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Thirteen texts every student must read to have a well-rounded high school theatre education

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**THIRTEEN TEXTS EVERY STUDENT MUST READ TO HAVE
A WELL-ROUNDED HIGH SCHOOL THEATRE EDUCATION**

by

Gary Bernard Sessa

**Bachelor of Arts
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
1988**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the**

**Master of Arts Degree
Department of Theatre Arts
College of Fine Arts**

**Graduate College
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ABSTRACT

Thirteen Texts Every Student Must Read to Have A Well-Rounded High School Theatre Education

by

Gary Bernard Sessa

**Ellis M. Pryce-Jones, Examining Committee Chair
Professor of Theatre
University of Nevada, Las Vegas**

This thesis is a discussion of theatre literature and its place in the high school curriculum. Until now, no one has published what specific theatre texts should be taught to students in high school before they graduate. However, with national standards paving the way for the future of education, and the idea that no child will be left behind, every curriculum, not just the core ones, needs to have a list of required reading before a student graduates from high school. This is the only way to insure a well-rounded high school education in theatre. Thirteen diverse texts ranging from technical theatre to performance to playscripts make up this list. I conclude that these thirteen are the most accessible and, along with regular theatre classes, will give the student the well-rounded education that he or she needs to graduate from high school with a solid understanding of the collaborative art form.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

With the popular trend today to create lists – top ten lists, top 100 lists; books you should read by the time you finish high school; books you should read by the time you finish college; books you should read before you die – it would seem that one more would be the equivalent of throwing a glass of water to a drowning man. However, this list of essential theatre texts is necessary due to the fact that no one has addressed theatrical literature in this setting. No one has looked at these books from an educational theatre point of view.

The emphasis in Education now is Content Area Standards, or what every student should know before they leave the classroom. In high school, teachers devote countless hours to determining which Standards are going to be taught in each of the “core” classes, and how these could relate to other fields for interdisciplinary success. The idea of standards in education has value. There are many things that students should know before they leave high school, and if teachers do not say, “This is what you need to know,” chances are, the students will not learn it and will graduate with a sub-standard education.

It is the same thing in Theatre. Just because theatre is not part of the core curriculum does not mean that there are not things that every student of theatre should know before they graduate from high school, especially if they want to be prepared for the next step in their formal education.

Imagine thirteen students sitting around a table in a college course entitled Drama of Today. As playscripts and playwrights are being discussed one student realizes that even though he had felt he was a fairly bright student of theatre, he actually had no clue about much of the discussion. What he discovered was that many of the

other students had received the background information, in high school, needed to succeed in this course, whereas he did not. Most teachers would say that this is not uncommon in school. Most students do not go on to study theatre in college and those that do have been exposed enough in their English classes, so why would they need any more exposure since if they choose to take theatre in college they will get that information there? The reason that it is important to know some of the basic literature of theatre is that it relates to everyday life whether the student knows it or not. Everyone should read, and know who Oedipus the King was. They should have a basic understanding of Aristotle's Poetics, if only to appreciate what they read and see. They should be exposed to the works on this list because of the place of these works and these events within history. Some of the people who look at this list may say, "Well, we give that to them in their English classes. They get the recommended amount of Shakespeare, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and even Sophocles in some classes, so why make a specific deal out of it for theatre?"

This thesis puts those texts into a perspective from a theatre point of view. This list analyzes the significance of each piece theatrically and suggests why each should be taught in the high school theatre setting. Furthermore it explains the significance that each piece will have beyond the theatre (e.g. how it will affect the daily life of the student). The pamphlet for the National Standards for Arts Education states that, "Students should learn about representative dramatic texts and performances and the place of that work and those events in history" (American Alliance For Theatre and Education 64). An English class can only go so far in its theatre unit. What these students need, nay, require, is a comprehensive list that will set the standard for theatre education in the 21st Century--a list that will let them know that, even if they are not going to go into theatre as a profession, there is still a basic collection of texts that must be read to meet the minimum standards of education in the collaborative art. If they are planning on majoring in theatre, this list is even more of a necessity because colleges and universities are expecting their students to walk into that first day as Freshmen with a certain level of education behind them. Dr. Alvin Goldfarb, President of Western Illinois University, thinks that:

[If a student is going to enroll as a freshman in Theatre] I would hope that they would have had a broad introduction to theatre, some literature coursework that included reading drama, and practical performance, design, or technical experience.

(Goldfarb, Alvin. E-mail interview. 2 Aug. 2002)

If they do not have it, they will have to get it in college and that will slow down the rest of the class, or that student will end up having to learn on his or her own just to catch up to the level of the class rather than expanding on what they learn from the course.

If the goal in education is to give students the tools that they need to help them succeed, then this list is a necessity. If educators want to feel that students have received the most significant amount of information possible on every subject, then theatre must be included in that duty. Creating this list is only half the battle. Only when teachers implement it will the success of putting the National Standards into practice begin to be seen.

CHAPTER 2

THE LIST: WHAT STUDENTS CAN LEARN

Students today are presented with much more information than students of even twenty years ago. Subject matter that was not introduced until high school is now being taught at the junior high level. As math, science and social studies struggle to keep up with cognitive ability of students in the 21st Century, so must other curriculums, lest they get left behind. Studies have shown that students can best be taught foreign languages in elementary school. Computer skills are being taught to preschoolers. If that is true, then educators must continue to challenge the student's desire for knowledge. How to achieve that goal? How can educators continue to challenge students and at the same time serve the requirements of the established curriculum?

Educators talk about "not teaching to the test", referring, of course, to not teaching to what is going to be on the standardized tests that students are required to take each year. If educators teach what is important and challenging to students, then, one hopes, the information not taught, but tested over, will be sought out by the student as they desire to know more, and become greater than what they are.

Technical Theatre

The area of technical theatre has vastly changed since the days of Robert Edmond Jones and Jo Mielziner. Computers make lighting and sound equipment easier to operate. They also make designing easier. With CAD (Computer-Aided Drafting and Design, also CADD) programs that are specifically created to draft sets and others like LightWright, Softplot, and WYSIWYG for light plots, the technician can now do his or her work in a fraction of the time it took to perform these duties a

quarter of a century ago. However, even though computers have made things easier for people, if one does not have the basic tools and fundamental skills to know how to design, there is not a computer program around that can help. These days it seems that there are books for “dummies” on every subject. For such user friendly things as computers that may be okay, but for technical theatre; considerably more skill and knowledge is required.

In most high school settings, if the school is lucky enough to have a real stage, the set for the school play is usually designed and built by the shop teacher, the journalism teacher, or the husband of the drama teacher. Sets are functional, but rarely elaborate. However, if the school is fortunate enough to have a full-time theatre teacher who can design, build, and teach students how to do this, suddenly a multitude of possibilities for those sets emerges. How are those students taught? The general authors today that can be used to teach high school students the subject of technical theatre include Parker and Wolfe, Lord, and others. The problem with those books is that they are not readily accessible for the high school student. They are written at a level that the high school student can read and follow, but those books are really designed for college-level students, or people who have a sufficient amount of experience with stage work. For a textbook to work at the high school level, it must be written in very easy to follow terms and still challenge the reader's skill and vocabulary.

Harvey Sweet has written such a text. His book Handbook of Scenery, Properties and Lighting: Scenery and Props Volume 1, falls into that category described above. this text covers everything from scenery to prop making and does it in a way that lets the reader know that “yes you can do this, and simply too”., Dr. Sweet, for example, gives detailed instructions on how to make muslin overlays to make a second layer on a flat instead of having to build twice the amount of flats, “This makes it possible to double the life of a setting for a show in a very simple manner”. (122)

His book covers many aspects of technical theatre. His first chapter is entitled “Planning the Production Space”. In that chapter he gives a layman's background on

the stage space itself. Stage directions, and curtain names, as well as rigging information are all included in this first chapter. He also introduces the reader to basic stage terminology and some problems that the reader might run across and how to solve them. There are also no questions at the end of the chapter. Sweet did not write this book as a scholastic textbook in the traditional sense. He wrote it and devoted it "to the worker in modest production circumstances who has a keen interest in production but is limited by time, budget, experience or the physical resources to mount a production" (xi). When asked if he had thought of putting questions at the end of each chapter, Dr. Sweet stated that the editors had asked him to, but he wrote the book more as a handbook rather than a textbook, so he did not feel that questions would be needed (Sweet, Harvey. Telephone interview. 5 July 2002). Later chapters deal with "Designing The Production", "Constructing and Handling Scenery", which includes material types, tools and safety, and "Alternatives to Standard Construction Materials". However, probably its second half is the most interesting part of this book.

There Sweet deals with building set pieces, props and painting techniques. Most texts describe and give you some examples of how to accomplish these tasks, but Sweet's book goes into tremendous detail on requirements and procedures for building and painting everything from flats to stairs to columns to guns, food and even special effects. For example, when Sweet discusses how to build stairs (71-78), the first thing he does is to provide theatre related terms and definitions that he will be using when explaining how to build a set of stairs. He also explains the concept of rise and run and how to calculate it. Next he lists the materials needed to construct a particular size of stairs, and then finally step by step instructions on how to build it. The instructions are laid out with drawings so that anyone, from novice to advanced carpenter, can build this unit. He then goes on to give examples of other types of stairs that may fulfill the reader's needs.

Technical theatre is a hands-on subject. Students require a textbook that not only teaches them the basics of the discipline (safety and building codes), but also provides detailed instructions on how to construct what needs to be created for a

production, and includes basic terms and definitions, but then allows the student to put those concepts into practice. Questions at the end of a chapter are pedagogically useful, but with Sweet's building projects, the student can apply what has been learned and know that they have acquired the knowledge. In a hands-on type of class, the practical work is better than the review questions.

Volume 2 of this book covers lighting and all of its aspects. From "Lighting Instruments" to "Electricity" and wiring, and "Lighting Control", this text does for lighting and color what the first one did for set construction. Again, Dr. Sweet gives clear examples and terminology for every aspect of lighting. By providing detailed, clear, and color photos of sets and models in different lighting situations, he allows the student to understand what his or her lighting choices are. And, by following the examples given in the book, the student will be able to see in a hands-on situation just how lighting works and how effective it can be in the theatrical environment.

Theatre History

As with any art form, a potential artist must study the history of the form to understand its past, and speculate on its future. In a recent report published on the Sci-Fi Wire, actress Jennifer Connelly, discusses her understanding of a new movie that she is involved in: The Incredible Hulk:

Jennifer Connelly, who will play Betty Ross in the upcoming Hulk film told Sci-Fi Wire that she was attracted to director Ang Lee's philosophical perspective on the Marvel Comics superhero. "I asked him why he wanted to make The Hulk, and he said, 'Well, it's really a Greek Tragedy. It's actually a psychodrama,' " Connelly said in an interview. "He talks about the rage inside all of us, he talks about fathers and sons, and he's talking about using a heightened format to get at something really profound that is otherwise more difficult to access. So I'm hearing it like Brechtian theater."

(Connelly, screen 1)

Obviously, her definition of Greek Tragedy is not the same as Aristotle's. When an actor uses three different genres in a single paragraph to describe a project, chances are they have a very limited knowledge of their subject. That is one of the reasons why this list is so important. Without telling students that these are the texts that will give them the knowledge that they seek, the junior high and high school students will think that what this actress and others are saying is correct. This will cause them to remain ignorant about knowledge that is within their grasp.

Several text books cover the history of Theatre. Many of them are fairly well-written. They include, The Stage and the School, Theatre Arts: The Dynamics of Acting, Theatre: Art in Action, and Brockett's well-known text, The History of Theatre. Each of these books works on some level. The first and second work for a junior high teacher who is trying to get his or her students to understand even a portion of what he or she is saying. The first book covers everything that the first four books on this list cover. The problem is that it is very long-winded, contains errors and does nothing to stimulate the reader's interest. Worthy of note in this respect is the chapter that deals with Theatre History. This chapter condenses 2500 years of theatre into 50 pages. Much of it is either glossed over, or not discussed at all. Two examples occur are in the chapter that deals with Elizabethan Drama. In this section, in the sixth edition, the authors incorrectly identify a key element of Marlowe's play Dr. Faustus. They say that he receives 24 hours of damning knowledge for his entering into a deal with Mephistophilis. Anyone who has read or studied this play knows that it is 24 years. This may not seem like a large thing, but it is errors like this which cause students to go to college having been taught incorrectly. How can a teacher teach about a play they have never read? And if they have, then they should not be making errors of this kind.

The other example comes in the same section and deals with another significant playwright of the time period, Ben Jonson. In The Stage and the School, the authors discuss for two paragraphs what the Elizabethans understood the term humour to mean, particularly in reference to Jonson's famous play Every Man in his Humour. Jonson though, saw humours differently than they suggest:

For, although Jonson concedes the origin of the term in the antiquated medical belief that the human disposition was determined by the balance of 'humours' - the supposedly bodily fluids, 'choler, melancholy, phlegm and blood' - he also stresses that in his plays 'humour' has the generalized sense of 'some one peculiar quality' which so possesses a person as to determine his actions. A 'humour' for Jonson is, in short, a singular disposition a degree of quirkiness or eccentricity, actual or affected, by embodying which a person reduces himself to a type. (Trussler 13)

This is a very important point. Jonson's play deals with emphasis on the comedy created by exploiting those character flaws that people have, not how much of a particular fluid is in a person's body. The authors of The Stage and the School devote one sentence to clarify that point. Any student worthy of theatre would demand that his teacher spend more than a week on Greek theatre alone; however the way this book is set up, it would be a class period or two, at the most. Again, this would be a good introductory book (parts of it anyway) for a junior high setting, but it is most often used at the high school level.

The Dr. Faustus error was removed in the eighth edition, but in the eighth edition they fail to discuss the importance of Plautus as a Roman playwright and also the importance of Senecan revenge tragedy as a style that influenced many of the Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights. In fact the only acknowledgement of Seneca is a two sentence section that states, "Seneca, a writer of bombastic tragedies, was the only author to attempt anything like a play. Ironically, his plays, called **closet dramas**, were intended to be read rather than performed" (Schanker, Ommanney 302). Again, this book would serve as an introductory text only.

Theatre: Art in Action is another book that has some value. As far as the technical aspect of the book is concerned, it gives some innovative ideas for model building, which is something that should be done at the high school level or even earlier according to the Standards. The problem with this book is that it seems to be written with the college student in mind. Its structure is not student-friendly. It seems to be a

book that is meant to be a challenge to the high school reader, and while it may be a stimulating book at times, it exceeds the intellectual grasp of most students. Again, parts of it will work, but as a main text book it would not be a wise choice.

The Brockett text is one that many college instructors think is the best of its type currently in print. Like Art in Action, it is written with the college student in mind. It is an extremely comprehensive text that covers every aspect of theatre history and more. However, it is a very challenging book that even graduate students have trouble getting through. If the goal here is to find a book that will be the best for the high school student, then this is one that should be left to college-level students.

Living Theater: A History is the best example of a high school level history text for Theatre that exists today. It covers the past 2500 years, but makes the reader feel that he/she is experiencing something unique rather than having a plethora of facts force-fed to them like so much hospital puree. In the "Preface" to the text, the authors state that:

The first challenge of writing a theater history, therefore, is to bring theater from the past to life today.... the opening of each chapter is a vignette: a reenactment of what it was like to attend a performance of a particular play on a particular day. We try to take the reader back to the past and recreate the atmosphere and the experience of going to the theatre in a different time and place. (xvii)

This is what has been missing from history texts for so long. Not just theatre texts, but history overall. What these texts were missing was a way to connect the reader with the material. By describing in great detail what it would have been like to see a play in a particular time period, the authors open the mind of the reader through the use of colorful language that will stimulate some long forgotten sense of wonder and make them want to read on. They will read, not because they have to, because they want to discover what will happen next.

Another significant aspect of this text is that the authors present a timeline at the beginning of each chapter. One side deals with "Theatre", and the other side deals with the "Culture and Politics" of the time. By having access to both sides of the

timeline, the teacher can put where Theatre was into perspective with what was happening at the time in the cultural and political areas in the world. For example, the timeline for the Roman Period (59) shows that the rise of the Roman Empire and its interest in building theaters throughout the empire occurred from 30 - 200 A.D. So even though the great playwrights of Rome: Plautus, Terrance and Seneca among them, live 100 to 200 years earlier, Rome's interest in theatre really flourished in the later part of the Empire. Interestingly enough, this period began right after Jesus was crucified in 30 A.D.

Each chapter gives an overview, and then a textual understanding of the time period, major plays and playwrights as well as theatrical innovations. The chapters then conclude with a summary. This is especially effective for students to understand what they read even if they have problems comprehending what is in the text.

Acting

There are nearly as many texts on acting out there as there are acting teachers. From Stanislavski, to Meisner, to Harab, to Crawford, there are books to fit every acting teacher's style and knowledge. The problem with most of these books is that they are written for students that have some advanced acting experience. This rules out many of the students who come into a high school first year class with little knowledge about the art, just a desire and willingness to experience it. If the goal is to make sure that the student gets the basic education necessary, then the texts by the authors listed above need to be reserved for college students who are actively pursuing a career in theatre.

For those high school students who are taking acting for the first time, the most accessible text is Robert Cohen's book, Acting One. Cohen has written a text that, while simplified, does not diminish the art of acting. Cohen even queries in the introduction to his book, "Can acting be taught?" He answers, "What can be taught is a beginning to the art of acting.... It is a method of helping you to get the most out of yourself and to train your acting instrument...."(1). He realizes that one book is not going to turn someone into an actor, but it can help them use what they have and

develop those skills necessary to pursue the type of acting skills that Stanislavsky and Boleslavsky write about in their books.

In the fourth edition of his book, Cohen has set up the chapters as exercises. The first lesson deals with "Relaxation", "Trust", "Discipline"(3-9) and how to enjoy acting. He lets the young actor know that he does not have to:

.... have [these talents] them in your hip pocket before your first class in acting. They are developed continually in a young actor's work, and they need refreshing throughout the actor's career. They will stand you in good stead whether you become an actor or not, for they are also useful preparations for the interactions of daily life, for relationships of every order, whether personal or professional. And they are the sort of basic goals you should check yourself out on regularly as you pursue your studies toward artistic advancement in the theatre or elsewhere. (12)

What a wonderful introduction to a textbook for high school students. Not only does this book teach acting, it also lets the student know that these basic skills can be applied to other aspects of life. Suddenly the rest of the world sees what theatre scholars have known ever since the English Royal Patent of 1662: "Theatre provides not only harmless delights, but useful instruction into the course of human endeavors" (Shanker, Ommanney 23).

Cohen's book provides specific exercises in each chapter. The text itself can be the class. The third lesson deals with the individual acting by him or herself. He starts out by demonstrating "Goals and Obstacle[s]" (21), something very basic in the pursuit of acting. His approach is different than just acting exercises. He starts out with physical exercises so that the student can go from what they know to what they do not know. Exercise 3-1 is a reaching exercise, ".... not an acting exercise.... a physical exercise, or a calisthenic"(22). Exercise 3-2 is "Reaching for Goals". Rather than just reaching, the actor, "Imagine[s] that there is something [they] greatly desire above [their] head" (22). He then explains that by doing this:

.... your action is purposeful and you are emotionally, physiologically committed.... All these words -*purposeful, doing, trying, intent, winning, want* - are useful in describing the playing for goals. The actor's energetic pursuit of the character's goal is what makes the action of a play acting, not demonstrating; dynamic, not static. (22-23)

This is something that a high school student is capable of understanding. Much like Sweet's book, this one also is written in a way that educates without making the student feel inferior to the material. It teaches with a hands-on approach, which is one of the best ways for a student to learn. Later in the chapter Cohen deals with "Self-Consciousness"(24) and "Projection"(25) which is something all new actors deal with, especially high school students who are somewhere between adolescence and adulthood. He also gives exercises that are designed to help the beginning acting student overcome his or her self-consciousness and by doing so learn about obstacles. He ends each chapter with a summary of what was covered and how it applies to acting and even other aspects of life.

The third lesson deals with the actor as an individual. The fourth and subsequent lessons deal with acting with others. When doing scenes in class, many teachers have students do monologues and scenes and just assume that students will know what to do. Cohen teaches the student how to perform by himself or herself and with others, so that when put in that situation, the student actor is less likely to be apprehensive. Other lessons deal with "Rehearsing"(81), "Staging the Scene" (87), "Stage Speech"(127), and "Phrasing"(187), along with other important topics.

Many educators will take a book like this and pick and choose what they want to teach and when, instead of following it lesson by lesson as the author suggests. That should not be done in this case. This book was designed with teaching in mind. By following it in its intended order, the student will learn what he or she needs to know to have a positive approach to acting and it will have laid the necessary groundwork for future acting classes.

Playscripts

From the National Standards:

Since theatre in all its forms reflect and affects life, students should learn about representative dramatic texts and performances and the place of that work and those events in history.

(American Alliance For Theatre and Education 65)

What this thesis intends is to determine what texts, both playscripts and theatre books, are the most valuable for high school theatre students. There are many playscripts by many authors out there that a student will read in his or her lifetime: Shakespeare, Miller, Williams, Wilder, and the list goes on. The remaining nine works on this list were chosen based on their being representative dramatic texts and something that may not be covered in an English Literature class.

Number five on the list is arguably the greatest piece of theatrical literature ever written, Oedipus the King by Sophocles. When theatre scholars talk about Greek drama, they usually begin with The Orestia. The first play in that trilogy, Agamemnon, chronicles the story of what happened to the great king upon his return from the Trojan War. That is fine for a starting point, but to really understand how drama developed into what it is today, one must start at a later work. Agamemnon (The Libation Bearers and The Eumenides make up the other two works in that trilogy) is a compelling story, but as theatrical literature it is dull and long-winded. The characters spend most of their time talking and, for a contemporary audience, the play seems to include very little action. However, if Agamemnon is the beginning, Oedipus the King represents the classic form of the Greek tragedy.

Oedipus the King as a playscript does two things very well. First, it presents us with a detective story. The word **history** is even derived from the Greek word **historia** meaning "learning by inquiry". Even though the Greeks were very familiar with the story of Oedipus, Sophocles' version proved to be a very powerful and cogent piece of theatrical literature. From the first moment the reader learns of Oedipus' quest to rid the city of the plague, as commanded by the Oracle at Delphi, he or she wants to join in to solve the mystery of the murder of King Laius. And

even though the ancient Greeks knew this story well, and that it was Oedipus who was the source of all the suffering, they were still excited about it when they watched this powerful story presented on stage, and by doing so learned, as readers will, that wisdom can be achieved through suffering.

The second thing that this play does is to allow us a guide, of sorts, into Aristotle's Poetics. Aristotle wrote many books on many subjects including law, medicine, politics and philosophy. His book, The Poetics, deals specifically with theatre. In it, Aristotle takes Oedipus the King and, using it as the model, give us a definition of tragedy that is still a basis for drama today. It also explains the parts of the drama: Plot, Character, Thought, Language, Music, Spectacle. Aristotle uses Oedipus the King as a benchmark for what Theatre is and what it will become 2500 years later. It is an amazing piece of theatrical literature that not only is a great playscript, but also serves as a model and reference point for what will become the study of theatre, as well as literature in general over the next 25 centuries.

One might ask, "Why not include The Poetics in this list if it is to be so complete?" The answer is that every book and every playscript can not be included in this list. Students have to want to be challenged. If the desire is there, in the student, then that student will be challenged. If the teacher wants the students to read and discover on their own, then all he or she can do is to introduce them to the material. Once the student has had their appetite whetted for such things, the rest is up to them. The teacher, must expose them to this world in such a way that they will not be able to keep from discovering new material and wanting to know more; always more.

The Poetics is advanced reading. It is taught in depth on the college level and points of it are discussed in both the high school and college setting. If the student is really interested in such things at the high school level, they can discover them on their own and gain insight with help from the teacher. However, it is really too advanced to be on this list.

The next book on the list is another playscript. After the 5th Century B.C. and Elizabethan periods, theatre did not have much of a rebirth until the late nineteenth

century. In theatrical literature, the major periods -"the golden ages" - are well-recognized and well-documented. However, if this list is going to be effective then certain times and works, as with The Poetics, must be sacrificed for the greater good. Roman Drama, which includes Farce, stock characters and situations, and the revenge tragedy, was influenced by the Greeks, and even though they developed their own style of theatre, it was not superior to the Greek style.

When weighed against one another, the Greeks, the founders of theatre with the Festival of Dionysus, are clearly more important for beginners to read and study than the Romans would be. Shakespeare (who was influenced by the Roman plays of Seneca, Plautus, and Terence) was a master playwright. There is no disputing that fact. His life and times changed theater in ways that are still being discovered today. However, his work is so well-established and dealt with on the English Literature level in high school that to cover it any further would be overkill. Restoration and neoclassical theater are important, but most of the works from that time period are so dated that a high school student would not understand the significance of a piece by Congreve or Wycherley.

Typically considered to be the beginning of Realism within the theatrical world, Henrik Ibsen wrote A Doll House in 1879, and ushered in a whole new genre of theatre. After Shakespearean theatre, and the neoclassical theatre ebb, a sort of romantic ideal of what theatre should be like, very presentational and flat, leaves theatre bereft for decades; there is a major shift in the style of Theatre. This occurs in what is referred to as Ibsen's "Middle Period".

Realism represents everyday life. Realistic theatre is meant to have, "[t]he action onstage resemble[d] what people could observe around them: characters behaved spoke and dressed like ordinary people" (Wilson, Goldfarb 361). It also approached subjects that no one thought to deal with before: unhappy marriages, economic injustice, and many other social problems. This was new ground for theatre and Ibsen, who along with Anton Chekhov, pioneered what was to come. His influence is felt in the works of such writers as Emile Zola, Gerhart Hauptmann and George Bernard Shaw, among others.

A Doll House is important for many reasons. First it deals with societal problems of the time. Nora is not allowed to borrow money without her husband's or father's consent. But women at the end of the 1800's and the beginning of the 1900's were becoming a powerful movement. They wanted rights, not only in the United States, but in other countries as well. Ibsen tapped into that rights movement, but as is well-known about him, he was more interested in the rights of the individual than rights of the specific gender. Still, his work helped to change the antiquated and patriarchal thinking that had dominated society for so long. His characters in A Doll House are well-defined in their roles within the society. Torvald is the husband and provider who is more concerned with his reputation and how others perceive him than what his own wife thinks or feels. Nora is, at first, the stereotypical wife who plays with her children and seems to pass the time without any real significance in the eyes of others. In fact Torvald's pet names for her would indicate that she is of no real substance within the framework of their marriage. She is his lark, his squirrel, his songbird, his doll to play with as he wishes. Uninformed people will say that the title is A Doll's House, and while that title is accepted in most educational settings, it is not accurate. In his foreword to his book, Rolf Fjelde states that:

There is certainly no sound justification for perpetuating the awkward and blindly traditional misnomer of A Doll's House: the house is not Nora's, as the possessive implies: the familiar children's toy is called a doll house.... (xxiv)

Women in Ibsen's plays were lucky to be treated as well as they were. Many of the women in the later plays of the period were not so well off. This play is a very accessible and understandable story from a high school student's point of view. Even though it was written 110 years ago, it deals with issues that are still relevant. Issues like money, love, respect, rank in society, and the treatment of others are still being debated today. This allows students to better understand their own culture by understanding the historical perspective of this piece.

