

Title: Using Visual Art to Create Scenes

Grade Ranges:

 K-4

 5-8

 X 9-12

Subject Tag:

Art and Music: Theatre

Synopsis:

This lesson plan uses visual art pieces or posters of art to help drama students create performing art. Class begins with a short lesson on scenes, and then students see a piece of art that they use as a stimulus to develop improvised scenes. The scenes must include a beginning-middle-climax-resolution. Students work in small groups to create their scenes and then perform them for the other members of the class.

Keywords:

climax, resolution, visual art, improvisation, performance art, scenes, script writing, play writing

Body:

At the beginning of class, explain that this is a “play writing” session in which students will develop short improvised scenes based on a piece of art. In order for students to understand that a scene or even a full-length play should contain a beginning-middle-climax-resolution, share with them the following two versions of a short scene:

Scene A: A woman is knitting a sweater. The doorbell rings several times interrupting her work. Once it is a neighbor asking to borrow a cup of sugar, another time it is the newspaperman collecting his money, another time it is a charity solicitation person. Then she receives a phone call, puts up her knitting and goes to bed. (Essentially this scene has a beginning-middle-end, but no real conflict or climax.)

Scene B: A woman is knitting a sweater...same scenario until the phone call. After the woman receives the phone call, she slowly begins to unravel the sweater until it is completely torn apart.

Ask students to compare the two scenes — characters, settings, and motivations — and then decide why the second scene is more complete. Eventually you should make sure they understand the idea of climax and resolution in a scene, story, or play.

Next show your students a work of art. You can find a slide to use, a poster, or a reproduction from the Internet. Also, the art teacher at your school might be able to provide some works that you can use. It helps students if the work is not too abstract, although you might have fun with something like Dali’s “The Persistence of Memory.” Less experienced students have more success if the art contains human figures. Divide students into small groups to work on their improvisations together.

Students are to use the work of art as a stimulus to help them create a short scene with a beginning, middle, climax, and resolution. The art is only the springboard, and it does not matter if their scenes don't replicate the work. Tell students, though, that works of art often depict scenes that show a beginning, middle, climax, or resolution with the other stages implied. For example, students may have to guess logically what happened in order to "set" the climactic scene portrayed in the artwork, and then logically try to predict how the scene will be resolved. Encourage students to avoid the quick and easy solutions of resorting to violence to create a climax and/or resolution.

After groups have planned their scenes, they should present them to the other members of the class. Presenters and audience members should then critique both the playwriting and the execution of the scene.

Related Links:

art.com

<http://www.art.com>

Inexpensive reproductions of many works of art, including Dali's "The Persistence of Memory," are available here.

Scene Structure and More

<http://screenwriting.about.com/cs/scenestudy/>

This page at About.com provides scene-writing tips and examples of scenes from many movies.

Features:

- Contains special education tips
- Quick Activity (less than 30 minutes; story starter)
- Requires Internet access for students to complete

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to develop scenes based on visual art pieces.
2. Students will understand the importance of climax and resolution in a scene.
3. Students will be able to collaborate through a scene development process.

Standards:

NY: 1: Students will actively engage in the processes that constitute creation and performance in the arts, and participate in various roles in theatre.

NYC: A5a. Work with others to complete a task.

CT: 1. Creating. Students will create theatre through improvising, writing, and refining scripts. **2.** Acting. Students will act by developing, communicating and sustaining character. **3.** Connections. Students will make connections between theatre, other disciplines, and daily life.

NJ: 1.1: All students will acquire knowledge and skills that increase aesthetic awareness in theatre. **1.2:** All students will refine perceptual, intellectual, physical, and technical skills through creating theatre.

Prerequisite Skills:

1. Some previous experience with improvisation is helpful.

Time Required:

One to two class periods depending on number of students involved

Technology and Materials Needed:

1. Pieces of art (sculptures, posters, or slides of works)
2. You might use the Internet to locate examples of works of art, but it is not required

Procedures:

Assessment Criteria:

1. Students can self evaluate their own scenes to decide how effective their scenes are — both in their conception (writing) and their presentation.
2. Other student audience members can help critique the scenes.

Recommended Lesson Plan Review Date:

NA

Review Comments:

NA