Object Stories: Theater Storytelling

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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: Tell me in detail about the object or objects you have in mind.

Indicators: Prompts for supporting story and developing meaning.
   i. Students tell about the relationship between own object and self: time, place, or people.
   Prompts: When, where, how and what other people or things were involved in the discovery of your object?

   ii. Students identify the significance associated with the object.
   Prompts: In your opinion, why is your object so valuable?

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

III. Materials:
   a. “Roll of Tape” object
   b. Teaching Artist object and story
   c. One Object Stories selection from www.objectstories.org/stories
   d. Story Map worksheets (see following pages)
   e. Tableau Checklist (see following pages)

IV. Lesson:
   a. Opener- This is Not a Roll of Tape:
      i. The teaching artist holds up a roll of tape and explains the she has an imagination challenge for the group. The object of the game is to transform the tape into something it is not. The only thing that it cannot be is roll of tape; anything else that is appropriate for school is okay. The goal of the game is to explain what the object is and to use it in the appropriate manner as the phrase “This is not a roll of tape, this is a ...” is spoken. For example, the teaching artist begins by saying “This is not a roll of tape this is my new, shiny camera.” Then the teaching artist takes a picture of a student with her “camera.” The teaching artist may ask for volunteers or challenge the group to see how quickly they can make it all the way around the room without repeating an object. Discuss what
choices students saw other people make that really helped them to see the object. (S)he transitions and explains the rules of Exploding Atom and starts students out with easy and introductory prompts. (5 min)

ii. Exploding Atom: The students are directed to physically place themselves according to their levels of agreement, disagreement and somewhere in the middle. The closer in to the cluster, means they strongly agree, the further out of the cluster, the more they disagree. A series of statements are read for them to place themselves based on their opinion and instigate discussion led by the facilitator. The statements transition into object stories brainstorming prompts to aid students to think about their object stories. The teaching artist engages students in conversation about their responses. The teaching artist uses the golden prompts indicated above. (10 min):

1. Sample Statements:
   - I love homework.
   - I love chocolate.
   - I think snakes are scary.
   - I cut crusts off my sandwiches.
   - I have been told a story.
   - I have told a story to others.
   - I have an important object that also has a story.
   - I have a place in mind that is significant to me.
   - I have a story about that place.
   - I have an object that makes me think about this place.
   - I have an object in my life that I use often.
   - I have an object that connects me to a family member.
   - I have an object that I’ve had for a long time.
   - I have an object that is handmade.
   - I can list the things that make up a good story (beg – introduces characters and setting, middle – reveals the situation or conflict, end – reveals the solution or closure.)
   - Telling stories to others is something I like to do.

iii. After exploding atom activity and discussion, the students are introduced to the Story Map and go over the parts of a story.

iv. Listening to a real Object Stories selection – play a real object story from www.objectstories.org/stories and the students will have to break it down to parts of a story based on the Story Map.

v. Activity: Tableau parts of a story:

Individuals, groups or partners create a ‘frozen’ image using their own bodies to crystallize a moment, idea or theme. Also know as ‘frozen pictures’ or ‘freeze frame’ or ‘image theatre,’ this technique can aid in story sequencing and development skill when groups are charged with creating 3 - 5 ‘frames’ (still images) that ‘tell’ the story.

1. Students are divided into groups of four or five (opportunity for creative division – divide by favorite season or favorite colors.) They are assigned two groups to beginning, two groups to middle and two groups to end to create tableaus to present.
2. The teaching artist discusses what a tableau is (doesn’t move, captures a moment in action using the body and face, strong point of view) and how to make one using the entire body. The teaching artist then discusses the reasons for engaging in tableau (i.e. highlighting the main points of the story, getting prepared to orally tell their stories, identifying the most important parts of the story.)

3. 2 Minute Challenge Tableaus
   - 30 seconds to Brainstorm ideas for what you’ll make (or you can just tell them)
   - 30 seconds to name what parts that picture would have
   - 30 seconds to decide who will be what part
   - 30 seconds to build the picture

   Often 30 seconds needs to become 1 minute, you give the steps one at a time and tell them not to move past talking about the step they are on. Also you may need to check to make sure everyone in a group gets to contribute emphasizing it’s not about being done first-it’s about discussing and deciding as a group.

4. The groups then create their assigned tableau scene based on the Object Stories selection they listened to.
   a. Beginning should demonstrate the setting (time & place) and characters (people and/or things) in their story.
   b. The Middle should reflect the situation or conflict (event or problem) in their story.
   c. The end should demonstrate the solution or resolution (how the problem was solved or event turned out) in their story.
      i. Students have an evaluation checklist before performance.

5. Students perform their group tableau for the class and the class uses visual analysis to discuss the tableau scenes. The tableaus help highlight the elements that make up the parts of a story (beg, mid, end.)

6. Independent practice: Hand out Story Maps. The students then record the parts of their story on the Story Map.

7. Independent practice: Students fill in their story on a Story Map worksheet. 10-15 min

8. Checking for understanding- After independent practice the teaching artist leads students in an exercise where they are asked to stand if they have certain parts of their story completed and share those sections of their story.

   A. Closer- Students share their object they have chosen for the project. In groups, in pair-share, in class discussion as time allows.
      i.

   Closer- Students share their object they have chosen for the project. (5 min) In group, in pair-share, in class discussion as time allows.
V. Assessments/Evidence:
   a. *Story Map* (contains evidence for: description, time, place, people, and significance)
   b. Tableau Checklist

VI. 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 more resources.)
   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.
Object Stories: Story Map Worksheet

Portland Art Museum Education
Middle School Curriculum

Author: _____________________  Teacher: ____________________

My object is: _____________________________________________

**Describe** its looks (color and shape), feel (texture and weight), smell and sound.

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________

Who are the people or things in your object?  When and where does the story your object take place?

_______________________  __________________________

_______________________  __________________________

_______________________  __________________________

_______________________  __________________________

_______________________  __________________________

_______________________  __________________________

_______________________  __________________________

These are your characters.  This is your setting.

In the story of your object, what **problem** or **event** takes place?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

This is your situation or conflict.

How does the **problem** or **event** turn out?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

This is your solution or resolution.

*Why is your object so important or significant to you?*

___________________________________________________________________________