

Multi-Media Dramatic Writing

By Mary Ann Chang

Purpose:

The purpose of this teaching activity is to allow students to write and produce work that is geared towards a specific audience and a specific purpose. Individuals need to be able to convey writing to a variety of audiences in different styles, from formal writing to pleasure writing. Students also need to be proficient in writing and using outside resources to prepare themselves for the work they will one day encounter. This type of multi-media project provides a multi-tasking learning experience to train individuals for what the real world may ask of them in their own careers. Students should show an ability to use a variety of resources using relevant sources and information to be able to communicate effectively in all types of formats.

Standards:

This “something else” would be to teach the standards of the **NCTE/IRA**. Standard 5: Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes. It would also teach the following Illinois Learning Standards. 3.B.4b Produce, edit, revise and format work for submission and/or publication (e.g., manuscript form, appropriate citation of sources) using contemporary technology. 3.C.4b Using available technology, produce compositions and multimedia works for specified audiences.

This assignment would also correspond to **Illinois Learning Standard** State Goal 3: Write to communicate for a variety of purposes. 3.C.4b: Using available technology, produce compositions and multimedia works for specified audiences. Also, Standard State Goal 5: Use the language arts to acquire, assess and communicate information. 5.C.4a: Plan, compose, edit and revise information for presentation to an audience.

Introduction and Rationale

The ability to write clearly is essential to effective communication. I believe it is important for students to learn to write effectively even in situations that include creative writing. Through this type of writing skill, students can show planning and organization and effectively convey idea or meaning of their text. Students must also be able to use a

wide variety of resources to be successful in school and in the working world. They must know how to relevantly structure information and use it to communicate in a variety of formats. That is why I choose to have students choose a life story that they can share with their classmates and other people interested in attending the presentation forum. The presentation of their project will also help students to gain a sense of pride in their final product. This will also help students to share their work and establish a type of ethic in presentation. This will be a quality that they will need in their future of learning as well as in the working world.

Writing is one of the essentials ways that people communicate. Personal writing is a strong attribute for people to possess. Students will be asked to write a short story, collection of poetry, novellas, etc., in any form they choose. The story can be written in as a play, as an essay, as a short story, or any other form that is approved with me first. Students will write their pieces and then have an adjoining assignment to creatively incorporate their story into a project. Students should make a project that they can take with them throughout their life.

I believe students can learn to benefit from an enhanced teaching materials lesson. The purpose of the lesson is to have students focus on an event that changed them or helped them to learn a lesson. Students have a choice and can focus their writings on any personal experiences they choose. This is an idea that was developed back in my senior year of high school. We were allowed to create our own final project. For my final project, I focused my attention on writing short stories of love and lost love. Then I put these writings into a book format, a quilt, a painting, and other mediums. I used seashells, roses, and other media to illustrate the underlying theme of each text.

Similar to that project, students will learn to develop a process where they write and then use other mediums to illustrate the underlying themes of their stories. Students can illustrate one specific scene from their writing or they can include an object with their writing; anything they find that appropriately conveys their subject matter. Students will learn to use creativity to better their presentation. Using other mediums, along with their writing, students will see that other texts can be used as resources to make stories become more enhanced.

The following condensed story would be similar to what I was looking for. Students can use flash fiction, short stories, novellas, poetry, etc., in their final projects. Then they would have to devise a plan bringing their text to other resources. This would be an example:

The Sky is Lonely

Back in 1999, on a hot Sunday afternoon, we took the el from the suburbs to the city. It was 99 degrees outside and it was a good day to bask in the sun and worship it. Somehow to my luck, I got stuck riding next to this old man, probably in his early 70's. He had a thick Polish accent reminding me of my friend Susie's schlotsky's. I guess I overtook his attention somehow, although it was unintentional. He had this undying urge to speak to me. And his timing was impeccable. Every time we'd hit an underground tunnel, he'd choose to start telling me a story about when he was a child back in Poland. Now imagine, someone starts to speak to you, only, this huge freight train passes by every time they try to utter a word. I kept my composure, nodded and laughed every once in a while. And I kept this charade up for a while until I noticed he was mumbling the same sentence over and over again. I guess I looked somewhat puzzled because he chose to repeat it one more time, only slower and more enunciated. I could decipher through his accent, that it wasn't a sentence he was repeating, but a question. He was asking if I was Chinese. I shook my head, "No," and smiled politely. He pointed to my friends.

