

Using Devised Theatre Methods In The Classroom

The Greensboro Sit-Ins



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Definition

Devised theatre (also called collaborative creation) is a form of theatre where the script originates not from a writer or writers, but from collaborative, usually improvisatory, work by a group of people (usually, but not necessarily, the performers). By the time a devised piece presents itself to the public, it usually has a fixed form: the improvisation is confined to the creation process, and either a writer, a director, or the performers themselves, will have decided exactly what is to be included and the running sequence. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devised_theatre

Objective

To use Arts Integration for the purpose of arousing curiosity in students.

This workshop has been designed to illustrate how devised theatre creators work. It also offers a method for exciting curiosity and making connections between Theatre Arts and Social Studies curricula. (The model may also be used with any curricula including - Math, Science, Language Arts, Healthful Living.) Curiosity is a driving force in pursuing knowledge. Arranging lessons and materials to inspire students' curiosity is a powerful educational tool. Students employ 21st Century Skills to investigate materials. The result is an interactive lesson which creates empathy and validates student contributions to the learning process.

Philosophy

When we grow weary of the way things are, it is important to question why, and look for a better way. As guides, we must empower students to ask the difficult questions and to struggle with the answers until they are accessible and applicable. The lesson will always only be what the student makes of it.

Our students are not just our future, they are our present. Our young people's ideas must be honored. Their point-of-view is valuable. Allowing participation and validation in the devised theatre lesson plan avoids their disenfranchisement. Enhancing intuitive skills and exciting curiosity leads to the tools, the knowledge, the vision and the voice students need to question and find answers to our global issues and concerns.

Goals

The goals of this workshop are

- 1) To prepare teachers to use Arts Integration in the classroom.
- 2) To demonstrate how devised theatre is created.
- 3) To model effective teaching practices integrating Theatre Arts and Core Curriculum.
- 4) To use teaching strategies that help students develop imagination, creativity, critical thinking skills to be perceptive, solve problems and take constructive action – 21st century skills.

Materials

After choosing the subject matter, collect the following related materials...

- Props (Optional) - You may wish to use 0, 1, 2, or 3 simple, symbolic props. I.e: chair, table, signs.
- Music or sound (may be recorded speeches or interviews). Choose music from the time-period that has lyrics that reflect the emotions or facts of the event. Consider radio or television news reports, commercials, recorded interviews and speeches.
- Images and fine art. Choose images from the event that evoke conflict, emotion, and action. There may be fine art from the period or later that represents the event.
- Quotes, Text. Choose quotes that reflect multiple points of view. Text can be from news stories, or interviews. Consider fragments and interjections to help suggest the tone and mood of the event.

The search for related materials is fun and can be distracting. You will find much more than you need, but it allows students to use their 21st Century Skills when they edit what you have provided. Allow students to make their own choices about the materials they want to use, juxtapose, and combine to create the drama.

Sources for materials may include: iTunes, YouTube, Flickr, WikiMedia Commons, the library, digital libraries, newspapers, magazines, books, etc. Please follow copyright laws for educational use.

Procedures

1. Starting with a clean space, add up to 3 simple, symbolic props.
2. Add music and sound. Invite students into the space without revealing the lesson. Allow them to just “be” in the environment with no instruction. Allow students to create meaning from their personal experience of the environment.

3. Now add images and fine art. Distribute printed images around the space, you may also use a powerpoint presentation to project images. If students do not take the initiative to walk around and explore the images, give them instruction to do so.
4. Layer in Quotes and Text. Distribute printed quotes and news articles around the space. You may also use a powerpoint presentation to project the quotes and news articles. If students do not take the initiative to walk around and explore the texts, give them instruction to do so.
5. While students look at the images, Quotes and Text, instruct the students to answer silently to themselves or to write the answers to the following questions...
 - What do you see?
 - What do you hear?
 - How do you feel?
 - What's going on?
 - What's the time period?
 - What led to it?
 - Who cares?
 - What difference does it make?
 - Does anything in this event remind you of something from your own life or today's current events? If so, what was the event? How is it similar? What connects the events?
 - Why did you wait for the instructor to tell you what to do?
 - Why did you do it?
 - (add your own, here.)
6. Ask students to carefully look at each image and choose one or more that attracts or repels them.
7. Ask students to carefully read each quote/text and choose one or more that attracts or repels them.
8. Ask students to arrange and consider the relationship between the image(s) and text(s) they have chosen.

