

Unit: Theater Making

Storytelling

Overview

Grades:
5th and 6th

Class Sessions:
**Once a week for
50 min. session**

Teacher:
Joe Pagano

School:
PS 150 Queens

Benchmarks:

- Students gain skills as emergent playwrights by using elements of dramatic literature in writing and theater activities.
- Students continue to expand their imaginations and process skills associated with acting and writing.
- Students exercise and refine the actor's instrument: body, voice, and mind.
- Students participate in both group and solo activities in rehearsal and performance, demonstrating self-discipline and the ability to work collaboratively.
- Students practice constructive responses to theater performance using observable evidence to support their opinions.

Big Idea(s) of this Unit

- Why do we need to tell stories?"
- Drama/Theater validates student's voices.
- Drama/Theater can come from "Seed Ideas".
- Drama is a collaborative art form.

Project Description

- Students will use basic storytelling/acting skills to present their written stories which have been based upon "seed ideas" from their memoir writing workshop.

Instructional Goal

- Through storytelling /story writing, students will explore the art of storytelling while developing their artistic voices as well as the actor's instrument.

Indicators of Student Learning

Students will know:

- Several theater games (1)
- Exercises that help develop body and voice (2)
- Why we tell stories (3)
- The elements of good story telling/ dramatic structure (4)

Students will be able to:

- Use the body and voice expressively (5)
- Create characters from their stories (6)
- Identify, understand, and apply the vocabulary and basic elements of Storytelling (7)
- Use critique to support and help improve each others work (8)

Students will understand that:

- People tell stories for many reasons (9)
- Storytelling is an art form itself (10)
- Storytelling helps us to understand ourselves and others (11)
- Storytelling can develop from our "seed ideas" into a performance that expresses the artistic voice (12)

Unit: Theater Making

Storytelling continued

Overview continued

Pre-Assessment/Planning

- Have I taught these students before?

Yes, these students in fifth grade class. They performed for an in our 5th grade play, Cinderella by Rogers and Hammerstein.

- What do students already know and understand about this area of Theater Making?

Students have performed for an audience.

Students understand dramatic structure

Students know what the elements of theater are. i.e.: script, actors, staging, costumes, props, sound, lighting, director, audience, scenery, stage crew

Students have heard stories.

- What skills related to this unit have students already developed?

Students have experience with seed ideas and memoir writing since 1st grade.

Students have experience with pantomime.

Students have experience with staging.

Students have experience with characterization.

Students have experience with cooperative skills.

- What activity might I use as a pre-assessment tool?

Have students present a "Who Am I Box" (September) where they utilize vocal projection and public speaking skills needed for story telling.

- How will the students' needs be addressed?

After observing the "Who Am I" stories I will assess where the greatest weaknesses are for each student and conference with students to address areas of concern, i.e. vocal projection, flow of the presentation, use of the stage, posture, etc.

I will create a supportive environment where students will feel safe to explore their "Artistic Voices". I will do this by creating a student generated "Bill of Rights" which the students will sign creating a document promising to respect and support each other in the class.

Unit Assessment Strategies: What is the evidence of student learning?

Self-Assessment

- Self Critique based on student generated storytelling Rubric.

Peer Assessment

- Peer to Peer critique based on storytelling rubric.

Teacher Assessment

- Logged anecdotes based upon teacher observations during warm-up activities and student responses during classroom discussions.
- Teacher critique based upon storytelling rubric.
- Notebook grade based on classroom /homework assignments where students reflect upon various classroom activities such as:
 - a. How does 'The Very Narrow Bridge' relate to our Storytelling Unit?"
 - b. Looking back over the work we have done these past four months, what have you learned that you did not know before?
 - c. About storytelling and about yourself.

