

TH 507 Ethnographic Theatre in Your Classroom – Kallie Marrison

NOTE: I think these activities are versatile and would work well for 5th grade up to a college undergrad class to introduce Ethnographic Theatre.

I found an awesome website that had a lot of lesson activities based in Ethnographic Theatre that I used as inspiration for the activities below.

Activity #1 (Shadowing Introduction Activity/Pre-assessment Activity):

Students will walk around the room at a normal speed. After 10-20 seconds, ask students to change directions to avoid walking in only one patterned direction around the room. After a few rounds of this, ask students to speed up, slow down, walk backwards, walk sideways, and change levels. Ask students to notice and watch a student in the room (without that student knowing they are being noticed/watched). Ask students to notice what speed the watched student walks at, their bodies' shape as they walk, and if any specific part of their body holds tension. Then instruct students to shadow their chosen person without the student knowing they are being shadowed. As "Lesson 1: Telling Other People's Stories" stresses: "All of their movement should now be determined by the person they are shadowing - their rhythm, posture, foot placement, etc. Emphasize that they are not to mock or imitate each other but to capture the essence or 'truth' of how each person moves. Instruct the students to follow that person for about thirty seconds. Ask the students as they continue to work to consider the following: *Where are their eyes looking- forward, down, to the side or up? Where is their chest and posture? Where are their arms? Pelvis? Knees? Toes? Consider tempo*". After students shadow their initial chosen person, ask students to notice and watch another student in the room (without that student knowing they are being noticed/watched). Then have the student continue the same process of shadowing their newly chosen person. After a few rounds of this, ask students to borrow movements from two of their classmates in the room (for example, they could use one classmates' tempo and the other classmates' body movement). After a few rounds of this, instruct them to try borrowing movements from three classmates, then have them try this with four classmates. Students will then discuss the following questions then journal their experience (they can choose whether they would like to write this journal or create a video journal).

Discussion: Invite students to talk about how much they were able to observe about other people at once and how their movements changed when they were shadowing their secretly chosen person. Ask them how their movements and physicalization changed when they borrowed movements from multiple classmates.

Activity inspiration/idea retrieved from:

"Lesson 1: Telling Other People's Stories." *Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators*, www.code.on.ca/section/lesson-1-telling-other-peoples-stories-1.

Activity #2 (Short Story Sharing):

Students will pair up – with one student being A and the other student being B. Student A will face Student B and tell a 30 second story about their love for their favorite dessert. Student B will listen carefully and pay close attention to Student A's story, gestures, and speech (including elements such as pauses, hesitations, changes of thought, breaths, and "umms"). After 30 seconds, Student B will swap places with a different Student B and tell their new Student A partner the story of their previous partner's love for their favorite dessert – capturing the gestures and speech patterns of their previous partner. After completing the story, Student B will then find a new partner, and the activity will begin again – this time with Student B telling Student A a 30 second story about their dreams for the future. Student A will listen carefully and pay close attention to Student B's story, gestures, and speech (including elements such as pauses, hesitations, changes of thought, breaths, and "umms"). After 30 seconds, Student A will swap places with a different Student A and tell their new Student B partner the story of their previous partner's dreams for the future – capturing the gestures and speech patterns of their previous partner. After completing the story, Student A will then find a new partner and the activity round will begin again – changing stories and swapping back to Student A telling Student B the story. Students will then discuss the following questions then journal their experience (they can choose whether they would like to write this journal or create a video journal).

NOTE: Suggested story topics can include – favorite vacation spot, favorite memory, crazy past experience, and a weird dream.

DISCUSSION - "Invite students to name physical and vocal qualities they observed (i.e. pauses in speech, the words *Um* and *like* or the way a person ends a question in a sentence). Ask the students to examine the list and consider: *What are the most difficult human behaviors to recreate as a performer? Why?*"

Activity inspiration/idea retrieved from:

"Lesson 1: Telling Other People's Stories." *Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators*, www.code.on.ca/section/lesson-1-telling-other-peoples-stories-1.

Activity #3 (Storytelling):

Students will write a two-minute story in first person from one of the following options:

- 1) A lifechanging experience
- 2) An embarrassing moment
- 3) A happy memory

Let students know that these stories will be shared with the class – so choose a story that they are comfortable with others around them knowing. Encourage students to be specific in their storytelling. Students will then pair up and will have two minutes to share their story with their partner (allow students to choose who is going first to encourage student centered learning). Each student should record their partner's story. Encourage students to listen carefully while simultaneously watching how the story is being told (having students pay close attention to elements such as body language, pauses, hesitations, changes of thought, breaths, and "umms"). As "Lesson 1: Telling Other People's Stories" describes, "Explain that they will share that person's story in role as that person, attempting to capture the truth or essence of that person but making the story seem like their own". After students have told each other their stories, students will face away from each other and practice telling each other's stories back to each other. After practicing each other's stories, students will form a circle and tell their partner's stories to their group of classmates. Each student should focus on "capturing the essence of the story and how it was told" – including incorporating their partner's body language, pauses, hesitations, changes of thought, breaths, and "umms" from their initial story telling. Students will then discuss the following questions then journal their experience (they can choose whether they would like to write this journal or create a video journal).

