

“Carpa” Theatre and the Arts of Protest
Residency Plan for Hamilton International Middle School

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Lesson plan in theatre

Grade level: 6th - 8th grade

Time Frame: 6 days of activity; One hour cultural and aesthetic introduction the first day; two hours per day for all subsequent days (11 hours total).

Project focus: In this lesson students will be introduced to the Mexican theatre form of *carpa* or “tent” theatre. Students will learn the essential elements of this theatrical form, how theatre can be used as an “art of social protest,” and will use the elements of *carpa* theatre to create their own skits and performances.

Lesson plans:

Day 1 –

Introduction to Carpa theatre. Use the introductory notes “Arte del Pueblo: 20th Century Mexican Arts of Social Protest.” Give students “quiz” sheet to reinforce learning.

Introduction includes overhead projected transparencies, video and live reading of a *carpa* theatre script.

Day 2 –

Introduction to improvisational theatre;

Stretching / warm ups;

Theatre games / exercises:

Movement around room (fast, slow, forward, backwards, sideways, etc)

Gravity (levels of weight/gravity between 1-5)

Cars and Trains (in pairs, then groups of 4)

Break

Exploration of emotion (walking slowly, then freeze in a pose of happy, sad, angry, frustrated, disappointed, etc.)

Sculptures of emotion (one person mold/sculpt the other into an expression of emotion).

First teacher calls out the emotion for each group to sculpt; then students choose the emotion on their own. Class shares their sculptures and everyone guesses which emotion.

Day 3 –

Stretching / warm ups;

Movement around room (fast, slow, forward, backwards, sideways, etc)

Sculptures of emotion (one person mold/sculpt the other into an expression of emotion).

Pairs choose their own emotions, working to make them more clear and expressive than day before. Pairs share their sculptures.

Demonstrations of action (show the actions which *lead to* the emotion. What *causes* the expression of emotion?) New pairs, working on adding the action which happens just before the emotion. Clear action leading to clear emotion (all done silently).

Break

Conflict (choose emotions which result from conflict or problems). In groups of three, repeat the above exercise. Clear actions leading to clear emotions. Show a scene, show what happens, what the conflict or problems is and what the resulting emotions are.

Resolution. (repeat of above exercise, but demonstrating a resolution) In the same groups, repeat the scene above, but change the ending to improve the situation or demonstrate a resolution. How is the conflict or problem resolved? What are the new emotions?

Day 4 –

Intro to creating personalized / real scenes;

Brainstorm:

Using large flip-chart and markers, make a list of 15-20 issues of collective importance to kids (not personal issues, but issues others can relate to as well.)

Take a poll of which issues have the most “energy” or importance to each person. (“How important is this issue to YOU?!”) Remove issues which don’t have collective identification or interest of more than a few people.

Break class into groups of 4-5. 2 min to discuss and choose an issue to focus on.

Issues assigned to each group based on their choices

Break

Groups work to create a scene based on their issue, clearly demonstrating the problem and clearly demonstrating a resolution. Able to use words.

Each group presents their scene-in-progress.

Day 5 –

Stretching / warm ups

Continue working in groups on individual scenes.

Choose a title. Add character, detail. Each scene should have a beginning or introduction (identifying who, what, where); a middle (showing the problem or issue being addressed); and an ending (showing the resolution to the problem or issue.)

Break

Presentation of each scene to the class, with discussion following. (“What did you like about the scene? Did they clearly identify who, what, and where? What was the problem being addressed? How did they resolve it? What improvements could they have made?”)

Day 6 –

Stretching / warm ups

Final rehearsals of scenes, incorporating final changes, improvements, feedback

Final presentations of scenes (preferably for an audience).

Teacher should video tape these final presentations, and after they are complete, play them back to the students (giving them immediate visual feedback and the reward of seeing themselves on TV.)

Summary / wrap up of project.

Resources: VCR and monitor, overhead projector, screen, large flip-chart, colored markers, video camera

Space requirements: Large room free of excessive clutter and furniture.

Learning goals: Students will learn about the history and political/social/cultural uses of carpa theatre. Students will learn expressive skills used in theatre: physical expression of emotion, clear articulation, role playing, the importance of being seen, heard, and understood. Students will learn to work cooperatively in groups. Students will understand that theatre is an effective medium of social protest.

Vocabulary: Revolution, dictator, democracy, protest, itinerant, portable, stereotype, character, exaggeration.

Arts EALR's: Successful completion of this lesson will meet

- 1.1 student understands arts concepts and vocabulary
- 1.2 student develops skills and techniques
- 1.3 student understands arts history and traditions in various cultures
- 2.1 student applies a creative process: gathers information, develops ideas, etc.
- 3.1 student uses the arts to express feelings / ideas
- 3.2 students communicates for a specific audience or purpose

Assessment strategies: Rubrics based on the arts EALR's, students' self-evaluation, peer evaluation

Project continuation: Continue working with carpa theatre to create longer, more in-depth scenes. Perform these spontaneously around the school: in the cafeteria at lunch, on the playground at recess, etc. Organize an evening of carpa theatre to which teachers and school administrators are present (esp. authority figures which appear in the skits.)

Contact Info

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