

PAPER BAG MASKS/SKITS

AGES: Elementary School, Middle School

DESCRIPTION

- 1) To remove much of the fear of performing from timid students.
- 2) To emphasize how the entire body is needed to promote a character.
- 3) To provide a group project where students gain from each other.

MATERIALS

- brown medium-sized paper grocery bags (one for each student)
- Color markers
- masking tape
- scissors, pencils
- colored construction paper (optional)

FULL LESSON PLAN

Procedure:

1. Place students in groups making sure they are balanced with different personalities and stage experience.
2. Ask students to come up with a simple skit that shows characters and how they move. Make sure the skit has a beginning, middle, and end. Make sure it has some sort of conflict to be resolved. I allow students to be inanimate objects, animals, creatures, as well as humans. The main point is to demonstrate how their character moves. Once they have decided on their skit, and they know what their character is, they are ready to plan their masks.
3. Bring out the mask making supplies.
4. Have them try the paper bags on their heads. They will need to cut about 3-4 inches up on the four corners of the bag as it rests on their shoulders so the top of the bag rests on the top of their heads. Fold or cut off the extra inches of the bag that rest on the shoulders.
5. Mark the eyes with a pencil.
6. Students begin the creative artwork- making the mask represent their character. It might be an animal, a flower, various ages of humans, etc. Encourage them to make the features large. Eyes can either be cut out or use a push pin and poke it through the bag many times to make a "screen" for the students to see out. That is a good technique if the character doesn't have normal human eyes (Cyclops, balloon, candy bar, etc.)
7. Once the masks are completed, students find a spot to rehearse their skit- first without, then with the paper bag on their heads.

8. Emphasize the need for expressive movement from the neck down.

Evaluation

If you must score the skits, do not evaluate the artwork on the masks. Explain that the point of the project is to convince the audience that you are the character seen on the mask by the movement. Score the group effort, rehearsal time well spent, and how effective the movement was. It is your call whether you want the skits done in mime or with spoken dialogue. They will work either way. I prefer no speaking so the total focus is on movement.