



Crispus Attucks (1723-1770)

Drama Activities

National Core Arts Standards

Objectives

TH:CR2-8

a. Articulate and apply critical analysis, background knowledge, research, and historical and cultural context to the development of original ideas for a drama/theatre work.

TH:PR5-8

b. Use a variety of technical elements to create a design for a rehearsal or drama/theatre work.

TH:RE7-8

a. Apply criteria to the evaluation of artistic choices in a drama/theatre work.

TH:RE8-8

a. Recognize and share artistic choices when participating in or observing a drama/theatre work.

TH:RE8-8

b. Analyze how cultural perspectives influence the evaluation of a drama/theatre work.

TH:CN11-8

b. Identify and use artifacts from a time period and place to develop performance and design choices in a drama/theatre work.

Enduring Understanding(s)

Theatre artists work to discover different ways of communicating meaning.

Theatre artists develop personal processes and skills for a performance or design.

Theatre artists reflect to understand the impact of drama processes and theatre experiences.



Theatre artists' interpretations of drama/theatre work are influenced by personal experiences and aesthetics.

Theatre artists critically inquire into the ways others have thought about and created drama processes and productions as a way to inform their own work.

Essential Questions

How do theatre artists transform and edit their initial ideas?

Why are strong choices essential to interpreting a drama or theatre piece?

How do theatre artists comprehend the essence of drama processes and theatre experiences?

How can the same work of art communicate different messages to different people?

In what ways can research into theatre histories, theories, literature and performances alter the way a drama process of production is understood?

What can I do to fully prepare a performance or technical design?

What happens when theatre artists use their imaginations and/or learned theatre skills while engaging in creative exploration and inquiry?

Theatre Literacy

- Listen and watch a presentation attentively demonstrating whole body listening.
- Improvise scenes using dialogue, body language, facial expressions, projection, pantomime, and sounds.
- Create tableaux, voices in the head, improvised scenes, and playwriting.
- Consistently maintain concentration.
- Develop empathy.
- Embody a variety of characters through individual interpretation.
- Work collaboratively and flexibility to create an imagined world
- Investigate and incorporate historical context

Time / Materials

1 class period for each drama lesson.



Playwriting

1. Write a one-page monologue describing the events on King Street as an eye witness from the point of view of a protestor, a townsman watching from a distance, a British sentry, or Governor Thomas Hutchinson.
2. Write a poem from the point of view of a townsman describing the tension between opponents and supporters of the British military presence over the five men killed in the Boston Massacre. The poem can be written in verse or prose.
3. Imagine that the Boston Massacre is occurring in the present. As a colonist or a British soldier, you are texting with a family member as the events around you are unfolding. You and your family member exchange a minimum of 30 messages.
4. As Crispus Attucks, write a journal entry explaining your thoughts about the Stamp Act and the Townshend Act and how these acts have affected you.

Playwriting Extension

Present the monologue to the class.
Video record the monologue.



Independent Drama Activity

Overview

Crispus Attucks was the first man killed in the Boston Massacre on March 5, 1770. There were no street lights on King Street and ice and snow covered the ground at approximately 9 p.m.

Students will dramatize Mr. Attucks's life on the night of March 5, 1770 using tableaux and "voices in the head."

A **tableau** is a still picture similar to a statue. The actor(s) freezes in a pose using his body language and facial expressions to create a picture. Click [here](#) for examples of tableaux.

Voices in the head are the thoughts of the character in a particular moment. Click [here](#) for examples of voices in the head / thought tracking.

Students will make individual tableaux of the following moments:

1. What was Mr. Attucks doing prior to hearing the bells?
2. What was Mr. Attucks doing on King Street that was filled by villagers?
3. What was Mr. Attucks's reaction when he heard the British soldier yell, "Fire"?

