The History of Commedia Dell’Arte and Storytelling

Exploring Stories

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| **Teacher Candidate(s):** Hannah Donaldson  Melissa Smyth  Samantha Tuer  Mark Cvetskovski | **Subject:** Drama  10 ADA20 | **Time:** |
| **Date:** December 8, 2015 | **Grade:** 10 Open | **Duration:** 75 Minutes |

Curriculum Expectations:

A2.1 Select and combine the elements of drama to achieve a variety of purposes in ensemble presentations

A3.2 Use a variety of voice and movement techniques to support the creation of character or atmosphere during rehearsal

B1.2 Analyse a variety of drama works to compare and assess how they explore universal themes and issues

B2.2 Explain how dramatic exploration helps develop awareness of different roles and identities people have in society

B2.4 Identify ways in which dramatic exploration contributes to their understanding of diverse cultures and traditions

C1.2Demonstrate an understanding of and use correct terminology to refer to the forms, elements, conventions, and techniques of drama, with a focus on ensemble drama works

C2.2 Describe how drama is used for various purposes in a range of social contexts

C3.1identify and follow safe and ethical practices in drama activities

C3.2 Identify and apply the skills and attitudes needed to perform various tasks and responsibilities in producing drama works

C3.3Demonstrate an understanding of theatre and audience etiquette, in both classroom and formal performance contexts

Specific Expectations:

**Knowledge**: Students will learn a brief introduction of Commedia Dell’Arte performer roles and understand the importance of storytelling with emphasized characters that create a “farce”

**Skills:** Students will adapt what they know of stories and twist it to create a farce/ or mockery of a classic nursery rhyme/ fairy tale.

**Attitudes**: Students are encouraged to act as outrageously as possible to experience how and what a farce looks and feels like when watching and performing. While connecting what they have learned to the stories that are being given for their activity.

**Resources**: Short stories (Cinderella, 3 little pigs, Sleeping Beauty, Aladdin and the Magic lamp, Rumplestiltzkin etc.)

Lesson Sequence

**Warm-Up** (Duration 30 minutes)

Students will watch the video (Link provided) about some of the main characters to “Commedia Dell’Arte”

* Students will be asked to take notes and observe the character as an individual and collective; how they interact with other characters.
* They will then (with a person sitting next to them) discuss a few questions by the teacher:
  + - Do you think these characters were made up or re-created by what people saw?
    - Can you think of ways in which Commedia Dell’ Arte is still used today?
    - Is this a form of stereotyping?
    - How could these characters improve a story?
    - Why do you think some characters have masks and others don’t?

-Students will then be asked to differentiate Comedy and Farce. A discussion will take place, where students can try to explain the difference between the two words.

**COMEDY:** professional entertainment consisting of jokes and satirical sketches, intended to make an audience laugh

**FARCE:** a comic dramatic work using buffoonery and horseplay and typically including crude characterization and ludicrously improbable situations.

*Walk My Walk*

Students are asked to choose a partner. One partner will be ‘A’ and one partner will be ‘B’. Students will begin to walk around the room with partner ‘B’ following partner ‘A’. Students will be asked to complete the following steps:

- Watch your partner walk   
 - Analyze the way their feet and legs move   
 - Analyse the way their hands and arms move  
 - Analyze the way their body stands and moves as they walk   
 - Try to walk exactly like them

After partner ‘B’ students have developed a “new walk”, partner ‘A’ is asked to find a DIFFERENT partner ‘B’ student in the room. They will follow the same steps as their previous partner did in order for him or herself to learn a “new walk” as well. Once all students have learned a “new walk” they will be given time to walk around the room and let the new movement sink into their body. After a sufficient amount of time students will all gather to one side of the room. One a time students will be asked to walk across the room and at the midway point they are release their body and return back to their original way of walking.

**Action** (Duration 40)

Farce Strories

-Students will count themselves off from 1-5

- Students will then find their group members and each group will receive a short story of their fairy tale. \*NOTE\* the stories that are picked should be familiar to students.

- Students will then be given 25 minutes to rehearse a farce of that fairy tale.

- The story must be clear, have different characters (mainly focusing on the four that were demonstrated in the video) and with those characters they should create walks that go with the person they are playing.

EXAMPLE: Cinderella: Light, hopping steps

Prince: Marching, loud steps

* Students will present and after each presentation, the rest of the class will provide critical feedback on what they liked, and what they students needed to improve on.

**Culminating** (5 Minutes)

* *Drama Journal Questions:*1) Explain farce and how it’s importance shaped Commedia dell Arte.   
  2) Describe or sketch a character you were envisioning when you were doing the activity “walk like me”. What were his/her characteristics? What category would they fall under  
  3) What is one thing you are looking forward to in this unit?

*4)* Do you think masks are useful for Commedia Dell’arte? Why?

**Ongoing Assessment/Evaluation**

* Are the groups focused on the task at hand?
* Are they engaged in the stories?
* Are they applying proper technique?

**Follow-Up Ideas**

Wax Museum   
In this activity, students will get into partners. One partner will begin as the “clay” and the other will begin as the “sculptor”. Each round the students will switch roles in order to have the opportunity to be both. Each round the sculptor will be given a word and they will then manipulate their partner into a pose that portrays that word. The words/concepts will begin simple with different stock characters and will slowly evolve into more abstract ideas (i.e. emotions). At the end of each round, once all of the sculptors have had a chance to create their pieces, they will be invited to walk around the “wax museum” (classroom) and take a look at their fellow sculptors’ pieces. Once they have walked all the way around, students will switch roles with their partner and the next round will commence.

**Reflections & Self Evaluation**

* Were the instructions explicit?
* Did everyone get a chance to do their part in the group activities?
* Can they identify commedia dell’arte characters to fairy tale stories?