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A RESPONSE-CENTERED METHODOLOGY  
FOR THE TEACHING OF DRAMATIC LITERATURE  
IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

by

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B.S. in Ed., Kent State University, 1968

Presented in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
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Drama

A Response-Centered Methodology for the Teaching  
of Dramatic Literature in the Secondary School (78 pp.)

Director: Alan Cook



This thesis explores the theories and practical application of a response-centered curriculum. The purpose is to offer possibilities for the implementation of such a curriculum in an elective, year-long dramatic literature course in grades ten through twelve. The thesis is divided into two parts; the first discusses the theories on which response-centered methodology is based. Special consideration is given to discussing the teacher's role, because his function in the classroom, although non-traditional, is critical to the survival of this type of curriculum. The topic of evaluation is explored in depth for the same reasons. Chapter VII of the thesis focuses on specific activities to be used in the response-centered classroom, and Part II applies these activities to the detailed study of Moliere's The Imaginary Invalid. Fourteen other plays included in the curriculum are discussed briefly, pointing out elements that lend themselves specifically to response-centered activities.

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**PART I**

**A RESPONSE-CENTERED CURRICULUM:  
THEORY**



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Dramatic literature, if it is to be an effectual and inspiring part of the secondary school English curriculum, demands a unique and vibrant presentation. Many contemporary educators speak of teaching methodology designed to focus on the student, in hopes of drawing out his responses to literary works. By discovering, expressing and exploring his responses and the responses of others, the student becomes actively involved and immersed in the literary work and is then able to enjoy a full, more personal response to it.

Part I of this thesis discusses the current student and response-centered philosophies and rationale for their use in the high school. The role of the teacher and specific evaluation procedures are also explored. The study of dramatic literature is emphasized, because this literature experience has been neglected in the past or combined with the study of novels, short stories and poetry. Interpretation of dramatic literature demands intense personal involvement. In a short story or novel, all necessary details are explained for the reader, but in dramatic literature the reader must use his own interpretative skills to determine characterizations. For this reason, this type of literature deserves special attention, and even more than the other forms, lends itself to a response-centered teaching approach. Creative dramatics is emphasized as a means of

drawing out student response because, while the subject itself is frequently written of, it is rarely espoused as a teaching method to be used in conjunction with literature study. Creative dramatics and dramatic literature, in the framework of a response-centered curriculum, can be drawn together successfully in the high school.

Part II of the thesis outlines a year-long curriculum to be used in grades ten through twelve, in an elective dramatic literature course. Fifteen plays, representative of various dramatic genres and periods are offered for study, using a response-centered approach. A feasible process for Moliere's The Imaginary Invalid is discussed in detail, with specific and optional activities listed.

As introduction, specific vocabulary and concepts need definition. What is a response-centered curriculum? It is a method of teaching that revolves around student response, or reaction, to a work of literature. Using student response as a starting point, teachers encourage students to explore both their own and others' feelings, toward better understanding of themselves and the world around them. Students are then encouraged to return to the text, in search of even fuller responses. Alan Purves, Professor of English Education and Director of the Curriculum Laboratory at the University of Illinois, coined the phrase "response-centered curriculum" in his How Porcupines Make Love. He says, "A response-centered curriculum is . . . doing things and looking at yourself while and after you have done them . . ." <sup>1</sup> Since the curriculum is concerned with what happens

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<sup>1</sup> Alan C. Purves, ed., How Porcupines Make Love: Notes on a Response-Centered Curriculum (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1972), p. 32.

when student meets subject, it is focused neither wholly on the student nor the literary work. Both are equally important and necessary to the curriculum. James Moffett, known for his methodology and curriculum development in language arts programs, espouses much use of "drama . . . what is happening" in the teaching of literature. A response-centered curriculum stresses the use of dramatic activities in eliciting students' creative responses. "Response," in this thesis, refers to what Louise Rosenblatt, literary critic and scholar in the field of English education, calls " . . . not a passive process of absorption but a form of intense personal activity."<sup>2</sup> This level of response from students ensures a commitment to studying a dramatic work. And this commitment, this full response, is the key to successful learning experiences.

"Drama" is distinguished from "theatre" in this thesis. "Theatre" refers to a presentation by a group of actors in front of an audience. While "theatre" is an end product, "drama" is a process--a tool used informally in the classroom to encourage students to explore their responses and feelings. Gabriel Barnfield, founder of the Children's Theatre Workshop in York, England, speaks of "Free drama . . . a form of personal expression . . . toward the development of personality . . . alive, intensely genuine, incapable of exact repetition . . . toward articulate expression."<sup>3</sup> This is the type of experience--genuine, spontaneous, committed--that "drama" in the response-centered classroom elicits.

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<sup>2</sup>Louise M. Rosenblatt, Literature as Exploration (New York: Noble & Noble, Inc., 1976), p. v.

<sup>3</sup>Gabriel Barnfield, Creative Drama in Schools (London: MacMillan & Co., 1968), pp. 5-6.

If "drama" is a general process, what exactly is "creative dramatics"? The term is usually used in connection with the primary grades. In the Educational Theatre Journal, Ann Viola, lecturer in creative dramatics at the University of Kansas City, states, "Children, with the guidance of an imaginative teacher . . . create and perform scenes with improvised dialogue and action. Personal development of players is the goal, rather than the satisfaction of an audience."<sup>4</sup> Geraldine Siks and Hazel Dunnington, authorities in the field of children's theatre, divide creative dramatics into four areas of activity:

1. Dramatic play: the interpretation of musical moods; characterizations suggested by rhythms; original pantomimes; charades, improvised parts from literature or social studies.
2. Story dramatization: the creating of an improvised play based upon a story (original or from literature or other sources).
3. Creative plays, developed to the point where they approach formal plays.<sup>5</sup>
4. Formal plays.

Many of these creative dramatic activities are used by secondary school students in their study of dramatic literature. The term "creative dramatics" refers to the use of dramatic play--the most informal level of creative dramatic activities--to draw out student response.

"Creativity" is another term needing definition. Charles Duke, of Plymouth State College in New Hampshire, explains the phenomenon as " . . . the idiosyncratic perception of new intellectual re-

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<sup>4</sup>Ann Viola, "Dramatics with and for Children: An Interpretation of Terms," Educational Theatre Journal VIII (May 1956): 139-42.

<sup>5</sup>Geraldine Brain Siks and Hazel Brain Dunnington, Children's Theatre and Creative Dramatics (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), p. 9.

relationships never before experienced by the individual . . . "6 Rita Criste, Director of the Children's Theatre in Evanston, Illinois, says, "Creativity . . . encompasses such processes as absorption in an idea, an encounter with the world, a rearrangement of ideas already known, the formulations of questions about the unknown and new points of reference."7 In The Creative Process, Brewster Ghiselin talks about " . . . that vague presentiment of some novel development felt to be specific but as yet undefined . . . "8 In another chapter he speaks of " . . . an imaginative surrender to every novelty that has even the most tenuous credentials."9 All these definitions stress the common element of novelty. Creativity, then, as far as this thesis is concerned, refers to students using their imagination in novel ways to explore previously unexplored ideas and behaviors--leading to deeper understanding of existing situations in life or literature.

The phrase "values clarification" appears frequently throughout the research. It refers to the process by which students arrive at their values--the concept of determining "good" and "bad." As advocated in Personalizing Education, "Values clarification is not an attempt to teach students "right" and "wrong" values. Rather, it is an approach

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<sup>6</sup>Charles R. Duke, Creative Dramatics and English Teaching (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1974), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup>Rita Criste, All That I Am: Midwest Program on Airborne Television Instruction, Resource guide no. 25, 1964-65.

<sup>8</sup>Brewster Ghiselin, ed., The Creative Process: A Symposium (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952), p. 15.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

designed to help students prize and act upon their own freely chosen values."<sup>10</sup> The response-centered curriculum offers personal values clarification as one of its primary behavioral objectives.

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<sup>10</sup>Leland W. Howe and Mary Martha Howe, Personalizing Education: Values Clarification and Beyond (New York: Hart Publishing Co. Inc., 1975), p. 19.

## CHAPTER II

### RATIONALE FOR A RESPONSE-CENTERED CURRICULUM:

#### VALUES AND OBJECTIVES

The values to be gained from a response-centered curriculum are many, and therefore the rationale for such a curriculum demands careful consideration.

The schools have certain responsibilities and functions to meet. Charles Duke sees the school as " . . . the most effective agent we have for meeting the creative needs of a large population. The schools come into contact with more people at their most impressionable stages of development than any other agency."<sup>1</sup> The school is established, then, as an essential meeting place, where students have the opportunity to communicate with each other under the guidance of educators. What the teachers must provide is the atmosphere in which students can freely communicate, demonstrating their uniqueness as individuals, confirming their own identities, and determining meaningful relationships with the world. Schools must provide the conditions which promote personal and social growth. James Moffet feels that many schools do not do this today. "Schools tend toward standardization, isolation, and compartmentalization . . . they need to tend toward individualization, inter-

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<sup>1</sup>Duke, Creative Dramatics and English Teaching, p. 16.

action, and integration."<sup>2</sup> A response-centered curriculum encompasses the ideals Moffett talks about and furnishes the conditions necessary for students' personal and social development.

A primary objective, then, of a response-centered curriculum focuses on self: insights that will lead the student toward self-actualization. Abraham Maslow, the psychologist who coined the term "self-actualization" states that it is last in the hierarchy of human needs, coming after food, warmth, shelter, safety, belongingness, love, respect, and self-esteem. According to Maslow, a person must fulfill these needs in order, and as the latter ones are sought after, the preceding ones are taken for granted. What is this last need exactly--what is self-actualization? A self-actualizing person is " . . . energetic, creative, self-motivating, spontaneous, efficient and tolerant. He lives life fully, answering to his own inner nature and finding in that nature a call to play a useful part in society. He is acting on a foundation of human values."<sup>3</sup>

Jean Piaget, another psychologist concerned with the development of self as an educational objective, introduces the concept of egocentricity. "The primary dimension of growth seems to be a movement from the center of the self outward . . . the self enlarges, assimilating the world to itself and accommodating itself to the world."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>James Moffett and Betty Jane Wagner, Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading, K-13 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976), p. 42.

