**Unit Title:**

**Voicing Your Own Cartoon**

**Author:**

Meredith Campbell

**Unit Objective:**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of voice as a tool for character development by creating character voices and creating a cartoon in a small group project.

**Grade Level:**

7-9; 85-minute class periods

**Prior Experience:**

Drama 1 is a prerequisite for Drama 2. All students in Drama 2 are familiar with the basic concepts of voice (pitch, tone, rate, projection, diction, etc.). In this unit, we are exploring voice more in depth as a tool for creating and developing character.

**Standards:**

Standard L2.T.R.2: Evaluate responses based on personal experiences when participating in or observing a drama/theatre work.

Standard L1.T.P.5: Use voice to communicate meaning through volume, pitch, tone, rate of speed, and vocal clarity.

Standard L1.T.R.2: Defend responses based on personal experiences when participating in or observing a drama/theatre work.

Standard L2.T.P.6: Use imagination to inform artistic choices.

Standard L2.T.P.3:Observe, listen, and respond in character to other actors throughout a scripted or improvised scene.

Standard L2.T.P.1: Develop the character, setting, and essential events in a story or script that make up the dramatic structure in a drama/theatre work.

Standard L2.T.R.6: Develop detailed supporting evidence and criteria to reinforce and defend artistic choices when participating in or observing a drama/theatre work.

**Essential Questions:**

1. How can variances volume, pitch, tone, rate, and vocal clarity create different characters?
2. How can creating meaning and applying principles of vocal technique in a performance promote empathy?
3. Can you identify and analyze another person’s use of vocal techniques and practices in their own performance?

**Enduring Understandings:**

1. Breath and body awareness are essential to proper voice support
2. Different vocal choices convey a variety of meanings
3. Feeling empathy through embodying a character’s voice
4. Using articulation and controlled rate of speech to speak clearly

**Authentic Performance Tasks:**

1. Performing a Short Poem (Lesson 3): For this assessment, students must exhibit the following while reading a short poem: Projection, Diction, Vocal Variety/ Expression (pitch, tone, and rate)
2. Creating a Character (Lesson 4): Students are going to create an animated character.
3. Making their Cartoons (Lesson 5 and 6): In their groups, they will brainstorm a story and create a cartoon using character voices.
4. Cartoon Presentations (Lesson 7): Students will evaluate other cartoons within these areas on the rubric they have been given for this project (included in Lesson 7 materials) as they will be evaluated for their own project’s grade.

**Lessons:**

**Lesson 1: Increasing Our Awareness of Body and Breath**

Educational Objective: Students will demonstrate an awareness of body and breath in vocal support by participating in self-awareness activities and articulating their experience in a think-pair-share.

**Lesson 2: Freeing the Channel through Releasing Tension**

Educational Objective: Students will understand how to release tension to improve vocal quality by participating in self-knowledge and group awareness activities.

**Lesson 3: Vocal Expression and Diction**

Educational Objective: Students will understand components of diction such as vocal expression and voice placement by performing a short poem.

**Lesson 4: Voice Acting and Characters**

Educational Objective: Students will demonstrate their understanding of vocal variety and character development by creating an original character and answering questions about that character while using their unique character voice.

**Lesson 5: Making the Cartoons Part 1**

Educational Objective: Students will demonstrate their understanding of character, setting, and story development by putting together their cartoon project.

**Lesson 6: Making the Cartoons Part 2**

Educational Objective: Students will demonstrate their understanding of character, setting, and story development by putting together their cartoon project.

**Lesson 7: Final Presentations**

Educational Objective: Students will demonstrate their understanding of voice as a tool for character development by creating character voices and creating a cartoon in a small group project.

**LESSON 1: Increasing Our Awareness of Body and Breath**

**Educational Objective:** Students will demonstrate an awareness of body and breath in vocal support by participating in self-awareness activities and articulating their experience in a think-pair-share.

**Standards:** Standard L2.T.R.2: Evaluate responses based on personal experiences when participating in or observing a drama/theatre work.

**Materials Needed:** a small bell, *Freeing the Natural Voice* by Kristin Linklater, soft/ meditative music, open space

Hook: Voice Jeopardy

Directions: Class will be divided into two teams. Each team sends one person up to the front of the classroom to face-off their opponent in answering questions about elements of voice and their ability to demonstrate them. Whoever knows the answer to the question will ring the bell between the two opponents. They will get 1 point for correct definition and another point for correct demonstration. The other team has a chance to “challenge” and earn the demonstration point if they demonstrate the element of voice better than their opponent. Each team also has one “phone a friend” per game, in which they can ask their teammates if they know the definition of the term they are being questioned on.

Questions:

1. Define projection...demonstrate by saying a line from your last scene.
	1. Possible definition: Using the vocal apparatus (including diaphragm, lungs, and air) and not centering sound on the vocal cords to produce vocal sound that can be heard in a large (performance) space.
	2. Challenged? Who can be heard the best-- remember it’s NOT yelling!
2. Define diction...demonstrate by correctly saying and enunciating this tongue twister: red leather yellow leather lavender leather
	1. Possible definition: Using your articulators (lips, teeth, tongue, jaw, etc.) to produce sound that can be heard clearly and distinctly.
	2. Challenged? Who enunciated the tongue twister the best?
3. Define tone...demonstrate an example of tone by portraying an angry parent.
	1. Possible definition: resonance or quality of voice; influenced by emotion (similar to vocal expression).
	2. Challenged? Who expressed more tone in that portrayal?
4. Define pitch...demonstrate a variety of pitch in your voice when saying a nursery rhyme.
	1. Possible definition: highness and lowness of voice; for example, boys often have lower-pitched voices than girls
	2. Challenged? Who has a greater range of pitch--lowest to highest?
5. Define rate...demonstrate an appropriate rate for a girl who is excited to be at a boy-band concert.
	1. Possible definition: speed of speech
	2. Challenged? Who performed did it better?
6. Define vocal expression...demonstrate vocal expression by giving a “dramatic” reading of a paragraph from the drama textbook.
	1. Possible definition: emotional intonation of speech
	2. Challenged? Who put more expression/ emotion in their performance? In other words, who was the most interesting to listen to?

