Lesson Plan Title: Elements of Story (successful in person and in the virtual classroom space)

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Description: In this lesson students will focus on the elements of story. They will analyze and tell stories using various improvisational techniques. These group activities could also be completed via video chat.

Learning Outcomes:

The students will be able to tell a succinct and engaging story to their peers

Grade Levels: Grades 3-5

2014 National Core Theatre Standards:

TH:Cr2.1.3.a. Participate in methods of investigation to devise original ideas for a drama/theatre work.

TH:Pr4.1.3.a. Apply the elements of dramatic structure to a story and create a drama/theatre work.

TH:Re7.1.4.a. Identify artistic choices made in a drama/theatre work through participation and observation.

Time to Teach: 1-2 class periods

Opening:

Start class with the improv game "What are you doing?" In a round robin style each person asks the previous person in the circle (or established order) what they are doing. They must then physically do that activity. Examples: Ironing clothes, walking my dog, brushing my teeth, underwater basket weaving etc. Depending on time available and size of class I would complete 1 or 2 rounds. This activity gets students connected with actions and starts the creativity flowing.

Instructional Procedures:

1. Divide the class into 4 small groups. Assign them to brainstorm a list of one of these categories to share with the class: characters, locations, objects, or activities. They should create a list of 20 items and number them.
2. As they come back together, create 1 word stories. This can begin before all groups finish and students can join as they complete their list. Students tell a story in a round robin style with each student contributing 1 word.
3. After they have all had the chance to participate in developing a 1 word story, discuss which stories work and which didn't. Ask them to identify why that is true. Lead them to identify the major plot points of the best story.
4. Either share or project a story mountain. Ask the students to label the parts of a story. exposition, conflict, rising action, climax, resolution
5. Have 4 volunteers pick a number between 1 and 20. Use those 4 numbers to select a character, location, object and activity. Using those input craft a story that utilizes all of those items. Ask students for suggestions and model putting them together into a story
6. You may choose to do group writing a few more times or you can break into small groups or individuals to create stories from the input.
7. You could also tell stories improv orchestra style where you select one person to begin telling the story and at random points choose another, conducting the orchestra of student actors.
8. 3 sentence story - In pairs students will tell a story. Use the following format
    a. Person A must contribute Character and location "Once upon a time, I visited my grandmother's house in the freezing winter"
    b. Person B must establish the conflict "My grandmother's furnace broke and there was a blizzard coming"
    c. Person A must resolve the story "She knitted me the warmest sweater I've ever worn and we watched movies under a pile of blankets on the couch."
9. Each student may only use one sentence. Each sentence must add information and move the story forward. Coach the students to be creative but collaborative. You may choose to give them time in pairs to develop their story or start out in the big group live improv style.

Assessment:

10. Each student should develop a short story and label it with the story mountain. They will then give a dramatic reading of these stories in class.

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Elements of a story	The story presented is engaging and includes detailed choices about the characters, action, location and conflict. The story includes a beginning, middle and end as well as details of rising action, denouement, conflict, climax, resolution and exposition.	The story presented contains a beginning, middle and end and the student has made specific choices about the characters, the action in the story and the location.	The story presented is not specific nor detailed but contains a beginning, middle and end.	The story is not complete and does not include a clear story arc from beginning, middle to end.
Dramatic reading	Student uses their whole body, facial expressions and vocal variations to perform with energy and expression throughout. The student is easily heard in the back of the room.	Student uses a variety of vocal and facial expressions that change with the story. Student is able to be heard loud and clear at the back of the room.	Student makes a few variations in the telling of the story. Story can mostly be heard in the back of the room.	Student does not use their body, face or voice to tell the story. They do not use energy or emotion in the telling of the story. The student cannot be heard in the back of the room.

Closing: Discussion: Which elements made for the most engaging stories? What got in the way of successful stories?

Please use the space below for suggestions for any adaptations or accommodations for inclusion of special needs learners.

Students can be given individual time away from the audience to develop and prepare their work rather than having to be spontaneous if more time is necessary or anxiety is a challenge.

Work could be completed entirely in a written format or in a spoken format

I recommend writing the instructions for 3 sentence stories so that all can see and be reminded of each step.

Please use the space below to list any suggestions for multi-cultural inclusions.

You can prompt students to include diversity in their brainstormed lists. I would also encourage students to break from stereotypes as they become more confident in their story telling.