



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1990 Volume II: Contemporary American Drama: Scripts and Performance

The Creative Dramatics Cookbook: Recipes for Playmaking

Guide for Curriculum Unit 90.02.01
by Kelley A. O'Rourke

"The Creative Dramatics Cookbook: Recipes for Playmaking" consists of the theater activities and the stories from the oral tradition I use to introduce young students to playmaking. This unit was written to be used in an elementary school classroom, grades K-5, though it can easily be adapted for use with middle and high school students. The unit is made up of six tried and true "recipes" or lessons. Each lesson is centered around a folk tale or myth and its dramatic and literary themes. The stories included are "A Story, A Story" by Gail E. Haley, "Pygmalion," "The Three Bears," "The Fat Cat," and "The Golden Goose."

The stories are first told to the students. Then each lesson is filled with theater games and exercises that build to playmaking. The exercises, at first, work with the acting skills of observation: listening and sight. Then the games use all stress movement, trust, and working together as group members. By the fifth session the students start to act out the stories, building on the skills of the earlier sessions.

Some of the theater games included in the unit are "Three Changes," "Clay," "Two Sticks," "Mirrors," and some warm-up rhymes. These theater games teach important learning skills such as critical thinking and problem solving. Teachers will find that they can use elements of this unit in curriculum areas other than language arts such as social studies and social development.

"The Creative Dramatics Cookbook: Recipes for Playmaking" is a practical approach for the average classroom teacher to refer to when she wants to integrate the arts in her classroom by encouraging her students to explore playmaking through the use of theater games. It is a worthwhile unit that is fun-filled. Both the teacher and her students will enjoy cooking up these recipes.

(Recommended for Drama, Language Arts, and "Self-contained Classroom," grades K-5)

Key Words

Children's Drama Exercises Performance

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