Discussion Questions:

"How did it feel to watch your story being told by your partner? Did it feel respectful? Why or why not?"

Did you recognize any of your classmates in the stories that were told?

Did it feel like the story 'belonged' to the teller even though they were imitating another person? What changed about the story in the re-telling? What is lost and what is gained in the actor's interpretation?

What new understandings do you have about other people in this class?

What makes it feel safe to do this activity? What makes it feel unsafe?

Whose stories get told? Whose stories are hidden?

What is your responsibility when telling someone else's story?"

Activity inspiration/idea retrieved from:

"Lesson 1: Telling Other People's Stories." *Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators*, www.code.on.ca/section/lesson-1-telling-other-peoples-stories-1.

Activity #4 (Presenting News):

Students will be placed in small groups of 3. Each group will be provided with multiple articles from different newspapers on the same topic. Each group will then have 30 minutes to create and rehearse a scene presentation based on the story in the news articles, along with including three direct quotes from articles. Students will be encouraged to use images and music to accompany their scene presentations. After each group creates and rehearses their scene presentations, the groups will then take turns performing their scene presentations in front of their classmates. Students will then discuss the following questions then journal their experience (they can choose whether they would like to write this journal or create a video journal).

Discussion Questions:

“What differences did you notice about how the event/issue was reported in different newspapers?”

What kind of bias does this reveal about the different newspapers?”

How was each group’s scene different from each other?

What were the differences in interpretation and artistic presentation choices?

How did music and image choices enhance artistic choices in scene presentation interpretations?

Activity inspiration/idea retrieved from:

"Lesson 2: Defining the Genre." *Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators*,
www.code.on.ca/section/lesson-2-defining-genre-1.

Activity #5 (Interview Composition Characters):

Students will create a “composition character monologue” from interview questions they ask their classmates. Each student will first draw one interview question at random from a hat (the *Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators* website included a great list of interview questions – see on the next page). Students will then walk around the room and ask at least five of their classmates their interview question while taking notes. Students will listen carefully and pay close attention to the answer the interviewee gives, also make notes of everything the interviewee says including “umms”, pauses, hesitations, breaths, and body language. After about 15-20 minutes of interviewing at least 5 classmates, students will find their own space in the room where they can write. Students will then write a monologue for a single character based on the notes they took from their classmates’ interviews. The students will have 30 minutes to write their character composition monologues using the following guidelines (which come from the *Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators* website):

- “1) You must have more than one voice (interview) in your monologue.
- 2) You do not have to use all of the answers but use only the words in your notes.
- 3) You can add a few connecting words (like and or but) for coherence but that is all.
- 4) You can borrow words from one interview to insert into another. For example, you can borrow the way one person speaks (says like a lot) and insert it into another interview to make it sound like one voice.
- 5) You can add stage directions, but they must come from something you observed in the interviews.
- 6) The monologue should be at least one page”.

After each student has written their monologues, the class will circle up and volunteers will be invited to share their monologues to the class. Students will do Lerman Looks to ask the volunteering student questions about choices they made to make the monologue sound like one character (from all the interviews combined). Students then discuss the following questions then journal their experience (they can choose whether they would like to write this journal or create a video journal).

Discussion Questions:

*“How many interviews did you end up using in the final monologue?
Did you use one interview after another in the order you collected the information, or did you mix up all the interviews?
Are there any suggestions from the class about how we can make this monologue sound more like one character? What feels out of place?”*

Activity inspiration/idea retrieved from:

"Lesson 4: Creating Composite Characters." *Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators*,
www.code.on.ca/section/lesson-4-creating-composite-characters-1.

Possible Interview Questions for Activity #5:

- “1) What major changes do you predict for our world in the next 50-100 years?
- 2) What do we need to change about our lives so that we will have a better future?
- 3) What can you and your family do to change your lives so that the world will be better (less wasteful, more peaceful) in the next 20-50 years?
- 4) Describe a change that happened in your family and how it affected relationships.
- 5) What is one thing about your life that you wish was different? Why? Can you see it ever changing? How?
- 6) If you could pick one thing that you wish someone close to you would change—what would it be and why?
- 7) If you could go back in time and change anything, what would you do differently? Why?
- 8) If you could change yourself into another person, who would it be and why?
- 9) If you could transform yourself into an animal, what animal would you become? Why?
- 10) What changes do you imagine will be in your life in ten years?”

Questions retrieved from: "Lesson 4: Creating Composite Characters." *Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators*, www.code.on.ca/section/lesson-4-creating-composite-characters-1.