



Literature in Tableau

K-6

Language Arts/Drama

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Core Curriculum, Reading Literature, Standard #3

Retelling, comparing, or contrasting the events, characters and settings of a story.

Drama, Performance Standard #1

Identify or analyze the character, setting, and essential events (plot) in a story that make up the dramatic structure, and use choices to shape believable and sustainable drama/theatre work.

4-6:

Objective: This lesson plan is a guide to recreating stories using a theatrical convention known as tableau. In this lesson, students will analyze the events, characters and setting of a story as they recreate the story in frozen images.

Materials:

Any story book or play will work with this lesson. Or you may choose a theme.
A hand drum.

Instructions:

- With the students, read through the book or play and make a list of the characters, settings and events.
- Each event will be recreated, using the students as both characters and inanimate objects (setting).
- The recreations will be done as tableaux. (See instructions on how to create tableaux.)
- After each new tableau is created, return to the first tableau. Using the drum, have the students silently move (no talking) from tableau to tableau. This helps them remember the order of the events. Until they can remember the order on their own, you may choose to call out each event as they transition.
- You may wish to add some dialogue to each scene. One way of doing this is by tapping a student on the shoulder, asking them to speak aloud, what they are thinking or feeling in this scene. You can even tap the inanimate objects to find out how they feel about what is happening.

Creating Tableaus

Tableaus are often referred to as frozen, or still images. When you are creating tableaux, you may do so by recreating pictures from a book or you may create your own interpretation of the scene. Either way there are some basic theater principals that need to be followed.

- Stage directions: Using the diagram below, teach your students basic stage directions. This will be very helpful when you want a student to change positions.
- Focus: Creating a tableau can be described as creating a stage picture. Ask the students what the focus of each scene should be. Normally, in theater, you will want the focus to be somewhere downstage. It doesn't have to be center stage, but all other images on the stage should be set up to point toward that focus.

- **Levels:** Make sure there are a variety of levels in your picture. If everyone is sitting or standing, the picture can be very boring. Normally, you will want objects that are upstage to be at a higher level than objects that are downstage. That way, everything can be seen.
- **Planes:** Avoid having students stand on the same plane (in straight lines) whether vertical or horizontal. Using a variety of planes will make the picture more interesting.
- **Facial expressions:** It is important for the students to show the emotions of the characters and even the inanimate objects. The audience can learn a lot about what is happening in the scene, simply by the facial expressions.

