**Unit Title**

Storytelling for Actors

**Author Name**

Kristen Leinbach

**Unit Objective**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of the elements of storytelling by performing their personal story for the class and writing a reflection.

**Learning Level**

Intermediate, Drama 3

**Students Prior Experience**

Drama 1 & Drama 2

**1994 National Theatre Standards**

Content Standard #1: Script writing through improvising, writing, and refining scripts based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history

Content Standard #2: Acting by developing, communicating, and sustaining characters in improvisations and informal or formal productions

Content Standard #5: Researching by evaluating and synthesizing cultural and historical information to support artistic choices

Content Standard #7: Analyzing, critiquing, and constructing meanings from informal and formal theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions

**2014 National Arts Core Theatre Standards**

TH:Cr1.1: Anchor Standard: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

TH:Cr3.1.HSIII.a. Refine, transform, and re-imagine a devised or scripted drama/theatre work using the rehearsal process to invent or re-imagine style, genre, form, and conventions.

TH:Pr4.1.HSIII.b. Apply a variety of researched acting techniques as an approach to character choices in a drama/theatre work.

TH:Pr6.1.HSII.a.Present a drama/theatre work using creative processes that shape the production for a specific audience.

TH:Re9.1.HSII.b. Construct meaning in a drama/theatre work, considering personal aesthetics and knowledge of production elements while respecting others’ interpretations.

**Big Idea**

Storytelling teaches self-awareness, identity and how to express genuine emotion

**Essential Questions**

Why is it important to tell our own personal stories? What does storytelling teach us about other people? How is storytelling performance?

**Key Knowledge & Skills**

Students should be able to research information, write an outline for a story and perform the basic principles of storytelling which include telling a cohesive engaging story with gesture, vocal mechanics, characterization and appropriate pacing.

**Authentic Performance Tasks**

Students will demonstrate their understanding through participating in performance based activities, write ups, reflections and a final performance.

**Lessons**

**Lesson: 1** Storytelling through Movement

**Educational Objective:**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of the principles of storytelling by practicing telling a personal story to their peers.

**Lesson: 2** Storytelling Through Voice

**Educational Objective:**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of the elements of a story arc by performing in a group scene.

**Lesson: 3** What is Storytelling?

**Educational Objective:**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of nonverbal storytelling by performing a short scene.

**Lesson: 4** Picking a Story

**Educational Objective:**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of the art of storytelling by choosing and writing their personal story.

**Lesson: 5** Character Development and Details

**Educational Objective:**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of character development by presenting a montage of image work and character analysis to the class.

**Lesson: 6** Small Group Previews

**Educational Objective:**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of how to analyze storytelling by providing peer feedback.

**Lesson: 7** Preview Day

**Educational Objective**:

Students will demonstrate their understanding of implementing the elements of storytelling by performing a preview of their story as well as providing peer feedback.

**Lesson: 8** Performances

**Educational Objective:**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of the elements of storytelling by performing their personal story for the class and writing a reflection.

**Lesson: 1**

Storytelling through Movement

**Materials Needed:**

Papers of instruction

**Educational Objective:**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of nonverbal storytelling by performing a short scene.

**Hook**: Without speaking motion to the students to come and sit in a circle on the floor. Pull out premade cards with the following phrases on them “Welcome to the circle” “Today we are going to play a game” “It is a silent game” “Here I have a magic box” “This box can grow, shrink, etc.” “It can hold anything (as long as it’s appropriate)” “Like a Mary Poppins Bag” “Rules” “No Talking” “One at a time take an object out of the box” “Show everyone the object” “Put the object back in the Box” “Pass the Box to the next person in the circle” “Make Sense?” “I’ll Go First”. Proceed to demonstrate by pulling an object out of the box, pantomime what the object is, put it back in the box, and pass the box to the next student in the circle.

**Step 1: Transition/Discussion**- Once everyone has pulled out an object from the box, pantomime shrinking the box and putting it back in your pocket and break the silence. Ask the students first for observations. What did you observe? What objects did we see? How could you tell what objects they were? If there was any confusion ask how the object could have been made more clear?

