Assessment Live!

10 Real-Time Ways for Kids to Show What They Know—and Meet the Standards

Nancy Steineke

Heinemann
Portsmouth, NH
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Foreword

If I had a dime for every time I’ve been asked to share some ideas for more descriptive, engaging comprehension assessment, I’d be digging my toes into fine, white sand somewhere right now! Teachers throughout the country have been waiting for this book. In *Assessment Live!*, you’ll find a lively, practical guide to not only assessing students’ thinking, but engaging them in compelling, relevant learning *as a part of* the assessment process. Nancy Steineke has actually found a way (*many ways*) to make literacy assessment a vital part of the learning experience, a concept that researchers have written about for years. As I was absorbing every assessment approach she proposes, however, I was actually thinking of an audience she may never have considered—an audience I desperately wish would read *Assessment Live!* The audience? Businesspeople in this country.

I vividly recall a particular Board of Directors meeting for the Public Education & Business Coalition (PEBC is a Denver-based nonprofit in which I worked for sixteen years) in the late 1990s. We were seated in a lovely, wood-paneled bank conference room drinking rich coffee and eating very flaky croissants and everyone was dressed in “board meeting” suits—lots of navy and black, lots of pin stripes. One of the agenda items was an opportunity for the members of the board to discuss their hopes, needs, and priorities for incoming workers in the coming twenty years. They talked about the needs they saw in their businesses and, because Denver-area school superintendents and other educators were in the room, the board expressed their hopes with respect to how the PEBC might work with local school districts to improve the odds that entry-level workers (students straight from high school and college graduates alike) come to the workplace with appropriate skills. I was stunned silent by their priorities.

They said that they needed young workers who could think clearly and critically, articulate their thoughts cogently, orally and in writing; they wanted workers to collaborate, think flexibly, and solve problems in an agile, inventive way. They wanted creative thinkers rather than dogmatic rule-followers and they wanted them to be able to “flex”
into a number of different roles, quickly changing perspectives to tackle new problems. They wanted, they said, thinkers and doers, but of the two they valued thinkers the most. They went on to say that they thought that these were the kinds of “skills” that should be taught K–12 and that students should be held accountable for agile thinking and collaborative actions. You’ll get no argument from me on any of that, I thought.

I was stunned because this was the very same group I had listened to numerous times as they encouraged me to work with PEBC educators to raise test scores as measured by traditional high-stakes assessments. I thought briefly about the very real possibility that I might be shown the door if I expressed what I was thinking, but my frustration was at a peak and I feared that I might experience some kind of implosion if I didn’t speak up. I gathered my thoughts, tried to slow my pulse, and entered the conversation. I pointed out that, if this society indeed hopes for critical, collaborative, agile thinkers, then we educators, with their help, needed to think very differently about the ways we are “holding kids accountable.” How on earth did we expect students to value the critical thinking skills they had just enumerated when their feedback from teachers, grades, tests, and entrance to college were all based on a hundred-year-old model of standardized, multiple-choice, dumbed down (I was really getting myself on a tear here) tests that didn’t assess anything they had just said they valued most!

I recall hearing the thundering quiet following my diatribe and wondering how unemployment works and how long it lasts, and then the bank president whose conference room we were occupying leaned forward on his shiny table and said, “Well I never thought of it that way.”

I suspect he speaks for many others (including some educators) in our society who may not have considered the disconnection between the proficiencies we seek among young entry-level workers and our teaching and assessment practices in the 13 to 17 years leading to their working life. Nancy Steineke has most certainly considered this anomaly—and she has a serious proposal for a solution.

In *Assessment Live!*, Nancy views assessment as an integral part of the learning process itself. She acknowledges that, in traditional assessment models, it is the adults who are doing the “heavy lifting.” We design the assessments, prepare kids to take them, then score them later and lament that they reveal very little about students’ thinking. Arguing convincingly that we need another paradigm for assessment, Nancy describes how activities that engage students in complex, multi-faceted demonstrations of learning can transfer the responsibility to students to reveal the quality of their thinking while seamlessly helping them learn the content more deeply and lastingly.
Teachers will devour the ten structures Nancy proposes in Assessment Live!, which represent a diverse set of tools teachers can use and adapt for a wide variety of learners across the range of content areas. Teachers will also love the detail Nancy offers to help students develop the skills required for these assessments. She writes clearly about the necessity of preparing kids in the early part of the semester to take full advantage of each type of demonstration. She emphasizes the need for team-building and work on students’ oral language—the central tool they use to develop and express learning.

