Drama and Role-Play

This packet includes…	Steps for teaching students to identify the key elements of a WANY script and to create their own dramas.
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Also…	See the scripts written by Don's students.

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We Are New York Student Script Writing Project
for Adult/Family Literacy

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Don Perry, Hunter College SPELL Program, Spring 2010

The following outline is a roadmap for using the WANY episode "No Smoking" as a template for teaching students how to write an original 'episode' based on issues of concern in their own lives. The students in my class in the SPELL program at Hunter College wrote scripts called "Saturday English," in which they told how and why they sought out ESL classes at Hunter College's Saturday Family Literacy SPELL program.

To prepare students to create their own scripts, I found it helpful to teach them to identify the underlying structure or building blocks that bring each WANY episode to life – *and* – how to use dialogue between characters as the means of telling a story. The steps here will help your students learn these things. If you have any questions about the project, please feel free to email me at: **ryanperry@earthlink.net**.

Phase I. Watch "No Smoking" with your students, and teach students to identify the elements of a WANY script.

   a. Use pre- and post-viewing techniques and activities according to your preferences and instructional objectives. (Initial pre- and post-viewing activities are not included here so that teachers can use the best ways to approach and scaffold the work on this project according to your students' levels and needs.)

   b. Provide students with a script of the episode (available on the WANY website: **www.nyc.gov/LearnEnglish**). Have students reenact scenes in class (and use the script to teach other skills as per your objectives).

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The steps that follow are intended to help students developed the critical thinking skills they will need to identify the essential elements of a WANY script.

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   c. Work with students to give a name or title to each of the eight scenes in the episode. For example: Scene 1 – The Coach of Brighton Beach; Scene 2 – The Doctor's Office, etc.

   d. Work with students to write several sentences about what happens in each of these scenes. This exercise sets up the work that students will do when completing the "No Smoking Storytelling Worksheet 1" (pages 4-6) which asks them to identify specific elements that comprise the building blocks of each scene. For example: Scene 1 has five storytelling elements, one of which is: "Tells us where the story takes place and in what season."

   e. "No Smoking Storytelling Worksheet 1" lists the structural elements that make up episode. In a way, this worksheet shows students a 'recipe' for how the episode was

written. If the students can understand the recipe, then they can follow it to write something original of their own. On the worksheet, the students select from the list the elements in each scene.

f. Once students understand the ideas presented in the "No Smoking Storytelling Worksheet 1," have them work on "No Smoking Storytelling Worksheet2." This exercise asks them to find the exact lines from the script that exemplify each storytelling element described in the first worksheet. Here, the purpose is to show the students how the writers must use dialogue between characters to 'tell' the story.

Phase II. Students work in groups to write their own episode. (My students wrote scripts called "Saturday English.")

a. Explain to the students that they are going to build scripts based on their personal experience. I chose the idea of writing about how they got involved in the Saturday English classes because I wanted them use language to talk about something they already knew and that is important to them. Since this was the first time they were writing scripts, I chose not to have them work on a project that they would have needed to research.

b. **Create groups** of students who will write together. Then work as a whole class to outline the storytelling elements for the 1st scene of the students' episodes. For example: Who is the story about? Where do these people live and/ or work? What is the problem or conflict that sets the main character(s) on a journey?

This is a lot to establish through dialogue in one scene. I found it helpful to have students try to work this out on their own – and then IF some groups were struggling, I would ask stronger students to do improvisations of what they had worked on so far to show the others an example of what we were aiming for. (In hindsight, I would use improvisation with all groups – and I would do it before each new phase of writing.)

c. **Writing phases:** At first students write together as a fluency exercise – just to help them get their ideas together and put them down on the page. These can be shared aloud with the whole class before the end of each session. I had students make a copy for each member of their group – and also one for me. I took these drafts and put them exactly as the students wrote them in a document that I then brought to the next session for students to edit. (If students have access to computers, then they can type up their drafts.) Caveat: the editing process is not to be underestimated – it's slow going at times but obviously essential…as an accuracy exercise and as part of completing the project.

d. **Developing their stories:** Once students have set the stage in their first scenes – they have to follow the journey of the main characters and satisfy a reasonable number of other storytelling elements that give an arc to their episodes.

In my class, I found it helpful to ask the students questions about their stories. These I would pose at the end of the type-written versions I would create from what they wrote in their groups in class. These questions were intended to guide the further development of scenes that would round out their projects. Each group received tailor-made questions that were specific to how their episode was shaping up.

