**Name:** Spencer Duncan

**Unit Title:** The Character of a Puppet’s Voice

**Objective:** Students will demonstrate their ability to manipulate voice to clearly portray an objective-driven character through the design and development of a puppet character in a short scene.

**Learning Level:** 7th-9th grade, beginning for junior high

**Student Prior Experience:** none

**2014 Standards:**

TH:Pr5.1.7.a. Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques that can be applied in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

TH:Cr.1.1.7.b. Explain and present solutions to design challenges in a drama/ theatre work.

TH:Cr.1.1.7.c. Envision and describe a scripted or improvised character’s inner thoughts and objectives in a drama/theatre work.

TH:Pr4.1.7.b. Use various character objectives in a drama/theatre work

TH:Cr3.1.7.b. Develop effective physical and vocal traits of characters in an improvised or scripted drama/theatre work

TH:Cr2-7.b. Demonstrate mutual respect for self and others and their roles in preparing or devising drama/theatre work.

TH:Cr3.1.7.a. Demonstrate focus and concentration in the rehearsal process to analyze and refine choices in a devised or scripted drama/theatre work.

TH:Re9.1.7a. Explain preferences, using supporting evidence and criteria to evaluate drama/theatre work.

**Essential Questions:**

* What happens when theatre artists use their imaginations and/or learned theatre skills while engaging in creative exploration and inquiry?
* How do theatre artists transform and edit their initial ideas?
* How are the theatre artist’s processes and the audience’s perspectives impacted by analysis and synthesis?

**Big Ideas/Enduring Understandings:**

* Theatre artists rely on intuition, curiosity, and critical inquiry.
* Theatre artists refine their work and practice their craft through rehearsal.
* Theatre artists apply criteria to investigate, explore, and assess drama and theatre work.

**Key Knowledge & Skills:**

Basic puppetry, Use of Voice in Portraying Character, Projection, Diction, Design, Anatomy, Feedback, Objective, Creativity, Respect, Interpreting, Analysis

**Authentic Performance Tasks:**

* Design of a puppet.
* Demonstration of puppet character’s objective and voice.
* Teaching peers about vocal characteristics.
* Demonstrating projection onstage.
* Demonstrating diction through a tongue-twister battle.
* Charting basic vocal anatomy.
* Giving peer-feedback in a guided rehearsing workshop
* Improvising and developing a 2-3 minute puppet scene
* Giving and responding to peer-criticism post-performance

**Lesson 1: Parts of the Voice**

**Length: 70 min.**

**Objective:** Students will demonstrate an emerging understanding of vocal technique by charting human anatomy, miniature exercises, and a game which practices projection.

**Levels of Understanding:**

*apply, self-knowledge, explain*

**National Standards:**

TH:Pr5.1.7.a. Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques that can be applied in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

**Materials Needed:**

Whiteboard and dry erase markers.

Auditorium or theatre space.

Prewritten quiz questions and answers

**Hook:**

Have the outline of a human body with a reptilian head drawn on the white board. As students ask why the image is on the board, tell them it has to do with what we’re learning today, but do not give them real answers. Tell them to take their seats and you’ll explain later.

**Step 1:**

Have the students get out paper and pen for a pop quiz of 5 questions worth 100 points. It doesn’t matter which questions you ask, as this pop quiz secretly will not count on the students’ grade. However, you should pick questions the students will definitely know the answers to.

As you administer the quiz do so only orally. None of the questions you say should be intelligible, as you will not use diction nor projection. You may also rush through a question, speaking very quickly. When the students get frustrated or treat the assignment as a joke, reassure them that they are likely doing great and that the quiz is worth 100 points.

Have the students exchange to grade papers. Restate the questions, this time clearly and intelligibly. After the students have received their scores have them pass the papers up and in, thanking them for giving their best efforts, pretending that you will grade them. Then with dramatic flair, hold up all the papers and drop them into the recycling. That is, after all where this quiz should go.

