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# To the Teacher

This book is divided into four sections and a set of appendices.

- I. General introductory information to be used as background information and a springboard of ideas for further in-depth study.
- II. Classroom activities to be done with and for the group.
- III. Independent study projects: There are a variety for students to choose from, or they may formulate their own from the suggestions given.
- IV. A short guide that students may use to write and/or produce their own play. A summary of the steps and people involved is included at the end of this section.

SECTIONS TWO AND THREE MAY BE DONE SIMULTANEOUSLY OR ONE AT A TIME, IN ANY ORDER.

The Appendices: Includes additional activity information, activity forms and a listing of pertinent resource material.

The goals include:

1. To help students learn about the history of drama and theatre.
2. To give students an understanding of the characteristics of a good play including:
  - A) Plot
  - B) Theme
  - C) Characters
  - D) Acting - What is involved in character interpretation
  - E) Visual Effects - Scenery, Props, Costumes, Lighting, Make-up (The Spectacle)
  - F) Sound Effects - Music (if any)
  - G) Choreography - Dance (if any)

3. To give students the opportunity to write, produce, and/or act in a play of their own choice.
4. To provide a vehicle for the development of process skills including critical and creative thinking, problem solving, inter-personal communication and research skills.

This book is designed for use with fourth grade gifted students and up. However, a primary level teacher could adapt the information, activities and study topics to make them appropriate for younger students.

Some basic, factual information is included with this book, giving a little background knowledge about the following possible areas of study.

1. History of the Theatre
2. History of Drama
3. Playwrights - Ancient and Modern (See Appendix I, pg. 40)
4. The Structure of a Play
5. The Spectacle of a Play
6. The Actor's Role
7. Types of Plays
8. The Theatre Building
9. The Opera
10. The Art of Pantomime
11. The Ballet
12. Puppets - Then and Now

The information enclosed is meant to help the student select an area for more in-depth study.

**Note to the Teacher:** Please make use of your community resources as you begin this book. If you cannot arrange for a professional actor to visit your class, there are many little theatre groups who could send actors and technical crew members to speak to the group. Films of plays, including Shakespeare, are available. Many places have mummers groups and people skilled in puppetry.

# Section 2

## Classroom Activities



### OBJECTIVES

- A. The student will develop the creative thinking skills of fluency, flexibility, elaboration, and originality.
- B. The student will experience the process of "changing one's viewpoint" and develop techniques for looking at things in a new way (boundary breaking).
- C. The students will understand and use the four stages of the creative process:

Preparation  
Incubation

Illumination  
Verification

- D. The student will develop non-verbal communication skills and recognize the importance of the face and body in communicating with others.
- E. The student will clarify and express personal feeling through acting.
- F. The student will understand the concept that words don't have meaning, people do. They will use tone of voice to convey different messages.
- G. The student will learn to function as an effective member of a group.
- H. The student will develop skills of listening to and observing others carefully in order to understand the intent behind their words and actions.
- I. The student will develop skills of imagination to put themselves "in the shoes" of another person or thing.
- J. The student will work through a problem solving process.
- K. The student will develop the critical thinking skills of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

NOTE: The letters following each activity indicate the objective to be met in that activity.

## ACTIVITIES

These activities should be done in order, and should be spread over several sessions.

1. Hold a brainstorming session on "What is Drama?" Write down all responses (5-10 minutes) on newsprint and save. Students should categorize responses into the following categories: (A.C.G.K.)
  1. The structure of written play - plot, theme, characterization
  2. The spectacle - costumes, makeup, scenery
  3. The sound - music, sound, effect
  4. The acting - facial expression, body movement, voice production, character interpretation

To the Teacher: If students have not included ideas from each category do not give them this information. Make a note of what is missing to see if students can come up with more suggestions at the end of the session.

- II. Think of a play or movie you have seen recently. Write the title down. Now answer these questions in one sentence (either oral or written). (H.I.K.)
  1. Structure of the Play
    - a. What was the plot - what happened?
    - b. What was the theme - What was the dramatic situation where either a conflict between good and evil was resolved or is there a clash between what the person is and what he/she is meant to be?
    - c. Who were the main characters? Which one did you identify with the most? Why? Which one did you least identify with? Why?
  2. The Spectacle
    - d. What did you think of the costumes - do you remember colors, material, time period? did the costumes help you understand the character better?
    - e. Was the scenery effective - did it add to the meaning of the plot?
    - f. What props did the characters use?
    - g. What did you notice about makeup and lighting? Think of one example of each.