearly crazy with loneliness for land. (II, ii)

Each of these examples contains phrasing with which the student is familiar, yet each penetrates with the force of poetry.

During the class's first few experiences with reading drama, the teacher should work with the students, discussing and guiding as the play is being read. Time spent on understanding the first scenes is quite valuable, for here the setting, the conflict, and the basic elements in the characters' personalities are introduced. It is also desirable that the teacher guide the student into systematic interpretation.

> It is important for the reader to notice how his interpretation develops as his analysis becomes more detailed and thorough, and to get continual practice in formulating interpretative statements. Even if no good occasion offers itself for shifting the analysis from terms, say, of character to those of action, the reader should periodically interrupt his analytic procedures and take his bearings, by making new efforts to formulate an interpretation of the play as a whole.[46]

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[45] Dusenbury, op. cit., p. 45.

[46] Knox C. Hill, Interpreting Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 55.

In addition, the teacher will at times have to call the student's attention to relationships between characters and events, to important speeches, to symbols and figurative language. Helping the student form hypotheses, interpret the meanings of dialogue and action, and analyze character and plot will provide the basis for critical reading so important to independent reading.

The teacher must avoid getting between the student and the play. The teacher's intrusion will usually happen when the play being studied is too difficult for the class. Then the teacher in an attempt to clarify the play gives his interpretations and prejudices about the work and the playwright, allowing the student no opportunity to exercise his own judgment. This results in what Margaret J. Early called "false appreciation," which, she wrote, "is most likely to become permanent in readers who have been forced to 'appreciate' before they are ready." The teacher's role, she continued, "is to get out of the way as soon as possible. For his role, unlike that of the critic, is not to interpret but rather to let them meet literature directly, prepared to be delighted."[47]

Burton wrote that the teacher should step aside early in the study of drama, especially in the study of non-Shakespearean plays, requiring the students to have read the

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[47]Margaret J. Early, "Stages of Growth in Literary Appreciation," Teaching English in Today's High Schools (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965), p. 83.

entire play before the first class discussion.

> This method has the advantage of putting greater responsibility on the student for drawing his own conclusions and seeing the play as an artistic unit and avoids the problem of holding all students to specific page limits.[48]

Hill and Thomas found this method successful in the study of Shakespearean plays, also. After the first rapid reading, Hill suggested, the student should write a statement in which he summarizes his understanding of the play, then he should reread the play in depth.[49] Thomas found two advantages to this method. He stated that a quick reading gave support for deeper reading and that it made clear quickly those parts of the play which were to cause the most difficulty for the students.[50]

Suggestions for Continuing the Play

Until students are accustomed to reading drama, the reading should proceed slowly; but the reading should not be prolonged unnecessarily. Since plays are written with the idea that they will be enjoyed and understood by an heterogeneous audience during the short space of two or three hours, one might suppose that a class of high school students could attain the significant goals of drama study in less than six

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[48]Burton, op. cit., p. 244.

[49]Hill, op. cit., p. 55.

[50]Cleveland A. Thomas, "A Focus for Teaching 'Hamlet,'" The English Journal, XLVII (January, 1958), 14.

or more weeks. If it cannot, then the class is probably not ready for the play, and a year spent on it will not make it any more suitable for them. "Three or four weeks are ample time for most works used in high school and is actually all that can be reasonably afforded in the already overcrowded English program."[51]

Plays should be presented quickly. Not quickly in the sense that time is not taken to discuss and understand them, but in the sense that the discussion is not extended to such length that the theme and significance of the play are lost to the adolescent. The student should not be burdened with the technicalities of construction. Such technicalities as plot, climax, and conclusion, of course, need to be discussed, but they should not become the major effort of the study.

