Speaking and Listening

8

Questions about Speaking and Listening

- Why is it important to teach speaking and listening?
- How should we teach, assess, and differentiate instruction in speaking and listening?

Reflections

Speaking and listening seem like such natural language acts for children. Babies listen before they speak; young children come to school already speaking their native languages. Perhaps we don't really need to worry about teaching speaking and listening when it's so important to teach reading and writing. What do you think? Jot down your ideas.

Speaking and Listening in the Classroom

Speaking is frequently the suppressed language art in the classroom. Speaking has more often been associated with behavior problems and a teacher's lack of classroom management skills than as the important language art that it is. In general, students have fewer opportunities to speak in school than they do at home. Schools don't always provide a linguistically rich environment compared to homes, where children have more opportunities to learn through speaking (Wells & Wells, 1984).

This may seem surprising in light of early research (Flanders, 1970) that has shown that during the schoolday, someone is speaking from one-half to two-thirds of the time (which is more than twice the amount of time teachers estimated). From this, Flanders developed the Rules of Two-Thirds: Two-thirds of classroom time is devoted to talk, two-thirds of the talk is teacher talk, and two-thirds of what the teacher says is only giving factual information or directions for assignments. The problem is that the teacher speaks more than all the students combined (see Figure 8.1a). Teacher talk tends to dominate activities involving explaining and evaluating, which limits student talk in terms of both quantity and meaningful purpose. As a result, children spend more time listening to teacher talk than engaged in active language interaction with either teachers or other students.

This teacher talk is often not an authentic conversation or dialogue with students, but has the following characteristics (Alexander, 2006):

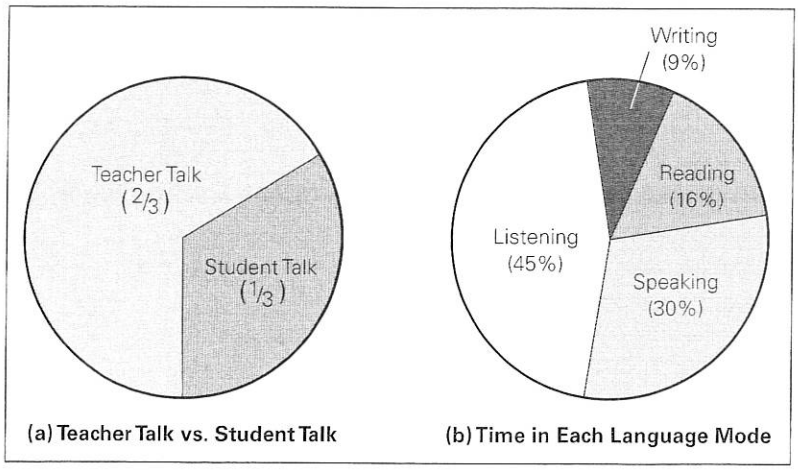
- Interactions between the teacher and students are brief, rather than sustained
- Teachers ask questions about content and students ask primarily about points of classroom procedure
- Closed questions (with only one possible answer) predominate
- Students concentrate on identifying the "correct answer"
- There is little speculative talk or "thinking aloud"
- A student's answer usually marks the end of an exchange and the teacher's feedback formally closes it

To change to a more authentic, meaningful dialogue with students, Alexander recommends instead that teachers do the following: Teachers and children learn and topic about topics collectively, and listen to each other and share ideas in a reciprocal interaction; teachers support students' expressing their ideas without fear of making a mistake; teachers guide discussions with a clear purpose in mind but also encourage students to build on each other's ideas, including the teachers.

Joyce Many's (2002) study of classrooms in which teachers had adopted a more authentic dialogue and constructivist and social interaction perspective, participating teachers saw discussions with students as a joint venture. Teachers and students were co-participants in negotiating meaning and in informing the nature of instructional conversations. This reflects learning as social communication developed through interaction with the teachers and other students and the role of the teacher as managing classroom interactions and providing scaffolding that promotes social, collaborative learning through talk. Teacher talk is fundamental to the process of co-constructing understanding rather than simply transmitting information or classroom procedures.