**Step 2: Practice**- Instruct the students that we are going to play the game again, but this time they get to interact with the person next to them. As we once again pass the box around silently, this time the first person in the team will pull out their object again and as they interact with the object, the person to their right will pull out their object and find a way to interact with each other without talking until their scene reaches an end and they put both objects away. The box is then passed to the next group and the process is repeated until you once again put the box away. Call for no talking and begin the game.

**Step 3: Discussion** - Talk with the students about their experience performing a scene through improv without talking. Discuss why movement/gesture is so important and how it can enhance a scene. What were some successes from the scenes, and why were they successes?

**Step 4: Assessment** - Divide the students into groups of four and instruct them that they are now going to tell a story without using words but incorporating the four objects from their stories (This time they can discuss what they want to do beforehand).

Give the students time to plan and rehearse and then perform for the class. At the end of each performance discuss the basic storyline and ask students to share moments that they enjoyed from the scenes and why. Focus on the benefits of exaggerating and making distinct movements and which gestures helped them to understand the story better.

**Lesson: 2**

Storytelling Through Voice

**Educational Objective:**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of the elements of a story arc by performing in a group scene.

**Hook:** At the start of class gather the students in a circle on the ground and explain that we are going to play “Fortunately and Unfortunately”. Ask for students to come up with a main character name and a situation. Then instruct that the first student in the circle will begin the story with an introductory sentence. Then the next student will continue the story by starting the sentence with fortunately, the next student in the circle will then continue the story by starting the sentence with unfortunately…. so on and so forth. You can play this game several times with various stories.

**Step 1: Transition/Discussion** - Wrap up the game and on the board draw a story arc on the board and ask for a volunteer to come up and fill in the elements, including exposition, inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution. Ask for students to provide examples of each of the elements from one of the stories we told. Ask why are each of these elements important to the story?

**Step 2: Practice** - As the discussion resolves divide the class into four groups and instruct that they are to take the story we just told and choose one element to change and perform for the class. Tell them that not only will they change the story but when they perform they also need to act out the scene and create distinct characters with specific gestures. They are allowed to change the lines but the basic story needs to stay the same except for the one element they choose to change.

As each scene finishes ask the class what element they changed as well as discuss how they portrayed characters and embellished the story.

**Step 3: Discussion/Assessment** - As the scenes all finish ask the students what differences they saw between last class and today? How is it different to tell a story only using your body and only using your voice? What is beneficial about each? Why is a negative to only having one or the other? How do they work together?

**Step 4: Instruction** - Explain to the students that for the final for this unit it will be there responsibility to tell a personal story. Explain what a personal story is. Tell them that you will be giving more specific instructions next time, but for the next class period their assignment is to write out a basic outline for two contrasting personal stories that they are considering performing. This will be worth 20/20 points.

**Lesson: 3**

What is Storytelling?

**Materials Needed:**

Videos of Storytelling

**Educational Objective:**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of the principles of storytelling by practicing telling a personal story to their peers.

**Hook**: When the students enter the classroom, ask them to share experiences from the weekend and discuss how they do storytelling every day of their life. Then write the word Storytelling written on the board. Ask for a volunteer to come up to the board and write a list, and ask the students to shout out anything that they think of when they see the word storytelling.

Make sure to get words such as plot, audience, characters, gestures, intonation, personal stories, ghost stories, comedy, tragedy, fairytales, fables, flexibility, eye contact. Share this clip from Donald Davis that describes what he thinks storytelling is <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6I24S72Jps&list=PLEMcZCvqQkarvQmrWxUGLctnpdBB-AwUM>

**Step 1: Practice** - Instruct that we are going to watch a several professional storytellers and as we watch students should take notes on techniques that they see the storytellers using:

- Bill Lepp <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hbarAW1Vxg>

Ask students what type of story they think this is? What techniques did Bill Lepp use to capture his audience? How did his story utilize the story arc? What was Bill Lepp’s inciting incident, how do you know? What character did he create of himself? What specific gestures did he use to create a connection with the audience?

- Then show the clip from Bill Harley (no URL provided – YouTube has plenty of options)

Ask students what type of story they think this is? What techniques did Bill Harley use to capture his audience? How did he create distinct characters? What type of audience was he appealing too? How did he use facial expression and why?

