

April 6, 2017

Final Lesson Plan – Voice & Diction for the Young Performer

Lesson 1 Breath and Movement with Purpose

Facilitation by: Si Mon' Emmett

Description: The High School Theatre I level students in this class will explore both physical and breathing awareness in the body as a means to develop effective voice and diction when acting. They will be introduced to basics of voice and diction for the stage.

Subject Matter: Relaxation, release of tension, awareness of breath, mindfulness, safe breathing on stage, pre-show warm ups for the performer

Rationale: I am teaching this lesson to shed light upon the importance of safe use of breath and movement when acting. Bringing awareness to safe ways of moving one's body and using one's voice on stage—and in everyday life—maintains a stable and strengthened performer.

Objectives:

- Students will know specific warm ups to add to the preparation routine pre-performance
- Students will be able to articulate/annunciate as a result of relaxation and physical mindfulness
- Students will develop a sense of awareness in regards to one's breath both on and off the stage
- Essential Question: How can breathing with purpose affect one's ability to project and articulate? Why is breath support and awareness important for the performer?

TEKS Addressed:

117. 315. c. 2. A) demonstrate safe use of the voice and body;

117. 315. C. 1. A) understand the value and purpose of using listening, observation, concentration, cooperation, and emotional and sensory recall;

117. 315. C. 1. D) develop and practice effective voice and diction to express thoughts and feelings

Materials: blank strips of paper

Preset: desks in groups of 4 with the room split in half for “playing space” in the back, students walk in and circle up in the playing space as they will for the top of every class for a warm up.

Group warm up - Mill and Seathe (5 min)

We will start off with a simple warm up, everyone please find a spot in the circle and plant yourself like a tree, straight up, stable and relaxed.

Close your eyes and take a few seconds to become aware of your breathing. Reach your hands up, alternating your arms and legs to get a fully engaging stretch from finger tips to your toes. Keeping your hands up, stand still then drop on a “huh” – drop wrists, elbows, arms, waterfall down. Roll up slowly, then let out THREE DEEP breaths.

Being aware of those around you, walk around the space from the outside of the circle to the center and back out in a different direction. This walking design is called “Mill and Seathe”

Walk around the space, making eye contact with those you pass

Move at a 5 pace (on a scale of 1-10) then a 7, 8 back to a 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 level speed

Become more aware of how your body is moving. How do your feet come off the ground? What part of your body are you leading with? And your breath, how does it change as your body changes? Where are you mostly breathing from when you speed up, nose, mouth?

Try to use your peripherals/soft vision to be aware of your peers

As you are walking let out another collective HUH (x3), then another longer HUUUUUUUUUH (which will sound more like a sigh) then come to a slow stop as you move back into the circle

Transition:

What observations did you make of your breathing? Does it change as your pace does?

Why do you think that is?

How does this relate to stage work or acting?

Today we will discuss awareness of breath in conjunction with intentional movement on stage. We will delve into a section on Voice and Diction.

Okay, now make your way back to your seats

What do you know about Voice and Diction? (10 min.)

Pull out your mobile devices and prepare for a Poll Everywhere. Text _____ to _____ to join. Add a word or phrase to this Word Cloud on what you know about voice and/or diction as it has to do with the actor.

Response after several words have been added: I'm noticing _____ and _____ were words that were used quite often. Can anyone speak to why this might be? Why do we think these aspects are more important when acting or performing?

Great! Let's explore this further.

My voice as it is now (10 min.)

(perhaps soft music playing in the background)

I am going to pass out a piece of paper. On one side, you are going to draw an image of your voice (as it is now) as an inanimate object that symbolizes how you feel about your own voice as it is right now. (4 minutes)

Then on the back of that same sheet, draw an image of your voice as you would like it to be. This can also be another object that resembles your (ideal) voice. (4 minutes)

Transition: Discussion with your table group:

What do you notice about your voice now & as you'd like it to be? Differences? Similarities? What are strategies you think you can take to reach your "voice at you would like it to be?"

One person from each group share something your group discussed that seemed significant to you about those comparisons. Two other people from the group share a strategy discussed (teacher will write these down on a virtual list and tell students that these will be shared with the whole class on a print-out so that everyone has a copy)

Poem to your voice:

Please pull out a pen or pencil. On this strip of paper, imagine that inanimate object that is your voice as it is now. Write a short (2-3 sentence) poem to your voice. How are you going to help it improve? What would you like it to know? How will you encourage it?

Transition: Freeing the source of sound: breath (5 min.)

