

Beth Murray, Spencer Salas, and Michele Ni Thoghda

United States and Oman

Applied Theatre, Adolescent English Learners, and the Performance of Literacy

Youth in middle and secondary grades, between childhood and the adult world, sometimes struggle with their identities as readers and learners. Too many describe themselves or are described by their teachers and parents as “reluctant, disengaged, and/or unmotivated” by classroom texts or by the rows of books in school libraries.

Even though blockbuster series have powered young adult fiction and cinematic markets over the last two decades (e.g., *Harry Potter* *The Hunger Games* *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*), “I don’t like to read” is nevertheless a common refrain in schools and in homes. The self-construction of adolescent youth, especially boys, as “bad” or “reluctant” readers is alarming at a number of levels—first, for those young people who have framed themselves in that way; and, second, for the societies they will enter and ultimately sustain. As such, creating a “culture of reading” across schooling contexts has been the subject of scholarship and international forums specifically dedicated to research and practice for literacy (Christenbury, Bomer, and Smagorinsky 2009; Power, Wilhelm, and Chandler 1997; Wilhelm 2008).

In terms of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), the communicative language teaching paradigms that have long dominated the field tend to downplay literacy as a focus in preference for conceptualizing language as distinct if overlapping skill sets of reading, writing, and listening. Whether a student did or did not like reading

has historically been of less concern to a field more focused on communicative language development. Yet, with more contemporary proponents of “literacy” arguing the multidimensional, multimodal, and existential ways of reading the “word/world” as an alternative (Freire 2000; Heath 1983; Paris 2011), the concept of literacy has slowly begun entering the professional lexicon of TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) International Association and other leading English language teaching professional organizations; in addition, the “power of reading” is an emerging centerpiece of primary and secondary curricular paradigms (see Fay and Whaley 2004; Krashen 1993).

In this article, we argue that how adolescent language learners position themselves as readers does matter to teachers of EFL and that teachers do not have to accept a student’s declaration of “I don’t like to read” as a permanent reality. Schools, and English language classrooms in particular, can promote a culture of reading that forwards a communicative paradigm and at the same time embraces literacy as a “system for representing the world to ourselves—a psychological phenomenon; at the same time it is a system for representing the world to others—a social phenomenon” (Barton 1994, 33).

Specifically, we outline in practical ways the potential of applied theatre for stimulating purposeful, creative literacy engagement with adolescent learners in order to engage communication in multiple modalities and in interactive ways. We begin with a brief overview of applied theatre and contemporary theorizations of its relationship to literacy development. We continue with a description of four approaches for activating applied theatre for literacy development, using Shel Silverstein’s (1964) *The Giving Tree*

as an anchor example. We conclude with special attention to how applied theatre might be leveraged across grade levels in diverse classroom settings and adapted for varied genres and forms of text. Our intent is directed to practitioners with the message that bringing theatre into the language classroom can be more than a warm-up activity or an end-of-unit celebration for parents and siblings. Rather, applied theatre can engineer far deeper literacies that ultimately reposition reading as transacting with the wor(l)d.

Four moves for deepening literacy production

While the strategies we describe can be used with any number of texts, as a common thread we use *The Giving Tree* to illustrate the theatrical “moves” we advocate. Just as other literacy strategies can be adapted to suit context and content, these applications of theatre can be used with a wide range of texts for a multitude of purposes, in series or in isolation. The short narrative of *The Giving Tree* tells of the relationship between a boy and a tree. Initially, the boy embraces the tree as a playmate—climbing under its wide branches. However, as he grows into a young man, he begins asking the tree for pieces of itself—its apples, branches, and finally its trunk—until the tree is nothing more than a stump for an old man to rest on. All the while, the Giving Tree is “happy” if the boy-man is happy—regardless of the sacrifices she makes to satiate his needs.

Traditionally, reading a story such as *The Giving Tree* would be broken down into a series of print-based pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities that might include vocabulary review or vocabulary building exercises as a way of activating readers’ language schema in advance of the text; formative comprehension checks

perhaps in the form of mapping out the narrative's beginning, middle, and end; and, finally, some sort of summative comprehension check—often in the form of short written answers on paper.

As we will illustrate, applied theatre reframes reading as a creative transaction with meaning. These strategies can take verbal and non-verbal forms. They can be used in isolation or in combination. As such, readers are not looking for a fixed meaning within a text that they individually demonstrate their understanding of through a series of correct answers. Instead, literacy through an applied theatre lens frames reading as a recursive, collaborative, and generative transaction with meaning.

Like applied math and applied linguistics, applied theatre is eminently practical—with a primary focus not on distanced theories but on the immediacy of performance. Applied theatre can and should happen outside of traditional theatre spaces—whether that space is a school classroom, a library, a women's clinic, an outdoor farmers' market, a street corner—or just about anywhere. Breaking from traditional conceptualizations and enactments of performance, applied theatre values the dynamic, creative processes of embodied literacy embedded in day-to-day human activity and relations, with a focus on the process of creating. Whether it ends in a performance or not, applied theatre is in and of itself a generative act.

Because applied theatre has roots in the realms of both theatre education and popular theatre, many point out that though the term “applied theatre” is contemporary, its origins are ancient (see Prendergast and Saxton 2009). Indeed, communities and individuals have for millennia leveraged public performance to explore, express, and give meaning to individual and community experiences. Whether we are referring to *Theatre*

of the Oppressed (Boal 1979), Brecht's Learning Plays of the 1920s and 30s (Hughes 2011), or the rituals of ancient Greece and Africa, theatre has included practitioners dedicated to participant-centered forms in a range of contexts, sometimes including classrooms.

Research supporting and describing the links between applied theatre and literacy learning rests on this history and relies heavily on a growing base of case studies and practitioner-driven inquiry that help those inside and outside the field imagine the nuances of the communication context fostered by the union of drama and literacy. Theatre strategies mediate a space for generative, social meaning-making and response to literature (Schneider, Crumpler, and Rodgers 2006), scaffolding talk (Dwyer 2004), driving collaborative inquiry and problem solving across subject areas (Bowell and Heap 2001; Swartz and Nyman 2010), and shaping and informing writing (Grainger 2004). This context, reliant on the chemistry between leader and participants in equal part, is particularly effective for inspiring literacy growth among groups traditionally labeled "reluctant" or typically underserved by their system of education, including English language learners (Kao and O'Neill 1998).

Adolescent students in particular welcome the interplay of immediacy and distance in theatre as a way to negotiate complex identities between real and imagined worlds (Gallagher 2007). As students embody the theatrical space, they come to own the communication and shared context it fosters as well. In some settings, the theatrical mode echoes and honors familiar local cultural forms (Kendrick et al. 2006), creating an opportunity for deepening relevance.

The four moves we describe (context building, narrative action, poetic action, reflective action) have much in common with the pre/while/after-reading sequence in that the moves are purposefully helping readers engage with the text at hand in scaffolded ways (see Figure 1, adapted from Neelands and Goode 2000).



Figure 1. Four “moves” for engineering deep literacy

There can be elements of story (beginning, middle, and end) inherent in an applied theatre approach to exploring a narrative, but when the approach is framed as a literacy process, the focus is on providing readers with multiple opportunities for meaning-making and symbolic representation of experience. In the sections that follow, we illustrate how the concept of applied theatre can become action. Blending ideas from the landmark drama/theatre compendium of strategies compiled by Neelands and Goode (2000) with contemporary arguments for textual enactments in middle grades and

secondary-level literacy instruction (Wilhelm 2004, 2008), and incorporating our own shared experiences as theatre/literacy educators, we outline the concepts of context building, narrative action, poetic action, and reflective action as possibilities for the EFL classroom. Our intent is to create a direction for teachers interested in exploring the potential of process-oriented enactment strategies in fostering spaces for deep literacy engagement for reluctant adolescent readers.

Context building: Co-creating wor(l)ds

Applied theatre engages everyday people as “spect-actors,” where the line between actor and spectator/audience is purposely blurred. This approach fosters perspective taking that disrupts traditional power structures and interaction patterns such as teacher/student or performer/audience through embodied analytic communication (Boal 1979; Kao and O’Neill 1998). While some forms of applied theatre rely upon a degree of theatre expertise among facilitators or performers, the heart of applied theatre is of and for the common person. Applied theatre is home to trained artists and to regular folks with a continuum of approaches, contexts, and participants. Indeed, a tenet of applied theatre is its inclusion of and its connection to community, place, and participants. O’Neill (1995), a noted process drama scholar, points out that sometimes a strong theatrical sense helps applied theatre practitioners, and sometimes it is a hindrance. When the goal of the work is as much (or more) about inspiring, challenging, and framing the perspectives of participants as it is about performing art, seasoned theatre artists can struggle to let go of habits of traditional theatre performance that short-circuit responses to in-the-moment developments reliant on strong listening and observation.

This is welcome news for novices, such as EFL classroom teachers, applying theatre in their context. No experience is required to begin.

Traditional plays center on the sequential performance of a scripted work; applied theatre centers on collective meaning-making and may or may not culminate in a final, polished performance in the traditional sense. Rather, creative explorations frequently progress more episodically than chronologically, with a heavy emphasis on participants inhabiting (and being challenged within) a range of perspectives, instead of enlivening a single character. Thus, an individual or group might simultaneously be asked to take on the perspectives of multiple characters—or even peripheral imagined characters to the story. In the case of *The Giving Tree*, spect-actors might be asked to take on the role of the tree or the boy or the tree’s imagined best friend—a little squirrel—or the boy’s cousin.

Sound-tracking texts

In process-based theatre, context-building conventions prepare participants for interaction with a specific text or idea as well as uncover or construct background and backstory. Theatre practitioners recognize that readers bring to texts “funds of knowledge” (Moll et al. 1992) or “schema” for transacting in dynamic ways with language, culture, and literacy. Sound-tracking is one such strategy. A collaboratively created soundscape helps participants build the world of *The Giving Tree* aurally as a way to activate prior knowledge and imagination. Before sharing the book with students, the teacher has them brainstorm a list of words to describe a child-friendly forest where trees care for people and people care for trees. What are the sounds of this forest? What are the

primary sounds? The subtle sounds? Are there words? Are there voices? Have students suggest options and try them out, slowly building a one-minute soundscape using the class as the sound chorus, pausing for feedback and revision from the whole group, then circling back to incorporate ideas. We encourage teacher-facilitators to limit sound-making options to student voices and sound-making movements (e.g., whistling like a bird or gently tapping on a wooden desk in a way that might evoke rainfall) to foster innovation and focus problem solving.

Freeze-framing the written word

Having students use only their bodies and each other to create images in response to challenges creates opportunities for collaboration and communication physically, verbally, and non-verbally. To get at comprehension, we have leveraged something we like to think of as “freeze-frame reading”—an activity that blends kinesthetic and visual intelligences by challenging participants to use their own bodies to create a frozen image of a textual moment or key concept. The activity typically begins with a shared reading of a short text or passage (fiction or non-fiction), followed by an identification and discussion of a key moment in the narrative or an important concept. *The Giving Tree* provides readers with multiple opportunities for freeze-frames. Freeze-frames allow participants to identify and embody a specific narrative moment of the relationship between the boy and the tree or a complex concept such as “generosity.” Still images can also be used to help participants flesh out and share inferences about a setting, a relationship, a history, or a lifespan.

Students, in groups of three or more, might also create with their bodies a single frozen frame to illustrate a key contextual moment or concept. Allow groups time to brainstorm and rehearse. Share with the group at large. While each group is frozen, prompt the onlookers for analysis with questions like these:

- “What do you see?”
- “What relationships are here?”
- “If you had to give this image a title, what would it be?”
- “What might this person be thinking or saying?”

Stress to participants that the freeze-frame is frozen. Only the observers can talk. After each group’s “performance,” give the frozen group a brief opportunity to explain their intentions, qualifying that this is different from charades because there is no specific correct answer. In the prompt, students can be charged to create specific kinds of still images as it suits the larger drama, such as surveillance camera stills, photos from an album, or an advertisement.

Narrative action: Moving the story forward

Narrative conventions help participants build the emerging drama’s plot. This is not the same as dramatizing an existing story; rather, it involves enacting some elements, but also extending and elaborating ideas only hinted at in the text, implied in the illustrations, or imagined by participants. Narrative strategies are recursive and fluid but always build meaning.

Expert meetings about content and issues

Endowing the participants with expertise (power, high status) and the leader with a problem requiring assistance (need, low status) turns the hierarchy of the classroom on its head and prompts participants to speak and think and share and listen (Heathcote and Bolton 1995). Let's say that the adolescents reading *The Giving Tree* are part of an imagined community conservation alliance—they are responsible for taking care of the trees but even more for protecting the environment for future generations. The teacher, in role as a new assistant to a local government official, initiates a conversation soliciting ideas, framing the children as experts—an arborist, a scientist, a farmer, a park ranger—and asking them to formulate their expert opinions about why trees are disappearing or abused and what possible actions should be taken.

Initiating an “expert meeting,” the teacher, out of role, explains that (1) there will be a meeting, and the students will be playing roles of people concerned with trees; (2) the teacher will take on a role, too; and (3) everyone must work together to improvise possibilities.

Some groups benefit from brainstorming a list of possible expert roles, but we caution against assigning everyone a role. Let them choose as the meeting evolves. Some will make strong character choices, others remain closer to themselves, and still others simply observe. All are valid ways to participate. The meeting itself need not be longer than a few minutes. Some teachers opt to wear a small costume piece to differentiate between themselves when they are in and out of role. It is helpful to think about the teacher as fostering possibilities rather than answering questions: opening up, not closing

down. The meeting can close with the promise of future contact. This is a beginning, not an end.

Interview pairs about main and peripheral ideas

After students form pairs, one student interviews the other. One person in the pair is from the committee or is a reporter, and the other a community member who knows something about the situation. To support those students tentative about language, decide on a few stock questions (“What is your name?”; “How or what do you know about [global warming]?”), and then generate a common list of possible interview subjects and share possible questions for specific interviewees.

For *The Giving Tree*, interview subjects might include the park ranger, an elderly woman who lives at the edge of the woods, a political activist, or a talking rock. The pair engages in a brief, scaffolded interview, perhaps two minutes long, in which one partner questions and the other answers to build background information. All pairs are interviewing in parallel. There is no audience. After the interviews, the interviewer reports his or her most interesting finding to the class. An emerging student might simply read aloud a written response to the interview questions that his or her classmate has recorded on paper. An advanced student may speak as if reporting on the television news.

Hotseating characters and readers

Hotseating is essentially a group interview (interrogation) of one person. Hotseating and interview pairs are the same at their heart, with different stakes. The public nature of being interrogated on the hotseat by a crowd differs qualitatively from

chatting one-on-one with a reporter in a quick interview. The context can be framed as a hearing or a media interview. If *The Giving Tree* drama work continually points to a person who has a significant hand in or a significant insight into the deforestation issue, he or she might be a worthwhile hotseat candidate: perhaps the boy or perhaps the Giving Tree will be recommended. Challenging the group to hotseat a role not fleshed out in the text creates a degree of creative freedom and challenge. Generating strong hotseat questions both as a group and individually prior to assigning the hotseated role improves the quality of questions and prepares those to be interrogated.

He said/She said

One example of a scaffolded hotseat is something we call “He said/She said.” This narrative strategy asks participants to assume the role of a character in a text—or an implied character—and to explain his or her point of view and subsequent rationale for his or her actions. With *The Giving Tree*, participants might, for example, assume the role of the tree or the boy—or an imagined character, such as the boy’s grandparents or a squirrel—and be called before what might be termed the “Forest Council.”

Again, students form small groups, this time prepping a participant to play a role with talking points for a brief “opening statement” explaining the rationale for or—depending on the role—their perception of a character’s actions. For example, the boy’s opening statement might narrate a childhood tragedy that left him completely dependent on the tree. The tree’s opening statement might describe her ideas about generosity and how it was that she came to feel so responsible for the boy’s happiness. A peripheral

character such as a squirrel might describe his or her feelings about seeing the tree destroy herself.

After the series of opening statements that might include a “counter narrative” of the boy-man justifying his actions or grounding his dependency on an imagined background story—for example, he was orphaned as an infant and his father and mother had entrusted his well-being to the tree—the characters engage in a question/response session (hotseat) with the class. You can opt to use the introductions to segue into hotseating for each role, or you can have the group vote on which two perspectives they want hotseated, based on the introductions.

Poetic action: Representing and symbolizing structures and concepts

Many theatre-based explorations with young people include narrative-action and context-building elements, stopping short of the deeper elements fostered by poetic action and reflective action. Poetic strategies challenge participants to work on the symbolic and abstract levels with “highly selective use of language and gesture” (Neelands and Goode 2000, 6). While language and gesture contract to become focused and spare, the context in terms of time and space frequently expands to foster broader, deeper inquiries and insights and complex perspectives. In other words, as readers engage in a text, representing and symbolizing push student spect-actors to ask themselves what the text means for their lives—its potential implications and applications for who they are and who they are becoming. Thus, “poetic moves” encourage readers to think about decoding text as a creative act—not merely figuring out what the text means at the word, sentence, or discourse level, but what it could also mean symbolically for their specific contexts.

Forum theatre: Public re-vision

Forum theatre, a convention originating from Boal (1979), functions just as it sounds. A small group of spect-actors depicts a carefully selected challenging scene or situation while the remaining spect-actors look on. However, the wall between actors and observers is permeable, and actor or observer can stop the action at any point to share any insight, ask a question, or even replace an actor with an observer. The scene is replayed, interrupted, problematized, and analyzed several times with the goal of possibility and exploration as an aim, not just performing a “good scene.”

To begin, choose two actors to be the boy and the Giving Tree in their old age. Have them play out the story as written. Discuss with the entire group how some readers consider that this is a story about sharing; other readers see it as about selfishness. Explain that the actors are going to replay the story and, at any point, you or they can call “freeze” to stop the action. Challenge the audience to find stopping places where a different course of action could be taken if different choices were made or different circumstances were in place. Perhaps share a limited example to demonstrate the logistics, but be careful not to simply replay a different story with a plot dictated by the leader. Be ready with questions like, “What other options does the tree have here?”; “What about the boy?”; “Would intervention by another character change the story?”; and “What other events could occur and impact the story?” The discussion among the forum at these stopping places is even more important than the acting out of the story. Remember, a member of the forum can share an idea for the current actors to enact, or a member of the forum can replace an actor, bringing a new dimension and voice to the

evolving scene. Finally, reflect individually and collectively on these new choices and endings and their messages. This reflection might be done in the form of a sharing circle—with participants simply voicing their ideas—or on paper in small groups with a representative sharing the group’s combined short reflection.

Flashback/Flashforward: Narrative points of view

Purposely playing with time helps break students out of the narrative mindset. Asking them to construct scenes, stories, or still images across a broad spectrum of time does include a narrative element, but it also challenges participants to boil down and focus their art. Taking away the verbal element can heighten the art as well as scaffold communication across language borders.

For *The Giving Tree*, a poetic exercise might take the form of having the adolescents imagine it is now 50 years after the tree’s death. They have been commissioned to create a wordless, musical video tribute to honor the history of the forest where the Giving Tree lived. Select a piece of music that is one minute long and have the adolescents form groups of three to five and choreograph a wordless scene from the history of the forest to perform for the entire class and then craft into a whole. Or, if the group wants to enter physically first, the teacher might ask the class to make a forest using their bodies—and then to embody that same forest in some sort of danger of extinction or destruction.

Reflective action: Looking forward, backward, and inward with texts

Reflective conventions stop the action and ask participants to “stand aside . . . and take stock of meanings or issues that are emerging” (Neelands and Goode 2000, 75).

Participants are prompted to reflect, look back, or take a stand. Traditionally, having participants reflect on their learning happens as a means of closure in a well-planned lesson. We argue that theatre-centered strategies for bringing individual and group closure add layers of reflection to discussion and naturally meld disparate perspectives into a multi-voiced unit or experience. Moreover, the reflective strategies we describe in this last move make individuals' learning public and provide the teacher-facilitator with valuable summative feedback about what an adolescent or a group took away from embodying a text.

Tapping into readers' reactions

Have students take a place in the room to collect their thoughts. Explain that the leader will circulate and tap each person on the shoulder. When tapped, each participant will speak a word, phrase, or sentence that describes a vivid insight, feeling, or observation they had about *The Giving Tree* during the various performance "processes." That might sound something like "Greed"; "Generosity can be destructive"; or "I'll think before I ask for something—what my asking or taking might do to the other person." For large classes with a range of language abilities, a variation on "tapping in" might include having clusters of students first form groups to discuss and record their reflections on paper. The clusters might then collectively embody some aspect of the mythical forest they depicted in the earlier learning segments with the teacher-facilitator tapping in not on individuals but on groups—with one or two group representatives articulating some of the reflections that members of the cluster voiced in the group reflection session.