> Rather than straining to make a single play yield all of its riches, the high school teacher is perhaps wiser to distribute emphasis, letting one play reveal the possibilities of dialogue, another the force of ideas, yet another the use of irony, contrast or symbolism. Ultimately the skills emphasized in one should transfer to and illuminate the reading of other plays.[52]

This does not mean that the teacher will forsake other elements to emphasize one; for example, a person could not read Oedipus Rex without becoming engrossed in characterization and ideas, yet irony could well be stressed while

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[51] Burton, op. cit., p. 247.

[52] Ibid., p. 244.

teaching the play. On the other hand, the teacher might emphasize the "force of ideas" in such plays as Mother Courage and Her Children and All My Sons.

The teacher should give the students an opportunity to interpret selected scenes from the play for themselves and to compare their interpretations with their classmates' ideas in class discussions or buzz sessions. Concentrating on one facet of the play, such as characterization, until the students are satisfied with their interpretations will be more beneficial than haphazardly discussing several dramatic elements.

Too often students unused to interpreting literature will allow their feelings to stand in the way of accurate analysis. An unchanneled release of feelings is dangerous and can result in a flood of emotions that obscure the truth. Questions similar to the following can help students verbalize their feelings toward dramatic characters:

> How do you feel about the various characters involved?
>
> Where are your sympathies?
>
> What fears or hopes do you have for the various characters before and after the incidents occur?
>
> What do you think about degrees of responsibility for one turn of events or another?
>
> Do the characters deserve what happens to them? Or do they deserve better or worse?[53]

From here, the teacher should lead the students toward

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[53]Hill, op. cit., p. 64.

an understanding that every judgment made about a character or an action needs to be based on an intelligent study of details. Students need to be led into the area of critical reading and thinking by being shown how to read and think critically. Class discussions are invaluable for illuminating conclusions that are logically or illogically based.

Essays and articles can be introduced profitably into the study of drama so that students begin to grow aware of differing opinions; they should be encouraged to disagree with a critic if they can produce evidence showing the critic's argument to be weak. One might have his students review Macbeth's Tomorrow and Tomorrow speech, then have them read Leonard Q. Ross's essay "Mr. Kaplan and Shakespeare," a humorously poor interpretation of Macbeth's speech.[54] Other essays that would lead to lively class discussions are Shaw's "Better Than Shakespeare" and "Valedictory," Thomas de Quincey's "On the Knocking at the Gate in 'Macbeth,'" Arthur Miller's "Tragedy and the Common Man," Marya Mannes's "How Do You Know It's Good?" David Karp's "TV Shows Are Not Supposed to Be Good," Tyrone Guthie's "So Long As the Theatre Can Do Miracles," and Thurber's "The Macbeth Murder Mystery." Magazines and other publications of drama should be available in the classroom.

Other activities that are excellent for promoting

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[54]William J. Reynolds, "When Thou Doest 'Macbeth,' Do It Quickly," The English Journal, XLVII (February, 1958), p. 90.

critical thinking follow.

Ask students to find lines combining two or more of of these purposes:

To refer to a significant event of the past
To foreshadow the future
To reveal a character trait of the speaker
To show the speaker's opinion of another's character
To help create mood
To show an attempt of the speaker to evade the issue
To show an attempt of the speaker to conceal his thoughts or feelings
To show the speaker's attempt to persuade by appeal to another's needs or weaknesses.

After the play is well started, ask students to begin collecting evidence for a final writing assignment requiring quotations from the play in support of conclusions. As they read, students should copy, either on cards or in their notebooks, references pertinent to the problem they are investigating. Give them a choice of purpose:

To show the gradual development of a principal character. Show how the author has developed the character of one of the principal personalities of the play; for each stage of development, supply evidence.

To explain the role of a minor character. Select a minor character; show why he is necessary to the play.

To show mood as conveyed by lines. Analyze the mood of the play, giving examples of lines that help to change or intensify it.