Now, keeping your poem in your hand. Find a space in the room facing any direction. Take three deep breaths letting each one out on a loud HUH. Try to imagine that sound coming from a balloon right behind your belly button and each inhale is refilling that balloon. Place your hands on your abdomen to feel that filling up and inflating happen. You should be able to see this movement as you look down at your hands on your stomach.

After each inhale let out one word from your poem. With each breath, let out more words, then more until you get to phrases. You might not get to the whole poem but that's not the point. Become more aware of how the words are coming out.

(if there is time) would anyone like to share their poem? Only 2 or 3 volunteers

Closing (5 min.): *As we move further into this unit, we will explore different warm up techniques to get your body and voice warmed up. Did you notice anything during today's activities that might be significant to the performing process? Why do you think these are useful?*

Extension Activity/Homework (if any):

Think of an activity that warms up your body or voice that we can use throughout this unit. Bring that idea to tomorrow's class. You will lead a warm up at some point in the semester.

Contingencies:

If the facilitation runs too long, I will cut the drawing of "my voice as it is now" and "my ideal voice" portion as it does not make or break the lesson as a whole. Rather it adds an opportunity to cater to a different type of learner in the room.

If the facilitation is too short, I would add conversation about breath or vocal warm-ups that students might already know. If they cannot think of any on the spot. I will show a list of different exercises for them to try and explore.

Lesson 2 Awareness Through Imagery and Imagination

Facilitation by: Si Mon' Emmett

Description: The High School Theatre I level students in this class will explore movement and physical expression through imagination and play.

Subject Matter: Personal expression, imagery, imagination, physical exploration, movement

Rationale: I am teaching this lesson to emphasize physical awareness in conjunction with breath as described in the last lesson. This lesson also allows students to get comfortable exploring movement in their bodies and in front of their peers.

Materials Needed: Bowl with slips of paper on it (slips of paper have different architectural structures written on them), computer/projector for Kahoot game

Objectives:

- Students will know reasons for imaginative play and why focus in breath exploration is important for the performer
- Students will be able to explore physical and imaginative transformation using imagery and a group game
- Students will develop a sense of awareness in how their own bodies respond to verbal cues
- Essential Question: Why is imagination important in theatre? How can our bodies and our breath support the way we move? What are elements of transformation and/or play that we can bring into a performance?

TEKS Addressed:

117.315.c. 4. A) portray theatre as a reflection of life in particular times, places, and cultures

117.315. c. 2. D) use physical, intellectual, emotional, and social awareness to portray believable characters and convey a story when applying acting concepts, skills, and techniques

117.315. c. 2. B) define creativity as it relates to personal expression;

Preset: desks in groups of 4 with the room split in half for “playing space” in the back, students walk in and circle up in the playing space as they will for the top of every class for a warm up.

Activities and Timeframe

Intro Activity: Imagination and play – “Pass the HUH” (5-10 min.)

Place your belongings at your desk and find yourselves making a group circle in the playing space. In our circle I will start with this ball (an imaginary ball) and pass it gently to (student) and they will pass it to another and they to another and so on. (pause) Now we will pass the ball like it is a ball of air, growing from an inhale of the person throwing and being passed on a “HUH” during the exhale. Try a long “huuuuuuuuh” that is more legato—Italian for “tied together” and in music indicates notes that are smooth and connected. Now try a short, swift “huh” that is more staccato which in music—and in Chekhov technique which we will touch on in Theatre II—means a shorter duration. Try a variation of those huh’s still imagining the ball in our hands. So we see the ball and hear it traveling. Does it float a little? Does it bounce? Let your voice reflect this. Play with pitch, tone, volume, etc.

Transition: (teacher takes the ball back and places it in her pocket) *Very nice! As we move further into voice and diction, we must be cognitive of our breathing, as we discussed in our last class introducing us to awareness of breath. One thing that helps is imagining it traveling through our bodies. Putting our imaginations to work constantly can also be great for us as theatre artist, or just people in general. Can anyone think of why? (pause for answers)*

Architecture in our Bodies (5-10 min.)

Now we’re going to play a quick game. I want you to grab a slip of paper from this bowl (teacher has the bowl) and think of the architectural structure that is listed on that slip. Study them. Imagine them right in front of you. Follow their lines, forms, dimensions:

Now become a mirrored image of that structure. You are becoming that structure! Try to experience their weight, the interplay of power of gravity. Study the connections of the separate parts. Try to guess their function, to support, to lift, to suspend. What is the main character of the whole? Steel beams? Columns? Is it stressing upward, does it cover and protect, does it want to vibrate, to fly away, to contract?

Do it freely and intuitively. Thus you will find many ways to penetrate it deeply into the architectural form to experience it!

Most of all, enjoy its beauty! Then ask yourself how it would look if elements were changed! How would it look if? (I.e. the arch became square, the roof flat)

From such questioning you will receive a shock, sometimes humorous. You can look at the other structure around you. Say hello to them. Introduce yourself to them, even! Now let’s make our way back to our desks.

Transition:

Now that we’ve explored some imagery in transforming into different structures, we’re going to going to jump into a bit of trivia! (teacher pulls up Kahoot game)

Flexibility of Images (10 minutes)

We're going to do some Transformation Trivia. Context -- Imagine events of mobility and transformation: a castle under a spell, a poor beggar woman turning into a witch, a princess becoming a spider, a young person aging (vice versa), a seed growing into a tree, so on.

In our trivia there are moments of transformation from different texts, theatrical shows, and movies that some of you may be familiar with. One person in your group (at your table) should pull out a mobile device. If someone does not have one in their group, then they can switch with someone in another group with multiple mobile devices. Now let's get started!

*The fun in this game is before you can answer a trivia question, someone from your group must embody that transformation physically! Use your imagination! What would that look like? Do not skip any of the stages of transformation! Ready? Let's go! **(play the game for 6-8 minutes)***

Wow you're all so great at embodying different types of transformation. Can anyone share what helped them embody the character or object in that process? How did you exercise your imagination?

Great. Let's continue with this exploration with our imaginations. Get up from your seats and find a spot anywhere in the room where you feel comfortable and have space to yourself.

Journey (10-15 min.)

Now we are going to go on what I like to call a Journey. Go ahead and find yourselves a comfortable spot to lay on the floor. If you do not feel comfortable doing so, you may sit up with your back against a wall, but your body must be completely relaxed and not supporting itself in full.

Take a few moments to take notice of how your body feels on the ground. Check in with your fingers, and toes. How your back feels against the surface of the floor (or wall). Your arms and legs, are they comfortable? And your back, is there tension in it? If so, take a deep inhale and try to let that breath release some of that tension, even reposition yourself if you need. Maybe your spine needs to lay flat on the ground. Maybe you have to bend your legs a bit, putting your feet flat on the ground. Whatever you need, make sure you are 100% comfortable.

Now take notice of your breath. How it is coming into your body, and how it is escaping. Are you inhaling through your nose? If not, try doing so and see if it changes your breath at all.

On each exhale let your top teeth meet your bottom lip and let out the breath on a slow, sustained "ffffff". Now let that go, place your hands on your lower abdomen and again move into the "huh" sounds we have worked with before. Let an exhale out on a soft "huuh" imagine it is a bubble traveling through your core up through your body and out in front of your face. Make several "huh" bubbles until you can see them floating around you. How big or small are they?

How high up can you send them? Do they float with elegance, or travel swiftly through the air? Play with pitch and tone, volume (soft and loud), and even speed. What do your bubbles look like now?

Let one last beautiful “huh” bubble out into the room and then come back to your regular breathing. In through the nose, out through the mouth.

Now imagine the air you have brought back into your body to make a new bubble has instead created a ball of light of “energy” (whichever you prefer to imagine) that lives in your core. That ball lives somewhere next to the balloon of air support. They can be friends if you like! Imagine that ball of light illuminating deep within your core, and starts to move a bit. It starts to travel down to your right thigh and through your ankles, all the way down to the tips of your toes. How do your toes react to the light? Are they tickled? Are they shocked? Are they calmed by the ball of light? Then the ball moves back up into your core and down your left leg to visit your other set of toes. How do they react? Are they in a different mood than your right side toes? Are they more tired? More awake? And the ball starts to move back up to your core and into your chest. Check in with that feeling. Does it expand your chest, making it bigger and brighter? Do you find yourself puffing up like Super-Man with this ball of light in your chest? How does it change your breathing? Now the ball sends energy through each of your arms, first the right...to your shoulders, through your elbows, into your palms meeting your fingers. Hello fingers! (note: this moment can be a check in to see if students are still awake, if not it isn't the end of the world, but it is preferred that they are conscious and aware of the activity) How do your fingers react? And the ball goes back into your chest and down your left arm sending light through all parts of it. It says hello to those fingers as well. They can say hello back maybe with a wiggle. Then the ball travels back up and now moves into your head. It shines out through your mouth with each exhale and grows even brighter with each inhale from your nose. You are releasing and feeding that light with each breath. Imagine that for a few breaths (pause) then send the ball of light/energy back into your core. Let it live there. Don't let it die, but turn your attention to your entire body....

