

Unit: Theater Making

# Playing House

## Overview

### Benchmarks:

- Students activate and use their imaginations.
- Students participate in creative play.

### What skills, knowledge and understandings do students already have about this area of theater?

Students will understand:

- the difference between real and make believe
- the need to contribute positively and responsibly

Student Strengths:

- emergent ability to work carefully together
- emergent ability to treat props carefully
- emergent ability to follow directions

Student Weaknesses/Needs:

- Students need to learn to share the imaginary world and allow the collaboration to support and extend their own imaginations.

Grades:

**Early  
Elementary**

Class Sessions:

**8- 10 Sessions**

Teacher:

**Stephanie  
Karpell**

School:

**PS 046  
The Edgar Allan  
Poe School**

### Big Idea(s) of this Unit

- Drama helps develop different points of view.
- Drama develops concentration and commitment to a group activity.
- Drama requires collaboration.

### Project Description

- Students will watch a puppet show and take turns performing one character in the puppet show. They transfer the dramatic elements to creative play with a set, props and costumes.

### Instructional Goal

- Students will sustain focus in an imaginary world, imitating the appropriate behavior of family relationships in the story

## Unit: Theater Making

# Playing House continued

## Overview/Assessments

### Indicators of Student Learning

#### Students will know:

1. Rules of behavior for actors, props and audience
2. The elements of the playing space
3. Warm-up exercises for body, voice and imagination
4. Theater terms: character, dialogue, props, set, puppet, audience

#### Students will be able to:

5. Respond within imaginary circumstances to objects and settings
6. Sustain focus in an imaginary world
7. Demonstrate preliminary understanding of character needs
8. Make appropriate use of costumes and props

#### Students will understand that:

9. Drama imitates real life.
10. Drama is a collaborative art.
11. Drama uses the body, voice and imagination.
12. Drama helps us understand life by expanding our point of view.

### Assessment/Evidence

#### Student Self-Assessment – a chart with faces that have either smiles or frowns

- Student chooses a face to represent the answer to the following questions:
- Did I do what my character would do? (Indicators 5, 7, 12)
- Did I treat others the way my character would? (Indicators 5, 10, 12)

#### Peer Assessment –same smiley face/frown face chart is used but the individuals in the family group evaluate the family regarding the following questions:

- Did the family members in the role-play act according to the relationships? (Indicators 6, 9, 10)
- Did the family members in the role-play use the set and props appropriately? (Indicators 1, 2, 8)

#### Teacher Assessment – observation and listening in on the role-play.

- Did the students stay on task? (Indicator 6)
- Did the students behave in-role? (Indicators 5, 7, 9)

# Unit: Theater Making

## Playing House continued

### Assessments continued

Learning Experience	Theater Strands				
	<i>making</i>	<i>literacy</i>	<i>connections</i>	<i>resources</i>	<i>careers</i>
<p><b>#1 - Warm up: song with movement “Shake Your Sillies Out”</b></p> <p>Recite the rhyme “This little piggy went to the market”, tickling them each at the end line “wee wee wee wee, all the way home”. Explain that I wondered what the rhyme meant and that I made up a story to explain it. I introduce each puppet and elicit how we know from observation which one is the baby, the father, etc. Explain the terms and jobs of audience and performers.</p> <p>I perform the puppet show and then have them identify the dramatic elements of the story: characters, beginning, middle and end.</p>		◆			
<p><b>#2 - Warm up: “role up and become” -- a game of becoming different people or objects</b></p> <p>Review the baby rhyme, this time they carefully tickle each other on the end line. We review the dramatic elements and introduce the term dialogue and we rebuild the story together with the dialogue. Practice the dialogue as a whole group. We review the concepts of audience and performers. Groups of five take turns reenacting the story.</p>	◆	◆			
<p><b>#3 - Warm up: song “This is the Way We Brush our Teeth” etc.</b></p> <p>Discuss how family members treat each other. How does a mom treat a child, a mom treat a dad, a child treat a parent, etc. Children are put in circle groups of five around the room. I assign each student a character in the pig puppet story and give each family a name. I put the family names on the board and explain the smiley face/frown face rubric. The students practice the dialogue in their groups. Each family then evaluates this activity on the basis of family members staying on task, not perfection in remembering the dialogue.</p>	◆	◆	◆		

