
**HowlRound
Theatre Commons:
Essays and
Conversations
from the
First Ten Years
(2011-2020)
Lesson Plans**

Applied Drama and
Theatre in Action

Applied Drama and Theatre in Action

Relevant Courses

Applied Drama and Theatre	Teaching Artistry
Intro to Theatre	Playwriting
Community Engagement	Theatre for Social Change
Theatre for Young Audiences	

Focus Questions

- ▶ What is applied drama and theatre?
 - ▶ What does applied drama and theatre look like in practice?
 - ▶ What role does dialogue have in applied drama and theatre?
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Pre-Reading

- ▶ *How Refugees Are Using Theatre to Welcome Parisians into Their Lives* by verity healy
 - ▶ *Liberating Terror: Clown and Activism* | by Sayda Trujillo
 - ▶ *The New Work of Building Civic Practice* | by Michael Rohd
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Objectives/Goals

- ▶ Students will learn the definition of applied drama and theatre.
- ▶ Students will participate in an applied drama and theatre workshop.
- ▶ Students will analyze the theatre techniques used and the role of participants* in an applied drama and theatre workshop.

*Applied theatre work takes place in a variety of contexts. For this reason, the word “participant” is used in place of “student.”

Applied Drama and Theatre in Action

Room Setup

Space for seated discussion as well as space to make a circle.

Materials

Applied drama and theatre definition printed on a handout or projected on a slide, reflection questions printed on a handout or projected on a slide, poster paper with prompts written at the top (Problems we see in the University/ College community... / Problems we see in our Department... / Problems we see in our city/town...)

Check-In

(5 min) Share your name, pronouns, and a social issue/injustice you care deeply about.

Engagement: Defining Applied Drama and Theatre (15 min)

1. Share definition of applied drama and theatre (ADT):

Applied Drama and Theatre (ADT) is an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of interactive and participatory drama and theatre activities, led by applied theatre practitioners and enacted by theatre artists and non-theatre participants, to interrogate a central question, theme, or guiding problem. Applied drama and theatre projects often examine issues in communities in order to spark dialogue, honor participants' voices, and enact liberatory change.

2. In small groups/partners, discuss the following questions. Provide the questions via a handout or projected on a slide.

- ▶ What stands out to you from this definition?
- ▶ How do our readings resonate with this definition of the field of applied drama and theatre?
- ▶ What considerations do the artists/applied drama and theatre projects from the readings offer the field at large? What is the role of dialogue in these projects?

Applied Drama and Theatre Model Workshop

At the heart of applied drama and theatre is a dedication to the use of theatre techniques to address issues relevant to communities. It lives outside of traditional performance spaces and professional hierarchies. So, to get an idea of what an applied drama and theatre (ADT) workshop could look like, you're going to experience a model workshop—a sequence of activities—that could be a first workshop with an ADT practitioner working with a new group. This model lesson was created for college undergraduates who are interested in using applied drama and theatre to enact social change on their campus.

Introduction: *Today we're coming together to think about what issues most affect our college/university community and how we could use theatre to address these issues—in order to imagine possible solutions. We ask that you bring yourselves to this workshop in the way that feels most comfortable to you. You are always in charge of yourself—how much or how little you share and how deep you'd like to go. You're the author of your story and how it's shared and ultimately told.*

Ensemble Game

Option 1: Zip, Zap, Zop

1. Invite students to join you in a standing circle.
2. Tell them: *The goal of this game is to pass energy around the circle. The way to do it is through three words: "zip, zap, zop." These words must be passed in order, for example if someone passes you a "zip," you must pass that energy to another person by saying "zap," then that person passes it along by saying "zop." Once you complete the three-word cycle, you start over with "zip."*
3. To pass the energy, say the word while pointing to another person. Imagine the energy flying through your fingertips, across the circle to the other person.
4. Once you receive the energy, pass it on to maintain the pattern.
5. For competitive play, you can have people who respond slowly or with the wrong word take a seat, until you have a winner.

