

Creative Writing: Drama in Fiction Lesson Plan

(Taught in one to two classes)

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Art Form: Creative Writing
Grade Level(s): 8th to 12th

Class Objective: Students will demonstrate understanding of drama in fiction

Level One

Students' experience begins with **perception** of a problem.

Discussion Points:

- Why are some stories riveting while others boring?
- What is drama?
- As writers, how can we use heightened drama to make our stories more interesting?

Level Two

Students respond to the problem with their own feelings forming a mental **conception**.

Topic: **Drama=Desire + Danger.**

Discussion Points:

- What is DESIRE?
- What does your character want?
- Is that what they *really* want?
- Can you think of examples of people who say they want one thing but really want another?
- Can you imagine a character who *thinks* they want one thing but *really* they wants something else?
- Can you imagine a character who *doesn't know* that they really want something else?
- What happens when something stands in the way of someone getting what they want?
- What is *tension*?
- What causes *tension* in fiction?

Level Three

Using the elements of art form, students give form to conception through **expression**.

Writing Assignment:

- Make a List of concrete, precise, but ordinary things your character WANTS: a glass of water, a new jacket, a burrito, or their best friend to call them back.
- For each item on your list, try to imagine that this simple WANT is a *symbol* or *symbolic* for a deeper DESIRE. Perhaps the character who wants the glass of water is really *thirsting* for *relief* from a boring day at work. Perhaps the character who wants a new jacket *desires* security; the person who wants a burrito isn't hungry, but their life feels empty and they *desire* to have it feel full.
- Now write an imaginary *scene*, *rendering your character in action* to get what they want.
- Now put someone or something or someone IN THE WAY of getting both what they want.
- Now have their deeper desire *revealed* to the reader by their not getting the thing they think they want.
- DO NOT STATE DIRECTLY WHAT YOUR CHARACTER'S DEEPER DESIRE.

Level Four

Through **reflection**, students use language to analyze the critical thinking they have engaged in. Students make judgments and consider the reasons behind their actions.

First Round Discussion Points:

- Read your stories aloud. After each reader, talk about in what moments contained the most tension?
- Why?
- What moments contained the least tension?
- Why?

Second Round Discussion Points:

- Fiction is different from what happens in “real life” because it relies on *tension*. Often there's plenty of DRAMA in real life, it doesn't *rely* on it.
- Sometimes we “lie” to “tell the truth” and in the literary arts, that's a good thing (even though in life it might get us in trouble).
- Precise, Concrete Details *render* a character on the page in a way that might be more compelling for the reader than the writer telling us who they are. For

example, what would you learn about a character if you emptied their purse/backpack?

- Engaging all five of your readers' senses has the power to pull your reader into the fictional world and deepen the effectiveness of your storytelling.
- When it comes to "character" the more dynamic, the better. Can you render an enemy's humanity? Can you show your hero's flaws?
- Place/Setting can play an important and dynamic role in showing the world and revealing conflict in your characters. Setting can be internal and external. Sometimes it's best to place your characters in places where they're off-balance.
- Change is a necessary component to creative writing...turning points, climaxes, and catharsis...things happen in our work so our characters will never be exactly the same again... Change can be small and profound or it can be big and dramatic. It can be external (a move to a different country) or internal (one thinking oneself ugly then seeing oneself as beautiful).

Level Five

The outcome of instruction is *re-vision* of the original problem and the development skills for reentering artistic inquiry.

- After hearing your peers' feedback, can you go back in and add one paragraph *deepening* a scene where your peers thought there was *tension*?
- Can you *edit* out or eliminate one paragraph where there was little to no tension? Or can you infuse it with tension?
- Can you use previous weeks' craft tools to deepen your *characterization*? (Adding an awareness of your character's surroundings or *setting*, an awareness of your character's senses, etc.)
- How might their surroundings and what they smell, hear, taste, etc. **ADD** to the tension of the scene?
- Does your character *change* or have the possibility of changing as a result of the tension they're experiencing?