



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2013 Volume II: Interpreting Texts, Making Meaning: Starting Small

Living Texts: Analyzing S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* by Thinking, Reading, Acting, and Thinking Again

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Introduction

"Where'd you learn that? That's what I meant." "Robert Frost wrote it. He meant more to it than I'm gettin', though." (1) Johnny and Ponyboy in *The Outsiders*

I was looking for something. Hinton's text rolled 'round my head. The unexpectedly bustling Sunday streets of New Haven shimmered, the bright sun a slow second to the gripping humidity. Life swirled and I searched. The landscape dotted with signs of texture—a cultural mix of past and present—evaded my analysis. Pandora offered *Downtown Abbey - The Suite* and the mounting speed of the score fluttered my nerves. It was then that my eyes took in a gold-green tree swirled and grown on a small sheet of dog-eared art paper. It sat still on the rough concrete.

"May I hold your work?" I asked the man, of whom I now know to be Isaac Canady, a lifelong resident of New Haven.

Placing it in my hands he asked, "What do you see?"

"The cycle of life? Was that your intention?"

"Yes, well, in a way. I often explore ideas about women, though. Why do you ask?"

"I'm working on a curriculum unit on the art of interpretation using Hinton's *The Outsiders*. Your drawing reminds me of a line she used from Robert Frost, *Nature's first green is gold*, and I am struggling to connect it all."

"So you're an artist, too."

I smiled, gave a sheepish negative nod and then, as if the metallic glow of Isaac's art had spoken—*Illumination!*

I found that which I had been seeking.

I had brought to this viewing my own ideas, beginning to connect all of these things as if some meaning were to be made of the moment. Isaac never intended to connect his art with Hinton's or Frost's, but my experience made it happen. Making meaning, in motion. I had solidified my understanding of the art of interpretation. All things are connected, both in life and in the reflection of life called *literature*. I experienced an example of how the reader brings his or her personal experience to a reading; how the author's intention drives a creation that is often ambiguous to the reader; and how what is simply sitting right before your eyes contains the whole—the actual words in the text—whether you 'get it' or not. (See **Appendices: A**)

Overview

Living Texts: Analyzing S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* by Thinking, Reading, Acting, and Thinking Again is an adaptable, Humanities-based unit that provides opportunities for students to *physically* demonstrate their interpretations of S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* through improvisation. The underlayment of the classroom activities is personal and social responsibility. Included in this unit is a sequence that can be used by students to efficiently and effectively interpret a text. Both the interpretation strategies and the improvisational strategies are used within a performance sequence that uses each chapter of the novel as the foundation. Integrating these strategies will help students to interact with a text through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic means, thus accessing each student's learning modality. Use of improvisation will help students to physically, linguistically, and artistically put themselves in the shoes of other people (characters), places (settings), and problems (plot) in order to help them *see, hear, and feel* what is going on in the words of a text.

Objectives

Throughout this unit, students will be able to analyze (interpret) *The Outsiders* for the text's meaning, the author's style, the student's personal experience, and the greater cultural setting; use these ideas to plan an interpretive performance; synthesize (perform) the plan; and evaluate the relationship between how a reader mentally interprets a text and how the actor physically and orally interprets a text as a form of action by substantiating claims and actions with a text.

Context

This unit has been designed for middle-level gifted, or academically-inclined, students within the Humanities Department of the Pittsburgh Public Schools gifted education program. The students, though grouped by perceived intellectual strength, have a wide array of gifts and talents. They need academic strength and/or interest-based enrichment and, at times, acceleration to satisfy the curiosity of their ever-wondering minds. They are not, contrary to popular assumption, 'all good students', nor do they all 'instinctively know everything'. They are also not capable of 'getting it all right on the first try'. They *really* like to ask questions. A

lot of questions. And though most students cherish their intellects, they struggle with the often negative reactions that others have to their unique perspectives. They also struggle to admit when they are struggling, most likely because they have been culturally conditioned to be silent. Thus, each of the teachers in our program writes course materials suited to each student's specific academic need and interest, as determined by test scores. As indicated above, teachers implement the upper tier of Bloom's Taxonomy together with interactive communication, problem solving, and the creative thinking process, to help develop self-directed learners through project-based course development. The students select from among these courses similarly to choosing multiple college electives, attending one 90-minute session per choice each week over a course of 16 weeks.

Preparation

In order to teach this unit, I need to answer several questions: What is interpretation? What is improvisation? How does interpretation relate to performance? The following material addresses these questions and includes examples of how they can be applied to Hinton's *The Outsiders*.

