**Theatre as an Art Form - Devising a Class Play**

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**Objective:**

Students will demonstrate their ability to write and perform a group script by performing a class devised piece based on Knuffle Bunny Free or The Ox Cart Man.

**Class Level**:

Beginning; unit can be used for 1st or 2nd grade. All lessons are 30 minutes.

**Main Concepts:**

collaboration, devising, rhythm, pantomime, improvisation

**Description:**

Students learn basic theatre skills by working together to create a play based on a storybook.

**Lesson Plans**

Lesson 1: Introducing Story and Devising

Students will demonstrate their ability to begin to engage with the story in Knuffle Bunny Free/The Ox Cart Man by participating in a reading of the book and discussion.

Lesson 2: Rhythm and Story

Students will discover qualities of movement inspired by Knuffle Bunny Free/Ox Cart Man by participating in the rhythmic journey activity.

Lesson 3: Pantomime

Students will begin to apply movement to telling parts of Knuffle Bunny Free/The Ox Cart Man by participating in situation pantomime game.

Lesson 4: Improvisations

Students will put speech to their pantomimes to develop scenes based on Knuffle Bunny Free/The Ox Cart Man by participating in scenario improvisations.

Lesson 5: Putting it Together

Students will demonstrate their ability to collaboratively decide the flow of their show by putting together the scenarios they improvised into one play.

Lesson 6: Dress Rehearsal

Students will demonstrate their ability to work together on solidifying their show by participating in a dress rehearsal of their class play.

Lesson 7: Performance

Students will demonstrate their ability to write and perform a group script by performing a class devised piece based on Knuffle Bunny Free/The Ox Cart Man.

**Utah Core Curriculum Language Arts First and Second Grade**:

Identify beginning/middle/end, characters, setting, problem/resolution.

**Unit Essential Questions:**

What is collaboration?

Why collaborate?

How do we express an idea?

Why do we create something new?

How do we create something new?

**Sources:**

Knuffle Bunny Free by Mo Willems

The Ox Cart Man by Donald Hall

Tomorrow’s Stages: Blueprints for Transforming Theatre

Creative Drama in the Classroom and Beyond Eighth Edition by Nellie McCaslin

**Introducing Story and Devising**

**Objective**

Students will demonstrate their ability to begin to engage with the story in Knuffle Bunny Free/The Ox Cart Man by participating in a reading of the book and discussion.

**Materials Needed**

* Copy of *Knuffle Bunny Free*by Mo Willems (First grade)
* Copy of *The Ox Cart Man* by Donald Hall (Second grade)
* Ball of yarn
* Whiteboard/chalkboard/butcher paper
* Dry erase markers/chalk/regular markers
* Clear space for class to sit and read the story

**Lesson Directions**

**Anticipatory Set/Hook**

***Webs We Weave***

Have students sit in a circle. Show them the cover of the book and tell them that as a class, we’re going to read this book and then make a play based on the book. But first we’re going to play a game to start thinking about the book. Have them look at the cover one more time.

Put the book behind you, then bring out a ball of yarn. Tell them that we’re each going to answer a question when we get the ball of yarn. I’ll answer a question first, and then hold on to a piece of the yarn as I gently toss the ball of yarn to one of the students and ask them to answer an inference question about the story. After the student answers the question, then he can choose another student to toss the yarn to and that new student will answer another question. And so on until everyone has had a chance to answer a question.

 Questions:

·         What do you think this story is about?

·         Who is in the story? (or Who is Knuffle Bunny? Who is the Ox Cart Man? Who is on the cover? What are they doing in the picture on the cover?)

·         What does that person do?

·         Where do you think the story takes place?

·         How did you guess where the story takes place?

·         Do you think the people go anywhere?

·         What do you think is one thing we need to have to make this book into a play?

·         What sounds do you think will be in this story?

After everyone has answered a question, there will be a web of yarn connecting everyone. Thank the students for their participation and tell them to look around the room at how everyone is important to making the cool shape of the yarn. Tell them each of them will be important when we create our class play.

**Instruction**

***Step 2:***

    Reading: Continue to sit in the circle and tell the students to think about the answers to the questions in the yarn game as you read *Knuffle Bunny Free/The Ox Cart Man.*

***Step 3:***

Post-Reading Discussion: As the questions are answered, write them on the whiteboard/chalkboard (to record later) or on a piece of butcher paper (to keep for the rest of the devising process)

·         Who was in this story? Who were the characters?

·         Where did the story take place?

