



Grade: 9

Subjects: Drama and English Language Arts (ELA)

You're Keeping Me in Suspense! Exploring "The Most Dangerous Game" with Tableaux

<p>Lesson Overview</p>	<p>In this lesson students explore the author's use of suspense in the short story "The Most Dangerous Game" by Richard Connel. This lesson occurs after the students have read the story. Students demonstrate understanding of suspense by enacting tableaux connected to the text. Tableaux is French for "pictures," and is a static dramatic scene created by using one or more actors or models. By creating a living picture of suspense of the story, students find the meaning of the suspense created by the text.</p>		
<p>How the Arts Improve this Lesson</p>	<p>Students at this level are taught to return repeatedly to the text and find textual evidence when they are asked to write. It is a necessary skill, and one that they will be tested on. It is not an easy skill for most students; students are often unsure about what to select as the evidence. Identifying and describing abstract ideas, like suspense, can be challenging. Using dramatic art in this lesson allows students to express the feelings and emotions of a text that is often difficult for them to put into their writing. Theatre is expressive, and words and movements can be symbolic. This type of activity opens up creativity, and students will most likely be more engaged. Students will explicitly be looking for the moments in the text that build the suspense and also allow the students to break apart the story, thus allowing for a more in-depth comprehension. Then the students take those moments and embody them physically to become a part of the story themselves. If the student simply read the text, they would not be able to understand suspense, or the story, in the same direct way as utilizing tableaux. Students who grapple with more traditional ELA reading and writing tasks may discover that the new, creative, and kinesthetic approach to the content is an avenue to achievement.</p>		
<p>Assessment of Student Learning</p>	<p>Massachusetts Learning Standards</p>	<p>Evidence</p>	<p>Collection Strategy</p>

	<p>Grades 9-10. ELA. Reading Standards for Literature. Craft and Structure. 5. Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise. RL.9–10.5</p>	<p>Students will accurately complete a blank chart identifying all parts, including the rising action, climax, and conflict from the story.</p> <p>Students will participate in a discussion by clearly articulating what suspense is, what it feels like, and why an author would use it.</p> <p>Students will give examples of common suspense moments (the music in a scary movie) and then identify how words create the same feeling.</p> <p>Students in small groups will be able to pick out excerpts of “The Most Dangerous Game” that accurately show suspense. They will identify examples of dialogue, setting, and foreshadowing that create suspense.</p> <p>Students will create and perform a tableau of their interpretation of a suspenseful moment from the story.</p>	<p>Teacher will circulate as the worksheets are being completed, check for understanding and accuracy, and collect sheets to grade.</p> <p>Teacher will listen and observe students in the discussions of suspense, eliciting further details and explanations if and when necessary.</p> <p>Teacher will listen and observe students as they choose suspenseful moments in the text and contribute to their group.</p> <p>Teacher will listen and observe student input during the debriefing discussion and make notes about understanding and inaccuracies.</p> <p>Summative: Teacher will take photographs of the completed tableau and assess using grading rubric.</p>
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	<p>Grades 9-12. Foundations Theater. Performing. 6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work. Describe how decisions about a performance are connected to what the student wants to express, evoke, or communicate. F.T.P.06</p>	<p>Students will collaborate in creating and performing a tableau, conveying a passage of suspense found in the story.</p> <p>Students will participate in giving and responding to feedback with classmates and in a debriefing discussion about the activity.</p>	<p>Formative: Teacher will listen and observe group work and collaboration, noting how students are choosing to convey meaning through the tableau.</p> <p>Teacher will listen and observe that each group can clearly explain their artistic choices in the performance.</p> <p>Summative: Teacher will photograph the tableaux and assess students using a grading rubric.</p>
<p>Essential Questions</p>	<p>How does an author create suspense in a story through plot and word choice?</p> <p>How can feelings, such as suspense, be made visible and demonstrated in theatre, as it is in writing?</p>		
<p>Enduring Understandings</p>	<p>Understanding rhetorical choice is important to make meaning out of texts.</p> <p>Events in stories are purposefully designed for an intended effect, such as suspense.</p> <p>Theatrical embodiment of ideas can deepen one's understanding of tone and mood such as in using suspense.</p>		
<p>Materials and Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Space for groups to work together ● Copies of “The Most Dangerous Game” text ● Chart paper ● Blank plot map/ pyramid triangle/ freytag’s pyramid and worksheet 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Markers ● Highlighters ● Pencils ● Photos of examples of tableaux
<p>Advancing Vocabulary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Action ● Climax ● Conflict ● Dialogue ● Facial expressions ● Focus ● Foreshadowing ● Gesture ● Levels ● Mood ● Plot ● Rising action ● Sequence ● Setting ● Space ● Suspense ● Tableaux
<p>Support & Accommodations Inspired by Universal Design for Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Printed copies of the story are provided for each student to annotate. ● Whole group instruction occurs along with smaller group work. ● The process of creating a tableau is modeled for the whole class with emphasis on how to engage those with lower grade level abilities and also physical disabilities. ● Students are grouped purposefully by the teacher. ● The teacher and paraprofessional circulate and assist groups as needed. ● Students who need it are provided with a partially completed chart.

