

Unit 1: Theater 101

Theater Grades 7 and 8

24 Class Meetings

November 2025

Essential Questions

- What are the different elements of theater?

Enduring Understandings with Unit Goals

EU 1: Theater has many different components such as acting, stagecraft, and playwriting.

- Build a warm-up routine that focuses on getting our bodies and brains ready for theater class.
- Connect and put into practice theater vocabulary through theater games and scaffolded tableau exercises.

EU 2: The process of theater making involves teamwork (ensemble) and community.

- Empower students to take ownership of different roles in theater through a fairytale.
- Create community through group work theater activities and performance.

Standards

National Core Arts Standards:

Theatre

TH:Cr1.1.8 a. Imagine and explore multiple perspectives and solutions to staging problems in a drama/theatre work.

TH:Cr1.1.8 b. Imagine and explore solutions to design challenges of a performance space in a drama/theatre work.

TH:Cr1.1.8 c. Develop a scripted or improvised character by articulating the character's inner thoughts, objectives, and motivations in a drama/theatre work.

TH:Cr2.1.8 a. Articulate and apply critical analysis, background knowledge, research, and historical and cultural context to the development of original ideas for a drama/theatre work.

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

TH:Cr3.1.8 a. Use repetition and analysis in order to revise devised or scripted drama/theatre work.

TH:Cr3.1.8 b. Refine effective physical, vocal, and physiological traits of characters in an improvised or scripted drama/ theatre work.

Unit 1: Theater 101

Theater Grades 7 and 8

24 Class Meetings

November 2025

TH:Cr3.1.8 c. Implement and refine a planned technical design using simple technology during the rehearsal process for devised or scripted drama/ theatre work.

TH:Pr4.1.8 a. Explore different pacing to better communicate the story in a drama/theatre work.

TH:Pr4.1.8 b. Use various character objectives and tactics in a drama/theatre work to overcome an obstacle.

TH:Pr5.1.8 a. Use a variety of acting techniques to increase skills in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

TH:Pr5.1.8 b. Use a variety of technical elements to create a design for a rehearsal or drama/theatre production.

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

TH:Re7.1.8 a. Apply criteria to the evaluation of artistic choices in a drama/theatre work.

TH:Re8.1.8 a. Recognize and share artistic choices when participating in or observing a drama/theatre work.

TH:Re8.1.8 c. Apply personal aesthetics, preferences, and beliefs to evaluate a drama/theatre work.

TH:Re9.1.8 a. Respond to a drama/ theatre work using supporting evidence, personal aesthetics, and artistic criteria.

TH:Re9.1.8 b. Apply the production elements used in a drama/theatre work to assess aesthetic choices.

TH:Cn11.1.8 a. Use different forms of drama/theatre work to examine contemporary social, cultural, or global issues.

TH:Cn11.2.8 b. Identify and use artifacts from a time period and place to develop performance and design choices in a drama/theatre work.

ISAAC Vision of the Graduate Competencies

Competency 1: Write effectively for a variety of purposes.

Competency 2: Speak to diverse audiences in an accountable manner.

Competency 3: Develop the behaviors needed to interact and contribute with others on a team.

Competency 4: Analyze and solve problems independently and collaboratively.

Competency 5: Be responsible, creative, and empathetic members of the community.

Unit 1: Theater 101
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Unit Content Overview

1. Warm-up and Tableau

Build a warm-up routine that focuses on getting our bodies and brains ready for theater class.

Connect and put into practice theater vocabulary through theater games and scaffolded tableau exercises.

- **Key Terms and Vocabulary:**

- Warm-up
- Cue
- Stage Directions
- Tableau
- Sequence
- Plot
- Collaborate
- Ensemble
- actor's toolbox: voice, body, imagination

2. Layer theatrical elements to fable or fairy tale tableau to help tell the story.

Empower students to take ownership of different roles in theater through a fairytale.

- **Key Terms and Vocabulary:**

- Script
- Pantomime
- Rehearsal
- Ensemble
- Thought Tracking
- Improvisation
- Costumes
- Lighting
- Sound Effects
- Setting
- Body
- Energy
- Space
- Time
- Levels
- Playwriting
- Storytelling

3. Perform the fairy tale or fable for another class.

Create community through group work theater activities and performance.

- **Key Terms and Vocabulary:**

- 4 A's of Audience Engagement: attend, allow, appreciate, applaud
- Attend
- Allow
- Appreciate

Unit 1: Theater 101

Theater Grades 7 and 8

24 Class Meetings

November 2025

- Applaud

Interdisciplinary Connection:

Music: Rhythm, music styles, tempo

Math (Geometry): Lines, shapes, angles in physicality

ELA: character, setting, plot sequence, storytelling

Art: Visual pictures and costumes for storytelling

SEL: Creating community, collaboration with peers

Daily Learning Objectives with *Do Now Activities*

Students will be able to...