·         Did the characters go anywhere? Where?

·         What were some of the events of the story (beginning/middle/end)?

·         What were some of the sounds in the story?

·         What is something we need as we create our class play about this book.

***Conclusion:***

   Thank students for their participation in the discussion and tell them that we will reference these answers over and over as we create our play as a class.

**Assessment**

Answering questions about the story.

**Author's Notes**

***Utah Core Curriculum Language Arts First and Second Grade:***Identify beginning/middle/end, characters, setting, problem/resolution.

**Essential Questions:**

* What is the connection between literature and theatre?
* How do we relate to the characters in the book?
* Why create a new piece of art based on another piece of art?
* What are characters?

**Rhythm and Story**

**Objective**

Students will discover qualities of movement inspired by Knuffle Bunny Free/Ox Cart Man by participating in the rhythmic journey activity.

**Materials Needed**

* Clear space in the classroom
* Drums (or something to create a rhythm)
* Whiteboard/Chalkboard/butcher paper
* Dry erase markers/chalk/marker

**Lesson Directions**

**Anticipatory Set/Hook**

High/Low Fast/Slow Movement: Tell students to find a space where they are not touching a neighbor in the open space in the classroom. Tell them that you are going to start making a rhythm on the drum and they are to start moving to that beat (maybe walking first).

After they’ve moved to a beat for a bit tell them that there are 3 heights they can move at to the beat: low (have them show you what low looks like) and medium (which might be their normal height) and high (have them show you what it looks like to move high). Tell them you’re going to do another rhythm and they need to move to that rhythm and then you’ll call out different heights for them to move at.

Next is Time: Tell them there are 3 speeds they can move at: slow (beat out a slow rhythm) medium (beat out a comfortable speed) and then fast (beat out a fast rhythm). Tell them that you’re not going to say anything but they need to match their movement to the type of rhythm being played (fast/medium/slow).

Last time: Now call out different heights as you change speeds of the rhythm and then stop the game.

**Instruction**

***Step 2:***

     Discussion: Have students sit in a circle. Ask the following three questions:

·         What did you think of this game?

·         What did you notice when you were moving at different speeds/heights?

·         How did the rhythm affect the way you moved?

***Step 3:***

     Rhythmic Journey:

Tell the students that they are going to move around the space again. But this time, the class is going to go on a trip together through the rhythm. Think about the different speeds/heights you can move at but also listen to where we are and the rhythm and move how those things make you think/feel.

***Knuffle Bunny Free:***Take the students to the different places Trixie and Knuffle Bunny go and doing some of the same activities: going on a plane, being lost etc.

***Ox Cart Man:***Take the students through some of the activities the Ox Cart Man does and some of the people he meets and where he goes.

***Closing:***

     Discussion: Bring out the butcher paper and label one part rhythms and movement:

             Ask the students the  following questions:

·         What were some things you noticed?

·         What were some movements you liked?

·         What were some sounds/rhythms that you like?

          Talk about what we want to keep exploring next time we come together out of the movements/rhythms we liked best from what we did today. Circle those and thank the students.

**Assessment**

Assess through closing discussion.

**Author's Notes**

**Content Standards:**

***National Standards for Theatre Education: Content Standard 3:***Designing by visualizing and arranging environments for classroom dramatizations.

*Achievement standard:*visualize environments and construct designs to communicate locale and mood using visual elements and aural aspects using a variety of sound source.

**Essential Questions:**

* How do we communicate mood with rhythm/sound?
* How do we communicate story with rhythm/sound?
* How do we work together to make rhythm/sound?

**Pantomime**

**Objective**

Students will begin to apply movement to telling parts of Knuffle Bunny Free/The Ox Cart Man by participating in situation pantomime game.

**Materials Needed**

* Clear space in the classroom
* Whiteboard/Chalkboard/butcher paper
* Dry erase markers/chalk/marker

**Lesson Directions**

**Anticipatory Set/Hook**

What’s in the Box?: Have students sit in a circle. Tell them that you have a box and you’re going to open up that box and show everyone what’s inside. But when you show them, you’re not going to make a single noise. You’ll just show the class what it is by how you act it out. Tell the class that after you’ve shown the class your object, you’ll close the box and give it to the next person. When the box gets to the next person, it may look completely different and it will have something new inside. Show us the box and then what is inside. Repeat this until the box comes back to the teacher.

**Instruction**

***Step 2:***

Discussion: Ask the following questions after the *What’s in the Box?*activity:

* What were some different things in the box?
* How could you tell what your classmates found in the box?
* How did you show us what was in the box?
* Are there ways we can show our audience something that is not really on stage with us during our play?

