



“The Art of Creative Dramatics Through the Eyes of a Young Child”

Curriculum Unit 93.03.01
by Geraldine Martin

Introduction

This paper will explore strategies and an array of activities to be integrated into the school curriculum for children participating in school plays. An important component will emphasize the active participation of children in using creative dramatics to invent or create imaginary situations.

As an example of how creative dramatics and the production of a school play will be integrated, each student will have the opportunity to participate in a school play, using techniques utilized during creative dramatics in order to bring a character to life.

My unit will also contain suggestions of multi-cultural stories and the works of writers with various backgrounds suitable for adaptation for school productions. A sampling of a few plays that I will be using in the classroom will accompany this unit. These plays will not by any means be end projects in and of themselves. For I believe that whenever children become involved in drama, they will alter the script by entering into a character and ad-libbing in a natural and spontaneous way.

My love for acting began when I explored the art of ventriloquism. For, in order to present an illusion and bring a puppet to life, one must be able to communicate to the audience that your puppet is alive and well. I remember a rather amusing incident while giving a school program. My husband was sitting in the audience. During my presentation, a lady sitting next to him whispered: “It’s so nice that you do the male voice for your wife’s puppet.”

I also fell in love with the art of acting through participation in a church drama production, “The Victor.” There I participated in the parts of Martha and Mary Magdalene. For me, I found acting the part to be very rewarding and therapeutic. Rewarding in the sense that I was able to communicate feelings, actions, ideas and expressions to the audience. I, also, found that during rehearsals, time had no meaning. In other words, it did not appear to me that I was connected to daily concerns or problems because I had escaped into the world of the character that I was portraying. To me, that was very therapeutic.

I teach first grade in a self-contained classroom at L. W. Beecher School. My classroom has children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds with varying abilities in the six to eight year old age range. The unit that I am organizing will be for my After School Program.

Unlike the regular classroom, the After School Program has children from a various classes, first through third grade. The class is smaller in size, consisting of 12 to 15 children. In addition, the program has an hour and half block of time which allows for more concentrated effort for dealing with the material at hand.

The After School Program's schedule is for eight weeks with my drama class meeting once a week for ninety minutes. Although my unit is designed primarily as an eight week After School Program, many of the activities suggested can be integrated into any language arts or social studies curriculum throughout the school year.

Objectives:

My overall objectives for the eight week program are:

- (1) To provide an interactive experience through the use creative dramatics as:
 - a. a mode for individual expression
 - b. a give and take didactic exchange
 - c. a group process interaction exchange
- (2) To stimulate intellectual and cognitive development, as well as, creativity through the use of imagery and fantasy as part of creative dramatics and class discussion.
 - a. acting activities
 - b. improvisation
 - c. play productions
- (3) To develop cultural sensitivity through the utilization of culturally appropriate racial/ethnic stories which stress:
 - a. fairy tales
 - b. folk tales
 - c. myths
 - d. legends
- (4) To improve verbal and reading skills of participants through:
 - a. memorization of scripts
 - b. rehearsal activities
- (5) To develop confidence and a positive self-image as participants in productions such as:
 - a. narrators
 - b. production staff
 - c. actors
 - d. members of an audience
- (6) To integrate the theory and practice of creative dramatics into the curriculum through:
 - a. the teaching of language arts
 - b. instruction in social studies
 - c. development of socialization skills

Children love to dramatize, “dress up,” pretend or invent situations. Not only do they enjoy acting a part in a play, but they love to watch a play or listen to one being read to them. It is as if for that moment, they are allowed to reach beyond the boundaries of self and explore themselves in an improvisational experience. In other words, it is plain fun, relaxing and therapeutic.

Andrews calls this stage of early development the “I” period. She contends that children in this age group are generally in grades one to three. One can often hear such common expressions as: “I did this.” “See what I did.” “Look at me.” She, also, suggests that healthy children at this age are in constant motion and find it very difficult to stand or sit still. Theirs is a world fueled by curiosity, a sense of urgency and increasing motor activity. They constantly bounce in their chairs, run instead of walk, scuffle their feet, push, tug, and climb over things. It is a stage when motor abilities are flourishing. In other words, they love to move because it is fun to do so. (“Creative Rhythmic Movement For Children,” page 6-7.)

This stage of development is also characterized by increased verbal expression. Children love to chatter and talk about themselves. It is an age where the world becomes a stage and they, a star performer.

