

Characterization

Participants: *Any*

Space: Lexington Children's Theatre

Target Age: 8-12 Year Olds

Time required: 6 Weeks, 1 Hour Each Week

Teaching Artist: Justin Doro

Objectives: To create imaginative, creative and fun characters.

To develop characters using our three actors tools: body, voice and imagination.

To explore characters that we created with our imagination.

Week 1

Objectives:

To build and ensemble and a safe space

To introduce what a character is

Warm-up Activities:

Ensemble:

Name/Fact: Have the students introduce their name and tell the group what their favorite cartoon character is. This will instantly get them accustomed to thinking about characters.

Come My Friends: Ask the group to spread out in the space. The facilitator will choose one person to begin by saying "come my neighbor if _____." They will fill in this blank with something that they like or like to do that is true about them and a positive statement. If other members of the group also like these things, then they gather around this person. Facilitator continues to choose people to find their own space in the room and state something that they like or is true about them.

Body:

Jazzercise: Have the young people stand in a circle. Begin the facilitation by starting a random dance move and then have the young people copy. Present a few examples of dance moves to get the group to fully understand what is happening. Then send the facilitation around the circle having young people give the dance move that will be copied by the rest of the circle. I suggest bringing music in to help engage this activity.

Voice:

Boom Chicka Boom: Words are called out line by line by the leader and are echoed by the participants:

I said a boom chicka boom

I said a boom chicka boom

I said a booma-chicka-rocka-chicka-rocka-chicka-boom

Un-hunh

Alright

One More Time... (the next verse style is then called out and follows this same basic style)

Valley Girl Style

I said like a boom chicka boom

I said like a boom chicka boom

I said like a booma-chicka-rocka-chicka-gag me with a spoon,

Like Un-hunh

Like Alright

Like One More Time...

As many styles as you like can be created throughout the song, while gestures are simply used to illustrate physically what the style is. For example, janitor style could use a sweeping motion while race car style could use a car-driving motion.

Imagination:

I Am A Tree: Have the group stand in a circle. You will begin the activity by jumping in the middle of the circle and saying “I am a Tree.” You will then, using your whole body, become a tree in the middle of the circle. The next person in the circle will think of the first thing that comes to their mind when they hear the word “tree.” They will go to middle of the circle and say “I am a _____”, where they will insert the word they first thought of. Then, using their whole body they will become that object. The next person will then be inspired by that object and will continue the cycle until everyone has become an object. When you get to the last person you will remind everyone how it all began with a tree by saying “And that is how a tree reminds us of a _____.”

Instructional Activities:

Activity 1: School 101

Materials: Giant piece of 3M paper, Markers to Write With

Begin this activity by having the students come up with a long list of characters that you can find in a school system. I suggest having your own list with you so that you can coach them through the process. Have the student’s not just pick “teacher” and “student” but define the type of student or teacher. (I.E. Chorus teacher, art teacher, gym teacher, popular student, nerdy student.) Also, do not be afraid to challenge them with inanimate objects and class pets and things like that.

Transition:

As the facilitator, then pick an object or a thing in the room. Start a class discussion about that object. What is its name? Does it have any friends? What does it like to do in its free time? What is its favorite book? What is its last name? Ask a series of questions about that object and then use it as a transition. Tell them that they, as a class, just created a simple character based off of an object that you found in the room.

Have the class then pick a character off of the list that you created. Let them know that they are creating a character based off of that character you can find in a school. Have them name the character and come up with three simple facts about their character.

If you have time, you can share your name and one of your facts. Make sure you remind the young people that once they pick this character that they must stick with it for the next six weeks, so they better love it. ≥

Wrap Up:

Pows and Wows

Pow: Least favorite part of the day.

Wow: Favorite part of the day.

Go through each young person and have them identify their Pows and Wows.

Week 2

Objectives:

To create a character

To explore characters and begin to solidify what they look like

Warm-up Activities:

Ensemble:

Name Tag: Have young people stand in a circle and put out their right hand. Begin by going to the center of the circle and tag one of the young people. Tell them that the goal is to not be tagged and you can prevent getting tagged by saying anyone in the circles name. The facilitator (the person in the center of the circle) must then attempt to tag the that person before they call out a new name. If you are tagged you become to person in the middle of the circle.

Body:

Energy Energy:

1. Have the students form a standing circle.
2. Set them up to echo the teacher.
3. Teacher: Energy energy in my hands (shakes hands out).
Students: Energy energy in my hands (shake hands out).
Teacher (with even more zeal this time): Energy energy in my hands! (shakes hands out)
Students: Energy energy in my hand! (shake hands out)
4. Teacher repeats in this fashion with several body parts such as, feet, knees, head, elbows, and hips. Then the teacher can insert different moves instead of body parts. For example: "Energy! Energy! In my slide!", "...in my Macarena," "...in my wave," "...in my sprinkler."
5. The activity ends when the teacher notices that the students are pumped!

