

STORY ARC IN TABLEAUX

AGES: High School, College

DESCRIPTION

Quickly familiarizes actors with the plot/story arc of a new play or musical and initiates the actor's process of looking at the arc of the story as a means to investigate changes that characters will undergo during the course of the story and to create a plan for character development.

MATERIALS

- Copies of a plot synopsis for whichever show will be performed or investigated.
- Division of the class roster into teams with equal numbers of no more than 4-5 members and then divide the plot synopsis into the same number of sections so each time will be assigned only one portion of the entire story.

FULL LESSON PLAN

Preparatory Activities (optional):

- 1) Teach the elements of an effective tableau - everyone can be seen, relationships are shown by proximity, effective use of dimension, frozen movement displays emotion or energy in a scene, facial expressions match scene content etc.
- 2) Practice creating tableaux with students depicting famous paintings, historical events or current events in the news; photograph and discuss/evaluate.

Process:

- 1) Divide the students into teams and assign sections of the plot synopsis to each team. Have students read their section of the synopsis silently, then give each team time and a separate location in which to discuss, create and practice tableaux that will illustrate their section of the story. Set a time that teams will showcase their tableaux for the other members of the class.
- 2) At the close of practice time, give each team the other teams' parts of the plot to read before the showcase.
- 3) Showcase and photograph each team's tableaux in sequential order in the plot. As each is presented, members of the other teams must identify/describe the scene from the plot which is being depicted. Discuss the elements of the tableau with are especially effective in communicating, in still form, visible relationships of the characters (analysis of proximity and body language), emotions which are evident in facial expressions, etc.
- 4) At the conclusion of the showcase, have each student select a character to focus on. Have each student write a brief synopsis of their chosen character's story arc including important events that happen, the character's reactions and the outcomes of the character's actions.

Note: Can be effective as having the traditional preliminary "read through" of a play.