

General Activities for Educators



Here at the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, we are committed to sharing the love of theatre with young people in order to facilitate creative growth, developing future artists, and helping young people experience, appreciate, and participate in live theatre.

Research has shown that students who attend live theatre performances gain a deeper understanding of literature and demonstrate greater tolerance, empathy, and critical thinking skills.¹ Experiencing live performances can also inspire young people to pursue their own dreams. Indeed, the Royal Ballet in London has seen a surge of young male dancers join their ranks in recent years, a phenomenon that has been coined 'the Billy Elliot effect.'² Look around you and notice the young faces in the audience – they may just be the stars of tomorrow!

The following classroom activities are designed to make connecting our performances to your curriculum as easy as possible. They can be used as a jumping-off point for any play you attend at Royal MTC. The curriculum connections listed are mostly focused on Drama and English Language Arts; however, many plays connect more broadly with other subject areas. We produce enrichment guides for select plays each season which contain specific classroom activities with comprehensive cross-curricular connections.

¹ University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. "Major benefits for students who attend live theater, study finds." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 16 October 2014.

² Hoyle, Antonia, "The 'Billy Elliot' effect sees young males become the 'crème de la crème' of the dancing world," Daily Mail, 12 December 2015.

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Discussing the Play and Performances

After seeing the production, ask students to discuss their impressions of the play. Consider the plot, characters, themes, and technical elements. General topics for every play can include:

- The title – why do you think the playwright chose this? What were your original thoughts about the play based on the title, and were those accurate to the show you saw?
- The characters – which characters resonated with you personally? Whose story were you invested in? How did the playwright achieve this? Which characters did you enjoy watching most, and why? Which characters would you like to interact with in real life?
- Acting and staging – what kinds of techniques did the actors and director use to give you impressions of the characters? What about the staging did you think was effective? What might you have done differently if portraying a role or setting the staging?
- What is a lesson or message you took from the play? What elements reinforced this message?

Curriculum Connections

Drama

Senior Years – Dramatic Arts: Responding

(DR–R1) The learner generates initial reactions to drama/theatre experiences.

(DR–R2) The learner critically observes and describes drama/theatre experiences

(DR–R3) The learner analyzes and interprets drama/theatre experiences.

(DR–R4) The learner applies new understandings about drama/theatre to construct identity and to act in transformative ways.

Early/Middle Years

(DR–V1) Students demonstrate interest, curiosity, and engagement while experiencing drama in a variety of contexts.

(DR–V2) Students analyze their own and others' drama.

(DR–V3) Students construct personal interpretations of their own and others' drama.

English Language Arts

Express Ideas (1.1.1) Question and reflect on personal responses, predictions, and interpretations; apply personal viewpoints to diverse situations or circumstances.

Consider Others' Ideas (1.1.2) Acknowledge the value of others' ideas and opinions in exploring and extending personal interpretations and viewpoints.

Explain Opinions (1.2.2) Review and refine personal viewpoints through reflection, feedback, and self-assessment.

Forms and Genres (2.3.1) Explain preferences for particular forms and genres of oral, literary, and media texts.

Appreciate the Artistry of Texts (2.2.3) Discuss how word choice and supporting details in oral, literary, and media texts [including books, drama, and oral presentations] affect purpose and audience.

Participate in Group Inquiry (3.1.3) Generate and access ideas in a group and use a variety of methods to focus and clarify inquiry or research topic

Attentive Listening and Viewing (4.4.3) Demonstrate critical listening and viewing skills and strategies and show respect for presenter(s).

Compare Responses (5.2.1) Recognize that differing perspectives and unique reactions enrich understanding.

Appreciate Diversity (5.2.3) Reflect on ways in which the choices and motives of individuals encountered in oral, literary, and media texts provide insight into those of self and others; discuss personal participation and responsibilities in a variety of communities.

Relate Texts to Culture (5.2.2) Explain ways in which oral, literary, and media texts reflect topics and themes in life.

Discussing Technical Theatrical Elements

Have students discuss the theatrical elements used in the play. They should consider how the technical elements are used practically (for example, how lighting provides illumination and focuses our attention) and also to develop themes or moods.

1. Lighting: what lighting effects were used? Think about colour, angles, and texture. How were these qualities implemented, and how did they affect the mood?
2. Sound: what sound effects were used? Was there music? How did it make you feel?
3. Costumes: What did the costumes tell us about the characters personalities, circumstances, and relationships? What did they tell us about the play's setting?
4. Sets: describe the sets. What do they tell us about the place and time period? Is this world of the play realistic or impressionistic? When and how were set changes made?
5. How did one or all of these design elements reinforce the themes or message of the play? Every design element involves making choices. Why do you think the director and set, costume, lighting, and sound designers made the choices they did?