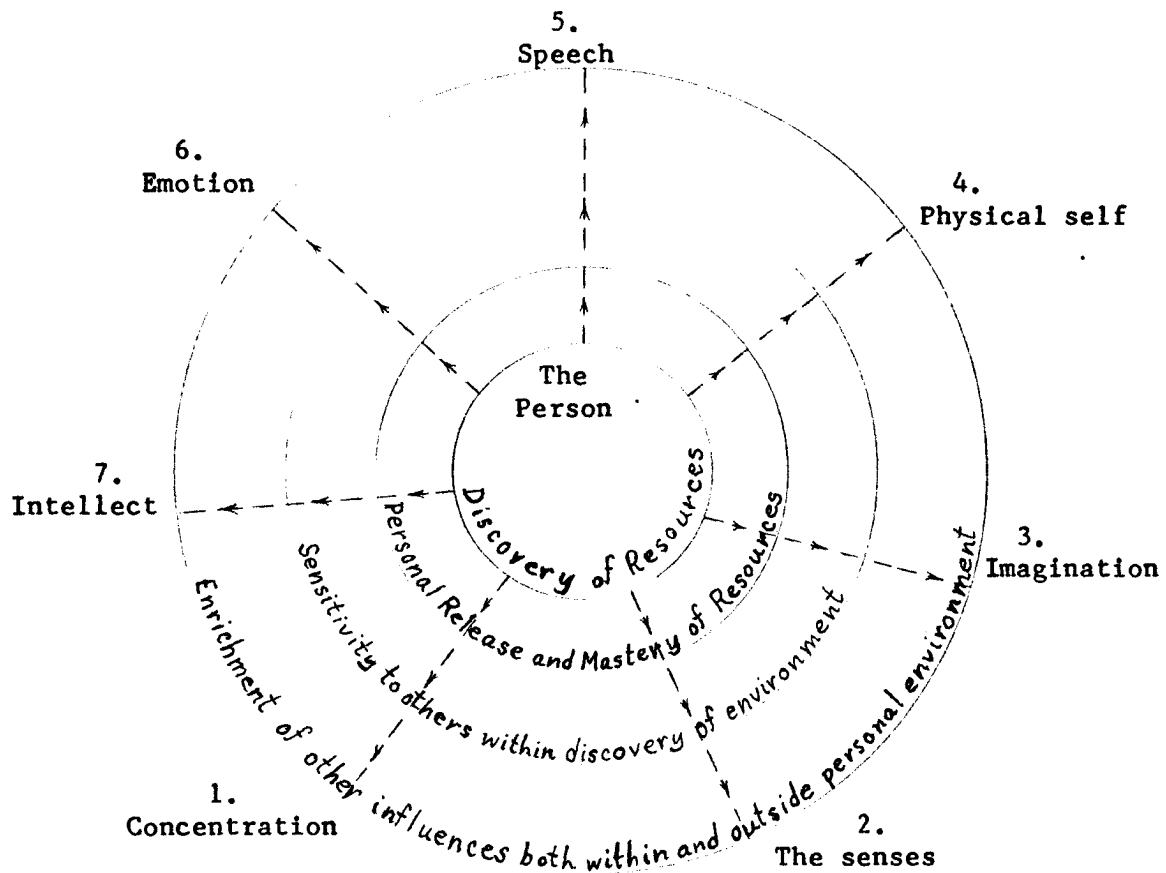
<sup>3</sup>Robert C. Hawley and Isabel L. Hawley, Human Values in the Classroom (New York: Hart Publishing Co., Inc., 1975), p. 15.

<sup>4</sup>James Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968), p. 59.



A child matures as he becomes less egocentric, less concerned with self. Piaget says that learning is a matter of "decentering," of breaking through egocentricity to new points of view. As the individual expands his awareness, he uses his senses, imagination, speech, emotion, and intellect to deal with his environment and other individuals.

Brian Way, Director of the experimental Theatre Centre in London and authority on English education, has graphically demonstrated Piaget's basic ideas on his growth chart:




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SOURCE: Brian Way, Development Through Drama (London: Longman Group, Ltd., 1967), p. 13.

Thus personal growth meshes with social growth, the other essential educational objective. After achieving a sense of his own identity, a student develops a social conscience, an awareness of the needs and problems of others in society. He discovers behaviors that are socially acceptable yet personally satisfying, and he learns skills that allow him to cope in social relationships. Moffett points out that psychic survival and fulfillment depend on what kind of relationship an individual works out with the social world. The main objectives schools need to deal with are the development of personal and social awarenesses, and this, of course, leads to students finding an expressive, significant relationship in society.

The study of dramatic literature lends itself well to the personal and social development of students, especially in a response-centered approach. And using creative dramatics is a natural way of expressing these kinds of responses. Moffett says:

While acknowledging that artificiality cannot be eliminated completely from the classroom situation, somehow we must create more realistic communication 'dramas' in which the student can practice being a first and second person with better motivation and in a way more resembling how he will have to read, write, speak and listen in the 'afterlife.'<sup>5</sup>

Creative dramatic activities based on dramatic literature put students into roles where they can freely experiment with different life styles and experiences. Individuals try on an attitude or model an emotion without paying the price of actuality. Role-playing and improvisation in creative dramatics are a vital tool in allowing students this

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<sup>5</sup>Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse, p. 12.

experimentation. Many texts of teaching and directing techniques stress the value of improvisational theatre, and these principles can also be applied to the response-centered English classroom. In Improvisation, Hodgson and Richards give the opinion, "It is sometimes possible to reach a greater degree of truth from acting out a situation . . . than is possible when called upon to explain it in detached conversation."<sup>6</sup> These exercises and activities used in the English classroom better prepare students for life's stage.

The broad goals, then, of a response-centered curriculum are personal and social development. What are some of the specific aspects of these goals? Creative dramatics in the response-centered curriculum improves students' language skills. In 1966 the participants in the Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English, held at Dartmouth College, offered these guidelines for the use of drama and oral communication in the classroom:

1. Drama and oral communication should become the centrality of pupils' exploring, extending, and shaping of experience in the classroom.
2. There is a definite urgency for developing classroom approaches stressing the vital, creative, dramatic involvement of young people's language experience.
3. The importance of directing more attention to speaking and listening for pupils at all levels, particularly in those experiences which involve vigorous interaction among children, should be apparent.
4. The wisdom of providing young people at all levels with significant opportunity for the creative use of language--creative dramatics, imaginative writing, improvisation, role-playing, and similar activities--has become increasingly evident.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>John Hodgson and Ernest Richard, Improvisation (London: Eyre Methuen, Ltd., 1974), p. 23.

<sup>7</sup>J.A. Christiansen, "School Drama," Media and Methods 8, (January 1972): 33.

Moffett also advocates the combining of drama and language learning. After all, drama is language. Moffett states, "I see drama as the matrix of all language activities, subsuming speech and engendering the varieties of writing and reading."<sup>8</sup> In experimenting through reading activities, students develop an awareness of and a feel for diverse language styles, and this leads to better understanding and fluency with their own. And after the dramatic activities are over, the language learning goes on, because, as Duke says, "Perhaps the greatest benefits derived from either drama or simulation result from what happens after the playing is over; the discussion of what actually happened, of how realistic it was, of what the strategies and problems were, will give the experience much of its meaning."<sup>9</sup> In other words, class evaluation of dramatic activities can further develop language skills.

Another secondary behavioral objective of a response-centered curriculum is the development of student imagination and creativity. In various creative dramatic and response-centered activities, students are asked to explore new points of view--those of others in the class, the teacher, and even, through role-playing, characters from the dramatic literature. Psychologist Carl Rogers has developed an understanding of the psychological conditions that foster creativity. The first is the student's openness to the experience. The answer lies

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<sup>8</sup>Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse, p. 60.

<sup>9</sup>Duke, Creative Dramatics and English Teaching, p. 51.

with the teacher; he creates an atmosphere conducive to student use of imagination, encouraging novelty, ambiguity, and absurdity. Secondly, the student has an internal sense of evaluation; he feels that his creative work is self-satisfying. The teacher helps the student become strong enough to rely on self-evaluation, possibly to the point of his refusing to evaluate the creative output of the student. Thirdly, the student gains the ability to play. He is able to live for the moment--the here and now--and develops the ability to play at life in new ways. The teacher is crucial in establishing this atmosphere of joy and playfulness, because, after all, response is a joyous expression.

The development of concentration is another behavioral objective. In creative dramatics, mime and movement exercises and improvisations help to achieve this objective. An important requirement for developing powers of concentration is the release of tension. In Improvisation, it is pointed out that when students are absorbed in an activity instead of in themselves and their feelings of self-consciousness and embarrassment, their tension is released, and a more effective improvisation is created. Because released tension naturally leads to a limbering of the body, physical development becomes yet another secondary aim.

In a response-centered curriculum, students learn the value of cooperation through interaction with their peers. Discussion and role-playing activities require compromise and flexibility if amenable solutions are to be worked out. Students, in respecting their own responses and those of others, learn to recognize their differences from and similarities with other people. They therefore retain their individuality yet experience a bond with peers and society in general.

Response-centered curricula encourage students' self-motivation and self-confidence. When teachers turn over more and more decision-making responsibilities to students, they are teaching them self-direction. Teachers should ask students to initiate, plan, execute, and self-evaluate their own learning projects.

Finally, a response-centered curriculum leads students to an appreciation of dramatic literature. Through exploration of and involvement in proven works, students discover good plays from bad; they recognize which elements are effective for them as individuals and which are not. In addition, because a response-centered approach requires returning to the text in search of fuller responses, students are challenged to establish the validity of their interpretations and judgements of the work. This search leads them to further exploration of literary techniques and forms, perhaps fostering an interest in other fields of research: history, biography, philosophy, or psychology. The process of clarification and amplification, leading to successive literary experiences, encourages the development of sound critical habits which, in turn, teaches appreciation of dramatic literature at a deeper level.

## CHAPTER III

### PRINCIPLES OF A RESPONSE-CENTERED CURRICULUM

There are several principles intrinsic to the response-centered curriculum, which distinguish this approach from more traditional, indirect approaches to the study of dramatic literature. An understanding of these elements is critical if it is to lead to an acceptance of the response-centered philosophy. These principles are explored in detail.

Of all principles to be considered in a response-centered curriculum, probably the most vital is the relationship among the reader, the text, and his response. The experience of the reader with the text demands central focus. Experience being a key concept, Viola Spolin, in Improvisation for the Theater, says, "Experiencing is penetration into the environment, total organic involvement with it. This means involvement on all levels: intellectual, physical, and intuitive. Of the three, intuitive, most vital to the learning situation, is neglected."<sup>1</sup> Spolin continues, ". . . when response takes place at this intuitive level, when a person functions beyond a constricted intellectual plane, he is truly open for learning."<sup>2</sup> A response-centered curriculum does not neglect the intuitive level of response, rather it

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<sup>1</sup>Viola Spolin, Improvisation for the Theater (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1963), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

fosters it; therefore, through these kinds of responses students relate to and gain from the dramatic literature experience. Teachers need to see that the pathway to these responses is kept open.

Student response occurs on four different levels: engagement/involvement, perception, interpretation, and evaluation. Engagement/involvement response occurs when the student is subjectively involved in the literature. He feels empathy or identification with the characters in the work. Perception takes place when the student objectively views the piece of literature. He is " . . . seeing the work as a product of human creation rather than as a natural phenomenon."<sup>3</sup> Interpretation involves either a subjective or an objective approach to the work. The student attempts to explain what the literature means; he aims for a translation of author intent. Evaluation, like interpretation, deals with either subjective or objective criteria. The student makes comparisons between the immediate work and others he has read, and he makes some statement about its importance, impact, and worth. Engagement/involvement responses are the least sophisticated of responses, but they form the foundation for students reaching into the more sophisticated areas of perception, interpretation, and evaluation. Response-centered curricula stress engagement/involvement activities because these activities foster the intuitive responses Spolin talks about. With these primary responses behind them, students are encouraged to become involved in the other areas of response, but if these fundamental activities are omitted, students lack the interest,

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<sup>3</sup>Purves, How Porcupines Make Love, pp. 87-88.



impetus, and dedication needed for further exploration of a work. For this reason, the response-centered curriculum emphasizes engagement/involvement activity and response; an exciting starting point is essential. James Moffett carries this one step further when he says;

The starting point, then, is 'drama': interaction between the communicants, who are equal and whose relation is reversible . . . One failure of English teaching has been to consider only messages, or consider them before or without placing them in the whole context of the communication frame wherein the student can see the operation of all relations.<sup>4</sup>

What are the elements of engagement/involvement responses?

What do teachers want to draw from their students, in encouraging them to identify and empathize with literary characters? Basically, personal reactions--numerous and varied. Students need to react to dramatic literature's content, form, and author. Having explored these responses thoroughly, they advance to interpretive, perceptive, and evaluative activities. In order to bring out these basic yet vital reactions/responses, teachers need to encourage students to personalize the text; they need to stress student feeling and intuition. Rather than asking "Is this a Shakespearian or a Petrarchian sonnet?" ask "Do you like the way this poem is written?" Rather than "What does the title mean?" ask "What do you think the title means?"<sup>5</sup> In the beginning, the student is of paramount importance. By focusing on himself in relation to the work, he becomes involved and interested. Eventually he is more easily persuaded back to the text to search for justification for his responses.