Here are some examples of questions or issues that students need to address in the course of telling the entire story in their episodes:

1. Who are the characters?
2. Where do they live or work – and how do they know each other?
3. What is the problem that the main character(s) need(s) to solve?
4. Where can people find information that may help in this process?
5. Who helps provide this info – or helps guide the main character to it?
6. How does the main character experience this journey?
7. Do any roadblocks get in the way? People or events, for example.
8. Who supports the main character in any way that helps her or him to solve the dilemma established at the beginning of the story?
9. What are the results? How does the main character feel?
10. How is the main character's life changed by this journey?
11. More / Better ideas of your own!

e. Keep the students writing and editing until they've reached a satisfactory goal. (This, of course, will depend on the time available.) Then have students rehearse and perform their episodes for each other – and other classes too if that can be arranged.

f. I chose to create a book of all the students' episodes. Each one was entitled "Saturday English" with a colon and then the names of the main character or characters, e.g., "Saturday English: Alma and Ana." I also included pictures of each of my two classes at the front of the book – and then a picture of each group appeared before the text of their episode. It is my feeling that a memorable experience helps students retain what they learn in class – and to have a souvenir of that experience becomes something they can also reference, review, and look to with pride and a sense of accomplishment.

Final thoughts: I would be pleased to know that what I have done with my students might be a small inspiration for others for use in their classrooms using WANY. I would also love to hear about anyone's experience trying some of these ideas – or to receive comments about ways to improve how it unfolds.

"No Smoking" Storytelling Worksheet 1

Directions: Look at the list of story elements below. (They are *not* listed in order of their appearance in the story.) Each scene has one or more of these elements. Read the scenes in the script and identify which elements each scene contains. Write the elements that are part of each scene in the space provided on the next page.

STORY ELEMENTS

- The turning point – the main character is pushed to take action.

- The main character does NOT have to face his problem alone.

- The main character seeks help from an expert.

- Some rewards of making a change are revealed.

- The main character faces temptation.

- Tells us where the story takes place – and in what season.

- The main character is advised about possible courses of action to take.

- The main character faces some people who AREN'T supportive.

- Sets up anything specific and unique about the story.

- An important reason WHY the main character needs to make a change is revealed.

- Celebration is the reward for hard work and determination.

- Tells us what obstacle or conflict the main character faces.

- It is up to the main character to take action in order to change his life.

- Sets the main character on a journey to solve her/his problem.

- Introduces us to the characters and provides background information about them that is relevant to the story.

Scene 1 – Boardwalk with coach: (5 elements)

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Scene 2 – Doctor's office: (3 elements)

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Scene 3 – Sasha & Rishi: (1 element)

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Scene 4 – Smokers on the boardwalk: (2 elements)

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Scene 5 – Rishi's family photo: (1 element)

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Scene 6 – Sasha's dream: (1 element)

_____

Scene 7 -- Better Kisses: (1 element)

_____

Scene 8 – No Smoking medal: (1 element)

_____

Name: _____

"No Smoking" Storytelling Worksheet 2

Directions: Find examples from the "No Smoking" script that reflect the storytelling elements mentioned below.

Scene 1 – Boardwalk with coach (5 elements)

• Tells us where the story takes place – and in what season.

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• Introduces us to the characters and provides background information about them that is relevant to the story.

_____

_____

• Sets up anything specific and unique about the story.

_____

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• Tells us what obstacle or conflict the main character faces.

_____

_____

• Sets the main character on a journey to solve his problem.

_____

_____

Scene 2 – Doctor's office (3 elements)

• The main character seeks help from an expert.

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• The main character is advised about possible courses of action to take.

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• It is up to the main character to take action in order to change his life.

_____

_____

Scene 3 – Sasha and Rishi (1 element)

• The main character does NOT have to face his problem alone.

_____

_____

Scene 4 – Smokers on the boardwalk (2 elements)

• The main character faces some people who *aren't* supportive.

_____

_____

• The main character faces temptation.

_____

Scene 5 – Rishi's family photo (1 element)

• An important reason WHY the main character needs to make a change is revealed.

_____

_____

Scene 6 – Sasha's dream   (1 element)

• The turning point – the main character is pushed to take action.

_____

_____

Scene 7 -- Better kisses   (1 element)

• Some rewards of making a change are revealed.

_____

_____

Scene 8 – No smoking medal (1 element)

• Celebration is the reward for hard work and determination.

_____

_____

HOMEWORK: Define each word using a dictionary. Then write an original sentence using the word.

1. perfect: _____

_____

2. tradition: _____

_____

3. serious: _____

_____

4. imagination: _____

_____

5. stranger: _____

_____

6. whole: _____

_____

7. perfume: _____

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