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Slam Poetry-Theater Lesson

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Lindsay 'Jag' Jagodowski

Slam Poetry-Theater Lesson

Grade Level & Classroom Description: Grade 4-6 students who have signed up for theater club.

Rationale:

Creating original scripts for scenes or monologues is an advanced theatrical practice. In order to make this more accessible to younger students, the application of slam poetry or spoken work poetry creates a frame work for their writing. Instead of being asked to write a play, scene or monologue, the process can be broken down into poetic terms. The literary form of poetry requires students to make specific choices with their descriptions and avoid being verbose in their writing which is often a challenge. Because brevity is required in poetry, students are better able to understand why an audience needs the actor to paint a specific verbal picture while on stage. Through reading poems from other authors, viewing videos of slam poetry performances and writing and performing their own piece, students will gain an understanding of slam poetry and monologue construction for the stage.

Academic Objectives: Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Frameworks – Theater

1.9 – Use physical acting skills such as body alignment, control of isolated body parts, and rhythms to develop characterizations that suggest artistic choices.

In order to successfully present their original poems, students will need to use the physical acting skills they have acquired. Specifically, they will control their bodies for specific descriptive movements, maintain rhythm throughout the piece and make choices in their poetic delivery to define the speaker of the poem.

1.10 – Use vocal acting skills such as breath control, diction, projection, inflection, rhythm, and pace to develop characterizations that suggest artistic choices.

While presenting their poems, students will access their skills in breath control, diction, projection, etc., to clearly convey their script and character choices for the poem.

2.4 – Create a scene or play with a beginning, middle, and end based on an original idea, a story, or other forms of literature (fiction, nonfiction, poetry)

In the process of creating their slam poetry monologues students will generate original material with a story arc (beginning, middle, end). This is important for development of comprehensible material and a step toward generating more complicated original works.

2.9 – Drawing on personal experience or research, write a monologue for an invented, literary, or historical character

Throughout the creation of their poems, students will access their prior knowledge about the world and their experiences in order to develop the story behind their piece.

5.1 – Describe and demonstrate audience skills of observing attentively and responding appropriately in classroom presentations, rehearsals, and live performance settings

During presentation of each poem/monologue, students will be expected to display appropriate behavior for artists and audience members. They will also be required to exhibit these skills during rehearsals.

5.8 – Identify and discuss artistic challenges and successful outcomes encountered during creative and rehearsal process.

At the conclusion of presentations, students will be expected to participate in a discussion about their processes, including problems that occurred and portions they felt were successful.

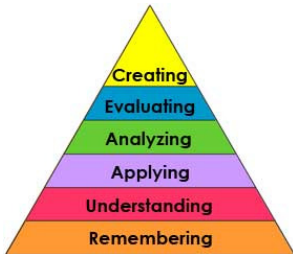
5.9 – Use appropriate theatre terminology to describe and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of their own or the group's work

Students will also be expected to use correct theatrical and poetic terms in order to assess their own strengths/weaknesses and to give constructive criticism to others in the class.

5.10 – Give, accept, and use constructive criticism that identifies the specific steps needed to revise and refine their own or the group's work

Finally, students will be required to give constructive criticism to their peers and accept criticism on their own poems/monologues construction and presentation.

Students from diverse populations and abilities will benefit from this lesson because it makes poetry and script/monologue writing accessible to varied learning styles. Through the consideration of Bloom's Taxonomy and Multiple Intelligence Theory, the benefits of this lesson are as follows:



Bloom's Higher Order Thinking Skills Accessed During Lesson:

Remembering

Students will be expected to define the specific poetic terms required for the lesson and memorize their scripts for the performances and repeat the performances.

Understanding

Using their growing knowledge of poetic and theatrical forms, students will be asked to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the presented poems and explain their reasoning.

Applying

Students will interpret the meaning of each others' poems. They will also discuss their creative processes and how this activity will be helpful to them as we apply this knowledge to further projects.

Analyzing

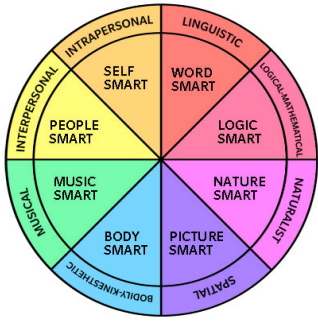
During discussions students will be asked to give constructive criticism distinguishing the elements of presentation that created stronger performances and appraise in what ways this knowledge could strengthen their writing and performance.