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<sup>4</sup>Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse, pp. 11-12.

<sup>5</sup>Purves, How Porcupines Make Love, p. 86.

The work becomes more and more important as the student develops more sophisticated ways of responding.

Another principle in the response-centered curriculum is the relationship of process to product. Since engagement/involvement activities are crucial to this type of curriculum, process is emphasized over product. Process activities help a child learn about himself and his environment. Richard Courtney, Senior Lecturer in Drama at Trent Park College in England, refers to dramatic play as an excellent specific "process" activity. He professes the same philosophy as Moffett: "It is the doing which is the important thing and not the final result."<sup>6</sup>

After it is realized that process reigns over product in the response-centered curriculum, an elaboration of "process" is necessary. According to Moffett, the logical progression of activities in this curriculum is soliloquy to dialogue to monologue. He handily translates this progression into three levels of coding: conceptualization, or experience into thought (non-verbal); verbalization, or thought into speech (verbal); and literacy, or speech into print (written).

Soliloquy, or conceptualization, begins the sequence. It is non-verbal and synonymous with thinking. A student does this before he can become part of a dialogue, and how he informs himself in soliloquy influences what he communicates in conversation. Thinking depends on an individual's experiences. The student formulates his feelings from his past experiences and present preoccupations. The unique backgrounds and perceptions of students bring a wide range of responses to the sur-

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Courtney, Teaching Drama (London: Cassell & Co., Ltd., 1965), p. 4.

face, and this is why the step from soliloquy to dialogue is so essential in a response-centered classroom.

Dialogue, or verbalization, is the second vital step in the response-centered sequence of events. Moffett says, "In the activity closest to reading and writing--speaking--we have the best evidence of all for the student-centered approach."<sup>7</sup> Dialogue is the major means of developing thought and language and demands cooperation among students. Through interaction, students learn to clarify and specify their own ideas and then relate and compare these to the ideas of others. Here is where the diverse backgrounds and experiences come forth; as students are exposed to the feelings and opinions of others, they learn to explore other motives for behavior. Hopefully they learn to consider these alternative thought and behavior patterns as alternatives for their own thoughts and behaviors and eventually progress toward evaluative responses, rationally.

Dialogue is discourse in its most physical and behavioral form, and the process of interaction and communication is a social behavior above all else. But Moffett warns, "If interlocuters do not really engage with each other, pick up cues, and respond directly, or if they merely listen out the other and wait for their turn to speak, nothing very educational will happen."<sup>8</sup> It is the teacher's responsibility to set out dialogue activities before his students that will develop and

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<sup>7</sup>Moffett and Wagner, Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading, K-13, p. 45.

<sup>8</sup>Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse, p. 82.

sharpen their communication skills: listening and expressing.

An important element of a response-centered approach to learning is use of the small group for dialogue or discussion purposes. Students are often divided into these groups and asked to explore specific aspects of a dramatic work. The most effective groups are usually comprised of three or four students, because abundant input is assured without creating individual pressure or without stifling contributors.

Dialogue is the necessary activity leading to the third step in the response-centered process, and that step is monologue, or literacy. Moffett says that from group work (dialogue) students learn the psychological independence needed for monologue. Monologue, like soliloquy, is another thinking activity. But at this point in the process, the students have interacted with each other and have explored additional viewpoints and experiences. Through this exploration they have gone through a more intense clarification process, and by considering the thoughts and behaviors of others, they have reached a point where they can clarify and fully expound their own ideas. Although the response-centered curriculum emphasizes the importance of dialogue activities, or process, it also professes the need for student monologue, or product. Monologue is a conclusion, an "alone" activity after a "together" one, and students need this chance to resolve their thinking into some finalized form. Moffett says, "When ongoing social behavior no longer structures the discourse, some internal behavior, some logic, takes over and determines the order and arrangement of utterances."<sup>9</sup> This logic, this

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

elaboration of ideas, is the student's resolution to a problem he has researched and explored.

Since monologue activities are individual rather than group efforts, assignments usually take the form of written composition. A verbal activity can be as effective a monologue as a written essay, and for the sake of variety, student verbal resolutions and conclusions should frequently be presented. Therefore, in Chapter VI, which discusses specific activities to be used in a response-centered classroom, discussion is devoted to what most teachers consider "speech" activities. These activities, in themselves products, are viable approaches to the conclusion of the response-centered process.

There are two other critically necessary principles to a response-centered curriculum, especially in that vital area of dialogue, and these are the elements of play and spontaneity. Nellie McCaslin, Director of Dramatic Arts at Mills College in New York City, says:

True play, though free, creates order--indeed is order. Whereas man may play alone, one of the basic characteristics of play is the teamwork involved; through play, the participants are drawn closely together . . . the impulse to play, if encouraged, can become a continuing way of learning, a medium of expression, and eventually, a creative art.<sup>10</sup>

This social, or behavioral importance of the use of dialogue groups to a response-centered curriculum has already been brought out in that the process of interaction and communication is a main goal of the system. McCaslin feels that play can become a creative art. Here again, drama is tied to English classroom activities, and principles of acting spill

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<sup>10</sup>Nellie McCaslin, Creative Dramatics in the Classroom (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1968), p. 2.

over into student dialogue groups. Courtney maintains that "Play energy is a constant aim of the drama teacher . . . improvised play is the basis of all drama teaching . . . [the student's] own imagination is expressed."<sup>11</sup> These are also the goals of the English teacher in the response-centered classroom.

Spontaneity is another factor to consider. When achieved, it leads students to fuller intuitive responses. In her teaching and directing handbook, Spolin strongly advocates spontaneity. She feels that students should explore new and untried experiences. In doing this they avoid unconscious repetition of old actions and dialogue and trite ideas. In group dialogue activities, English teachers should also encourage students to achieve spontaneity; exploring alternative behaviors through improvisation will lead students to develop wider choice of monologue material. But Spolin warns, "Pre-planning How makes process impossible . . . and no 'explosion' or spontaneity can take place, making any change or alterations in the student-actor impossible."<sup>12</sup> This warning, although directed to student-actors, should also be heeded by English teachers in their preparing and leading students through the dialogue process in a response-centered curriculum.

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<sup>11</sup>Courtney, Teaching Drama, pp. 1-3.

<sup>12</sup>Spolin, Improvisation for the Theater, p. 37.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

"The most important single factor in the use of drama as a genuine part of education is the teacher."<sup>1</sup> Brian Way's statement is true enough, but it has special connotations for the teacher involved in a response-centered curriculum. To many, the statement implies an all-powerful teacher--a leader who sits behind his desk, or stands behind his podium--lecturing, orating, and wildly gesticulating. If Way's statement implies this, it is misleading. While the teacher's role is imminently important in a response-centered curriculum, it is not overpowering physically. Why is the teacher's role so crucial? The educator's responsibility falls into six areas.

First of all, the teacher recognizes his responsibility to his students as well as to the literary work. Student response is the crucial center of this type of curriculum. Naturally, the teacher is excited about dramatic literature. He is dedicated to and absorbed in the formal, aesthetic elements of the discipline and is anxious to reveal these elements to his class. He can lecture for hours, listing facts about social, economic, and intellectual history of the age in which specific dramatic literature was written. More and more facts are always available to the students: facts about the author and his life, facts about literary traditions he inherited, facts on form, structure, and

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<sup>1</sup>Way, Development Through Drama, p. 8.

technique. Yet, as Rosenblatt says, "All these facts are expendable unless they demonstrably help to clarify or enrich individual experiences of specific novels, poems, and plays."<sup>2</sup> What Rosenblatt is professing is the importance of student involvement and commitment. The teacher recognizes student response in the study of dramatic literature. Formal elements of a work mean little until social, human elements are also considered. The teacher's responsibility is to bring the literary work and the student together, both as important entities; he leads the student to a personalization of the text.

Secondly, the teacher is the provider of materials in the classroom. Of obvious importance here is the text, or the dramatic literature to be studied. The choosing of specific texts is discussed later in this chapter. Along with the printed scripts, the teacher has an outlet for securing audio-visual materials such as films, slides, video-tapes, tape recordings, and records. Any means to furthering student excitement about a script--and audio-visual materials have a way of doing just this--should actively be sought after. Other materials the teacher provides depend on the activities he chooses to bring out his students' responses. Dramatic exploration in the classroom might involve the use of music, instruments, costumes, and specific objects. The teacher sees that his classroom is equipped with these necessities.

A third teacher responsibility is to provide a suitable classroom atmosphere for a response-centered approach to learning. Essential to this atmosphere is a general feeling of acceptance: students feel

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<sup>2</sup>Rosenblatt, Literature as Exploration, p. 27.



liked and valued by their teacher; they feel encouraged to respond freely to dramatic literature; they feel that their responses are valid and worthwhile. Students feel secure in their responses; if they experience this secure atmosphere they are not dependent on their peers' or teacher's responses. In other words, they learn to trust themselves. The teacher creates an atmosphere where responses are spontaneous, yet non-competitive. Brainstorming, to be discussed in detail later, is an activity that encourages output of numerous and unconventional ideas in a non-critical, non-evaluative atmosphere. Spolin's exercises in Improvisation for the Theater relate well to literature response exploration. She says, "Spontaneity is the moment of personal freedom when we are faced with a reality and see it, explore it, and act accordingly . . . it's a time of discovery, of experiencing, of creative expression."<sup>3</sup> Since spontaneity is crucial, the teacher strives to create an atmosphere conducive to it. Other environmental factors encouraging spontaneity and open response are a spirit of enthusiasm, play, imagination, and cooperation. Barnfield says, "The teacher should give the impression that in drama he has found a great adventure or challenge. The children are glad to have him as their guide and companion."<sup>4</sup> The teacher takes an active role in setting the learning and creating ambiance of his class, and his zeal and inventiveness spark that of his students.

A fourth responsibility of the teacher centers on the choosing of a dramatic text. He makes sure that the dramatic literature chosen

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<sup>3</sup>Spolin, Improvisation for the Theater, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Barnfield, Creative Drama in Schools, p. 17.

well integrates his students' past experiences. The maturity or emotional readiness of students is an important factor in choosing dramatic texts. The educator understands, as much as possible, the past experiences and present preoccupations typical of his group of adolescents. Every human being is the sum of his past experiences, and from these he develops his own particular religious and moral code. In addition, everyone is under certain cultural and social pressures. Teen-agers are probably more influenced than adults by these codes and pressures, because of their naivete and vulnerability to stereo-types perpetrated by the mass media. The teacher is aware of these preoccupations and chooses his students' literary exploits sensitively and accordingly.

Rosenblatt suggests that teachers offer literature not beyond the powers of students, that which doesn't need learning of a new language. A "new language" refers to any wildly unfamiliar structures incomprehensible to students. It is not surprising that so many student readers opt for literature of the escape variety, when often classics are introduced to them at an age when it is impossible for them to relate in any way to the problems or conflicts of the characters. Consider Shakespeare's classic Romeo and Juliet. While the situation might be comprehensible to a high school student, the language sometimes obscures the subject matter. On the other hand, Beckett's Waiting for Godot presents completely foreign subject matter, although the language employed is contemporary and simple. With the right teacher enthusiasm and introduction, either of these works can be successfully treated in high school, and certainly, students should be encouraged and led to discover and accept different language structures, situations, and points of view.