Transition: Now that we have had a bit of a refresher on elements of voice, we are going to go forward by participating in exercises that increase our awareness of our voice as the expressive instrument that it is. The first step to doing that is becoming more aware of how our body functions as we breathe. I am going to guide you through this exercise through verbal prompts *(NOTE: play soft, relaxing music as you lead this activity)*

Activity: Awareness of Body and Breath (adapted from *“Freeing the Natural Voice,”* Workday One and Two)

Introduction: It’s not about what we are doing, but HOW we are doing it that is important

* Develop physical awareness through specific relaxation and releasing knots of tension.
* Proper use of voice depends on properly alignment of the body-- and that starts with the spine
* Free your voice by “getting to know your spine and skeleton”

Step 1:

1. Have students find their own space in the room. Stand with your feet about a shoulder-width apart and close your eyes...in your mind’s eye, picture the bones of your feet...now move up to your legs-- ankles, shins, knees, thighs, and hips
2. Base of your spine (sacrum)
	1. Move up your spine through your back and between your shoulder blades
	2. Picture your rib cage folding around it and your shoulders on top
3. Feel your arms hanging for the shoulder sockets
	1. Picture your arms-- upper arms, elbow joints, forearms, and wrists, then move down to your hands and fingers.
4. Move your mind’s eye back through your arms and into your neck...shift up to the skull-- picture your skull floating, like a balloon, off the top of the spine

Step 2

1. Focus your attention into your elbows-- rotate them forward and let them rise up gently toward the ceiling while keeping the shoulders and forearms relaxed. Let your hands hang loosely
2. Let your wrists rise toward the ceiling and leave your hands hanging.
3. Let your fingers float to the ceiling-- like someone is gently pulling you up by your fingertips and stretching your ribs and spine
4. Let your arms float back down and hang loosely from your shoulders-- feel the blood coming back into your hands as gravity adds weight to your arms.
5. Now let the weight of your head pull your chin down towards your chest so that your head and neck hang forward. Slowly and gradually give into the weight of your head and let your shoulders go forward too, then fold forward, vertebrae by vertebrae until your head hangs between your loosely extended arms. Make sure that your kees are relaxed and bent slightly to keep your center of gravity (your weight) over your feet.
6. Take moment to BREATHE easily! We are doing this exercise to relax your torso muscles, shoulder muscles, neck muscles, head, and arms.
7. Now, vertebrae by vertebrae, you are going to slowly restack your spine and stand up straight. Don’t stand up too quickly! Feel the almost float-like sensation of your head on top of your neck.

Step 3

1. Stand quietly for a couple of minutes and be aware of your spine supporting your skeleton while your muscles hang loosely. Feel the air touching your skin.
	1. As you breathe naturally, tune into the small movements that are happening as you inhale and exhale. Be aware of the breath moving your body, rather than your body moving the breath.
	2. Take 3 deep breaths in and out. Let each inhale fill your body and each exhale help relax your body. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.
	3. Now stretch and open your eyes, then gently shake your body all over.

Discussion/ Questions:

* How do you feel after that exercise?
	+ Students may respond that they are feeling more relaxed and less tense.
	+ Inform the students that the best actors/ performers are relaxed during their performance-- they have no extra tension.
* Do you know what “being grounded” means?
	+ It’s not just punishment from your parents; another definition is that you are in tune with your body-- feeling your breath, knowing your emotional state, and being authentic/ genuine. These exercises are starting to form a conscious picture of how the voice works and how it helps us “be grounded.”
* Connecting the Dots: Your breath is your source of life and vocal sound. Your breathing habits, believe it or not, have helped you develop into being your character-- you!
	+ As actors, we have the task of letting ourselves into other characters, which means we change behavior, thought, feeling, and *even breathing.*
	+ Know that there is no one “correct” way to breathe that fulfills all purposes of breathing-- such as singing, swimming, playing a breath instrument, etc.
	+ As we go forward, think about PURPOSE of breath and how we can use our breath to power our vocal expression.

Practice: Human Breathing Machine-- Our body has mechanisms or different parts to help us breathe, as follows:

* Brain (top)—breathing is a “subconscious” action
* Nasal cavity/ trachea (below brain)—bring air into the lungs
* Ribs (encase the lungs)—lungs expand on inhale, deflate on exhale
* Intercostal muscles (around the ribs)—contract and release according to breath
* Diaphragm (below lungs)—flexes with breath; diaphragm is the base of your lungs; “breathe from the diaphragm”
* Intestines (below diaphragm)

Now we are going to create a human breathing machine! We’ll need several volunteers to do this... Have one person stand on a chair-- this person will be the brain at the top of the “body” we are putting together. Under the brain will be the nasal cavity/ trachea (the brain will put their hands on the shoulders of the person who is the nasal cavity/ trachea). Then the person who is the nasal cavity will have their arms draped around 2 people who will serve as the ribs. There will also have two more people with their arms stretched in front of the ribs-- these people are the intercostal muscles. Have someone kneel on their knees below this group with their arms bent into a downward curve (they are the diaphragm.) Then have a couple of people wiggle slowly and gently below the diaphragm-- they are the intestines. Here is the role for each volunteer:

* Brain: send a (subconscious) message for breath-- squeeze the shoulders of the person who is the nasal cavity/ trachea.
* Nasal Cavity/ Trachea: expand with inhale, deflate with exhale-- gently lift arms up and down slightly
* Ribs: expand with inhale, deflate with exhale--gently move with the breath
* Intercostal muscles: contract and release according to breath by moving arms out and in from in front of the ribs
* Diaphragm (below lungs)—flexes with breath-- rise up and down with inhale and exhale
* Intestines (below diaphragm) -- wiggle gently with each breath

Once everyone knows their roles, we are going to do a few collective breaths as a group (invite those who are not a part of the human breathing machine to breathe together with them as well). After you get the rhythm down with a few breaths, try experimenting with a laugh as opposed to a normal breath, or faster breathing as though you are going on a run. After the activity, reflect on the discussion questions listed in the next section.

