

EDUCATOR GUIDE

Story Theme: Opening Nights
Subject: Teatro Visión
Discipline: Theatre

SECTION I - OVERVIEW	2
SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT	3
SECTION III – RESOURCES	5
SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK	7



Teatro Visión's *Conjunto*.
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SECTION I - OVERVIEW

EPISODE THEME

Opening Nights

SUBJECT

Teatro Visión

GRADE RANGES

K-12 & Post-secondary

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Theatre & Physical Education

OBJECTIVE

This guide will introduce educators to the mission and vision of Teatro Visión and issues of contemporary theatre. Teatro Visión's vision and programming is a springboard from which to explore character development, dramatic structure, and the use of theatre as a tool for exploring history and diversity. Using theatre as a tool, educators can explore themes of diversity through playwriting and other characterization exercises that support curricula objectives in the Standards for Social Studies, Language Arts, and Theatre (Visual & Performing Arts).

STORY SYNOPSIS

In its premier episode, SPARK goes behind-the-scenes at to experience the tension and risk of an opening night for Teatro Visión de San Jose, a Latino community theatre organizations in San Jose, California as they defiantly mount their most ambitious production to date, a new theatre work called *Conjunto*, in the face of shrinking budgets and the economic downturn.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Participation in analysis of theatre, writing, and government documents
Group oral discussion, review and analysis, including peer review and aesthetic valuing about individual and group performance

Teacher-guided instruction, including demonstration and guidance
Hands-on projects as independent students and as a group
Critical reflection on one's own performance as well as the performance of others

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

Theatre productions (plays) are stories brought to life through creative collaboration between actors, playwrights, directors, set crews, and the audience
Theatre is a discipline that requires independent and collaborative work.
Theatre is an historical art form that can be used to explore personal, social and political issues and ideas, and stimulate discussion
Theatre is a complex and often costly enterprise

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

SPARK story "Going for Broke" on VHS or DVD (available from SPARK at www.kqed.org/spark) with player
Computer with Internet access and navigation software

MATERIALS NEEDED

Paper & pencils
Performance space and copies of plays or scripts (see Theatre Resources)
Resource materials on theatre, Latino theatre, and playwriting

INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED

Linguistic - syntax, phonology, semantics, pragmatics
Bodily-Kinesthetic - control of one's own body
Interpersonal - awareness of others' feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
Intrapersonal - awareness of one's own feelings, emotions, goals, motivations



SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

CONTENT OVERVIEW

Teatro Visión is a theater company whose mandate is to celebrate Chicano culture, nurture community, and inspire vision. Its mission is to move people to feel, think, and act to create a better world. The company aims to be recognized throughout Santa Clara Valley for quality Latino productions, educational programs, and attracting dedicated audiences.

In “Opening Nights,” SPARK follows the cast and crew of Teatro Visión as they produce *Conjunto* (meaning “union” in Spanish)--a new play about the internment of a Japanese-American farm owner named Min and the effects of his seizure on the family, farm, and workers that he must leave behind. The authorities can intern Min according to the national permissions issued for the confinement in “military areas” (internment camps) of people identified by the government to be potential threats to national security.

Originally named Teatro Huipil, Teatro Visión was founded in 1984 by members of Women in Teatro, a statewide network of Chicano theaters. Since its inception, Teatro Visión has worked with actors or “teatristas” from Teatro de la Gente, Teatro de la Esperanza, Espíritu de Atzlan, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and Valentina Productions. With an annual budget of \$516,000, Teatro Visión presents three productions each year in thirty-eight performances. The company has produced over thirty-three bilingual plays in San Jose, including the Northern California premieres of three new works by Latino playwrights. Teatro Visión employs a variety of artists including directors, actors, designers, and specialty artists. The company is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization, guided by a Board of Directors and is largely supported by volunteers.

THE BIG PICTURE

The permissions that in the play allow for Min's seizure and internment were part of US Executive Order # 9066, signed on 19 February, 1942 by

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Over 120,000 mostly Japanese Americans were seized around the US as a result of E.O.# 9066 and interned in 10 remote camps with 24-hour armed guards. Some people spent up to 4 years in the camps without ever being charged with a crime.

In *Conjunto* Min is taken away by authorities following the proclamation of the Order, despite the fact that he is a Nisei--a second generation Japanese in America. Min's mail-order bride Shoko suddenly finds herself responsible for the farm and the staff. Struggling to manage these new responsibilities, Shoko finds a kindred soul in Genovevo, the farm's long-time Mexican foreman. Their partnership is a symbolic one, uniting Mexican and Japanese spirits against an oppressive and prejudicial campaign.