Along with Ibsen, the Russian playwright, Anton Chekhov was one of the most important early realists. Chekhov's work bears mentioning because not only did he

further the Realistic style of Theatre, but, along with Konstantin Stanislavsky, helped to create a style of acting that is the standard for actors around the world today. The difference in style between Ibsen and Chekhov would be that Chekhov found humor in his serious situations, which increases their importance as great works because, "Comedy does not provide a contrast but rather increases our awareness of the tragic circumstances." (Wilson, Goldfarb 372) Chekhov's most significant piece and most accessible to students at this age level is The Cherry Orchard.

The Cherry Orchard takes the social subject of class struggle and finds humor in the seriousness of it. During the late 1800's, Russia was going through the same kind of social changes that were happening in other parts of the world. One of the most significant of the time was the creation of a middle class in a society where only poverty and wealth had existed for centuries. Madame Ranevskya is caught in a Catch-22 situation. She must rent parcels of the land to pay the taxes and keep the orchard, but to do so would ruin what the orchard is. This playscript provides the essentials to modern drama: a very dramatic situation blended with elements of humor, and themes, if not universal, at least, understandable to the modern audience. A good example of the universality of theme is demonstrated in the scene at the end where Madame Ranevskya leaves Firs:

He has been left behind, another victim of Madame Ranevsky's habit of delegating authority to undependable individuals; and ill and failing, though still anxious to discharge his duties, he lies on the sofa to reflect upon the meaninglessness of his existence: "Life has slipped by as though I hadn't lived.... There's no strength in you, nothing left you-all gone! Ech! I'm good for nothing." And thus having characterized not only himself but the whole household, he lies motionless as that ominous sound coming from the sky, like the breaking of a harp string, through the noise of the chopping, signifying the end of this useless and superfluous, though charming and civilized class. (Brustein 178)

Students in school today can relate to this theme if it is framed in the right way. The social significance of the play is essential to students for understanding the world

around them. It is much easier to access than The Three Sisters, which is a well-written play, but lacks in the social significance of The Cherry Orchard.

Arguably the most humorous play on the list, Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest, is a playscript that if not read, prevents the student from developing an appreciation for wit that will leave his or her theatre education in high school lacking. More importantly, the intelligent humor in the story allows for a close study of the language presented: "The great charm of the play is in the dialogue" (Barnet xxx). One of the hardest things for students in high school to grasp is the idea and timing of humor. Opinions as to the reasons for this vary, but it seems to stem from the fact that the high school-age student's life is constantly dramatic, and most of the exposure that students at that age receive of humor comes from either Disney, or unintelligent, sophomoric movie comedies that teach nothing of language, timing and intelligence, but only vulgar humor laced with bodily functions and concerns of sexual prowess; the younger, the better. Therefore, the dramatic element is more accessible than the humor of wit and intelligence.

That fact is unfortunate. A proper study of the playscript shows that not only is it full of deservedly famous quotations, but as Goodwin suggests, it also shows how humor can allow a person to get away with things that most would never say:

Peter Hall sees The Importance of Being Earnest essentially as a satire on the British upper classes in the 1890's. Partly it makes fun of their belief, as typified by Lady Bracknell, that love and property are the same thing. But its main target is the public school-bred conviction that all passion must be hidden. As in the plays of Harold Pinter, Wilde's characters use language to disguise their feelings rather than show them. Throughout the play there are brief moments when emotions show, and then, immediately, a joke to cover up. "Wilde's wit only works when it disguises passion." However it is also necessary to pay close attention to the text. Wilde's plays have very tight rhythms, and if those rhythms are betrayed, the laugh is lost. (11)

Wilde illustrates that fact in Act II when Algernon (Ernest) and Cecily discuss their engagement:

- Algernon. You will marry me, won't you?
- Cecily. You silly you! Of course. Why, we have been engaged for the last three months.
- Algernon. For the last three months?
- Cecily. Yes, it will be exactly three months on Thursday.
- Algernon. But how did we become engaged?
- Cecily. Well, ever since dear Uncle Jack first confessed to us that he had a younger brother who was very wicked and bad, you of course have formed the chief topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism. And of course a man who is much talked about is always very attractive. One feels there must be something in him after all....
- Algernon. Darling! And when was the engagement settled?
- Cecily. On the 14th of February last. Worn out by your entire ignorance of my existence, I determined to end the matter one way or the other, and after a long struggle with myself I accepted you under this dear old tree here....
- Algernon. But was our engagement ever broken off?
- Cecily. Of course it was. On the 22nd of last March. You can see the entry if you like. "Today I broke off my engagement with Ernest. I feel it is better to do so. The weather still continues charming."
- Algernon. But why on earth did you break it off? What had I done? I had done nothing at all, Cecily. I am very much hurt indeed to hear you broke it off. Particularly when the weather was so charming.

Cecily. It would hardly have been a really serious engagement if it hadn't been broken off at least once. But I forgave you before the week was out. (Wilde 157-159)

As stated earlier, the Restoration theatre, and comedies of manners are dated, and to expect a student to understand their significance is an uphill battle that most teachers would not try to fight. However the style of The Importance of Being Earnest, not only will teach the student about language, but again as Goodwin suggests, also exposes them to a style of theatre that, while dated, is accessible through this play:

.... The Importance of Being Earnest was in a class and style of its own. Leaving aside the melodramatic plots of Lady Windemere's Fan, A Woman of No Importance, and An Ideal Husband, Wilde wrote that very rare thing in the English theatre, a highly sophisticated comedy of manners, comparable only with the works of Congreve in the early 18th century, and Sheridan in the 1780's. (Goodwin 10)

The popularity of Wilde is increasing, and the time for students to discover Wilde and his wit is now. With the release of a filmed version of this playscript in June of 2002, the accessibility of the play makes it all that more important to have the students read.

In contrast to Wilde's play, a playscript that deals with one of the greatest problems of the late 19th and early 20th century, that of poverty, comes from the mind of George Bernard Shaw. Shaw, who some say is the "greatest playwright next to Shakespeare," (Schanker, Ommanney 316) wrote fifty-three plays between 1892 and 1950. Although some, like Mrs. Warren's Profession and John Bull's Other Island, are not very appealing, "delights us less...." (Smith, vii), many of them were and still are important works that are significant today. Shaw, "believed that drama should inspire social reform," (Wilson, Goldfarb 369) and his plays reflect that. Theatrical literature like Heartbreak House, Saint Joan, and Man and Superman, all look to reforming society for the better. And although most people are familiar with

his play Pygmalion under its musical title, My Fair Lady, probably his most important playscript for a Shavian beginner is Major Barbara.

Major Barbara deals with poverty and the Salvation Army. At the time the play was written, the Salvation Army had been looked on as an organization that was on the verge of corruption. Their purpose was to save souls, but the souls that they were saving were the drunk and destitute. In order for them to save these souls, they required money and the companies that donated to their cause were on occasion the liquor distributors who were creating the drunks in the first place. So by accepting money from the liquor companies, they were "saving" their souls as well. Do these companies give because they feel guilty or because they want to help their fellow man? The hypocrisy exists because we allow it to. The social significance of this play is easy to see: Why do people give to those less fortunate? Is it truly to make others feel better, or is it to make themselves feel better?

Undershaft believes that his religion, that of the gun, is more truthful than that of the Salvation Army. He knows what he is doing, he will sell to whomever wants to buy, "I will take an order from a good man as cheerfully as from a bad one."

(Shaw 64) He goes on to say:

Cusins: Do you call poverty a crime?

Undershaft: The worst of crimes.... Only fools fear crime: we all fear poverty. Pah! you talk of your half saved ruffian in West Ham: you accuse me of bringing his soul back to perdition . Well, bring him to me here; and I will drag his soul back again to salvation for you. Not by words and dreams; but by thirty-eight shillings a week.... and a permanent job....

Barbara: And he will be better for that?

Undershaft: You know he will. Don't be a Hypocrite, Barbara. He will be better fed, better housed, better clothed.... It is cheap work converting starving men with a Bible in one hand and a slice of bread in the other.... Try your hand

on my men: their souls are hungry because their bodies are full. (Shaw 66-67)

Undershaft believes that he can do more to help people by putting them to work in a job that even though it will create more people for the Salvation Army to save than the Salvation Army can by doing what it does. As he says, it is easier to save someone when they need to eat, but what about when they are safe and secure? How do you save them then? This is socially relevant to high school students today. They are going to become part of the modern society and this play is a good example of the contradiction that exists in modern society from the government on down. War and poverty and hunger and all of the other bad things in the world are not going to go away, but some feel that if they give money here and there then they can feel okay with themselves for the things that they do that create these situations. Shaw wanted the people to see these ills of society and, as Goldman suggests, to do something about it; which at the time was unheard of:

“Major Barbara’ is one of the most revolutionary plays. In any other but dramatic form the sentiments uttered therein would have condemned the author to long imprisonment for inciting to sedition and violence. Shaw the Fabian would be the first to repudiate such utterances as rank Anarchy, ‘impractical, brain cracked and criminal.’ But Shaw the dramatist is closer to life--closer to reality, closer-to the historic truth that the people wrest only as much liberty as they have the intelligence to want and the courage to take.” (Goldman x)

As unorthodox as Shaw could be at times, his contributions to the world of theatre cannot be ignored. His style and social commentary, and his desire to change society for the better make him a playwright deserving recognition on this list, and Major Barbara is a fine representation of those qualities.

The next playscript on the list was chosen by Time magazine as “The Best Play of the 20th Century”. However the other plays in consideration are all fine representatives of 20th Century theatre as well. They include: Man and Superman by Shaw, and Long Day’s Journey Into Night by Eugene O’Neill. But of Six

Characters In Search Of An Author, Time said, "It crystallizes the century's chief concerns of life and art: man's existential predicament, the line between illusion and reality. And it's more fun than Waiting For Godot" (73).

During the mid-20th Century, the genres of Absurdist and Existential theatre came into being. Playwrights saw what was happening as a result of World War I and World War II and created fantastic works of literature. Theatrical literature like No Exit by Jean-Paul Sartre, and novels like The Stranger by Albert Camus, show us a world void of values. Six Characters, written in 1921, shows theatre in a different light. It asks the audience what reality really is. Is it what is seen, or what is thought to have been seen? Pirandello felt that his characters were just as alive in their reality (that of the play), as we are in our own reality:

I can only say that, without having made any effort to seek them out, I found before me, alive-you could touch them and even hear them breathe-the six characters now seen on the stage. And they stayed there in my presence, each with his secret torment and all bound together by the one common origin and mutual entanglement of their affairs, while I had them enter the world of art, constructing from their persons, their passions and their adventures a novel, a drama, or at least a story. Born alive, they wished to live. (Pirandello 364)

Even though his play was written twenty-three years before Sartre would write his masterpiece, and usher in a whole new movement in theatrical literature, Pirandello saw something worth exploring. The idea of illusion versus reality was certainly not a new topic. Shakespeare examined it in A Midsummer Night's Dream. So did Strindberg in A Dream Play. So what is it about Six Characters that makes it so interesting to 21st Century scholars and so accessible to 21st Century students? It is the idea of existence. What is it that makes people alive? Is it the ability to think? To reason? To feel or emote? How does one know that he or she is really alive? Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am." Pirandello's characters are the embodiment of that quote. These characters have been created and only want to live out their existence, so they think that if they find someone to finish their story, then that will

complete their lives. In literature though when a story is completed, the book may be reopened and the characters will live again because it is only "pretence". However, at the end of Six Characters, when the Boy is shot, the following exchange occurs:

Some Actors.

He's dead! dead!

Other Actors.

No, no, it's only make believe, it's only pretence.

The Father [with a terrible cry].

Pretence? Reality sir, reality!

(Pirandello 276)

In his book, The Theatre of Revolt, Robert Brustein says that, "In Pirandello's view, in fact, dramatic characters are not alive at all until they have been bodied forth by actors; the action waits to burst forth into life, and passion to receive its cue. 'We want to live,' says the father to the actors in Six Characters, 'only for a moment.... in you'"(305). However, in the world of the play, they are already alive. Every time that play is read or performed in New York, or Los Angeles, or Des Moines, or Las Vegas, those characters live again. Which again asks the question, "What is it that makes people alive?" This study is essential to the 21st Century student because it not only teaches him or her to think about the past, it also teaches him or her to consider the future. That's what makes theatrical literature so exciting; once it comes to life it touches the reader in ways that regular literature cannot; because it is meant to be seen.

The next playscript on this list is its only musical. Musical theatre is an art form that has been around in one way or another for over two hundred years. From the ballad operas of John Gay to the Wagnerian operas, and Gilbert and Sullivan's classic operettas, to Andrew Lloyd Webber, and Stephen Sondheim, musical theatre has been a cornerstone of theatrical literature. As most scholars would agree though, musical theatre took a giant step forward in 1943 when Rodgers and Hammerstein created Oklahoma!. These two writers/composers gave us a show that, "ran directly against the form and feeling of the musicals of the day. The age was conservative.... Realistic subject matter and sophisticated musicality were prohibited,"(Mordden 23)

but it changed the way we saw Musical Theatre from then on. Rodgers and Hammerstein would go on to write several more musicals including Carousel, “Best Musical of the Century” (Time 73), South Pacific, The Sound Of Music, Cinderella and Flower Drum Song, among others. Much of the subject matter of these musicals dealt with, racism, class struggle, and war. However, the most relevant of their shows, The King and I, as the Rodgers and Hammerstein catalog indicates, deals not only with those issues, but also with traditions and values:

In The King and I, we have the story of Anna Leonowens who: arrives at the Royal Palace in Bangkok, having been summoned by the king to serve as tutor to his many children and wives. The king is largely considered to be a barbarian by those in the West and he seeks Anna’s assistance in changing his image, if not his ways. With both keeping a firm grip on their respective traditions and values, Anna and the king grow to understand and, eventually, respect one another....(Rodgers and Hammerstein Musical Theatre Library 46)

While it is based on the original book, Rodgers and Hammerstein’s version is really based more on the Rex Harrison movie, Anna and the King of Siam (Mordden 132). As is the case with many plays, musicals or movies that are based on another story, they adapted it to make it become theatrical. Theatre is story! (Mordden 132) Why then would a musical that is based on a movie be relevant to students today? What is it in this musical that one would not get in any Rodgers and Hammerstein musical? In his book Rodgers and Hammerstein, Ethan Mordden describes the “tale’s fascination”:

--a Western woman battling for democratic fairness (and feminism) in the patriarchal, totalitarian East. And of course this West versus East could serve as a background for an arresting relationship, for the Westerner is amazingly iron willed, while the king is a despot struggling to become a president, half barbarian and half republican.

(131)

The social relevance of this piece of theatrical literature is easy to understand. The King wants to have all of the benefits of Western influence, but still hold on to what makes him king in his country; his traditions and values. The story of the playscript shows a man who wants to join the 19th century, while keeping one hand on the old ways. The King talks about President Lincoln and the war he is fighting. He offers to send him elephants to help him win the war. What the King fails to understand is what Lincoln was fighting for: an end to slavery. The King just sees it as another war in the West, and by sending elephants, he is trying to get in good with this culture. At the same time, he has numerous wives and slaves who do his bidding at all times, or face punishments that seem barbaric to the West (ex. the whipping of Tuptim), but are centuries old to this culture (Mordden 134-135).

This is a play that can fit in nicely with a world history or sociology course. There are several examples of racism, war, traditional values, resistance to authority and rebellion within this story. In many of Rodgers and Hammerstein's other plays these issues are also dealt with; racism in South Pacific, rebellion in Carousel, resistance to authority in The Sound of Music, but only in The King and I are traditional values being put into question in addition to the other elements listed above. If students are to learn about traditional values and understand other cultures, then this is a very important piece of literature for them to read. Not only is it socially relevant, but it also boasts some of Rodgers and Hammerstein's greatest music.

One of the things about musicals is that the songs must let the audience into the mind of the character. Songs like "Getting to Know You" and "Is a Puzzlement" are wonderful examples. "Getting to Know You" lets the audience know what kind of personality Mrs. Leonowens has. She is a teacher and wants to get to know her students as well as their king. Only by doing this can she understand and have respect for their culture. In "Is a Puzzlement", the audience sees the King as he is struggling to understand Western philosophy, but it is not until the end of the play as he is dying that he finally understands Western culture. Unfortunately, by then it is too late. Through history courses, most know that it is his son, Chulalongkorn, who is the king that really embraces Western teachings. However, if his father had not brought

Mrs. Anna to Siam, Chulalongkorn would not have become the great leader that he was.

“The chief value of any idea is that it contains within it the germ of other ideas” (Appia 150). Through the influence of music, what otherwise might seem a dull history lesson, suddenly comes to life and students can respond to it. Scholars agree that music plays an important role in education, and since Musical Theatre as an art form is not really discussed in the secondary setting, by including it on the list the students are exposed to an art form that may otherwise be ignored and forgotten.

The last two playscripts on the List represent forms of theatre that have not been addressed by the prior eleven works: female, and African-American playwrights. Both of these groups are important for two reasons. First, they embody the beginning of a social movement within theatre that encompasses, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American playwrights as well as every other culture represented in this country, including gays, physically challenged, and all other movements that exist today. Second, in addition to representing such contemporary movements they also are representational of the 1960's. The “decade that changed America” has always been popular, but mainly for the positive things it gave the country like the Apollo missions, music, Camelot, and the like. What needs to be discussed with increasing sophistication are the civil rights movements during this period, as well as the anti-war movements brought on the Vietnam war, and the counter-cultural movements of the latter half of the decade. As August Wilson suggests in the text of his speech, The Ground on Which I Stand, to not study works created by playwrights reflecting those years is to deny their value in society:

I find it curious but no small accident that I seldom hear those words “Black Power” spoken, and when mention is made of that part of black history in America, whether in the press or in conversation, reference is made to the Civil Rights Movement as though the Black Power Movement—an important social movement by America's ex-slaves—had in fact never happened. But the Black Power Movement

of the '60s was [in fact] a reality; it was the kiln in which I was fired, and has much to do with the person I am today and the ideas and attitudes that I carry as part of my consciousness. (12-13)

Because of these movements, there are many African-American playwrights that are worth studying in the educational system of high schools. For example, Lorraine Hansberry's, A Raisin in the Sun is read in some advanced English classes already, and even though Amiri Baraka, whose play Dutchman, deals with a "sexual showdown between a middle-class assimilated black man and a white temptress" in a steamy subway car in New York City (Wilson, Goldfarb 469) is too advanced for high school classes, his value as a playwright of the period cannot, and should not, be ignored.

The most interesting and accessible playwright of the African-American culture is August Wilson whose more well-known plays include, among others, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, The Piano Lesson; for which he won his second Pulitzer Prize, Joe Turner's Come and Gone, Seven Guitars and most recently, King Hedley II. An interesting point about Wilson's plays is that they all deal with life in the Hill district in Pittsburgh where he grew up. "Wilson's major plays to date are part of a proposed cycle of ten dramas—one for each decade of the twentieth century—tracing the African-American experience. The most accessible of his plays is his first Pulitzer Prize winner, Fences.

Fences is the story of a man, Troy Maxson, who tries to understand the new opportunities that are coming for the black man in the future, while being a product of the past. His son has the opportunity to play football in college, but in the pre-Jackie Robinson era where he grew up, Troy played baseball in the Negro Leagues. Blacks then did not have those opportunities and Troy does not believe that it will happen for his son either:

Troy: I told that boy about that football stuff. The white man ain't gonna let him get nowhere with that football. I told him when he first come to me with it. Now you come telling me that he done went and got more tied up in it.

He need to go and get recruited in how to fix cars or something where he can make a living. (Wilson 8)

Today there are still those of the baby-boom generation, who fought for better opportunities for all races and sexes, that, like Troy, deny they were successful in their endeavors. They still believe that they, and others, are oppressed and they are blind to the reality of the situation. African-Americans have made great strides in their quest for equality, and while not entirely equal, they have more opportunities now than they had forty or fifty years ago. This is a play that not only African-Americans can relate to, but other students as well. The social aspects of the play are not just thrown in the face with a "Here!", they are woven within the storyline of a family with values and situations that as Wilson and Goldfarb suggest, are universal:

Wilson argues that in order to know who you are now, you must know who you were in the past. His characters are universal figures, standing for everyone who has ever struggled with himself or herself and with social forces. He has said, "I write about the black experience in America and try to explore in terms of the life I know best those things which are common to all cultures." (Wilson, Goldfarb 479)

In a speech he gave at the Theatre Communications Group conference in 1996, Wilson goes further with those ideas:

The commonalities that we share are the commonalities of culture. We decorate our houses. That is something we do in common. We do it differently because we value different things. We have different manners and different values of social intercourse. We have different ideas of what a party is.

There are some commonalities to our different ideas. We both offer food and drink to our guests, but because we have different culinary values, different culinary histories, we offer different food and drink to our guest. As an example, in our culinary history, we have learned to make do with the feet and ears and tails and intestines of the pig rather than the loin and the ham and the bacon. Because of our different

histories with the same animal, we have different culinary ideas. But we share a common experience [with Whites] with the pig as opposed to say the Muslims and Jews, who do not share that experience.

(Wilson 27)

The significance of this playscript and playwright is that it, and he, will expose all students to a representative of the African-American culture who is trying to find ways to bridge the gap between the different cultures yet still keeping his culture separate from the rest. Hopefully, once a student has some exposure to this play and playwright, it will prompt him or her to want to discover more about not only the African-American culture, but all of the other ones as well.

Female playwrights have been around for quite a long time; Lillian Helman, Caryl Churchill, and Susan Glaspell among them. However, in the last thirty years the feminist movement has produced several well-respected writers that have placed the female playwright in league with many of the male playwrights as far as content and quality of writing. Writers like Marie Irene Fomes, Tina Howe, Beth Henley, and Wendy Wasserstein have set the bar that all other female playwrights aspire to clear. One of the most notable writers of this genre is Marsha Norman. Her two outstanding plays deal with issues that are similar in tone to some of those that have been dealt with in the other playscripts on this list. Her first play Getting Out deals with "Arlene, [who] has just been released from prison and in the play, tries to come to terms with her past (embodied in the character of Arie, her younger self) and her future" (Stone 57). Similar in thematic issues to Fences, and A Doll House, this play looked at life from a female perspective and as suggested in Stages of Drama, even drew on Norman's own life as an emotional sibling:

"She also drew on her own personal experience of feeling emotionally imprisoned, as she made clear in her forthright acknowledgement that 'the person locked up was me' and that the writing of Getting Out for me was my own opening of the door"

(Klaus, Gilbert, Field Jr. 1208).

Her second play, 'night Mother, for which she received a Pulitzer Prize, deals with getting out also, but in a much more permanent way; suicide. It centers around Jessie "who is vocally and actively concerned with regaining a significant measure of self-control in her life, so much so that she is willing to put an end to it, since she cannot imagine a tolerable future, afflicted as she is by the painful circumstances of her past" (Klaus, Gilbert, Field Jr. 1209). This play has been received as a play that is "aesthetically over-distanced for men (producing indifference) and aesthetically under-distanced for women (producing pain)" (Spencer 373), and both praised and attacked by feminist critics who see it as a:

discourse on the condition of women in (post)modern society, disagreeing among themselves on whether to applaud the play's positive virtues for presenting female entrapment in a male-centered ideology or to condemn the play's defeatist resolution of suicide in the face of that entrapment. (Demastes 109)

The controversy exists because some believe that Jessie's suicide is a cop-out. She can no longer handle what life has given her, and decides that the best thing to do is to pack it all in:

Mama: This is all my fault, Jessie, but I don't know what to do about it now.

Jessie: (*Exasperated at having to say this again*) It doesn't have anything to do with you!

Mama: Everything you do has to do with me, Jessie. You can't do *anything*, wash your face or cut your finger without doing it to me. That's right! You might as well kill me as you, Jessie, it's the same thing. This has to do with me, Jessie.

Jessie: Then what if it does! What if it has everything to do with you! What if I could take all of the rest of it if only I didn't have you here? What if the only way I can get away

from you for good is to kill myself? What if it is? I can *still* do it! (Norman 1224)

Whether the play is about feminism or not is certainly worth discussing, and whether the act of Jessie's suicide reinforces that idea one way or the other only adds to the controversy. Jenny Spencer argues that:

Whether or not Norman's 'night, Mother is a feminist play is another question entirely, but one not easily avoided. Clearly about and for women, the play offers women for identification unmediated by the gaze of men. The play also focuses on complicated issues of gender and female subjectivity, but does so without sacrificing traditional or conventional sources of pleasure through (Oedipal) narrative, closure, the illusion of reality, emotional catharsis. Much of the play's political effect (the area most closely associated with a feminist practice) lies in the theatre event itself – how it is performed, what kind of discussion follows, what kind of reviews and critical commentary the play generates. (Spencer 373)

As with Fences, many of the themes presented in this playscript are universal: the relationship between mothers and daughters, one's duty to others, one's duty to self, depression, suicide, and defeatism, among others. Even though this play is controversial, it is less political than many of the other plays written by female playwrights. This allows the teacher to introduce to the student a female playwright who as Demastes suggests:

.... has commissioned the realist form to present perhaps the most radical vision of experience in human history, one that denies understanding as centuries of inquiry have striven to formulate and perfect it. (Demastes 118)

What this playscript does is to expose the student to a well-respected female playwright who, like August Wilson, shows us those themes from a different point-of-view; this time female.

These thirteen works are representative texts for theatre students. As stated above, "The chief value of any idea is that it contains within it the germ of other ideas." These texts do just that. Not only do they serve to influence students as far as theatre education, many of these works have great social relevancy and can stimulate the minds of the students into thinking and discussing issues that were heretofore unheard of in a high school theatre class.

With these thirteen texts, a student can graduate from high school and know that they have a well-rounded theatre education. In addition to the works that the students have to read in English, they are being exposed to the greatest theatre minds of the last 2500 years. With the National Standards becoming more and more important to school districts, the texts listed would allow any teacher to reach out and open up the minds of their students. These texts are the most accessible to the student, and together with regular theatre classes, they will give the student the well-rounded education that they need in theatre. It is only when the National Standards are applied, and used together with the List that educators will start to realize what can be accomplished and at what age level students can be exposed to this material. These topics will be discussed in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND THE NATIONAL STANDARDS

What does theatre do for society? Why should teachers even concern themselves with teaching about these playwrights or making sure that students have basic skills in set design and acting? According to the introduction of the National Standards on Arts Education:

The arts have been part of us from the very beginning.... the arts have described, defined, and deepened human experience. All people, everywhere, have an abiding need for meaning-to connect time and space, experience and event, body and spirit, intellect and emotion. People create art to make these connections, to express the otherwise inexpressible.... We know from long experience that *no one can claim to be truly educated who lacks basic knowledge and skills in the arts.*

(Music Educators National Conference 5)

"No one can claim to be truly educated who lacks basic knowledge and skills in the arts." As the rest of the educational world tries to come up with standards for their subject matter, so should theatre. Theatre has existed for at least 2500 years. From the Greeks to Shakespeare to the Modern Age, theatre has served to guide man on his quest. It advances the human cause. It may not solve problems, but it certainly exposes issues that might otherwise go ignored. It involves religion, politics, war, science, sex, relationships, values, judgments; any idea that can be discussed in any other arena by specialists, can be discussed by everyone in a theatre. Theatre however, is not for everyone. Many will graduate from high school and go on to be very successful without ever stepping foot inside a theatre. Or they will decide after never doing theatre in high school that they want to take acting in

college and get all of the information that they need at that level. However, if what the Music Educators National Conference, hereafter referred to as MENC, states is true, then the job of theatre educators is not to give students all of the answers, but to get students to think and find the answers themselves (Debruyne 4). In order for this to be accomplished, standards for theatre must be implemented and maintained.

