



# WHAT IS THEATRE?

By KAREN LOFTUS

Students will explore the question “what is theatre?” and analyze it by comparing film and television productions. Each session comes with an journal prompt, a warm up game, and an exit slip for assessment. This is a great unit to start off a school year.

Feel free to customize it as much as you want, and refer to the Pacing Guide for more details and ways to supplement with other DTA materials. While you’re analyzing “what is theatre?” with your students, you can introduce classroom procedures and do icebreaker/trust games. You can also remind the kids that Theatre is Ensemble - all of the games they play help to build ensemble.

## **1 - What is Theatre?**

Students discuss and identify a working definition for theatre. They create a “Theatre Is....” poster for the room and are introduced to the concept of a ‘dramatic moment.’

## **2 - Theatre Role Definitions**

This session has students discuss the benefits of live theatre over film and apply the definition of the playwright, actor and director

# Standards Connections

## National Core Arts Standards

### Organize and develop artistic ideas and work - Grade 6

TH:Cr2.1.6.b - Contribute ideas and accept and incorporate the ideas of others in preparing or devising drama/theatre work.

### Organize and develop artistic ideas and work - Grade 7

TH:Cr2.1.7.b - Demonstrate mutual respect for self and others and their roles in preparing or devising drama/theatre work.

### Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation - Grade 7

TH:Pr5.1.7.a - Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques that can be applied in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

### Organize and develop artistic ideas and work - Grade 8

TH:Cr2.1.8.b - Share leadership and responsibilities to develop collaborative goals when preparing or devising drama/theatre work.

### Organize and develop artistic ideas and work - Grade HS Proficient

TH:Cr2.1.HS1.b - Investigate the collaborative nature of the actor, director, playwright, and designers and explore their interdependent roles in a drama/theatre work.

### Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work - Grade 7

TH:Pr6.1.7.a - Participate in rehearsals for a drama/theatre work that will be shared with an audience.

### Refine new work through play, drama processes and theatre experiences using critical analysis and experimentation - Grade 7

TH:Cr3.1.7.a - Demonstrate focus and concentration in the rehearsal process to analyze and refine choices in a devised or scripted drama/theatre work.

### Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work - Grade 8

TH:Pr6.1.8.a - Perform a rehearsed drama/theatre work for an audience.

## Common Core

### Speaking and Listening

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1 - Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

### Language

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.1 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.2 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.6 - Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

### Language

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.2 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

### Writing

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

## California VAPA Standards (2019)

### 6.TH:Cr2 Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

6.TH:Cr2.b - Contribute ideas and accept and incorporate the ideas of others in preparing or devising drama/theatre work.

### 7.TH:Pr5 Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

7.TH:Pr5.a - Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques that can be applied in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

### 7.TH:Cr2 Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

7.TH:Cr2.b - Demonstrate mutual respect for self and others and their roles in preparing or devising drama/theatre work.

### 8.TH:Cr2 Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

8.TH:Cr2.b - Share leadership and responsibilities to develop collaborative goals when preparing or devising drama/theatre work.

### Prof.TH:Cr2 Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Prof.TH:Cr2.b - Investigate the collaborative nature of the actor, director, playwright, and designers and their interdependent roles in a drama/theatre work.

### 7.TH:Pr6 Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

67TH:Pr6 - Create through improvisation a drama/theatre work that will be shared with an audience.

### 7.TH:Cr3 Refine and complete artistic work.

7.TH:Cr3.a - Demonstrate focus and concentration in the rehearsal process to analyze and refine choices in a devised or scripted drama/theatre work.

### 8.TH:Pr6 Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

8.TH:Pr6 - Perform a rehearsed, scripted scene from a drama/theatre work for an audience.

## Florida Sunshine State Standards

### Critical Thinking & Reflection

TH.68.C.1.3 - Determine the purpose(s), elements, meaning, and value of a theatrical work based on personal, cultural, or historical standards.

TH.68.C.1.5 - Describe how a theatrical activity can entertain or instruct an audience.

TH.68.C.2.2 - Keep a rehearsal journal to document individual performance progress.

