

DIGITAL THEATRE+

VIRTUAL LEARNING LESSON PLAN
DRAMA/THEATRE



A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

BY ARTHUR MILLER

LESSON PLAN LENGTH: 60 MINUTES
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand how a Greek chorus/narrator is used to highlight key themes in a play, with specific reference to Alfieri
- Explore the delivery of two speeches which deal with key themes in the play
- Analyse the opening address from the play and consider different interpretations for an audience
- Explore moments in which the narrator becomes involved in the action

This lesson plan assumes prior knowledge of the plot; links to a comprehensive plot summary can be found in Further Viewing below.

To teach this lesson, you will need the following resources:

- [English File: A View from the Bridge | BBC Studios](#)
- [A View from the Bridge | L.A. Theatre Works \(Audio Theatre\)](#)

Other materials:

- Your class text of *A View from the Bridge* to refer to page numbers for specific extracts (pages quoted here are from the Methuen Student Edition).
- Alternatively, provide the text for the opening speech of Act 1 from “You wouldn’t have known it” to “watched it run its bloody course.”
- You will also require the later speech in Act 1, from “It was at this time he first came to me” to “and so I waited here.”
- Students will require paper (preferably blank) and a pen/pencil.

Further viewing (from Digital Theatre+ for extension activities):

- [A Concise Introduction to Arthur Miller](#)
- [A View from the Bridge DramaWorks Practical Guide](#) (a comprehensive plot summary can be found on pp.5-6)
- [A View from the Bridge Practical Workshop Guide](#)
- [Arthur Miller BBC Studios Documentary](#)
- [English File: Red Hook Not Sicily - A View from the Bridge BBC Studios Documentary](#)

Keeping students and teachers safe during remote education is essential. Please ensure any online platform you are using to communicate or coordinate with students is suitable for their age group and check privacy settings. For further information, see the [NSPCC guidance](#).

For further resources to help you teach *A View from the Bridge*, including a [full-length production](#) and [Practical Workshop Guide](#), visit www.digitaltheatreplus.com

EXERCISE 1

STORYTELLING

Assignment/Discussion:

- Create a mind map identifying the function of a narrator and how it is the same/different to a Greek chorus. Consider the impact on the audience – what they might think and feel in response to what a narrator or chorus does and says.
 - Students should also consider how many times a narrator/chorus can interrupt the dramatic action in order to speak directly to the audience before it becomes a hindrance to the action.
 - What plays and/or stories can they think of where a narrator has been particularly important to the narrative?
- If you are able to meet virtually, this can be developed as a discussion activity where students can create a set of expectations for how the character of Alfieri might be used in the play.
- Alternatively, students can create this mind map independently and send it to you electronically. A collaborative document that records further thoughts and analysis of Alfieri as students progress through the play might also be helpful.



ESTIMATED TIME:
10 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is to highlight the use of a non-naturalistic device. Arthur Miller uses the character of Alfieri at key moments in the play to frame the action, as well as interact with Eddie as a voice of reason.

This task can also develop prior learning about the role of the Greek chorus.

EXERCISE 2

THE LAW

- Provide students with a link to the [BBC Studios production](#). They should watch Alfieri's opening address to the audience (0:00:00-0:04:15).
- Guide students to consider not only how Alfieri delivers his lines but also what is happening in the background as he does so.
- Remind students that this is a tragedy. How does this impact our understanding of why Arthur Miller includes him at the opening of the play?

Assignment/Discussion:

- Paying attention to the stage directions at the beginning of Act 1 (p.3), provide a series of instructions for the actors in the background who react to Alfieri.
 - What do they do whilst Alfieri addresses the audience, and why?
 - Do they stop what they are doing and watch him? Do they create a tableau?
- If exploring this in a virtual classroom, one person might read Alfieri's line. A nominated 'director' should then say "STOP!" and explain their ideas. Everybody else in the conference call should then adopt what has been suggested. For example, "everyone should stand and glare at Alfieri as he walks past".
- Encourage students to use technical terms and to be as specific as possible so that they are verbally practising what they need to do in written exams when explaining what actors do/did in a particular performance.
- If this is an assignment, a three-paragraph response could be written and submitted electronically.
- Students should also consider the way in which the actor playing Alfieri delivers his lines. Does he look at/make eye contact with the other characters or only at the audience?