Reflection/ Assessment:

 Students will have a few moments to ponder their experience in these exercise, guiding their thinking towards asking the following questions:

* How can proper breathing help me ground my voice and project?
	+ Possible answers may include: having proper breath support helps my voice sound more full and carry over longer distances, breathing properly reduces the tension in my voice and makes it sound more natural, etc.
* How can I align my body to help me speak more freely?
	+ Possible answers may include: good posture helps support proper breathing and reduce tension held in your body, aligning your body helps you feel more “grounded,” etc.

Students will then have the opportunity to share their thoughts with a partner, and then in a group reflection (think-pair-share).

**LESSON 2: Freeing the Channel through Releasing Tension**

(from Linklater Workday 5 and 6 pg. 129)

**Educational Objective:** Students will understand how to release tension to improve vocal quality by participating in self-knowledge and group awareness activities.

**Standards:**

* Standard L1.T.P.5: Use voice to communicate meaning through volume, pitch, tone, rate of speed, and vocal clarity.
* Standard L1.T.R.2: Defend responses based on personal experiences when participating in or observing a drama/theatre work.

**Materials Needed:** *Freeing the Natural Voice* by Kristin Linklater, soft/ meditative music, open space

Hook: Machine

 Directions: Students must create a human machine by combining their own sound and movement, and one by one, add to the group. As a whole, the machine must speed up as one unit, and then slow down to a stop as one unit.

Transition: Like a machine, our body has its own mechanisms that help us breathe (remember the human breathing machine we created last time?) In fact, having an awareness of our body and breath is foundational to vocal support.

 Building from bottom up:

1. Body/ Breath awareness
2. Vocal Principles
3. Techniques
4. Application

 We are building towards the application-- our final performance/ project. But in doing so, we are going to go in-depth with vocal principles, techniques, and how those concepts help us build and connect with character.

Question: Where do we hold tension? We don’t store stress just in our mind-- it goes into our body too!

* Breaking down the picture of the head and neck (two large bone structures joined by a hinge-- in your jaw). As you open your mouth, your chin drops towards the neck.
* We send complicated messages to or jaws (“open your mouth wider” when you are singing...but you need space at the BACK of your mouth to allow for freer air flow). To maximize openness, we need to think of the “bottom” jaw as dropping and the “top” jaw as lifting from as far back in the mouth as possible.
	+ Instinctual movements and feelings seen in animals too-- a lion roaring in anger (130)-- Try a “lion’s roar”; it’s going to sound ugly, but we are going to work to get that tension out through our breath!

Transition: In order to use our voice as the instrument that it is, we need to release tension and free our speaking channel. To do that, we are going to go through some exercises together. First, I want you to respond to a prompt aloud, but to yourself...and as you say it, take note of how you feel and sound as you speak. Here’s the prompt: “Recall a happy memory or favorite day.” I’m going to ask you to respond to the same prompt after we complete this exercise. Now we’ll proceed with me giving your verbal prompts for this activity.

* One “subconscious” form of muscular defenses lies in our jaw hinges (i.e. clenching teeth to stifle a scream, so a bulging jaw represents courage). We’ve also heard the expression “set jaw,” which we see as a sign of determination, resolve, or contemplation. Or, have you ever bitten your tongue to stop yourself from saying something, or even distract yourself from other pain you might be feeling? That’s also where the expression “bite the bullet comes from. Humans have been conditioned, in a sense, to use the jaw as a defense against intense emotions.
* We don’t have many opportunities to release that deep tension we get in our jaws...screaming, laughing, or yawning may release it to a certain extent. Today, we are going to work to really free the jaw, tongue, and throat. As we do so, you may feel inclined to yawn-- do it and don’t feel like you need to hide it! We yawn because it gives us an increase of oxygen and give our jaws a much-needed stretch.

Step 1: (pg. 132)

* Have students find their own space in the room. Students will start standing, but they may sit down later on-- and please stand when prompted to during the exercise. To help us increase our awareness and relax your jaws, put the heel of your hands on the jaw hinge area on either side of your face. Gently massage your jaw muscles in small circles.
* Next, press into your cheeks while moving your hands downward, smoothing the bottom jaw down away from the top jow until your mouth hangs loosely open. Imagine that your bottom jaw is dependent on your hand for movement-- like it doesn’t have it’s own muscles.
* Let your jaw relax down even further, like there are tiny weights at the back of your jaw underneath your ears. Then, gently lift the jaw back up with your hand (repeat a few times...notice how your jaw is starting to feel more loosened and relaxed.) Remember to keep your movements and stretches along your jaw very slow and gentle.