“Arts education standards can make a difference because, in the end, they speak powerfully to two fundamental issues that pervade all of education - quality and accountability” (MENC 9). In conjunction with Goals 2000, these standards were established to say that this is the **minimum** that the student should know. This chapter will focus on the National Standards and the methodology for determining which texts should be included on the list.

“Since *theatre in all its forms reflects and affects life, students should learn about representative dramatic *texts and performances and the place of that work and those events in history” (American Alliance For Theatre and Education 64). The List evaluates texts based on that quote as well as the “Content Standards for Theatre”, and makes concrete choices. These choices have to be made. If educators want to have certain standards that students must meet, then certain texts must be chosen, and in order for the student to master the standards set forth, he or she must read these works. The problem seems to be that school districts do not want to make hard choices. They want to choose certain books, but then recommend supplementary materials that favor almost all authors.

The Clark County School District Course Syllabus for Drama, refers the teacher to the District’s list of approved texts, but recommend eighty-four supplementary texts that they may use. The teacher then decides which of the eighty-four they deem to be most effective to educate their students about theatre. Following this path, the teacher is almost assured of not teaching everything they should and the student will leave without receiving the minimum knowledge they require to meet the National Standards.

What is proposed is that based on the Content Standards for Theatre, these texts are the most essential to achieve the goals set forth by Nevada 2000 and Goals 2000.

The criteria for determining these texts are as follows:

1. Standards
2. Use standards to determine how many texts in each category and what category should be included.
3. How these particular texts were chosen over others.

Standards

The Standards for Theatre, grades 9-12, from the National Standards For Arts Education (American Alliance For Theatre and Education 64-68) are as follows:

1. **Content Standard:** Script writing through *improvising, writing, and refining *scripts based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history.
2. **Content Standard:** Acting by developing, communicating, and sustaining character in improvisations and *informal or *formal productions.
3. **Content Standard:** Designing and producing by conceptualizing and realizing artistic interpretations for informal or formal productions.
4. **Content Standard:** Directing by interpreting dramatic texts and organizing and conducting rehearsals for informal or formal productions.
5. **Content Standard:** Researching by evaluating and synthesizing cultural and historical information to support artistic choices.
6. **Content Standard:** Comparing and integrating art forms by analyzing traditional theatre, dance, music, visual arts, and *new art forms.

- 7. Content Standard:** Analyzing, critiquing, and *constructing meanings from informal and formal theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions.
- 8. Content Standard:** Understanding context by analyzing the role of theatre, film, television, and electronic media in the past and the present.

These eight standards determine that there should be a standardized reading list that every student should complete. The standards can be grouped into categories, and thereby create the required categories for the List. Standards 2, 3, 7, and 8 deal with the area of Play Analysis. Standard number 3 also deals with Technical Theatre. Standards 1, 2, and 4 deal with the Performance aspect of Theatre. Standards 5 and 6 deal with Theatre History. Each standard is also broken down into what makes a student proficient. By using the standards, teachers can then know what needs to be taught to insure that the student receives the best education and the teacher will know what areas to concentrate on. By using the reading list, the teacher will make sure that students are receiving the most accessible information to satisfy the minimum requirements established by the National Standards.

Play Analysis

This first category is crucial because it exposes the student to over 60% of the texts on the list. According to the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, a student is proficient in **Content Standard 2** only if they can:

- a. analyze the physical, emotional, and social dimensions of characters found in dramatic texts from various genres and media
- b. compare and demonstrate various *classical and contemporary acting *techniques and methods
- c. in an *ensemble, create and sustain characters that communicate with audiences (64)

Play Analysis is a crucial building block for a theatre education because so much of what is done is analysis of character, set, acting style, costume; the list goes on. Theatre teachers stress the importance of creating and maintaining a character and making it as believable as possible. If students do not analyze these texts, they will never be considered proficient because they will have never learned how to analyze a play and learn the different styles that make up theatre.

For a student to be proficient in **Content Standard 3**, he or she must be able to:

- a. explain the basic physical and chemical properties of the technical aspects theatre (such as light, color, electricity, paint, and makeup)
- b. analyze a variety of dramatic texts from cultural and historical perspectives to determine production requirements
- c. develop designs that use visual and aural elements to convey *environments that clearly support the text
- d. apply technical knowledge and skills to collaboratively and safely create functional scenery, properties, lighting, sound, costumes, and makeup
- e. design coherent stage management, promotional, and business plans. (65)

Only by analyzing the play can the student begin to understand how it works, what needs have to be met in terms of lighting, sound, set design, and costume as well as promotional and audience requirements. Analysis is the basis for everything in theatre. Only by analyzing can sets begin to be built. Only by analyzing can acting styles and periods in theatrical history begin to be understood. Only by analyzing can artists and educators begin to understand this "Theatre" that they claim to love so much.

Since play analysis is the most important aspect of theatre education, it requires the most number of texts on the List. In addition to the proficiency requirements above, the student must also achieve the following from **Content Standard 7**:

- a. construct social meanings from informal and formal productions and from dramatic performances from a variety of cultures and historical periods, and relate these to current personal, national, and international issues
- b. articulate and justify personal *aesthetic criteria for critiquing dramatic texts and events that compare perceived artistic intent with the final aesthetic performance
- c. analyze and critique the whole and the parts of dramatic performances, taking into account the context, and constructively suggest alternative artistic choices.
- d. constructively evaluate their own and others' collaborative efforts and artistic choices in informal and formal productions

(67)

and the following from **Content Standard 8**:

- a. compare how similar themes are treated in drama from various cultures and historical periods, illustrate with informal performances, and discuss how theatre can reveal universal concepts
- b. identify and compare the lives, works, and influence of representative theatre artists in various cultures and historical periods
- c. identify cultural and historical sources of American theatre and musical theatre
- d. analyze the effect of their own cultural experiences on their dramatic work (67)

Repeatedly, the National Standards point to a need for a list of core texts. With such a demand for studying the “representative theatre artists” and their “works” and “historical periods”, to not have a list of those representative works and artists and periods would defeat the purpose of having standards in the first place. Based on this need, 69% of the list is made up of representative works from different periods

in theatre history. These works were chosen based on their historical significance to the art itself as well as their contributions to advancing the art. They were also chosen based on their accessibility to high school students. It is this criteria that determines which are the most significant representative texts to be studied. In addition to the nine playscripts listed, a theatre history book is included. Its place on the list is necessary due to the fact that not only will students need to read the representative texts from the particular periods in history, but they will also need a text that will give them the cultural and historical background they need to more fully comprehend what they are reading.

Technical Theatre

The second category exposes students to not only the specific 15% of the List to deal with technical theatre, but also all of the playscripts as well. In addition to the overlapping requirements to be proficient in **Content Standards 3 and 7**, a student will be considered proficient if from **Content Standard 4**, he or she:

- a. develop multiple interpretations and visual and aural production choices for scripts and production ideas and choose those that are the most interesting
- b. justify selections of text, interpretation, and visual and aural *artistic choices
- c. effectively communicate directorial choices to a small ensemble for improvised or scripted scenes. (65)

Technical theatre is so much more than just being on a crew for a show. It is more than learning how to build a flat or paint a set. That is just the beginning. Many students who excel in technical theatre in high school go on to college and make a career in Lighting, or Set Design, as well as Stage Management, or Costume Design. By being exposed to the texts on the List, students are able to make choices regarding their futures that they would not otherwise be able to make.

When students decide that they want to go to college and make a choice where to go, they will inevitably look for ways to help pay for their education. Many schools

will offer scholarships to students who show academic promise in their chosen field. The University Of Nevada, Las Vegas offers scholarships for the best students who can write:

a 200 word written concept analysis of the scenery, costumes or lighting for one of the following plays:

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| I. | Tennessee Williams' | <u>The Glass Menagerie.</u> |
| | Samuel Beckett's | <u>Waiting for Godot.</u> |
| | William Shakespeare's | <u>Hamlet.</u> |
| | Richard Sheridan's | <u>The School for Scandal.</u> |
| | Anton Chekov's | <u>The Three Sisters.</u> |
| | Arthur Miller's | <u>Death of a Salesman.</u> |
| | Sam Shepherd's | <u>Curse of the Starving Class</u> |
| | Rodgers and Hammerstein's | <u>South Pacific.</u> |
| | and show- | |
| II. | Three examples of their drawing skills | |
| | and show- | |
| III. | Three photographs and/or drawing of properties or scenic pieces they have constructed. | |

(University of Nevada, Las Vegas 1)

While none of these playscripts are on the List, several of the playwrights are, and by exposing the students to these playscripts and providing them with the proper texts and instruction the student will be able to not only provide a competent analysis, but also be considered proficient in **Content Standard 5** as well; which states:

- a. identify and research cultural, historical, and symbolic clues in dramatic texts, and evaluate the validity and practicality of the information to assist in making artistic choices for informal and formal productions

As stated earlier, colleges and universities are expecting students to come from high school with certain skills and knowledge. That is what the List does. By using the “Content Area Standards for Theatre”, it makes sure that, if implemented, students will have the basic education necessary in theatre to go on to be successful at the college level. By teaching the student the technical aspects of theatre the instructor insures that the student will be able to begin building a portfolio so that he or she can show what he or she has learned, as well as be able to give an explanation of the concepts behind the design and how it relates to the overall production which “support artistic choices” (American Alliance for Theatre and Education 66).

Theatre History

The next broad category in the National Standards is theatre history. **Content Standards 5 and 6**, already discussed above, cover the area of theatre history. The questions most often asked are, “Why study history?” and “What can we learn from theatre history that will apply to our everyday life?” The answer to that is very simple. If scholars do not study what has gone before, how can they hope to understand what theatre was like at the time of Sophocles, or Shakespeare, or Pirandello? And if they are not able to understand what theatre was like during those periods, how can teachers and directors possibly expect to be able to communicate that to an audience? How can actors transcend time and bring to life, for an audience, something that was written 2500 years ago if the actors themselves have not taken the time to at least attempt to analyze and research what has gone before?

All thirteen of the texts on the List fall into this category. By reading the playscripts we are getting inside the mind of the playwright and trying to discover why he made the choices that he made. By reading the theatre history text, the student can begin to understand how theatre was performed 400 years ago and why certain periods in history banned theatre as an art form. By studying the acting text, the student can learn about the different styles of acting from the different time periods (ex. Stanislavsky and Strasberg), and how they can be used in performances today. Finally, by exposing the student to the technical theatre texts,

teachers can instruct them how to build sets from different eras and how the believability can be achieved, as well as designing lighting and props that help the student to understand how all of these elements go into a production and are able to be communicated to the audience.

Acting

The final 7% of the List is devoted to acting. In addition to being proficient in **Content Standards 2, 4, 5**, the student will also need to be proficient in **Content Standards 1 and 6**. The requirements for **Content Standard 1** are:

- a. construct imaginative scripts and collaborate with actors to refine scripts so that the story and meaning are conveyed to an audience

It is essential that students have an acting text that they can learn from. How can they “construct imaginative scripts” if they are not allowed to open their imagination through the learning of acting skills? How can they convey this to an audience if those skills are not mastered early on in their development? Again, if educators want the student to be successful and make sure that “no child be left behind,” then these skills are essential toward that development and the List is a must.

Finally, to be proficient in **Content Standard 5**, a student must:

- a. describe and compare the basic nature, materials, elements, and means of communicating in theatre, *dramatic media, musical theatre, dance, music, and the visual arts
- b. determine how the nondramatic art forms are modified to enhance the expression of ideas and emotions in theatre
- c. illustrate the integration of several arts media in informal presentations

Again, by exposing students to the texts on the List, they are more likely to be able to “illustrate the integration of several arts media in informal presentations”. In order to achieve this, a text on acting in addition to the other texts listed is essential to the

development of the student in order for that student to be considered proficient in the standards listed in this section.

By breaking the National Standards into categories, teachers are better able to determine how they should be taught and what texts are required to achieve that goal. This will allow educators to focus on making sure a student is proficient in one area before focusing on the next. By doing this, they are taking the necessary steps to ensure that the student is proficient in all areas upon being graduated from high school. The next two chapters will discuss criteria 3: How these particular texts were chosen over others.

CHAPTER 4

MAKING THE CHOICE: THE FIRST FOUR TEXTS

One of the problems with education is that there are as many different ways to teach as there are teachers. For someone to come along and say that these are the thirteen most important texts that a high school student will read is sure to create controversy. Jeffrey Leptak-Moreau of the Educational Theatre Association says that the type of list discussed here, “suggest[s] some sort of standardized curriculum which is contrary to how education is administered in the USA, and [one] can imagine the kind of controversy that official reading lists would provoke. Also, the National Standards leave that question to local decision-makers” (Leptak-Moreau, Jeffrey. E-mail interview. 27 Aug. 2001). However, if there are going to be standards that each student must meet to be considered proficient in a subject matter, then choices must be made and by doing that, texts are forced to be left out that some would say are as important, if not more, to the 21st Century student. Those texts are listed in Appendix I at the end of this thesis.

There are certain steps that each school district must go through in order to have a textbook “adopted” for a particular course. These steps vary from district to district, but there are certain ones that all agree upon. First, there must be a need to adopt the textbook. Second, a committee must evaluate the texts available for that subject in order to make a decision about which book is best suited for that particular course, and third, once approved by the committee, it must be approved by the state in order for it to be officially “adopted” and available for purchase in large quantities. Before it can be shown how and why the texts on the list were chosen over the others, the steps that a district goes through must be examined.

Once a school district (ex. Clark County, Nevada) has determined that there is a need for textbook adoption, they send a request out to educational book publishers in order to have them bid on that particular subject and to send what books they offer for their equivalent of that particular course. For example, a school district may send a request to Glencoe Publishing for texts for Drama I. Glencoe will then send what texts they consider to be suitable for Drama I to the district, as will every other educational publisher that receives the bid request. Some publishers may send one book, some may send five books; it varies from publisher to publisher. Each publisher determines which texts are to be for which subjects, based partly on the National Standards, as well as discussions with sales representatives and editors in the company.

Once the textbooks have been sent to the district, a committee made up of teachers for that subject matter is formed within the district to review the texts to determine which, if any, are suitable for adoption for the course. That committee will pare down the choices to three that will go before a textbook adoption committee made up of parents and other interested parties in the school district that will give final approval on the texts.

After approval has been given, the texts are sent to the state department of education for final approval. The textbooks then become available to be ordered without question since they are "adopted". The texts are on the state approved list for seven years, after which they must be evaluated again to see if they can be readopted, or not. If not, schools can use the books up to four years after they are no longer on the list, or keep them indefinitely as supplemental material.

Upon contacting five districts around the United States, they reported:

1. In Clark County, Nevada., Culver City, San Francisco, and Ventura, California there are no adopted textbooks for Theatre. In Clark County this appears to be because no one has ever brought up the need for adopting books for these courses. According to a representative who handles textbook purchasing for that district, memos have been sent out requesting information for textbook adoption for theatre courses, so far, no response has been received. Since electives are not

considered core subjects in Nevada, there is not a regular textbook adoption cycle, so districts can adopt texts on an as needed basis. This is not being done.

According to representatives for the San Francisco, Ventura and Culver City Public School districts, the state of California only allows textbook money to be spent on approved textbooks. There is a fund for supplementary material, but it is much smaller and is limited to small quantities of items. As with the Clark County School District, there are no approved textbooks for theatre.

2. In Chicago, the Chicago Public School District is on a local school reform program. About seven years ago, it was decided that the financial choices being made by the Chicago School District were not in the best interest of the schools, so the School Board decided to turn over the decision-making responsibilities to each individual school. That means that there are no approved textbooks for the District at all. Each individual school is responsible for choosing and ordering their own textbooks for each particular course. According to a principal at one preparatory school in that district, they have a committee of teachers that determine which textbooks to use for the school. Their choices are determined by a combination of the State and City Standards, as well as what each teacher thinks will be the best text for each particular subject. They did have a textbook for Theatre however the principal was not sure which book it was.

3. Each individual book publisher seems to have their own criteria for textbooks as well. According to a sales representative at Glencoe, once they decide to publish a book, they will then determine what course it is best suited for. This is done by examining the National or in some cases state standards on a particular course and then showing how those standards are being met by that particular text. Many of the publishers even go so far as to publish the state standards within the front of the text to show this. They will also make up a committee to evaluate the text in relation to those standards. A sales representative at Pearson Education says that they look for readability as well as marketability.

The reality of this whole thing appears to be this: Each district is able to use whatever textbook they want, provided it is on the district "approved" list. In Clark

County, if it is not on the approved list, it can still be used, provided it is only bought in what are referred to as classroom sets. These are quantities of forty books. A teacher can have a book that they use all of the time, but has never appeared on the approved list because the district has never bothered to approve it. The teacher can purchase forty copies this year, and another forty next year, and so on until five years later they have two hundred copies and are using that book in all of their classes. This book may or may not meet the Standards, however, the teacher likes it and that is it as far as the district is concerned; since it was never bought in large amounts (two hundred over five years versus two hundred in one shot).

This teacher is able to bypass the system that has been established to ensure that the students are getting the education that they need, just because they like a particular book. This goes completely against what the National Standards are about. If the United States has established standards that each student must meet in order to be proficient in a subject, then how can districts allow these teachers to use books that are not on an approved list? This justifies the need for the existence of the List. There must be a list of textbooks that each student should read during his or her time in school so that they may be proficient in not only theatre, but in every subject.

For a text to appear on an approved reading list it has to meet certain criteria. According to the Clark County School District (also referred to as CCSD), their regulation states that:

A. Basic textbook selection will include to following:

1. Professional staff will be involved in the development and implementation of all basic textbook procedures.
2. A systematic basic textbook adoption –procedure will be used to recommend textbooks for local adoptions in each grade and subject area.
3. An appropriate textbook commission will be part of the basic textbook adoption procedure.
4. A central accounting procedure will be utilized to control the distribution of all district textbooks.

5. Textbooks selected for use in the public schools in classes in literature, history, or social studies must accurately portray the culture and racial diversity of our society, including lessons on the contributions made to our society by men and women from various racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The regulation also includes the following on supplemental textbooks:

XII. SELECTION OF SUPPLEMENTAL TEXTBOOKS:

Supplemental instructional materials will be selected by the professional staff in each school as approved by the principal. These materials must be consistent with the curricular and instructional requirement as required by the Elements of Quality and NAC 390.120 and NAC 390.130.

(Clark County School District Regulation 6150 1)

By creating this regulation, the district feels that they have come up with a minimal criteria that will satisfy most people who want to have input on the textbooks that their children read. The district will leave the actual choosing of the textbooks up to the textbook committees to decide on in any manner they deem fit. This is not always the case. On May 26, 2002 the following letter was published in the Las Vegas Review-Journal regarding textbook choices in the CCSD:

My son's textbook is called Mathematics: Applications and Connections, Course 3. It was published by Glencoe/McGraw-Hill in 1998. It complies with the Nevada revised standards for mathematical textbooks. It is a hodge podge of politically correct mumbo-jumbo and garbled thinking. Math concepts are buried in an avalanche of propaganda on the values of recycling, multiculturalism, endangered species, the evils of corporate profits, and the importance of saving the Earth. A full five pages are devoted to a discussion about whether it should be legal for cigarette companies to advertise in magazines

which may be read by children.... Now it is obvious this book was written by people with an agenda beyond teaching mathematics....

(Gruber, screens 2-3)

By having their regulation covering only the minimum requirements for textbook policy, and allowing the faculty to choose which textbooks they want to adopt, the end result is: A series of textbooks that may or may not meet the standards, but will not be able to help the students learn because they have too much useless information contained within their covers. In addition to that, there is no consistency between districts. What works for one district in choosing a textbook may not work for another. With a national list that is based on the National Standards, districts would be more likely to make sure that their students are learning the same material in a school on the east side of town or the west side of town; or between one state and another. Too often students change districts and are told when they register that they are going to be credit deficient because the district cannot give them credit for a class they took previously since it does not meet the requirements for that district. The ideas in this thesis may sound like socialized education, but they are not intended to be that way. The point of this thesis is that each subject, including theatre, should have a minimum list of text books that every student should read before they graduate from high school. How that list is taught is up to the individual teachers and districts, but with the National Standards already in place, it is up to the districts to get on board and see that these standards are being implemented. This chapter will examine the first four texts on the list in detail to determine if they meet the National Standards criteria.

Handbook of Scenery, Properties and Lighting: Scenery and Props Volume 1

Originally written in 1989 and updated in 1995, Dr Harvey Sweet's book, Handbook of Scenery, Properties and Lighting: Scenery and Props Volume 1, is a book that meets the National Standard criteria. Detractors of Dr. Sweet will say that his work is considered to be trite and unimportant to the technical theatre world, and that most of his writings have no place in the true aspect of technical theatre. This is

absolutely not the case. Dr. Sweet's texts are relevant because they contain the same material as Parker and Wolfe, among others, and they are relevant because they present it in such a way that a high school student can understand what he or she is supposed to do, and how he or she is supposed to do it. His copyright date of 1995 shows that he is keeping up to date in the aspects of technical theatre. There are always going to be changes and updates in professions like theatre due to the introduction of computers and the need to build things faster and cheaper due to rising costs of materials. However, no matter how much is known about how things are done in the technical world, there will always be constants. One will always have to know how to build a flat, or a set of stairs. The purpose then of Dr. Sweet's book is to present the knowledge that one needs to understand the more advanced building and set designs that he or she will deal with in the future.

The major aspect of this book that makes it such an appealing text for the high school student is its accessibility. As stated earlier, this book was not designed as a "textbook". It was designed for people who are building sets and mounting productions. It is for the people who want their sets and plays to be just as professional as a Broadway show, but lacking the Broadway budget. Anyone who has ever directed High School Theatre has said at least once, "if we only had more money we could...." That is why this book is so valuable for a high school setting.

Textbooks in the Technical Theatre category must meet **Content Standard 3**. A close examination of the text shows that it is correlated to the national standard requirements. As stated in Chapter 3, for a student to be proficient in **Content Standard 3**, "Designing and producing by conceptualizing and realizing artistic interpretations for informal or formal productions," he or she must be able to:

- a. explain the basic physical and chemical properties of the technical aspects theatre (such as light, color, electricity, paint, and makeup)
- b. analyze a variety of dramatic texts from cultural and historical perspectives to determine production requirements

- c. develop designs that use visual and aural elements to convey
*environments that clearly support the text
- d. apply technical knowledge and skills to collaboratively and
safely create functional scenery, properties, lighting, sound,
costumes, and makeup
- e. design coherent stage management, promotional, and
business plans.

(American Alliance for Theatre and Education 65)

Sweet's second chapter "Designing the Production" (19-34) meets this objective. Not only does he cover designing the setting, he also discusses what the setting is composed of ¹:

.... scenery, properties, and lighting, which work with the costumes and makeup to create a total image that fulfills many important functions for an effective performance. It establishes a place for the actors to perform, defines the mood and style of the play, provides expository information about the characters and situations, and controls where actors move on stage. (20)

Sweet also takes the reader through the designing process:

.... it is usually more efficient to do some advance planning in preparation for mounting the scenery. This may consist of simply sketching a floor plan and thumbnail or may include painting a rendering or constructing a model. (30)

What makes this so effective for students is that as the author explains each part of the design process. He gives detailed examples that allow the reader to match words and pictures together to synthesize an understanding that does not rely on the kind of advanced technical jargon that many of the other textbooks that were considered contain. It is worth emphasizing here that this list is aimed at high school students. Some may look at this thesis and wonder if Scenic Design and Stage Lighting might not have more information. It may have more, but to expose high school students to that excessive college-level information in an introductory high

school course is counter-productive. It would amount to information overload.

Finally, in his conclusion to the chapter Sweet writes that:

Once the design has been developed, whether it is held in the mind or committed to a floor plan and thumbnail sketch, rendering or model, it will provide a basis for planning the construction and painting of the scenery, development of the props list, and planning the lighting. By being able to identify the content of the set at the beginning of work on the show, meaningful plans regarding time, budget, and materials can be made. From that point on, it is simply a matter of utilizing resources in the best possible way to mount the production. (33)

He makes it clear that there are many steps that have to be gone through before a play is ready to be produced, but he reinforces the idea that **Content Standard 3**, "Designing and producing by conceptualizing and realizing artistic interpretations for informal or formal productions," needs to be met.

That chapter by itself may be classified as meeting the requirements for Standard 3, but in order to truly meet the standard, the sub-categories must also be evaluated within the text to see if it meets those as well. sub-category 'a' states that in order for the student should be able to "explain the basic physical and chemical properties of the technical aspects of theatre (such as light, color, electricity, paint, and makeup)". This is achieved in several of the chapters in the text. Lighting and electricity are not addressed in this volume, they are such important aspects that they have their own text which will be discussed later in this chapter. In Chapter 5: "Color" (203-218), Sweet covers all aspects of color:

Color has significant influence on our lives.... color contributes to our moods and attitudes and affects our choice of clothing, automobiles, and even the food we eat.... Not only do colors bear significant meaning, they contribute to the interest and attention of the audience. Properly employed, color can be used to control focus and to create psychological and emotional effects. It can create a sense of form, style, and mood and suggest the period or locale of a performance.

With all of these attributes, color is one of the most important elements on the stage. (204)

He lets the reader know how important color is to the designer, which is what the standard is requiring for proficiency. The chapter consists of several sections devoted to the “physical and chemical properties of color. In the first section he explains and defines the properties of color, “It consists of three interrelated components: hue, value, and chroma” (204). In addition to explaining and defining each of these terms, Sweet also gives a “Summary of Color Terms” (208) and provides a section on “Color Mixing” (209) and “Color Perception”:

Although a knowledge of the vocabulary and technology of color is important, it only serves to prepare for the task of manipulating color in a design. The choices that must be made are dependent on some understanding of the human perception of color.... These choices, however, should be made with further understanding not only of the technology of color but also of the effects of color perception. (216)

The chapter also reinforces the text by adding in color photographs of the different aspects of color that are discussed.