Voice:

Chocolate Bunny: This is an activity in trying out different pitches of voice. The words are in two parts, the first is "Someone stole my chocolate bunny" and the second is "and I don't think it's very funny". It is easy to do this activity standing in a circle, so that each member of the group can see each other. Each person in the circle gets a turn to say the first part of the phrase in the voice of their choice- they can change their pitch to be high or low, or use an accent, or play with their voices in other ways. Then, the entire group says the second part copying the voice used by the selected group member.

Imagination:

What Are You Doing?: The group can begin by standing in a circle. Person A (usually the instructor) will begin pantomiming an activity. (This can be anything- a sport, shopping, cleaning, other chores or tasks, etc.) Person B, the person standing next to Person A, will turn to them and ask "What are you doing?" Person A must answer Person B's question with an answer that is ANYTHING BUT WHAT THEY ARE ACTUALLY DOING. (Example: Person A is pantomiming playing baseball. When asked what they are doing, they reply that they are sewing a shirt.) Person B must then begin doing the activity described by Person A. Person C, the next person in the circle next to B, will then ask, "What are you doing?" And will begin doing the action described by Person B. This passes all the way around the circle so that each individual pantomimes the activity stated by the person before them, and describes the action the next person must pantomime.

Instructional Activities:

Activity 1: Biopoems

Materials: Biopoem Sheets, Pencils

A biopoem is a very easy way to begin developing your character. Attached to this lesson plan is the biopoem template that we have created. It is a simple set of questions that the young person will answer as their character. You will have to remind them that it is as their character, not as themselves. Come to class with one already finished so that you can model what they will look like so they have an idea of what to work towards.

Once they have all finished, have the young people sit in a circle and go through and share some of the things they created about their characters.

Activity 2: Walkaround

Materials: A large enough space so that you may walk around freely.

Begin by having the class walk around the room at a level three out of five. First have them explore the speed of their walk. One is the slowest you can go without stopping and five is the fastest you can go without running. Once they have the speed down, begin challenging them to be thinking about the way in which they are walking. Talk about the pace they are walking, what body part they are leading with, how heavy or light their steps are. Once they have recognized how THEY walk, have them in vision the way their character would look in their head. Begin by having them simply take on the physical shape of their character. Then have them start to explore how their character walks using those elements you talked about with their walk. Have them be very specific about their choices on how their character would walk.

Activity 3: Walk Across

Materials: A large enough space so that you may walk around freely.

Now that they have a image of what their character looks like and walks like, one by one have them walk from one side of the room to the other, taking pauses if necessary. Have the class talk about what they found interesting or unique about those walks and how it enhanced their character they chose to be.

Wrap Up:

Pows and Wows

Pow: Least favorite part of the day.

Wow: Favorite part of the day.

Go through each young person and have them identify their Pows and Wows.

Week 3

Objectives:

To create super hero/villain identities

To create super hero/villain emblems

To explore super hero/villain poses

Warm-up Activities:

Ensemble and Focus:

Go

Have students stand in a circle. Choose one young person, A, to choose another person in the circle, B, and make strong eye contact. B will then say go which allows person A to leave their spot to walk across the circle and take B's spot. B must now find another person in the circle to make eye contact and will wait until that person says go until they can move. Remind the young people that it is the person they are making eye contact with that says go. Continue playing until the young people have successfully established a rhythm of coming and going.

Body and Voice:

Alive, Awake, Alert and Enthusiastic:

This song is to the tune of "If you're happy and you know it clap your hands"

"I'm alive, awake, alert and enthusiastic,

I'm alive, awake, alert and enthusiastic,

I'm alive, awake, alert,

I'm alert, awake, alive,

I'm alive, awake, alert and enthusiastic"

There are motions that go along with the song. Each time that you repeat the song, the motions get bigger and bigger and you sing louder and louder. You start by moving your fingers, up, in, out, up, in, out in a repetitive motion to the beat of the song. Then you repeat motion using your whole hands for the second sing-through. Then you use your whole arms for the third go. Then your whole body on the fourth go. It really gets you excited and energized.

Imagination:

Object Transformation: Choose a simple object, such as a roll of tape, a ruler, a marker, etc. and ask the group to use their imaginations to make it something else. Introduce the activity as the greatest toy in the whole wide world and make sure they are ready for it. Then one student is selected to step forward and use the greatest toy as another object- such as using a ruler as a baseball bat. They should only show the action, because the rest of the group gets to guess what they have turned the object into. Each member of the group should get a turn to use the object, and should be encouraged to think of something new and original to use it as. Make sure to remind students the goal of the exercise is to make their pantomime really clear, which could result in making their object really easy to guess. Reward students for having their object guessed quickly.