Step 2:

* Place your thumbs under your jawbone and your fingers on top of it (around your cheeks) so that you are gripping your jawbone on either side of your chin. Keep thinking of your hands as the muscle-force for the bottom jaw. Start with your jaw closed and teeth touching lightly.
* Without moving the bottom jaw at all, lift the top jaw up until your mouth is open. (remember how we talked about your bottom jaw/ chin being set like a hinge on your top jaw-- the rest of your skull?)
* Now, use your hands to lift the bottom jaw up to meet the top jaw. Let your teeth touch gently at the back.
* Do the same thing again with your top jaw from where you are currently positioned-- lift the top jaw up until your mouth is open, then bring your bottom jaw up to meet it..(may need to do it one more time). Now your head should be back, your mouth will be open, and you are still holding your jaw in your hands.
	+ Ask a question-- where are the muscles that move the top jaw? They are in the back of your neck.
	+ Gently bring your head back down while holding your jaw in your hands. Let your hands go back to your side and keep your jaw loose.
	+ Now that we have stretch out those muscles that control our top and bottom jaws, practice “voicing” your breath. What I mean by that is I want you take a deep breath in, and as you breathe out say “huuuh” or “aaahh.”
		- You may feel that the sound is richer and feel more vibrations from the sound. Now answer the same prompt that I asked you before we started the exercise: “Recall a happy memory or favorite day.” How does that feel different from when we started? Students may respond that their voice sounds and feels different. Identify that this is the student’s “natural voice.” Your natural voice has more resonance and richness than how we think we sound when we usually talk.

Practice: Breath and Movement-- Have the students stand in a circle. Invite them to stand in a neutral position-- feet shoulder-width apart, standing up straight, hands hanging loosely at their sides. Have one student volunteer to give the first “breath and movement” -- which needs to be grounded and natural. The student standing next to them in the circle then tries to copy the same breath and movement-- not trying to mock or make fun of it in any way. The breath and movement will travel around the circle; see how much it changes (or doesn’t change) as it goes around the circle. Remind the students to stay focused on their breath and grounded in their movement as they participate. After the first breath and movement goes around the circle, ask another student to volunteer sharing a new breath and movement to go around the circle.

Transition: Opening the throat...pg. 182

There is a sharp angle where our throat (which holds the larynx, vocal cords, etc.) turns into our mouth passage. If we have a lazy soft palate and tense tongue, we can jam that channel. We want to open that channel and stimulate spaciousness as we breathe more freely

Step 3:

* While staying in your own space, lengthen the front of your neck so that your head us far back enough to allow for a straight breath channel--no corners or turns through your body.In this position, sigh out a whispered “haaaaa.”
* Using the back of the neck, bring the head back upright on top of the spine. Visualize how that “channel” has changed shape, and sigh out a whispered “huuuuuh.”
	+ Note: When the head is back, it is almost impossible to use the throat to support sound, so the breath must take over. However, even at the natural angle, you can still have the breath flow without interference in the throat-- by releasing tension. We are trying to relax the throat and remove its ability to support sound. As you do so, you’ll find your connection with the core of your breathing (diaphragm, lungs, etc.) becoming clearer.

Step 4:

* Straighten the channel again by gently tilting your head back. Focus on the starting point of the sound deep in your body (in your breathing core) and on a spot on the ceiling. Release a “haaaaah” sound and imagine that your voice is travelling to the ceiling in an unbroken stream of sound-- from your core through the channel, to your spot on the ceiling.
* Lift your head and neck back into the natural position--still keeping the channel open-- and pick a spot straight ahead of you. Release a “haaaah” from your core and stream it to that spot.

Discussion: Now, I’m going to have you answer the same prompt as before-- “Recall a happy memory or favorite day.” What do you notice now about your voice as compared to before we did this exercise? Do you feel more relaxed, more open and free to breathe? The exercises that we have done the past couple of days have helped us develop a more keen awareness of our voice-- how we breathe, how our body functions as we breathe, and how we need to release tension to support proper breath and voice.

Assessment: Write a short response to the prompt: “How has my awareness of my voice and breath changed?”

**LESSON 3: Vocal Expression and Diction**

**Educational Objective:** Students will understand components of diction such as vocal expression and voice placement by performing a short poem.

**Standards:** Standard L1.T.P.5: Use voice to communicate meaning through volume, pitch, tone, rate of speed, and vocal clarity.

**Materials Needed:** Clip: Proper Vocal Technique through Vocal Placement <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gim3aCJuUyY>

Clip: Singing Placement Techniques

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0UcDL4o_FTw>

Short Poems for Practicing Diction sheet

Hook: New VOICE!

 Directions: This game is very similar to the improv game “New Choice.” Two performers start an improv scene (potential adaptation, students may prompt the performers with giving suggestions for characters, settings, and situations). One person (that is not an actor) will be designated as the “buzzer.” The buzzer’s job is to tell the actors to make a “new voice” for their character as they perform the scenario. The buzzer can buzz either of the two actors, but once the actor receives a new voice, give them some time to experiment with the new voice before being prompted with another one. Remember to still use diction-- speak clearly and distinctly!

*Potential Adaptation: Give students a prompt for the kind of voice they can use; for example, “New voice: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”*

 *Possible voices:
An opera singer.
An angry toddler
A bored teenager.
A bride on her wedding day.
A British king or queen
A bratty girl getting ready for prom.
A wicked witch
A weatherman/woman
An innocent princess.
A dashing, confident prince
A ghost*

*An army drill sergeant
A ship captain*

Discussion: How did you experiment with your voice in portraying new voices-- different pitch, tone, etc. Did you notice *where* your voice may be coming from? Have the students practice different vocal placements and analyze their differences-- ex. wicked witch (from your nose-- nasal) vs. ghost (from the back of your throat-- velar). Other comparisons may include: an innocent princess vs. army drill sergeant, opera singer vs. angry toddler, etc.-- experiment with where you place them. Often, when we hear different character voices, they make their voice come from different places, elongate sounds, emphasize sounds (or leave out sounds), etc.

