**Unit Title:** Musical Scene Mash-Ups

**Author Name:** Mary Beth Bosen

**Unit Objective:** Students will demonstrate acting fundamentals (character development, objectives, tactics, motivation, blocking) by creating, rehearsing, and performing a musical theatre mash up scene.

**Learning Level Description/Some Context:** Intermediate-ish. This was designed for a high school Intro to Musical Theatre class. Most students in this class have taken drama classes before and hope to audition for the musical and/or the Advanced Musical Theatre class. There are a few exceptions to this, but generally most students are passionate about and enjoy performing. Some of the main goals for this course are to help students amp up their acting abilities, improve their stage presence, and sharpen their ability to sing in styles needed for musical theatre.

**Prior Experience:** Prior to this unit, students have done musical theatre duets and a group ensemble number. Students are familiar with and have worked in this class to apply basics of acting, blocking, characterization, but need further opportunities for practice and application.

**National Standards:**

TH:Pr5.1.I

a.  Practice various acting techniques to expand skills in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

TH:Re9.1.II

c. Verify how a drama/theatre work communicates for a specific purpose and audience.

TH:Pr4.1.I

a. Examine how character relationships assist in telling the story of a drama/theatre work.

b. Shape character choices using given circumstances in a drama/theatre work.

TH:Pr4.1.II.

a. Discover how unique choices shape believable and sustainable drama/theatre work.

**Big Idea:**

Scenes are most interesting when an actor’s physical and vocal choices are tied to their character’s objective.

**Essential Questions:**

* Why do both voice and body matter in character development?
* How can physical and vocal characterization help an actor best engage an audience?
* How can the tools of physical and vocal expression apply outside of theatre?
* What qualities make a scene believable?
* How do objectives inform an actors physical and vocal choices within a scene?
* How can movement help enhance a story?
* How can props and business be utilized to enhance a story/character relationships?

**Enduring Understandings:**

* An actor must know the ins and outs of their character if they want the audience to fully engage with them.
* Audiences need to know what is being said (lines) and why (objective) in order to be interested and engaged in a performance.
* For this to happen, actors need to know how to find and play their character’s objective.
* An actor’s goal is to find the most appropriate physical and vocal expressions to meet the audience’s needs.
* Frequent, honest self-reflection can help an actor improve future performances.

**Key Knowledge and Skills:**

* Stage Presence, Collaboration, Commitment, Physical Characterization, Vocal Characterization, Storytelling, Blocking, Self Reflection.

**Authentic Performance Tasks:**

**Day 1, Intro to Scenes**

**Lesson Objective:** Students will create a new musical theatre scene by researching and selecting a Broadway song to embed in an assigned contemporary scene.

**Day 2, Creating the Scene**

**Lesson Objective:** Students will create a new musical theatre scene by cutting/adapting their scene and selected song to fit together and beginning memorization.

**Day 3, Taking on Character Traits**

**Lesson Objective:** Students will delve into their characters by answering character questions and interviewing their partners in character.

**Day 4, Objectives & Tactics**

**Lesson Objective:** Students will demonstrate their understanding of objectives in acting by identifying their character’s objective, plotting out tactics they use, and performing a short moment for another group.

**Day 5, Movement (Generating Character Driven Blocking & Business)**

**Lesson Objective:** Students will discover character driven movement for their scenes by choosing one prop they will implement into their scenes, creating a basic floor plan of their scene’s set, and writing out blocking for the scene.

**Day 6, Preview Prep**

**Lesson Objective:** Students will prepare for previews by doing a memorization check and small group scene work.

**Day 7, Previews**

**Lesson Objective:** Students will demonstrate their progress by performing their scene in a preview.

go over rubric, spend 10-15 mins rehearsing scene. OR do mini preview—choose a chunk to perform for us that you want notes on. OR split class into 2-3 groups put them in different rooms/areas of the auditorium if available—will need multiple sound systems or speakers if doing this.

**Day 8, Scene Brush-up/Transitioning into song**

**Lesson Objective:** Students will sharpen their scenes by setting rehearsal goals and focusing their rehearsal on the areas they received notes on during previews.

**Supplemental Lesson/Rehearsal Ideas**

NOTE: Depending on the level of students in the class, more guided rehearsal days may be necessary or desired. Feel free to add those in as you see fit! The Supplemental Lesson/Rehearsal Idea page has a list of activities and exercises that could be used to help guide students in their rehearsal.

**Day 9, Final Performances Day 1**

**Lesson Objective:** Students will demonstrate acting fundamentals (character development, objectives, tactics, motivation, blocking) by performing a musical theatre mash up scene and writing a critique of the work of their peers.

**Day 10, Final Performances Day 2**

**Lesson Objective:** Students will demonstrate acting fundamentals (character development, objectives, tactics, motivation, blocking) by performing a musical theatre mash up scene, writing a critique on the work of their peers, and doing a self-reflection.

**Day 1, Intro to Scenes**

**Lesson Objective:** Students will create a new musical theatre scene by researching and selecting a Broadway song to embed in an assigned contemporary scene.

**Materials:** Contemporary Scene Scripts (these should be pre-assigned to student partnerships), AV Hook ups, Musical Theatre Mashup Brainstorm worksheets (1 for each partnership), Youtube clips of MT performances (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3MAwJTRNwo Les Mis 10th Anniversary Concert Version & https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=me7DMpMaKI0 Les Mis Movie Version)

**Prior to Class:**

Have the projector/sound set up with video clips cued up and ready to go

**Hook:**

Show students two different video clips of the same musical theatre performance. (one where the performance is focused mostly on the singing, and one where the performance is fully staged and acted out). Ask students to think about which performance they find most compelling/engaging as they watch. When clips are over, discuss their thoughts—which was more interesting/engaging? Why?

**Transition:**

Highlight the idea that musical theatre can be an extremely powerful, engaging art form—particularly when the acting is strong and storytelling/character/relationships are emphasized.

Explain that the major goal for this class is to help you develop greater acting skills—the ability to really tell a story and convey emotion, character, and relationships through voice and body. Because of the way royalties and copyrights work, you can’t legally get access musical theatre scripts unless you are doing the show and have paid to rent the scripts. That’s why we usually just work with the songs from musicals in this class, because we can access the non-musical dialogue portions from these shows. Learning how to act the non-musical portions of a scene and transition into a song adds power to your performance. These are all goals for this next unit which will be explained now…

**Assignment Instructions:**

Students will be put in partnerships and assigned a contemporary scene. Students job is to then select a musical theatre song (can be from any decade, but needs to have come from a Broadway produced production) that they will incorporate into the scene to further the story. Because this unit is also designed to help you practice crafting a scene, you will have a bit more leeway with your scenes/songs than you would if working professionally or even if doing the show at school or in the community. When you pay for rights to do a show, you agree to do it as it is written, changing lines, elements of character (gender) and sometimes the context of scene the play without consent is illegal. In this educational setting, and for this unit only, you will be allowed to make slight adjustments to lyrics and lines to make them better fit your scene. Try to keep the bulk of the song/scene the same. Encourage students to have fun with these, get creative, and think outside of the box!

