

Human Stuff

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Story Analysis & Creative Writing

USE THIS LESSON TO: Prepare students to see *The Little Mermaid JR.*, or as an English Language Arts lesson for your cast before they begin working on the play.

TIME: 45 minutes

MATERIALS:

- Character Consciousness Worksheet (included)
- 3 large sheets of paper labeled A, B, and C respectively, hung in locations around the room
- Markers
- Mystery Scripts (included)

OBJECTIVES: Students will:

- Work independently, in small groups, and as a class to explore dialogue, plot, and character
- Learn how to analyze a piece of literature
- Understand literary conventions, such as objective, conflict and character
- Learn the skills necessary to be a good audience member
- Explore text through reading, writing, and performing

INTRODUCTION: (2 minutes) Today we are going to explore the concept of character. In movies, TV and theatre, actors speak words – or dialogue – that tell us things about their character’s personality, situation and objective. Let’s discover the clues in a piece of text that help actors bring their characters to life.

WARM-UP: (15 minutes) Detective Dramaturg

1. Count the students off into three groups: A, B and C. Ask each group to stand next to their corresponding sign.
2. Distribute the following Mystery Script to each group. Tell the students to read through the script once to themselves.
3. After everyone has finished reading, tell each group that they have been cast to play the role of the corresponding letter in the script. All those standing near the “A” sign will be character A, all those standing at the “B” sign will be character B, and those standing at the “C” sign will be character C.
4. Within their groups, ask the students to analyze the script and to write everything they can determine about their character on the large piece of paper. Do they know where their character is from? What is unusual about the way this character speaks? Are there clues as to their character’s age, gender, or personality? Give the class five minutes for this process.
5. Ask the groups to share a few of the things they have determined about their characters. Point out any assumptions that students make along the way to guide them through the analysis process. Ask questions like, “How do you know your character is male?” “Why do you think your character is excited?”

HOOK: (10 minutes) Character Consciousness

1. Distribute the Character Consciousness Worksheet to each student, and ask them to keep their paper upside-down. Tell them that the paper contains five questions. You will give the class 30 seconds to answer each question. Students must begin writing their response to each question when you say “go” and may not stop writing until you tell them too. Point out that spelling, grammar, and punctuation don’t matter here. This is “stream of consciousness” writing.
2. Give students 30 seconds to write their answers to each question.

MAIN ACTIVITY: (15 minutes) Places, please!

1. Divide your students into groups of three, ensuring there is one A, one B and one C from the warm-up activity in each group.
2. Working within their new groups, ask students to share their answers from their Character Consciousness Worksheet with each other.
3. Ask each group to pick one location and one relationship answer to work with for the remainder of the lesson.
4. Have each group stand up and rehearse the scene aloud with their new choices in mind.
5. Now, ask the groups to fill in the blanks and complete the last three lines of dialogue for their scene.
6. Each group should rehearse their scene one more time, making sure to practice the new ending.
7. Have each group share their scene, including the new ending, with the rest of the class. Encourage good audience etiquette and applaud each group's performance.

REFLECTION: (5 minutes) Dialogue

Engage the class in a discussion using these questions:

- What did you notice about the scenes we shared? Were there similarities? Differences?
- How did the script analysis inform your acting choices?
- How did the Character Consciousness activity influence the new lines you wrote?

Character Consciousness Worksheet

Answer the following questions based on your assigned character. Reference your Mystery Script to find clues. Some information may not be apparent in the text but can be inferred – and you can always use your imagination to fill in the gaps!

1. Who is your character?

2. What is your character's relationship to the other characters in the script?

3. What does your character want in this scene?

4. What is standing in your character's way and preventing him/her from getting what he/she wants?

5. What does your character do to get what he/she wants?

Mystery Script

A

You'll never guess what I found today. Look!

(lifts up a large silver serving fork)

Have you ever seen anything so wonderful in your entire life?

B

Wow! Cool! What is it?

A

I don't know... but I bet C will! Come on, I'll race you!

(With a splash, A hits the water.)

B

Hey, wait for me!

A

C!

C

(calling out to A in the distance)

A, how you doin' kid? Whoa! What a swim!

A

(waving the fork)

C, look what we found!

C

More human stuff, eh? Lemme see...

B

Can you tell us what it's for?

C

Wow! This is special. This is very, very... unusual.

A

C

B
