Anaya Ward

Ms. Joy Handelman

English Composition II

28 January 2018

Definitions Essay: Break a Leg

Simone always dreamed of being an actress, ever since she visited the theater to see her parents perform. Always hearing the phrase “break a leg” though she was not new to the theater it always pondered in her mind what it meant to break a leg. She started to analyze and gain a better understanding of the art theater by gathering information. Learning the insides and out of theater along with the history and even starring in plays at her local community center. As she got older the thought of pursuing a career in theater became a dream. The phrase “Break a Leg” became more familiar to her. Before knowing the theater ‘lingo’ she thought it was literal meaning to break a limb. After doing her research she noticed here is a limited meaning to this phrase. Her interpretation of the phrase means having good luck or do a good job of having a good performance especially in a big performance of an actor or actress. Soon after auditioning for Hamlet she got the lead on the play. She soon began to think this was her big moment to break out and make her mark. Before she walks out to start her performance one of her peers comes to her and gently taps her shoulder saying the encouraging words. “Good Luck, Simone Break a Leg”. “Break a leg” is a term that is associated with theater, outsiders can gain a better understanding of the phrase through knowing the origin, personal experience and academic reference.

*To begin with*, “Break a Leg” origin of this phrase has an interesting background. Established from many speculations on the phrase was formed around the theater. For example, coming from a historical context it states that the popular etymology is the assassination of the sixteenth president Abraham Lincoln. The assassin John Wilks Booth was an actor and after leaping off the stage after the murder. The theory was that his leg was broken into the process but many think this is not how the phrase came about. Another example is titled “Hals Und Beinburch” the German saying an “invitation into breaking your neck and bones” mainly used by aviators for “happy landings!” Theater and Aviation did not correlate with other in meaning so this could not be the direct origin of the word. Though this phrase has no direct and precise origin it is often referred to the arts of theater.

*Therefore,* the phrase “break a leg” has been broken down and constructed into a clear and direct meaning is associated with relating to the theater. Meaning “good luck” to the actor and actresses in a production. Though it has been a long time since I have participated in a play or a production. Being in the production of “A Raisin in the Sun” at a community center. Before being a production never hearing the phrase “Break a Leg”. The interpretation before doing the play would have me think of doing the literal meaning of breaking a limb and hurting myself. Lacking knowledge of the phrase the ground-breaking performance went well and received a standing ovation due to the presentation of this timeless classic. Afterwards after leaving the theater arena through the experience was nice and learning the real meaning of the term.

 *In addition to,* “Break a Leg” is an idiom in the parts of speech. Conveying the meaning of words that are “established by the usage as a meaning not deducible from that individual from those of the individual words.” Or the “characteristic mode of expression in music or art.” The analyzation of the term helps the “outsider” understand the academic perspective of the meaning of the word. Using critical thinking strategies and context clues to convey the meaning of the word. For example, instead of just getting a direct google definition, read a passage with the phrase “Break a Leg”. Use the words around the term to convey an understanding and meaning of the term. Though this term will not be used in a traditional essay unless it relates to the topics of arts and music.

 *In conclusion*, “Break a Leg” term meaning conveys to the theater and giving someone good luck on their performance especially to an actor or actress. Speculations from the historical context of the assassination of a president to the aviators of the twentieth century. Though there is no exact and precise origin of this term it is directly associated with the arts of theater. Outsiders can connect with a personal experience from the word trying to “put the pieces together” into creating a definition that is understood. For example, the term is known to be understood as “good luck” on a theatrical performance. It is the equivalent as saying “good job” to doing your personal best on accomplishment. To find the definition of the word without directly googling. The academic standpoint is using the common ways to find the context of the word.

Cites Used:
“More about Break a Leg.” *Theatrecrafts.com*, www.theatrecrafts.com/pages/home/glossary-of-technical-theatre-terms/more-about-break-a-leg/.