Curriculum Connections

Drama

Senior Years

(DR-R1) The learner generates initial reactions to drama/theatre experiences.

(DR-R2) The learner critically observes and describes drama/theatre experiences.

(DR-R3) The learner analyzes and interprets drama/theatre experiences.

(DR-R4) The learner applies new understandings about drama/theatre to construct identity and to act in transformative ways.

(DR-M2) The learner develops competencies for using elements of drama/theatre in a variety of contexts.

(DR-C1) The learner develops understandings about people and practices in the dramatic arts.

(DR-C3) The learner develops understandings about the roles, purposes, and meanings of the dramatic arts.

Early/Middle Years

(DR-V1) Students demonstrate interest, curiosity, and engagement while experiencing drama in a variety of contexts.

(DR-V2) Students analyze their own and others' drama.

(DR-V3) Students construct personal interpretations of their own and others' drama.

DR-L3 Students demonstrate understanding of and facility with theatrical elements that contribute to drama.

English Language Arts

Express Ideas (1.1.1) Question and reflect on personal responses, predictions, and interpretations; apply personal viewpoints to diverse situations or circumstances.

Consider Others' Ideas (1.1.2) Acknowledge the value of others' ideas and opinions in exploring and extending personal interpretations and viewpoints.

Explain Opinions (1.2.2) Review and refine personal viewpoints through reflection, feedback, and self-assessment.

Participate in Group Inquiry (3.1.3) Generate and access ideas in a group and use a variety of methods to focus and clarify inquiry or research topic

Attentive Listening and Viewing (4.4.3) Demonstrate critical listening and viewing skills and strategies and show respect for presenter(s).

Compare Responses (5.2.1) Recognize that differing perspectives and unique reactions enrich understanding.

Write a Review

Have students write a review of the play as though they are a reporter writing for a newspaper. Here are some guidelines:

Think about your initial reaction to the play and explore why or what specific moments have led to you feeling that way. You can also explore the purpose of the play and the effectiveness of the production for the audience – how did others around you react? Was that the same or different than your reactions?

Your review should have an introduction, body and conclusion that consider the following:

- The introduction should include information such as the title, actor, director and writer.
- The body should summarize the plot, give the setting, and comment on the characters and content.
- The conclusion should clearly state whether you liked or disliked the play and who you would recommend to see it or not see it.

Finally, edit and revise your writing prior to submitting your work. You can also do this with a partner.

Curriculum Connections

Drama

Senior Years – Dramatic Arts

(DR–R1) The learner generates initial reactions to drama/theatre experiences.

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(DR–R3) The learner analyzes and interprets drama/theatre experiences.

(DR–R4) The learner applies new understandings about drama/theatre to construct identity and to act in transformative ways.

Early/Middle Years

(DR–V2) Students analyze their own and others' drama.

(DR–V3) Students construct personal interpretations of their own and others' drama.

English Language Arts

Express Ideas (1.1.1) Question and reflect on personal responses, predictions, and interpretations; apply personal viewpoints to diverse situations or circumstances.

Consider Others' Ideas (1.1.2) Acknowledge the value of others' ideas and opinions in exploring and extending personal interpretations and viewpoints.

Explain Opinions (1.2.2) Review and refine personal viewpoints through reflection, feedback, and self-assessment.

Forms and Genres (2.3.1) Explain preferences for particular forms and genres of oral, literary, and media texts.

Appreciate the Artistry of Texts (2.2.3) Discuss how word choice and supporting details in oral, literary, and media texts [including books, drama, and oral presentations] affect purpose and audience.

Organize Information (3.3.1) Organize information and ideas by developing and selecting appropriate categories and organizational structures.

Organize Ideas (4.1.3) Identify and use a variety of organizational patterns in own oral, written, and visual texts; use effective transitions.

Grammar and Usage (4.3.1) Edit for parallel structure, use of transitional devices, and clarity.

Spelling (4.3.2) Know and apply a repertoire of spelling conventions when editing and proofreading; use a variety of resources when editing and proofreading.

Capitalization and Punctuation (4.3.3) Know and apply capitalization and punctuation conventions in dialogues, quotations, footnotes, endnotes, and references when editing and proofreading.

Revise Content (4.2.2) Review previous draft and revise to refine communication and enhance self-expression.