The physical and chemical properties of paint are discussed in their own chapter entitled, 4: “Painting and Texturing” (153-201). Again the author begins this chapter with an introduction that stresses the importance of understanding these properties and the techniques associated with them:

After all, the audience sees the paint, not the raw muslin or wood used to construct a flat or the plastic cups and foam ball used to make a prop. The paint should create an appropriate effect that is credible, attractive, and durable. It should tell the audience what something is or is supposed to be and the condition that it is in.... Careful analysis of the colors that contribute to the complex beauty of wood or brick will help anyone painting scenery determine which colors to use, the order in which to apply them, and the processes that may be most

effective. The techniques described here should be considered as guides from which to begin.... (154)

The format of this chapter is very similar to the others in the book. He begins by defining the terms to be used in the chapter, "All paints consist of three components: pigment, vehicle, and binder" (155) Once defined he explains what is required for scene paint (that is paint that is used specifically for theatrical purposes as opposed to interior or house paint) and includes advantages and disadvantage of the scenic paints (156). Sweet continues on in the chapter with a section about "Brushes" (159) and other tools that may be used for painting. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to "General Painting Techniques"(161) and "Detail Painting Techniques" (164), as well as "Commercial Finishes" (198).

What is effective about these sections is that whether the artist is a novice or advanced painter, the author goes through all the steps necessary to ensure that the reader understands and is able to effectively use these techniques to create the painting effect that is desired. He begins by explaining what the different coats (steps) are for painting a flat: the Size Coat, Prime Coat, and Base Coat:

Each coat of paint is extremely important because it provides the foundation for all subsequent painting. In many instances, one of these coatings can serve multiple functions, the size coat and prime coat can be a single treatment if necessary. Often, a prime coat is eliminated and the base color is painted directly over the size coat. (162-163)

Quite often the high school student will be working in an environment that does not have a large, or any, budget and the fact that the author shows how to effectively cut corners really demonstrates how user-friendly this text is for the educational setting. When he discusses the different types of detail painting techniques, he includes photos of each example as well as detailed steps to insure a correct use of the technique:

Feather dusting.... creates a rich elaborate texture that can serve as wallpaper or it can be utilized as a textured base for a wallpaper stencil. Once again, the effectiveness of the technique depends on the

means of application as well as on the selection of color. A real ostrich-feather duster is used. The feathers are dipped into the paint, wrung partially dry, and tested on an area off the scenery to determine the amount of paint on the feathers. Holding the duster by the handle, the feathers are swirled so they spread out like a fan; while in the extended position, they are dropped onto the surface of the scenery, leaving an impression of the swirling feathers. The duster is lifted, rotated in the opposite direction, and dropped onto the scenery again, repeating the process in random, overlapping patterns. The duster must be lifted and rotated between each impression; the feathers should not move on the surface. If a feather duster is not available; a muslin stomp may be used in exactly the same way.

(170)

With a clear understanding of the technique and a photo of a sample product the author is assured that anyone using this technique will be effective in achieving the desired results. The section of the chapter covering with "Commercial Finishes" deals with covering chemicals other than paint. These include Aerosol Paint, Wood Stain, Varnish, Lacquer and Shellac. The purpose is to let the reader know what alternatives there are available to them other than paint, however, the author also warns about the dangers of using such materials:

(CAUTION: Lacquer and lacquer thinner are highly flammable. Lacquer produces an intense vapor that will cause headaches and nausea; it should be used in a well-ventilated environment) (200-201)

The author places these kinds of cautions in bold so that they are easily identifiable and make the reader aware of the dangers associated with chemicals in painting. A further discussion of safety will be addressed later in this chapter. He concludes the chapter with a recapping of the importance of painting and texturing, reinforcing how important taking care in preparing the items to be painted, and finally with a reminder,

"It must be approached with care and understanding of the purpose and effect of each choice" (201).

Makeup is not addressed in this text. When asked why it was not included in the text Dr. Sweet stated that, "Everything I know about makeup I learned because I had to teach it." In the high school environment there is not a large need for makeup artists. Most of the time students at this level wear only base makeup, if any. The only time a student has to learn about advanced techniques is when the character calls for age or some type of appliance (bald cap, facial hair, scars), and as this thesis will show about costumes, those are usually with parent volunteer assistance. That is not to say that the standard should not be taught; however it can be accomplished in the form of a guest lecturer or a workshop where the student can get the chance to have some hands-on work done rather than reading it out of a book and looking at pictures. In fact, even at the university level the introductory makeup class is taught as a four hour workshop on a Saturday. Therefore, even though makeup as a topic is not addressed in this text, as this thesis will show, this is still the most accessible text for high school students.

The next subcategories, 'b' and 'c', state that the student must be able to "analyze a variety of dramatic texts from cultural and historical perspectives to determine production requirements", and "develop designs that use visual and aural elements to convey *environments that clearly support the text", respectively. This text accomplishes both of those goals in the first two chapters. In Chapter 1: "Planning The Production Space", he introduces the reader to the proscenium theatre as well as other shapes for theatres. He includes terms and ways to problem solve for "No matter what kind of facility is worked in.... Range[ing] from dealing with a slippery floor to poor acoustics" (15). This chapter is vital to the introduction and understanding of the reader due to the fact that "An awareness of the limits of the production space and the producing organization and an understanding of the needs of the show are essential". If one does not understand this, how can one hope to analyze and develop designs? As the author says, 'Once the needs and limits of the production have been determined, work can proceed to mount the show" (17).

Chapter 2: "Designing The Production", encompasses both 'b' and 'c' in its makeup. The purpose of this chapter is to "design the setting.... it establishes a place for the actors to perform, defines the mood and style of the play, provides expository information about the characters and situations, and controls where actors move on stage" (20). The author begins the chapter by discussing the "Functions of the Setting", covering place, mood, style and exposition and defining those terms as related to theatre. He then covers "Design Elements":

When planning the setting, objects are selected and arranged to define the space. Reduced to the most basic level, it is the elements of design—line, shape, mass, color, and texture—that are manipulated; to affect contrast, balance, and rhythm for the purpose of creating an appropriate visual composition that will support the action of the play.

(23)

Once again the author reinforces the requirements of the National Standard, by introducing the concept of design elements to the reader, he establishes the basis for what the National Standard is attempting to assess. The remaining sections of this chapter deal with "Preparing to Design" (26) and "The Designing Process" (30). Within the scope of these sections the author explains and gives solid examples of how to analyze a script, as well as the importance of doing this:

Studying a script to determine what a play is about is a typical directorial function. This analysis usually considers who the characters are, what they do, how and why they do it, and what the results of their action are. This may lead to a thematic statement about the effects of ego for a play like Oedipus The King, or a simple statement about life as an early teenager for a script such as Lillian Hellman's A Member of the Wedding.

Understanding what the play is about will also help develop an emotional response to it.... When the play is read—and when an audience sees it—what emotional response should be elicited? How does the play feel?.... However, the feelings stimulated by a play

may change during the course of action.... Finally, it is necessary to determine the physical requirements of the production. Two categories of information are needed: what is requested and what is required.

(27)

Sweet concludes the chapter by demonstrating script analysis. By using the opening scene from Neil Simon's, The Odd Couple, the author shows how to give a quick read of the basic information contained in the script as well as other important things to look for:

The objective of this analysis is not to strip the setting to the minimum, but to discern what is absolutely required by the play and then to figure out what other things would be helpful to the performance to complete the visual image and to aid the actors. This understanding allows greater flexibility in planning the setting and in seeking the props for the production.

The analysis of the text should also consider the historical period in which to mount the play. Some scripts may be easily modernized to make them more understandable by a contemporary audience.... It can also ease the work of the properties crew by allowing the use of contemporary furniture and set dressings. Not all plays, however, may be updated. In some instances, the actions, values, or social mores of the play restrict the production to an earlier historical period. In some of these, it may be possible to make an adjustment of historical period without bringing the play all the way into a contemporary setting. (29)

Dr. Sweet writes that "in any well-written play, there is a story that connects to your life. My job as a theatre practitioner is to help them [audience] find the connection."

This is why a textbook like this is a necessity for this National Standard. The National Standard cannot be met without a good basic understanding of what the design process is all about, and this text meets and exceeds that criteria.

Subcategory 'd' states that the student must be able to "apply technical knowledge and skills to collaboratively and safely create functional scenery,

properties, lighting, sound, costumes, and makeup". Chapter 3: "Constructing and Handling Scenery" (35-151) covers that topic in detail. In his introduction he explains the temporariness of scenery:

Scenery is intended for temporary use on stage. Its purpose is to create the impression of a location. People who build scenery are concerned with economy, strength, weight durability, ease of construction, and ease of handling. (36)

Due to the fact that a set is temporary, this chapter is concerned with "traditional construction methods" as well as "alternative techniques". The author writes that, "No solution should be discarded simply because it has not been used before or does not exist in a book. If an idea, technique, or material seems practical and safe, it should be tested; if it works, it should be used" (36). The focus of the chapter deals with how to build scenery and the safety aspects of such. Examples of how effective the text is for instructing how to build are discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis and need not be repeated here. However, the important section worth noting is the section on safety.

The author covers what types of standard tools the reader is likely to run across in the scene shop, as well as the different aspects of safety: Rules, Fire, Rigging, Electrical, Irritants and Toxic Hazards and First Aid. The sections are short, but they get their point across. Some of the "Rules":

Read and understand the instruction manual.

Wear a full-face safety shield.

Do not wear loose-fitting clothing that will get caught in the tools.

Pin up long, loose hair.

Use a grounding plug or double-insulated tools.

Disconnect tools when changing blades and bits.

Do not leave tools running while unattended.

Do not use damaged power cords.

Minimize the use of extension cords. (45)

Most of these rules would be considered common sense by most people; however, since the National Standards deal with high school students, the text must spell out things that should already be known. This is not intended to diminish the intelligence level of the student or the teacher; it is taking into account the lack of common sense that some have:

Safety is a primary concern in a shop or theatre, because such places are filled with potential hazards. On stage there are all kinds of things suspended overhead; in the shop there are tools and equipment that must be treated with respect and understanding. In addition, there are the constant potential of fire and electrical shock, as well as exposure to airborne irritants, toxic vapors, and fluids. Understanding these hazards and being prepared to deal with them are imperative. (46)

Students need to realize that these dangers exist in the theatre and not paying attention could end up costing someone an arm, or leg, or even their life. This text is not to replace the teacher. There is no panacea textbook that covers everything in absolute, complete detail. What the text does is to meet the requirements of the National Standards. It is then up to the teacher to reinforce those practices in the classroom, especially where safety is concerned. These ideas are carried over into the other topics in this subcategory and do not needed to be stated here. The final subcategory, 'e', deals with the student being able to "design coherent stage management, promotional, and business plans". In most schools the theatre teacher is responsible for creating these plans. While they may train some students how to do this, most of the time it is done by the teacher for liability reasons. It is not dealt with in Sweet's book. Texts that deal with the area of stage management are listed in Appendix I.

The subject of costuming is not dealt with in Sweet's book either, nor does it need to be dealt with in great detail at this level. Most junior and senior high schools do not have the resources or facilities for much in the way of costume construction or storage. It is also not practical since children are still growing and it is very unlikely that the costumes that worked for the students this year will work the next time the show

is done without some major alterations. Therefore they will most often rent costumes from a company and pay for it with funds that they have generated through fund raising. Several years ago a high school put on a production of Once Upon A Mattress and built their own costumes. The cost of the material alone was \$1000. They were fortunate enough to have two parent volunteers to build all forty of the costumes for the show. The style was medieval and they had just enough storage for this set of costumes. The following year the same school put on a production of Anything Goes and without room to store, or parents to help build costumes, it was easier for them to rent the finished pieces at a cost of \$1800 than try to enlist the help of the students in the Home Economics department for such an arduous task.

As with makeup, costume design should be touched upon at this level, but only as it relates to play analysis. The students need to understand why a character is dressed or made up the way they are. If the student understands play analysis from a technical theatre point of view and has been exposed to the other texts on the list in order to meet the requirements of the National Standards, then that student should have a rudimentary understanding of costume design and makeup. This can be reinforced in the form of a workshop or guest speaker in the classroom, but at this level there does not need to be a text devoted to either costume or makeup.

Handbook of Scenery, Properties and Lighting: Lighting Volume 2

Handbook of Scenery, Properties and Lighting: Lighting Volume 2 is the companion text to Volume 1. This text deals specifically with lighting and light related topics such as electricity and color. In his "Preface" to this text the author states that "the only assumption made in this book is that the reader is interested in practical solutions for lighting staged events" (ix). Sweet lets the reader know that this book will cover everything and assume nothing ²:

The book begins with a discussion of the purpose, functions, and qualities of stage lighting, which is followed by a discussion about the principles, practices, and strategies of lighting design and then an

investigation of color as an element of stage lighting design. Practical concerns and their effect on lighting design are discussed in relation to mounting positions and lighting fixtures. There is a discussion of projection and special effects, which is followed by a simple presentation about the basics of electricity. Finally, lighting control and lighting control equipment are discussed. These chapters will provide the experienced theatre practitioner or the novice with practical solutions to common problems in production. (ix)

The ideas expressed in this book are very practical for a high school text since many mistakes can occur at this level when things are assumed; most are embarrassing, but some are deadly. The two sub-categories of **Content Standard 3** that deal with lighting and electricity are 'a', explain the basic physical and chemical properties of the technical aspects of theatre (light, electricity)", and 'd' "apply technical knowledge and skills to collaboratively and safely create functional.... lighting". This text covers both of those categories in great detail.

As with his previous book, the author briefly and effectively introduces the reader to the subject matter. In the Introduction to Chapter 1: "Lighting Design", Sweet explains how effective lighting can be and stresses its importance:

The audience will not leave the theatre "whistling the lighting," but effective lighting makes it possible for the audience to see and even easier for them to hear the performance. More than that, the quality of illumination can affect everything that audience members experience. It can intensify the drama, control and direct interest or attention, paint pictures, provide information about the time and place, contribute to the style and mood, and help communicate ideas. When exciting visual effects are created and refined, a sense of artistry and fulfillment is achieved by the designer and a more effective performance is given to those watching and listening. Even when there are severe limits on the availability or use of equipment, time, or staff, lighting can make a significant contribution to a performance. (2)

Once the reader has been engaged by this introduction, as well as the author's explanation of the functions of lighting, he discusses an advanced level of "Analysis". If the student has read the first text and understands what script analysis is and how to use it properly, he can easily understand Sweet's ideas about lighting analysis:

Analysis is the first step in developing a lighting design. Even before a production goes into rehearsal, the person responsible for the lighting should have a clear understanding of what the performance is about and what ideas the production is attempting to express. (5)

Sweet's texts often return to the idea of analysis; sub-category 'b'. For the other proficiency skills to be mastered, the student must understand analysis. This book makes sure that that idea is reinforced before the author delves into theoretical ideas about color. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to different systems of lighting a proscenium stage (single-point, two-point, multi-point), and a non-proscenium stage:

When planning lighting for the non-proscenium theatre, such as an arena or thrust stage, many of the same design approaches can be used, but there are additional concerns. Because the arena theatre, with the audience completely surrounding the stage is the most extreme example of a non-proscenium theatre, it shall be used to exemplify the needs and systems involved in non-proscenium lighting. the location of the audience on all sides of the stage makes lighting for visibility necessary on all sides of the performance area. There can be no dark side of the stage or a side that is deeply colored throughout the performance. (37)

Even though the author concentrates mainly on the proscenium style of stage, he discusses other styles in this text. This would be very helpful in a school environment where the stage is in a gym, or a multi-purpose room, or in the case of some of the magnet schools around the country, where the theatre is a black box or arena-style space. This chapter allows the reader to understand what the different

requirements are for the different types of theatres, and what the main purpose of lighting is:

.... but whether a great deal of equipment is available or only a limited inventory, at some point someone must decide where to place and aim the lights, when to turn them on, and when to turn them off. If dimming is available, the intensity of each light and the rate of change must be decided as well as choices about color and beam quality.

The art of lighting design, without regard to the quantity or or type of equipment available, is an important task that may contribute to the overall effectiveness of any production. Light should not only make the performance visible, it should enhance the dramatic or comedic effect of every moment of the production. This is accomplished best with a practical understanding of lighting equipment and how to utilize that equipment in artful ways. Lighting design, then, is the art of making a performance visible, theatrical, and dramatic as a result of judicious planning, a clear understanding of the script and the performance, and the artistic application of technology. (56)

This chapter alone more than meets the requirements set up in sub-category 'd'. The remainder of the text not only reinforces the requirements for sub-category 'd', but 'a' as well, and exceeds the requirements for both of those sub-categories.

Other than the chapter on color, which will be addressed later, the remaining chapters in this book deal with the technical knowledge of lighting ("Mounting Position and Equipment" (71-88), "Lighting Instruments" (89-131), "Projection and Special Effects" (133-154), "Lighting Control" (175-201)), and the basic physical and chemical properties of "Electricity" (155-174). Only by demonstrating proficiency in these categories is the student able to show that they have mastered **Content Standard 3**.

In Chapter 4: "Lighting Equipment", (90-131), the author tells the reader that "all of the equipment has a single purpose: to put controlled light on stage" (90). In order

for the reader to understand what this means, Sweet discusses in some detail “The Typical Lighting Instrument”:

The typical theatrical lighting fixture consists of nine standard parts: The hood or housing, color holder, socket, lamp, pigtail, connector, yoke, and mounting device, including safety cable. (90)

He proceeds to break down each part and explain with excellent detail what each part of the instrument is and does. Definitions are clear and well-written so that anyone will be able to follow what is being discussed:

The **reflector** is one of the most important parts of any theatrical lighting instrument. It serves two functions: (1) to increase the efficiency of the lighting instrument by redirecting what would otherwise be unused rays of light and (2) to create specific patterns and qualities of light as part of the redirection process. **Reflection** is the technical term for redirecting rays of light by bouncing them off a surface. The kind of reflection with which most people are familiar with is called mirror **reflection**, which is when an image strikes a surface and is reflected in exactly the same pattern. (91)

Once Sweet has described the parts of the instrument are, he discusses what the common types of lighting instruments are, again, with clear and easily understood definitions:

Floodlights and spotlights are the two general classifications of lighting instruments. They are distinguished in purpose and design.

Floodlights provide general illumination; they are made to wash the stage with a flood of nonspecific light that may be clear or colored.

Spotlights are designed to illuminate a specific location—a spot—on the stage.... There are several different kinds of floodlights and spotlights. Each is designed to produce a distinctive quality or shape of light for a specific purpose. (98)

Again, all of these examples reinforce a sub-category of the National Standard. A student may apply the technical knowledge only if he has a clear understanding of

this background. That is what this text provides. The remainder of this chapter focuses on lenses and alternative lighting equipment:

Although most people doing stage lighting would prefer to work with commercially manufactured theatrical lighting instruments, budget may prohibit availability of this equipment. There are a variety of alternatives that can be used for stage lighting. A few of these solutions are highly practical and very inexpensive. Usually the equipment is available from local hardware stores or electrical suppliers. (127)

Exposing the reader to such alternatives is important because a lighting designer or technician needs to be creative. They need to find out how they can achieve their goal with what they have to work with, which, for the high school student, is relevant to sub-category 'd'. The last section of the chapter describes how to focus the various types of instruments that the author discusses earlier. Sweet sums up this chapter in a "Conclusion" that reinforces what he states throughout the text and that relates to the National Standard quite well: "Adapting to these restrictions often produces some wonderfully creative solutions to the problems of production" (131).

Chapter 7: "Lighting Control Systems" (175-201), provides a fairly thorough look at how light boards work, without getting overly technical:

The technical elements of lighting control—that is, the construction of dimmers, wiring of control circuits, and so forth is extremely complex and in general is left to the profession of engineers. However, understanding the operation of lighting control boards is essential to the theatre practitioner and is exciting once a few fundamental concepts about lighting control systems are understood. (177)

The chapter focuses not only on understanding what a patch panel is and how it operates, or what a dimmer, or dimmer per circuit system, is, but also on examples of how to set up a basic program on a single light board:

The method of operation is fairly simple. Before it is time to turn the lights on and with the master pot [defined earlier in the section] in the

down position, the board operator sets the intensity each controller shall come to once the lights are turned on.

And a preset lighting controller:

Preset 1 or Scene 1 on this board is an exact duplication of a single-scene electronic control board. Preset 2 or Scene 2 is an exact duplication of Preset 1, with the exception of the assignment switches that are not used in the second scene. The two banks of potentiometers are located above and below each other with the posts assigned to each channel of control directly aligned to create a vertical row consisting of assignment switch, fader for Preset 1, and fader for Preset 2. Some control boards have as many as 10 presets, each a duplication of the faders in Scene 1. (188)

Using this text, a student with access to a light board would have very little trouble learning how to work it, as compared to using a manual for a Strand board which is written as though the operator understands everything from running the board, to designing it.

The rest of the chapter deals with “Alternatives to Commercial Lighting Control”, “Plugging”, “Switches” and “Household Dimmers” (196-197), and even how to make a “Homemade Dimmer Board” (198-201), again emphasizing safety:

The idea of using household dimmers may be extended to the point of constructing a small homemade dimmer board. **Before constructing the control system, check to be sure that this device meets state and local codes.** (198)

In summation, the author tries to make sure that every person, student or adult, who reads this book, understands and is able to set up, design and run a lighting system in any theatre. Sweet’s book also lets the reader know that with the understanding that professional lighting systems are larger, if the reader is able to grasp what they are doing at this level, the more advanced system is not going to be a hindrance. In fact the text will challenge the reader to become more proficient in their lighting skills so that they will not be intimidated by larger or more sophisticated systems, which is

one of the overall goals of the National Standards.

Chapter 6 “Electricity” is probably the one of the most important chapters in this text. The purpose of this chapter is not to give the reader a semester course in electricity, but to allow them “to be familiar with a few terms, significant safety precautions, and one simple mathematical formula” (156). Familiarizing himself or herself with the terms, etc., along with the design process, will allow the reader to achieve the best results for their project.

As stated above, the first section of this chapter is devoted to “Electrical Terms”. sub-category ‘a’ states that the student should be able to “explain the physical and chemical properties.... of electricity” (65). As with the previous chapters discussed, the author gives clear, easy to follow definitions to explain what is often a confusing subject:

The amount of power used is directly related to the *rate* or speed at which the power is used; this value is identified as **amperage**, rated in **amps**. Most small appliances, such as a toaster, and all electrical hardware, such as plugs, fuses, wire, and switches, are rated by the maximum amps they can safely conduct. (156)

In addition to the terms defined in this section, the author explains what the different color coding of the wires in an electrical system mean. This is relevant to sub-category “a”. The author also explains the “West Virginia formula”. Very often, a student may be working in an unfamiliar electrical situation, when trying to decide what instruments to use, or how to connect more instruments to fewer circuits without blowing a fuse or circuit breaker (these terms are also discussed in this chapter), especially with regard to safety. The West Virginia formula allows the user to determine if what they trying to do with their lighting equipment is feasible or wise:

To determine how much power is needed to operate equipment or the capacity of the equipment being used, it is necessary to apply the **West Virginia (W. Va.)** to the known information.... (158)

Once that formula is mastered, the rest of the chapter makes easy reading. The

remaining sections deal with “Current Limiting and Circuit Protection” again with a focus on safety:

The amount of electricity allowed into any portion of an electrical system is restricted by fuses and circuit breakers that limit the flow of current and protect the circuits. Either device is designed to fail, blow out, or shut off if it is asked to carry an excess amount of electrical current. These devices are intentionally the weakest links in any electrical system. By being the first part of the system to fail due to an overload of electrical demand, a fuse or circuit breaker protects all of the other equipment drawing power on the line it protects.

(159-160)

Finally Sweet discusses the “Distribution Of Electrical Power” as well as how to make “Portable Equipment”. These sections are designed to help the reader to understand not only how electricity reaches point ‘b’ after leaving point ‘a’, but also how to make such things as an “Extension Cord” (164-167), a “Two-Fer” (167-168), which is a dual ended extension cord which allows the reader to plug two instruments into one socket, and an In-Line Switch (171-172). Knowing the basics of electricity and how to build portable equipment is relevant not only sub-category ‘a’, but also ‘d’. Through this chapter, the student, armed with an understanding of electricity, will be able to as the sub-category dictates, “apply technical knowledge and skills to.... safely create functional.... lighting”:

This essential source of energy [electricity] can be wonderfully helpful to create the appropriate mood for a production, but it must be understood and respected. It is imperative that anyone working with lighting equipment stay conscious not only of its contribution to the production but also of its potential dangers to people, equipment, and buildings. If the proper equipment is used, wiring is done with care, and safe procedures applied when handling the equipment, the work and workers should be safe. (174)

Chapter 3: “Mounting Positions And Equipment”, and Chapter 5: “Projections

And Special Effects” are important chapters for different reasons. Both are important for the student’s understanding the National Standards content, but their functions in achieving this goal are different. The purpose of Chapter 3 is to not only explain about the ideal situation which “permits lighting instruments to be placed anywhere in a performance space,” but also what is considered more realistic; Community or Educational Theatre:

Although many theatres are equipped with at least limited lighting positions, many other facilities and most nontraditional performance spaces, such as a gymnasium or cafeteria, do not have permanent mounting positions for theatrical lighting instruments. In those situations, temporary mounting and electrical distribution equipment must be used. (72)

The “Introduction” discusses how important it is that the basics of electricity (Chapter 6) be learned. Clearly, there is a significant amount of overlapping in these chapters which enables the student to understand and become proficient in the National Standards content.

The first section of this chapter deals with understanding the “Requirements For Lighting Positions” (72). This section takes into account the angles that the lights will be placed at as well as accessibility:

- 5. Mounting positions must be accessible to workers so that lights can be hung, focused and maintained. Preferred access is by means of catwalks, which place stagehands on a secure floor that allows them to hang and focus that lights easily. In lieu of catwalks there must be a way to place a scaffold or ladder on a stable base within safe access of each lighting instrument. (73)**

Sweet next discusses different types of “Mounting Equipment”: “.... instruments are designed to be hung with clamps or with bolts on pipes, track or flat surfaces” (73). He also includes comments on “Traditional” and “Non-Traditional” ways to mount instruments. If the reader is lucky enough to have a traditional setup, then this section

will reinforce what is visually evident in that theatre. If however the reader's theater is non-traditional, Sweet provides substantial information for that as well:

When a performance space is not equipped with lighting positions, it may be adapted by temporarily adding pipes. The easiest way to do this is to suspend a 1 1/2" pipe with properly installed aircraft cable from a solid overhead structure that a structural engineer has confirmed is able to carry the weight. (79)

Here the emphasis is again on safety and proper design. If the space is not able to accommodate such measures, Sweet again gives alternatives:

Trees, ladders, and booms are handy portable mounting equipment.... Although well-designed and well-equipped theatres may have some or all of the traditional mounting positions and equipment, many organizations work in minimal facilities or must adapt gyms, churches, cafeterias, or classrooms to perform. Those kinds of spaces seldom have established positions for mounting lights or means to distribute electrical power, and the organizations also lack the budget to purchase standard equipment to use or rigging. A few inexpensive solutions are possible to solve the problems of finding locations for lights in these situations (81-82).

