

Workshop for BCTLA Conference: Friday, October 23rd, 2015

Building a “Living Library” This hands-on workshop with author, educator and actor Lori Sherritt-Fleming actively models how participants can create a “Living Library”. We will bring characters, settings and history to life using simple and time sensitive drama, visual art and writing activities proven to engage student’s imaginations and get them hooked on books on a personal and long-term basis

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Resources: **Hungry for Math: Poems to Munch On** (By: Kari-Lynn Winters, Lori Sherritt-Fleming, Illustrated by Peggy Collins, Fitzhenry and Whiteside 2015)

-On Juno Beach, Canada’s D-Day Heros (By: Hugh Brewster, Scholastic 2004)

Purpose: to use drama to connect to story, characters and setting, improving literacy and comprehension skills. The following activities introduce some basic drama skills and can be used in any library setting. I usually clear a space so students can make a standing circle.

-Establishing parameters: Drama can be noisy and energetic. I find establishing some simple parameters at the beginning helps to make lessons a success. Mine are:

“Hands to yourself”: space is essential to telling a story using drama. Students should refrain from actually touching one another and keep space between them.

“Be appropriate”: use only gestures that are appropriate and respectful in a school setting, for example, no ‘guns’.

“Nobody gets hurt and nothing gets broken”: Move carefully and be in control of your body and words. Create an environment where everyone is comfortable taking risks.

Activities: The following activities introduce the concepts of using the body for storytelling as well as for connecting to characters. They use the theatrical ideas of EXTENSION (extending and exaggerating the body’s position), EXPRESSION (facial and body) AND LEVELS (high, medium and low). These can be built on and used in many additional activities to help create a living library.

* **Move Around the Room and Freeze!** This is a simple warm up. Everyone can do it! Beat a drum or play some music. When you bang 3 times or when the music stops, students freeze where they are. You can add movements associated with the

story or book such as: Now you're a dragon granny riding a scooter bike, or you're a dragon swimming in the toilet (to quote a certain book). Do **character walks**, first as you would normally, then add a character from a story ie. Grumpy from Snow White. Move like the characters. Keep them a secret and try to find your character groups based on the movement activity.

***Fill in the Space** is a drama warm-up game to introduce levels, extension and expression. Stand in a circle. Choose a pose that uses the extension, expression and levels. One person goes to the centre and poses. The person beside them then goes in and without touching the first person also takes a pose using a different level. The first person then leaves and the next person comes in until the whole circle has had an opportunity to participate. You can time this to make it more challenging by putting a time limit on it, seeing how quickly students can go around the circle. For a literacy strategy, have students fill in the space as characters in a story you are reading.

***One Word Story** Go around the circle and have each student add one word to a nonsense or themed story. You can use this as a comprehension tool as well to see how well students retained information in the story.

***Speaking Objects**_Create a tableau that features the main character, perhaps at a time in the story where he/she is at a crossroads. Ask students to step in and become one of the objects in the scene/setting surrounding the character at the time. Using tap in, have the students speak in role and offer the character advice. We will do this with the poem, "Rot-TEN Dragons" and explore elements of a setting. This could then be extended into an illustration and writing activity, students could write about all of the details in the room Great for descriptive writing and building vocabulary.

***Tableaux** are frozen pictures. They can be used in many ways to tap into and enhance literacy skills. They are the basic building block of drama. The scenario that we worked on was a prediction scenario. I told part of the story and asked students to become the characters involved and create the scene using tableaux that showed what they predicted would happen 5 minutes after the point in the story where I ended. To create the tableau, ask students to freeze in an active stance ie. Reacting to Snow White's apparent death. Play music or bang a drum. Students can move in character while they hear sound and must freeze in their picture as the music slows and stops. **Animate:** Call out animate and let them act out for 10 seconds what is happening in their picture. **Speaking in Role:** Another addition to this exercise is to tap each student and have them say a line about what they are feeling or doing, ie. I am wrestling with my brother, I am chewing on some corn...

***Pop up Story** a great, quick game. Have students read a portion of a book then have others volunteer to create a pop up tableau image of what this might look like.

***Pinwheel Poetry:** This takes a little longer but is well worth it. Use a tableau as per above to get students to take a point of view other than their own. Write in role for 5 minutes. Trade papers with another student and underline striking lines, lines or short phrases that stand out. Once striking lines have been chosen, have a group of at least 4 people stand back to back, closing their eyes if they want. Listening closely, so there is

no overlap, have them repeat their striking lines. The key here is to really listen and not to overlap. The poem will never be the same twice. We will use “On Juno Beach” a non-fiction book to illustrate this activity. It can be adapted for younger students by brainstorming and writing out words in advance.

A Visual Statement Story Stones. Build a cairn. (markers and stones) How did a character impact you? What would be a good symbol or word/phrase to describe this character? It's all in how you frame it. Have students reflect on a story, character and guiding question. Have them draw a symbol, word or phrase on a rock and when done, build a small cairn with each student speaking when they add their stone. Conversely, they can do this in silence and observe and process the result. You will need sharpies and stones to do this activity.