Example—In the past a group did a scene from *The Odd Couple* coupled with the song “If I Only Had A Brain” from *The Wizard of Oz.* To make the song fit the scene, the students slightly changed the lyrics to “..if HE only had a brain.” They used the song to further unpack the crazy relationship that Felix and Oscar have and to show how the two view each other.

We’ll work through logistics of the assignment together—how to cut scenes, figure out how to transition seamlessly from dialogue to song.

Ask students: What are questions that you have about this assignment? (this is a big unit, most likely something they haven’t done before, so they will definitely have questions). Discuss and answer students’ questions.

**Assignment:**

Explain that you will now announce partnerships. When students’ names are called, they will come up and get their copies of their scene and a Brainstorm worksheet. When they get these materials, they should find a spot in the room to work. Students need to follow the instructions on the worksheet—answering the questions on it, before they do part II on the worksheet (researching possible songs to use). Ask students what questions they have about this assignment. Answer questions and then go ahead and give out scenes and have students work. Circulate the room offering help, clarification, etc…

Students will need the bulk of the class period to work on this.

**Wrap Up/Final Instructions:**

When there are about 5-8 minutes left of class, gather everyone together.

Explain that their **song choice is due next class period**. Partnerships will be given 10 points if they have their **song choice** (knowing what song they will use) and 15 points if they bring their **music** (either a minus track or sheet music of the song they are going to use). Have students use the rest of the class time to co-ordinate how they will make this happen.

**Assessment:**

Have students hold onto their Brainstorm worksheets—they will need these next time. Students will be given points for their participation today.

**Musical Theatre Mash-up Scene Brainstorm Sheet**

Partner Names: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Scene (Play title, Act/Scene):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**PART 1 INSTRUCTIONS:** Read through your scene one time as a partnership. This reading is just to help you get a sense for the story. Read through your scene a second time, this time answer the following questions together. Be detailed in your responses.

**1-WHO are the characters in this scene?** (what are their names, character traits, and what is their relationship?)

**2-WHAT is going on in this scene?** (What actually happens? What is the main conflict?)

**3-WHAT emotions, ideas, or attitudes do the characters experience in the scene?** (List as many as possible!!!)

**PART 2 INSTRUCTIONS:** Using the information you have gathered so far, take some time to search for potential songs you could use for your scene. Remember, the song should help further the story of the scene. You can use your phones to search online, in musical theatre anthologies, or use any other resources available. List your ideas in the spaces below.

**Song Title: Show Title: Author:**

**Day 2, Creating the Scene**

**Lesson Objective:** Students will create a new musical theatre scene by cutting/adapting their scene and selected song to fit together and beginning memorization.

**Materials:** Segment of a contemporary scene (I used *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare Abridged*), Segment of a Broadway Song (I used *Brush Up Your Shakespeare*), Memorization Tips & Tricks Handout

**Hook:**

Announce that song choices are due! Have students bring up their song choices. Partnerships will be given 10 points if they have their song choice and 15 points if they brought their music (either a minus track or sheet music). Make note of what song each partnership is doing with their scene (I would list both song title & title of the show it’s from)

**Transition:**

Explain that learning to cut a script is an invaluable skill for a theatre practitioner to have (actors use it to shape audition monologues, directors use it, etc…)—this skill is particularly necessary when piecing together a scene like they’ll be doing this unit.  We’re going to practice this first as a group and then each of you will get to apply this work in your partnerships.

**Activity: Cutting a Scene**

Have students take out a pencil. Give everyone (or at least every partnership) a copy of the Complete Works scene and the segment from “Brush Up Your Shakespeare”. Project the scene at the same time on the projector. Assign 3 students to read a role from the scene--read through the scene as class. Ask students what’s happening in this scene? What are the main conflicts? How do you know?

* Ask students: what do you think was the most “meaty” moment in the scene? (what was the moment of greatest tension [character being stretched to breaking point, moment of highest drama], greatest discovery [character realizes something about themselves or another] or greatest vulnerability [character puts everything on the line] for the character?) Why might it be important to identify the most important part of a scene before cutting it? How might this matter for your scenes—especially when thinking about adding a song to it?

Project the song segment from “Brush Up Your Shakespeare” Model how this song could be implemented into the scene (ex—could be last ditch effort DANIEL & JESS make to convince ADAM to finish the show and do Hamlet—ex-if nothing else, do it because the ladies love Shakespeare, they won’t be able to resist you if you do Shakespeare). Highlight the idea that there are numerous ways to shape/cut the scene so that the song could fit into it.

* Ask students to read the Complete Works text individually now, this time looking for and underlining what they consider to be the “meat” of the scene (discoveries, conflicts, tensions, moments of vulnerability, etc...) As they do this, ask them to consider the different ways they could cut or adapt the text to get the strongest, most coherent scene that the song could feed directly into
* With the “meat” in mind, give students 5 minutes to cut the scene according to what they think is most important

When time is up, have students quickly get into partnerships and take a couple minutes to share their scene cuttings. When students are done, ask 2-3 volunteers to share their cuttings with the class.

**Transition**

Briefly discuss the different ways students were able to cut/adapt scene to best implement the song.

* + How many of you had a similar cutting to your partner’s? (or, how many of you had similar versions to those read by volunteers)
  + How many of you had a very different interpretation/cutting than your partner? (or the volunteers)
  + What other interpretations could be created?
  + How might this exercise help you choose how to shape your scene?

**Partner Work:**

Have students get with their partners and spend 15-20 minutes figuring out how to cut their scene so that it fits their song choice and has a clear beginning, middle, and end. Circulate the room as students work offering help and insights.

When time is up, check in with students. Ask what the experience has been like for them so far—what questions they have. If they are working productively and/or need a bit more time, give them 5-10 minutes more.

**Wrap Up: Memorization Discussion**

When work time is up, briefly ask students: What’s the big deal with memorization…why is it so vital? Highlight the idea that now that their script is cut, the next step is to get it memorized. The sooner they can get off book—especially in a scene that also has a song in it, the faster (and more effectively) they will be able to work in future class periods.

