

Arts Integration: Ecosystems

Facilitator: Tori Gitten

Strategies: Alphabet Relay, This Setting Needs, Series of Tableaux/Narrative Pantomime

Subject: Theatre/Science

Time Needed: 38 Minutes

Materials Needed: Whiteboard/Large Paper, Expo Markers/Markers, Chromebooks

Grade: 5th Grade

MA Theatre Standards:

Creating

- **Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.** Develop essential events that make up the dramatic structure in an improvised or scripted theatrical work. (5-6.T.Cr.02)

Performing

- **Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.** Contribute to the performance of a short theatrical work with an audience (e.g., acting, writing or supporting a technical element) that makes connections to other disciplines. (5-6.T.P.06)

Responding

- **Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.** Use domain-specific vocabulary to identify details about a play or theatre work. (5-6.T.R.08)

Connecting

- **Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.** Describe and demonstrate one's own theatrical style and preferences. (5-6.T.Co.10)

Essential Question (AKA Focus Question):

- How can we create our own ecosystems using our bodies?
- How can theatre strategies help us better understand and explore ecosystems and other non-theatre-related content?

Enduring Understanding:

- Theatre is a tool that can help us deepen our understanding of non-theatre-related content (ex, other school subjects).
- Teaching through the arts can present difficult concepts in a creative way, making them easier to understand.

Learning Objectives:

- The students will identify ecosystem elements and vocabulary through Alphabet Relay.
- The students will create ecosystems with their bodies through This Setting Needs.
- The students will craft and explore three different stages of an ecosystem using their own bodies to devise a series of Tableaux and incorporate Narrative Pantomime.

Adaptations/Modifications:

- Assess prior knowledge at the beginning and end of a unit and keep posters to share with the group (Alphabet Relay).
- Have each student create the setting silently without explaining what he or she is doing (This Setting Needs).
- Have the students write out a narrative script to read from (Narrative Pantomime).

FACILITATION PLAN

QUESTION OF THE DAY (5 Minutes):

What is an ecosystem?

[Group check-in. Students share their responses.]

INTRODUCTION:

Hook: *You may wonder, ‘why are we talking about ecosystems in theatre class?’*

Well, theatre can be used as a tool to help us explore other content and subjects like Math, Social Studies, English, and Science in a creative way.

Today we will engage in various theatre strategies and activities to deepen our understanding of ecosystems.

We will begin with an ecosystem Alphabet Relay!

ENGAGE (5 Minutes): Alphabet Relay

Students will engage in a round of “Alphabet Relay” to assess their prior knowledge of ecosystems. Students will list vocabulary/words related to ecosystems in order to brainstorm key vocabulary and visually activate dialogue.

[Each team needs to list ecosystem-related vocabulary/words from A to Z. Working from a single file line, the first person in the line will run to the poster and write a word that starts with the next available letter on the list – starting with A, then B, and so on. The goal is to complete every word on the board from A-Z as quickly as possible. Once groups have finished their list, they are encouraged to cheer on the other groups to finish. After all the teams have completed their poster, the class gathers where everyone can see the posters to reflect on the activity and the ideas they generated.]

[Two teams at a time, or one team if the class is small.]

Note: Ask students to define vocabulary words. Give the opportunity for the students to be the ‘scientific’ experts (Mantle of The Expert).

Side-Coaching:

- *Go with your first instinct – don’t overthink your answer.*
- *Look ahead and start thinking of an answer for your next letter!*
- *If you get stuck, ask your team for help. Support each other by helping to brainstorm responses together.*

Reflection Questions:

D: What strategies did your team use to complete the activity successfully?

A: What words do you see on more than one alphabet poster? [Circle words that are similar or repeated.]

R: What words are circled? What does this tell us about our knowledge of ecosystems?

Transition: *Great work! Now we will use the different elements and vocabulary we brainstormed to embody an ecosystem through the activity This Ecosystem Needs.*

EXPLORE (10 Minutes): This Ecosystem ‘Setting’ Needs

Students build an environment with their bodies based on one (or more) of the ecosystem elements from the Alphabet Relay exercise. By embodying objects/people/animals/actions in a space, students explore the many characteristics and aspects of an ecosystem.

[One at a time, students build an ecosystem tableau with their bodies by making specific physical choices that embody something one may find in an ecosystem. Students raise their hands and, when called on, add to the ecosystem by saying, “*This ecosystem needs...*” and embody an element of an ecosystem. Build each setting until 5-10 students are on stage. Once the image is built, ask for feedback from the audience.]

Note: Invite students to get ‘in-role’ as scientists. *How might a scientist sit? How would a scientist speak? What observations would a scientist make?*

Side-Coaching:

- *What do you see in this setting?*
- *What clues do the actors give you to help you understand who they are/what they are doing/how they feel about it?*
- *If you had to give this ecosystem a title, what would you title it?*

Reflection Questions:

D: How did we use our bodies to show different parts of an ecosystem?

A: Can you name different relationships we saw in each ecosystem?

R: How did this activity help us think about the different ecosystem relationships?

Transition: *Now that we have explored some ecosystem relationships, we will work in groups to create an ecosystem story through a series of narrated tableaux.*

EXPLORE (12 - 15 Minutes): Series of Tableaux & Narrative Pantomime

Students work in small groups and use their bodies to create a visual representation of a three-stage ecosystem. One-Two students narrates each tableau. Students work collaboratively to make deeper meaning of ecosystems both through their bodies and their words.

[Students work in small groups to create three clear tableaux that visually represent three different stages of an ecosystem using their bodies. One-Two students act as the narrator and narrate each tableau.]

Side-Coaching:

- *Find a different way to join the image that you haven't done before (a new level or viewpoint).*
- *Audience, let's think like a director: is this picture telling the story we need to tell? What suggestions might we make to strengthen or clarify the image?*
- *What do you see? What could be happening in this image?*
- *What about the bodies/characters that you see make you say that?*

Reflection Questions:

D: What did we do in this activity?

A: What performance choices helped us to explore different elements of ecosystems?

R: What kind of ecosystems did you see? What clues helped you come to that conclusion?

Transition: *Let's take a moment to reflect on our whole lesson.*

REFLECT (5 Minutes):

D: What are some of the ways we used our bodies, voices, and creativity to explore ecosystems today?

A: How did the theatre activities we did today help us to deepen our understanding of ecosystems?

R: What other subjects could we explore through theatre? How might we do that?

Ending Statement: *Today, we learned that theatre and the arts can help us deepen our understanding of non-theatre-related content (ex, other school subjects). Exploring different subjects through the arts can help present difficult concepts in a creative way, making them easier to understand. I encourage you to use your 'theatre toolbelt' as you continue your learning journey in and out of school!*