

Theater Games

Theater games are fun for middle grades and older kids. To set up a theater games session,

1. Provide plenty of open floor space

2. Eliminate any distractions in the room

3. Sit in a circle

4. Establish a classroom control technique for gaining attention when needed.

For example, count down from 5 fingers to zero, quiet at zero

Or, “If you hear my voice, clap once, if you hear my voice, clap twice, etc.”

5. Before playing improv games, go over these basic rules of improv:

"Yes and" - accept any information given by another player in a scene. Do not contradict anything another player establishes with their dialog or actions.

No DVDs - no death, violence or destruction.

Work as a team - audience supports players, players support each other, no “winners or losers.”

6. The leader should also participate in the games. It is important to model for the kids.

7. More information on theater games can be found at www.TheProgramRoom.com.

Ghost in the Graveyard

Type of Game: Warmup

Description

Requires space to run. This is the same as “Red Light.” Whoever is “it” stands with their back to the room. The rest of the kids start from the other side and try to cross the room while “it” isn’t looking. When “it” turns around and says “Ghost in the graveyard” everyone must freeze. When “it” turns away again, everyone moves forward.

Variation

Move in a particular way, such as pretending to carry something heavy, or walking through snow

Freeze Dance

Type of Game: Warmup

Description

Play music; kids dance to the music. When you stop the music, everyone must freeze in place. When you start the music, dancing commences.

Space Walk

Type of Game: Pantomime

Description

The leader narrates an improvised story with very descriptive locations that moves the players through different interesting settings while the players pantomime moving through each setting.

Examples

Walking on the moon

Walking through the forest

Screen Test

Type of Game: Pantomime / Improv

Description

One player is chosen to play the “casting director,” and sits in the director’s chair with a list of emotions. The leader plays the agent, and the rest of the players are actors. Each actor draws a slip of paper with an emotion printed on it. The agent introduces each actor in turn. The actors must each act out their emotion using no words or sounds. The director must guess which emotion from the list is being acted out.

Magic Toy Box

Type of Game: Pantomime

Description

An imaginary (or real) box is passed around the circle. Each child pulls an imaginary object from the box and pantomimes using it. The rest of the group must guess what the object is.

Whatcha Doin'?

Type of Game: Pantomime / Improv

Description

The first player begins to pantomime something. When it is clear what's being pantomimed, a second player steps up and asks "Whatcha Doin'?" The first player replies with any answer OTHER than what they are actually doing. The first player sits down and the second player begins to pantomime whatever was said. The cycle is repeated with a new player.

Freeze

Type of Game: Improv

Description

Two players act out a scene, interacting with one another. Once the scene gets going, anyone in the audience can shout "Freeze" and the players must freeze in place. Whoever shouted taps one of the players on the shoulder and replaces that player in the scene, assuming that player's position. They then re-start the scene with a new line of dialog, and may take it to a new place. The cycle continues when another person shouts "Freeze." (The leader can use "freeze" too, as needed to make corrections and keep the scenes moving constructively.)

Echo

Type of Game: Improv

Description

Split the group into two lines, facing one another from across the room. The first person in the first group speaks a line of dialog, loudly. The second person in line repeats the words a bit softer, and so on down the line. The last person should barely be whispering. Then the second group does the same with a replying line of dialog. Go back and forth and have a conversation.

Zip Zap Zop

Type of Game: Warmup

Description

Players stand in a circle. The leader starts by clapping, then pushing their hands forward with fingertips pointing at another player and saying “Zip.” Whoever was pointed to claps, points, and says “Zap.” Whoever was pointed to claps, points and says “Zop,” next person says “Zip,” etc. The clap is passed randomly about the circle. Try to get a quick smooth rhythm going and see how long you can sustain it.

Sound Orchestra

Type of Game: Warmup

Description

Assign a sound to each player. These can be animal sounds, or sounds to fit some other theme or random sounds. The leader then directs the group as if it is an orchestra. Hands up means louder, hands down means softer. Invent other gestures for faster, slower, etc. Players take turns leading the sound orchestra. A small hand drum can be used to provide a beat.

Three-Headed Expert

Type of Game: Improv

Description

Three players take the stage as the expert. The leader takes a suggestion from the audience as to what topic they will be an expert on. Audience members pose questions about that topic to the “Three-Headed Expert.” Questions are answered one head at a time: The first head says the first word, second head says the second word, third head says the third word, first head says the fourth word, etc. To end the answer, one of the heads will say “period,” and a new question is posed.

Questions

Type of Game: Improv

Description

Two players take the stage. They must hold a conversation using questions only. If one player fails to form a response as a question, that player is out, and the next player from the audience steps up to take their place. The new player picks up where the conversation left off.

Variation

Instead of questions use statements only - this is just as challenging!