Give each student a memorization exercise worksheet. Go over some of the exercises listed on it with them. (Depending on time—you could actually have them apply an exercise to their scenes, or if running low on time—demonstrate/explain some of the techniques and encourage them to use the suggestions listed on the sheet in their individual memorization efforts at home)**Song for Scene Cutting Activity:**

Segment from “Brush Up Your Shakespeare” *[Kiss Me Kate]*

ARTIST: Cole Porter

The girls today in society go for classical poetry

So to win their hearts one must quote with ease

Aeschylus and Euripides

One must know Homer, and believe me, Beau

Sophocles, also Sappho-ho

Unless you know Shelley and Keats and Pope

Dainty Debbies will call you a dope

But the poet of them all

Who will start 'em simply ravin'

Is the poet people call The Bard of Stratford on Avon

{Refrain}

Brush up your Shakespeare

Start quoting him now

Brush up your Shakespeare

And the women you will wow

Just declaim a few lines from Othella

And they'll think you're a hell of a fella

If your blonde won't respond when you flatter 'er

Tell her what Tony told Cleopatterer

If she says your behavior is heinous

Kick her right in the Coriolanus

Brush up your Shakespeare And they'll all kow-tow

**Scene for Scene Cutting Activity:**

Segment from *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare Abridged* (Revised)

By Adam Long, Jess Winfield, Daniel Singer

ADAM: Can I have some house lights please? [*House lights come up. To an audience member*.] Can I

borrow your program for a sec? [*He grabs a program from a patron, which must contain a list of the plays. If there’s no program, he may consult the* Complete Works *book*.]

DANIEL: What are you doing?

ADAM: I just want to check the list of plays. I think we might have done ’em all already.

JESS: Really?

ADAM: Yeah, see, we did all the histories just now--

DANIEL: The comedies were ‘a lump of hilarity.’

JESS: Okay, that leaves the tragedies. We did *Titus Andronicus* with all the blood--

ADAM: *Romeo and Juliet* we did--

DANIEL: *Julius Caesar, Troilus and Cressida*, right--

JESS: We rapped *Othello*, Lear was in the football game, *Macbeth* we did with Scottish accents. What about *Antony and Cleopatra*?

ADAM: Yeah, I puked on that lady over there--

JESS: Right. *Timon of Athens* I mentioned. *Coriolanus*?

ADAM: Eh...let’s skip it.

JESS: Why? What’s the matter with *Coriolanus*?

ADAM: I don’t like the ’anus’ part. I think it’s offensive.

DANIEL: Okay; so we’ll skip the anus play.

ADAM: And that’s it, right? That’s all of them!!

DANIEL: Wow. Great. [*Checks the time. To audience*.] Looks like we can let you go a little early.

JESS: Hey, no, you guys . . . [*Points to a spot in the program*.]

ALL: *Hamlet*!

DANIEL: Oh man.

ADAM: Shakespeare didn’t write Hamlet.

DANIEL: Sure he did.

ADAM: What’s it about?

JESS: You know, the young prince struggling with his conscience after his uncle murders his father?

ADAM: Dude, that’s The Lion King.

JESS: Ladies and gentlemen, thirty-six plays down, one to go. Perhaps the greatest play ever written. A

play of such lofty poetic and philosophical--

ADAM: [*Tugging at* JESS*’ sleeve*] Wait a minute, Jess. Hamlet is a serious, hard-core play, and I’m just

not up for it right now.

JESS: Whaddaya mean? It’s the last one!

ADAM: I know. It’s just that that football game left me emotionally and physically drained. I don’t think

that I could do it justice.

DANIEL: We don’t have to do it justice. We just have to do it.

ADAM: I don’t wanna do it!

JESS: Look, Adam. Our show’s called *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare.*

ADAM: Okay, so we’ll change it to *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare Except Hamlet*.

JESS: That’s the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever heard.

DANIEL: Adam, I think all your new little friends would like to see it. [*To audience*.] What do you say, would you like to see *Hamlet*?

[*Audience responds*.]

ADAM: Okay, fine. We’ll do *Hamlet*--

DANIEL *and* JESS: Great—

ADAM: As a two-man show! If you guys feel so strongly about it then you do it. I’m going to hang out

with them. [*Sits next to a random audience member*.] She’s my friend. I’ll sit here and we’ll watch it together.

DANIEL: C’mon. Adam—

[JESS *and* DANIEL *try to pry him loose from the audience member, but* ADAM *starts to get hysterical*.]

ADAM: You can’t make me do it!

JESS *and* DANIEL [*ad lib, to* ADAM.] Let go of her! (etc.)

ADAM: [*To audience member*.] Don’t let go, you’re all I have in the world.

[JESS *and* DANIEL *pry* ADAM *loose from the audience member and drag him roughly onto the stage*.]

ADAM: Okay, okay, okay! Just don’t touch me.

JESS: Okay, jeez! [*He tosses a now-crumpled wad back to the audience member*.] Here’s your program; sorry, it got kinda trashed. [To everyone.] Right. We start off with the guard scene, so we’ll need Bernardo and Horatio.

DANIEL: Gotcha.

JESS: We’ll need Rosencrantz and Guildenstern too.

DANIEL: Nah, they’ve got their own play, we can skip them. [*While they’re distracted,* ADAM *sprints toward the exit at the back of the theater.* DANIEL *sees him*.] Hey, where do you think you’re going?!

[JESS *sprints after him.* ADAM *grabs and audience member, preferably a youngster.*]

ADAM: I’ll kill little Timmy! I’ll kill him!

JESS: Fine, but I think it’s gonna turn him off to live theater.

[ADAM *lets go of his victim and runs out the back of the house*]

JESS: Get back here, you Shakespeare weenie!

**Memorization Tips, Tricks, and Ideas:**

**Read your script/scene/monologue all the way through at least three times.**  Pay attention to your lines and where they fit in the overall story.  Think about what comes before and what comes after.

**Memorize a chunk at a time.** Break down your monologue into bite size chunks. Memorize a couple sentences at a time.

**Scrap Paper Quiz.** Take a sheet of scrap paper and cover everything but the line that you are trying to memorize.  Quiz yourself to see if you can say it without looking, then move onto the next line.

**Practice delivering your lines out loud.** It’s great if you can run your lines in your mind, but never underestimate the power of actually speaking them.  It’s always better to practice how you will perform.

**Move while you memorize.**  For some people simply walking around while reciting lines is helpful.  If you are *really* a kinesthetic learner (you learn best by moving, and *doing*) try doing an action that corresponds with each word you are speaking.

**Write your lines out**. This is works quicker than you might think, and helps you remember the lines word for word when you are done.  This method helps you connect your mind to the action of writing the lines down and seeing the lines at the same time.