Introduce the Upcoming Unit: Inform the students that in the next several days they will be learning about creating characters by using vocal variations. They will be introduced to several vocal variations and will choose at least two of those variations to portray characters in their cartoons. Each character must have distinct vocal characteristics-- use vocal variety to make the voices sound different from each other.

Guided Practice: Placements of Voice

Clip: Proper Vocal Technique through Vocal Placement <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gim3aCJuUyY>

Clip: Singing Placement Techniques

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0UcDL4o_FTw>

* Pause periodically to practice the principles from the video with the students-- practicing finding their natural voice and varying vocal placements.
* Keep in mind the vocal elements we have reviewed-- projection, diction, tone, pitch, rate, etc. These are all parts of vocal expression...practice vocal variety/ expression while saying the “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” rhyme.

*Twinkle twinkle little star*

*How I wonder what you are*

*Up above the world so high*

*Like a diamond in the sky*

*Twinkle twinkle little star*

*How I wonder what you are.*

Have students practice the following vocal placements with a partner as they go through the rhyme: up in your nose, down deep in your throat, elongate vowels, emphasize consonants, etc.

Transition/Guided Practice: Putting Expression into Your Voice (adapted from “Children Tell Stories: Teaching and Using Storytelling in the Classroom” textbook, pg. 110-111)

* Depending on how you say the same word, you can give that word a completely different meaning. I am going to tell you a variety of ways to say one word: “oh.” As I give you these verbal prompts, I want you to use lots of expression in your voice and faces. So, say “oh” in response to...
	+ “How wonderful!”
	+ “How disgusting!”
	+ “I’m so sorry.”
	+ “LOOK OUT!”
	+ “That’s not important.”
	+ “Do we really have to do this?
	+ “NOW I understand.”
	+ “How disappointing.”
	+ “I’m so surprised!”
	+ “I’m very suspicious of that.”
	+ “That hurts.”
	+ “That scared me!”
* Now we are going to shift gears a little and look at saying sentences with vocal expression and emotion. For example, ask “What are you doing?” as though…
	+ You were furious at your sibling going through your stuff in your room.
	+ You came into class and found your teacher standing on their head.
	+ You are suspicious.
	+ You’re a big mean bully picking on someone small.
	+ You are small and frightened by a bully who you caught doing something wrong.
* As we went through expressing “oh” and “what are you doing?” in different ways, did you notice how your voice changed? That’s vocal expression!

Assessment: Performing a Short Poem

Directions: For this assessment, students must exhibit the following while reading a short poem:

Projection

Diction

Vocal Variety/ Expression (pitch, tone, and rate)

Write those elements on the board so the students can refer to them during the activity. Due to the large class size, students will read aloud their poems (chosen from a handout-- see below) in groups of 2-3 people. They will stand at the back of the room, away from other students, and say the poem they have chosen. Groups may either say the poems in unison or alternate who says what lines of the text. After a few minutes of practice in their groups (which they can choose on their own), they will sign-up for an order in which to perform the poem. After each group performs, they will receive a couple of comments of feedback. Feedback should surround questions such as:

* What did you like about their vocal expression-- what emotions did you see from them?
* Could you hear each word clearly and distinctly?
* Were they projecting properly--breathing deep and having a full sound?

**Short Poems for Practicing Diction**

EARLY BIRD (*Where the Sidewalk Ends*) by Shel Silverstein

Oh, if you’re a bird, be an early bird

And catch the worm for your breakfast plate.

If you’re a bird, be an early bird—

But if you’re a worm, sleep late.

THE ACROBATS *(Where the Sidewalk Ends)* by Shel Silverstein

I’ll swing
By my ankles,
She’ll cling
To your knees
As you hang
By your nose
From a high-up
Trapeze.
But just one thing, please,
Don’t sneeze.

PUT SOMETHING IN (*A Light in the Attic*) by Shel Silverstein

Draw a crazy picture,

Write a nutty poem,

Sing a mumble-gumble song,

Whistle through your comb.

Do a loony-goony dance

‘Cross the kitchen floor,

Put something silly in the world

That ain’t been there before.

**LESSON 4-- Voice Acting and Characters**

(how to use your voice for the cartoon project)

**Educational Objective:** Students will demonstrate their understanding of vocal variety and character development by creating an original character and answering questions about that character while using their unique character voice.

**Standards:**

* Standard L2.T.P.5: Use voice to communicate meaning through volume, pitch, tone, rate of speed, and vocal clarity.
* Standard L2.T.P.6: Use imagination to inform artistic choices.
* Standard L2.T.P.3: Observe, listen, and respond in character to other actors throughout a scripted or improvised scene.

**Materials Needed:** \*Potential Introduction\*: Voice Acting Tutorial <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hylrH__HunA> (0:00-6:00)

PowerPoint presentation:

Hook/ Warm-up: One Word Scenes

 Directions: Students must create and perform scenes using only one word for each line, for example:

 A: Hi

 B: Hello

 A: What?

 B: Dog

 A: Oh!

Seeing as you can only use one word, you have to give it emotion and inflection to fill in the gaps of what is going on. Any questions? Give it a try with a partner, and after a few minutes we will come back together for some of you to volunteer and share your One Word Scenes!

Instruction: How do we emphasize words? Give students some examples (adapted from “Children Tell Stories: Teaching and Using Storytelling in the Classroom” textbook, pg. 116-117)

* Examples:
	+ Stretch-- “A loooong time ago…”
	+ Punch-- “He **ran** and **slammed** the door.”
	+ Louder/with more expression-- “I really really REALLY want to win!”

Directions: Write one of the following sentences on the board. Have students read the sentence to themselves and think of a word that they could emphasize in this sentence to convey more meaning.