**Step 2:**

Ask the students why that quiz should be in the trash. Discuss why clear speaking is important in life in general and in theatre. Inform the students that in this unit, they will be learning about the voice. This will help them in their acting, so their performances avoid belonging in the rubbish. It will also help them effectively communicate their opinions, beliefs, and feelings in real life.

**Step 3:**

Bring the students’ attention to the outline on the whiteboard. Before students can use their voices, they must first have an understanding of human (or even monster) anatomy. Have the class name the monster drawn on the board.

**Step 4:**

Have all the students get out a piece of paper and draw the monster outline. They will use this diagram to chart a simplified, human, vocal anatomy. One student will come up to the white board and be the scribe, then another, one scribe for each body part. All students will receive credit for their personally-drawn diagrams.

**Step 5:**

Walk the students through the anatomy in the chart below, completing each physical or vocal exercise with each body part and corresponding use or definition. Map each item on the monster’s body as a class, having the scribes come up to draw and chart in writing.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Body Part | Use/Definition | Exercise |
| Spine | When straight and relaxed, enables good posture for better use of lungs and diaphragm and better air flow. The spine extends from the tailbone to the skull, flowing through the back and neck. | Have the students get in golf stance, drop their bodies and slowly roll their spines upward, as though a string were coming out of the top of their heads. Have them loosen their shoulder blades by rolling them and gently roll their necks. Doing so will release neck tension, and allow for proper spinal alignment. |
| Lungs | Lungs hold the air. | No exercise.  |
| Trachea | The tube which connects the lungs to the mouth. | No exercise. |
| Diaphragm | Pushes air in the lungs. Using the diaphragm enables for increased projection and sustained breathing. | Have the students breath, making the chest expand and contract. Have them make “ha” noises. Now have them fill their core and stomach instead, again making “ha” noises. Notice the difference in power.  |
| Vocal Folds | Vibrate 100-1000 times per second to create sound as air travels through them. | Have the students hum and talk, placing their hands on the front sides of their throat. Can they feel their vocal chords vibrating?  |
| Larynx | Also known as a voice box or Adam’s apple. Protects the voice while swallowing. Singing with a raised larynx will cause damage to the voice and result in poor technique. | Have the students swallow. Can they feel their larynx raise and drop? Sometimes people will raise their larynx to hit high notes or swallow their larynx to hit low notes. This is bad. Notes can be hit with practice and proper, relaxed air flow. |
| Nostrils | Allows for airflow while the mouth is closed. | No exercise. |
| Jaw | Jaws should be loose and relaxed when speaking. Clenched jaws cause physical stress. We move our jaws when we speak. | Can the students speak with their jaws tightly closed? Have the students yawn. Opening and loosening the jaw allows for more air to enter and exit the body. |
| Uvula | Helps control vibrato and helps your body know when it is getting a dry throat |  |
| Soft Palate | Helps control the sounds you make. Lifting the soft palate enables your voice to carry and have good resonance. | Have the students inhale on a “Kaah noise” to raise their palates. Then have them speak, visualizing the sound spinning out and up along the spine, arching up and over into the nasal cavaties then through the front of the face. |
| Hard Palate | The hard ridge in front of your soft palate.  | No exercise. |
| Lips | Used in forming words and sounds | Ask the student what sounds they make with their lips. Can they say “Maybe I’d better eat a fantastic mushroom or another vegetable” without using their lips? |
| Teeth | Used in forming words and sounds | Have the students make “t”, and “d” sounds. Have them share what their tongue and teeth do. Their tongues should be pressing against the aveolar ridge just behind the teeth. What other sounds rely on the teeth? Have them try talking as though they had no teeth, and had lost their dentures. |
| Tongue | Used in forming words | Have the students stick out their tongues. What sounds rely on the tongue? Can they speak without their tongue? |

**Step 6:**

There are two more terms the students must know in vocal production: diction and projection. On their papers, have them write “Diction is the clarity of your words.” Diction is aided by the teeth, tongue, and lips. Next class, they will begin to practice diction and other exercises necessary to their puppet performance, but today they will learn about the second term: projection.

