Theater and Reading Infused Lesson

Character Objective: Overcoming Obstacles
Author: Dave Quicksall   Grade Level: Fourth

Enduring Understanding
Identifying a character's objective and obstacles determines the actions in a story for an author/actor.

Lesson Description (Use for family communication and displaying student art)
Students learn the concepts of character objective (what a character wants), action (what a character does to achieve their objective), and obstacle (what gets in the characters way). Through a series of physical and vocal exercises including statues, pantomime, and tableau, students practice objectives and actions. Then they apply those skills and use the Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart to a story where they look closely at two characters and determine what they want, the actions they take, and the things that get in their way.

Learning Targets and Assessment Criteria

Target: Shows an action to achieve an objective through voice and body.
   Criteria: Makes physical and vocal choices simultaneously.

Target: Identifies the attributes of a character's behavior in a story.
   Criteria: Records an objective, obstacles, actions, and a result on the "Pursuing an Objective" flow chart.

Target: Makes a specific physical choice to convey character.
   Criteria: Uses posture, gesture, and facial expression choices to communicate a specific person in a tableau.

Vocabulary

Arts Infused:
Action
Attributes
Character
Emotions

Reading/Writing:
Objective Flow Chart

Arts:
Actor Neutral
Facial Expressions
Gesture
Objective
Obstacle
Pantomime
Physical Choice
Statue
Tableau
Vocal Choice

Materials
Museum Artworks or Performance

Seattle, WA
Book-it Reparatory Theatre
Seattle Children's Theatre

Tacoma, WA
Broadway Center for the Performing Arts

Materials
The Tiger Rising by Kate DiCamillo (or other book selection), copies for each student or student group; White board, document camera, or chart paper & markers; Pursuing an Objective Flow Charts; Writing pencils; Class Assessment Worksheet; Arts Impact journals/sketchbooks

Connections
Teachers College Readers Workshop

Learning Standards
WA Arts State Grade Level Expectations
For the full description of each WA State Arts Grade Level Expectation, see:
http://www.k12.wa.us/Arts/Standards
1.1.1 Elements: Character, Action, Objective
1.2.1 Skills and Techniques: Movement, Gesture, Facial Expression
1.2.2 Skills and Techniques: Voice and Movement
1.2.3 Skills and Techniques: Creates a Character with Objectives
1.2.4 Skills and Techniques: Creates Objectives for a Character
1.4.1 Audience Skills
2.1.1 Creative Process
2.2.1 Performance Process
2.3.1 Responding Process
4.2.1 Connection between Theater and Reading

continued

Common Core State Standards in ELA (Reading Literature)

For a full description of CCSS Standards by grade level see:
http://www.k12.wa.us/CoreStandards/ELAstandards/

RL.4.1. Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from a text.

RL.4.3. Describe in depth a character or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text.

RL.4.7. Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text.

SL.4.1. Engage effectively in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about *grade 4 topics and texts,* building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.4.2. Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

SL.4.4. Report on a topic or text or tell a story in an organized manner, using appropriate facts relevant descriptive details.

College and Career Ready Students in Reading

Demonstrate independence.
Build strong content knowledge.
Respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline.
Comprehend as well as critique.
Value evidence.
Come to understand other perspectives and cultures.

Pre-Teach

Read the beginning (first four or five chapters) of *The Tiger Rising* by Kate DiCamillo, or the beginning of a different book, before "Day Two" in the lesson.

Lesson Steps Outline

Day One

1. Instruct on objective, action, and obstacle. Model pursuing an objective with the "Opening a Door" exercise.

2. Lead students in a warm-up: the "Opening a Door" exercise.

☑ Criteria-based process assessment: Utilizes strong, specific actions to attain a specific goal.

3. Model filling out the *Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart* based on the scenario of opening a door.

4. Guide groups of students to use the *Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart* to achieve an assigned objective.

5. Guide groups to practice and perform their scenes. Guide a reflection after each group using their *Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart*.

☑ Criteria-based teacher checklist: Makes physical and vocal choices simultaneously.

6. Guide reflection.

☑ Criteria-based reflection: Reflects on how a character's objectives are connected to his or her feelings.

Day Two

1. Lead students in a warm-up of "Statues," first using general characters and feelings, then using characters and feelings from the selected story.

2. Lead students in filling out the *Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart* for the main character (Rob in *The Tiger Rising).*

3. Introduce the theater technique of "Tableau." Divide the class into groups and guide each group to create two tableaux based on the *Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart*.