- Collaborate to create a class contract
 - *Review TWPS*
- Apply three elements of statues to theater work
 - *Bring your notebooks*
- Apply theater vocabulary and stage directions to their actions.
 - *What do you think of when you think of “Theater”?*
- Investigate how theater tells a story with tableau
 - *Write in your theater journal what part of the theater are you most looking forward to learning more about?*
- Formulate actionable sentences and create tableaux for the beginning of a story
 - *Why do fables usually use animals as characters instead of humans?*
- Formulate actionable sentences and create tableaux for the middle, of a story
 - *Look at this Fairytale or Fable Image. What is the setting? What evidence do you have to support this claim?*
- Formulate actionable sentences and create tableaux for the end of a story
 - *Look at this Fairytale or Fable Image. What story is being told here? What evidence do you have to support this claim?*
- Connect storytelling and plot sequence to tableau. *
 - *Two Sides of the room TWPS. Students answer the question, then move and discuss. What makes a moral feel meaningful—not just obvious or preachy?*
- Apply pantomime to storytelling.
 - *What does it mean to “show, not tell” a story?”*
- Devise lines for their characters through improvisation and thought tracking. *
 - *Write 3 interesting things about your character in your theater journal.*
- Synthesize dialogue and storytelling to write the script. *
 - *What makes dialogue sound realistic, and what makes it sound fake?*
- Review and Revise Dialogue and storytelling. *
 - *What does it mean to review and revise?*
- Apply acting choices to dialogue to enhance storytelling.
 - *What choices can an actor make to show strong emotions without saying anything?*
- Apply choral speak to selected lines of dialogue.
 - *What is a chorus?*
- Connect script and blocking to storytelling. *

Unit 1: Theater 101

Theater Grades 7 and 8

24 Class Meetings

November 2025

- *Why do fables often end quickly after the moral is revealed? What's the effect of that structure?*
- Synthesize costume pieces to create a costume for their character.
 - ⊖ *What costumes pieces might help define your character?*
- Connect music and sound effects to the theme, characters and setting of their scene.
 - *Listen to this song and write down descriptive words to convey how it makes you feel.*
- Rehearse and revise your fairytale scenes with all the theatrical elements using the performance checklist .
 - *Write down 2 things to work on and 2 things you are doing well with your performance.*
- Perform the full fairy tale with all the theatrical elements. Complete a self-reflection and share out about the process with positive feedback using accountable talk.
 - *Write in your theater journal using the sentence starter, I had a growth mindset in theater class during this unit because I...*

Unit 1: Theater 101

Theater Grades 7 and 8

24 Class Meetings

November 2025

Instructional Strategies/Differentiated Instruction

- Whole group instruction
- Visuals of instructions for assignments
- Plan for the Day (Visual and Aural)
- Scaffolding (Building on theater skills)
- Repetition
- Imagery
- Silent Cues
- Visual learning, Aural Learning, Kinesthetic learning
- Sentence starters
- Student-led instruction
- Teacher modeling
- Written feedback
- Think-pair-share and small-group discussions
- Accountable talk
- Homework
- Word walls with visuals of theater vocabulary
- Small group instruction
- Virtual tools: Online example of scenes
- Conferencing
- Theater Journals
 - Performance Checklist Scoring Guide

EL Differentiated Instruction

- Word walls with visuals of theater vocabulary.
- TWPS (Think, write, pair, share)
- Pre-reading strategies
- Culturally responsive teaching
- Explicit modeling
- Key Vocabulary
- Graphic organizers
- Strategic grouping
- Non-verbal Assessment

Unit 1: Theater 101

Theater Grades 7 and 8

24 Class Meetings

November 2025

Assessments

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- TWPS
- Daily Participation Checklist (EU 1)
- Student discussions and responses
- Theater Journal Entries
- Accountable Talk Discussions
- Tableau Plot Worksheet (EU 1)
- Stage Direction Quiz
- Costume Color Palettes (EU 1)
- Group work Dialogue Script (EU 1 and EU 2)
- Music cue and sound effect activity (EU 1)
- Group Work Checklist
- Successful completion of employing each theatrical element

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Theater Vocabulary Quiz (EU 1)
- Assembling the scenes by adding theatrical elements each class (EU 1 and EU 2)
- Group work final script (EU 1 and EU 2)
- Performance Task- "Once Upon a Theater!" (EU 1 and EU 2)

Unit Task

Unit Task Name: Performance Task- "Once Upon a Theater!"

Description: Students perform a fairytale or fable in small groups. The retelling of this well-known story will be devised by their group. It will contain many theatrical elements: character, setting, plot, dialogue, pantomime, basic costumes, recorded music and sound effects. The completion of this project will require writing a script with the technical cues and stage directions written in properly. The scenes will be performed for each other and students will engage in giving constructive feedback using accountable talk. They will reflect on what it feels like to perform for peers as well as what it feels like to work as an ensemble to create a short piece of theater. (EU 1 and EU 2)

Evaluation: Summative Assessment.

Unit 1: Theater 101

Theater Grades 7 and 8

24 Class Meetings

November 2025

Unit Resources

- Video Resources of Online scenes
- Theater Images to post for gallery walk/TWPS
- Laptops
- Visual vocabulary cards
- Google Slides/ Power Point Presentations
- Music
- Speakers
- Paper
- Pencils/ Pens
- Crayons or colored pencils
- Theater Journals
- Cards with Fairytale/ Fable summaries
- Costume Bag with various costume pieces
- Lighting ideas (small white lights, LED candles, Flashlights, Gels)
- Sticky notes
- Chart Paper
- Tape