**Step 7:**

Have the students turn their papers in and move to their things to the auditorium. Have them take a seat anywhere they like. Speak to them, projecting from the stage. Inform them how the word on the street is that when *Guys and Dolls* was first casting in New York, the casting directors had each actor speak from stage without a microphone while the casting directors sat in the back of the theatre. The casting directors were looking for people who could project, as the show required a loud, brash cast. Demonstrate speaking like Nathan or Adelaide. While not every show involves loud New Yorkers, the principle is the same: actors must project to be heard.

**Step 8\*:**

Students will play the following game. One by one, the students will come onstage and give their name while projecting. This allows the teacher to coach them how to use their diaphragm. After the student has said their name, the class (who is still scattered throughout the auditorium) will begin to talk freely and loudly. The student onstage will then give the class attention call, not shouting but projecting, aiming their voice up and into the places of the theatre designed for good acoustics. They will be coached by the teacher as they do this. When the other students can hear the call they will respond and be silent. Once the entire class is silent, a new player stands onstage.

After so many students, to avoid unnecessary boredom, have partnerships come up. Attention calls may change. Eventually, the entire class can go onstage and call for the teacher (who could then be in the auditorium) to stop singing and listen.

*\*Note: Not only does this exercise help students learn how to safely project, it helps them learn to listen and what it is like to be the teacher and call for attention!*

**Student-created example of a simplified anatomy chart for a monster named Sophia:**



**Lesson 2: Vocal Characteristics**

**Length: 70 min.**

**Objective:** Students will demonstrate an understanding of vocal characteristics and their application to character by teaching and modeling characteristics in preparation for analyzing a live performance ‘s use of characteristics in its creation of character.

**Levels of Understanding:**

*Interpret, explain*

**National Standards:**

TH:Pr5.1.7.a. Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques that can be applied in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

**Materials Needed:**

Pieces of paper in a bag saying “Audibility, tone, pitch, inflection, rate, force, and articulation”

Precut sections of the Vocal Characteristics handout.

Copies of Vocal Characteristics handout for each student

Tongue Twister pages for each student.

**Hook:**

Gather the students in a big circle. Have them sit on the floor and play the game “telephone.” Before and after playing, help them understand the game’s connection to diction.

A fun variation is to have multiple phrases being circulated at the same time. This is like when multiple actors speak onstage at the same time.

**Step 1:**

Have the class get into seven groups. Hand each group a cut section of the Vocal Characteristics with their term. The groups will have ten minutes to ask the teacher questions about their term and practice the exercise. Each group will then give a six-minute presentation in which they teach the rest of the class about the term, covering the information on the section and leading them through the exercise.

**Step 2:**

The class will again gather in the circle. Walk the class through rolling the spine up, relaxing the shoulders and neck, then push air out with the diaphragm. Have the students shake any nerves of presenting out.

**Step 3:**

The teacher will then have well-behaved students draw the slips of paper out. A slip is drawn and that group presents. Another slip is drawn and the next group follows. The process continues until all characteristics have been taught and practiced.

**Step 4:**

The teacher will then tell a story with the class (such as Spencer Duncan’s *Mrs. Walker and the Lizard Man: A Southern Riff of that Ol’ Turnip Tale*) any selection they like, as long as the story is orally told and incorporates different character voices and vocal characteristics.

As the students listen to the story, have them note what characteristics are used and how they are used. At the end of the story, the students will share their thoughts.

**Step 5:**

Pass out the tongue twister papers and a copy of the Vocal Characteristics page to each student. Tell the class they should keep their vocal characteristics for future use in class and at these tongue twisters will help them with projection. Next time, there will be a tongue twister battle and they will begin to design their puppets. If there is time at the end of class, students can begin practicing the tongue their twisters.

