



Expressions Learning Arts Academy

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Reading: A Dramatic Approach

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Reading: A Dramatic Approach

Incorporating drama methods and techniques into the reading program encourages participation in group reading activities. Converting popular children's stories and fairytales into a dramatic format infuses the reading lesson with hands-on reasons for reading. Students become empowered as they see their reading brought to life by their classmates. Children are able to examine literary devices such as character, setting, mood and inflection as a means to an end. They are now responsible for becoming that character, interacting with the environment, setting the tone and determining the appropriate mood for the story.

Active participation in the reading and acting process involves students at a creativity level that engages them in traditional reading instruction without the traditional apprehension or complacency often associated with reading. It is not realistic to design every reading unit as a dramatic unit but once the process is learned by the students it is feasible to convert many stories into this format for a more active reading experience. Learners at a variety of reading levels will become involved in the process and master skills through repetition and practice as they work on their individual parts.

The teacher creates multi-level cooperative groups and can assign parts based on reading ability. Unlike a Reader's Theater activity, where students read from a script as they act, this active reading approach has some students acting out the story as it is read by others. This is done with the use of student-made props, sets, simple costumes, face paints, etc. Sound effects and background or theme music can also be included.

Whether working towards a finished product, as in a formal production, or just having fun with a favorite story or nursery rhyme, students bring the reading process to life. As children become personally involved with a story and make it their own creation, they naturally make connections to other stories. This would then open the door for children to start writing, casting and producing their own short plays and stories.

Three Little Pigs Reading Unit

Grade Level

This unit is designed for students grade K through 2

Time Needed

The teacher should plan on this unit taking up approximately ten 20-40 minute sessions for a two-week unit.

Goals

The main goal of this unit is to introduce an active reading approach that will advance student's reading fluency, comprehension and inflection through dramatic interpretation of a story. Further, students will gain experience working in cooperative groups to plan, review, read and present their part of the reading selection. Students will also become familiar with aspects of *drama techniques* such as *projection, staging, blocking, movement and gesture*.

Objectives

1. Students will move toward mastery in reading The Three Little Pigs from their Open Court Basal Reader. (Of course, any similarly appropriate story or fairy tale could be used within this format, from whatever series is available.)
2. Students will become familiar with plot, characters and sequence of events.
3. Students will become active participants in the re-telling of the story through reading and dramatization.

Materials

1. The Three Little Pigs, Open Court Basal Reader or similar substitute
2. Variety of versions of The Three Little Pigs (See reference links)
3. Dry erase board or chalk board (lesson two)
4. Story character pictures on cardstock or poster board (See resources)

Suggested Art Materials

1. cardboard boxes for houses and trees
2. coloured crepe paper streamers, wallpaper, for bricks and straw etc.
3. milk and bleach jugs for masks, felt, batting, elastic ribbon, markers
4. white glue, hot glue gun, glue sticks, masking and duct tape
5. paper bags, butcher paper, for stick house
6. various items for props, baskets, handkerchief, aprons, hats, etc.,
7. video camera (optional)

Lesson Plans

Lesson One: Introduce Unit

Ask students if anyone knows the story of The Three Little Pigs. Follow with a short discussion to assess prior knowledge of the story. Explain that this type of story (genre) is a folktale or fable and that it can be told many different ways by different cultures. Present several versions (bilingual if possible) of the story and make predictions of what will happen in the different versions. How are they

alike and different based on the title, cover and illustrations? Has anyone heard these versions before or different versions? Ask students to share their different versions from home if possible. Display many versions for children to read and explore during free reading time.

Lastly, show students the version of the story presented in their basal reader or which ever version you have with multiple copies. Explain that the class will be learning to read and act out the story of The Little Pigs. Read the selected version aloud using expression and emphasis.

Assessment:

Assessment is based on children’s responses during discussion. Make note of individual reaction to plans for reading and acting story, (for example, excitement, anxiety, indifference), and compare this to their reactions at the end of the unit.

Standards: LA.A.1.1.1, LA.A.1.4, LA.A.2.1.2, LA.C.1.1.1, LA.E.1.1.1

Lesson Two: Story Plan

Students recall the events of the past reading of The Three Little Pigs and complete a story plan based on four questions. (See resources: Let’s Write a Fairy Tale). Distribute storybooks for reference.

1. Who are the characters in the story?
2. Where does the story take place?
3. What is the problem?
4. What is the solution?

This can be done as a group activity on large chart paper, dry erase or chalkboard. The teacher calls on individuals to respond and dictates responses. Children complete their own story plan based on group discussion. Answers may vary.

