CONTEXT:

The students have finished reading *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. They have discussed the issues within the text and have come to know and understand the characters. Now it is time for students to re-visit the text and experience it in a different way than just reading it.

PURPOSE:

In Readers’ Theatre, students present a text by practicing it first and then reading it aloud dramatically to the class. This helps students learn to read a play with more fluency, understanding the ways dramatic texts can differ from other texts. Not only do students become more fluent with each practice session, but they also are going back into the text again which is crucial to the content learning area. By practicing and reading a portion of the text to the class, the students are providing a fluent and thoughtful interpretation of the text, making it engaging and comprehensible for the rest of the class.

DIRECTIONS:


TIME: Time depends on how many different groups are performing that day.

STEP ONE:

INTRODUCE READERS’ THEATRE

Begin by explaining to the students that reading a play to themselves is a much different experience than the playwright intended. When Tom Stoppard wrote this play, he wrote it with the intentions of it being performed by actors and viewed by an audience. Tell the students they are now going to have the opportunity to experience pieces of this play as it was meant to be experienced; they are, in groups, going to choose, practice and perform a scene for the class.

STEP TWO:

CHOOSING A SCENE

The students will probably be excited and start thinking of what groups to form right away, but tell them, before they think about breaking up into groups to first think about the possible scenes that they think are important to the play; scenes that show an important trait of a certain character or perhaps scenes which showcase a topic that was discussed in class, such as: death, identity crisis or making hard decisions. Tell the students to be thinking about certain scenes they would like to act out as you hand
out the instructions sheet. Encourage the students to also be thinking of their own interpretation of the scene they choose. Tell them to be creative.

STEP THREE:

BREAKING UP INTO GROUPS

Since the play itself has so few characters and many of the important scenes have no more than three at a time, tell the students to break into groups of two, three or four. If they have a scene in mind which uses more characters, they are welcome to create bigger groups, but have them clear the scene with you first since these plays will need to be practiced outside of class and sometimes it’s hard for a bigger group to all meet at the same time.

STEP FOUR:

PRACTICING

Before the students perform, they will want to practice their scenes to memorize their lines and blocking. You can allow for time during class when there is extra time, but most of the practicing will have to be done outside of class. Give the students up to a week to practice before the performance day.

STEP FIVE:

PERFORMANCE DAY

On the day of the performances, have a discussion with the students about proper theatre etiquette and post on the white board the important rules: Respect the actors. No talking during another performance. Keep your feet on the floor and eyes on the performers. Before a group performs, have them turn in their explanation sheet they have typed up for you, which was outlined on their directions sheet. Also, ask each group to introduce their scene and why they chose it before they begin.

ASSESSMENT:

Students have revisited the text in a different way, giving them a chance to more fully comprehend the text and gain a higher level of fluency. Did the students understand why their scene was crucial to the play and explain it in their write-ups? Did their interpretation of the play show understanding of main concepts within the play?