Story Theatre
Erin K. Hulse, Drama Resource Teacher, APS ARTS Center

Appropriate Grade Levels: K-5+

Objectives:
- Students will improvise the retelling of a story.
- Students will collaborate when retelling a story.
- Students will demonstrate their comprehension of a story.
- Students will illustrate the sequence of a story.

Resources:
- Story (or poem) to share with students.
- Students grouped in numbers to accommodate the number of characters from the story.
- Space for groups to work.

Procedure/Tips for Acting Out a Story or Poem:
In selecting stories or poems for dramatizing, keep the following in mind:
- Stories or poems with plenty of physical action or movement work better than ones with lots of description and complicated dialogue, at least at first.
- Start with shorter stories and poems that can be told or read in just a few minutes and acted out several times with players trying different roles.
- “Narrative Pantomime” is often a good way to start. This means that the teacher tells or speaks the story or poem while the players pantomime along with the narrative.
- MOTIVATE: Tell the story or have students read it silently or aloud.
- PLAN:
  - Have a discussion where students describe the pictures they had in their mind’s eyes of the main characters.
  - Allow students to try on the main characters all together, using the still image technique above, possibly bringing their still image to life briefly to pantomime an action the character might do.
  - Divide the story into short segments if it’s a longer story. For the first segment, get volunteers to act out each of the roles.
  - Set up chairs or tables or other objects in the playing space to represent things in the environment.
- ENACT: Have the players act out that segment of the story.
- EVALUATE: Let viewers respond. At first it is very important to allow only positive comments: “What did you see that you liked” “What helped you understand the story” The leader can model positive feedback to help build player’s observational skills and build confidence and mutual support in the group: “I could really tell that Karen was the cat by the way she used her hands as paws to clean her whiskers.” “Kevin did a good job of staying in character and not laughing when Bill made that funny face.” “All these actors did a good job of working together.” “I could tell the players were in a jungle by the way they were wiping sweat off their brows and swatting at bugs and chopping at all the vines.”
  After the group is supportive of each other, allow suggestions by asking: “Was there anything you didn’t understand?” “What could we do in the next repeat of the scene to make it better?”
- REPLAY: Switching roles or allowing other volunteers to enact the same scene.
- EVALUATE: As above.
- REPLAY AND EVALUATE as long as the group’s interest holds and the dramatization keeps improving.
- MOVE ON TO ANOTHER SECTION OR ANOTHER STORY

Extensions/Modifications:
- For younger students, pre-plan movements to fit characters or actions, at least for the first few experiences with story theatre.
- Older student can write an adaptation of the story or poem in narrative or script form.

Vocabulary: Pantomime, dialogue, positive feedback, cooperate, collaborate.

Assessment/Evaluation:
- Teacher observation.
- Improvisation rubric
- General rubric for theatre.
APS Drama Standards Addressed:

**Topic/Skills:** The student discovers and develops essential skills in acting, directing, and technical work for classroom dramatizations.

**APS District K-5 Benchmark:** The student utilizes essential skills to communicate character (acting, costumes, makeup), mood and locale (scenery, properties, lights, sound) in classroom dramatizations.

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**Topic/Playwriting:** The student exhibits an understanding of the creative process by planning and recording of improvisations and using script writing.

**APS District K-5 Benchmark:** The student, individually and in groups, refines and records dialogue and action and creates characters, environments, and scenes that bring about tension and suspense.

**Topic/Evaluation:** The student observes, discusses, analyzes, and constructs meaning with regard to classroom dramatizations and other theatrical performances.

**APS District K-5 Benchmark:** The student discusses components of dramatizations (acting, story, staging, scenery, etc.) using appropriate terminology, and explains personal and emotional connections to the dramatic piece.

**Topic/Performance:** The student contributes to school and community by acting, completing technical work, and/or directing formal and informal productions.

**APS District K-5 Benchmark:** The student imagines and assumes roles for an audience that clearly demonstrate characters, their relationships, and their environments using his or her acting skills and knowledge of technical elements of costume, makeup, scenery, etc.