Notice which parts are touching the floor. Is the floor Cold? Warm? Soft? Dirty? Imagine the parts of your body that touch the floor don't touch it anymore. You are starting to raise from the floor. Maybe your spine rises first, then your neck and head and legs and you are now floating above the classroom floor. Now imagine floating even higher, you can look down and see the school, the streets around the school, the freeway, your favorite food truck, maybe even your house! As you float further up maybe you see Austin as a whole. What do you notice about your city. What does it look like from up here? Now you float even higher and maybe you can see all of Texas! Maybe not, that's up to you. You are now amongst the clouds, and this place transforms into your favorite place. Is it your favorite beach? Is it the park or the lake you like to visit? Is it a passenger seat on a relaxing road-trip with a family member or friend? Is it a family member's house? Find your favorite place. Maybe you have a nice glass of ice-tea next to you. Take a sip. Let the cold run through your body. Take a few deep breaths and embrace this happy place. (pause). Now, imagine your body floating up once again, saying “see ya later” to this place. No goodbye necessary, who knows maybe we will revisit it again soon. And start to let that place get smaller and smaller and you float back down. It doesn't disappear, it just grows

a little smaller the closer you are to getting back down. Looking down, you can see Austin again. Skyscrapers, Cranes, the Capitol! Again, your favorite food truck! Does that make you hungry? And you see our school. Our classroom, and all of your peers in the room with you. You lay back down onto the ground and check in again. Notice which parts are touching the floor. Is the floor Cold? Warm? Soft? Dirty? Start to wiggle your fingers, your toes, if your legs are flat on the ground, start to bring them in to your chest like a little ball, roll your body over to one side, staying in that little rolled up ball then when you feel ready slowly start to raise up. Push your body up with your hands and make sure your head is the last thing to come up so you don't get dizzy.

Take one big stretch towards the sky expanding your whole body with a biiiiig inhale through your nose, and a biiiiig "Ahhh" out of your mouth—a kind of sigh of relief if you will. Check in with someone around you. Make eye contact. Share a smile. Now let's take a seat back to our circle.

Closing (5-10 min.):

Discussion about breath imagination and relaxation:

Going on a journey is one of my FAVORITE things! What are some things you noticed about our Journey today? Where were parts you liked more than others? Did anyone find themselves falling asleep?

Check in with your body right now. Do you feel any different than when you walked in the room? Did you find that your HUH's changed over the course of the class? Why or why not?

Why do we think Ms. Emmett would have brought up this exercise in a theatre class? What might be some elements of theatre that we've been exploring in our unit on Breath and Movement for the Performer? Why was this important? Or do you think it even was? Why would imagination be important in theatre?

Extension Activity/Homework (if any):

Please bring a tongue twister activity to share with the class (does not matter how long/short it is). It must be appropriate and you do NOT have to have it memorized, but you SHOULD be familiar with it.

Contingencies:

If the lesson runs too long, I will cut the journey in half to make it shorter

If the lesson is too short, I will allow for research on tongue twisters so that students can get a head start on choosing them for next class.

Lesson 3 Linking Breath to Acting

Facilitation by: Si Mon' Emmett

Description: The High School Theatre I level students in this class will put the tools learned in previous lessons on breathing and diction to use by applying them to their choice of a Shakespearean sonnet, poem or two tongue twisters.

Subject Matter: connecting words and breath to action, emotion in voice and body, diction, effective and safe communication

Rationale: I am teaching this lesson to connect the students awareness of breath and physicality to performing. We will soon move further into specifics on articulation.

Materials Needed: Clip from My Fair Lady, projector, laptop, Shakespeare book with sonnets

Objectives:

- Students will know various tongue twisters to prepare for performances
- Students will be able to coach and learn from peers through a pairing activity
- Students will develop a sense of applying vocal, breath and physical exercises/warm-ups to theatrical work
- Essential Question: Body language can communicate many different things, but what can voice communicate on stage? How can strengthening our articulators and physical gestures make us stronger performers?

TEKS Addressed:

117. 315. c. 2. C) employ effective voice and diction to express thoughts and feelings;

117.315. c. 2. E) employ physical techniques consistently to express thoughts, feelings, and actions non-verbally;

117.315. c. 2. D) use physical, intellectual, emotional, and social awareness to portray believable characters and convey a story when applying acting concepts, skills, and techniques;

Preset: desks in groups of 4 with the room split in half for “playing space” in the back, students walk in and circle up in the playing space as they will for the top of every class for a warm up.

Activities and Timeframe

Intro Activity (7-10 min.)

Students will be instructed to please take a seat at a desk as they walk in.