ESTIMATED TIME:
20 MINUTES

The aim of this task is to encourage students to consider the visual element of this scene. Whilst Alfieri provides verbal information, the way in which other characters respond to him will also provide cues as to how the law is regarded in the neighbourhood.

For more able students, this will also extend their insight into Alfieri's background (an immigrant himself) and his decision to represent a particular demographic within his law practice.

EXERCISE 3

THE VOICE OF REASON

- Guide students towards Alfieri's first interaction with Eddie (p.38, "It was at this time he first came to me" to p.44 "And so I waited here.") Ideally, they should read this extract. It can also be found in the [BBC Studios production](#) from 0:46:58-0:54:45 and in the [L.A. Theatre Works production](#) from 0:40:40-0:48:52).

Assignment/Discussion:

- Ask students to consider whether they feel sympathy for Eddie at this point in the play and justify their answers.
- Students should explain their response to the text and then consider how they would perform in order to elicit that reaction in an audience, making specific reference to facial expression, vocal skills and body language. If your online learning platform allows, ask two students to perform a section of this scene (as a radio play if movement is not an option). Other students can then evaluate the success of this short performance.
- As with other activities in this lesson plan, this task can be explored in a video-conference as a practical activity, a debate or as a written or recorded video assignment to be submitted electronically.

ESTIMATED TIME:
15 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is for students to consider whether Eddie is a likeable and/or tragic character. Arthur Miller talks in various documentaries (see Further Viewing) about making the hero an ordinary man, as opposed to the kings of Greek tragedy.

The task also assists students in understanding Alfieri's dual role, and the way in which he represents the law.

More able students may be able to make the distinction between the 'old' law of Sicily and the 'new' way of life in America, and how Alfieri tries to help Eddie understand the difference.

EXERCISE 4

DESIGNING THE SET

- Read aloud the stage directions from the beginning of the play (p.3) with your students, or guide them to that section of the text.
- As you read aloud, students should sketch the set on paper, labelling it as they do so. If you're doing this in a virtual conference call, students could hold up their sketches and compare theirs with others.
- Question them as to the similarities and/or differences between their sketches. Why might Arthur Miller have been so specific?
- If this task is done offline, students can sketch and then upload/send a photograph of their work to you electronically. Colour should be added if students do this work offline, as an important reminder of how it is used to communicate information to an audience about period/setting/wealth etc.

Assignment/Discussion:

- Discuss how the set helps define Alfieri's role in this play. Notice that Alfieri both begins and ends the play with his comments, and he refers to watching and waiting several times throughout the play.
- Ask students to explain verbally (or note down) how they would direct the actor playing Alfieri to use the set. For example, when he is not directly involved in the action, or addressing the audience, is he in his office watching, or is he offstage? Students should justify their answers by referring to what they want their audience to **think** and **feel** in response to what Alfieri does and say.



ESTIMATED TIME:
15 MINUTES

The aim of this task is to highlight to students that this play presents the action within the frame of Alfieri's experience and memory. The audience watches the play alongside Alfieri and so his visibility on stage even in the moments where he is not involved in the action can be key to creating a specific relationship with the audience.

Students will find it beneficial to track where Alfieri is 'narrator', where he is 'character' and any moments where the boundaries between the two are blurred.

EXTRA TASKS

- Assign Alfieri's closing speech to students to learn and perform, focussing on facial expression, voice and body language. They can film it and send it to you via a secure method (remind students to use a neutral background to ensure safeguarding practices are adhered to.)
- Students would benefit from watching the [BBC Studios Documentary](#) on Arthur Miller, and the contextual documentary [English File: Red Hook Not Sicily - A View from the Bridge](#) to create a solid foundation of knowledge for the specification requirements.

The estimated time required for these extension tasks can be set according to your knowledge of your specific students.

The aim of this exercise is for students to explore different interpretations of Alfieri's character in the final moments of the play, using performance skills to achieve this.

For further resources to help you teach ***A View from the Bridge***, including a **full-length production**, and **Practical Workshop Guide**, visit **www.digitaltheatreplus.com**

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