Therefore, the classroom setting is an ideal place for creative dramatics to liberate those forces which help a child to explore the world around him and encourage the expression of feelings, actions, and ideas. For creative dramatics, the child must communicate what he is doing to an audience by enabling him to develop those inner resources such as: fantasy, imagination, intelligence, to name a few. In other words, creative dramatics enhances the learning that takes place in the classroom by allowing the child to become an active participant.

Unlike creative dramatics in the classroom, a school play (i.e. one that is rehearsed for the public) has a definite end in view. For example, a child who participates in creative dramatics and builds a snowman, may at any point in time stop and decide that he is no longer interested in building his snowman. The task has served its purpose. A school play, on the other hand, requires a series of interdependent tasks which must be accomplished in order to culminate in a product which will be taken before an audience for their consideration, criticism and enjoyment.

Chilver suggests that a school play is essentially a project which children must enter into with their own free will. However, those free wills must be brought into a peer common bond in order to yield the finished product. This means that there must be respect for each other’s contribution. Particularly, each must respect the other’s need for a conducive atmosphere where there is quiet and relaxation. While some are waiting their turns to rehearse, it is important that a team spirit develops and everyone takes an interest in each other’s part. (“Staging a School Play,” page 2)

Strategies:

I have selected six strategies which build upon each other and lay the framework for school wide productions. However, some of the strategies can be used individually and integrated into the regular classroom curriculum. For example, the eight-week After School Program does not allow enough time for writing creative stories. However, because it is an important component in my unit, I will use stories that were written during the regular classroom time and expand them into plays. Also, I intend to use my unit over a period of many years. This unit allows the incorporation of many activities which can result in a variety of productions.

My unit will include the following time table: The first week will be devoted to those tasks outlined in strategy one; the second week will focus on strategy three; the third through eighth week will concentrate on strategies three through five; strategy six will be accomplished on a designated day during regular school

time. Bear in mind that the above time frames are not rigid since the entire activity is an evolving process subject to many influences which cannot be totally controlled.

Examples of overall strategies for the course of the eight week period are:

Strategy (1) The utilization of reading a variety of stories with multi-ethnic authors or settings and expanding these themes into related activities for the classroom. Children need to be read to on a daily basis in preparation for development of reading and writing skills. This strategy will help to lay the foundation for later activities.

Distance whether physical and/or psychological has the effect of producing cultural isolation so that one can easily become provincial, self-centered and indifferent to the world at large, missing the diversity which supplies dynamic energy for creativity.

A delightful book written by Ed Young, "Lon Po Po," helps to bridge the gap between cultures by bringing us a familiar story with a Chinese setting. This book is a Red-Riding Hood Story from China. I would start my unit by telling the more familiar version of Little Red Riding Hood to the children. By telling the story, one can dramatize different parts of the tale, developing each character by using different voices and lots of gestures. Children feel more free to become involved in something that they already know.

After telling the European version of Little Red Riding Hood, I would introduce the story of "Lon Po Po." We would find the country of China on the map and discuss where it is located in relation to our own country. By looking at a few pictures of Chinese families, noting their clothing and hairstyles, we would get a good sense of the characters and how they look and are dressed in Young's book. I feel that it is important while telling this story to use the pictures in the book because in addition to portraying Chinese features and clothing, they present a combination of techniques used in ancient Chinese panel art with a contemporary palette of watercolors and pastels.

Once the group is familiar with both stories, we would discuss their similarities and differences. We would talk about the number of characters required for each story, noting the similarities and differences in the number of characters. Also, the children could get together in groups of two or four and discuss parts that they liked or disliked in both stories. A recorder from each group would report back to the class while the teacher lists their findings on chart paper.

A similar presentation of any combination of the following works could achieve the goals of my first strategy:

Africa

"Tales of Mogho"—Frederic Guirma

"The Bojabi Tree"—Edith Rickert

"Songs and Stories From Ugana"—Moses Serwat

African-American

"Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad In The Sky"—Faith Ringgold

