

The Quest Story:

Exploring Culture and Values through Creative Dramatics

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Teachers Summer Workshop
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(This workshop was developed in relationship to the Lied Center School Series
performance of Roseneath Theatre's production of Spirit Horse.)

Introduction: In this workshop, teachers will explore how they can use simple creative dramatics exercises to discover with their students personal heroic adventures and create a collective quest story that is every bit as exciting as those in literature.

- *The quest story is not just limited to heroes. All of us, young and old, are on a quest in our lives and our activities mirror the elements of a quest.
- *What are the riddles and obstacles that must be overcome?
- *What strengths do your culture and family give you to meet and defeat those obstacles?
- *Who are those who help you along the way just when you need help the most?
- *How do your own personal strengths and abilities create a 'magic' that helps you solve problems and meet challenges on the journey of life?

I. Warm up exercises . . .

- A. Fortunately/Unfortunately
Participants form a circle. One member starts a story. Players continue to tell the story, alternating their beginning with the words "fortunately" or "unfortunately."
- B. Tell a story with different emotions
Players divide into teams. The leader assigns different emotions to each player or team, depending on level of participation. As they tell the story, the leader taps the person who will continue the story and they do so, using the emotion that has been assigned.
- C. Exploring words with the body
 1. Players walk around the room, responding with their bodies to words called out by the leader.
 2. Teams create statues of words called out by leader.

II. Creating a of a quest story:

A. Elements of a Quest story (Discussion):

1. WHAT – the goal of the quest, the thing you want
2. WHERE – change your own circumstances to a magical land
3. WHO – The characters that populate your story
4. HOW – getting past what stands in your way – (conflict and resolution)
5. WHY – what will be better at the end\

B. Example – Discuss the model and gradually bring it to life, selecting students to represent each character.

1. WHAT – Establishing the GOAL - Justin WANTS to go to a Summer Astronaut Camp but there are problems.
2. WHERE – the Kingdom of Justin's Backyard - If Justin can get across the back yard, he'll get to go to camp. Talk about things in a typical or unusual back yard.
3. WHO & HOW –Understanding and Overcoming the OBSTACLES –
WHO or what are the obstacles? Perhaps in this case they are Money, Friends and Mom.
WHO or what helps Justin get past each obstacle?
HOW do they solve the problem or what do they give him to help long his way?
 - a. Suggest CHARACTERS that might give help along the way.
These might include:
 - i. Someone who is human. This can be anyone from a leader in your students' lives or our world (for example – a wonderful aunt or Mother Teresa or Hannah Montana). This help could also easily be multigenerational. The group may assign a special attribute, superpower, or magical item to this person.
 - ii A pet or animal; preferably real, but maybe fictional. This creature may be assigned a super power such as speaking, flying, reading minds, etc.
 - iii. Someone from your students' culture (discussion). What can they draw from their own cultures that can help them and Justin?
 - b. Face each obstacle – Personify and overcome
 - i The first obstacle is money. Personify money as an OGRE OF MONEY (WHO). Ask students who or what could help? Maybe Justin has a rich aunt (WHO) who flies in and happens to have an 'Enlarger' which she can use on his wallet? (HOW)

iii. The next obstacle is friends. Perhaps they don't want Justin to go. They circle him telling of the fun to be had at home. They can be personified as the CIRCLING FLIES OF DISTRACTING FRIENDS (HOW). What can be used against them? Perhaps a Frog of Freedom (WHO), who is red, white and blue, parades and croaks very loudly, scaring away the Circling Flies.(HOW)

iii. The last, and biggest, obstacle is Mom, who could be called the MOMSTER. (WHO) How can Justin get past her? Could someone from his culture help out? How about his bagpipe playing Scottish Grandfather (WHO) playing a magical "tune of reasonable listening?" (HOW)

4. WHY? (the conclusion) Creating the OUTCOME – What is the happy ending? And why has it been an important lesson? Justin used help and skills to achieve a goal and become a well rounded individual.

5. Act out the story

6. Reflect on the elements of the quest story that the model has presented

C. Brainstorming a quest story (small group discussion and note taking)

Each group brainstorms a desired GOAL. From that discussion, the goal is chosen along with a MAIN CHARACTER who is seeking to achieve the goal. Players then brainstorm a list of OBSTACLES for the goal and choose two to three. The next step is to PERSONIFY THE OBSTACLES. Encourage students to make these "larger than life" (like Mom into Momster) The groups, then come up with persons, magical beings, and/or magical objects that can help the main character get past the obstacles and achieve his/her goal. Use the worksheet (*Appendix) to write down the important components of the story.

