

Storytelling Workshop
Presented by Tamara Goldbogen
Davis School District
September 28 4-6pm

Poster Dialogue

“What makes a good story?”

“What makes an interesting character in a story?”

“What do you think is the hardest part of storytelling for young people?”

“What is one thing you hope to get out of today’s storytelling workshop?”

WARM UP: BrainDance

This is a quick, easy way to warm up our bodies and brains for creating, writing, and performing stories.

- Breath – deep breath in and out, repeat
- Tactile – squeeze, tap, pat, lightly scratch, brush all body parts
- Core-Distal – reach out, return to core, reach out, return to core
- Head-Tail – move head and tail separately and together, wiggle spine
- Upper-Lower – move all part of upper half, move all parts of lower half
- Body Side – move all parts on right side, move all parts on left side, horizontal eye tracking
- Cross Lateral – move across mid-line and connect upper and lower body, vertical eye tracking
- Vestibular – move off balance with spins, swings, both ways

The BrainDance is a movement sequence based on babies developmental patterns in the first year of life. It consists of 8 patterns that can be executed in any dance, sport, or other movement style and can be as short as 3 minutes or as long as 15 minutes. It can also be adjusted for use with all age groups and abilities, and it can be done standing, sitting in chairs, sitting or lying on the floor, in a swimming pool, with props, with music. Developed by Anne Green Gilbert (creativitydance.org/about/braindance)

Workshop Goals

1. Explore the ELEMENTS OF A GOOD STORY – key to writing good stories
2. Try a few STORY STARTERS – how to structure the writing process for your students
3. How to TELL a good story – building dramatic presentation skills

Elements of a Good Story

- Setting – Where is this story happening? – soundscape, writing to music
- Character – Who’s the story about? Backstory? – writing to pictures, dialogue (character has a WANT encounters an OBSTACLE = PLOT)
- Plot – What’s happening? (Beginning, middle, end – timeline of story) – frozen pictures
- Conflict - Every story has a conflict to solve. The plot is centered on this conflict and the ways in which the characters attempt to resolve the problem. When the story’s action becomes most exciting, right before the resolution, it is called the climax.
- Resolution - The solution to the problem is the way the action is resolved.

WARM UP: Memory Police

If every one would take out a blank piece of paper and a writing utensil. I would like everyone to imagine that in two minutes the memory police are going to walk through that door and when they do anything that you do not have written down on that piece of paper in front of you will disappear forever. Be a specific as you can. You have two minutes to write down everything that is important to you. Go!

WARM UP/CHARACTER: Individual/Pair Dialogue Writing

How can we demystify the art of writing good stories? In the left hand margin please “letter” the page as follows:

A “Did your dog just...?”

B

A

B

I will show you how this exercise works. This is going to be a conversation between 2 people, character A and character B. On the top of my paper I will write down the prompt. For example, ““Did your dog just...?” next to the first letter A. Now it is my job to finish this prompt. I might write, “did your dog just pee on my foot?” And now I will write a response from character B. Something like, “Are you talking to me?” Character A (sarcastically) “no I’m talking to your dog”

The object is to keep your pen moving and to write down the first thing that comes to your mind. Imagine the conversation in your head. This is a timed activity you will only have one minute.

Your first prompt is “Help! I can’t...” Go.

Everyone wrap up your last line. You have all written the beginnings of an interaction between two characters—in one minute. Is there anyone who would like to share? Have them read a few out loud, comment on what works, what you know, or what to know about the characters.

Now I would like you to find a partner sitting next to you, you will share one piece of paper between the two of you, one person from the pair needs to letter down the margin, A/B, etc. Take a second to decide with your partner who will be character A and who will be character B. I would like whom ever is character A to write the following prompt on the first line, “Excuse me. I think that...” When I say go, character A will finish the prompt and then pass the paper to their partner who will respond to what character A has “said” – You will have one minute. Ready? Go.

Write, then share, comment on and ask students what they know about these characters

CHARACTER/STORY STARTER: Writing from Photos – review “What makes a good character”

How do we begin to construct a character? Images can reflect a time period or issue being studied in class. Pick one character in the photo and answer the following:

- Age? Name? Occupation?
- What is special about him/her?
- Where is he/she?
- How does he/she feel about being there? Why?
- Why is this day different from any other day?
- What does this character want, need, or dream about?
- What’s stopping him/her from getting it?
- What does she/he need to tell? Who is he/she telling?

Free write in the 1st person as the character in the photo.

- Who do they need to tell?
- What do the NEED TO TELL?

PLOT: Frozen Pictures/Tableau

Introduce/demo frozen pictures. What makes a good frozen pictures (levels, expression) add on to make group image. Count off by 5’s, find your group.