4. Guide groups to present their tableaux and reflect.

☑ Criteria-based peer assessment and process assessment: Uses posture, gesture, and facial expression choices to communicate a specific person in a tableau.

Day Three

1. Guide students to work in pairs on the *Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart*.

☑ Criteria-based teacher checklist: Records an objective, actions, obstacles, and a result on the *Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart*.

2. Guide students to create one tableau of the character overcoming one of his/her obstacles.

3. Guide students to present their tableaux and reflect.

☑ Criteria-based teacher checklist, peer assessment and reflection: Uses posture, gesture, and facial expression choices to communicate a specific person in a tableau.

LESSON STEPS

Day One

1. Instruct on objective, action, and obstacle. Model pursuing an objective with the "Opening a Door" exercise.

📖 Demonstrating comprehension strategy, making a connection with prior knowledge

📄 Although this lesson references a specific story, these strategies can be applied to almost any story that is used in the classroom.

📄 Pre-determine how the room will be set-up for students to move through space – desks moved to the side or students moving among the desks.

📄 Write the terms and definitions for objective, action, and obstacle on the board.

- *A very important question to ask whenever we read a story is "what matters the most to the character?" When actors are preparing for a play, they start by reading the script. As they read, just like when you read a book, they always ask themselves questions to generate ideas about the character. These ideas allow the actor to begin constructing meaning with their bodies and voices while they rehearse the play — just as you construct meaning about a character as you read.*

- *The primary question an actor asks is, "What does my character want?" We call this the character's objective. In order for a character to reach the objective, he/she must use actions to get it. An action is a verb — it shows a character doing something to get what they want.*

- *For example, let's pretend I want to open a door to get into my house. My objective is simple, I want to get inside. What actions can I take to get what I want? What can I do?*

- *Those are all great actions — turn the doorknob, unlock the door, and take out your keys. Let's go with "Turn the doorknob". I'm going to pantomime turning the doorknob.*

- *Uh-oh, the door is locked! Now what? I have something in the way of getting what I want! We call that an obstacle. For an actor, an obstacle is like a roadblock to a character's objective. It can be an object, like a locked door. It can be another character, or it can be something inside the character him/herself — like fear or doubt. With an added obstacle, the character must choose a new action in order to reach the objective.*

- *So, here I am with a locked door. What can I do to reach my objective, which is to get inside my house? Those are all great actions — use keys to unlock the door, ring the doorbell, bang on the door. I'm going to pantomime getting out my keys to unlock the door.*

- *Oh, no! The key broke off in the lock! Now, what will I do? Those are all great actions — crawl through the window, call a family member. I'm going to pantomime crawling through the window.*

- *I did it! I achieved my objective – I got in the house.*

2. Lead students in a warm-up: the "Opening a Door" exercise.
📖 Making a connection with prior knowledge, turn and talk, partner sharing

- *Find an acting space in the room. We are going to* generate ideas *and* construct meaning *just like an actor does by pursuing an objective.*

- *Now, it's your turn to imagine you have a door in front of you that you need to open. The objective is to open the door! Let's open it — wait! We can't get it open.*

- *What's your first obstacle? Can you think of a different obstacle than the door being locked? Turn to a neighbor and share what your first obstacle is.*

- *Now, what is your next action to overcome that obstacle? Go ahead and do it — pantomime your action.*

- *Now that you have overcome that obstacle, a second obstacle gets in your way! What is your second obstacle? What is still preventing you from opening the door? Turn to a neighbor and share what your second obstacle is.*

- *Now, what is your new action to overcome this obstacle? Go ahead and do it — pantomime your action. This time you overcome your obstacle.*

- *Now, walk through that door! You made it!*

☑ Criteria-based process assessment: Utilizes strong, specific actions to attain a specific goal.

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3. Model filling out the *Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart* based on the scenario of opening a door.
📖 Demonstrating comprehension strategy, synthesizing

- *We are going to use the* Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart *graphic organizer to help us map out a character pursing an objective.*

- *Let's have a group reflection and use our experience of opening the door to fill it out.*

- *What was the objective? Right, to open the door. What was the first action? What was the first obstacle? Second action? What was the final outcome? Yes, we were able to get inside!*

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4. Guide groups of students to use the *Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart* to achieve an assigned objective.
📖 Group conferring, making a connection with prior knowledge, predicting

🗐 Assign objectives from this list:
　　OPEN A BIRTHDAY PRESENT
　　GET MONEY TO BUY SOMETHING YOU WANT VERY BADLY
　　MOW THE LAWN
　　CATCH THE BUS
　　DIG A HOLE

- *Now you get to work with a group to use the* Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart *to achieve an assigned objective.*

- *Each group will get one* Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart *and an objective.*

- *As a group you will fill in the needed actions and obstacles for the objective you have been given.* Work together as you generate ideas.