To reconcile conflicting evidence. Select a character whose actions often contradict his words and actions are at variance with what is said about him; justify your opinion of him by reconciling the conflicting evidence.[55]

Though the student must be cautioned against being wholly emotional in his response to drama, neither can he be encouraged to be completely objective. The reader of drama

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[55]Loban, Teaching Language and Literature, pp. 345-346.

must respond to a play as he should respond to similar situations in life, through a combination of emotion and intellect. For this reason, the student must learn to apply the skills of critical thinking to all drama, not just that studied within the classroom.

> One of our first tasks is to make students more articulate about the films and plays they see, to lead them beyond a mono-syllabic or cliche reaction. They should therefore be taught to evaluate drama both as an art and as a craft, to perceive it as a medium demanding integrity, self-control, significance of theme and language, discipline of body and voice, fusion of spectacle, technique and idea. They should further learn to distinguish the artistic and original production from the tawdry or imitative and to recognize the hidden persuaders, the stereotypes, the false view of American life frequently presented. Surely a major directive for our teacher should be that advocated by Gilbert Seldes in his essay "Radio, TV, and the Common Man": to make students realize that more discriminating audiences are needed, and that the American public isn't necessarily getting what it wants, but often what it is too passive to reject.[56]

To stimulate critical regard of television and movies the teacher might appoint a student television committee to watch for television offerings that would be worthwhile for the class to view.[57] Occasional discussion of television shows and movies is valuable, but the teacher must help the students to determine what makes a good show good. Students cannot, alone, develop taste in television and movies. Guidance must come from the teacher of literature.

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[56]Burton, op. cit., p. 231.

[57]Neil Postman, Television and the Teaching of English (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1961), p. 80.

Providing experiences in seeing and hearing plays. Drama should be taught as both literature and theatre. To do this, the teacher will want to discuss with the class ways in which an actor might interpret and present certain parts of the play's action. The questions, "Why might one way be more appropriate than another?" and "Are they both valid interpretations?" could be asked of the class. Students will more readily understand the different possibilities for interpretations if they hear or see different ones.

Besides picturing the action as though it were taking place "on a little imaginary stage inside their heads,"[58] the students should also have the opportunity to see the play performed. Planned theatre trips are desirable, but classroom enactment benefits the study, too.

> One does not need an elaborate stage or costumes to study drama: a make-believe stage and ordinary classroom furniture are sufficient to allow blocking and dramatic interpretation. Stage directions and movement and grouping of characters put dialogue in context and complete understanding and appreciation.[59]

This class participation involves oral reading, of course; but oral reading is not without its drawbacks. It can, however, be an exciting challenge to both the teacher and the student if approached with consideration for the readers and the listeners.

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[58]Thomas, op. cit., p. 9.

[59]Garten, op. cit., p. 117.

Unplanned oral reading wastes time and destroys interest. Students become bored and restless as they listen to a classmate stumble and stammer through lines that should swell with feeling. Some believe that the teacher should read the weighty passages, letting the students attempt the easier ones. This is especially true of reading Shakespearean blank verse, for Shakespeare's plays require excellent diction and expression, and there are few high school students who are capable of interpreting the correct expression.

Good reading on the teacher's part can ignite a class's enthusiasm for drama and cause the students to want to read aloud, also. As an actor the teacher must awaken students to the delight of the spoken word; as an educator, he must help students to delight others with the spoken word. This is a challenge, but not as great a challenge as it may first appear to be.

Assigning the material to be read orally a day or more before the actual presentation will help students gain a feeling of self-confidence. While the assignments should be specific, students show more interest if they have some choice as to what passages or parts they will present. Students need to "select and read key scenes, passages revealing character or moments of climax--all of which require careful planning, yet which are brief enough to retain class-

room interest."[60]

Oral reading provides the teacher with an excellent means for stimulating independent play-reading; for example, instead of writing a summary of a play he has read, the student might give an oral introduction to the play and then deliver an interpretation of one of the play's important speeches.

For most students modern drama is much easier to read aloud than Elizabethan or Greek plays.

