

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 3: COMMUNICATION

“To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.”

– Anthony Robbins

Lesson Objective: to explore the skills specific to understanding that our bodies have a language of its own and our words are only a part of what we say.

Key Terms: Verbal/Non-verbal, Listening, Seeing, Feeling, Understanding

Materials: Slips of paper (each with a different animal written on them), blindfolds.

National Core Arts Standards:

TH:Cr2.1.7

b. Demonstrate mutual respect for self and others and their roles in preparing or devising drama/theatre work.

TH:Cr3.1.7

b. Develop effective physical and vocal traits of characters in an improvised or scripted drama/theatre work.

TH:Pr4.1.6

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

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.

California VAPA Standards:

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

Common Core State Standards:

RST.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

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.

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 handout.*

Introductory Activities

ANIMAL ACTING

Objective(s): To line up in alphabetical order according to animal by only making animal sounds

Skill Set Used: Teamwork, Bold Choices, Specificity, Listening, Observation

Materials Needed: Slips of paper, each with a different animal written on them (same number as participants)

Instructions:

1. Each person draws a piece of paper without showing anyone else.
2. Once everyone has their paper, they must alphabetize themselves according to their animal. They cannot, however, talk. Students must communicate ONLY by making the animals' sounds and/or acting out what the animals does.
3. After everyone is standing in line alphabetically, the leader will go down the line, asking what each animal is to check it.

Bridge Activity(ies)

FIND YOUR MOTHER LIKE A BABY PENGUIN

Objective(s): Pairs of blindfolded participants must locate each other from across the room using only sound.

Skill Set Used: Teamwork, Listening

Materials Needed: Blindfolds for every participant

Instructions:

1. Divide group into pairs. One will play the part of the “youth” and the other will play the part of the “adult.”
2. Ask “youth” to line up shoulder to shoulder, and then ask “adults” to do the same, facing the “youth”.
3. Ask the “adults” to each come up with their own distinct sound – not using words – which they can repeat throughout the activity. It should be a sound loud enough that the “youth” can hear it, but not so loud that it drowns out everyone else.
4. Let the “youth” know that they will need to remain completely silent throughout the activity.
5. Once the “youth” have memorized the sound their “adult” has chosen, ask everyone to move around the room. Make sure they mix themselves around and do not follow their partner.
6. Once everyone seems nicely mixed, call freeze and then ask everyone, both “youth” and “adults,” to put on their blindfolds.
7. Tell them that when you say “Find your mother like a baby penguin” “adults” and “youth” need to try to relocate each other using nothing but their unique sound.
8. Once they have found each other, they can remove their blindfolds, and they should stop making their noises.
9. Repeat the activity with “youth” making noises and “adults” silent.

ONE WORD STORY

Objective(s): To tell a full story one word at a time

Skill Set Used: Storytelling, Impulse, Listening, Yes, and..., Characters, Conflict

Materials Needed: None

Instructions:

1. All members of the ensemble sit in a circle.

2. Each player goes down the line telling a story only by saying one word at a time. Students must keep in mind a story arc (beginning, middle, and end), characters and a conflict with a resolution.
3. The story can be fun, silly, and anything can happen, but it should maintain the arc of a story and make sense. Remind students that each word they offer should be built upon the words already said and connecting thoughts to create a cohesive, flowing story.
4. The story will end when the last two words are "The End."
5. If students are struggling with connecting the words as thoughts, ask them to repeat the previous words said before adding on their own until the sentence is finished. Then start a new repetition and continuation with the first word of the next sentence. All of the sentences are still part of one story, but this will help them with forming a better flow and story that makes sense.
6. Instead of going around the circle, the story can also be told by tossing a ball around the circle. Whoever has the ball adds a word before tossing it to someone else.

THE QUESTION GAME

Objective(s): To successfully communicate and have a conversation speaking only with questions.

Skill Set Used: Attention to Detail, Thinking on Your Feet, Focus

Materials Needed: None

Instructions:

1. The group comes up with a scenario for PLAYER A and PLAYER B.
2. A will begin an improvised scene by asking B a question.
3. B will respond to A, but their answer needs to be in the form of a question.
4. This continues to go back and forth, alternating between A and B.
5. When either A or B says something that is not a question, they are out of the game.
6. A new player is chosen to take their place and the two are given a brand new scenario to work with.

Main Activity:

CONTENTLESS SCENES

Objective(s): Working in pairs, students are given a short scene that is ambiguous and devoid of content. It is up to each pair to flesh out their scene by deciding

upon “Who” the characters are, “Where” the scene takes place and “What” it is that the characters are discussing in the scene.

Skill Set Used: Speaking and Listening, Decision Making, Yes, and...

Materials Needed: Contentless Scenes Handout

Instructions:

1. Divide the students into pairs and distribute the Contentless Scenes Handout.
2. Ask students choose one of the scenes and decide who will be A and who will be B.
3. The students should begin by simply reading through the scene with very basic or no expression.
4. Each pair should then work together to flesh out their scene by agreeing on some given circumstances for their scene. They need to determine “Who” their characters are, “Where” their scene takes place, “What” it is that the characters are discussing. We call these the 3 W’s of creating a scene. These decisions will be unique to each pairing.
5. Allow them a few minutes to make decisions and a little time to rehearse their scene.
6. It is best if lines are memorized (if so, it should be exact memorization – no paraphrasing), but they can be performed with the script in hand.
7. Each pair presents their scene to the rest of the class.
8. When discussing the scenes afterwards with the class, ask the audience if they are able to guess “Who” the characters were, “Where” the scene took place and “What” the scene was about.
9. Facilitate a discussion about how effective each pairing was at communicating to the group their intention for the “Who,” “Where” and “What” of their scene. Ask for the group to provide constructive criticism for a revision. The scenes can be revised, rehearsed and presented multiple times with each pair working to more effectively communicate their choices.

Discussion/Reflection:

Use the last few minutes of the session to discuss how each of these activities relates to COMMUNICATION. 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 help them to make larger connections.