

Title: Creating a Tableau for a Story

Grade Level(s): This is designed for a unified theatre class which is a combination of students with special needs and mentor students in grades 9-12 or a 6th grade class.

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Description: In this tableau lesson students will create a tableau for a chosen story and briefly bring it to life. The emphasis will be on creating a moment in the story when the characters are “feeling” a specific emotion in response to an event or interaction with another character.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to create statues which communicate specific emotions.

Students will be able to identify emotional moments in a given story.

Students will be able to speak as a character in an emotional moment

SEL Competencies Taught:

Self-awareness, which is the ability to recognize one’s emotions and know one’s strengths and limitations

Social awareness, which is the ability to take the perspective of others, demonstrate empathy, acknowledge and appreciate similarities and differences, and understand how one’s actions influence and are influenced by others

Responsible decision-making, which refers to the ability to use multiple pieces of information to make ethical and responsible decisions.

2014 National Core Theatre Standards:

TH:Cr1.1.6.c. Explore scripted or improvised characters by imagining the given circumstances in a drama/theatre work.

TH:Cr2.1.6.b. Contribute ideas and accept and incorporate the ideas of others in preparing or devising drama/theatre work

TH:Pr4.1.6.b. Experiment with various physical choices to communicate character in a drama/theatre work.

TH:Cr2.1.II.b. Cooperate as a creative team to make interpretive choices for a drama/theatre work.

TH:Pr4.1.I.b. Shape character choices using given circumstances in a drama/theatre work.

Time to Teach: Two seventy-minute Lessons

Materials Required for Instruction: None

Opening:

On the whiteboard or chalkboard when the students come in have the following statement:

Using the markers supplied do one of the following on the big piece of paper on the wall -

Write the name of a character from a story, TV show, film you like

or

Draw the answer to the question.

After you have completed the task find your own space and sit comfortably

(This assumes an open space with the ability to move or the ability to move chairs to create an open space.)

Instructional Procedures:

Step 1 -

SEL Note self-awareness: When everyone is in their own space, have them begin moving just their upper body. As they move their upper body, have them check in with their comfort level. Say, “Explore the different ways your upper body moves. Focus on your movements and your body. Move at different speeds, with different intentions.” Allow them time to get comfortable with this movement. If some students are watching others to see what is the ‘Right’ way to do this, encourage them to shut their eyes. When everyone is relatively comfortable with the movement, discuss what they noticed. What felt comfortable for you? When were you uncomfortable? Why is it important to be comfortable moving as an actor?

After the discussion, have them stand and begin moving around the room. Start with speed, levels, exploring the space, moving without talking, moving ignoring others in the room and then acknowledging the others- still without voice. When they are comfortable with this movement, have them sit wherever they are at the moment.

SEL Note: Self Awareness - Ask them how they are feeling? What is the dominant emotion they are feeling? Then ask how that emotion affects the way they move? Create a visual chart with emojis and a corresponding type of movement - for example a sad face and a line and the word slow or heavy. When you have emojis and types of movement for all of the emotions represented by the class ask if there are any emotions we missed? Add those to the chart. Then ask why it is important for an actor to know how they are feeling? Discuss how the actor's feelings can affect their character and how knowing how you move when you are feeling a particular emotion helps you to find the way the character moves when they are feeling that emotion.

Have them get up again and start moving around the room starting with speeds and levels. Then add emotions. Call out the emotions that the student listed. Allow them to explore each emotion from their own point of view. At some point in the exploration of the emotion, call freeze. As a part of each freeze, say - "Moving just your eyes, look around the room. Notice the different freezes. Which freezes communicate the strongest representation of the emotion we are exploring? Why is this one particularly strong?" After they have worked with most of the emotions - if time is a factor, you can choose which emotions to work with. You can also look at the list the students made at the beginning of the class and be sure to include emotions that those characters predominantly experience.

Next look at the stories and historical events the students have listed, tell the students to think about the character they thought of at the beginning of the class. Think about the predominant emotion of this character and move as the character. Again, once their emotion is established, call freeze and have them look at each other's freezes. Look for commonalities. Have them start moving again. They can change the way they are moving, think of another moment in the story when the character is feeling another emotion. When they are all established, have them find, as they move someone who is feeling the same emotion. When you see mostly alike emotions, say freeze. Ask them to look around the room - again looking with just their eyes. Next, have them sit and discuss with the group they were in - what was the predominant emotion, were they all expressing the same emotion, were there differences? Discuss the differences and similarities. Each group creates a statue that represents the predominant emotion of the group. Give them ten minutes to do this and then share. Have each group share. During the sharing the other students will walk around the statue and look at it from all angles.

SEL Note Social Awareness- A discussion will follow concerning the emotions presented and the ability to communicate an emotion through a moment of stillness. Why is it important to be able to communicate in this way as a human being? As an actor? The emotion the character is feeling needs to match their movement or the audience will be confused. By the same token if the emotion we are feeling is hidden by the way we move those around us may respond in a way that is hurtful rather than helpful.

Wrap up - End the way you started with the students in their own space. Checking in through small movements of their upper body. Focus on how they are feeling - comfortable, uncomfortable, etc. Provide them with an exit ticket to debrief the class or this part of the class.

