## ADA4M: Grade 12 Dramatic Arts, College/University
### Verbatim Theatre

**Context:**
This unit explores a genre of theatre that has gained importance and popularity in recent theatre history. Verbatim Theatre involves the creation of theatre that is drawn from word-for-word interviews with real people. It has been used to explore events in recent history such as 9/11, the murder of Matthew Shepard, and the race riots in Los Angeles. It also documents the voices of people from the margins, such as homeless youth or caregivers from the Philippines. Students might be familiar with the genre of the docudrama from prior drama courses, but they will certainly be familiar with reality television that has exploded in the last decade. Verbatim Theatre is designed to deepen their encounter and exploration of reality-based dramas. The unit could be used as the groundwork for the creation of a Verbatim theatre performance piece around a theme that is loosely explored in the unit: the theme of change.

**Summary:**
The Verbatim Theatre unit will be scaffolded through voice, movement, storytelling and interviewing activities to invite students into the process of recreating 'reality' both as an actor and as a writer. The unit will culminate in a polished performance piece that was developed from earlier lessons.

### Expectations

**A1. The Creative Process:** use the creative process and a variety of sources and forms, both individually and collaboratively, to design and develop drama works;

**A2. Elements and Conventions:** use the elements and conventions of drama effectively in creating individual and ensemble drama works, including works based on a variety of global sources;

**A3. Presentation Techniques and Technologies:** use a variety of presentation techniques and technological tools to enhance the impact of drama works and communicate for specific audiences and purposes.

**B1. Critical Analysis Process:** use the critical analysis process to reflect on and evaluate their own and others' drama works;

**B2. Drama and Society:** demonstrate an understanding of how societies present and past use or have used drama, and of how creating and viewing drama can benefit individuals, groups, and communities;

**B3. Continuing Engagement:** identify knowledge and skills they have acquired through drama activities, and ways in which they can apply this learning in personal, social, and career contexts.

**C1. Concepts and Terminology:** demonstrate an understanding of the nature and functions of drama forms, elements, conventions, and techniques, including the correct terminology for the various components;

**C3. Responsible Practices:** demonstrate an understanding of safe, ethical, and responsible personal and interpersonal practices in drama activities.

### Unit Guiding Questions
- What is Verbatim Theatre? Why is it important and compelling?
- What are the challenges of creating Verbatim Theatre? What tools are available to the artist to create Verbatim Theatre?
- What ethical considerations must be demonstrated when creating Verbatim Theatre?
- How can a Verbatim Theatre piece be edited?
- What happens to the ‘truth’ when it is shaped, revised and interpreted through an actor?
- What can we learn about ourselves through telling and listening to personal stories? What can we learn about our society?
- How can we use Verbatim Theatre to educate and eventually change social views and practices?

### Lesson Guiding Questions

#### Lesson 1-Telling Other People's Stories
- How can we share and re-tell our stories in a way that feels safe and respected?
- Whose stories in our society get told?
- Whose stories do not get told?
- How can theatre tell other people's stories without exploiting or appropriating them?

#### Lesson 2-Defining the Genre
- What does the word Verbatim mean as applied to theatre?
- What are the basic principles that define the genre?
- Why might this be a compelling style of theatre for an artist and audience?

#### Lesson 3-The Overheard Conversation
- What's it like to 'listen in' on other people's conversations and how can we do that respectfully?
- What can you gain as a theatre artist by observing interactions in the 'real world'?
- How can the artist mold and shape reality through editing while still honouring the truth?

#### Lesson 4-The Composite Character Monologue
- How do you create questions and conduct interviews in Verbatim Theatre? How do you record your data?
- What written cues can you give the actor about the way your character speaks?
- What does it feel like to hear your answers spoken in the composite character monologue?
Lesson 5-Polishing and Performing the Verbatim Text
How can the written verbatim text be interpreted by the actor? What is lost in the translation from the page to the stage? What is gained? How is your understanding of reality television different from when we started the unit? What have you learned about the topic of change? How have you deepened our understanding of change?

Assessment and Evaluation: How will students demonstrate their learning?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Assessment of Learning</th>
<th>Culminating Performance Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Students will be evaluated on their rehearsals using the Creation Process Checklist.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Students will be evaluated on their polished (written) Verbatim text.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Students will be evaluated on the performance of the monologue using the Verbatim Theatre Monologue Performance Rubric that was co-constructed by the class.</td>
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<td>4. Students will be evaluated on their Verbatim Theatre Reflection.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment for Learning</th>
<th>Check Point #1/Lesson 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback on written version of stories</td>
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| Check Point #2/Lesson 2 | Group Self-Evaluation using the Creation Process Checklist |
| Check Point #3/Lesson 3 | Teacher Feedback on Creation Process |
| Check Point #4/Lesson 4 | Written teacher feedback on Composite Character Monologue |
|                        | Oral feedback from teacher and class on Composite Character Monologue |
| Check Point #5/Lesson 5 | Peer Feedback on Performance using Co-constructed Rubric |