**Use White Board/Chalk Board.** Write out your lines. Recite them until you feel confident, then begin erasing words and phrases until you can say your lines without referencing the board.

**Record your lines, pop ‘em on your phone/iPod/mp3 player and listen to them throughout the day.** This can be especially helpful when trying to memorize your cue lines in scene work.

**Have someone quiz you.**Recite your lines to a friend, parent, neighbor, whoever while having them check you for accuracy.  If memorizing a scene, have your helper read your partners lines.

**Day 3, Taking on Character Traits**

**Lesson Objective:** Students will delve into their characters by answering character questions and interviewing their partners in character.

**Materials:** Character FB Worksheets, Character Interview Questions, AV hook ups

**Hook: Fill The Space**

Invite students to stand up and move around the classroom just as themselves. At this point, they should be silent as they walk. Focus on moving through space, if see any huge open gaps, fill them. Focus on yourself, just existing in the space. Have them continue to explore the space, now playing with tempo (1=mega slow, 4=normal walking pace, 10=super fast). After a bit, call out different body parts for them to “lead” their walk from (head, knees, stomach, chest, hips, feet). If desired, have students now add a specific character to walk around the space as. With each character, ask them to greet others, as they continue to move around the space. What sort of voice/word choice does the character have/use. Go through a couple different character types. (3 year old, grandma/grandpa, rock star, a business executive, super hero, the most popular kid in school, etc…)

**Discussion:**

Have students sit down where they are. Ask, what that experience was like? Things you liked that you saw happening? What was fun or entertaining?

* Other potential questions:
  + How did tempo and body lead influence the sort of energy or character that you took on? How did you decide how to move and speak as each character? What did you have to know/decide about the character to make a characterization?

Highlight the idea that the more detailed/specific characterizations were (physically and vocally) the more believable and interesting the characters are to watch.

**Transition:**

Ask students: How can you determine what traits to take on for your character? Use students’ answers to transition into the next activity.

Ask students: How many of you have Facebook?

* What sorts of things can learn about a person based on their Facebook profile?
* What sorts of things do people usually post in the info about themselves?

On the board draw out a basic FB profile “about me” template (or can project one if you have a good one).

**Modeling/Group Practice:**

As a class, pick a character (can be from a movie, book, etc…) Ask students to imagine if this character had a Facebook profile. What information do you imagine might be on their Facebook “about me” page? If a student has an idea, invite them to come up and write some on the board or verbally share ideas.

Read through the profile as a class and discuss what insights the information provides about the character.

**Individual Practice:**

Give each student a FB profile worksheet. Have students imagine that they are their character. What might your character put in a Facebook “about me” profile? Have them consult their scripts for character details and fill out the info on their papers.

**Pair Share:**

When finished, have students get with their scene partner and exchange papers (or read them to the other).

Have a couple people share their responses with the class.

**Discussion:**

What sort of things did you learn about your character through this exercise? What about other people’s characters? Ask students to think about some of the best performances they’ve seen—what made the characters so engaging to watch? Highlight the idea that the more an actor can pull character details from the script, the better time they’ll have taking on and interpreting the character. Chances are, the audience will enjoy the performance more too because the character will feel more realistic and well rounded.

**Scene Partner Interview:**

Have students get back with their partners. Explain that one of the best ways to start taking on and developing character traits—aside from analyzing the script—is to practice speaking and moving like the character you’ll be taking on. Project a list of “interview” questions on the screen in the class. Explain that partners will take turns interviewing each other using questions on the screen (they can add ones of their own if they’d like). Here’s the thing—they both need to conduct the interviews in character (with both the interviewer and interviewee speaking, responding, sitting, standing, moving like your character would in the interview situation). Set a timer for 6 minutes—this time is for partner A to be interviewed. When time is up, set timer again for 6 minutes—this time is for partner B to be interviewed.

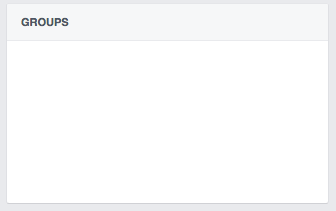
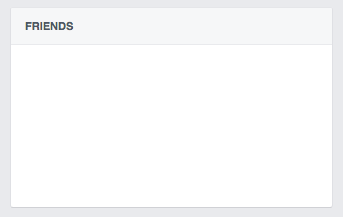
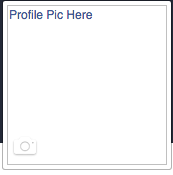
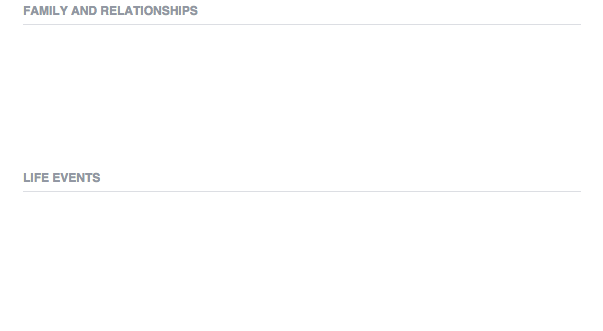
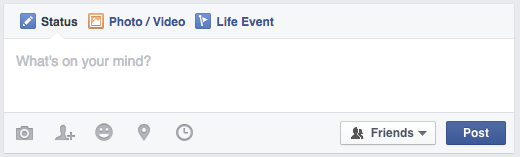
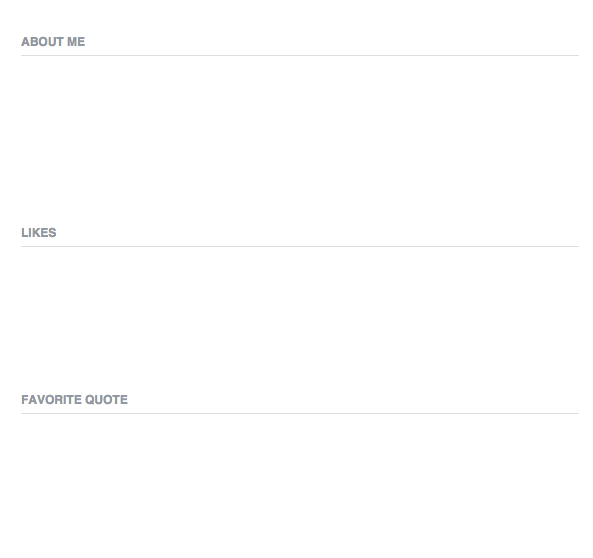
* Do a quick demo of what this might look like for students.