Option 2: People/Shelter/Storm

1. Invite students to create groups of three.
2. SHELTER: In each group of three, two people will create "shelter," placing their hands together above their heads, touching palms together, to make a roof shape. The other person represents the "people" standing underneath the shelter.
3. PEOPLE: When you call out "people," the people will leave their shelters and find a new shelter as quickly as they can. Try this a few times.
4. When you call out "shelter," the two partners will leave their person and find a new "person" to shelter. The "people" stay where they are. The "shelter" partners should separate and find another partner to make a shelter with. Try this a few times.
5. STORM: If you call out "storm" everyone leaves their group and finds a totally new group as either a person or a shelter.
6. Once all of the instructions are clear, the game begins with the facilitator calling out "people," "shelter," or "storm" at random.

7. Optional reflection questions:

- ▶ If this game is a metaphor for our university/college community, what are the “storms” that pull us apart?
- ▶ What are the “shelters” that bring us together?

Poster Dialogue

1. On three large pieces of poster paper, write the following prompts:

- ▶ Problems we see in the university/college community...
- ▶ Problems we see in our (university/college) department...
- ▶ Problems we see in our city/town...

2. Give each student a marker and invite them to visit each poster and share their thoughts. They can write words, sentences, or even draw images.

3. As they move to each poster, they can riff off of other people’s thoughts or add checkmarks to signal their agreement.

4. Give students five to six minutes to respond. Play music in the background.

5. If they finish early, encourage them to read others’ responses and signal their agreement when appropriate.

6. When everyone finishes, read each poster aloud as a group, making sure that each response is heard aloud. They do not have to read their own responses, and this works best “popcorn style,” where people organically take turns reading responses.

7. Reflect:

- ▶ Where are we seeing a lot of “heat”? What responses seemed to resonate with the

group the most?

- ▶ Take a moment for yourself and think about how these issues impact you, or people you know, personally. You do not have to share your responses aloud.

8. Based on the reflection and the responses on the posters, the facilitator chooses a topic to explore for the remaining activities (i.e., sexual assault on campus, casting procedures in the department, etc.) A specific theme is more helpful.

Six-Word Story

1. *Now that we have a theme chosen, take a moment and revisit these questions for yourself: How does this issue impact you, or people you know, personally? How do you see it impacting the community at large?*

2. Write a six-word story capturing one of these experiences. Your story can only contain six words total. You can be creative with punctuation, play with one long sentence, or a couple short ones.

3. Let students know they will be sharing these stories with others but only if they are comfortable doing so.

Real to Ideal Images

1. Get into groups of three to four. Share out the six-word stories in groups (if students are comfortable).

2. Discuss: What is the reality of this problem? What does it look like?

3. Based on their discussion, invite students to choose one idea to pursue for the rest of the activity. It does not have to reflect one person’s story.

4. Direct students to create a frozen image with their group that captures the essence of this problem. *Make sure to check in with your group as you create your image to ensure everyone is comfortable with any physical touch.*

5. Give the students time to rehearse their images. Then, share out all of the images at the same time. Count students down to freezing with a “three-two-one, freeze”.

6. Now, invite them to consider: What is the ideal? What would it look like if this problem was solved, or didn’t exist?

7. Direct students to create a frozen image with their group that captures the ideal.

8. Give the students time to rehearse their images. Then, share out all of the images at the same time. Count students down to freezing with a “three-two-one, freeze”.

9. Now, let’s consider: What strategies could help us move from the real to ideal? Create an image that captures a strategy that will help this community address this issue.

10. Rehearsal time: Practice moving through all three images.

11. If you have time: Invite students to improvise three lines of dialogue for each frozen image. Rehearse and perform with lines.

12. Perform final images (and dialogue) for the whole group.

13. Reflect as a whole group after each performance:

- ▶ Does this strategy feel realistic—like something our community could try?
- ▶ What conditions would need to exist for this strategy to succeed?

Transition out of workshop

Alright, we are bringing our model workshop to a close. Let’s step out of the context of participants and turn our attention toward analyzing the workshop itself.

Facilitator Note

It will be helpful to hand out a copy of the workshop plan above so students can see the activities in sequence for discussion—or project on a slide.

Reflection

- ▶ What did you notice about how participants were asked to engage in this workshop?
- ▶ What activities did we do? How did these activities invite dialogue among participants?
- ▶ If you facilitated this workshop with a community, what might you do as a next step/additional workshop?

Closing

Complete the prompt:

“(an observation, idea, or thought from class) ...It made me think.”

Example: *“The role of dialogue in applied drama and theatre...it made me think.”*

Applied Drama and Theatre in Action

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