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5. Guide groups to practice and perform their scenes. Guide a reflection after each group using their *Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart*.

📖 Responding, synthesizing, sharing

- *Now you will rehearse what you have mapped out on your* Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart.

- *Everyone in the group will play the same character acting out the same objective, actions, and obstacles. Make physical and vocal choices to show the actions your character takes to achieve your objective.*

- *Practice acting it out at the same time. When you present with your group you will each perform the scene at the same time — all members of the group will act out the scene simultaneously.*

- *You have five minutes to rehearse your scene. Remember, you have it all mapped out! You have* generated ideas*; now* construct meaning *with your bodies and voices. You can talk during these scenes.*

- *Now we will present and reflect. Before your group presents, give me your flow chart. I will tell the audience your objective and we will read over the chart after you have presented your scene.*

- *Let's have the first group. Their objective is, "Open a birthday present." Audience, look for the actions they make with voice and body to achieve their objective. What got in their way — what obstacles did they face?*

- *Let's reflect. What did the actors do with voice and body to show their actions? What obstacles did they face?*

☑ Criteria-based teacher checklist, peer assessment: Makes physical and vocal choices simultaneously.

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6. Guide reflection.

📖 Full-group reflection.

- *Does pursuing an objective also help the actor figure out what the character may be feeling? How does it help?*

☑ Criteria-based reflection: Reflects on how a character's objectives are connected to his or her feelings.

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1. Lead students in a warm-up of "Statues," first using general characters and feelings, then using characters and feelings from the selected story.

▤ Make a list of general characters and feelings for this step, like: bear, teacher, pirate, tiger, astronaut, monkey, excited, angry, sad, etc. Then transition to characters from the story.

- *We will walk around the room in actor neutral. "Actor neutral" means that you are being yourself.*

- *When I shout out "Freeze!" Freeze wherever you are. I will then call out a character or a feeling. Turn your body into a statue of what I call out.*

- *Freeze! Make a statue of a pirate. Make it bigger. Exaggerate your statue.*

- *Walk around in actor neutral. Freeze! Make a statue of excited. Increase intensity by 100%. Exaggerate your statue.*

- *Walk around in actor neutral. Freeze! Make a statue of Rob (or other character).*

- *Walk around in actor neutral. Freeze! Make a statue of Rob seeing the tiger (or other character).*

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2. Lead students in filling out the *Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart* for the main character (Rob in *The Tiger Rising*).

📖 Mini lesson, demonstrating comprehension strategy, discerning the important information, responding, inferring

▤ Pass out the *Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart* to each student.

- *We are going to analyze the main character (Rob) as if we were actors playing the role and as readers interested in forming questions for ourselves as we read. We will use our* Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart.

- *Our flow chart only has place for two obstacles — there are many more obstacles that characters (Rob) face through the course of a story. We will just focus on the beginning of the story and look for a couple of obstacles.*

- *The first question to ask is, what is the main character's (Rob's) objective? What does he want at the beginning of the story?*

- *Yes, the main objective for Rob is to keep his "suitcase" closed — to not show his feelings.*

- *The author uses a metaphor of a suitcase to represent how Rob keeps all his feelings shut up inside of himself. Rob's objective is to keep his "suitcase" shut — to not show his feelings to anyone. Write that under "Objective."*

- *What action does he take to meet his objective in the first chapter, as he waits for the school bus? He imagines the tiger sitting on top of the suitcase. Write that above "Action #1."*

- *What is his first obstacle? It is the Threemonger brothers, who are bullying him. Write that above "1ˢᵗ Obstacle."*

- *What does he do? What action does he take? He ignores them by thinking about the tiger. Write that above "Action #2."*

- *What is the second obstacle? It is the new girl in class, Sistine. She sticks her tongue out at him in class. Write that above "2nd Obstacle."*

- *What does he do to shut out his feelings? What action does he take? He draws a picture of the tiger. Write that above "Action #3."*

- *What results from this struggle to reach his objective? He can't overcome the second obstacle, can he? He finds himself trying to rescue Sistine as she is being bullied on the playground. Why do you think he does that? Write that under "Results."*

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3. Introduce the theater technique of "Tableau." Divide the class into groups and guide each group to create two tableaux based on the *Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart*.
📖 Group conferring, interpreting, synthesizing

▤ The first tableau is of the main character trying to overcome the first obstacle. The second tableau is of overcoming the second obstacle.