Write a letter or journal entry from a character

Have students select a character from the play and write a letter or journal entry from their point of view. Students should consider how tone, diction, vocabulary, and culture reflect on the character's identity.

Example: Lady Macbeth writes a tortured confession in her diary before descending into madness during her 'out, damned spot' scene; Billy Elliot writes a letter home after being accepted into the Royal Ballet School and moving to London.

Curriculum Connections

Drama

Senior Years – Dramatic Arts

(DR–R3) The learner analyzes and interprets drama/theatre experiences.

(DR–R4) The learner applies new understandings about drama/theatre to construct identity and to act in transformative ways.

(DR–C3) The learner develops understandings about the roles, purposes, and meanings of the dramatic arts.

Early/Middle Years

(DR–V3) Students construct personal interpretations of their own and others' drama.

English Language Arts

Express Ideas (1.1.1) Question and reflect on personal responses, predictions, and interpretations; apply personal viewpoints to diverse situations or circumstances.

Experiment with Language and Form (1.1.3) Use memorable language effectively and experiment with different personas for dynamic self-expression.

Create Original Texts (2.3.5) Create original texts to communicate and demonstrate understanding of forms and techniques.

Appreciate the Artistry of Texts (2.2.3) Discuss how word choice and supporting details in oral, literary, and media texts [including books, drama, and oral presentations] affect purpose and audience.

Revise Content (4.2.2) Review previous draft and revise to refine communication and enhance self-expression.

Choose Forms (4.1.2) Adapt specific forms to match content, audience, and purpose.

Organize Ideas (4.1.3) Identify and use a variety of organizational patterns in own oral, written, and visual texts; use effective transitions.

Appreciate Diversity (5.2.3) Reflect on ways in which the choices and motives of individuals encountered in oral, literary, and media texts provide insight into those of self and others; discuss personal participation and responsibilities in a variety of communities.

Critical Literary Analysis

Have students critically analyse the play as a literary work, and describe the plot, characters, themes, and setting. What literary techniques does the playwright use?

Curriculum Connections

Drama

Senior Years – Dramatic Arts

(DR–R3) The learner analyzes and interprets drama/theatre experiences.

(DR–R4) The learner applies new understandings about drama/theatre to construct identity and to act in transformative ways.

(DR–C1) The learner develops understandings about people and practices in the dramatic arts.

(DR–C2) The learner develops understandings about the influence and impact of the dramatic arts.

(DR–C3) The learner develops understandings about the roles, purposes, and meanings of the dramatic arts.

Early/Middle Years

(DR–V3) Students construct personal interpretations of their own and others' drama.

English Language Arts

Express Ideas (1.1.1) Question and reflect on personal responses, predictions, and interpretations; apply personal viewpoints to diverse situations or circumstances.

Experiment with Language and Form (1.1.3) Use memorable language effectively and experiment with different personas for dynamic self-expression.

Develop Understanding (1.2.1) Reflect on new understanding in relation to prior knowledge and identify gaps in personal knowledge.

Appreciate the Artistry of Texts (2.2.3) Discuss how word choice and supporting details in oral, literary, and media texts [including books, drama, and oral presentations] affect purpose and audience.

Comprehension Strategies (2.1.2) Use comprehension strategies appropriate to the type of text and purpose; enhance understanding by rereading and discussing relevant passages.

Textual Cues (2.1.3) Use textual cues and prominent organizational patterns within texts to construct and confirm meaning and interpret texts.

Revise Content (4.2.2) Review previous draft and revise to refine communication and enhance self-expression.

Choose Forms (4.1.2) Adapt specific forms to match content, audience, and purpose.

Organize Ideas (4.1.3) Identify and use a variety of organizational patterns in own oral, written, and visual texts; use effective transitions.

Relate Texts to Culture (5.2.2) Explain ways in which oral, literary, and media texts reflect topics and themes in life.

Appreciate Diversity (5.2.3) Reflect on ways in which the choices and motives of individuals encountered in oral, literary, and media texts provide insight into those of self and others; discuss personal participation and responsibilities in a variety of communities.

Compare Literary or Film Adaptations

In the case of a play which has been adapted from or into a film, or based on a novel, have students watch or read the other version then discuss the similarities and differences. How does the different medium change the story? Compare and contrast techniques used in film, literature, and live theatre to tell a story.

Curriculum Connections

Drama

Senior Years – Dramatic Arts

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(DR-R3) The learner analyzes and interprets drama/theatre experiences.

