

CREATIVE EXERCISES WITH CHARACTER CARDS

AGES: Elementary, Middle School, High School, College

DESCRIPTION

- Students will learn to pick up on visual clues to create characters.
- Students will understand the importance of character back-story, motivation, goals, problems and conflicts.
- There are additional objectives with each exercise.

MATERIALS

PREPARE CHARACTER CARDS

The preparation for this exercise can be quite time consuming, but with the help of your class you may be spared much of the work.

Buy some stiff paper and guillotine in half to make 8.5 x 5.5 cards. From old magazines, discarded school text books, etc., collect a large range of character pictures – including cartoons and animals. Use rubber-based glue (which doesn't wrinkle the paper) to stick the cut-outs on the cards.

Be attractively random! These will become a great resource for years. Look after them.

FULL LESSON PLAN

1. IMPROV.

- Students will experience what is to get into character.

Spread out Character Cards, face up.

Each student selects a card then takes 1 minute to name the character and determine his job, family relationships, obsession and physical oddity.

Put students into groups of 2-5, select a situation and problem. The characters improvise the solution to the problem.

Repeat, but this time starting with cards face down! This should lead to far more comedy and inventiveness.

2. MONOLOGUES

- Students will develop a sustained narrative in the voice of the character.

Students again select cards, either face up or blind. Give them from 5 to 10 minutes to write a dramatic monologue. The scenario might be:

a self-defense in court; a letter to a relative; a proposal of marriage, a job application or the opening scene of a play, an audition, etc.

The class shares the monologues.

3. SCENES

- Students will work to translate the immediacy of improv into a more controlled and studied development of a scene.

Students select cards by your chosen method. For their characters they select name, age, job, guilty secret, pet hate and desire. Each student briefly presents their character to the rest of the class (or group of 10 max).

Then, selecting two other characters, they write the opening two pages of a play. Students present the scenes.

4. SHORT PLAYS

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Student will discover the creative surprises that come from putting their characters together in their chosen situation.

As with SCENES, except that the students get together in groups of 2-4 to collaborate in writing a 5 minute play. Set a time limit for the assignment.

Students present plays.