Object Stories: Oral Storytelling

By Teaching Artist Adele White
Middle School Curriculum

I. Outcomes: Students tell stories about their own objects with description and personal meaning.
   a. Indicators: Prompts for describing own object with detail.
      Prompts:
      What is THE object you chose?
      How would you describe your object to someone who knows nothing about it?
   b. Indicators: Prompts for supporting story and developing meaning.
      i. Students tell about the relationship between own object and self: time, place, or people.
      Prompts:
      What are the key parts of your story you have identified from the story map, photos and narrative you created?
      What is the beginning, middle and end of your story?
      What are the characters, setting, situation/event and resolution/solution of your story?
      Why are these parts important in the telling of your story?
      ii. Students identify the meaning associated with the object.
      Prompts:
      Why is it so important to have this particular object be the star of your story?
      What is the difference between writing your story and telling your story out loud?
      How did you decide what were the most important parts to include to tell your story out loud?

II. Big Idea: Objects of all kinds carry personal and cultural stories across time and place.

III. Materials: Tambourine

IV. Lesson:
   a. Opener- “Jump In – Jump Out Introduce Yourself” (15-20 min.)
      i. Students stand in a Focus Circle. This is a quick story about you.

      ii. Students learn the following rhythmical verse:
      “Jump in, jump out, turn yourself about,
      I said, jump in, jump out, introduce yourself.”
      My name is______________ (group responds, “yeah”)
      I like to______________ (group responds, “yeah”)
My favorite ___________ (group responds, “yeah”)
I want to ___________ (group responds, “yeah”)

- Teacher demonstrates several options.
- Students turn their backs to the circle and decide what to share in their quick story.
- When they are ready they turn around and put up a thumb.
- If they are unable to think of things, they can get help from neighbors.
- Every member of the group takes a turn.
- Last time around the group says “Jump in, jump out........we introduced ourselves”, and this ends the “quick story”

b. Procedure-
   i. Circle Sharing (20 min)
      a. Explain to the students that there are many ways to share a story. One is written (which they have done with their narratives) and another is telling a story out loud or “orally.” A great way to practice storytelling orally is to rehearse it many different times and different ways. Tell the students that they will now rehearse telling their story and listening to one another’s stories multiple times. Ask them:
         • What makes a good presenter?
         • What makes a good listener? (i.e. eye contact, reactions, clear voices, inflections, no eye rolling, etc. – The teaching artist will model good and not so good listening and presenting skills.)
      b. Have the students create two circles, one inside the other. Have one circle move clockwise and the other move counter clockwise. The students will be partners with their counterparts in the opposite circle. When they hear the tambourine sound they must stop telling their story wherever they are. They will then be instructed to either give feedback to their classmate or move to their next partner in the circle. Students may use Story Boards or other aids to remember their narrative. They will get the chance to work on the telling of their story four times:
         1. Warm up – “speak as your object and tell your story” – everyone at once.
            When they have finished ask them:
            • How it was to be the voice of their object?
            • Can they speak like their object?
            • Can they speak as different characters in their story?
            • What did they find useful in this first telling?
         2. Switch partners and “tell your story as you think it might be told in the booth” (no time limit.) When both partners
have finished telling their stories to each other, have them sit down and quietly listen to the other stories being told around them. Instruct them to not give any comments to their partner just yet. When all have finished ask them:

- What was it like to tell your story and have a time limit?
- What was it like to listen to your partner’s story?
- What gestures and different voices could you use to help tell the story?

3. “Tell it again with the two minute time limit.” When they are finished tell them this is the amount of time they will have in the recording booth. They must get their story told in that amount of time – not too long, not too short. Ask them to reflect on one another’s stories:

- What stood out to you in your classmate’s story?
- What would you like to hear more of?
- How could it be even better?

4.) “Now let’s try something crazy – switch partners and tell your story in 45 seconds!” When they are finished ask:

- What was that like?
- What could you use from that version?

Let them look over their Story Boards or notes and make any small changes if necessary. Guide them to take some deep breaths to focus and tell their story one last time for now.

c. “Take all you have learned from your practicing and attempt the “real version” of your story.” They will each have 2 minutes to tell their story to their partner. During this telling, encourage the students to note what discoveries they are making. With each telling, the students have the opportunity to find the best way to tell their story.

*Additional ideas for the different tellings (time permitting, if needed):

ii. Throw a ball back and forth and alternate lines of stories between partners

iii. Sit knee to knee and make eye contact

iv. Sit back to back

B. Closer- Students reflect on the session. (5min)

1. Leave the students to think about the following:

- The more you rehearse your story, the more comfortable you will feel in the telling of it.
- Remember you have two minutes to share your story
• Practice lots of times: at home for your parents, for the pets, on one another
• Rehearsal takes self discipline and only you know how much you need to practice.

II. Common Core Standards?: 6.W.3- Write Narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences (see Downloads for this activity.).
   A. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
   B. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.

My object is a football. It is redish-tanish and is shaped like a squash with a fat center. It’s really light and has a bunched of scales on it. My stepdad got it for me and it is my only football. He got it from a store last year for my birthday. When I am bored I have something to do. In the end it is not so boring. The reason it is my special object is because it is the first birthday present my stepdad got for me.