

HANDOUT- Object Storytelling Across Virtual Space [LIVE]

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The NEST is a child-led, interactive installation supporting youth as civically engaged leaders through shared art experiences in storytelling, play, movement, art-making, and creative placemaking.

Values/objectives:

- A mysterious, migrating teacher is living in your...(city, museum, school!)
- Via co-creation, participants and artist-guides create and evolve the story by adding art/artifact/information to the empty structure.
- Space/story belongs to the place and the people who interact with it.
- Together, we PLAY, MAKE, TELL STORIES, MOVE, DESIGN, INTERPRET, TINKER, REFLECT, ADVISE & RELATE
- Artist-guides are ambassadors- open-ended inquiry and facilitation invite responsive play, clue-finding and constructing meaning.
- Difference is welcome. Opposing ideas co-exist in this playscape and are in constant dialogue with each other.
- We share wisdom: advice for the Creature, insights about your community, big questions- they all belong here.
- We investigate: *who is the Creature? Where did they come from? Why did they choose to come here- what are the assets of our community? Where are they going next?*

What results is a layered, immersive space that reflects the values/vision of its community.

Learn more about *The NEST* at www.thenestiscoming.com & www.meganflod.org

Object Storytelling- what is it?

Using stuff to express and create meaning

It can be random items (raw materials) or personal possessions (objects we keep or are useful)

By interposing a layer of intention (*I make choices as a thoughtful and reflective artist*), it becomes a powerful tool for expression & connection.

Object Storytelling Exercises to Use in your World

(activity break-downs below)

1. Personal Museum
2. Sculpture
3. Puppetry
4. Create-A-Story
5. Original Art Piece (group prompt)

*Other Object Storytelling prompts: Create-a-FORT, Inventions, Self-Portraits, Identity Installation, Environments, Using Literature

1. Personal Museum:

Objective: *To curate a personal museum of identity through object selection, design and placement and storytelling.*

Time needed: 10 minutes to arrange objects, 5 minutes of sharing per participant.

Process: Participants show up to the session with their selected objects, three or five objects are great. Ask participants to arrange their objects like a mini museum exhibition about themselves. Think about space, height, lighting and proximity to the viewer when arranging. Tell participants they can use other items around them to aid in the display (to prop things up or highlight special objects). Ask each participant to present their space and talk about the significance of their items.

Useful for: Getting to know a new group, sharing values around a particular topic or charting a new direction as a group.

Notes: You could do this exercise with raw materials too (clay, string, paper) and ask participants to shape/design objects to represent identities. If virtual, ask participants to snap a photo of their work and screen share for class (less time moving devices around...)

2. Sculpture

Objective: *To explore how the body is a tool for expression creating 3D frozen images using a single object.*

Time needed: 2 minutes to experiment with shapes in the body or "rehearse" & 3 minutes for the group to respond to the work.

Process: Ask participants to select one object (or use the body alone) and consider the meaning/significance/symbolism of the object. Tell them they have a few minutes to experiment with how they might create a frozen image (sculpture) that represents the meaning of the object. Remind them they can think abstractly and symbolically in their interpretation. After 2 minutes or when the

group is done trying things, count them down to “freeze”- from 5-4-3-2-1- Freeze. Either have half the group observe and half participate and switch or everyone freezes at the same time and observes while holding their frozen sculpture.

Useful for: Creative writing/poetry prompts, community-building, or exploring a particular curriculum topic like family, civic engagement, natural sciences, history or literature.

Notes: Tableau is a very powerful tool for responding to or building interest around a topic. When we use our bodies to respond to an idea, it is inherently personal and becomes a sharing of our inner selves.

3. Puppetize

Objective: *To imbue an object with life to create a short performance.*

Time needed: 10 minutes to practice and rehearse puppet performance. 3-5 minute sharing/response needed for each participant.

Process: Ask participants to select one object of their choice. Tell them they must manipulate the object to tell a very short story with a clear beginning, middle and end. Tell them they have a few minutes to discover how their puppets move- think about direction- does it lead with its “head”? Is their gait smooth or bouncy? Try out different emotions that could be possible personality traits (shy, erratic, grateful or indicate how it moves. After that, give 3-5 minutes to rehearse a short story. Urge participants to reveal some part of the objects’ meaning in their puppet story. Share puppet performances with the group and use Critical Response Protocols.