Once the problem of where to mount the instruments has been discussed, the author turns to a very pressing issue of how to reach the "... Mounting Positions" 82). Here again, the emphasis is on safety: "There are a number of ladder-safety rules that should be strictly observed" (83). He discusses the different types of ladders (including set up) and how to build a "Rolling X-Frame" (87-88), and finally concludes:

Less well equipped facilities increase the amount of time the work on lighting requires by necessitating creation of mounting positions and making access to hang and focus the lighting instruments difficult.... Certain basic understandings about how electricity functions and the equipment that distributes it are important. The establishment of

lighting positions affects and is affected by how electrical power is brought to the lights. (88)

As demonstrated here, each chapter in this text is relevant to the National Standards and includes summary material to suggest that theatre, and education in general, is not just about what is learned in the current chapter; it is a building process that continues from one lesson to the next.

If the purpose of Chapter 3 is to demonstrate the proper ways for mounting lighting instruments, then the purpose of Chapter 5: "Projections and Special Effects" is to show how "treatments of light as projected textures and images can greatly enrich a production" (134). This chapter takes the reader through a discussion on gobos, "a very thin piece of stainless steel with a design etched through it or heat-resistant glass with a pattern painted on it," (138) "Photographic Slides" (143) and "Use of Projections" (146-149). There have been advances made in the area of special effects in theatrical lighting since 1995 (the copyright date of this text); but this chapter exposes the reader to the systems and companies that are the pioneers and leaders in this type of lighting effects:

The Vari-Light Company manufactures several different versions of **moving lights**. These are very specialized fixtures designed to rotate, change intensity, beam size, and beam quality (hard/soft), as well as change color and even insert gobos or patterns in the beam of light. The company markets fixtures for long and short throws in narrow, medium, and wide beam spreads. To direct the movement of fixtures, Vari-Light provides a dedicated control system to program and record the cues for the fixtures. Managed in this way, one, two, or even several hundred lighting fixtures can be cued at the same time. Vari-Light systems are leased, not sold. There is a minimum order requirement, including a minimum quantity of fixtures, the control system, and at least one operator who is responsible for programming as well as maintenance of the equipment. Normally this equipment is obtained directly from Vari-Light. (150-151)

According to a representative from Vari-Light, there are about six other manufacturers of these types of lighting instruments, and as the technology improves, more will follow. The benefit of this chapter is that it exposes the reader to what is currently (within 10 years) known about advanced lighting systems and who the leaders are in the technology of automated lighting (vari-light has become a generic term for these types of lights much like leko or xerox). Due to a tremendous volume of calls from people interested in purchasing their systems, Vari-Light started selling them about two years ago.

Technology changes daily. The PC that is bought in a store today is already six months out-of-date. Each day things are being designed faster, cheaper and more sophisticated than ever before. It is unreasonable to expect a textbook to remain up-to-the minute, as the technology will be obsolete by the time the text is published. What is more desirable, is for the text to expose the reader to the overall technology that exists, and if he or she wishes to learn more about it, he or she can find that information through the library, on the Web, or through dealers. Most students are not going to be working with the kind of sophisticated effect systems that Vari-Light and other companies offer since most schools cannot afford, or even need those types of systems. Still, since students need to know the basics of the system, this chapter successfully exposes the reader to the basics of the projection and special effects of lighting. As new systems and technology come out, they will not have to learn everything anew; they can expand on the basic knowledge that they have already learned through classes and this text. That is what the National Standards are designed to accomplish. The Standards do not require that the students have the most advanced knowledge, only that they be proficient in reasonably current knowledge. Specialization is a much more advanced goal, which should be accomplished at the college or professional level.

The remainder of the chapter discusses different types of special effects, from flashes to strobes, to flash paper, to mirror balls(151-153). In the "Conclusion", Sweet sums up how effective these effects can be: "The use of any kind of projection demands extra time in the production schedule for experimentation and to

make modifications. When the time is available, projections and special effects can greatly enliven a performance”(154). Once again, he reinforces the sub-category, “apply technical knowledge and skills to collaboratively and safely create functional lighting”.

The final chapter from this text relevant to the Standards, is Chapter 2: “Color” (58-69). In his “Introduction” to this chapter, the author emphasizes the importance of choosing and understanding the right color:

Color is one of the most challenging element of design. The colors selected for scenery and costumes should be pleasing to the eye and appropriate for the mood of the show. However, it is of no consequence what colors are chosen for the scenery or costumes for a production if the lighting does not complement those colors. Selection of appropriate lighting colors can harmonize all of the visual elements of a show, or poorly chosen colors can turn the colors of the setting or the costumes into bright, glowing blobs, or a murky muddy mess. Obviously, with this ability to aid or damage the effectiveness of the sets, costumes, and production as a whole, the selection of color for lights must be done with great care. An understanding of the theory of color in pigments, which is explained in Volume I, and the theory of color in light, which is discussed below, can aid this selection process.

(58)

From the “Introduction” alone it is evident that this chapter meets the goals of sub-category ‘a’ – explaining the basic physical and chemical properties of color.

Explaining color theory is difficult enough, but the author breaks the theory down into readable sections and includes several examples to illustrate his points:

1. If a white object is seen under white light, it will appear white. There are no color absorbers in the object since white pigment contains no hues, and all of the visible spectrum of light is present to be reflected....

7. If a yellow vase is seen *under green light*, it will appear green since there is no red light present to be reflected....
12. If a blue ball is seen under *both red and green light*, it will appear black because there are no reflectors of either color present in the ball.... (60-61)

These examples presented in concert with Sweet's explanations of "The Interaction of Additive and Subtractive Color Mixing" help the reader understand how this theory works:

When white light falls on a surface, the surface may absorb or reflect any portions of the visible spectrum of light. The *color of the surface* determines which wavelengths of light are absorbed and which wavelengths are reflected. Beginning with a surface that is white and therefore contains no hues and no color absorbers, the more hues that are mixed together to make the color of a surface, the more wavelengths of light will be *absorbed*. Mixing pigments to create a color is called **subtractive color mixing** because pigment absorbs—or subtracts—wavelengths of light from the reflection pattern. Those wavelengths of light that are not absorbed by the pigment are reflected by it. (60)

It bears repeating here that this theory is difficult to comprehend even for someone with a background in physics. The author tries to make this theory as accessible to the reader as possible without lowering the intelligence level of the text. When asked about his explanation of the color theories in this text, Dr. Sweet justifiably thought that no one explains color on reflection to lighting and painting as fully as he does in this chapter. He suggested that texts like Parker and Wolfe's make too many assumptions and tend to omit the basics, and that texts like Bellman's are too hard to read (Sweet, Harvey. Telephone interview. 4 July 2002). As stated earlier, those types of texts are better for the college student who is considering going into

technical theatre as a career rather than the high school student who is being exposed to it for the first time.

The rest of the chapter deals with color media: “There are three categories of light-coloring media: liquid, glass, and disposable sheets” (63). As in the chapter on special effects, Sweet also discusses new technology in lighting:

Many touring companies and an increasing number of resident theatres are using color scrollers as a lighting fixture accessory. A color scroller (Figure 2-5) is an automatic color change that mounts in the color holder of a lighting fixture. Upon receiving a remote signal, the scroller will draw colors in front of the lens until the appropriate color has been reached.... Use of scrollers can reduce the number of lighting fixtures required on a production, since now any single fixture equipped with a scroller can project at least eight different colors of light. (68)

Not only does the author explain what a scroller is, he also lists the advantages and disadvantages of such a device which is useful for any reader when determining what value such a piece of equipment would have in his or her theatre. There are many similarities between this chapter and the chapter on color in Stagecraft I. Whereas the author’s explanation of theory in Stagecraft I is simplistic, here Sweet explains theory at a reasonable level. Sweet’s text has also contains color photos to reinforce the examples in the chapter, an advantage over the Lord text. Lord offers few photos, and the ones included are black and white.

In his conclusion to this chapter Sweet states that:

The process of selecting the colors must be done carefully with a full understanding of the effect of the color on the scenery costumes, and makeup, as well as the psychological effect of the lighting on an audience. (69)

This is what the goal of the sub-category is – explaining the basic chemical and physical properties of color. The author’s conversational style allows the reader to feel as though he or she is participating in a discussion rather than being lectured to, a

distinct advantage over other textbooks. Sweet also includes two appendices at the end of the text. One is a "Color Media Guide" (203-214) whose purpose is to "offer some general guidelines to the range of Roscolux and Roscolene colors and diffusers," and the other is "A Revised Standard Graphic Language for Lighting Design" (215-222) which includes sections on "The Light Plot", "The Vertical Lighting Section", "Line Weights", Computer-Aided Design (CAD) Symbol Standards" and three pages of graphic symbols for lighting. This appendix is based on USITT standards developed in 1995. Once a student has read and developed an appetite for lighting from this text, and understands the symbols and terminology, he or she will be able to read and explore more, and understand the other, more advanced texts discussed in this chapter; in Sweet's text, a student learns the basics and meets the goals of the sub-category of the National Standard. As the author states in his discussion regarding "Future Standards" (218), ".... this process is and should be ongoing. This standards document is not final and will continue to be revised as new technology and techniques are discovered". When compared to the other texts available, this text more than exceeds the requirements of the National Standards.

Still, none of the texts on the List have reinforcement questions at the end of chapters. As shown in Chapter 2, Dr. Sweet stated that the editors had asked him to write questions at the end of both volumes of his text, but that he decided against it. He saw these books as handbooks rather than training manuals, and as a result felt that questions were not needed. To an extent this is true of all of the texts on the List. Too often in the educational world, publishers will sell texts that not only come with a Teacher's Annotated Edition, but also questions, tests, overheads; an entire kit designed to cover everything you need in order to teach this class. "Just follow my simple directions and you too can teach!" Just because a company publishes such a kit does not necessarily mean that it is the panacea for this course. Some, like The Stage and the School do not give even a third of the information that these two texts do in regard to technical theatre. They include many pedagogical aids that will help the undereducated teacher to succeed in teaching, but they fall short with regard to the National Standards. There is no one text that covers everything in enough detail

to meet all of the National Standards effectively, as evidenced by the amount of information covered by the first two texts on this list. The next two texts cover perhaps even more information with regard to their specific disciplines.

Living Theater: A History

History, whether it is of theatre or otherwise, tells a society where it has been, where it is going, and how it got to where it is at this moment. It tells people what was important, and what is of no consequence. The saying, “Those who do not study history are doomed to repeat it,” is the rally cry of a generation that refuses to suffer and meet the same fates as their parents. In their book, Living Theatre: A History, Edwin Wilson and Alvin Goldfarb go further ³:

Theater history is a discipline that serves a multitude of functions. To begin with, it can help future professionals understand their artistic heritage. Theater history also presents techniques, conventions, and ideas which can be borrowed by contemporary practitioners. We will see, in our discussion of modern theater how often contemporary artists adapt historic conventions to create productions which speak to their own audiences. We should note that this is different from recreating historically accurate productions—another common use of theater history.

If theater is a reflection of its society, then theater history can also give us insights into societies of the past. We can learn significant information about the major issues and concerns of a historical period by studying its theater; we can learn about the conventions and norms of a society by analyzing its theatrical presentations.

Theater history is also an exciting and unique discipline worthy of study purely for the sake of scholarly exploration. Because theater is an ephemeral art, theater history is immensely difficult to reconstruct. But this difficulty leads to exciting debates and constant reevaluation.

Like the art form it tries to reconstruct, theater history itself.... is constantly being reconstructed. (16)

This is what **Content Standards 5** and **6** represent. **Content Standards 5** and **6** state that students should be proficient in "Researching by evaluating and synthesizing cultural and historical information to support artistic choices", and in "Comparing and integrating art forms by analyzing traditional theatre, dance music, visual arts, and *new art forms" (American Alliance for Theatre and Education 66) respectively. Both of these standards fall into the category of Theatre History, and this is the best text book to accomplish those goals.

This text, originally written in 1983 and recently (2000) published in a third edition, chronicles theater history from a unique perspective:

In describing the various aspects of theater, we have striven to give flesh and blood to each activity. As we discuss the artists who created theater, we provide details of their personal histories: interesting information that makes them come alive. To focus on these people as individuals, we have highlighted them in the text with their names, their dates, and photographs or drawings. Rather than being set apart in separate boxes, however, these **biographical sections** are an integral part of the text, so that the flow of Living Theater is not interrupted. (vii)

Too often history texts are written in an attempt to expose the reader to the material. There is no desire on the part of the writer or the editor to make the text complete, informative or even interesting. This can best be illustrated by comparing Living Theater with a popular text used in the high school setting currently, The Stage and the School.

In the most current edition of The Stage and the School (1999), a book which was originally published in 1932, the chapter on theatre history consists of 30 pages of surface information about theatre and playwrights from all around the world. It only includes details on certain playwrights and time periods. The authors regard only

major people and events worth studying, apparently. For example, here is what The Stage and the School provides about Ben Jonson:

Ben Jonson Ben Jonson (1572-1637) was a master of English comedy. He wrote Volpone, The Alchemist, and Every Man in His Humour. To the Elizabethans, the word humor (or humour, as the British spell it) referred not to an attitude of amusement, but to a personality trait. The Renaissance was a period in which anatomical study, as well as the arts, was developing. Scholars believed that all matter was made of four elements air, earth, fire, and water and that the human body was composed of these same four elements, each having its own effect on the personality. The balance of the four in each person's body decided his or her type.

The humor of most interest in Elizabethan plays is that of black bile, represented by earth and the melancholy personality. The melancholy character fell into three main types: the lover, the malcontent, and the intellectual. Hamlet is an excellent example of the intellectual melancholy humor. Although most stage figures had a predominating humor, a balanced personality was the most desired. This is evidenced by Mark Antony's tribute to Brutus in Julius Caesar: "... the elements [were] so mixed in him that Nature might stand up and say to all the world, this was a man."

Jonson widened the scope of the humors to include any strong personality trait, especially a weakness, a foible, or a folly that could make a character laughable. (310)

Here is what Living Theater has to say about Jonson:

As a playwright, literary critic, and poet, Ben Jonson was one of the first writers in England to champion the neoclassical principles, and in his own work he wanted to prove that one could please the public by following these rules. Known for his sharp wit and imperious manner,

he became an arbiter of literary tastes, presiding over a group of younger poets who met regularly at the Mermaid Tavern in London.

In such plays as Every Man in his Humour (1598), The Alchemist (1610), and particularly Volpone (1606), Jonson developed a “comedy of humours” in which each principal character had an excess of one trait, or “humour”. Unlike many of his contemporaries, who did not think of drama as literature, he considered his plays to be important works, and he personally supervised their printing in 1616. He was also unlike other English writers of his time in championing neoclassical structure for drama, though his own plays did not always adhere strictly to the neoclassical rules. His other writings include volumes of poetry, an English grammar, and—despite his preference for neoclassical form—a laudatory introduction to the collected plays of his friend William Shakespeare. (199)

More information is presented in those two paragraphs alone than in the entire section in The Stage and the School; however, Living Theater goes on for three more paragraphs which describes Jonson's educational background, other plays that he collaborated on, The Isle of Dogs, Eastward Ho!, his composing of court masques, and relationship with Inigo Jones:

From 1605 to 1625, he composed court masques, expanding the form to include an “anti-masque,” a burlesque of the main theme. He often quarreled with the designer Inigo Jones over the use of spectacular settings; Jonson felt that such settings detracted from his poetic allegories. Eventually Jonson retired, though he wrote several plays for public theater before his death in 1637. Two of his other well-known plays are: Sejanus. His Fall (1603) and Bartholomew Fair (1614). (199)

To be fair, it seems that The Stage and the School is meant to be more of a complete course text rather than an area-specific text like Living Theater. Perhaps when Stage was originally written, it was desirable to have one text that covered

everything, even if it did not go into extensive detail on all subjects. However, the National Standards make it clear that area-specific texts are a necessity if students are going to be considered proficient in these subject areas.

To be considered proficient in **Content Standard 5**, a student must be able to “identify and research cultural, historical, and symbolic clues in dramatic texts, and evaluate the validity and practicality of the information to assist in making artistic choices for informal and formal productions” (American Alliance for Theatre and Education 66). Living Theater accomplishes this in several ways. First, with fifteen chapters ranging from “Greek Theater” (25-60) to “Early Asian Theater” (111-137), and from “The Theater of the Spanish Golden Age” (207-224) to “Contemporary Theater” (473-521) it gives the cultural background at the major times in theatre history. Without understanding the cultural backgrounds of a society, how can a student hope to understand why a playwright chose to write what he did? For a student who wishes to go into theatre as a profession, this text is a necessity. Only by learning about theatre history can a student hope to learn how to design sets, or lighting for productions, or how to perform convincingly. Even the student who wants to become a playwright needs to study history, if only to learn the styles that have gone before. In his program notes for Oyedipo at Kolhuni⁴, a modern version of the Sophoclean drama Oedipus at Colonus, Wole Soyinka discusses such background:

The original proposal that reached me was a kind of tri-cultural reflection on the Theban cycle. - Japanese, Greek and Yoruba. My mind went immediately to a pantheistic encounter, a contemporary vision that inevitably re-interprets the singularity of any mythology or moral world-view even in a process of attempting their reconciliation.... In any case, every originating creative impulse becomes tempered by numerous factors, prominent among which may be found sub-themes and incidental motifs that resonate, and may even dominate our contemporary - and socio-political - consciousness.

In short, every adaptor/ director commences the journey anew -

backwards into an unrecoverable community or, forwards into the present and future. Why, indeed, should Thebes not be found on some abandoned settlement on Neptune where 'futuristic' creatures reenact the tragedy of Oedipus to an audience of invading 'earthlings'? (Soyinka 1)

Every student should study history, if only, as Wilson and Goldfarb say, to gain "insights into societies of the past," (16) or to understand the "socio-political consciousness" of a time and hopefully to improve our own society.

History does not exist in a vacuum. What happens in one aspect of a culture has profound influences on what happens in other areas of that culture. If teachers do not expose their students to these other aspects then they are only giving them a portion of the entire picture. This is not to say that students at the high school level need a text like Brockett's History of Theatre, because according to Dr. Goldfarb it is too encyclopedic. What they do need though, is a text that contextualizes history which he feels his text does well. (Goldfarb, Alvin. Telephone interview. 27, June 2002)

Wilson and Goldfarb begin, as most history texts do, with the Greeks. Whereas other texts simply explore the drama of the Greek times, Wilson and Goldfarb give broad cultural background:

Athens is credited, for example, with being the birthplace of democracy. In 510 B.C., the rulers of Athens established a democracy of free citizens, which means that all male citizens men who were not slaves or of non-Athenian origin were given a voice in politics and government. Though there were slaves in Athens, and women were subservient, it should be remembered that the United States, also founded on democratic ideals, once suffered from similar limitations: slavery was not abolished until 1865, and women could not vote until 1920. Despite these drawbacks in ancient Athens, it was an admirable achievement to establish democracy for such a large portion of the population.

There were advances in other areas as well. Greek philosophers, such as Socrates and Plato, tried to explain the world around them; and Herodotus transformed history into a social science. A number of important scientific discoveries were made: the Greek mathematician Pythagoras formulated a theory that remains one of the cornerstones of geometry, and the physician's oath written by Hippocrates is the one still taken by doctors. The classical Greeks were also remarkable artists and architects; Greek sculpture from this period is found in museums around the world, and the Parthenon, the temple on the Acropolis, has withstood time and natural catastrophes—its columns and proportions remain models for architects even today. Obviously, this was a time conducive to developments in many fields, and one of the most significant was theater. (26)

This is the kind of cultural background that students need in order to properly analyze the choices that a playwright made. If the text does not provide this information, students are likely to believe that these influences are irrelevant to the theatrical culture, as well as to society. The student must discover that the “cultural, historical and symbolic clues” in dramatic texts are based in not only the playwright's mind, but in the society that influenced that writer. Specific influences with regard to theatre history and play analysis will be addressed in the next chapter.

In addition to the cultural background for ancient Athens, Wilson and Goldfarb include several biographical sections on the various playwrights and writers of period including Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristotle, Aristophanes and Menander (34-54). At the high school level, teachers will ignore biographies in many anthologies, since the emphasis is more on reading the literature rather than what the biography says about the person (this is usually because the teacher thinks that his or her own knowledge of the person is better than what a book describes). In this book though, biography is an integral part of the text. One cannot understand the changes that happened in the Greek chorus, ranging from fifty men in the beginning of the Festival of Dionysus (37), to twelve and fifteen during the times of Aeschylus

and Sophocles, respectively (34-35), without incorporating biographies of the men who accomplished such changes. Also, the reader cannot understand the importance of a play like Oedipus the King, which is discussed in Living Theater (42-45), without reading the biographies of Sophocles and Aristotle:

Logic, metaphysics, psychology, physics, theology, ethics, politics, biology, and literary theory are among the topics covered by Aristotle in his 170 works. In his writings he stressed the importance of detailed observation and description of a phenomenon before attempting to form a theory—a process that still forms the basis of scientific method. Aristotle applied the same techniques when examining drama. In The Poetics, rather than formulating rules, he carefully observed classical Greek tragedy and described it in detail. Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato are recognized as the most influential Greek Philosophers, but Aristotle was the only one of the three to include an analysis of drama in his philosophic writings....

To understand the structure of Greek tragedy, it will be helpful to examine a single play, Sophocles' King Oedipus, which was first presented around 430 B.C. There are structural similarities among all extant Greek tragedies, but it should be noted that King Oedipus is the only one that conforms exactly to Aristotle's description. (41-42)

In addition to the biographies, most of the chapters include timelines. The noted exception is the modern era when several sections are grouped into one timeline (ex. 1945 to 1995) (439). As stated earlier, the timelines examine each era from two angles: "Theater" on one side, and "Culture and Politics" on the other. An example of the timeline for Greece is included in Appendix II. This arrangement allows the student and teacher to examine not only the achievements in theatre at that time, but also to understand what was happening more broadly with the culture of the region. This thoroughness is very effective in what is known as Cross-Curriculum teaching, where other subject matter is brought in to show the relationship between disciplines. As stated earlier, history does not exist in a vacuum, and it must be

explored from all angles in order for the student to have a solid understanding of it. Obviously a teacher in theatre would not spend as much time discussing the Peloponnesian Wars (431-404 B.C.) as a world history teacher would, but it would be worth noting if only to realize that Oedipus the King was written during those years (430 B.C.).

Living Theater not only discusses the plays and playwrights, and the culture of the time period, it also examines the style of theatre at that time, as well as the actual structures of the major theaters. This text covers all of the major theatrical building designs from Greek to Roman:

.... the classical Greek theater probably accommodated 15,000 to 17,000 spectators. The most noted of these theaters was the Theater of Dionysus in Athens.... Greek theaters were outdoor amphitheaters with illumination provided by the sun, and the Greeks were of the resourceful in the use of natural lighting in the dramas; if a play required a "sunrise effect," for example, it would be presented as the first drama of the day, at dawn. (48)

The Roman structures, however, were different from those of classical Greece. The Romans had developed the arch and other engineering techniques that allowed flexibility in construction, and they put this knowledge to good use in building theaters. Roman theaters were usually not built into hillsides but were freestanding structures with a tiered audience section connected to the scene house....

Much of what we know about Roman theater architecture comes from Marcus Vitruvius, who lived in the first century B.C. and whose ten-volume work De Architectura indicates that much of Roman architecture was based on Hellenistic models.... We can also reconstruct the characteristics of Roman theater buildings by examining those which have survived the ravages of time, in such diverse locations as France [The Roman Theater at Orange is presented as an illustration], Libya, and Israel. (77-79)

The text also describes the theaters of England and Spain:

The stage in a corral was a platform raised 6 feet (although some scholars believe it was as high as 9 feet) above the patio. There was an area under the stage which served as the men's dressing room and as a storeroom for costumes. (The women's dressing room was behind the central doorway that led into the stage house. There were trapdoors on the stage, which were used for special effects. The stage had a semicircular apron. At each side of the platform was a railed area that was used for additional bench seating unless a production required the entire stage. (220)

In addition to the topics already discussed, the stages, scenery, costumes and styles of all of the major time periods in theatre must be studied if the student is to be considered proficient in this standard, and only then will he or she be able to begin to make "artistic choices for informal and formal productions".

Content Standard 6 states that the student will learn about "Comparing and integrating art forms by analyzing traditional theatre, dance, music, visual arts, and *new art forms," and that in order for the student to be proficient in that area they must:

- a. describe and compare the basic nature, materials, elements, and means of communicating in theatre, *dramatic media, musical theatre, dance, music, and the visual arts
- b. determine how the nondramatic art forms are modified to enhance the expression of ideas and emotions in theatre
- c. illustrate the integration of several arts media in informal presentations.

In addition to the examples already presented that illustrate the contents of this text and its alignment toward **Content Standard 5**, many of which also ally themselves with **Content Standard 6**, the concluding chapter, Chapter 15: "Contemporary Theater: 1975 To The Present", shows how many of these forms can be combined.

What makes this chapter so interesting is that it defines not only the classical

forms, but more modern styles as well, and discusses how these styles are often integrated with each other as well as with other art forms:

Some of these [theater] companies and dramatists have worked in what is described as a *postmodernist* style. This term suggests that “modernist” interest in antirealism is no longer central, and theater has moved beyond abstraction. Contemporary playwrights—and other theater artists—combine abstraction and realism, so that their work cannot be easily classified. Also, the distinction between “high” art and popular art is no longer entirely clear: postmodernists use both “artistic” and popular concerns and techniques. (475)

The standard demands knowledge of exactly what the authors spend the entire chapter discussing: postmodernism. What the standard requires is that students learn to combine elements of different cultures with theatre. With sections devoted to “Hispanic American Theater”, “Chicano Theater”, “Cuban American and Nuyorican Theater”, “Asian American Theater”, and “Native American Theater” as well as “Gay and Lesbian Theater”, many different cultures are discussed by these authors. And as the text describes “Alternative Theater in the United States” like Richard Schechner and the Performance Group, and the Wooster Group, and Mabou Mines (496), the student realizes that there are quite a variety of styles effected by theatre groups around the world.

“Performance Art” which is one of the more interesting aspects of theatre today, and a part of this content standard, is discussed in the text also:

Performance art has two important antecedents: first, earlier avant-garde experiments of the twentieth century—such as dada, surrealism, and happenings, which stressed the irrational and attacked traditional artistic values and forms—and second, the theories of Antonin Artaud and Jerzy Grotowski.

During the past 30 years, the term *performance art* has stood for various things. In its earliest manifestations, performance art was related on one hand to painting and on the other hand to dance. In the

1970's. one branch of performance art emphasized the body as an art object: some artist suffered self-inflicted pain, and some went through daily routines (such as preparing a meal) in a museum or in a theater setting. Another branch focused on site-specific" or environmental pieces in which the setting or context was crucial: performances were created for specific locations such as a subway station, a city park, or a waterfront pier....