Listening is often the neglected language art in the classroom. A well-known study done by Paul Rankin in 1928 showed that 68 percent of each schoolday is spent in communication, and during that time, listening is the most prevalent activity (45 percent). Next is speaking (30 percent), followed by reading (16 percent) and writing (9 percent) (see Figure 8.1b). More recent studies have verified similar breakdowns of classroom time, yet relatively little attention has been paid to teaching listening, even though active approaches to doing so have been demonstrated to improve students' listening ability (Chaney & Burk, 1998).

Figure 8.1 (a) Amount of Teacher Talk vs. Student Talk (b) Amount of Classroom Day Spent in Language Modes (in percent)



(a) Teacher Talk vs. Student Talk (b) Time in Each Language Mode

Opportunities for teaching listening, as well as speaking, have been limited because educators have traditionally used literacy, or reading and writing performance, as measures of student achievement. Research has shown, however, that listening comprehension can be improved in a variety of ways when it's taught in the

context of meaningful oral language experiences, with the underlying assumption by teachers that good student listeners are active listeners, creating ideas as they engage in listening and speaking (Jalongo, 1995).

Literacy, Speaking, and Listening

Literacy has an integral connection with speaking and listening. Walter Loban (1976; 1979) conducted a well-known 13-year longitudinal study of how children from kindergarten through grade 12 use and control language. He and a team of researchers documented the language development of a cohort of the same 338 students over this 13-year time period. This landmark study had several significant findings about the connections between literacy and speaking and listening. Loban found that all the language modes function together as children learn to use and control language. He found a strong positive correlation between reading, writing, listening, and speaking abilities; that is, ability in one usually indicated the presence of ability in others. More specifically, the study demonstrated that children who are proficient in oral language—speaking and listening—use more complex language and better understand the conventions of language, score higher on vocabulary and intelligence tests, and perform better in reading and writing than students who are less proficient in oral language. And according to Loban, the most important element in learning to use language is to use it in "genuinely meaningful situations, whether we are reading, listening, writing, or speaking" (1976, p. 485).

Research continues to confirm Loban's findings, that speaking, listening, reading, and writing are integrated communicative processes. Reviews of studies on the connections between literacy and speaking and listening confirm that children's experience with and knowledge of the linguistic organization of spoken language is a fundamental prerequisite to their learning to read (Pinnell & Jaggar, 2003).

Speaking and listening are integral to writing as well as reading. For young, emergent writers, speaking works in concert with *composing,* or expressing ideas in writing (Dyson, 1994). Writing is one aspect of the total process of language development and thus interrelated with speaking, listening, reading, and thinking. All of these abilities develop simultaneously and in concert, not in isolation. James Britton's famous metaphor—"Writing floats on a sea of talk" (1970, p. 164)—helps us picture the importance of listening and talking as a basis for literacy.

Considering the great importance placed on literacy instruction today, teaching speaking and listening in your classroom will have a significant impact on your students' achievement in reading and writing. Keep this in mind as you read the ideas presented in the rest of this chapter.

Common Core State Standards

Speaking and Listening

Including but not limited to skills necessary for formal presentations, the Speaking and Listening standards require students to develop a range of broadly useful oral communication and interpersonal skills. Students must learn to work together; express and listen carefully to ideas; integrate information from oral, visual, quantitative, and media sources; evaluate what they hear; use media and visual displays strategically to help achieve communicative purposes; and adapt speech to context and task.