Process

1. Provide a [brief historical background](#) of the events that occurred in Boston prior to the Boston Massacre.
2. Read the **Overview** to the class.
3. Show the videos explaining tableau and voices or summarize these techniques.
4. The facilitator will ask a volunteer to model a tableau. Next, the facilitator will say to the student, "voices in the head." The student will share the inner thoughts of the character.
5. Brainstorm possible activities Mr. Attucks could have been doing before he heard bells such as sleeping, eating, cooking, cleaning, reading, etc.
6. Ask students to choose an activity.
7. The facilitator will say, "3, 2, 1. Freeze." All students will model their tableau simultaneously and hold their pose.
8. The facilitator will call on a student and ask for "voices in the head." The student



- will share their inner thought of the character in that moment of time.
9. The facilitator will call on a few additional students to share their “voices in the head.”
 10. The facilitator will ask students to relax and unfreeze from the tableau position.
 11. Brainstorm possible activities Mr. Attucks could have been doing on King Street prior to the Boston Massacre such as looking for a fire, talking to townsmen, intimidating a British soldier with a club, throwing snowballs, etc.
 12. Repeat steps 6 through 10.
 13. Brainstorm possible reactions Mr. Attucks might have had when he heard the British soldier yell, “Fire!” – such as fear, surprise, excitement, joy, etc.
 14. Repeat steps 6 through 10.

Discussion

1. Explain your experience making tableaus of Crispus Attucks.
2. After listening to a variety of peers sharing “voices in the head,” which Crispus Attucks voices are the most realistic? Explain.
3. If you could go back and recreate any of the tableaus and “voices in the head”, what would you change and why?

Pairs/Triad Drama Activity

Overview

The setting is the evening of March 5, 1770 on King Street in Boston, immediately after the British cease fire. Bostonian women have witnessed the Boston Massacre and have varying perspectives. How did these Bostonian women react to the events?

Students will improvise this scenario.

Process

1. Organize students into pairs and/or triads and assign them a designated area in the room to work.
2. Give the groups 10 minutes to choose their parts (friends, sisters, mothers, strangers, etc.) and rehearse their scenes.
3. The scenes should be approximately 3 minutes in length and all of the members of the group must take a speaking role.



4. Because the scenes are not scripted and there are no props, students use creative dialogue (the words spoken by two or more actors) and pantomime objects (communicate an idea through movement and gestures). For example, it was cold on the evening of March 5, 1770. Actors can pantomime shivering, putting on a hat, buttoning up their coat, etc.
5. Each group will present their scene from their designated area for the class.
6. The facilitator will say, “3, 2, 1, action” and the scene begins.
7. When the scene is over, the facilitator will say, “Scene.”
8. The students and facilitator will applaud the scene.
9. The facilitator will repeat steps 6-8 until all groups have presented their scene.

Discussion

1. What are some similarities and differences between the women?
2. How might the discussion between the women in 1770 differ if the events occurred in the present?

Small Group Drama Activity

Overview

On the night of May 5, 1770, there was a ceasefire on King Street in Boston. A modern-day news reporter interviews eyewitnesses. The news reporter interviews the following people at the crime scene: Crispus Attucks badly wounded lying on the ground being helped by a civilian, Captain Thomas Preston and Private Hugh Montgomery cleaning their muskets, a civilian making snowballs while another civilian is crying.

Students will improvise the scenario using dialogue and pantomime.

Process

1. Organize student groups and designate an area in the room to work.
2. The facilitator or a volunteer student can play the part of the news reporter.
3. Brainstorm with the class the types of questions the news reporter might ask.
4. Give the groups 10 minutes to choose their parts and rehearse their scenes.
5. The scenes should be approximately 3 minutes in length and all of the members of the group must take a speaking role.
6. Because the scenes are not scripted and there are no props, students should use creative dialogue (the words spoken by two or more actors) and pantomime objects (communicate an idea through movement and gestures).
7. Each group will present their scene from their designated area for the class.
8. The facilitator will say, “3, 2, 1, action” and the scene begins.
9. When the scene is over, the facilitator will say, “Scene.”
10. The students and facilitator will applaud the scene.
11. The facilitator will repeat steps 8-10 until all groups have presented their scene.

