

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Title:

Theatre Arts

Department:

English

Course Description:

This elective combines an introduction to elementary acting techniques with a study of the history of the theatre. Students will have the opportunity to develop their acting skills by performing monologues and scenes. They will also gain an appreciation for the theatre by studying a wide variety of groundbreaking dramatic works, ranging from William Shakespeare's tragedy King Lear to George Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion to Jonathan Larson's contemporary musical Rent. Curriculum goals include developing an understanding of the role of the actor, the stage, and the audience. Oral, written, and performance assessments will complement the study, viewing, and interpretation of theatrical productions.

Primary Course Materials:

A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams

Pygmalion by George Bernard Shaw

The Cherry Orchard by Anton Chekhov

Long Day's Journey into Night by Eugene O'Neill

King Lear by William Shakespeare

West Side Story

Hairspray

My Fair Lady

Rent

12 American Plays (edited by Richard Corbin and Miriam Balf)

A Variety of Short Plays (edited by John C. Schweitzer)

Selected monologues from the following plays and musicals:

Hamlet

Macbeth

Henry V

The Tempest

Richard III

West Side Story

Pygmalion

My Fair Lady

The Cherry Orchard

Hairspray

A Streetcar Named Desire

The Pirates of Penzance

Long Day's Journey into Night

King Lear

Othello

Rent

Selected poems including but not limited to "Invictus" and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"

Selected scenes

Essential Questions:

Thematic Concept: The role of the actor

What techniques does the actor use to develop a character?

What is the importance of the theatre to our culture?

How does the theatre help us to understand ourselves and the world?

How has the theatre changed over time?

In what ways does the theatre mirror both the aspirations and the fears of its time?

How have dramatic techniques and approaches to storytelling changed over time?

Course Objectives:

MHS Learning Expectations:

Melrose High School students will:

1. Write effectively using standard English
2. Demonstrate the ability to read effectively
3. Demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively
4. Demonstrate an understanding of arts and culture

MHS Theatre Arts Course Goals:

Students will be able to:

- I. Perform and interpret a wide variety of monologues, both classical and modern
- II. Collaborate with their peers to perform scenes
- III. Learn the skills to create fully developed characters
- IV. Understand and apply the specific vocabulary associated with the stage
- V. View and critique both professional and non-professional theatrical productions

Content Outline:

Unit I: Developing a Character

Students will be introduced to the vocabulary of the theatre. They will begin an intensive study of the monologue. All students will have the opportunity to perform in front of their peers and receive feedback to improve their performance. Students will be introduced to basic vocal and physical warm-ups to help prepare them for their work on the stage. The culminating project for this unit will be the performance, in costume and utilizing props and appropriate set pieces, of a dramatic or comedic monologue. Students will have a one week rehearsal period during which they will receive feedback before their final presentations. All students will complete a detailed self-assessment of their work following the performances.

Monologues to be covered during this unit:

Hamlet

Henry V
Macbeth
The Tempest
Richard III

Unit II: The Art of the Scene

The second unit will be devoted to the study and performance of scenes. Students will continue to be exposed to new vocal and physical warm-ups to help prepare them for the stage. In addition, students will explore blocking and learn how to use the stage space. Students will work with their peers to perform short scenes, both formally and informally. They will receive feedback on their work and have the chance to revise and rethink their choices. An intense study of the musical West Side Story will allow the class to develop an understanding of what makes an effective scene for the audience. This unit will culminate in the formal presentation, in costume and with props, of a well-rehearsed partner scene. A detailed self-assessment will complement the performance of the partner scene. Ideally, students will have the opportunity to visit the Huntington Theatre in Boston during this unit to view and critique a professional dramatic performance.