According to Piaget, "Cognitive growth depends on expanding perspective by incorporating initially alien points of view."<sup>5</sup> A classic like Congreve's The Way of the World is probably so overpowering in both language and orientation that one could hardly blame a high school student for searching out the nearest cheap paperback or opting for almost any non-reading activity. It becomes crucial that the teacher carefully choose texts according to the interest, maturity, and language level of his students.

One of the most difficult yet vital responsibilities of the teacher in a response-centered classroom is to take the role of guide rather than leader. This is especially crucial in the beginning, when a new dramatic work is open for response. The teacher provides the right introduction to facilitate and encourage student reactions, but then he is willing and trusting enough to step out of the role of teacher and observe and promote student-to-student conversation. Teacher becomes mediator, listener, and elicitor, rather than judge and jury. He guides the students to articulate, clarify, and elaborate on their responses. Realizing that student response is the starting point for growth in understanding, the teacher is content to become catalyst, or facilitator between the student and his response to the text. If the student lets himself get side-tracked and arrives at an interpretation not supported by the text, it is the teacher's responsibility to reintroduce the work for further analysis, leading, of course, to a more reasonable interpretation.

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<sup>5</sup>Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse, p. 71.

After his students have gained some conversing experience, that is, when they can run the responding process themselves, the teacher may participate in the group, giving his own opinions and feelings. By this time, the class is ready to accept the teacher as another group contributor, with past experiences, biases, and preoccupations like any other group member. If the teacher holds back participating until the middle or the end of a response exploration, he is not threatening to creativity and spontaneity of the group. Students thrive on this type of situation, and the teacher is no longer the sole individual on whom they must rely for help. The students become more independent learners and more functional individuals; they develop inquiring minds.

The final and most complex responsibility of the teacher is to help the response-centered learning experience become a real maturation experience. By honest student-to-student conversation, the teacher helps students learn from each other. Moffett advocates, "What needs to be fostered is multiplicity of ideas . . . what takes learning is the sense of alternative possibilities and reasons for choosing one over another."<sup>6</sup> Teachers encourage students' tolerating other points of view, which expose a wide range of responses and ideas.

If individual students bring a variety of backgrounds and behaviors, and thus responses, to the reading of a dramatic work, the dramatic work exposes even greater varieties of backgrounds and behaviors to the students. This is what makes dramatic literature exciting--this delving into the private lives of other human beings. The environmental,

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.97.

physical, and emotional factors that make up literary characters offer to the reader numerous possible approaches to life, and from these, students experience infinite behaviors and motivations and select as they will.

The teacher, working for a growth experience for his students, strives for full responses from his class. All preliminary responses are valid, but "I liked it" or "I hated it" must be elaborated upon, must be followed with "Why?" from the teacher. There is always a basis for liking or disliking a work, and the teacher's responsibility is to help the student explore these feelings. Rosenblatt says that when young readers consider their reasons for responding in a certain way, they are learning both to read more adequately and to seek personal meaning in literature.

One more growth area is that of moral development. The teacher is in an advantageous position to set up learning experiences that will facilitate moral development, and it is his responsibility to do so. An activity that fosters this development is role-playing, which is an integral part of the response-centered curriculum and is discussed at length later.

## CHAPTER V

### EVALUATION IN A RESPONSE-CENTERED CURRICULUM

Many educators look upon the assigning of grades as an arduous but inevitable task because they realize that so much of grading is a subjective activity, demanding a great deal of objectivity. Both objective and subjective grading depend on teacher assessment of student progress, but in subjective testing there is much room for personal bias and interpretation to enter. It is inevitable that this should happen, when testing consists of open-ended activities such as essays or oral presentations. The effectiveness of any creative performance is, after all, a matter of opinion, no matter how experienced or trained the evaluator is. Wanting to overcome or avoid this problem of intruding personal opinion, many teachers opt for totally objective testing procedures. By giving students multiple choice, matching, or true-false tests, success or failure of the individual becomes a fact, translated from a raw percentage. This method of testing and the philosophy behind it does much to hinder the spontaneity and openness of a response-centered approach to learning.

The case for abolishing grades is strong. The giving out of grades is an ineffectual way to evaluate students for several reasons. First, grades are not realistic. Certain test scores can be reliable measures for measuring certain specific things. But, as stated in Human Values in the Classroom, "Using a variety of unreliable measures . . .

then weighting those measures according to the teacher's hunch . . . and finally giving a comprehensive score . . . produces a score that is of doubtful validity as a measure of anything."<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, grades hamper creativity and self-motivation because the teacher, as the external agent--judge rather than helper--can easily corrupt a student's self-evaluation. In the final analysis, the student must live with himself and what he believes to be right for himself. To become a self-directed person, the student must have confidence in his own evaluation.

Also, grades have a tendency to degrade potentially meaningful work. If a student's most spontaneous, creative efforts are always assigned a grade, he naturally learns to limit his responses to his safest, probably most un-spontaneous efforts. "A sort of inverse proof of this point is that the things we don't grade become unimportant in the students' eyes."<sup>2</sup> Nothing is more frustrating to a teacher than to have his students narrow their efforts and responses to only those projects evaluated by the teacher. The students feel that their own evaluation is worthless, and along with the lessening of the number of responses, this is a big creativity destroyer.

Lastly, a strict grading system tends to foster a competitive atmosphere, and as discussed in the previous chapter, a response-centered classroom thrives best in an open, spontaneous, non-competitive atmosphere. As explained in Human Values in the Classroom, "For those who

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<sup>1</sup>Hawley and Hawley, Human Values in the Classroom, p. 237.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

agree that competition is basically healthy, we answer that competition is so pervasive, so ingrained in our society, that there is no need to fear it will die. The value of de-emphasizing competition in school is to redress the balance somewhat."<sup>3</sup>

What do advocates of the response-centered approach offer instead of grades? Basically, they suggest subjective evaluation. "Evaluation is the process of placing values on past events by means of analysis and diagnosis, and of placing values on future events by setting goals."<sup>4</sup> Since objective evaluation is based on value judgements, the process becomes basically a human rather than mechanical act. The primary questions evaluators need to ask are first, "What are our goals?" and then, "Have we successfully achieved these goals?" When dealing with values, teachers are making subjective decisions. Why not accept this role and strive to set realistic standards.

The task of setting standards is difficult but of crucial importance. According to Marjorie Hourd:

Unless children feel secure that we hold our standards clearly, they do not feel secure enough in themselves to create . . . Students must feel sure that we have standards--that we are judging them in relation to others of their age, that we are watching for their own progress, and that we shall hold fast to what we know to be good in the works of others and constantly keep it before them.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, teachers need to have flexible but structured standards and goals--those which instill students' confidence and trust in the

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>5</sup>Marjorie Hourd, Education of the Poetic Spirit (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1968), pp. 140-141.



teacher. This favors the concept of guide rather than judge.

After establishing the importance of setting standards, the teacher is faced with the problem of choosing those which are applicable in his classroom. What are some realistic objectives for evaluating student response? One important standard was already mentioned--the need to judge students' individual progress in relation to the progress of others their age and to keep highest standards possible in front of them. This method of evaluation can foster fierce competition unless done in an understanding and eclectic way, therefore the teacher must have good rapport with his students and recognize individual limits for accepting criticism, challenge, and suggestion.

Another alternative is evaluation solely on individual progress. A student is judged in relation to his own achievement throughout the learning period; he is not judged in relation to the progress of his peers. This method allows for personal and individual evaluation but necessitates even more subjectivity on the part of the teacher. An effective system of evaluation can be worked out by considering both these methods. Students are judged finally on their individual progress, but in order to actualize "highest standards possible," the progress of others in the class is continually considered.

Freshness, spontaneity, and freedom of expression should also be evaluated in students. In a response-centered curriculum these are more important than development of technical skills. Teachers realize this and evaluate accordingly. Here again, they concern themselves with subjective rather than objective decisions.

Spolin refers to several actors' objectives to be evaluated,

and most of these are appropriately applied to evaluation in the response-centered classroom. For instance, concentration is as necessary a faculty for participating in response-centered activities as it is in acting. A student's completeness, or incompleteness of concentration is considered by the teacher because this skill has definite carry-over value into the reality outside the English classroom.

Other questions a teacher asks of his responding students are, "How well did they solve the problem?" and "How well did they communicate among themselves?" These capabilities, like the development of concentration, are of great import to the personal growth and maturation process and can be exercised outside the classroom. For that reason, the teacher evaluates these skills, in hopes of better preparing discriminating individuals. Perhaps all these qualities are inherent in the question, "Did the students let something happen here?"

There is a warning not to be overlooked in the subjective evaluation process, and teachers must take care to heed it. Hourd states, "Students want teachers to correct their work, to praise it, or to show where it falls short; not to dissect their personalities through it."<sup>6</sup> This is precisely where objectivity must enter, even in the most subjective of evaluations. The teacher must be aware of his own preconceptions and biases if he is to deal with all students with an open mind. Hourd continues:

The teacher . . . needs to accept the good and bad in himself and in the child as parts of one whole--then he will reconcile the will of the child and bring him gradually to believe in himself as he is

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

and not as he ought to be,<sup>7</sup> judged by standards which are unrelated to his own deepest needs.

In other words, a balance must be achieved between teacher and student personalities--an acceptance and acknowledgment of the "other."

Three other evaluation practices concern the individual student. Briefly, the first one involves personal, constructive remarks from the teacher to the student. After a specific activity, these one-on-one encounters provide valuable feedback to the student. Another consideration of the teacher is that he takes care to see that something--some idea or observation--from every student is used and is somehow of importance to the entire class. And thirdly, the teacher often allows for self-evaluation by the students. After all, if a student strongly believes he has learned, grown, benefitted--or has not learned, grown, benefitted--from a certain activity, how can a teacher dispute this? A student's feedback to himself must be reckoned with.

Unfortunately, evaluation, with all its good connotations, must often be translated into a grade, with all its bad connotations. There are several methods that can be used to incorporate the aspects of evaluation discussed earlier in this chapter: continuums of behaviors, individualized study contracts, self-evaluation forms, and student grade analysis forms. The following is a sample student grade analysis devised by David Bergman of North Quincy High School in Massachusetts. What is convenient about this analysis is that the point values can be adjusted to meet the specific needs of the teacher and class. Another workable possibility is having both teacher and

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

student complete the form to compare evaluations.

Attendance

excellent . . . . . 40  
good . . . . . 30  
fair . . . . . 20  
poor . . . . . 10  
fail . . . . . 0

Attendance points . . . . .

Quality of work

excellent . . . . . 10  
always good . . . . . 8  
sometimes good . . . . . 5  
fair . . . . . 4  
poor . . . . . 0

Quality points . . . . .

Effort

works to best  
of ability . . . . . 10  
works when  
motivated . . . . . 8  
makes some effort . . . 5  
makes little effort . . 3  
makes no effort . . . . 0

Effort points . . . . .

Work Completion

all . . . . . 20  
most . . . . . 15  
some . . . . . 10  
little . . . . . 5  
none . . . . . 0

Completion points . . . . .

Class Participation

makes significant  
contribution . . . . . 10  
questions where  
applicable . . . . . 8  
answers when  
questioned . . . . . 7  
attentive . . . . . 5  
not attentive . . . . . 0

Participation points . . . . .

Level of Study

difficult (college) . . . 10  
requires research . . . . 8  
average difficulty . . . . 5  
material is basic . . . . . 3  
insignificant . . . . . 0

Level points . . . . .

Points

Total grade

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SOURCE: Hawley and Hawley, Human Values in the Classroom,  
p. 247.