Australia

“The Rainbow Serpent”—Dick Roughsey

China

“Lon Po Po”—Ed Young

“The Moon Lady”—Amy Tan

“The Terrible Nung Gwama”—Ed Young

Czechoslovakia

“Favorite Fairy Tales Told in Czechoslovakia”—Virginia Haviland

England

“The Little Wee Tyke”—Marcia Sewall

“The Teeny Tiny Woman”—Barbara Seuling

Greece

“Favorite Fairy Tales Told in Greece”—Virginia Havila

Hawaii

“How Maui Slowed The Sun”—Suelyn Ching Tune

Hebrew

“Grandma’s Latkes”—Malka Drucker

“Elijah The Slave”—Isaac Bashevis Singer

Iceland

“Audun and His Bear”—Barbara Schiller

India

“The Talkative Beasts”—Gwendolyn Reed

“Fat Gopal”—Jacquelin Singh

Japan

“Momotaro The Peach Boy”—Linda Shute

“Three Strong Women”—Claus Stamm

Mexico

“Tales The People Tell In Mexico”—Lyons

Native American

“Cherokee Animal Tales”—George F. Scheer

“Arrow To The Sun”—Gerald McDermott

“Dreamplace”—George Lyon and Peter Catalanotto

“Ladder To The Sky”—Barbara Esbensen

“The Legend of Scarface”—Robert San Souci

Poland

“The Cobbler’s Reward”—Barbara Reid and Ewa Reid

Russia

“My Mother Is The Most Beautiful Woman In The World”—Becky Reyher

South America

“Pepito’s Story”—Eugene Fern

“The Monkey’s Whiskers”—Anne Rockwell

Viet Nam

“Fairy Tales From Viet Nam”—Dorothy Lewis Robertson

Strategy (2) Utilization of stories or themes as models for writing one’s own stories and developing plays. “Let’s pretend that you’re a little chick in an egg and you do not know how to get out.” “What would you do?” Immediately all eyes are riveted to the face of the storyteller. It is as if one can see those little wheels begin to spin and the air is charged with excitement. My first graders and I are about to embark on a creative writing experience in which we try to use all of the children’s ideas in some way shape or form.

The children are ready for this step because they have been introduced to a variety of stories in the regular classroom and in the After School Program. They have been listening to stories presented to them, and actively writing stories of their own. I file my children’s stories in folders which we call our “Smart Folders,” and store them in the school classroom.

These stories (i.e. individually or classroom written) provide basic material for expansion into themes for classroom skits and school plays. For example, the children in my classroom were given a picture of a rabbit dressed in clothing holding a basket filled with eggs entitled, “Miss Jennie Delivers Easter Eggs.” A classroom puppet read the story, providing the children with a model for writing their own story. Then the children were told to write their own version. They could change names and the characters in the story. After completing the exercise, I chose one story and helped this student to expand her story so that we could develop it into a school play. The following story was written and expanded by a first grader in my classroom:

“Miss Kimmie the Rabbit”

By Ashlie Russell

Once upon a time there was a rabbit. Her name was Miss Kimmie. Miss Kimmie lived behind a pile of bricks on the city sidewalk.

Her job was making colored eggs for good boys and girls then delivering them on Sunday.

It was summer time. Kimmie was in her house. She was hot. So she went outside to get some fresh air. When she went outside, a stranger was walking on the street. The stranger grabbed Kimmie and took her away. She yelled and her cousin Pammie heard her.

Pammie lived next door in a gold cardboard box. Pammie ran outside to see what all the noise was about. She saw that Kimmie was being taken away. So Pammie dialed 911.

Bob the Cat, a police cat, answered the phone. Pammie told the police cat that Kimmie was taken away. She told him that the stranger was a bear with blue shorts, an orange hat and big brown glasses. Bob the Cat said he would come as soon as he had finished his lunch.

Finally, Bob the Cat came and found Kimmie. She was sitting on an old log in the park. She was crying and told the police cat that the bear had dropped her after he found out she only had two eggs. Bob the Cat knew the bear was John the Mean Bear. He said he would look for John the Mean Bear after he takes Kimmie home.

It was 5:00 when Bob the Cat went to look for John the Mean Bear. John was chopping wood for his fireplace. Bob the Cat told John never to bother Kimmie or anyone again.

Meanwhile, it was Sunday and time for Kimmie to deliver her eggs to all the good boys and girls. She made sure that Pammie got the biggest and best egg because Pammie helped to save her from John the Mean Bear.

(See section, Examples of Scripts, for the play, “Miss Kimmie the Rabbit.”)

Themes can be developed around seasons. Many of the stories listed in my unit lend themselves to seasons or months of the school year. For instance, February is an important month in our school when many activities center around Black History month. Faith Ringgold’s recent book, “Aunt Harriet’s Underground Railroad In The Sky,” contains a rich history pertaining to the Underground Railroad and facts about Harriet Tubman’s life. This story could easily be adapted for children to perform in a skit or school play.

The following list gives suggestions of monthly themes and stories that maybe used in the classroom for developing stories and writing plays:

September: Harvesting—“Chico Saves the Money,” Illustrated by Monica Anagnostaras

October: Trees, Leaves, Woods—"Lon Po Po," (A Chinese version of Little Red Riding Hood),
Written by Ed Young

November: Native Americans—"Arrow To The Sun," Written by Gerald McDermott.