Unit Lessons: How will assessment and instruction be organized for learning?

| Lesson 1 | Lesson 1 - Telling Other People's Stories | 2 classes |
| Lesson 2 | Lesson 2 - Defining and Creating within the Genre | 3 classes |
| Lesson 3 | Lesson 3 - The Overheard Conversation | 1-2 classes |
| Lesson 4 | Lesson 4 - The Composite Character Monologue | 1-2 classes |
| Lesson 5 | Lesson 5 - Polishing and Performing the Verbatim Text | 3 classes |

Approx. Duration 1 class = 75 minutes
# Verbatim Theatre

## Lesson 1: Telling Other People's Stories

### Critical Learning

In this lesson, students will experience and reflect on the process that lies at the heart of Verbatim Theatre: telling other people’s stories. Beginning with their own stories, students will learn to make respectful observations about their classmates and re-tell a classmate’s story in role.

### Guiding Questions

- How can we share and re-tell our stories in a way that feels safe and respected?
- What verbal and non-verbal cues should we pay attention to when observing others tell stories? Whose stories in our society get told? Whose stories do not get told? How can theatre tell other people’s stories without exploiting or appropriating them?

### Curriculum Expectations

| A1.3 | create and interpret a wide range of characters using a variety of acting approaches |
| A3.1 | demonstrate an understanding of how different acting and staging techniques reflect and support different purposes in drama |
| C3.1 | identify and follow safe and ethical practices in all drama activities |
| B1.2 | analyse a variety of contemporary and historical drama works to explain and evaluate how they communicate themes and dramatize issues |
| B2.1 | demonstrate an understanding of how drama questions social and cultural conditions in a variety of Canadian and global drama sources and traditions |
| B2.2 | describe ways in which their personal experiences in drama have influenced their attitudes to others and their world view. |
| B2.3 | describe ways in which drama can support or influence school and/or local community affairs. |

### Learning Goals

- At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:
  - identify physical and vocal nuances that can be observed by the actor and recreated from real life
  - respectfully recreate the speech and physical patterns of another person
  - capture the essence of another person in the re-telling of their story

### Instructional Components

**Readiness**

Students should be familiar with voice and movement exercises and the experience of building a character both physically and vocally. Students should have built trust and respect for each other through various ensemble building activities at the beginning of the year.

**Terminology**

- Shadowing
- Inside-Outside Circle
- T-Chart
- Pivotal Moment
- In role

**Materials**

Clip from Anna Deavere Smith’s field play *Twilight Los Angeles* (if copyright permits)

