

Building Character and Showing Emotion
Lesson Plan for 4th Grade Creative Drama

PREPARATION/MATERIALS:

- Source 15-20 pictures of faces displaying different emotions. There should be enough images for each child in the class to have one. 3-5 of the pictures should be a little unclear - and perhaps show more than one emotion. Pictures should be printed out on individual pieces of paper
- Write out vocabulary words on poster paper to hang in the space
- Wacky prop (ex. spatula, magic wand, cloak, etc)
- (optional) something to display the pictures on such as a projector or smartboard

VOCABULARY:

<u>Movement</u>	<u>Voice</u>	<u>Emotion/Character Adjective</u>
Direct	Low Pitched	Happy
Indirect	High Pitched	Sad
Light	Quiet	Timid
Heavy	Loud	Excited
Slow	Singing	Nervous
Fast	Choppy	Brave
Stuck		Serious
Loose		Goofy
		Mad
		Surprised
		Grumpy

OBJECTIVES:

1. To equip students with the tools necessary to bring characters to life
2. To inspire students to think about the characters in books, paintings, and plays as being potentially 3 dimensional
3. To make students more aware of their own voice and movement capabilities
4. To make students more empathetic to certain movement and voice patterns in their peers.

OVERVIEW:

This lesson will walk students through an abbreviated character creation process by introducing 3 crucial elements to character expression in drama: movement, voice, and emotion. Students will begin by stretching to warm up the body, voice, and mind. Then, they will be guided through activities to teach them the 3 elements of character. Finally, their knowledge will culminate in a series of improv exercises where they can practice the quick character creation techniques they learned. Throughout the lesson, students will look at images of human faces showing clear emotion to help guide character discussion.

Total time: approximately 1 hour

Suggested venue: empty room with a lot of space for students to move and create

Number of suggested adult leaders: 1-3 (depending on size of class)

ACTIVITY	TIME	DESCRIPTION
Introduction/ Emotion Pictures I (3-5 images)	5 minutes	<i>(Sitting)</i> Theatre is all about telling a story about characters with intense emotion. It's larger and more intense than real life. Show first few pictures and ask: "How does this person feel?" "How can you tell?" "Do you walk and talk differently when you feel sad or happy?"
Warm-Ups	5 minutes	<i>(Standing)</i> <i>Stretching:</i> tell the students to raise one of their hands as high as they can, just like Lilly when she wants to be called on. Their other hand should stretch down towards the floor. Have them switch off hands twice. <i>Tongue Twisters:</i> Roberta ran rings around the Roman ruins. This summer, Santa's short suit shrunk Pirate's Private Property She sells seashells by the seashore <i>Shake-Out Countdown:</i> the students should loosen up by shaking out their arms and legs, starting with 10 shakes per limb and moving down incrementally as they complete each set. <i>Full-Body Exercise:</i> tell the students to make their bodies as BIG as they possibly can. Stretch out their arms, legs, and hands. Have them relax. Now, make tell them to try to make their bodies as small as possible. Slowly count up to 10 and have them morph back to their BIG body from their small position.

Character Walks	5 minutes	<p>(Standing)</p> <p>In complete silence have the students spread out evenly across the space so that they have an arms-width apart from their nearest neighbor and are facing different directions. Have them move straight forward in a direct walk, only changing directions if they're about to run into another person or obstacle. Next, have them move in curvy lines across the space, again make sure they avoid each other and obstacles. Go through the following list, spending about 30 seconds on each style.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Direction: Direct/Indirect ● Weight: Light/Heavy ● Speed: Slow/Fast ● Flow: Bound/Free <p>Now combine some of the styles. Have them walk fast, light, and indirect; or slow, heavy, and indirect; again spending about 30 seconds on each style. In between switching walks ask:</p> <p><i>“What kind of person walks like this?”</i></p> <p><i>“How do you think they feel?”</i></p> <p><i>“How does moving like this make you feel?”</i></p>
Character Voices	5 minutes	<p>(Standing)</p> <p>Choose a silly word like “banana”. Have the students say the word in their normal voice at a normal volume. Then, tell them to try saying it as low pitch as possible. Continue switching voices down the list using the same word and adding in other options where fitting. Instructor should modulate voice accordingly as an example each time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Low pitch ● High pitch ● Quiet ● Loud ● Singing ● Choppy
Character Traits	5 minutes	<p>(Standing)</p> <p>Combine one of the “complex” walks with a fitting voice modulation. For example, have the students move through the space indirect, heavy, and slow while saying one of the tongue twisters in a really low voice. Ask them what they think <i>a happy person would walk and sound like.</i></p>

