

UNITE

Writers' Theatre PD Day Lesson

Warm up: name game or pass the clap (5 minutes)

Main Activity: Reader's Theater (35 minutes)

- Reader's Theater can be used in ANY classroom and allows students to take virtually any piece of literature or text and turn it into a script for performance
- It is a great way to teach students the important characteristics of a story
- It allows students to make personal connections to the story and engage with the piece actively using their bodies and voices

How it works:

- Choose a piece of text and print copies of it for your students, for today we will use excerpts from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl and *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak
 - Recommendation: make each section around 5 minutes long.
 - Variation for older students: choose a few chapters, or a few scenes, from a book and break them into small groups with each group working on one chapter, or one scene.
- As a class, discuss and the important elements to the story (and possibly write down the answers on the board):
 - Characters:
 - Setting:
 - Conflict:
 - Themes, or main ideas:
 - Variation for older students: have them work in small groups or answer these in on their own.
- Ask students to look at their piece of the text and highlight any dialogue with a highlighter or colored marker.
- Ask students to look at their piece of text and underline anything that isn't dialogue but is important to understand the story. (Where it takes place, who is speaking, etc.)
 - The underlined elements become the narration for the piece.
- Then, have students start to re-copy the pages in the following format so that it looks like a script, leaving the first line blank so that the name of the student reading that part can be written in
 - For today's purposes I have done that part so you can see an example.

_____ : "dialogue"

_____ : narration

_____ : "dialogue"

• essential questions w/ the classroom

• assign roles by level, comfort, personality

Bringing the Reader's Theater to Life!

- Now you can work with your students to perform the piece!
- Ask them to think about which word(s) are the most important word(s) in each of their lines.
- Give them tongue twisters to help them warm up their voices.
 - Examples: red leather, yellow leather; she sells sea shells by the sea shore; a proper cup of coffee; unique New York; we all scream for ice cream
 - Tell them to think about pronunciation and diction.
- Ask them to think about how to express the story by using their bodies, too.
 - *Where the Wild Things Are* example: How would you use your body to act like a wild thing? Is that different than how you would use your body to act like Max's Mom?
 - What could you do with your voice or your body to help establish the environment? What does the ocean sound like? What does the forest sound like? What does the wild rumpus sound like?
- Read through the piece.
- Rehearse and/or perform the piece as much as you want!

For older or more advanced students:

- If you are doing this for an older, more advanced class or for a whole book, discuss other plot elements:
 - Good pieces will have a conflict, the character's unsuccessful attempts to solve that conflict, a successful attempt to solve it, and a resolution
 - Identify those moments:
 - Conflict:
 - Attempt to solve it:
 - Attempt to solve it:
 - Attempt to solve it:
 - Successful solution (turning point):
 - Resolution:
 - Variation for older students: have them work on this in groups or alone and use other vocabulary:
conflict=initiating event, attempts=rising action, turning point, climax, falling action, resolution
- If you want students to write their own version of the book that they can perform, instead of breaking it out into "reader's theater", have them focus on writing a short play with those important plot elements in mind.

Closing: pass the clap or zip, zap, zop game (5 minutes)

Contact information:

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