***Step 3:***

Situation Pantomime: Tell the students we are now going to show different situations and places to each other without words (just like the game we just played, this is called pantomime). We will split the class into groups and each group will have a scene from the story we read act out. Each group will have a few minutes to play around with the pantomime and then we’ll perform for each other.

*Knuffle Bunny Free*situations:

·         Leaving Knuffle Bunny on the plane and realizing she’s gone.

·         Adventures of Knuffle Bunny

·         Finding Knuffle Bunny and giving her to another child.

*Ox Cart Man*situations:

·         “In October of the year, he counts potatoes dug from the brown field, counting the seed, counting the cellar’s portion out and bags the rest on the cart’s floor./He packs wool sheared in April, honey in combs, linen, leather tanned from deerhide and vinegar in a barrel hoped by hand at the forge’s fire”

·         “ He walks by his ox’s head, ten days to Portsmouth Market, and sells potatoes, and the bag that carried potatoes, flaxseed, birch brooms, maple sugar, goose feathers, yarn./When the cart is empty he sells the cart. When the cart is sold he sells the ox, harness and yoke”

·         “and walks home, his pockets heavy with the year’s coin for salt and taxes, and at home by fire’s light in November cold stitches new harness for next year’s ox in the barn and cares the yoke, and saws planks building the cart again.”

***Step 4:***

Explore: Give the students a few minutes of guided exploration of the scenario.

***Step 5:***

Share: Bring the students back together and remind them of what an audience does. Each group will share. After each group shares, give them a round of applause and ask these questions: **What did you notice? How did they tell the story using no words?**

***Conclusion:***

Thank the students for their participation. Ask them as a group creating the play what they think was useful about today. (write on the board or the butcher paper)

·         What can we use in our play?

·         Can we incorporate rhythm into that as well? How?

·         What is new about our play today?

**Assessment**

Situation Pantomimes

**Author's Notes**

**Content Standard:**

***National Standards for Theatre Education; Content Standard 2:***Acting by assuming roles and interacting in improvisations.

**Essential Questions:**

* How do we communicate with just our bodies?
* What is the relationship between story telling and body language?

**Improvisations**

**Objective**

Students will put speech to their pantomimes to develop scenes based on Knuffle Bunny Free/The Ox Cart Man by participating in scenario improvisations.

**Materials Needed**

* Clear space in the classroom
* Whiteboard/Chalkboard/butcher paper
* Dry erase markers/chalk/marker

**Lesson Directions**

**Anticipatory Set/Hook**

 Where we are: Have students gather around and tell them that in a moment the classroom is going to be transformed from a classroom into another place (ex: Pizza buffet, park, clothing store). Students will go up in groups of 2 or 3 (as the teacher calls on them, until about half the class is up there and the other half is watching) and enter the new space. What sorts of activities do you do in that place? Tell the students that they just need to pretend like they’re in that place and do something in the space, they can interact with each other and use words. Let the scene play out for a minute or so and then ask those who weren’t in that particular scene: What did you see? How did you know where they were?

Repeat the activity with the other half of the class and ask the same questions.

**Instruction**

***Step 2:***

            Improv description: Tell the students that they are going to do something sort of like the game we just played. Tell the students to think about the pantomime scenes we did last time. We’re going to get into our same groups and this time we’re going to build on our pantomimes by adding words. What would the characters say? How do we tell the important parts of the story through what say?

            Give them time (monitored by a co-teacher) to improv the scene.

***Step 3:***

Share: Each group will share their improv with the class.

Ask: What did you notice? How did they help you to know where they were and what they were doing with their actions and words?

***Conclusion:***

            Thank the students and tell them that you’re excited to continue creating the play now with words as well.

**Assessment**

Improvised scenes

**Author's Notes**

**Content Standards:**

***National Standards for Theatre Education; Content Standard 1:***Script writing by planning and recording improvisations based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature and history.

***National Standards for Theatre Education; Content Standard 2:***Acting by assuming roles and interacting in improvisations.

**Essential Questions**

* How do we work together to create dialogue?
* What is the connection between movement and words?

**Putting it Together**

**Objective**

Students will demonstrate their ability to collaboratively decide the flow of their show by putting together the scenarios they improvised into one play.

