



LESSON 6: 'ON THE SET'

AIM: To use the world of film-making as a stimulus to create a dramatic scene

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: BY THE END OF THIS LESSON I WILL...

- * KNOW how to use the 'shop window' technique for setting up scenes.
- * UNDERSTAND how conflict can be introduced to a scene to create tension and interest.
- * BE ABLE TO create a short scene exploring conflict and tension.

RESOURCES

YOUTUBE
SCRIPT EXCERPTS FROM
PREVIOUS LESSONS

TO BE SUCCESSFUL I WILL ...

- * Have worked with others to create a piece of polished improvisation.
- * Have explored the dramatic possibilities in the world of film-making.

GETTING IN THE ZONE

CIRCLE: ALPHABET

ACTING

Students sit in a circle and say the alphabet – repeating if there are more than 26 students in the circle. Teacher gives students an aim: starting sad ending happy, or starting calm ending furious. Students have to try and build that up as they go around the circle. Change directions and start at different points in the circle.

MIX IT UP

Students can stand in the circle and use movement and gesture to accompany their letter to be more dramatic – linking in with our themes for 'Singin' in the Rain' which tend to be over the top and highly dramatic in keeping with the Silent Film era.

WHERE IS THE KEY?

Students stand in a circle but with their backs to the middle and so that there is no gaps between them. They have a key (which unlocks something fantastic) which if they are found with means big trouble. They pass it behind their backs. One student is out of the room when the key is given. He comes back in and has three guesses to try and work out where the key is. If he can't then the group win.



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TAKE IT TO THE SPACE

The above game can be developed in the following way.

WHERE IS THE KEY – moving.

Students stand in a space – one student leaves the room. Students remaining close their eyes and put their hands by their sides. Teacher sneaks the key into one student's hand. The other student comes back in. The students open their eyes and have to move around the space trying to keep the key moving so that they are not caught with it. The detective has three guesses to see who is carrying it.

LEVELS OF TENSION

As in this session the students will be trying to create tense situations it is good to revise or look at the 'States of Tension' as developed by Jacques Lecoq. It's fun to play around with and can give students insights into how to create tense situations. Students can explore each one in the space – working individually or in pairs. Teacher calls out each one and models an appropriate physical response.

1. **JELLYFISH.** There is no tension in the body at all. Exhausted, catatonic, complete relaxation, little-no movement.
2. **CALIFORNIA SURFER DUDE.** Hardly any tension. Laid back, chillaxed. Just enough tension to move slightly.
3. **NEUTRAL.** The state of tension before anything happens. No past, no future, in the present, aware. (Shoulders down and set back. Feet are hip width apart)
4. **CURIIOUS.** Some tension in the body, maybe in the neck/shoulders. Looking at things. Sitting down. Standing up. Fidgety and indecisive. What's in the room?
5. **SUSPICIOUS SPY.** The tension is clear in the body, concentrated in the eyes. Wary, suspicious. Breathing may get faster. The crisis is about to happen. Are you being followed? Is someone watching you? Is that hiss a snake in the room?
6. **OPERA.** The tension has exploded out of the body. It is difficult to control. Passion, anger, fear, hilarity, despair - every emotion is extreme. There is a frenzy of movement. Someone is chasing you. There is a snake in the shower.
7. **BOMB.** The body is solid tension. Rigid, petrified, unable to move. The snake is about to bite!!



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THE MAIN EVENT:

Shop window

Students sit around the outside of the room. We are going to use the shop window technique to create a scene from a film studio. Students suggest ideas for what they would expect to find in a film studio whilst a film is being made: actors, directors, film equipment etc. Each person has to go into the space and hold a position showing that they are either a character in this scenario, or something non-human such as a camera or a boom or a piece of set. At the end the whole class should be in, all doing something different.

MIX IT UP – bring it life for 10 – 20 seconds.

Where are the possibilities for tension and conflict? (Actors falling out with directors; bits of the set breaking; cameras not working; actors forgetting what they had to do; stunts not working; producers wanting to stick their noses in and change bits).

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF 'SINGIN' IN THE RAIN'

By now the students should know the show or film fairly well. There are various stories about the filming of it that show that although onscreen it is all smiles and tap dances, behind the scenes it was very different:

- Debbie Reynolds was not a great dancer and Gene Kelly constantly bullied her because he didn't think she was doing a good enough job. Aged only 19 she at one point crawled under a grand piano and had a good cry. Only to be found by Fred Astaire – another Hollywood legend who took her under his wing and gave her some dance tuition to get her on track.
- In the iconic Singin' in the Rain song took three days to film. By the end Gene Kelly had a raging fever and could barely continue. Not that you would guess.
- The bit where they topple the sofas in 'Good Morning' took 40 takes and by the end of the last 14 hours shooting Debbie Reynolds feet were bleeding and she had to be carried to her dressing room. She later compared the experience to childbirth.
- Singin' in the Rain went \$600 000 over budget. At that time, a very serious amount of money.



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OVER TO YOU

In groups of 5 students are to prepare the filming of a moment from the musical. They could choose:

- Where they are trying to film the duel in The Royal Rascal
- A dance sequence in 'Good Morning'
- One of the audition pieces from a previous lesson
- Or any other section of the musical that the students would like to choose

This time though, we get to see the crew, the director yelling cut, things going wrong, equipment not working, actors falling out, starlets running off in tears, feet hurting people feeling ill etc. Students spend about 5 minutes discussing their 'On set' ideas making sure that they include at least two different sources of conflict and tension. Students rehearse their 'On the Set' performance trying to incorporate some of the stresses and tensions of making a movie. Groups perform and share their work. Evaluative comments made.

SUCCESS CRITERIA:

* Did I take on a role within a piece that helped create dramatic tension? Did we as a group create the sense of a busy, stressful film set? *

PLENARY:

Despite all the troubles and expenses of making such a film – the world needs to daydream – or does it? Why does Hollywood continue to tell the stories it tells? Are we still addicted to happy endings?

WATCH THE TITLE SONG "SINGIN' IN THE RAIN" FROM THE MOVIE:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w40ushYAaYA>