Useful for: Brainstorming characters, community-building, embodying characters from literature.

Notes: Remember, you can puppetize any object! Some best practices: keep your eyes on your puppet- it directs the audience’s attention to the puppet and makes us believe! No dead puppets- practice entrances/exits for your performance, don’t drop the puppet from your hand mid-story. Be specific about beg-mid-end of the performances.

- Have participants take video of their performances before class if you have students who prefer not to be on video during class, or to save on time.

4. Create-A-Story

Objective: *To write, draw or verbally dictate the stories of objects.*

Time needed: 10 minutes for a more brief exercise and up to 30 minutes for a longer exercise.

Process: Ask participants to create the story of an object in their collection. Tell them to choose (or decide which best serves your purpose) a scope of the story- from the objects perspective (A Day In The Life or Origin Story) or how it came into your possession, or a first person perspective on what the object means or symbolizes to you. The story can be written, drawn or spoken orally.

Useful for: Getting to know a new group, community-building, creative writing exercise, art history prompt, or rethinking everyday objects/tools, or tools from an anthropological, cultural or historical perspective.

Notes: This exercise could be interesting if the group was writing about the same object, or same kind of object, like a spoon. Their responses would be unique to their lived experiences.

5. Original Art Piece (group prompt)

Objective: *To collaborate on a creative artwork, inspired by the ensembles' shared values, beliefs or interests.*

Time needed: 10 minutes of work time & 5 minutes of sharing per group (longer if using Critical Response Protocols).

Process: Break your group into smaller groups with 4-8 people. Ask them to create an artwork (visual, performance, literary, sound) based around something they have in common (shared values, beliefs or interests).

Useful for: Community-building activities, curriculum topics, belief-mapping, & challenging conversations.

Notes: Collaboration can be trickier in virtual spaces but not impossible! Ask the group to record their art work (video or screen shot), or have it in a format that can be presented by one group member.

CRITICAL RESPONSE PROTOCOLS

An awesome way to share & respond to creative work!

Liz Lerman's born from a response to giving/getting "feedback" and responding to work- it should be a dialogue <https://lizlerman.com/critical-response-process/>

- A way to share power (who gets to give feedback typically?)
- A way for artists to receive non-judgemental information from a viewer.
- A way to participate in a creative development process!
- A method to engage with art more meaningfully.

Critical Response Protocol Process (simplified)

1. What did you notice? (*I noticed that...*) Non-judgemental- what did you see/hear.
2. What does it remind you of? How does it connect to your own experience or wisdom?
3. How do you feel? No wrong answers, described in 1 or 2 words.
4. What questions does it raise? (*I wonder...*)

5. Speculate- what about the work helps to understand the artist's intent and what meaning is intended or conveyed in the work? (*I speculate...*)
 6. (optional)- Respond/Open Dialogue/ Reflect: Artist responds or reflects out loud, participants have an open dialogue about new ideas or next steps and respond directly about what they're still wondering about.
- This tool engages and empowers all participants by setting them up for success.
 - THERE ARE NO WRONG ANSWERS when people begin by describing or stating what they see and notice.
 - Each participant has room to grow, connect, question, and draw meaningful insights from the work. Collectively, the community benefits from the whole, with meaning-making occurring through the sharing of all participants' insights.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING:

Zaretta Hammond (author of *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*, Published by Corwin, 2014).

Culturally Responsive Teaching should mimic cultural learning styles and tools and lean on ways we know the brain learns best- through play!

1. Gamify it!- Most games employ a lot of the same cultural tools you'd find in oral traditions- repetition, solving puzzles, making connections between things that don't seem to be related.
2. Make it social- Organizing learning so that students rely on each other will build on students communal orientation.
3. Storify it- Students (all of us) learn content more effectively if they can create a coherent narrative about the topic or process.

<https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/culturally-responsive-teaching-strategies/>

Stay in touch!

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