

Unit Overview

Unit Title	Dramatic Scriptwriting and Underreported Issues
Unit Length	Six lessons, designed for 75-minute class periods
Grade Level(s)/Subject(s)	12th grade English
Unit Overview	<p>Storytelling is a powerful tool to engage young audiences and adults alike.</p> <p>In this unit, students will identify social issues that are of relevance and concern to them and their community. They will analyze how journalist-playwrights use dramatic writing and performance to communicate underreported true stories to an audience. Students will then plan, draft, and revise their own dramatic scripts that include setting, conflict, characters, plot, structure, and a narrative that portrays an underreported issue that matters to them. Students will work to capture multiple perspectives and marginalized voices in their script.</p> <p>Students taking part in this unit in Chayanee Brooks’s class in spring 2022 had already received an introduction to a range of literary/cultural theories (such as feminist, Marxist, and archetypal theories), equipping them with tools for literary interpretation. As a result, students were also asked to interpret their own dramas through the lens of the literary theory of their choice. Literary theory can not only build empathy and expand perspectives, but can also help to forge connections among people who might have had different experiences in their lives. This is an optional extension that enriches the unit; however, the unit can be completed without this background.</p>
Objectives & Outcomes	<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify what constitutes an underreported story 2. Identify underreported issues that matter to them and their community 3. Plan, draft, and revise dramatic scripts that elevate underreported issues
Standards	<p>Common Core State Standards:</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.B</p>

	<p>Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>Unit Resources</p>	<p>“We're All Here,” a short clip from Sarah Shourd’s play <i>The BOX</i>, which is based on the stories she collected from people in solitary confinement in prisons across the United States.</p> <p>“The House Where Our Stories Live,” an essay by Sarah Shourd that reflects on how different artistic mediums communicate messages differently, and to different audiences.</p> <p>Flying Kites, a graphic novel created collaboratively by members of the 2018-2019 Stanford Graphic Novel Project, which tells the story of the 2013 California prison hunger strike through the perspectives of a man in solitary confinement and his daughter.</p> <p>SHOT: Caught a Soul, a 30-minute play by Gloria J. Browne-Marshall recorded via Zoom. It tells the story of the night an African American teenager is killed by a white police officer from the perspectives of the teenager and the officer.</p>
<p>Performance Task(s)</p>	<p>Students work in teams of three to plan and write a dramatic script that addresses an underreported issue in their community (and beyond). They will present their perspectives through one or more lens, drawing on the literary theories discussed previously in the semester. Scripts will follow this format:</p> <p>Page 1: Literary theory lens and interpretation (students return to this page after completing their draft)</p> <p>Page 2: Brainstorm issues that concern you. Consider campus, local, national, and global issues. You may think in terms of health, families, technology, the environment, and any other area that comes to mind. Discuss in a team and come to a consensus.</p> <p>Page 3: After selecting, describe the issue of concern your team chose, underlying universal issue, and parallel setting. State the audience, purpose, and intended effect of your script.</p> <p>Page 4: Freytag model (story plotline)</p> <p>Page 5: List of characters and team members</p>

	<p>Page 6: Plan for visual and auditory elements of the dramatic production Pages 7+: Dialogue and stage directions</p>																			
<p>Assessment/Evaluation</p>	<p>Student teams' dramatic scripts will be assessed according to the following rubric:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="613 443 1544 1446"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="613 443 846 506">Exemplary</th> <th data-bbox="846 443 1078 506">Proficient</th> <th data-bbox="1078 443 1310 506">Emerging</th> <th data-bbox="1310 443 1544 506">Incomplete</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="613 506 846 842"> <p>-Demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of issue of choice through research and interviews with people in the community</p> </td> <td data-bbox="846 506 1078 842"> <p>-Demonstrates a clear understanding of issue of choice through research and interviews with people in the community</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1078 506 1310 842"> <p>-Demonstrates a limited understanding of issue of choice through research and interviews with people in the community</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1310 506 1544 842"> <p>-Demonstrates an unclear understanding of issue of choice through research and interviews with people in the community</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="613 842 846 1220"> <p>-Effectively provides social commentary on the chosen issue through literary theory of choice through various theatrical elements</p> </td> <td data-bbox="846 842 1078 1220"> <p>-Adequately provides social commentary on the chosen issue through literary theory of choice through various theatrical elements</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1078 842 1310 1220"> <p>-Attempt to provide social commentary on the chosen issue through literary theory of choice through various theatrical elements</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1310 842 1544 1220"> <p>-Does not provide social commentary on the chosen issue through literary theory of choice through various theatrical elements</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="613 1220 846 1446"> <p>-Insightfully communicates the intended effect to the audience</p> </td> <td data-bbox="846 1220 1078 1446"> <p>-Plausibly communicates the intended effect to the audience</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1078 1220 1310 1446"> <p>-Somewhat communicates the intended effect to the audience</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1310 1220 1544 1446"> <p>-Does not communicate the intended effect to the audience</p> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging	Incomplete	<p>-Demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of issue of choice through research and interviews with people in the community</p>	<p>-Demonstrates a clear understanding of issue of choice through research and interviews with people in the community</p>	<p>-Demonstrates a limited understanding of issue of choice through research and interviews with people in the community</p>	<p>-Demonstrates an unclear understanding of issue of choice through research and interviews with people in the community</p>	<p>-Effectively provides social commentary on the chosen issue through literary theory of choice through various theatrical elements</p>	<p>-Adequately provides social commentary on the chosen issue through literary theory of choice through various theatrical elements</p>	<p>-Attempt to provide social commentary on the chosen issue through literary theory of choice through various theatrical elements</p>	<p>-Does not provide social commentary on the chosen issue through literary theory of choice through various theatrical elements</p>	<p>-Insightfully communicates the intended effect to the audience</p>	<p>-Plausibly communicates the intended effect to the audience</p>	<p>-Somewhat communicates the intended effect to the audience</p>	<p>-Does not communicate the intended effect to the audience</p>
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Day 1