* Example 1: Johnny hated the idea of eating another bite of broccoli.
* Example 2: Sometimes you could hear the witch cackle in town.

Ask for volunteers to read on of the sentences and emphasize only one word. Tell them that ordinarily that they might emphasize more than one word, but only emphasize ONE word for this exercise. Don’t tell classmates which one they plan on emphasizing so no one knows ahead of time. Afterward, reinforce the idea that there was no one right word to emphasize or one right way to say the sentence. Everyone tells a story differently.

Sometimes, emphasizing different words can change the meaning of a sentence. Show the following example to the students. Ask for volunteers to read the sentence and ONLY emphasize the *italicized* word. The words are italicized for the lesson plan, but write the sentence once on the board and underline a different word each time-- the students will emphasize the underlined word. After the sentence is read, ask for volunteers to share the possible implications of what they heard (see below).

What is said:

*I* never said Luke stole my money.

I *never* said Luke stole my money.

I never *said* Luke stole my money.

Implication:

I didn’t say he did-- Jesse blamed him!

I never say such a thing.

I may not have said it, but I think he did

I never said *Luke* stole my money.

I never said Luke *stole* my money.

I never said Luke stole *my* money.

I never said Luke stole my *money.*

Luke didn’t steal it, someone else did.

He didn’t steal it because I gave it to him.

He stole Emily’s money.

He stole something else.

Discussion: Often, there is no right or wrong way to emphasize...your emphasis just may have a different implication!

*Potential Adaptation: Have the students get into partners. In their partnerships, one person will say these sentences (below) in several ways. After each sentence, the other student responds by improvising the implication, as in the preceding example.*

* *Example 1: Did Jill give Julie a pink shirt?*
* *Example 2: Can Molly go see the new movie on Saturday?*

Transition: Just as we use different inflections, emphases, and vocal variety in our natural speaking voice, we need to have that same level of expression (even if it might be a bit more exaggerated) when we create different character voices. However, before we create character voices, we need to create a character!

Directions: Creating a Character

Students are going to create an animated character. Encourage students to make this new character unique. Students will practice performing as this character, but first they need to know about them! The first step to doing that is drawing them. As they draw, invite the students to consider what is unique about their character’s appearance-- noticeable features, how they dress, age, etc.

The 10 questions below serve to help students develop their character’s background and personality. Have them write down their answers to these questions on their own piece of paper. Give them about 10 minutes to do so. Here are some possible questions for them to consider…(put on PowerPoint)

1. Decide your characters gender, name, and approximate age.
2. Nationality: where is your character from (NOTE: it can’t be Utah!)
3. What does your character do for a living?
4. What is your character’s family like?
5. Does he/she have a significant other? What is he/she like?
6. Does your character have any annoying habits?
7. What kind of education has your character had?
8. What’s your character’s personality like?
9. What types of hobbies or talents does your character have?
10. What’s your character’s favorite form of entertainment-- books, movies, sports, games, etc.

Go through the 5 Steps for Discovering and Creating Original Character Voices (also put on the PowerPoint)

1. Begin with an impression *of* an impression
	1. Many of the characters used in animation today are loose, distorted or exaggerated impersonations of old Hollywood stars or famous people.
	2. Try this-- take an impersonation of someone famous--especially a bad impersonation-- and see where that takes you. Regardless of how awkward or poor the impersonation might make you feel, you’re probably going to discover a character that is uniquely yours!
2. Play with original voices you’ve been doing for a while
	1. Do you ever find yourself speaking for your cat, dog, hamster, etc? This is often a family character voice that has been morphed, magnified, and engrained into your childhood. Now’s your chance to bring it out into a new character!
	2. Try this-- try vocalizing your voice you use to talk for your pet (or if you don’t have a pet, make a voice for your favorite animal); you can even use your “bad” impression from earlier to help you find a starting point.
3. Consider your placement of your sound
	1. Remember how we talked about vocal placement last time-- where we feel our voice coming from (i.e. nasal voice, deep throat voice, etc.) Other places to consider where your sound might be coming form is your chest voice, missing teeth, a thick tongue, well-spoken/ articulate (or trying and failing miserably?) Or how about a speech impediment (think Daffy Duck). Remember that we still need to be able to understand WHAT you’re saying, so your character’s intention is key to whether the character communicates at all.
4. Consider your character’s emotional center and intelligence.
	1. Practice the ability to vary up the emotions while maintaining the character’s center and their primary point of view. Be patient-- it takes time. Ask yourself-- is my character...honest or rotten? Pleasant or terrible? Smart or dim-witted? Clever or clueless? Kind or cruel? Shy or confident? etc.
5. Have FUN!
	1. If you’re not playing, then you risk dragging on your performance for your listening audience. Allow yourself to enjoy what you are doing and go further than you think is necessary-- it is key to discovering your limitless character options. It will also keep YOU interested in what you are doing-- not just your audience.

Practice: Ask students what type of voice does your character have? Think about pitch and volume levels. Have students explore and give a voice to their character by talking about their answers to some of the questions from the Creating Your Character exercise. The students may do this with a partner sitting next to them.

Activity: Walkabout-- Have the students find a space in the classroom, taking their chair with them. Once they have found their space with their chair, have the students slowly pace around the chair imagining that their character is sitting in it. Recognize that they are still in the beginning stages of developing their character; this is an exploratory/ brainstorming activity to help them bring their character to life. As they visualize their character, give them verbal prompts as to what they are picturing of their character (i.e. their appearance, noticeable features, are they comfortable in the chair, how do they feel, what questions might you ask them, etc.)

