

PLAYWRITING: DIALOGUE

LESSON PLANS

T&W teaching artist [Frank Ingrassiotta](#) invites students to explore their emotions in this playwriting lesson on dialogue and delivery. Students work literally from the outside in, first identifying the format of dialogue as it appears on the page, and then considering how what the character speaking feels inside can dictate the dialogue's expression. In both written and oral exercises, students have fun practicing their newly learned form and playing with the emotions that give it meaning.

Grade(s) Taught: 5th

Genre(s) Taught: Playwriting

Common Core State Standards:

(Refer to Standards for Writing at [English Language Arts Standards > Writing > Grade 5](#) and for Reading at [English Language Arts Standards > Reading Literature > Grade 5](#))

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.B
Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6
Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

Guiding Questions:

- How do we format dialogue in a play?
- How is dialogue expressed?



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LESSON

Introduction:

Read aloud of a section of the play *Befriending Bertha*. It would be best to have a handout or a projection of the section so that students can see what the page looks like. Students will identify how to format dialogue and discuss the difference between writing for performance and writing for a book.

Discuss with students how dialogue writing is active and reactive. It acts as the railroad track to behavior and there are many different ways to say the same line. It's never just about the words. It's about the characters' feelings and reactions to the situation.

Main Activity:

Students will be given a one line of introduction: "Hello, my name is [their real name]." Privately (e.g., in a one-to-one conversation or on a slip of paper) they will be given a feeling or emotion to express the line with. They will then enter the room acting that feeling. The other students will then guess the feeling being enacted.

Write a group of personified characters on the board (i.e., camel, star, sun, eagle, skeleton, etc.). Then pose the question: "If they could speak, what would they say?"

Have the students pick 3-5 characters and write dialogue responding to the posed question. Remind them that they must write their dialogue in play format. The dialogue could be about the characters themselves, the way they feel, or their relationship with another character or object. Remind students that the characters should have a conversation with each other.

Closing:

Share!

Materials:

Excerpt from *Befriending Bertha*

Vocabulary:

Dialogue, format, expression, emotion

Multi-Modal Approaches to Learning:

This lesson appeals to **aural** learners, hearing the text read aloud; **kinesthetic** and **visual** learners, picturing a scenario using four of the senses that inform and allow the creation of a mental image; **interpersonal** learners, answering a prompt as a class and group brainstorming; and **intrapersonal** learners, with time dedicated to independent writing.