December: Christmas, Hanukkah—"Grandma's Latkes," Written by Malka Drucker

January: Snow—"The Golden Snowflake," Written by Françoise Joos

February: Black History—"Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky," Written by Faith
Ringgold

March: The Wind; Flying Kites; Exploring—"Where Does The Trail Lead," Written by Albert Burton

April: Showers—"The Rains Are Coming," Written by Sanna Stanley

May: Planting—"The Little Red Hen," Written by William Stobb

Strategy (3) Use of themes with mime and/or creative dramatics to portray actions. The children have been listening to stories, acting out familiar parts, and writing their own anecdotes. Now they are ready to concentrate on one particular character or aspect of a character and make a presentation in class. In order to achieve this strategy, the children will use mime to portray actions or creative dramatics to perform the themes or stories.

Mime is a fascinating form of art that is entered into with enjoyment by most children. Mime requires no memory of lines and little memory of action because the children are encouraged to act spontaneously by using their imaginations and self-expressions. The children must keep in mind that all actions take place in total silence. To show that one is talking, lip movement is permissible, but the lips should not be forming actual words. It is, also, important to keep in mind that one uses as many parts of his body as possible to express an action, mood or emotion. For example, when expressing sleepiness, one could stretch his arms, rub his eyes, cover a yawn, droop his shoulders, shuffle his feet, lie down, etc.

I would begin by showing the children a few simple mime movements before we entered into any activities. Claude Kipnis' excellent book entitled, *The Mime Book*, goes into great detail with pictures and instructions about techniques and body movement required for mime activities.

This component of my unit will stress the following rules of our classroom:

- 1) Everyone determines his space in the classroom. After deciding upon a space, each child respects his peer's space and does not enter into another's space.
- 2) Because listening skills are important for hearing directions properly, every student must focus their attention on the teacher.
- 3) When the teacher says, "freeze," all action stops and is held until the teacher says, "relax."
- 4) We will never negatively criticize anyone's response or performance.

- 5) When anyone is speaking, all others will remain silent and listen.
- 6) We will hold our questions, comments or suggestions until we are finished with an activity.

The following lines are examples of mime activities to be used before rehearsals of a school play. After each line, I would tell the children to freeze their actions followed by relaxing their bodies. We would continue by discussing who they were or how they used their body to show the action.

(T: Teacher's suggestions or questions.)

T: Think of a very tall person or object. Show me what you would do to become a very tall person or object.

T: Think of a very small person or object. Show me what you would do to become a very small person or object.

T: Think of a wide person or object. Show me what you would do to become a very wide object or person.

T: Think about putting yourself into a box—a nice, tall, skinny box. Now, let's break ourselves out of the box. How would you break out?

T: This time, think about putting yourself into a little tiny box. How would you break out of this box?

T: Show me how you would climb the stairs. What stairs were you climbing? Were you climbing the stairs fast or slow? Why?

T: Let's all go to the zoo. Think about an animal that you like to watch at the zoo. Try to convince me who that animal is by moving your body.

The following lines are demonstrations in regards to showing feelings through body movement and facial expressions. After each activity, the children will tell about an incident related to their expressions. The incident may be real or imaginary.

T: Think of something that makes you feel happy. Show me a happy person.

T: Think of something that makes you feel angry. Show me an angry person.

T: Think about your birthday. Imagine yourself opening your gift. Show me how you would look when you've opened your gift. What was inside your gift?

T: Think about knocking on someone's door. Think about who will come to the door. When the door opens, show me how you would look.

T: Think of a sad event. Show me a sad person.

T: Think about something that was very scary. Show me how you would look when you see something scary. Now, show me a face and use your body movements to scare someone else.

T: Think about singing a song. Show me singing your song. What song were you singing? Or, who were you when you were singing the song?

T: Think of someone who is getting a bad cold. Show me someone who is coughing and getting sick.

T: Think about a time when you did very well on a school project. Show me someone who is getting an A+ for his project. What was the project?

T: Think about a time when your parents were planning a special surprise for you and did not want you to hear. Show me someone who is trying hard to listen. What is the surprise?

T: Think about walking into a room with all the toys you have ever dreamed about. Show me a curious person. What toy are you looking at?

T: Think about your friend telling a tall tale. Show me a person who doubts what their friend is saying.

T: Think about something that makes you feel very tired. Show me a person who is tired.

I would, also, ask the children to work in pairs. The same rules would apply. However, instead of one person working in a space, there would be two. The following is a list of suggestions that one could use for children working in pairs:

1. A barber tries to cut the hair of a wriggling boy.
2. A doctor tries to calm a child who is scared of getting a shot.
3. A cowboy tries to rope a wild horse.

