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Introduction

Some Strategies to Maximize the Effectiveness of Plays

1. **Open with the Vocabulary Activity.** Each unit has a vocabulary practice worksheet. Completing this exercise before acting out the play prepares students for difficult words and helps them make sense of the content. It can also be a good idea to practice pronouncing these words as a class.
2. **Read stage directions aloud during the play.** This reminds students of what to do and allows you to direct while you read.
3. **Consider assigning yourself the narrator's role.** Due to the number of high-level vocabulary words, the job of the narrator can be tough for many students. If a student is going to play the part, make sure he or she is a strong reader.
4. **Give students time to highlight or practice their lines.** This could be done for homework or at the beginning of class.
5. **Choose a lead who is extroverted and a good reader.** Both qualities in a lead help to make the play more enjoyable and fluid.
6. **Assign roles ahead of class.** Although it can be fun to have students lobby for certain parts, preassigned roles make for a calmer start. Also, if you need to assign two roles to one person, it gives you time to make sure they aren't in overlapping scenes.
7. **Read through the play with room set-up in mind.** You will want to think ahead of time about where some scenes will take place and what extra furniture you might want at the front of the room.
8. **Be sensitive to student responses to stage directions.** One of the most fun aspects of these plays is students acting out stage directions (running, high fiving, dropping to the floor, etc.). That being said, some students will be reticent, particularly if the directions require contact between girls and boys. These situations can't be totally planned for since girls often end up playing boys' parts. Be flexible and conscious of this while students act out their parts. Students will let you know what parts they don't want to do.
9. **Facilitate a discussion about historical accuracy.** It can be helpful to remind students that even though the dialogue and some of the actions are fictional, everything is based on historical facts.

10. **Perform the play twice.** Often, students want to perform the play again. Not only does this give them another opportunity to hear and learn about the history, but the plays also run more smoothly the next time through. It can also be fun to allow students to trade parts for the second show.
11. **Edit the plays on the included CD.** Add to or change the plays to better fit your class's focus. You also might want to edit some of the vocabulary to minimize students stumbling over words.

Common Core Standards

Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies » Grades 6–8

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8 Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.10 By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies » Grades 6–8

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

English Language Arts Standards in Speaking and Listening » Grade 8

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.2 Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.3 Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

English Language Arts Standards in Writing » Grade 8

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

Overthrow This!

America's Role in the Regime Changes of Iran and Guatemala

Characters

- Narrator
- Alien
- U.S. President
- U.S. Vice President
- Corrupt Guy
- British Oil Company Owner
- Mosaddegh
- Dwight D. Eisenhower
- John Foster Dulles
- British Intelligence Agent
- Kermit Roosevelt
- Iranian Journalist
- Iranian Politician
- Iranian Religious Leader
- Iranian Thug 1
- Iranian Thug 2
- Shah
- George Washington
- Sam the Banana Man
- Arbenz
- CIA Agent
- Guatemalan Wife
- Guatemalan Husband
- Hostage Taker
- Jimmy Carter
- Husband
- Wife
- Random Guatemalan Guy on My Couch

scene 1. Aliens Attack!

ALIEN, U.S. PRESIDENT, U.S. VICE PRESIDENT, and CORRUPT GUY *stand at the front of the room.*

U.S. PRESIDENT. (*Shakes ALIEN's hand.*) Nice to meet you. What can I do for you?

ALIEN. I want all of your pinecones.

U.S. PRESIDENT. I think we can handle that. Why do you want them?

ALIEN. We'll sell them to a neighboring planet. We'll give you 10 percent of the profits.

U.S. PRESIDENT. Sweet!

Five years later.

U.S. PRESIDENT. So about this pinecone deal . . .

ALIEN. Is there a problem?

U.S. PRESIDENT. Well, you're kind of destroying all of our pine forests.

Overthrow This! Play

ALIEN. (*Impatiently.*) And?

U.S. PRESIDENT. The people from those states aren't happy about that.