**Lesson Plan
Progression Details**

This lesson will take place after students have read the short story “The Most Dangerous Game.”

1. Introduction:

- The teacher will begin the class by reviewing the story “The Most Dangerous Game.” The students will have a blank plot map and will review elements, including plot, rising action, and climax. Together students complete the chart of the plot structure by adding in the events of the story. **(DOK 1- students recall events of the story)**

- Teacher then leads a whole class discussion on suspense by asking questions, such as, “What is suspense?” “When do we feel suspense?” “How do we know it’s suspense?” “What does it look, feel, and sound like?” “What are examples of suspenseful moments that you can think of?” **(DOK 1 and 2- students recall, interpret, categorize)** Student responses are recorded by the teacher on chart paper. If students are struggling, the teacher can play a clip of suspenseful music from a movie and discuss. The teacher will then explain that the author of “The Most Dangerous Game” has created suspense through dialogue, setting, and foreshadowing. The teacher will read aloud text from the first page of the story and point out that the author is building suspense with this dialogue and description right from the start: “The old charts call it Ship-Trap Island,” Whitney replied. “A suggestive name, isn’t it? Sailors have a curious dread of the place. I don’t know why. Some superstition.”

2. Tableaux:

- The teacher will introduce the dramatic strategy of tableaux. Tableaux are still images created and acted out by people using their bodies, without talking. This dramatic art form will be used to represent suspenseful moments in the story. Photographs of tableaux will be shown as examples. In the displayed examples, the teacher will have students talk about what they notice, like the frozen positions, the levels of each person’s body in relation to each other, and the facial expressions. A sample tableau will be created with volunteer students to model the opening scene of the story. The teacher will explain that a tableau is often successful if it incorporates:

- A **focus**. Ask the class to consider what the audience/viewer should focus on when they view the group’s tableau. Is there a central element emphasized? Are all actors’ eyes focused on the same thing? Looking in different directions?

- A sense of **action**. Tell the class that the tableau should look like a moment frozen in time. For example, if the tableau shows someone running, the actor is challenged to create a fixed action pose that illustrates this dynamic movement.
- Different body **levels**. Ask the class to consider if everyone's body should be standing up. Or, in the context of the tableau, does it make more sense for some people to be stretching, squatting, sitting, or lying down? It is visually more interesting for the audience if the tableau shows various levels?
- Thoughtful use of **space**. Ask the class to think about how the meaning of a tableau can be communicated based on how each person's body is spaced out. Should the tableau show everyone in the group clustered tightly together? Spread out? Facing one another? Turned in different directions?

● The teacher and students will practice all four elements above in a variety of ways to model. Use the acronym FALS (focus, action, levels, space) to help students remember the components of a successful tableau. **(DOK1- students use and define terms. DOK 2- students apply new knowledge through practicing a new learned skill)**

● The teacher will instruct the students to work cooperatively in assigned groups to: 1) identify a passage in the text that creates suspense, and 2) develop a tableau to represent the identified passage and the feelings of suspense. Students will be reminded to look for and choose an excerpt of dialogue, setting, or foreshadowing, and be prepared to later share verbally why the passage is considered suspenseful.