## CHAPTER VI

### ACTIVITIES FOR A RESPONSE-CENTERED CURRICULUM

The aspects of dramatic literature to be explored in a response-centered classroom are basically the same as those in any English classroom. Important elements to be examined are characterization, plot, theme, structure (conflict, climax, denouement), dialogue, unity, and technique. The primary difference that distinguishes a response-centered approach from a traditional one is that of emphasis. While many teachers give plot, characters, and setting equal time, the response-centered teacher focuses directly on character exploration, with other elements of the play examined through various character viewpoints. In other words, a response-centered curriculum stresses delving into and discovering a play from within, while other, more traditional approaches involve an external method of study. This chapter, then, is rather an introduction to Part II, an explanation and rationale of possible activities to be used in a response-centered classroom.

Since response-centered classrooms are deeply concerned with character, it is necessary to discuss some basic elements that shape character. Some obvious but often overlooked considerations are the physical presence of the character, his clothing, age, temperament, past experiences, general attitudes and outlook on life, his educational and cultural background, occupation, religion, and interests.

Many of these questions can be answered by reading stage directions or character descriptions given in a play. Unfortunately, students sometimes tend to read only for plot, with no preliminary considerations of character. If some of these questions are not answered by play exposition, students can and should use their own energies to appropriate answers. What the character says and how he behaves when alone or with others, what other characters say about him, how others treat him--all these are clues from plot and dialogue that tell the student what he needs to make assumptions about character behavior and motivation. Students need to realize that real people shape a plot--it doesn't evolve on its own. Response-centered classes question how and why events occur and the answer can be found through character study and textual analysis. The main purpose of a response-centered curriculum is to actively involve students with literature and life. When students are involved, they are interested, and when they are interested, they learn, grow, and mature.

The goal of a response-centered curriculum is to deeply involve students in character studies. The means to achieving this goal is a unique, specific sequence of activities: soliloquy, dialogue, and monologue. The need and rationale for these was dealt with in chapter II, so at this time definitions and rationale for this particular progression of activities will be restated briefly.

Soliloquy is student thinking; it is an internal unvoiced conversation. People address themselves continuously throughout their lives. It is a natural, almost unavoidable process. It is the first step in dealing critically with dramatic literature. Student dialogue

is the next important step in the process; it is the most important step, according to Moffett, Rosenblatt, and others of the response-centered philosophy. Dialogue is talk about something. It is extemporized. "It is generated of the moment and moves in time, governed by setting and circumstances as well as by the wills of the speakers . . . it is spontaneous, ongoing, unpondered, and uncomposed."<sup>1</sup> Moffett strongly believes that dialogue is a major means of developing thought and language. The process of talk offers students the chance to express and vocalize their own thoughts and opinions and offers them the opportunity to discover, explore, and refute other thoughts and opinions. This in turn allows them to refine their own thinking and to come to specific conclusions. This concluding stage is student monologue and is a product rather than a process activity. After sorting out, questioning, and amending extemporaneous dialogue, students elaborate and organize their own ideas. A monologue can be verbal or written, the main idea being that it is an individual activity, an "alone" product evolving from a "together" process. In the response-centered classroom, most "together" activities lead to "alone" products in some shape or form, because even though process is more important than product, monologue provides the opportunity to draw loose ends together and form conclusions. Monologue proves a justifiable rationale for dialogue.

A response-centered curriculum thrives on activities that foster dialogue among students. Naturally, other types of activities

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<sup>1</sup>Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse, p. 72.

make up part of the curriculum--activities that develop other cognitive skills such as reading, writing, and listening. Since speaking is the activity most indispensable, and therefore lengthy, to a response-centered curriculum, it will be discussed last.

A part of the soliloquy process is the listening to and reading of plays. There are many ways to approach these activities in the classroom, and a variety of methods should be used in order to maintain student interest and involvement. Choral reading encourages students to improve diction, learn cooperation, and experience the rhythms of language. It can be done informally, even spontaneously, or more formally, depending on the time allotted and the emphasis the teacher wants to place on the activity. Performance may be the end result, but this is less often the objective. If this formal approach is desired, the following steps are taken:

1. Choose a section and read it together or in pairs until everyone understands it.
2. Decide how to arrange the text for choral reading.
3. Have each person read a line to decide voice pitch. Group all voices with the same quality together.
4. Decide which, if any, lines should be spoken by a solo voice, a sub group, or the whole group and which lines would best be spoken by high, medium, or low voices.
5. Read through the entire selection as arranged and make changes if needed to emphasize the important parts.
6. Practice expressive fluency by making a list of the most important words and phrases and then reading them aloud in quick succession, one after the other, changing voice and facial expression rapidly as the meaning changes.
7. Read through the complete text again, using a different volume for each different idea. Decide which volume and pitch level is best for each part to clarify the meaning. Try out various kinds of phrasing, intonation, and other vocal expression.
8. Experiment with pace.
9. Decide who's going to read solo and duet parts; then rehearse; take the rehearsals to hear which parts, if any, need more work. Consider adding a guitar, piano, humming, or other accompaniment.



10. Share with an audience .<sup>2</sup>

Another reading activity is story theatre, where one or more students read the dialogue as other students pantomime the action. At performance levels music can be added. The steps involved in producing story theatre are similar to those involved in choral reading. Of course, the teacher must decide how much time and effort this activity warrants and plan accordingly. The activity is an entertaining and productive approach to reading a text.

Readers theatre is another approach to making texts come alive for students. It involves students as oral interpreters of a text, sometimes with a narrator. The setting of the play is established off-stage in the imagination of the audience rather than on-stage with the readers. The class needs to discuss such matters as speakers, setting, action, style, and theme; a unity of staging must be agreed upon if the activity is to culminate in a performance.

Other approaches to reading/listening activities include the following: reading aloud to classmates or a different audience, silently reading a text while listening to tapes or records, or watching films or video-tapes. These activities allow students to hear meaning and emotion, which in turn, " . . . improves silent reading skills and comprehension of text, strengthens the internalization of new language forms and vocabulary, and increases their involvement with literature."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Moffett and Wagner, Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading, K-13, p. 111.

<sup>3</sup>Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse, p. 112.

There are numerous methods that can be used to make that first, or final contact with the text a worthwhile, exciting experience. With these activities available, and others limited only by teacher and student imagination, a student need not be confronted continually and exclusively with silent reading as a homework assignment.

Writing is often a culminating "product" activity used in the response-centered classroom. As discussed earlier, writing is a tidy way of producing a student's monologue, which reflects his organized, elaborated conclusions to the study of a dramatic work. There are a multitude of writing activities that can be used to spark student interest and imagination far more extensively than the usual three or four page expository essay. These essays are valuable upon occasion, but in many classrooms they are too frequently required, whereas different types of writing assignments offer welcome variety and change. For example, have students keep a diary of a specific character from dramatic literature. This activity provides detailed insight into realistic character motives and behavior. Another possibility is letter writing: from reader to character, character to reader, or character to character. Fable writing is an imaginative writing assignment, and as fables incorporate morals at the end, the students are led to make value judgements for dramatic literature, and indirectly, for themselves. Some shorter writing exercises involve the composing of epitaphs for characters, proverbs or advertisements based on dramatic themes, or haiku or poetry reflecting dramatic emotion. As with reading/listening exercises, only the teacher's, and his students' imagination place limits on writing possibilities that can challenge, stimulate, and

excite.

Talking/performing skills form the basis for dialoguing, the most important part of the response-centered curriculum. "Performing" refers to experimental classroom activities, not performing for an audience. Of course, some activities such as readers theatre can lead to a product to be performed before an audience, but the performing/experimenting discussed here is process-oriented and structured so that students actively explore and work out their ideas in groups, leading to some later conclusive state alone.

The talking/performing activities fall into several categories: whole-class efforts, speech-oriented activities, movement exploration, improvisation and role-playing exercises, script creation, and art projects. These will be discussed in order.

An all-class activity, judged as " . . . perhaps the most important single skill in the repertory of personal growth activities,"<sup>4</sup> by Robert and Isabel Hawley, is that of brainstorming. Basically, brainstorming is a group way of amassing possible solutions to a problem. Students offer suggestions as spontaneously and rapidly as possible and all ideas are recorded. This activity gives students a mind-expanding way of thinking that fosters creativity and versatility. The large volume of ideas brainstorming produces is the result of students spontaneously participating, and it encourages a non-competitive classroom atmosphere. The rules for brainstorming are as follows:

1. Express no negative evaluation.

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<sup>4</sup>Hawley and Hawley, Human Values in the Classroom, p. 38.

2. Work for quantity, not quality.
3. Expand on each other's ideas.
4. Encourage far-out ideas.
5. Record each idea.
6. Set time limit and obey it.<sup>5</sup>

After all ideas or possible solutions are recorded, the group selects and modifies suggestions for further discussion and possible implementation. Brainstorming is a fruitful way of drawing out many ideas in a short period of time, and it takes advantage of diverse input.

Rank ordering is another all-class activity used to help students clarify values. After general class discussion of specific characters in a play, students are asked to individually, upon reflection, give a rank order of the characters: who is "best," "second best" and so on. Students make a choice and decide on some ranking in a short period of time, as with brainstorming. After judging the characters, the entire class compares notes and discusses the reasons for their choices. The teacher mediates, focuses and directs dialogue. After class discussion, the students re-rank the characters, but this time they have a clearer and better organized understanding of their own values. If the teacher prefers, the students work in small groups to talk out differences of opinion. Finally, the group presents a coherent view, and individual students are asked to follow up with some sort of polished--written or verbal--monologue activity.

All-class discussions do not have to formally revolve around a specific structure such as brainstorming or rank ordering. These discussions can be held at any time during the study of dramatic literature.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

They are informal and of any length depending on student interest and input, but the teacher carefully directs and guides the progress of the group.

The next group of dialogue activities are categorized as speech exercises. They are varied enough to involve any number of students, from pairs to the entire class, but usually these activities call for small groups of four to six students.

Working in pairs, students can invent dialogues: a character conversing with his conscience, a telephone conversation, or an interview. These are discussed beforehand and presented extemporaneously for the rest of the class. Since these are primarily presentations reflecting ideas and conclusions of the students, they are considered a product activity. The important process has taken place during the students' planning of the presentation. For this reason, the teacher can consider this a monologue activity even though the product is a dialogue.

Small groups lend themselves to debate and discussion activities. Formal debate encompasses a set of rules and strategies that many teachers do not wish to deal with in the English classroom, and the activity can also be time-consuming because of the research involved. Nevertheless, most of the principles of formal debate are used in discussion groups that lead to panel presentations or informal debates in the classroom: a problem is stated in concise terms, affirmative and negative sides present and support their opinions in predetermined allotments of time, refutation occurs (also in predetermined amounts of time), and workable solutions are offered. In the response-centered classroom, discussion

groups satisfy the "process" requirements and panel presentations and informal debates satisfy the "product" needs.

There is a five-step process to be followed for resolving interpersonal conflicts as set down by Leland and Mary Howe in

Personalizing Education:

1. Formulate a statement of the problem.
2. Clarify dimensions of the conflict.
3. Brainstorm possible solutions to the conflict.
4. Identify the consequences.
5. Choose a mutually acceptable solution.<sup>6</sup>

As students move from problem to solution, the teacher circulates among the groups and offers guidance when necessary. Sometimes re-focusing will be necessary and other times a spark of enthusiasm. Occasionally the teacher might have to provide an opposing view for consideration. Whatever the group needs, the teacher must be there ready to provide it or show the students how to provide it.

Speech activities to be performed by the entire class can take the form of an election, a town meeting, or a mock trial. Actually, these activities can be undertaken as an all-class improvisation; in this case the process takes place as the performance evolves. Later, a monologue activity is assigned. If used as product activities, the class discusses ideas to be incorporated in the final presentation. Any solution is workable, providing that the students go through the essential process of dialogue and decision.