The tradition of performance art as a form influenced by movement and dance is best seen in the work of leading performance artist Martha Clarke (1944-), who began her career in dance and has continued to stage dance performances. Clarke's presentations combine dance, popular entertainment, and stunning visual effects.... she directed two Mozart operas, The Magic Flute and Così Fan Tutte, in 1992 and 1993 at Glimmerglass Opera in upstate New York, incorporating many of the techniques of her visual style. (517-518)

The text also includes other performance artists such as Karen Finley, Rachel Rosenthal, Holly Hughes, and Bill Irwin, whose work "uses popular slapstick techniques to reflect on the contemporary human condition" (518). It discussed John Leguizamo, whose "Freaks was presented to critical and audience acclaim on Broadway in 1998," (519) and others, and included a lengthy biography of Anna Deavere Smith:

Smith is best known for her series of one-woman works entitled On the Road: A Search for American Character. In this series, she portrays many real people she has met and interviewed; as a performer she crosses gender and race line to represent all the people with whom she has talked and to ask pointed questions about racial and gender identity. She usually tape-records her conversations with the many people she interviews and creates a mosaic of diverse characters, attitudes, and voices. Her performance style captures the person she is representing with both a great sense of actuality and an

exaggerated demonstration of his or her idiosyncrasies. Smith has remarked that she is influenced by [Bertolt] Brecht's theory of the performer as demonstrator. (519)

Along with a section on "Musical Theater in the United States and International Developments" (492-495), this section on performance art shows how all of these different elements can work together to enhance theatre as performance:

New forms of theater have developed, often defying categorization. Performance art, combining popular elements and techniques from the visual arts and dance, became a significant alternative form. A number of artists known as *new vaudevillians* have used popular comic techniques to comment on the world around them. (521)

Not only do the National Standards demand an understanding of theatrical history, but they also require that students of theatre appreciate and understand modern theatrical styles. There is so much more in the way of theatre than just what is presented on Broadway, and if students are not made aware of the existence of these alternative forms then, just as with the traditional "boring" history class where teachers explain that history was written and created by a "bunch of dead white guys", students will only receive the establishment's version of what theatre history is and was, as opposed to what it should be: an ever evolving art form where sharing in the moment fuses a link with the past, and the future.

Acting One

In the "Preface" to the fourth edition of this book, the author, Robert Cohen, gives specifics about the audience he hopes to address ⁵:

This book is expressly intended for the beginning acting student. The twenty-eight lessons comprise basic material for what could be a one-year or two-year course in acting fundamentals. The amount of time needed to cover them will vary to the degree proficiency is sought or expected, for while the material is presented as an introduction to acting, these are the fundamentals that professional actors spend their

lives exploring and perfecting. None of these twenty-eight lessons can ever be fully learned, not even in a lifetime. (xv)

This is a textbook that is designed to help the beginning actor to understand what the craft is that he or she is interested in, and what skills are required to understand himself or herself in relation to acting as a profession.

Originally written in 1984 and recently updated (the fourth edition came out in 2001), this text is written by someone who not only is a working teacher, but who has written several other texts on theatre, and in fact wrote this book to correct a misleading title of a prior book:

I never approached them (the publishers) and they didn't suggest it to me. I had indeed suggested Acting Professionally to them, fifteen years previously, and I had submitted Acting Power to them a few years after that, and both of these were published in due course. But when they published Acting Power they added the subtitle, "An Introduction to Acting," which was misleading; the book isn't any such thing - it's a theoretical study of acting as informed by recent discoveries in sociolinguistics and other subjects, to which I had added some acting exercises at their request. But the success of that book made me realize that I should indeed write an introduction to acting on those same principles of Acting Power, and so, without informing them, in the summer of 1982, between rehearsals of Macbeth, which I was directing at the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, I wrote the entire text of Acting One. When I finished, I simply sent it to my editor there (Lans Hays at that time) as a "surprise gift" -i.e., the book they had really wanted to publish in the first place.

(Cohen, Robert. E-Mail interview. 29 July 2002)

As stated before, this text is designed for the beginning acting student; in relation to the National Standards, it is really the most accessible choice in this category.

Regarding "Performance", there are three national standards. **Content Standard 2** states that a student will learn about "Acting by developing,

communicating, and sustaining characters in *improvisations and informal or *formal productions” (NEMC 64). This text contains twenty-eight lessons designed to give the student just those types of experiences. Many think that the first exercise that a student should perform is a monologue or a scene. This is not the case. Often the teacher, especially a high school or junior high teacher, will have many students that are just beginning to act. In a Theatre I class, students are exposed to many types of exercises and assignments, and to pressure a student into doing a monologue when they have no background in acting is very detrimental and will very often turn off the student to the art. This type of text, however, would be used in a class that is specifically an acting class in which case the teacher would assume that most of the students had enough experience to be willing to learn from this type of book.

The first exercise here is the “Pledge Your Allegiance to a Flag” exercise (2-1). If the goal of the standard is to have the students create improvised characters, then this exercise gets them started on the right track:

Imagine there is an American flag on the front wall of your classroom.

Pledge allegiance to it. Here are the words:

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands: one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Go ahead.

* * *

Good. Now repeat the exercise, very sincerely. When you finish, as before, don't move or talk; just keep looking at the imaginary flag. Go ahead.

* * *

Keep looking at the flag.

Now imagine the following situation: You are not and have never been an American citizen, nor have visited America, nor indeed have ever been outside your own country, which is across an ocean from

America. The country where you have lived your entire life has, in the past years, come under the rule of a tyrannical regime that regularly persecutes-for no reason-people of your race or ethnic origin....

You have decided you must leave your country by any means. You sneak out of your town in the dead of night, with nothing but the clothes you are wearing, and walk toward the distant ocean.... In front of you is a hill, covered in green grass; on the top of the hill flies an American flag.

You have never even seen a real American flag, but you have seen pictures of it. You believe America to be a land of freedom, justice, and democracy, and you decide you will, before proceeding farther, write you own prose-poem offering to become an ally of all Americans. Your prose-poem will declare you allegiance, not only to this cloth symbol of the United States, but also your bond with its democratic government and free citizens.

Still facing this (imaginary) flag, make your pledge to it: however, the words of your prose-poem just happen to be the identical words of the Pledge of Allegiance cited above. But these are your own words now, and you are making them up as you say them.

On your own time, and without making any effort to say this prose-poem in unison with anyone else, go ahead.

* * *

After going through the exercise with more subtle changes, he declares:

That's all. The exercise is over. (13-17)

According to the author:

This exercise shows exactly *what acting is*.

Acting is taking a memorized text, almost always written by someone else, and investing it with your own personal feelings, intelligence, communicative skills. interest in other people, and personality. All of these are brought out by living the situation that the

dramatic character—in this case, an immigrant to the United States—experiences.

And, as it happens, the above-bulleted “changes” in your reading from the first to the last pledge all represent what most people call “good theatre” and “good acting”: namely, acting that is emotionally vivid, intellectually precise, interpersonally communicative, personally authentic, creative, active, growing, and with variation, momentum, and uplift....

Sincerity, and good acting (and of course *great* acting), comes from fully throwing yourself into a situation, not “putting on an act.” (18)

This exercise is a good representation of the various others in this text. By starting the student with a simple exercise, it puts him or her in a comfortable position and makes him or her want to be involved, and will help him or her discover, not only how easy these exercises can be, but how much is learned in one exercise about acting, and through improvisation. That is what the standard requires. But the author also addresses the concerns of those who view this exercise in a way other than how he intended:

Please note: this exercise is not about your or your author’s politics! It is not about America! It is only about *acting*. The improvisation is sheer fiction.... no one can seriously believe that America had provided liberty or justice for *everyone—all the time*. All you are asked to do, in this exercise, is *act the role* of a person who has had, and is having the described experience.... Acting, and the imagination that powers it, creates all the bulleted points listed above. (18)

Finally, the author pulls everything together in his summary with regard to the importance of improvisation and creating character:

So, by *experiencing* this improvisation, you have learned—by doing it—the most basic nature of acting. You have taken a memorized text, written by someone else, and, by accepting, elaborating on, and playing a situation, invested it with your own person. Almost

everything in the rest of the book will build upon what you have experienced in this fundamental exercise. (18)

Acting is not about separate exercises, it is about taking what you learn from one experience and building on it for the next one. That is what the standards and this text are trying to accomplish. Other exercises, including “Reaching for Goals” (Ex. 3-2), “Overcoming an Obstacle” (Ex. 3-3), and “Resonating” (Ex. 3-5) deal with solo improvising as well.

Acting though, is not just about solo efforts. It is also about working as an ensemble and creating scenes and plays. The sub-categories of **Content Standard 2** state that in order for a student to be proficient he or she must learn to:

- a. analyze the physical, emotional, and social dimensions of characters found in dramatic texts from, various genres and media
- b. compare and demonstrate various classical and contemporary acting techniques and methods
- c. in an ensemble, create and sustain characters that communicate with audiences

Sub-category ‘a’ relates to play analysis and will be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter. Sub-category ‘c’ is addressed in Part II of the text. “Lesson 4” deals with “Acting with the ‘Other’ ” (29). The purpose of the exercises in this lesson is to get the actor used to working with someone other than themselves and creating an ensemble:

Probing deeply into other people is one of the essential tasks of the actor. This does not necessarily mean long talks into the night, social involvements, mutual therapy sessions, or the baring of personal secrets; it certainly does not mean forcing confessions or outside relationships on other actors. It does mean a willingness to look clearly and directly at your acting partner and to talk in the whole person with whom you are acting. (29)

This exercise essentially helps the actor to learn to trust his or her partner as he or

she performs. This is one of the key elements of creating an ensemble, trust in a partner and working toward a common goal.

In order to achieve this trust and create this “ensembleness”, one of the exercises that the author uses is called “Vulnerability” (Ex 4-2):

Pair with a partner and designate one of you to be A and the other B. Memorize and quickly “rehearse” the contentless scene. (A contentless scene is one in which the words, by themselves, do not clearly reveal any specific characters or plot; it is a scene that has no specified dramatic content.)

A: One.

B: Two.

A: Three.

B: Four.

A: Five.

B: Six.

A: Seven.

B: Eight.

A: Nine.

B: Ten.

“Perform” the scene while imagining each of these situations:

1. You have reason to believe that your acting partner may be planning to murder you and that he or she may have a concealed weapon.
2. You were separated from a beloved sibling when you were three years old and you have reason to believe that your partner is that sibling.
3. Person A has reason to believe (1) above, and Person B has reason to believe (2).
4. Person B has reason to believe (1) above, and Person A has reason to believe (2).

Cohen suggests that this is a good trust building exercise because , “vulnerability, a crucial component of all acting, means that you are aware of the other actor as a complete person, and that you are also aware of the potential good or harm that can come from the relationship between you”. He also says that:

The actor’s impulse, in an acting situation, should be to make them vivid, to create the dynamics of the relationship wherever possible and appropriate. Even a scene as content-free as “one, two, three.... ten” can become a vivid and exciting drama if you explore the potential for both love and violence that might be imagined as existing between characters A and B and the vulnerability of he actors to those potentials. (32)

The goal of this exercise clearly relates to an actual scene from a play. The actors must create that ensembleness and trust each other in order to achieve that goal, and this exercise will help in that area. This is what the sub-category requires. The other exercises in this lesson “Discovery” (Ex. 4-3), “Using Tactics” (Ex. 4-4) and “One Two Three Four Five Six Seven” (Ex.4-5) all work toward that same goal. Cohen makes this clear in his “Summary”:

.... Most of what the audience eventually sees in an acting performance is a relationship between characters—a relationship created by you and your acting partner. In order for that relationship to be a dramatic one, it must be dynamic. The actors must be vulnerable to one another. A potential for good or harm—preferably for both—must be clearly implied by the relationship, and the actors, through the use of interpersonal tactics, must put pressure on each other to change or improve their relationship. (37)

Sub-category ‘a’ states that the student must learn to “analyze the physical, emotional, and social dimensions of characters found in dramatic texts from, various genres and media”. As stated above, this will be discussed in the next chapter as it relates to play analysis. However, there are aspects of this area which are relevant to

acting and need to be addressed here. Part III of this text deals with “The Actor’s Tasks”.

In Lesson 9: “Preparing a Role”, the author discusses what kind of analysis is required to choose a role:

1. Choose roles of your own sex and close to your own age.
2. Choose roles in which you can clearly see something at stake, emotionally, for the character you will be playing.
3. Choose roles in which something is happening in the scene itself—as opposed to roles in which characters are talking about something that has already happened.
4. Choose roles in which you can identify with the character’s struggle or dilemma.
5. Choose roles in which the characters and situation interest you personally. (69)

Knowing what to look for when choosing a part, will help a student in analyzing a role.

The next topic Cohen discusses is how to edit a scene:

Sometimes it is necessary to edit a scene, to cut it down in length, or to combine two short scenes into a longer one, or to delete references within the scene that are unrelated to the immediate matters at hand. Sometimes a little rewriting, if permitted by the instructor, may be useful for eliminating a minor character in the scene....

Once the script is fully edited, you and your partner must obtain exact duplicate copies. You should also agree on the context of the scene: What is the basic relationship of the characters—as they both understand it to be—and what is happening in the scene as both characters understand it? These basic understandings should be just that—basic—one or two sentences that define only the outer boundaries of the scene.... (70)

Only when the scene has been edited and analyzed will the student be ready to start rehearsing a scene for performance. The author’s decisions about the order for

these lessons is very important. Students cannot just get up on stage and start acting. They need to learn about themselves, and each other before they can start creating characters that are more than just improvisations. However, as stated earlier, acting builds on what is learned previously. The standards take that into account in the sub-categories.

The author also includes a section on how to memorize in “Studying the Part”:

While you are memorizing your part, you begin to study it. What are your character’s goals? How will other people—particularly the other person or persons in the scene(s) with you—help you to achieve that goal? How are they your obstacles? What sort of tactics can your character use? What sort did he or she grow up with?.... These are questions to be answered first and last by you, the actor. Studying is the private part of actor preparation, and it is important, in a nondirected scene, that you first study your part by yourself and not with your acting partner.... The best acting scene will be the result of a dramatic *confrontation* between you and your partner—with both of you seen as individually ambitious (and yet vulnerable) characters). Your individualism must be nurtured in private: hence the importance of your private study in approaching your part. (75)

As is evidenced here, analysis is of the utmost importance in understanding how to play a character truthfully.

The exercise in Lesson 9 is called “The Gentleman Caller I,” and it is executed with a scene that comes from The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams:

.... In this famous scene.... the characters’ deepest thoughts are expressed mainly indirectly, and dialog only suggests their profound feelings, fears, and desires.

1. Study the scene and prepare the role of Laura or Jim, depending on your gender. Assume both characters are your actual age (as they could be—their age is unspecified in the play).

2. Underline your actual *lines* in one color Underline your *line cues* in a second color and your *action cues* (where they are different from the line cues) in a third.
3. Analyze the *logic* of your speeches and imagine the thoughts that connect them. Make notes of the *thought linkages* [discussed in other lessons] that connect your lines with each other, and with the other character's lines. Make notes toward a GOTESheet [discussed in "Lesson 8"] for your part.
4. Memorize your part, using the thought linkages to help you connect the individual lines.
5. Complete your GOTESheet.
6. In a subsequent class, pair with a partner and play the scene without rehearsal, just as you played to contentless scene (Exercise 5-1).
You or your instructor will need to bring to class pillow, two drinking glasses, and something to represent a candelabrum.
7. Switch partners and play it again. repeat. (75-76)

[The scene is then included on pages 76-78]

This exercise clearly demonstrates how important analysis is for actors in understanding their character. It also accomplishes the other goal of the sub-category which is to expose the student to a piece of dramatic literature:

This scene is famous more for what the characters don't say than what they do.... Study the author's stage directions and particularly his punctuation: dashes indicating pauses and exclamation points indicating excitement.... Don't try to simply repeat your part the same way every time; allow yourself to vary your behavior according to what's happening between you and your partner. And, yes, let the scene really "happen" in real time between the two of you. Study your acting partner and his or her reactions to your expressions. Try to get to know your acting partner better, simply by rehearsing the scene

together. You may not succeed—but it will make the scene much more interesting. (78-79)

The second sub-category, 'b', deals with the student being able to “compare and demonstrate various classical and contemporary acting techniques and methods”. In the introduction of Lesson 21: “Emotion—and Acting Theory,” the author takes the reader from the beginning of the Stanislavsky style up through the Strasberg “Method” and everything in between (175-180):

No country—not even Russia—has been as influenced by Stanislavsky’s teaching as the United States. By 1920 two of Stanislavsky’s disciples, Richard Boleslavsky and Maria Ouspenskaya, moved to New York and founded the American Laboratory Theatre, bringing Stanislavsky’s new “System” to the attention of American actors. among their converts was an Austrian immigrant, Lee Strasberg, who headed to Actors Studio in New York from 1951 until his death in 1982.

Strasberg’s ensuing “Method”, derived from the early version of Stanislavsky’s System, and including emotional recall as a principal technique, proved the most influential actor-training theory in America during the 1950’s and ‘60’s.... Other American acting teachers, some of whom, like Stella Adler and Sonia Moore, had studied with Stanislavsky at a later point in his career, preached the Russian master’s later creed of physical actions rather than emotional memory. To this day, almost all American teachers pay homage to Stanislavsky, often framing the debate on acting theory as the opposition of his early teaching with his later ones. (180)

The exercises in Lesson 21 are all based on the Stanislavsky’s idea of emotional memory. This lesson, along with lessons “26: Scene Structure,” “27: Building a Scene,” and “28: Creating a Monologue” all deal with what sub-category “b” is written to accomplish: exposure to the techniques and methods, as well as more exposure to characters found in dramatic texts. The later lessons also include scenes

from well-known plays which put all of the prior lessons and techniques that had been worked on prior into perspective.

Content Standard 4 states that a student will learn about “Directing by interpreting dramatic texts and organizing and conducting rehearsals for informal or formal productions” (American Alliance for Theatre and Education 65). While there are some text books on directing (Bloom, among others), most students who will get a chance to direct will be doing so in the context of the scenes that they work on in class or through the technical work that they do if they are working on a play. This does not in any way diminish the importance of learning what this standard is trying to teach. Still, a student cannot learn about directing very effectively without having experienced the well-known dramatic texts as an actor, and/or as a technician. The sub-categories reinforce this notion:

- a. develop multiple interpretations and visual and aural production choices for scripts and production ideas and choose those that are most interesting
- b. justify elections of text, interpretation, and visual and aural *artistic choices
- c. effectively communicate directorial choices to a small ensemble for improvised or scripted scenes (NEMC 65)

This series again reveals why analysis is so important. Only by understanding analysis can the student hope to begin to understand how to act in a scene, or design a set, or props, or lighting. And only by analyzing theatre history can a student have the necessary background to be able to accomplish that goal. A student must master all of these basics before Directing as a separate course can be taught. The student will apply what he or she has learned in this text to directing when the time is right. Cohen makes clear that during these exercises students can only offer suggestions through talking and analysis:

Lesson 10: “Rehearsals”

Above all, never try to direct your partner and never allow your partner to direct you. No matter how experienced you feel you are, or

how well you think you understand your partner's role, or how well you know "how the scene should play," your job is to act your role to the fullest, not to play both roles at the same time.... An acting scene is not a directed performance, and it should not try to look like a directed performance; its goal is to bring out the most intense, honest, vivid, and dramatic interaction between the two of you.... You can.... tell your acting partner which of his or her behaviors stimulate you emotionally.... [to] make your own performance more exciting. (82-83)

The students would also discuss "the staging elements of your eventual presentation. Where should the scene be set? What props should be used? What should you wear?.... Gradually you will add these elements to the rehearsal process" (83). Such activities are the beginnings of how to think like a director. The best way to approach this would be to have set design be integrated into the Performance class (as discussed above). Later as with the make up and costume subjects, direction might be taught as a work shop or with guest lecturers.

The same idea should work with **Content Standard 1**, "Script writing through *improvising, writing, and refining *scripts based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history," and its sub-category:

- a. construct imaginative scripts and collaborate with actors to refine scripts so that story and meaning are conveyed to an audience

(64)

As with the directing standard, there are writing opportunities within the exercises. Anytime a student has to create a scene they are going to be writing and learning how to create a scene, character, and plot, among other points. They will learn what works, and what does not. Again, it is only by analysis of previous playscripts and understanding theatre history that a student will be able to be considered proficient in this standard. The opportunities for writing, just like directing will come only after they are successful in the other areas of theatre. And as with the other subjects that are not

covered with a text, writing can be examined through a workshop or through guest lecturers.

As well-written as Cohen's text is, not all of it is appropriate for use in a school district. This text was written for a college-level program, and as such it contains some (less than 5) exercises or examples that many would deem inappropriate for high school students. This is not to say that the text as a whole would not work; however, some objectionable material simply will not do:

Exercise 17-1

Rude Chants

Chant, as a group:

1. Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!
2. Barf, barf, barf, barf, barf!
3. Penis, penis, penis, penis, penis!
4. Urine, urine, urine, urine, urine!

In this impolite exercise, the point is not to giggle or pretend you're saying something else but, rather, to allow your voice the freedom to say, at full volume and with clear speech, the sort of words you don't usually say in public.

Try these also:

5. Testicle, testicle, testicle, testicle, testicle!
6. Copulate, copulate, copulate, copulate, copulate!
7. Intercourse, intercourse, intercourse, intercourse, intercourse!
8. Masturbate, masturbate, masturbate, masturbate, masturbate!

As an actor, you should be able to say *anything* boldly on stage. No words, no matter how personally odious to you, should simply stick in your throat. (136-137)

The exercise has merit. It is designed to free up the performer when he or she is

speaking, no matter what the words are. The problem is that parents, and school boards, try hard to prevent students from coming in contact with this type of objectionable material. The book should not be dismissed as unsuitable though, thanks to modern technology. Most major text book publishers, McGraw-Hill among them, offer a new service called Custom Publishing. According to a sales representative for Allyn and Bacon, schools may use a textbook that contains either objectionable material or material that the instructor does not wish to teach in their particular course. For a price, and a guarantee of 300 books purchased over a two-year period, the publishers will remove the binding of the text and all unwanted material, and then rebind and even put a new cover on the book with the teacher's name. Or, they will insert material in addition to, or in place of, what is removed. What this means is that a district may remove or replace the offensive exercises in this text at the teacher's discretion. This may seem like an unreasonable idea for smaller districts, but a school district the size of Clark County, Nevada, sixth largest in the country, with 20+ high schools, 300 text books is a small order. What is required though, is for the teachers in the districts to adopt this book and agree on how to customize it.

The examples in this chapter demonstrate that 1) there is a need for standardized textbook adoption within districts, and that 2) these are the most accessible and most complimentary texts with regard to the national standards. Even though there may be objectionable material contained within the texts, with Custom Publishing, schools and districts can, delete said material without diminishing the effectiveness of the text. This will allow the school districts to adopt text books for all courses which will ensure that all students are covering the same material, which in turn will satisfy the National Standards—while still omitting any material that is inappropriate for students at this age. The next chapter will focus on the remaining portion of the List: Playscripts.

Notes

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² From Harvey Sweet, Handbook of Scenery, Properties and Lighting: Scenery and Props, Vol. 2, 1995. All rights reserved. Reprinted (or Adapted) by Permission of Allyn & Bacon.

³ From E. Wilson, Living Theatre: A History, 2002. All rights reserved. Reprinted (or Adapted) by Permission of The McGraw-Hill Companies.

⁴ Oyedipo is still (at this writing) a work in progress and has yet to be published.

⁵ From Robert Cohen, Acting One, 2001. All rights reserved. Reprinted (or Adapted) by Permission of The McGraw-Hill Companies.

CHAPTER 5

MAKING THE CHOICE: THE NEXT NINE TEXTS

The texts described in the previous chapter will help students to meet the National Standards by covering the areas of technical theatre, theatre history, and acting. Implicit in all of these areas, of course, is the student will also read, analyze, and understand a variety of the most important play scripts and understand how they relate to the standards and the world around them. This chapter will argue for why these particular playscripts are the most important and appropriate theatrical literature to be studied by students at the high school level with regard to the National Standards.

As Chapter 3 suggests, **Content Standard 7** mandates that a student will learn about "Analyzing, critiquing, and *constructing meanings from informal and formal theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions" (American Alliance for Theatre and Education 67). The sub-categories of this standard include:

- a. construct social meanings from informal and formal productions and from dramatic performances from a variety of cultures and historical periods, and relate these to current personal, national, and international issues
- b. articulate and justify personal *aesthetic criteria for critiquing dramatic texts and events that compare perceived artistic intent with the final aesthetic performance
- c. analyze and critique the whole and the parts of dramatic performances, taking into account the context, and constructively suggest alternative artistic choices.

- d. constructively evaluate their own and others' collaborative efforts and artistic choices in informal and formal productions

(67)

What this standard is requiring the student to accomplish is to read certain playscripts that are representative of major periods in theatre history, and analyze and understand why the playwright wrote what they did (societal influence), and how that particular piece of theatrical literature affected society after it was published.

Content Standard 8 reinforces that idea when it states that a student will learn about "Understanding context by analyzing the role of theatre, film, television, and electronic media in the past and the present" (American Alliance for Theatre and Education 67). The sub-categories for this standard reinforce that idea as well:

- a. compare how similar themes are treated in drama from various cultures and historical periods, illustrate with informal performances, and discuss how theatre can reveal universal concepts
- b. identify and compare the lives, works, and influence of representative theatre artists in various cultures and historical periods
- c. identify cultural and historical sources of American theatre and musical theatre
- d. analyze the effect of their own cultural experiences on their dramatic work (67)

A theatre scholar is not able to understand and interpret how theatre works now if he or she does not go back and try to understand its beginning as well as its future. The following pieces of theatrical literature point to where theatre has been and where it shall be going, as well as stops along the way.

Oedipus the King

From Aristotle, to Dr. Sigmund Freud, to Dr. Frasier Crane, the tragic story of Oedipus has become not only a part of our culture, but as noted in Stages of

Drama, also a benchmark for theatrical studies:

Because its plot and characters are so skillfully conceived and developed, Oedipus Rex has come to be the most influential play ever written. The perfection of its form was recognized by Aristotle during the fourth century B. C. when he was expounding his theory of tragedy in The Poetics.... Using it as his model play, Aristotle produced a study that has come to be the most influential document in the history of dramatic theory and criticism. In choosing his model, Aristotle also had his eye on the audience, for he knew from his own experience of witnessing Greek drama just how strongly an audience can be moved to “pity and fear” by discoveries and reversals of fortune on the part of a tragic hero.

(Klaus, Gilbert and Field, Jr. 48-49)

Even though the standards seem to be more focused on the performance aspect of analysis, realistically, the most effective way to understand a playscript is to read it. Even if a student watches a production, he or she is receiving a filtered version of the play. It is filtered through the director, actors, and technical personnel in the production. However, by reading it, the reader avoids anyone's incorrect or inaccurate interpretations and thus achieves a truer understanding of the work. That is not to say that seeing a production of the play would not enhance a student's appreciation of the work, but if that is the only way that a student is exposed to these works, then many of the goals in the other standards will not be met. One example of this is the trend in some English classes to show the 1968 version of Romeo and Juliet by Franco Zeffereilli, instead of reading the original. While this is a fairly true interpretation of the playscript, unless the class reads the play as well, they will miss out on a good portion of Shakespeare's language, as well as not be aware of certain directorial decisions like not killing off Paris, or having the message from Friar Lawrence arrive too late. It is obvious that had Aristotle based The Poetics on audience reaction alone, it would have been a very different text, and probably not as influential as it has become.