Chart Paper and Markers
# Verbatim Theatre
## Lesson 1: Telling Other People’s Stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minds On</th>
<th>Approximately 30 minutes</th>
<th>Pause and Ponder</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Whole Group &gt; Walk in Space &gt; Observation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment for Learning (AFL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invite students to walk around the room at a normal speed. Every ten seconds, ask them to change directions so as not to fall into any pattern of walking around the room. Ask them to speed up, slow down and walk backwards and sideways, change levels etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td>While students are telling their stories, pause them at anytime and ask students to perform on the spot or circulate and listen in on their stories. Use this to gauge how much they are changing their bodies and voices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instruct students to observe one student in the room without letting them know they are being observed. Coach them to notice the speed at which they walk, the shape of their body when they walk, if they are holding any tension, etc. Ask students to notice another person without letting the first person out of their peripheral vision. Add a third and then a fourth. Ask students to consider: how much can you observe about other people at one time?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Collect the recorded stories and provide written feedback on any important parts they may have missed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct students to choose one person to shadow without being obvious about it. All of their movement should now be determined by the person they are shadowing– their rhythm, posture, foot placement, etc. Emphasize that they are not to mock or imitate each other but to capture the essence or ‘truth’ of how each person moves.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment as Learning (AaL)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instruct the students to follow that person for about thirty seconds. Ask the students as they continue to work to consider the following: Where are their eyes looking-forward, down, to the side or up? Where is their chest and posture? Where are their arms? Pelvis? Knees? Toes? Consider tempo.</td>
<td></td>
<td>While students are rehearsing their partner’s stories, ask them to refer back to the T-chart created to remind themselves of the physical and vocal nuances they might recall about their partner in the re-telling of their stories.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instruct the students to follow another student and then another, constantly switching subjects to follow them as they move into their field of vision. Ask students to try borrowing movements from two people in the room. They might copy one person’s tempo and the way another person moves their arms. Ask them to gradually try to add more.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Differentiation (DI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whole Group &gt; Inside-Outside Circle</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assign pairs or allow for student choice depending on the group. Tell them that they will get the most out of the activity if they choose someone they do not know very well.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have students form two circles facing each other so that every student has a partner. Instruct the inside circle to tell a 30 second story about themselves as a food lover. Instruct the outside circle to shift one or two students to the right and tell a story about their love for food in the style (attempting to capture the gestures and speech patterns) of the previous partner. Now ask the outside circle to tell a 30 second story about generosity while the inside circle observes. The inside circle shifts to the right but tells their story as a generous person but in the style of their partner from the outside circle. Ask the group what they would like the next story to be about. Continue telling stories this way until they have practiced telling stories at least three times.</td>
<td></td>
<td>If you have ELL students in your class, give them the option of telling stories in their own language as a way of beginning the activity and then encourage them to move into English.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Suggested Topics:</strong> Tell a story about selflessness, tell a story about your vision of the future, tell a story about a recurring dream, tell a story about love.</td>
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<td>Consider doing the debrief as a written reflection first if students have difficulty opening up about their responses to the activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Whole Group &gt; T-Chart</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Quick Tip</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct the students to create a T-Chart with the headings voice and body. Invite students to name physical and vocal qualities they observed (i.e. pauses in speech, the words Um and like or the way a person ends a question in a sentence). Ask the students to examine the list and consider: What are the most difficult human behaviors to recreate as a performer? Why?</td>
<td></td>
<td>This inner-outer circle activity can be done in a straight line or in pairs but the key is to randomly change partners quickly and many times. This is a warm-up activity and should move very quickly. Limit the stories to 30 seconds or one minute.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Action!</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare a list of different topics for the inner-outer circle. Think about what this particular group of students might be interested in telling stories about.</td>
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| Approximately 75 minutes | |
| **Pairs > Storytelling** | |
| Invite the students to think about and prepare a two minute story about a pivotal moment in their life (i.e. a turning point) when they went from thinking one way about their life or the world around them to thinking another way. It can be a story about an experience they had, or an inspiration from a book they read, or a speech they heard-- anything that significantly changed their way of thinking. Remind them to be specific in their storytelling. | |
| Inform them that whatever story they choose to tell will be shared with the class so they should not share anything that will make them feel uncomfortable. | | Post the T-chart and use it as anchor chart for the lesson. Add to it over the course of the unit. |
Invite the students to tell the story to a partner. Instruct the students that the student who is listening to the story must listen to the words carefully while observing how the story is being told. Explain that they will share that person's story in role as that person, attempting to capture the truth or essence of that person but making the story seem like their own. Allow students to decide who is going first and then time them for two minutes exactly.

After students have told their stories, ask students to sit back to back with their partner, practising telling each other's stories for approximately 5 minutes.

Direct each storyteller to immediately record their partner's story in writing to keep for the Culminating Task. Remind them that the story should be written in the first person.

Whole Class > Storytelling Circle
Invite students to form a circle. In any order, students should tell their partners' stories to the group, attempting to capture the essence of the story and how it was told. Ask partners to sit separately from each other in the circle, and not to tell their stories one after the other. Instruct the students that they will share all the stories and debrief the stories and the activity when all the students have shared.

Consolidation
Approximately 20 minutes
Whole Class > Storytelling Debrief Discussion
Engage students in a debrief discussion about the storytelling activity.

Key Questions for Discussion:
How did it feel to watch your story being told by your partner? Did it feel respectful? Why or why not?
Did you recognize any of your classmates in the stories that were told? Did it feel like the story 'belonged' to the teller even though they were imitating another person?
What changed about the story in the re-telling? What is lost and what is gained in the actor's interpretation?
What new understandings do you have about other people in this class?
What makes it feel safe to do this activity? What makes it feel unsafe?
Whose stories get told? Whose stories are hidden?
What are the implications in telling someone else's story when they are a different gender, race or ethnicity from you, the performer?
What is your responsibility when telling someone else's story?

If you cannot access the link to Twilight Los Angeles, use information about the play and the playwright online or use a copy of the play.

Link and Layer
Link this type of acting to various styles of acting such as the outside-in acting technique that is a variation on the Stanislavski method.

After sharing stories, have the group identify similar themes that emerge as a way of building topic material for a collective creation.

Consider linking Verbatim Theatre to the oral tradition of storytelling where stories were passed on from one generation to the next. How were stories told so that people could remember them prior to writing being available?

Hyperlinks in the Lesson
Twilight

If copyright permits, show clips of different characters from Anna Deavere Smith’s play Twilight Los Angeles (http://www.pbs.org/wnet/stageonscreen/twilight/twilight.html), a play based on interviews from a range of people responding to the Los Angeles riots following the 1992 Rodney King trial. Ask students to comment on the ways she changed her voice and body to indicate create new characters.
Grade 12 Dramatic Arts

Verbatim Theatre
Lesson 2: Defining the Genre

Critical Learning

In this lesson, students will be introduced to the concept of Verbatim Theatre by broadly defining the term verbatim as it applies to theatre. Students will differentiate between verbatim theatre and docudrama by investigating and presenting a newspaper article in the style of each genre. Students will build on their experience with dramatic forms by incorporating tableau, choral speaking and movement into each presentation.