TH.68.C.2.4 - Defend personal responses to a theatre production.

TH.68.C.3.1 - Discuss how visual and aural design elements communicate environment, mood, and theme in a theatrical presentation.

TH.68.C.3.2 - Compare a film version of a story to its original play form. Develop and apply criteria to select works for a portfolio

TH.912.C.1.5 - Make and defend conscious choices in the

creation of a character that will fulfill anticipated audience response.

TH.912.C.1.7 - Justify personal perceptions of a director's vision and/or playwright's intent.

TH.912.C.3.1 - Explore commonalities between works of theatre and other performance media.

### Historical & Global Connections

TH.68.H.1.1 - Explore potential differences when performing works set in a variety of historical and cultural contexts.

TH.68.H.1.2 - Analyze the impact of one's emotional and social experiences when responding to, or participating in, a play.

TH.68.H.1.5 - Describe one's own personal responses to a theatrical work and show respect for the responses of others.

TH.68.H.1.6 - Discuss how a performer responds to different audiences.

TH.68.H.2.3 - Analyze theatre history and dramatic literature in the context of societal and cultural history.

TH.68.H.2.4 - Discuss the differences between presentational and representational theatre styles.

TH.68.H.2.7 - Define theatre genres from different periods in history, giving examples of each.

TH.68.H.2.8 - Identify and describe theatrical resources in the community, including professional and community theatres, experts, and sources of scripts and materials.

TH.68.H.3.1 - Identify principles and techniques that are shared between the arts and other content areas.

TH.68.H.3.6 - Discuss ways in which dance, music, and the visual arts enhance theatrical presentations.

TH.912.H.3.3 - Apply knowledge of non-theatre content areas to enhance presentations of characters, environments, and actions in performance.

### Innovation, Technology & the Future

TH.68.F.1.4 - Survey an aspect of theatre to understand the ways in which technology has affected it over time.

TH.912.F.1.3 - Stimulate imagination, quick thinking, and creative risk-taking through improvisation to create written scenes or plays.

### Organizational Structure

TH.68.O.1.1 - Compare different processes an actor uses to prepare for a performance.

TH.68.O.1.3 - Explain the impact of choices made by directors, designers, and actors on audience understanding.

TH.68.O.1.4 - Discuss how the whole of a theatre performance is greater than the sum of its parts.

TH.68.O.2.1 - Diagram the major parts of a play and their relationships to each other.

TH.68.O.2.2 - Explain how a performance would change if depicted in a different location, time, or culture.

TH.68.O.2.5 - Explain how the contributions of significant playwrights, performers, directors, designers, and producers from various cultures and historical periods have influenced the creative innovations of theatre.

TH.68.O.3.1 - Compare theatre and its elements and vocabulary to other art forms.

TH.68.O.3.2 - Explore how theatre and theatrical works have influenced various cultures.

TH.912.O.1.3 - Execute the responsibilities of director, designer, manager, technician, or performer by applying standard theatrical conventions.

TH.912.O.1.4 - Write an original script or a dramatic adaptation of a literary work to demonstrate knowledge of theatrical conventions.

TH.912.O.3.1 - Analyze the methods of communication

among directors, designers, stage managers, technicians, and actors that establish the most effective support of the creative process.

### Skills, Techniques & Processes

TH.68.S.1.1 - Describe the responsibilities of audience members, to the actors and each other, at live and recorded performances and demonstrate appropriate behavior.

TH.68.S.1.3 - Describe criteria for the evaluation of dramatic texts, performances, direction, and production elements.

TH.68.S.1.4 - Discuss the ways in which theatre experiences involve empathy and aesthetic distance.

TH.912.S.1.6 - Respond appropriately to directorial choices for improvised and scripted scenes.

TH.912.S.2.8 - Strengthen acting skills by engaging in theatre games and improvisations.

TH.912.S.3.2 - Exercise artistic discipline and collaboration to achieve ensemble in rehearsal and performance.

TH.912.S.3.3 - Develop acting skills and techniques in the rehearsal process.