After a few minutes of them examining their characters in their minds, invite the students to sit in their chair→ they have now *become* their character. Have them take a moment to embrace becoming their character, because the next step is to get up and walk about the room as their character (no talking yet). Have the students think about and practice how their character walks and moves. Consider posture, flexibility, etc. Students may walkabout and make eye contact with others, smile, and so forth. After a moment of walking around quietly, the students will have a chance to interact with other characters while still staying in character. Afterwards, invite students to discuss their experience...

Discussion-- Developing Memorable Characters

Question: How much of your characters do you know right now? Explain to students that small details might seem insignificant to the story (i.e. a scene, monologue, or play-- or even TV shows and movies), but the smallest details inform the bigger picture! Tell the students that the more they know about the characters, the better they’ll create believable characters-- characters that really live and breathe on the paige, stage, or screen!

Activity/ Assessment: Character Circles

Students will be divided into 3-4 groups. In each group, each student must answer more in-depth questions about their character (will be displayed on the projector) AND answer them while being *in* character. Give the students a few minutes to contemplate and write down their answers to some of those questions displayed on the PowerPoint-- they will turn in their answers to these questions and will be assessed on the development of their character (NOTE: There are no right or wrong answers-- just describing a character). Then invite the groups to start going through their answers to the different questions. Don’t have one person answer each question for their character, move around the circle for everyone to answer the question before moving onto the next one. For example, everyone will go around answering the question “What is your character’s favorite article of clothing?” before moving onto another question. To help the students keep track, it may be best to just go down the list of displayed questions rather than bouncing around in a random order. The instructor will float about the groups and observe how they are answering the questions while staying in their character. After everyone has answered the questions, thank each other (still in character!) for helping one another know more about each other’s characters, then come back to your seats.

Discussion: What is something unique that you learned about another character in your circle? Did they share any unique perspectives or opinions? Why is voice an important element of character? (Possible answers include distinguishing character, giving depth to their personality, etc.) I hope these questions and vocal explorations have been helpful to you and given you useful tools for our cartoon assignment--and we will start working with that technology next time!

Possible more in-depth questions for character creation…only have 10-20 questions on the screen-- whatever questions you see fit for the students to explore.

1. What do you know about this character now that she/he doesn’t yet know?
2. What is this character’s greatest flaw?
3. What do you know about this character that she/he would never admit?
4. What is this character’s greatest asset or ability?
5. If this character could choose a different identity, who would she/he be?
6. What music does this character sing to when no one else is around?
7. In what or whom does this character have the greatest faith?
8. What is this character’s favorite movie?
9. Does this character have a favorite article of clothing? Favorite shoes?
10. Does this character have a vice? Name it.
11. Name this character’s favorite person (living or dead).
12. What is this character’s secret wish?
13. Describe this character’s most devastating moment.
14. What is this character’s greatest achievement?
15. What is this character’s greatest hope?
16. Does this character have an obsession? Name it.
17. What is this character’s greatest disappointment?
18. What is this character’s worst nightmare?
19. Whom does this character most wish to please? Why?
20. Describe this character’s mother.
21. Describe this character’s father.
22. If she/he had to choose, with whom would this character prefer to live?
23. Where does this character fall in the birth order (of siblings)? What effect does this have?
24. Describe this character’s siblings or other close relatives.
25. Describe this character’s bedroom. Include 3 cherished items.
26. What is this character’s birth date? How does this character manifest traits of his/her astrological sign?
27. If this character had to live in seclusion for 6 months, what 6 items would she/he bring?
28. Why is this character angry?
29. What calms this character?
30. Describe a recurring dream or nightmare this character might have.
31. List the choices (not circumstances) that led this character to his/her current predicament.
32. List the circumstances over which this character has no control.
33. What wakes this character in the middle of the night?
34. How would a stranger describe this character?
35. what does this character resolve to do differently every morning?
36. Who depends on this character? Why?
37. If this character knew she/he had exactly one month to live, what would she/he do?
38. How would a dear friend or relative describe this character?
39. What is this character’s most noticeable physical attribute?
40. What is this character hiding from him/herself?
41. Write down one additional thing about your character.
42. Describe your character’s perfect day.
43. What might they be looking for in a friend?
44. Positive words to describe yourself

**LESSON 5-- Making the Cartoons Part 1**

**Educational Objective:** Students will demonstrate their understanding of character, setting, and story development by putting together their cartoon project. e:

**Standard:** L2.T.P.1: Develop the character, setting, and essential events in a story or script that make up the dramatic structure in a drama/theatre work.

**Materials Needed:** Technological devices to access Toontastic 3D app (information link here: <https://toontastic.withgoogle.com/>; download on Google Play for Android or App Store for Apple devices)

 Rubric (see below)

Warm-up: 2-Lines (2 characters have only two lines each during a scene, the 3rd character can say whatever they want-- as long as it is within the context of the scene and is school appropriate and not vulgar)

Instruction/ Tutorial: How to Use the App-- Toontastic 3D

* Show the example cartoon that you made with mentor teacher-- “Camping with Bigfoot”
* Go through step-by-step of using the app-- creating characters, choosing setting, filming parts of the story, etc. (NOTE: The app gives explanations and options).
* Go through the following rubric to explain the elements students will be graded on in their performances/ cartoons: vocal expression, character consistency, projection/ diction, plot (follow dramatic structure). Each student should have their own printed rubric to refer to as they practice.