Guiding Questions

What is Verbatim Theatre? How is it different from docudrama or documentary theatre? Why is it a socially important style of theatre? What are the artistic challenges of Verbatim Theatre? What did you learn about media bias by examining the same story reported through different news sources?

Curriculum Expectations

A1.2 select and use a variety of drama forms to present original drama works

A3.1 demonstrate an understanding of how different acting and staging techniques reflect and support different purposes in drama

B2.3 describe ways in which drama can support or influence school and/or local community affairs

C3.3 demonstrate an understanding of correct theatre worker and audience etiquette in classroom drama activities and formal performance contexts

C3.1 identify and follow safe and ethical practices in all drama activities

Learning Goals

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- explain the word verbatim and how it applies to theatre
- distinguish between documentary and verbatim theatre
- create and present a newspaper article in the style of verbatim and documentary theatre
- suggest some reasons why this is a socially important style of theatre

Instructional Components

Readiness

This lesson builds on the previous storytelling lesson by making explicit the genre and techniques of Verbatim Theatre. The dramatic work draws on their knowledge of dramatic forms (such as docudrama) from previous courses. The case study of Matthew Shepard and the Laramie Project contains sensitive material, and so issues of trust and respect must be established in the classroom prior to this lesson, and should be revisited before delving in to the material.

Terminology

Docudrama
Documentary Theatre
Verbatim Theatre
Mind Map
Anchor Chart
Homophobia

Materials

Chart Paper or a Blackboard
Variety of newspaper articles on the same topics from different sources
Background information on Matthew Shepard
Film of *The Laramie Project* (if copyright permits)
BLM #1 Newspaper Article Instructions
BLM #2 Creative Process
Observation Checklist
BLM #3 The Overheard Conversation Assignment

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Verbatim Theatre
Lesson 2: Defining the Genre

Minds On
Approximately 15 minutes
Pairs > Mind Map
Write the terms Verbatim Theatre and docudrama in writing on opposite sides of the board. Using dictionaries and/or the Internet, ask students to work in pairs to come up with definitions for the two genres and write them near each word on the board to create a mind map surrounding each word.

Whole Class > Defining the Genre
Ask one student to read the set of definitions aloud to the class. Ask students to think about the similarities and differences as they listen to the definitions. As a class, come up with a clear definition for each term and post it on an anchor chart for students to reference throughout the unit.

Action!
Approximately 40 minutes
Small Groups > News in Different Genres
Number students into groups of 4 or 5. Provide each group with articles on the same topic from different current newspapers. Select articles with quotes from a variety of people in the story. Direct half of the groups to recreate the newspaper article in the style of Verbatim Theatre and the other half to present in the style of a docudrama. See attached instructions (BLM #1) for more detailed instructions.

Give students 20-30 minutes to create and rehearse their presentations.

Whole Class > Presenting News in Different Genres
Direct the students to present the articles to the class in each of the styles. Debrief the presentations.

Key Questions for Discussion:
Which style was more interesting to watch? Why?
Which style is more challenging for the artist to work with? Why?
What differences did you notice about how the event/issue was reported in different newspapers?
What kind of bias does this reveal about the different newspapers?

Return to the earlier T-Chart and anchor chart and ask students to add new understandings to the list of differences between the two genres based on their work on the articles.

Whole Class > Viewing of The Laramie Project
If possible, show students the film version of The Laramie Project as an example of Verbatim Theatre. If copyright does not permit, then read excerpts of the play together. Before showing the film, familiarize students with the background on Matthew Shepard’s death and the creation of The Laramie Project using background research.

While viewing the film, ask students to consider why Verbatim Theatre is a powerful medium to tell the story of Mathew Shepard. Challenge them to think about why this kind of storytelling may have a greater impact on how people view and think about the issue of homophobia in our society.

Consolidation
Approximately 175 minutes
Whole Class > Post-Viewing Reflection
After viewing the film, ask students to brainstorm a list of reasons why The Laramie Project (and Verbatim Theatre in general) is a socially important form of theatre. Record their answers on the board. Some answers might be related to issues like community participation, the audience feeling closer to and more emotionally affected by the truth, giving voice to the marginalized, keeping a historical record, combating homophobia. Engage students in a discussion about the context for the film.

Key Questions for Discussion:
Do you think homophobia was the reason behind Matthew Shepard’s death? Why or why not?
Why did the media become so interested in Matthew’s story?

Assessment as Learning (AaL)
Use the Creative Process Observation Checklist (BLM #2) to observe the students as they engage in the assignment. Collect and post the checklist with students so that they can self-evaluate their group’s creation process.

