

Biographical Tableau



Language Arts & Drama

Grade
6

English Language Arts Common Core Standard(s) Gr. 6

RI.4.1 CCR Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

RI.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Essential Skills and Knowledge:

- Determine and state evidence that confirms the meaning of an informational text.

Drama (MD) Standard(s) Grade 6

3.2.a Creative Expression: Use selected posture, movement, expression, and vocal skills to enact characters drawn from selected sources.



CONNECTED OBJECTIVES

Students use the actors tools and skills to confirm/summarize the meaning of an informational text through tableau.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

McDougal-Littell's **Language of Literature**: *Spellbinder: The Life of Harry Houdini* or any similar biography.

KEY CONTENT VOCABULARY

Biography

KEY ARTS VOCABULARY

- *Actor's Tools*: body, voice, imagination.
- *Actor's Skills*: ensemble (a small group working together), focus (concentration on staying in character), sense memory (understanding the emotions and experiences of characters), commitment (using all your energy to enter and stay in the world of the theater)
- Statue, sculptor, positive/negative

A S S E S S M E N T

- Positive/Negative response: divide students into two groups. One will compose negative comments for Houdini (based on his challenges, setbacks, and struggles), and the other will compose positive comments (based on his successes and how he achieved them). All comments must be based on the text.
- Select one student to be Houdini at the pinnacle of his career. You could tell students they are doing a fake séance, just like the ones that Houdini debunked during his career. Allow the entire class to work together to compose a Wax Museum statue of Houdini, explaining why they are making each artistic choice.
- The Positive Response team stands on one side of the room, the Negative Response team lines up on the other. Alternately step up to the living statue of Houdini, one at a time deliver the positive or negative message. Try to end with a positive one.
- Say farewell to Houdini, you might play with the idea that this was a “fake séance” but that we learned some very real information by going back to the text. Be culturally responsive regarding this topic!
- Complete the lesson by having students write a letter to Houdini’s survivors---what should they know about their relative? How was he able to accomplish his goals? What advice would he have for his descendants? They should discuss a character trait and provide examples from the text to support your ideas. (eg perseverance, creativity, determination, etc)



L E S S O N S T E P S

Background Information:

Personal acting space (kinosphere)

Acting strategies: Wax Museum; Clay Statues

Students have read the excerpt of Harry Houdini’s biography in the Literature text: Spellbinder: The Life of Harry Houdini, pages 804-808.

Opening

- Show the film clips of Harry Houdini’s life. Tell students they are going to reread and analyze an excerpt from a biography of Harry Houdini to discover how he became so famous.

Guided Practice

- Model close reading of the first chunk of the text: lines 1-25. What kind of entertainment did people of the late 19th century enjoy? What kind of entertainment did Houdini provide? How would you characterize this phase of his career, and what makes you say that?
- Generate a list of the performances that Houdini did at the beginning of his career.
- Allow the whole class to practice being a wax museum statue of one of these acts by allowing them to create a kinosphere and use their acting tools and skills to create an individual tableau, or living statue, of this moment. Provide positive reinforcement for stillness, silence, dramatic gesture, and levels.
- Close this activity by having students turn to a partner and exchange information about the statues they created and how they think Houdini felt about this part of his career.

Independent Practice:

- Tell students they will work in small groups to create a Wax Museum statue to represent one part of Houdini’s life. Each team will choose one person to be the “clay.” Each member must contribute one idea for a physical gesture, posture, expression, or stance and be able to tell how they got their idea from the text.
- Rehearse creating the statue and explaining the text support.
- Perform for the rest of the class.

Text Chunks:

Lines 1-25, 26-30, 31-48, 49-77, 78-90, 91-112, 113-end..

EXTENSIONS & OPTIONS SOURCES & RESOURCES

- Media Smart dvd Life of Harry Houdini
- www.thegreatharryhoudini.com.

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