Responding to the Arts: Theatre
Exploring Technical Elements – Grade 3

VPA interactive

TEACHER NOTES

Background:

The following learning experience was developed to demonstrate implementation examples aligned to the *Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) for Visual and Performing Arts*.

It is important to note that the learning experience indicated through these Teacher Notes and related resource(s) represent one example. This example is not a requirement nor a suggestion for school curriculum. While the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) is responsible for the development of high-quality academic standards, state law assigns each local district the authority to develop the school's curriculum and determine appropriate instructional resources based on language found in Kentucky Revised Statute (KRS) 160.345.

This learning experience includes detailed procedures and all links, handouts, printables and graphics needed to successfully complete each segment. The following formats are used to assist in organizing information:

- The VPA logo Indicates a companion video with an overview of information included in the section.
- *Italicized text* identifies foundational information from the *KAS for Visual and Performing Arts.*
- Activities for students to complete will appear in a **green, solid-lined box.**
    - These boxes also include the corresponding slide number within the Theatre – Responding to the Arts Implementation PowerPoint. These slides include information and graphics that can be projected and shared with students throughout the learning experience.
- Standards language, key vocabulary definitions and clarification statements pulled directly from the *KAS for Visual and Performing Arts* will appear in a box that matches the color of the corresponding artistic process. For this responding learning experience, that color is **coral surrounded by a dash-lined box.**

Overview of Learning Experience:

Students will explore the importance of scenic design as a technical element. They will also explore how scenic elements help to develop a character and tell a story. Students will watch a scene and identify the scenic elements used before determining how a character's needs can affect the design. Next, students will explore how the design of a scenic element may be altered to meet the needs of different productions. Using classroom materials and art supplies, students will then design a scenic element that meets a character's need. Finally, they will build a 3D model of their scenic element before writing a design statement to justify how their choices develop character and tell a story.

Teacher Preparation:

This learning experience should utilize what is available in your learning environment.
Plan for the following:

- Review instructions and resources linked through this document, including the accompanying Theatre – Responding to the Arts Implementation PowerPoint, to prepare adequate copies and materials.
- Review the following resources to gain additional understanding prior to sharing with students:
    - Scenic Elements: Guiding Questions – Graphic Organizer
    - Scenic Elements: Lexington Children's Theatre & "Charlotte's Web" (7:45) – Video
    - Theatrical Scenes: Lexington Children's Theatre & "Charlotte's Web" (3:34) - Video
    - Brainstorm Web - Graphic Organizer
    - Brainstorm Web Reflection - Graphic Organizer
    - Suggested Kagan Structures - .pdf

Teacher Preparation Continued:

- Review these additional resources to gain additional understanding prior to sharing with students:
  - Responding to Art: Everyday Art Foundations (2:16) - Video
  - Audience Feedback Form – Graphic Organizer

- Sections of this learning experience encourage the use of specific materials:
  - Decide on and gather materials and supplies needed for students to create a scenic element that resembles a spider web. Suggested materials include, but are not limited to, construction paper, glue, yarn or other string, pipe cleaners and a variety of decorative art supplies.

KAS for Visual and Performing Arts Alignment:

The *KAS for Visual and Performing Arts* is designed to engage students in artistic processes and creative expression. Standards for all grade levels, K-8, and at three high school proficiency levels indicate what students should know and be able to do. (*KAS for Visual and Performing Arts*, page 7).

> ***Anchor Standards*** *are a unifying element across the arts disciplines that describe the artistic literacy that students should demonstrate throughout their education (KAS for Visual and Performing Arts, pages 9 - 10).*
>
> ***Process Components*** *are the actions artists carry out as they complete each artistic process. Students' ability to carry out these operational verbs empowers them to work through the artistic process independently. (KAS for Visual and Performing Arts, page 14).*

This learning experience aligns to the following anchor standard and process component:

Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
Process Component: Interpret

> ***Artistic Processes*** *nurture artistic literacy through student engagement in the four artistic processes of creating, performing/producing/presenting, responding and connecting.*

While there are aspects of each artistic process embedded throughout this learning experience, the standard addressed is focused on responding, which includes understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning. (*KAS for Visual and Performing Arts* pages, 8 - 9)

> ***Standards*** *or Performance Standards are discipline-specific grade-by-grade articulations of student achievement in the arts (dance, media arts, music, theatre, visual arts). Performance standards are coded to reflect the Arts Discipline, Artistic Process, Anchor Standard, Process Component and Grade Level or High School Proficiency level. (KAS for Visual and Performing Arts,* page 7).

