



Informing your Audience through Actions and Dialogue

Grade 3-6

Language Arts/Drama

by Linda Gold

Core Curriculum, Writing, Standard #3b

Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations.

Drama, Standard # T.CR.3

Write or record simple dramas that include the five W's of who, what, where when and why.

Objective: The students will be taken through a series of exercises that will teach them how to develop a character and how to get important information across to their audience. These exercises will take several sessions to complete. You should be able to get through 2 or 3 each time. This will prepare the students for future work on writing dialogue for a play.

Materials:

Pencils; Copies of the Character Analysis Worksheet; Copies of the CROW worksheet; Occupation Cards; Mannerism Cards; Personality Cards; Emotion Cards; Where cards; Drum.

Sources:

Theatre Games for the Classroom by Viola Spolin; The Drama Game File CD-ROM by Jonas Basom

Hook: What is a character? Are all characters unique? Who are some of your favorite characters? What makes these characters interesting to you? You are each going to have the opportunity to create a unique character. We are not going to copy a character that already exists because that would not be your own creation. It would not be unique. As you create your character, make sure that you are capable of portraying every aspect you add to your character because you will eventually have the chance to act out your character.

Character Analysis Worksheet: Pass out the worksheet and make sure each student has a pencil. Write your name under "Actor's Name". You may choose to name your character now or wait until you have had a chance to think about it. Choose an age for your character. We want our characters to be believable so let's not have any babies. Choose an age between 8 and 80. Remember, you will be acting this character out so be sure to choose an age you feel comfortable acting.

Occupation: What does the word occupation mean? Can someone give me some examples of occupations? Think of occupation as something that occupies your time. I'm going to give each of you an occupation card. Keep it a secret. If you don't know what the occupation is, raise your hand and I will help you with it.

We are now going to choose a where card which will tell us where we are. You are going to act as though you are a character who has the occupation you are holding and is in the place we have chosen. You will be given a limited amount of time to interact with as many people as possible. As you interact with each other, make references to your occupation without saying the word on your card. Do not guess at each other's occupations. You are simply gathering and dispensing information.

Make sure you stay true to the location. For example, if your occupation card says “Gardner” and we are on a cruise ship, would your character be planting a garden? Instead of planting a garden, you can tell someone about the wonderful tomatoes you are growing back home and how tasty they are compared to the tomatoes at the salad bar on the cruise ship. Take a moment and think about how you can portray your occupation in a way that fits with our where and then we will begin.

Give the students 5-10 minutes to mingle with each other. The teacher should also join in the game. Don't hesitate to break character and side-coach if you see someone trying to guess an occupation or if a student needs help conveying their occupation. When you finish the exercise, allow the students to guess at the occupations they believe they discovered. Always ask them what the person did to let them know their occupation. Now they may fill in an occupation for their character. It does not have to be the occupation on the card they were given. Collect the occupation cards.

Speech: For “Speech” we are going to focus on formal and informal. What is the difference between formal and informal speech? Informal speech is more relaxed. It uses a lot of slang, contractions, poor grammar and mispronunciations. Formal speech is just the opposite. Words are pronounced correctly and the person speaking uses proper grammar. Most of us use informal speech when speaking to our friends and formal speech when speaking to someone with authority. So if I were to say to Chad, “Hey Chad, what’s up?” Would that be formal or informal? How about if I say, “Hello Chad, how are you today?” Who can give me another example of informal speech? Who can say that same sentence, formally? Look at the occupation you have chosen for your character. Would someone with that occupation normally have formal or informal speech?

Choose the type of speech that fits your character the best and write it on your worksheet. Without telling the person next to you, what type of speech you have chosen, hold a brief conversation with them, practicing formal or informal speech.

Do you think it is important for everyone to learn how to speak formally? Why? When you are older, and want to get a job, do you think that your future employer may judge you by the way you speak? It is said that formal speech is the language of money. If you want a good job someday, it is important for you to learn to speak formally.

Mannerisms: What is a mannerism? Does everyone have mannerisms? Why is it important for your character to have mannerisms? I’m going to give each of you a mannerism card. Keep it a secret. If you are unsure of what your word means, show it to me for help.

We are going to form two lines, at opposite ends of the room. The first two people in line will walk toward each other performing the mannerism on their own card. When they pass by each other, they will stop doing their mannerism and will start doing the other person’s mannerism to finish their walk across the room. The only way you will know what the other person is doing is by watching them. So as you are performing your own mannerism, it is important for you to watch what the other person is doing so you can imitate them.

Choose a student who understands the directions and ask them to help you model the activity. Play the game.

Go ahead and write down a mannerism for your character. It does not have to be the one on your card.

Walk: Let's think about the way our characters might walk. Did you know that the way you walk can be a mannerism? We first must agree that there is no such thing as a "normal" walk. What is normal for one person may not be normal for someone else. It might be normal for me to walk with my toes pointed out and normal for you to walk with your toes pointed in. We are going to explore different ways of walking.

Everyone stand. When I start to beat the drum, start walking. When the drum stops, everyone will freeze and I will give you a type of walk to try out. Do not start moving until you hear the drum. Every time the drum stops, you stop and wait for a new way to walk.

Some types of walks you may want to use are, toes turned in, toes turned out, knees turned in, knees turned out, shuffling feet, bouncing, slow, fast, darting, slumped, straight and tall, hips swaying, swag. You may want to try leading with certain body parts like your head, nose, chin, shoulders, chest or tummy. Try combining two of them like bouncing with toes pointed out. Encourage the students to make it real and not over exaggerate. Compliment students you see who are doing a good job of keeping it real.

Go ahead and write down a type of walk for your character. Make sure it is consistent with the rest of your character.

Personality: Can you think of one word you would use to describe yourself? How about three words? Stay away from words that describe how you look. Instead, think of words that describe how you act. Are you kind? bossy? helpful? friendly? Who would like to share their words?

We are going to try on different personality types. We will repeat the activity we used to discover different occupations. This time everyone will be given a personality card. Remember to keep it a secret.

Pass out a personality card to each student, pull out a where card, and follow the directions under "Occupation". You may choose to have them act out the occupation they have chosen for their character in combination with the personality they are given.

Emotion: We sometimes use the same words to describe personality and emotion. What is the difference between personality and emotion? How often do people change their personalities? How often do they change their emotions? What is the difference between having a grumpy personality and feeling grumpy?

For this activity we will all sit in a large circle. Everyone will be given an emotion card. Keep it a secret! If you need help understanding your emotion, stand up and I will come around and help you. We are all going to use the same sentence to convey our emotions. Repeat this sentence: "I can not go to the ball game." Now say it using your emotion. We will go around the circle, and one at a time, we will say the sentence, using the emotion on our emotion card. We are not going to try to guess at the emotions. We are just going to say the sentence. If you are unsure on how to say it, just do your best. I will start.

Continue around the circle until everyone has had a chance to say the sentence. When everyone has had a turn, have them put their emotion card in front of them, face down, and slide it to their right. Do not look at the new card. Continue to have them slide the cards several more times without looking at the card. When you think they have slid them enough, let them pick up the new card and repeat the

activity of going around the room with everyone saying the sentence. If you like, you may use a new sentence.

What is more important in acting, the words or the emotion? Why? How do we know what emotions our characters should be feeling when we are acting in a play? Since we do not have a script to read, we have no way of knowing what our character's emotion is so we are going to leave that blank for now.

Objective: In theatre, we use words like objective or motivation. What do you think these words mean? Is it important for an actor to have an objective? Why would an actor need an objective? How will it help his acting to know what is character wants? How do we find out what our character's objective is? Since we do not yet have a script, we will also leave the objective blank. We will fill it in later.

CROW: It is now time to create some dialogue for our characters. What is dialogue? In this activity, you will be given a partner. You and your partner will first talk to each other about the characters you have created. You will decide on a relationship between your characters. Can someone give me an example of a relationship? (*parent/child; brother/sister; neighbors; friends; seller/buyer; etc.*) Next you will decide on a location for your scene and what each of your characters objective is. Let's do one together.

Quickly create 2 characters as a class. Decide on a relationship between the 2 characters, a location and objectives. You will now create three lines of dialogue that will get all of the CROW information across to your audience. As far as character goes, do not expect to get all of the information from the character analysis sheets into the CROW assignment. Much of the information there is meant to be acted out, not explained in dialogue. The students should be able to include occupation and character names in the CROW assignment.

After you have completed the example, pair the students up to work together on the assignment. It is best to have each child fill out a separate form so they both have a copy of the script. Make sure that they understand that each partner must have the same dialogue written on their forms. When they have completed their dialogue, they may now fill out objective and emotion on their character analysis sheet. Allow time for them to practice so they can work on incorporating other aspects of their character into their performance. They do not have to memorize their scripts. Before the students perform, give each student an assignment to look or listen for certain aspects of the performance. Assign a few to discover names and occupations, others to discover the relationship, others the objectives, and still others the where. You can also assign some to look for mannerisms, emotions, personalities, etc. After each performance determine whether or not the students managed to get all of the information in their three lines of dialogue. (You may choose to allow more than one sentence in each line of dialogue.)

Evaluation: Was there any performance that stood out to you? Why did you like their performance? What do you think we need to work on to make all of our performances entertaining? Were we able to get information across to our audience?

Occupation Cards:

secretary

plumber

soldier

hunter

banker

cowboy

athlete

model

baker

doctor

painter

lifeguard

tailor

nurse

police

farmer

dancer

reporter

fire fighter

president

gardener

veterinarian

fisherman

barber

dentist

mechanic

teacher

scientist

janitor

librarian

butler

movie star

pilot

taxi driver

photographer

zoo keeper

Where Cards:

park

jungle

gym

boat

party

store

beach

backyard

ballroom

jungle

castle

campsite

forest

garden

farm

mall

zoo

subway

pool

library

rainforest

museum

mansion

lake

Mannerism Cards:

click tongue

chew lip

clear throat

growl

slurp

gasp

wink

cough

shrug shoulders

grumble

whistle

snap fingers

wipe nose

look at watch

sigh

rub hands

snort

shuffle feet

yawn

evil laugh

crack knuckles

sniff

adjust hair

rub chin

sing

hum

twitch

lick lips

scratch

giggle

tap finger

wheeze

moan

wiggle

twirl hair

rub eyes

Personality Cards:

bossy

helpful

selfish

charming

tough

careful

forgetful

indecisive

thoughtful

spoiled

stubborn

jittery

rude

cheerful

caring

polite

cool

snobby

competitive

hotheaded

obedient

generous

peaceful

sensitive

chatty

honest

clumsy

friendly

nice

tidy

lazy

serious

curious

suspicious

shy

enthusiastic

Emotion Cards:

frustrated

happy

furious

excited

hurt

nervous

depressed

disgusted

disappointed

bored

amazed

stressed

shocked

sad

relaxed

scared

relieved

mean

jealous

overjoyed

mad

lonely

exhausted

surprised

hopeful

panic

sympathy

annoyed

longing

proud

shy

suspicious

sleepy

terrified

thrilled

guilty



Character Analysis

Actor's Name _____

Character's Name _____

Age _____

Occupation _____

Speech _____

Mannerisms _____

Walk _____

Personality _____

Emotions _____

Objective (want) _____



Names _____

CROW

Characters _____

Relationship _____

Objective (want) _____

Where _____

Create 3 lines of dialogue that contain all of the above information:

#1 _____

#2 _____

#3 _____
