

Module 9



Problem Solving through Theatre: Learning 21st Century Skills via the Dramatic Arts Grades 6-12



*Developed by San Diego County Office of
Education, Old Globe Theatre, and La Jolla
Playhouse*



UNIT 1: CREATIVITY

"Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That's because they were able to connect experiences they've had and synthesize new things." --Steve Jobs

Lesson Objective: to explore the skills specific to Improvisation so as to release creative anxiety that may be holding one back from trusting instincts.

Key Terms: Energy, Instinct, Character, Relationship, Scene/Story

Materials Needed: One or more ordinary objects (e.g.: a scarf, broom, piece of string).

National Core Arts Standards:

TH:Pr5.1.7

a. Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques that can be applied in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

TH:Pr5.1.HSI

a. Practice various acting techniques to expand skills in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

California VAPA Standards:

6.2.2 Creative Expression: Use effective vocal expression, gesture, facial expression, and timing to create character.

7.2.1 Creative Expression: Use improvisation in rehearsal to discover character and motivation.

7.5.2 Demonstrate projection, vocal variety, diction, gesture, and confidence in an oral presentation.

8.2.2 Perform character-based improvisations, pantomimes, or monologues, using voice, blocking, and gesture to enhance meaning.

Common Core State Standards:

RST1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

WHST2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

English Language Development Standards:

Collaborative

1. Exchanging information and ideas with others through oral collaborative discussions on a range of social and academic topics

3. Offering and justifying opinions, negotiating with and persuading others in communicative exchanges

4. Adapting language choices to various contexts (based on task, purpose, audience, and text type)

Interpretive

5. Listening actively to spoken English in a range of social and academic context

Productive

12. Selecting and applying varied and precise vocabulary and language structures to effectively convey ideas.

Note to Facilitator: These activities can be used all at once or over the course of a few sessions depending on the group. Pick and choose which activities you feel most comfortable leading under each of the lesson components.

THEATRE WARM UPS

Vocal and Physical *See handouts in Downloads*

Introductory Activities

GREETINGS

Objective(s): To explore a relationship/situation through physicality and emotional expression.

Skill Set Used: Instinct, Bold Choices, Listening, Expressiveness, Relationships

Materials Needed: None

Instructions:

1. Participants walk around the space and briefly greet each other by shaking hands.
2. The facilitator presents them with a relationship or situation with which to greet each other (i.e. like old friends, you are afraid of each other, you are in love, the other person smells, you are angry, you are royalty, etc.).
3. Until the facilitator changes it, students should move and greet each other in character.

YES, LETS!

Objective(s): To accept and carry out each activity

Skill Set Used: Energy, Improvisation, Ensemble, Bold Choices, Yes, and...

Materials Needed: None

Instructions:

1. PERSON A (or the leader) yells out, "Hey! Let's (insert activity)!" It can be anything from "Let's go to the moon" to "Let's walk our dogs!"
2. All the other players then simultaneously say "YES, LET'S!"

3. Then, everybody starts acting out their own version of that activity until another person decides to start a new activity.
4. The game should flow well, each person taking the initiative to keep the ball rolling. Each activity should only be done for about 20-30 seconds.

Bridge Activity

CATEGORIES #1

Objective(s): To maintain the rhythm while keeping the category traveling around the circle as long as possible

Skill Set Used: Focus, Following Impulses, Concentration, Thinking on your feet

Materials Needed: None

Instructions:

1. All players sit in a circle and begin a 2-beat rhythm (i.e. clap-snap or slap legs-clap).
2. One person says, in rhythm, "I-am-thinking-of-...", whatever the category is, and then says something that fits the category. On the second beat after the first person, the second person says something that fits the category, and so on.
3. If a player waits more than one beat to say something or repeats a word, they are out. The last player left wins.

Example:

- "I-am-thinking-of-kinds-of-fruits" (clap) "Apple"
- (Clap) "Orange"
- (Clap) "Strawberries"
- (Clap) "Banana"
- (Clap) "Watermelon"

CATEGORIES #2

Objective(s): To keep all categories going at once as quickly and accurately as possible

Skill Set Used: Focus, Memory, Bold Choices

Materials Needed: None

Instructions:

1. All players begin by standing in a circle.

2. Player A chooses a category that will be Category 1. It can be anything from sea animals to music genres to sports.
3. One player will start by saying something in that category and doing a movement with it directly to another player in the circle.
4. Once it is received, that player will then pass a different movement with something else that belongs in that category to another player.
5. This will continue until every player in the circle has passed a movement. The last person will send it back to Player A.
6. This will create a pattern that will be continuously repeated throughout the game.
7. After Category 1 has been mastered, players can add in Category 2, and then eventually Category 3 so that all categories are going at one time.