- Then show the clip from Kim Weitcamp (no URL provided – YouTube has plenty of options)

Ask students what type of story they think this is? What techniques did Kim Weitcamp use to capture her audience? How did she relate a personal story to the audience? What details did she incorporate? Where you able to visualize her story? What was different about her story from the other two tellers?

**Step 2: Discussion -** Talk with students to discuss reasons that made these stories engaging? Why should storytelling be flexible? (What does this mean?)

**Step 3: Practice** - Have students get into partners and tell their stories to each other, the first time just using gesture to tell both of their stories and the second time they should vocalize their story. If any parts of the story were confusing to their partner have the partner explain what confused them and to also share any moments that they really enjoyed. After they perform have the students write down a reflection, it can be just bullet points, of what they want to keep and use in their performance and choose the story they are going to tell. Depending on time have them rotate partners and do it again.

**Step 4: Assessment** - Instruct that by the end of class students need to come and show you the basic plot for their stories and if there isn’t time then by next period they need to bring in written down plot points for their story. This will be worth 30/30 points.

**Lesson: 4**

Picking a Story

**Educational Objective:**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of the art of storytelling by choosing and writing their personal story.

**Hook:** Before students enter the classroom have nine chairs placed in a circle facing out. Instruct that they should turn in their two story arcs to my desk and then instruct the students to sit in the chairs facing out and write on the board for them to sign up for times for performance dates. For those who don’t get a chair, instruct that they are to stand across from someone in the circle.

**Step 1: Practice** - Instruct that they now have the time to decide which of the two stories they want to tell. They also need to make sure as they chose that they will have two distinct characters in their story as well as themselves as the narrator and that their story is between 4 and 5 minutes long. In the circle, those who are standing are going to rotate around the circle and they can switch between telling the two stories to each new person they rotate to or they can go ahead and pick one and start polishing it. As the instructor take one of the chairs to observe and give students verbal feedback on their stories and their initial knowledge of storytelling, also be in charge of the time and call for the students to rotate to the next person every five minutes.

**Step 2: Practice** - Give students the rest of the period to write out the “script” of their story, if there isn’t time during class assign it for homework. During this time return papers and talk to students about missing work.

**Step 3: Assessment** - If there wasn’t time to finish writing their scripts in class then before they leave class remind them that next time they need to have their script written for 30/30 points.

**Lesson: 5**

Character Development and Details

**Materials Needed:**

Paper, Markers and Colored Pencils

**Educational Objective:**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of character development by presenting a montage of image work and character analysis to the class.

**Hook**: When students enter the class, have the tables set in a circle and hand them coloring utensils and paper and instruct them to take fifteen to twenty minutes to draw their two characters. Remind them to draw details and specifics, what clothes are they wearing, how do they stand, how old are they, do they have a limp. On the outside of the image draw what they like and don’t like, if they claim that they aren’t an artist tell them that they have permission to label their drawings so we know what they are.

**Step 1: Instruction/Practice** - When students finish their drawings instruct them to turn their papers over and to find a partner that they weren’t sitting with and verbally describe their characters to their partner.

**Step 2: Instruction/Practice** - Once both partners have shared explain that for the next step they need to take a few moments to walk around the space and find a “moment” for their character, meaning that they need to create one image with their bodies that describes their character.

**Step 3: Performance/Assessment** - Instruct the students that now that they have found their image have the students pull their chairs into a semi-circle and they will be performing their images one at a time. Have them hold the image and have the class describe what they are seeing and interpreting from the image. Those who have already heard the description should hold their comments to the end. Then after the class has shared their thoughts the performer has the opportunity to present their picture and description of their character with the class. Students can receive 30/30 points for presenting.

**Step 4: Practice**: If there is time at the end allow students practice time to work on incorporating their characters in their scene. You could also have them partner up to give one another feedback on the characters they are incorporating into their story.

**Lesson: 6**

Small Group Previews

**Educational Objective:**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of how to analyze storytelling by providing peer feedback.

**Hook**: Have students set up chairs in a semi-circle and finish up the class character presentations that we worked on last period (if needed). Then instruct them that we are going to take a few minutes to walk around the space as their first character in their story, interacting with the other characters in the space. Then have them switch characters. Sidecoach - for them to really find the movements of their character and also the voice as they interact with other characters.