Responding to the Arts: Theatre
Exploring Technical Elements – Grade 3

The standard addressed in this learning experience is:

Standard:
TH:Re8.1.3.b) Discuss technical elements from multiple theatrical works.

Educators may have to engage students with a standard multiple times throughout a year in order to meet the full intent of the standard. As a result, the following example may not encompass the entire scope of the standards identified.

> **Essential Questions** are open-ended, designed to stimulate thought and empower students to work through the artistic processes independently. Essential questions are specific to each standard, but consistent between each grade band.

Essential Question:
Why might the same theatrical work communicate different messages to different people?

The standard and essential question may need to be translated into student-friendly learning goal(s) which serve as the basis for student success criteria. For more information on learning goals and success criteria, visit Clarifying and Sharing Clear Learning Goals.

Below are examples of a learning goal and success criteria for this learning experience:

Learning Goal:
Students will discuss technical elements from multiple theatrical works.

Success Criteria:
1. I can identify the purpose of a scenic element based on different characters' needs.
2. I can create a scenic element based on a character's need.

The student-centered learning experience begins on the next page.

Remember: Activities for students to complete will appear in a **green, solid-line box**.

Exploring Technical Elements:

Explain the meaning of technical elements as they relate to theatre using the key vocabulary definition:

Slide 2

Technical Elements: The elements that help tell a story.

Technical Elements include scenic, lighting, sound, properties, costume, make up, etc.

(student-friendly adaptation of the KAS for Visual and Performing Arts, page 304)

Review any technical elements that have been previously discussed in class before introducing the learning goal and first success criteria and the definition of scenic element.

Slide 3

Learning Goal:
Students will discuss technical elements from multiple theatrical works.

Success Criteria One:
I can identify the purpose of a scenic element based on different characters' needs.

Share with students the definition of scenic elements:

Slide 4

Scenic Element: any part of the scenery that helps to create the setting.

Exploring Technical Elements – The Pigeon's Bus & Jack's Beanstalk:

Show students the following image from a production called *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* based on the book by Mo Willems and ask the following question

***Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* - Part One:**

Question: What do you notice about the image?

Photo by: Sally Horowitz
Lexington Children's Theatre production:
Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus
based on the book by Mo Willems

Slide 5

After students have shared what they notice in the image, review the story of *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* before allowing students to answer the questions with a partner:

Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus **Part Two:** **Summary:** A bus driver asks the audience to keep an eye on his bus and ensure that a determined pigeon does not drive it. Throughout the musical, the pigeon uses clever arguments, pleading and humor to try to convince the audience to let him take the wheel. It teaches important lessons about patience, boundaries, and self-control, while remaining lighthearted and fun. **Questions:** 1. Why is the scenic element of the bus important to the characters? 2. How does the scenic element of the bus help to tell the story?	*Slides 6 & 7*  Photo by: Sally Horowitz Lexington Children's Theatre production: *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* based on the book by Mo Willems

Provide support to students as they answer the questions above. Example:

1. For *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus,* the bus is important to the pigeon because he wants to drive it.

2. The bus helps to tell the story because the windows are open so the audience can see the characters on the bus.

Next, show students the following image from *Jack and the Wonder Beans* adapted by Larry Snipes from the book by James Still. Ask the following question:

Jack's Beanstalk - Part One **Question:** What do you notice about the image? Photo by Sally Horowitz Lexington Children's Theatre production: *Jack and the Wonder Beans* adapted by Larry Snipes from the book by James Still	*Slide 8* 

After students have shared what they notice in the image, review the story of *Jack and Wonder Bean* before allowing time to discuss the following questions:

