The Great Depression Experience –3-day Residency

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What was it like to live through the Great Depression? How did families cope, adapt, and even stay together? In “The Depression Experience,” a three-day in-class workshop program, actor and storyteller Barry Stewart Mann employs the tools of drama – oral interpretation, character development, improvisation, and dramatic writing – to bring this defining period of U.S. history into gripping focus. On Day One, Barry will use primary sources from the era, sharing ordinary people’s experiences and leading students in dramatic readings of authentic personal narratives. On Day Two, the class experiences the Depression through the lens of an imagined family, improvising a series of family dinners that document their downward spiral into destitution. Each student becomes a family member who keeps a journal of the family’s fortunes interpreted through his or her own feelings and responses. Teachers then work with the students to improve their journal entries with the enhancement of details, figurative language, and uplifted vocabulary. On Day Three, Barry will guide the students to select and, in small groups, present a short excerpt from their Depression journal that reflects quality writing choices; the readings will be done in character, and are video-recorded for sharing. Through “The Depression Experience”, students will have a deeper appreciation of both the Great Depression and the processes of narrative writing and expressive performance.

SS5H5 The student will explain how the Great Depression and New Deal affected the lives of millions of Americans.

TAES5.3 Acting by developing, communicating, and sustaining roles within a variety of situations and environments

Day 1 – Depression Diaries (Diary Entries)

Warm Up :5

B shows Photo Essay with readings :10

B & T perform monologues :5

B shares diary selections – students read aloud to selves : 5

Drama instruction – use of voice/Voice Dial :10

 Expression = volume, pace, articulation, pitch, inflection

Students practice – read with a partner :5

Volunteers come to read, with/without costume pieces :10

Day 2 – Depression Family meal (Costume Pieces, Journals)

Warm up :5

Introduce story: A family of farmers. Family/Parents’ names :5

Distribute diary pages. Select name/age. Make Name plate :5

TA as father, T as mother, talking to family over dinner. With each group, share news, discuss, hear kids’ thoughts, ideas, worries, etc.

1 – Notice that mortgage is overdue – Letter 1 :10

2 – Bank is foreclosing, moving into town, need to pack & sort, send one son away, no holiday presents – Letter 2 :10

3 – Father going away, little food, avoid using electricity, small apartment with shared bathroom – Bus Ticket :10

4 – Father hopping train to CA, family to a Shantytown – Note :10

Day 3 – Our Diaries (Costume Pieces, backdrop

Warm-up w/Depression vocab and several statues :5

Select 1-2 sentences from 1 entry, revise as needed :5

Introduce and model tableau :5

Poll for selections by date – set groups :5

Group work – set order, create statues, practice :10

Add date for each group, name & age for each entry :5

Record :15

Reflect :5