Instructional Activities

Before beginning the day's activities, the co-teachers will act out a short scene in-role. Both teachers must create a superhero before class to become during the class. The first co-teacher can slip out during the imagination warm-up then return at the very end of the activity to start the scene. This is what worked in the past, but the teachers should feel free to construct this moment however they please. After the scene, the teachers reveal to the students that the characters they have been creating in the school are actually attending Super School and each character is a superhero or super villain.

Activity 1: Villian or Hero!

Materials: Notebook or large sheet of paper to write down the teams on.

After the short skit listed above, students will decide whether they want to be a super hero or a super villain. The facilitator who was the villain will be the “head villain” and the facilitator who was the hero will be the “head hero” so that you can work with two groups of young people at the same time. In your hero/villain groups have the young people name their hero/villain and then come up with their very own super power.

Activity 2 Art Project: Emblem!

Materials: Emblem shapes on cardstock, markers, tinfoil, glue sticks, hole punch, yarn, extra construction paper to cut out letters.

Once the young people have chosen what their names/powers are, they will create an emblem that represents them as a hero/villain. Have three or four shapes prepared for this art project for them to choose from. To make the emblem interesting, we let the young people tin foil around the outside while coloring the inside with marker. After they were done with these steps, they will cut out a letter that represents them and glue it to the center. Use yarn to tie it around their necks and wear them like necklaces. Once they become super hero/villains in the sharing, they will put them around their necks.

Activity 3

Materials: Your imagination

Psychological Gesture

Once the students have their superpower chosen, they will use Psychological Gesture to connect their body to their character.

This activity is based on a Stanislavsky acting technique where the students will create a series of two or three movements ending in a pose that defines their character. The series of movements serves to get the young person into character and the end pose should ultimately be their superhero's signature pose.

Wrap Up:

Pows and Wows

Pow: Least favorite part of the day.

Wow: Favorite part of the day.

Go through each young person and have them identify their Pows and Wows.

Week 4

Objectives:

To explore and develop our super hero and super villain characters

To create a unique background for how we got our super powers

Warm-up Activities:

Ensemble:

Monster: Monster is a game for an entire class, large group, whatever! Have the group link arms and explain that they are one monster with ONE voice. (You will have to remind the group several times of this) The goal of this activity is to have the group listening and responding to each other. No one monster head should be talking or shouting louder than others. It's perfectly ok if the monster answers slowly as this allows everyone to listen. Begin by asking the monster questions about itself, what its name is, what it likes to do, etc.

Example conversation:

Teacher: Monster.

Monster: YYYYYEEEEESSSSSS

Teacher: What's your name?

Monster: Fffffffreeeeeddd.

Keep going! Put the monster in fun situations, like a job interview. Ask Fred why he wants to work at McDonald's, his favorite hobbies, take him out to dinner, etc. You may have to remind Fred constantly that there should be no one voice that is louder than the others. The idea is that it is the group's desire to say the answer or the group works together to find an answer. It's sometimes fun to perform a monster-octomy to temporarily remove parts of the monster that are consistently not listening and trying to railroad through the answers. It's about the group, not the individual, as hilarious as their answers are.

Body & Voice:

Oh Ley Oh: This activity is used to stretch both the body and the voice at one time. Use the phrases "Oh ley oh," "Oh ley oh," "Oh ley oh ley oh ley oh la la," to stretch different part of your body. You can make this super fun by changing pitch and intonation of your voice, volume and fun, engaging stretches. Stretch all parts of the body while focusing both on using your voice and your body.

Imagination:

Team Gak!: Have the students pair off with a partner. Give each pair of students a piece of magic clay to have. The students will then pass the magic clay back and forth creating objects and using those objects so that their teammate can guess what they have made. For each gak that was successfully guessed, that team will get a point. Give them a time limit and see which pair had the most points at the end of the activity.

Instructional Activities:

Activity 1:Explore Your Past! (Flashback Scenes)

Materials:A bin of random objects, one for each student.

This activity is used to give the young people an opportunity to explore HOW they got their super powers. Each student will be given a random object and use that object to improvise a short scene where they will present how they got their super power. Explain that they need a beginning, a middle and an end to this story and that the object that they were given has to be what granted them their super power. Challenge them to think outside of the box and maybe not go with the literal object but transform it into something magical or out of this world.

Have the young people then share their flashback scenes with the rest of the class and then have the class try and identify the beginning, the middle, and the end to the story to engage them and give them a reason to sit and watch the rest of the class.

Activity 2 (Culminating):Hotseating

Materials:The Imagination!