> Fortunately, modern drama does not indulge in lengthy monologues but in rapid-fire interchange. Use this crackle of dialogue to give your students the fluidity and self-assurance they want: have them speed up their pace in dramatic reading, generally far too slow; if a word is missed, let it lie and keep them ploughing ahead; as their partners in dialogue finish, and their lines begin, let them come in at once, rapidly, as they do in conversation, unless the stage directions order otherwise. Stage presence is gained simply by keeping the lines going and getting aboard on time. Memorization is not necessary, but knowing the lines well enough to get them off quickly is.[61]

Some students will be so shy that the teacher will have to pay special attention to them. Timidity should not be encouraged by ignoring it.

> If shy students refuse to do their share of acting, allow them to remain at their seats, so the knee-knocking will be less conspicuous. Sit with these students. Read the lines together with them. Allow them to read silently. Prompt them. You may never get them to face the class, though they will want to do so. Maybe some subsequent teacher will be successful. You

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[60] Bernstein, op. cit., p. 244.

[61] Ibid., p. 277.

> will at least have set the foundations. Your students will be eternally grateful for getting them out of their shells, fight you though they will.[62]

One way to help adolescents feel less shy as they participate in the play is to put the student-actors at different places around the room, instead of always positioning them in front of the audience. Being aware of movement around them will also give the audience a sense of involvement.[63] Listening skills will be developed if the spectators keep their play books closed during the production.

Acting out each play studied is not always feasible. Instead, the class could try some group play reading. Many plays lend themselves favorably to this activity, especially those plays depending more on language than on action for effect, such as Ghosts, An Enemy of the People, The Cherry Orchard, Uncle Vanya, Our Town, and the Greek tragedies.[64] Since confusion will result if too many characters are used in group reading, the number should be kept at twelve or less. To help the audience understand the significance of plot and characters, a student-director should provide some information before the reading begins.

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[62] Ibid., p. 278.

[63] Ibid., p. 277.

[64] Dorothy Mulgrave, Speech: A Handbook of Voice Training, Diction, and Public Speaking (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1954), p. 127.

> He should indicate briefly the setting for each act and should introduce each character. The person being introduced should stand and remain standing while the director gives a complete description of the age, appearance, and behavior of the character, as well as his part in the play.[65]

Because a class period is usually not long enough in which to present a three-act play, the teacher might suggest that the group prepare a good one-act play or a part of a longer play, or the class might choose to meet at the teacher's home for an evening of group reading. An especially worthwhile reading could be given to other classes or in assemblies.

Assignments involving oral reading motivate students to search a play for meaning and to read in depth so that they will do their best before their classmates. Such assignments demand that the readers truly understand the play. If they do not, this lack of understanding will be evident in their presentations.

Activities to develop speaking skills are numerous and do not always involve oral reading. Many teachers believe that memorization is a necessary and rewarding part of drama study, but most agree "that the teacher needs to exercise prudence in tailoring requirements to the capacities of students."[66] The following reasons were among those given by teachers for assigning memorization of Shakespearean drama:

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[65] Ibid., p. 126.

[66] Haugh, op. cit., p. 105.

> It gives students a sense of accomplishment; in some of the more memorable speeches Shakespeare says things of universal significance better than anyone else has said or can say them; students have something concrete about the play to remember long after its details have faded from recollection; memorization injects an element of beauty into personalities largely shaped by drab and ugly forces; and students, sooner or later, are grateful to the teacher for having required this kind of work of them.[67]

Nevertheless, much disagreement exists about the value of required memorization. If a teacher believes that it is, indeed, wrong for his particular class, then he might ask that his students copy lines which they find especially effective into a notebook; by doing so students often commit such lines to memory.[68]

The tape recorder helps the shy student overcome some of his fright of delivering his memorized speech. One teacher found that "where there was resistance to repeating memorized lines before the class there was no difficulty at all in getting the student to speak the lines into a microphone in private."[69] A group of less timid students would enjoy using the tape recorder, also. After recording speeches or scenes from a play, they could then compare their interpretations with those of professional actors heard on records. "Such comparisons help to point out weaknesses in timing, pronunciation, interpretation and emphasis."[70]

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[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] John T. Muri, "The Use of Recordings in High School English Classes," The English Journal, XLVI (January, 1957), 38.