Teaching Speaking and Listening

In a summary of research, Gay Sue Pinnell and Angela Jaggar (2003) suggest that five principles should underlie teaching oral language, or speaking and listening:

1. The English language arts classroom must engage students in talk.
2. Classroom contexts must provide a wide range of learning contexts that require the development and use of a wide range of language.
3. Education should expand the intellectual, personal, and social purposes for which children use language.
4. A constructivist view of learning requires a curriculum that involves language interactions of many different kinds.
5. Context plays a central role in oral language learning.
6. Oral language is a means to learning. (pp. 902–904)

Pinnell and Jaggar further recommend that in order to teach oral language, teachers should avoid "narrow lessons, isolated drills and exercises" (p. 903). Instead, oral language is best taught and learned using "small-group student discussions and project work, informal conversations between students and their peers and teachers, language games, storytelling, creative dramatics, role-playing, improvisation, and for older students, more formal drama" (p. 903). The rest of this chapter will describe these and other strategies for teaching and differentiating instruction in speaking and listening which address the two categories of the anchor standards for speaking and listening of the *Common Core State Standards:* Comprehension and Collaboration and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas. But first, let's look at a discussion in a second-grade classroom. As you read, think about what the research says about speaking and listening in the classroom.

Snapshot

Class Discussions of Books and Films at Halloween: Second Grade

In this Snapshot, we'll look at a discussion in a second-grade class the week before Halloween, when teacher Kathy Lee read a book, showed a film, and then led discussions with students. While reading the Snapshot, let's do simple analyses of several things: (1) the ratio of the teacher speaking to students speaking and (2) the types of questions the teacher asked: closed versus open. Open questions allow more opportunities for students to speak because they can have multiple responses. Closed questions, such as *yes* and *no,* limit opportunities for students to speak because they have only one answer. Use Figure 8.2 to keep tallies of how many times the teacher and the students each spoke in the book and film discussions as well as how many open and closed questions the teacher asked.

We'll add up the totals and calculate ratios later, after reading the Snapshot, when we'll also discuss the implications of these observations for teaching speaking and listening in your classroom.

Figure 8.2 Analysis of Teacher and Student Discussions

Date/Time _____

Activity _____

	Speaking during Discussion		Type of Questions	
	Teacher	***Student***	***Open***	***Closed***
Book				
Total	_____	_____	_____	_____
Ratio	_____	_____	_____	_____
Film				
Total	_____	_____	_____	_____
Ratio	_____	_____	_____	_____

Book Discussion: *Where the Wild Things Are*

It was Halloween, and Kathy Lee was reading her second graders Maurice Sendak's (1963) well-known Caldecott Medal–winning book *Where the Wild Things Are,* which is about a little boy's adventures on an island with some wild, monstrous creatures. Kathy was reading the book in the way teachers often do with young children: reading the text, showing the illustrations, and asking questions about the story as she went along. While reading the book, she engaged the students in the following book discussion (remember to analyze this language sample using Figure 8.2):

Teacher: [points to title] What does it say?
Child: [reading] Where the wild things are.
Teacher: That's right. And the picture looks like . . . ?
Child: A monster.
Teacher: What kind of feet does it have?
Child: Human feet.
Teacher: Maybe this can be for one of the days we're celebrating this month. What day is that?
Child: Columbus Day?
Teacher: Well, this [points to monster] can be for Halloween, and this [points to boat] can be for Columbus Day.
[Noise from the children.]
Teacher: [reading] "The night Max wore his wolf suit and made mischief of one kind . . ." What is he doing?

Kathy continued to read the rest of the book in this way.

Film Discussion: *Clay*

Kathy showed the film *Clay: The Origin of the Species* (1964), a clay animation film in which things constantly change into other things at a frenzied pace. After the film was over, the class discussed it:

Teacher: Well, what did you think of it? What did you think of all those creatures?
Child: I liked the animals and people and boats and the Statue of Liberty.
Child: And a president. President Lincoln.
Child: A man eating. Something that eats everything that comes by. A lizard.
Child: And a whale and an elephant and a deer.
Child: Yeah, and a cow and a gingerbread boy.
Teacher: What do you think was the most unbelievable thing that happened in the movie? We saw a lot of funny things, but what really made you go "wow" or something?
Child: I know. When the dinosaurs were playing and they kissed.
[Many children laugh.]
Child: I like that, uh, that, um, one dinosaur, um, ate the other one.
Teacher: Do you think you could make things like you saw in the film?
Many Children: YEAH!
Teacher: What would you like to make?
Child: You could make anything you wanted to.
Child: Mrs. Lee, could we make something together?
Teacher: Would you like to make something together?
Child: Yeah. We'd like . . . two people to work in a group, you know, work together.