Assessment for Learning (AFL)
Observe the words and definitions that students add to the anchor chart to monitor their developing understanding of Verbatim Theatre.

Differentiation (DI)
Numbering students into groups is a more equitable way of forming groups so that students don’t exclude others. Consider playing a game like Atom to get students to form random groups.

Quick Tip
Post the definitions for the duration of the unit and invite students to return to the definitions adding their new understandings and learning.

Choose newspaper articles that are relevant and current to students in your particular community. Consider choosing articles on same topic but from different newspapers or magazines to discuss how events get reported differently in the media.

Consider giving students the Overheard Conversation Assignment before you watch The Laramie Project so you can give them a few days to complete it.

Link and Layer
When introducing the concept of Verbatim Theatre make links to the theatre form of collective creation, including The Farm Show, in which actors from Theatre Passe Muraille lived with farmers in Clinton, Ontario...
Do you think Laramie was more homophobic than other places in the United States? In the world? Why or why not?
What different experiences might someone have being gay in a small town versus a big city?
Do you think people’s attitudes toward homosexuality have changed? Why or why not?
Do you have any personal stories that you can share about someone dealing with homophobia or coming out?
Why do you think homophobia exists?

Invite comments about how the actors and the director made the interviews dramatically engaging for the audience. Prompt students to think about elements like music, juxtaposition of interviews, visual images that accompany the monologues, character choices, setting.

Whole Class > Homework Assignment
Give students the Overheard Conversation Assignment (BLM #3) to complete for homework. Read the assignment aloud and take questions from the students about the details.

and created a performance on their lives and experiences.
Encourage students to observe the differences in the way the media reports on one event.
Link this type of acting to various styles of acting--like an outside-in acting technique that is a variation on the Stanislavski method.

Hyperlinks in the Lesson
BLM #1 Newspaper Article Instructions
BLM #2 Creative Process Observation Checklist
BLM #3 The Overheard Conversation Assignment
### Verbatim Theatre

#### Lesson 3: The Overheard Conversation

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<th>Guiding Questions</th>
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<td>In this lesson, students will revise and perform two versions of their Overheard Conversation Assignment from the previous lesson. Students will learn about and reflect on the revision process that may occur while creating Verbatim Theatre.</td>
<td>How does it feel to record other people's conversations? How can you record people in a way that feels responsible and ethical? Are overheard conversations dramatically interesting? Can overheard conversations be used as raw material or inspiration for a script? What editing choices can be made to improve a 'real life' script while maintaining its truthfulness? How can the writer help the actor to create a character from a script? How does the actor search for clues about the character in the script? Think about reality television: do you think those conversations get 'edited'? In what ways? Should it be called reality television when a lot of it is edited?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Curriculum Expectations</th>
<th>Learning Goals</th>
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<tr>
<td>B1.1 use the critical analysis process to reflect on and justify or revise decisions in creating drama works C3.1 identify and follow safe and ethical practices in all drama activities</td>
<td>At the end of this lesson, students will be able to: • revise a Verbatim Theatre script • create a staged reading of two Verbatim scripts • reflect on the revision process for Verbatim Theatre</td>
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<tr>
<th>Instructional Components</th>
<th>Materials</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Readiness</strong></td>
<td>An ‘overheard conversation’ script for each student. Teacher will need to photocopy students’ scripts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each student must have a script to work with based on the homework assignment from the previous lesson. Students should have some experience with editing and revising original scripts.</td>
<td><strong>Terminology</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Editing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dialogue</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Writing in Role</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Inner Monologue</strong></td>
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### Verbatim Theatre
**Lesson 3: The Overheard Conversation**

#### Minds On
Approximately 10 minutes

**Pairs > Sharing and Reflecting**
Invite students to work with a partner to share their thoughts and feelings about documenting someone else's conversation in their Overheard Conversation Assignment. Ask them to reflect on what was challenging about the assignment. *What did you learn about writing dialogue?*

Invite the students to share some of their answers with the larger group.

#### Action!
Approximately 60 minutes

**Small Groups > Editing the Overheard Conversation Scripts**
Ask students to move into groups of two or three or four, depending on how many people were recorded in their overheard conversations. Ideally, most groups will be made up of 2 or 3 people.

Have students read their Overheard Conversation scripts to each other and select one script to edit. Instruct students to write a new version of the script that is edited down to ten lines. They may add or omit words to make the ten lines coherent as a script. Instruct them to write one new line anywhere in the script that will help introduce a conflict or a reversal (change).

**Small groups > Rehearsing Overheard Conversation Scripts**
Give students photocopies of each group's scripts (the edited and the original) so that there are enough copies for each speaker in the scene. Then, instruct groups to pass the scripts on to another group to rehearse and perform.

Give students time to rehearse their staged readings in their groups. Encourage them to work on their feet, adding some blocking to the scene even though they will still be reading from the script. Instruct students to recreate the original setting of the first Verbatim Theatre script but change the second (if possible) in the second edited script.

