

Advanced Tactics

by Maria McConville

Essential Question

How do actors determine and apply tactics and obstacles to enhance their performance?

Ideal group

Experienced High School actors.



Goal/Aim

Students can identify the conflict, intentions and actions for the characters in their play/scene.

Length of Lesson

This could work for a 40-45 minute class period.

Materials Needed

Script (copies for each actor), pen or pencil, a bag, strips of paper.

Vocabulary

Conflict: incompatibility or interference, as of one idea, desire, event or activity with another. The struggle between characters in a scene.

Intention: the end or object intended; purpose. What the character wants in a scene.

Obstacle: a person or thing that opposes or hinders something. What stands in the character's way of achieving his/her goal.

Tactic: an action performed to achieve a goal.

Improvisation: the art or act of improvising, or of composing, uttering, executing or arranging anything without previous preparation.

WARM-UP

Verb List: Have students create a menu of verbs. Then:

1. Group brainstorm a situation the students might find themselves in during the day when they would have a very specific objective - something they would really, really need. (i.e. money for lunch, to stay out late, to be excused from an exam.)
2. List the tactics they would use to get what they want. (i.e. to bribe, to tease, to accuse, to charm, to demand.) Write them on strips of paper.
3. Pair students up and have them select a scenario where one student would need/want something from the other. (It can be a scenario mentioned earlier.) There is one performer who wants something from the other and that scene partner does not/can not give it.
4. Have students pick 3 verbs/tactics each from the bag.
5. Give the student pairs 5 minutes to improvise the scenario and have them only use these tactics to try to achieve their goal.
6. Take 10 minutes to watch a few of the improvisations.

ACTIVITY 1

Adding tactics to the scene

1. Read through the scene your students are working on.
2. Establish each character's intention and obstacle.
3. Each actor should pull 3 tactics from the bag of verbs made earlier.
4. Have the actors rehearse the scene using these three tactics.
5. Discuss what worked and what did not. Did these tactics help the character get what they want?

ACTIVITY 2

Choosing the best tactics for your scene

1. Actors now re-establish their character's intention and obstacle.
2. The scene partners should now create a new menu of tactics that could be possible in their scene. Write all of these playable verbs on paper.
3. The actors should select 3 new tactics from this menu to try out in rehearsal.
4. Discuss what worked and what did not.

5. Try new tactics from the menu.
6. After students have tried the scene with a few different tactics, they should take the time to discuss what were the strongest choices based on text and intention.

Discussion Questions

What did you learn about your character that you didn't know before?

What did you discover about your scene that made it more interesting?

How did this process help strengthen your performance?

Teaching standards met by this lesson

New York City Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Theatre

Theatre Making: Acting; Developing Theatre Literacy; Making Connections Through Theatre;

Working with Community and Cultural Resources; Exploring Careers and Lifelong Learning

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