Briefly, two speech activities will be mentioned that must function as product, but which provide an alternative to written

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<sup>6</sup>Howe and Howe, Personalizing Education, p. 77.

monologuing. They are usually done individually. The first is the persuasive speech. The student, after a small group discussion, commits himself to a specific viewpoint of a certain character or character behavior. He then presents his opinion to the rest of the class in hopes of convincing them of his ideas. The second activity is making a tape recording. Again, this is monologuing and works best when the student first goes through a dialogue process before clarifying and refining his thoughts.

Speech exercises are effective in producing students' vocal response, however, on another level, movement activities evoke physical response. Courtney's book Teaching Drama deals primarily with elementary school children, but his goals also apply to secondary school students:

1. To release children's energies and emotions through movement.
2. To allow children to have knowledge and control of the workings of their bodies.
3. To develop the ability to communicate through movement and realize the need for this.<sup>7</sup>

Exploring characterization through movement opens new channels of thinking for students. By showing pure movement to reflect the mood or tone of a character or an entire play, a student expresses his "gut-level" feelings and thus learns more about himself as well as the character or literary work. With these feelings as part of his experience, he opens himself up to alternative ideas and opinions. In other words, as he experiments with movement, he explores his responses in depth and grows with them.

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<sup>7</sup>Courtney, Teaching Drama, p. 37.

What are some of the specific exercises a teacher can engage his students in to encourage them to respond? The choices are endless:

1. Have students move to the rhythm of a character or a play. Is the character's personality (and body) light, heavy, quick, slow, wooden, sinuous, etc. Is the character open, secretive, sad, happy, brave, fearful, etc.
2. Have students create pure movement and sound to communicate the above characteristics.
3. Have students move and/or sound to show their sensory observations of a character or a play: how does he (it) feel, smell, sound, taste?
4. Have students create a connected machine to show the character relationships working in the play.
5. Have students show character values by relating movement to concrete objects, ideally, objects from the play.

Movement and sound lead to another level of responding, that of improvisation and role-playing. Improvisation is an activity used extensively in actor training, and it requires much skill and practice to learn to improvise effectively in a theatrical sense. But if the teacher uses this activity knowledgeably and non-evaluatively, with no outside audience, improvisation and role-playing are productive tools for exploring response to dramatic literature. As opposed to speech activities, improvisation is pure process, because impromptu discussion comes out in the scene; there is no discussion beforehand, as in speech presentations. As with movement, the possibilities for improvisation are inexhaustible, and if the teacher's imagination ever fails, there is a wealth of texts to consult for worthwhile and numerous suggestions. Some of the best sources are: Nellie McCaslin's Creative Dramatics in the Classroom, Gabriel Barnfield's Creative Drama in Schools, Brian Way's Development Through Drama, John Hodgson's and Ernest Richard's Improvisation, and Viola Spolin's Improvisation for the Theater.



To promote an open atmosphere conducive to good improvisation, the teacher should encourage students to improvisationally use the classroom. For example, a chair can become a throne, a platform, or a sofa. The teacher's desk can be transformed into a cave, a closet, or whatever else has approximately a similar shape. Plants can be a jungle, coffee cans and upside-down waste baskets can become musical instruments. The teacher should encourage imagination on all levels to lead to a creative atmosphere in the classroom.

Here are some specific improvisation/role-playing exercises designed to bring out and explore student responses and to encourage students to explore others' responses:

1. Have students improvise a specific scene in their own words, transforming the author's language into their own.
2. Have students improvise a scene using the character's thoughts rather than words. This is valuable for revealing subtext, or getting to what the scene is "really about" and discovering character motivations and explanations of behavior.
3. Have students role-play characters, exploring the situation from different points of view.
4. Have students improvise alternative courses of action at points of conflict, climax, or denouement.
5. Have students discuss a theme from the play in improvisation from different characters' points of view.
6. Have students improvise a discussion between a character and his conscience. This exercise can be expanded to include two students or two groups of students, thus involving the entire class.
7. Other crowd scene improvisations which can include the whole class are lynching, revolution, welcoming committee, mutiny, or strike.

If classroom atmosphere and enthusiasm are conducive to improvisation and role-playing, these activities are some of the best ways of exploring student response, alternative modes of behavior, and values clarification.

Script writing can be considered as product, but since it is

best done in groups rather than alone, it is included as a dialogue activity. It is an exercise that can become time-consuming, so the teacher will have to use his discretion in deciding if the activity is justifiable. Naturally, student interest and enthusiasm help dictate the needs of the class. Courtney outlines the following procedure for play writing in class:

1. Improvisation (Students improvise some dramatic action they wish to expand into a play. Obviously, many avenues will have to be explored before an acceptable, viable plot emerges.).
2. Write the scenario. [Group effort!]
3. Polish the improvisation. [Work out plot, conflict, climax, etc. through exploring alternative solutions.]
4. Write the dialogue. [Group effort!]
5. Final improvisation and polishing of the script.<sup>8</sup>

By discussing dialogue and motivation problems, the students go through an intense process. In the end, the finished script is truly a part of all students involved.

A variety of art projects round out the dialogue series of activities that elicit student response. Even if unskilled or uninformed in the area, teachers should recognize the possibilities art projects offer students in expressing their feelings. In fact, some students who seem unresponsive and unable to express themselves in other areas may totally open up through art media. Some specific art projects are:

1. Have students create a collage, using magazine and newspaper pictures or phrases to show their responses and feelings about a character or a work.
2. Have students create a sound collage using a tape recorder, that demonstrates the emotions of a play through aural stimuli.
3. Have students design and construct masks that express the essence or essential qualities of their favorite characters.
4. Have students paint, sketch, or fingerpaint a scene depicting

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<sup>8</sup>Courtney, Teaching Drama, p. 35.

- a general image or concept of the play.
5. Have students design book jackets, create cartoons, posters, or centerfolds that show their responses to dramatic literature.

These art projects are products of learning as is the three or four page essay, but these individually creative expressions are still the result of soliloquy and dialogue activities. These projects provide an alternative, imaginative way of monologuing, a way of organizing, clarifying, and personalizing responses and thoughts.

## **PART II**

### **A RESPONSE-CENTERED CURRICULUM: APPLICATION**

## CHAPTER VII

### INTRODUCTION

These fifteen plays form the basis for study in a year-long elective dramatic literature course in grades ten through twelve:

#### Twentieth Century

The Odd Couple, by Neil Simon  
The Miracle Worker, by William Gibson  
The Crucible, by Arthur Miller  
Ah, Wilderness!, by Eugene O'Neill  
Fiddler on the Roof, by Joseph Stein

#### Nineteenth Century

The Inspector General, by Nicolai Gogol  
A Doll's House, by Henrik Ibsen  
Arms and the Man, by George Bernard Shaw

#### Eighteenth Century

The Rivals, by Richard Sheridan

#### Seventeenth Century

The Imaginary Invalid, by Moliere

#### Elizabethan Period

The Taming of the Shrew, by William Shakespeare

#### Medieval Period

Everyman, anonymous

#### Greek Period

Lysistrata, by Aristophanes

#### Avant-garde Period

Rhinoceros, by Eugene Ionesco  
The American Dream, by Edward Albee

Moliere's comedy The Imaginary Invalid serves as a model, providing a progression of activities based on a response-centered approach to learning. Since the process for The Imaginary Invalid is a model, the teacher is invited and encouraged to expand, modify, or omit any activities he decides necessary to best fit specific classes. For instance, the amount of presentational activities a class pursues will depend heavily on the readiness and enthusiasm of the students involved. Above all else, a response-centered curriculum must remain flexible. The remaining fourteen plays in the course outline are discussed only briefly as to plot and structure. If the work in question possesses elements that lend themselves specifically to response-centered activities, that is, beyond those provided in The Imaginary Invalid process, they will be discussed in detail.

The course is designed to begin with the consideration of contemporary works and progress through the study of period plays, the rationale being that by the end of the year, students will be more capable of handling the unfamiliar language and structure of the earlier plays. Works of the avant-garde, because they require special orientation, will best be studied last in the course.

## CHAPTER VIII

### A PROCESS FOR THE IMAGINARY INVALID

The Imaginary Invalid takes a farcical look at hypochondria and the medical profession. Argan, the main character, is a hypochondriac. He sees the advantages of free medical care and plans the marriage of his daughter Angelique to Thomas Diafoirus, whose father is a doctor. But Angelique is deeply in love with Cleante and refuses to obey her father's wishes. Toinette, the servant, sees clearly how the medical profession takes advantage of Argan; she also sees how devoted Angelique is to her father and how coniving and vicious Argan's wife Beline is. Through various hilarious masquerades, she soundly convinces Argan of his wrong perceptions. In the end, Angelique marries Cleante, Argan plans to become a doctor, and everyone celebrates.

#### Activity

1. Read prologue together as class in choral groups.
2. Teacher presentation of an introduction to Moliere: his life as an actor, hopes to become a great tragedian, popularity with Louis XIV, elements of his style, influence of comedia dell'arte on his writing, and the manners, ideas, art, and life style of the period.
3. Discuss what type of music might accompany the prologue to The Imaginary Invalid;

#### Objective

1. To introduce rhythms, word patterns, and intonations occuring in Moliere-type drama.
2. To acquire background knowledge. To define specific details. To gain a flavor and feeling for the period. To begin to draw relationships between an artistic product and the form of living which produces and surrounds it.
3. To elicit first responses. To project style by illustrating and categorizing details.

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Objective</u>
Teacher play some possibilities; discuss what purpose the prologue serves.	To make connections between different forms of expression: drama and music.
4. Read the alternative prologue together and project theme of the play; if no response to this, read Argan's first speech and then elicit responses.	4. To become aware of and be able to interpret foreshadowing. To look at the concrete givens of a text which lead to a basic understanding of it.
5. Assign reading of Act I.	5. To develop responsibility and self-direction. To develop the ability to work alone.
6. Play recording of Act I. Discuss the character of Argan and Toinette; brainstorm adjectives describing them.	6. To categorize and describe characteristics and personality traits without placing a value on them. To respond intuitively.
7. Divide into pairs. Improvise Argan's and Toinette's scene in Act I.	7. To develop dialogue based on organic impulse. To further personalize the text.
8. In the same pairs, improvise a sound and movement scene (see Chapter VI, p.47) between Argan and Toinette, showing their characteristics and relationship.	8. To learn cooperation. To express personality traits on an organic level. To establish non-verbally a relationship between two people.
9. Ask for volunteers to re-create their dialogue improvisation for the class.	9. To demonstrate personal interpretation in front of an audience.
10. Class discussion of Beline and Angelique. Possible questions: What do their names suggest? Are their names consistent with their personality traits? Compare these women to other characters you have studied in literature or observed in real situations.	10. To categorize and describe personality traits of individuals. To explore the concept of stereo-type and shallowness versus depth of character. To personalize the text by relating a personal experience.
11. Ask for volunteers to improvise interior monologue of Beline and Angelique in a scene between them.	11. To explore inner thoughts of characters. To understand the function of subtext.



