

**LESSON 12:
MOVING TO THE POEMS OF ANGEL ISLAND****Objective**

Students will interpret a poem from Angel Island and express their interpretation of the poem through movement.

Grades

3-6

Time

Approximate length: 2 hours

Materials

Multiple copies of poem #32 (one per student), paper and pencil for each student, music for final movement phase of the unit. Optional: percussion instruments

Standards

California Language Arts Standards, California Performing Arts Standards

Procedure

Introduce this activity to your students. Students will be hearing one of the poems carved on the walls on Angel Island. Explain that they are going to experience poetry in an untraditional way, and that through drama they will gain not just an intellectual understanding of the poem, but will experience it in their bodies, hearts, and imaginations. After hearing the poem they will work in groups to come up with a movement or drama piece that expresses the feeling of the poem.

Physical and Vocal Warm-ups

Lead the group through a physical and vocal warm-up. Since students spend so much of their school day in their desks and in their heads, it is important, before doing any dramatic work, to get up, push back the desks, and stretch and breathe. They, and we, need to rediscover how our bodies work. (Do many, or all, of the following.)

Deep breaths: exhaling on a sustained, intense "hiss"

Body Warm-up: Head rolls, shoulder rolls, motions of "bird in flight," "bear hugging a tree," drop head, shoulders ribs, "hang over," roll up slowly, grow an inch, push through the grass, gather, swim, inflate from the feet, hang from a hook, shake it out

Facial Warm-up: Massage face in slow motion, then in fast motion, say "I have a BIG face" (make your face very big when you say it), say "I have a tiny, little face" (make your face tiny when you say it), put face in forehead (imagine/attempt to do just that!), put face in chin, right cheek, left cheek, nose, front teeth.

Vocal Warm-up: Deep breath, warm-up tongue, lips, sound from chest (Tarzan), mouth (chew), nose/eyes (siren, buzz), top of head (pigeon), tongue twisters: red leather, yellow leather, and the following phrases:

What a to do to die today at a minute or two to two.
A distinctly difficult thing to say and harder still to do.
For they'll beat a tattoo at a twenty to two
With a ra-ta-ta/ta-ta-ta/ta-ta-ta/too
And the dragon will come when they hear the drum
At a minute or two to two today. At a minute or two to two.

Neutral Walk with good posture, around the room, explore the space, find the corners and the middle of the room, get out of slumps, fill holes. Notice how your body moves. Pay attention to your shoulders, arms, chin, hips, feet. Speed up. Slow down. Freeze. Move with imperceptible movement. Note the difference.

Poem Interpretation

1. Distribute copies of poem #32, one per student.
2. Inform students as they listen to the poem to jot down lines that appeal to them for any reason, be it the sound of the line, the meaning of it, the emotion or idea it conveys, etc.
3. Slowly read the poem aloud to the class. When finished, ask students to select one favorite line and circle it.

Poem #32

Imprisoned in the wooden building day after day,
My freedom withheld; how can I bear to talk about it?
I look to see who is happy but they only sit quietly.
I am anxious and depressed and cannot fall asleep.
The days are long and the bottle constantly empty;
my sad mood, even so, is not dispelled.
Nights are long and the pillow cold; who can pity my loneliness?
After experiencing such loneliness and sorrow,
Why not just return home and learn to plow the fields?

Movement activities

1. Have students play "Pass the Clap." First, students form a circle. Have them clap together. "One, two, three, CLAP!" Practice a few times to loosen people up. Next, watch the person to your immediate right. When s/he claps, you clap next. This is like "the wave" done at sporting events stadiums. Concentrate and build speed. Pass the clap around the circle a few times. (Variations: jump up, raise arms)
2. Play "Pass the Line." Take the line from your list and say it with appropriate inflection and with a gesture. Person two will observe, and repeat, the line and gesture as done by

the first person. The third person flows and the line will be passed around the circle. Remember: Once the line begins to move around the circle, it can overlap like a wave. Each person does not have to wait until the person in front of them is done with the line and gesture. This prevents each person from being the center of attention, making it less threatening, saving time, and making the exercise more interesting.

3. After everyone has done this, choose a gesture for each line. Each person will say their line again, and every person will instantly, without thinking, make a statue or tableau of that line. They freeze until the teacher says to return to neutral position. While they are frozen, instruct them to look around the group with their eyes and observe the many other ways there are to physicalize the line.

Group tableaux

1. Divide the whole group into smaller teams of 4-6 participants. Important: Be sure that one or two responsible, cooperative students are grouped with the student(s) who lack impulse control. Distribute the different ranges of behavior evenly among the group.
2. Each group will review the lines of the poem you have chosen, decide a logical or meaningful order, and create a group tableau for each line. It may be literal or symbolic. The line must be spoken, either by an individual or more than one person. The tableau must be held for at least 5 seconds to give the audience time to observe and absorb its meaning. Then, smoothly transition to the next tableau. Variations on these instructions are allowed. Allow 8 to 10 minutes for groups to prepare.
3. Simultaneously, give all the groups time to rehearse their 4 to 6 tableaux in succession. Interrupt them after they've frozen into their first tableau and instruct them to double the energy, expression, and gesture. Encourage them to make bold, vibrant expressions to help the tableau be more effective in communicating meaning. Rehearse the series of tableaux several times.
4. Suggestions: In the group tableau work, all four people in the group may move in unison or divide the movements among participants as they see fit. Percussion instruments such as a drum, rattle, bell, or triangle could be played by the narrator to enhance the performance.

Final performance

1. Have groups sit in a circle or semi-circle so that they can all see each other.
2. Each group presents their tableaux in their places.
3. Next, each group presents their tableaux a second time. For this presentation, they present without speaking the lines; repeat gestures and transitions cycle several times, until the instructor stops them. Music is played in the background so that the tableaux are performed as a sequence of movement or dance.

4. All groups perform simultaneously to the music. The teacher may stop one group at a time to observe all the other groups performing simultaneously and then instruct that group to again join in the performance so that another group may observe.
5. Reflection: Ask students to reflect on their experience. What was the entire experience like? How did the drama work affect your understanding of the poem? What did you learn from participating and observing?

Assessment

Teachers can evaluate student learning through observation, dialogue, performance task, reflective writing upon returning to school (refer to journal prompts in lesson 6)

For the unit's culminating activity, a field trip to Angel Island could include a performance of Island Poem #32 on the grass or beside the monument near where the immigrants were detained.

Vocabulary

gesture	a movement of the body, head, arms, hands, or face that is expressive of an idea, opinion, or emotion
literal	following the words of the original very closely and exactly
symbolic	-serving as a symbol of something
tableau	a vivid or graphic description
statue	a sculpture representing a person or animal
physicalize	to express with the body

Source: Lai, Him Mark, Genny Lim and Judy Yung. *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980.

This drama activity was originally developed by and adapted with permission from Gerry Wiener, Drama Teacher, Alhambra High School, Martinez, CA

Special thanks to Sue Li-Jue, artistic director of Facing East Dance & Music (www.fedm.org) for her inspiration for this movement lesson.

Prepared by Jane Sheftel-Hara with the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Name _____ Date _____

Angel Island Poem #32

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