Buzz sessions, too, benefit drama study, for they give students a chance to exchange opinions in a small, relaxed group. One group, for example, might read the same play and afterwards discuss its meaning and significance among themselves. Topics for buzz sessions follow.

> Discuss how ideas in drama apply to contemporary situations. Explore such issues, for example, as what Inherit the Wind has to say about freedom of thought in a democracy, how The Crucible reflects on twentieth-century "witch-hunting."
>
> Discuss the impression that American films and TV convey to others, especially people abroad. To what extent is this view of American life convincing, real, precise? Identify productions that have given a valid or a deceptive view.
>
> Have students select a TV program, film, or play and discuss how creative thinking could give it more richness, meaning, significance.
>
> Discuss popular "family," western, or nature programs on TV. Identify common characteristics in these programs and evaluate to what extent they represent realistic life situations.
>
> Debate the responsibility of the protagonist for his actions: Is Macbeth a free agent or merely a pawn of fate? Is Captain deVere justified in applying the death penalty to Billy Budd? Is Joe Keller of All My Sons to be condemned for thinking first of his family's well-being?[71]

More formal discussion groups also serve to enrich the study of drama. Plays read individually by students might be discussed for the class during a round-table talk.

> These could be structured around a theme, for example, "Facing Reality"--or else each student could be asked to

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[71]Burton, op. cit., pp. 232-243.

> discuss a play he has most enjoyed, pointedly commenting on (a) the play's central conflict, (b) theme(s) the author has directly expressed or suggested, (c) key characters and the change in them throughout the play, (d) a key scene, in which the central character most reveals himself, (e) an estimate of whether the play provides a significant dramatic experience.[72]

Or a discussion group could concern itself with the universal problems or truths found in comparable plays, such as Anderson's Winterset, Shakespeare's Hamlet, and Euripede's Medea.[73] For a class of better students, a comparison of Macbeth and the Faust legend would prove enlightening.

> The Faust saga, as a brilliant allegory of man's spiritual degeneration when he leagues himself with the forces of evil, contains a universal truth. In many ways, Macbeth parallels the legend . . . . Whether or not there was a conscious or sub-conscious linkage, the parallels are worth pointing out because they deepen understanding of both plays.[74]

In addition to the usual types of oral activities such as panel discussions, buzz sessions, and memorization, Veidemanis suggested the use of socio-drama

> . . . where students spontaneously assume the role of characters in a play and speak through the guise of these characters in justification of some action or conduct in the play. (e.g., have a group of major

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[72] Ibid., p. 241.

[73] William Fidone, "An Above-Average Class Studies Hamlet," The English Journal, XLV (November, 1956), 475.

[74] Henry I. Christ, "'Macbeth' and the Faust Legend," The English Journal, XLVI (April, 1957), 212.

> characters meet in Limbo to debate who was to blame for a particular happening.[75]

The most obvious and necessary oral work is that involved in class discussions. MacEachen outlines a series of basic questions for discussion over the theme, plot, characters, setting, and language of plays. These help emphasize important developments typical of each area and give the teacher a solid basis upon which to formulate questions pertaining to specific plays. For example, these questions are suggested for discussion of plot development:

> What brings on the dramatic conflict? Are the incidents well and plausibly connected? Is there sufficient causation supplied? Is the resolution sufficiently inevitable, or is the denouement brought about by arbitrary coincidence?[76]

If possible the play should be seen, but if it cannot be seen, then it should be heard. Recordings are an invaluable aid to the teacher and an excellent educational experience for the class. The large amount of time necessary for listening to a recorded play, however, is a major disadvantage in using records. To overcome this, the teacher could interest his students in forming volunteer listening groups to meet at noon, after school, or in the evenings; space might also be made available within the school so that interested students could meet in listening rooms during

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[75] Veidemanis, "Drama in the English Classroom," 550.

