



Educational Outreach: *A Man's A Man*

Post-Reading Activities: Formal elements of Staging in *A Man's a Man*

Objectives

- Understanding formal production elements of the staging and their purpose.

Guiding Questions

- How do elements of the staging (costuming, acting style, set) affect the way a play communicates a message to its audience?

Materials

"theatrical production." *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.* Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2012. Web. 12 Apr. 2012.
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/590310/theatrical-production>>.

Reading

This part of the lesson may be completed individually, in small groups, or prior to class meeting. Ask learners to read through the *Encyclopædia Britannica* entry on theatrical production noted above. Provide them with copies of **Worksheet 1A**, on which they will complete a visual organizer laying out important information in relation to the following key terms:

- realism
- types of performance
- aims and functions of theatrical production
- dramatic and non-dramatic theater
- space and time
- performer
- play
- theatrical production

Alternatively, this reading activity may be completed by learners with the help of library references. They should be encouraged to look for definitions of the terms in theater textbooks and handbooks, as well as in general encyclopedias.

Potential references include:

- Banham, Martin. *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995.
- Kennedy, Dennis. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003.

Chambers, Colin. *The Continuum Companion to Twentieth Century Theatre*.
London: Continuum, 2002.

Discussion

The discussion component uses a think-pair-share structure. Learners should each be provided with a copy of **Worksheet 1B**, a list of discussion questions. Give them time to think individually and jot down notes in response to the discussion questions. Once they have had this time, they should then compare and communicate their ideas to a partner or a small group. Finally, each set of partners or each small group will share their responses to the questions with the group as a whole.

Encourage learners to use key terms from the visual organizers and to refer to concrete details of the staging of *A Man's A Man* in answering the discussion questions. Taking notes on one question on the board with input from the entire group is a warm-up option for providing students with an example of linking staging to the key terms.

Discussion Questions

Performers:

- What was the relationship between the performers and the audience in *A Man's A Man*?
- How realistically were the characters portrayed? To what extent were they believable as individuals?

Space and time:

- How was the border between the stage and the audience marked?
- How was the setting indicated for the audience? How was the setting conveyed in dialogue? In staging?
- How was passage of time indicated in the play?
- What was the time relationship between the scenes?

Performance:

- How did costuming and the actor's physical affect contribute to the portrayal of the characters?
- How did use of the stage space contribute to the portrayal of the characters?
- What non-dramatic elements such as spectacle played a role in *A Man's a Man*?

Making connections to larger significance:

- Based on the play's production characteristics, what can we say about its purpose or its intended message and significance?

Activity

- 1) In a small group, learners must create a poster for staging a new version of a well-known fairytale, following the steps outlined on **Worksheet 1C**. It may be helpful to assign all of the groups the same fairy tale, so that they will understand how different styles of production can make a familiar story new and different. They will be expected to choose a style of staging, as well as an effect the style might achieve.
 - Their responses on **Worksheet 1C** should include ideas for handling the following aspects of staging the story:
 - relationship between play/performers and audience
 - costuming and acting style
 - space and time
 - stage setting
 - Encourage learners to consider:
 - who your audience will be and how to address them
 - what story elements might be entertaining, spectacular, most absurd or difficult to put on the stage – how will your production handle them?
- 2) Learners will present their poster and proposed production orally to their classmates, who will play the role of a theater's board. Everyone will make notes on the presentations and vote for the production they would like to have at their theater.
- 3) To wrap up, ask learners to share how they cast their votes. What impact did they see each production having on its audience?

Fairy Tales

Three Little Pigs
 Goldilocks
 Rapunzel
 Cinderella
 Little Red Riding Hood
 The Emperor's New Clothes
 etc.

Purposes

Educational
 Entertainment
 Religious
 Political
 etc.

Further Suggestion

As a group, the learners might prepare a script and organize their own short production of the winning production scheme.

Worksheet 1A: Visual Organizer

Key terms	Notes
theatrical production	
performer	
types of performance	
realism	
dramatic theater	
non-dramatic theater	
space and time	
purposes of theatrical performance	
play	

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Worksheet 1B: Discussion Questions

Performers:

1. What was the relationship between the performers and the audience in *A Man's A Man*?
2. How realistically were the characters portrayed? To what extent were they believable as individuals?

Space and time:

1. How was the border between the stage and the audience marked?
2. How was the setting indicated for the audience? How was the setting conveyed in dialogue? In staging?
3. How was passage of time indicated in the play?
4. What was the time relationship between the scenes?

Performance:

1. How did costuming and the actor's physical affect contribute to the portrayal of the characters?
2. How did use of the stage space contribute to the portrayal of the characters?
3. What non-dramatic elements such as spectacle played a role in *A Man's a Man*?

Making connections:

1. Based on the play's production characteristics, what can we say about its purpose or its intended message and significance?

Worksheet 1C: Poster Activity

Your poster should answer the following questions about your production, making reference to the key terms from the reading and discussion:

Performers:

- 1) Who will the performers be (amateurs, trained actors, all men, all children, etc.)?
- 2) Will the performers interact with the audience? If so, how?

Performance:

- 1) What style of acting will be used?
- 2) What should the actors' costuming and physical affect be like?
- 3) What kind of "special events" are there in the play? What are the high points? How will they be staged?

Space and time:

- 1) Will there be a marked border between the audience and the performers?
- 2) How will the setting be indicated?
- 3) What will the set look like and how will the characters interact with it?
- 4) What will the lighting be like?
- 5) How will the passage of time be marked?
- 6) Will the setting be realistic or minimalistic? If realistic, will it refer to a particular time or place?

Script:

- 1) Will your production alter the positions or the points-of-view of any of the characters?
- 2) Will you remove or emphasize any parts of the story? If so, how?

In your oral presentation, you will need to show how your choices create a new framework for understanding the play. What do your costumes, staging, and directorial decisions do for the play's message? Jot notes about this below.