Nancy seems to have anticipated every conceivable glitch in the processes (having, no doubt, experienced every conceivable glitch in the processes) and has worked out just how to avoid them. As I was reading each live assessment, I would just start to think, “Yeah, but what would happen if . . . ,” when Nancy would answer my question with a clever, precise response that can actually prevent the problems before they manifest. I began to wonder if she was reading my mind. I think the truth is that her experience has enabled her to write a book that is not only a practical guide to very engaging assessment and learning activities, but an important paradigm shift in assessment practice for American teachers.

Part of that shift relates to how teachers participate in the assessment process. Rather than standing as ultimate judge, Nancy sees us as coaches and observers, preparing kids before they begin the process and observing with a trained eye as students reveal their thinking as active, engaged learners. She helps us know what to look for in our role as observers and provides dozens of tools, including rubrics, to help teachers and students make informed judgments about the quality of the product. She also shows how numerous standards are met through performance assessments, calming any fears that students whose understanding is assessed in this way won’t meet standards or score well on traditional assessments.

Nancy also asks us to reconsider our old ideas about the grade levels in which students can be asked to show what they know through performance assessments. The structures presented in Assessment Live! apply all the way across the 6–12 range, giving the lie to the notion that older students are too peer-focused to “perform” in this way and that younger kids aren’t developmentally ready to synthesize their learning in a visible way. I can only imagine the power of these strategies if adapted and applied all along the K–12 grade continuum, and what critical thinkers and doers this Board of Directors would begin to find in their entry-level workforce!

I wish Nancy Steineke had been with me that day in the boardroom. I wish she had been able to describe as vividly as she does on these pages how students can bring their
thinking to life by collaborating, thinking flexibly, and solving real-world problems in an agile, inventive way. I suspect that that group of business people and educators might have said, “Let’s make this happen in all schools. Let’s find a way to make our assessment practices match the skills we want students to bring with them into the higher-education and working worlds. Let’s get behind schools that see the need to change the way they think about assessment. Let’s stand back and watch kids really engage in learning again.” I suspect that you’ll feel that way after reading this book and I sincerely hope that you share it with colleagues with whom you can create your own movement for change in your school and district. Nancy leaves no doubt that it can be done.

—Ellin Oliver Keene
Acknowledgments

The students of Victor J. Andrew High School: My students supply the fun and energy that keep me going, and they willingly take the risks that enable all of us to become better learners.

Bill Steineke, my husband: He offers unwavering support and always manages to find a fresh supply of patience in the face of my authorial panics.

Smokey Daniels, friend and editor: There is no better person to help me talk through an idea. And when the prose is rough, he sure knows how to polish it up.

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Charles McQuillen, marketing director: Even the best book will languish unread unless someone is working hard to find its audience.

Ellin Oliver Keene, foreword author: I am deeply honored by Ellin’s enthusiasm for this book and truly appreciate her recognition that assessment should reinforce not only content but also the skills students will need for higher education and the working world.

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James Bond, personal assistant cat: Though he wasn’t much help with revision, Mister Bond did a great job keeping me company as he slept atop my computer monitor.
What Is It?

The Tableaux strategy is a series of scenes presented by groups of four to eight students who are frozen in poses or positions that depict an historical event, famous speech, scientific concept, or scene from a novel. One student reads the Tableaux captions while the others create the scene being described (Wilhelm 2002). The Tableaux script can be based on existing text (textbook, novel, short story, magazine article) or original text written in response to something the students have read or studied. Fiction requires students to reexamine scenes and character while nonfiction requires students to imaginatively create characters that represent people, ideas, or symbols. The following script, and the photo in Figure 8.1, depict the series of Tableaux scenes that a fifth-grade literature circle group designed in order to convey the startling true story the readers could not forget once they finished the book My Heart Is on the Ground: The Diary of Nannie Little Rose, a Sioux Girl (Rinaldi 1999). This book portrays the life of a young Sioux girl, ripped away from her family and community and sent to live in a government-run boarding school in order to be assimilated into white culture.

