



EdTA Canada—New Drama Activities!

Alliteration with Movement

This is a fun getting to know you game. It can also be changed each day to make it a fun daily warm up. Invite everyone to stand in a circle. Explain that alliteration is the repetition of the first sound in a word. Next explain that each person will come up with a movement that starts with the first letter of their name. (Examples: Jennifer Jumps, Niko Nods, Sam Slithers, Petra Parties)

Part 1. One at a time, go around the circle. Each person says their name and does their movement, and the class repeats. Keep the pace moving along. If someone needs help, others can offer ideas. Once everyone has shared their name and movement, go around a few times quickly to solidify names and movements.

Part 2. Calling the Action- At this point one person begins by doing their own movement and then another person's movement. (No voices) That person then does their own movement and another person's movement. It can get going quickly and usually makes people laugh. This requires focus. (If they are really good you can even have 2 sets of movements going around the circle.)

Part 3. Pantomime Scenes-Divide the class into smaller groups. (3-5 people) Tell them they are now going to create a short, pantomimed scene using the movements of the people within their own group.

Their scene must have a beginning, middle, and end. It must involve all the players. Their movements should be clear to the audience but can represent something different. (For instance, if my move was washing windows, that could also look like waving.) Provide them with a setting such as a ski lodge, haunted house, or surprise party. They only need about 5 minutes to prepare their scenes. When everyone is ready, invite them to share with the class. After they share ask the audience if they could tell what was going on and if they identified the movements.

Part 4. If you want to continue with this framework, you might let them try their scenes again, but this time using just one word each or maybe adding dialogue.



JENGA

(A tableau game where everyone can play, inspired by the stacking blocks game, Jenga.)

Type: Tableau (Easy to use in lessons about history, music, math, language arts, etc., simply by proposing a theme.)

Age Group: Elementary and Up.

Set up: Open space with players either in a circle or sitting as audience.

Online Option: Players use their bodies in their own spaces to create tableaux.

How to Play!

1. Choose a STARTER and a DESTROYER.
2. Player 1 is the STARTER and enters the space and declares "I am a___" taking the shape of that thing with their body. (Examples: I am a shoe, I am lightening, I am hunger, I am America, I am friendship...)
3. Player 2 enters and builds on to that theme with another suggestion somehow associated with Player 1's offer. Continue this with all players except for the destroyer who will be last. (Example: Player 1- I am a nightmare. Player 2- I am a pillow. Player 3- I am a blanket. Player 4- I am fear...)
4. As you are creating one giant tableaux, side coach students to use levels, expression, share focus and take turns.
5. Once everyone has entered, the DESTROYER comes in with the offer that would set the whole thing crumbling. Everyone yells JENGA!

Examples:

A. I am a computer, I am a game, I am electricity, I am imagination, I am strategy, I am a controller, I am a kid... DESTROYER enters with "I am the mom saying it's time for bed!"

B. I am a present, I am a Christmas Tree, I am cookies, I am milk, I am a decoration, I am Santa...DESTROYER enters and offers "I am a child coming down the stairs and discovering Santa." Everyone yells JENGA!

Pet Show

Put students in pairs. One person is the pet owner. The other person is the pet. They decide what the pet will be, come up with a name and a trick. The owner leads the pet on, introduces her and the animal performs. Then they take turns! If you have one extra person, he can play the judge. He could judge the show, ask the owners questions about their pets and decide which pet is the winner.

What?

This is a vocal projection game. It works well because the students are coming up with their own dialogue, so they are simultaneously thinking about what to say and it takes the focus off of pressure to be louder. Two players onstage. One is a little old man who owns a candy store. The other is a customer. The customer enters, goes up to the counter and asks for a piece of candy. The little old man is hard of hearing, so he says "What?" The customer asks again, this time a little louder. The little old man says "What?" a little louder. This goes on three times, with both players becoming increasing louder, until finally, the old man says, "Oh, okay. Here you go." Then the customer becomes the little old man, and a new player enters the candy store. Students get to pick what candy they'd like. Encourage students to always choose something new-no repeats.

Customer: I'd like some peanut brittle please.

Little Old Man: What?

Customer: (a little louder) I'd like some peanut brittle please.

Little Old Man: (a little louder) What?

Customer: (loudest) I'd like some peanut brittle please!

Little Old Man: Oh, okay!

Or try this!

Hitchhiker Version-an old man stops to pick up a hitchhiker.

Old Man: Where you headed?

Hitchhiker: I'm going to Disneyland.

Old Man: (a little louder) Where you headed sonny?