**28 Tough Tongue Twisters for Specific Tricky Sounds**

*(courtesy of http://www.fluentu.com/english/educator/blog/esl-pronunciation-tongue-twisters/)*

**Consonant Blends**

***Sh****e sells sea****sh****ells by the sea****sh****ore*

*I saw a kitten eating****ch****icken in the kit****ch****en*

*I****th****ought I****th****ought of****th****inking of****th****anking you*

***Sl****im****sl****am****sl****ap*

*A big****bl****ack bug snoozed on a big****bl****ack rug*

*He****th****rew****th****ree free****th****rows*

***Th****in stic****ks****,****th****ick bric****ks***

***Fr****ed fed Ted****br****ead and Ted fed****Fr****ed****br****ead*

**L vs. R**

*Red lorry, yellow lorry*

*Truly rural*

*I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream*

*Rolling red wagons*

*Red blood, bad blood*

**B vs. V**

*Blue blurry vines blind*

*Betty loves the velvet vest best*

*Barber baby bubbles and a bumblebee*

*Burnt base, vicious vase*

*Vivacious Val vacuumed Violet’s very vivid vehicle*

**Vowels**

***E****ddie****e****dited****Ea****rl’s****ea****sy music*

*G****oo****ey g****o****pher g****u****ts*

***E****xcited****e****x****e****cutioner****e****x****e****rcising his****e****xcising powers****e****xc****e****ssively*

***A****nnie****a****te****ei****ght****A****rctic****a****pples*

*An****o****range****o****val sp****oo****ks the****o****dd****o****perative*

*An****aw****ful****aa****rdvark and an****a****ching****a****pe****a****te an****a****ntelope*

**Bonus Twists**

*Printed papers under pressure make pens prickle*

*The poor boar pours batter over his putter*

*Six sticky skeletons*

*Thunder sunders thick sticks*

**Lesson 3: Tongue Twisters and Puppet Conception**

**Length: 70 min.**

**Objective:** Students will demonstrate an ability to use diction through a tongue-twister competition. They will also demonstrate their ability to imagine and create characters through the design of a puppet.

**Levels of Understanding:**

*Explain, Apply, Empathize, Self-knowledge, perspective*

**National Standards:**

TH:Cr.1.1.7.b. Explain and present solutions to design challenges in a drama/ theatre work.

TH:Pr5.1.7.a. Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques that can be applied in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

TH:Cr.1.1.7.c. Envision and describe a scripted or improvised character’s inner thoughts and objectives in a drama/theatre work.

**Materials Needed:**

Puppet design worksheets, printed on yellow paper.

Coloring utensils

**Hook:**

Have the students stand up. Lead them through an exercise in which they hang their bodies down, rolling their spine up as though they had a string on the top of their heads. Have them roll their shoulders and loosen their necks. Have them shake their bodies out and manipulate their faces, warming and stretching them out.

Lead them in a few projected ”ha’s” and the tongue twister, “Me and my mommy may move to Miami, and me and my mommy may not.”

**Step 1:**

Give the students the Tongue Twister exercise forms to pass off. They must be signed off by their peers, but they can have one peer sign off multiple exercises.

**Step 2:**

Gather the students for a tongue twister battle. Have the class divide into several groups. Each group will determine one tongue twister to practice. The group will then say that tongue twister as clearly as they can. Speed does not matter for this round. When one person slips up, the group changes tongue twisters and repeats until there is only one student left.

**Step 3:**

Have the winners of each group come up for the final round. The class will choose one tongue twister for the final contestants to battle. One student, possibly a TA, will stand in as an epic judge. The epic judge will lead the class in a “3-2-1 Battle!” countdown. Following the countdown, the final contestants will begin to say the determined twister as fast as they can as many times as they can. If they cannot keep up with the pace of the other contestants, the epic judge taps them. If they cannot be understood, the epic judge taps them. If they do not say the tongue twister correctly, the epic judge taps them.

Once a student is tapped, they must fall to the floor, as though they had died. They are out. They class cheers on the winner.

**Step 3:**

The tongue twisters are fun, but why do the students think we are practicing them? The answer is diction. After asking this question, ask the students why diction is important for actors. Review the other main term learned two class periods ago, projection. Why is projection important for actors?

