

Group Play Devising

by Maria McConville

Essential Question

How can our group devise a play that the majority can agree upon?

Ideal group

Beginners. Middle School.

Goal/Aim

To have a Top 3 list of Locations and Character Types/Relationships that everyone is interested in creating a play about.

Length of Lesson

This lesson was originally created for an after-school setting. This would be for a session lasting around 70-90 minutes. The residency would be focused on play making.

Materials Needed

Chart paper and markers.

WARM-UP 1

(10 minutes)

Hey, Hey, What do you say? Tell us what you did today!

The group is sitting in a circle. The entire group chants "Hey, Hey, what do you say? Tell us what you did today!" One by one, each student shouts out something from their day. In between each students' share, the group chants "Hey, Hey..." to move to the next student.



WARM-UP 2

(5 minutes)

Simon Says

You know it. You love it.

The teacher leads. This is fast and furious.

WARM-UP 3

(10 minutes)

The Clap Game

The group is in a circle. The teacher passes the energy to the student next to him/her by clapping with them at the same time. Now the student has the energy and passes it the same way it was received. The energy will move all the way around the circle. It should gain momentum and, ideally, sound like one person clapping.

IDEA BUILDING

ACTIVITY 1

(5-10 minutes)

Telephone (2x)

A student or the teacher sends a sentence around the circle by whispering it to the person next to them. Does it change as it travels?

ACTIVITY 2

(5-10 minutes)

One Word Story (2x)

Students are still in a circle. The teacher or a student can start a story by saying one word. The person next to them says the next word to continue the thought. A story should begin to form.

ACTIVITY 3

(5-10 minutes)

Talking Ball (1x)

Whoever has the ball gets to begin telling a story. After a sentence or two, they should pass/toss the ball to another student to continue the story. Everyone must listen and build upon the ideas that come before theirs.

WHAT IS A CHARACTER

ACTIVITY 1

(10 minutes)

View Points Walk

- The students walk around the rehearsal space. This is an independent walk, yet, all of the students are walking at the same time. They should walk with purpose and avoid bumping into each other, touching each other, laughing... This is a task.
- The teacher offers different ways the students can move through space: Fast, slow, as if it were very hot, cold, raining, a blizzard, a perfect spring day...
- After, they have tried out various "walks," talk about what types of characters they know or that they see in their communities that these physical movements remind them of.

ACTIVITY 2

(10 minutes)

Ball Toss

- The students come back into a circle.
- The teacher has three balls. One is passed to your right. Whenever you receive that ball, you state your name. When the second ball is introduced, that ball is passed to the left and you state your age. A third ball is then tossed around the circle. This one represents your individual intention.
- Next, the balls are the same, but the student must create a new character for this round.

ACTIVITY 3

(7-10 minutes)

Lists

- Students gather in a group while the Teacher asks for different character types.
- On chart paper, the teacher writes out the characters offered. Example: Evil Step-Mother, Goofy Teacher, Wacky toddler...
- After you have quite a few characters, match which the group might pair up for an interesting interaction.

ACTIVITY 4

(10 minutes)

Alphabet Location

- The group is broken into two teams. Each team lines up in front of a piece of chart paper that has the alphabet written down the side.
- The leader of each line has a marker. They must write a location starting with the letter of the alphabet that is next. This could be a city, a state, a country, a town, a room, a planet...the more specific the better. Don't copy from the other team!
- Whichever team finishes their list first, wins!

Share Time

What was your favorite activity from today's lesson? Did anything surprise you about what was created today?

Restate what was learned/practiced

Talk through the lists and characters the group has devised. How did the group collaborate together to come up with the ideas?

Homework/Writing reflection

Have the students choose their Top 3 locations and Top 5 characters. At your next rehearsal, the group will decide who they will write about and where the play will take place!

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

Maria McConville is a native New Yorker who has lived in every borough...yes, even Staten Island. She started out at LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts and received her BA in Performance from Fordham University at Lincoln Center. Maria has performed all over New York City from Shakespeare in the Park-ing Lot to Theatre Row and across the country with Theatreworks USA. She also a member of AEA, writer, Army wife, proud mother, and an inspired teaching artist.



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