Tableaux Script Based on My Heart Is on the Ground

1. If Indian parents did not agree to have their children taken to the school, they were taken by force.
2. Once the children arrived at the school, they immediately had to get their hair cut. For them, it meant taking away their Indian past.
3. The kids struggled to learn English and were forced not to talk or sign in their past language.
4. The children were given diaries to write about what they did each day.
5. Many kids died from various diseases at the school.
6. Many kids tried to escape because the school was not a great pleasure.
No matter the genre, Tableaux require that students be ruthless in their scripting since the narration must capture key points in a series of single sentences. Creating an effective Tableau requires solid comprehension of the material in order to take the text or information, write a succinct series of captions, and transform each caption into a three-dimensional living illustration. Students must think seriously about the accuracy of their blocking (visual composition, gestures, facial expressions) and frozen scene depictions, which requires careful rereading of the text.

**When and Why to Use It**

Tableaux are useful in any content area. This is an energizing, active way for students to return to the text and think about it more deeply. In addition, as students negotiate what information is vital for Tableaux representation, they must grapple with or discuss alternative reader responses. Listening in on these conversations as you monitor offers a unique way for the teacher to assess the students’ internalization of key material. In addition, this assessment is intensely kinesthetic and spatial. Students are moving around as

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**Figure 8.1 Students Depict My Heart Is on the Ground**: If Indian parents did not agree to have their children taken to school, they were taken by force.
they compose living pieces of sculpture. While the movement and rehearsal enhance memory connections, the physical aspect is perfectly in tune with how boys want to respond in a physical way to their reading (Wilhelm and Smith 2002).

But Tableaux is also a great ongoing assessment tool. After some reading has been completed, student groups work with assigned pages to create and perform some frozen scenes that highlight the information or drama. While a quiz is individual and ends with either having the answers—or not—a Tableaux assessment requires students to revisit the text, explain significant aspects to each other in order to construct further meaning, and then reinvent the most important information in a new medium. Interestingly, even if you assign six different groups the exact same three pages of text, each group will script and block differently because every reader’s visualization of the text is unique. Creating Tableaux forces students to make inferences when they combine textual clues and their imaginations in order to forge logical conclusions. Plus, each group’s comprehension and creativity gets shared with the entire class.

**Time Requirement**

One to two class periods is needed. The time factor depends on how much text students are working with as well as how many scenes they need to create.

**Starting with the End in Mind**

As you explain the assignment and students study the rubric (see Figure 8.2), discourage them from immediately discussing costumes; their focus needs to be on creating a dramatic script and visually interesting and informative frozen scenes. Notice that costumes are also de-emphasized by point value on the scoring sheet (see Figure 8.3); the greatest values are awarded to the script and the blocking.

