

Lesson objectives

To be able to communicate tension and conflict through choreography and performance.

What am I looking for?

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

Warm up

Ask the students to find a space and create a shape or action to demonstrate the following sayings:

- Having the upper hand
- Standing your ground
- Collapsing like a pack of cards
 - Lashing out
 - Red mist descending
- Shooting daggers with your eyes
 - Circling around the issue
- Getting straight to the point

Repeat 2 or 3 times in a random order, encourage different levels, shapes and facial expression to further communicate meaning.

It may help the pupils to emphasise the words underlined - eg 'upper hand' would indicate which body part they should use but also which level, whereas 'standing your ground' suggests stillness and a wide base so that you cannot be easily moved.

Depending upon the context of your school you and the students could add to or substitute other sayings, these might include...

Being walked over...Used as a doormat...A volcano waiting to erupt...They held all the aces...
Weighing up the situation...Didn't want to rock the boat...Looked down their nose...

Levels + projection

Context

Action movies also include moments of tension, these typically occur when the protagonist encounters their rival.

During their first encounter they try to identify the opponent's strengths and weaknesses with each character trying to 'get the upper hand' or judging the other as 'having a heart of stone'.
It may be necessary to explain the meaning of some of the sayings.

Exploration

Organise the students into groups of 2, 3, 4 or 5 and each group selects at least 3 sayings and finds a way of representing them through movement.

It may help to demonstrate how this might be achieved in a group context - eg if 'circling around an issue' one person may be static whilst others rotate around them.

Emphasise the use of:

- LEVELS (to communicate power)
 - DYNAMICS - (to communicate mood)
 - PROJECTION (to communicate clearly).
- Add the music for 4 to 5 minutes and support*

Join the 3 sayings in the order of their choice and include additional movements (TRANSITIONS) to link them smoothly.

Add the music for another 2 to 3 minutes and encourage trying various combinations. To add further challenge, select 1 idea and repeat it at some point. Consider developing it - eg 'circling around the issue' could travel in the other direction; the circle could be bigger or faster.

Projection, dynamics + structure

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Composition

In action movies the adversary is difficult to defeat with the main characters being evenly matched. Ask the groups to add a starting position and/or opening movement to demonstrate showing they are of similar abilities.

SYMMETRY and MIRRORING show equality and balance whilst looking (FOCUS) the opponent 'in the eye' will communicate rivalry.

Ask the groups to consider how tension can be added:

- Moving closer together (being too close for comfort)
- Adding moments of stillness (it was as if the world had stopped spinning)
- Include balances (walking a tightrope - being on edge)
- Include angular or twisted shapes (plot twist – reversal of fortune)

Recap their 'encounter' dance and apply any of the above to build a greater sense of tension between their characters.

Add the music for 3 to 4 minutes and support as required.

In action movies the first encounter is never the last - find a way to resolve this section with the protagonist and antagonist continuing to be well matched.

This may echo the symmetry/mirroring of their starting position/action – alternatively they may separate.

Add the music for another 2 to 3 minutes.

You may wish to suggest a few more sayings such as:

Held their head up high...
Didn't want to lose face...
They locked horns...

Projection, dynamics + structure
Perform

Ask one group to perform to another with the observing group identifying the sayings used.

Encourage the observers to precisely identify the action, space, dynamic and/or relationship that projected the meaning, e.g., getting 'straight to the point' used direct pathways and 'pointing' gestures.

Ask the observers to explain how FACIAL EXPRESSION, FOCUS and PROJECTION and CHARACTERISATION help to communicate the mood of the encounter.

Once feedback has been given, change roles and repeat the process.

Ask the groups to separate and reflect on how they could further improve their 'encounter' section:

- Increasing or exaggerating their use of LEVELS
- PROJECTING the meaning of the sayings more clearly
- Adding EMPHASIS through EXTENSION, STILLNESS, SIZE and DYNAMICS

Ask the students to apply any further refinements to their work.

Add the music for another 3 to 4 minutes.

Interpretation + analysis

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Cool down

Ask the pupils find a space and find a way of 'standing their ground'.

Eg wide base, hold their bodies with balance and control.

From there show a 'red mist descending'.

Look for changes in physical tension and level.

Then how they have 'the upper hand'.

Encourage the pupils to stretch fully.

Ask them to move through these three sayings slowly and smoothly blending one into the next, repeating 3 or 4 times.

Praise students demonstrating change of qualities in their actions, or those showing balance, co-ordination, and control.

Levels + dynamics