A NOTE ON THEATER TEXTS

Any text can be used for theater. Bringing a theatrical perspective to a text offers students a new approach that makes the literature meaningful and lasting.

In this project, students studied historical texts on theater during the reign of Louis XIV, focusing their study in the particular historical and cultural context.

Students approached Perrault’s 1697 Fairy Tales from a theatrical perspective. The short tales lend themselves well to performance, and this approach revives the familiar tales.

L’ATELIER DE THEATRE – CASE STUDY

Bringing a Theatrical Perspective to Perrault’s 1697 Fairy Tales:

In-Class Readings:
- Students practiced reading aloud in French, encouraging their competence with grammar.
- Drama and humor defamiliarized the text, facilitating new interpretations.

Actor’s Method:
- Students approached the characters looking for character motive and action. This opened the text in new ways.

In-Class Readings:
- Using vocabulary related to theater, students were able to apply theater concepts to textual analysis – students examined the “staging” or “direction” of the tales and communicated their ideas to the class.

Incorporating Grammar:
- Grammar review was conducted with each tale, providing students with necessary tools for recognizing and applying the historical language of the texts, as well as an appreciation for the importance of grammar in literary analysis.

Performance:
- As a final project, students staged and performed Perrault’s tale "Blue Beard." Students worked as directors, masters of ceremony, actors, stage crew, program coordinators, and grammar experts in charge of explaining complex grammar to an audience of introductory-level language learners.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

Theatrical approach to text?
- The text becomes more engaging and memorable
- Better understanding of text

Theatrical approach to grammar?
- Refreshing, engaging, and more fun than previous grammar classes
- Feel more comfortable with language

Other positive outcomes?
- Performance was motivational
- Increased student interaction was beneficial
- Enjoyed blending literary and grammar work
- Feel accomplished

Limitations?
- On-stage performance was intimidating
- Difficult to gauge how much fluidity improved

"This approach to French grammar is much more engaging... You’re living and using the grammar rather than just trying to memorize it for a test." – Anonymous Student

"It is completely unique, and quite frankly much more exciting than the rote-style learning of grammar classes." – Anonymous Student

"Grammar is learned through repetition, through practice, through immersion, and through performance." – Anonymous Student

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & REFERENCES

Acknowledgements:
Thank you to Jill Stephenson and Maddy Oritt for their guidance and encouragement. Thank you to the students of Atelier de Théâtre for their participation.

References: