

Short Plays
for English Learners

INTRODUCING ROB

Has Lola finally met Mr Right?



by Alice Savage

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FOREWORD

There is probably little need for me to present and extrapolate on the manifold benefits of the use of drama in the English language teaching classroom but it is worth mentioning that there is a body of research which shows how much well-organised theatrical events can improve student-centred learning, encourage collaboration amongst peers and increase exposure to consistent real-world language. Of course the process isn't magical and all concerned must be engaged and challenged to work together for the ultimate aim of generating a work of art together and that's exactly what Alice Savage's handiwork aims at.

Alice Savage provides a much-needed response to the lack of dramatic material which is already prepared for classroom use, as opposed to adaptations of already existing plays or creating productions from other types of literature. The author has cleverly relieved busy teachers of the drudgery of changing a masterpiece into something English learners can access by creating her own mini masterpieces which are already accessible and graded or gradable.

Not only are her plays beautifully crafted in terms of the scripting but they also carry important messages which are perfectly aimed at the age group for which these works are intended. Significantly, these tenets are not presented in obvious or condescending ways but are a subtle by-product of the story line.

The stories themselves are engaging page-turners with the reader (and presumably the audience) waiting with bated breath to see how the situation might be resolved. Sometimes, in the style of the best mysteries, there is no obvious resolution, which naturally motivates players and indeed audiences to consider and discuss a possible solution.

As well as the plays themselves, the Alphabet Publishing support website (<http://www.alphabetpublishingbooks.com/istd>) provides numerous aids for students and teachers to access before, during and after the production, once again supporting the teacher in what is a thoroughly worthwhile endeavour: drama in the English language teaching classroom.

There is invaluable advice on how to approach a production as well as extremely useful information on the use of language, pronunciation, pragmatics and more. There is a plethora of materials attached to the

plays themselves which will guide teacher and students into some vital development.

It is worth noting that being involved in such drama activities, whether as actor, prompter, stage hand, director or whatever, the benefits to language development are clear but there is no doubt that there are considerable advantages in terms of personal growth too. Shy students can become more self-assured, bossy students more collaborative, disruptive students more focused and students with poor self-esteem can become more confident.

I imagine that teachers will welcome this innovative addition to their resource library and probably be waiting impatiently for the next play in the series!

*Steve Hirschhorn
Budapest, Hungary
January 2019*

TO THE STUDENT

This play is full of conversations. When you work with a script, you get to try out these conversations. You can become someone else for a short period of time. You can say what they say, feel how they feel, and want what they want. If you like the way a character says something, you can take that phrase and use in your own life.

Two sisters make very different choices in the play, *Introducing Rob*. Cassie is a cheery, traditional mother with a husband and children. The more serious Lola, on the other hand, has put much of her life into her career at a tech company. So when Lola finally brings a man home to meet the family, Cassie and their parents are delighted. Yet, all is not what it seems, and Cassie becomes more and more alarmed at the prospect of having Rob for a brother-in-law.

Of course, creating that performance may take a bit of work. You'll need to practice pronunciation and speak with the emotion of your character. At the back of the book, you'll find some support. **Production Support** has specific ideas for structuring your work and troubleshooting. **Pronunciation Tips for Actors** helps you develop strategies for working on the sounds and rhythm of English, and other suggestions for preparing your play. Finally, there is a list of **Theater Vocabulary** with commonly used words and terms.

Finally, there are many additional supporting materials and teaching ideas on the Short Plays for English web page on the Alphabet Publishing website, <http://www.alphabetpublishingbooks.com/spel>. You will find engaging activities and icebreakers for getting comfortable with your classmates as well as some monologues and short sketches that you can use for practice.

And if you like this play, you might want to try another one. There's something magical about performing a story with an audience, and people often want to continue. In fact, there's even an expression for it: You've got the theater bug.

Alice Savage

PREVIEW

Technology and new inventions are changing our lives, but some things stay the same. One custom is meeting the parents of a future spouse.

What do you think that is going to be like for you? Or what was it like to meet the parents of your current partner or spouse?

Language

Match the word or expressions with its meaning.

1. ___ I'm self-conscious.
 2. ___ make a good impression
 3. ___ a spoiled child
 4. ___ devoted to her family
 5. ___ put pressure on someone
 6. ___ speaking of great
 7. ___ I take it you're not a fan.
 8. ___ Something about him gives me the creeps.
 9. ___ He'll grow on you.
 10. ___ I'll let it go.
- a. *She will do anything for her relatives.*
 - b. *You'll like him more over time.*
 - c. *I won't argue about this anymore.*
 - d. *I feel uncomfortable around other people.*
 - e. *I guess you do not like something.*
 - f. *People like you when they meet you.*
 - g. *try to make someone do something*
 - h. *What you said reminds me of another good thing.*
 - i. *I don't know why, but I don't trust him.*
 - j. *a boy or girl who gets whatever they want.*

Answers: 1. d 2. f 3. j 4. a 5. g 6. h 7. e 8. i 9. b 10. c

A PLAY

INTRODUCING ROB

SETTING

A town in New England in North America, in the near future. It is late fall.

CAST (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Genders can be changed as needed.

LOLA: A career woman

ROB: Lola's colleague

MYRTLE: Retired. Lola and Cassie's mother

GEORGE: Retired. Lola and Cassie's father

CASSIE: A homemaker. Lola's younger sister.

SCENE 1: Late afternoon: Lola and Rob are in a car. Lola is driving.

LOLA: What is it, Rob?

ROB: It's just . . . Are you sure they're going to like me?

LOLA: Of course they'll like you. They'll love you. You're perfect.

ROB: No, I'm not. I smell funny. Everyone says so.

LOLA: You don't smell funny. Why do you say that?

ROB: Other people say so.

LOLA: Like who?

ROB: Like Tina. It makes me self-conscious.

LOLA: Don't be self-conscious.

ROB: But you said being a little self-conscious is okay.

LOLA: A little bit is cute. You can look down at the floor once in a while.

ROB: I do want to make a good impression. Do you want me to drive? I can drive. If I am driving, will that look good?

LOLA: It doesn't really matter because they'll be inside. They won't see who's driving.

ROB: Tell me about the farmhouse.

LOLA: Well, it's big and white. It's got a lot of windows facing south... to catch the winter sun.

ROB: Okay! Now what else do I need to know?

LOLA: Well, watch out for my sister. She'll be very suspicious of you.

ROB: She doesn't know about me?

LOLA: Well she knows a little. Not everything.

ROB: Gee whiz, I feel like I'm being inspected.

LOLA: I'm sorry, but there's no way around it.

ROB: Should I talk a lot or a little?

LOLA: Well, good question. Let me think about that. (*She pauses*) How about you be a really good listener? Get them telling you stories about the family. Everyone loves a good listener.

ROB: Even your sister?

LOLA: Especially my sister. I'm hoping Cassie's not there, but if she is, just ask questions. She'll think you adore me.

ROB: I do adore you.

LOLA: Aww, thanks, Rob. So, yeah. Just say things like, "What was Lola like when she was a little girl." Then laugh every once in a while.

ROB: Okay. "What was Lola like as a little girl?"

LOLA: Yes,

ROB: Ha ha ha ha ha!

LOLA: Okay, that'll do. And my dad likes sports, so you can talk about sports.

ROB: No problem there. I excel at sports talk. How about your mother?

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT FOR ACTORS

Answer the questions as your character. Then discuss your answers with your scene partners.

1. What do I want at the beginning of the play?

2. What is stopping me? (Do I have a fear, an enemy, a hardship, or some other obstacle?)

3. What strategy or strategies do I use to try and achieve my goals? (They can be positive or negative.)

4. How do the events in the play change me?

5. What do I learn by the end of the play?

Other Notes

PRAGMATICS

Sharing feelings and showing empathy

When people talk about their emotions, it can make them feel closer to others. When responding to someone sharing an emotion, people often use familiar expressions to show understanding and encouragement.

Sharing a feeling	Responding with empathy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I have to admit, I'm a little nervous. ● I've been feeling kind of anxious lately. ● I feel self-conscious when I talk to strangers. ● I'm pretty stressed out right now. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I know how you feel. ● That's perfectly understandable. ● Of course, I'd feel the same way if I were you. ● I thought maybe something was bothering you. Do you want to talk about it?

A. Find a scene in the play where someone shares feelings and another character or characters respond. Discuss the pragmatics. What is the outcome of sharing a feeling? Do the characters become closer or not?

B. Practice the language used in the scenes you found in part A in one of the roleplays below. A has a concern, and B is a helpful friend, classmate or coworker.

1. A is worried about passing a driver's license test.
2. A has taken too many classes and is overwhelmed with homework.
3. A sometimes has had a lot of difficult customers at her/his job lately.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The following advice and suggestions come from professional theatre and pronunciation experts.

Tablework

Read the whole play and talk to your classmates about the story. What does it make you think about? What is your opinion about the ending? Would you handle the situation differently?

Talk about the characters and take notes. How do the different people in the play change? What do they realize as they experience the events in the story? Do some people change more than others? Also, think about which character is most like you or people you know. Or, who is different from you? In what way?