Interpretation Strategies

The word *interpretation* is synonymous with *the act of finding meaning*. But, what is meant by *meaning*? How does one find meaning within a text and why does any of this matter, anyway?

Teaching students how to interpret a complex text matters because the act of interpreting is a rigorous task, and rigorous tasks, according to the *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*, are necessary to keep U.S. schools from falling farther behind. (2) There is, however, a difference between simply comprehending a text and the act of interpreting a text. A top-down reading process, which includes moving from meaning and big ideas to details and language forms, is the most recently-accepted 'best practice'. (3) The Pittsburgh Public School District supports the use of this sequence in what has been dubbed *Disciplinary Literacy; Patterned Way of Reading, Writing, and Thinking*. The pattern includes reading to get the gist; rereading to find significant moments; interpreting ideas within the text; and analyzing the author's methods. Students are encouraged to read each portion of a text at least four times.

Adequate oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, and interpretive or critical analysis skills are not necessarily co-existent, even among high-ability readers. In my classroom, such students often struggle with oral reading fluency and comprehension. They can quickly decode phonetics and memorize the meaning of new vocabulary when it is presented to them in isolation from a text, yet they often fail to find the contextual evidence needed to tackle an unknown word within a text. Furthermore, they fail to consider that one word, when repeated in the text or placed within several different texts, may have a different meaning each time it appears. This inability does not; however, preclude them from taking part in higher order thinking activities, such as interpreting a text. Such skills can be taught simultaneously. A line of questioning that moves systematically higher and higher on Bloom's Taxonomy can be used. Consider what words are both significant and need to be defined in this portion of Hinton's novel:

"You know, the only thing that keeps Darry from being a Soc is us." "I know," I said. I had known it for a long time. In spite of not having much money, the only

reason Darry couldn't be a Soc was us. The gang. Me and Soda. Darry was too smart to be a greaser. I don't know how I knew, I just did. And I was kind of sorry. (4)

How can a reader define the terms Soc and greaser? One can simply pick up a dictionary and find a meaning for *greaser*, but one cannot do the same for *Soc*. In the case of Soc, the reader must move away from Bloom's level 1, *knowledge*, and move into level 4 and 5, otherwise known as the first two stages of higher order thinking, or *analysis* and *synthesis*. Analysis requires a student to "make inferences and find evidence to support generalizations" (5) and synthesis requires a student to "[c]ompile information together in a different way by combining elements in a new pattern." (6) Both happen to also be components of interpretation, which I'll expand upon later. Students could be led to extrapolate a definition for the words through presentation of a question like, "What evidence can you find that could lead you to a text-based definition of these words?" and "What is the relationship between these words?" Text-substantiated student responses could be, but are not limited to, 'Greasers are poor, unintelligent gang members. Being a Soc is more desirable, so it might mean the opposite of those traits.' Moving toward Bloom's next highest order, 'Synthesis,' the question, "What predictions can you make about the storyline from just these definitions?" could be used. A possible answer could be, 'The speaker must care about Darry. He says he feels sorry that the gang holds them back.' Note that the answer gives both an interpretation and a text-based substantiation for the answer—a key combination for objective interpretation. Interpretation requires evidence. It also requires the reader to eliminate possibilities. "The interpretative process is essentially a restricting of the possible ways in which a sign, such as a textual element (letter, word, sentence, etc.) can mean or point our attention to something other than itself. This restriction is accomplished by conventions of relevance, or more formally, by selective contextualization." (7)

Alongside the ability to use clues to define new vocabulary, the students also have a hard time looking for significant portions of the text that can lead to an understanding of the text. In a general manner of speaking, comprehension requires students to be able to use clues from within the text to understand the text as a whole. Comprehension is on the lower order of Bloom's Taxonomy, yet it is an essential skill necessary for gaining a basic understanding of a text as a whole. Taking a close look at significant sections of a text, like the one mentioned above, gives students the opportunity to practice comprehension skills.

To illustrate this, reread the excerpt and connect it to the opening excerpt in the **Overview**. What can you now tell about the story? Since the characters in the first passage are referencing Robert Frost, can you still maintain your belief in the definition of greaser as unintelligent? What might this suggest about the character's sense of self? When these sorts of connection are made, the student is moving toward Bloom's highest level, evaluation. Evaluation is defined as the ability to "[p]resent and defend opinions by making judgments about information, validity of ideas or quality of work based on a set of criteria." (8)

Like Bloom's Taxonomy, the components of interpretation vary in definition, but for purposes of this unit, I will follow Laurence Perrine and label the parts of interpretation as meaning, intention, and context. (9) Interpretation takes into account all of the factors above that contribute to the construction of a text—the *parts of the whole*. Interpretation aims to look critically at these parts as they relate to the overall text. In order to arrive at a collective agreement about an author's intention, a reader must interact with the text in a critical manner. Goethe's three questions for "constructive criticism" of authorial intention are, "What did the author set out to do? Was his plan reasonable and sensible, and how far did he succeed in carrying it out?" (10) In this unit, only the first question will be addressed. Though it may seem that speculation would be a part of answering Goethe's first question, the question actually aims at objective interpretation—using text-based examples to arrive at the part-to-whole relationship of a text.