Evaluating

During creation, performance and criticism, students will be expected to judge their own strengths/weaknesses and defend their choices in the creation of their performances.

Creating

For successful completion of this lesson, students will need to develop their own characters, write poems for those specific speakers and create presentations which allow the audience to understand their story and the purpose behind the performances.



Gardner's Multiple Intelligences in Relation to this Lesson:

Intrapersonal Intelligence

Students will engage their self knowledge during their creative processes; expressing their own feelings and experiences through poetry.

Interpersonal Intelligence

Students will employ their interpersonal intelligence when discussing each others' poems.

Kinesthetic Intelligence

Students will use their kinesthetic intelligence when creating movements for the presentations of their poems/monologues. This intelligence will also be engaged as they demonstrate their vocal acting skills.

Logical-Mathematical Intelligence

Students' logical intelligence will be accessed as they detect patterns in each other's poetry analyzing the language, rhythm and rhyme schemes.

Musical Intelligence

Students will use their musical intelligence to create rhythm and patterns in their delivery of their poems/monologues. They may also choose to include sound or song throughout their presentations.

Spatial Intelligence

Students will use their spatial intelligence when deciding on the format for their poems as well as where they choose to present the poem and if they sit, stand or move about the stage.

Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence

Students will show their verbal/linguistic intelligence through word choice in the construction of their poems and discussions in which they give and receive constructive criticism.

Blooms Taxonomy image retrieved from: http://www.odu.edu/educ/roverbau/Bloom/blooms_taxonomy.htm

Gardner's Multiple Intelligences image retrieved from:

<http://educ732.courseblock.com/module04/topic-4-2-gardner%E2%80%99s-multiple-intelligences-theory/>

Time Allotment: Five 30-minute sessions (Larger classes may need longer allotted time)

Preparation work and Materials:

You will need to prepare by choosing and downloading examples of slam poetry. I have included several poems and the links to the videos I used below. Further materials include pens, pencils and paper.

Video Links:

http://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_kay_if_i_should_have_a_daughter.html

http://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_kay_how_many_lives_can_you_live.html

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44sXwJgqUyc&feature=related>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYyN_6GmzWI&feature=relmfu

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v4fVoT4P9Kw&feature=relmfu>

Procedure:

Session 1: What is slam poetry and what is a monologue?

This class is an introduction to poetry and to spoken word/slam poetry in specific. To begin, students will view video introductions to slam poetry from Sarah Kay and Taylor Mali. We will then discuss what slam poetry and monologues are and what makes a strong poem in terms of subject choice, rhyme, rhythm and various writing terms (please see ‘terms and tools’ worksheet). Students will be asked to consider topics and personal stories that interest them before the next meeting.

- 15 minutes of viewing video introductions and examples
- 15 minutes for discussion

Session 2: Poetry Terms, Tools and Construction

In the second class we will cover basic tools and terms for poem construction. Students will discuss what makes a strong poem, subject choice, rhyme, rhythm and various writing terms (please see ‘terms and tools’ worksheet). Students will also be asked to begin constructing their poem. Doing this in class allows for each student to have peer and teacher support if they run into writer’s block or are having difficulty with word choice, rhyme and rhythm.

- 15 minutes on the Terms and Tools worksheet
- 15 minutes to begin constructing their poem

Session 3: Constructing your poem

In the third class students will be asked to continue constructing their poems. Again, allowing for each student to have peer and teacher support if they run into writer's block or are having difficulty with word choice, rhyme and rhythm. Students should finalize their poems, edit and begin memorizing before the next session.

- Use the full 30 minutes for writing and editing

Session 4: Rehearsal of Poem/Monologue

In session four, have students work in pairs to rehearse. Students should give each other feedback on effective use of vocal acting skills, rhythm, and any issues they see with the poems. They should also work together toward memorization by rehearsing without scripts and having their partner read them the lines if they get stuck.

Session 5: Poetry Slam/ Performance

During the final session of this lesson students will perform their poems/monologues. Each student's performance should be no more than 2 minutes long. At the conclusion of the performances, ask students to give constructive criticism to each performer on their use of vocal acting skills and the story conveyed by the poems.