**Materials Needed**

* Clear space in the classroom
* Whiteboard/Chalkboard/butcher paper
* Dry erase markers/chalk/marker
* Costume pieces (such as scarves and hats)
* Props (small props like a back pack or satchel)

**Lesson Directions**

**Anticipatory Set/Hook**

Sound/Movement Circle: Have students stand in a circle and tell them that they will create a sound and a movement. Start with one person and the whole group will repeat it and then move to the next person and so on until each person has gone.

Have the students sit down. Ask: What did you notice in that game?

**Author's Notes**

**Content Standards:**

***National Standards for Theatre Education; Content Standard 1:***Script writing by planning and recording improvisations based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature and history.

***National Standards for Theatre Education; Content Standard 2:***Acting by assuming roles and interacting in improvisations.

***National Standards for Theatre Education: Content Standard 3:***Designing by visualizing and arranging environments for classroom dramatizations.

*Achievement standard:*visualize environments and construct designs to communicate locale and mood using visual elements and aural aspects using a variety of sound source.

**Essential Questions:**

* How do we collaborate to put the play together?
* How do we combine rhythm, movement and words to create the play?
* How do we complete the play?

**Dress Rehearsal**

**Objective**

Students will demonstrate their ability to work together on solidifying their show by participating in a dress rehearsal of their class play.

**Materials Needed**

* Clear space in the classroom
* Costume pieces (such as scarves and hats)
* Props (small props like a back pack or satchel)

**Lesson Directions**

**Anticipatory Set/Hook**

Pass the clap: Have students stand in a circle. The clap will start with you and you will look in a student’s eyes and you clap at the same time and this goes all the way around the circle. Tell the students that the you want to clap the same time as your partner, look in their eyes and get it around the circle as quickly as possible.

**Instruction**

***Step 2:***

Discussion: Ask the students: What did you notice in this game? How will it help us as we practice our play?

            Have students help you recall all the elements of their play. Tell them we’re going to practice our play just like it will happen next class.

***Step 3:***

Rehearse: Have the students help you decide where everyone’s props/costumes will go during the show. Practice putting the props/costumes there and taking them back/putting them on.

·         Practice what will be said before the show.

·         Practice the actual show and what a student does when he/she is not on stage.

***Step 4:***

Thank the students and go through one more time the logistics for the performance. Tell them how excited you are for the performance. Thank them for their hard work.

**Assessment**

Rehearsal

**Author's Notes**

***National Standards for Theatre Education; Content Standard 1:***Script writing by planning and recording improvisations based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature and history.

***National Standards for Theatre Education; Content Standard 2:***Acting by assuming roles and interacting in improvisations.

**Performance**

**Objective**

Students will demonstrate their ability to write and perform a group script by performing a class devised piece based on Knuffle Bunny Free/The Ox Cart Man.

**Materials Needed**

* Clear space in classroom, one part the stage and the other part for audience
* The costumes decided on for the show

**Lesson Directions**

**Anticipatory Set/Hook**

Energy Ball: Performers stand in a circle and tell them you have a ball and show them what it looks like. Tell them that you will look another person in the eyes and toss the ball to them. The ball can be different when it gets to that person, but the person must show the group how it is different, then toss it to someone else. Tell them you want to go as quickly as possible.

**Instruction**

***Step2:***

Pre-Performance Pep-talk: Have the students sit in a circle. Thank them for all their hard work on the play. They worked together well and every person’s ideas and input were needed to make the play successful. Tell them to go out there and have fun. Remind them of where the stage is and our etiquette when we’re not on stage.

***Step 3:***

Performance: Thank the audience for coming and remind them of audience etiquette. Hands and feet to yourself and no talking. We clap at the end to say “good job” to the actors. Introduce the show.

***Step 4:***

Post-Show: Thank the audience for coming. Tell the actors great job. Ask this question:

·         What were some things you liked about the play?

·         What were some things you noticed?

Dismiss the audience.

***Conclusion:***

Tell the actors how proud you are of them and their team work and thank them for the experience.

**Assessment**

Performance.

**Author's Notes**

***National Standards for Theatre Education; Content Standard 1:***Script writing by planning and recording improvisations based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature and history.

*Achievement standard:*improvise dialogue to tell stories, and formalize improvisation by writing or recording the dialogue

***National Standards for Theatre Education; Content Standard 2:***Acting by assuming roles and interacting in improvisations.

***National Standards for Theatre Education: Content Standard 3:***Designing by visualizing and arranging environments for classroom dramatizations.

*Achievement standard:*visualize environments and construct designs to communicate locale and mood using visual elements and aural aspects using a variety of sound source.