To illustrate this, re-read the excerpt above from *The Outsiders*. What do you notice about the defining words for the character groupings? Why is it that Hinton chose to capitalize Soc and de-capitalize greaser? Did she *intend* to give the reader a hint? These questions lead to the concept of authorial intent. "*Intention* is design or plan in the author's mind. Intention has obvious affinities for the author's attitude toward his work, the way he felt, what made him write." (11) Hinton certainly made *choices*, but 'why' she made those choices is extrinsic to the text. It is not of concern when meaning is being made by the reader. Interpreting why an author made a particular choice is too subjective. Some conclusions are better substantiated than others, but for the purposes of this unit, that form of criticism will be left out because young readers need to find evidence.

Both the writer and the reader of a text can be influenced by historical and cultural context. If a reader is tackling a non-contemporary text, the reader must subtract the conclusions that are muddled by his own preconceptions and simply see the text either as it is, or the reader must consider the historical and cultural context in which the text was written. Consider that *The Outsiders* was published in 1967. Hinton was 15 years old when she wrote the draft. Audra Bull, a public school educator from Tulsa, perceives the actual area in which Hinton's book was set as still being eerily similar to the texture of the novel—divided by class.

Improvisational Strategies

Improvisation is a form of dramatization that is scriptless. An actor is given all or part of the *who, where, and what* just as the skit is beginning. This aligns well with literature: *character (who), setting (where), and plot (what)*. Just as a reader creates meaning as he or she reads, an improv-ist creates meaning in motion. He or she creates the act *during* the performance. This stands in opposition to the way an actor would prepare for a scripted performance, such as predetermining a way to portray a character, while memorizing a script. There is both freedom and restriction in improv, too, as an actor needs to eliminate, in the moment, what does not 'make sense' to the audience.

Improv, like interpretation, is a continually renewing experience. Each reading of a text in interpretation can provide new insights and challenge or change ideas, as does each performance in improv. There is no wrong way to do either. In asking students to physically demonstrate their understanding of a text, you are asking them to come prepared to the show, so to speak. It's an informed version of improv. Physical interpretation of a text allows the reader to express things that he or she may not be able to manage with language. In "A Method to the Madness: Laughter Research, Comedy Training, and Improv," Bynane stated, "Language is but one code in a frayed tapestry of codes." (12) Though he was specifically speaking of the connection between laughter and comedy, his greater point concerned interpretation. One cannot be taught to be funny, just as one cannot be taught to laugh genuinely. According to this theory, neither interpretation nor improvisation can be directly taught. Both are cyclical processes that involve the actor, the character, the substantiating idea, and the audience. This is one of the many connections between interpretation and improvisation. Using improv in the classroom is a way to engage students, but when applied to a literary situation, it becomes a way to gauge understanding. "Concepts such as multiple perspectives benefit greatly from role plays and scenarios that make different viewpoints integral to the performance." (13). When applied to literature, improv can help students see, hear and feel the thinking of a character.

In *Improvisation for the Theater: A Handbook of Teaching and Directing Techniques*, Viola Spolin identifies ways in which a teacher can help students to be successful when 'playing' with improvisation. She discusses how the expectation of judgment prevents free relationships within the acting workshop. She wrote, "All words which shut doors, have emotional content or implication, attack the student-actor's personality, or keep a student slavishly dependent on a teacher's judgment are to be avoided. Since most of us were brought up by

the approval/disapproval method, constant self-surveillance is necessary on the part of the teacher-director to eradicate it in himself so that it will not enter the teacher-student relationship." (14)

Another mode of driving success, according to Shady Cosgrove, is use of a common language. "In order for improvisation to succeed in workshop discussion, everyone needs a common language...Only with a common language could students communicate effectively about the prose work being examined." (15) For this reason, I plan to use terms like quiet on the set, cut, reset, freeze, and recast. Cut means that an actor must cease all action. Reset means that they will mentally prepare to take on another role. Freeze will be used like stop-motion in animation so that a *still* can be seen, discussed, and then continued. Recast means that a new group will redo the same scene. In order to help the students feel as if they have a stage, I plan to use black sheets and sticky, two-sided velcro strips to create a 'black box' in the corner of my classroom.