In role, you (as the facilitator) will pretend that you are a talk show host. One by one the young people, as their characters, will come onto your talk show. The goal of this talk show is to make the young people really dive into their characters and answer questions they may not know the answer to off the top of their heads. Ask them a few questions and then see if the class has any questions they would like to ask the one in the hot seat. You will be surprised about how intelligent the questions they come up with are.

Here are a few questions you could ask to start off with:

What is your favorite food?

What is your favorite season?

Do you have any pets?

What is school like for you?

Tell me about a time in which you saved someone/caused mass chaos?

What do you like to do in your free time?

What's it like going to school with other super heroes/super villains?

Do you ever wish you were a super hero/villain?

What do you want to do with your powers?

Wrap Up:

Pows and Wows

Pow: Least favorite part of the day.

Wow: Favorite part of the day.

Go through each young person and have them identify their Pows and Wows.

Week 5

Objectives:

To explore, in depth, the characters we are creating

To challenge young people to make bold and interesting character choices

Warm-Up Activities:

Body and Imagination :

Tension/Release Exercise:This is a body relaxation exercise. Have the young people find their own space and lay on their back on the floor with their eyes closed. The facilitator will use the following narrative:

Close your eyes and begin to breathe deeply. In through your nose, then out through your mouth. Now, feel every body part that is touching the floor. Become aware of your heartbeat, your rate of breathing and the weight of your body. Now, I want you to tense up the muscles in your feet and legs. 3,2,1, tense. Now release. (Repeat this with hands, arms and face). I want you to now imagine yourself laying in your bed before you go to sleep and you hear a tapping on your window. You look and see your favorite person in the world at your window. They ask you to come with them and you do. They proceed to take you to your favorite place in the world. How does that place smell? What does it look like? Is it hot or cold outside? What do you do while you're there? Imagine all of these things. Now, whenever you're ready, you can slowly open your eyes and sit up.

Voice:

Little Sally Walker: The song goes like this:

"Little Sally (Tommy) Walker walkin' down the street (clap twice)

She didn't know what to do so she stopped in front of me

She said 'Hey Girl do your thing, do your thing' and switch.

Hey Girl do your thing do your thing and switch."

The entire group is standing in one large circle. One person starts in the middle, and the group begins to sing the song. When you get to the "Stopped in front of me" the center person stops in front of one other person in the circle. On the first "hey girl" they do a dance move while facing their chosen person, and on the second "hey girl" the chosen person repeats their dance move, and then switches places so they are then in the middle to walk around and choose someone new.

Instructional Activities

A/B Scenes:

Materials: A/B Scene Scripts

Before class, co-teachers must choose three different A/B scenes that are appropriate for a superhero and a villain, two superheroes and two supervillains. The scenes must have a beginning, a middle and an end. Once in class, split the students up into partners and assign each pair the appropriate scene. Tell the young people they must use their imaginations to come up with details about why they are having the conversation and really use their characters in the scene. After giving the class about 6 minutes to prepare, have each scene perform for the class. As they are performed, ask the class what they saw in the scene and what details they came up with for their scene. Use the responses to re-direct the scenes and guide the young people to make their scenes more interesting. After all the scenes have performed, give the young people additional time to use the new information to re-work their scenes.

Week 6

Objectives:

To inform young people what the sharing will be

To rehearse sharing

Warm-up Activities:

Body

Natural Disasters: Have students find their own space in the room. Give the students two examples of a natural disaster accompanied with a sound and a movement for each one. For example a hurricane or a tornado. Then, have the young people name natural disasters and create a sound and movement to go with them. Now, the facilitator will review each natural disaster and then begin calling them out. When a natural disaster is named, each young person has to do the corresponding movement and sound. Eventually, the person(s) who do the

movement last or do the wrong movement are 'out' and they become additional sets of eyes to call who is out.

Here is a list of examples:

Transition:

Instructional Activities:

Pre-class preparation: Teachers should come to class with a list of activities prepared as well as a list of students to participate in each activity. Go the activities that you have done in the past five weeks and find five or six activities to present during the sharing. Each student does not need to participate in every activity but teachers should choose activities the students are particularly strong in. Activities should represent the entire process from week one to week five.

Here is an example list of activities for a Characterization Sharing:

To begin the sharing, students introduced their initial 'boring' character names. Then, it was explained that the students went to Super School and they each revealed their super hero or villain and their super power. The following activities came next:

1. Bio-poems (2 students)
2. Flashback Scenes (3 students)
3. Hot-Seating (3 students)
4. A/B Scenes (5 scenes, 10 people)
5. Ask each student to share one thing they learned about Characterization.

Activity 1

Rehearsing Sharing:

Materials: Everything you will need for the sharing.

The majority of Week Six will be spent reviewing the sharing with the young people from beginning to end. Be prepared to alter who does what activities if a student is uncomfortable.