"They are Chinese, no?" he asked.

"No," I told him. "They're Philipino."

He started to compare my friends and I, swaying his eyes back and forth. I couldn't make sense of his behavior. He turned towards the window and continued to stare at the monotonous scenery. A few minutes later, he turned back to me and leaned in a little, his way of signaling to me it was my turn to listen. As not to be rude, I hunched in towards him.

"You are not like your friends," he said as he chuckled. "They are very skinny."

I took great offense to this comment. Who was he to sit and make judgments about me? I was infuriated at what he was saying to me.

"You built like strong China woman."

I had to laugh. This ignorant old man was trying to compliment me somehow in what he said. I just laughed to myself. He seemed pleased by my response and sat and chuckled with me. My stop came and my friends and I got off the subway. I saw the old man get off as well. He hobbled over to our direction and tried to direct us towards the correct locale of the beach. I thanked him kindly and meandered off signaling to my friends to follow my lead. I took one last look back and smiled to my newfound friend. I realized then, we all just need people to listen to us once in a while. I wondered what the man meant. I shook my head and laughed. Someone once told me, everything happens for a reason. That reason, I had to find out for myself.

* * *

With this story, I would make a small 3-D subway cart. I would then take marker or spray paint and have the story be written inside the cart like graffiti. I am not sure if I would keep the story going continuously along one wall or have the story go round and round the cart. I think this would be a nice way to incorporate my story into a real subway, making use of the scenery. There is real graffiti inside subways. I thought by incorporating the story and real life objects, it would be possible to paint a miniature [real life] object and have the words make the story come alive. I thought this would be a creative way to make my story come to life.

Students can use any type of text (poetry, prose, flash fiction, novella) to tell their story. Then they can use any type of multi-media to bring it to life. For instance, if a student wanted to write about meeting a singer, they could write a collection of songs and copy onto a CD and then design a CD cover and present it like it was an actual music CD. Or if a student wanted to talk about a specific night where all they did was drive, but had experiences while driving (picture *America Graffiti*) they could design a box that was full of roads and have a car placed in one of the roads and have the story within the box. There are endless possibilities.

Again, having students produce this kind of work would help them to think outside the lines. This type of assignment would allow the artistic freedom for individuals to pick whatever suited them the best. Students get to pick the subject matter, the type of media to illustrate it with, and basically the overall presentation. As for grading, I have attached a rubric. It requires students to use correct spelling and grammar. I am grading on creativity

in presentation. I am looking for a theme or a learning experience the story/play/text was based on. Grades would be determined by the quality of the work submitted. The rubrics can be discussed before hand to allow students to know what my expectations are of this assignment. This would be a four-week unit.

Students would present this at the end of the year as a final project. The class would spend 3 to 4 days during examination periods presenting individual presentations. Students would be required to state why they picked the project they did. They would share what they learned from their experience and acknowledge why they presented it in the manner they chose. Whether it was a magazine, newspaper, book, box, spray can, etc., they would have to elaborate on why they went the route they did. Not only would students observing in the audience be required to participate by listening, they will be required to assess the level of success they see in each individuals product. They will also be required to share reasons to why or why not they believe the product fails or succeed. They will need to provide critiques of all the projects handed in.

As for grading, I would have a rubric that had the basics. Students would have to write in a particular manner, appropriate for the audience, whether formal, informal, colloquial, etc. They would have to include vivid imagery to make the scenes come alive. Students would have to use correct spelling and grammar. Students would be graded on an individual basis on their creativity in presentation, peer responses, delivery, theme, and learning experience. Students would need to convey what lesson was learned or what concept was used or what happened to them that affect their lives in a memorable fashion. A rubric of what attributes are required for this project would be handed out before the due date of the assignment.

At the end of this assignment, I will organize a night when student invite their family and friends to view their semester long projects. I will provide refreshments and ask for volunteers to present their projects and have the rest of the projects on display for onlookers.