Get comfortable performing in front of your classmates. Work in pairs and groups to play drama games. Say your lines with different emotions or try to show where you are simply by the way you move. Then get other students to guess the situation. Have fun, and don't be afraid to be silly.

Preparation

Think about how you will produce the play. Depending on the number of students in the class, you can have two or even three casts. You can also create new characters who can perform a monologue at the beginning. Or you can write in new scenes.

If you don't have enough students for two or three separate casts, some actors can participate in more than one performance. Finally, you might consider doing plays in repertory, which means some students perform a different play in the series. Or if some students are feeling creative, you might write a prequel or sequel to perform separately.

Once you've organized your approach, choose a role or audition for one. Remember the students with the biggest roles will have the most work, so think about how much you can commit to the process. Then once your role is assigned, use a highlighter to mark your part. This will help as you prepare your script for working with other actors. Use the extra space on the page to make notes about your character, your feelings, and move-

THEATER VOCABULARY

The following words and concepts can be helpful as you prepare to produce your show.

Actor/actress Actors (male or female) and actresses (female) are the performers who become other people in order to act out a story for an audience. Who are you in this play?

Audience The people who watch a play. Sometimes they are called audience members. The audience members might laugh or take a deep breath during the play, but they do not interrupt the show.

Audition An actor who wants to be in a play must try out for a part in an audition. During an audition, the director may ask the actor to read a monologue (a short speech spoken to the audience) or a scene with another actor. The director offers the part to the actor whom they think will play that role the best.

Backstory The characters in a play represent people with a past, a childhood, a family and other details that are not always in the script. Actors and directors sometimes imagine those details to help them decide how the characters will act. What is your character's history?

Blocking Blocking involves the way characters in a play stand, sit, walk, where they move, and who they look at. What will you do with your body during the play?

Character A play usually has two or more characters. They want or need something to happen, and their actions and words tell the story of how they try to get it. Who is your character and what does he or she want?

Costumes Costumes are the clothing that the actor wears to look like the character. A character's clothing is a part of that character's story. What clothing will best show your character's personality? What will you wear as this character?

Curtain (call) A curtain is the piece of fabric that hides the stage, but it also indicates the end of the show when it closes. A curtain call is the bow you take at the end of the play.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



ALICE SAVAGE comes from a theatrical family, but she strayed from that path to become an English-language teacher.

However, she could not escape her past. After many happy years in the classroom, she eventually came to realize that theater offers a great way to learn a language.

She now lives in the most international city in the U.S., Houston, Texas, where she teaches, writes, and produces plays with her students at Lone Star College.

In addition to the Integrated Skills Through Drama series, Alice has books with Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, and Wayzgoose Press.

More Drama at Alphabet Publishing

alphabetpublishingbooks.com/scripts

Short Plays

These 15-minute plays provide a script with vocabulary and pragmatics support and are suitable for a drama class or a short theater module.

Just Desserts: A foodie drama about a chef gone bad

Introducing Rob: Lola's family is thrilled about her new boyfriend. Until they actually meet him.

Strange Medicine: Who decides what the truth is?.

Colorado Ghost Story: Two exchange students make trouble in the old West.

The Drama Book

This teacher's guide is designed for teachers who want to try drama in their English classrooms but don't know where to start. It contains monologues, sketches, and scripts, as well as activities and teacher support—everything you need to go from drama games and pronunciation activities to a full production!

ISTD Coursebooks

These coursebooks contain a complete curriculum with background readings, vocabulary and pragmatics exercises, writing, pronunciation activities, and more to support the production of a 20-30 minute one-act play as an elective or module in an oral skill class.

Her Own Worst Enemy A serious comedy about choosing a major.

Only the Best Intentions A love triangle between a guy a girl and a game

Rising Water A stormy drama about what happens to people in a crisis

“...provides students with ample opportunities to practise using language in a variety of situations. . . . they’ll be having so much fun that they won’t even realise that they are learning!”

—David Farmer, NILE training consultant, director, and author

The Short Plays for English Learners series makes it easy to bring drama into the classroom. These original plays were written to expose students to real-world language and authentic situations, while also engaging them in a real page-turner!

Introducing Rob is about a woman who is dedicated to her career. So her family is excited that she’s bringing home a boyfriend. Until they meet him.

As students read, practice, and perform plays, they learn:

- cultural contexts
- conversational moves
- intonation and body language
- high frequency lexical phrases and grammar patterns

These scripts are short enough for a project in a speaking class, but expandable to fill a whole elective class, drama unit, or theater club production.

Learn more at alphabetspublishingbooks.com/istd