Exit ticket

Name _____ - Date _____

1. My predominant emotion today was _____
2. My movement was (describe how your emotion informed your movement) _____ or draw a picture
3. The predominant emotion of our group tableau was _____
4. Describe the important elements of your tableau _____ or draw a picture
5. One thing I learned today about emotion and body language is _____

Step 2 - Introduce the idea of the tableau. A frozen picture of one scene from a story. Tell them they have already created one using the emotions of characters. Go back to the lists on the paper. Have students come up and either circle one they like or put parentheses around one they don't like. From this exercise you will choose enough stories to make groups with at least four or five to a group. Break the students into groups. Before sending the groups off to work on the task.

SEL Note Social Awareness and Responsible Decision making – Say - You will all be a part of a group. Each of you has strengths and weaknesses. For this task you will need someone who is a strong leader to keep you on task, you will need someone who can write out your ideas, you will need someone who can help the group to come to a decision without getting angry, you will need someone who is good at time management, and you will need someone who knows the story you pick really well. Before you get into your groups, think about which person you are and how you can help your group the most. Send the groups off with the task sheet to fill out. Encourage the groups to keep their story under wraps.

Group Story Tableau

Names _____

Before you begin - choose a timekeeper - you have twenty minutes to complete your task, choose a scribe, choose someone to lead the discussion and resolve issues fairly.

The story we choose is _____

A brief description of the moment in the story that we will create in our tableau.

The reason we chose this moment is

The characters and who will play them in the moment -

A line each character can say that fits in this moment

Now - discuss the tableau- come up with the tableau. Try it out - redo.

You can make a drawing if this helps your process. Do not spend too much time discussing - get up and try it out.

Allow twenty minutes to complete the task. By fifteen minutes they should be up and practicing the tableau. This is really important. Groups who sit and discuss forever will not have a thought-out tableau. It is important to move around the classroom and encourage the students to try something out rather than discuss it.

Step 3 - Share the tableaux as you did with the first ones with emotions. The sharing can be on the stage or on the floor of the classroom. It should be informal. The emphasis is on what they are communicating, the success of sharing the chosen moment of the story, and the predominant emotion. During the sharing, touch one person's shoulder and have them say a line that the character might say at this moment of the story. (This will be on the task sheet)

Debrief - after each tableau.

SEL Note Social Awareness - "what emotion was expressed in the tableau? Was it clear? Was the actor able to express that emotion in a way that clearly communicated it to the audience? How did the character's emotion which you expressed through your body affect the way you felt? How did experiencing the emotions in your bodies before you expressed the character's emotions impact your developing the character?

Assessment:

Formative - Exit Ticket - first tableau experience - this is in the body of the lesson

Summative - final tableau - have the students self-assess using the rubric and comments

	Advanced	Proficient	Approaching	Below
Explore scripted or improvised characters by imagining the given circumstances in a drama/theatre work.	Tableau communicates the given circumstances of the chosen moment of the story with additional information added which reflects the interpretation of the group through the pose and spoken lines.	Tableau communicates the given circumstances of the chosen moment in the story through the pose and the line spoken by the actor.	Tableau communicates the story through the pose and spoken lines, but the given circumstances are unclear.	Tableau's communication of the story is unclear.
Contribute ideas and accept and incorporate the ideas of others in preparing or devising drama/theatre work	Tableau is a cohesive whole which creates a moment in the story which could become a part of a devised script for the story adding elements of the group's interpretation of the event.	Tableau is a cohesive whole which has one focus, and all of the group is actively involved.	Tableau has multiple focuses with group members participating at varying degrees of attention to the task.	Tableau is unfocused and some of the group is not involved.

Comments - Where does your tableau fall in this rubric? Defend your rating. Include in your defense how the group functioned and the ability of the members of the group to function in the role they chose or that was chosen for them.

SEL NOTE- A working knowledge of Responsible Decision making is demonstrated through these responses.

Closing:

A tableau is a frozen moment in a story that communicates one of the important moments of the story. As you watch a play or movie or TV show, look for moments that could be tableaus - stop the action what is communicated?

SEL Note - Social awareness - Become aware of the emotions expressed in those big moments.

Note - this lesson can be used with the lesson plan "Creating an improvised set based on a ground plan for a location-based story". The stories would be the same for both and the tableaus would be created on the set which the students create during the location lesson.

Learning for all: Please use the space below for suggestions for any specific adaptations or accommodations needed for neuro-diverse or atypical learners.

Some accommodations are embedded in this lesson.

Students who are in a wheelchair or have difficulties moving standing can sit or lie down.

Blind students can work with a partner who can describe what the others look like and or let the blind person use touch to explore the statue.

This lesson can be adapted for just about every child. The key is talking to the special educator and finding out what will work best for each student.

How does this lesson's content model inclusivity and honor diversity?

The story from which the tableau will be created will be chosen by the students and the teacher with the teacher encouraging the students to explore a variety of stories that contain characters which represent the population of the classroom, the school, and/or the community.

Works Cited: N/A

Additional Tools & Resources: N/A