D. Show and share. Have each group perform their quest story. Talk about the ways in which the scene fulfills the definition of a quest story and have the entire group make suggestions of where else the story could go. Positive evaluative questions include:

What did you like?

What would you do differently if it were your scene?

Can you think of other solutions to the problems presented?

EXTENSIONS

A. To help students be more imaginative with their quest story, try the following two exercises:

1. Create magical items on index cards. Select personal attributes with the help of a guide sheet* (see appendix). Examine your own innate abilities; pick two personal attributes, personality gifts, or skills that you feel you possess. How can these help you in life? Write them on a card – they can be used by a character in your story.
2. Design or create two magic items from your choice; draw symbols on two index cards; list “powers” on the back of the cards.

B. Before the production of Spirit Horse:

1. Choose one quest element of Spirit Horse –for example, the girls are by themselves in the city and must decide how to get back.
Who can help them?
What magic do they possess to help themselves?
2. Create a large group scene based on the above questions . After seeing “Spirit Horse,” Compare the ideas you and your students had to what the playwright does in the play.

C. After the production discuss with your class how “Spirit Horse” meets the elements of a quest story.

D. To take the scenes to a larger, more mythic level, magnify the characters. Make them more like Harry Potter, Luke Skywalker, Frodo Baggins, etc. Discuss archetypes, mythology, and fairy tale elements with your students and create characters and obstacles based on those discussions; for example, characters who riddle, magic doors, enchanted forests, Sirens, tribes of Orcs and goblins, etc.

E. Other ideas:

APPENDIX – GUIDE SHEET

GUIDE SHEET TO ACTING QUEST STORY:

GOAL:

(WHO)_____ wants
main character

(WHAT) _____?
object of the quest

WHERE: (describe a cool location)

OBSTACLE #1 (WHO)_____

Is Overcome by
(WHO/WHAT)_____

How?

OBSTACLE #2 (WHO)_____

Is Overcome by
(WHO/WHAT)_____

How?

OBSTACLE #3 (WHO)_____

Is Overcome by
(WHO/WHAT)_____

How?

HOW ARE THINGS BETTER NOW? (WHY)

APPENDIX - ATTRIBUTES

ATTRIBUTES WORKSHEET

Read through the following list. Circle any words that you feel describe you. Select from the suggested nouns below or use your own

Alertness	Creativity	Intuition	Self-Awareness	Wisdom
Attentiveness	Curiosity	Joy	Self-Esteem	
Awareness	Directions	Laughter	Sensitivity	
Beauty	Enthusiasm	Leadership	Serenity	
(Strong) beliefs	Endurance	Love	Stability	
Commitment	Friendliness	Nurturance	Supportiveness	
Compassion	Graciousness	Open-mindedness	Tolerance	
Consistency	Honesty	Peacefulness	Trust	
Confidence	Humor	Patience	Vision	
Courage	Independence	Security	Understanding	

Determining Your Talents and Abilities: Circle any words that feel right to you or add your own:

Accounting	Designing	Organizing	Supporting
Artistry	Encouraging	Painting	Teaching
Acting	Engineering	Performing	Training
Building	Fishing	Planning	Writing
Cooking	Healing	Plumbing	
Caring	Inspiring	Sculpting	Selling
Composing	Leading	Serving	Creating
Coordinating	Learning	Sharing	Gardening
Counseling	Listening	Singing	
Dancing	Managing	Studying	
Communicating	Nursing	Sporting Activities	

APPENDIX – CURRICULUM STANDARDS

CURRICULUM STANDARDS -

4-6th Grades

Standard 2 – Literature: The student responds to a variety of text.

Benchmark 1: The student uses literary concepts to interpret and respond to text.

2.1.1 ▲ identifies and describes *characters'* physical traits, and feelings, and explains reasons for characters' actions and the consequences of those actions.

2.1.2 ▲ identifies and describes the setting (e.g., environment, time of day or year, historical period, situation, place) of the story or literacy text.

2.1.3 ▲ identifies or describes the major conflict in a story and how it is resolved.

Standard 3 – Writing: The students write effectively for a variety of audiences, purposes, and contexts.

Benchmark 2: The student writes expository text using the writing process.

3.1.1 Chooses and writes 3.2.8 Uses a variety of prewriting strategies (E.g., webbing, brainstorming, listing, working in pairs or in cooperative groups).