The themes discussed in Oedipus the King are universal themes: love, politics, religion, fate, intelligence, and jealousy, pride, and anger among others. These are themes that have been discussed by scholars and lay people since the beginning of time. They are important themes because they allow for discussion into the philosophical element of the human mind: “Why do men and women suffer?”, “What are the limits of human endurance?”, “Is there truly justice in the world?” There are no definite answers to these questions, but through reading, analyzing and probing, the student may come a little closer to understanding the bigger picture, since man, before and after 9/11, has, as Wilson argues, tried to deal with certain unanswerable questions:

King Oedipus is also admired because of the religious and philosophical questions it raises. Why does a man like Oedipus suffer? Is it because of some flaw in his character—his pride, for example—or because of an error in judgment? Is it, perhaps, to test Oedipus, as Job is tested by God in the Bible? Or is it because the world is a place where life is sometimes cruel and unjust and the innocent must suffer? (Wilson, Goldfarb 44)

While the storyline is uncommon in modern society, the themes, being universal, allow the student to discuss not only the importance of this myth in the Greek society, but also, as Wilson writes, how it would be interpreted in later societies and in modern times:

The psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, for instance, developed a theory that each man subconsciously wishes to murder his father and marry his mother; Freud called this desire the *Oedipus complex*.

(Wilson, Goldfarb 45)

While scholars have refuted many of Freud's theories, his ideas, which were greatly influenced by Sophocles' play, nevertheless led to a greater understanding indeed to the founding of modern psychiatry and psychoanalysis. As a representative playscript of Aristotle's Poetics, the Greek period of theatre, and Freudian

psychology, Oedipus Rex clearly relates to the National Standards. Even more, it is significant for its influence in modern popular culture.

As one of the most popular sitcoms on television, Frasier has won numerous awards. The situation is very easy to follow. Frasier, whose character was spun off from Cheers several years ago, is a radio psychiatrist who has his own call-in show. He lives in Seattle with his father, and near his brother who is also a psychiatrist. Much of the humor in the show comes from Frasier's outdated Freudian beliefs. One of the most humorous episodes is entitled "Mamma Mia" in which Frasier's new girlfriend looks very similar to his mother, who died prior to the series events, and his brother and father try not to say anything about it. The Oedipal references throughout the show clearly demonstrate how relevant the Oedipus story is to modern audiences, culminating with Frasier accidentally spraying his brother's bug repellent in his own eyes and blinding himself. The universality of the themes and the play itself allows this ironic treatment: the more Frasier tries to avoid his fate, the more surely it catches him; Oedipus could see, but was blind to the truth, whereas Teiresias was blind and could see the truth. Dramatic irony, comes into play too, since the audience knows who Oedipus' parents are even though he does not. In addition this playscript must be included in any list which seeks to insure that a student receives a well-rounded theatre education.

There are many translations of this play, and the most accessible one for students of the high school age is included in the anthology Greek Tragedies Volume 1. The editors, David Grene and Richmond Lattimore, have presented Oedipus the King in a way that allows the reader to understand the what the Chorus' role in this play would have been: strophe and antistrophe, without having to translate characters' names for sake of the original text. One example of this is the name of Oedipus' wife. In the Grene and Lattimore edition she is Jocasta (111), however, in the translation by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald in Stages of Drama, her name is locaste (50). The explanation for this is simple enough. The letter 'J' in the modern alphabet is 'I' in Latin. What Pitts and Fitzgerald have tried to do is come closer to the Roman version of the play rather than the Greek. Even their

choice of title, Oedipus Rex is closer to Seneca's version than Sophocles. 'Rex' being Latin for 'King'. Their version does break the play down into Scenes, Odes, Prologue and Exodus, however they include Oedipus' character within the strophe and antistrophe which is inaccurate, and that, along with the Latin interpretation of the text, makes this version not as accessible as the Grene and Lattimore translation.

A Doll House

As is evidenced from the choices of playscripts on the List, the major periods in theatrical history seem to coincide with major periods in human history. Playwrights seem to take note of this, and their writing is influenced by that. The next playscript on the List is no exception. Henrik Ibsen, long a writer of plays dealing with social and political problems, "Beginning with":

The League of Youth (1869), a play that attacked the hypocrisy of provincial politics and politicians, Ibsen turned from history, myth, and folklore to contemporary social problems.... In The Pillars of Society (1877), he continued his iconoclastic aims by exposing the disreputable behavior of a socially respectable businessman and by reforming him through the agency of a socially liberated woman.

(Klaus, Gilbert, Field Jr. 533)

Ibsen then turned his sights on "the most sacred of all social institutions—marriage—by making the heroine of his next play, A Doll's House (1879), a young wife who gradually becomes aware that she has been turned into a helpless child by her husband, whom she abandons after discovering that he is an emotional hypocrite" (Klaus, Gilbert, Field Jr. 533). This play is important in the history of theatre for two reasons. First, Ibsen, whom many consider the "founder of realism" (Wilson, Goldfarb 364), wrote in a style that pushed theatre into its next great period after the Elizabethan period. Even though he did not write in this style until his "middle period", and then ended up writing in a symbolist style in his later years, without his influence, modern theatre as we know it would not have existed:

Realists sought to convince their audiences that stage action represented everyday life. Unlike drama that featured larger-than-life characters, was written in verse, and had supernatural figures such as witches and ghosts. Realistic drama mirrored life. The action onstage resembled what people could observe around them: characters behaved, spoke and dressed like ordinary people. This is not, of course, a revolutionary concept for today's audiences, but in the late nineteenth century many theatergoers and critics were scandalized by realism in the theater. One reason is that realism touched a raw nerve.... no subject matter should be excluded from the stage.... Furthermore, realists refused to make simple moral judgments or to resolve dramatic action neatly. Unlike popular melodramas, realistic plays frequently implied that morality and immorality were relative—not easy to distinguish or define. (Wilson, Goldfarb 364)

Without this influence, the writing styles of playwrights like Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller would not have developed to the extent that they did during the early and middle part of the twentieth century. The second reason for the importance of this play in relation to the National Standards, is its social significance.

At the time the play was written, women were not allowed to vote or have many, if any, rights in most countries. They were, as they had been for many years, considered property belonging to first of the father, and then of the husband, to do with as they saw fit. As argued in Stages of Drama, Ibsen earned much praise, as well as much criticism after this play was written without really understanding why:

From his own time to this day, many of Ibsen's prose plays have primarily been interpreted as pieces of social criticism. A Doll's House, for example, is frequently celebrated nowadays as an attack on male chauvinism and an affirmation of women's rights....

Ibsen himself may well have meant to show both Nora and Torvald as being imprisoned in their relationship, even though for years the

Association for Womens Rights: "I must decline the honor of being said to have worked for the Women's Rights movement. I am not even very sure what Women's Rights are. To me it has been a question of human rights." (Klaus, Gilbert, Field Jr. 534)

With the divorce rate at an all-time high in the United States, this play speaks to what the individual can achieve, not just the woman. That is not to say that it is a play about just divorce; it is also about politics, marriage, money, status, and how society shapes those views. These are issues that are still being dealt with today, and are issue that students should be learning about. As with Oedipus the King, the universality of these issues in addition to its influence on modern theatre makes this play one of the most important pieces of theatrical literature that students can be exposed to. In addition to that, the overwhelming social significances are worth studying. For example, when this play was produced in Germany, the government did not think that the ending of the play, where Nora leaves Torvald, was socially correct and demanded that Ibsen write a new ending if it were to be produced. He reluctantly did so. These are the types of constructs that the sub-categories of **Content Standard 8 seek to address. Its social criticism would set the stage for so many great works to come.**

The most accessible translation of this play is included in Ibsen: Four Major Plays Volume I. What makes it so accessible is that the editor, Rolf Fjelde, gives excellent commentary about not only the play, but also the social influences that it has affected:

The superstructure of Torvald's conscience, his sense of right and wrong, is founded on the formulation: "the most important thing is that he be a success; all else will follow from that." Nora's moral sense, on the other hand, is that "the most important thing is that we live in, and out of, the truth of our feelings; all else will follow from that." What is at stake is nothing less that the respective definitions that the society allows of a man and a woman. And because Ibsen lives in a universe

out of, the truth of our feelings; all else will follow from that." What is at stake is nothing less than the respective definitions that the society allows of a man and a woman. And because Ibsen lives in a universe where essences are no longer given a priori, out of a fixed, eternal order, out of some Platonic idea of man and woman, but rather in a flowing process where selves are chiefly defined by the choices they make, the unenlightened struggle of Torvald and Nora to define themselves along separate paths inevitably brings them into conflict.

(Fjelde xxiv)

It is only by exploring this play's social, and theatrical significances through analysis, in relationship to history, that students can begin to understand its importance in the modern world.

The Cherry Orchard

The importance of Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard within theatre, as well as in society, is evident. The play not only examines the emerging bourgeois class, but also what effect its emergence had on the decline of the upper class. The play was written as a reflection of what was happening in Russia and elsewhere, "the degeneration of culture in the crude, modern world" (Brustein 152), and as argued in Stages of Drama:

The Cherry Orchard may be seen as a full-scale version of cultural futility—the inability of an old aristocratic social order to preserve itself, and the inability of a new bourgeois order to find meaning in anything beyond the acquisition of money and land.

(Klaus, Gilbert, Field Jr. 534)

Brustein suggests that from the perspective of world history, this play shows the changes sweeping over society and how those changes effected Chekhov in his writing:

If he is aggrieved by any general fact of Russian life it is the cancerous growth of slovenliness, filth, stupidity, and cruelty among the mass of

men; and if he despises the sluggishness and indolence of his upper-class characters, then this is because they, too, are gradually being overwhelmed by the tide, lack the will to stem it. For if the Russian gentry represents beauty without use, the Russian environment is characterized by use without beauty; and those with the necessary will power are often utterly without the necessary culture or education.

(Brustein 148)

Again, this play is very relevant to what the sub-categories and Standards teach. This play looks at the society of its time and, as discussed in Stages of Drama, comments on it in a humorous or tragic way depending on whose point of view one accepts:

Whether the audience is to laugh at this spectacle, to weep, or simply to be bemused is a difficult question. Chekhov called the play a comedy, and he apparently intended it to be comic, judging from correspondence with Stanislavsky.... Yet, Stanislavsky's letters just as clearly show that he did not consider it a comedy at all—that he viewed it as a tragic expression of Russian life: It is not a comedy, not a farce, as you wrote—it is a tragedy no matter if you do indicate a way out into a better world in the last act.... when I read it for the second time.... I wept like a woman, I tried to control myself, but could not. I can hear you say: "But please, this is a farce...." No, for the ordinary person this is a tragedy....

Stanislavsky's decision to produce the play as a tragedy moved Chekhov to complain that he was turning it into a piece of sniveling sentimentality.... The conflict between Chekhov and Stanislavsky is, of course, irreconcilable because the play repeatedly hovers between the comic and the tragic. (Klaus, Gilbert, Field Jr. 600-601)

Analyzing this play also allows the student to study the style of directing and acting that made Stanislavsky famous, which is a further aid to the thorough analysis shown to be so important for the student's understanding of plays and the world around him

or her. This playwright an excellent representative of his time, and his playscript an excellent and accessible representative of the importance of the “social” theatre in general.

There are many translations of this play available, and most are acceptable. However, the most accessible version of The Cherry Orchard is included in the collection titled Anton Chekhov: The Major Plays. What makes this version more accessible than the rest is that it includes in its “Foreword,” an excerpt from the “Chekhov” chapter in Robert Brustein’s book, The Theatre of Revolt. The Theatre of Revolt provides a brilliant analysis of several of the major playwrights of the early modernism: Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, Shaw, Brecht, Pirandello, O’Neill, Artaud and Genet. The information contained in that “Foreword” is much more thorough than what most textbooks provide. Very rarely does a high school text include this type of information. This is not to imply that the information is over the head of the high school student. On the contrary, given the National Standards demands, books like The Theatre of Revolt, are essential for the students education, and will be accessible because of the information that he or she will have already learned in his or her theatre classes.

The Importance of Being Earnest

As a comedy, The Importance of Being Earnest stands out as a landmark work most scholars would include on any representative list. There are other well-known comic playwrights who are still writing today, Neil Simon among them; however, one of the factors that makes Wilde’s play the best choice is the students familiarity with him as a writer. The Picture of Dorian Gray is usually read in the advanced high school English classes; the content and tone of the play differs greatly from the book, which makes it all the more fascinating to study, especially stylistically. The National Standards’ mandates will clearly be fulfilled by studying Wilde’s work, not as a representation of the time period, but as Sylvan Barnet argues, a premier example of wit and humor.

The Importance of Being Earnest is Wilde's greatest work, the only play in which, freeing himself from melodramatic claptrap, he wrote a delightfully intricate plot (the four lovers are sometimes partners, sometimes competitors) with consistently witty dialogue. It is, so to speak, a play that is pure *play*. (Barnet xxviii)

Whereas the other playscripts on the List represent great theatrical literature as well texts which are wonderfully revealing of historical periods, The Importance of Being Earnest, written during the same period as A Doll House and The Cherry Orchard (1875-1910), is less a historical or political play than a witty satire of the people of England. However, as Barnet points out, there is social relevance within the play:

But to this it can be replied that Earnest is filled with talk about important matters, such as love and marriage and divorce and illegitimacy, education, class relationships, appearance and reality, and death. How seriously does the play allow us to take these themes? Wilde subtitled the play "A Trivial Comedy for Serious People," and told a friend that the play has a "philosophy." What was this philosophy? Wilde explained, "We should treat all the trivial things of life seriously, and all the serious things of life with sincere and studied triviality." This is, of course, again the language of the dandy, designed to shock—but also, perhaps, to stimulate thought and to induce a new perspective. (Barnet xxxi)

In addition to the information provided in Chapter 2, Barnet's comments clearly demonstrate that this playscript should be included, in that it enjoyably fulfills the Standard's dictates on analysis of a variety of scenes.

There are many copies of this playscript available, however the most accessible and informative is included in an anthology of Wilde's work entitled Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Earnest and Other Plays. What makes this edition so accessible is that in addition to it being paperback, as are all of the playscripts on the List, it includes the valuable "Introduction" by Sylvan Barnet: this edition also includes what

has come to be known as “The Gribbsby Episode,” a fourth act that is typically, and as Barnet argues regrettably, omitted in modern performances:

A final, biographical point: Wilde drafted *Earnest* in four acts, but was persuaded by the producer to reduce it to three. Acts II and III were combined to form the present Act III, chiefly by the omission of an episode concerning one Gribbsby, which we print as an appendix. The omission of this episode is a real loss, but it should be pointed out that the four-act version is essentially a draft—it lacks much of the wit of the later, three-act version—and cannot by any means be regarded as the play that Wilde would have put on the stage if it had not been for the interference of the producer. The three-act version is the version that he approved for production and later (with the addition of small improvements in the dialogue for publication. To regard the four-act version as authoritative, then, is to reject Wilde’s many improvements. But the loss of Gribbsby is regrettable. (Barnet xxxii-xxxiii)

The significance of that episode, which shows the early versions of Wilde’s humor, is invaluable when, as the sub-category of the standard suggests, students are analyzing the playwright and his style. This inclusiveness makes this text the only real choice for this playscript.

Major Barbara

One cannot effectively study modern theatre without discussing George Bernard Shaw, and one cannot effectively discuss Shaw without discussing Major Barbara. Shaw, who was a life-long Socialist, began in 1898, “his practice of writing long prefaces discussing issues raised in his plays” (Wilson, Goldfarb 372). He wrote that, Major Barbara’s “Preface” in particular, was “to help my critics out with Major Barbara by telling them what to say about it” (Shaw 15). Shaw argued that by explaining what the point of his writing was, he could ensure that others would understand his socialist goal and ideals:

In the millionaire Undershaft I have represented a man who has become intellectually and spiritually as well as practically conscious of the irresistible natural truth which we all abhor and repudiate: to wit, that the greatest of our evils, and the worst of our crimes is poverty, and that our first duty, to which every other consideration should be sacrificed is not to be poor. 'Poor but honest, 'the respectable poor,' and such phrases are as intolerable and as immoral as 'drunken but amiable,' Security, the chief pretence of civilization, cannot exist where the worst of dangers, the danger of poverty, hangs over everyone's head, and where the alleged protection of our persons from violence is only an accidental result of the existence of a police force whose real business is to force the poor man to see his children starve whilst idle people overfeed pet dogs with the money that might feed and clothe them. (Shaw 15-16)

Major Barbara is a play that deals with one of the worst social problems of the late nineteenth, and twentieth century, that of poverty. Shaw believed that society must be changed at its very roots, and tried to do so through his writings. He thought that poverty should be eliminated, but he thought that society was not doing anything to make that a reality:

In spite of the emphasis laid both in this preface and in the play on the fact that poverty is an infectious pestilence to be prevented at all costs, the lazy habit still prevails of tolerating it not only as an inevitable misfortune to be charitably patronized and relieved, but as a useful punishment for all sorts of misconduct and inefficiency that are not expressly punishable by law. Until we have a general vital hatred of poverty, and a determination to "liquidate" the underfed either by feeding them or killing them, we shall not tackle the poverty question seriously. Long ago I proposed to eradicate the dangerous disease of hunger among children by placing bread on public supply like drinking

water. No Government nor municipality has yet taken up that very sensible proposal. (Shaw 49-50)

The idea of poverty was a driving force in Shaw's writing of this play, an important social issue that makes this a play worth analyzing. In addition, "Though most of Shaw's plays took up social problems and philosophical concepts, they were also witty, engaging comedies with lively dialogue and unusual, well-drawn characters. They could be characterized as realistic comedies of manners" (Wilson, Goldfarb 373). Shaw's plays present a realistic view of life as opposed to Oscar Wilde's stylized societal views. They are in fact, as Gassner point out, closer to Ibsen's style of writing: "For Shaw, modern drama and true realism started in 1879 when Ibsen's Doll House heroine Nora made her husband sit down and discuss the nature of her marriage to him" (Gassner 297). Wilson and Goldfarb go further:

In 1895, Shaw became the theater critic for the magazine Saturday Review. His commentaries, later published in book form as Our Theater in the Nineties, set a new standard of excellence in dramatic criticism. He championed the new realistic theater, particularly the plays of Ibsen, and condemned the stale commercial theater of time. Finding no English drama that reflected his views, he began writing his own plays to convey his ideas on political and social reform. (372)

Shaw's importance as both theatre critic and playwright is apparent when one looks at his body of work. Major Barbara's status as one of the most important of Shaw's plays, is clearly an apt choice to fulfill the Standard's guidelines, and its accessible. That is not to say that it is simple, for no Shavian play can be considered that. Major Barbara brilliantly addresses issues that affected not only people at the turn of the last century, but also the turn of the latest.

Of several editions, the most accessible to high school students is included in Bernard Shaw's Plays. What makes this edition the best choice is that first, it is in an anthology that includes three other well-known Shaw playscripts (Heartbreak House, Saint Joan, Too True to be Good) that can be studied if a teacher so desires. Second, the anthology also includes backgrounds and criticisms of all four plays

included in the text. This also will allow a teacher to access more information about Shaw, and his philosophies and beliefs. Finally, it does not include the “Preface” that is included in the solo published version of Major Barbara. As pointed out in Stages of Drama, Shaw wrote prefaces for many of his plays:

Shaw expounded his views not only in his plays but also in prefaces and notes that he wrote for the published versions of the plays. By means of these commentaries, which were often as long as the plays themselves, Shaw used his incisive prose style to explicate his characters, plots and themes as well as to gain a wider audience for his ideas than was possible in the theater.

(Klaus, Gilbert, Field Jr. 628)

While useful to the college student as a tool to achieve deeper understanding of Shaw's philosophies, this “Preface” is extremely advanced and too challenging for the high school student based on what the standards are trying to achieve.

Therefore, at the high school level it is more appropriate to read others interpretations of Shaw's work and his philosophies before moving on to the more advanced readings. A new version of this anthology, George Bernard Shaw's Plays was published in 2002, and while it contains the “Preface” for Major Barbara, it does not include many of the commentaries from the older edition. The older edition is still available though, through Barnes and Noble, or Amazon.

Six Characters in Search of an Author

In theatre the idea of “the suspension of disbelief” is particularly important. The theory is that even though the audience knows that what it is seeing is impossible, for example Peter Pan taking flight, or Javert falling to his death from the bridge in Le Miserables, it will allow itself to accept the unbelievable as real because it wants to. Within the “reality of the play”, the audience will accept anything put before them provided it is performed well.

When the “fictional characters” in Six Characters in Search of an Author appear on stage and ask for assistance from the Manager, the audience does not question their

reality. Its only concern is “what will happen now?” Even though these “fictional characters” are supposedly from another play, all of this can seem natural to the audience, provided they willingly suspend their disbelief.” What makes this play so compelling is, that like much of modern art, it, as Pirandello writes, questions what reality and what being alive implies:

There is one character, that of the Mother, who on the other hand does not care about being alive (considering being alive as an end itself). She hasn't the least suspicion that she is not alive. It has never occurred to her to ask how and why and in what manner she lives. In short, she is not aware of being a character, inasmuch as she is never, even for a moment, detached from her role. She doesn't know she has a role. (Pirandello 370)

The value of studying this play then is that it allows students to examine not only Pirandello's philosophy: “Truth is thus presented to be as unstable, as variable, as the differing perceptions of every [person],” (Klaus, Gilbert, Field 674) which is discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, but also (in relation to the National Standards), as Klaus, Gilbert, and Field point out, to study the causes leading to Pirandello's work, as well as what is considered to be the forerunner to much of what the Existentialist ideas are all about:

Although the play is clearly an enactment of Pirandello's relativistic philosophy, it may also be seen as dramatizing the problematic relationship between art and life, between performance and existence. (Klaus, Gilbert, Field 675)

Not only is the playscript worth studying for its value as theatrical literature, but it also allows the student to see how what was happening during the years between World War I and World War II affected art, and the world around it. Wilson and Goldfarb write that:

Pirandello's life and career, like his plays, reflected theoretical, social, and political upheavals in Italy and Europe.... In 1924 he had joined the fascist party, possibly partly because his theater needed state

subsidies. But it is also true that Pirandello's political views were conservative, and he often praised Mussolini in his newspaper articles; he even donated his Nobel Prize for literature (which he won in 1934) to the Italian government during its invasion of Ethiopia.

(Wilson, Goldfarb 416-417)

In high school, students are exposed to the World War years from the political point of view, and while that allows them to become familiar with those years, student's needs to realize that there were authors that were influenced by those wars, and that influence created some of the greatest literature of the twentieth century, and was reflected, as Robert Brustein points out, if only symbolically, in their writings:

The relationships between the fictional characters and the living actors become exceedingly complex; and the conflict of the play, as Francis Fergusson has perceived, proceeds on several planes of discourse. On the one hand, the characters create friction with the theatre people who first disbelieve their story, then find it too squalid for the stage, and finally travesty it in the act of imitation. On the other hand, the characters struggle among themselves, for they detest each other, and are bound together in mutual hatred. As the drama of the characters is interrupted by the comedy of the actors, and the two parallel conflicts begin to grate, the tragi-comic alternations create an atmosphere of the grotesque. The characters, furthermore, quarrel among themselves over the details of their story. And the first act is almost entirely taken up with trying to determine the vague outlines of this "historical" narrative. (Brustein 310-311)

The ideas that the members of the family "struggle against themselves" and "detest each other, and are bound together in mutual hatred" are easy to see as symbolic ideas for governments working together for the same reasons, which occurred in both world wars. And since the relationship of the characters is a familial one, it puts the issues in terms that students are able to relate to.

The best version of this play for purposes of the List is in the anthology Naked Masks: Five Plays by Luigi Pirandello. Not only does this edition allow access to the other well-known plays by this author, Henry IV and Each in His Own Way among them, but it also presents the student with Pirandello's "Preface" for Six Characters which is much more understandable than Shaw's is for Major Barbara. It also includes as shown in example below, an excellent "Introduction" by Eric Bentley:

Perhaps this would nowadays be called an existentialist vision: life is absurd, it fills one with nausea and dread and anguish, it gives us the metaphysical shudder, yet, without knowing why, perhaps just because one is *there*, in life, one faces it, one fights back, one cries out in pain, in rage, in defiance (if one is a Sicilian existentialist), and since all living, all life, is improvisation, one improvises some values. Their Form will last until Living destroys them and we have to improvise some more. (Bentley xxvii)

This introduction is easy to follow and allows the high school reader to understand Pirandello's ideas without adding excessively complex material.

The King and I

Most high school theatre teachers discuss plays and playwrights but many leave out musical theatre as a legitimate part of theatrical literature. Most of the time the teachers do not teach this area because they simply do not have enough time to cover all of the playscripts that they feel are important, and still do justice to musical theatre. That is unfortunate; especially when sub-category 'c' in **Content Standard 8** clearly regards the musical as an important area of theatre: "c. identify cultural and historical sources of American theatre and musical theatre." Since it is so important, Rodgers and Hammerstein, along with Stephen Sondheim, Andrew Lloyd Webber, and many of the modern musical theatre artists should be examined in the theatre history area; however, the one playscript that should be analyzed in an educational setting is The King and I.

As observed in Chapter 2, its questioning of traditional values makes this play relevant to modern audiences. Many may feel that West-Side Story is more relevant, with its Romeo and Juliet plot and its gang themes, to modern audiences. However, it is often used in English classes when teachers are trying to help students make sense of the Shakespeare play, so it need not be redone here. What needs to be taught in relation to the National Standards is not only musical theatre, but also, as Ethan Mordden argues, the culture of the time period of the play:

The Tuptim subplot further roots the musical's anti-authoritarian theme in that "Hello, Young Lovers" is virtually an anticipation of Anna's taking Tuptim's side and thus becomes a hymn not only to love but to liberty. And of course the Big Ballet, "The Small House of Uncle Thomas," Tuptim's court entertainment, elaborates the situation of a slave hoping to flee a wicked master to join her lover. As with South Pacific's Cable and Liat, the subplot is in one way the main plot, thematically explanatory. Anna and the King are the show: but Tuptim is what the show is about. (Mordden 135)

In a modern world where multiculturalism is the order of the day in schools, and students from all over the world are attending schools in the United States, this play will work well as a study of the effects of cultural changes within a society. It also, as Mordden argues, promulgates acceptance and tolerance of those that in many cultures are considered low, and "untouchable," due to "politics and personalities":

The shift from film [the original Rex Harrison film] to musical also aggravates the Anna-King confrontation over Tuptim far more effectively. In the film they merely argue. In the musical they must come to grips with the very core of what they cannot abide in each other—her resistance to authority and his egomania. Moreover, this happens only moments after the "Shall We Dance?" scene, in which they have drawn closer to each other than ever before. Now, with

Tuptim held down on the floor before them, the King orders her to be whipped.

ANNA: She's only a child. She was running away because she was unhappy. Can't you understand that? Your

Majesty, I beg of you—don't throw away everything you've done. This girl hurt your vanity. She didn't hurt your heart. You haven't got a heart. You've never loved anyone. You never will. (The King, stung by Anna's words, seeks a way to hurt her in return.)

KING: I show you! (He snatches the whip from the Guard)
Give! Give to me!

ANNA: I cannot believe you are going to do this dreadful thing.

KING: You do not believe, eh? Maybe you will believe when you hear her screaming as you run down the hall!

