

6th Grade Lesson Plans

Mask Making and Storytelling through Tableau

Learning Objectives:

I can:

- Recall facts about Greek theatre
- Explain the function of the mask in Greek theatre
- Recall that masks were used in many cultures
- Create a mask depicting a clear emotion
- Define “tableau”
- Create a story outline, using characters, setting, plot
- Create a problem and solution that could occur in space
- Create 3 tableaus, one depicting the beginning, middle, and end of the story
- Perform the tableaus

Materials and Supplies:

Pre-Show

- [Google Slides Presentation](#)
- Heavy cardstock or paper plates
- Thin sewing elastic
- Scissors
- Hole-punch
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils, paint, etc.
- Construction paper
- Glue

Post-Show

- Student Masks
- Paper
- Pencils

Standards

South Carolina Academic Standards for Performance Indicators for Science

6.S.1A. Conceptual Understanding: The practices of science and engineering support the development of science concepts, develop the habits of mind that are necessary for scientific thinking, and allow students to engage in science in ways that are similar to those used by scientists and engineers.

6.S.1A.1 Ask questions to (1) generate hypotheses for scientific investigations, (2) refine models, explanations, or designs, or (3) extend the results of investigations or challenge claims.

South Carolina Academic Standards for Performance Indicators for ELA

Standard 1: Interact with others to explore ideas and concepts, communicate meaning, and develop logical interpretations through collaborative conversations; build upon the ideas of others to clearly express one’s own views while respecting diverse perspectives.

1.4 Engage in focused conversations about grade appropriate topics and texts; build on the ideas of others, and pose and respond to specific questions to clarify thinking and express new thoughts

South Carolina College and Career Readiness Standards for Theatre Proficiency

Anchor Standard 1: I can create scenes and write scripts using story elements and structure.

Indicator T.CR NM.1.1 I can make choices about how to tell a story nonverbally.

Anchor Standard 3: I can act in improvised scenes and written scripts.

Indicator T.P IL.3.1 I can portray a character within the context of a story using my body

Anchor Standard 7: I can examine the role of theatre through history and culture.

Benchmark T.C NM.7 I can relate to character experiences of a specific culture.

Indicator T.R NM.7.1 I can recognize how a specific culture explores theatrical elements.

Pre-Show Activity-Mask Making!

Introduction-Greek Theatre and Masks (10 minutes)

Use the accompanying [Google Slides Presentation](#) to lead this introduction!

- Explain that today we'll be making our own theatre masks, but first, we need to learn a little bit about the origin of theatre masks
- Explain that many cultures used masks in their theatre and show students the images of the Kabuki, Commedia, and Greek theatre masks
- Show the video [clip](#) about Greek theatre
- Ask the students to take a look at the image of the Greek theatre masks
- Ask the students what they notice about the masks. Are all the facial expressions the same?
- Explain the function of the mask in Greek theatre
 - It allowed actors to play more than one character
 - Had exaggerated facial expressions to help the audience understand the character
 - The genre determined which expressions were used
 - Large costumes and masks were used to enhance the experience for the audience members in the back row
 - Some believed the masks actually helped with vocal projection

Make the Masks! (30 minutes)

Remind students that they'll be making their own mask today and that they need to choose a clear emotion to convey on their mask. They should have materials at their desk or work station by this point. Use whatever materials you have for them to decorate--markers, colored pencils, paint, construction paper, beads. Use what you have! It may be helpful to model some of the steps below for your class before they begin. Go over the following steps with your students:

1. Measure the distance between their eyes with two fingers.
2. Transfer the distance to paper and mark the eyes. Make sure they're centered!
3. Draw the eyes around your marks
4. Draw the shape of a head around the eyes. (Remove this step if using paper plates)
5. Choose which emotion you'd like to convey
6. Decorate your mask! Remember to convey a clear emotion. Think about character!
7. Cut out the mask
8. Cut out the eyes
9. Punch holes on the sides, about one inch below the eyes.
10. Tie one end of a piece of sewing elastic to each side and adjust to fit your face

Circulate as your students work to keep them on track and assist with anything they might need!

Mask Work (If time allows, 15 minutes)

Create an audience area and a performance area for this activity. Ask three to four students to come up the performance area at a time with their masks on. Lead the class in a discussion about what kind of characters we see. Ask them questions, such as:

- What emotion is being conveyed?
- What characters do we see? Why? What makes you say that?
- How does their body language affect your thoughts about the character?
- Does the body language match the mask?

Repeat this process until each student has showcased their mask.

Post-Show Activity-Storytelling Through Tableau

Introduction-What is tableau? And the Dramatic Elements (5 min)

- Ask the students what a tableau is
- Remind the students of the part of the play where the actors formed still images with their bodies
- Explain that those moments were tableaux. A tableau is a frozen image made up of a group of people representing a part of a story
- Explain that today their task will be to create tableaux that tell a story
- Tell the students that are things that every story has, and in theatre, they're known as The Dramatic Elements
- Explain that the dramatic elements are: characters, setting, and plot--things they've been learning about for years!
- Remind students that within the plot, there is a beginning, middle and end, and a problem and solution

Introduce the Activity (3-5 minutes)

- Explain that today, students will be working in groups to create characters based on their masks, create a problem that these characters could face in space, and create tableaux that depict the problem and solution. One tableau will depict the beginning of the story, one will depict the middle, and one will depict the end.
- Remind the students of the "Not So Sweet Potato Rebellion" in the play. Encourage them to be creative about what problems these characters could face!
- Get the students into groups of 4 or 5 then introduce the steps of the project using the slide in the Google Slides Presentation

Planning, Creating, and Rehearsing the Tableaus (25 min)

The students will:

1. Look at their masks to determine specifics about these characters. What is their relationship to each other? What are their character traits?
2. Create a problem that these characters could face in space.
3. Create a solution to this problem
4. Create specifics about each character. Who's the leader? What roles are each person serving?
5. Decide on a specific setting. Are they on the moon? On Mars? On a spacecraft?
6. Create a basic plot outline. What happens in the beginning, middle, and end?
7. Brainstorm on how the group could depict these key plot moments in a frozen image
8. Create 3 tableaux, one for the beginning, middle, and end
9. Rehearse transitioning between tableaux while wearing the masks

Circulate as the students work! Help them if they're stuck. When creating tableaux, remind them of where their audience is; backs should not be to the audience and people shouldn't be blocking one another. We want to see everyone! Remind them to be extra expressive with their bodies, because we can't see their face. Remind them that everyone should be completely frozen in the tableau--including eyes! Pick a focal point and focus.

Perform the Tableaus (15 minutes)

Have each group come up and share their tableaux with the class. After each group, ask the audience what they thought the plot was and compare it to the group's description of the plot. Was the plot clearly communicated? Why or why not? Give feedback!

Adaptations

-We know that these lessons are jam-packed! Feel free to cut down, omit activities, or take more time!

-Spend more time on genres and have students create contrasting masks, one for tragedy and one for comedy!

-Instead of creating tableaux, expand the mask work activity and dive deep into exploring these characters. Encourage students to explore exaggerated physical movement to communicate.

Want to do more?

-Reflect on the project as a whole. What was challenging? What was easy? Did seeing the play help inspire plot ideas? What would you do differently next time? What was one thing your group did well? What was one thing your group could improve on?

-Take pictures of the tableaux or record all three. Have the students watch their performance and critique themselves. Perhaps have them make adjustments based on the photos or video!

-Expand the project! Have students turn the story they created into a script!