

Creative Drama Lesson Plan
By Emily Schmitt and Haley Conner
James Madison University

Stimulus: View Film/Play/Musical: *Akeelah and the Bee* by Cheryl West

Connections to Story Themes, Characters, Setting, and/or Plot: The goal of the workshop is to connect the overarching idea of the story, which is that regardless of where you come from or what your background is you can have the power to succeed.

Creative Dramatics Strategies: Cross the Room If..., Cover the Space into Statues, Person in a Mess

Time Needed: 60 mins

Materials Needed: glasses, poster, various colors of markers, copies of the play or film

Space Needs: Large open space

Grade(s): 5th

National Standards:

Creating

TH:Cr1.1.5.c. Imagine how a character's inner thoughts impact the story and the given circumstances in drama/theatre work.

TH:Cr3.1.5.b. Use physical and vocal exploration for character development in an improvised or scripted drama/theatre work.

Performing

TH:Pr6.1.5.a. Share small group drama/theatre work, with peers as audience.

Responding

TH:Re8.1.5.a. Justify responses based on personal experiences when participating in or observing a drama/theatre work.

TH:Re9.1.5.c. Recognize how a character's circumstances impact an audience's perspective in a drama/theatre work.

Connecting

TH:Cn10.1.5.a. Explain how drama/theatre connects oneself to a community or culture.

Essential Questions: How can you overcome the people who are negative in your life and feed off the positive people in your life?

Enduring Understanding: Everyone can have the power to overcome barriers

FACILITATION PLAN

Engage (10 minutes)

Before beginning this strategy, have students come up with a classroom contract containing rules about how they want to respect one another throughout the workshop. Use a poster with several different colored markers to write down the rules that they come up with.

(Cross the Room If...)

Everyone, please make two lines directly across from one another.

We are going to do a strategy called “Cross the Room If...” I will read a statement twice. The first time I read it, think about whether or not the statement applies to you. After I read the statement a second time, cross the room and join the line across from you. This strategy is about self-reflection. At the end of the strategy, we will reflect with one another.

Cross the Room If...

- *You choose your hobbies based on the opinions of other people.*
- *You have felt like no one wants to hear about your day.*
- *You believe that if you work hard enough, you can achieve your goals.*
- *You have ever had to overcome obstacles in order to accomplish a task.*

Side-Coaching:

- *Remember to stay quiet during this part of the activity. We will have time to share after all of the statements.*
- *Your opinion may be different than others. Remember that it is okay to be different.*
- *These statements require some thought. Move based on what you think, not based on what you see others doing.*

Reflection:

Describe: What were some things you observed about our entire group during this strategy?

Analyze: Choose a statement that you either moved on or didn't move on. Why might someone have chosen to answer the opposite way that you did?

Relate: Would anyone like to share why they decided to cross the room or not cross the room for any of the statements? What words in the statements influenced your decision the most?

Transition: *Thank you for listening to everyone's opinion and being so respectful. Remember that in the play, Akeelah was not always fortunate enough to get respect from others. Now we are going to move into a strategy that will keep us thinking about the feelings of others. First, we will look at some lines from the play “Akeelah and the Bee” that we just saw.*

Explore (45 minutes)

Have students read this excerpt of the play (page 23 of script).

DR. LARABEE: You don't read the bible, either? If you're going to learn language, you have to read all types of...

AKEELAH: I do read. When my head is wrapped right, I can memorize any word.

DR. LARABEE: And getting your “head wrapped right” will never happen if you don't know a word's origin, its root...

AKEELAH: Maybe, Mister, you been playing in the dirt too long, cause you don't need to know a root to know how to spell a word. Just sayin!

DR. LARABEE: I see.

AKEELAH: You see what?

DR. LARABEE: That you are incredibly rude and insolent...

AKEELAH: What about you? Ever since I opened my mouth, you been trying to put your foot in it.

DR. LARABEE: Please tell me why you're still here.

AKEELAH: 'Cause I thought you were supposed to be somebody's coach. I'm trying to give you a chance here, so blow a whistle, get me some words going. Then watch me put the press to the impress!

