



Lesson Plan

Making Good Life Choices: Write and Produce a Play

Grade: High School

Goal: Students will learn about making good life choices and the consequences of drug misuse.

Class Time: Determined by teacher, but no less than 5 classroom periods.

Learning Objectives: Students build thinking and cooperation skills as they write and perform a drug misuse themed play that shares the consequences of good and bad life choices. Playwriting teaches students how to construct a plot, write dialogue, and tell a story through action.

Potential for Critical Assessment: Teacher may evaluate students' participation.

Activity

Teachers lead class in writing and producing a play.

Play may solely be an in-class experience or acted out on stage for a larger group such as the school's student body.

*A larger-scale production may be arranged by enlisting the participation of local fire, emergency, and police units. This option would require a theatre class teacher who could coordinate a production like this on a larger scale to perform before the whole school or broader community. For example, some schools have reenacted a DUI crash on their campus with local responders participating to great effect.

How to Write a Play:

Step 1: Come up with an idea. The play needs a plot and should be around 8-10 pages or longer. There're limitless ideas for this play like:

- Friends gather for a birthday party at Jane's house. One of the attendees has brought a bottle of pills she took from her grandmother's house. She suggests that they all take one and see what it's like.
- John and Mike are on the football team. They like to work out together and hope to take their team to the playoffs. Mike sees that John is getting so much bigger than



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him so quickly. John has also been really aggressive at times and Mike is concerned that John is using steroids.

- A group of friends are out hiking and one of them pulls out a marijuana joint.

Step 2: Determine a conflict. This is the problem that the characters will face. It will be central to the plot and will make the play more dramatic. The plot should proceed in the following way:

- The beginning will introduce the characters and conflict.
- Next, the characters try to solve the problem, creating “rising action.”
- The rising action leads to a “climax,” or turning point.
- Finally, a resolution sums things up in the end through “falling action.”

Step 3: For a single class, break your students into smaller groups. Have each group write a play in four acts using the above list as an outline. Each group will put on a play for the class.

For a larger production have the group write one play. The group will then produce a play for the school in the school auditorium.

Plays must include the following components:

- **Setting:** The setting of the play could be anywhere, including the past, the future, or in a vacuum.
- **Scene Changes:** Good times for characters to switch locations.
- **Characters:** The play should have anywhere from three to eight characters.
 - Each character wants something and has a goal or objective.
 - List each character and give a detailed description of each one. Even if the characters are animals they still have unique qualities. *Note that the more detailed the characteristics are the more depth the actors can give to their performances.
 - Examples of Character Details:
 - Name
 - Age
 - Physical appearance
 - Personality
 - Hobbies and interests
 - Fears
 - Secrets
 - Abilities
 - Motivations
 - Occupation
 - Relationships with other characters



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- **Dialogue:** The dialogue should move the story forward. It should reveal the characters' relationships with each other and their moods and personalities. Dialogue should be believable and sound real; there can be pauses and contractions, just like in everyday speech.
 - If possible, students should study real-life speech.
 - Students can also practice reading their dialogue aloud to see how it sounds.
- **Format:** Using correct playwriting format helps to put all these pieces together in an understandable way (see example below).
- **Stage Directions:** Messages in parentheses, aligned to the right margin, from the playwright to the actors and crew telling them what to do and how to do it.
 - They should be brief and written in the present tense.
 - They describe action and visuals, not inner thoughts.
 - List them at the beginning of a scene and anywhere else where action, props, or descriptions need to be explained for the cast and crew.
 - Write character names in all caps. Center and bold the names above each character's lines.

Example:

The Spot

By: Johnnie Nixon, Louisa Gray, and Michael Morrison

Cast of Characters:

Joe, a friendly high school junior, 17, and an avid skateboarder. Joe and Zoe live in the same building.

Zoe, a fun high school sophomore, 16, and known for her wacky science experiments and big mop of curly red hair.

Melissa, a serious high school junior, 16, who writes on the school newspaper and loves all animals. Melissa and Zoe are cousins.

Julie, a popular high school senior, 17, is known for her jokes and big personality. Julie is worried that if everyone finds out that her dad lost his job that she won't be popular anymore.



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Christian, a rebellious high school junior, 18, is in a band and skateboards with Joe nearly every day. He sometimes teases Zoe. Julie suspects it's because Christian has a secret crush on Zoe.

SETTING:

The play takes place on a rainy fall morning in a bustling, eclectic, leafy old neighborhood of ornate row houses and apartment buildings in Washington, D.C.

Act 1

Scene 1

(Early morning, rain falling. Sidewalk in front of a tall apartment building. Joe enters and is walking past the front of the building. He is dressed for rainy weather and wearing a backpack with a skateboard strapped to it. Zoe comes out of the building and approaches Joe.)

Zoe

Joe wait! Julie just texted me! She and Christian are skipping class and meeting at the Spot! They've called a meeting!

Joe

Oh yeah?! But we have that test on Friday...why have a meeting *now*? But, going to the Spot sure sounds a lot better than being in class.

(Melissa rolls up on a skateboard, rain dripping off her colorful hooded poncho and grinning.)

Melissa

Hey guys! We'd better hurry or we're gonna be late...it's almost 7:45!



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Joe

We're gonna skip class and go to the Spot! Christian has called a meeting!

Melissa

Really? But we have class...I'm not sure if that's a good idea...

Zoe

Oh, come on Melissa...it'll be fun! And we can't miss a meeting, now can we...?

Melissa

...I guess not...

(Joe and Zoe exit. Melissa watches them go. After a few seconds she follows them.)

Scene 2

(Morning. Julie and Christian hanging out at the Spot, which is under a bridge in their neighborhood. There's a creek, a trail, tall grass, dense trees and bushes, and a picnic table. There's graffiti on the underside of the bridge and a few odd beer cans and bottles lying around. Julie and Christian's bikes are lying on the ground. Julie is sitting on top of the picnic table looking at her phone and Christian is throwing rocks into the creek.)

Julie

The guys are on their way!

Christian

Cool! So glad to NOT be in lame-o Mr. Dickerson's class this morning...

(Periodic "plunk" and "sploosh" sounds as Christian tosses rocks into the stream.)



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(Joe, Melissa, and Zoe enter. Joe approaches Christian, they do a fist bump, and Joe picks up some rocks to join in the tossing. Melissa and Zoe join Julie on the picnic table.)

(Speaking under his breath to Christian.)

Joe

So, what's with this meeting dude? We usually meet up after school...what's so important?

(Christian looks over at the girls, who are chatting and looking at something on Julie's phone)

Christian

Dude you're not gonna believe what I scored!

(Christian leans closer to Joe and reaches into his shirt pocket and pulls out a marijuana joint.)

Joe

Duuuuude! No way!

Christian

It's supposed to be really good! I couldn't wait until after school!

Have your class finish the story or begin a new play of their own! Remember to stick to the theme and have fun!



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Standards of Learning:

Common Core

9th-10th Grades

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3](#)

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.A](#)

Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.B](#)

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.C](#)

Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.D](#)

Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.E](#)

Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

11th-12th Grades

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3](#)

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.



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[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.A](#)

Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.B](#)

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.C](#)

Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.D](#)

Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.E](#)

Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.