

Lesson Plan Workshop #4 – Themes and Improvisation

WNYC Audio Theater Residency – The Sound

Blueprint Markers:

- Theater Making: Acting, Playwriting/Play Making, Designing and Technical Theater, and Directing
- Developing Theater Literacy
- Making Connections
- Working with Community and Cultural Resources

NY State Educational Standards for Theatre Arts:

Art Standard 1 - Creating, Performing and Participating in the Arts

- 1.1 Use improvisation and guided play writing to communicate ideas and feelings
- 1.2 Imitate various experiences through pantomime, play making, dramatic play, story dramatization, storytelling, role-playing, improvisations and guided play writing
- 1.3 Use language, voice, gesture, movement and observation to create character and interact with others in improvisation, rehearsal and performance
- 1.5 Identify and use, in individual and group experiences, some of the roles, processes, and actions for performing and creating theatre pieces and improvisational drama within the school/community, and discuss ways to improve them

Art Standard 4 – Understanding the Cultural Contributions of the Arts

- 4.11 Improvise scenes based on information about various cultures
- 4.12 Explain how drama/theatre experiences relate to themselves and others

Objectives/Outcomes

Participants will:

- Examine, analyze and discuss the concept of visibility/invisibility within audio theatre and photo imagery
- Use thematic writing to inspire improvisation, exploring how we can improvise characters and given circumstances
- Create and perform improvised scene from thematic writing

Materials Needed:

Writing Materials

Photo Samples

CD – *Sorry, Wrong Number*

Lesson Plan:

▪ **Starter Activity**

Listen to selected scene from *Sorry, Wrong Number*. Analyze and list everything we can see while listening. Imagine “what’s invisible” that can’t be seen, but can possibly influence what we hear.

Show students various photo samples of New York life. Have students define what they visually see. Create a list of “invisible” factors for each character in the photos that may somehow inform these photos.

▪ **The Main Activity**

A devising activity to explore thematic writing and improvisation and how these elements can be used to create scenes/storylines. An example is below.

Thematic Writing Into Improvisation

- Each participant writes on a piece of paper and completes the sentence or paragraph: “When someone is _____ everyone can see them. But what people don’t see is...” They should write as little or as much as they feel appropriate.
- After participants have finished writing, they break up into their groups. Each group shares their writing with each other and as a team they decide on a universal, **NON-PERSONAL** situation that they can improvise a 1-minute scene about. They each pick characters they would like to represent and have a few moments to prepare for the scene. The scene in its entirety will be improvised in front of the group. IF APPROPRIATE: After each scene is presented, the original writings are read aloud, so that the group gets a sense of where the scene emerged from.

■ Closing Discussion/Activity

- Have participants sit in circle on floor and inquire about: “What did we do today?” and/or “What’s something you discovered today?”
- Share with participants that this workshop was an exploration of theme and improvisation through personal connections.
- Reiterate the focus of our study from the previous workshops (character, sounds) and inform students that will begin creating their own audio theater drama by working on some of the created improvisations from today’s class or ideas that were inspired from today’s work. Before the next workshop, each group should decide what ideas they would like to incorporate into their work and in what structure (monologues, scenes, both) they want their work.
- **Closing exercise** - to seal in the ensemble energy we’ve created. An example is below.

Zip, Zap, Zop

- One person quickly claps and gestures towards another saying “zip”. The person who received the “zip” then claps and points at another while saying “zap”. That person then clasps and points at someone else saying “zop”.
- The goal is to pass the words and energy around as quickly as possible, making eye contact with the person who you are passing to, staying focus and keeping a rhythm. The passes can go around the circle or to random people. The facilitator can add rules to the game to make it more challenging (i.e. “zips” can only go to the person to your left, “zaps” can only go to the person to your right and “zops” can only go to someone across the circle.

Vocabulary:

Improvisation, Theme, Character