**Step 4:**

As the students create their puppet shows, they must have clear diction and projection to be understood. Model for the students what a bad puppet performance is like—one without diction and projection. Does it remind the students of the pop quiz taken at the beginning of the unit? How fun was that pop quiz? How enjoyable would an hour-long puppet show be if you couldn’t understand the characters? Their puppet shows will not be an hour, but 2-3 minutes, and they will not be misunderstood, because our performers are better than that!

**Step 5:**

Have the students pull out their vocal characteristic sheets. These other vocal characteristics, learned about last time, will also help the students in their performance, as these characteristics will help create *character*. Ask the students what a character is and how voice in general determines/reveals character. Then ask them to get with a partner and find a way that a specific vocal characteristic can determine/reveal character. Each partnership will share.

**Step 6:**

Next time the students will begin to build their puppets. Some material will be provided, but students will be responsible for bringing their own puppet bodies to class.

Show some examples of past student puppets or teacher-created puppets. Have some students come up and animate the puppets, encouraging them to create vocal choices. How do they apply the attributes discussed last class? How do they decide what choices to make?

Give out the Puppet Character Design worksheets—their golden tickets. Have the students begin to design their puppets. They must draw their puppet in full color. As they design their puppets, they should think about how they want theirs to sound. Some questions on the handout ask for background, others ask for physical looks. These two things: background and appearance, help shape how an audience might imagine a character’s voice, in marriage of sight and sound.

**Step 7:**

Allow the students time to design. They will pass off these golden tickets with a teacher signature before building their puppet. As they get their tickets passed off, they will demonstrate how they imagine their puppet sounding.

**Step 8:**

Five minutes before class ends, have the students get out a piece of paper. If they would like to be in a group with any other student(s), they may submit a request. Requests will be considered, not guaranteed. Groups will be 2-4 people.

**Puppet Design Worksheet**

*(modified and expanded from a puppet design worksheet by Calista Wilkes)*

Student Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Period\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Describe your puppet’s character! Who are they?**

Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Age\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Height\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Weight\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Shoe Size\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Occupation (job)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Describe their family and friends (parents, siblings, spouse, children, relatives, best friends, sort-of-friends):

Homeland (where they are originally from) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Where are they living now? Who with? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Favorite food\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Favorite color\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Three hobbies\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Dislikes\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Things they do that are annoying\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Social class (wealth)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Education level\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Describe your puppet’s costume\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Describe your puppet’s movement\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What desires does your puppet have? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Describe your puppet’s voice using at least 3 of the following. They may vary in their use of these characteristics, but they may generally use a characteristic in a particular way:**

Accent\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Tone\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Pitch\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Rate\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Force\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Puppet Design**

Draw a sketch of your puppet below. Make your picture detailed. Use full color!

***What type of body do you need to bring to class to create your puppet?***

*Do you have the materials at home? If not, can you get the body you want in another way? Write your game plan below:*

**Lesson 4: Puppet Conception and Creation**

**Length: 65 min.**

**Objective:** Students will demonstrate an ability to interpret and create from a design through creating their designed puppet character.

**Levels of Understanding:**

*Interpret, Apply*

**National Standards:**

TH:Cr.1.1.7.b. Explain and present solutions to design challenges in a drama/ theatre work.

TH:Cr.1.1.7.c. Envision and describe a scripted or improvised character’s inner thoughts and objectives in a drama/theatre work.

**Materials Needed:**

Materials for creating puppets (e.g. hot glue, googly eyes, pipe cleaners, felt, etc.)

**Hook:**

Have all the puppet materials neatly arranged on a table at the front of the class.

**Step 1:**

Walk the students through how to create hair, attach eyes and clothes, how many materials they each may use. If students get burned while using hot glue guns, they must come and tell the teacher who will either administer aid or send the student to the office for treatment.

The students must have their golden tickets (design sheets) signed off by the teacher before having access to the puppet materials. Once they have their materials, they are free to create.

