

RESPONDING TO DRAMA: A TEACHER AND STUDENT GUIDE

This page replaces pages 1-2 in the
Responding to Drama section of your binder.

DRAMA 1ST EDITION UPGRADE

A Teacher and Student Guide

Congratulations! In using the Drama Arts Toolkit you are making a commitment to students learning in, through, and about drama and theater in your classroom. This section of the toolkit will provide you with information and ideas to help you prepare students to get the most out of attending dramatic performances. While this resource is specifically geared to live theatrical performance, many of the suggestions can be easily adapted to responding to film and television performances. —*Jane Dewey, author*

Background: The Importance of the Elements

Theatrical performance can take many forms, including staged readings, reader's theater, improvisations, work-in-process showcases, classroom stagings, one-act plays, and full-length plays. But no matter what the form of the performance, it is likely to include some of the elements of drama—literary, technical, and performance. Which elements are emphasized and how they are put together make each theater production unique. Looking at the performance through these elements with purpose and focus will deepen students' understanding of a theatrical performance.

Elements of drama are part of every level of the Kentucky Core Content for Drama and include concepts and terminology for all students. Make sure you understand these terms and review them with students as appropriate to grade level before students attend and respond to a theatrical performance. If you need definitions, refer to the Drama Arts Toolkit glossary.

Literary Elements

From Core Content

beginning
character
conflict
dialogue
end
falling action
language
middle
monologue
organization
plot (story line)
plot structures
rising action
style
suspense
theme
turning point

Additional possibilities

antagonist
climax
denouement
development
discovery
exposition
foreshadowing
protagonist
symbolism

Technical Elements

costumes
lighting
makeup
music
props
scenery
set
sound
staging
types of stages: arena, thrust,
proscenium

Performance Elements

acting
blocking
body alignment
breath control
character analysis
diction
empathy
facial expression
gestures
inflection
motivation
movement
nonverbal expression
projection
speaking
speaking style
vocal expression

Understanding How We React to Drama

What kind of responses do we want to encourage students to make to dramatic performances? Responses can take many forms, but generally fall into three broad categories. Some classroom activities may elicit responses drawing from all three categories. Other activities may focus on one type of response more than the other.

Immediate Response

This refers to the overall impression made by the performance. Did you like it? Did you understand the story and the character relationships? Did the production make you laugh, cry, sigh with recognition, think?

Intellectual Response

The elements of drama can be used to help analyze a dramatic performance and its effectiveness. Which literary, technical, and performance elements can you identify in the production? How was each element used? Which elements were most important to conveying the story and the ideas? Was this an effective way to perform this drama?

A written response, such as a review of the performance, is a good way for students to respond intellectually to a theatrical production. Use the Four-Step Critique Process included in this resource as a guide for writing a review or open response answer or essay. The process can also be used to guide a class discussion. Encourage students to continue thinking and responding to the production through expanded research, discussion, and writing.

Artistic Response

A dramatic production can be an excellent springboard and source of inspiration for students to express their own feelings, thoughts, and emotions in creative ways. This can be done individually or in groups using drama or one or more of the other art forms.



A Four-Step Process for Critiquing a Play

Regardless of what form of response you are asking students to make, this critique process encourages them to take a focused, detailed, and specific view of a theatrical performance. Answering these questions will assist students in successfully expressing their immediate, intellectual, and artistic responses to a performance. You can adapt this as a handout, use the process as the basis for a class discussion, develop a graphic organizer based on the process, or use the student worksheets included in this guide.

1. Description

Did the production tell the story? What did I actually see and hear during the performance?

(Explain to students that it's good to start with the facts of the performance. Remind them that the performance may be slightly different from the written script. If the performance is an adaptation, it could be very different from the short story or novel from which it is taken.)

2. Analysis

How does this particular performance come to life? How were the elements of drama—literary, technical, and performance—used?

(Review the elements with students before they see the production. To help them focus, you may want to identify certain elements for them to pay special attention to as they watch.)

3. Interpretation

What's the point? What ideas or themes are conveyed? How does what happens—the plot—relate to the major ideas or themes of the production?

(Make sure students understand the difference between plot and theme. Ask them to look for ideas and experiences conveyed in the performance that remind them of their own lives.)

4. Judgment

Was this production enjoyable? How did it make me feel? Did it make me think? Would I recommend that others see it?

(Encourage students to support their opinions with specific examples from the production. Remind them that their examples should draw from the elements of drama and use appropriate drama/theater terminology.)