Child: Could we do it right now?
Teacher: I think maybe later on today we'll make some clay things.
Child: We're gonna make something good. We're gonna make a clown and a football player.
Child: See, I could bring a ball.
Child: We could make our own movie!
Child: Will we have prizes? Let's say they all get a prize.
Child: Yeah! Me included.
Child: We'll run the movie through again.
Child: We'll have prizes and show the movie and make our own movie and then we'll have it all together!

Now, add up your tallies from Figure 8.2 and for each discussion, calculate the ratios of (1) teacher to student talk and (2) open to closed questions.

During the book discussion when the teacher asked more closed questions, did you notice the following?

- The teacher spoke more, and there was a 1:1 ratio of her questions to student answers.
- The students were only expected to give short, simple answers or read words aloud from the book.
- The students spoke very little, didn't interact with each other or the teacher, and made noise unrelated to the book discussion.

During the film discussion when the teacher asked more open questions, did you notice the following?

- The teacher spoke less, and there was a much higher ratio of student answers to her questions.
- The students had the opportunity to provide more than one response, and consequently the teacher built new questions on each response received.
- The students spoke much more, interacted with each other, and led the discussion in new and interesting ways.

When Kathy asked closed questions, her teaching was teacher- and text-centered. As a result, very little happened in terms of students' speaking and listening, and the discussion was impoverished. When Kathy asked open questions, however, her teaching was student-centered. As a result, students spoke and interacted with her and each other freely and the discussion was rich and full. She added on to students' ideas, and the class went on to make their own clay animation film called *The Greatest Clay Movie on Earth.*

Questions and Prompts

The kinds of questions and prompts teachers use are critical to the development of student speaking and listening as well as thinking and understanding. Given that, we might assume that teachers would most often choose to use open questions. But in *A Place Called School,* John Goodlad (1984) explains that this isn't the case:

> A great deal of what goes on in the classroom is like painting-by-numbers—filling in the colors called for by numbers on the page. . . . [Teachers] ask specific

> questions calling essentially for students to fill in the blanks: "What is the capital city of Canada?" "What are the principal exports of Japan?" Students rarely turn things around by asking the questions. Nor do teachers often give students a chance to romp with an open-ended question such as "What are your views on the quality of television?" (p. 108)

Common Core State Standards

Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
3. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Unfortunately, teachers spend more time engaging students in closed discussions than open ones. This traditional discussion pattern was described as Initiate–Respond–Evaluate by Mehan (1979), whose investigation of a primary grade class showed that 81.1 percent of the instructional sequences were initiated by teachers but only 17.9 percent by students. This is a well-documented, persistent pattern of classroom interaction (Alexander, 2006; Cazden, 2001; Myhill, Jones, & Hopper, 2006). This traditional script occurs when the teacher initiates a spoken sequence (often with a test-type question or prompt), the teacher selects a speaker, and the student gives a short response. The implied role of the student is to give a predetermined "right" answer. Then the teacher gives feedback, usually verifying the correctness of the response. Moreover, students often learn to give only the answers they think teachers want to hear and that fall within the traditional boundaries of classroom activities. Wells and Wells (1984) suggest that the problem may be that we as teachers have a

> less than wholehearted belief in the value that pupils' talk has for their learning. Many of us have years of being talked at as students and have probably unconsciously absorbed the belief that, as teachers, we are not doing our job properly unless we are talking, telling, questioning, or evaluating. But all the time we are talking, we are stopping our pupils from trying out their understanding in words. We are also depriving ourselves of valuable information about the state of their understanding and thus of an opportunity to plan future work to meet their specific needs. (p. 194)

In a study of how teachers used questioning and class discussions, Mercer (2000) contrasted less effective with more effective teachers with regard to the types of questions they asked and the way they used them. The more effective teacher emphasized asking "why" questions to encourage understanding, rather than questions to test student knowledge; were able to use questions more adeptly when choosing when and what questions they asked, and for more than just asking about the content of a subject—they also led students' through problem-solving, and understanding the purpose of learning experiences and classroom activities; viewed discussions as a social, communicative process, supported the free exchange of ideas and greater participation among students, linking current past to present activities.