**Step 2:**

Before letting the students work, announce who the performing groups are. While puppet creation should reflect what is on the design sheets, students may alter their designs to be in greater harmony with the desires of their groups.

**Step 3:**

Allow the students time to work. If students finish early, they should begin to brainstorm a scene they can do with their puppets and partners.

**Step 4:**

Ten minutes before the end of class, have the students clean up everything.

**Lesson 5: Objectives, Rehearsal, and the Dating Game**

**Length: 70 min.**

**Objective:** Students will demonstrate an

**Levels of Understanding:**

*Perspective, Empathy, Explain, Apply, Self-knowledge*

**National Standards:**

TH:Cr.1.1.7.c. Envision and describe a scripted or improvised character’s inner thoughts and objectives in a drama/theatre work.

TH:Pr4.1.7.b. Use various character objectives in a drama/theatre work

TH:Cr3.1.7.b. Develop effective physical and vocal traits of characters in an improvised or scripted drama/theatre work

**Materials Needed:**

Some sort of visual separation for the Dating Game

**Hook:**

Have the students play the improv game, The Dating Game, but as their puppets. One person and their puppet will be the host, three will be contestants to be selected from to date, and one will be the person selecting the dates.

The person/puppet selecting the dates is led out of the room before the three contestants are chosen. The contestants hide their puppets while the selector enters. The hosts leads the selector through asking three questions of the contestants who give their answers in character. The selector then chooses whom they will date, the host announces the perfect date, and the audience cheers. It is helpful if the audience cheers when the selector enters too, as though a cue card in a studio filming had gone up. A cue card holder is another option if more students wish to play.

All acting and participation in the game, including as audience members, is in role as the puppets--- particularly in puppet voice.

Play several rounds of this, allowing many students to participate. Inform students they will get to play again as a warm-up on another day.

**Step One:**

Ask the class what the characters in the dating game wanted. In every show, just like in the dating game, each character has something they want. This is called an objective.

Have the class repeat what every character wants (an objective).

Each puppet character needs to have an objective in the students’ scenes.

The class will rehearse today, focusing on objectives, and the teacher will walk around, checking to make sure each character has an objective.

**Step Two:**

Let students rehearse. Check in on their objectives.

**Lesson 6: Rotating Previews of Practice**

**Length: 70 min.**

**Objective:** Students will demonstrate an

**Levels of Understanding:**

*Perspective, Empathy, Explain, Apply*

**National Standards:**

TH:Cr2-7.b. Demonstrate mutual respect for self and others and their roles in preparing or devising drama/theatre work.

TH:Cr3.1.7.a. Demonstrate focus and concentration in the rehearsal process to analyze and refine choices in a devised or scripted drama/theatre work.

**Materials Needed:**

**Hook:**

Have the following chart drawn on the board. Tell the students that today, they will be previewing their scenes for their peers, but first they will have ten minutes to freshen up.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Objective | Diction |
| Projection | Character |

**Step One:**

Assign each group a partner group. The partner groups will listen to what the other group’s character objectives are and then watch each other perform. After performance, the audience group will share two positives and one tip for improvement regarding the performing group’s objectives.

Step Two:

Regather the students and assign the groups new partner groups. These groups will do the same thing: observe and give feedback but for character voice—do the actors use a voice fitting their puppet character or do they use their personal voice? There may not be much difference between the two, but any similarities between character and actor voice should be intentional. Have the group members share with each other what they are aiming for in character voice. This will help feedback be productive.

**Step Three:**

Break up the performing with a round or two of the dating game. This will keep the students engaged in their rehearsing.

**Step Four:**

Have the groups get back with their first group partners. This time the group will sit faraway to watch the performance, looking for projection. The same process occurs.

**Step Five:**

Finally, the groups will rejoin with their second partners. These partners will look for diction.

**Note:** Along the way, the teacher should filter in and out of the groups, helping to give feedback where needed. This is an exercise allowing students to lead and have ownership, but some groups may struggle to correct their peers appropriately. The groups should try to improve each time, incorporating the feedback they receive.