		<p><i>What about an angry person?</i> <i>A serious person?</i> <i>A goofy person?</i> <i>An afraid person?</i> etc.</p>
<p>Emotion Pictures II (7-10 images)</p>	<p>10 minutes</p>	<p>(Sitting) Have the students sit facing the pictures. Show the images one at a time, asking the students <i>what they think each person is feeling</i>. <i>How can you tell?</i> <i>How do you think that person sounds?</i> <i>How does the person walk?</i></p> <p>In this mix there should be the pictures that are unclear or show more than one emotion. Here, ask questions that are more story-driven.</p> <p><i>Are they feeling just one thing?</i> <i>How can you tell?</i> <i>Is the person having a good day or a bad day?</i></p> <p>Introduce the idea that in Theatre to tell a story well, our characters need to be both clear and sometimes show more than one emotion. Like how sometimes you can be excited and nervous.</p> <p><i>*MODIFICATION*</i> For smaller groups, or if ahead on time: <i>ask for times the students have felt more than one emotion at once and how they sounded, moved, and felt. Did they think other people noticed?</i></p>
<p>Improv Games</p>	<p>10 minutes</p>	<p>(Standing) Play a few easy improv games to get the students loosened up to create a story of their own. Introduce the rules of improv “yes, and”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Freeze - two students start a scene, when another student sees an opportunity they call freeze, the actors freeze. The student replaces one of the frozen actors and begins a brand new scene. ● Wacky Props - divide the students into small groups and give them an obscure prop. Students will create a scene featuring the prop, however, the prop cannot be used as what it actually is. For example, a spoon could be used as a microphone but not a spoon. Students decide what their object should be together.

Emotion Pictures III	5 minutes	<p><i>(Standing)</i></p> <p>Using the remaining emotion pictures and some leftover pictures, hand each student an emotion picture and a writing utensil. Explain that this is their character for the next activity. Have them ponder and write down some character elements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Voice ● Movement ● 1-2 adjectives from the list ● 1 piece of secret made-up backstory <p>Give students about some time to complete this “character work”. If a student has been shy throughout the previous activities, giving them a picture that’s already been viewed and categorized can be a safe way to keep them involved.</p>
Birthday Party Improv	10 minutes	<p><i>(Standing)</i></p> <p>After everyone has their answers, guide them in groups of 3-4 through a “Birthday Party” Improv. One student is the party host and is welcoming guests into their house for their party. The guests arrive one by one and interact with one another and the host for a while. After the students have had about a minute to establish themselves, the instructor gives the students (including the party host) either a “sudden emergency” that they have to make an excuse about and leave for. Sometimes the party host is the first to leave. After all the characters have left, the drama ends.</p> <p>The focus in the activity should be on the students’ movement, voice, and expression of character less than the “story” of the improv. If need be, the instructor can call out activities for them to do like “Did anyone see the cake, it looks delicious!” or “It looks like they need help hanging decorations”.</p>
Audience Response		<p><i>(Sitting)</i></p> <p>Remind the audience of proper audience behavior: quiet bodies, quiet mouths, and attentive eyes and brains. After each performance, ask the audience:</p> <p><i>Who was who?</i></p> <p><i>What was happening?</i></p> <p><i>Did any relationships develop?</i></p>

		<p><i>What worked well? How can we do it better?</i></p> <p>The students who were performing can choose to share their “secret backstory” if they want to and it didn’t come up.</p>
Closing	2 minutes	<p><i>(Sitting)</i></p> <p>Remind students of the 3 crucial elements to showing character: voice, movement, and emotion. Point out the connection between playing characters in plays and improv, and thinking about how the characters in books and paintings might move and talk if they could. Challenge them to bring the world around them to life the same way they did with their last emotion picture.</p>

SUMMARY OF STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS LESSON

- **Sixs’ Structural Components and Elements**
 - ***Explored in the Player’s Role:*** Relax, Trust, Concentrate, Body Movement, Imagine Circumstances, Language, Voice, Speech, Characterization
 - ***Explored in the Playmaker’s Role:*** Plot, Character, Spectacle, Diction, Spectacle
 - ***Explored in the Audience Role:*** Perception, Response, Evaluation
- **Colorado Department of Education Expectations**
 - ***Create:***
 - Create characters from scripts or improvisation using voice, gestures, and facial expressions
 - Create and write simple dramas and scenes
 - Design a scene through an inventive process, and perform the scene
 - ***Perform:***
 - Participate collaboratively with partners and groups
 - Demonstrate safe use of voice and body to communicate characters
 - Define stage direction and body positions
 - ***Critically Respond***
 - Develop selected criteria to critique what is seen, heard, and understood
 - Examine character dynamics and relations