



Building Character:

Related Subjects: Language Arts, Visual and Performing Arts

Grades: 6-8

Medium: Theatre

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Class time required: 1 hour and a half

Summary: In this class students will expand on vocal, physical and visual awareness. Students will understand how to apply theatre by using theatre games and activities collectively.

Materials: n/a

Teacher Preparation: Open room/Open Space

Cross the Room

Students create two lines across from each other on opposite sides of the room. The teacher will ask student to cross the room if the statement is true about them. For example, "Cross the room if you are wearing black." If the comment is true to you, then you will cross the room.

Pass the Movement

Create a circle with your class. Using your entire body, the leader creates a movement which is then pass to the person to their left. The person to their left will imitate the movement and pass it to the person left to them and so forth. The same movement will make its way around the circle like a domino effect, until it arrives back to the person who created the movement. Following, the second person in the circle will begin another movement and the pattern continues until the movement arrives to the place of origin.

Viewpoints

Introduce soft focus to students (relaxing eyesight and paying attention to everything around them). Explore the room and spatial relationships. Challenge students to explore all areas of the room and have them break patterns. Have them notice patterns (movement, paths, eyesight) and tempo (speed of walk). Students can explore proximity and distance from other people. Guide them through the process by explaining distances step by step. For example: "at this point, I want you to be as far away from people as possible but pay attention to your tempo."

Aliens

Have three volunteers (A,B,C) in front of the group and assigned them a role. Volunteer A will be an alien (he/she only speaks alien), volunteer B is a translator and volunteer C only speaks English. Give the group a theme. Have them communicate through the translator. Stop activity at the climax (most exciting moment).



Number Impov

In pairs, students improvise scenes incorporating elements of character, setting, conflict and objective but instead of words use numbers.

Actor A: 1

Actor B: 1-2

Actor A: 1-2-3 and so forth until 10

Leader must provide the given circumstances.

Rap Rhapsody

Create a circle with your class. Using your entire body, the leader creates a sound and a movement that links together. Have the leader continue making the sound while the person standing next to them joins with a different sound and movement (when they feel the time is right). Continue the sound and movement all the way until you build a Rap Rhapsody.

Grade Level Variations

These activities work for all ages.

6th Grade

Have them write a story from the perspective of the alien, translator or human. Have them think about the plot, theme and the characters.

CA Standard

Written and Oral English Language Convention

Sentence Structure

- 1.1 Use simple, compound, and compound-complex sentences; use effective coordination and subordination of ideas to express complete thoughts.

Listening and Speaking

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

- 1.4 Select a focus, an organizational structure, and a point of view, matching the purpose message, occasion, and vocal modulation to the audience.
- 1.7 Use effective rate, volume, pitch and tone and align non verbal elements to sustain audience interest and attention

7th Grade

Ask students to develop a character based on the class activities. Have them relate the character to the activities done in class. Have them think about movement and voice. How would they transmit what they just worked on to a character assignment?

CA Standard

Speaking Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

- 2.1 Deliver narrative



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- a. Establish a context, standard plot line (having a beginning, conflict, and rising action, climax and denouement, and point of view.
- b. Describe complex major and minor character and a definite setting.
- c. Use a range of appropriate strategies, including dialogue, suspense, and naming of specific narrative action (e.g., movement, gestures, expression).

8th Grade

Have students write an autobiographical essay, paying particular attention to detail. Have the student think of time and space. Choose a significant event that builds to a climatic moment.

CA Standard

- 2.1 Deliver narrative presentation (e.g., biographical, autobiographical)
 - a. Relate a clear, coherent incident, event, or situation by using well-chosen details.
 - b. Reveal the significance of, and the subject's attitude about, the incident, event, or situation.
 - c. Employ narrative and descriptive strategies (e.g., relevant dialogue, specific action, physical description, background description, comparison or contrast of character).

Bibliography/Webography



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Bernardi, Phillip. *Improvisation Starters: a Collection of 900 Improvisation Situations for the Theatre*. Ohio: Betterway Books.1992

Boal, Augusto. *Exercises for the Actor and Non-Actors*. New York: Routledge. 2002

Bray, Errol. *Playbuilding: A guide for Group Creations of Plays with Young People*. Portsmouth: Heinemann. 1994

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Joyce, Mary. *First Steps in Teaching Creative Dance to Children*. Mayfield Services Limited. New York.1980

Neelands, Jonathan. *Structuring Drama Work: A Handbook of Available Forms in Theatre and Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1990

Theatre Games for the Classroom

Theatre Games for Rehearsal

Improvisation for the theatre: a handbook of teaching and directing techniques theatre

Theatre Game File

Viola Spolin Games: <http://www.spolin.com/index.html>