Spaces between characters' motivations and rationales

After a session where the relationship between the boy and the Giving Tree is prominent, have two volunteers stand before the group, one representing the boy, the other representing the tree. Ask another volunteer to place the two in relationship to each other, with the distance between the two telling us something important about their relationship. Ask the volunteer who just placed the boy and the tree to explain or interpret the physical space between the two characters. This might sound something like, “The space between the boy and the tree is about how the boy only thinks about himself and never the tree. The tree wants them to be closer—but the boy is always leaving. That’s why the boy is far away from the tree.” Let the group comment and question. Repeat with others placing and explaining.

Corridors of readers' responses

Have the students imagine they are the collective conscience (or the thoughts) of the future generation of the Giving Tree’s forest. Explain to students that they will create a “human conscience hallway” with students facing each other about a meter apart in parallel rows. Each thinks of one piece of advice, one nagging question, or one cautionary phrase he or she wants the future generation to have in mind. Have a student walk through the human conscience hallway slowly as each student repeatedly says his or her chosen phrase. If time permits, have each participant take a turn walking through the conscience hallway.

Branching beyond *The Giving Tree*

We used *The Giving Tree* as an anchor text to help practitioners imagine specific strategies in action with a familiar text. The danger of aligning these strategies with a specific text, of course, is that readers start to see the strategies tied only to one story. It is important to remember that these strategies can be adapted to a wide range of texts.

Traditional folklore, written or oral, pairs well with applied theatre strategies. In many ways, *The Giving Tree* echoes a folkloric style with its simple plot, elements of repetition, two-dimensional characters, and clear intended moral. The features entice participants to fill in, flesh out, and question the simple text. The story becomes the springboard for complexity through theatre. Adolescents find comfort in the familiar tales of childhood and freedom in twisting them into a new direction. Through soundscape, the context of a forest or a jungle or a kingdom or a market square can be enlivened in any classroom. Similarly, hotseating a character who has made errors, committed crimes, or acted selfishly positions spect-actors to flesh out two-dimensional characters with nuanced, justified motivations; the same is true of forum theatre. Further, finding traditional stories that are part of a community's culture creates opportunities to purposefully connect with local lore and resources. If there is no written text of the story available, then collecting, listening to, retelling, illustrating, and sharing local stories adds another culturally relevant layer to your literacy environment. Just be mindful to choose stories without strong religious or spiritual parameters to “play” with—there are always many.

The anchor text you work from could be any genre, from fiction to non-fiction to poetry—even an illustration or photograph. You can use all or a portion of the text. You

can use theatre strategies before, during, or after the full reading or examination of the text. However, some texts lend themselves more to the generative nature of applied theatre than others. Here are some questions to ask yourself as you filter texts for applied theatre possibilities:

- What are some multiple perspectives (written or implied) this text affords?
- What are the relationships and tensions that invite unpacking or extending?
- Are there “unseen scenes” or peripheral incidents worthy of exploration?
- Whose are the marginal voices that could be heard through dramatic activity?
- What are the hard-to-answer ethical questions this text evokes?
- What are the assumptions and easy answers that theatre could productively muddy?

The important step is to begin with a text that captures your interest and take a few small risks, then reflect and refine for the next episode. You will have many ideas, but the student work will suggest ideas and directions you had not imagined. Allow yourself time between installments to take in student ideas, mull them over, and build on them. As you grow in comfort applying theatre, you will be more able to do this on your feet. Your students’ positive response and their newfound voices brought forth in these authentically situated contexts will inspire your planning as well.

Conclusion: Performing literacy in classroom contexts

In making reading about more than decoding words on a page, EFL teachers and teachers of drama and theatre find common ground to push back against students framing themselves as reluctant or bad readers. Using applied theatre strategies helps teachers

across disciplines stretch the multimodal and cultural borders of literacy to embrace multiple pathways to and through meaning-making that include traditional reading, writing, and listening facets within a broadened view of classroom communication covering an embodied semiotic system.