**Getting Ready**

Begin by showing some photos of actual statues. Ten minutes of searching Google images should yield some good results. Look for statues that depict groups of people in dramatic poses (grand gestures; vivid expression; multiple visual levels where subjects are simultaneously standing, sitting, crouching, kneeling, or reclining). As you search for images, start with the phrase “statues in [your state here]”. That way you might find some images with which students are already familiar. Another dramatic statue that deserves study (and is easily found on the Internet) is the Flag Raising at Iwo Jima. Explain that when students
## Figure 8.2 Tableaux Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Script</strong></td>
<td><strong>Script</strong></td>
<td><strong>Script</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Introduction gives audience necessary background</td>
<td>- Scene choices reflect important parts of text</td>
<td>- Demonstrates insight into characters, ideas, and text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Caption for each scene clearly describes action</td>
<td>- Audience can easily follow from one scene to the next</td>
<td>- Scene reflects high drama, conflict, action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Neat final draft copy of introduction and Tableau narration turned in</td>
<td>- Captions are correct length</td>
<td>- Helps audience remember key information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Narration</strong></td>
<td><strong>Narration</strong></td>
<td><strong>Narration</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Easily heard</td>
<td>- Good oral interpretation: emotion and energy present</td>
<td>- Interesting, entertaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Correct pacing of speech</td>
<td>- No stumbles</td>
<td>- High energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scenes/Blocking</strong></td>
<td><strong>Scenes/Blocking</strong></td>
<td><strong>Scenes/Blocking</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Makes sense to those unfamiliar with text</td>
<td>- Scenes are important to the text</td>
<td>- High drama, conflict, action depicted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- All actors fully visible</td>
<td>- Tight compositions—actors close together</td>
<td>- Body heights staggered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Well practiced</td>
<td>- Spacing shows relationships between characters</td>
<td>- Each frame is substantially different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Performance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Performance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Remains frozen entire time</td>
<td>- Actors face the audience, “cheating out” when necessary</td>
<td>- Exaggerated expression and gestures portray accurate characterization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No upstaging—“breaking up”—laughter</td>
<td>- Identifiable gestures, fits context</td>
<td>- Audience thoroughly entertained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hair does not hide face</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>- Very polished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Props/Costumes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Props/Costumes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Props/Costumes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Slight suggestion of character/scene</td>
<td>- Costume/character connection is clearly obvious to audience (i.e., casual clothes does not make it clear you are a housekeeper)</td>
<td>- Creativity and obvious outside effort reflected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Contributes positively, enhances audience understanding</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 8.3 Tableaux Scoring Sheet

Tableaux

Name ________________________________

Source ____________________________ Date ________ Period ______

Directions: Referring back to the rubric, rate your presentation in the following categories. Please jot down any notes about details you want me to notice about your writing and performance before I assign the final grade. Do not repeat the rubric phrases. Attach a copy of your script, and turn in your group’s score sheets together.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Script</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>x 6</td>
<td>/30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narration</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>x 3</td>
<td>/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenes/Blocking</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>x 5</td>
<td>/25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>x 4</td>
<td>/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Props/Costumes</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>x 2</td>
<td>/10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Points /100

May be photocopied for classroom use. © 2009 by Nancy Steineke from Assessment Live! Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
## Standards Skills Students Will Practice

### Reading
- Interpret and evaluate the impact of ambiguities, subtleties, contradictions, ironies, and incongruities in a text
- Analyze interactions between main and subordinate characters in a literary text
- Read, view, and interpret texts and performances in every medium
- Recognize unstated assumptions
- Recognize and analyze the relevance of literature to contemporary and/or personal events and situations
- Explain and justify interpretation

### Writing
- Synthesize information from multiple sources
- Revise writing to improve the logic and coherence
- Draw comparisons between specific incidents and broader themes
- Use tone and language appropriate to the audience and purpose
- Use prewriting activities
- Use the writing process
- Take notes from written and oral texts

### Speaking and Listening
- Analyze historically significant speeches
- Assess how language and delivery affect the mood and tone
- Use appropriate rehearsal to achieve command of the text, and skillful artistic staging
- Recite poems, selections from speeches, or dramatic soliloquies with attention to performance details
- Listen respectfully and responsively
- Apply delivery techniques such as voice projection and demonstrate physical poise
- Use nonverbal communication techniques to help disclose message
- Recognize the use and impact of effective language
- Respond to constructive criticism
- Determine points of view, clarify positions, make judgments, and form opinions
create a tableau, they are making a living statue. Together their groups will create frozen dramatic scenes. Instruct them to notice how the drama of the statue is composed: the posture and pose of the subjects vary, gestures and facial expressions are clear, faces can be seen by the audience unless a face is hidden to intensify dramatic impact.

