

Lesson Plan: The Fourth Wall

Objectives:

- Students will be able to... define fourth wall concept.
- Students will be able to... create examples of a fourth wall.
- Students will be able to... differentiate between examples of fourth wall.

Materials:

- Attachment - *What is the Fourth Wall?* by Liz Sands

Time	Procedure
5-10 min	Hook: Ask students what their favorite movies are. To lead into a discussion about fourth wall separation in film, ask students if they ever talk to the actors and actresses, even though they can't hear them. Do they ever wish that they could ward characters or get involved in the story in some actual way?
2 min	Define fourth wall (see attachment) in terms of the separation of the actors from the audience in theater.
5 min	Discuss prevalence of fourth wall. Ask students what they imagine the difference to be between a play where there is a fourth wall and one in which there is not.
10 min	Student Role Play: Get a few students to volunteer to act out a scene of everyday school life <u>with fourth wall intact</u> .
10 min	Student Role Play: Now have the same scene acted out <u>without a fourth wall</u> taking cues from audience. Encourage the audience to get really

	involved.
10 min	As a whole class, discuss difference between the two scenes; lead into discussion of plays lacking the fourth wall in Spain's golden age.
(Alternate Activity)	An alternate activity to the above is to show students a scene from a movie. Make it explicit that the fourth wall is present. Then have some students come up to act out the same scene that they have just watched. Encourage the students who are not acting to remember that there is now no fourth wall and that they can try to interact with the actors and persuade their actions. Follow this with a discussion about the differences with and without a fourth wall.

Assessment: Short open Q&A quiz with class about fourth wall & its effect on theatre & film.

What is the Fourth Wall?

By Liz Sands, BYU student

What is the fourth wall? We can't see it and its existence relies solely on our cooperation to believe that it does. William Darlington defines the fourth wall as the "... invisible barrier which separates the inhabitants of a room on the stage from us ordinary mortals whose fortune it is to look but never enter in..." (11). Darlington continues, as he explains, that the fourth wall itself is "... a piece of architecture unknown to our forefathers; but to the authors and producers of the present time it assumes from time to time the proportions of a problem" (11). This separation between actor and observer allows for the two groups to stay within their respective boundaries, not to interact with one another. The respective roles of each denote there is no room for an intimate actor-audience relationship. Without the fourth wall however, as in Golden Age Theatre, the audience and actors are able to communicate, empathize, and emotionally correlate. The actor knows he is performing well to the crowd's liking when his stage is strewn with gold and silver escudos. Likewise, the actor might take note from the audience when showered with bad produce. Because their opinion and reaction carried heavy weight in determining the sequence of events, the audience members became players themselves, deciding how events should come about.

Darlington, William Aubrey. *Through the Fourth Wall*. Essay Index Reprint Series. Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1922.