ANNA: I am not going to run down the hall! I am going to stay right here and watch you!

KING: Hold this girl! (The two Guards grab Tuptim's arms) I do this all myself.

ANNA: You *are* a barbarian!

KING: Down! Down! Down! (The Guards hold Tuptim down)
Am I King, or am I not King? Am I to be cuckolded in my own palace? Am I to take orders from English schoolteacher?

ANNA: No, not orders....

KING: Silence!.... (He hands the whip to Kralahome) I am King, as I was born to be, and Siam to be governed in my way! (Tearing off his jacket) Not English way, not French way, not Chinese way. My way!
(He flings the jacket at Anna and takes the whip back from the Kralahome) Barbarian you say. There is no

barbarian worse than a weak King, and I am strong King.
 You hear me? Strong. (He stands over Tuptim, raises
 the whip, meets Anna's eyes, pauses, then suddenly
 realizing he cannot do this in front of her, he hurls the
 whip from him and, in deep shame, runs from the room.)

Anna has destroyed the King. So fully has he come to depend on her
 for advice, support and esteem that he cannot survive without them.
 Yet she has come to depend on him, to be the kind of man she can at
 once guide and admire. Seeing him as a savage shatters her idol.

(Mordden 134-135)

From ancient cultures to the Communist rule of Fidel Castro, and to the destruction of
 the Buddha statues in Afghanistan by the Taliban, personalities effect politics in the
 context of world culture. And not only does this play encourage thoughtful study of
 such issues, it also allows the students to be exposed to Rodgers and
 Hammerstein's contributions to musical theatre both of which are what the National
 Standards are trying to accomplish.

The only accessible version of this playscript is available through The Rodgers
 and Hammerstein Theatre Library. Due to copyright laws, most librettos are not
 available for purchase, only rental. Organizations like Music Theatre International -
 MTI, and Rodgers and Hammerstein have come to the realization that there is a
 large market in Educational Theatre, and have responded in two very effective ways.
 First, MTI has come out with a "Broadway Jr." series that allows elementary and
 junior high schools the ability to perform condensed versions of their shows. Each
 version runs about 70 - 80 minutes and contains all of the songs and most of the
 story in an abbreviated form. The composers have also transposed the songs into
 keys appropriate for younger voices. For a set fee MTI will send a complete
 production kit that includes:

- 1 Director's Script
- 2 Piano/Vocal Scores

- 20 Student Libretto/Vocal Books (The students keep these as souvenirs)
- 1 Broadway Junior Production Handbook (You too can put on a show!)
- 1 Cross-Curricular Activities and Enrichment
- 2 Performance/Accompaniment CD (No orchestra required)

This new product allows students to have access to many of the most important works of the musical theatre. For several years MTI was the only organization that had such a program. Rodgers and Hammerstein are currently working on a junior version of The King and I. Although no specific release date has been given, the publishers have realized that there is a market for this type of program. Clearly, they felt that it was better to make available an official version of their shows rather than to find schools revising The Sound of Music on their own for a one-hour illegal show, for example.

The second way that these two organizations are tapping into the Educational Theatre market is by offering Classroom Study programs. This is the only legal access that a teacher would have to any of musicals that are owned by Rodgers and Hammerstein. According to a representative from the company, if a teacher were interested in teaching The King and I, he or she would need to apply for a special Classroom Study license that would allow the teacher to teach the show with scripts provided by Rodgers and Hammerstein. This is not to be confused with a Performance license; in fact, the companies specifically state that no performances can be given under this license. The cost of this program is a maximum of ten dollars per script, rental, and ten dollars per script, for Security Deposit. This covers shipping costs and is only for a specified time (e.g. a semester). They do not provide a soundtrack of the show. A teacher would have to provide a recording on his or her own. Rodgers and Hammerstein realize that if a teacher is going to teach one of their musicals, that ten dollars per script can add up quickly. They also realize that the money to pay for such programs of study has to come out of a budget, so they are willing to negotiate a lower price. MTI's program is similar to Rodgers and

Hammerstein's. It charges a rental fee of twenty-five dollars and a royalty fee of \$150 for a kit. If additional scripts are required, there is an additional fee. However, the librettos of many of the shows produced through MTI are available in published form. However, the kit from MTI includes the vocal scores as well as the librettos. What is significant about these programs, is that these companies are making their shows accessible to schools, for study as well a production. The prices are reasonable when weighed against dictates of the National Standards.

Fences

Content Standard 8, sub-category 'c', mandates that students identify the "cultural and historical sources of American theatre" (American Alliance for Theatre and Education 67). Since many English classes cover Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller, it would be redundant to include them here. However, the emergence of the African-American playwright in this country is certainly worth investigating. Most would agree that August Wilson "is one of the most acclaimed playwrights of our time, as well as one of the most popular" (Bradley 1), and some would agree that he is "American's preeminent contemporary playwright" (Sanders 151). What makes him so popular is that he tries to "take black American culture and place it on stage to demonstrate that it exists...." (Bradley 2), because he feels that "Some Americans, black and white, would deny that a black American culture even exists" (Shannon 114).

Of the several plays that Wilson has written concerning the history of blacks in the twentieth century, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, Joe Turner's Come and Gone, Jitney, Seven Guitars, King Hedley II, and Fences; Fences is the most accessible. The play is very compelling because it shows life in the years prior to the Civil Rights movement in the 1960's. Many teachers discuss the Civil Rights movement without talking about how life was for the African-American people during the years leading up to that time. The play accomplishes this by showing the reader how deep-seeded, racism was in this country; so deep, in fact, that not only did whites prevent blacks from being able to succeed, but, as Sandra Shannon writes, older blacks

would prevent younger blacks from succeeding just because it had been done to them:

Fences reminds us that the politics of racial hatred that endured long past slavery continues to drive wedges between black men and their sons. Black men frequently lash out at their sons or (other blacks) alternate targets instead of confronting head-on the emasculating racism or the social and economic pressures they encounter outside the home.... Some, like Troy Maxson, rationalize that their downright mean treatment of their sons prepares them for the similar treatment that awaits them in society. (Shannon 100)

It is an unfortunate fact to think that in this modern society racism still exists. Through the ideas about multiculturalism that are impressed on children in school, and about accepting people for who they are rather than the color of their skin, educators have tried to decrease the racism that is still rampant in schools today. A play like Fences also tries to accomplish that goal by showing that even though racism existed during the '40's and '50's, as it does now, as Shannon points out, the stereotypes of people were not always correct:

'We have been told so many times how irresponsible we are as black men that I try and present positive images of responsibility'.... That he does not simply flee apparently saves him from the total damnation heaped upon so many black men caught in similar dilemmas.

(Shannon 103)

Troy is a man like many other men who have their problems:

Like Willy Loman, he has his share of human failings, yet he draws a degree of empathy because he is portrayed as a victim of his times. Society has dealt him blow after blow, yet somehow sustains his all-important sense of pride and responsibility. (Shannon 101)

The difference between Troy's problems and a character like Willy Loman's is that Fences emerges from a black perspective having been written by someone

who understands what it is to be black, and as Wilson argues, tries to communicate that to his audience:

To mount an all-black production of a Death of a Salesman or any other play conceived for white actors as an investigation of the human condition through the specifics of white culture is to deny us our own humanity, our own history, and the need to make our own investigations from the cultural ground on which we stand as black Americans. It is an assault on our presence, and our difficult but honorable history is America; and it is an insult to our intelligence, our playwrights, and our many and varied contributions to the society and the world at large. (Wilson 30-31)

Similar in theme to The Cherry Orchard, with the idea of the “old guard.... dying away, thus making room for a new order” (Shannon 95), this is a play that deals with universal themes, and Wilson thinks that the black perspective is just as relevant as any other:

Theatre asserts that all of human life is universal. Love, Honor, Duty, Betrayal belong and pertain to every culture and every race. The way they are acted out on the playing field may be different, but betrayal is betrayal whether you are a South Sea Islander, a Mississippi farmer or an English baron. All of human life is universal, and it is theatre that illuminates and confers upon the universal the ability to speak for all men. (Wilson 45)

Since the standard clearly demands the study of such universal themes, this is a playscript that must be included on the List, not only for what it says about the black man in society, but also for what it can teach the student about other races. Fences can also be seen as a lynch pin to the other playscripts on this list because, “the past is like the rudder of a ship. It keeps you moving through the present, steers you into the future” (Davis 78). It connects what has gone before, with what has yet to come.

The most accessible version of this play is published through Signet Publishing. The script is easy to read and includes an introduction by the original director of the

play, Lloyd Richards. There are currently no anthologies of Wilson's plays, which include commentaries. Several books on Wilson's dramatic vision and style, in addition to the ones previously cited, are included in Appendix I.

'night Mother

As important as Fences is to understanding the black culture in America, 'night Mother is a representative text for the woman because, "it is one of the first plays written by a woman and addressing women's concerns to gain widespread attention, critical acclaim, and economic success" (Dolan 19). Again, in reference to **Content Standard 8**, sub-category 'c', this play is one that shows that universality of theme certainly does apply to women. Many critics of this play though, do not see it as universal because, as Jill Dolan argues, of the location of the scene and its focus:

In the change from male writer to female and father / son focus to mother/ daughter, domestic drama [ex. Death of a Salesman] is reduced to kitchen drama, which is considered specific rather than universal, and melodramatic rather than tragic. (Dolan 33)

Still, this universality, "Defined as the ability to speak to the generic spectator" (Dolan 34), of themes in 'night Mother is genuine. Jenny Spencer argues that how they are experienced is what differs:

I would like to suggest the possibility that male and female a audience members "read,' comprehend, and respond to the play in ways fundamentally different. While universal themes of death and desire, of human dignity and human pain, of hope and existential despair are accessible to all, these seem but secondary elaborations of the primary drama that women may cathartically experience in Norman's play. If we accept the psychoanalytic premise that given this specific pressures, complications, and resolutions offered the female child within the Oedipal situation, the process whereby men and women gain their sexual identity is not identical, then it stands to reason that a literary work in which such issues are represented should

provide for the audience of each sex a different kind of experience.

'night Mother provides an interesting case since it both self-consciously addresses a female audience and subconsciously works upon the female psyche in powerful ways, positioning male and female viewers differently in the process. Indeed, because of the way in which the text foregrounds issues of female identity and feminine autonomy, focuses on the mother-daughter relationship, and controls the narrative movement, the relatively detached position available (however tentatively) to male viewers simply cannot (without great risk) be taken up by women. (Spencer 365)

Many critics, as Dolan suggests, think that this play is not a feminist play due to the fact that Jessie's suicide is giving up rather than confronting and dealing with what is wrong in her life:

"The premise alone defies feminist categorizing: If feminist plays are defined as those that show women in the painful, difficult process of becoming full human beings, how can a play in which suicide is assumed from the first moments be a thorough consideration of women?" (Dolan 35)

However, others, including the playwright, think that it is indeed a play that shows a strong woman, a woman who has finally made choices in her life as opposed to going with the flow. Norman herself stated that:

For Jessie in 'Night Mother, even the wizenning of hope does not negate the fact that she exercises her will to the last—by deciding what will become of her life. Not she chooses to *die*, but she *chooses* to die. (Stone 58)

Anne Marie Drew goes further with that idea when she states that:

We can grieve that only in death was she free, but Norman's work moves us to an inexorable conclusion. In death, Jessie Cates finds life. 'Although many argue that her death is merely an act of desperation, Jessie's decision to take her own life displays a new

confidence in herself; she knows that it is the right decision for her....
 [she finds] her own meaning only in the rest afforded by death.... and
 [she] does manage to find herself in the act of dying (McDonnell 103).
 Given that some of us do not find ourselves in either life or death,
 Jessie's end is no small triumph. (93-94)

In a modern society where women are still trying to receive equal pay for equal work, and where they, like the Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, and gays, among others, are still not treated with the same respect and choices that white men are, it is unfortunate that a play that not only "address[es].... just the question of suicide but the larger questions concerning a woman's identity in a world dominated by men" (Klaus, Gilbert, Field, Jr. 1209), is reduced to a debate about feminist political issues.

There are many more positive aspects of this play that make it worthwhile to include on the List. This is a play that looks at themes from a female point of view. It also helps the audience to understand this mother-daughter relationship in a way that it would never be able to understand the relationship between Willy and Biff. As Robert Brustein points out:

Her suicide is perhaps meant partly to punish her mother, but it is also a means of reaching out to her, and in the agony of their parting there develops a deeper understanding between the two women than they could ever have achieved in life. (Brustein 160)

Regardless of cultural or gender differences, there are certain themes that all can relate to, and certain playwrights, as Jill Dolan suggests, can tap into those themes and communicate them to the audience from their specific perspective:

Studying texts like Marsha Norman's 'Night Mother against the context of traditional texts forces an awareness of the ideological nature of cultural discourse. As women playwrights continue to assert their voices in the traditional male forum, gender will remain an issue with which to reckon. (Dolan 40)

The play should be studied due to its universality of themes. That is what the standard mandates. Brustein concurs:

Nothing reinforces one's faith in the power and importance of the theater more than the emergence of an authentic universal playwright—not a woman playwright, mind you, not a regional playwright, not an ethnic playwright, but one who speaks to the concerns of all humankind. (Brustein 162)

There are no anthologies yet of Norman's plays. The most accessible version of this playscript is published by Dramatist's Play Service. As with August Wilson, there are several books that deal with Norman as a playwright and the female theatre. Those relevant, and not previously cited, are included in Appendix I.

All of the playscripts on the List are "representative dramatic texts" in that they "reflect and affect life" (American Alliance for Theatre and Education 64). The goal of the List with regard to the National Standards is to include texts that will expose the student to not only the major styles of theatre, but also ones that will expose the student to playscripts that are not normally taught in other classrooms. By using such a list, the teacher can be assured that the student will not only be exposed to differing views of playwrights, but also that he or she will be exposed to a greater portion of the world around him or her, and as a result, achieve a greater understanding of his or her role in society.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the information presented in this thesis, several conclusions can be drawn: first, that there is a need for this type of list in high school education; second, that based on the National Standards for Theatre, this is the most accessible list of texts available to the high school student; and third, that only through implementation of such a list will the goals of the Standards be successful.

As shown throughout this thesis, there is a need for this type of list in high school education. As stated earlier, if teachers do not say that this is what students need to know before they graduate from high school, chances are they will not learn it. If a student is not planning on going to college, or majoring in Theatre in college, then the benefit of this list is that it exposes the student to not only great works of theatrical literature, but also allows him or her to experience an art form that advances the human condition. It allows him or her to explore that side of his or her own life and personality that he or she may otherwise not be exposed to. By doing this, he or she will discover more about, not only his or her role within society, but as Alvin Goldfarb suggests, the role of theatre as well:

For the high school student, I think a student should understand the place of theatre in society, how theatre reflects society, who the major theatre artists are and their functions, and an appreciation for attending the theatre. (Goldfarb, Alvin. E-mail interview. 2 Aug. 2002)

For the student going on to study Theatre in college, this list serves another purpose. Students who study theatre in this context and with these texts, will be assured that when he or she goes to college he or she will, Goldfarb continues, have the background necessary to succeed at that level:

I would hope that they would have had a broad introduction to theatre, some literature coursework that included reading drama, and practical performance, design, or technical experience.

(Goldfarb, Alvin. E-mail interview. 2 Aug. 2002)

Unfortunately, students are going to college without the background necessary to succeed in this discipline. The role of educators in the secondary schools is to ensure that when a student leave their classes, he or she will have absorbed the basic knowledge and skills to succeed at the next level. This is not happening. Not only in theatre, but in other subjects as well. Too often school districts are reporting that students are not passing the minimum proficiency requirements and as a result, are often transferring to different schools:

The students, in northeastern Utah's Uintah School District, [who] normally would have attended West Junior High School.... were allowed to transfer [this fall] to Vernal Junior High School, 30 miles away, where test scores are a bit better.... Like thousands of other students nationwide, those in Utah are getting their first taste of a new federal law that allows students at 8,652 struggling schools to transfer, often at taxpayer expense, to other public schools. (Toppo 1A)

It is because of situations like this that lists like the one described in this thesis need to become reality. Only by establishing national standards and stating concretely that this is what the student needs to know before he or she graduates, will educators ensure that students have the skills necessary to not only pass proficiency tests, but also to succeed at the next level.

The choices on this list are concrete. They are based on the National Standards, and evaluated not only for their ability to meet the demands of the National Standards, but also on their accessibility to the student. A list of this magnitude cannot be created on the whim of a teacher, based solely on whether he or she likes a playscript, or a particular textbook or not. There has to be some sort of criteria when deciding which texts make the list and which do not. In the Teacher's Resource

Binder that is published as a supplemental text for The Stage and the School, there is an extensive bibliography for the educator. The problem with this bibliography is that there are so many choices on it that it is not clear which are the most important and which are secondary. The bibliography also includes several textbooks on theatre, but again there are so many listed that it is unclear which are the most important. Also, it includes several more advanced texts that are really for the college-level student, but fails to include ones that are easily accessible and understandable to the high school student. As compared to the List created for this thesis, this 72-page bibliography appears to be a major listing of every popular play, musical, and theatrical textbook, as well as video, internet listings, and theatrical resources, rather than a select list of important works to be covered in a theatre course.

The choices made for the list were based on the National Standards. If the National Standards are to provide the guide for what students need to know, then the choices made for this list are the most representative and most accessible to the student. As representative texts, they will assure that what the student is reading will give them the minimum knowledge for theatre required by the National Standards. These texts will also assure that should the student wish to be further challenged in the world of theatre, he or she will have the background necessary to seek out those challenges, and the confidence to face them. Since all of these texts are accessible, the information contained is presented in such a way that the student will be challenged with material, that while appropriate for his or her level of education (high school), speaks to him or her on an educated level.

The creation of this list is only a portion of what is required to ensure success for the high school student. Complete success, as Lin Wright points out, comes with the implementation of the texts into the regular curriculum of the school districts around the country:

In spite of.... opportunities to see film and television, read plays , and act in skits, very few children have the opportunity to see theatre or to work with theatre specialists to acquire the skills necessary for

exercising aesthetic judgment in choosing theatre or films to view. Few have the opportunity to develop the skills to create and present drama. Theatre educators see the standards as a means of helping theatre specialists and classroom teacher[s] improve their teaching in our discipline. (Wright 36)

The following three-part plan is a way of implementing the list within the school districts:

1. Districts around the country need to rewrite their curriculum to include the requirements of the National Standards.
2. Districts around the country need to include the texts on the List as required reading in all theatre classes.
3. Once the texts on the lists are included as required reading, the districts need to require textbook adoption of the texts on the list to ensure that teachers are purchasing approved textbooks, and that students have access to the required information.

The point of this thesis is that theatre should have a minimum list of texts that every student should read before they graduate from high school, and that it should be taught as part of the curriculum, which, as Wright argues, has not happened:

For at least the last decade, theatre educators have been criticized for being in a "production mode." The high school teacher, particularly, produces play after play, leaving little time to teach about the art of theatre. This state of affairs is as much due to administrators and parents who demand competitive events and "viewable" results as it is to the teachers.... theatre is a discipline with aesthetic theories, a history, and a literature; it is also a dynamic means of teaching cognitive, affective, and social skills. Theatre creates a metaphor for society and helps us make meaning about what it is to be human.... For students to be able to understand world drama, we must teach about ritual; to deal with modern society, we must teach about media as art forms and tools for expression.... (Wright 36-37)

How the list is taught is up to the individual teachers and districts. However, with the National Standards in place, it is up to the districts to see that the standards are being implemented and that the list is being taught. The wide-ranging implications of this movement is that the ideas presented can be easily applied to other disciplines. Only then will educators be able to ensure that no child will be left behind.

APPENDIX I

LIST OF SUPPLEMENTAL TEXTS

LIST OF SUPPLEMENTAL TEXTS

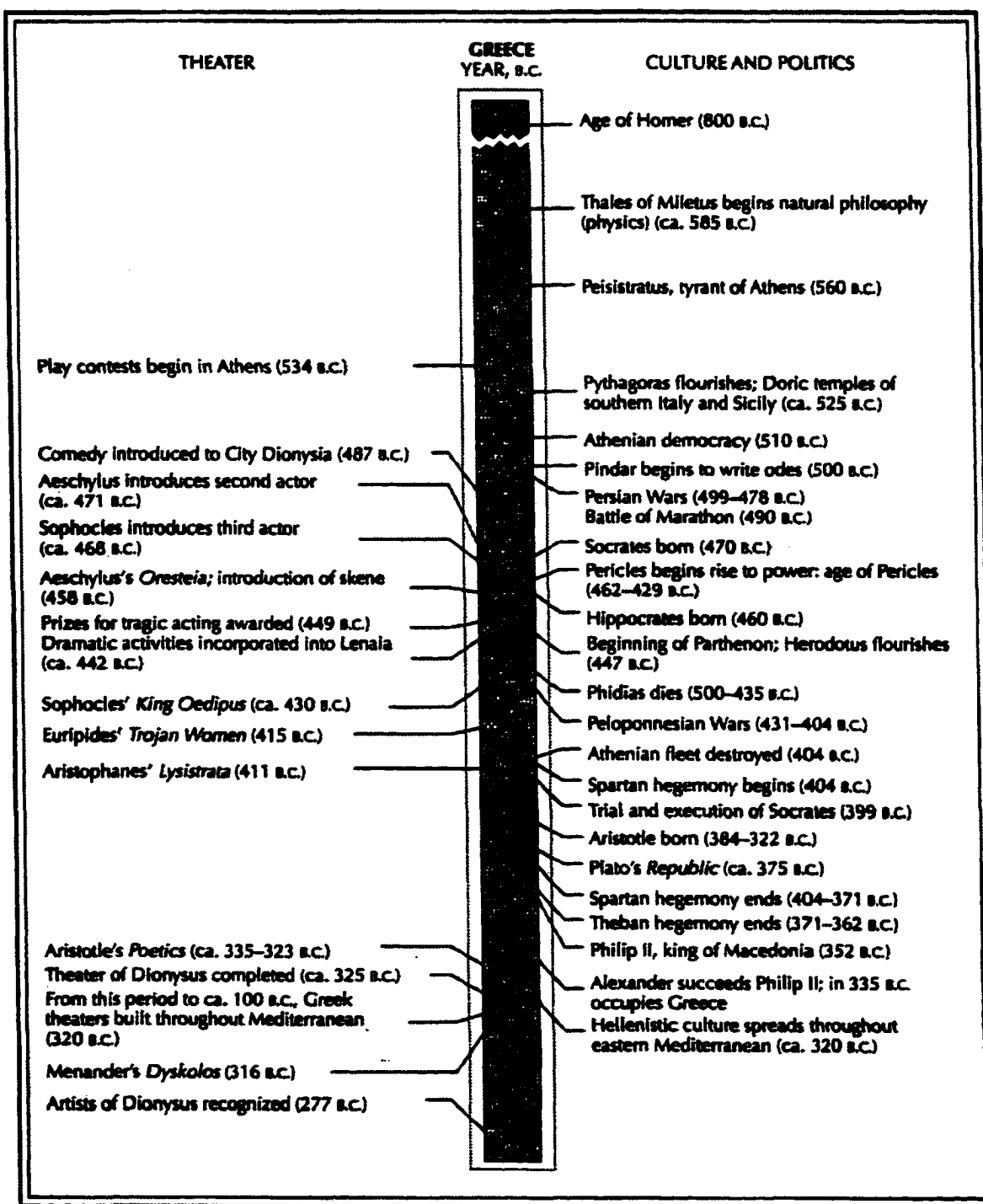
The following is a list of supplemental texts that, although not as important as the thirteen on the List in relation to the National Standards, are still worth consulting and/or exposing students to in high school.

- Albee, Edward. A Delicate Balance. New York: Samuel French. 1966.
- . The Sand Box. New York: Samuel French. 1960.
- Ball, David. Backwards and Forwards: A Technical Manual for Reading Plays. Chicago: Southern Illinois University. 1983.
- Beckett, Samuel. Waiting for Godot. New York: Dramatists Play Service. 1965.
- Benedetti, Robert. The Director at Work. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. 1985.
- Boleslavsky, Richard. Acting: The First Six Lessons. New York: Theatre Arts Books. 1996.
- Capek, Karel and Josef. R.U.R. New York: Samuel French. 1962.
- Carter, Paul. Backstage Handbook: An Illustrated Almanac of Technical Information. Shelter Island, N.Y.: Broadway Press. 1994.
- Chapman, Gerald. Teaching Young Playwrights. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. 1991.
- Corson, Richard, James Glavan. Stage Makeup. Ninth edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Allyn & Bacon. 1990.
- Hansberry, Lorraine. A Raisin in the Sun. New York: Samuel French. 1966.
- Hellman, Lillian. The Little Foxes. New York: Dramatists Play Service. 1945.
- Ibsen, Henrik. "Hedda Gabler." Four Major Plays: Volume I. Trans. Rolf Fjelde. New York: Penguin Books. 1992.
- . "The Wild Duck." Four Major Plays: Volume I. Trans. Rolf Fjelde. New York: Penguin Books. 1992.

- Inge, William. Picnic. New York: Dramatists Play Service. 1955.
- Miller, Roger and Bob Hauptman. Big River. New York: Rodgers & Hammerstein. 1986.
- Mobley, Jonniepat. Play Production Today. Fifth edition. Lincolnwood, Illinois: National Textbook Company. 1996.
- Nunn, Joan. Fashion in Costume: 1200-2000. Chicago: New Amsterdam Books. 2000.
- O'Neill, Eugene. Long Day's Journey Into Night. New York: Dramatists Play Service. 1955.
- Plautus. "The Menaechmus Twins." The Menaechmus Twins & Two Other Plays. ed and Trans. Lionel Casson. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. 1-70. 1963.
- Pickens, Mary Brooks. A Dictionary of Costume and Fashion: Historical and Modern. Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications. 1985.
- Pinter, Harold. The Birthday Party. New York: Samuel French. 1960.
- Rodgers, James W. and Wanda C. Rodgers. Play Director's Survival Kit: A Complete Step-by-Step Guide to Producing Theater in Any School or Community Setting. West Nyack, New York: The Center for Applied Research in Education. 1995.
- Rodgers, Richard and Oscar Hammerstein II. South Pacific. New York. Rodgers & Hammerstein. 1949.
- Rodgers, Richard and Oscar Hammerstein II. The Sound of Music. New York. Rodgers & Hammerstein. 1960.
- Shange, Ntozake. for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf. New York: Samuel French. 1977.
- Simon, Neil. The Odd Couple. New York: Samuel French. 1966.
- Sondheim, Stephen and James Lapine. Sunday in the Park with George. New York: Music Theatre International. 1986.
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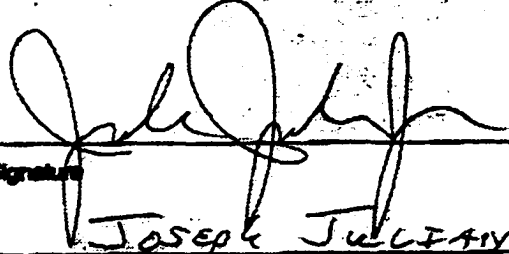
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