<u>Activity</u>	<u>Objective</u>
12. As a class, read aloud the first interlude. Teacher explain comedia dell'arte technique and the universality of Puchinello.	12. To practice reading skills. To explore techniques of farce. To acquire background knowledge. To respond openly.
13. Ask for volunteers to work out, as homework, a section of the interlude for the class, using their own original dance and instrumentation.	13. To present to peers a personal exploration. To exercise imagination and creativity.
14. Discuss how well the interlude presentation succeeded in its purpose, apart from and in relation to the play itself.	14. To receive and assimilate criticism. To exercise powers of critical thinking.
15. Assign home reading of Act II.	15. To develop reading skills. To develop responsibility, self-direction, independence.
16. Divide into small groups. Discuss Diafoirus, Thomas, and Cleante. Decide on image/metaphor for each and be able to explain and justify to the class.	16. To interpret, categorize, and describe detail. To develop skill in understanding analogies.
17. Present metaphors to the class.	17. To experience sharing of interpretations.
18. Bring in tactile metaphor for any character discussed so far. Example: Beline--something smooth and hard; Toinette--something slippery and flexible.	18. To discover ways of describing personality traits. To develop powers of thinking in concrete terms. To find a personal, organic, sensory way to relate to the experiences of the character and ultimately to the whole sense of the character.
19. Evaluate and discuss tactile metaphors.	19. To discover and accept others' interpretations. To evaluate peer projects.
20. Discuss reasons for Cleante's long speech/opera. What purpose does it serve in the play? Explain Argan's reaction to it.	20. To develop discussion and cooperation skills.

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Objective</u>
21. Play recording of Act II.	21. To develop an appreciation of rhythms, intonations, and the aural immediacy of a theatre experience. To develop imagination and skill at visualization.
22. Assign home reading of Act III.	22. To develop reading skills. To develop responsibility, self-direction, and independence.
23. Divide into groups of three. Role-play an interview with Argan and Beralde, discussing their feelings toward the medical profession, illnesses, and cures.	23. To experience the feelings of others, based on a literary experience. To clarify values. To learn cooperation.
24. Ask for volunteers to present interviews to the class.	24. To share a group exploration.
25. Keeping in mind the opinions of Argan and Beralde from the previous exercise, prepare an informal or formal debate exploring these medical questions as contemporary issues.	25. To relate works of fiction to real, everyday issues. To express opinions concisely and convincingly. To refute others' opinions unemotionally.
26. Class reading of scene between Toinette and Argan; one student plays Argan and the others play Toinette. Use voice, movement, and gestures at random, on group impulse.	26. To experience impromptu presentation. To develop sight reading skills. To experiment with lyrical rhythms and intonations. To develop movement and gesture patterns as an ensemble and which grow naturally out of poet's dialogue.
27. Divide into small groups and rank order Beline, Argan, Angelique, Toinette, Beralde, Cleante, Diafoirus, and Thomas according to their nobility of character.	27. To make decisions and clarify values. To learn cooperation and acceptance of others' views. To express opinions of moral judgement.
28. Assignment: write a one or two page paper, recounting the plot of <u>The Imaginary Invalid</u> from one of the character's points of view.	28. To stimulate imagination. To develop writing skills. To personalize the text. To explore and clarify values.

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Objective</u>
29. Read representative papers to the class. Comment.	29. To exercise powers of critical thinking. To evaluate and accept differing points of view.
30. If there is much enthusiasm for this type of activity, expand a scene from the play into readers theatre or choral reading, or encourage a mask and comedia dance project based on one of the characters.	30. To experience performance before an outside audience. To experience ensemble work. To learn to take direction.

## CHAPTER IX

### OTHER PLAYS IN BRIEF

#### The Odd Couple

Written by Neil Simon in 1965, this comedy is frequently considered to be his best. The story focuses on the relationship between two middle-aged poker buddies, Oscar and Felix. Oscar is divorced, and Felix' wife has just thrown him out of their apartment. Oscar invites his friend to move in with him, but Felix soon drives him crazy with his talkativeness and compulsive neatness. A crisis comes when Felix won't cooperate on a double date Oscar has arranged with two giggly sisters from England. Oscar eventually throws his friend out and Felix is immediately taken in by the motherly Britishers. By not living together, Oscar and Felix find they can become friends once again, and yet, through the explosive few weeks together, each has learned something about himself and about the other.

Because The Odd Couple's dialogue is contemporary and natural, the play has interesting possibilities for students creating alternative endings. It also lends itself to dynamic role-play: contrasting the slovenliness of one character with the compulsive neatness of the other can produce some insightful scenes for adolescents. Students are pleasantly surprised to realize that despite the age difference between the odd couple and themselves, they share many of the same conflicts and confront them in much the same manner. Another possibility for

response exploration is pure sound and movement activity. Students physicalize and sound, without words, the relationship between Oscar and Felix. An interesting concluding activity is to draw a comparison among the play, the film, and the television series. Teacher-led discussion brings out the problems involved in producing episodic presentation of The Odd Couple.

### The Miracle Worker

Written by William Gibson in 1960, The Miracle Worker is the story of Helen Keller, the well-known writer and humanitarian who was blind and deaf since infancy. The play begins with Helen's birth and the dramatic discovery of her blindness. In her early years, her parents spoil her terribly, because they know no other way of coping with her, and so the father employs Anne Sullivan as her governess. After innumerable frustrating and debilitating experiences together, Annie and Helen establish communication.

In studying The Miracle Worker, students can experience and explore the world of the blind. Exercises in which students work blindfolded with seeing partners develop trust and strengthen use of their other senses--hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting. A "blind journey" in which a blindfolded student is led by an unblindfolded one throughout the school building and campus, is an effective way to develop these skills. Students might also "lose" their seeing guides and have to "find" them by touch or use of a specific sound. The possibilities are limitless with these types of activities, and all lead to a good understanding and appreciation of Helen's character. Also, through these types of exercises, students learn much more about them-

selves--why they experience certain fears and anxieties, how they cope with these feelings, and how easily they gain trust in other individuals. The importance of understanding one's fears and of developing trust is evident. Students also benefit from exploration into Helen's behavior patterns. Role-playing simulates Anne Sullivan's and the Keller family's treatment of Helen, and some conclusions may be reached as to the resulting behavior of the blind girl. Students privately, if not publically, relate and compare their own family's philosophy toward child rearing and its relative effectiveness. The possibilities for values clarification are evident.

### The Crucible

Written in 1953 by Arthur Miller, The Crucible is a serious drama about the Salem witch trials of 1692. It is based on actual court records and personages of the era. The story centers on a group of adolescent girls who pretend to have been bewitched. The leader of the group, Abigail Williams, convinces her friends to make hysterical accusations of witchcraft against several townspeople whom they do not like. Mainly, Abigail is out to get Elizabeth Proctor, wife of John, a farmer she has seduced. John confesses to his past adulteries, trying to expose Abigail's lies. Elizabeth testifies falsely for her husband, trying to protect him from Abigail's wrath. Inevitably, John is accused of witchcraft and sentenced to death. He is offered amnesty only if he agrees to expose other witches. He refuses and is hanged.

Study of The Crucible leads to value exploration and clarification. Students should be asked to do a rank ordering exercise,

placing the main characters in a scale of moral goodness. A final activity might be the presentation of a mock trial involving defense and judgement of Mary Warren, Abigail Williams, and Elizabeth and John Proctor. This type of culminating activity requires student research into historical background, revealing moral and religious attitudes of the era. Possible persuasive speech topics are to prepare the final defense or prosecution presentation to the jury. Study of The Crucible also evokes relevant discussion of contemporary belief in witches, extrasensory perception, and various other forms of parapsychology.

#### Ah, Wilderness!

Eugene O'Neill wrote this comedy in 1933. It involves the growing pains of Richard Miller, an adolescent who lives with his family in a small town in Connecticut. His father is somewhat sympathetic to his problems, but his doting mother drives him to rebellion. Symbolically, on Independence Day, he enters the world of prostitutes and drunks. He emerges from the experience a bit wiser and secure in the knowledge he will eventually marry his childhood sweetheart Muriel. His father is reassured that Richard will survive adolescence.

Because of Richard's age, high school students have an easy time relating to this play. Discussion might involve topics of parental control and adolescent rebellion. Role-playing is a valuable activity to be used here, because it allows adolescents to experiment with parent roles and behaviors. Discussion of Richard's "Independence Day" encourages values clarification. As with The Miracle Worker, students should compare Mr. and Mrs. Miller's treatment of Richard.

Improvisation reveals possible results of the different behaviors and philosophies, and students should be encouraged to relate these insights to their own lives.

### Fiddler on the Roof

Joseph Stein's book is based on Tevye the Milkman, a story by Sholem Aleichem, "the Jewish Mark Twain." Music and lyrics are by Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick, respectively. The musical is set in Anatevka, a Russian village during the early 1900s. The story revolves around Tevye and his wife Golde, and their attempts to marry off their three eldest daughters through Yente the Matchmaker. Tevye's daughters object to the arranged matches and eventually get their own way. Tzeitel chooses to marry a poor tailor and Hodel weds a revolutionary teacher and moves to Siberia. Tevye goodheartedly gives in to his first two daughters but obstinately refuses, because of his religion, to give his blessing to Chava, his third daughter who wants to marry a Russian soldier. When she does so anyway, he is heartbroken. The play ends sadly, with the Jews eviction from Anatevka. Some famous songs from the musical are "Sunrise, Sunset," "Matchmaker, Matchmaker," and "If I were a Rich Man."

Fiddler on the Roof is a musical that warrants inclusion in a dramatic literature course, because it is full of rich dramatic moments. If possible, students should experience the recording and the movie in addition to a reading of the play. Activities dealing with Tevye's and his daughters' moral decisions provide opportunity for values clarification. Writing or verbalizing interior monologue provides insights into character. Tevye makes use of interior mono-



logue in the script, and it proves interesting to have students script an "interior dialogue" between him and his individual daughters or between him and Golde. Class discussions aid students in bringing out and clarifying their own cultural traditions. Poetry writing is another outlet for student feelings toward the work.

### The Inspector General

Nikolai Gogol wrote this comedy of mistaken identity in 1836. The mayor of a provincial Russian town receives word that an inspector general is travelling incognito from St. Petersburg to inspect his administration. There is much to fear, because the mayor's town is incredibly corrupt. Coincidentally, a young government clerk arrives in town, and immediately all the town officials assume he is the inspector. All try to bribe "The Inspector," who enjoys every minute taking advantage of the foolish townspeople. He is even so bold as to court the mayor's wife and daughter. The government clerk finally leaves town but an inquisitive local postmaster opens a letter which reveals the clerk's real identity and his mischievous trickery of the townspeople. Inevitably, the real inspector general arrives and everyone is horrified.

This play lends itself to explorations of alternative endings. Students should be encouraged to use their imaginations to the fullest extent. Entire class improvisations can be worked out between the "Inspector" and the townspeople. A town meeting might be called to decide what to do with the "Inspector" before or after his real identity is discovered. Students should enjoy writing possible epitaphs for the "Inspector's" tombstone. Another plausible activity is to have stu-

dents write a script scenario for weekly television episodes of The Inspector General, in which the shyster travels from town to town barely ahead of word of his true identity. Small group activity can focus on changing the locale and time of the play and then presenting a short scenario to the rest of the class.

### A Doll's House

This three-act social drama was written in 1879 by Henrik Ibsen, who is sometimes called the "Father of Modern Drama." The play is about Nora Helmer, who leads an extremely comfortable life with her husband Torvald, a successful bank manager. But in reality, because she is so over-protected, Nora is leading a life bordering on desperation. She had once forged her father's name in order to obtain a loan to pay for a trip necessary for her husband's health. Now she is being blackmailed by her creditor, an employee in Torvald's bank. Torvald unknowingly and coincidentally dismisses the man, and Nora's forgery is exposed. Rather than forgiving her selfless act, Torvald berates Nora and calls her unfit to be the mother of his children. This wild scene makes Nora realize her intolerable position in life, and she walks out on her family and home, vowing to seek a self-actualizing life.