[76] Dougald B. MacEachen, "Analyzing a Play," College English, XXV (April, 1964), 549-550.

study periods.[77]

Recordings increase students' understanding and appreciation of plays. They should not be used as the sole lesson nor should they be used as time-fillers. Not only do recordings develop listening skills, but they give students the opportunity to hear the play as a whole and to evaluate characterization and various interpretations of plays. The teacher should also consider using recordings of plays other than the one being studied to illustrate contrasting or similar themes and to provide the stimulation for additional play reading.

In the study of Shakespearean drama, recordings could be used effectively, the most popular being the Evans and Welles recordings. When studying Shakespearean drama or any other drama, the class should not hear the records before it has studied the text of the play. Too much time, however, spent on the play before it is heard will decrease the students' enjoyment of the record.

Bulletin board displays are another way which aid students in forming impressions of dramatic scenes. One teacher suggested posting pictures taken of actual productions of Hamlet toward the end of the first week of study,

> late enough to give students a chance to form their own mental pictures and early enough to assist those

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[77]Muri, op. cit., p. 37.

> who are not visual-minded and to apply those who are with variations on their own pictures.[78]

This technique could be used successfully with the teaching of all plays.

Providing experiences in writing. During the study of the play, the teacher should assign papers dealing with some aspect of the drama. These papers need not be very long, but they should be of such worthwhile topics that the adolescent will want to express himself upon one or more. Expository writing needs to be stressed, for this stimulates the student to think about his reaction to a play and to base his reaction on an understanding of the play. It also helps him to relate the ideas or events within plays to his own experiences. Summaries of the play should not be acceptable. Instead, the papers should be critical or analytical; they should deal with the development of a character or characters; or they should be comparative. Students might, for example, compare a Shakespearean tragedy with a modern tragedy, or a dramatic character with a real person from history or the present.

In A Writer's Guide to Literature, De Mordaunt has given the student a series of pertinent questions which might suggest topics for papers.

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[78]Thomas, op. cit., p. 14.

Often you can base your papers on your answers. Sometimes answering only a single question thoroughly will suffice for a brief paper; at other times, you may use a section of the following questions as the basis for an outline of your paper . . . .

. . .

A. Structure and plot

1. Can the play be classified according to the definitions . . . of tragedy or comedy? If so, identify the elements that enable you to make this classification.
2. Is the play classifiable according to subject matter as well as according to genre--tragedy of revenge, comedy of manners, etc. If so, explain the particular genre and show why the play represents it.
3. State briefly the central action around which the play revolves.
4. Is the play divided into acts and scenes? If so, indicate the reasons for the divisions and subdivisions.

B. Style

1. Are figures of speech, rhymed poetry, or blank verse used? If so, specify the figurative language and verse form and the kinds of subject matter so treated.
2. Identify the dramatist's devices of dialogue (for example, his different uses of the soliloquy), and show how these devices are used for characterization.
3. Is there dramatic irony? If so, explain the pattern of ironic events or characteristics.

C. Characterization

1. Is there a central character? If so, is he or she basically heroic or unheroic, sympathetic or unsympathetic.
2. Identify the sympathetic and unsympathetic traits in the central character and show how the audience is supposed to feel towards these traits.
3. Explain how the dramatist uses basic character contrasts.
4. Are the minor characters grouped in interesting ways in factions of two or three or more? Do these factions in the play add to or detract from the major tension and suspense?

5. Show the relationship between the central character(s) and the minor characters.

D. Setting

1. Are there shifts in scene? If so, do these shifts detract from the unified dramatic effect? If not, does the play lose interest because of the sameness of the setting?
2. Are many scenic props required for stage presentation? Describe these props and indicate whether or not their use would improve the play.
3. Describe the most appropriate costuming for the chief characters in the play and relate this costuming to the actions and prestige level of the characters.
4. Describe the theater and the stage to be used.