9. Ask students to write a brief reflection on the sounds, images and texts they have experienced so far in this lesson.

10. Ask students to create a performance from their image, text, and reflection, using their breath, body, eyes, face, and voice to express the meaning they have created from this experience.



- “We are going to create a brief performance with the choices you've made.”
- “Please place the image and text back-to-back.”
- “Hold the image facing me, and the text facing you, so that you may read from your script, while displaying the image to the audience.”
- “Use your breath, body, eyes, face and voice in any way you wish to fully represent the meaning of your script.”
- “Choose your position on the stage. Consider creating a relationship to another person or prop.”
- “We will order the speakers by working from Stage Right to Stage Left as we perform.”

11. Allow students time to rehearse their choices. Instruct them to try different styles before settling on a final choice.

12. Perform the drama.

13. Classroom Discussion

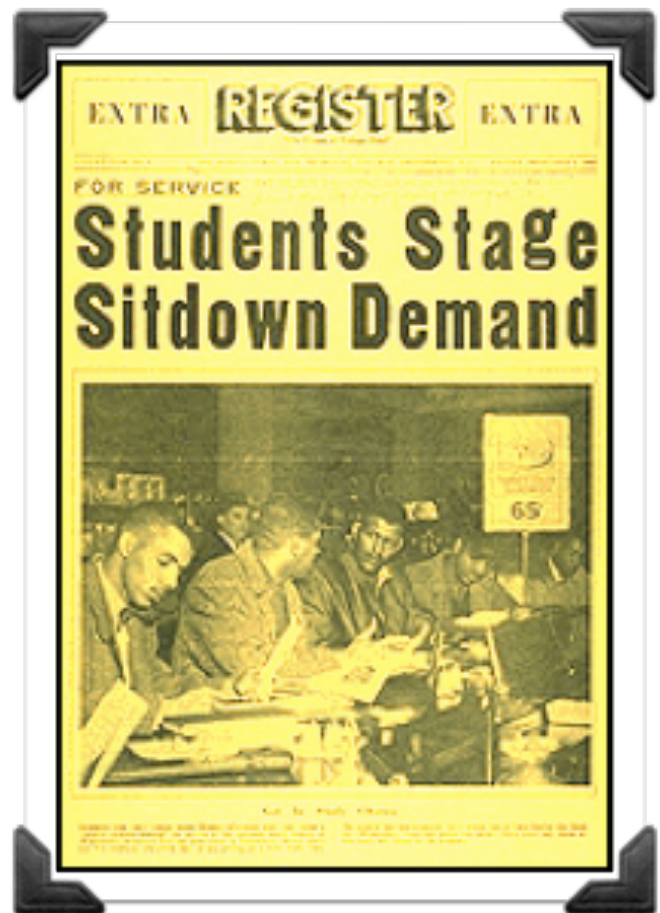
- Reveal the lesson. Fill in any information not gathered by students intuition based on their personal experience.

This particular lesson is about the Greensboro Sit-Ins, a civil-disobedience protest initiated by four A&T students in 1960 that resulted in the integration of the local Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, NC. The Greensboro Sit-Ins were part of a larger Civil Rights movement that included the Freedom Riders and the Montgomery Bus Boycotts.

On Monday, February 1, 1960, four freshmen who attended North Carolina A&T University held a lunch-counter sit-in at a Woolworth's variety store in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Blacks could buy school supplies and other items in that store, but were not allowed to eat at its lunch counter. When these four young men sat down at the lunch counter that day, the waitress refused to bring them the coffee and doughnuts they ordered. So they sat there until the store closed for the day.

All week, additional students joined the sit-in. By week's end, more than 300 had participated, including some white students. Crowds of angry segregationists participated, too, by harassing and shouting insults at the protestors.



TV and newspaper reporters showed up and did stories on the sit-ins. Word spread to other college campuses. Nonviolent student led sit-ins began to spring up elsewhere, first in other cities in North Carolina, then South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee and Florida.



By years end, more than 50,000 people in over 100 cities had participated in lunch-counter protests. Police had arrested about 3,000 protestors. The Greensboro Woolworth's reportedly lost \$200,000 worth of business during the sit-ins. In July 1960, that Woolworth's dropped Jim Crow and integrated its lunch counter. Soon other lunch counters did, too. The sit-ins showed the value of nonviolent protest, economic pressure, willingness to face arrest, media coverage and marshaling

the power of young people to change the world.