- *I am going to introduce a theater technique called "tableau." A tableau is a frozen picture a group of actors make with their bodies to show a moment in a story — like a picture or photograph. It shows actions and feelings, but has no movement. Tableau means "painting" in French.*

- *At the beginning of the lesson we created "statues." When we use our bodies alone to show a character, that's a statue. When we put two or more statues together to create a picture, it's called a tableau.*

- *You are going to work in groups to create two tableaux based on the Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart for Rob (or other character).*

- *The first tableau is of Rob trying to overcome the obstacle of the Threemonger brothers bullying him. The second tableau is of Rob trying to overcome the obstacle of Sistine.*

- *All members of your group participate in both tableaux. What other characters could be present? The bus driver, the teacher, other kids, or maybe the tiger?*

- *You have ten minutes to create your two tableaux.*

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4. Guide groups to present their tableaux and reflect.
📖 Sharing, retelling, responding

- *Let's have our first group present its tableaux.*

- *Let's reflect. What were some actions that you saw? What gestures told the story? How could we tell that Rob was thinking about the tiger?*

- *What were some examples of gestures and/or facial expressions used in the various tableaux that effectively communicated how the character was feeling?*

☑ Criteria-based peer assessment and process assessment: Uses posture, gesture, and facial expression choices to communicate a specific person in a tableau.

Day Three

1. Guide students to work in pairs on the *Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart*.

📖 Partner sharing, asking questions, inferring

📃 Select a different character from the story. For *The Tiger Rising,* it could be the characters of Sistine, Rob's father, Willie May, etc.

- *With your partner, you get to fill out your own* Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart *on a new character. Let's focus on _____.*

- *Start with the first questions, "What matters the most to this character?" and "What does he/she want?"*

- *Even though you are working with a partner, you are responsible for your own flow chart — be sure to fill it out as you talk through it.*

☑ Criteria-based teacher checklist: Records an objective, actions, obstacles, and a result on the *Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart*.

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2. Guide students to create one tableau of the character overcoming one of his/her obstacles.

- *Working with your partner, create one tableau of the character overcoming one of his/her obstacles. It can be the first obstacle or the second one, the choice is yours.*

- *Show us the actions of the character trying to overcome an obstacle. Your flow chart can provide the information that you need to create your tableau.*

- *A tableau is a frozen picture that shows actions and feelings — no movement.*

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3. Guide students to present their tableaux and reflect.
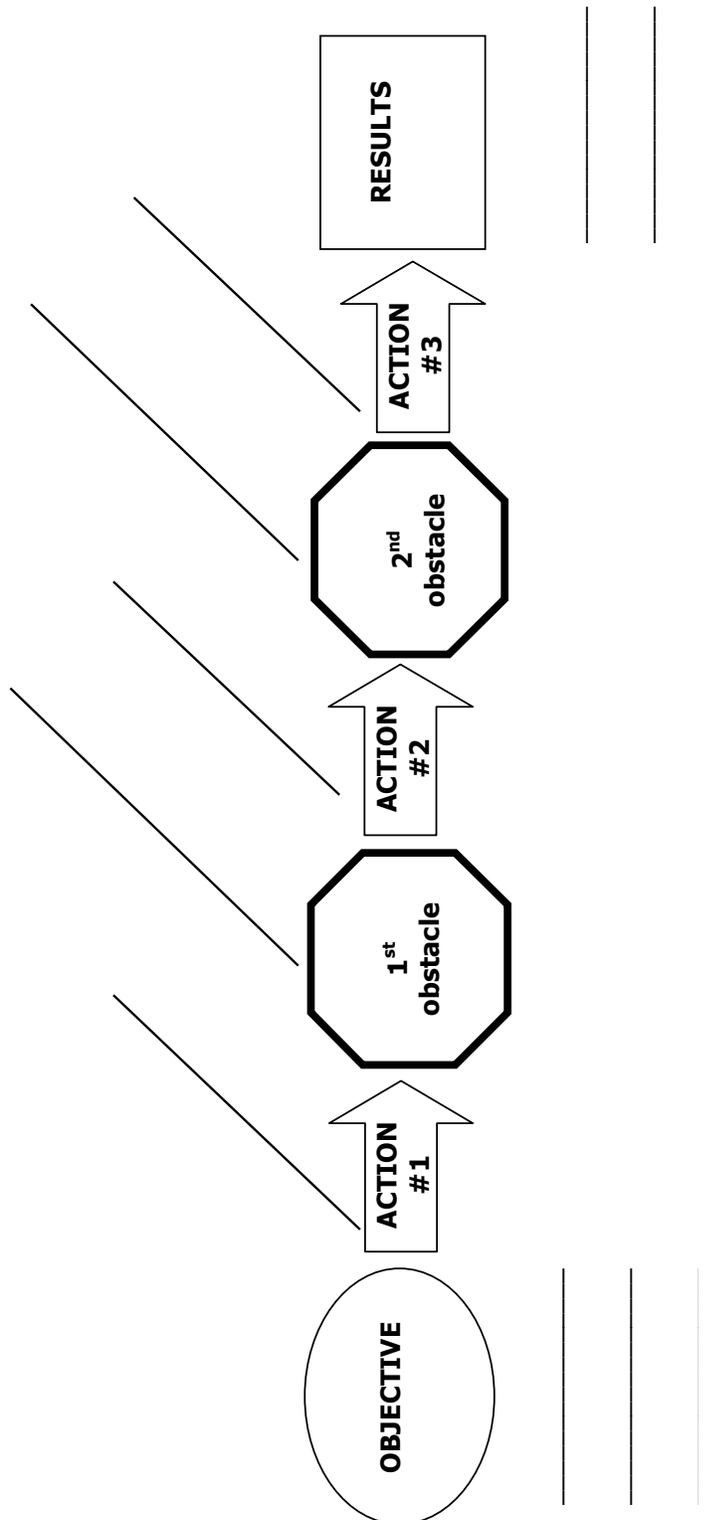
📖 Sharing, retelling, responding