Question One lends itself to having the children describes the characters and their habits and attitudes as well as physical attributes.

Question Two can be used to introduce the concept of *setting*. This lends itself to describe the *drama concept* of the *set*, which is where a scene in a play takes place. The set is used to create the atmosphere or environment and mood of a scene. This can be done with props, backdrops and lighting etc.

Question Three can be divided into two parts based on different perspectives. What problem did the pigs have? What was the wolf’s problem?

Question Four addresses the conclusion of the story. Was it a happy ending?

How could it have ended differently?

Assessment:

Individual story plans are reviewed for understanding, length of response and readability. Participation during discussion, critical thinking and problem solving skills should be noted. Illicit responses from all students, they should be familiar with story elements.

Standards: LA.A.2.1, LA.B.1.1.1, LA.B.1.1.2, LA.B.2.1.1, LA.E.1.1.2, LA.E.2.1.1

Lesson Three: Story Sequence

This is a comprehension lesson to develop the relationship among the events and ideas in the story. Students will recall the events of the story following a **First, Then, Next** and **Finally**, pattern. The teacher shows students cards that display characters and events in the story one at a time out of sequence. The pictures are placed on the chalkboard, out of sequence. The teacher explains that the students are to put the pictures in order of the events in the story. Help the students to understand that what happens in the story is known as the *plot*.

The teacher introduces the words, **First, Then, Next** and **Finally**, displayed on sentence strips. Students volunteer to place the pictures in the correct order of events. If the first student does not place the pictures in order then another volunteer is called. Student may work in pairs or threes. Next, the teacher places the pictures out of sequence once more. The teacher asks the students how the story would be different in this sequence and how the outcome would change. Repeat the process a few more times having students recount the events in the story using the key words **First, Then, Next** and **Finally**.

Assessment:

Observe student's participation for understanding of sequencing activity. Monitor speech for volume and audibility. For individual assessment, worksheets on predicting the outcome according to the sequence of events are completed. (See resources)

Standards: LA.1.1.2, LA.1.1.4, LA.A.1.1.2, LA.A.1.1.4, LA.C.3.1, LA.E.2.1.1.

Lesson Four: Whole class reads /Key words / Comprehension

Prepare students for reading the story out loud by reviewing key words: **bricks, sticks, fortune, blew, straw, load, wolf, along, first, second, third, etc.**

Tell the students they will take turns reading aloud. Ask the students to follow along as others read because they will be trying to locate the **beginning, middle** and **end** of the story. Also, remind them that they are looking for parts of the

story that can be *blocked* into *scenes* for their *dramatization* of the story.

Have the students begin reading the selected version you plan to use for the dramatization. Remind students to use picture and context clues when reading. Pause during reading to suggest and discuss where different scenes might occur.

Example: It is possible to divide this story into at least four scenes according to the story events and dialog. Involve the children in constructing an outline on chart paper or dry erase board, based on their reading and discussion.

Scene 1: 3 Pigs say good bye to Mama pig, 1st pig meets straw seller, wolf visits straw house

Scene 2: 2nd pig and stick seller, wolf visits stick house

Scene 3: 3rd pig and brick seller, wolf visits brick house 1st attempt

Scene 4: Wolf and 3rd pig try to out due one another, wolf in the pot.

After completing chart activity and reading, have students complete comprehension worksheet to practice writing, reading and responding to related reading. (See resources)

Assessment:

Monitor reading and note frequent miscues. Review comprehension sheet aloud with the class to check understanding and accuracy. Compare fluency, expression and interest in participation to traditional reading to reading during dramatization.

Standards: LA.A.1.1.2, LA.A1.1.3, LA.C.1.1.4, LA.D.2.1.2, LA.E.2.1.2, TH.A.2.1.1

Lesson Five: Scenes/ groups/ sets

The children assigned to each scene or group will act, read and create materials for their scene. Explain that the roles are interchangeable within each scene and that everyone will get a turn to be each character **and** to read the parts. Refer to the *Scene blocking* chart made previously. Have children recall the **beginning**, **middle** and **end** of the story. Record this with brackets on the side of the chart. Finalize scenes and allocate page numbers for each scene. Teacher assigns cooperative groups of mixed reading ability for each scene. Have students break into to their groups and read through their scene several times.

Pass out drawing paper for students to start planning their scene(*costume, characters and set design*). Rotate between groups to check progress and give

suggestions, make sure group members allow input from all members, although group leaders will emerge naturally.

Assessment:

Monitor participation in reading and group planning.