Teatro Visión's *Conjunto*.
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The Latino/Chicano theatre movement originated in the US in the late-1960s, largely through the work of El Teatro Campesino (The Farmworkers Theatre), a group formed by Luis Valdez when he left the San Francisco Mime Troupe to help organize farm workers with Cesar Chavez in 1965.

THE BIG PICTURE (continued)

By 1970, El Teatro Campesino had established a unique theatre form that would later come to be known as “teatro Chicano,” a form of community theatre combining the performance style of the Italian Renaissance commedia dell’ arte with the humor, character types, folklore and popular culture of Mexican theater.

In commedia dell’ arte, characters are generalized and exaggerated personality types, such as the villain, the damsel, the hero, or the village idiot, whose struggles represent universal or common struggles. This combination of exaggerated character types and themes of Mexican American struggle, was potent in addressing polemical issues of social welfare and politics at a time of political and social upheaval. Today, this combination is still potent, providing a forum in which topical issues are explored through an array of familiar and resonant characters, to which many people can relate.

Compared to the rich Chicano theatre scene of the 1970s, when nearly 400 Chicano companies were producing and performing works that dealt with contemporary political and social issues, today there are relatively few, with Teatro Visión among those that still exist.

SECTION III – RESOURCES

TEXTS

Alvarez, Julia. [How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents](#). New York: Plume Press, 1991. Four sisters adjust to their Dominican-New York City move from Mexico over a 30-year period.

Broyles-González, Yolanda. [El Teatro Campesino: Theatre in the Chicano Movement](#). Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.

Camarillo, Alberto. [Chicanos in California: A History of Mexican Americans in California](#). San Francisco: Boyd & Fraser Publishing Company, 1984.

Culture Clash (Richard Montoya, Ric Salinas, Herbert Siguenza). [Culture Clash: Life, Death and Revolutionary Comedy](#), 1998. – Expository text about this successful political comedy troupe.

Gallo, Donald R., Ed. [Join In: Multiethnic Short Stories by Outstanding writers for Young Adults](#). Delacorte Press, 1994. Collection of short fiction – perfect for those new to multicultural literature.

Gotanda, Philip Kan. [Sisters Matsumoto](#). – Life after the internment camps for three sisters.

Hill, Kimi Kodani. [Topaz Moon: Art of the Internment](#). Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2000. Text documenting the Topaz internment camp, including interviews with detainees, and documentary photographs and photographs then and now.

Huerta, Jorge, ed. [Necessary Theater: Six Plays About the Chicano Experience](#), (c) 1989.

Huerta, Jorge. [Chicano Drama: Performance, Society, and Myth](#), (c) 2001.

Ionazzi, Daniel A. [The Stage Management Handbook](#), (c) 1992. Introductory book on stage management.

Jennings, Coleman A. [Theatre for Young Audiences: 20 Great Plays for Children](#). 1998.

Mori, Kyoko. [Shizuko's Daughter](#). Fawcett Juniper, 1993. A Japanese girl named Shizuko copes with her mother's suicide and her father's new wife.

Morton, Carlos. [The Many Deaths of Danny Rosales, and Other Plays](#), 1983. An anthology of Chicano theater classics.

Osborn, M. Elizabeth. [On New Ground: Contemporary Hispanic-American Plays](#), 1989. Includes L. Alvarez, M. Fornes, J. Jesurun, E. Machado, J. Rivera, M. Sanchez-Scott.

Shepard, Aaron, [Stories on Stage](#), H.W. Wilson Co., 1993.

Surface, Mary Hall. [“Most Valuable Player” and Four Other All-Star Plays for Middle and High School Audiences](#), Smith & Kraus Publ., 1999. Multicultural plays dealing with a range of personal and social issues.

MEDIA

Verdoia, Ken, producer/director. “Topaz,” (58 min.) Documentary film discussing the internment of Japanese in the U.S. at the Topaz, 1999. (More information available at <http://www.kued.org> – KUED Television – University of Utah, Salt Lake).

WEB SITES

Association for Hispanic Classical Theatre, Inc. (in Spanish only) -
<http://www.coh.arizona.edu/spanish/comedia/escomedi.html>.

California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives at the University of California, Santa Barbara –
cemaweb.library.ucsb.edu/cema_index.html.

Exploring the Japanese American Internment through Film and the Internet - <http://www.jainternment.org>.

Children of the Camps – Exhaustive Web site list of texts written about the Japanese and Japanese-American internment, including biographical stories, interviews, and movies - <http://www.children-of-the-camps.org/resources/books.html>.