NM Language Arts Standards Addressed:

**Strand I: Reading and listening for comprehension.**

**Content Standard I:** Students will apply strategies and skills to comprehend information that is read, heard and viewed.

**K-4 Benchmark I-A:** Listen to, read, react to and retell information.

**K-4 Benchmark I-C:** Demonstrate critical thinking skills to comprehend written, spoken, and visual information.

**5-8 Benchmark I-A:** Listen to, read, react to, and interpret information

**5-8 Benchmark I-C:** Apply critical thinking skills to analyze information

**Strand II: Writing and speaking for expression.**

**Content Standard II:** Students will communicate effectively through speaking and writing.

**K-4 Benchmark II-A:** Demonstrate competence in speaking to convey information.

**5-8 Benchmark II-A:** Use speaking as an interpersonal communication tool
Hat Characters
Erin K. Hulse, Drama Resource Teacher, APS ARTS Center

Appropriate Grade Levels: K-5+
Objectives: Students will use a variety of hats to create characters.
Resources:
- A variety of hats for students to choose from. There are hats available for checkout at the APS ARTS Center. Using hats that suggest characters or occupations are useful in this activity. If you don't have enough hats, have the class divide in half or into small groups to work and reassure students that each will get a turn.
- Large space to work in.

Procedure:
- Leader places hats out in a big circle on the floor and asks players to get in a circle around the hats.
- The leader selects one or two hats as examples and has a brief discussion about the characteristics of each hat and who might wear it.
- Students walk around the hats in the circle and, in their head, choose several they would like to use. They then carefully choose a hat.
- Students examine their hat, imagine what kind of character would wear that hat and then make a frozen statue of that character—posture, pose, and facial expression.
- The leader counts aloud to 3 and each player brings their character to life and says one word that this character might say while moving about the playing space.
- Students form back into the circle and the leader calls out “pass the hat” and the players pass their hat one to the person to the right. Repeat the frozen character and bringing to life for this “new” hat.
- Continue this until students have tried on several hats (or all of them).
- Now, have students take the hats and line them up so all can see them. Players then pick one hat that they can work with more extensively. You may want to remind them to have a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choice in case they do not get the hat they wanted.
- The leader directs students to put on the hat and go on a walk as their character, side-coaching suggestions:
  - Decide where you are and why you are walking (identify objective of character)
  - Let how you think about your character effect how you walk. Is it different than how you walk?
  - How old is this character?
  - How does this character stand? What is their posture?
  - Does he or she walk fast or slow?
  - Your character is nearly to where they are going when they run into an obstacle—a broken shoe, lose something, faints from the heat, lost, allergy attack, etc.
  - Struggle with your problem.
  - Overcome the problem or let it overcome you.
  - End your walk.
- Players get into two lines, shoulder to shoulder, on opposite sides of the room facing the center (about 6 to 10 feet between the two lines).
On the leader’s signal, players cross the open space and say hello to the person across from them. They then continue on and stand in the other line. Discuss how they can make their voice different than their own.

On the leader’s signal, players cross the space again, but this time stop and ask a simple question (What time is it? Will it rain? What is your name? etc.) to a person they meet.

Now they do not travel from line to line but “mingle”—they must introduce themselves to at least five other characters. They need to tell them their character’s name.

The players can then begin to define their character some by writing a character profile (modified for younger students). Younger students can sit with a partner and discuss the “answers” to the categories on the profile (leader reads each for them). Older students can complete a profile sheet and then sit with a partner that they have not introduced their character to and share their profiles.

Extensions:
- Have students write or tell a biography of their character.
- Have them write and share an event from the life of this character.
- With a partner, write a dramatic scene (script) involving the two characters.

Vocabulary: Character, traits, motive, goal, still image, improvisation.