**Whole Class > Presenting Overheard Conversation Scripts**
Direct students to perform the two versions of the script for the class. After each presentation, invite students to comment on the verbatim and the revised scripts.

**Key Questions for Discussion:**
- *Which version was more compelling—the original or the edited version?*
- *Did the edits maintain the essence of the verbatim script or change it radically?*
- *How did the new setting impact the script?*

Ask the original writers to comment on what it was like to watch actors interpret the voices in the script. *What new interpretations did the actors bring to the script? What did they miss in their interpretation?*

Explain that Verbatim Theatre, although it always aims for 'word for word' authenticity, is often edited or mediated to enhance or create new meaning. Ask students to brainstorm a list of ways that a Verbatim Theatre script might be edited. Record this list as an anchor chart on the board or on chart paper.

#### Consolidation
Approximately 15 minutes

**Individual > Writing in Role**
Ask students to imagine that they are one of the people in either their own or someone else's Overheard Conversation Script and write a monologue in role as that person. The inner monologue should explore their thoughts about the conversation recorded and can take place before or after the conversation. While writing, instruct students to keep the voice of the person in mind and to try to recreate the speech patterns in their writing.

#### Pause and Ponder

**Assessment for Learning (AfL)**
Use the scripts to gauge how much students understand the structure of writing plays. Collect them or conference with writers to offer formative feedback as they are editing.

Use the Creative Process Observation Checklist to give students feedback on their rehearsal process during the staged reading.

**Assessment as Learning (AaL)**
By sharing and editing with partners and receiving feedback from the class, students can assess and refine their own abilities to create original scripts.

**Differentiation (DI)**
If a student feels uncomfortable 'eavesdropping' on conversations outside the classroom, give them an opportunity to record conversations that happen within the classroom.

If students find the ten line script too limiting, be flexible about how much they need to edit.

**Quick Tip**
By passing their scripts to another group, students are interpreting the verbatim script with 'fresh' eyes and ears. The writer of the original script can impersonate the people overheard from memory. This way the writer can see how helpful the script was in allowing the actor to create a character from it that is close to the original speaker.

Create an opportunity for students to share the Overheard Conversation monologue in the next lesson. Make the Overheard Conversation monologue in to a more in depth assignment by asking students to link the monologues to the scenes and create a performance.

**Link and Layer**
Explain that many writers use the technique of eavesdropping to create
characters and dialogue. For example, Judith Thompson borrowed a lot of her characters and dialogue from the work she did as a social worker.
Verbatim Theatre
Lesson 4: Creating Composite Characters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Learning</th>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In this lesson, students will learn about composite character creation in Verbatim Theatre by seeing examples from contemporary theatre. Through interviews with many classmates, students will create composite character monologues.</td>
<td>What is a composite character? Why is the purpose of creating a composite character in Verbatim Theatre? How can we create one seamless voice out of many different interviews? How do we conduct interviews to get the most interesting responses possible?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Expectations</th>
<th>Learning Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C3.1 identify and follow safe and ethical practices in all drama activities</td>
<td><strong>Learning Goals</strong> By the end of this lesson, students will:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1.2 use correct terminology for the styles, components, processes, and techniques of drama in creating and critiquing drama works and theatre performances</td>
<td>• explain the term composite character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2.2 describe ways in which their personal experiences in drama have influenced their attitudes to others and their world view</td>
<td>• identify examples of composite character creation from contemporary theatre projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1.1 use the critical analysis process to reflect on and justify or revise decisions in creating drama works</td>
<td>• create a composite character monologue based on multiple interviews with classmates</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Readiness</strong> In this lesson students are building on their experiences of monologue writing from previous courses and are honing their ability to listen and observe people in real life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Terminology</strong> Composite Character Monologue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Verbatim Theatre
### Lesson 4: Creating Composite Characters

### Minds On
**Approximately 10 minutes**

- **Whole Class > Composite Character Definition**
  - Write the word *composite character* on the board and invite students to explain what the word composite means in relation to character and Verbatim Theatre. Explain that Verbatim Theatre artists sometimes create composite character creations in which where several different interview subjects are collapsed into a single voice.
  
  Look at examples of composite character creations based on multiple interviews include Eve Ensler’s *The Vagina Monologues* or New York Theatre Workshop’s *Aftermath*.

### Action!
**Approximately 60 minutes**

- **Whole Class > Interviews**
  - Explain that each student is going to create a composite character monologue based on interviews that they will conduct with their classmates. Cut up the questions from BLM #4 and ask students to select one question randomly from a hat or envelope.
  
  Instruct students to walk around the room and ask their peers the questions while taking notes. Remind them to record everything the interviewees say, including "umms" and pauses, etc.
  