One important context for using questions is discussing literature. The questions and prompts that teachers ask during and after reading aloud, in literature circles or whole-class discussions, or in student/teacher conferences focused on student self-selected literature are extremely important, because they direct children's stance toward literature and therefore their ultimate understanding of a literature. According to Louise Rosenblatt's (1978/1994) *transactional theory,* readers take a *stance* on a continuum of efferent to aesthetic responses. An *efferent* response focuses on information that can be taken away from the text—for instance, reading a story to learn facts. An *aesthetic* response focuses on personally experiencing the text—for instance, reading a story to examine personal values

Figure 8.3 Examples of Both Aesthetic and Efferent Questions and Prompts

Aesthetic (More Open and Private)	Efferent (More Closed and Public)
What do you think about the story?	What was the main idea of the story?
Tell anything you want about the story.	What did the author mean by . . . ?
What was your favorite part? Tell about it.	Retell your favorite part.
Has anything like this ever happened to you? Tell about it.	Tell the order of the story events.
Does the story remind you of anything? Tell about it.	Describe the main characters.
What did you wonder about? Tell about it.	Explain the characters' actions.
What would you change in the story?	What other stories are like this one?
What else do you think might happen in the story?	Compare and contrast the stories.
What would you say or do if you were a character in the story?	What was the problem in the story?
	How did the author solve the problem?
	How did the author make the story believable?
	Is it fact or fiction?
	How do you think the characters felt?

or attitudes. Rosenblatt (1980) suggests that children should be directed toward aesthetic stances during experiences with literature, rather than efferent ones.

Nonetheless, research on aesthetic versus efferent questions has shown that even teachers who describe themselves as literature-based tend to direct children to take efferent stances (Zarrillo & Cox, 1992). This is the case even though studies with fifth-grade students (Cox & Many, 1992a) and sixth- through eighth-grade students (Many, 1991) have shown that students who respond aesthetically to literature develop higher levels of understanding and produced writing that was more involved and made connections between the story and their own lives (Many & Wiseman, 1992). My own longitudinal research on young children's responses to literature has led to development of the types of questions and prompts that reflect children's natural aesthetic responses to literature (Cox, 1994; 2002). And classroom studies have demonstrated how efferent questions can follow and develop from the initial open, aesthetic questions and prompts, keeping instruction student- and response-centered (Many & Wiseman, 1992). Examples of both aesthetic and efferent questions and prompts are shown in Figure 8.3.

In general, using more open questions and prompts initially will invite multiple responses from students and lead to richer classroom discussions. Similarly, initially using more aesthetic questions and prompts when discussing literature will lead to higher levels of understanding. Questions and prompts used skillfully are among the most valuable tools teachers have to support children's grown in speaking, listening, literacy, and thinking.

Instructional Conversations

Questioning strategies that are especially appropriate for differentiating instruction for English learners are used in a model called *instructional conversation,* or *IC* (Goldenberg, 1993). Goldenberg suggests that given the perception that English learners only need to

Engaging English Learners

Instructional Conversations with English Learners

The following instructional and conversational elements of an instructional conversation (Goldenberg, 1993) are especially helpful in providing support for English language learners:

- Instructional Elements: Teachers focused on a theme or concept and first activated student background knowledge and experience around the theme, teaching directly to the concept while also encouraging students to provide support for their ideas and thus leading to more complex language.
- Conversational Elements: Teachers were responsive to students ideas, encouraging all students to participate and allowing self-selected turns along with asking more open questions as opposed to known-answer questions, making connections among students' comments in a safe but challenging environment.
- Guidelines for Planning and Implementing IC: Begin with a book which has a theme around which to focus the discussion, tap into student background knowledge related to the theme and then providing information which may help students make sense of their reading and further discussion. Plan questions to ask in advance, guide the discussion, and extend the discussion with appropriate activities based on what happened in the discussion related to the theme.

drill, repeat, and review in order to succeed academically, teachers often fail to move beyond low-level, factually oriented, closed questions. IC is an explicit instructional model designed to guide teachers in how to have discussions that are interesting and engaging; that are about focused, meaningful, relevant ideas; and that have high levels of student participation not dominated by the teacher. Characteristics of IC include fewer known-answer questions and responsiveness to student contributions.

Saunders and Goldenberg (1999) have found that IC promotes a higher level of understanding of significant concepts without sacrificing literal comprehension and that IC can be a productive mode of teaching for language-minority students, whom research has shown are particularly likely to receive inordinate amounts of low-level, skills-oriented instruction. See Engaging English Learners for a summary of how to use ICs with ELs.

Group Discussions, Cooperative Learning, and Graphic Organizers

There are many types of group discussions: whole-class discussions led by the teacher, small-group discussions with students, or "buddies" or pairs of students working together. Kathy Lee used this technique when she formed her second-grade students into groups to work on some of the ideas that came from discussing what they could make with clay, which eventually led to them working in small groups and pairs to produce their own animated film, *The Greatest Clay Movie on Earth.*

Students collaborate in group discussions and learn speaking and listening in meaningful ways: making their ideas clear to others, understanding the perspectives of other students, and problem solving. Cooperative learning, an instructional technique that uses

students' own conversation as a vehicle for learning, is an important aspect of working in groups. Research has shown that cooperative learning also improves students' academic achievement, social skills, and self-esteem (Strickland & Feeley, 2003). Group discussions using cooperative learning techniques can be structured in a variety of ways:

1. ***Jigsaw.*** Students form teams, and each member of the team becomes an expert on one topic by working with members of other teams who are assigned the same topic. For example, if there are six teams and each has five members (A, B, C, D, E), topics would be assigned like this:

   A. How long ago and how long did dinosaurs live?
   B. Where and how did they live?
   C. What are the types of meat-eating dinosaurs?
   D. What are the types of plant-eating dinosaurs?
   E. Why did dinosaurs become extinct?

When students return to their original teams, they share what they learned about their respective topics. All members of the teams are assessed on all topics.

2. ***Think–pair–share.*** A question or a problem on any topic can be posed by the teacher or students. For example, the teacher could ask an open, aesthetic question after reading a book aloud: "What did you think of the book?" Or "What was your favorite part?" Or students could ask to do something, such as Kathy Lee's students did when they asked if they could make a film. Students then think about the question or topic, pair up with a partner to discuss it, and share their thoughts with the rest of the class.

3. ***Three-step interview.*** Students working in this strategy also form pairs. A purpose for the interview can be established, such as introducing students to the class, and the class can brainstorm questions or prompts, such as: "Where were you born? Who are the people in your family? What is your favorite thing to do?" The three steps are (1) the first student interviews the second student by asking the questions, (2) the second student interviews the first with the same questions, (3) each student shares what he or she has learned about the other with the whole class.

4. ***Cooperative projects.*** Students work together in small groups toward a single goal, but each individual must make an identifiable contribution. We've already seen several examples of this strategy in this book, including Avril Font's students working in group workshops to learn about the maypole dance or to build a dragon and dramatize the story of St. George and the dragon. Kathy Lee's students provided another example when they worked on cooperative projects in groups and made clay animation movies.

   To work effectively, cooperative project groups should have the following features:

   - Heterogeneous composition (ability, gender, race/ethnicity)
   - Individual accountability
   - Group goals (positive interdependence)
   - Shared responsibility
   - Emphasis on social skills

5. ***Gallery walk.*** Students work together in small groups to answer a question or solve a problem. Each group also creates some kind of artifact: a chart, graphic organizer, cluster, web, semantic map, illustration, model, or experiment. The artifacts are then displayed around the room. The student groups rotate to view the artifacts. They leave written feedback on a sheet of paper by each artifact or write their observations on Post-its and attach them to the artifacts. When each group returns to their own artifact, they discuss their

peers' feedback about what they have done. All of the groups then reflect on the experience together.