Spolin also urges that teachers 'play' along with students to help students become the *act*, rather than a mere member of a classroom. She refers to improv as "problem-solving games." (16) In this regard, part of the 'problem' for students will be to interpret specific parts of *The Outsiders* adequately enough to show their understanding. Bynane suggests, in order for this to happen, moving from simple, guided improv games, to audience-suggested roles, finally to text-driven roles. (17) Improvisation games are innumerable, as are the ways that each can be modified. Below is a description of the varieties of improvisation that will be used in this unit. They are listed in the order that they are to be used with the students. *Note that after any chapter, the preceding improvisations for the completed chapters can be applied.*

1. *Silent Stills* are completely motionless, statuesque portrayals of an emotion or character trait.
2. *Pantomime* is when an actor moves, but does not speak.
3. *Mirroring* is when one or more actors move exactly in the same way as the person facing them.
4. *Frozen Actor* is when the actor is only allowed to speak, not move, as a character. He or she must remain still and emotionless. Another actor molds him, through quiet prompting, into the physical shape that demonstrates the emotion needed in the scene.
5. *Tableau* is a still group scene, like a photograph, that portrays a brief, but significant moment.
6. *Vignette* is a moving group scene that portrays a brief, but significant moment.
7. *The Way it Is* is when two characters talk while a small group performs silent actions that reflect a change or shift in what is going on in the speaking actors' part from the preceding chapters.
8. *Soliloquy* is when an actor talks to his or herself.
9. *The Road Not Taken* is when an actor gets into character, but must react to the opposite of the actual storyline event as the character's personality and habits dictate.
10. *Written Scene* is when characters know and stick to the complete storyline, but are still not reading from a script.
11. *Unwritten Scene* is when characters know the complete storyline and are still not reading from a script, but are given a 'what if' scenario and must apply it to the story line, demonstrating evaluation of a character's personality and habits.

12. *Montage* is a collection of scenes. For purposes of this unit, the students will pick only the most significant scenes, one per chapter, and perform them.

13. *Truth or Lie* is a trivia-based activity in which actors collaborate to answer text-based questions while choosing to either be true to the text or to falsify an answer. The audience must determine if the answer/act is true or false.

14. *Interview* is when an actor, pretending to be a specific person, answers question posed by the audience. In this unit, students will take turns being S.E. Hinton.

15. *Cast Party* is when the whole group interacts as self-chosen characters in a party-like setting.

In a dramatic performance, a triangle strategy exists: the actor's comprehension of the character, the actor's portrayal or interpretation of character, and the audience's reaction to both. These three stages align with the upper tier of Bloom's Taxonomy—Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation, hence they also align with the art of interpretation. Interpretation and improv come together when an actor examines a character for a role in which a parameter is missing. For example, though students will have read the chapter in which I will be blocking the scene, they will not know the type of improv activity or scenario beforehand.

Presentation

The sequence that I will consistently use with each chapter of *The Outsiders* is as follows: Guiding question with brief discussion (with review of preceding chapters); Reading for the gist and significant moments; Text-based discussion to determine that the aforementioned ideas are covered; Active interpretation of specific significant moments to enrich understanding or flesh out misinterpretations; Discussion of the action and its relevance to the text. In the section that follows, a scaffold of improv activities is used in relation to the significant moments in the text.

Chapter-by-Chapter Analysis of SE Hinton's The Outsiders with Improv Guide

From a characterization standpoint, *The Outsiders* is, at its core, about bonds—as in both loyalty and oppression. Though several conflicts drive the story forward, a careful reading reveals the true antagonist is society, and societal pressures influence each character in the story with a similar result—*change*. Some changes involve identity, while others are finite—death. In chapter one we are introduced, in first person, omniscient narration, to PonyBoy Curtis, an orphaned, book-smart, street-foolish *greaser*. Pony begins and ends the story with the same line, a trick that ties well to the Frost poem seen in chapter 5, "Nothing Gold Can Stay". The poem's main idea parallels the book's structure. Pony shares the main character role with Johnny, his family-neglected best friend. As Ponyboy is attacked, the ironically good-natured, mild-mannered Johnny stabs and kills Bob, a *Soc*, or 'privileged', yet lost young man, in order to save Pony. The pair flees to an abandoned church. When they leave to eat, a group of picnicking children enter the church, which catches on fire. Without hesitation, the boys run in to save the children, but Johnny is fatally injured. The story continues on, and the reader realizes the story ends and begins in the same place—with the cathartic power of reading and writing.

Lesson 1: Unit Introduction; Chapter 1 Reading; *Silent Stills*

Pre-Reading Discussion: What does it mean to be an outsider?