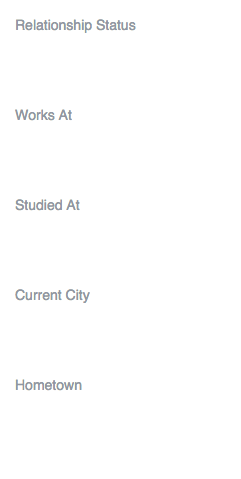
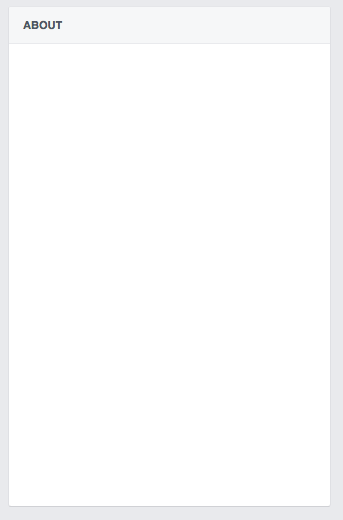
When time is up, ask students what the experience was like? What was fun? Challenging? What did you discover about your characters through this exercise? How about your character’s relationship? How can you use this information to help you develop stronger characters as you rehearse?

**Rehearsal:**

Have students spend the rest of the class time going through their scenes, working on memorization, implementing character traits, and especially looking at what the character’s relationship is—how that relationship can help you come up with character traits/relationship dynamics in the scene.

At the end of class, have students turn in their character FB papers. They will be given points for these as well as for their participation in class that day.





**Character Interview Questions**

What is your name?

Where are you from?

What was your childhood like?

What is your favorite color?

What is your favorite food and why?

Song or type of music?

Favorite movie, book, play, television, or radio show (depending on the decade, might not know answer to all of these)

What is your character’s relationship to the other character in your scene? What are their feelings toward him/her?

Posture: how do they hold themselves? Tall? Proud? Confidently? Lazily? Why?

What is your occupation?

What are 3 words you’d use to describe yourself?

What has your day been like before this scene takes place?

What is your relationship status? (married, dating, divorced, widowed, single, desperate!!)

Do you have a best friend? Who are they and why are they your best friend?

Do you have any enemies? Who and why?

What is your social status?

What are your hobbies/talents?

What does your daily routine look like?

What is your greatest fear?

What is your biggest dream?

What is your deepest secret?

What kind of education do you have?

Are you happy with your life? Why or why not?

What kinds of friends do you have?

What kind of clothing do you wear?

Are you healthy?

What is your physical appearance like?

Are you an introvert or an extrovert?

What is your biggest pet peeve and why?

If you could be doing anything on a day off, what would it be and why?

If you had a theme song, what would it be?

**Day 4, Objectives & Tactics**

**Lesson Objective:** Students will demonstrate their understanding of objectives in acting by identifying their character’s objective, plotting out tactics they use, and performing a short moment for another group.

**Materials:** Blindfold, a set of keys or another noise making device, Whiteboard/markers

**Hook: Hunter/Hunted**

Have students get up and stand in a large circle. Choose 2 brave souls—one to be “The Hunter” the other to be “The Hunted.” These two will stand in the middle of the circle. Everyone standing in the circle is a “Protector.” Their job is to keep the 2 in the middle safe (ex-students can put their hands up to protect themselves and to help keep the others inside the boundaries of the circle). Whoever is “The Hunter” is blindfolded. “The Hunted” is not blindfolded, but has some object that makes a noise. The objective is for the Hunted to not get tagged. The Hunter will try to tag the Hunted with “soft hands”. Occasionally ask the Hunted to ring the bell or jingle the keys. The protectors are to be quiet and help the 2 in the middle to stay safe.

* Extensions: Have students take a step in to make the circle tighter to raise the stakes (large circle or small circle will change tactics) or students in the middle can use levels; getting low, etc…
* Play a round or so (game ends when the Hunted is tagged. Hunted then becomes the Hunter and a new student becomes the Hunted)

**Discussion:**

When finished with the game, have all students sit down in the circle. Ask all the observers/protectors: What was this experience like for you?

* What made it interesting or less interesting?

Ask those who were either Hunters or the Hunted: What was this experience like for you?

What made your goal easy or difficult to achieve? What obstacles did you have to overcome? How did you fight to overcome them?

**Transition:**

Ask the class: How does this game relate to acting? Listen to and expand on students’ remarks.

* Highlight the idea that just like in a solid performance, the harder the players tried to get their objective, the more interesting the game was to watch. When actors use a variety of tactics and when their objectives go through the other person, situations and characters becomes especially interesting and engaging to watch.
  + Ex—Like in the game, the smaller the circle, the higher the stakes, the higher the stakes, the more intense/amusing to watch

Ask the class: How can you apply these ideas to your scenes? Listen to and expand on students’ remarks.

**Instruction:**

**To be effective as an actor, you need to KNOW what your character wants (the objective).** Be able to identify it and make it strong. Discuss the following, outline key ideas on the board for students to jot down in their notes.

* Strong objective vs. weak (Weak: playing the emotion--I want to be mad. I want to cry. I want to yell. Strong: active need/desire to accomplish something—involves another character. Ex-I want to convince Rudolph (a shy, homebody, mama’s boy) to run away to the Bahamas with me.
  + I want to convince \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. This formula will help you come up with a stronger objective that you can actually WORK for in your scene.

What do we call the WORKING for the objective?

* TACTICS.

**Tactics are strongest as VERBS—meaning actions that go THROUGH the other person**

Write a few lines from a contentless scene on the board. Read through the lines with the class. Ask them what is happening in the scene (or what *could*) be happening based on the lines? Based on their responses, ask students what could be a possible objective for each character? (this sort of scene is open ended, so the objective can be anything, but ideally it should be inspired by the lines)

Work with the class to come up with and write down potential objectives for both A and B in the scene. When you have objectives, ask students what tactics each character could use to try to achieve their objective. If students are struggling or if you want to demo the difference between weak and strong tactics, ask them the following:

* Which action would be a stronger choice in the scene?
  + To cry about something, or to try to guilt the other character? to manipulate them, to comfort, etc…?
* WHY? (“to guilt” is to make an active, honest attempt to elicit a specific response from another character. This goes through the other person in the scene, requires them to respond and fight back and/or submit)

Ask students what questions they have about tactics and objectives so far. Clarify any questions—can do more examples with the contentless scene if needed.

**Practice:**

Have students get in their scene partnerships and pull out their scripts and writing materials. Have students take 10-15 minutes and go through their script/song. Their task is to:

* Identify their character’s objective.
* Identify some tactics their character uses or could use to try to achieve their objective

Roam the room while students work, offering help and observing students’ progress.

When time is up, ask students what this experience was like for them so far. What questions or difficulties are they having? Discuss their findings, if needed clarify any misconceptions or confusion.