4. A customer tries to give directions to a taxi driver who does not understand.
5. A tight-rope walker walks on a line while a spectator watches.
6. A lion tamer tries to tame a ferocious lion.
7. A father tries to calm a baby who is crying.
8. A man tries to teach a dog to shake hands.
9. A mother tries to teach her daughter how to cook.

In his book, "Child Drama In Action: A Practical Manual For Teachers," Billi Tyas has children participate in creative dramatics to tell a story. I used an idea from one of his stories entitled "The Lion Hunt," and wrote my own version for children to participate in an imaginary walk through a jungle.

"A Jungle Walk"

I want you to stand up, move around, and make any movement that you want until you hear me clap and say the word "freeze."

Now, I want you to turn around, sit down, think of your favorite television show and tell me what it is about. When I clap, begin to tell me about your favorite show. We will all speak at the same time. When you hear the word "freeze" stop what you are saying.

Was anyone able to hear about anyone's favorite television show? It is very difficult to hear what others are saying when you are talking yourself.

Now, I want everyone to lie down on the floor where you are. Everyone will be very still and listen for their own heartbeat. How many heard their own heartbeat?

At this time, everyone will be quiet and listen to the sounds outside of this room. I will walk around the room and tap you when it is your turn to tell us the sounds that you hear.

Now, I want you to sit up where you are. We have been listening to the noises of a city. Have any of you ever seen movies or programs on television about a jungle? Does a jungle have the same noises as we heard in our city? Does the jungle have any noises like our traffic? How do people get around in the jungle? That's right, they walk on paths. Usually people walk one behind the other because the paths are narrow and overgrown with trees, bushes and plants.

Do you think it would be a good idea to carry supplies on your head as we walk on the narrow path to our camp? Today, we will all go for walk in the jungle and carry our supplies to camp. As we walk along, listen for the different sounds you can hear in the jungle. Remember it is very hot and there are a lot of wild animals

living in the jungle. Be very quiet when you walk, or they will hear you coming.

(Play a record with a rhythmic march, suggesting a jungle atmosphere.)

Line up for our jungle journey and lift your supplies onto your head. Stay close together because you may need your friend's assistance. Be careful not to get your feet tangled in the long vines on the path. Did you hear that bird screech? Can you see the bird? What size and color was he? Do you think there is an animal swinging in the tree? Can you see the big branch of that big green tree moving? You may talk to your friends, but keep your voices very low. What do you think that rustling noise is in the bushes? Let's send two of our friends into the bushes to find out what they can discover.

The camp is just ahead. (Take a few steps and collapse onto the floor. Discuss with the children the happenings on their trip.)

Strategy (4) Rehearsing for a school play, using techniques learned during creative dramatics and mime to develop a character. The children have had the opportunity to portray actions and movements through participation in mime and creative dramatics. At this point the children are ready to rehearse for a school play.

I will choose a play, (i.e. one that is listed in the Examples of Scripts section of my unit,) for the children to perform. Thirty minutes each day during five sessions will be devoted to rehearsal time. The sixth period will be a dress rehearsal. We will devote the entire period to rehearsal for our production.

After I have read the play that our group will use for a performance, we will cast the parts. A great deal of time will not be spent deciding assignments because children constantly want to change their parts. Therefore, I may have to make some final decisions and move right into rehearsing the play.

Peter Chilver points out that "the director's job is to hold up a mirror to the actor, for unlike a painter or a writer, the actor cannot actually see what he is doing. As he becomes experienced he learns to see a remarkable amount as he is doing it, but the director is needed to keep on completing the picture for him." ("Staging a School Play," page 69)

I agree with Chilver and contend that although children at this age, (i.e. particularly the "I" stage,) do not like interruptions or do not necessarily like to be told to change what they are doing, they do develop a deep sense of achievement and self-assurance when a good performance is executed. For some children, improvisation, speech and body movements are natural. However, many children need lots of practice and prodding to develop a character and feel comfortable performing before an audience.

Strategy (5) Making simple costumes and scenery for a school performance. Another important part is that of creating background scenery and costumes. Background scenery will be relatively simple. Our school stage has a large bulletin board attached to the back of the stage. It is ideal to attach a mural that the children have done during rehearsal time. While some of the children are rehearsing their parts, others will work on the background scene.

Each child will be responsible for their own costumes. It is a great way for families to work together on a school project. The children become very excited which is carried over to the home, often times involving grandparents as well.

