



Grade: 5th-6th grades

Date: 11.19.2014

Teaching Artists: Katie Cox and Laura Epperson

Lesson #1*

Theme of Lesson: Introduction to nonverbal communication and storytelling

Restating of Inquiry Question: *How can we use creativity to examine our world and tell our stories in new ways?*

How can multidisciplinary projects and processes enhance or affect communication?

Opening Ritual (5 min)

Objective: To grab attention and peak curiosity

Activity Name: Graffiti Walls: "Backward Bill"

Brief Description: Post a few words or phrase from each stanza of the poem "Backward Bill"† by Shel Silverstein around the space. Upon entering, ask students to write their one or two word immediate response to what they read on each sheet.

Intro Activity (10 min)

Objective: To introduce the concept of nonverbal communication in music and composition.

Activity Name: Stomp the Song

Brief Description:

- (7 min) Have group stand with eyes closed. In unison, count to 8 aloud then stomp. Instruct group to silently count to 8, at their own tempos, then stomp. As the rhythmic song progresses, ask the students to try to find others with similar tempos, without opening their eyes. Depending on time, play with the tempo, asking the group to speed up or slow down.
- (3 min) Discuss. *What was that experience like? Were you able to hear the music we created? How was it trying to group by tempo without using words (or sight)?* (Be sure to define rhythm and tempo.)

Classroom Teacher Role: Join in!

* Could also easily be adjusted and used at various stages in a multi-week residency.

† A number of poems could work in this plan.



Main Exercise (30 min)

Objective: To explore the use of nonverbal communication in storytelling. To think critically about how we communicate. To embrace collaboration in the creative process.

Activity Name: All words taboo!

Brief Description:

- (5 min) Ask students to construct a definition of nonverbal communication. *What are some examples of nonverbal communication we use every day?* Teaching artists should reenact appropriate examples. Discuss/identify some nonverbal techniques used in music (rhythm, volume, pitch, etc.) and theatre (gesture, facial expression, breath, tone, body language, etc.). Depending on time, show clip from *The Artist*.
- (15 min) Split students into 5 groups and give each group a stanza of "Backward Bill." Tell students they are to collaborate as a group to tell their portion of this story *nonverbally*. Teaching artists should encourage students to use their creative brains and think outside of the box regarding nonverbal techniques. Teaching artists will provide a variety of musical instruments to be used. Each presentation must:
 - Communicate the meaning/feeling of each line in the stanza
 - Incorporate both movement/gesture and music/rhythm
 - Be 30 seconds to 1 minute in length
 - Include everyone in the group

Teaching artists should display the above criteria for students' reference and give each group the graffiti wall sheet for their stanza, for inspiration and idea generation.

- (10 min) Have group perform their piece. After each performance, read the stanza from the poem and lead the class in a short (1 min) discussion: *What nonverbal techniques did they use? Could you see or feel the story without hearing the words? How was your experience different from hearing the poem read?*

Classroom Teacher Role: Assist teaching artists in keeping groups on task and answer questions as they arrive.

Closing Ritual (5 min)

Objective: Reinforce each individual's power and importance in telling her/his story; end with empowerment, rhythm, and volume

Activity Name: I have a voice



Brief Description:

- Repeat after me chant (with variations--perhaps one nonverbal?)
I have a voice.
My voice is powerful.
My voice can change the world.

Classroom Teacher Role: Join in!

Multiple Intelligences: Bodily-kinesthetic, musical, verbal-linguistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist

Classroom Teacher Role: Embedded in plan

Creative Elements

Skill(s): rhythm, verse, nonverbal communication, collaboration, storytelling, composition, performance, phrase, discussion, movement, expression

Theme(s): creativity, storytelling, communication, community

Artists/Authors/Works of Art

Shel Silverstein--"Backward Bill," Jean Dujardin--*The Artist*, Greta Garbo



Backward Bill by Shel Silverstein

Backward Bill, Backward Bill,
He lives way up on Backward Hill,
Which is really a hole in the sandy ground
(But that's a hill turned upside down).

Backward Bill's got a backward shack
With a big front porch that's built out back.
You walk through the window and look out the door
And the cellar is up on the very top floor.

Backward Bill he rides like the wind
Don't know where he's going but sees where he's been.
His spurs they go "neigh" and his horse it goes "clang,"
And his six-gun goes "gnab," it never goes "bang."

Backward Bill's got a backward pup,
They eat their supper when the sun comes up,
And he's got a wife named Backward Lil,
"She's my own true hate," says Backward Bill.

Backward Bill wears his hat on his toes
And puts on his underwear over his clothes.
And come every payday he pays his boss,
And rides off a-smilin' a-carryin' his hoss.