Now distribute a handout of six to ten numbered captions from a piece of text with which the students are already familiar. When you create this sample set of captions, remember to keep them short, about ten to twenty words each. They are like the captions one would find underneath a newspaper or magazine photograph. Break the class into groups of four or five and have each group pick one or two captions to put into a scene. Remind students to use the statue photographs for inspiration as they create a freeze-frame that captures the characters, action, ideas, and emotion of their caption. Because each group is using the same script, all group members will be part of each scene; the teacher can serve as the narrator this first time. Remind students that the most interesting Tableaux scenes are created when they remember the following:

- Keep the composition tight—actors should be close together versus far apart.
- Consider the relationships between the characters or ideas. Characters or ideas who agree or are on good terms with one another will be physically closer to each other as opposed to conflicting forces who may stand apart or at an angle to others.
- Exaggerate your character’s feelings through your expressions.
- Stagger positions and heights of the actors—it is visually boring when everyone is standing or sitting at the same level.

Give the groups about ten minutes to brainstorm and practice before performing the scenes. As they rehearse, pay particular attention to how they are orienting their poses in relation to where the audience would be. Students often will create a literal scene, a scene that depicts how people would stand in real life versus a staged scene for an audience. In real life, there is no audience, so all players are focused directly on the action being played out. When students create poses like this, often half of the actors are hidden from view because they are standing behind someone else or they have their backs turned to the audience. Try to catch these blocking faux pas as they occur and teach students how to “cheat out,” which means angling one’s body outward so that the audience can still see the actor’s face. Actors in Tableaux should never turn their backs to the audience unless it is to make a strong visual, emotional statement.

Viewing the scenes is best appreciated when the audience members close their eyes until each group is frozen in position. Watching the actors set up their positions can take away from the effect. Getting the students to cover up their eyes can be challenging—you
may want to take digital photos of each scene to capture the blocking and that “frozen moment.” The kids love to look at the photos and they are a good start for studying visual composition and refining blocking in future Tableaux.

Patrick Henry’s “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” speech offers some great Tableaux opportunities for American literature or U.S. history students. As the following example script illustrates, Tableaux is a very useful strategy in content areas. Though most students have heard of the famous slogan “Give me liberty or give me death,” few know its author, its context, or that in terms of craft it’s one of the greatest examples of a powerful closing statement ever written. Unfortunately, when the full text is revealed to kids via their American literature or U.S. history books, it comes off as a difficult-to-read snore selection. Putting Patrick Henry’s great lines in the physical context of Tableaux makes his words come alive (see Figure 8.4) and helps students remember key points of his speech.

PATRICK HENRY—Speech to the Second Virginia Convention
St. John’s Church, Richmond, Virginia, March 23, 1775

1. I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided; and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past.

2. Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation? . . . I ask, gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array, if its purpose be not to force us to submission?

3. We have petitioned; we have remonstrated; we have supplicated; we have prostrated ourselves before the throne . . .

4. Our petitions have been slighted; our remonstrances have produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been disregarded . . .

5. Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance, by lying supinely on our backs, and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot?

6. Three millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us.

7. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations; and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us.

8. I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!
After watching the scenes, pass out photocopies of the original text from which the Tableaux were created and have the students compare it to the script. They should notice that specific lines are chosen for their power. Seldom are all the sentences in a paragraph used for one freeze-frame. One paragraph might actually contain two or three scenes. Also, lines can be combined from several different paragraphs in order to create a powerful scene caption.

Now it’s time for students to create their own scenes from another piece of text they have read and studied. The only real requirements for the text selection are that the information is important for kids to remember, and that the passage have some action to it. But use your imagination! There is a ton of action going on during cell mitosis! Once students have their piece of text, it is their job to ferret out the key information and portray it in narrated
Tableaux. In this initial phase, monitor the groups closely and ask them to explain their text choices to you. If they have traveled down an obscure path, help them rediscover some key text elements they should be including. Then, as they compose their script, remind students that each scene should have action and emotion, and five or six scenes should tell a story. All group members should write a copy of the caption script as it is negotiated. Remind the groups to keep the freeze-frame captions short because, among other reasons, when a narrator reads a long paragraph, it gets hard to keep standing statue still. Once the script is finalized, the groups need to practice so that their blocking is memorized for each freeze-frame.

