

**Arts**  
**Theatre**  
**Grades 6 - 8**



**Lesson Plans**

## **“Freeing the Imagination: Drama Tools for Developing Visual Imagery”**

**Subject:**

**Arts:** Theatre

**Level:**

Grades 6-8

**Abstract:**

The process of imaging is found in all art forms. In order to create art we must develop the skills to create and imagine. In addition, the use of the imagination is essential in life. As individuals become more highly skilled in using their imagination, they expand the possibilities in their lives; for what we can imagine, we can potentially create. This lesson is designed to use drama techniques to help students to develop their own visual imagery skills. The lesson will begin by exploring visual images in our world. What kinds of visual images surround us in our everyday lives, and how do we make meaning from these images? Students will next explore visual images through a series of theatrical games and exercises. Lastly, they will create performance pieces in a tableau format using visual arts masterpieces as their starting text. They will then add sound, words, music, and theatrical techniques to create a performance piece.

**Invitation:**

“What is the imagination?”

“How do you, personally, imagine something?”

Ask students to respond to these two questions in writing in a “quick-write” format. Have students share their responses with the full class.

“Look around the room and jot down everything you see that might have been invented as the result of someone being able to imagine it first.”

Have students share their responses with the full class.

“How do images play a role in the use of the imagination?”

Guide a discussion around the idea that very often people have a visual “picture” in their heads that leads them to create or invent something, and that the ability to “image” is an essential life skill used in many facets of life. Put the words “image,” “imagine,” and

“imagination” on the board to present the idea that the word “image” appears in “imagine” and “imagination.”

Explain that over the next couple of weeks the class will be exploring visual imagery and how it is used in our everyday lives as well as in the creation of art.

### **Situations**

**Where:** This lesson is designed to take place as part of an on-going theatre class. The ideal setting for this lesson would be a theatre facility, multi-purpose room, or a room with a large open space to allow ample room for movement and rehearsals. If a computer lab is available, students can complete the virtual art gallery and script writing projects in the lab.

**When:** This lesson is designed to be incorporated into a semester of study of theatre and drama. It could also be integrated into a language arts block.

**How Long:** This lesson should take approximately 15 class periods (50 minutes each) to complete.

### **Tasks:**

#### **Task 1:**

The first task is aimed at establishing trust between students as well as to create an avenue for learning to focus perspective. Students will divide into partners. One partner will become the “camera” and the other the “photographer.” The camera will close his/her eyes and will be led to various locations around the room or outside by the photographer. The photographer will create “photos” for the camera and when the photographer feels the image is ready to look at, he/she will say “click.” The photographer will open and close his/her eyes quickly, simulating the lens of a camera. It is important for the camera to keep his/her eyes closed through the entire exercise, and only open them for a quick second when the photographer says “click.” Each photographer will set up 5 to 10 images for the camera.

Follow this exercise with a reflection, asking students what they noticed and what their experience was as both the photographer and camera.

#### **Task 2:**

Students will gather around a large table (or two) where a variety of postcards, magazine clippings, pamphlets, newspaper clippings, and

other assorted items that contain visual images have been laid out. They will choose one visual image that represents them and how they are feeling right at this moment in time. When all students have chosen an image, students will sit in a circle in the classroom (so that everyone can be seen). One by one, students will share their image and explain why this image represents them today.

**Task 3:**

Distribute the "Handout: The Elements of Visual Arts" attachment. Students will go over the seven elements of visual arts: color, line, shape, form, value, space, texture. In advance, the teacher will choose several visual images that show these elements and will use them to demonstrate/model how these elements are used in the visual image. Students will then pair up and, using the image that they chose in the previous task, will go through the elements of visual arts and see how many they can identify in their own and their partner's image. When completed, students will share their findings with another group. The teacher will then lead a class reflection/discussion that leads students to the idea that the visual images they see everyday are often carefully crafted by artists and designers to evoke some kind of response from the person viewing it.

**Task 4:**

Students will keep a list for the next 24 hours of all the visual images that are created for them by humans that appear in their everyday lives. (See the "Worksheet: Twenty-four Hour Visual Images" attachment.)

**Task 5:**

The teacher will facilitate a discussion on the results of the 24-hour observations. Where are the most common places that we absorb images? Pay particular attention to images that evoked a strong response in students. Ask leading questions regarding these strong responses. How did the artist set this up? How do we make meaning from visual images? Do we all respond in the same way to images? How are visual images set up so that we will buy products? How are they set up to persuade us to do something?

**Task 6:**

Students will now transfer their knowledge of visual imagery to the theatre arts area. It is helpful to describe theatre as a series of visual images. If at any moment a theatre production is frozen in time, the viewer should be able to see a carefully crafted "stage picture." These stage pictures are purposefully arranged to elicit a response from the

audience. Some of the tools used to create stage picture composition are: costumes, props, sets, positions of the actors on the stage, the actors facial and body expressions, lighting, sound, the words of the script, color, music, and dance.

Before students create their own stage pictures, the teacher will lead a discussion on Fair Use Guidelines and your district's policy on Fair Use related to downloading images on the Internet. There are a number of sites on the Internet that discuss Fair Use including <http://k-12.pisd.edu/techs/train.htm>. Following the discussion, students will visit a variety of virtual art galleries on the web. They will tour various websites and find a two-dimensional arts masterpiece that they think tells an interesting story. Students will follow the "Step Sheet: Downloading Images from the Internet" attachment to collect their images of masterpieces.