Hitchhiker: (a little louder) I'm going to Disneyland.

Old Man: (loudest) Where's that you say?

Hitchhiker: (loudest) I'm going to Disneyland!

Old Man: Oh, hop in!

Disaster Version-One person walks up to an old man on the street.

Passerby: Excuse me, your house is on fire.

Old Man: What?

Passerby: (a little louder) Excuse me, your house is on fire.

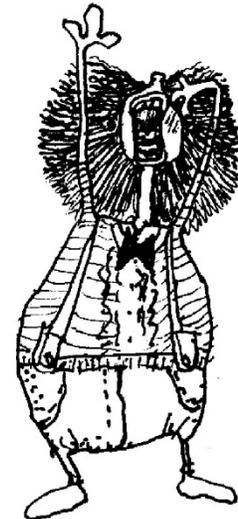
Old Man: (a little louder) What?

Passerby: (loudest) Old man, your house is on fire!

Old Man: Oh! Thank you!

Each player comes up with a new disaster. Outrageous ideas are allowed. (Examples: a storm is coming; your cat is choking; you're standing on a black hole; your pants fell down.)

Students Choice-Let the students come up with their own scenario.



Play a Story

Children love interactive storytelling. They feel proud and delighted to see their ideas come to life. This devising method will become part of your toolbox and can be used in a variety of ways and with any age. The **STORY CHART** not only helps you make up stories and plays with your students, it also builds literacy skills as children see written words, learn parts of speech, and practice storytelling.

How to Play!

1. Draw 3 vertical columns on a white board.
2. In the middle column, draw a HOUSE with a few stick people around it. This is a preposition house. Explain that prepositions describe position. Ask students, "Where can you be in relation to this house?" Children create the list of prepositions. Another option is to make the middle column a list of verbs.
3. The outer columns will contain headers that help form a title to a story. These can be based on your theme for the day, or ideas you'd like to introduce.
4. Children offer their suggestions for each column, filling up the chart.
5. Choose one word from each column forming a title for your story.
6. Explain that not all ideas will be used today, but they can always make up their stories own later.
7. Begin making up a story. Encourage children to share their ideas and use their bodies to show parts of the story. They can either move about the room as the story unfolds or stay in self-space.

Coffee Can Theatre

This is a fun way to create and play a collaborative story. It is filled with endless possibilities from simple storytelling to playwriting. While geared for early elementary, it can be modified for older students as well. Cover a coffee can with a collage of images. They can be random or specifically curated with a theme. (As an example, one can might be covered with images of an old lady, bicycle, ice cream cone, chicken, boy, bird cage, etc.) Inside the can place some small items. (Such as: treasure map, tiny flashlight, glasses, etc.) Gather students in a circle if possible. Let them see all the images. Invite them to tell you what they see and offer ideas about who these characters might be, where they might be, what they might be doing. Pull out one item and again ask them what it is and who it might belong to. You might place all the items in the center, or if you have enough, you might let everyone hold one item. At that point you might begin playing a story. With leading narration, invite the children to add to the story as it evolves. Or you might set them free and let them improvise.

Mystery Bag Theatre

Before class, full four to six paper grocery bags with random unrelated items such as: a bell; a flashlight; a cookie cutter; a cat toy. Each bag should have just a few random items in it. Divide students into small groups. They have fifteen minutes to write a skit using the items.

Garage Sale

Invite each participant to bring in an object they care about. Set up the stage with a few tables and place the objects on them. One person plays the seller and another person enters as a buyer. Have players improvise dialogue as the buyer enters the sale. When the buyer selects a random item to purchase, the seller goes into a lengthy (improvise) explanation of the history of that object and why it is important to him or her. The buyer ups the stakes, offering more money or other enticements. Ultimately, the seller decides that he/she doesn't want to sell it after all. The buyer then becomes the seller and another person enters the playing space as the buyer. Play until all participants have had the opportunity to be both buyer and seller.

Or try this!

Treasured Items Monologues

Ask students to write a one-minute monologue inspired by an item they've had since childhood. Give parameters such as length of the piece in pages or minutes, number of characters, specific location, etc. Teach students about 'dramatizing' their story. In other words, real-life stories can be interesting, but ask students to embellish their monologue by adding conflict, tension, interesting characters and a dramatic ending that leaves one or more characters transformed.

Award Ceremony

One player presents a (fictional) award to the next player who must improvise an acceptance speech. The acceptor then becomes the presenter! Give 'presenters' the option of coming up with their own award or drawing one from a hat. Awards may be funny or serious.

Examples of Serious Awards!