Assessment/Evaluation:
- Teacher observation
- Improvisation rubric
- General rubric for drama

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Strand II: Writing and speaking for expression.
Content Standard II: Students will communicate effectively through speaking and writing.
K-4 Benchmark II-A: Demonstrate competence in speaking to convey information.
5-8 Benchmark II-A: Use speaking as an interpersonal communication tool
**Conflict/Please No**
Erin K. Hulse, Drama Resource Teacher, APS ARTS Center

**Appropriate Grade Levels:** 3-5+

**Objectives:**
- Students will demonstrate conflict between characters.
- Students will improvise a scene.

**Resources:**
- Students arranged in partners
- Space for partners to work
- A signal for the participants to freeze—a whistle or bell or something to be heard
- *Paper and Pencils
- *Sample of Basic Script
*If using this lesson in conjunction with playwriting.

**Procedure:**
This drama exercise helps illustrate to students that conflict does not have to be violent.

**Part 1:**
**Please/No**
- Partner up the students. Have the partners choose who will be “A” and who will be “B”. Let them know they will have a chance to switch roles and play the other side.
- Person A may only say “please”. They may say it however they want but they may only say please.
- Person B may only say “no”. Again, they may say it however they want but they may only say no.
- Have partners do this for 30 seconds and then allow them to switch roles and repeat the process.
- Discuss what it felt like in each position.

**Part 2:**
**Please/No/Maybe/Yes**
- Students assume original positions of A and B. “A” may still only say “please”. This time, “B” may say “no”, “maybe”, or “yes”. However, once B says yes, both A and B must sit down and be silent. Remind B to be sure he or she really wants to say “yes”—make A convince B to say yes. Also, remind B that if A gives a really compelling argument, they should say yes.
- Do this for 30 seconds, then switch. Stop at 30 seconds whether or not partners get a “yes”.
- Discuss with the partners who are sitting why they said “yes” and how they felt when they got a “yes”. What about if they didn’t get a “yes” in the 30 seconds? What did that feel like?

**Part 3:**
**Please/No/Maybe/Yes and Beyond**
- For this round, students can use any dialogue they want. Person B is pantomiming an activity that is very important or that they really like to do. There is a strong reason for them doing this activity and they cannot be easily persuaded to stop the activity.
- Enter person A. Person A wants to do something with person B and must try to convince person B to leave what they are doing and join person A. Person A can use any means to try to get B to go with them, but it must all be done with words. The scene continues until B gives in or the leader (teacher) calls time (about two or three minutes).
- Have students switch roles and repeat the process.
- Ask for volunteers to show one of the conflicts to the rest of the group.
• Discuss any strategies used to persuade B to go and what made for interesting conflicts.

**Extensions:**

**Playwriting**

• Students create a character profile for their character and begin their scene.
• Partners begin to write a story or script with the characters and conflict created in either of the situations developed on Part 3. Both partners write exactly the same thing. This is so there are two copies of the script.
• Begin with Time, Place, and At Rise. Encourage playwrights to include stage directions so that actors have guidance in their interpretation of the scene.

**Vocabulary:** Conflict, motive, improvisation

**Assessment/Evaluation:** Teacher Observation, Improvisation Rubric, *Six-Trait Writing Rubric for Playwriting

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**Strand II: Writing and speaking for expression.**

**Content Standard II:** Students will communicate effectively through speaking and writing.

**K-4 Benchmark II-A:** Demonstrate competence in speaking to convey information.

**5-8 Benchmark II-A:** Use speaking as an interpersonal communication tool
Prompts with Photos
Erin K. Hulse, Drama Resource Teacher, APS ARTS Center

Appropriate Grade Levels: 3-5+

Objectives: Students will use inference skills to create characters from photographs.

Resources:
- Photos of people/events from magazines, mounted and laminated
  NOTE: When choosing photos, look for unusual or intriguing subjects and/or settings that might invite students to tell a story about the subject or the event.
- Character profiles
- Writing paper

Procedure:
- Spread the photos on tables so that students can see them.
- Have students take their time to look at all the photos and determine which of the subjects appeal to them or engage them.
- Choose a photo to work with. Begin to question or sidecoach students in considering their character:
  ◊ Who is he/she?
  ◊ What is his/her name?
  ◊ What is special about this person?
  ◊ Where is this person? In the photo, can you tell the economic level of the character?
  ◊ Does he/she come to this place often or is this his/her first time? Why is he/she here?
  ◊ How does he/she feel about being there?
  ◊ What does the character want? Need? Dream about?
  ◊ What is stopping him/her from getting it?
  ◊ What does this person really care about?
  ◊ What does he/she need to tell you or someone?
- Have all students simultaneously take on the pose in their photo and hold it. Encourage them to convey how that feels and what it tells you about the person.
- Now, on your signal, have students bring the photo to life and do what they think the character would do next. Give them a minute to act it out.
- Repeat, having the students act out what they think happened just before the picture was taken, ending with a freeze in the pose of the picture.
- Using a character profile sheet, encourage students to create a defined character by completing the elements on the profile sheet. REMIND students that the rest of the group will get to know this character by what they create so there is no “wrong” way to complete the character profile.
- Focusing on the wish/motive/goal and fear of the character can become a starting point for a story about this character. The other elements of the profile become factors in how the character deals with their wishes/motives/goals and fears.
- After the students have had time to complete their profiles, have them introduce their characters to the rest of the group.

Once the students have had a chance to get to know their character, they can then begin to write a monologue or story involving their character and possibly a conflict
around the wish/motive/goal or fear of the character. This writing can be in narrative form or script form.

**Extensions:**
- Partner students up and have them improvise a scene involving their characters.
- From their improvisation, have students write a scene in script form.

**Vocabulary:** Character, traits, motive, goal, still image, improvisation.

**Assessment/Evaluation:**
- Teacher observation
- Improvisation rubric

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**K-4 Benchmark II-A:** Demonstrate competence in speaking to convey information.

**K-4 Benchmark II-C:** Demonstrate competence in the skills and strategies of the writing process.

**5-8 Benchmark II-A:** Use speaking as an interpersonal communication tool

**5-8 Benchmarks II-C:** Demonstrate competence in the skills and strategies of the writing process
Four Starters
Erin K. Hulse, Drama Resource Teacher, APS ARTS Center

Appropriate Grade Levels: 3-5+

Objectives:
- Students will create characters based on various emotions
- Students will collaborate to create an improvisation of a scene
- Students will collaboratively write a scene based on their improvisation
- Students will follow basic script form when writing their scene

Day/Session One

Resources: Emotions poster or cards with emotions written on them.
Four Starters lines (set of 15 works for 30 students), each set of four lines mounted on its own card.
Large space to work

Procedure:
- As a whole group, review emotions with students. Have them show the different emotions not only with their faces but with their bodies too. For example, “embarrassed” might be head hung down, shoulders slumped forward, body slightly turned away from the group.
- Partner up the students. If there are an odd number of students, you can collaborate up with the extra student or you can have a threesome. You may want to read through the Four Starters to see which would be appropriate for three people.
- Hand out the four starters, one to each partnership. Have them decide who is character one and who is character two.
- Give students three to five minutes to rehearse reading the four lines using different emotions.
- Ask partnerships to share the four starters using different emotions.

Day/Session Two

Resources:
Four Starters lines (set of 15 works for 30 students), each set of four lines mounted on its own card.

Procedure:
- Improvisation of the four starters. Have students return to their partnerships and give them their original four starter.
- Ask students if they have an idea of who these characters are, where they might be, why they are there, when this is happening, and what has happened to bring them to the point of saying the four lines.
- Give students five to ten minutes to rehearse an improv of how their scene (story) might evolve from the four lines. The four starters must be the first lines spoken in the improv, and then they can use any lines they need to tell the story!
- Stage the improvs for the rest of the class.

Day/Session Three: Writing Scenes!