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
Students will be able to define and identify what an underreported story is.
Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today's lesson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → "What Are Underreported Stories?," a video from the Pulitzer Center → "The House Where Our Stories Live" by Sarah Shourd for Medium and the Pulitzer Center
Lesson Activities
<p>1. Students watch "What Are Underreported Stories?" and discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → According to the speakers in the video, what is an underreported story? → How are underreported news stories different from other news stories? Reference examples from the video in your description. → How can you find underreported stories, in the news and in your own communities? <p>2. Students visit www.pulitzercenter.org/stories. The teacher demonstrates how to filter the page by issue and country, and directs students to be mindful in their exploration that they choose a topic that feels safe for them to explore today based on how they are feeling. Note that stories may not contain content warnings.</p> <p>3. Students use filters, browse the page, and identify an underreported story that interests them. They should independently read/watch/listen to that story. While they explore the story, students should complete the Local and Global Issues worksheet.</p> <p>4. Introduce the unit and its performance task to the class. Students will work on page 2 in their script organizers.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Brainstorm issues that concern you. Consider campus, local, national, and global issues. You may think in terms of health, families, technology, the environment, and any other area that comes to mind. Discuss in a team and come to a consensus, keeping the following guiding question in mind: <i>How can artistic expression advance society?</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">This question will prepare you for your performance task where you will work with a group to write an original dramatic script in which you make a statement about an issue that you face locally and that people face globally. You must demonstrate your ability to create a dramatic script that advances social messages.</p> <p>Homework: Students read "The House Where Our Stories Live" by journalist and playwright Sarah Shourd.</p>
Lesson Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Local and Global Issues worksheet [.pdf] → Local and Global Issues worksheet [.docx]

- [Script organizer \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Script organizer \[.docx\]](#)

Day 2

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
Students will be able to understand how the drama genre can reach its target audience in the community.
Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today's lesson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → "We're All Here," a short clip from Sarah Shourd's play <i>The BOX</i> → Optional extension: The BOX full play, recorded via Zoom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Content notes: <i>The BOX</i> full play contains mature content including explicit language, mental health crises, and suicide. Teachers should watch the recording and judge its appropriateness for their students before sharing it with students and/or selecting excerpts for them to view. → Optional extension: Virtual visit with journalist and playwright Sarah Shourd, provided through the Pulitzer Center's free virtual journalist visit program
Lesson Activities
<p>1. Reflecting on the assigned reading for homework and their own experiences, students discuss...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → What media do they find most effective for communicating messages? (Can they think of examples?) → What is special about drama as a genre? How can it communicate stories and messages well? <p>2. Students watch "We're All Here," a short clip from Sarah Shourd's play <i>The BOX</i>, which is based on the stories she collected from people in solitary confinement in prisons across the United States. Share with students that this is a dramatization, but is also based on journalistic research Shourd has done for years.</p> <p>3. Students analyze the clip in small groups. Guiding questions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → What is the issue and the underlying global issue in this clip? → How might this story be considered underreported? → What is the effect of the chosen medium? → How does the playwright create the setting? → How is the conflict introduced? → How did the playwright help the audience connect with the character(s)? → How did the playwright develop an event as a scene of the action? → How does the playwright use diction and syntax in the dialogue to convey a particular time and place or meaning? <p>Student groups share out and discuss as a class.</p> <p>4. Students work on page 3 of their script organizer.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">After selecting, describe the issue of concern your team chose, underlying global issue, and parallel setting. State audience, purpose, and intended effect.</p> <p>Optional extension: Use an additional class period to invite Sarah Shourd or another journalist/playwright to speak with your class through the Pulitzer Center's free virtual journalist visit program. The</p>

journalist/playwright can walk students through the process of turning research and reporting into a play. They can also share why they believe drama is a powerful form for telling underreported stories, and discuss the ethical considerations of telling stories about marginalized communities.