Pulitzer Prize
Nobel Peace Prize
Olympic Gold Medalist
Oscar Winner
Grammy Winner

Examples of Funny Awards!

Last Place in a Marathon
World's Oldest Bachelor/Bachelorette
Hairiest Person Alive
World's Worst Psychic
"Old Maid" Champion

Open House

A realtor 'shows a house' to a couple of prospective buyers. The realtor describes the house in great detail; the two buyers are given an obstacle or an attitude. For example: a realtor shows a mansion to a couple of thieves who are casing the joint!

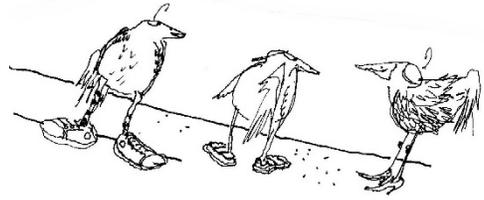
Headlines

(Full version of this game in 75 No-prep Lessons.)
Make a list of interesting headlines such as "Man Arrested for Stealing Burrito," and put them in a hat. Divide class into small groups and let each group draw a headline. Give students fifteen minutes to come up with a skit that tells the whole story. Encourage actors to be inventive! Students may also choose to act out their skit as a live news broadcast.



Actor's Nightmare

Two players onstage, one of which gets their lines on paper (like a script). The other player must respond by making up her lines. You can use existing plays for this, or use the printout provided on this website. Coach students to try to remember to stay in character and to actually 'act,' rather than just reading or improvising their lines.



Or try this!

Actor's Nightmare with Poems

Instead of scripts, use simple poems for younger students. Students make up the next rhyming line.

Keys to the Car

The instructor can act as the 'parent' and sit at center. The objective is to get the keys to the car. One at a time each student must try a different tactic to convince the 'parent' to let them have the keys. This is a favorite of both elementary and high school students. It's low risk because they don't feel like they are really 'acting.' It's fun to introduce this game without having a visible list of tactics.

Variation: The 'ask' can be for anything really. Will you go out with me? Can I have the job? Can I get a dog? With high schoolers it's fun to play where you are trying to win back a boyfriend/girlfriend. Tactics to consider: ask, beg, bargain, threaten, trick, sweet talk, hypnotize, annoy, etc.

Complaint Desk

One person will act as the employee who is at a customer service desk on one side of the stage. The other will be trying to return something to that store. It's easy to keep a safe social distance. The person who is going to return an item should leave the room for a moment and decide what they want to return. It can be anything real or imagined. (a baby, candle, invisible friend...) While the person is out of the room the rest of the group decides on a tactic the customer must employ in order for the worker to accept the item back. Invite the customer back into the class. They must continue trying different tactics until they get the right one. Tactics to try: ask, beg, bargain, threaten, sweet talk, bribe, hypnotize, annoy, guilt, etc.

Chef's Special (a version of the Eggs game)

Choose characters for a restaurant: Customer, Waiter, Cook. All others turn off cameras. The teacher is in role as a film director and sets the scene, "Okay everyone! Let's take it from the scene where the customer walks into the restaurant. Are we all ready? Lights, Camera, Action!" The actors play the scene in a 'normal' way. Following the scene, the director cuts the action and asks the audience for a different genre. The scene is then acted out 2 more times with different genres. The actors can adjust the dialogue, accents, foods etc... based on the genre. The dialogue goes something like this:

Waiter: Welcome to (*Host decides the name and type of the restaurant*).

Customer: Thank you. Table for 1 please.

Waiter: Right this way.

Customer: Can you tell me what the chef's special is today?

Waiter: Let me check. Hey Chef, what is the chef's special?

Chef: It's *(Chef decides)*
Waiter: It's _____.
Customer: That sounds delicious. I'll take that.
Waiter: One chef's special!
Cook: *(Pantomimes making the food, can whistle or talk as well.)* Order Up!
Waiter: Here you go.
Customer: Thank you. *(Begins to eat and dies in any fashion they choose. Host and Cook can react in any fashion they choose within each genre.)*
Director: Cut! Cut! That was terrible *(Or that was fair, that wasn't really what I was going for, etc.)* Now let's try it in a different genre, emotion, etc. *(Repeat scene for a total of 3 different ways.)*

Murder Mysteries

Students will have a blast with these murder mystery, or 'whodunnit' activities! (Like a murder mystery dinner party for kids and teens!) Each mystery includes: a scenario; cast list; extension activities; cast lists and descriptions; character worksheets; and detective checklists.

Want more great ideas and scripts?

Go to Script Library

Go to Lesson Library

