

Lesson objectives

To be able to communicate character and personal qualities through performance and choreography.

What am I looking for?

To be able to explore, select, and refine appropriate actions in response to the idea of character.
Effective use different dynamics to communicate the character.
Performs with accuracy, commitment, and characterisation.

Warm up

Ask pupils to find a space and create a shape they can hold that communicates 'being powerful'... Ask them to exaggerate the body shape so that it clearly communicates the intention.

This might mean it doesn't look 'realistic' but more stylised.

Then to take 8 counts to melt into a shape that shows 'thoughtful'...a further 8 counts to move to 'honest'...

Ensure the students show CONTROL when holding and moving between their shapes as well as continuing to use exaggeration to project the quality effectively. When indicated they should move on to the next, selecting from worthy traits, such as...

Brave...curious...determined...kind...persistent...resilient...strong...adventurous...calm...energetic...imaginative...observant...wise...

Repeat the previous task adding how they move from shape to shape - if the first shape is 'powerful' they should move powerfully into shape 2.

Again, count steadily to 8 and encourage the use of facial expression to communicate the style of the film genre.

Encourage students to include additional moves when shifting between shapes such as turns and jumps using indirect PATHWAYS.

Repeat with students deciding upon which qualities to show.

Continue to count steadily, adding in a pause when reaching 8 to ensure that all students realise and hold their shape with CONTROL.

Name the qualities you see and how you identified it - eg "Kai is looking relaxed and is in a symmetrical shape - that makes me think you're showing calm".

Repeat 5 or 6 times.

Projection and control

Context

Explain that as action movies progress we find out more about the protagonist - their back-story, special abilities, talents and resources or their emotional state.

Depending upon whether you have pre-selected a film to focus upon, or whether you have approached this from a broader genre-based perspective will impact upon the movement content that the students create.

Within the following task you may guide the students to a specific film character, alternatively you may ask the groups to select who they wish to focus on, alternatively they may decide individually and find ways of bringing the characters together.

Lights! Camera! Actions! 2: Characters

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Exploration

Organise the students into groups of 2, 3, 4 or 5 then (decide upon and) name the features we associate with the chosen protagonist. For example:

- Lara Croft: athletic, archaeologist, survived a plane crash, strong, fearless
- Furiosa: strong-willed, moral, wily, resourceful
- Indiana Jones: archaeologist/university professor, afraid of snakes, uses a whip
- Black Panther/T'Challa: king and protector of Wakanda, proficient in science, advanced technology and rigorous physical training

Ask the groups to select a minimum of 3 features related to their character then recreate and exaggerate an action depicting it - eg 'athleticism' could be shown via a shape that suggests running- gestures could be used to show the activities such as 'cracking a whip'.

Add the music for 2 to 3 minutes and support students as required.

Some aspects are easier to depict than others so encourage students to trial several ideas before deciding.

It may further support students to access images of the character, these show posture or a scene they can recreate.

Projection, facial expression
+ characterisation

Composition

Ask the groups to decide which of their shapes/actions they will use first and to consider:

- What formation would be the most effective?
- What direction should be faced?
- Whether or not the group should be at the same level.

These elements all refer to the SPACE that the groups are using - where an action is happening

- you could also ask them about pathways if they have travelling movements, the size of the actions, how close together they are...

Add the music for 2 to 3 minutes.

Ask the groups to decide which of their remaining ideas should be added next and consider:

- What DYNAMIC would support the depiction of how their character behaves?

Consider how to add the remaining idea and whether this should be performed:

- In unison (same action at the same time), typically used to suggest power and togetherness
- In canon (same action at different times- commonly known as a 'Mexican Wave') has a ripple effect which moves the audience's eye around the group.
- By mirroring (creates a symmetrical image) suggest evenness, balance, equity.
- Using question and answer (akin to 'call and response' in music where one person performs a movement and another responds with a different action) communicating a sense of conversation
 - typically seen in Dance Battles.
- Demonstrating contrast (such as clearly different levels or shapes) shows the tension of opposite states.
- Or using contact (any kind of touch such as supports, counterbalances or lifts) which typically show togetherness and connection.

All of the above are RELATIONSHIPS and refer to who we are dancing with and how we relate to them.

Action, space, dynamics + relationships

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Composition

It is probably unwise to introduce more than 3 as prompts for the groups if they have had little prior dance experience – so please consider this to be a menu to select from.

Ask the groups to recap, rehearse and consider:

- Does the sequence clearly communicate the qualities/traits of their character? PROJECTION
- Does the movement suit the accompaniment? MUSICALITY
- Do we learn more about the people involved? CHARACTERISATION

Add the music for 4 to 5 minutes while the groups rehearse, reflect and amend their work.

Perform

Give each group a number which will be called in a random order. When their number is called, they should perform their 'character' dance, once complete they should observe the work of others and identify the characters and their qualities/traits.

Explain more than 1 group may be called at any time and they may perform more than once.

Number the groups, add the music and call out 2, 3 or 4 groups depending upon group size, pupil confidence and the time available.

Any pupils feeling particularly underconfident may only be called when everyone is performing.

Gather feedback on how they identified the qualities/traits of the character - eg the use of facial expression, posture, characteristic shapes or actions...

Include opportunities to highlight and praise good work.

Projection, characterisation + facial expression

Cool down

Ask the students to find a space again and remind them of the warm up, making shapes to represent personal qualities/traits and taking 8 counts to move to the next.

Ask them to consider what qualities or traits they possess, select 3 and think how these could be represented.

Ask them to take 8 counts to move into their 1st shape and hold for a moment, then move into their 2nd shape and hold, before moving into their final shape.

If time allows repeat 2 or 3 times.

During the pause look at the shapes created and describe them - eg "I think Sam is showing 'brave' or 'courageous' - it looks as though Alex is demonstrating 'curious' or 'questioning'..."

Projection, facial expression + characterisation