Although written in the nineteenth century, A Doll's House is a relevant play today because it deals with the topic of women's liberation. Students find it interesting to learn that because of the protest of a certain German actress, Ibsen wrote an alternative ending where Nora returns, at least to her children. While many audiences were content with the "happy ending," Ibsen felt it violated the entire

point of his play, and this ending is rarely used today. Students should be asked to comment on the two different endings, exploring and comparing the consequences of Nora's solution in both versions. This commenting can be done in general class discussion or in the format of a convincing speech or written essay. Also, students might be asked to keep a diary of Nora, showing her progressing discontent and desperation. Discussion-group or debate activities elicit student response to Nora's behavior, Torvald's treatment of her, and the feminist question in general.

#### Arms and the Man

George Bernard Shaw wrote this romantic comedy set in Bulgaria. Bluntschli, a Swiss mercenary serving in the Serbian Army, takes refuge in the bedroom of Raina, daughter of the rich and pretentious Major Petkoff. Bluntschli undermines Raina's romantic ideas of war and heroism, and also her fiance Sergius, a Bulgarian officer. After the war, Sergius falls in love with Louka, a servant girl, and Bluntschli falls in love with Raina. Her pretentious parents are hesitant at first hearing of this news, but Bluntschli reveals himself as heir to a fortune and all ends happily.

Almost a satire on war, Arms and the Man lends itself to values clarification activities such as rank ordering. Interviews exploring attitudes toward war can be conducted, with students playing the parts of Bluntschli, Major Petkoff, and Sergius. Informal debate may arise from these interviews, in which students express their own ideas on this contemporary and relevant issue. If possible, a recording of the play should be made available so students can appreciate the formal

language. The scenes between Raina and Bluntschli are fine prospects for readers theatre pieces.

### The Rivals

Richard Sheridan wrote The Rivals in 1775. It is a comedy of manners in which Lydia Languish, determined to marry for love, is in love with "Ensign Beverly," who is really aristocrat Captain Jack Absolute. Jack's father, Sir Anthony Absolute, and Lydia's aunt, Mrs. Malaprop, become involved in the courtship and serve to confuse matters. Finally, Lydia learns of Jack's affluence and rejects him because he has deceived her, nevertheless harmlessly. After much excitement and confusion, the lovers are finally reunited.

This comedy of manners is especially famous because of the character Mrs. Malaprop, whose ridiculous misuses of the language have been named "malapropisms." Students enjoy creating their own malapropisms; this exercise is an imagination stimulator. The play also lends itself to values clarification activities in which students explore concepts of love, courtship, wealth, "harmless" deception, and interference by well-intentioned relatives. Role-playing provides some interesting insights for adolescents. As with the Shaw play, a recording should be played for the students, so they will better adapt to the flow of flowery Restoration language. The Rivals also is an inspiration for poetry writing and dramatic reading.

### The Taming of the Shrew

Written around 1593, The Taming of the Shrew is one of Shakespeare's most famous comedies. The Cole Porter musical Kiss Me, Kate is based on this play-within-a-play. The main plot centers on

a rich merchant's two marriageable daughters--shrewish Katharina and gentle lovable Bianca. Since Katharina is the eldest, she must marry first, so Bianca's suitors encourage Petruchio, a young man looking for a large dowry, to court the strong-willed lady. After their marriage, Petruchio begins the process of "taming" his new wife. Throughout their hilarious battling, Katharina falls in love with her husband and emerges an "obedient wife." Meanwhile, Bianca has fallen in love with Lucentio and his friend Hortensio has fallen in love with a rich widow. Everyone celebrates at a triple wedding feast.

The Taming of the Shrew, with its farcical elements, is a proven choice for high school study and an effective introduction leading to an appreciation of Shakespeare. Characterizations are obvious and the poetry is easily understood. Students enjoy listening to recordings of the play and then trying their own dramatic readings. Underneath the broad farce, Shakespeare has commented on personality and marriage. Students should spend time delving into these aspects of the play, possibly in small group discussions. The relationship between Katharina and Petruchio can be well explored through sound and movement activity. Students should show a definite beginning, middle, and end to the relationship as they move the characters through the "taming" procedure. Of course, "who has tamed whom" is evident by the end of the sound and movement exercise. Other worthwhile activities involve comparing Shakespeare's Katharina with Ibsen's Nora.

### Everyman

Written in the fifteenth century, Everyman is an English morality play which explores the average man's inner struggle with

vice and virtue. In the play, Death summons Everyman, the protagonist, to give an account of his life before God. Everyman pleads for more time but Death refuses his plea. Everyman then searches for someone to accompany him into death. He begs Fellowship, Strength, Beauty, and others to join him, but they all refuse. Good Deeds would be willing to accompany him but she is weak from neglect and cannot stand. Everyman is led to Confession, who convinces him to repent, and then Good Deeds is healed of her sickness. Everyman makes one final plea to his friends, but only Good Deeds accompanies him to the grave.

Everyman encourages values clarification exercises. Students can rank order the characters as to their relative nobility, then discuss their choices. Improvisation possibilities can involve modern-day telephone conversations in which "friends" of Everyman all offer excuses for not lending him money; this realistic situation proves an analogy to Everyman's predicament in the play. As the language and tone of Everyman are serious and profound, the teacher should help the students cope with them. This can be done by in-class choral reading and by having students listen to modern tapings or recordings of the play. All-class discussions led by the teacher keep enthusiasm at a high level.

### Lysistrata

Aristophanes wrote this popular Greek comedy in 411 B.C. Lysistrata, an Athenian woman, unites the females of her country to strike against their men in an attempt to stop the senseless Peloponnesian War. The older women capture the Acropolis and defend it against the men. Lysistrata leads a debate, defending the rights of

women and justifying their concern in war and politics. A few women decide to return to their husbands, but the females still triumph in their strike. The men reconcile with them and normal life in Athens resumes.

Lysistrata provokes debate and discussion on women's liberation topics. Also, debate might arise on the war question, as in Arms and the Man. Girls and boys in the class can be paired up as husbands and wives of Athens and an interesting progression of letters might result between them as the Peloponnesian War continues. Students should be sure to compare Aristophanes' treatment of the feminist subject with Ibsen's and Shakespeare's. Because of the large chorus/cast, possibilities for all-class improvisations should be explored. Lysistrata's debate, in the form of a town meeting, can be re-enacted as an entire-class improvisation or role-play. Recordings will help the students with the formal language.

### Rhinoceros

Written in 1959, Eugene Ionesco describes the piece as " . . . an anti-Nazi play, yet it is also and mainly an attack on collective hysteria and the epidemics that lurk beneath the surface of reason and ideas."<sup>1</sup> The protagonist, Beranger, is an average middle-class citizen. He is concerned with his girlfriend Daisy and his friend Jean and is not too affected by the fact that a rhinoceros is roaming about the streets. Throughout the play, the townspeople, eventually including Jean and Daisy, begin to lose their human qualities and turn into rhino-

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<sup>1</sup>Eugene Ionesco, Notes and Counter Notes: Writings on the Theatre (New York: Grove Press, 1964), p. 199.

ceroses. Beranger is left totally alone to contemplate his solitude. Rhinoceros is a study of conformity and contamination, but it is written with a sense of humor and irony.

Before studying Rhinoceros and The American Dream, the teacher should introduce principles of avant-garde theatre. The question of language and characterization should be explored, as well as the philosophy that allows the presentation of a fragmented reality. Ionesco's play encourages the study of "join-the-bandwagon" behavior. It proves interesting to stage an improvisation where the students, one by one, are won over to group behavior. Afterwards, discussion brings out revealing perceptions and feelings. Sound and movement activities are instantly successful because of the play's dealing with so many non-verbal characters anyway. Beranger's diary is an interesting undertaking for students, providing them with new insights on friendships, inner struggle, loss, and loneliness. The play also lends itself to scripting alternative endings, with students working in small groups.

#### The American Dream

Edward Albee's play, written in 1961, is a satire of life in middle-class America. It very effectively shows the ridiculousness of American small talk. The main characters are Mommy, Daddy, and Grandma. Mommy is dominating, Daddy is submissive, and Grandma is rebellious, although she merely waits to be carted off. The family is waiting for the Adoption Service to bring them a new child, for Mommy destroyed the one they had years ago. A handsome man arrives, looking for a job, and because of his absolute perfection--good looks and sexual prowess--Grandma calls him "The American Dream" and the family adopts him.



The American Dream provides valuable material for poetry or original script writing. Alternative endings can be explored, as the Young Man assumes various personalities upon entering this "typical" American family. Response to avant-garde works is easily elicited through art projects such as visual or sound collages. The natural, loose dialogue of The American Dream provides opportunities for imaginative improvisations.

## CHAPTER X

### CONCLUSION

In a response-centered curriculum, students are encouraged to experiment freely with different life styles and experiences. The main goal of such a curriculum is the student's personal and social development. Dramatic literature, because it is alive with rich meaningful moments, is a subject that can be successfully treated with a response-centered approach to learning. This thesis has shown why and how, both in theory and application, the two entities are drawn together.

Students are primarily occupied with engagement/involvement activities in a response-centered curriculum. The process of learning is considered more important than the product of learning, therefore student-to-student communication serves as an integral part of the response-centered program. The small group, usually comprised of three or four students, is a vital agent around which engagement/involvement activities revolve. This group involves itself with various speech activities and values clarification exercises that focus on eliciting student response to dramatic works. In addition, and as emphasized in this thesis, creative dramatics activities are another effective tool to be used in drawing out student response. The teacher's role throughout this process is that of guide or facilitator. He observes and directs his students in their self-discoveries and expressions.

He also has the responsibility of setting criteria and standards for evaluating his students.

While the teacher doesn't often play an obviously active role during his students' process activities, neither is he playing a totally passive role. He possesses a great deal of knowledge to be able to effectively direct the activities his students engage in. The success of his students is largely his personal responsibility, and the importance of teacher preparation cannot be overemphasized. A teacher contemplating implementation of a response-centered approach in a dramatic literature course does well to enroll in drama classes such as stage speech, acting, creative dramatics, and directing. Courses in teaching values clarification and role-playing are also helpful as a supplement to a good English education series. Some colleges and universities, such as the University of Montana, offer English methods courses which deal specifically with response-centered approaches to teaching. In addition to course work, teachers can involve themselves in further research of the subject; the bibliography given in this thesis provides excellent source books for specific dramatic activities that can be applied in the study of dramatic literature. After a teacher has committed himself to a response-centered program in his dramatic literature classroom--after he has prepared himself for conducting an effective and successful program--he accepts one final responsibility: he realizes the importance of flexibility, imagination, and experimentation in the response-centered classroom. Despite what English methods and dramatic literature courses and books espouse, only a sensitive teacher can determine and evaluate what

happens in his classroom.

The fifteen dramatic works used in this specific curriculum are readily available from various paperback book companies. Acting editions of most of the plays may be obtained at relatively low cost from either Samuel French, Inc., 25 W. 45th St., New York City, New York, 10036, or Dramatists Play Service, 440 Park Avenue South, New York City, New York, 10016.

There are several areas in the response-centered curriculum which merit further research. The evaluation process needs to be studied in depth, so that procedures for student evaluation will be expanded, and a more detailed description of setting specific standards for evaluation will emerge. Another area of concern revolves around the role of the teacher. Here, further studies will do well to explore teacher training options in the field of response-centered curricula. Numerous renowned people of the creative dramatics field, such as Brian Way, currently offer this type of practical workshop to teachers. A final suggestion is that an in-depth study be conducted in the choosing of dramatic texts for high school students. Educators must always be wary of losing readers by trying too soon for a maturity of tastes, and further research will reveal the interests and natural enthusiasms of contemporary high school students.

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