Next, instruct students to now take 5-10 minutes to rehearse a short moment from their scene. (have them find just a short chunk of lines where the characters each have a chance to use a tactic on the other in an effort to get their objective). We’re talking like a 20-30 second chunk.

**After 5 mins, get with a partner group and show them your bit.**

* Partners should be looking for how effectively they play the tactics/objective. Partner groups should share the following info:
  + Did you believe that they wanted/fought for their objectives?
  + W/o directing them, (ex-You need to Cry right here, etc…) offer any feedback for them what you believed, why you believed it, what could help you believe it more (commitment, more expression, more physicality, listening to each other, etc…)

**Discussion:**

When groups have finished showing/getting feedback on their little chunks, have students sit and ask them to share answers to these questions:

* What were some discoveries you made doing that last exercise?
* How can you use what you learned from that experience to beef up the strength of the rest of the scene?
* How can you apply feedback given to you to the song portion of your scene?
  + The song NEEDS to have that same strong objective in it that the characters are fighting for.
  + Usually in the song we see if the character “won” or “lost” in regard to their objective.

**Rehearsal:**

Give students the rest of the class time to spend rehearsing their scenes. Remind them to focus on applying what they just experimented with

* Using active tactics to get your objective.
* Also--listening and responding to each other. This is what makes scene believable

Another option—if students are really far along/looking for a new challenge.

* Get with another group. Practice transitioning from your scene into your song. Have the other group start your music for you so that you can focus on acting, staying in the moment.

**Day 5, Movement: Generating Character Driven Blocking & Business**

*(Portions of this lesson adapted from “Making Shakespeare Active” by Shawnda Moss, BYU THED Database)*

**Lesson Objective:** Students will discover character driven movement for their scenes by choosing one prop they will implement into their scenes, creating a basic floor plan of their scene’s set, and writing out blocking for the scene.

**Materials Needed:** Students will need paper and writing utensils

**Hook:**

Have some students who feel confident in their piece/memorization of at least a chunk of their scene come up and perform.  Put each of them in a pose. Explain that they will do a chunk of their scene, but they have to hold this pose and can’t move out of it.

AND/OR

Call up a scene group and have them sit knee-to-knee facing each other – their kneecaps should be touching and they should be looking straight into each other’s eyes.  Have them “perform” their scene without moving their knees and without looking away from the other’s eyes.

**Processing:**

Talk with the performers about the situation you thrust them into.

* How difficult was it to act without moving?  Why?
* What could have made the whole activity easier and more natural?

Talk with the student audience about what they just experienced

* What did you just observe?
* What if you saw the opposite? Instead of not moving at all, they moved on every single line—were always moving? What effect would that have on the scene?
* What ideas or suggestions do you have for natural blocking movement in the scene?  (What have students done in the past for performances to create natural, interesting blocking?)

**Extension to the Hook:** (if time permits, use this activity to help all students in the class have the kinesthetic experience of working with restricted/unmotivated blocking). Have students quickly get with their scene partners. Have each start their scene either in a knee-to-knee position, or in a frozen pose that they can’t break out of. (students will likely struggle with this quite a bit) Let this go on for a minute or so.

Have students start their scene again, but this time allow them to move as the impulse strikes them.  They can use the suggestions offered earlier by other students or follow their own ideas as they go.  After the second performance, discuss with the class the difference between the two performances.

Whole Class:

* **What kind of blocking/movement is most interesting to watch? (Motivated, character driven, objective driven, life like, natural, etc…)**
* What ideas or suggestions do they have for natural blocking movement in the scene?  (What have students done in the past for performances to create natural blocking?)
* How important is natural, motivated blocking to a performance?

**Transition**

Encourage the students to thrust themselves out of their comfort zone in order to have creative, motivated blocking.

Encourage students to really explore different ideas in business and blocking because it is seldom their first idea or impulse that is the best idea; more often it is their five or sixth idea that really works the best for the scene.

**Instruction/Discussion**

What sort of **logistical** things do the actors need to know in order to create blocking?

* (Need to know WHERE the scene takes place. WHAT kind of room/space it is & what objects are in it.)
* WHY are these things important?
  + Knowing your space and setting allows you to also come up with “business” for the scene that can be natural and motivated as well.

Ask students to define the **difference between business and blocking.**

* (**Business**=smaller life like actions character does ex-reading newspaper, clipping toe nails, eating snack, doing hair…**Blocking**=the big movements, getting up, moving to SL, sitting in chair, etc…)

Ask students: How can props and business be utilized in a scene and what can they convey about a character or situation?

Ex—Patrick Stewart Macbeth production, murderer scene. In many productions, this scene is set in a chamber room. In this modernized production, the scene is set in a kitchen. While talking with two hired murderers, giving them instruction to kill his best friend, Banquo, and his son, Macbeth pulls out a loaf of bread, knife, meat, and pickles, and makes himself a sandwich. Woooh.

* What version of this scene would you rather watch? One where the characters just sit around talking at a table? Or this production--where king, calmly makes sandwich while plotting another murder?

Explain that theatre is ordinary events made extra ordinary. Character driven business--like blocking—makes characters lifelike and the scene overall so much more engaging to watch.

**Partner Application Work**

Assign students to brainstorm for a couple minutes, and for each partner to identify at least one prop for their performance and discover different ways to utilize that prop as business. Have them write it down on their script—what they’ll use and how.

Assign the students 10 minutes to draw out the floor plan of their scene’s setting. Doesn’t have to be gorgeous or to-scale. It should clearly define where you’re at and include anything that you’ll use throughout your scene. Students should label any furniture props they may be using. This is a tool to help you create the business and blocking of the scene.

When time is up, students another 10-15 mins to coordinate their blocking around those pieces.  They should explore many different ways to block the piece following their impulses until they find the best movement for each particular moment. This means going through the scene—on their feet! (If needed, remind students to write the blocking the decide on in their scripts—that way they can remember it in future rehearsals)

Float around the classroom and give ideas and encouragement to the students as they work on their scenes.

If there is time, could have a few students do their scene/share their blocking for the class. Analyze it together, look at what really works to help tell the story and identify what movement might be confusing/distracting

**Wrap Up:**

Explain that next time, we’ll be doing a memorization check and some partner preview work. Make sure you are memorized. Also if you have a portable speaker that you could bring, that would be much appreciated since we’ll be breaking into groups.

**ASSESSMENT:** Students can be assessed on their floor plan and blocking creation during rehearsal time.

**Day 6, Preview Prep**

**Lesson Objective:** Students will prepare for previews by doing a memorization check and small group scene work.

**Materials:** Final Performance Rubrics, AV hook ups, if available—several sets of speakers

**Hook:**

Give students 10 minutes to get with partner and run through their piece.