ALIEN. And?

U.S. PRESIDENT. I'd like to get reelected.

ALIEN. Not my problem. Anything else?

U.S. PRESIDENT. And we'd like some more money from you for using our resource. Would you be willing to give us 50 percent of your profits?

ALIEN. BEEP!

ALIEN *shoots* U.S. PRESIDENT *with his invisible ray gun*. U.S. PRESIDENT *dematerializes* (*Be creative, U.S. PRESIDENT*).

U.S. VICE PRESIDENT. Where'd he go?

ALIEN. Not important. Are you willing to keep giving me pinecones?

U.S. VICE PRESIDENT. We live in a democracy here. I have to answer to the people too.

ALIEN. Not anymore you don't. BEEP!

ALIEN *shoots* U.S. VICE PRESIDENT *with his ray gun*. U.S. VICE PRESIDENT *dematerializes*.

ALIEN. (*To CORRUPT GUY.*) Hey, you, are you going to get me my pinecones?

CORRUPT GUY. What's in it for me?

ALIEN. Money and power.

CORRUPT GUY. Keep talking.

ALIEN. You get me my pinecones. I'll make you the leader of your country. I'll also give you a cut of my profits so you and your friends can be rich.

CORRUPT GUY. Where do I sign?

ALIEN. One more thing: You'll need to change the country's name to Pineconia.

CORRUPT GUY. No problem. I kind of like how that sounds. Deal?

ALIEN *and* CORRUPT GUY *fist bump*.

ALIEN. Deal.

NARRATOR. Aliens might not have taken over America (yet), and no one has ever been very interested in another country's pinecones. However, there is a long history of foreign governments replacing elected leaders in weaker foreign countries to maintain access to their resources. The United States will be involved in various overthrows during the Cold War. In Iran and Guatemala, the important resources will be oil and bananas, respectively.

scene 2. Overthrow in Iran

MOSADDEGH and BRITISH OIL COMPANY OWNER stand at the front of the room.

MOSADDEGH. So about this oil deal . . .

BRITISH OIL COMPANY OWNER. (*Feel free to use a British accent.*) Blimey! Don't tell me you're going to try to back out on it. You get 16 percent of the profits. We have a deal!

MOSADDEGH. That deal was made in 1901. We're a democracy now, and our people want a fairer deal.

BRITISH OIL COMPANY OWNER. Our country did all the work finding the oil.

MOSADDEGH. We'd pay you back for that. Also, how do we even know we're getting 16 percent? Can we see the records from your company?

BRITISH OIL COMPANY OWNER. No, those are private business records.

MOSADDEGH. Records of money your country is making off my country's oil!

BRITISH OIL COMPANY OWNER. What are you going to do about it?

MOSADDEGH. We're willing to make a deal. The United States just signed an oil deal with Saudi Arabia to split the profits fifty-fifty.

BRITISH OIL COMPANY OWNER. No chance.

MOSADDEGH. Then we'll nationalize and keep all the profits. Are you sure you want to go down this route? Fifty percent of something is much bigger than 84 percent of zero.

BRITISH OIL COMPANY OWNER. Are you threatening me? Do you realize who you're dealing with? Enjoy your job while you have it.

Exit MOSADDEGH and BRITISH OIL COMPANY OWNER. Enter BRITISH INTELLIGENCE AGENT, DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER, and JOHN FOSTER DULLES, who sit in chairs at the front of the room.

Overthrow This! Play

NARRATOR. And so Mosaddegh nationalized the oil company. The British responded by blocking oil tankers from leaving Iran's ports, freezing Iran's currency in British banks, and taking their case to the International Court of Justice (where Britain lost). They also tried to remove Mosaddegh from power, but Mosaddegh discovered the plot and kicked them out. The British no longer had anyone in Iran to perform a coup. They decided to see if America's new president would help out.

BRITISH INTELLIGENCE AGENT. *(Feel free to use a British accent.)* Cheers to winning your election.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER. Thanks. It feels good to be president of the most powerful country in the world.