Reflection:

Describe: *How did Akeelah and Dr. Larabee act toward one another in this excerpt?*

Analyze: *How do you think Dr. Larabee's words influenced Akeelah's feelings?*

Relate: *Why do you think Akeelah acted the way she did? Why do you think Dr. Larabee acted the way he did?*

Now we are going to take what we have just discussed and engage in a strategy called Statues. If you could all please leave your belongings in your seat. Now, please find a space, equally distant from the people around you. Now, walk around and cover the space, staying equally distant from others.

As you are walking, take on the role of Akeelah. How might you be feeling as Dr. Larabee talks to you? How do his comments affect your body language? How do you act in response to his comments?

With these thoughts in mind, I would like you to make a frozen image of Akeelah in 3-2-1 Freeze. Take a quick look at the statues around you.

Now, continue Covering the Space. I would like you to think of the questions I just asked you and the statue that you just made. Think about if you want to revise it at all. You can add facial expressions, change the level that your body is on, or do anything to solidify how your character is feeling. Make a statue in 3-2-1 Freeze. Look at the statues around you.

We are going to do this one more time. Please make any changes you would like, and this time try to include your whole body. 3-2-1 Freeze.

Now, I am going to ask you to remember this statue. If I tap you on the shoulder you will unfreeze silently. If you are unfrozen, please take a gallery walk and look at the statues.

Describe: *What do you see the bodies doing?*

Analyze: *What does this say about how Akeelah is feeling? How does the body language connect to how she feels?*

Relate: *What parts of our play excerpt do these statues connect to?*

If you are currently a statue, please unfreeze. If you were already unfrozen, please spread across the room and make your statue in 3-2-1 Freeze.

If you are unfrozen, take a walk around and have a look at the statues.

Describe: *What do you see the bodies doing?*

Analyze: *What does this say about how Akeelah is feeling? How does the body language connect to how she feels?*

Relate: *What parts of our play excerpt do these statues connect to?*

Transition

Thank you all for doing such a nice job participating. I loved how you all used your bodies to create statues for those different scenarios. You may all go back and take a seat.

In moment I am going to put on these glasses. When I put on these glasses I will go into role as a character that needs your help. When I put on these glasses can we all agree that I am a different character? Give me a thumbs up if you agree. Thanks!

Hi everyone I'm Jamie! I am a reporter for Spelling Bee Monthly. I heard that something incredible, wild, spectacular, brilliant happened here today, I was told to get down here immediately to get the story. Oh no did I miss all the action?! Were you all there to witness everything? Would you all be willing to help me piece back the story so I don't get fired from the Spelling Bee monthly? This is the best job I've ever had and I would be so upset if I lost it! (students agree to help) Oh thank you so much for agreeing to help me. Can I get a few people to tell me what happened? (students answer) Wow thank you so much for helping me figure out exactly what happened I really appreciate how specific you all were. You know what else could really help me? If could have a few pictures to publish with the article. I know it already happened but maybe you all could use your bodies to reenact what happened. So could you show me what happened first? Students use bodies to show their interpretation of what happened first. Wow you all are doing a great job showing me what you did with your bodies! I'm now going to take a few pictures for my article. So now could you show me what happened here on stage today? Incredible! Let me get another picture. Great! How was Akeelah able to get from where she was at the beginning to what happened on stage today? Great, now I just need a snapshot of this! You all are using your bodies in such creative ways! Let me snap a few shots of this. Well thank you all for helping me. With your help I now i'm going to be able to create such a great article!

De-roles: Takes off the glasses

Transition: *Now I'm your instructor again. You all did a great job participating. Now if you could all grab a seat so we can reflect on what we did here today.*

D:

Why was Jamie at our class today?

Why did Jamie seem so frazzled?

A:

Why did you all decided to help Jamie?

Why was do you think others will find Akeelah's story interesting?

R:

When are some times that we use parts of stories to connect to others?

What were some important transitions Akeelah went through in the story?

Reflect (5 minutes)

D:

What kinds of activities did we do here today?

How did we use our bodies and minds in creative ways?

A:

Why did these activities help us expand our understanding of Akeelah and the Bee?

How did Akeelah overcome barriers throughout the story?

R:

Why was this story important?

What are do you think the big takeaways are from the story, and how can these ideas or morals help you in your life?

Ending Statement

Akeelah went through some very difficult times and proved herself to be a very dynamic character throughout the story. It is important to keep in mind that no matter where someone is from or what their background is that anyone can be successful.