### **Task 7:**

Students will divide into groups of four to six students. They will create a tableau (a frozen picture using their own bodies) of each of the images. They do not need to limit themselves to being human beings. Students can become windows, doors, trees, foliage, objects, etc.

When finished, each group will show their tableaux to the rest of the class. Using the "Step Sheet: Gathering and Inserting Electronic Images" attachment, students place their images in a PowerPoint presentation that is projected behind them as they demonstrate each tableau.

### **Task 8:**

Each group will choose one image from the group's collection of overheads with which to continue working. They will now create a series of tableaux from the one image that portrays a story line. If this image were part of a story, what happened before? What happened after? They will need to create additional tableaux to depict this. They can use the original tableau, but they must now decide where in the story sequence it should be placed. Students will include a minimum of ten tableaux, with a story line that has a beginning, middle, conflict, and end. Each member of the group must appear in at least two of the ten tableaux.

### **Task 9:**

Students will perform their tableau story line for the class. The PowerPoint presentations will be used again to project images behind the students as they perform their tableaux. As groups finish their

performance, the teacher will lead a reflection of each performance, using the “Handout: The Elements of Visual Arts” attachment as a guideline to discuss composition elements in the tableaus.

**Task 10:**

Working in the same groups, students will use Microsoft Word to create a script from the story line told through tableaus. They will first need to reduce the image so that it appears in the upper left corner of the page. They will then decide the names of each of the characters. Each tableau becomes a “scene” in the script. The teacher will distribute the “Sample: Script with Image” attachment and ask for volunteers to read the parts. Students will note the structure of the script with the scene number at the top, followed by the character's name in all caps with a colon, then the words the character will speak. This format continues for each character's lines.

**Task 11:**

When the script is finished, students will rehearse the scenes with the lines they have created. They will create blocking and “stage pictures” that help tell the story. Ideally, students will memorize the lines for their final presentation. Students can also add music, sound effects, props, and costume pieces if desired. The teacher will distribute and go over the “Performance Rubric” attachment prior to the beginning of these rehearsals.

**Task 12:**

Students will perform their scenes. They can use the PowerPoint presentation with images as their “set” if desired. After each group performs, the teacher will conduct a short aesthetic valuing discussion and reflection based on the “Performance Rubric” attachment, encouraging students to reflect on their own performance as well as on the performance of their peers. The teacher will encourage students to go beyond “what did you like or dislike” questions or comments, and focus on the elements of what they saw, heard, felt and experienced in each performance.

**Interactions:**

**Full Class:** The full class will participate in discussion and reflections, as well as in observation of peer performances. The teacher will lead whole-class discussions and reflection processes.

**Partners:** Students will work in partners to complete the camera and photographer exercise, the elements of visual arts exercise, and some discussion/reflection sessions. Groups of four to six students will complete the tableau exercises, script writing process, and rehearsal and performance process.

**Individual:** Students will complete a quick-write assignment, choose a visual image and explain how it represents them, conduct an Internet search for an arts masterpiece, download it, insert it into a PowerPoint presentation, and complete the "Worksheet: Twenty-four Hour Visual Images" attachment.

**Standards:**

Theatre Standards:

Grade 6

Component Strand: Artistic Perception

1.1 Identify how production values can manipulate mood to persuade and disseminate propaganda.

Grade 7

Component Strand: Creative Expression

2.3 Create characters, environments, and actions that exhibit tension and suspense.

Grade 8

Component Strand: Artistic Perception

1.2 Analyze the use of figurative language and imagery in dramatic texts.

Component Strand: Creative Expression

2.2 Perform character-based improvisations, pantomimes, or monologues using voice, blocking, and gesture to enhance meaning.

Language Arts

Writing:

Writing Applications

2.1 Write biographies, autobiographies, short stories, or narratives

Language Arts

Listening and Speaking

2.1 Deliver narrative presentations (e.g., biographical, autobiographical)

**Assessment:**

- "Performance Rubric:" the class will reflect on their own work and the work of other students using the rubric to guide reflection.
- Performance Tasks: Completion of worksheets, visual image assignments, and participation in theatre games and exercises.

**Tools:**

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft PowerPoint
- Internet access
- Assorted postcards, magazine clippings, pamphlets that contain visual art images

**Project Tips and Alternatives:****Tip #1:**

This lesson is designed as part of an ongoing theatre arts program. It is important that a sense of group ensemble and safety be established within the class before asking students to perform for each other. It is strongly suggested that students participate in basic theatre movement activities and improvisations prior to this lesson, creating safety and a sense of group ensemble.

**Attachments:**

- "Handout: The Elements of Visual Arts"
- "Worksheet: Twenty-four Hour Visual Images"
- "Step Sheet: Downloading Images from the Internet"
- "Sample: Script with Image"
- "Step Sheet: Creating a New Document"
- "Step Sheet: Creating a PowerPoint Presentation"
- "Step Sheet: Gathering and Inserting Electronic Images"
- "Performance Rubric"

**Web Resources – Content:**

A list of [linked web resources](#) related to the content of this lesson can be found on the Lesson Page.

**Web Resources – Word:**

A list of [linked web resources for Word](#) can be found on the Word Resources pages.

**Assistive Technology:**

Please refer to the [Assistive Technology section](#) for information on methods and devices to help ensure that all students have access to the curricula in the least restrictive environment.