Pair up partnerships and have them exchange scripts and check for each other’s memorization.  Scores should be given out of 20 points:

1-3 mistakes 20/20

4-8 mistakes 18/20

9-14 mistakes 16/20

15-20 mistakes 14/20

21-25 mistakes 12/20

26+ mistakes 10/20….

Have students turn in their scores.

**Rubric Review:**

Hand out copies of the rubric to each partnership. Project the Final Performance Rubric for the whole class to see. Explain that students will be previewing their scenes the next class period. Explain that previews are pass/fail but that they will be graded by this rubric for their final performance. Go over the performance rubric with students and unpack the expectations and grading system.

**Small Group Rehearsal:**

Explain that today students have the chance to perform their scenes for a small group of their classmates and get feedback before they preview next time. Have students get into small groups (3-4 partnerships) and take a space in the classroom (if available, could spread groups throughout the auditorium). Have them perform their scenes for each other and offer specific notes to each other—using the rubric as their guide. Each group will probably need a portable speaker to play their music from. Roam around and watch various groups performing and giving notes.

**Reflection:**

With about 10 minutes left, have students reflect on their experience today and the notes they were given. Have them answer the following questions:

* What do we (as a partnership) need to work on most?
* What are we doing well with so far?
* What can I do individually to be best prepared for the preview?
* How will I accomplish this?

**Wrap Up:**

At the end of class, thank students for their good work. Remind them to bring any props, costumes, or other items that they want to use/will need for their previews.

**Day 7, Previews**

**Lesson Objective:** Students will demonstrate their progress so far by performing their scene in a preview.

**Materials:** Vocal Warm Up Ideas (https://www.theatrefolk.com/freebies/vocal-exercises.pdf)

**Hook:**

Pick an activity from the vocal warm up sheet and lead the class in it. Encourage them to use their bodies as well (they’ll need to have both warmed up for their work today)

When finished, set a timer for a couple minutes. During this time, students should gather/prepare any props/costumes they’ll be using for their scenes.

**Transition:**

Give students 10 minutes to run through their scenes. Ask them to focus on transitioning in and out of their song. How can they do it in a way that flows nicely and helps tell the story of the scene? Circulate the room as students prepare their scenes.

**Preview Protocol:**

When time is up, have students take a seat again. Have them pull out a pencil and their notebooks. Ask students call out acting elements we’ve studied so far and any other things that make a strong scene performance (clear objectives, tactics, blocking, business, motivation, movement, characterization, character relationships, projection/diction, etc…). Write them up on the white board. Explain that students need to take notes on their classmates’ performances—identifying specific things that are strong in the scene so far, and specific things that need work in the scene. We will share these notes after the performances

Take notes on each groups’ performances—noting areas of strength and areas that need more work. (I typed mine up so I could print them out and give them to students during the next lesson)

**Preview Performances:**

Have each group perform their scene.

After each scene take a couple minutes for students in the audience to offer feedback from their notes while the next scene is setting up their scene/music.

* If time permits, offer some of your notes as well.

Go through all the performances.

When previews are finished, have students turn in their notes (or just show them to you) for points.

If time permits, discuss with the class their general observations about previews. What does the class need to work on the most? Where is the class excelling?

**Assessment:**

Students will be assessed by their participation in the preview performance (did they perform their scene and did they take notes/participate in feedback?)

**Day 8, Scene Brush-up**

*(Much of this lesson from “Preview Reflection” by Shawnda Moss, BYU THED Database)*

**Lesson Objective:** Students will sharpen their scenes by setting rehearsal goals and focusing their rehearsal on the areas they received notes on during previews.

**Materials**: Soothing music for relaxation, Teacher Preview Notes taken last time (typed up for students)

**Hook:**

Conduct a relaxation session with the students.  Have them lie down on their backs and begin the soothing music.  Guide them verbally through relaxing breathing, releasing tension in their bodies and clearing their mind.  After the relaxation period, guide the students through a visualization (staying on the floor with their eyes closed and seeing the day happen in their imagination) of a day in their Shakespeare character’s life.  They will supply the activities and moods of the character throughout the day as you prompt them to do daily routines (waking up, getting ready, eating breakfast, going to work, staying at home, and so forth throughout the day).  Tell them that at some point during the day their character must “run into” the character(s) they are playing opposite of in their scene or monologue.  It can be during an errand to the grocery store where they meet up in the produce section, it can be a date-night, it can be a business meeting, etc.  This meeting must take place at some point during this day.

Once the day is complete visually, have the students mentally return to the meeting of the characters in the day.  Now allow them to hear the exchange between the characters in their imagination as well as see it.  Focus their attention to the tiny, fine details of the relationship and exchange (what is the body language like, how do the characters react to each other, what happens vocally in the meeting, what is being discussed, etc.?).  Make sure that the students spend some time on their own mentally painting this picture and discovering new bits to their relationship and feelings toward the other character.

**Discussion:**

Have the class sit in a circle.  Ask a few students to share the experience of their character that day.  Have them share with the class what their character’s meeting was like and how they felt about it.

Talk with the students about how important it is to create a character that has a previous life to the scene with prior relationships and feelings.  This is something that we need to see more of in final performances. If possible, share a moment in your own life where you had an exchange with someone that you had a previous relationship with that made that exchange more tense or happy because of what you had previously gone through with that person.

**Journal Write:**

Have the students take out their notebooks and respond to the following three questions in regard to their own preview performances:

* What was the strongest moment/thing about your preview?
* What was the weakest moment/thing about your preview?
* What specific steps are you going to take before your final performances to overcome your weakest thing?

**Rehearsal**:

Explain that not only do you want them to see your notes and suggestions, but you want them to critically analyze their own work, see a weakness, make a goal (or objective) and then work to reach that goal before their final performances.

Pass back the preview notes you took on each performance and give the students time to work on their scenes. Have them focus their rehearsal specifically on the goals/specific steps they wrote out for improving their scenes and in applying what they learned from the visualization exercise to their scenes.

Circulate the room as students work. Offer clarification on any notes students have questions on or assistance in any other ways needed.

**Assessment:**

Students will be assessed on their participation in each activity today (visualization exercise, discussions, journal exercise, & rehearsal). If desired, could have students turn in their Journal assignment at the end of class for points.