Answering this question requires a reader to be able to identify his or her own cultural preconceptions. Children are said to be "both constructed and constructive," which implies they are often not yet aware of the cultural influence that impact their thinking (18). When examining the concept of being an outsider, students should be questioned about their thinking, not told what to think. A concept map that allows students to visually identify ways in which they have individually been labeled will allow the student to take prior knowledge and later apply it to the book's many outsiders. (See **Appendices: B**) Students will be guided through interpreting the excerpt noted in the **Interpretation Strategies** section prior to beginning Chapter 1.

Significant Moments: 1) Pony is harassed by a group of Soc. He is frightened, but tries to fight back. He is pinned down and as they try to cut his 'greasy' hair, they cut him. He is saved by members of his own gang. 2) Pony talks to his brother, Soda, whom he adores, about dropping out of school—a fact that deeply upsets Pony.

Action: *Silent Stills* will be used on any student-identified emotion conveyed in the chapter.

Action Interpretation: How was your story emotion portrayal like or different from your own, original portrayal? Why? Can your real life affect what you see and feel in the text? How? Why?

Lesson 2: Chapter 2 Reading; *Pantomime*

Pre-Reading Discussion: What are the best character traits a human can have? The worst?

Significant Moments: 1) Cherry Valance, a pretty Soc with a kind heart and a realistic world view, is introduced as the core greaser gang sneaks into a movie. 2) Pony remembers, in vivid detail, the day when Johnny was severely beaten by the Soc.

Action: In pairs, students will begin to physically interpret the character's traits, such as individuality, courage, pride, respect, and their opposites; conformity, bravado, shame, arrogance, through *Pantomime*.

Lesson 3: Chapter 3 Reading; *Mirroring*

Pre-Reading Discussion: How do stereotypes divide people?

Significant Moments: 1) The metaphorical implication of this activity relates to the characters' labels. Though Soc is deemed better than greaser, many of the characters are emerging as mirror images of one another. In a literal way, some words are mirrored as well, such as in this exchange between Cherry, Two-Bit, and Ponyboy:

Cherry started walking down the street. "Maybe they won't see us. Act normal."

"Who's Acting?" Two-Bit grinned. "I'm a natural normal."

"Wish it was the other way around," I muttered." (19)

2) Also metaphorical is the mirror image of Pony, who thinks a Soc life is perfect, and Cherry, who befriends

Pony, but then tells Pony not to talk to her if he sees her in school. She also states that she could fall in love with Dally, a character presented to this point as a vulgar greaser.

Action: As two characters who have been identified as opposites, yet show similar dispositions, such as Pony and Cherry, the students will take turns *Mirroring* each other's movements as they relate to the character's identified character trait.

Lesson 4: Chapter 4 Reading; *Frozen Actor*

Pre-Reading Discussion: Can anyone ever really win a fight? What is the real price of violence? (This question should be revisited after reading chapter 9, where Pony poses the question.)

Significant Moments: Johnny kills Bob to save Johnny. Dally emerges as helpful, caring.

Action: Due to the violence in the chapter, using *Frozen Actor* will allow the students to have control over the scene, but will grant the teacher control of the classroom. A possible scenario could be "Shape (chosen character) as you feel that he felt after the stabbing."

Lesson 5: Chapter 5 Reading; *Tableau*

Pre-Reading Discussion: Read and predict the poem-to-story relationship relevance of "Nothing Gold Can Stay". (20) Compare and contrast Isaac Canady's image to the poem. (See **Appendices: A**)

Significant Moments: Johnny and Pony are hiding out in the abandoned church. They discuss life, books, and Frost's poem.

In the excerpt at the top of the **Overview** section, Hinton's main characters are referring to Robert Frost's poem, "Nothing Gold Can Stay", which is strategically used within her text. How do I know her intention? I came to a logical decision about what the poem means and then applied that meaning to both the placement of the poem in the complete text of Hinton's book.

I first interpreted the poem's first line, "Nature's first green is gold" to mean that the first sign of springtime growth is precious, like gold. I expect that most of my students will arrive at this interpretation as well. After reading the poem again, I decided there might be a different meaning to the poem—a metaphorical one. Several interpretations refer to the poet's tree as a willow, which has golden buds and flowers before producing leaves. Others say that the plant is forsythia, which produces brilliant yellow flowers. I reject the notion that the poem is merely about nature and return to my original interpretation, though I agree that the particular plant is significant. My claim can be substantiated by referring to the sixth line, in which an allusion to the biblical Garden of Eden is made, thus adding the notion of demise or deterioration in a fallen state. The second and fourth lines imply a quick or fleeting life span. Also, the short poem comes full circle, beginning with the start of life and ending with 'nothing'. Note that Hinton's text follows a similar structure in her book—beginning where exactly where the story ends.