Jack's Beanstalk - Part Two: **Summary:** In the story of "Jack and the Beanstalk," a young boy named Jack trades his family's cow for five magical beans, which his mother angrily throws out the window. Overnight, a giant beanstalk grows, reaching high into the clouds. Curious, Jack climbs the beanstalk and discovers a giant's castle filled with treasures, including a magical harp and a golden goose that lays golden eggs. Despite the giant's fierce nature, Jack cleverly outsmarts him and returns home with riches to help his mother. Ultimately, Jack's bravery and quick-thinking lead to a happier life for both. **Questions:** 1. Why is the scenic element of the beanstalk important to the character? 2. How does the scenic element of the beanstalk help to tell the story?	*Slides 9 & 10*  Photo by Sally Horowitz Lexington Children's Theatre production: *Jack and the Wonder Beans* adapted by Larry Snipes from the book by James Still

After students have discussed the questions with a partner, allow students to share their responses with the class.

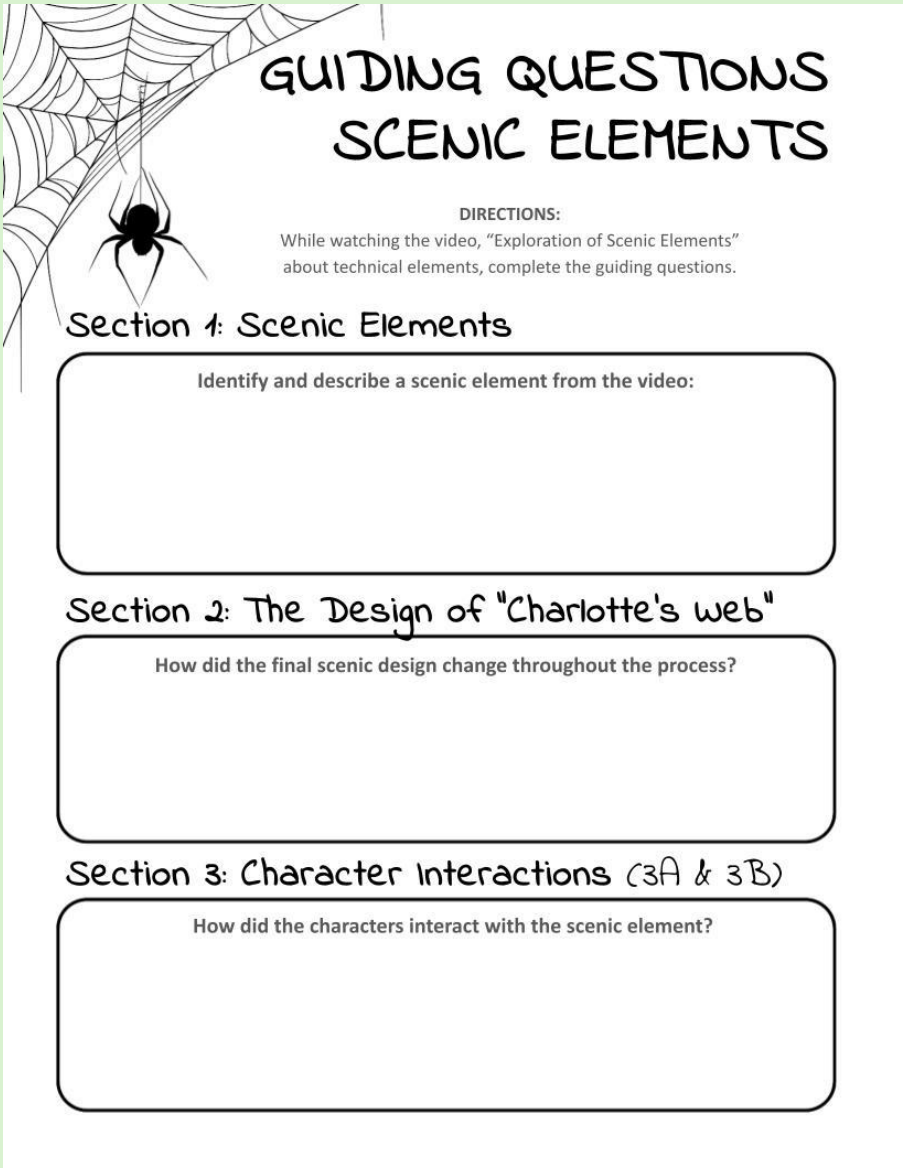
Ensure students understand the purpose of a scenic element prior to moving forward.