Strategy (6) Producing the play before a school-wide audience and parents. By the end of the eighth week, the children are ready to produce their school-wide play. One day will be chosen during regular school time for the

production. There will be lots of excitement on this day. A program cover will be designed by a student. The names of characters in the play and who is performing will appear in the printed program. Two students will be selected to stand at the door of the auditorium and pass out programs. Parents, siblings, grandparents and friends will be invited to see the grand performance.

Examples of Scripts

“Miss Kimmie The Rabbit”

(This play grew out of a story that was written in the classroom by a first grade student.)

Characters: (Kimmie, Pammie, Bob the Cat, John the Bear)

Setting: A rabbit named Kimmie lives behind a pile of bricks in the city. Her job is making colored eggs for good boys and girls then delivering them on Sunday. Her cousin Pammie lives next door in a gold cardboard box.

Scene I (A stage hand dressed in black comes to center stage and holds a sign which reads: “It is summertime.” Kimmie is on stage dyeing her last two eggs. She places them in a basket of eggs on her table.)

Kimmie: Phew! (Wipes her forehead.) I’m so glad to be finished with my eggs. My, my they sure are pretty. (Kimmie walks over to her rocker, sits down, places her glasses on her nose and proceeds to read the paper. After a few moments, she begins to fan herself.) I’ve been working all morning on those lovely eggs for all the good boys and girls. It sure is hot. I think I’ll go outside for a breath of fresh air. Maybe I’ll go window shopping. No, I think I’ll go for a stroll in the park. (Kimmie walks outside humming a tune as John the Mean Bear walks down the street. John is wearing blue shorts, an orange hat and huge brown glasses pushed down on his nose. He is taking big, quiet steps as he sneaks up to Kimmie and grabs her.)

Kimmie: Help, help, save me. (Kimmie continues to yell until John puts his hand over her mouth. By this time, they are at the park.)

John: Be quiet, Kimmie. Give me all of the colored eggs that you have. (Kimmie pulls two eggs out of her pockets. John grabs them and gives Kimmie a slight shove.) That’s all you’ve got?

Kimmie: (Sobs.) Yes, that’s all I have in my pockets. The others are at home on my table.

John: Oh dear—I can’t take a chance and go back for them. This will have to do. (As he walks off stage, he grumbles about not having much for breakfast.)

Scene II (Kimmie sits on an old log in the park crying. Meanwhile, Cousin Pammie heard a lot of noise and ran out to see what was happening. She saw that a bear had grabbed Kimmie and was taking her down the street. Cousin Pammie runs inside her house and dials 911.)

Pammie: I must call the police at once. Let’s see, I have to dial 9-1-1. Oh, good, it is ringing. Please answer, please answer. We must save Kimmie.

Bob: Hello, this is Bob the Police Cat. How can I help you?

Pammie: Oh, Bob, please, please save my cousin Kimmie. I saw a bear wearing blue shorts, an orange hat and big brown glasses take my cousin Kimmie away. Please, please do something quick.

Bob: Oh, now quiet down, dear Pammie. After I’m finished eating my lunch, I will go and look for

your cousin Kimmie.

Pammie: But, what can I do until you finish your lunch?

Bob: Oh well...you can eat a carrot. That ought to help.

Scene III (Stage hand comes to center stage with a sign that says 5:00. Pammie is in her house munching on a carrot. As Bob the Cat comes onto the stage, she freezes her actions. Bob walks back and forth with hands over eyes looking for Kimmie. finally he spies her in the park and walks over to her, putting his arm onto her shoulder.)

Bob: Now, now dear Kimmie. You will be all right. I will take you home. Then I will look for that bear. I know it has to be John the Mean Bear. (Bob escorts Kimmie home. Kimmie sniffles all the way. When she arrives home, Kimmie and Pammie greet each other with a hug and thank Bob. Kimmie and Pammie freeze actions while Bob walks around on stage as he looks for John the Mean Bear. Finally he spies him chopping some wood.) Hi John. What's up?

John: Not much, Bob, just chopping some wood for my fireplace.

Bob: I see. Well, John I don't want you to bother Kimmie or anyone else ever again. Do you hear? Next time, we have to put you in the slammer. Do you hear?

John: Okay, okay, I promise.

Scene IV (It is Sunday and time for Kimmie to deliver her eggs to all the good boys and girls.)

Kimmie: (Kimmie goes to center stage and holds up a big egg.) Before I deliver my eggs, I'm going to give this big one to my cousin Pammie because she helped to save me from John the Mean Bear. (Kimmie calls for Pammie. Pammie comes to center stage and Kimmie gives the egg to her. Then they give each other a hug and say in unison, "We're the best cousins in the whole wide world." Both Pammie and Kimmie go into the audience and hand out paper decorated eggs.)