Standards: LA.A.1.1.2, LA.A1.1.3, LA.A.1.1.4, LA.B.2.1.2, LA.C.1.1.1, LA.C.1.1.3, LA.C.1.1.4

Lesson Six - Eight: Set design, Props, Costumes, ‘Read Throughs’

Spend time having children design the props for their scene. Ask them what they need for the beginning, middle and end of their scene. Three scenes require a different house, the last scene could work on the chimney of the brick house or trees in the forests etc. (See suggested Art materials list.) Houses can be any size and shape, free standing or propped up with a support. Do they need a doors or windows? Allow children to create what they see within their scene. Houses do not have to be uniform.

Each pig needs a mask as well as the wolf, (What could you use for a tail?) For our masks we used milk jugs for the pigs cut so the jug opening was the snout and the top 1/4 of the jug was the face. This was covered with pink felt using hot glue. Eyes were cut out and outlined with black marker. The ears were cut out of felt, put over cardboard and attached to the top. Elastic was used to secure the back. For the wolf we used a bleach bottle, cutting the top to make the long nose, then covering it with batting colored brown and black for features. A parent volunteer could easily help each group construct their mask. Make sure it will fit everyone in the group and that the plastic does not have any rough edges. Help children to plan and make necessary props: baskets for the straw seller with straw house material, cooking pot (Where’s that Halloween cauldron?), Mother Pig’s handkerchief, etc.

Read Throughs are conducted when actors read through their parts from the script acting their part as they read. Reading with emphasis and feeling requires that children understand the motivation of their character. It also requires a considerable degree of reading fluency. This is developed through continuous work with their individual scene. Take a break from set designing to do a whole group read through to see how individual groups are progressing.

Ask questions about the character’s feeling to help children discover the way to *act out* their scene as they read. For example, at the beginning how should the mother pig sound? How do you think she feels having her sons leave her? What clues does the story give to her feelings? What actions could accompany her feelings? What about body language? Ask children how they feel when someone leaves? How do they think their mom or dad feels when they go away

to visit someone? What do they do? Do they wave, give a hug, blow a kiss, etc.

During another session, join small groups during their read through to help individuals with their scene and character development. Notice that reading rates are improving, groups should have settled into working units, make cast changes only if necessary. Attendance during this part of the unit is important. Encourage participation with a parent letter explaining the activity and inviting them to a final performance, giving parents an opportunity to see their children enjoying the learning process. Videotapes could also be made available for purchase or check out from classroom library.

Assessment:

Individual assessment is based on observable reading progress. At this point in the unit struggling readers are gaining fluency and fluent readers are working on expressive reading. How each child falls along the continuum can be measured by using a checklist and individual conferences. Try to make at least one anecdotal observation of each child during the set making and read through process. Make note of each child's role and participation within their small group. This reading unit works for many types of learners because they are able to be more active, work together and use art and creative movement to express themselves.

Staying on task may be difficult for some that are not used to so much activity but they must be redirected and assigned specific tasks by the teacher if needed. The focus is on teamwork and collaboration. Each member must feel responsible for the success of the group and the class as a whole. Specific and familiar consequences must be in place for off task and inappropriate behavior. No one will benefit from this lesson format if it becomes a *free for all*. Conversely too much structure will limit the creative process. Teachers are not likely to repeat a more flexible approach if it becomes stressful. Have clear expectations and rules in place for this portion of the unit, which is more child centered and less teacher directed. Volunteers would be very helpful to assist children with set construction, reading and or management.

Standards: LA.A.1.1.2, LA.A.1.1.3, LA.A.1.1.4, LA.C.1.1.1, LA.C.1.1.4, LA.C.2.1.2, LA.C.3.1.1, LA.C.3.1.2, LA.C.3.1.3., LA.C.3.1.4, LA.D.2.1.1, LA.D.2.1.2, LA.E.1.1.1, LA.E.1.1.2, LA.E.2.1.1, LA.E.2.1.2
TH.A.2.1.1 TH.A.2.1.1 TH.E.1.1.3

Lesson Nine: Dress rehearsal/ Trading places

It is now time to bring the groups together to demonstrate their work. Have small groups meet to finalize any details of their scene and gather their materials. Tell them they will be doing a dress rehearsal or final practice of their scene, along with the other groups to tell the story of The Three Little Pigs. Each scene has

approximately two readers and two actors; once one pair has read or acted, then the other pair takes their turn.