It's important to remember that the people who participated in the sit-in movements were students themselves. They were 17, 18, and 19 year olds who were willing to question authority to find liberty and justice for all.

- Invite Questions and provoke thoughtful discussion among the students based on the images and quotes used as resource material.
 - Why did you choose the image you chose?
 - Why did you choose the text you chose?
 - What is going on in the pictures where a smoker is exhaling into someone else's face?
 - How do you think the non-smoker feels?
- Apply the lesson to current events and students' personal experiences.
 - Are the events of the Greensboro Sit-Ins similar to modern day events like Occupy Wall Street? What do the protests have in common? How are they different?

- Think of a time when you did something to effect change in your life. Protest may occur in very subtle ways in our everyday life. What and how have you protested recently?

14. Extend The Lesson

- Mix the images and text and order to create another performance.
- Compare and contrast the performances.
- Did you notice new meaning in the images and quotes now that you know more about the event? What did you notice? How did it affect your understanding of the material? What kind of emotional connection did you make?

Sample Standards

National Education Standards Potential Connections

Fine Arts: Theater

[Na-t.9-12.1](#) Script writing by planning and improvising, writing and refining scripts based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history

[Na-t.9-12.5](#) Researching by finding information to support classroom dramatizations

Language Arts

[NL-ENG.K-12.3](#) EVALUATION STRATEGIES

Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

NL-ENG.K-12.7 EVALUATING DATA

Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

NL-ENG.K-12.11 PARTICIPATING IN SOCIETY

Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

NL-ENG.K-12.12 APPLYING LANGUAGE SKILLS

Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Social Sciences: US History**NSS-USH.5-12.9 ERA 9: POSTWAR UNITED STATES (1945 TO EARLY 1970s)**

- ^ Understands the struggle for racial and gender equality and the extension of civil liberties

NSS-USH.9-12.10 ERA 10: CONTEMPORARY UNITED STATES (1968 TO THE PRESENT)

- ^ Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in contemporary United States

**NC Standard Course of Study
Grades 9-12 Potential Connections**

THEATRE ARTS I

COMPETENCY GOAL 1: The learner will write based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history. (National Standard 1)

COMPETENCY GOAL 2: The learner will act by interacting in improvisations and assuming roles. (National Standard 2)

COMPETENCY GOAL 5: The learner will research by finding information to support informal or formal productions. (National Standard 5)

LANGUAGE ARTS**ENGLISH I**

Competency Goal 1: The learner will express reflections and reactions to print and non-print text and personal experiences.

Competency Goal 2: The learner will explain meaning, describe processes, and answer research questions to inform an audience.

ENGLISH II

Competency Goal 2: The learner will inform an audience by using a variety of media to research and explain insights into language and culture.

ENGLISH IV

Competency Goal 2: The learner will inform an audience by exploring general principles at work in life and literature.

Competency Goal 3: The learner will be prepared to enter issues of public concern as an advocate.

Competency Goal 4: The learner will analyze and critique texts from various perspectives and approaches.

SOCIAL STUDIES**9th Grade**

Competency Goal 6: Patterns of Social Order - The learner will investigate social and economic organization in various societies throughout time in order to understand the shifts in power and status that have occurred.

10th Grade

Competency Goal 10: The learner will develop, defend, and evaluate positions on issues regarding the personal responsibilities of citizens in the American constitutional democracy.

11th Grade

Competency Goal 11: Recovery, Prosperity, and Turmoil (1945-1980) - The learner will trace economic, political, and social developments and assess their significance for the lives of Americans during this time period.

Resources

History Channel - The Greensboro Sit In — <http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/the-greensboro-sit-in>. Website.

The North Carolina History Project, Greensboro Sit In — <http://northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/greensboro-sit-in/>. Website.

Learn, NC - The Greensboro Sit-In — <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-postwar/6014>. Website.

Songs of the Civil Rights Movement — <http://www.npr.org/2010/01/18/99315652/songs-of-the-civil-rights-movement> . Website.

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"Oh Freedom!." *Oh Freedom!*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Feb. 2012. <<http://africanamericanart.si.edu/index.php>>.

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A variation of this workshop was originally developed by Serena Ebhardt for the North Carolina Arts Council's Cartwheels program offering of Mike Wiley's The Parchman Hour.
www.mikewileyproductions.com