



**Muse Machine 2023 Summer Institute-Inspired Lesson Plan**

## **North(ern) Light Bulb Moments**

**Developed by Audrey Miller**

**The Miami Valley School**

**Dayton, OH**

### **Introduction:**

When ELA teachers ask students to explore impactful moments in their lives, it is usually through a written reflection. Audrey Miller from The Miami Valley School, however, offers students the opportunity to portray their understanding through elements of the stage. In this lesson, she uses Moment Work, an approach to theatrical storytelling created by Tectonic Theater Project, that she learned at Muse Machine's 2023 Summer Institute. After journaling about an impactful moment in their lives, students explore how light can be used to depict the meaning of that moment. Then the experimentation is applied to their class novel, *North*, as students work in groups to portray an impactful moment for each of the main characters. This lesson offers a kinesthetic approach that requires experimentation and problem-solving that not only enlightens students' understanding of character, but also reveals how an artist can harness elements of the stage to create meaning.

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**Teacher:** Audrey Miller, The Miami Valley School

**Title:** North(ern) Light Bulb Moments

**Subject Area & Grade Level:** American Authors, 11<sup>th</sup> Grade English

**Date of Implementation:** Fall 2023

**Inspiration:** Tectonic Theater Project’s devising process, Moment Work

## OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON

### *Summary:*

This lesson explores the element of light as a storytelling device. Students previously wrote in their journals about one impactful moment from their past. During this lesson, they will take part in a discussion about how light can be used to tell a story and then investigate how to do it. Students will play with light sources (previously collected) to recreate the story of the moment they wrote about in their journals. Future lessons will be used to discuss sound, costume, props, and text, and students will be encouraged to experiment with these elements to enhance their impactful moments. Then students will use these ideas and skills to recreate an impactful moment from the class text *North* by Brad Kessler.

### *Standards:*

- **RL.9-10.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning, mood, and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place or an emotion; how it sets a formal or informal tone).
- **RL.9-10.2** Analyze literary text development. Determine a theme of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details.
- **RL.11-12.1** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

### *Objectives/Outcomes:*

1. Students will explore and investigate how to use various theatrical elements (sound, light, costume, props) to tell a story.
2. Students will be able to apply these techniques to explore important moments in the lives of the characters in the Dayton Literary Peace Prize finalist novel *North* by Brad Kessler.
3. Students will work together in small groups to determine which moment is most important and then reconstruct this impactful moment through light.

By creating an impactful moment, students can:

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- gain an appreciation for the value of a single moment in the arc of a narrative.
- connect to the importance of feelings and mood as created by theatrical elements.
- critically evaluate and prioritize plot elements key to character development.
- further establish trust in their peers by working together in a small group situation.
- gain confidence in their ability to perform in front of others.
- develop empathy for peers and people unlike them by closely studying a fictional character.

### *Teaching Approach(es):*

Full group lecture/collaboration, small group work, formal presentations, and student reflection

### *Assessment Tool(s):*

Teacher observation, presentation/performance, rubric

## LESSON PREPARATION

### *Teacher Needs:*

#### Teacher Context & Research

- Read [\*Moment Work: Tectonic Theater Project's Process of Devising Theater\* by Moises Kaufman and Barbara Pitts McAdams](#) (pp. 34-106 in the Kindle edition, especially pp. 78-79)

#### Helpful Hints

1. I did some pre-work by asking students to write about an impactful moment in their lives in an earlier journal. We shared several of these out loud including mine.
2. Students were asked to bring in items from home. They were cautioned not to bring anything they would need or that was deeply personal or valuable.
3. I also separated students into one of three groups ahead of time based on the three main characters in the book. Each group will create a moment.

### *Student Needs:*

#### Prior Knowledge

Students should have finished reading *North*. Students should understand what “impactful” means.

#### Student Voice

Student voices will be heard through their choices of moments and by how they recreate them through their performances.

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## Vocabulary

- *moment*: Tectonic Theater Project’s unit of theatrical time, expressed as “I begin... I end”

## EVIDENCE OF OUTCOMES

Students will be assessed on their contributions prior to and during their performance, and their written reflection afterward.

## ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

Students can recognize how the use of theatrical elements can portray and enhance an author’s intent and an audience’s perception. Students will understand that stories can be told without words, and more importantly that we use all our senses to derive meaning. Non-textual elements, such as light, can be used to evoke powerful emotions and create moods that shape and solidify our understanding of a text. Students can become aware of other situations in their lives when light, color, sound, etc., influence how they think or feel about a story.

## LEARNING PLAN

**Essential Questions:** How can light be used to “shed a light” on a story? Why is light an essential element in storytelling?

### Resources/Materials:

- Sufficient copies of class text *North* by Brad Kessler
- Laptop with internet access
- [Pixar Lamp Animation](#)
- [“Lamp”](#) by David Smith
- [Moment Work planning handout](#)

### [\(provided by students\)](#)

- Light sources
- Props
- Costumes
- Sound sources

### Pre-Class Writing Prompt:

In an earlier class, students were assigned to write about an impactful moment from their lives.

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### Hook:

Students will enter a darkened classroom. The teacher will use various light sources to create a spotlight effect on him or herself. (Keep the focus on the light and not on changing your facial expressions.) Ask students probing questions such as, "How does this light affect the mood?," "How does it change the feeling?" or "What emotion do you think this person is feeling?" (See pg. 78-79 in the Moment Work text for a description of how light sources can be explored in unconventional ways.)

### Main Lesson Narrative/Sequence:

1. Play: Teacher will spotlight him or herself (see "hook" above) and propose questions to the class.
2. Watch: Everyone will watch the Pixar Light Animation clip.
3. Ask: What kinds of light are used in plays/movies/life? What does that light do [help to tell a story]? How does it accomplish that task [by creating mood, drawing attention to something, etc.]?
4. Watch: Everyone will watch the short film "Lamp" by David Smith. Point out where and how light is used to tell the story. Prompt students to make their own observations.
5. Create: The teacher will share his or her own journal response to the introductory writing prompt. As a class, discuss the essential elements of the impactful moment and then create a plan for how to tell that story through light. If time allows, students may also create a light story for their own journal response.
6. Play: Divide students into groups by character (Sahro, Teddy, Fr. Christopher). In groups, students will select an impactful moment from the novel for that character and explore ways to recreate the moment through light.
7. Write: Students will generate a group document and write up the plan for their light story ([student examples](#)).
8. Perform: Students will perform their light stories for the class.

(Additional class periods introduce new elements: props, costumes, sound and text.)

### Demonstration of Learning:

Students will perform their light story for the class. They will demonstrate imaginative and effective use of their light source(s) in communicating the mood, feelings, character development, and key plot points of their selected moment.

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Ultimately, students will explore several additional theatrical storytelling elements: props, costumes, sound and text. Students will learn how to layer these elements together to create a richer, fuller performance of their character’s “impactful moment.”

### **Final Review:**

The teacher will know from observing the students’ group work, class discussion, written plans, and final performances whether students achieved the desired outcomes.

## LESSON REFLECTION

Students will write a short reflection to address what they learned from the assignment, how it benefited their understanding of the novel, and ways in which their experience could have been enhanced.

Several examples from my class are attached:

[Student Reflection #1](#)

[Student Reflection #2](#)

[Student Reflection #3](#)

[Student Reflection #4](#)