

## CHARACTER EXERCISES

### DESCRIBE A CHARACTER

Build a verbal description of the character from a story

- 1<sup>st</sup> person speaks a descriptive sentence about a character
- 2<sup>nd</sup> person adds another descriptive sentence
- Continue building description with additional students adding sentences.
- Use colorful adjectives to create a verbal picture of the character
- Use Actor's Voice/Vocal Projection
- Can be played as a game. Let students "guess" who is the character being described.

Purpose - Enhances listening skills and the use of descriptive language. Helps students cooperatively build on the ideas of others.

### Character Walk

Walk or move like different characters in the story

- Walk on different parts of your feet
- Experiment leading with different parts of the body
- Listen to Leader's directions - stop, go, change
- Maintain your own space
- Leader suggests general characters or animals (rooster, giraffe, old person, perfect student), occupations (police officer, fireman, teacher), or characters from the story (Big Bad Wolf, Laura Ingalls, Quillwork Girl, Buffalo)

Purpose - Use the body as a way of exploring a character

VAPA Standards Strands - AP, CE, HCC, CRA

### Character Statues (Variation of **Character Walk**. Can be done with little to no space)

Create a statue of a character in the story

- Turn bodies into malleable clay - legs, arms, torso
- Listen as Leader calls out a character from the story
- Players shape themselves into a statue of the chosen character and Freeze on the command "1, 2, 3, FREEZE"
- Repeat with additional characters

Additional Side Coaching prompts:

"Say something this character would say", "Move in place like this character would move".

Purpose - Another way of using the body to explore character when space is limited

### Interview Game

Participants portray characters from a story. Interviewer and audience ask the characters questions.

Actors answer as the character.

- Use the facts of the story to answer questions as the character
- Stay in character for the entire interview
- Use your imagination to improvise believable answers even if you don't know the answer.
- Ask questions about the character
- Assess with 2 likes and a wish

Purpose - Develops actor's empathy for and ability to think as the character. Another tool to help retell and sequence the story. Enhances students' ability to infer information.

Helpful hint: Use the exercise **Describe a Character** to generate ideas and suggestions for the characters before starting the Interview Game. Refer back to the 5 W's and other questions words for guidance.

**Additional Theatre Exercises**  
**The Music Center Institute for Educators**  
**Denise Iketani, Theatre Artist**

**Remote Control Tableau** – Use a “remote control” to add dialogue and movement to a tableau, a frozen picture that shows action.

Choose a scene or illustration from the story.

- Ask students, “Who are the characters in the scene?”, “What is happening in this scene?”
- Cast students to portray the necessary characters. Students can also portray inanimate objects like the wagon from Crossing the Creek, or an arrow from The Quillwork Girl.
- Students will create a frozen pose to show their character in the scene.
- Use the Character Statues Exercise to help them freeze in an action pose.
- Animate the tableau by using a pantomimed or real Remote Control
- Tell the actors that you are going to press the buttons and see what happens when you press PLAY.
- The actor should say what they think the character would say at this point in the story.
- It is okay to improvise dialogue.
- PAUSE the action and REWIND and PLAY again to rehearse or clarify the dialogue.

Note: At first students will stay in frozen poses and improvise dialogue without moving. To add movement, create a starting frozen pose and an ending frozen pose. The actor can move from the start pose to the end pose while speaking their dialogue.

**Meaningful Stage Pictures or Tableaus** – Work with a smaller group, (3 or 5) Use body positions, levels and planes to create a tableau reflecting one of these themes:

Loss	Triumph	Separation	Revenge
Distrust	Peace	Celebration	Hope
Power	Shame	Grandeur	Jealousy
Grace	Relief	Gratitude	Unhappiness

**Cabana, Person, Storm**

Explain to students that you are going to call out three different words: People, cabana, and storm. Have them get into groups of 3, and in their trio, explain that two people will become the cabana, and one person becomes the person living inside the cabana. Show them how to make a “cabana,” which is two people facing each other, lifting their arms and placing the palms of their hands together to make a “roof.” The third person goes underneath. Make sure every person has a cabana, and every cabana has a person. Explain that when you call out “person,” the person will leave their shelters and run to a different one while the cabanas stay put. Practice this a few times. Next explain



# Tableau Scene Checklist

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## Tableau

Clear "freeze"

Strong body poses

Bold facial expressions

Clear focal points

Everyone stays in character

## Staging

Everyone is visible

Different levels (high/medium/low)

Stage picture is balanced

All of the pieces fit together

## Collaboration

Group works well together

Everyone follows guides (play hard, play fair, nobody hurt)

Everyone has a part in the tableau

The group is able to form the tableau quickly and quietly



# K-6 Theatre Vocabulary (from VAPA Frameworks)

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- **Character:** The personality or part an actor re-creates.
- **Collaborate:** The act of working on a joint intellectual effort.
- **Dialogue:** The conversation between actors on stage, in film, and in television or videos.
- **Downstage:** The stage area toward the audience.
- **Gesture:** The movement of a body part or combination of parts, with emphasis on the expressive aspects of the movement.
- **Imaging:** Using your imagination to create pictures inside your head as you listen to a story
- **Improvisation:** A spontaneous style in which scenes are created without advance rehearsing or scripting.
- **Narrative Pantomime:** utilizes a storyteller or narrator as one or others act out the action of the **narrative**.
- **Pantomime:** Acting without words through facial expression, gesture, and movement.
- **Puppetry:** Almost anything brought to life by human hands to create a performance. Types of puppets include rod, hand, and marionette.
- **Reader's Theatre:** A performance created by actors reading a script rather than working from memory.
- **Scene:** The setting of the action of a play, story, etc.; a division of a play, usually part of an act.
- **Script:** The written text of a play.
- **Setting:** The locale of the action of the play.
- **Stage Left and Right:** The left and right side of the stage from the perspective of an actor facing the audience.
- **Tableau:** A silent, motionless depiction of a scene created by actors, often from a picture.
- **TPT scene:** Tableau/Pantomime – in slow motion/Tableau

## Terms to Keep in Mind

**Unison** or Simultaneous play - Everyone plays at the same time

**Solo** - Everyone plays as an individual. No Interaction between the participants.

**Tableau** - A silent and motionless depiction of a scene created by actors, often from a picture. The plural is tableaux.

**Improvisation** - A spontaneous style of theatre in which scenes are created without advance rehearsing or scripting.

**Pantomime** - Acting without words through facial expression, gesture, and movement.

**Side Coach**-the leader coaches the action from the side to help participants be more committed or try new things.

**Gesture** - An expressive movement of the body or limbs.

**Creative Expression** - Encourage responses to be unique and exploratory.

**Ensemble** - A group of theatrical artists working together to create a theatrical production.