

DIGITAL THEATRE+

VIRTUAL LEARNING LESSON PLAN
ENGLISH



A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

BY ARTHUR MILLER

LESSON PLAN LENGTH: 60 MINUTES
WRITTEN BY: SUSIE FERGUSON

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
- 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
- Develop inference and deduction skills linked to social, cultural and historical context

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? You may also wish to open this discussion up into a question of narrative voice, and reliable vs unreliable narrators.
- 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:

- In his opening speech, Alfieri provides a considerable amount of context to explain what the audience will experience during the play. Using quotations from Alfieri's opening speech (p.3-4), explain how Miller prepares us for the action of the play.
- If you're exploring this in a video conference format, one student could choose a quotation and nominate another student to explain what it suggests about the lives of the people in the play. That person then 'bounces' another different quotation from the same speech to someone else who follows up with some analysis about this new quotation, and so on. As a teacher, your role is to develop answers and rectify any misconceptions.
- If you're exploring this as an offline assignment, students could write 3-4 paragraphs to be sent to you electronically.



ESTIMATED TIME:

20 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is for students to deduce and infer the social and historical issues that underpin the action of the play. The major themes which they might extract include crime, illegal immigration, secrecy and suspicion, attitudes towards the law, loyalty, changes between the past and the present. This task is differentiated by outcome.

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 responses using quotations from the text and provide analysis of the language to justify their response.
- 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.

Extension task/homework:

- Ask students to respond in writing to the following question: "How does Miller create a sense of foreboding in this extract?"



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? Students may need a reminder of terminology in terms of stage right, stage left, upstage, downstage etc.
- 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.
- Students should focus on the final moments of the play (from p.79, or 01:38:48 of the [BBC Studios production](#)).
- Divide the class in half. Half should argue **for** and half should argue **against** the following statement: "Alfieri should not emerge from the crowd (as per the final stage direction), but should remain separate from the action by standing away from the rest of the characters to deliver his final speech."
- If this task is being done offline, students could create a two-column document summarising their thoughts.



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

- For more able students, ask them to consider how the play would change if Alfieri did not directly address the audience.
 - How would this change the audience's view of Arthur Miller's message in the play?
 - Is there anything that still needs to be explained through the action if Alfieri did not narrate? If so, write a short scene that would fulfil this. If you do not think the play would be altered without Alfieri's direct address, justify your response in a short written response.
- 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 to ensure that students are fully aware of the function of Alfieri, and the way in which Arthur Miller has moved away from unity of time and place but keeps the one plot (unity of action).

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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