



Ensemble Performance

Reading comprehension and analysis through performance

Suggested Time: 25 minutes

Student Tasks:

- Read and annotate the texts
- Move to pairs or small groups
- Play with texts as an ensemble

Online ThinkCERCA Resources

- Reading selection

Rationale/Research Base

Performing a poem as a script is more than a strategy for reading comprehension and analysis. At the same time, performance demands multiple close readings and the need to understand tone as one embodies characters. It also drives analysis and deeper understanding of the emotions, key moments, and themes from the text as students physicalize their interpretations.

Optimal Application Notes:

Choose a literary or informational text that aligns with the theme or concept you want to explore. It could be a scene from a play, a poem, a passage from a book, an essay, or even a news article.

Before:

- Provide students with copies of the text
- Designate a performance space/stage

During:

- Have students read the passages together out loud.
- Ask students to circle key phrases and words and annotate the passage, noting key ideas, emotions, themes, issues, and ideas.
- Have small group “play” with the text, physicalizing the most salient ideas.
- Students should try various physical representations, gestures, and expressions that best convey their characters' emotions, relationships, issues, and important concepts of the piece. Encourage students to use Tableau (See Best Practices: Performance Strategies (Tableau).)
- Allow time for participants to rehearse their performance.
- Encourage them to experiment with different movements and expressions to create a visually compelling and emotionally resonant scene.

Guidelines:

- Point out the left and right sides of the stage where their tableau or frozen picture will be set.
- Students should play with frozen expressions, freezing their bodies and faces in an expression that captures a key idea, emotion, theme, concept, or issue. (For example, by freezing in a pose that captures the concept of gratitude.)
- Encourage students to play with individual poses, staying connected as a group, and breaking out into smaller groups, so it looks like a large-scale film.
- Have students use different heights for their image so the audience sees the high, medium, and low parts of the image.

Assemble and View:

- Once everyone is ready, have groups share their performances.
- Encourage the audience to ask questions and share their interpretations of the characters, emotions, and the theme itself.

Wrap it Up!:

- Wrap up the exercise by summarizing key insights, themes, or emotions that emerged from the performances. Discuss how this exercise enhanced participants' understanding of the text and theme.
- Using theatre exercises provides a dynamic and interactive way to engage with literary and informational texts, promoting a deeper connection to the material and facilitating discussions on complex themes and concepts, so let students know this strategy will be used periodically throughout the course.

Scaffolds & Supports:

- Provide a reading of the text and ask basic comprehension questions to ensure students understand the literal level of the text. Translations may also be used to support comprehension.
- Review annotations and ask students to explain their thinking.
- Provide a smaller text selection so the targeted passage is an appropriate length.
- Use pairs instead of groups.