# Unit: Theater Making

## Playing House continued

### Assessments continued

Learning Experience	Strands				
	<i>making</i>	<i>literacy</i>	<i>connections</i>	<i>resources</i>	<i>careers</i>
<p><b>#4 - Warm up: song with movement “Shake Your Sillies Out”</b></p> <p>Students go to their family groups and remind each other of their roles. We review the smiley face chart and I explain that today they will be using a set and props and they will evaluate themselves and their family members for staying in character and the appropriate use of the props. They will build their houses today but they must follow the instructions exactly or they will not get the next prop. Each group must group 7 chairs in a circle. I explain that one of the chairs is a door and I demonstrate knocking on the door and elicit the appropriate response from the “house” inhabitants, i.e., “Who is it?” We discuss who opens a door, what is polite behavior etc. I demonstrate incorrect use of the house, i.e., not using the door, exiting through a wall, etc. They live in their houses during this session as the characters but making up their own dialogue. I gradually add some props: plastic crate for a table, pots, spoons, phones, babies (large pieces of cloth), rolling pins, aprons. After some role play, we reflect on the activity and each family has a chance to evaluate themselves. Clean up consists of putting all the props in the crate</p>	◆	◆	◆		◆
<p><b>#5 - warm up: I play music and the students mirror my actions.</b></p> <p>The family groups go to their circles. The smiley face chart is reviewed but this time evaluations will extend to the whole class since they will be leaving their houses to visit or shop or play. We discuss possible activities of each family member and appropriate behavior of each family member. Some demonstrations of smiley face and frown face are given. I designate a store area and explain that “money” (bits of paper) will be given to the mom and dad to use at the store. The houses are built and gradually the props are given out. More hats and bits of costume are given out. The students are free to use the room. After the role play there is the reflection and filling out the chart as well as a report on what stories might have evolved. Clean up as before.</p>	◆	◆	◆		◆

# Playing House continued

## Assessments continued

### Playing House -- Assessment Chart



#### Self-assessment

- Did I listen to the others?
- Did I do activities that my character would do?  
(take care of the baby, go shopping, do the dishes etc.)
- Did I treat others the way my character would?  
(father helping son; child asking mom for permission, etc.)
- Did I use the props and set safely and appropriately?  
(sharing props, using the door to the house etc)

#### Peer-assessment

- Did I feel that others listened to me?
- Were the members of my family doing activities that made sense for their characters?
- Did other actors treat me the way their characters would?
- Did other actors use the props and set safely and appropriately?

## Stephanie Karpell, Theater Teacher Observations

The learning activities begin with a physical and vocal warm-up at the beginning of each session. The warm-up gives each student a chance for full expression in a group activity.

The initial puppet show demonstrates the possibility of “making up our own stories” while teaching the conventions of audience and performer. The term “dialogue” becomes familiar. The concept of story elements is reviewed. First graders have little patience with taking turns; therefore, the short puppet show allows them to develop that patience and practice appropriate audience behavior.

Movement into the family groups helps them begin to take responsibility for their own investigation into the “role play.” They are aided in the beginning with the dialogue from the story to demonstrate appropriate behavior between family members.

Building the house together gives them a concrete experience of accomplishing a task together and begins to create that cozy “house” feeling. Adding the door and its demonstration of correct use layers in sophisticated stagecraft.

Adding the props is the most delicate element of the role-play because it gets them so excited and it is very difficult for them to stay in character if they all want to use the prop. I can only add the props if the whole group seems to be working together well up to this point. Although I have a room and have space to have them build houses with chairs, I would do this activity having them use under the tables as the house area, if I had to travel to the classroom. Also, I would use more cloth to suggest props and costumes rather than heavy bulky items.

The smiley face/frown face chart was more successful than I would have imagined. It gave us all a chance to reflect on what can often be very loud and busy activity. I was surprised at how honest they were at evaluating themselves and how well the chart gave students a chance to express their grievances.

I was pleased at how involved the students were in their world and how they managed to share the props – I saw dads rocking babies, students in animated conversations on the phone, lots of cooking and visiting.

It was suggested to me by cohorts that this unit could span a year. I am eager to expand the unit to include drawing families, telling stories about your real family and then having some students act that story out. I would like each family group to report on a story that might be evolving in their group and then have a chance to act it. Some classes have evolved to the point that family members have jobs. This creates another level of character work and the possibility for interesting plots.