  Give students about 15-20 minutes to walk around the room interviewing their peers. Try to do this activity alongside the students. When you observe that students have interviewed at least five people, ask them to find a spot in the room where they can write individually.

- **Individual > Monologue Writing**
  - Explain to students that they will write a monologue for one character based on the notes generated from their various interviews. Give students the instructions (BLM#5) for writing the monologue. Give students 20-30 minutes to create their monologues as you work on yours.

- **Whole Class > Monologue Sharing**
  - When students have completed their monologues, invite each student to share their monologue with the group. They can do this informally in a circle, or stand in front of the class to read the monologue. Invite students to comment on whether the monologue sounds like one character. Ask the writer and students questions about the choices they made to make it sound like one voice.

### Key Questions for Discussion:
*How many interviews did you end up using in the final monologue?*
*Did you use one interview after another in the order you collected the information, or did you mix up all the interviews?*
*Are there any suggestions from the class about how we can make this monologue sound more like one character? What feels out of place?*

### Consolidation
**Approximately 10 minutes**

- **Individual > Exit Cards**
  - When the sharing has concluded, instruct students to fill out an Exit Card by finished the following writing prompts:

    - *When I heard my answer spoken in the monologue, I . . .*
    - *The most difficult thing about the assignment was . . .*
    - *A question I would have liked to ask my classmates during the interviews is . . .*

- **Individual > Homework**
  - Instruct student to choose one of their monologues from either Lesson 1 or 4 for another student in the class to perform. Tell students to word process the monologue if possible and make any changes to it based on the written feedback from you.

### Pause and Ponder

- **Assessment for Learning (AFL)**
  - Working alongside the students will allow you to assess their commitment to the project as well as observe their interviewing and listening skills.

- **Assessment as Learning (AaL)**
  - Collect the Composite Character Monologues (along with their notes) and give students written feedback on how to improve it so that it sounds like one character speaking.

- **Differentiation (DI)**
  - Allow students to choose other questions if they are unhappy with the ones they chose.

  Consider pairing students for the final activity based on the needs and strengths of the students. Allow one student to scribe for another if necessary.

- **Quick Tip**
  - Look for clips or examples of composite character creations on the Internet or in play scripts to show students.

  Provide time between lessons 4 and 5 so that written feedback can be provided on the Composite Character monologues. Have students create the polished versions in a computer lab or consider doing a research project on recent Verbatim Theatre projects. See BLM #5 for a list of examples of projects.

### Hyperlinks in the Lesson
- [BLM #4 Composite Character Interview Questions](#)
- [BLM #5 Composite Character Monologue Instructions](#)
## Verbatim Theatre
### Lesson 5: Polishing and Performing the Verbatim Theatre Text

#### Critical Learning

In this culminating task, students will create a polished performance from another student’s monologue that was developed in Lesson 1 or 4. Through acting techniques and activities, students will make the character specific and receive feedback as they build toward a performance.

#### Guiding Questions

- How can you create your own character from a verbatim text?
- What clues can you find in the text to help you build your character?
- How can you use setting and audience as a means of creating character?
- How can we as a class move forward into collective creation following this unit?

#### Curriculum Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1.2</td>
<td>select and use a variety of drama forms to present original drama works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1.3</td>
<td>create and interpret a wide range of characters using a variety of acting approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2.1</td>
<td>use the elements of drama to achieve specific purposes in drama works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1.1</td>
<td>use the critical analysis process to reflect on and justify or revise decisions in creating drama works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1.2</td>
<td>use correct terminology for the styles, components, processes, and techniques of drama in creating and critiquing drama works and theatre performances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1.3</td>
<td>demonstrate an understanding of how various media can be used in the production and promotion of drama works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3.1</td>
<td>identify and follow safe and ethical practices in all drama activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Learning Goals (Unpacked Expectations)

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- build a character from a Verbatim Theatre text
- make interpretive decisions about setting and audience that will aid in the development of the character
- rehearse a monologue performance inside and outside of class time
- co-construct a rubric for the performance
- give feedback on other student performances using the rubric
- perform a monologue in front of the class
- identify further directions for a collective creation

#### Instructional Components

##### Readiness

Students should have prepared a polished (word processed) version of their Verbatim Theatre monologue from Lesson 1 or 4. The polished version should have incorporated teacher feedback. Students should have some familiarity with Stanislavski concepts such as objectives, tactics, etc.

The monologues generated in this culminating task could be used as the basis for a collective creation project undertaken by the class as a whole.