**Step 1: Practice/Assessment** - Allow the students to divide up into three groups of six and each person in the group needs to perform their story for their peers. As peers it is their responsibility to write complements and questions down on a piece of paper. Instruct that in questioning they are to write I wonder statements, asking I wonder how this choice could be more bold, etc? Also instruct that one student needs to be in charge of timing each story so they can know how long their story is. At the end of each telling each member of the group can share their most pressing I wonder question and their favorite complement and then it will be the next person’s turn to perform.

**Lesson: 7**

Preview Day

**Educational Objective**:

Students will demonstrate their understanding of implementing the elements of storytelling by performing a preview of their story as well as providing peer feedback.

**Hook**: Before students enter pull the chairs into a semi-circle as well as have numbers 1-9 written on the board and have students’ sign up for a preview time and pull out paper to give peer feedback for each other’s stories. Also provide brief information about the rubric and how you will be grading their final.

**Step 1: Practice/Assessment** - Remind students that we are going to preview half of the class’ stories today. Assign students to write down feedback on a piece of paper that they can pass to the student who performed after each performance. Allow time at the end of each performance to give students the opportunity to give notes, after the students give peer notes take time to give verbal feedback to each student so they can know what is expected of them and what they need to improve on.

**Lesson: 8**

Performances

**Materials Needed:**

Storytelling Rubric

**Educational Objective:**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of the elements of storytelling by performing their personal story for the class and writing a reflection.

**Hook**: Give students five minutes to get warmed up and prepared to perform their stories.

**Step 1**: Explain to students that they need to be taking notes on the improvement they have seen from their peers from the preview to their final performance.

**Final Assessment**: After students perform explain that they have till the following class to turn in a one page typed reflection on their experience storytelling. What do they feel went well? What do they feel they could improve on?

**Storytelling for Actors**

***Final Evaluation Sheet***

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_/150

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Proficient** | **Good** | **Fair** | **Poor** |
| **Voice Mechanics**(15 pts.) | Speaks with an appropriate volume for the audience to hear. Employs clear enunciation. Uses non-monotonous, vocal expression to clarify the meaning of the text. | Student speaks with an appropriate volume, uses some enunciation and uses some vocal expression. | Student is difficult to hear, doesn’t enunciate and hardly uses vocal expression. | Can’t hear the student, doesn’t enunciate and doesn’t use vocal expression. |
| **Gesture**(20 pts.) | Expressively uses non-verbal communication to clarify the meaning of the text. | Uses some non-verbal communication and gesture. | Barely uses non-verbal communication and gesture, mostly stands and presents | Doesn’t use non-verbal communication or gesture. |
| **Characterization** (20 pts.) | There are two characters that are created and are believable. Storyteller's natural voice and gestures are differentiated from character voices. | Has one or two characters that are created and believable. The voice and gestures and somewhat different then their narrator. | Hardly differentiates between their characters. | Doesn’t have distinct characters in their story. |
| **Pacing**(10 pts.) | The Storyteller utilizes pacing to keep their audience interested and their story engaging. | The storyteller varies pacing some to help keep their audience engaged. | The storyteller barely uses a variety in pacing. | The storyteller doesn’t use pacing. |
| **Stage Presence**(20 pts.) | Storyteller seems comfortable, relaxed and confident in front of listeners. Storyteller listens to their audience and keeps them engaged throughout the performance. | Storyteller seems somewhat comfortable and confident. They try to listen to their audience and keep them engaged in the story. | The storyteller hardly seems comfortable and makes the audience feel uncomfortable. | The storyteller isn’t confident and does not seem comfortable at all in telling their story. |
| **Time Limit**(15 pts.) | Performance is within the 4-5 minute time limit. | Performance is 30 seconds outside of time limit. | Performance is between 30 seconds and 2 minutes overtime. | Performance is over 2 minutes outside of time limit. |
| **Reflection**(50 pts.) | Students turns in a typed one page reflection about their experience storytelling and discussing what they felt they did well and what they would want to improve on. | Student turns in page response that somewhat reflects the questions asked. | Turns in part of a reflection. | Doesn’t turn in a response. |

**Additional Comments:**