Resources:
Four Starters lines (set of 15 works for 30 students), each set of four lines mounted on its own card.
Loose-leaf paper
Pencils

Procedure:
- Partners sit together. They write the same thing so there will be two copies of the script.
- Students must give the following:
  CAST LIST:
  TIME:
  PLACE:
AT RISE:
- Students begin writing their scripts. The first four lines must be the four starters, and then they can use any lines they want to tell the story. Remind them to name their characters, and any new characters they add.
- Workshop the scenes by acting them out, either with the playwrights in the roles or (better yet) have the playwrights cast others in the roles so they can see their work performed.

Extensions:
- Playwrights write Character Profiles for each of their characters.
- Students create new “four starters”.

Vocabulary:
- Improvisation, scene (NOT “SKIT”), character, motive, emotions (see list), playwright (the person who “wrought” the play), script, “At Rise” (what the audience sees on stage as the curtain rises), setting, plot or problem

Assessment/Evaluation:
- Improvisation Rubric
- Six Trait Writing Rubric for Creative Dramatic Writing

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- 5-8 Benchmarks II-C: Demonstrate competence in the skills and strategies of the writing process
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“Four” Starters

Circumstance # 1:

Character # 1: Is it time?

Character # 2: Just about.

Character # 1: Well, don’t just sit there!

Character # 2: Be patient. It will happen.

Circumstance # 2:

Character # 1: What do you think it is?

Character # 2: I don’t know.

Character # 1: Should we open it?

Character # 2: Do you think it’s safe?

Circumstance # 3:

Character # 1: It’s so dark!

Character # 2: Well, I could light a match.

Character # 1: Wait! What was that sound?

Character # 2: What sound?
Circumstance # 4:

Character # 1: Do you think they will recognize us?

Character # 2: What do you mean?

Character # 1: I mean, will they know what we look like?

Character # 2: How am I supposed to know?

Circumstance # 5:

Character # 1: The train arrives at midnight.

Character # 2: Do you think he’ll be on it?

Character # 1: He better be!

Character # 2: But what if he isn’t?

Circumstance # 6:

Character # 1: What time is it?

Character # 2: How should I know?

Character # 1: You’re the one with the watch.

Character # 2: Hey! Where’s my watch?

Created by Erin K. Hulse, Drama Resource Teacher
APS ARTS Center/Fine Arts
Circumstance # 7:
Character # 1: She said she’d be home in an hour.
Character # 2: Do you think she’ll know about it?
Character # 1: I’m sure she’ll find out sooner or later.
Character # 2: Well, maybe we shouldn’t.

Circumstance # 8:
Character # 1: Why are you so happy?
Character # 2: Wouldn’t you like to know!
Character # 1: Well, of course I would—I asked, didn’t I?
Character # 2: Well……No, I’m not going to tell you!

Circumstance # 9:
Character # 1: Can you eat it?
Character # 2: I’m not sure.
Character # 1: It sure is a funny color.
Character # 2: But it smells okay.
Circumstance # 10:

Character # 1: Where did it go?

Character # 2: I think it rolled under here.

Character # 1: Are you going to get it?

Character # 2: I thought you were.

Circumstance # 11:

Character # 1: The phone’s ringing.

Character # 2: Yea, I know.

Character # 1: Aren’t you going to answer it?

Character # 2: It’s probably them again.

Circumstance # 12:

Character # 1: How was it?

Character # 2: Okay, I guess.

Character # 1: What do you mean?

Character # 2: If you like that kind of stuff.
Circumstance # 13:
Character # 1: We’re not supposed to be here.
Character # 2: Who’s gonna know?
Character # 1: They’ll find out.
Character # 2: You gonna tell them?

Circumstance # 14:
Character # 1: Let’s do something fun today.
Character # 2: I can’t.
Character # 1: Why not? What happened?
Character # 2: I don’t want to talk about it.

Circumstance # 15:
Character # 1: We have to be quiet.
Character # 2: Why?
Character # 1: Take a look around.
Character # 2: Yeah, so?