



Lesson Two: Challenging Students/Changing Lives: Exploring the Oakland Military Institute

Grade Levels 9—12

Subject Area English

California State Standards <http://www.cde.ca.gov/board/>

Reading

Grades 9 and 10

2.8 Evaluate the credibility of an author's argument or defense of a claim by critiquing the relationships between generalizations and evidence, the comprehensiveness of evidence, and the way in which the author's intent affects the structure and tone of the text.

Grades 11 and 12

2.4 Make warranted and reasonable assertions about the author's arguments by using elements of the texts to defend and clarify interpretations.

Writing

Grades 9 and 10

2.3 a. Marshal evidence in support of a thesis and related claims, including information on all relevant perspectives.

Grades 11 and 12

Listening and Speaking

1.0 Students formulate adroit judgments about oral communication. They deliver focused and coherent presentations that convey clear and distinct perspectives that demonstrate solid reasoning. They use gesture, tone and vocabulary tailored to the audience and purpose.

Overview

Students will view selected segments of the KQED **Bay Window** program **The Celebrity and the City** and participate in activities designed to explore educational reform efforts in Oakland schools. Lesson activities are designed to provide students with opportunities to explore the challenges facing Oakland schools and to examine the efficacy of the Oakland Military Institute as a model of school reform. They will use what they have learned to create a short play that encompasses their research, elements of the production, and their thoughts and ideas concerning

educational reform. In the Pre-Viewing Activities, the students will create Act 1. In the Viewing Activities, the students will conduct research and view the education segment of **The Celebrity and the City**. In the Post-viewing Activities, the students will create Act 2 and Act 3 of the play.

Learning Objectives

Students will

- be able to express their understanding of school reform efforts.
- learn how to present coherent arguments on various perspectives regarding school reform.
- be able to analyze varied elements of school reform efforts and draw conclusions supporting their individual opinions.

To assess students' achievement of these learning objectives, teachers may rate the students' work on quality of their participation in small-group and whole-class discussions, the quality of their research, and the development of their arguments as evidenced in the creation of the play scenes.

Time Two to three 40-50 minutes class periods

Materials and Teacher Prep

Videotape **Bay Window— The Celebrity and the City**

Internet access

Bookmark the following Web sites:

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2001/08/14/MNL112977.DTL>

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2001/07/08/MN104842.DTL>

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=24oakland.h19>

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=41charter.h20&keywords=education%20reform>

<http://past.thenation.com/cgi-bin/framizer.cgi?url=http://past.thenation.com/issue/000605/0605schorr.shtml>

Pre-Viewing Activities

Activity One

In this activity, students will brainstorm ideas on school reform. These ideas will be the basis for writing Act 1 of the play.

1. Ask each student to respond briefly in writing to the following questions:

- What do you think is wrong with schools today?
- What are the things you would consider schools to be doing right today?

2. Ask the students to convene in small groups and have each group draft a list of the 10 most important things that they think are right and wrong about schools.

3. Lead a class discussion focusing on improving schools and investigating viable means to accomplish change. Create a class chart that lists students' ideas on the best ways to reform schools.

4. As a class, visit the following Web site. It contains the article "California Audit Cites Litany of Troubles in Oakland Schools":

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=22oakland.h19>

Ask the students to share their knowledge about the Oakland schools.

Activity Two

In this activity students will write dialogue for Act 1, which focuses on problems in schools.

1. Tell the students that they are going to create a three-act play about school reform in Oakland and that some structure will be provided for them. Divide the students into three groups. Share the following information with the students:

This play will consist of three acts. So for the first act, each group will be asked to write dialogue for a brief scene in which they describe parents' frustrations with their child's school experience.

Create a brief dialogue describing how you imagine these parents might feel about the difficulties both they and their child are facing. You should introduce and name the characters, mention their occupations, and create a setting. (The first act of the play consists of three sets of parents describing their children's school experiences).

The only requirement is that your dialogue present a clear understanding of issues that you feel are pertinent to the problems in today's schools in the city of Oakland.

2. Allow students time to develop their characters, setting and dialogue.

3. Tell the students that after they have written Act 1, they will be watching the KQED **Bay Window** production **The Celebrity and the City**, which focuses on education in the city of Oakland.

Focus for Viewing

Tell the students that they should try to understand the various dimensions of the issue of charter schools as they watch the production. They should think about the positive and negative aspects of schools that they discussed in the Pre-Viewing Activities. This segment of the production should give the students ideas regarding the Oakland Military Institute that they might want to use as they create the characters and dialogue for Act 2 and Act 3.

Viewing Activities

Activity One

In this activity students watch the education segment of **The Celebrity and the City**, which explores various dimensions of school reform efforts in Oakland. The students will discuss the different viewpoints expressed.

1. Begin watching the education segment of the film. Pause the film after the education segment ends.
2. Lead a class discussion based on the following questions:
 - What was your reaction to the portrayal of the Oakland Military Institute?
 - What did you think of the Oakland school superintendent's views on the Oakland Military Institute?
 - Do you think Jerry Brown is doing the right thing for Oakland students in creating this Institute?
 - What did you think about the parents' opinions on the Oakland Military Institute?
 - How did the classroom scene compare to what you have experienced in school?

Postviewing Activities

1. Tell the students that they are going to create Act 2 of the play. Share the following information with the students:

In Act 2, the three sets of parents are going to attend a meeting of the school board. During this meeting, the Oakland Military Institute will be discussed. Each student group should create a cast of a minimum of three characters, each of which expresses different viewpoints regarding the Oakland Military Institute. Act 2 will consist of the school board meeting. The main requirement for Act Two is to create material that represents a variety of viewpoints on the Oakland Military Institute.

2. Prior to writing the dialogue for the characters in Act Two, the students should conduct research on charter schools and the Oakland Military Institute. The following Web sites are good places to begin research:

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2001/08/14/MNL112977.DTL>

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2001/07/08/MN104842.DTL>

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=24oakland.h19> (scroll to the section “Decades of Struggle”)

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=41charter.h20&keywords=education%20reform>

<http://past.thenation.com/cgi-bin/framizer.cgi?url=http://past.thenation.com/issue/000605/0605schorr.shtml>

3. Allow the students time to create their characters and dialogue for the play.
4. Tell the students that they are going to create Act 3 of the play. Share the following information with the students:

In Act 3, each of the three sets of parents will decide whether or not to send their child to the Oakland Military Institute. Create a dialogue that explains what each set of parents decides and how they arrived at their decision.

5. Give the students opportunities to review the acts and decide how to stage them.
6. Have the students create stage sets for each act of the play.
7. Perform the play before an audience or videotape, if possible.