Lesson Materials

- [Script organizer \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Script organizer \[.docx\]](#)

Day 3

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Analyze fiction and nonfiction using literary criticism. → Understand the planning process for creating a drama (script or performance) that presents an underreported story.
Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today's lesson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → SHOT: Caught a Soul, a 30-minute play by Gloria J. Browne-Marshall recorded via Zoom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Content notes: <i>SHOT</i> tells a story of anti-Black police violence/the murder of a Black teenager by a white police officer. The play also contains explicit language. Teachers should watch the recording and judge its appropriateness for their students before sharing it with students and/or selecting excerpts for them to view. → Optional extension: Virtual visit with journalist and playwright Sarah Shourd, provided through the Pulitzer Center's free virtual journalist visit program
Lesson Activities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students watch an excerpt from the play Shot: Caught a Soul (minute 02:49-18:35) by journalist and playwright Gloria Browne-Marshall. While they watch, students should identify plotline and literary elements such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Exposition → Characters → Conflict → Rising action → Climax → Falling action → Resolution → Denouement 2. Students identify the big global issues at work in <i>SHOT</i>, and then analyze how the playwright developed plotlines that narrowed the scope of that global issue, and discuss whether/why their work is successful through class discussion. This analysis will better prepare students to write their own dramatic script. 3. Students will work on page 4 of their script organizer, outlining their story plot using the Freytag model and on page 5, listing characters and team members. <p>Optional extension: Use an additional class period to invite Gloria Browne-Marshall or another journalist/playwright to speak with your class through the Pulitzer Center's free virtual journalist visit program. The journalist/playwright can walk students through the process of turning research and reporting into a play. They can also share why they believe drama is a powerful form for telling underreported stories, and discuss the ethical considerations of telling stories about marginalized communities.</p>

Lesson Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Script organizer [.pdf]→ Script organizer [.docx]

Day 4

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
Students will be able to associate literary criticism with non-linguistic features such as theatrical elements and mise-en-scene in visual arts and/or graphic novels.
Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today's lesson
→ Flying Kites by the 2018-2019 Stanford Graphic Novel Project (see full list of contributors at the link)
Lesson Activities
<p>1. Remind students that their dramatic scripts should imagine and plan for a visual world beyond the text. Ask students to list visual elements of a theatrical production. (I.e. props, costumes, makeup, blocking/stage directions, lighting,...) Ask students how each of these elements contributes to storytelling and communicating a message that connects with audiences.</p> <p>2. Introduce <i>Flying Kites</i> to students. This graphic novel was created collaboratively by members of the 2018-2019 Stanford Graphic Novel Project. Note for students that Sarah Shourd was one member of the cohort, and that this graphic novel shares some similarities and is based on some of the same research that underlies the play <i>The BOX</i>, explored in lesson two.</p> <p>3. Students read <i>Flying Kites</i> part 1, pages 1-22. While they read, students should answer these guiding questions independently or in small groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Who is the speaker? → What is the situation? → How might the speaker's race, religious beliefs, or political beliefs affect the situation? → Is the point of view from a marginalized perspective or from a dominant perspective? Explain. → What does this work add to our understanding of human experience in the time and place in which it is set, including the ways individual identity shapes and is shaped by cultural institutions? → How might this work be received differently by different audiences? <p>4. Students work on page 6 of their script organizers, planning for elements such as costumes, props, venues, lighting, music, etc.</p> <p>Homework: Students return to www.pulitzercenter.org/stories and identify one or more news stories on the issue they have chosen to focus on in their dramatic scripts. They should bring these stories / links with them to the next class.</p>
Lesson Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Script organizer [.pdf] → Script organizer [.docx]

Day 5

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
Students will be able to... <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Understand how to create dialogues in drama by embedding interview and nonfiction research→ Utilize drama to reach the target audience in the community through dramatization and film
Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today's lesson
→ Flying Kites by the 2018-2019 Stanford Graphic Novel Project (see full list of contributors at the link)
Lesson Activities
<p>1. Students return to the story they selected from the Pulitzer Center website for homework. In their small groups, students should review the stories and pull quotes and keywords from the stories into a single document. (At least some of these quotes should come from interviews with people directly affected by the issue.) In this way, teams will form a bank of material they can draw on to inspire and inform their scripts and dialogue.</p> <p>2. Students work on pages 7+, writing the dialogue and stage directions for their dramas.</p> <p>Homework: Students will have to share the document and work on the script outside of class. They will get ongoing feedback from teachers. Alternatively, teachers may devote additional class periods to the collaborative writing and feedback process.</p>
Lesson Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Script organizer [.pdf]→ Script organizer [.docx]

Day 6

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
Students will be able to present a dramatic script that represents an understanding of an underreported story in their community and globally.
Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today's lesson
→ Students' own dramatic scripts
Lesson Activities
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. In their small groups, students return to page 1 of their script organizers and interpret their completed dramatic script draft through the lens of the literary theory of their choice.2. Students take turns reading/watching one another's dramas and giving feedback that celebrates and critiques their work.3. Students annotate copies of their own scripts to self-assess what they have created.