Unit: Theater Making

Storytelling continued

Overview continued

Learning Experiences	Theater Strands				
	<i>making</i>	<i>literacy</i>	<i>connections</i>	<i>resources</i>	<i>careers</i>
<p>Session 1:</p> <p>Warm-up / 10 min. / Zip-Zap-Zop (These warm-ups use throughout the Unit for cooperation, commitment and concentration skills building)</p> <p>Assessment/ teacher/Logged Anecdotal</p> <p>Lesson: Why Tell Stories? Students create a “WORD WEB” and through discussion and guided questions they discover reasons for storytelling. (See III A)</p> <p>Guided Questions: Who do you think the first storytellers were? Why do you think they told stories? What do you think their stories were about? How did these storytellers tell their stories? Do you think language was the most important thing the first storytellers used in telling their stories? How would you know that a caveman was talking about a T-REX and not a Saber tooth tiger? What do we call acting like a character? CHARACTERIZATION!</p> <p>We addressed storytelling as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Teaching lessons (Fairytale, Fables) ■ Exploring culture and tradition (Folktales, Tall –tales, Folklore) ■ Explaining the unknown (Legend, Myths, Folklore) ■ Entertaining (Ghost stories, Comic tales from everyday life. jokes) <p>Teacher Assessment: Notebooks</p> <p>Learning Indicators: 1,2,3,6,9,12,</p>	◆	◆	◆		
<p>Session 2:</p> <p>Warm-up: 10 min. Zip-Zap-Bop (Refer to session 1)</p> <p>Lesson: “One Word Story”/Students sit in a large circle and are told to create a story with each person adding a word. Some words cannot be used such as: Then, When, So, And. (etc.) A scribe writes down the words as they come from the students.</p> <p>Guided question: After this exercise I would ask the question is this a good story?</p>	◆	◆	◆		

Unit: Theater Making

Storytelling continued

Overview continued

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<p>Teacher models, the “Taco Story”. This story is based on an incident from my youth. I use all the elements of good storytelling I want my students to utilize in their stories.</p> <p>Guided questions: Was that a good story? Why? What makes a good story? What makes a good storyteller?</p> <p>Homework assignment: Write in response to the guided questions which will be used to create a Checklist/Rubric for storytelling.</p> <p>Teacher Assessment: Notebook/Assignment and future Rubric/Checklist for Storytelling</p> <p>Learning Outcome: 3, 4, maybe 10, 11, and 12.</p>					
<p>Session 3:</p> <p>Warm-up: 10 min. The Hula-Hoop Race</p> <p>Lesson Focus: What makes a good story? What makes a good storyteller? Students will read their answers and through discussion, discover what makes a good story and a good storyteller.</p> <p>Guided questions: What made the Taco Story good? As a storyteller what did I do that made the story “Good”? Students devise a Storytelling Checklist and create a Rubric for their presentation as a homework or classroom assignment.</p> <p>Teacher Assessment: Notebook: Homework /Class work based on notes and discussion</p> <p>Learning Indicators: 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, and 12.</p>	◆	◆	◆		
<p>Session 4:</p> <p>Warm-up / Lesson: “The Very Narrow Bridge”: Students build a narrow bridge out of blocks about 15 feet long. Two students go to opposite ends of the bridge and are told that their job is to reach the other side and help the other traveler to get to their destination. (See Student Work Sample- II A/Photos IIB)</p> <p>Guided questions: What did you learn from this theater game and how can we use what you discovered in our unit on Storytelling.</p> <p>Teacher Assessment: Notebook/Assignment</p> <p>Learning Indicators: 1, 6, and 8</p>	◆	◆	◆		
<p>Session 5:</p> <p>Warm-up 10 min. Zip, Zap, Zop</p>	◆	◆	◆		