Exploring Technical Elements – Charlotte's Web:

Inform students that they will now watch the video Scenic Elements: Lexington Children's Theatre & "Charlotte's Web" included below. Pause the video after each section (Scenic Elements, The Design of Charlotte's Web and Character Interactions) to complete each section of the accompanying Scenic Elements Guiding Questions:

Slides 11 - 14

Scenic Elements: Lexington Children's Theatre & "Charlotte's Web"
Scenic Elements: Guiding Questions



After students have completed each section of the video and the guiding questions, use a Suggested Kagan Structure such as **Think-Write-Round Robin,** to allow students to share what they learned.

Interacting with Scenic Elements

Tell students they are going to identify a scenic element used in *Charlotte's Web* adapted for the stage by Joseph Robinette and based on the book by E.B. White.

Prepare students by sharing background information below about *Charlotte's Web*.

Slide 15

***Charlotte's Web* - Background Information**

Charlotte's Web tells the story of a pig named Wilbur, who is saved from being slaughtered by a kind girl named Fern. Wilbur is moved to Fern's uncle's farm where Wilbur becomes friends with a wise spider named Charlotte. When Wilbur's life is once again in danger, Charlotte devises a clever plan to save him by spinning words into her web that highlight how special he is.

Her efforts bring attention to Wilbur and the story unfolds with themes of friendship, loyalty and the power of kindness.

Share the image below from *Charlotte's Web* and ask students to complete the following task as a whole class:

Slide 16

***Charlotte's Web*: Scenery**

Task: Identify the most important scenic element in this image from *Charlotte's Web*.

Photo by: Sally Horowitz
Lexington Children's Theatre production:
Charlotte's Web
adapted for the stage by Joseph Robinette
and based on the book by E.B. White

Now, tell students they will watch scenes from *Charlotte's Web* in the video **Scenes from Charlotte's Web: Lexington Children's Theatre.** After the third scene, "Terrific", answer the following questions:

Slide 17

Scenes from Charlotte's Web: Lexington Children's Theatre

1. Why is the spider web important to Charlotte in the scene?
2. How does the spider web help to tell the story?
3. Identify how the purpose of the scenic element of a spider web changed based on the needs of the characters.

After students have responded to each scene, use a Suggested Kagan Structure such as **Round Robin,** to allow them to share their thinking.

Design Phase:

Tell students they will be using the scenic element of a spider web from *Charlotte's Web* to apply to a new story.

Review the learning goal before introducing the second success criteria and the new story:

Slide 18

Learning Goal:
Students will discuss technical elements from multiple theatrical works.

Success Criteria Two:
I can create a scenic element based on a character's need.

Review with students the story of the Itsy-Bitsy Spider outlined below:

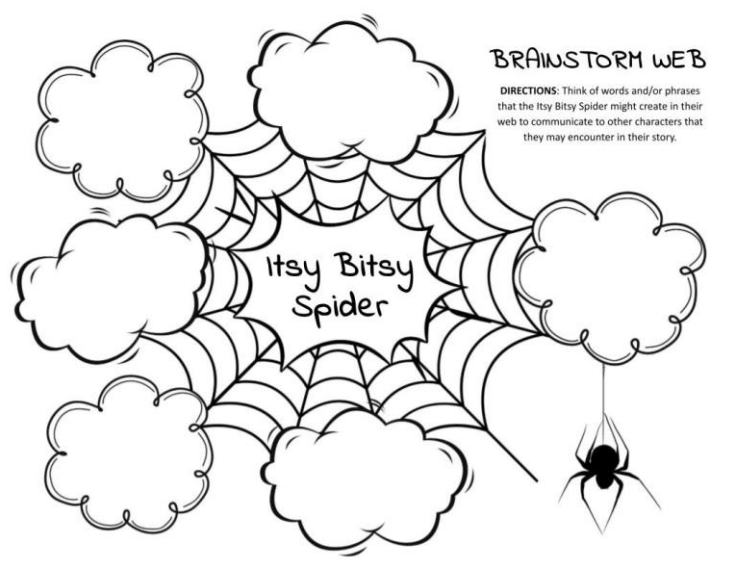
Slide 19

The Itsy-Bitsy Spider

Ask students to think about what the Itsy-Bitsy Spider would need to communicate if it had a web by completing the Brainstorm Web included below:

Slide 20

Brainstorm Web

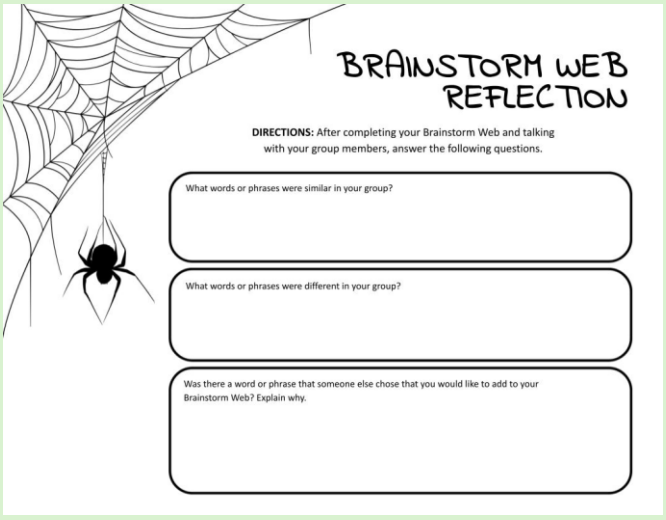


Place students in groups to share the words and/or phrases they included on their Brainstorm Web. Use a Suggested Kagan Structure such as **Rally Robin,** to allow them to share their thinking.

After students have shared, they will complete the Brainstorm Web Reflection:

Slide 21

Brainstorm Web Reflection



After students have completed their reflection, use a Suggested Kagan Structure such as **Think-Write-Round Robin, to** allow them to share their thinking.

3D Model:

Inform students that they will now create a 3D model of the Itsy-Bitsy spider's web based on their Brainstorm Web. Start by telling students to choose one word or phrase from the Brainstorm Web.

Provide construction paper, glue, yarn or other string, pipe cleaners and a variety of decorative art supplies. Give each student a piece of construction paper and allow them to select the materials they prefer to create their spider web.

Share the following instructions and give students time to create. A student example of a 3D Model is included below:

Spider Web: 3D Model Directions

1. Choose one word or phrase from the Brainstorm Web
2. Use construction paper, glue, yarn or other string, pipe cleaners and a variety of decorative art supplies.
3. Try different techniques and supplies to create your design.
4. Let your creation dry and prepare to share your final spider web in a gallery walk.

Slide 22

3D Model Student Example

By: Nyla Henning

Let the creations dry overnight, if necessary, before helping students display their 3D model in an available space within your school. Spaces can include the classroom, hallway, cafeteria or other common space.

Scenic Design Gallery Walk:

To support their design choices, students will develop a justification statement. Use the Design Statement below to aid students in capturing their thoughts:

Slide 23

Design Statement

My spider web communicates the word/phrase _____,
because the Itsy-Bitsy Spider needs _____.

Example: My spider web communicates the word "help" because the Itsy-Bitsy Spider cannot climb the waterspout on its own.

To prepare students for the transition from designer to art critic, share the video, Responding to Art: Everyday Art Foundations and the accompanying guiding question to gain foundational understanding of the artistic process of responding.

Slide 24

Responding to Art: Everyday Art Foundations

While Viewing:
Pay attention to the three main strategies for responding to art as they appear onscreen–**noticing, analyzing, and evaluating–**and the different questions you can ask yourself for each.

After Viewing:
Reflect on what you learned in the video.

How did the kids in the video say what they liked or didn't like about a work of art?

Students will now participate as art critics in a Gallery Walk as they respond to their classmates' spider webs. For more information about setting up a Gallery Walk, visit "Why Your Next Critique Should Be a Gallery Walk" by the Art of Education.

Before beginning, remind students to use constructive and kind words in their feedback.