**Voicing Your Own Cartoons Rubric**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Beginning (1) | Developing (2) | Proficient (3) | Mastery (4) |
| Criteria | Student shows a beginning level of understanding of the educational standard/ learning goal | Student shows a developing level of understanding of the educational standard/ learning gaol | Student achieves the educational standard/ learning goal | Student goes above and beyond application of the educational standard/ learning goal |
| Character Consistency | Student is starting to exhibit character development. | ….and somewhat consistently portraying a character | ...and effectively portrays a character consistently throughout their performance. | ...and gives depth to their character throughout their performance |
| Vocal Expression | Student is starting to portray pitch, tone, and rate in their cartoons, though it is not consistent or long-lasting.  | ...and is somewhat consistently portraying pitch, tone, and rate in their cartoons to give more depth to their character.  | ...and effectively portrays pitch, tone, and rate to sufficiently portray character.  | ...and effectively uses emphasis or exaggeration to give meaning to the words they say.  |
| Projection/ Diction | Student is starting to use projection and diction in their performance, though there are several places where the audience can’t hear or understand them.  | ...and is somewhat consistently using projection and diction.  | ...and uses projection and diction throughout their performance to be heard and understood effectively. | ...and enunciates their words (with emphasis or exaggeration on some words) to make them heard and give them more meaning.  |
| Plot | Student has some story elements present, though it is not complete. | ...and has the majority of the elements present, though they are not within the 2-4 minute limit. | ...and effectively tells a complete story with a beginning, middle, and end. | ...and shows the character’s experience in the story within the 2-4 minute limit. |

Assignment: Time to create their own

* Students can choose their groups (no more than 3 people). In their groups, they will brainstorm a story and create a cartoon using character voices. At least one person must have a smartphone or tablet. Please include the character that you created last time! NOTE: if no one in one group has a smartphone or tablet, then the group may use the app on the iPad.

**LESSON 6-- Making the Cartoons part 2**

**Educational Objective**: Students will demonstrate their understanding of character, setting, and story development by putting together their cartoon project.

**Standard**: L2.T.P.1: Develop the character, setting, and essential events in a story or script that make up the dramatic structure in a drama/theatre work.

**Materials Needed:** Rubric

Warm-up: Mixed Emotions--Have students stand in a circle. One student begins the game by having the “power.” The person with the power makes eye contact with someone else in the circle, and tells them a reaction to a situation. For example “Jill, you are super sad about going to Disney World...you are very happy that your dog is lost...you see a duck and you are terrified ...you are given a beautiful piece of chocolate cake but you feel disgusted, .etc. Then, the student who just reacted to that situation has the “power,” and they pass it by giving another student a situation to react to. Encourage students to really exaggerate their reaction to the situation! THe game goes on for as much warm-up time that they have (maybe 15 minutes). Have the students call on different people so that everyone has a chance to react to a situation.

Individual Practice/ Assignment: Record the Cartoons

Instructions: Students will be able to film segments of their films in 5 minute cycles. When it is their turn, a group may go into the hall to escape the noise of other groups working so that they can record their cartoons. For example, Group 1 will record the first part of their cartoon, then Group 2 will record their first part, and so on. During the time that the students are not recording in the hall, they will be writing their script for each section of the story: exposition, inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. The instructor will float about answering questions and helping the students brainstorm ideas. As the groups work on their projects, they must pass of each section of their story before they go to record that section. Once they pass-off, they are able to go into the hall and quietly record that section of their cartoon. Remind the students to refer to the rubric they were given last time to help them stay on track with the necessary elements.

Potential Adaptation: More than one group may step outside, they will just need a signed hall pass from the teacher to be able to go to another space. This could help the process go faster so that the students can finish in a more timely manner. NOTE: If one group finishes their story and is able to record rather quickly, then they may split into other groups to help them develop their cartoons.

**LESSON 7-- Final Presentations**

**Educational Objective:** Students will demonstrate their understanding of voice as a tool for character development by creating character voices and creating a cartoon in a small group project.

**Standards:** L2.T.P.1: Develop the character, setting, and essential events in a story or script that make up the dramatic structure in a drama/theatre work.

L2.T.R.6: Develop detailed supporting evidence and criteria to reinforce and defend artistic choices when participating in or observing a drama/theatre work.

**Materials Needed:** Technology and hook-ups to play the cartoons

* Rubric: Students will be graded based on the rubric we have used for this unit:
* Cartoon Evaluations half-sheet

Presentations-- student will evaluate other cartoons within these areas on the following handout:

* NOTE: They need to fill out an evaluation for EACH cartoon (between 6 and 8 total, depending on the number of groups in the class).

Discussion/ Assessment: Ask the students the following questions:

* How can variances volume, pitch, tone, rate, and vocal clarity to convey meaning and even create different characters? How has this project helped you explore new voices for character and exploring how we communicate?
	+ Possible answers may include speaking clearly, using vocal inflection and emphasis to give meaning, using tone and pitch to change sound, etc.
* Can you identify and analyze another person’s use of vocal techniques and practices in their own performance? For example, how did they use vocal expression (and vocal placement) to create someone new?
	+ Possible answers may include comments about a student’s use of vocal placement to make their voice sound different, use of rate to talk faster or slower, etc.
* Now let’s expand our thinking beyond the classroom...How can creating meaning and applying principles of vocal technique in a performance promote empathy?
	+ Possible answers may include getting to know a character and understanding their experience; “walking a mile in their shoes,” etc.

Improv Time-- After the performances, as per the end of every major unit/final performance, they will have some Improv Time to play improvisation games.

**Cartoon Evaluations**

**Cartoon Evaluated: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Vocal Expression/ Character**-- *How did they use their voice to create new characters that sounded different from the actor’s natural speaking voice? How did their character sound-- think about age, personality, etc.*

**Projection/ Diction**-- *Can you clearly hear what the character is saying at all times? What are some of your favorite phrases from their cartoon?*

**Character Consistency**-- *Does voice and character stay reasonably consistent throughout the story? Did they maintain or change that character throughout their story? How did they do that?*

**Story**-- *Did it follow the elements of dramatic structure, and was it unified (no outlying characters?) What was your favorite part of their cartoon?*