**Supplemental Lesson/Rehearsal Ideas**

**NOTE:** Since the big assignment for this unit is basically 2 projects rolled into one (song + dialogue), students may need more time than the days outlined in this unit to rehearse their pieces—especially after getting feedback from previews. If desired/needed, you could add in an additional rehearsal day before final performances. Here are a few ideas of what could be done:

**Small group performances:** 1-Give students a portion of the class time to work in their partnerships. Have them focus their rehearsal on the items that they feel are weaker in their scenes (maybe the transition from scene to song, character physicality, playing objectives, etc…) 2-Have students get into small groups (3-4 partnerships) and have them perform their scenes again for each other and offering notes. Almost like a final mini-preview.

**Scene Workshopping:** 1-Give students a portion of the class time to work in their partnerships. Have them focus their rehearsal on the items that they feel are weaker in their scenes or on something that they received lots of notes on in their previews (maybe the transition from scene to song, character physicality, motivating movement, listening & responding, playing objectives, etc…) 2-Bring the class back together. Have a brave group come up and perform a bit of their scene for the class (it should be a portion of the scene that highlights the item they focused their rehearsal on). As a class—analyze and discuss improvements they see, also discuss areas that could still be strengthened—focusing particularly on the item they focused their rehearsal on. Have the group do the small bit of their scene again with the notes they received in mind. Help coach the group, having them stop and start if needed, asking guiding questions along the way. 3-Ask students workshopping what this experience was like for them as well as the students watching the scene. Have them discuss how they can apply the things they learned from watching a group work their scene to their own scenes. 4-Have class members get back with their partnerships and practice applying their ideas.

**Vocal Objectives**

Have scene partners assume some sort of frozen position. Have students go through their scene—they must fight for their objective using only vocal qualities to push their tactics (tone, rate, volume, pitch). Encourage trying a variety of tactics and vocal work.

The following rehearsal ideas are from: https://www.theatrefolk.com/spotlights/directing-the-high-school-play-part-two-the-rehearsal-process

**Gibberish**

Have students play their scene only performing the actions, substituting gibberish for dialogue. How well do the actors know their blocking? What is their physicality communicating? Is it motivated?

**Play the Opposite**

Play a tragic scene as comedy, play a comic scene as a serious drama. Can use this as a warm up exercise to finding the opposite emotion within the scene (all dark scenes need some light, all fast paced comedy scenes need stillness)

**Day 9, Final Performances Day 1**

**Lesson Objective:** Students will demonstrate acting fundamentals (character development, objectives, tactics, motivation, blocking) by performing a musical theatre mash up scene and writing a critique on the work of their peers.

**Materials:** White Board/Markers, Final Performance Rubrics (one for each student), A/V Sound Hook Ups

**Prior to Class:** Number the white board 1-however many scene groups there are in the class.

**Hook:**

Have students stand. Lead them through a quick physical and vocal warm up. (a tongue twister with actions would work fine). Have students stretch, do a couple jumping jacks, then shake everything out.

Set a timer for 1-2 minutes. Within this time frame, a member of each partnership needs to come up to the white board and sign up for a performance slot. (ex- the group that signed up for 1 goes first, 2 next, etc…) Every group needs to sign up! NOTE: Since performances will almost certainly take two class periods, it might be a good idea to snap a pic of the order on the white board to refer to next time.

When time is up, have students take out their notebooks and a writing utensil.

**Transition:**

Briefly explain the procedure for performances:

* Performances will go according the order on the white board.
* For each scene performance, students will write a brief critique answering the following questions:
  + What elements of the scene have improved the most since previews? (be specific)
  + What elements could still use some work? (again, be specific)
* Once a scene finishes, the folks on deck will get their space/music set up while the class finishes any last minute notes about the scene. To help these transitions run smoothly, encourage students to stay in “audience mode” (focusing on the performers & on their own work, not talking, etc…)

Ask what questions students have about the instructions/procedures. Answer any questions.

Give students a couple minutes to gather any props/put on any costume pieces they may have.

**Performances:**

Go through the line-up listed on the board, having each group perform their scene. Fill out a rubric for each student.

Get through as many performances as possible during the class period.

**Wrap Up/Discussion:**

Stop performances when there are about 5-10 minutes left of class. Ask students what they’ve enjoyed and/or learned from the performances they watched today. Thank students for their focus and have them clean up the space. Those who didn’t get to perform can store their props/costumes in the class room.

**Assessment**: Students will be assessed on their performance through the rubric and through the critiques they worked on.

**Day 10, Final Performances Day 2**

**Lesson Objective:** Students will demonstrate acting fundamentals (character development, objectives, tactics, motivation, blocking) by performing a musical theatre mash up scene, writing a critique on the work of their peers, and doing a self-reflection.

**Materials:** White Board/Markers, Final Performance Rubrics (one for each student), A/V Sound Hook Ups

**Prior to Class:** On the white board, list the performances remaining in the order determined last class period.

**Hook:**

Have students stand. Lead them through another quick physical and vocal warm up. (a tongue twister with actions would work fine). Have students stretch, do a couple jumping jacks, then shake everything out.

After the exercise give students several minutes to get out the materials they’ll need for the day. Students who still need to perform should get out their props/costumes. All students should also take out their notebooks and a writing utensil to continue the performance critiques they started last class period.

**Transition:**

If needed, briefly review the procedure for performances:

* Performances will go according the order on the white board.
* For each scene performance, students will write a brief critique answering the following questions:
  + What elements of the scene have improved the most since previews? (be specific)
  + What elements could still use some work? (again, be specific)
* Once a scene finishes, the folks on deck will get their space/music set up while the class finishes any last minute notes about the scene. To help these transitions run smoothly, encourage students to stay in “audience mode” (focusing on the performers & on their own work, not talking, etc…)

**Performances:**

Go through the line-up listed on the board, having each group perform their scene. Fill out a rubric for each student.

**Transition:**

When all performances have finished, take a moment as a class to applaud each other. Express gratitude for all of students’ great work, focus, and respect for each other—especially during the final performances.

Have students then take out a separate sheet of paper.

**Self-Reflection:**

On their note taking paper, have students do a self-reflection on their experience through this unit. (prompt students to be specific in their answers, use details from their experiences/from the elements of acting they’ve studied through the unit)

* Generally, what did the class do well with in their final performances?
* Generally, what could the class have improved in the final performances?
* In my final performance, I am most proud of…
* If I could perform my scene again, I would specifically improve…
* The most valuable thing I’ve learned from this whole experience is…

Invite students to share their responses. Discuss as a class. Point out areas that you saw growth in for the class and areas that they can keep working on. Highlight the idea that frequent, honest self-reflection can help an actor improve future performances.

**Wrap Up:**

Have students turn in their self-reflections, and performance critique notes.

If there is time at the end of class, play a group game.

**Assessment**: Students will be assessed on their performance through the rubric. Students will also be given points for their self-reflection.