In this drama strategy, each group will be creating frozen pictures. I will come around to each group and whisper the name of a story. Then as a group, you need to create a series of 3 frozen pictures for the beginning, middle, and end of the story. All group members must be in each image. You will have 5 minutes to do this. Each group will share their frozen pictures with the class – do not tell us what your story is.

Facilitate, “3 2 1 freeze” What might be going on here? Who might these characters be? Relax, etc.

- 3 Little Pigs
- Cinderella
- Jack and the Bean Stalk
- Little Red Riding Hood
- Rapunzel

SETTING: Soundscape

Purpose: Students will create sounds to mimic a real or imaginary environment. This activity encourages students to think creatively and experiment with creating sounds using their own voices, and bodies. It is an active way to think about environment, setting, and sound effects.

A large group may be split into two smaller groups for this activity. While one group creates a soundscape, the other group will serve as active listeners. Invite students to comment on things that they hear from the soundscape. The teacher can offer a demonstration of effective sound effects focusing on volume and dynamics.

- Students stand (or sit) in circle. Close your eyes.
- When I tap you on the shoulder I would like you to make a sound that you would find in a _____. Continue making this sound until I tap you on the shoulder a second time.

Variations:

- If students are having trouble focusing, have them keep their eyes open in the soundscape circle and face the outside of the circle.
- For a surround-sound effect you could have one group could form a small circle with the other group forming a larger circle around it. The inside group will close their eyes while the outside group creates a soundscape.

Example Soundscapes: the zoo, a city street, forest, hair salon, circus, supermarket, school

SETTING: Writing from/to Music

Play each song 2x, first time they listen with eyes closed, second time they free-write or draw or write dialogue, whatever.

- Describe the setting
- Where are we? real or imaginary?
- Write the beginning of the story in dialogue or paragraph form

STORY STARTERS: Object Work (mention museum/visual arts work)

Everyone gets an object, pick an object you have on you, share objects.

- Describe the object in front of you. What does it look like? Feel like? What does it mean to you?
- Now pretend you are the object. Write about the person looking at you. Write in the voice of the object.

In the voice of the object take a few minutes to free-write about your life so far. How did you come to be? What do you remember? What has happened to you? How did you get here? What do you think will happen next?

STORY STARTERS-TELLING: Fantastic Binominal

This is from the Neighborhood Bridges program in Minneapolis – a yearlong program that develops critical literacy skills through drama and storytelling. Every session began with students writing fantastical binomials that they kept in a notebook to revise and share stories.

- The storyteller/educator writes prepositions called linking words on the board. (above, against, around, behind, below, beneath, beside, between, following, inside, near, on, outside, over, through, under, underneath, with)
- The storyteller asks for two nouns to be quickly thrown at her. She takes the nouns and asks audience for their choice of a linking word. She then tells a story with the help of the audience.
- The storyteller/educator asks for two volunteers to come to the board and to write two nouns on the board – animals and places. They are to cover their nouns until both are ready to reveal their nouns at the same time. Once revealed, the words are to stimulate the students to write and illustrate very short stories.
- The students who come to the front are asked to read their stories to themselves. Then they are asked to put their stories down and to tell their stories in their own words to the audience.

TELLING: Tell me a story about...

Priming the memory banks (2 mins per response) – 15 mins

- Partners, (one sit and one lies down)
- Tell me from the childhood...going to the beach, a much-loved or hated teacher, a birthday party, something or someone you lost

TELLING: Narrative Pantomime – just a quick example of modeling dramatic storytelling

Tamara reads “Me-Stew” (solo pantomime on cold read)

- good stories for narrative pantomime should have action, climax, and resolution
- add dialogue, sounds effects, music

Reflection questions: I saw lots of different..., what was one thing you did that you liked best?, what do you think you might do differently if we did it again?

REFLECTION: ...It Made Me Think (reflection)

Ask each participant to reflect on the day’s work and think of one word or very short phrase that captures their opinion and completes the phrase “_____, it made me think.” The phrase can describe something that intrigued or inspired them during class or something that was thought provoking or memorable. After they've had a moment to choose, participants go around the circle and say their word or words, followed by the phrase “It made me think.” In practice, it might sound like this:

- The interconnectedness of ecosystems, it made me think.
- Tomatoes are fruits! It made me think.

Reflection:

- What did you notice about this activity? What ideas did you hear more than once in our reflection? Why do you think this is? Why is it important to think about and name our own thinking?

Resources:

- Alrutz, Megan. *Digital Storytelling, Applied Theatre, & Youth: Performing Possibility* (2015)
- Chapman, Gerald. *Teaching Young Playwrights* (1991)
- Heinig, Ruth Beall. *Creative Drama for the Classroom Teacher* (1993)
- Zipes, Jack. *Creative Storytelling* (1995)
- Zipes, Jack. *Speaking Out: Storytelling and Creative Drama for Children* (1995)

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