> Note: The teacher should think about if they want to assign or allow students to choose which spider webs for which they will provide feedback.

Instruct students to rotate through the gallery space to view each spider web design. Students will provide feedback for four spider web designs using the Audience Feedback Form included below.

Students will write appropriate words or phrases about the web design under the appropriate column (meets expectations or exceeds expectations). Students will use their feedback form to guide them in discussion later.

Slide 25

Audience Feedback Form:

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK Name: _____

1 CRITERIA	EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS	MEETS EXPECTATIONS
Communicates the Character's Needs		
Helps to Tell the Story		

2 CRITERIA	EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS	MEETS EXPECTATIONS
Communicates the Character's Needs		
Helps to Tell the Story		

3 CRITERIA	EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS	MEETS EXPECTATIONS
Communicates the Character's Needs		
Helps to Tell the Story		

4 CRITERIA	EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS	MEETS EXPECTATIONS
Communicates the Character's Needs		
Helps to Tell the Story		

After students have completed the Gallery Walk and the Feedback Forms, invite students to share one piece of feedback by asking who has a star, or who has a wish for this 3D model. Use the discussion technique "Two Stars and a Wish" (outlined below):

Slide 26

Feedback: Two Stars and a Wish

What are one to two things, or "stars" (design elements that worked well) in the 3D Model? Why?
What is one "wish" (design elements you would recommend changing) in the 3D Model? Why?

Encourage students to give examples from the 3D model to support their feedback. Repeat the steps outlined above as much as time allows.

Student Reflection:

After each student receives the feedback for their spider web design, remind them of the learning goal and success criteria for this learning experience.

Slide 27

Learning Goal:
Students will discuss technical elements from multiple theatrical works.

Success Criteria:
1. I can identify the purpose of a scenic element based on different characters' needs.
2. I can create a scenic element based on a character's need.

Now, invite students to think about the following reflection questions:

Slide 23

Student Reflection Questions:

- What was the most exciting part of this learning experience?
- How could you apply the audience feedback you received to improve your final design?
- How did designing a 3D model impact your understanding of scenic elements?
- If you were to construct this design for the stage, what materials would you need to use?
- Which technical element would you like to learn more about?

Teacher Reflection:

For teacher reflection, consider these questions:

Teacher Reflection Questions:

- What did the students respond to the most enthusiastically in this learning experience?
- What are some of the challenges they faced? How can they be addressed?
- What are the comfort levels of the students in using scenic elements to communicate? What is your comfort level in supporting students' understanding of scenic elements?
- How can more opportunities be provided to experience the technical elements?
- How will you continue to support student learning?

Wrap Up:

You can revisit this learning experience using the other technical elements of theatre: lighting, costumes, sound and props. Continue to provide your students with opportunities to explore creatively with different technical elements and respond to multiple styles of theatre.

Scaffolding Connection to Support the Enduring Understanding:

The following examples are a synopsis of high-quality, grade-level learning experiences that appropriately scaffold to support the enduring understanding of this anchor standard for theatre.

> ***Enduring Understandings*** summarize important ideas and processes that are central to an arts discipline. They allow the standards to be steeped in rigor and focused on students' ability to demonstrate understanding through performance.

Enduring Understanding:
Personal experiences and preferences shape the interpretation of theatrical work.

Middle School – TH:Re8.1.7.b (Grade 7)
Comparing Technical Elements: Design Aesthetic

> As a class, students will read a scene from a theatrical work. Students will be divided into groups and create a design concept for the scene based on their own personal aesthetics. Each student in the group will create a design for one of the technical elements: scenic, lighting, properties, costumes/makeup and sound design. The students will then pitch their concepts and designs to the rest of the class, where the class members will discuss how different aesthetics affect design choices.

High School – TH:Re8.1.Acc.b (Accomplished)
Interpreting Technical Elements: Technical Designer

> Students will view images of a single scene from multiple productions of the same play. Students will then justify their personal aesthetic choices of the production images that they viewed. Students will then choose a single scenic element from the play and create their own design of that element. Their new design will be based on their personal critiques of the versions that they observed, and on their own interpretation of the given scene.