Questions to consider:

1. Was the performer loud enough to be heard?
2. Did they use correct diction and enunciation?
3. Did the poem have a beginning, middle and end?
4. How may the performer have improved their delivery?
5. What was the strongest part of the performance?

Reflective journal assignments will act as a self assessment for students to look at their work, progress, effort, process and products. Ask students to write journal entries that addresses the following questions:

1. What was the hardest part of constructing your own poem/monologue?
2. How do you think your performance went?
3. What was the best piece of constructive criticism you received?
4. Name three things that you learned about yourself as a performer
5. Name three things you learned about yourself as a writer
6. As a performer, what do you need to work on most?
7. What would you change if you did this again?
8. How did you feel about using your own words?

Poetry Terms and Tools Worksheet



Onomatopoeia:

Words that sound like what they mean – Buzz, pop, wham, slap, etc.

Alliteration:

Repetition of beginning letter of a word – Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers

Simile:

Comparison of two unrelated things using like or as to connect the words

A laugh like thunder

A look sharp as a knife

Metaphor:

Comparison not using like or as where it represents another concept

The soft wings of the baby's lashes brushed my cheek.

Hyperbole:

Obvious and intentional exaggeration – The fish was as big as a car!

The Three R's

Repetition: Purposefully repeating a word, phrase or sound in order to convey an idea in your poetry.

For example:

Robert Frost's

"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

T. S. Eliot's

"Ash-Wednesday":

Because I do not hope to turn again

Because I do not hope

Because I do not hope to turn...

Rhyme: The repetition of the end sound of words at the end of a line of poetry.

She would not say where

She had cut the hair

But evidence was there

The cat's tail was bare.

Rhythm: Rhythm in writing is like the beat in music. Certain words are stressed vocally or held for a longer period of time. A repeating pattern creates a rhythm. A good way to think about rhythm is in terms of syllables. Try saying out loud, "I do not like to write in rhyme." Did you notice a pattern? What other rhythms can you think of in written or spoken word?

Poetry Slam/ Monologue Rubric

Name _____

Date _____

	Excellent	Good	Needs works
Poem Construction	Uses all of the learned poetic devices, edited and put forth considerable effort 8- 10 points	Uses some of the learned poetic devices and put some effort into editing and construction 4-7 points	Uses minimal poetic devices and minimal effort in the editing and construction process 0-3 points
Vocal Acting <i>Volume</i>	Consistently speaks loudly enough for audience to hear 8- 10 points	Usually speaks loudly enough for audience to hear 4-7 points	Speaks too soft or loud to hear. 0-3 points
Vocal Acting <i>Clarity</i>	Words are pronounced correctly and easily understood 8- 10 points	Most words are pronounced correctly and easily understood 4-7 points	Many words pronounced incorrectly, too fast or slow, mumbles 0-3 points
Vocal Acting <i>Reads with expression</i>	Consistently reads with appropriate expression 8- 10 points	Usually reads with appropriate expression. 4-7 points	Reads with little or no expression. 0-3 points
Physical Acting	Consistently uses appropriate physical choices in presentation of poem 8- 10 points	Uses some appropriate physical movements as well as some that are inappropriate 4-7 points	Does not incorporate movement or movements are generally inappropriate for presentation 0-3 points
Constructive criticism	Consistently offers good feedback using correct theatric and poetic terms 8- 10 points	Offers some feedback using mostly correct terminology 4-7 points	Difficulty in offering feedback and use of terminology 0-3 points

Total points possible 60

Points earned _____ Percentage _____%

References

Collom, J., & Noethe, S. (2005). *Poetry everywhere: teaching poetry writing in school and in the community* (2nd ed.). New York: T & W Books.

Kay, S. (March 2011). If I should have a daughter ... [TED2011] Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_kay_if_i_should_have_a_daughter.html

Kay, S. (December 2011). How many lives can you live? [TEDxEast] Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_kay_how_many_lives_can_you_live.html

Taylor Mali 'On Girls Lending Pens' Performed as part of Page Meets Stage at the Bowery Poetry Club on February 22, 2007.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44sXwJgqUyc&feature=related>

Rives performing 'Levitate' Recorded live at Tourettes Without Regrets, Oakland, California. Official website version. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v4fVoT4P9Kw&feature=relmfu>

Strand, M., & Boland, E. (2001). *The making of a poem*. New York: W. W. Norton.