**Lesson 7: Performance!**

**Length: 70 min.**

**Objective:** Students will demonstrate an ability to perform objective-driven and vocally-refined characters through a live puppet show.

**Levels of Understanding:**

*Perspective, Empathy, Explain*

**National Standards:**

TH:Re9.1.7a. Explain preferences, using supporting evidence and criteria to evaluate drama/theatre work.

**Materials Needed:**

stage of drama blocks

puppet performance rubric

**Hook:**

Have a stage built out of drama blocks set up at the front of the class. Announce that today there will be performances. The class will be giving feedback.

**Step One:**

Lead the students in the traditional spinal alignment and tension release exercise.

 **Step Two:**

Give the students six minutes to freshen up.

**Step Three:**

Each group will slate and perform, the teacher grading the actors as a collective group. Major discrepancies between actors’’ performance quality will be taken into consideration, adjustments to grades being made.

After each group performs, the rest of the class will share two positive critiques and one suggestion for improvement. Each student needs to give feedback at least once to receive participation points for the day. The teacher will comment on the performance after the class.

|  |
| --- |
| **Drama Foundations Puppet Show Walkaway Rubric** |
| Student Names and Characters: |
| Vocal choices are successfully targeted to match the puppet character, rather than the actor. |  0 pts 2 pts 4 pts 6 pts |
| Performance is intelligible thanks to clear diction. |  0 pts 3.5 pts 7 pts |
| Performance is intelligible because the performers project, using their diaphragm and voice appropriately. |  0 pts 3.5 pts 7 pts |
| Each character has a clear objective and seeks to achieve that objective-- they may or may not be successful in achieving that objective. | Clear objective (3 pts)Seeks to achieve that objective (3 pts) |
| Performance is 2-3 min in length. | Yes (4 pts) or No (0 pts) |
| **Total (out of 30 points)** |  |

**Lesson 8: Performance—Again!**

**Note:** *The class will likely need two days of performance. If on the second day, the performances run out early, and there is extra time, the activities in Step Four are recommended.*

**Length: 70 min.**

**Objective:** Students will demonstrate an ability to perform objective-driven and vocally-refined characters through a live puppet show.

**Levels of Understanding:**

*Perspective, Empathy, Explain*

**National Standards:**

TH:Re9.1.7a. Explain preferences, using supporting evidence and criteria to evaluate drama/theatre work.

**Materials Needed:**

stage of drama blocks

puppet performance rubric

**Hook:**

Have a stage built out of drama blocks set up at the front of the class. Announce that today there will be performances. The class will be giving feedback.

**Step One:**

Lead the students in the traditional spinal alignment and tension release exercise.

 **Step Two:**

Give the students six minutes to freshen up.

**Step Three:**

Each group will slate and perform, the teacher grading the actors as a collective group. Major discrepancies between actors’’ performance quality will be taken into consideration, adjustments to grades being made.

After each group performs, the rest of the class will share two positive critiques and one suggestion for improvement. Each student needs to give feedback at least once to receive participation points for the day. The teacher will comment on the performance after the class.

**Step Four:**

If there is extra time, it is recommended that an episode of the original Muppet Show is viewed as a class. Inform the students that about seven men voiced all of the Muppets—including the talented Frank Oz, who is known not only for Miss. Piggy but Yoda. This is a chance for the students to see character voice applied professionally. Each episode lasts about 35 min.

It is recommended an episode featuring a stage celebrity, such as Julie Andrews, Sandy Duncan, Ethel Merman, Ben Vereen, or Joel Grey be shown. This will increase students’ awareness of theatre history.

As you view the episode, you may ask the class what they think the characters’ objectives are, to consider the differences between the human and puppet voices and how each uses the vocal characteristics discussed. Are there any characters with poor diction or poor projection? Is this a mistake or a conscious choice on the part of the actors? Why? Are there times when breaking the rules is encouraged?

Puppet karaoke to well-known songs or more of the dating game are also excellent alternatives to fill time without deviating from the unit objective.