Unit: Theater Making

Storytelling continued

Overview continued

Learning Experiences	Theater Strands				
	<i>making</i>	<i>literacy</i>	<i>connections</i>	<i>resources</i>	<i>careers</i>
<p>Lesson: Students will use their Assignment from 2 weeks ago and apply their work creating a Student Generated Checklist/Rubric. (See Storytelling Checklist/Rubric-IIIc)</p> <p>Teacher Assessment: See the assessment for session #3</p> <p>Learning Indicators: 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12</p>					
<p>Session 6:</p> <p>Warm-up: 10 min. Isolation Exercises.</p> <p>Lesson: How do we Use the Rubric for Storytelling? Students will be asked to use the posted Storytelling Checklist/ Rubric to critique each other. We will begin with teacher "Taco" story and have the students critique it. Students will realize that a critique is an opportunity to support your peers by mentioning something positive first. When making suggestions, students will be asked use the form of a question to assist their peers in coming to their own realizations. (See Method of Assessment Reflection IIC) Students will then begin to perform their stories with the class using Self-Critique and Peer-Peer Critique (See Storytelling Film Clip IIE)</p> <p>Teacher Assessment: Self-Critique, Peer-Peer Critique, and Teacher Critique.</p> <p>Learning Indicators: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9,10, 11, 12</p>	◆	◆	◆		
<p>Session 7/The end of the Stories:</p> <p>Warm-ups: Address the students' needs for the Unit, i.e., Character Walk, which helps students with characterization.</p> <p>Lessons: See Session 5</p> <p>Teacher Assessment: Refer to session 5</p> <p>Learning Outcomes; Refer to Session 5</p>	◆	◆	◆		
<p>Session 8/End of Unit:</p> <p>Lesson: Students were asked to write a paper using their notebooks reflecting what they have learned about storytelling and themselves during the course of this Unit on Storytelling. (See Attached IID)</p> <p>Teacher Assessment: Written Assignment</p> <p>Learning Indicators: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,</p>		◆	◆		

Unit: Theater Making

Storytelling continued

Assessment Tools: Student's Rights and Responsibilities

My Responsibilities/My Rights

I have the responsibility to treat others with compassion.

I have a right to be happy and be treated with compassion in this class.

This means I will not laugh at others, tease others or try to hurt the feelings of others.

This means no one will laugh at me or hurt my feelings.

I have the responsibility to Respect others as individuals and not to treat others unfairly

I have the right to be myself in this class.

This means that no one will treat me unfairly

Because they are:

- Black or White
- Fat or Thin
- Boy or Girl
- Adult or Child

Because I am:

- Black or White
- Fat or Thin
- Boy or Girl
- Adult or Child

I have the responsibility to make this class safe by not:

- Hitting anyone
- Kicking anyone
- Pushing anyone
- Punching anyone
- Hurting anyone.

I have the right to be safe in this class.

This means that no one will:

- Hit me
- Kick me
- Push me
- Threaten me
- or hurt me.

Student Signature _____

Parent Signature _____

Storytelling continued

Assessment Tools: Storytelling Web



Unit: Theater Making

Storytelling continued

Assessment Tools: Storytelling Rubric Checklist

Level 4- Excellent

Playwriting:

(includes **ALL** of the following elements)

- a. Beginning, Middle, End (a sequential Plot)
- b. Conflict/Resolution/solution
- c. Rising Action
- d. At least 2 characters with dialogue
- e. Must be based upon a "seed idea" from memoir writing.
- f. Strong Opening
- g. Strong Closing

Acting:

- h. Vocal Projection, articulation and enunciation.
- i. Characterization for at least 2 characters.
- j. Utilize the stage/use eye contact.
- k. Engage and entice the audience with details and descriptive language.

3- Good

Playwriting:

(includes at least **SIX** of the following elements)

- a. Beginning, Middle, End (a sequential Plot)
- b. Conflict/Resolution/solution
- c. Rising Action
- d. At least 2 characters with dialogue
- e. Must be based upon a "seed idea" from memoir writing.
- f. Strong Opening
- g. Strong Closing

Acting:

- h. Vocal Projection, articulation, enunciation
- i. Characterization for at least one character.
- j. Use eye contact to engage the audience.
- k. Engage the audience.

