# ARTS IMPACT INSTITUTE LESSON PLAN - Core Program Year 2 Art-Infused

THEATER LESSON – Clues to a Character through Text

Arts-Infused Disciplines: Theater/Reading Arts-Infused Concept: Character

Artist-Mentor: Dave Quicksall Grade Levels: First – Fifth Grade

Examples:

Enduring Understandings

Using a text’s descriptions of characters can inspire an actor to create character attributes and dynamic

choices by blending the voice and body.

Target: Identifies a character’s personality traits from a selected text.

Criteria: Writes descriptive words about the character’s attributes from a selected text.

Target: Incorporates physical choices to portray the character.

Criteria: Uses character pose/posture and movement based on the clues from a Character

Map.

Target: Incorporates vocal choices to portray the character.

Criteria: Selects specific vocal pitch, volume, or timbre based on the character attributes from

the Character Map.

Target: Communicates dialogue (invented or actual) using physical and vocal choices.

Criteria: Blends voice and body to present the character’s conversation to an audience.

Teaching and Learning Strategies

Before teaching this lesson, the teacher comprises a list of descriptive language and character

attributes from the nursery rhymes or the story being explored. Examples of the type of words needed

are: fear, happy, giant, spider, anger, tiny, old, gruff, etc.

1. Introduces students to a warm-up, Statues. Introduces ways actors use their body to

create characters that have specific physical, vocal and emotional attributes. Guides students to

begin walking around the room as themselves (neutral). Teacher calls Freeze and then calls out

a word (human or animal).The word does not have to come from the story/nursery rhyme text

(rock star, parent, giant, etc.). The purpose of this exercise is to guide the students towards

discovering different kinds of physical choices when investigating a character. Prompts: I want

you to just walk around the room as yourselves and when I call freeze I want you to freeze.

When you freeze I will call out a word and then you make a statue of that word.

Student: Walks around the room in neutral, freezes on cue, and creates a frozen statue cued by

the prompt.

Embedded Assessment: criteria-based teacher checklist, reverse

2. Leads students through the exercise I Am the Tiger. Introduces ways actors use their

voice to create characters that have specific physical, vocal and emotional attributes. Guides

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students to stand in a big circle. Stands inside the circle and walks around, prompting each

student, one by one, to say the line I am the Tiger endowed with a different vocal pitch,

volume, or timbre (pre-selected and demonstrated by the teacher). Refers to list of descriptive

words made before the lesson to direct the students. Prompts: Say the line I am the Tiger when

I cue you. Say the line with a character attribute, so if I say surprise how could you say I am

the Tiger like you are surprised? This is what I mean by descriptive words. How would a king

sound? How would a monkey sound if it could talk? What would you need to do to your voice to

make it sound that way? Remember there are many different ways to do this.

Student: Stands in a circle with the group and when prompted says the line I am the Tiger

endowed with character attributes to match the cue.

Embedded Assessment: Criteria-based teacher checklist

3. Reads aloud or reviews the key story elements of a selected story/nursery rhyme.

4. Introduces looking at the story itself to find clues to descriptions of characters.

Hands out blank Character Map. Assigns characters from a selected story or nursery rhyme to

each student. Guides students in a group brainstorm or individually to dig for clues in the text

about their character. Introduces the concepts of attributes and inference to the

students. Prompts: When actors are trying to create their character they do it like a detective

by looking for clues in the story. Attributes are words that describe someone. What words do

you read that describe your character (physically—how he/she walks, moves or looks on the

outside; vocally—how he/she talks or makes sounds with the voice; emotionally—how he/she

feels on the inside). If you cannot find specific descriptive words in the text, you can “infer”

them, meaning, decide what attribute(s) are appropriate based on the other clues in the text.

Student: Contributes ideas about character attributes in a group brainstorm. (A group

brainstorm can serve as an important assessment tool for the teacher to confirm that ALL the

students understand the concept). Chooses a character. Finds clues and fills out the Character

Map.

Embedded Assessment: Criteria-based teacher checklist.

5. Leads students in another walk around the room which now transforms into a

walk as their assigned character. Ends this step when all students have met criteria.

Prompts: Let’s just walk around the room as yourselves again. When I cue you, I want you to

start walking as your character would walk. Think about what you wrote on your Character

Map. What words on it would describe how you might move? How would your character walk?

How does your character feel? Happy? Sad? Scared? How would the way you feel change the

way you move?

Student: Having referred to the Character Map, walks around the room, first in neutral and then

as his/her assigned character, making appropriate changes to posture, walking, movement, etc.

to create the character.

Embedded Assessment: Criteria-based teacher checklist (reverse); self-assessment (Character

Map)

6. Brings the students back to the circle, and from inside the circle goes one by one again, but

this time cues each student to present a line of dialogue in the context of their

story/nursery rhyme. Prompts: Now I want you to say a line as your character would say it.

Again, think about your Character Map; that’s going to be your guide. If you don’t have a line

written in the nursery rhyme you can make it up. What might the spider say to Miss Muffet,

knowing what kind of spider he is, and how would he sound, saying that line?

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Student: After referring to the Character Map for clues, stands in a circle with the group and

when cued, presents a line of dialogue (from the story/nursery rhyme or invented, if there are

none in the text). Changes voice to sound like the given character.

Embedded Assessment: Criteria-based teacher checklist (reverse); self-assessment (Character

Map)

7. Guides students in moving and talking like their characters by having them move

around the room, while speaking the previously chosen lines of dialogue. Prompts: We’ve

written our Character Map, we’ve practiced making physical and vocal choices and you’ve made

physical choices for your character and vocal choices for your character. Now, how does your

character move and speak at the same time? How does the way your character is moving affect

the way your voice sounds?

