

Title: The Character of a Place

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Subject Area/ Grade: Theater/ 11th & 12th Grade

Students will perform tasks and activities focused on revealing “the character of a place”, leading to a greater understanding of the environment’s impact on world-building and character-building onstage. The project culminates in a performance or presentation of an independent project that creatively synthesizes individual work on a chosen place (e.g., writing/ performing short play/ video about said place, bringing the class on a virtual or onsite tour, designing a mise-en-scene to reproduce or improve upon the “character” of the place, creating a site-specific performance project or art installation).

Goals

- Students will perform various tasks and activities focused on revealing “the character of a place”, leading to a greater understanding of environment’s impact on world-building and character-building onstage.
- Students will gain practice devising work based on source material from outside theatrical texts.
- Unit culminates in the performance or presentation of an independent project that creatively synthesizes individual work on study of a chosen place (eg writing/performing short play/video about said place, bringing the class on a tour (in the classroom or on site), designing a mise-en-scene that seeks to reproduce or improve upon the “character” of the place, creating a site-specific performance project or art installation - concept or actual project depending on circumstances, writing/performing a piece of original music, etc.).

Content Area and Standards

- Generate and Conceptualize ideas and work
- Organize and Develop ideas and work
- Synthesize and Relate knowledge and personal experience to make art
- Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding
- Refine and Complete artistic work

Activity

Session 1: After an introductory session on environment and character, students will choose a particular place in their lives that is of interest to them or has significance.

Students will be given notebooks and an initial worksheet to make observations about their place (characteristics of the place and also their own emotional responses.)

Session 2: Students take classmates on a “tour” of their place, describing the surroundings and noting particular “landmarks”. Students must make clear the time of day and the circumstances for the tour.

Before the next session, students will be asked to bring in an “artifact” from the place. This can be an object from the site, an article/documentary material about the place, a photograph, an interview with someone they encountered there etc.

Session 3: Students share their “artifacts” with the class. Students share/workshop initial ideas for their project with me or the class - depending on how they feel comfortable.

Before the next session students are asked to write a short monologue from the perspective of the place (a first person account of what it is like to be the place). We will use the guidelines from the “Step Inside” reading.

Session 4: Students will share their monologues with the class. Before the next session, students will revisit their site with a partner from the class. The students will work together on their projects and peer review work after both have experienced the other’s chosen place (complete worksheet for peer review).

Session 5: Students will create a mise-en-scene that illustrates how their site could be translated to the stage. They will create three different versions of their place - one realistic, one abstract, and one idealistic. The class will share their work in small groups.

Before the next session, students will work to finish their projects and coordinate with me about how they would like to present/perform and what I can do to facilitate their project.

Session 6: Student presentations of their work (either on site or in the classroom depending on location and feasibility). Students will be asked to field questions from the class post-performance/presentation.

At the end of each session, we will do a check-in on the progress of the project and workshop/brainstorm ideas. The final project may include any work from the sessions leading up to the presentation or performance.

Joy2Learn Artists /Videos that Support Project

- Richard Serra - Confusing Questions

- Gregory Hines - Improvography
- Frank Gehry - Designing, Bilbao, Concept to Completion

Art Forms that May Be Included

- Visual Arts and Design
- Performance
- Playwriting/Monologue Writing
- Music or Videography as options for final project

Connections to Students Passion Areas and Interests

Students will choose a place/space that holds particular meaning or is of interest to them and they will center their research and project on it. Students will also get to choose the media through which to share their project/performance/presentation with the class (writing, performing, drawing, powerpoint presentation, musical performance, etc.)

Materials Needed

Anything at the students' disposal with relevance to the project. Clipboards and paper or notebooks for recording research and ideas (in the form of drawings and writings).

Assessment

- Participation in the majority of class exercises/activities
- Support and respect for classmates in workshops/brainstorming sessions/performances
- Communication with instructor in re: final project
- Research and Ideation for project
- Willingness to take artistic risks

Timeline

6 weeks (meeting one period a week)