“Po Po”

(A Red Riding Hood Story From China)

(I used the story “Lon Po Po,” from Ed Young’s book as a foundation for a play, and wrote my own version.)

Characters: (Mother, Wolf, Chang, Tao and Patoze)

Setting: Once upon a time there was a woman who lived with her three children, Chang, Tao and Patoze. They lived alone in the country. A hungry wolf lived nearby.

Scene I (Today is Grandma’s birthday. Mother is going to spend the day with her. The three children stay home alone.)

Mother: Be good while I’m away. I will be home tonight. Remember to keep the door closed at all times.

(Wolf is hiding in the bushes. He is disguised as an old woman. He sneaks up to the door and knocks twice.)

Shang: Who is it?

Wolf: My sweet little dears, this is your grandma, Po Po.

Shang: Oh Po Po, our mother has gone to visit you.

Wolf: Oh dear, I did not see her along the way. She must have taken another path.

Shang: Why is your voice so low, Po Po?

Wolf: Oh my sweet, your grandma has caught a cold. Hurry up and let your Po Po come in.

Tao: (Opens the door.) Come in Po Po.

(Wolf comes in and blows out a candle.)

Patoze: Po Po, why did you blow out the candle?

(Wolf yawns and pretends to be sleepy. He climbs into bed. The three children crawl in beside him.)

Shang: Oh, Po Po, your foot has a bush on it.

Wolf: Yes, I’ve brought some hemp strings to weave a basket for you.

Tao: Oh, Po Po, your hand has thorns on it.

Wolf: Your Po Po has brought a needle to make shoes for you.

Shang: Oh, Po Po, you must be hungry. Have you eaten ginkgo nuts?

Wolf: What are ginkgo nuts, my dear?

Shang: They are soft and tender. One taste and you will live forever. They grow on the top of the tree just outside our house. We can pick some for you.

Wolf: (Licks lips.) Oh good, my bones are too brittle to climb trees.

(The children go outside and climb the tree. The wolf follows and sits by the tree.)

Wolf: My good children, pick some nuts for me.

Patoze: Po Po, ginkgo nuts are only magic when you pick them from the tree yourself.

(The wolf paces back and forth, licking his lips, while the children say how good the nuts taste.)

Shang: Po Po, I have a plan. At the door is a big basket. Tie the rope to the basket and throw the other end to me. I will pull you up.

(The wolf follows Shang’s instructions. The children begin to pull, but let the basket fall.)

Shang: I’m so sorry Po Po, but I’m so weak. I can’t hold the rope by myself.

Tao: This time, I’ll help. Let’s do it again.

(The children go through the rope pulling procedure two more times. Each time the wolf stumps his feet and displays a lot of anger. The last time the rope is pulled, the wolf falls and does not

respond.)

The children call together: Po Po, Po Po, Po Po. (Then they climb down the tree, take a look at the wolf, go into the house, and go to bed and sleep.)

Scene II (Mother arrives home from visiting Grandma with two baskets of food. The scene opens with the family sitting at a table eating rolls from Grandma's basket. The children tell the mother what happened while she was gone.)

“Monkey Business”

(I used the story, “The Monkey’s Whiskers,” a Brazilian folk tale from Anne Rockwell’s book as a foundation for a play, and wrote my own version.)

Characters: Monkey, Barber, Woman, Man, Mother, Four Daughters)

Setting: The jungle is a lovely place. It is a place of beautiful flowers and noisy parrots. It is a place where coconut trees grow so tall that you can hardly see their tops. In one of the tallest coconut palm trees, a monkey lived.

Scene I: (The monkey jumps down from his tree as scene opens.)

Monkey: I’m going to see the world. I know where I’ll go. I’ll go into town. (Monkey sees a barber shop, stops, waves to the barber and hops onto the chair.) I want my whiskers shaved.

(Barber looks at the monkey, shrugs his shoulders and shaves the whiskers.)

Monkey: (Hops down from the chair and looks into a mirror. Then he hops up and down yelling.) Where are my whiskers. I want them back.

Barber: I can’t. You asked me to shave them off.

Monkey: Then give me your razor. (Barbara shows sad expression as he hands the razor to the monkey.)

Scene II: (The monkey walks up and down the street grumbling to himself about loosing his whiskers. A woman is on the river’s edge cleaning fish with a piece of wood. She looks tired.

Monkey: Here, dear lady. Take my razor and you can do the job quickly. (Monkey runs off stage.)