Unit: Theater Making

Storytelling continued

Assessment Tools: Storytelling Rubric Checklist continued

2- Room for improvement

Playwriting:

(includes at least **FOUR** of the following elements)

- a. Beginning, Middle, End (a sequential Plot)
- b. Conflict/Resolution/solution
- c. Rising Action
- d. At least 2 characters with dialogue
- e. Must be based upon a "seed idea" from memoir writing.
- f. Strong Opening
- g. Strong Closing

Acting:

- h. Vocal Projection
- i. Some characterization.
- j. Somewhat engaging for the audience.

1- Needs work

Playwriting:

(includes **TWO OR FEWER** of the following)

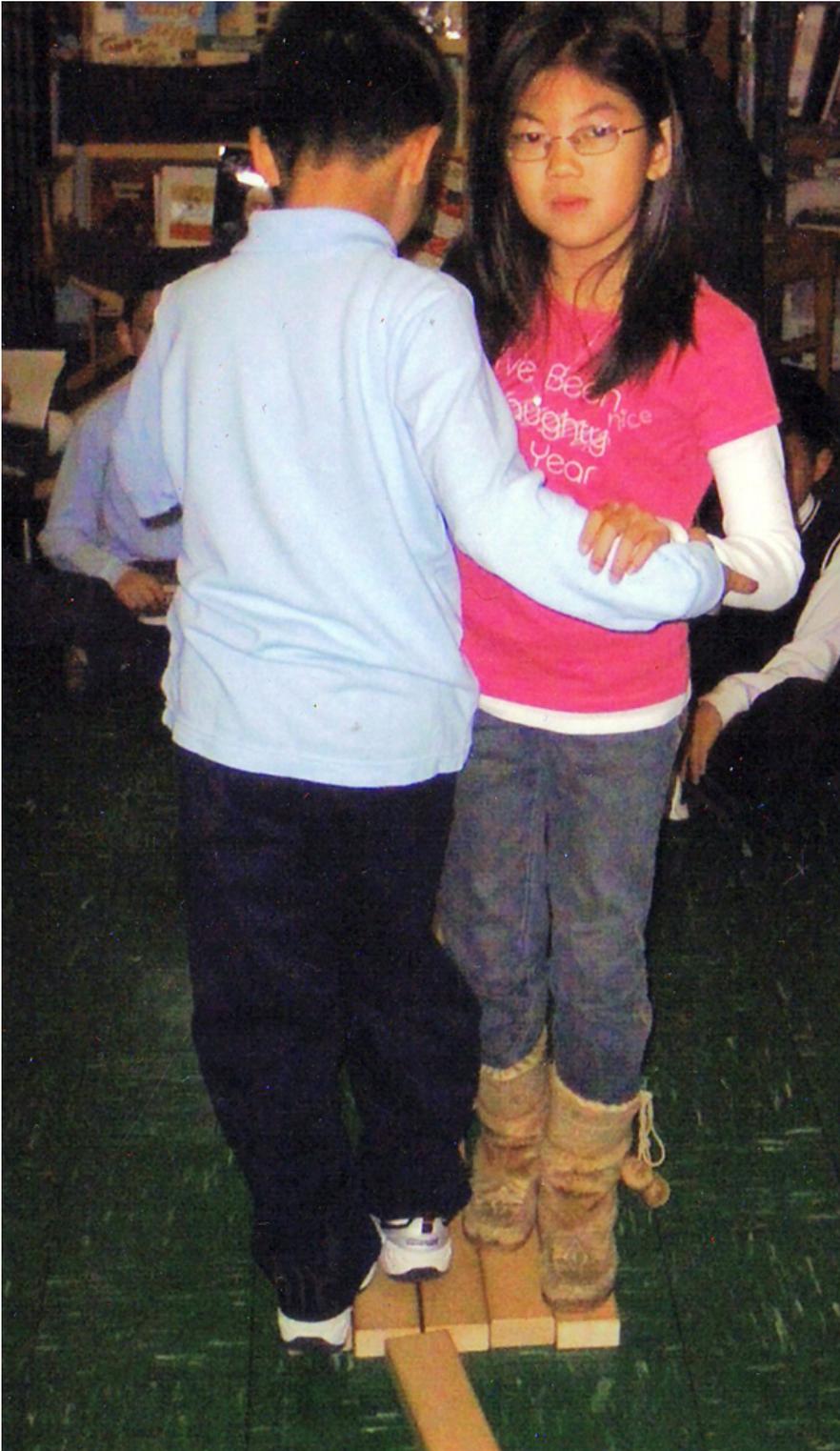
- a. Beginning, Middle, End (a sequential Plot)
- b. Conflict/Resolution/solution
- c. Rising Action
- d. At least 2 characters with dialogue
- e. Must be based upon a "seed idea" from memoir writing.
- f. Strong Opening
- g. Strong Closing