Determine the area you will use for the performance. Have each group watch and listen as you work with the other group to *stage* the scene. Who enters first and where do they stop? When do you set up the house? Which side will the wolf enter from how everyone go off stage or do you want to stay in the background while others do their scene? Children who are going to read first sit in front of the stage area. They must read slowly and clearly, with emphasis *projecting* their voices. Projection is more than loudness it is speaking distinctly and clearly in order to be understood.

The teacher may want to do a brief introduction to set the stage or select a student to give the title and author for the story. Begin reading the story and have each scene presented in order. Children may need to switch masks or change props, create an area that is “backstage” or apart from the readers that can be used for this purpose. The teacher should be ready to assist readers if they get confused or lose their place. The tendency is for them to read faster than the actors have time to act. Use this practice time to fine tune these moments so the actors follow the story line as much as possible.

When the story is finished, take time to discuss the experience. Criticism should be positive and helpful. If time allows do it again having the readers and actors from each group trade places, if not do it in your next session. Dress rehearsals are a fun and meaningful learning experience.

Assessment:

The connection between drama and reading is evident as the active reading process takes form. Continue noting the children’s progress with the story. How have their attitudes changed toward reading? Observe how the creative process has evolved in each reader/ actor.

Once both groups have traded places, have a class meeting to discuss the active reading process and allow students to give you and each other feedback. What did you like or dislike? What was your favorite part? What could we do differently next time? Would you like to do this again? These questions are also great for personal teacher reflection.

Standards: LA.C.1.1.1, LA.D.1.1.1, LA.D.2.1.1, LA.D.2.1.2, TH.E.1.1.3

Lesson Ten : Performance (Optional, but fun!)

Invite another class or grade to watch your dramatization. Invite parents and other staff and family members if possible. The children will do their very best

work in front of others and it is a joy to see them display their talents. Don't forget to videotape.

Culminate the event with a **'Pig-Out' Cast Party** including pigs in a blanket (vegetarian of course), pig face cupcakes, Mama Pig's famous fruit punch, wolf crispy treats made with coca crispys, peanut butter and wolf jelly sandwiches made by Little Red Riding Hood herself, etc. Parents and children could have a lot of fun with this party idea.

Extensions

Science

Students can learn about wolves, their habitats and why they are on the endangered list. Are pigs smart? Where do pigs live in the wild? Do they make good pets? Are they really dirty? Students can investigate the different houses animals construct for themselves. Some animals build nests, dig burrows lives in caves or trees, etc.

Social Studies

Children could investigate the houses in their own neighborhood. How are the houses constructed? What makes a house strong and secure? You could talk about storm and weather safety or even home security if appropriate. Children could extend their exploration to houses around the world. What materials are needed? How are different houses suited to their unique environments?

Math

Students could measure and build their own model houses from a blueprint. Use recycled materials. The houses could be used as sets with puppets to create another story dramatization.

Language Arts

Encourage children to write their own fairy tales; develop characters, story plan and events. Publish fairy tales for a classroom collection. Have different students or groups work on the same story creating different versions to compare and contrast. Others could act out the students' tales with the direction of the author. Traditional fairy tales and rhymes could be learned and acted out in small groups or done as a monologue. These could also be changed by the students and adapted, for example substituting names in fairy tales with student names. Have fun! Keep those creative juices flowing.

References

Adams, M. A. (2000). Open Court Reading. Columbus: SRA/ McGraw-Hill Company.

Burn, Roe, Ross (1999). Teaching Reading in Today's Elementary Schools, 7th Ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Calfee, R. C. (200?). A Primary Directed Writing Program: Let's Write a Fairy Tale. Columbus, OH: Zaner-Bloser, Inc. (Included)

Suggested Reference Links

McCullough, L. E. (1997). Play's from Fairy Tales. Lyme, NH: Smith and Kraus.

Jalango, M. R. (1993). Creativity in the Early Childhood Curriculum. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Ommanney, K. A. (1982). The Stage and the School. Columbus, OH: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Children Literature Links

The Three Little Pigs by Caroline Bucknall
The Three Little Pigs by Paul Galdone
The Three Little Pigs retold and illustrated by David McPhail
The Three Little Pigs: An old Story by Margot Zemach By John Scieszka
The Three Little Pigs retold and illustrated by Steven Kellogg
“Brer Wolf and the Three Pigs” in *Further Tales of Uncle Remus* by Julius Lester
The True Story of the Three Little Pigs
The Three Pigs by David Wiesner
The Three Little Hawaiian Pigs and the Magic Shark by Donivee Martin Laird

Audio/ Video Links

Kaplan, c. and Becker, S. (1987) Three Piggy Opera. St Louise, Missouri: Milikin