**Communicating a Character from a Poem**

By Ashlyn Anderson

**Grades:**

1-2

**Length:**

30 minutes

**Standards:**

2014 National Theatre Arts

* Anchor Standard 4: Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.
  + TH Pr4.1.1.b. Use body, face, gestures, and voice to communicate character traits and emotions in a guided drama experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).
* Anchor Standard 6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
  + TH: Pr6.1.1.a. With prompting and support, use movement and gestures to communicate emotions in a guided drama experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).
* Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
  + TH: Cn10.1.1.a. Identify character emotions in a guided drama experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama) and relate it to personal experience.

English Language Arts Grade 2

* RL 1: Ask and answer such questions as *who, what, where, when, why,* and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
* RL 2: Recount stories and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.
* RL 3: Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

**Objective:**

Students will demonstrate increased ability to make physical character choices by exploring in role the characters from the poem “Adventures of Isabel” by Ogden Nash.

**Big Ideas:**

* Character
* Emotion
* Expression

**Essential Questions:**

* What role does a character play in a story? How do characters influence the rest of a story?
* How do people communicate their thoughts and feelings using their bodies and faces?
* How can I use my facial expressions and body language to tell a story?

**Enduring Understandings:**

* Theatre artists make strong choices to effectively convey meaning.
* Theatre artists share and present stories, ideas, and envisioned worlds to explore the human experience.
* Theatre artists rely on intuition, curiosity, and critical inquiry.

**Prior Experience:**

Students may have previous experience with story drama, but it is not necessary for this beginning lesson.

**Materials Needed:**

* *The Adventures of Isabel* by Ogden Nash, illustrated storybook

**Preparation:**

Fasten the pages about doctor in the storybook together with a paper clip to facilitate an easy page turn (i.e., skip this stanza of the poem).

**Warm up:**

Play ‘Wake Up’ with the students. Alternate between telling them to “Wake up” and “Go to sleep” as various animals or characters. Begin by saying, “Go to sleep, students (or children).” Then ask them to “Wake up,” as lions, witches, bears, fish, mice, sheep, etc. On cue, students should move and make noise like the character. Students should stay in role until you tell them to “go to sleep.” e.g. “Go to sleep, students . . . Wake up, lions . . . Go to sleep, lions . . . Wake up, monkeys . . . etc.”

Use side-coaching phrases to help students explore their roles:

* How does a witch move—fast or slow?
* How is your lion feeling—hungry, sleepy, happy, or warm?
* Can you go to sleep like a bear? How does a bear like to sleep?

Variation: Turn the lights off each time you say “Go to sleep” and turn them back on again each time you say, “Wake up.”

Variation: For gifted and talented students, challenge them with more abstract character roles, like musicians, colors, or feelings.

**Hook:**

Read the poem to the students. Tell them to pay close attention because you will have some questions for them afterward (skip the stanza about the doctor).

* Who was the main character of this story? (Isabel)
* Who did she meet along the way? (bear, witch, giant)
* In what ways did those characters look differently than Isabel?

**Step 1:**

“Now we are going to try pantomiming these characters using our bodies and without using words. Find your own space in the room and stand in it. Make sure your space doesn’t overlap with someone else’s. Turn around and face me when you are ready.”

“I am going to read the story again, and I want you to act it out while I’m reading it using your body and face.”

* Do you remember which character Isabel met first in the story? (The bear)
* Can you act out the bear while I read that part of the story?

Read the storybook out loud while students act out the characters. Notice the students’ physical choices for the bear’s size and hungry mouth. Provide reinforcing feedback using the names of students who are following directions successfully.

* Do you remember who Isabel met next? (The witch)
* Please act out the witch’s character while I read that part of the story.

Notice the students’ choices for the witch’s facial expressions and posture.

* Who did Isabel meet next? (The giant)
* Try to act out the giant while I read that part of the story.

Encourage the students to make the character of the giant even more different than the witch and the bear.

* How can you show the size of the giant’s body?
* What do you think his face looks like?
* Does he move really fast or really slow?

Teach the students how to move in their own space by walking in place and not leaving their spot. Ask them to tell you why it is so important to stay in your own space. (Keeping to yourself shows respect for others and lets us have more fun.)

**Step 2:**

“Great job! Now, I’m going to set the storybook down, but let’s look at your three characters closer.”

* Act out which character was the biggest (the giant).
* Show me your witches. How can you make the witch look smaller than the giant?

**Step 3:**

“Choose your favorite character: is it Isabel, the bear, the witch, or the giant? When I count to three, please move to your seat while moving in the way your favorite character would walk. Be as quiet as you can . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . .”

**Step 4:**

Show the students the pictures of Isabel’s nightmare at the end of the book. “Look at this picture. Do you think Isabel is afraid? Why or why not?”

* Do you remember some of the character she met? Was she afraid of the bear, the witch, or the giant? (No)
* How did you know she was not afraid? What did she do to show she felt brave?

“Let’s find out. I’m going to read the rest of the story.” Read the end of the storybook out loud to the students.”

* Was Isabel afraid of the bad dream? (No)
* How did she make the bad dream go away? (She woke up)
* Are you ever afraid? What are some things you are afraid of?

**Step 5:**

“Let’s act out what it looks like to be afraid.” Ask the students to show you what their face looks like when they are afraid.

“Good job! Those were some scared faces. But Isabel was not afraid, was she? How did she feel instead?” (Brave, happy, etc.)

“You’re right. Isabel felt brave. Can you show me what ‘brave would look like on your faces? Good job.”

“Now let’s try showing the feeling ‘brave’ with more than just our faces. Do you think you could make your whole body look brave? Let’s try. Everyone find your own space in the room. Stand up. When I read about Isabel, can you look as brave as she did?”

**Step 6:**

“Feeling brave or afraid are only two of many different emotions. What are ‘emotions’? Emotions are feelings. What are some other feelings you can think of? Let’s try acting some other emotions out.”

* Hungry: “Remember that the bear was hungry? I’m going to reread the part of the story about the bear. While I read it, please try to show me what it feels like to be hungry.”
* Sick: “What do your body and face look like when you feel sick?”
* Angry: “What do you look like when you are mad?”
* Surprised
* Sleepy
* Happy
* Bored

**Extra Activity (if needed):**

Play ‘Wake up’ again, but this time call out a character + an emotion that you want the students to act out, such as, “Wake up, hungry lions” and “Wake up, scared birds,” etc. Encourage the students to keep both their characters and emotions in mind as they act out the parts of the game.

**Assessment:**

Students can be assessed on their character choices demonstrated by the end of class.