- *Let's have our first group present its tableaux.*

- *Let's reflect. What actions did you see? What feelings?*

- *Did they come up with different obstacles than you did? Is the objective the same? How does this apply to the way you read a story?*

- *How do the characters' actions influence what you think about that character as you read?*

- *When do you figure out the character's objective as you read?*

- *What are some of the most significant character obstacles you can describe?*

☑ Criteria-based teacher checklist, peer assessment and reflection: Uses posture, gesture, and facial expression choices to communicate a specific person in a tableau.

Character Objective: Overcoming Obstacles
Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart

Name: _____   Date: _____

RESULTS

ACTION #3

2nd obstacle

ACTION #2

1st obstacle

ACTION #1

OBJECTIVE

▤ Teachers may choose to use or adapt the following self-assessment tool.

STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

Disciplines	THEATER	READING	THEATER	Total 3
Concept	**Body & Voice**	**Objective, Obstacle, & Action**	**Tableau**	
Criteria Student Name	Makes physical and vocal choices simultaneously.	Records an objective, obstacles, actions and a result on the "Pursuing an Objective" flow chart for a story.	Uses posture, gesture and facial expression choices to communicate a specific person in a tableau.	

CLASS ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

Disciplines	THEATER	READING	THEATER	Total 3
Concept	**Body & Voice**	**Objective, Obstacle, & Action**	**Tableau**	
Criteria Student Name	Makes physical and vocal choices simultaneously.	Records an objective, obstacles, actions and a result on the "Pursuing an Objective" flow chart for a story.	Uses posture, gesture and facial expression choices to communicate a specific person in a tableau.	
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30.				
Total				
Percentage				

What was effective in the lesson? Why?

What do I want to consider for the next time I teach this lesson?

What were the strongest connections between theater and reading?

Teacher: _____   Date: _____

THEATER AND READING LESSON: *__Character Objectives: Overcoming Obstacles__*

Dear Family:

Today your child participated in an **Arts and Reading** lesson. We talked about how actors use the objective (or goal) of a character to determine what actions to use. We also learned that characters often have obstacles in their way and must use new actions to overcome them.

- We acted out a simple objective (opening a door) and added an obstacle (the door was locked) that we had to overcome.

- We were introduced to the *Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart*, which maps out a character's objective, obstacles, and actions.

- In small groups, we practiced pursuing an objective by acting out short scenes in which we tried to get something we wanted very badly.

- We filled out a *Pursuing an Objective Flow Chart* on a character from a story we are reading in class. We presented tableaux (frozen stage pictures) from the book to the class.

At home, you could determine the objectives and obstacles of characters from your favorite stories.

Enduring Understanding

Identifying a character's objective and obstacles determines the actions in a story for an author/actor.