**Planning and Rehearsal Tips**

Just like all the other performance projects, you will need to remind the kids to keep practicing and refining their freeze-frames. Explain that their audience will suffer if they are still “dragging members into position” and finalizing their blocking when they are supposed to perform some polished scenes. Watch their blocking and don’t be afraid to give suggestions.

**Assessment Live!**

In addition to enjoying the live performances, be sure to videorecord the Tableaux. The digital photos I mentioned earlier are for the Tableaux introduction, when the teacher is acting as the narrator. Now that students are the narrators, you’ll need to capture sound as well as image. When you’re taping, remember this key step: hit the pause button between each freeze-frame. That way, when you play back the tape all the “getting in position stuff” is eliminated and the viewers get to see the scenes the way they would have originally if they had shut their eyes between scenes.

While reviewing the class videorecording, students watch all of the performances carefully, taking notes on the content and performances. They might consider the following:

- What key information did the performances help you remember?
- What makes a good Tableaux performance?
- What would your group do differently the next time?

After the performances, talk about the content first and then use their ideas from the other two questions to make some lists. (See some examples in Figure 8.5.) Next time this live assessment comes around, review those lists in order to improve students’ planning and rehearsal.
### Figure 8.5

**What Makes Good Tableaux?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Narration</strong></th>
<th><strong>Scene Acting</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lively, enthusiastic voice</td>
<td>Audience can see facial expressions from a distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear speaking</td>
<td>Don't laugh—stay in character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak slowly</td>
<td>Stand still</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak loudly</td>
<td>Make each scene look different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show emotion</td>
<td>Overexaggerate facial expressions and gestures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pause between sentences</td>
<td>Blocking shows relationships between characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice lines</td>
<td>Use staggered levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize certain words</td>
<td>Creates feeling of action or motion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound confident, decisive</td>
<td>Creative poses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make character voices</td>
<td>Face the audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Audience can see everyone (no one is behind someone else)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What We Need to Work on Next Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Narration</strong></th>
<th><strong>Scene Acting</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read narration enthusiastically</td>
<td>Don’t laugh and goof around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk loudly and clearly</td>
<td>Practice more—know what we’re doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize words</td>
<td>Overexaggerate gestures and facial expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak with more confidence</td>
<td>Stand still</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make poses more dramatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poses use varied levels (standing, leaning, sitting, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make each scene look different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Face the camera—don't turn back to the audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create a feeling of motion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be dramatic/creative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Get/keep the audience's attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stand so audience can see all actors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Predictable Problems

The part of Tableaux that almost always needs the most teacher coaching is the narration. A group will spend a load of time on writing good captions and planning their blocking but never think twice about how the narrator should orally reflect the vivid action of the scenes. As you monitor, watch for this. When you view the videotape, if the groups’ narrators often fail to match the energy of the acting, take some time out for the direct instruction of basic oral interpretation techniques mentioned in Chapter 2.

**QUICK GUIDE: Tableaux**

1. Choose a dramatic, emotional, or active part of a text—or write your own original script.

2. Divide the text up into five or six scenes.

3. Find a line or two of text that will serve as a caption for each scene.

4. Block each scene. Think about tight composition and conveying emotion/action. Varying pose levels will make the visual composition more interesting.

5. Practice! The actors need to memorize their positions for each scene and rehearse moving seamlessly from one Tableau to the next. Also, standing stock-still while the narrator reads each caption takes practice. Remind actors to face the audience rather than facing away.

6. Pay particular attention to narrator’s oral interpretation. The teacher needs to monitor, intervene, and coach the narrator and the group. Their discussion of the oral interpretation should have the same attention to detail as the physical interpretation. Encourage the narrator to mark the caption script. Underline words to emphasize, mark pauses by placing slashes between words, write down what emotions the voice should reflect as the caption is read.

7. Practice before another group and then together discuss how well the narration and Tableaux met the rubric requirements. Revise and practice again!

8. Public performance. Afterwards, debrief discussing the information presented as well as how successfully the groups portrayed that information. What worked and what would groups need to do differently the next time?
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