



Telling Great Stories: The Legend Library as Source for Play Creation

Lesson Overview

ADA10/ADA20: This lesson serves as an exploration into using people's personal stories as inspiration to create drama works. In this lesson students will reflect on what makes a good story, and explore the stories shared by Canadian theatre artists through the Legend Library. They will learn about the form of verbatim theatre and use the creative process to create a short performance inspired by a Legend Library interview.

Learning Goals

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Generate criteria of what makes something a 'great story'
- Explore Canada's Theatre Museum Legend Library
- Define 'verbatim theatre'
- Use the creative process, and techniques of verbatim theatre, to create a short drama presentation

Guiding Questions

- Why are stories important?
- What makes a story a 'great story'?
- What is the Legend Library?
- What great stories from Canadian theatre artists are shared in Legend Library?
- What is verbatim theatre?
- How can we use stories as impetus for the creation of theatre works?

Readiness

Students will be familiar with responsible digital citizenship and appropriate use of online resources.

Students will have experience in collaborating with classmates to create short dramatic pieces in a way that is both artistically effective and demonstrates theatre responsibility. They will have experience sharing short pieces with the class, and acting as an attentive, safe and supportive audience for their peers.

Students will be able to kindly and helpfully offer feedback to their peers on what made their performances successful.

Terminology

- Anchor chart
- Verbatim theatre
- Tableau

Materials

- Internet-enabled devices for students
- [Canada's Theatre Museum Legend Library](#)
- Whiteboard/blackboard, and markers/chalk

Minds On

Teacher Notes

When inviting students to share personal stories, prompts have been created to evoke happy, positive memories. Adjust the prompts as you see fit (see Differentiation suggestions below). Students might also need reminding that stories they share should be positive and school-appropriate.

Pairs > Minds On Quote

Write on the board:

"What is important to me is a great story, a human voice, and a connection."

- Philip Akin, Legend Library Interview (Pt. 42 of 48)

Put students into pairs. Explain that this is a quote about theatre by a legendary Canadian theatre artist. Ask them to think, then share their thoughts on this statement with their partner.

Prompts: *What do you think about this statement? What is important in theatre to you? Do you have any favourite stories that you've enjoyed seeing on stage - or you've enjoyed staging yourself?*

Pairs > Sharing Stories (Great and Small)

Invite students to share a favourite story from their elementary school years with their partner.

Prompt: *Let's talk about 'great stories.' Think of a 'great story' of something that you experienced during your time at elementary school. Was there something hilarious that happened one time? Or, maybe there was a great mystery, or a big surprise? Share your story with your partner.*

Once each student has shared a favourite story, invite them to share a story of something boring that happened to them in the past week.



Prompt: *What is something boring, mundane or not very interesting that has happened to you in the last week? Share that story with your partner.*

Whole Class > Generating Success Criteria

Invite students to reflect on the stories that they have shared and heard. Ask them to reflect on what made one a 'great story' and the other 'boring.' With their partner, have them identify some success criteria that make a story a 'great story'

Once students have developed their success criteria with their partners, invite them to share their responses as a whole class.

Record them on the board and create a class anchor chart of criteria.

Differentiation

Suggest a different favourite story prompt, if another is more topical or effective for your students. Examples could include:

- Share a story of the time you had the most delicious meal
- Share a story of something funny that happened this past summer
- Share a story of the silliest thing you've ever seen an animal do

Give students the option of recording their stories in a journal instead of a paired discussion.

Assessment as learning

Generating and co-creating success criteria requires students to use the critical analysis process

Action!

Small Group > Exploring the Legend Library

Form students into small groups, and ensure that each group has an internet-enabled device.

Introduce students to Canada's Theatre Museum Legend Library. Explain that it is a resource of interviews with more than 70 esteemed Canadian theatre artists.

Ask each group to select a theatre artist of interest, and to watch one or more of their interview clips.



Have students identify the part(s) of the stories shared that best fit the success criteria of a 'great story.' Ask them to record the timestamps of the video(s) where the artist shares that 'great story.'

Whole Class > Learning the Form

Write the term verbatim theatre on the board. Explain that this is a form of theatre scripted from the direct words of actual people.

Discuss why this might be an interesting technique to create theatre. Collectively, craft a definition of what verbatim theatre is in language that makes sense to your students and write it on the board. **Prompt:** *What do you think would be interesting about theatre that is created this way? How might this be used to help tell great stories?*

Small Groups > Creating Verbatim Theatre

In their small groups, have students dramatize their artists' great story into a work of verbatim theatre.

Direct them to:

- Review the interview and select the five sentences that are most key in retelling the artists' great story. (The timestamps will help with this!)
- Write down those sentences word for word. It is important that students not fix any grammatical errors, modify any weird sentence structure, or remove any filler words like 'um' or 'ah'.
- Create five tableau poses to dramatize the story - one pose to correspond with each sentence. Each pose should be presented frozen and silently, but then brought to life by one actor who will speak the verbatim sentence.

Extensions

- Engage in a Verbatim Theatre unit by adapting or extracting from this one (designed for Grade 12) on CODE's website: [Verbatim Theatre](#)
- Explore the history and uses of verbatim theatre more deeply by screening [An Introduction to Verbatim Theatre](#) by the National Theatre (UK)
- Have students learn more about their Canadian theatre artist by doing a web search, or by visiting the [Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia](#)
- Explore and discuss the ethics of verbatim theatre, especially in terms of balancing responsibility to the people whose stories are being shared and making effective theatre. A great starting point is [The Ethics of Verbatim Theatre](#) by the National Theatre (UK)

Differentiation

Give students the option of working individually, in pairs, or in small groups to review the Legend Library.

Assessment for learning

Circulate and ask students about the stories that they have discovered, and how those stories meet the success criteria generated earlier in the lesson.

Consolidation

Whole Class > Sharing

Have students present their performances to the class taking turns as the performers and as the audience.

After each performance, invite positive feedback from peers of what they found effective about each performance, and how each performance effectively told a 'great story'

Extensions

- Continue to explore the form of verbatim theatre as a medium for play creation with CODE's [Verbatim Theatre Unit](#)

Differentiation

Rather than tableau, students could use verbatim transcript excerpts as text for one performer while other performers re-enact the story using movement, or another drama form.

Assessment of learning

Use the previously generated success criteria to offer verbal and/or written feedback to students