E. Purpose

1. Is there a moral to the play? If so, is this moral hidden or is it easy to detect? How does the author wish to influence his audience?
2. In what light does the author present evil and vice?--punishment for crime? How does this treatment indicate purposefulness or lack of purpose on the part of the playwright?
3. What characters carry the burden of guilt and how are these characters to be regarded by the audience?[79]

Although students should be encouraged to use their imaginations in any paper they write, creative writing assignments should be few in number. They should be used primarily as breaks from the monotony of a series of expository assignments. Veidemanis suggested the following types of creative writing exercises:

> Parodies or travesties of certain play scenes; stage directions for plays which lack them; an original scene suggested by a play, e.g., Ophelia's soliloquy, Saint

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[79]Walter J. De Mordaunt, A Writer's Guide to Literature (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), pp. 25-26.

> Joan in prison, etc., in style of original work; a dramatic episode suggested by everyday-life drama, a news story, one's imagination; dramatization of a short story or scene from a novel or biography; rewriting the ending of a play to fit another logical interpretation; creation of dialogues which reveal character traits (e.g., arrogance, uncertainty, jealousy) or social problems (intolerance, strife, cruelty, class distinction . . .).[80]

Suggestion for Ending the Study

Play reading should never end for students, for unless they learn to enjoy reading drama they will never become acquainted with some of the world's greatest literature. It would be impossible to attend productions of all drama that one wishes to know. Strindberg's plays, for example, are rarely performed in the United States and only a few fortunate people have felt his powerful combination of love and hate.

The teacher's ultimate goal must be to stimulate independent reading. Most adolescents, once they have discovered the satisfaction that drama gives, will continue searching for glimpses of life from the pages of plays. Before the students leave their classroom introduction to dramatic art, they should be equipped with a knowledge of the truly important playwrights of today and yesterday; they must be able to rely on their own understanding of drama to serve as a trustworthy guide to reading and viewing, and

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[80]Veidemanis, "Drama in the English Classroom," 550.

they should come away from their classroom study assured that drama can live almost as vividly for the reader as it does for an audience.

The school must help interest in live drama to grow.

> . . . Unless the school stimulates interest in playgoing, both through planned theatre trips and regular publicizing of worthwhile community productions, the majority of our students will probably never shift from exclusive patronage of motion pictures and television, the less expensive and more accessible media.[81]

Because students will be so greatly influenced by television and movies throughout their lives, the teacher must also assume the responsibility of preparing students to judge these areas of entertainment with objectivity and intelligence.

Drama records for the adolescent every kind of human experience. Chekhov introduces him to people of unsatisfied longings; O'Neill tells him of loneliness and despair; Auguste Strindberg lays his own tormented mind open for the world to try to understand. But the happiness of life is found in drama also. Drama, then, provides the student with a look at life in all its moods.

SUMMARY

Today's educators are recognizing the importance of providing experiences in world drama for adolescents. A

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[81] Burton, op. cit., p. 231.

study of drama, they have found, acquaints students with some of the world's greatest literature and serves as a means for developing social sensitivity, insight, and critical thinking. But world drama has not yet found its place in most programs of English.

The teacher of literature is responsible for realizing the worth of world drama and for helping his students become a more sophisticated audience for the theatre, television, and movies. As adolescents become aware of the riches to be had from reading and viewing plays, they will grow more discriminating in their choices of entertainment.

Although a play's success in the classroom depends greatly upon the maturity and reading ability of students, the teacher needs also to concern himself with the theme and subject matter of the play. Even some Shakespearean plays are not appropriate for study by all adolescents. A knowledge of adolescent psychology, then, is vital to the selection of plays that will appeal to high school students. To be successful, plays should include characters with whom adolescents can identify and conflicts with which they are concerned.