(DR-M2) The learner develops competencies for using elements of drama/theatre in a variety of contexts

(DR-C1) The learner develops understandings about people and practices in the dramatic arts.

(DR-C3) The learner develops understandings about the roles, purposes, and meanings of the dramatic arts.

Early/Middle Years

(DR-V1) Students demonstrate interest, curiosity, and engagement while experiencing drama in a variety of contexts.

(DR-V2) Students analyze their own and others' drama.

English Language Arts

Express Ideas (1.1.1) Question and reflect on personal responses, predictions, and interpretations; apply personal viewpoints to diverse situations or circumstances.

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Participate in Group Inquiry (3.1.3) Generate and access ideas in a group and use a variety of methods to focus and clarify inquiry or research topic.

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Relate Texts to Culture (5.2.2) Explain ways in which oral, literary, and media texts reflect topics and themes in life.

Create A Playlist

Music can be a helpful tool for setting a scene. Either individually or in pairs/small groups, create a playlist of ten songs that will establish the world of the play for the audience, that could be played as preshow or intermission music. There is no right answer, but make clear choices. For example, consider the era in which the play is set – for a show set in the 1950s, would you choose popular music from that decade? Or would you use modern songs that evoke the themes of the play? Will you focus on the themes and messages you have noticed in the play, or will you find songs to represent different events that take place – or a combination?

OR

Create a playlist that tells the journey of a character. Many actors use music as a tool in their preshow prep, playing the same songs as they get ready each day. Choose ten moments in the play that affect the character, or ten aspects of that character's life or personality, and select a song for each. Will you focus on emotions, the characters' circumstances, their actions?

OR

Considering all those aspects of each character, make one playlist that contains a signature song for each character in the show. Share this list with a classmate – can they tell which song goes with which character?

Curriculum Connections

Drama

Senior Years – Dramatic Arts

(DR–R1) The learner generates initial reactions to drama/theatre experiences.

(DR–R2) The learner critically observes and describes drama/theatre experiences.

(DR–R3) The learner analyzes and interprets drama/theatre experiences.

Early/Middle Years

(DR–V1) Students demonstrate interest, curiosity, and engagement while experiencing drama in a variety of contexts.

(DR–L2) Students demonstrate understanding of and facility with character and role in drama.

English Language Arts

Express Ideas (1.1.1) Question and reflect on personal responses, predictions, and interpretations; apply personal viewpoints to diverse situations or circumstances.

Consider Others' Ideas (1.1.2) Acknowledge the value of others' ideas and opinions in exploring and extending personal interpretations and viewpoints.

Explain Opinions (1.2.2) Review and refine personal viewpoints through reflection, feedback, and self-assessment.

Music

(M–R1) The learner generates initial reactions to music experiences.

(M–R2) The learner listens to, observes, and describes music experiences.

(M–CR3) The learner revises, refines, and shares music ideas and creative work.

Design a Poster

Posters are used by theatre companies to spread the word about the show to a potential audience. Visually represent this play in a way that makes people want to see it. Think about what target audience you will choose – even if this play wasn't your favourite, who would enjoy it instead, and how could you entice them? Is there a particular character, event, theme, or message that you want to emphasize? How can you use colours, shape, and images to give the impression you are going for? Make sure to include the title of the play in your poster.

Curriculum Connections

Visual Arts

(VA-M1) The learner develops competencies for using elements and principles of artistic design in a variety of contexts.

(VA-CR1) The learner generates and uses ideas from a variety of sources for creating visual art.

(VA-C2) The learner develops understandings about the influence and impact of the visual arts.

Drama

Senior Years – Dramatic Arts

(DR-R1) The learner generates initial reactions to drama/theatre experiences.

(DR-R2) The learner critically observes and describes drama/theatre experiences.

(DR-R3) The learner analyzes and interprets drama/theatre experiences.

Early/Middle Years

(DR-V1) Students demonstrate interest, curiosity, and engagement while experiencing drama in a variety of contexts.

(DR-V2) Students analyze their own and others' drama.

English Language Arts

Express Ideas (1.1.1) Question and reflect on personal responses, predictions, and interpretations; apply personal viewpoints to diverse situations or circumstances.

Consider Others' Ideas (1.1.2) Acknowledge the value of others' ideas and opinions in exploring and extending personal interpretations and viewpoints.

Some Resources

The Drama Teacher: Resources for Those who Love Drama

<http://www.thedramateacher.com/>

Manitoba Drama Educators' Association

<http://www.manitobadrama.com/>

Theatrefolk

<https://www.theatrefolk.com/free-resources>