Hispanic American Periodicals Index – Comprehensive listing of magazines published on issues in the Hispanic American community, including arts, society, politics, science, etc. - <http://www.hapi.gseis.ucla.edu>.

Northwest Books – Research group Web site featuring a full transcript of Executive Order #9066 - <http://www.pnorthwestbooks.com/docs/eo9066.html>.

Santa Cruz Public Library Resources
A Web site published by the SC Public Library assessing the impact of Executive Order #9066 on Santa Cruz County, California. - <http://www.santacruzpl.org/history/ww2/9066/intro.shtml>

BAY AREA RESOURCES

Balazo Gallery/ Mission Badlands
2811 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
415/920.0896

Galeria de la Raza 2857 24th Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
415-826-8009
<http://www.galeriadelaraza.org>

La Raza Galeria Posada
1421 R Street
Sacramento CA 95814
916/446.5133
<http://www.galeriaposada.org>

La Peña Cultural Center
3105 Shattuck Ave.
Berkeley CA 94705
510/849.2568
<http://www.lapena.org>

Latin Bay Area (Web site)
<http://www.latinbayarea.com>

Mexican Museum (The)
Fort Mason Center, Bldg. D
San Francisco.
415/202.9700
<http://www.mexicanmuseum.org>

Mission Cultural Center
2868 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
415.821.1155
info@missionculturalcenter.org
<http://www.missionculturalcenter.org>

Teatro Visión
Mexican Heritage Plaza
1700 Alum Rock Avenue, Suite 265
San José, CA 95116
408/272.9926
<http://www.teatrovision.org>

SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

Talking About Theatre

Introduce the SPARK story and the idea of theatre in general. Discuss as a group:

- what defines a play, including plot, dialogue and characters
- story line (what a play is about), dramatic conflict (climax or turning point), and resolution (conclusion)
- characterization, including lead and supporting characters, protagonist, antagonist
- stories have beginnings, middles, and ends

NOTE: It is important to talk as a group about making judgments. Making art is an expressive process in which people demonstrate different skills. Together, develop a list of words that can be used in place of “good” and “bad.”

Assemble a collection of 3-4 plays, or scripts such as *Romeo & Juliet*, *How the Garcia Girls...*, (See Theatre Resources). Encourage students to attend a local theatre or watch a theatre piece on TV or video. In addition assign students to read a play at home.

Introduce the concept of “point of view” using the SPARK story and the plays that students have read or attended to illustrate the points.

“Point of view” refers to the perspective from which a story is told. There is always a narrator who tells the story from a either first-person or third-person point of view. The narrator determines what a reader is given. Talk about the four points of view:

First person: An “I” character who reveals his/her own thoughts; other characters are related through him/her.

Third-person objective: Outside narrator who reports only on what s/he observes and hears.

Third-person limited: Outside narrator who sees into the mind of one character.

Third-person omniscient: All-knowing narrator who enters the minds of all characters.

- Whose voice(s) do you hear?
- Are there competing viewpoints?
- Whose voice is strongest or invites most empathy?
- Are the voices expressing his/her culture?
- What is communicated about that culture?

Ask students to identify the point of view of Teatro Visión’s *Conjunto*, a play they have read, or a play they have watched.

RELATED STANDARDS

THEATRE

Grade 2

1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

Development of the Vocabulary of Theatre

- 1.1 Use the vocabulary of theatre, such as plot (beginning, middle, and end), scene, sets, conflict, script, and audience, to describe theatrical experiences

Grade 7

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

Derivation of Meaning from Works of Theatre

- 4.2 Explain how cultural influences affect the content or meaning of works of theatre.

RELATED STANDARDS - LANGUAGE ARTS

Grade 2

3.0. Literary Response and Analysis

Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text

- 3.1 Compare and contrast plots, settings, and characters presented by different authors.

Grade 7

2.0 READING COMPREHENSION

Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text

- 2.4 Identify and trace the development of an author's argument, point of view, or perspective in text.

SPARKLERS:

- * Write a description of a play, movie, or story, using the key concepts introduced above.
- * Share descriptions and assemble the work into an almanac or resource booklet that is available to other students.

Political Theatre

Move on to talk about the SPARK episode as an example of social or political theatre.

Ask students to work in small groups to write a one-paragraph description of political theatre identifying what are the elements that makes a play political. Ask students to also name other performances, movies or plays they have seen about social or political topics.

Return to the story line of *Conjunto* or another piece of theatre or literature about the internment camps in the pre-World War II period. Invite students to respond to the following questions.

- What were US attitudes towards Japanese? Mexicans?
- How were these attitudes expressed?
- What were the results of the internment camps? Deportations?
- What are the contemporary attitudes towards these and other minority groups and how are they treated?