Plays chosen for study by adolescents should represent life honestly, for students need to learn to distinguish between the real and the false in literature. So that

adolescents may grow in sensitivity, the teacher should help them recognize the differences between sentimentality and sympathetic understanding. One of the main objectives in teaching drama is that of helping students achieve emotional maturity.

Clear objectives for the teacher and his students are a necessary part of the plans the teacher makes before beginning the study of drama. The objectives will serve as guides throughout the study and will influence the methods used in teaching, the composition of tests, and the types of oral and written activities assigned during the study.

Objectives will also determine the way in which the unit on drama is set up. The main ways are by an historical approach, by theme, and by genre. Each has advantages and disadvantages, but often one is used repeatedly at the expense of the others. Rather than emphasizing one way, a school should strive for variety in its approaches to teaching drama.

The specific activities and methods of teaching are perhaps the most important part of teaching the unit on drama. For this reason the activities and methods must be varied and interesting and must be planned to correspond to the interests and needs of adolescents. Students will find the reading of plays to be different from the other types of reading with which they are more familiar. Activities should

be introduced to the class that will increase students' understanding of the characteristics of drama. The reading of plays needs to be approached slowly and with guidance from the teacher, so that the difficulties involved in visualization and interpretation will be overcome.

Since drama should be taught as both literature and theatre, oral and written activities are necessary to the successful study of plays. Some especially worthwhile oral activities are group play-reading, buzz sessions, panel discussions, and, of course, class discussions. Educators recommend the use of records and tape-recorders during the study. Excellent records of plays are available, but these should be used to supplement the study in a meaningful way.

Most educators agree that plays should be seen. This can be accomplished by having students perform the play within the classroom. For further motivation, planned theatre trips could be arranged.

Adolescents need to analyze their reactions to plays; therefore written activities should be included at intervals during the study of drama. These activities should be mainly expository, and creative writing assignments should be given only to provide variety for the students.

In summary, plays provide experiences of lasting value for adolescents if the teacher approaches the study of drama with enthusiasm and knowledge of adolescents' needs. Because drama deals so directly with human conflicts, students

grow in understanding themselves and others as they lose themselves in the spectacle of drama.

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TEACHING DRAMA IN LITERATURE CLASSES AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

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The teaching of drama in secondary schools is receiving more emphasis today than ever before. Yet a need does exist for an appraisal of the plays and the methods chosen by teachers of literature as they provide their classes with experiences in drama.

The purpose of this report was to conduct a study of the literature available on the teaching of drama in secondary schools and, ultimately, to develop a guide for the teaching of drama. To investigate teachers' and students' attitudes toward drama and to accumulate successful activities and approaches for teaching plays, the literature in the Kansas State University Library was reviewed. This investigation revealed a growing recognition among educators of drama's importance in the lives of adolescents. However, the greatest quantity of material related to the teaching of Shakespearean drama.

Because drama deals so directly with human conflicts, it provides material for the development of social sensitivity, insight, literary appreciation, and experiences in oral and written expression. In preparing for the study of drama, the teacher needs to make preliminary plans, such as selecting appropriate plays for adolescents and determining a set of clear objectives for himself and his students. These depend to a great extent upon the teacher's understanding of adolescent psychology and his awareness of the principal

goals of education.

Although the methods for teaching drama are many, educators recognize three main approaches. These are by an historical approach, by theme, or by genre. Nevertheless, most teachers believe that none of these should be emphasized repeatedly, for each is valuable in some respect. Teachers of literature, therefore, should use a variety of approaches, aiming toward an eclectic approach to the teaching of drama.

In addition, the activities and methods of teaching should be interesting and appealing to youth. The teacher cannot ignore the importance of the emotional and physical changes taking place during adolescence. Students need the opportunity to participate in activities involving oral and physical interpretation of drama and in those involving critiques and analyses of plays.

In summary, emphasis in the teaching of drama should be upon providing adolescents with quality experiences in literature so that they may grow in sensitivity, insight, and literary appreciation.