

Pantomiming Tales

How are events and characters in a story expressed through pantomime?

Grades 3-5 Lesson: Pantomiming Tales

Grade Band: 3-5

Arts Subject: Theater

Other Subject: English & Literature

SUMMARY

In this 3-5 lesson, students will use their bodies to communicate through movement, improvisation, and pantomime. Groups will read a Grimm Brothers' fairy tale or self-selected text and retell the story through movement.

PREPARATION

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Make inferences about characters or events in a story.
- Pantomime character or story elements.
- Read Grimm's fairy tales or other familiar stories.
- Recreate a tale or familiar story using only movement in cooperative groups.
- Retell and present a tale or familiar story to an audience.

Standards Alignment

National Core Arts Standards

[TH:Cr1.1.3c](#) Collaborate to determine how characters might move and speak to support the story and given circumstances in drama/theatre work.

[TH:Cr1.1.4c](#) Imagine how a character might move to support the story and given circumstances in a drama/theatre work.

[TH:Cr1.1.5c](#) Imagine how a character's inner thoughts impact the story and given circumstances in a drama/ theatre work.

Common Core State Standards

[ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3](#) Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events

[ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3](#) Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

[ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#) Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

Recommended Student Materials

Editable Documents: *Before sharing these resources with students, you must first save them to your Google account by opening them, and selecting "Make a copy" from the File menu.*



Check out [Sharing Tips](#) or [Instructional Benefits](#) when implementing Google Docs and Google Slides with students.

- [Rubric: Pantomiming Tales](#)

Websites

- [2014 Into the Woods](#)
- [2011 Into the Woods](#)
- [1991 Into the Woods](#)
- [Grimm Brothers Tales](#)
- [Fairy Tales](#)

Videos

- [Musical, Into the Woods](#)
- [1-2-3 Pantomime with Jamie Hipp](#)

Teacher Background

Teachers should be familiar with the Grimm's fairy tales or allow students to explore other popular characters from classroom or library books.

Student Prerequisites

Students should be familiar with simple movements, expressions, and be able to retell events in a story.

Accessibility Notes

Modify handouts, text, and utilize assistive technologies as needed. Allow extra time for task completion.

INSTRUCTION

Engage

1. Watch the Prologue of *Into the Woods* ([2014 Into the Woods](#); [2011 Into the Woods](#); [1991 Into the Woods](#)). Sondheim and Lapine, in their [Musical, Into the Woods](#), use simple sets and props. Actors employ pantomime for some of the actions, and use movement and gestures to indicate character and elements of their stories.

2. Have students analyze the movements that show the identity of the characters. For example, Cinderella washing the floor, the baker and his wife making movements to suggest a child, or Little Red Riding Hood skipping in place through the woods.

3. Discuss the characters from *Into the Woods*. Ask students: *What characters did you recognize? What revealed the character?*

4. Form pairs of students to play improv games. Model the game “Mirror.” Use a student as your partner as you model the following steps:

- Partners face each other and maintain eye contact.
- Decide who will be the leader. The other person will mimic the leader’s movement.
- Move slowly and deliberately.
- Use high, middle, and low spaces (above the head, at eye or torso level, and near the feet) as you move.

5. After two minutes, call out “Switch Leaders!” The other person will now lead.

6. Tell students they were practicing the skill of pantomime. Watch the Teaching Artists Present video, [1-2-3 Pantomime with Jamie Hipp](#), to dynamically express meaning with your movement, facial expressions, and imagination. Discuss the activity with students. Ask students: *How did this relate to the movements from Into the Woods?*

Build

1. Help students refine their movements by adding size and weight in “Ball Toss.”

Students will form a circle and toss around an imaginary ball. Lead the students at first, modeling how you would adapt your movement according to the size and weight of the ball. Pretend to use a tennis ball at first. Bounce it, squeeze it, and toss it in the air. Have students copy these actions. Now switch to a golf ball, a basketball, a bowling ball, a beach ball, etc., adapting your movement accordingly. Have a student toss a ball to another student who must catch the ball tossed, then change its size and weight with movement and toss it to another student.

2. Discuss with students how they adapted their movement each time the shape and weight of the ball changed. Continue to practice the skill of pantomime with objects and actions that they use in everyday life.

3. Divide students into pairs. One will pantomime and the other will guess the sequence of movements. Have students switch roles half way through. Ideas may include:

- Peeling a banana
- Eating a pizza with lots of cheese
- Sipping a drink through a straw
- Picking up a coin
- Hammering a nail
- Swatting at a fly/bee

4. Call student groups to pantomime for the class. Tell them to imagine that the classroom space is the woods, like the setting for *Into the Woods*. The class will infer the character portrayed by pantomime and why they are going into the woods.

- A toddler learning to walk

- An elderly person picking berries
- An angry person
- A person outside on a hot day
- A suspicious person hiding
- A person in a hurry

Apply

1. Tell students that they will collaborate with their partner to create a 2-3-minute pantomime based on a Grimm Brothers' fairy tale or another book character. Assign or have students select a character from a fairy tale or book. Students may consider one of the following characters:

- Hansel and Gretel
- Sleeping Beauty
- Sherlock Holmes
- Angelina (*The Day You Begin*)
- Jeremiah (*If You Come Softly*)
- Mercy Watson (*Mercy Watson to the Rescue*)
- George and Harold (*Captain Underpants*)
- Clay (*Wings of Fire*)
- Luna (*The Girl Who Drank the Moon*)

2. Distribute and review the [Rubric: Pantomiming Tales](#). Discuss what is expected in the areas of Performance, Storytelling, Movement, and Cooperation.

3. Each group should find a space to re-read or summarize the tale or book. [Grimm Brothers Tales](#) and other [Fairy Tales](#) can be shared digitally.

4. After reading the tale, students should identify four to six events that can be told in pantomime and movement. Students cast themselves in these scenes and develop pantomimes for each event, using the skills developed in the improv games. Encourage students to use inanimate objects, such as doors, houses, trees, etc., to help clarify the action in the scene. Only costume props may be used.

5. Allow time for students to practice pantomiming their tale.

Reflect

1. Present pantomime tales to the class. Have a discussion with the class after each performance. Ask students: *What story did the group tell? What actions helped you determine the characters or events in the story?*

2. Assess students' knowledge of pantomime with the [Rubric: Pantomiming Tales](#).

Credits

Adaptation, Rebecca Haden

Editor, JoDee Scissors



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