● Students will be given time to work together in their groups. **(DOK 4- students self-monitor, collaboratively create, and translate passage from text into dramatic performance. DOK 3- students revise for meaning)** They will collaboratively aim to achieve a criteria of success in their tableaux (found in the grading rubric in the appendix). The grading rubric will be shared and reviewed with the class so students understand these expectations ahead of time:

- Groups should develop tableau based on a selected passage from the story, and work collaboratively, persevere through creative blocks, and amicably resolve disputes. All team member's voices should be heard during the planning process.
- Groups should practice their tableau and refer back to the passage in the text and revise if need be.

- Groups should begin in a frozen tableau and remain in the position for around 30 seconds so that all audience members can take in the scene.
- Groups should exhibit a distinct and meaningful use of *at least* two of the four elements previously discussed (focus, action, levels, space).

3. Performance:

- Groups will perform their tableaux, one at a time, and the other students will watch. When students are acting as the audience, they will follow the “curtains down” and “curtains up” directives as the groups set up. This means that when the group says, “curtains down,” the audience members close their eyes. This will give the group time to get into their positions. When the group says, “curtains up,” the audience members open their eyes.
- After viewing the tableau in silence for approximately 30 seconds, the audience will provide positive feedback to the group and answer questions such as, “How is this tableau suspenseful?” “What feelings are evoked by this tableau?” “What decisions did the group make to help communicate a mood?” **(DOK 3- critique, analyze, draw conclusions, support opinions with evidence)** As students are performing tableaux, the teacher will take photographs to document. Each performing group will also be asked questions such as, “How did you work together to analyze the author’s text and choose a portion to recreate as a tableau?” “How did you collaboratively make decisions about what to communicate and how?” **(DOK 3- self-evaluate and analyze)**
- After all groups have performed, the class will debrief the activity with the questions: “What worked well in this activity, and why?” “What didn’t work or was challenging, and why?” “What would do differently next time, and why?” “Did this activity change your understanding of the story/text at all? Why or why not?” “Did this activity change your understanding of drama at all? Why or why not?” **(DOK 3- students analyze and draw conclusions with supporting evidence)**

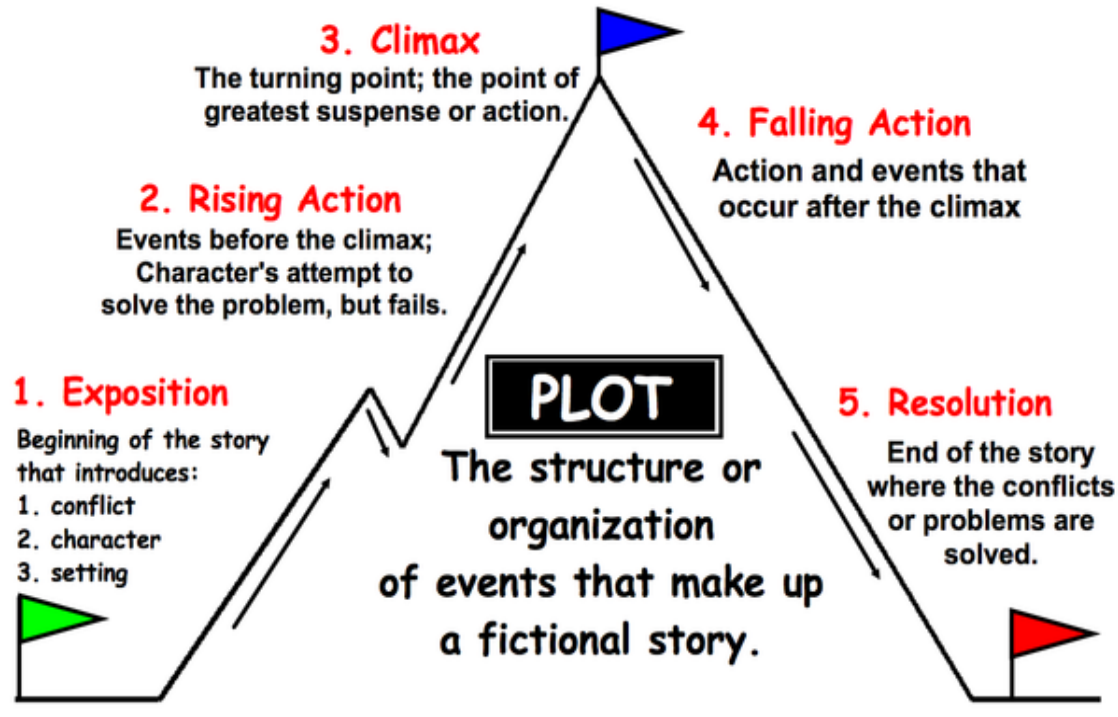
Resources

Connell, R. (1973). *The most dangerous game and other stories of adventure*. New York: Berkley Pub.

