The Winter's Tale Acting Exercise: "Exit, Pursued By A Bear"

Students have listened to Bruce Coville's prose version of *The Winter's Tale* and have completed a formative assessment on character and plot. Students will receive their scripts and parts for the performance activity tomorrow. Today we will work in groups and will use textual clues to define stage directions, props, tone, movement.

Students are given a short excerpt from the script: in this scene, Antigonus leaves the baby Perdita on the shore of Bohemia and exits, pursued by a bear, and a shepherd arrives and finds the baby.

Students are divided into groups of three.

Students are given the following: three pieces of cloth of varying sizes, a small pouch, a sheet of yellow paper, a sheet of brown paper, a sheet of white paper or envelope, a pair of brown socks, a necklace, scissors, access to a stapler, glue. (A small doll may be added, if an actual representation of the baby seems to be a good idea. Small teddy bears work well, too – some groups may use the bears as babies, and others may use the bears as . . . bears!)

Students are asked to work as a group to figure out what is happening in this scene, to divide up the parts (Antigonus, Bear, Shepherd), to use the supplies to make props. Teachers/aides circulate answering questions as often as possible with questions, encouraging the students to work out the "problems" of interpretation and performance as a team. Give students 15-20 minutes to work.

With at least 20 minutes left in the period, students move into a large circle. The teacher explains that the space inside the circle is the "stage space," and the teacher explains that this exercise will be done as "theater in the round." To move from "off-stage" to "on-stage," students are shown simply to stand up and enter the circle. To move "off-stage" again, students are shown simply to sit down in their original places. Each group is invited to present its scene.

When all groups have performed, ask the students:

How did the different groups use the prop materials? What did you like about the props used?

How did the different groups convey Antigonus' emotions? And/or how might Antigonus have expressed his/her emotions through actions or expressions or voice?

How did the different groups convey the Shepherd's emotions? And/or how might the Shepherd have expressed his/her emotions through actions or expressions or voice?

How did the different groups present the Bear? What did you like about the Bear's representation?

At the end of the lesson, ask students what they have learned about using the script, the text on the page, to figure out how to act, how to present a scene.

Tomorrow, students will be given their parts. You might point out to students that someone will have the part of Antigonus and someone will have the part of the Shepherd, but all of the scenes will have many more lines to interpret. And you may want to do something different, if you are Antigonus or the Shepherd!

Sample Common Core Standards, Grade 5: **Reading Standards Literature**: Craft and Structure, Describe how a speaker's point of view influences how events are described; **Reading Standards Foundational Skills**: Phonics and Word Recognition, Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words; Fluency, Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension; **Speaking and Listening Standards:** Comprehension and Collaboration, Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly, Explicitly draw on preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas, Carry out assigned roles, Draw conclusions in light of information and knowledge gained from the discussions; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Speak clearly at an understandable pace. (Vocabulary Acquisition and Use may be included as well.)

How did it go?

Did students find a way to use the props in their performance? Did students understand the relationship of the three characters in the scene? Did students recognize the shifts in emotions expressed by at least two of the characters in the scene? Did students collaborate to make decisions on how to perform the scene?

Enter ANTIGONUS with Baby

ANTIGONUS
Our ship hath touched upon the deserts of Bohemia.
Come, poor babe: thy mother appeared to me last night,
and bid me call thee Perdita, thou little lost one.
Blossom, speed thee well! There lie *[puts baby down]*,
and there thy character *[places an envelope or note in the baby's blanket]*, there these *[places a pouch with coins and jewels in the blanket],* which may, if fortune
please, both breed thee, pretty, and still rest thine.
The storm begins; poor wretch, farewell!
Thou art like to have a lullaby too rough.
A savage clamor! Well may I get aboard!
[Notices bear] This is the chase: I am gone forever.
[*Exit, pursued by a bear]*

[Enter Shepherd]

SHEPHERD
What have we here! *[picks up baby]* Mercy on us,
a barne, a very pretty barne! I'll take it up for pity.
[Finds note, pouch, coins, jewel] This is fairy gold:
fortune requires nothing but secrecy.
'Tis a lucky day, and we'll do good deeds on it.
Exeunt

"barne" = baby