

Doug Berky Student Workshops



"The Magic of Mask Theater" is a workshop most appropriate for middle and high school classes interested in exploring the art of mask theater. For theatre related workshops, Doug focuses on physical and vocal exercises that help the students understand how we communicate. Theatre games and exercises are used to teach observation skills, communication skills, and development of imagination and improvisation skills. Theatre and masks are used as a tool to explore literature and character through interactive exercises. Through physical movement students explore how the body moves and discover our movement vocabulary. Students will also experiment with improv and experience some exercises with neutral masks (revealing body expression and character traits), larval masks (imagining and creating simple character), expressive masks (getting the body aware of emotional life) and character masks. Masks help reveal that each person is unique in their movement, and before a word is spoken, the body has already revealed much of what is to be known.

Students learn by doing what they are trying to learn. Questions asked revolve around what students learn or understand by what they see, hear, or read and how art/theatre skills enable us to communicate those ideas. What skills and tools do we have and use to make ideas seen and understood?

Arts Integration:

Physical education - movement, coordination, fitness, communication, balance, physical health

Literature - culture studies, reading comprehension, vocabulary, drama, storytelling, folktales, character development

Art - theatre, sculpting, mask making, puppetry, imagination

"Exploring Communication and Cooperation With Masks" is a workshop most often scheduled for older elementary and middle students though it can be adapted for younger elementary and high school students as well. The process involves physical theatre games that allow students to discover the language of movement, the subtle ways we communicate without words, and ways we can understand and cooperate with one another even with few words. Some games and exercises come from Viola Spolin's "Improvisation for the theatre".

For example, students move freely and are asked to freeze. Then acknowledging their attitude or position, they begin to move from that position to "justify" what this position suggests to them (playing a game, crying, eating, etc)

Another theatre game is “What’s your trade”. Children mime an occupation and others must guess the occupation.

Students also play a cooperation game entitled "Machines". The students create a “machine” through movement. One starts a movement and sound, others join with their own movement and sound and create a machine.

Expressive masks are used to explore how we feel and the emotions evoked through movement. Some of the masks are anger, joy, surprise , fear. In a process called sculpting, one child puts on an emotion mask and the others gently position that persons body into a position that communicates the expression of the mask. By wearing the expressive masks, the students physicalize human emotions in a safe fun setting.

Arts Integration:

Physical education - movement, coordination, fitness, balance, physical health emotional health

Art - theatre, sculpting, mask making , imagination

Social/emotional learning - problem solving as part of a team, communication with others, self understanding, self control