##### Terminology

- Gesture
- Collective Creation

##### Materials

- A Verbatim Theatre monologue for each student.
- BLM #6 Character Creation Sheet
- BLM #7 Monologue Performance Rubric
- BLM #8 Verbatim Theatre Reflection
### Minds On

**Whole Class > Walking and Talking with the Monologue**

Ensure that students have a copy of the monologue they are going to perform. Instruct them to walk around the room reading the text silently several times. Tell them to continue walking around the room and adapt their reading according to your instructions:

- Mouth the words to the monologue
- Speak them in a whisper
- Speak them in a normal volume
- Speak them in a loud voice, competing to be heard
- Speak them as you imagine yourself in the Arctic
- Speak them as you imagine yourself at the beach on a hot day
- Speak them as you race to get somewhere because you are late
- Focus on punctuation. Stop when you reach a period, semicolon, exclamation mark or question. Slide when you see an ellipses. Change directions for a dash. Jump on a comma.

**Individual > Character Creation Sheet**

Give students the Character Creation Sheet (BLM #6). Ask them to fill out the sheet, making specific choices about their character that are grounded in the text. Remind them to first search for clues about their character within the text rather than imposing a character onto the text.

### Action!

**Individual > Create Set and A Gesture**

Invite students to find a spot in the room where they can work individually. Have them to create a set for their monologues using whatever is in the room (they can bring props from home as well). Ask them to begin with one line from the script that they think is the most important or most revealing for their character. Tell them to memorize the line and find an action or gesture to accompany the line.

Instruct students to rehearse their one line again and again so that they find a beginning and ending to the action and gesture as well as the line. Explain that if we were to catch this ten second glimpse into your character’s world, we would learn everything we could about them through this gesture and line.

Stop the rehearsal when you think students are ready and invite each student to perform their line and gesture. Give students feedback on how strong or revealing their choices are and what they could extend further.

Repeat the above process but this time ask students to create the "moment before" and then the first line and gesture.

**Paris > Creative Process**

Ask students to work for at least one class in pairs with one student directing and holding the text while the other student is given (by the director) the lines and ideas for creation. Ask the director to keep these questions in mind while helping the actor:

*Is the opening moment believable (where is the character coming from and what are they doing)? How are they using their set?*

*Are the objectives and obstacles being played?*

*Can the audience hear them?*

*To whom are they speaking?*

*Can I help the actor to make this clearer?*

**Whole Class > Co-construct Success Criteria**

Stop rehearsal at an early point in the creative process to develop the success criteria for a performance rubric. Ask students to suggest categories (like voice, movement, set, objective). For a sample performance rubric see Monologue Performance Rubric BLM #7.

### Pause and Ponder

**Assessment for Learning (AFL)**

While students are walking around the room, check in with them that they can read and understand the words in their given monologue.

Circulate and give students help and feedback on their Character Creation sheets to ensure that they are making their character as specific as possible.

**Assessment as Learning (AaL)**

Co-construct the criteria for the Performance Rubric with the students. Ask student to use the Performance Rubric to peer evaluate each other before the performance.

**Differentiation (Di)**

Depending on your class, you can distribute the monologues in advance (keeping in mind what would either be a challenge or a good fit for your student) or distribute them randomly or ask each writer to suggest two actors to perform their monologue and make your decision based on their choices.

If students are struggling with the Character Creation sheet, consider partnering them with the writer who can help them make discoveries within the text.

**Quick Tip**

For the performance, students can pick names from a hat to create an order or volunteer to perform. You can decide to have students perform individually, facing everyone or perform in the round, where students perform from the space they were rehearsing in the room.

**Link and Layer**

The techniques in the Character Creation Sheet are borrowed from the Stanislavski system (and Uta Hagen). Make this explicit to students, especially if they have already studied these techniques.

Consider using the material generated in this final task as the basis for a collective creation. The class may decide to focus their collective creation on one or a combination of the monologues performed, or may wish to choose a theme or issue from their discussions and reflections for further investigation.
### Whole Class > Performing and Evaluating
Perform the Verbatim Theatre monologues. At the end of each performance, ask students to comment on one positive aspect of the performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consolidation</th>
<th>Approximately 5 minutes</th>
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</table>

### Whole Class > Discussion
After presentations have concluded, use the critical analysis process to facilitate a discussion with the class based on their observations of their peers’ work.

**Key Questions for Discussion:**
- Were there common themes running through our stories? What were they?
- If you could choose a Verbatim Theatre topic that would be interest or importance to the school, what would it be and why?
- How are the examples of Verbatim Theatre that you have seen in this class different from the version of 'reality' that is popular on television?
- Do you think Verbatim Theatre makes for compelling theatre? Why or why not?
- Whose voices get silenced in this school? In our community? In Canada? In the world?
- Why is it important to hear their voices and stories?

### Individual > Written Reflection
Hand out the [Verbatim Theatre Reflection (BLM #8)](BLM #8) and ask students to begin answering the questions. Ask them to return the reflection within 3-5 days for evaluation.

**Hyperlinks in the Lesson**
- [BLM #6 Character Creation Sheet](BLM #6)
- [BLM #7 Monologue Performance Rubric](BLM #7)
- [BLM #8 Verbatim Theatre Reflection](BLM #8)