Monologues and poems to be covered during this unit:

West Side Story

King Lear

Othello

“Invictus”

“Stopping by Woods”

selected short scenes from a variety of works

Unit III: “The Play’s the Thing”

The third unit will be devoted to an intense study of several masterpieces of the stage, to provide students with a background in theatre history and an appreciation for the metamorphosis of theatre as an art form. For each play, students will examine the life of the playwright and the social context in which the play was written. In addition, students will be encouraged to explore how the play challenges the social norms and expectations of its time. If possible, performances of the plays will complement the reading and discussion of each work. During the third unit, all students will research a major playwright and complete an oral presentation that highlights important details from the writer’s life and significant works. In addition, students will bring in a famous scene from one of their playwright’s major works and have their classmates act it out. All students will write a detailed self-assessment of their presentations. Ideally, the students will have the opportunity to visit a community theatre such as The Stoneham Theatre during this unit to view a professional dramatic production.

Major works (including monologues) to be studied this unit:

King Lear

A Streetcar Named Desire

Long Day’s Journey into Night

The Cherry Orchard

Pygmalion

Unit IV: The Art of Musical Theatre

During this final unit, students will begin an exploration of musical theatre as its own distinct genre. The transition into the fourth unit will begin with an examination of My Fair Lady, the musical adaptation of George Bernard Shaw's play Pygmalion. Students will investigate the nuances of musical theatre and interpret each musical in the context of its time, paying close attention to the way that the musical has evolved as an art form over time. Students will look closely at musicals that explore issues of social justice, such as Hairspray and Rent, and explore how the theatre can be used as a vehicle for societal change. During this unit, students will deliver an oral presentation on a musical of their choice. They will examine the production history of their musical and explain why it has retained its popularity over time. At the end of this unit, students will research twelve different American stage classics and vote on one final play to examine before the close of the year. This final play will allow the students to review the theatre vocabulary they have learned throughout the year in preparation for the final exam.

Major works (including monologues) to be studied this unit:

My Fair Lady

Hairspray

Rent

The Pirates of Penzance

Reader's Choice Play

Major Evaluation Strategies

Name of Assessment	Type of Assessment	MA Standards Assessed	MHS Learning Expectations Assessed
Hamlet Monologue	Performance	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	3, 4
Macbeth Monologue	Performance	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	3, 4
Henry V Monologue	Performance	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	3, 4
The Tempest Monologue	Performance	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	3, 4
Richard III Monologue	Performance	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	3, 4
West Side Story Monologue	Performance	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	3, 4
Pygmalion Monologue	Performance	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	3, 4

My Fair Lady Monologue	Performance	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	, 4
The Cherry Orchard Monologue	Performance	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	3, 4
Hairspray Monologue	Performance	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	3, 4
A Streetcar Named Desire Monologue	Performance	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	3, 4
The Pirates of Penzance Monologue	Performance	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	3, 4
Long Day's Journey into Night Monologue	Performance	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	3, 4
King Lear Monologue	Performance	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	3, 4
Othello Monologue	Performance	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	3, 4
Rent Monologue	Performance	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	3, 4
Formal Monologue Performance	Presentation	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	2, 3, 4
Famous Playwrights Presentation	Presentation	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	2, 3, 4
Performance Self-Assessments	Writing	Writing 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10	1
Musical Theatre Presentation	Presentation	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	2, 3, 4
Midterm Exam: Formal Scene Performance/Self-Assessment	Performance/Writing	Reading: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Speaking and Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 Writing 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10	1, 3, 4
Final Exam	Writing	Writing 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10	1

Learning Standards from the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks:

Reading Standards for Literature

1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
2. Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.
4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10).
5. Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.
6. Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text. .
8. Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning (e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court majority opinions and dissents) and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy (e.g., *The Federalist*, presidential addresses).
9. Analyze seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century foundational U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (including The Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address) for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features.

Writing Standards

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.
7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Speaking and Listening Standards

1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
2. Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.
3. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.
4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.
5. Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.
6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grades 11–12 Language standards 1 and 3 on page 67 for specific expectations.)

Language Standards

1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.
4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grades 11–12 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
6. Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.