Students will be asked to think about why Hinton might have used the poem here.

The poem is used in chapter five to illuminate the events in previous chapters, as an allusion to an upcoming event in the book's text and the death of Johnny, but it also supports the book's theme of fleeting beauty and change. It also supports Hinton's storytelling style, to begin and end the same way.

Action: Student-chosen, book-based tableau in small-groups that uses Frost's poem, in some way, to connect to the story line.

Action Interpretation: How has the text motivated your tableau? How is interpreting a text related to performance?

Lesson 6: Chapter 6 Reading; Vignette

Pre-Reading Discussion: What makes you a hero? Are only dangerous acts heroic?

Significant Moments: Pony and Johnny rescue children from the burning church.

As most novels progress, characters undergo some form of change, or the author chooses to mask and then reveal elements of the character's disposition. To help students analyze a story's characters, a standard set of questions can be used: How would you characterize (name of character)? What evidence provides support for this judgment? Give an example of what the character says and does. Give an example of what is said to or about the character.

This chapter continues to turn Dally's character. Just before the fire, Johnny asks Dally, who has come to the hiding place to make sure that Pony and Johnny are doing well, if his parents have asked about him. Dally shows great emotion, both angry and protective, when he replies to Johnny.

Johnny's character also takes a turn. He decides to turn himself in, mostly for Pony's sake—moving him from a passive character, one who only reacts when pushed to do so, to an active character in charge of his own fate. When the trio returns to Jay Mountain, Johnny does not hesitate to run toward and into the fire to save the children inside, solidifying this newly-developed trait. Dally saves Pony and Johnny. A new character, Jerry, appears confused when Johnny tries to tell him what low-lives the greasers are. Jerry states that he believes that the boys are "sent from heaven." (21)

Action: In *Vignette* form, teams will act out any portion of the chapter within one minute, placing emphasis on the characters' changes to this point in the novel. A 'then' and 'now' *Tableau* and/or *Mirroring* will also be used to help 'show' the characters changes over time. (See Lesson 2)

Lesson 7: Chapter 7 Reading; *The Way It Is*

Pre-Reading Discussion: What kinds of things make people change?

Significant Moments: Pony and Bob's best friend, Randy, reveals their humanity through understanding.

Action: Using *The Way It Is*, two characters of student choice talk while a small group performs silent actions that reflect a change or shift in what is going on in the speaking actors' parts. For example, while students act as Pony and Randy having a conversation, a small group of students might quietly revolve around the characters, interacting with the small group only, while demonstrating some aspect of the past turmoil that involved the characters.

Lesson 8: Chapter 8 Reading; *Soliloquy*

Pre-Reading Discussion: What role does tone of voice play in your life? Is dishonesty ever acceptable? When? Why?

Significant Moments: The gang visits Johnny in the hospital. Pony detects a tone in the doctor's voice that indicates that Johnny is dying. Pony feigns cheerfulness for Johnny's sake.

Action: Using the Soliloquy format, each student will perform a 100-150 word self-talk using their choice of book character, placing emphasis on vocal inflection to help capture the 'tone' created by Hinton.

Action Interpretation: The audience will be asked to give re-directorial advice to enhance a retake of the performance, paying special attention to tone of voice.

Lesson 9: Chapter 9 Reading; *The Road Not Taken*

Pre-Reading Discussion: What things have you done that you wish you had not? Why?

Significant Moments: 1) The greasers fight the Soc; Dally for Johnny's sake, though Johnny thinks it foolish. 2) Johnny dies, sending the characters into a stage of grief—each in his own way.

Action: Using *The Road Not Taken* a single actor will get into a self-selected character, but must react to the opposite action as the character's personality and habits dictate. This will allow students to create an alternative to the choices made by the characters in the book. Students will then read Robert Frost's, "The Road Not Taken" and, in small teams, debate as Pony, a gifted student, and Johnny, as to what the poem might mean.

Lesson 10: Chapter 10 Reading; *Written Scene*

Pre-Reading Discussion: Predict the outcome of the story citing evidence from the text for your answer.

Significant Moments: Dally chooses to entice the police to shoot him.

Action: Using *Written Scene*, groups of actors will act out any scene that includes Dally prior to this scene. Books may be used.

Lesson 11: Chapter 11-12 Reading; *Montage*

Pre-Reading Discussion: What role can you play in keeping violence out of your life?