Acting:

- h. Little if any vocal projection'
- i. No characterization.
- j. Difficult for the audience to follow.

Storytelling continued

Student Work



Reason: Dependent on
1/1/21

What method/means of assessment
how we did it our storytelling unit?

A method of assessment we have
used in our storytelling unit is the
self assessment in which we grade
our own stories based on their
storytelling criteria. Then there's the
peer to peer assessment in which the
audience (class) grades you according
to the storytelling criteria. Finally
there's the assessment by the
teacher. In the end you get the
average of all 3 grades and
that's your score.

The storytelling criteria which
we used had a lot of things to
it. For example, the criteria for
a 2 is:

- strong opening
- developed characters (2) minimum
- characterisation
- good tone of voice, rhythm
- organised/sequence of events
- plot (Beginning, middle, end)
- good use of stage
- dialogue
- clear ~~story~~ (Seed like)

The criteria for a 3 is:

- developed characters
- organised
- evidence of a story
- plot
- tone

The criteria for a 2 is:

- undeveloped characters
- sort of organised
- some kind of plot
- some setting
- no tone

The criteria for a 1 is:

- no plot
- unorganised
- no tone
- poor ending and opening

This is how we're graded ~~ourselves~~,
get graded by the class and
the teacher.

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[Click here for a sample of student storytelling and reflection](#)

Observations

I have used this Storytelling Unit in all five of our sixth grade classes and looking back I have made some modifications along the way which I believe made a positive difference in the learning outcomes for the many students.

However, there is plenty of room for improvement. I find myself constantly looking for the answers to unresolved questions.

I know I need to introduce and expose the students to several types of storytelling such as cultures, traditions, teacher modeling and storytelling to “Explain the Unknown”. I know my work in this unit is not finished. However, much was accomplished this year and I choose to celebrate those successes with you now...

I had very definite “Big Ideas” that I wanted to impart to my students most of whom I have known since Kindergarten.

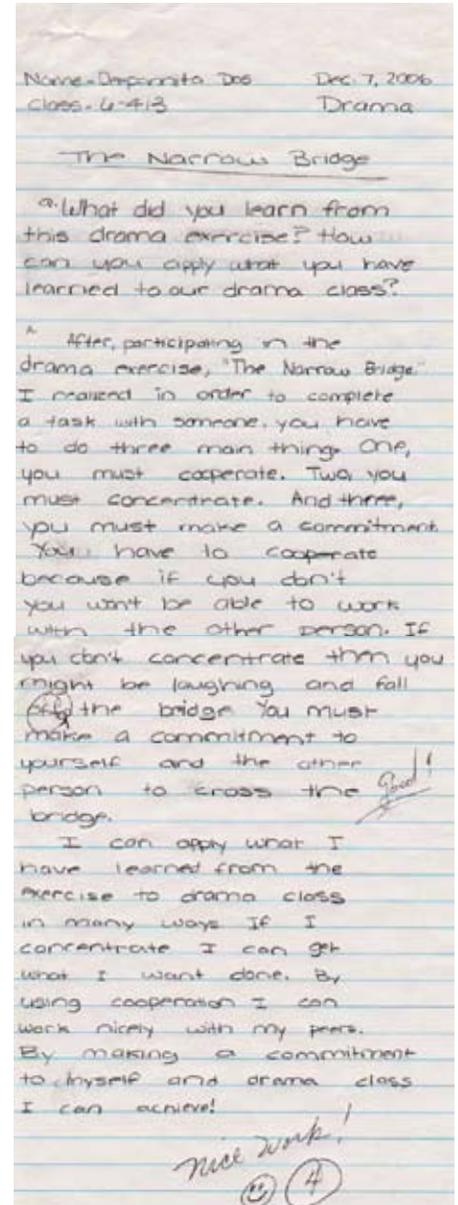
I wanted my students to be able to speak in front of an audience while having their creativity and imagination validated.