Student: After referring to the Character Map, creates movements, words and/or vocal sounds

simultaneously as the character.

Embedded Assessment: Self- Assessment (Character Map). Activates checklist with comments

on how they achieved criteria.

POSSIBLE FOLLOW-UPS:

1. Divides students into groups and guides them as they act out the stories/nursery

rhymes in their entirety with all the characters, using the previous steps in this lessons to

create the characters (they can also create new lines of dialogue, Character Maps, etc.).

2. Leads a criteria-based group reflection session – Prompt: What did you see?

Remember to keep the focus on what the students saw and the different ways they met the

lesson criteria.

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Vocabulary Materials and

Community Resource

WA Essential Learnings & Frameworks

Arts Infused:

Theater and

Reading:

attributes,

character,

emotion,

inference

text

Theater

Character Map,

cue/prompt,

freeze

movement,

physical choice,

Statues

Performances:

Broadway Center for the

Performing Arts, Tacoma, WA

Seattle Children’s Theater,

Seattle, WA

Performance Materials:

selected story or nursery

rhymes

Character Map, blank

template

Essential Learnings

AEL 1.1 concepts: character, vocal choice, physical choice

AEL 1.2 skills and techniques: blending body and voice

AEL 2.1 applies a creative process: conceptualization

AEL 2.2 applies a performance process: presents

REL2.2.3 understand and analyze story elements

REL 2.3.1 understands similarities within and between analyzing and interpreting

information in literary text

Arts State Frameworks

Kindergarten: imitates and uses vocal sounds; imitates and uses movement

Grade 1: uses simple movements to imitate character

Grade 2: identifies and describes main and minor characters; uses movements to

communicate character; identifies character’s feelings

Grade 3: identifies character traits of the main character; demonstrates a range of

movement to create character,; uses appropriate feelings to create character

Grade 4: selects and uses specific vocal qualities; uses emotional and sensory recall to

create character

Grade 5: identifies and uses voice to communicate character; identifies and uses

movement to communicate character; identifies and sues emotional and sensory recall

to create character

Reading State Frameworks

Kindergarten: composes visual images from what is read aloud and/or during shared

reading; identify story elements of character

Grade 1: makes inferences after hearing or reading a story using prior knowledge

Grade 2: describes the physical traits of characters and tells how they act

Grade 3: supports with evidence from text how a character will act

Grade 4: uses knowledge of situation and characters’ actions, motivations, feelings, and

physical attributes to determine characters’ traits

Grade 5: uses knowledge of the situation, characters’ actions, motivations, feelings, and

physical attributes to determine characters’ traits

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ARTS IMPACT INSTITUTE LESSON PLAN

THEATER LESSON – Clues to a Character through Text

PERSONAL ASSESSMENTS CHECKLIST

Character Attributes

READING

Physical Choices

THEATER

Vocal Choices

THEATER

Presents RUBRIC

THEATER

Student

Writes down descriptive

words about the

character’s attributes

Uses pose/posture

and movement for

character attribute

Selects specific pitch,

volume, or timbre for

character attribute

Blends voice and body

to present the character

1-4 points

Total

Points

7

RUBRIC FOR BLENDING VOICE & BODY IN PRESENTATION OF CHARACTER

Student 4 3 2 1

blends physical and vocal

choices together and sustains

the characterization throughout

the entire performance

utilizes a physical choice and

a vocal choice together at

intervals throughout the

performance

utilizes either a physical

choice or a vocal choice

exclusively without putting

the two together

speaks and moves

without making

dynamic physical or

vocal choices

Criteria-based Reflection Questions:

Self-Reflection: How does the way your character is moving affect the way your voice

sounds?

Peer to Peer: What did you see?

Name: Date:

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ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

Character

Attributes

Physical Choices

THEATER

Vocal Choices

THEATER

Presents RUBRIC

Students THEATER

READING

writes down

descriptive words

about the character’s

attributes

uses pose/posture

and movement for

character attribute

selects specific pitch,

volume, or timbre

for character

attribute

blends voice and body to

present the character

1-4 points

Total

Points

7

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

15.

16.

17.

18.

19.

20.

21.

22.

23.

24.

25.

26.

27.

Total

Percentage

Criteria-based Reflection Questions: (Note examples of student reflections.)

Self-Reflection: How does the way your character is moving affect the way your voice sounds?

Peer to Peer: What did you see?

Thoughts about Learning:

Which prompts best communicated concepts? Which lesson dynamics helped or hindered learning?

Lesson Logistics:

Which classroom management techniques supported learning?

Teacher: Date:

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CHARACTER MAP Character’s name:

Fill out the numbered areas

with the following information

from the nursery rhyme/story

(if it’s not in the actual text

you can make it up!)

6

1. What does character say? 3. Describe character’s voice.

2. What kind of sounds does 4. What does character

character make? look like?

(growl, laugh, scream,

whisper, etc.)

5. How does character move?

6. What feelings does character have?

2

1

3

4 5

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ARTS IMPACT FAMILY LETTER

THEATER LESSON – Clues to a Character through Text

Dear Family:

Today your child participated in a theater arts lesson on characters and their attributes.

• We created a Character Map on a character from a nursery rhyme by looking through the text

and looking for clues on how that character looks, moves, and feels.

• We played I Am the Tiger and explored the different way our voices can change when we

become different characters.

• We presented our characters to the class by walking and talking like they would in the story.

At home you could act out your own favorite stories or nursery rhymes by determining how the

characters look, move and feel.

Enduring Understanding

Using a text’s descriptions of characters

can inspire an actor to create character attributes and dynamic choices by blending the voice and body