Significant Moments: In chapter 11, Pony is ill and reflects on the tragic events and on humanity. In chapter 12, he begins to heal through writing. The last line of the book is the same as the first, bringing the story full circle.

Action: Using *Montage*, the entire class will create a chapter-by-chapter 'flash action', or 12, one minute chapter action summaries of the entire book. This will be practiced and filmed over multiple days.

Wrap-ups

Using *Interview* students will take turns being S.E. Hinton by answering questions about her style, intention, and the historical setting in which Hinton lived when creating *The Outsiders*. Questions will be used such as, "S.E., was it your intention to use 12 chapters to represent the span of a year? Why? What parts of your book demonstrate this idea? Did you model the structure of your book after Frost's poem? Why? How do they relate?"

Cast Party is the culminating event in which the whole group interacts as self-chosen characters in a party-like setting. This continues the use of improvisation while allowing students to feel proud of their growth as literary interpreters and actors.

Annotated Bibliography

Barton, Linda G. *Quick Flip Questions for Critical Thinking*. Janesville, WI. 2010.

A tiny booklet that gives examples of question sets that cover the hierarchy of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Brown, Susan C., and Marcella L. Kysilka. *Applying Multicultural and Global Concepts in the Classroom and Beyond*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2002.

A book that asks the reader to participate in completion of cultural-awareness activities.

Bynane, Patrick. "A Method to the Madness: Laughter Research, Comedy Training, and Improv." In *Theatre Symposium: A Journal of the Southeastern Theatre Conference*. Volume 16. Pages 31-39, 2008 University of Alabama Press. Tuscaloosa, AL.

An improv methodology manual.

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An article that intertwines the concept of improvisation as a teaching style and a student learning strategy.

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Phillips, June K. "Practical Implications of Recent Research in Reading." *Foreign Language Annals* 17, no. 4 (1984): 285-296.

An article that discusses the reading process and suggests reading strategies for foreign language classrooms. Though seemingly taken out-of-context for use in this unit, new language learners all use a similar process. The research in this article is beneficial to all language learners, foreign and domestic.

Schultz, Jean Marie. "The Gordian Knot: Language, Literature, and Critical Thinking." In *SLA and the Literature*.

This article discusses the changing role of literature in the language classroom.

Spolin, Viola. *Improvisation for the Theater: A Handbook of Teaching and Directing Techniques*. 3th ed. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999.

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A methods book on improvisation.

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An article about rigor.

Wimsatt, William K. *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*. Lexington, Ky.: University of Kentucky Press, 1954.

A detailed description of a method of understanding the meaning of a text.

Appendices

A - Canady, Isaac. *Untitled*. Pen and Metallic Pencils. 2013. Property of Cheree Charmello.