6. ***One-minute paper.*** In response to a question or topic, students write or draw for one minute. then share their writings/drawings among themselves. The teacher can number off students (say, from 1 to 5), and they can find a number match to exchange papers with. Or students can sit in two concentric circles and share with the persons across from them.

7. ***Group interview.*** In groups of three or four, students first think about a question or a problem to be solved. Then each student is interviewed by the rest of his or her group. All students have a chance to share, take turns, listen to each other, and ask questions to clarify their understanding of what other students have said.

8. ***Corners.*** This strategy works well if a group discussion has generated different points of view—for example, identifying a favorite season or character from a book or film or deciding what students would like to do in a class project. The teacher designates one corner of the room for each option. Students first think by themselves about the choices and then go to the corner representing their choice, where they discuss ideas and plans with other students. They may use other group discussion techniques such as three-step interviews and group interviews. The group in each corner shares its ideas and plans with the other corner groups. Students may plan further experiences for a class project this way. For example, in Kathy Lee's class, students could decide what part of the animated clay movie they would work on and how.

9. ***Treasure hunt.*** The teacher or the teacher and students generate a list of questions or topics they would like to know more about. Topics may be about the students (e.g., "Find someone who has a family member who was born in another country and tell about it") or related to academic content (e.g., "Find someone who knows an animal that is a mammal and can tell some facts about it"). Each student records the topic or question on a piece of paper and then moves around the room, gathering information from other students. Students come together again to share what they have found out. The following Treasure Hunt form could help students become acquainted at the beginning of the year.

Treasure Hunt: Getting to Know the People in Our Class

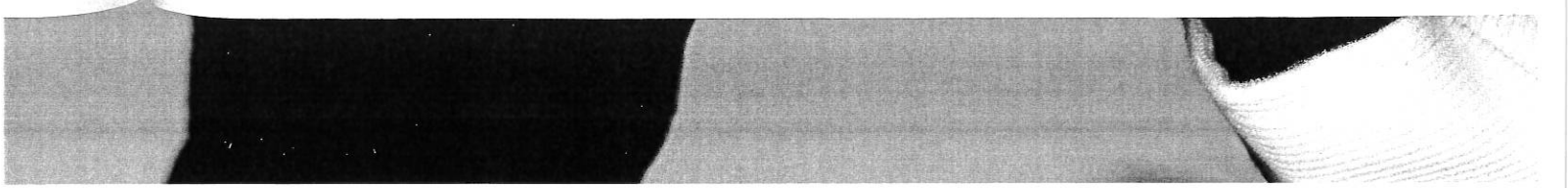
Hunt for someone in the class who:

1. Had something good happen to them this year. Why was it good? Write down the person's name and some details.

2. Went to a really interesting place this year. Why was it interesting? Write down the person's name and tell about the place.

3. Has a hobby or activity that they like. Why do they like it? Write down the person's name and tell about the hobby or activity.

10. ***KWHLS.*** This approach is a variation on the KWL chart described in Chapter 1. The KWHLS chart usually describes an activity for a group: *K* (what we *know*), *W* (what we *want* to learn), *H* (*how* we will learn), and *L* (what we *learned*), and *S* (how we will *share*).



The KWHLS can also be used by an individual to show differentiated goals and to build interdependence among students.

Teachers can record students' ideas during discussions on chart paper or the chalkboard using *graphic organizers,* or students can use them when working in small groups or individually. Graphic organizers can make concepts visual and show the relationship between different aspects of a concept or topic. They are also a way to record student's ideas and show the relationship between thinking, speaking, and print. They provide a record of discussions and can serve as a blueprint for projects.