I wanted them to understand that “Story-telling” is a unique art form where they could explore and better understand themselves and others. Finally, I hoped they would come away with the understanding that theater as well as life, works best when we cooperate and support each other.

Now all I had to do was create a sequential unit of study containing Learning Experiences which would produce the desired Learning Outcomes and also utilize the appropriate Assessments that align to those Learning Outcomes. Back in October it all seemed a bit overwhelming. I must say that the Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Theater proved to be an invaluable resource and teaching tool. Using David L. Harrison’s, Writing Stories, as well as Martha Hamilton & Mitch Weiss’s, Children Tell Stories: A teaching guide along with my own bag of theatrical tricks I began to create the unit.

As far as journeys go ours began as most do, brilliantly! The first few sessions were successful and things were looking very good. My sixth graders were engaged and producing work. The most successful aspect of the unit as far as I was concerned was the student generated Checklist/Rubric along with the Self and Peer-to-Peer Assessments which were based upon the Rubric/Checklist.

This worked I believe for several reasons. First it validates the students as they created the tool. As such, the students can’t



Unit: Theater Making

Storytelling continued

Student Work

really find any way to argue their grades as they themselves set the bar. Creating this Rubric directly after the modeling of the Storytelling was key. With that experience fresh in their minds, they listed all the elements of successful storytelling and incorporated them into their own expectations for themselves.

The Peer-Peer assessment also proved to be an excellent classroom management tool as the students had a reason to remain engaged during the presentations. The students were very happy working within the perimeters of the checklist.

One of the biggest surprises I had was in the positive and productive use of the Peer-Peer assessment by MANY of the students who have reputations as being “behaviorally challenged”.

But there were problems. I found that the storytelling itself was flat. Many students had a problem with characterization and keeping the audience engaged. I did introduce a characterization exercise at this point, which seemed to open the students up to performing the dialogue within their stories and shifting them away from the narrative. Sixth graders seem to have changed in the past few years and I needed to continue with and find new ensemble building exercises to keep them focused on one of my “Big Ideas” i.e., “Drama is a cooperative art form.”

Video taping the students proved to be a two edged sword. Some students responded well to seeing themselves. They were honest in their self-critique and determined to improve their skills. Others were put off by classmates who laughed at performance mistakes or worse a student’s physical appearance. We discussed this and the classes all agreed that we should support each other and act as an ensemble even while performing as individuals. I felt that the damage was done and I came up with the students’ Bill of Rights. (See Students’ Rights and Responsibilities- III B)

I also found that students overwhelmingly had issues with openings and closings to their stories and how these differ from the beginning-middle-end of a story. I will address this next year with a lesson on opening and closings. If anyone has a suggesting for a written assignment that we could use please share it with me.

Finally, I need to share with you the fact that TIME is a FACTOR in the success of this Unit. With 30 or so students per class, that’s 150 two to three-minute stories you need to listen to and critique three times i.e., Self, Peer-to-Peer and Teacher.

With only 50 minutes per session and warm-ups, you can get to 4-5 students per session if the class is really on task. I found it really helped to have energetic, varied warm-ups based around concentration and cooperation skills to keep the students coming back for more and eager to perform. Again if anyone has any suggestions, I welcome the chance to improve and give back to the students just a small piece of what they do for me.

