

I Got a B-plus!?

How to Assess a Performance



Obviously, she doesn't need a traditional letter grade to affirm her performance. With drama, the assessment comes from the audience and from within.

Because it's the emotional charge that releases the brain-changing chemicals that make reading possible, it's important we handle assessment delicately.

The Delicate Nature of Assessing Drama

We want our students—even our poorest readers—to step off the stage feeling like they deserve an Oscar. Therefore, the conclusion of the performance isn't the time to be dishing out Cs and Ds in reading.

If we've done a good job coaching during rehearsals, every student should come away feeling as thrilled as the actor in the cover photo. That's our ultimate goal!

Still, we're teachers. We grade stuff. So here are some tips on how to evaluate student work during a drama project.

Create and Use Scoring Guides

Use our rubric with your students, or better yet, create one that's more organic. Identify standards for a successful performance such as projection, fluency, positioning, cueing, characterization, and engagement. Visit

ReadAloudPlays.com for free rubrics.

Discuss standards before and during rehearsals.

At the conclusion of a play, solicit feedback from the audience. If we've consistently revisited our rubric, we'll get sensible comments such as "Maureen spoke loudly," or "Toni put character in her voice."

Not only is this feedback for the performers, it also helps audience members synthesize evaluative factors they will then apply to their own performance.

When we ask, "What do they need to work on?" we'll get responses such as "Matt needed to keep from turning his back to the audience" or "Trey needs to keep his script away from his face so the audience can hear him."

When comments come from the audience rather than the teacher, the performers are better able to receive them without the negative emotional charge of a grade.

Assessing the audience and the content in the play is also important. Give the performers a chance to evaluate the audience with questions like, “Actors, what did you think of your audience?” Discuss what a good audience looks and sounds like, but also how a poorly performed play can lead to the audience losing interest.

Assess the Audience and Content

Improve audience engagement by passing out copies of the play so the audience can follow along, or asking prospective audiences to pre-read the script so they’re familiar with the story.

Finally, evaluate the play itself for its entertainment value and academic content. You can ask your students the same questions you ask in any literary or social studies discussion: “What did this play teach you?”, “Did you enjoy the story?”, or “What is the moral?”

Not Every Play Will Go Well.

Unexpected illnesses and emergency dental appointments can sometimes derail performances. Kids, no matter how responsible, often lose or forget their scripts. Intercoms and fire drills sometimes interrupt. And of course there’s plain old misbehavior.

Occasionally, plays do go sour, but if you commit to building your reading program around drama, you’ll soon be rewarded with a bank of favorite plays you come back to year after year, a class full of engaged readers, and a ton of great entertainment you can’t find on social media.





Performance Scoring Guide

Shade in a portion of each star based on performance

VOICE

Projection

Spoke loudly

Enunciation

Spoke clearly with
proper pacing

Characterization

Put character in
voice or used accent

READING

Accuracy

Read lines smoothly
and correctly

On Cue

Followed along so to
enter on time

Memorized

Memorized the lines

PRESENTATION

Direction

Kept face toward
audience

Script/Face

Kept script away
from face

Position

Maintained correct
place on stage

PARTICIPATION

Prepared

Came to rehearsals and
shows with script

Practiced

Practiced lines
independently

Behavior

Had good behavior
at all times

AUDIENCE

When a member of the audience:

Attentive

Paid attention
during show

Applauded

Clapped when
appropriate

Gave Feedback

Able to give valid
feedback



Performance Scoring Guide

Shade in a portion of each star based on performance

Write categories in each rectangle; identify a standard for each star.

Play Performance Scoring Guide Instructions

Guide 1 has categories and standards already defined. *(See below for details.)*

Guide 2 is blank; students and teacher can discuss and define the standards they want to emphasize and write them into the guide.

Discuss each category and standard before, during, and after rehearsals and performances.

Rubric can be scored by instructor or, better, used by students as a self-assessment. If any given standard is emphasized during rehearsals, it's likely students will score well in that category.

Each star is to be shaded based on the degree to which the student succeeded in that category. For example, if during the performance a student consistently spoke with an appropriate volume, he or she would shade in the entire star. If he or she only sometimes spoke loudly enough, he or she might shade in half the star.

VOICE

Projection: Student spoke with appropriate volume, “flinging” their voice toward the audience.

Enunciation: Student spoke clearly and at an appropriate tempo.

Characterization: Student spoke with inflection, characterization, or accent.

READING

Accuracy: Student read lines correctly.

On Cue: Student was able to follow along with the script and enter (physically or verbally) at the correct time.

Memorized: Student memorized his or her lines.

PRESENTATION

Direction: Student kept his or her face toward the audience, especially when speaking.

Script/Face: If using script, student kept script away from face so audience could see his or her mouth.

Position: Student maintained the appropriate position on stage, especially when delivering lines. (For example, in their nervousness, students will sometimes still be saying their lines as they rush off stage instead of finishing lines, then exiting.)

PARTICIPATION

Prepared: Student consistently came to rehearsals with script in hand, ready to fully participate. Student participated in the performance.

Practiced: Student practiced independently, such as for homework reading.

Behavior: Student demonstrated appropriate behavior during rehearsals, during performances, back stage, and when in the audience.

AUDIENCE

Attentive: Student followed along with the performance.

Applauded: Student clapped appropriately and at the correct time.

Gave Feedback: Student was able to give reasonable feedback to the performers.

