

Forum theatre



Week 1, lesson 2	Duration
Students will learn about the Theatre of the Oppressed by exploring the techniques of Augusto Boal's forum theatre.	75 minutes

Stage 4 outcomes	Stage 5 outcomes
A student:	A student:
4.1.4 explores a range of ways to structure dramatic work in collaboration with others.	5.1.4 explores, structures and refines ideas using dramatic forms, performance styles, dramatic techniques, theatrical conventions and technologies.
4.2.3 explores and uses aspects of dramatic forms, performance styles, theatrical conventions and technologies to create dramatic meaning.	5.2.3 employs a variety of dramatic forms, performance styles, dramatic techniques, theatrical conventions and technologies to create dramatic meaning.
4.3.2 recognises the function of drama and theatre in reflecting social and cultural aspects of human experience.	5.3.2 analyses the contemporary and historical contexts of drama.

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Element learning opportunities	
 Tension	 Focus

Lesson Body

Element learning opportunities	
 Movement	 Role and character
 Audience engagement	 Moment
 Time	 Place
 Dramatic meaning	

Introduction (15 minutes)

Briefly refresh students' knowledge of "The Theatre of the Oppressed" and introduce forum theatre (via the digital resources).

Forum theatre breaks down the boundary between performers and the audience by inviting them to be active participants in the action. Within forum theatre, a play outlining a form of oppression is performed twice. Members of the audience, or 'spect-actors', are invited to spontaneously stop the action and show how the protagonist could behave differently, enabling alternative outcomes. A Joker facilitates these interventions, allowing the creation of a dialogue on stage where the performance itself becomes a dynamic forum for debate. This role is a little bit like a director who comes on stage to run the show, but to also make sure the play continues in the right direction (no magic!) and to continue to get the audience discussing the situation... during and between different attempts to change the situation.

When this is done get everyone up for a warm-up.

Warm - up

A brief game to encourage playfulness and group interaction

- Each member of the class is given a number from one to six (depending on the size of the class)
- Tell them to get into number groups (all the one's together, all the two's together, etc.)
- Ask them to make four types of shapes: circle (holding hands in a circle), star (holding hands facing outwards in a circle and lean out), stretch (all reaching up and touching a point in the centre of a circle), scrum (in a circle, all lean in and place hands around each other's shoulders)
- Once they are familiar with these shapes, tell them to remember who they are with, this is their number group. Go to each group and give them letters (A to E) get them into new groups.
- Go through the shapes again in this new group. This is their letter group.
- Now call out random combinations. E.g.: 'Number Group Star!', 'Letter Group Scrum!', 'Letter Group Circle', etc. - make it a race to get their hearts started.



Main body (50 minutes)

Newspaper Headlines

Working in the groups they finish up in, the participants prepare a freeze frame of a dramatic scene showing a serious online conflict. They demonstrate the freeze and state the headline that goes with it.

Explain the three levels of conflict and bullying, latent, emerging and manifest and describe how conflict escalates through these stages to reach manifest:

- latent (where the conditions for conflict or bullying exist, but the parties are not consciously involved yet)
- emerging (where some but not all of the participants recognise conflict or bullying is taking place and are actively involved)
- manifest (where the conflict or bullying is clearly evident to all the participants and to outsiders and is being deliberately escalated).

The groups then prepare two more freeze frames, showing the latent and emerging stages to go with their manifest newspaper freeze. Each group performs the three freezes in sequence.

See the sample video in the online digital resource for demonstration purposes.

Show these images to the class for feedback and adjust where necessary.

Now taking each of these images as a starting point, improvise the scene that follows each.

Flesh out the characters and scenes, adding dialogue and movement until there is a realistic portrayal of the latent, emerging and manifest oppression.

Forum Theatre Rehearsal

Three scenes showing latent, emerging and manifest conflict with a break in time between each scene.

- Each scene begins and ends with a freeze.
- The joker introduces each scene with brief details about the characters, time and place (for the sake of necessity, the joker can also be a performer).

Performances

The three scenes of the play are performed twice.

The first time the play is performed straight through so that the audience becomes familiar with the plot, characters and the issue being explored.

After the first performance, the joker will ask for audience comment – what is the cause of the oppression? How can this be addressed? Is there more than one way to do this? Also, ask if they have any questions. They can ‘hot seat’ characters if required.

During the second performance, the audience can shout ‘STOP’ and is able to intervene, taking on the role of any character in the play to try modify or de-escalate the conflict or bullying that is occurring. The same part of a scene could be done several times if more than one spect-actor wish to try!



Conclusion (10 minutes)

Discuss and/or reflect

- What aspects of Boal's approach to theatre provides effective tools to use to provoke discussion and prompt change?
- How can this be applied to your digital footprint or online behaviour?
- If you were to create a piece of theatre on this issue, what techniques from this lesson would you use again?
- What's one thing you learnt today about Boal?



Differentiation

Extension	Life skills
Provocative question - Human's communicate in many ways. Why will human communication always be complex? Creative reading skills - During this unit, in consultation with the teacher, the student will select, read and provide a review on a relevant book. Creative listening skills - Students find and listen to a podcast that is relevant to the unit. They outline the narrative arc or structure of the podcast. Predicting is a higher order thinking skill that requires synthesis. Compose a hypothetical scenario depicting online conflict that could be employed in a Forum theatre exercise. The original scenario you suggest ends badly. Predict a number of alternative forum theatre endings that could be enacted to end well.	Many of the activities in this lesson will be accessible to Life Skills students. Depending on an individual student's particular profile however activities may need to be adjusted for example by offering further examples when explaining concepts ('forum theatre', 'spect-actor'). Scaffolding practical activities to a greater degree and breaking down steps to be followed until students are comfortable with accessing activities or concepts being covered may also be required. Content questioning can be mostly memory recall and reflection using Revised Bloom's Taxonomy. While many of the activities in this lesson will be accessible to Life Skills students depending on their particular profile and will need to be adjusted accordingly it will be necessary for the teacher at times to offer extra support by: • Providing concrete examples (eg: forum theatre: latent, emerging, manifest oppression to be found in a tv show, movie or a fictional context they are familiar with eg: Show White and her Step Mother: Jealous and resentful/ mean to Snow White/ arranges her murder) • Scaffold activities into very clear sequences and ask students to story board forum theatre shown in class with their own possible endings.

Reference list

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