

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 4: CRITICAL THINKING

“Education must enable one to sift and weigh evidence, to discern the true from the false, the real from the unreal, and the facts from the fiction. The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically.”

--Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., 1947

“The teacher is of course an artist, but being an artist does not mean that he or she can make the profile, can shape the students. What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves.” – Paulo Freire

Lesson Objective: to explore the skills specific to critical literacy through abstract dramatic activities, connected to a single topic or theme.

Key Terms: Critical Literacy, Tableaux, Image Theatre, Intelligent Clay, Sculpting

Materials Needed: Large piece of butcher paper, markers

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.

California VAPA Standards:

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

Common Core State Standards:

RST4 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.

Evaluative

7. Evaluating how well writers and speakers use language to support ideas and arguments with details or evidence depending on modality, text type, purpose, audience, topic, and content area.

8. Analyzing how writers and speakers use vocabulary and other language resources for specific purposes (to explain, persuade, entertain, etc.) depending on modality, text type, purpose, audience, topic, and content area.

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.

Allow some extra time for student discussion after each activity connected with the theme.

Select a theme or issue to center the activities around. This can be a topic from social studies or themes around a novel being read.

Theatre Warm-Ups

Vocal and Physical *See handout*

Introductory Activities

COME MY NEIGHBOR

Objective(s): To get to know one another better in the group

Skill Set Used: Listening, Body Warm-up, Energy

Materials Needed: None

Instructions:

1. One person begins by separating themselves from the group and yelling “Come my neighbor if you...” They say something that applies to them that could also apply to others. If it is true for someone else in the group, that person runs over and stand near the person who first called “Come my neighbor if you....”
2. This continues as a new person steps out from the group, goes to a different location in the room and calls out “Come my neighbor if you...” adding a new statement to complete the sentence.

SCRAMBLED EGGS

Objective(s): To form the shape as a group as quickly as possible. Tableau practice.

Skill Set Used: Collaboration, Physicality, Ensemble Building

Materials Needed: None

Instructions:

1. The facilitator begins by calling out the name of something (i.e. scrambled eggs, the Empire State Building, a bus, a washing machine). The group then has to work together to form one image with their bodies that is in the shape of that object as quickly as possible.
2. Do not use chairs or other objects in this exercise. Encourage them to work not as individuals, but as an ensemble. Making it a silent game will provide a challenge and prevent too much yelling or “taking over” from anyone.
3. Variation: ask group to ‘activate’ the object using sound and motion.

Bridge Activity

Graffiti Wall #1

Objective(s): To uncover areas of interest or themes from the group to be used for future image work.

Skill Set Used: Instinct, Free thinking, creativity,

Materials Needed: Large piece of butcher paper, markers

Instructions:

1. Using large pieces of butcher paper, and offering an assortment of lively colored markers, participants surround the paper laid out on the floor and respond to a question or general theme/topic using words, phrases, or drawings. Suggestion: *"On the blank page in front of us; write a word or phrase, that represents some of the issues/fears or problems faced by this group."*
2. As students write or draw it, they say the word or image out loud. This allows everyone to hear what is being drawn and participate all together.
3. Once the page is filled, ask the group to stand up and walk around the page, encourage participants to stand back again and look at the words/topics/concerns that have come out for the group.
4. Tape the Graffiti Wall to a whiteboard or other prominent location. This is a visual representation to be used for the larger theme.

IMAGE OF THE WORD

Objective(s): To create an image that illustrates the suggested theme/focus.

Skill Set Used: Focus, Bold Choices, Creativity, Specificity, Physical Expression, Leadership

Materials Needed: None

Instructions:

1. A volunteer is asked to create an image using as many people from the group as they need. If the class/workshop has a certain theme or focus for the duration or even the day, it's very helpful if the image is centered on this theme.
2. As the sculptor is creating their image, the facilitator reminds the group that, even as an audience member, everyone is actively participating and involved in the images because of their relationship to it.
3. Once the image is created, the facilitator checks in with the group, asking questions like: Does the group agree that this is what the theme looks like? Do parts need to be changed? Would somebody volunteer to make these changes?
4. The image continues to evolve until everyone agrees that it is an accurate and complete image of the theme.
5. This exercise can be further evolved in the following ways:
 - a. Have those in the image create a movement that is contained within it while still in their place.
 - b. As well as the rhythmic motion, they create a phrase that comes from and fits the character, not the actor. Repeat the gesture and phrase.
 - c. Add a movement that indicates what the character will do next.