TH.912.S.3.8 - Direct a scene or one-act play.

## Georgia Performance Standards - Theatre Arts

### Grade 6 - Creating

TA6.CR.1 - Organize, design, and refine theatrical work., a. Identify artistic choices, utilize theatre vocabulary, and demonstrate non-verbal communication skills in the rehearsal process., b. Interpret a character's motivation by understanding the relationship between their background and their behavior., c. Identify the variety of relationships between characters., d. Identify, define, and classify character traits., e. Recognize and demonstrate the roles, responsibilities, and skills associated with collaborative performance., f. Use resources to identify and create technical elements of theatre.

TA6.CR.2 - Develop scripts through theatrical techniques., a. Identify the elements of a story., b. Identify the theme and structure of a play., c. Articulate creative ideas in oral and written forms., d. Use the dramatic writing process to generate a script., e. Demonstrate the conventions of dialogue and stage directions.

### Grade 6 - Performing

TA6.PR.1 - Act by communicating and sustaining roles in formal and informal environments., a. Demonstrate effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills (e.g. rate, pitch, volume, inflection, posture, facial expression, physical movement), b. Execute character creation in a performance., c. Demonstrate a variety of types of theatre performances.

### Grade 7 - Creating

TA7.CR.2 - Develop scripts through theatrical techniques., a. Create ideas for stories., b. Analyze the theme and structure of a play., c. Use the dramatic writing process to generate a script., d. Utilize dramatic conventions in the scriptwriting process (e.g. stage directions, dialogue, scenes).

### Grade 8 - Connecting

TA8.CN.1 - Explore how theatre connects to life experience, careers, and other content., a. Investigate and prove common themes and structure among theatre and other disciplines., b. Defend how theatre reflects life., c. Incorporate multi-disciplinary aspects into theatre performance., d. Identify and analyze professions associated with different forms of production (e.g. director, stage manager, designer, technician, playwright, actor).

### Grades 9-12 - FUNDAMENTALS OF THEATRE LEVELS I-IV

## - Connecting

TAHSFT.CN.1 - Explore how theatre connects to life experiences, careers, and other content., a. Examine how theatre reflects real life., b. Analyze how theatre employs aspects of other art forms and disciplines to effectively communicate with a live audience., c. Demonstrate awareness of the discipline, knowledge, skills, and education required for careers in theatre., d. Explore various careers in the theatre arts (e.g. performance, design, production, administrative, education, promotion).

## North Carolina Essential Standards

### Beginning High School Standards - Communication

B.C.2.1 - Use improvisation and acting skills, such as observation, concentration, and characterization in a variety of theatre exercises.

### Beginning High School Standards - Culture

B.CU.2.1 - Illustrate appropriate theatre etiquette as a member of an audience, as a performer, and as a technician.

B.CU.2.2 - Use acting conventions, such as stage presence, subtext, style, and ensemble work, to perform formal or informal works.

### Intermediate High School Standards - Communication

I.C.2.1 - Use improvisation and acting skills, such as observation, concentration, and characterization, to demonstrate given situations.

I.C.2.2 - Interpret scenes through formal and informal presentations.

### Intermediate High School Standards - Culture

I.CU.2.1 - Understand theatre etiquette that is appropriate for a variety of theatrical spaces, styles, and genres.

### Proficient High School Standards - Communication

P.C.1.3 - Create original works, such as monologues, scenes, or performance pieces.

P.C.2.1 - Use improvisation and acting skills, such as observation, concentration, and characterization, to create extended scenes.

### Advanced High School Standards - Culture

A.CU.2.2 - Integrate conventions and structures of theatre when creating formal or informal theatre productions.

## Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Theatre Arts

### MS 117.211 LI - Creative Expression: production

C.3.C - collaborate to plan brief dramatizations.

### MS 117.211 LI - Critical evaluation and response

C.5.A - identify and apply audience etiquette at all performances.

### MS 117.212 LII - Creative Expression: production

B.3.C - define the role of the director.