Discussion

1. Which character(s) do you identify with in the scenario and why?
2. How would a modern-day crime scene differ from the one on March 5, 1770?
3. If you could play a different character in the aftermath of March 5, 1770, who would it be and why?
4. What were Crispus Attucks final words?



Whole Group Drama Activity

Overview

The scene takes place on March 6, 1770, in the early morning after the Boston Massacre. Townsmen, along with Lieutenant Governor Hutchinson, have gathered in Faneuil Hall to debate whether the British soldiers are guilty of murder or whether they were acting in self-defense.

Students will improvise this scenario by sharing and listening to the eye witness accounts, discussing the tenor of the community, and debating an action plan with collective decision making.

Process

1. Were the British soldiers murderers or acting in self-defense? Divide the class evenly into two separate groups.
2. Have students select an occupation for their townsman. Students might reference their occupation during the debate.
3. The facilitator or a volunteer student can play the role of Hutchinson who will be facilitating the meeting.
4. The facilitator will say, “3, 2, 1, action” and the scene begins.
5. Hutchinson makes a brief introduction that includes welcoming the townsmen, summarizing the events that occurred on King Street the previous night, and asking the townsmen to determine whether the British soldiers are murderers or soldiers who defended themselves against a violent mob.
6. Since there are no scripts or rehearsals, students will improvise the dialogue.
7. During the improvised debate, Hutchinson is responsible for assuring multiple townsmen are not talking over one another.
8. When the scene is over, the facilitator will say, “Scene.”
9. The students and facilitator will applaud the scene.

Discussion

1. Explain the arguments that changed your perspective about the British soldiers.
2. Which character(s) did you have sympathy for and why?
3. How might the debate be different if it occurred in the present time?



Special Needs Drama Activity

Overview

Before, during, and after the Boston Massacre on March 5, 1770 on King Street, there were many surrounding sounds that created a mood and atmosphere for each individual.

The sounds varied in degree and intensity. Some of the sounds that night included: people talking, walking, running, horse hooves, yelling, firing, falling, loading, whispers, wind hollowing, rolling wheels, falling snow, owl, barking dog, etc.

Students will create a live soundscape (the sounds heard in a particular location) from King Street on the night of March 5, 1770.

Process

1. Students can work independently or in pairs/triads.
2. Students brainstorm sounds that would have been heard the night of March 5, 1770 on King Street.
3. Select at least five sounds and write them down on a piece of paper.
4. Organize the sounds in preferential order.
5. Have students simultaneously make the first sound and repeat it at least three times.
6. Have students simultaneously make the second sound and repeat it at least three times.
7. Repeat Step 5 for the remaining sounds.
8. Have students rehearse their soundscape by simultaneously making each sound and then moving on to the next sound without pausing.
9. Students should experiment with the volume for each sound.
10. Optional - Soundscapes can be created with each person creating their own sound and solely contributing their sound to the soundscape when it is their turn.
11. Optional - Soundscapes can have some sounds overlap.
12. The facilitator will say, "3, 2, 1, action" and the scene begins.
13. Present the soundscape for the class.
14. When the soundscape is finished, the facilitator will say, "Scene."
15. The students and facilitator will applaud the scene.



Discussion

1. What sounds did you hear in the soundscape?
2. What mood was created by the sounds?
3. What additional sound would you add to the soundscape?

Student Accommodations

Groups encompass heterogeneous/flexible groupings.

Shy and English Language Learners write their discussion response.

Autistic and shy students take pantomimed parts and/or smaller speaking roles.

Gifted students model the scenes for visual learners.

Discussion topics are given orally and written on the board.

Seating accommodations are made for visually and hearing-impaired students.

A student can shadow (follow the actor around and simultaneously do the things that they do) a shy student.

Students draw a picture in lieu of making a verbal comment.

Students self-cast and differentiate themselves by the size of their selected role.

Special needs students can play scenes in the last group so they can watch others first.

Gifted students can play multiple parts and/or participate in multiple scenes

The sequence of the scene is written on the board / projected on a white board.

Facilitator side coaches those who need extra assistance.