In other words, applied theatre creates opportunities for expressive and receptive communication in audio, gestural, spatial, linguistic, and visual modes working together in a complementary way (Cope and Kalantzis 2000). This effort makes space for diverse students to find entry points into the material. It also values adolescents in the co-construction process. Remember that teachers can start small, using a single strategy, or opt to string several strategies together in a single session or across a unit of instruction. Though the goal of this work is not performance, many teachers find that the material and excitement generated by students in a literacy-*cum*-applied theatre setting can be shaped into a sharing/performance event celebrating literacy and the meaning-making transaction that reading can be.

References

- Barton, D. 1994. *Literacy: An introduction to the ecology of written language*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Boal, A. 1979. *Theatre of the oppressed*. New York: Urizen Books.
- Bowell, P., and B. S. Heap. 2001. *Planning process drama*. London: David Fulton.
- Christenbury, L., R. Bomer, and P. Smagorinsky, eds. 2009. *Handbook of adolescent literacy research*. New York: Guilford.

- Cope, B., and M. Kalantzis, eds. 2000. *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures*. London: Routledge.
- Dwyer, P. 2004. Making bodies talk in forum theatre. *Research in Drama Education* 9 (2): 199–210.
- Fay, K., and S. Whaley. 2004. *Becoming one community: Reading and writing with English language learners*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Freire, P. 2000. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. 30th anniversary ed. London: Bloomsbury Academic. (Orig. pub. 1970.)
- Gallagher, K. 2007. *The theater of urban: Youth and schooling in dangerous times*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Grainger, T. 2004. Drama and writing: Enlivening their prose. In *Literacy through creativity*, ed. P. Goodwin, 91–104. London: David Fulton.
- Heath, S. B. 1983. *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heathcote, D., and G. Bolton. 1995. *Drama for learning: Dorothy Heathcote's mantle of the expert approach*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Hughes, E. 2011. Brecht's lehrstücke and drama education. In *Key concepts in theatre/drama education*, ed. S. Schonmann, 197–201. Boston: Sense.
- Kao, S. M., and C. O'Neill. 1998. *Words into worlds: Learning a second language through process drama*. Stamford, CT: Ablex.
- Kendrick, M., S. Jones, H. Mutonyi, and B. Norton. 2006. Multimodality and English education in Ugandan schools. *English Studies in Africa* 49 (1): 95–114.

- Krashen, S. D. 1993. *The power of reading: Insights from the research*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- Moll, L. C., C. Amanti, D. Neff, and N. Gonzalez. 1992. Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory Into Practice* 31 (2): 132–141.
- Neelands, J., and T. Goode. 2000. *Structuring drama work: A handbook of available forms in theatre and drama*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Neill, C. 1995. *Drama worlds: A framework for process drama*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Paris, D. 2011. *Language across difference: Ethnicity, communication, and youth identities in changing urban schools*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Power, B. M., J. D. Wilhelm, and K. Chandler, eds. 1997. *Reading Stephen King: Issues of censorship, student choice, and popular literature*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Prendergast, M., and J. Saxton, eds. 2009. *Applied theatre: International case studies and challenges for practice*. Bristol, UK: Intellect.
- Schneider, J. J., T. P. Crumpler, and T. Rodgers. 2006. *Process drama and multiple literacies: Addressing social, cultural, and ethical issues*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Silverstein, S. 1964. *The giving tree*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Swartz, L., and D. Nyman. 2010. *Drama schemes, themes and dreams: How to plan, structure, and assess classroom events that engage young adolescent learners*. Markham, Ontario: Pembroke.

Wilhelm, J. D. 2004. *Reading is seeing: Learning to visualize scenes, characters, ideas, and text worlds to improve comprehension and reflective reading*. New York: Scholastic.

———. 2008. *“You gotta BE the book”’: Teaching engaged and reflective reading with adolescents*. 2nd ed. New York: Teachers College Press.

BIODATA:

Beth Murray, PhD, is Assistant Professor of and coordinates the program in Theatre Education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Years as a public-school theatre teacher, a teaching artist, a program development facilitator, and a playwright/author for young audiences undergird her current research and creative activity.

Spencer Salas, PhD, is Associate Professor in the Department of Middle, Secondary, and K–12 Education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Michele Ni Thoghda is the Chief Supervisor for English with the Ministry of Education, Oman. Prior to her current position, she has worked as a teacher, teacher trainer, supervisor, and department head in various countries. Her areas of specialization are young learners, development drama, and literacy.