THIS IS NOT A...

Objective(s): To use the object in a new and creative way

Skill Set Used: Creativity, Instinct, Listening

Materials Needed: One or more ordinary objects (e.g.: a scarf, broom, piece of string).

Instructions:

1. All participants sit in a circle with an object in the middle (i.e. a shawl).
 2. Each player, in turn, uses the object in a way that changes it into something else, rather than what it actually is, treat it as if it were something else and says, "This is not a (shawl), this is a (pillow) (or anything else!)."
- Remind them to use all of the senses and memories of the real thing to create the reality that the object is something it's not.
 - I.e. a chair is another person, a rollercoaster seat, a barking dog; a broom is a dance partner, a pet, a baby, a sword; a liquid is hot chocolate, cold milk, fizzy soda, poison, etc.

FORTUNATELY/UNFORTUNATELY

Objective(s): To go around the group telling one complete story

Skill Set Used: Storytelling, Yes, and..., Improvisation, Don't Hesitate

Materials Needed: None

Instructions:

1. All players sit in a circle.
2. The leader begins telling a story with one sentence.
3. The next person in the circle continues the story, but they must begin their sentence with “Fortunately...” The next sentence by the next player must begin with “Unfortunately...”
4. These two beginnings continue to alternate around the circle until the last person finishes the story with their sentence.
5. Focus on maintaining a story line that makes sense with a beginning, middle, and end, even though they have the first word of their sentence. It is all about “yes, and-ing” the previous person – not contradicting them, but finding a way to further develop the story based on what you have already been given.

Main Activity(ies):

ENTER and EXIT

Objective(s): To enter and exit the space as creatively as possible

Skill Set Used: Creativity, Specificity, Physicality

Materials Needed: None

Instructions:

1. The group splits in half and each half lines up on stage left or stage right.
2. One at a time, participants enter the space as creatively as they can and then exit the space on the opposite side in a different creative way. Examples: western-style swinging doors, crashing through a window, sliding door, using many keys to unlock a heavily bolted door, etc.
3. The emphasis is not on story or character, just on entering and exiting (nothing in-between).

FREEZE

Objective(s): To “yes, and...” your scene partner’s offer and improvise a specific, bold scene until someone shouts “freeze!”

Skill Set Used: Yes, and..., Improvisation, Big Physicality, Bold Choices, Memorization

Materials Needed: None

Instructions:

1. Student A enters into the space and begins to improvise a one-person scene (Scene I).
2. As some point, any student (Student B) in the class may shout out, "Freeze!" Student A must freeze where she is.
3. Student B enters the space and creates a new two-person scene (Scene II) that is inspired by the shape in which Student A froze, but is a totally different scene than Scene I.
4. Students A and B continue to improvise this new scene until another student (Student C) shouts out, "Freeze!" Students A and B must immediately freeze.
5. Student C enters the space and creates a new three-person scene (Scene III) that is inspired by the shapes in which Students A and B froze, but is a totally different scene than either Scene I or Scene II.
6. This three-person scene continues until a fourth student (Student D) shouts out "Freeze!" Student D then enters into the space and creates a brand new four-person scene (Scene IV) that is inspired by the shapes the first three participants are frozen in, but is totally different than any scene that has come before.
7. After the four-person scene plays out a bit, Student D needs to find a reason for their character to leave the scene and exit the space.
8. The three remaining students must immediately pick up the three-person scene (Scene III) and continue as though Student D never entered and changed the scene.
9. After the three-person scene plays out a bit, Student C needs to find a reason for their character to leave the scene and exit the space.
10. The two remaining students must immediately pick up the two-person scene (Scene II) and continue as though Student C never entered and changed the scene.
11. After the two-person scene plays out a bit, Student B needs to find a reason for their character to leave the scene and exit the space.
12. The remaining student (Student A) must immediately pick up the original one-person scene (Scene I) and continue as though Student B never entered and changed the scene.
13. Student A must then find a reason for their character to leave the scene and exit the space.
14. You can continue this exercise adding in as many students as you like (even the entire class!), but the formula remains the same. Each student must remember the order in which they added themselves into the improvisation and know which student entered immediately after them so that they can remember the order they need to leave the scene when the process is reversed.

Discussion/Reflection:

Use the last few minutes of the session to discuss how each of these activities relates to CREATIVITY. How do the experiences connect to situations or problems that we encounter today? This can be in school, at home, with friends, in the workplace or on a team.

Discussion and reflection opportunities allow students to connect what they experienced to what they know and helps them to make larger connections. Don't be afraid of silence.