### MS 117.212 LII - Critical evaluation and response

B.5.A - understand and demonstrate appropriate audience etiquette at various types of performances.

### MS 117.213 LIII - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding

B.1.E - apply knowledge of theatrical vocabulary and terminology.

### MS 117.213 LIII - Critical evaluation and response

B.5.A - understand and demonstrate appropriate audience etiquette at various types of live performances.

### HS 117.315 LI - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding

C.1.F - demonstrate a working knowledge of the language of theatre such as stage terminology, elements of theatre, or theatrical conventions.

C.1.H - define the roles of and appreciate the collaborative relationships between all artistic partners such as playwrights, composers, directors, actors, designers, technicians, and audience.

### HS 117.315 LI - Creative Expression: production

C.3.C - perform a role such as actor, director, designer, technician, or editor in production decision making and collaborate with others in a production role to tell a story through live theatre or media performance.

### HS 117.316 LII - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding

C.1.E - identify examples of theatrical conventions in theatre, film, television, and electronic media.

### HS 117.316 LII - Creative Expression: production

C.3.D - perform a role such as actor, director, designer, technician, or editor in production decision making and collaborate with others to tell a story through live theatre or media performance.

### HS 117.316 LII - Critical evaluation and response

C.5.A - evaluate and apply appropriate audience etiquette at various types of performances.

### HS 117.317 LIII - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding

C.1.E - distinguish between the theatrical conventions of theatre, film, television, and other media.

### HS 117.317 LIII - Creative Expression: production

C.3.D - perform a role such as actor, director, designer, technician, or editor in production decision making and collaborate with others to tell a story through live theatre or media performance.

### HS 117.318 LIV - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding

C.1.D - compare the structure of theatre to that of film, television, and other media.

### HS 117.318 LIV - Creative Expression: performance

C.2.E - create individually or devise collaboratively imaginative scripts and scenarios.

## Alberta, Canada

### Improvisation Drama 10

3 - maintain concentration during exercises

32 - sustain a character throughout a scene or exercise

### Directing - Drama 30

1 - demonstrate understanding of the function of the director

### Junior Goal II Objectives

explore specific techniques demanded by various dramatic forms

### Junior Goal III Objectives

develop awareness of various conventions of theatre

### Junior Orientation

focus concentration on one task at a time

investigate a variety of roles and situations

listen effectively  
recognize the purposes of and participate in warmup activities  
share ideas confidently with others  
show awareness of story sequence  
speak, move, and generate ideas spontaneously  
support positivity the work of others  
work cooperatively and productively with all members of the class in pairs, small groups and large groups

### **Movement Level I - Beginning**

2 - demonstrate awareness of personal and shared space

### **Improvisation/Acting Level I - Beginning**

1 - use warm-up techniques for preparation of body, voice and mind  
12 - make logical choices within the boundaries of situation and character  
7 - use stage vocabulary: stage areas, body positions and crosses  
8 - demonstrate appropriate rehearsal behaviours and routines

### **Improvisation/Acting Level II - Intermediate**

17 - select and use language appropriate to a given character and situation  
20 - enter and exit in character  
21 - sustain a character throughout an exercise or scene

### **Junior Goal I Objectives**

develop a sense of responsibility and commitment  
develop the ability to initiate, organize and present a project within a given set of guidelines  
develop the ability to interact effectively and constructively in a group process  
develop the willingness to make a decision, act upon it and accept the results  
extend the ability to understand, accept and respect others-their rights, ideas, abilities and differences

### **Technical Theatre - Levels I, II, III - Awareness**

1 - recognize the basic terminology associated with the component being studied  
2 - demonstrate understanding of the basic functions of the component being studied.  
5 - demonstrate understanding of the various conventions of the components being studied

### **Senior Goal I Objectives**

demonstrate a sense of inquiry and commitment, individually and to the group  
demonstrate a sense of responsibility and commitment, individually and to the group  
demonstrate the ability to contribute effectively and constructively to the group process  
demonstrate the ability to initiate, organize and present a project within a given set of guidelines  
develop a sense of inquiry and commitment to learning  
extend understanding of, acceptance of and empathy for others  
increase self-confidence  
increase self-discipline

