

Childsplay Drama Frames

Teacher: Enza Giannone and John Clayton

Lesson Overview

In this lesson students will explore setting through a recreation of Valley Forge during the American Revolution. Students and teachers will take on the roles of George Washington, and soldiers of the Continental Army.

Length of Lesson: 45 minutes

Instructional Objectives:

- Students will gain a perspective of the hardship of the winter of 1777-1778 by:
 - Recreating elements of the setting in their classroom.
 - Taking on the roles of soldiers.
 - Exploring the historical significance of the American Revolution.

Drama Frame: Setting and Teacher-in-role/Structured Improvisation

Theatre: S1: C2: PO 101: Imagine and describe characters, their relationships, what they want and why. & PO 102. Sustain a scene using appropriate language or movement with the teacher role-playing or giving clues (e.g., from literature or students' personal experiences).

Reading: S1: C1: PO 6. Determine of all the aspects of the setting (e.g., time of day or year, historical period, place, situation) in a literary selection.

Supplies:

- Video of the real the American Revolution:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtb9W3mPVtE&feature=related>
- If teacher wants, students may use props and costume pieces to suggest the setting and characterization. However these can all be pantomimed/imagined.

Previous Knowledge/Preparation:

- Students will have read and discussed the American Revolution and information about the difficult winter at Valley Forge from 1777-1778

Instructional Plan:

Introduction "Character creation":

- Students will be asked to imagine that they have travelled through the classroom's time machine to 1777 and Valley Forge. When the lights are flickering this will mean the time machine is working and they can begin to pretend they are soldiers. This is a serious time in history and for this to work they will have to be serious and respectful of those who suffered through it. Today they will imagine they are the Continental Army living through the harsh winter of 1777 and they will make predictions about what it was like for the soldiers and the women who helped them. Enza and Mr. Clayton will also be imagining they are soldiers and George Washington. Mr. Clayton will be George Washington.



Warm-up “Getting into Character” (Enza):

- Students will be asked to imagine what the soldiers looked like, what they were wearing and what they might be holding. *They can also be asked to think of some ways to alter what they are wearing to look more like the soldiers (maybe roll up a pant leg, take off a shoe, etc. But this can become unmanageable so it’s up to the teacher in the moment what props and costume pieces to use).*
- Students will then be asked to create a statue of their soldier (Enza and Mr. Clayton will do this too). On a count of three they will say out loud in unison what their soldier is thinking.

Target Activity “Teacher in role/Structured Improvisation”:

- Enza will then flick the lights and everyone will come out of their frozen images and begin to pantomime movement led by Enza as soldier and Mr. Clayton as George Washington. Students will need to move about the room and should be told to be careful. This can be managed by asking students to imagine the desks are trees, rocks or other materials in the forests of Valley Forge they have to avoid for safety. Step-by-step, Enza and Mr. Clayton will lead the drama by asking the “soldiers” to first create the setting (*“Soldiers, let’s make camp where should our camp look like? Where should we go?” Remember men, protect yourself from this miserable cold weather, some of you will build log cabins, some will...? These answers should come from the kids*), then decide the actions performed in the setting (*“Ok now what should we do prepare our camp?”*). The soldiers will recreate Valley Forge by performing these actions and will be encouraged to add ideas to move the drama forward. If they get silly it’s ok to stop the drama for a moment or to ask in character: “Would the soldiers be laughing?” If there was an audience here would they believe us?” George Washington can walk through the camp giving orders or checking in on the soldiers.
- Enza as soldier will then introduce a bit of conflict by trying to convince the soldiers to retreat. She will improvise with the other soldiers about what they should do. After awhile, Mr. Clayton as George Washington will give an inspiring speech to convince the soldiers to stay because soon Frederick Wilhelm von Steuben will arrive and help him to teach the men to become strong soldiers who will win this revolution, *and don’t they want to be heroes!??*
- Eventually the drama will come to an end with either everyone agreeing to stay and fight or some staying and some leaving. Once the decision is made Enza will say: “Oh no! The time machine is calling us back, ok everyone brace yourself, it’s time to go back to 2012! Enza will convince everyone by starting to shake, flick the lights, encourage the kids to shake, and then say Welcome back!

Closure and Assessment/Writing Activity:

- What was it like for them to take on the role of people during the American Revolution?
- What did they notice about the way everyone responded to the soldier wanting to leave? What would they do if they had been there? Would they want to fight the war?
- Writing or drawing exercises: In role as their soldier character respond to what it was like to be in the terrible conditions at Valley Forge.