BRITISH INTELLIGENCE AGENT. No need to rub it in, good chap. But we're not here to talk about how my country is no longer number one. *(Sniffs sadly then gathers himself.)* We have a little problem with this cheeky little country Iran. They've been acting beastly about this oil deal we have with them.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES. We've heard.

BRITISH INTELLIGENCE AGENT. We thought your country might be interested in helping us replace their leader with one a bit more . . . accommodating.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES. What's in it for us?

BRITISH INTELLIGENCE AGENT. Iran has a lot of oil.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER. Intriguing, but we already have major oil operations in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

BRITISH INTELLIGENCE AGENT. And then there's the communist issue.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES. Did someone say communist?

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER. I wasn't aware there was a big communist movement in Iran.

BRITISH INTELLIGENCE AGENT. I've heard from someone who once spoke to someone over there that the party is gaining power and could take over at any time. And don't forget, you know who they share a northern border with, right?

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER. *(Walks over to a map in the room.)* The Soviet Union!

BRITISH INTELLIGENCE AGENT. Exactly. Can't you see them crossing the border to turn one more country communist?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES. We've already lost Eastern Europe, China, and half of Korea; do we really want the commies getting their grip on the Middle East too?

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER. Definitely not. Let's talk details.

BRITISH INTELLIGENCE AGENT. Smashing!

Exit JOHN FOSTER DULLES, BRITISH INTELLIGENCE AGENT, *and* DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER. *Enter* IRANIAN POLITICIAN, IRANIAN JOURNALIST, IRANIAN RELIGIOUS LEADER, *and* KERMIT ROOSEVELT.

NARRATOR. This launched Operation Ajax, a covert CIA operation whose goal was to remove Mosaddegh from power. In charge of the operation was Teddy Roosevelt's grandson, Kermit Roosevelt (but no relation to the frog). He used cash to create an anti-Mosaddegh movement.

KERMIT ROOSEVELT. I need help turning Iranians against Mosaddegh.

IRANIAN POLITICIAN. That's going to be tough. Mosaddegh is very popular.

IRANIAN JOURNALIST. He's making a stand against powerful countries to make life better for us.

IRANIAN RELIGIOUS LEADER. Praise Allah!

KERMIT ROOSEVELT. I'm sure you all feel very strongly about Mosaddegh, but here are thousands of reasons to change your mind.

KERMIT ROOSEVELT *pretends to hand all three money.*

IRANIAN POLITICIAN. Now that I think about it, Mosaddegh is a traitor to this country. We need new leadership, preferably a general.

IRANIAN JOURNALIST. I suddenly feel inspired to write negative articles about him.

IRANIAN RELIGIOUS LEADER. Praise money!

Exit IRANIAN JOURNALIST, IRANIAN POLITICIAN, *and* IRANIAN RELIGIOUS LEADER. **KERMIT WASHINGTON** *stays.* *Enter* IRANIAN THUG 1 *and* IRANIAN THUG 2.

NARRATOR. Next, Kermit Roosevelt convinced Iran's shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, to sign a royal decree demanding Mosaddegh's resignation. But Mosaddegh heard about the plot and had the messenger arrested. Fearing repercussions, the shah fled the country. It appeared Mosaddegh would stay in charge. Unfortunately for Mosaddegh, Kermit Roosevelt had one more trick up his sleeve.

KERMIT ROOSEVELT. *(To* IRANIAN THUG 1.) I need you to get a group of people to run through the street yelling, "Long live Mosaddegh and communism."

IRANIAN THUG 1. Can we break windows and light things on fire?

KERMIT ROOSEVELT. That would be a great touch. *(To* IRANIAN THUG 2.) And I need you and some friends to chant how much you love the shah. *(To both.)* Feel free to have your groups fight.

IRANIAN THUG 2. Am I really going to get paid for this?