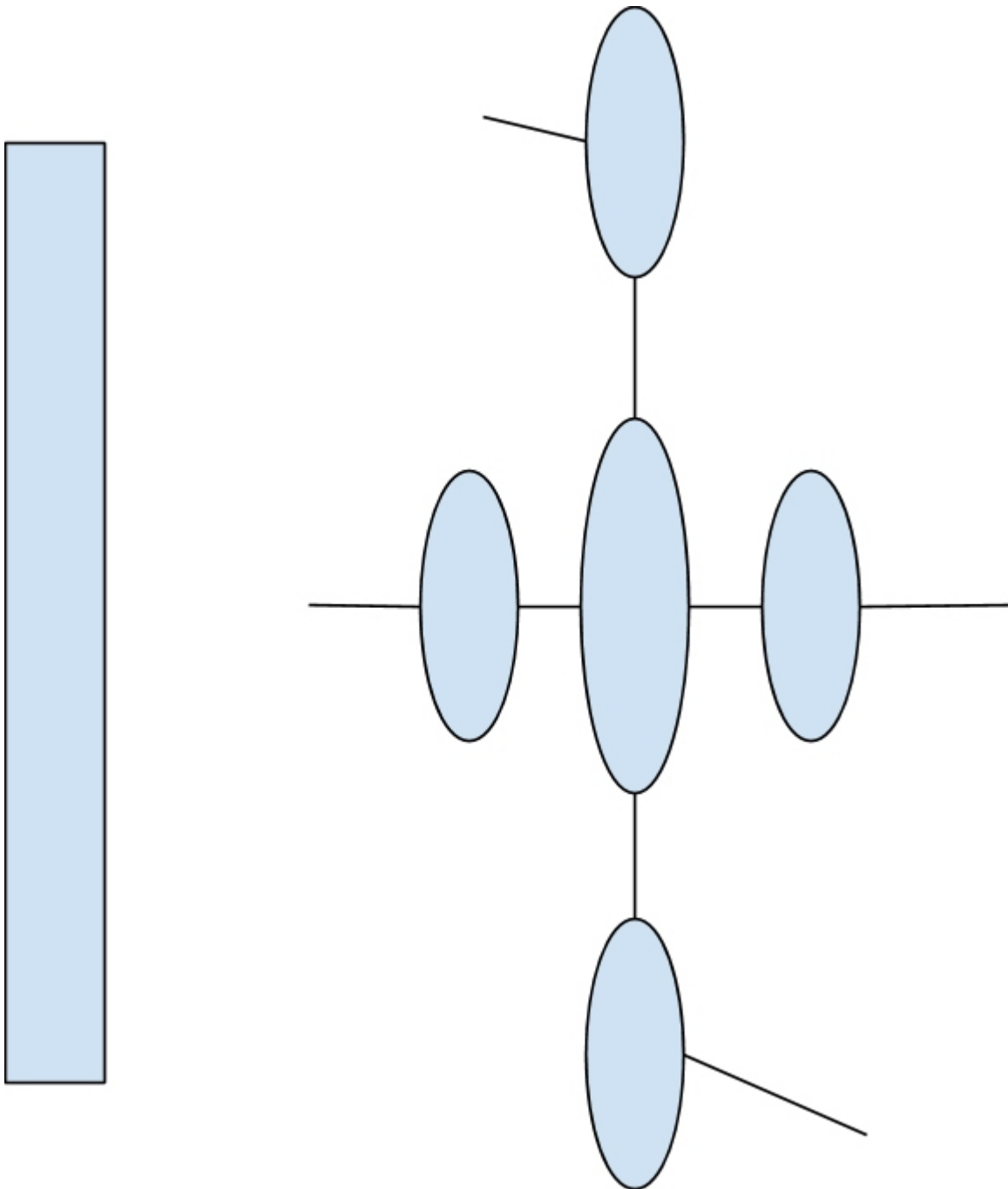
B - Concept Map

C - Standards

A - Canady, Isaac. *Untitled*. Pen and Metallic Pencils. 2013. Property of Cheree Charmello



B - Concept Map



C - Standards (Common Core)

Though several other Common Core standards are addressed by using this unit, two standards were specifically targeted. Under reading, the following Common Core Standard is used: 1.3: Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature - Fiction and Non-Fiction. Under Arts and Humanities, the following Common Core Standard was used: Production, Performance and Exhibition of Dance, Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts of standard 9.1.8.B: Recognize, know, use and demonstrate a variety of appropriate arts elements and principles to produce, review and revise original works in the arts (Specifically, improvising and interpreting a role).

Endnotes

1. S.E. Hinton, *The Outsiders*, 77-78.
2. Richard W Strong, Harvey F. Silver, and Matthew J. Perini, *Teaching What Matters Most: Standards and Strategies for Raising Student Achievement*.
3. June K. Phillips, "Practical Implications of Recent Research in Reading." 285-296.
4. S.E. Hinton, *The Outsiders*, 126.
5. Linda G. Barton, *Quick Flip Questions for Critical Thinking*, 1-2.
6. Ibid.
7. Jay Lemke, "Making Meaning Across Textscales: A Critical Statement on Reading Comprehension", 2.
8. Linda G. Barton, *Quick Flip Questions for Critical Thinking*, 3-4.
9. Laurence Perrine, *The Nature of Proof in the Interpretation of Poetry*.
10. William K. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*, 6.
11. Ibid.
12. Patrick Bynane, "A Method to the Madness: Laughter Research, Comedy Training, and Improv." In *Theatre Symposium: A Journal of the Southeastern Theatre Conference*, 34.
13. Susan C. Brown and Marcella L. Kysilka, *Applying Multicultural and Global Concepts in the Classroom and Beyond*, 158.
14. Viola Spolin, *Improvisation for the Theater: A Handbook of Teaching and Directing Techniques*. 3th ed., 8.
15. Shady Cosgrove, "Teaching and Learning as Improvisational Performance in the Creative Writing Classroom." In *Pedagogy*, 447.
16. Viola Spolin, *Improvisation for the Theater: A Handbook of Teaching and Directing Techniques*. 3th ed., 9.
17. Patrick Bynane, "A Method to the Madness: Laughter Research, Comedy Training, and Improv." In *Theatre Symposium: A Journal of the Southeastern Theatre Conference*, 34.
18. Peter Hunt, *Understanding Children's Literature: Key Essays from the International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*, 39
19. S.E. Hinton, *The Outsiders*, 43.
20. S.E. Hinton, *The Outsiders*, 77.
21. S.E. Hinton, *The Outsiders*, 95.

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