Woman: (Women begins to clean the fish. The razor falls out of her hands into the river.) Oh no, the razor is gone. What am I going to do? (She begins to cry.)

Monkey: (Walks onto stage looking for the woman. He sees her crying.) Give me my razor.

Woman: Oh, I’m so sorry, but it fell out of my hands into the river.

Monkey: What! You lost my magnificent razor that I loaned to you. Then I want your fish. (He grabs the fish and goes off stage.)

Woman: Please, please give back my fish. My children won’t have any supper tonight. (She throws up her hands and walks off stage.)

Scene III: (It is the next day. A man is sitting under a tree eating bread. Under another tree, a mother and her four daughters sit. Mother is braiding one daughter’s hair.)

Monkey: (Walks on stage and stops by the man eating bread.) Here good man. That bread looks dry. Take my fish and enjoy lunch.

Man: Thank you. You are kind.

Monkey: (Walks to center stage and grumbles about being hungry. Then walks back to the man who has just finished eating the fish.) Give me back my fish.

Man: But, I just ate the fish.

Monkey: (Hops up and down.) You ate my fish that I loaned to you. How could you? Then give me your coffee beans. (Grabs plate of beans beside man.)

Man: Stop, come back. (Man throws up hands and walks off stage.)

Monkey: (Runs off stage, but stops, turns around and spies the mother with her daughters. Very quietly sneaks up on stage and speaks to the mother.) My, what pretty girls you have, my dear.

Mother: Oh, thank you.

Monkey: They all look like such sweet girls. I think they should have some nice brewed coffee for their lunch.

Mother and Girls: Thank you. Thank you. You are a kind monkey.

(Scene ends with monkey walking off stage proudly with hands on hips.)

Scene IV (Girls and mother are sitting under the tree reading books together.)

Monkey: (Walks onto stage and begins to yell.) Where are my coffee beans?

Mother: But, you gave them to us. We brewed the beans and drank the coffee.

Monkey: I didn't give them to you. I loaned them to you. Now I will take something of yours. I want your most prettiest little girl. (Grabs a girl. Mother and girls sob.)

Mother: (Kneeling position.) Please, please, do not take my little girl.

Barber: (Walks onto stage.) My dear wife and girls. Why are you crying?

Monkey: Oh, it's you. If you had not taken my whiskers away. I would not take your beautiful daughter away.

Barber: (Looks at wife and girls for a moment then smiles.) Mr. Monkey, if I give your whiskers back, will you leave my daughter here.

Monkey: (Turns away, scratches his head and frowns. Then looks at barber.) Yes, I will. But, how will you do that?

Barber: It will be hard to do. But I will give you a magic coconut to eat and you must stay hidden under our house for eight days.

Monkey: It's a deal. (They shake hands.)

Scene V (Monkey enters stroking whiskers and smiling.) It's magic. It's magic. It really worked.

Barber, wife, girls, come, come. Let's celebrate. (Monkey and family dance in a circle. Then monkey waves good-bye, leaves stage and shouts.) Back to the jungle.

Lesson One

Resource:

Lon Po Po, by Ed Young

Summary:

A long time ago, a woman lived with her three children in the countryside of Northern China. One day, she had to leave to visit Granny and left the children home alone. A wolf, disguised as their granny, Po Po, came knocking at the door. After a lengthy discussion, the children let the wolf in. In the end, the children subdued the wolf and sleep peacefully during the night.

Procedure:

1. Tell the more familiar European version.
2. Introduce the book, Lon Po Po.
 - a. Locate China on a world map.
 - b. Locate United States and Connecticut.
 - c. Show pictures of people from China; discuss clothing hairstyles; compare pictures with characters in Young's book.
 - d. Read the story in class.
3. Dramatize European version in the classroom.
 - a. Discuss similarities and differences (i.e. story, characters, etc.)
4. Serve a Chinese dish, encourage children to use chopsticks.

Lesson Two

Resource:

The Mime Book, by Claude Kipnis

Summary:

The book gives suggestions for mime activities with pictures as references.

Procedures:

1. Introduce classroom rules.
2. Model facial expressions, hand gestures and body posture (e.g. for building a wall; for feeling the sides of a box, etc.)
3. Participate in mime activities. (See strategy section No. 3 for suggestions.)

Lesson Plan Three

Resource:

Play—"Po Po"

Summary:

The Play was developed from Ed Young's book, Lon Po Po.

Procedure:

1. Review classroom rules.
2. Participate in creative dramatics and mime activities.
3. Read play, "Po Po."
4. Choose character parts.
5. Characters begin reading parts.
6. Determine props and begin working on background scenery.

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