Unit Outline

Rationale:

The purpose of this type of assignment would be to allow students self-expression. But more importantly, it would provide students with the knowledge that these skills are useful in real life situations. Individuals must be capable of writing for all different types of audiences. This empowers them to use their writing in all kinds of situations from rhetorical to business letters. This type of writing also incorporates use of technology, whether it is through computers or other processes that enable students to gain access to improving their writing abilities. This allows them to expand the necessary skills needed to produce work with proficiency that are geared to their future career.

Goal and Objective:

The student will be able to identify themes and anecdotes to relay a story to a geared audience. The student will be able to use outside resources other than texts to combine into their projects. The student will be able to give a presentation of their final project. The student will be able to use a variety of writing processes to convey their stories. The students will be able to use multimedia works for their projects.

NCTE/IRA Goals: Standard 5: Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes. It would also teach the following Illinois Learning Standards. 3.B.4b Produce, edit, revise and format work for submission and/or publication (e.g., manuscript form, appropriate citation of sources) using contemporary technology. 3.C.4b Using available technology, produce compositions and multimedia works for specified audiences.

Illinois Learning Standards: State Goal 3: Write to communicate for a variety of purposes. 3.C.4b: Using available technology, produce compositions and multimedia works for specified audiences. Also, Standard State Goal 5: Use the language arts to acquire, assess and communicate information. 5.C.4a: Plan, compose, edit and revise information for presentation to an audience.

Week One: Introduction to the Final Project, Drafting of Pieces

Week Two: Revising and Peer-Editing of Pieces

Week Three: Outside Resources Being Developed and Added to Text Created

Week Four: Presentations

Handout (examples)

Final Project

For the final project, you will be required to think about past events that have altered your life. We will be focusing on writing about a specific event that taught you a lesson or influenced you in some way. Keep in mind that this project will require you to use outside resources to enhance it. By this I mean you will be required to use other mediums to illustrate the story you are writing about. You may choose what story to write about in the styles of: short story (minimum of 10 pages), collection of poetry (minimum of 10 poems), novella, play (minimum of 15 pages), or other formats that I have to approve (come see me if you would like to do other types). We will be working on this project for the next 4 weeks. This will be worth 85 points, 10% of your final grade. You will be graded on your drafts, peer editing, and participation. You will be given class time to work on your stories, as well as the multi-media aspect of your project. You will be required to present your project to the rest of the class. I will have a sign up sheet passed around in the next few days for this purpose. You will be required to comment critically about the work your classmates produce. You will be graded on your project and the participation aspect of presentations week.

Peer Editing Rubric	NO					YES					
Does the text make sense?	0	1	2	3	4	5					
Is there a clear anecdote/moral/theme to the story?	0	1	2	3	4	5					
Does the author use correct spelling and punctuation?	0	1	2	3	4	5					
Does the author use correct grammar?	0	1	2	3	4	5					
Does the story relate to the 5 senses? (touch, taste, sight, smell, sound)	0	1	2	3	4	5					
Is the story entertaining?	0	1	2	3	4	5					

Comments:

What are the strong points of the story?

What can the author do to improve the story?

Where are there areas of confusion?

Final Grade Rubric

Project	No					Yes						
• There is a moral to the story.	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Story is written realistically.	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Story portrays importance to author.	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Story is not too broad or too narrow.	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5

Multi Media

• Outside mediums are used in presentation.	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Medium shows relevance to the story.	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Project is presented with neatness.	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Project shows effort.	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5

Presentation

• Student talks in a loud voice.	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Student explains why they chose the story.	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Student explains their choice of presentation.	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Student does not sway, mumble, or fidget.	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Student actively participates in critiquing other student's works.	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5

TOTAL: _____ points

NAME: _____

Brainstorming Activity:

Answer any of the following questions to start thinking of your piece. Or if you have an idea in mind, start thinking of ways to answer the following questions with your story idea.

Whom do you admire most? What is it about that person that inspires you?

What is your most treasured memory?

What is the greatest accomplishment in your life?

What was your best experience?

What was your worst experience?