Share student responses in a general discussion of the issues.

“Acting Out”

Ask students to write a general characterization of someone they know.

- Invite them to “act out” their character, using speech intonations and gestures to illustrate “who” it is without saying it. Ask other students to guess.
- Challenge students to describe a person of compelling character. The person may be stunning, plain, physically challenged, mean or different looking, etc.
- On slips of paper, write adjectives that describe a character type. Divide the class into groups and give each group a list.

- Challenge each group create a character who represents the list of adjectives using the words. Then have each group read its characterization aloud so other students can attempt to determine which adjectives the character exemplifies.
- Give each group a list of the same adjectives and challenge the students to analyze the differences and similarities in the ways that each group presents the same characteristics.

RELATED STANDARDS

THEATRE

Grade 9-12

2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Creating, Performing, and Participating in Theatre

Students apply processes and skills in acting, directing, designing, and script writing to create formal and informal theatre, film/videos, and electronic media productions and to perform in them.

Development of Theatrical Skills

2.1 Make acting choices, using script analysis, character research, reflection, and revision through the rehearsal process.

Creation/Invention in Theatre

2.2 Write dialogues and scenes, applying basic dramatic structure: exposition, complication, conflict, crises, climax, and resolution.

3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of Theatre

3.2 Describe the ways in which playwrights reflect and influence their culture in such works

RELATED STANDARDS

SOCIAL SCIENCE

Grade 10

World History, Culture, and Geography: The Modern World

2. Understand the role of appeasement, nonintervention (isolationism), and the domestic distractions in Europe and the United States prior to the outbreak of World War II.

Writing in Character

Ask students to think about what it would be like to leave their home and immigrate to another place, perhaps one where they don't speak the language or the landscape is unfamiliar.

- Invite students to discuss how they would feel, what they would do, etc.
- Invite the class to explore accounts of real and fictional Ellis Island immigrants through various resources (see Resources section).

Challenge students to write short stories or journals (in first person) as a person immigrating to the US or in an internment camp.

- Ask students to ground their work in research, following a theatre formula of character development = introduction of story line and characters, event/change (action or conflict), and resolution.
- Challenge students to develop a strong sense of place, including physical description, weather conditions, duration, discovered through research.
- Invite students to illustrate their stories with images or audio recordings.
- Publish the stories in a book form, or create an exhibition of them.

To conclude the activity, encourage students to comment on each other's works by writing a response or by making a visual image of the character. Invite students to read their stories to the class, adding appropriate props, voices/intonations, and actions to illustrate and/or exaggerate their character and his/her actions.

Engage students in discussion about each other's characters and performances, offering feedback on what was effective and what wasn't, and why.

MATHEMATICAL SPARKLER:

* Imagine a local, community theatre like Teatro Visión is producing a new play - *Conjunto*. Define a set dollar amount for the production budget, and assign student groups different areas of responsibility to research and return expenses:

- Overhead: electricity, security, water, heat, staff/technicians, garbage, sewage
- Actors: Actors and actresses
- Scripts, rehearsals, other preparations
- set design and construction

- Opening night food, entertainment, beverage
- Marketing: Posters and press releases
- Programs (for the audience)

Convene the groups and total the costs. Compare costs with the budget and see how much has to be cut. Through group negotiation, decide which areas and items will be reduced and which will be cut completely. Consider the viability over the number of performances, increasing expenses, etc.

RELATED STANDARDS

LANGUAGE ARTS

Grade 7

2.0 Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

2.1 Write fictional or autobiographical narratives:

- a. Develop a standard plot line (having a beginning, conflict, rising action, climax, and denouement) and point of view.
- b. Develop complex major and minor characters and a definite setting.
- c. Use a range of appropriate strategies (e.g., dialogue; suspense; naming of specific narrative action, including movement, gestures, and expressions).

Grades 11 & 12

Writing

1.0 Writing Strategies

Organization and Focus

- 1.1 Demonstrate an understanding of the elements of discourse (e.g., purpose, speaker, audience, form) when completing narrative, expository, persuasive, or descriptive writing assignments.
- 1.2 Use point of view, characterization, style (e.g., use of irony), and related elements for specific rhetorical and aesthetic purposes.

RELATED STANDARDS

MATH

Grade 7

Mathematical Reasoning

1.0 Students make decisions about how to approach problems:

- 1.1 Analyze problems by identifying relationships, distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information, identifying missing information, sequencing and prioritizing information, and observing patterns.
- 1.2 Formulate and justify mathematical conjectures based on a general description of the mathematical question or problem posed.
- 1.3 Determine when and how to break a problem into simpler parts.