We will watch a clip from My Fair Lady <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJr9SSJKkII>

Transition: *If you watch this move in full, you'll watch the full transformation that Eliza goes through when constantly practicing her articulation and annunciation through tongue twisters and various warm ups. These were some great tongue twisters indeed! As I've asked last class, I'd like you to pull out a tongue twister that you can share with the class. Do we have any volunteers? (if there are none, teacher will share a tongue twister or two)*

Group Game (5-7 min.)

Telephone game voice and physical: "Would You Like a Cup of Tea"

We're going to play a little game I've learned from a colleague of mine. It's called "would you like a cup of tea?" So let's hop out of our seats and form a circle in the playing space.

This game is like the game "Telephone", but with movement and speech. (teacher turns to student next to her and asks...) "Would you like a cup of tea?" paired with a movement that suggests offering a cup of tea, such as bowing slightly and extending their hands as if holding a cup. It can look much like the gesture in the clip we watched! The more specific and heightened the movements and speech inflections are, the better. The next person turns to the person to their right and attempts to copy the way the instructor did the movement exactly.

As it gets passed around the circle, the goal is for each person to try to copy the person before them exactly, not the original movement.

For example, if one person sneezed at the beginning of saying "Would you like a cup of tea," the next person would have to incorporate that sneeze into their movement. As the movement passes around the circle it will become more and more altered. Depending on the amount of participants, the movement can go around more than once.

We can also try this with another gesture and saying! (but maybe not for the sake of time)

Transition:

Great! Now everyone hold your cup of tea, look down at it. Then on 3, we will look up and try to make eye contact with someone in the circle and ask again "WOULD YOU LIKE A CUP OF TEA?" If you make eye contact with someone, that is your partner for the next activity. We'll keep doing it until everyone has a partner.

**for those students that pair off instantly, please go grab your tongue twisters if you have them written down or printed out and find a space to work with your partner.*

Perform in Pairs (10 min.)

Now with your partner, you will get the chance to coach each other's use of voice and diction, then prepare to present individually. This is no way a final product, as we are just beginning our unit on voice and diction, but I would like for us all to see where we are so that we can see how we grow—just as you see Eliza grows through the film! Perhaps we'll even get a chance to watch the whole film at some point this year.

So all tongue twisters should have clear enunciation and should have physical gestures also included in them. Know what you are talking about, what you are saying.

Include your knowledge of breath support and physicality to bring this tongue twister to life! Look at it as a mini-performance but with low stakes, because it should mostly be fun for your and audience.

(5 minutes for first actor, then switch for 5 minutes for the next actor in the pairs**)**

Coaches, remember to support your actor. Important elements of feedback are

- 1) Letting them know something that was effective or that was very clearly communicated*
- 2) Giving them an "I wonder" for instance "I wonder if you slow down on this word, if it would make it clearer. Let's try it!"*
- 3) Give them an opportunity to try again and note improvement or challenges they can still conquer.*

Transition:

Okay go ahead and wrap up your final notes coaches. Now let's make our way back to our desks. Is there any pair willing to share their tongue twister with the class?

Volunteers to perform for class (5 min.)

Now, I will ask 1 or 2 performers come up to the front to share their tongue twisters with the given notes from their coach. Do we have any volunteers who might like to share their tongue twister?

Can we try physicalizing the piece, with no vocals? Now try only the vocals. Then both again.

Closing: Discussion on Coaching (5-10 min.):

Audience can you speak to what you witnessed, any notes you can give or interesting observations to share?

Performers, can you speak to what the process was like to be coached on your tongue twister? What did you do to prepare for this mini-performance? What process did your coach take you through? Any notes given to you that helped your performance?

Anyone else in the class, what happened in your partner activity?

How might it have connected to the “Would You Like a Cup of Tea?” activity we did earlier? Did you find any similarities in those two activities? Or just any thoughts on either of them separately?

Although silly at times, why are these type of activities (tongue twisters) done to prepare the performer?

Well, we will explore these further through the unit Hold on tightly to your tongue twister because you will revisit them later and teach them to the class along with a 3-minute warm-up at the top of class. Be thinking about those warm-ups—remember, the ones we discussed in the first lesson on breathing and voice—over the next week.

Extension Activity/Homework (if any):

For next class, We are doing to move in to applying articulation and breath support to Shakespearean texts. Please bring a Shakespearean sonnet to next class. It does not have to be memorized, but you should be familiar with it before we begin next time. If you need one, I have a big book of them with me. Talk to me after class if you need to copy one down.

Contingencies:

If the lesson runs too long, I will cut or reduce the performance portion of the lesson and we will move right into the next discussion

If the lesson is too short, we will look through my personal Shakespeare book and pick out several sonnets for students. They will have an opportunity to write down which ones they would like to use.