Farmer, D. (n.d.). *Tableaux*. Drama resource. <https://dramaresource.com/tableaux/>

Appendix

Plot Map:



Worksheet:

Name _____
Title of Story _____

Analyze the **PLOT**, the structure or organization of events that make up a story.

Exposition:
What happens in the beginning of the story?

Who are the characters?

What is the setting?

Rising Action:

Which events happen before the climax?

How do characters attempt to solve a problem?

Climax:

What is the turning point of the story and the point of greatest suspense or action?

Falling Action:

Which events occur after the climax?

Resolution:

What happens at the end of the story?

How are conflicts or problems solved?

Extension Activity ideas:

- Once students have a solid understanding of tableaux, consider introducing additional theatrical elements. Students can choose to add small instruments, created sounds, or spoken words to the performance to enhance the tableau's meaning.
- Once students have a solid understanding of tableaux, students can choose to introduce small props, like colorful scarves, to enhance the tableau's meaning.
- The students can view the photographs taken by the teacher and work to sequence them to match the plot map of the story. Students can then discuss how the author successfully created suspense by

writing the details in this order. Ask students, “Would it have worked the same if the details had been ordered differently?” “How does the timing add to the suspense?”

Grading Rubric for Tableau:

Criteria	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Developing
<i>Creating a Tableau:</i> The student group must work as a team to develop tableau based on a passage from the story.	The group showed teamwork, including working through creative blocks and amicably resolving disputes. The group worked with the story and revisited the text to make informed choices for their tableau. They practiced their tableau.	The group showed teamwork, but sometimes struggled to work through creative blocks and/or amicably resolve disputes. The group worked with the story and revisited the text to make informed choices for their tableau. They practiced their tableau.	The group showed some teamwork, but often struggled to work through creative blocks and/or amicably resolve disputes. It is not clear if the group worked with the story or revisited the text to make informed choices for their tableau. It is unclear if they practiced their tableau.	The group did not operate as a team and struggled to work through creative blocks and/or amicably resolve disputes. The group did not work with the story nor revisit the text to make informed choices for their tableau. They did not practice their tableau.
<i>Performing a Group Tableau:</i> The student group must perform the tableau based on a passage from the	The group remained frozen in tableau for at least 30 seconds. At least 2 intentional concepts from FALS (focus, action, levels, space) were easily	The group remained frozen in tableau for at least 30 seconds. At least 2 intentional concepts from FALS (focus, action, levels, space) were	The group struggled to remain frozen in tableau for at least 30 seconds. At least 2 intentional concepts from FALS (focus, action, levels,	The group did not remain frozen in the tableau for at least 30 seconds. No intentional concepts from FALS (focus, action, levels, space) were

story for the audience.	recognizable.	recognizable with some hesitation.	space) were recognizable with considerable hesitation.	recognizable.
<i>Reflecting on a Tableau:</i> The student group must verbalize their decisions to explain how their tableau clearly represents a chosen passage from the story.	The group verbalized clearly all of their decisions to explain their tableau, including describing how they chose and represented a suspenseful moment in the story, and linked all of their artistic choices to a text passage.	The group verbalized most of their decisions to explain their tableau, including describing how they chose and represented a suspenseful moment in the story, and linked most of their artistic choices to a text passage.	The group verbalized a few of their decisions to explain their tableau. It is unclear if the group chose or represented a suspenseful moment in the story, and/or they were unable to link most of their artistic choices to a text passage.	The group verbalized very few or none of their decisions to explain their tableau. It is unclear if the group chose or represented a suspenseful moment in the story, and/or they were unable to link any of their artistic choices to a text passage.

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