*Note to Facilitator: As the above activity progresses, check Graffiti Wall #1 to see if a larger theme or issue is emerging. Use that theme in the next series of activities.

Main Activity(ies):

Graffiti Wall #2

Objective(s): To explore in further detail a specific theme as generated by the group in Graffiti Wall #1.

Skill Set Used: Instinct, Free Thinking, Creativity

Materials Needed: Large piece of butcher paper, markers

Instructions:

1. Ask the group if there is a theme they'd like to explore. Or the facilitator can select a theme or topic from the list. (If an overall theme or issue has already been predetermined by the facilitator skip Graffiti Wall #1 and move directly to this activity).
2. Using the theme selected by the group (or preselected) ask students to write or draw their thoughts and feelings about that theme.
3. Once the page is filled, ask the group to stand up and walk around the page, encourage participants to stand back again and look at the words/topics/concerns that have come out for the group.
4. Tape the Graffiti Wall to a whiteboard or other prominent location. This is a visual representation to be used for the next activity.

Intelligent Clay 3 Types of Sculpting

You are Intelligent Clay, which means that once you have been sculpted you are able to imbue that image with emotion and feeling appropriate to the way in which you have been sculpted.

Sculpting: The sculptor physically manipulates the body of the clay into the form and image. This can include facial manipulation.

Modeling: The sculptor makes the shape with his or her own body and the clay mirrors it.

Marionettes: The sculptor uses invisible strings (like a marionette puppet) to move the clay into position.

Note: *It is often useful to use a combination of these techniques when sculpting to ensure a detailed image is created.*

Sculpture Wheel

Objective(s): To physicalize the ideas, thoughts and themes generated from the Graffiti Wall. Move them from being thoughts to being embodied.

Skill Set Used: Instinct, Tableau, Intelligent Clay, "Physicalization"

Materials Needed: None

Instructions:

1. Ask the group to pair off in A's and B's. A's form a small circle facing outward. The B group forms a larger circle surrounding the inner A circle and faces inward to their partner.
2. B's in the outer circle are the sculptors, and those A's in the inside circle are the "intelligent clay."
3. A word, thought, or phrase (usually from the Graffiti Wall #2) is called out by the facilitator and the sculptors use the clay to create an image of what that word looks like to them.
4. After each round of sculpting the outside B circle quietly walks around the inner circle to observe the multiplicity of visual meaning that a single word can inspire. They continue walking until they reach the person that is one past their last partner.
5. Repeat this for a variety of words and then switch the role of A and B.
6. Discuss with the group what they noticed about the images that were similar/different.

COMPLETE THE IMAGE

Objective(s): To use creativity to create a story for the image and to use the language of pictures/images to look at what's present for us

Skill Set Used: Creativity, Bold, Choices, Yes, and..., Specificity, Physicality, Physical Expression

Materials Needed: None

Instructions:

1. The facilitator (could also be a student) begins by entering the center of the space, making a shape with their body, and asking, "What do you see?"
2. The group can respond with whatever they truthfully see. There are no right and wrong answers – the point is that it's correct because it is *what YOU see*. Even if the facilitator enters with a completely different idea, it does not matter because the point is for the group to access all of their creative ideas.
3. Each person can have the opportunity to make a shape. These shapes/images our bodies make can show us how we feel or think, without ever necessarily telling anyone else what it is.
4. Develop this exercise further by allowing another student to add onto whatever shape is already there. Ask what they see in this before asking the original shape to step away, leaving what was added. What do they see in this?
5. This exercise can continue until the facilitator is ready to move on or, specifically, until a theme emerges that connects to the workshop/class theme.

Additional Variation: “Dynamisation” of the Image

- When there is a “loaded” image, ask the group to add themselves to the image one by one where they see a place for themselves.
- Build the image and reflect.
Who are the people in the image? Where are these people? What are they/each doing?
What does each want in this moment?
 - When facilitator says “Go,” instruct participants to take one step toward that want. Stop and look how the image continues to change

Following the completion of the activity ask the group: What was in this for you? We all see things differently. And without words we all can interpret our own message. Where do we get these messages? Why do you think we see what we see?

Discussion/Reflection:

Use the last few minutes of the session to discuss how each of these activities relates to CRITICAL THINKING. 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.