### **Orientation Drama 10**

concentrate on the task at hand  
demonstrate effective use and management of time  
demonstrate trust by becoming comfortable with others, physically and emotionally

display consideration and respect for self and others  
listen to self and others  
make effective decisions or choices  
share ideas confidently

## **British Columbia (2018)**

### **GRADE 6 - ARTS - Reasoning and reflecting**

Examine relationships between the arts and the wider world  
Reflect on works of art and creative processes to understand artists' intentions

### **GRADE 6 - ARTS - Communicating and documenting**

Experience, document and present creative works in a variety of ways  
Express, feelings, ideas, and experiences through the arts

### **GRADE 7 - ARTS - Exploring and creating**

Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play

### **GRADE 7 - ARTS - Reasoning and reflecting**

Research, describe, interpret and evaluate how artists (dancers, actors, musicians, and visual artists) use processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, techniques, and environments in the arts

### **GRADE 7 - ARTS - Communicating and documenting**

Experience, document, choreograph, perform, and share creative works in a variety of ways  
Take creative risks to express feelings, ideas, and experiences

### **GRADE 8 - ARTS - Reasoning and reflecting**

Describe, interpret and evaluate how artists (dancers, actors, musicians, and visual artists) use processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, techniques, and environments to create and communicate ideas

### **GRADE 8 - ARTS - Communicating and documenting**

Experience, document, choreograph, perform, and share creative works in a variety of ways

### **GRADE 9 - DRAMA - Exploring and creating**

Create dramatic works both collaboratively and as an individual, using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, and purposeful play  
Take creative risks to experience and express thoughts, emotions, and meaning

### **GRADE 9 - DRAMA - Reasoning and reflecting**

Receive, offer, and apply constructive feedback

### **GRADE 10 - DRAMA - Explore and Create**

Improvise and take creative risks to express meaning

### **GRADE 10 - DRAMA - Reason and reflect**

Apply feedback to develop and refine ideas

### **GRADE 10 - DRAMA - Connect and expand**

Demonstrate respect for self, others, and the audience

### **GRADE 11 - DRAMA - Explore and Create**

Improvise and take creative risks using imagination, exploration, and inquiry

### **GRADE 11 - DRAMA - Reason and reflect**

Receive and apply constructive feedback to develop and refine ideas

### **GRADE 11 - DRAMA - Connect and expand**

Demonstrate awareness of self, others, and audience

### **GRADE 12 - DRAMA - Reason and reflect**

Use self-reflection and awareness of audience to refine ideas

### **GRADE 12 - DRAMA - Connect and expand**

Demonstrate respect for self, others, and audience

## **Ontario, Canada**

### **Grades 9 & 10 - Foundations - Responsible Practices**

C.3.2 - identify and apply the skills and attitudes needed to perform various tasks and responsibilities in producing drama works (e.g., use active listening and cooperative problem-solving skills; practise punctuality; use tact in suggesting changes and improvements; demonstrate willingness to accept criticism and build consensus)

C.3.3 - demonstrate an understanding of theatre and audience etiquette, in both classroom and formal performance contexts (e.g., as a performer: show willingness to take direction and behave appropriately towards other actors; as a viewer: demonstrate respect for performers and other audience members by paying attention, not interrupting or talking, and applauding when appropriate)

### **Grades 9 & 10 - Reflecting, Responding and Analyzing - Connections Beyond the Classroom**

B.3.1 - identify and describe skills, attitudes, and strategies they used in collaborative drama activities (e.g., brainstorming, active listening, and cooperative problem-solving skills; strategies for sharing responsibility through collaborative team roles)

### **Grades 9 & 10 - Creating and Presenting - Presentation Techniques & Technologies**

A.3.2 - use a variety of voice and movement techniques to support the creation of character or atmosphere during rehearsal (e.g., use voice and movement to suggest an airport, circus, or factory environment)