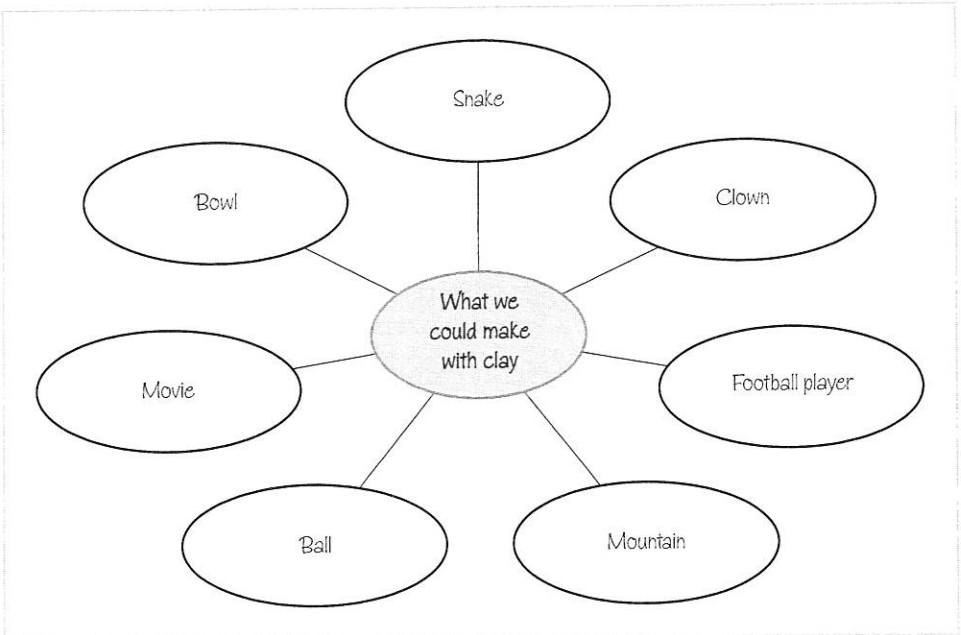
Research-based recommendations for using graphic organizers are (Baxendell, 2003):

1. Use charts consistently. For example, each time that a process with steps is taught, use a flowchart.
2. Charts should clearly show the relationship between key concepts, words, and ideas on a topic.
3. Use clear labels.
4. Be creative when using charts across a lesson or unit and across content areas.

For example, a chart with a graphic organizer can be used to introduce a topic after reading a book to activate students' prior knowledge and background experiences, to later clarify problem areas and synthesize concepts, and, finally, to help students communicate and review what they have learned.

Kathy Lee used a graphic organizer to record children's ideas when they thought of "what they could make with clay." The teacher can support discussions like this (or even initiate them) using graphic organizers such as *clusters* to record children's ideas. To do so, the teacher simply writes down the focal point of the discussion at the top or in the center of a piece of chart paper or the chalkboard and then records students' ideas for discussing and as a basis for further activities (see Figure 8.4).

Figure 8.4 Graphic Organizer Cluster for "What We Could Make with Clay"

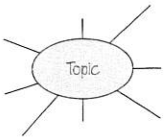


There are different types of graphic organizers that are useful for various purposes:

- ***Cluster.*** This is the type shown in Figure 8.4, which shows connections between ideas related to a main topic.
- ***T-chart comparison.*** The characteristics of two things are compared.
- ***Venn diagram.*** The relationships between ideas or parts are shown by overlapping items or putting them alongside one another. The middle section shows how they are alike, and the side sections show how they are different.
- ***Flowchart.*** The order of elements is indicated, showing cause and effect.
- ***Expanded cluster.*** Subtopics are clustered around a main topic cluster.
- ***Semantic map.*** A cluster identifies the features of a word.
- ***Expanded T-chart.*** The characteristics of more than two things are compared.
- ***Feature comparison chart.*** The features of subtopics under a main topic are compared.

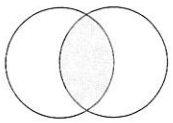
Group discussions with cooperative learning strategies and graphic organizers are well suited to students with individual differences, as described in the Differentiating Instruction box on p. 270.

Cluster

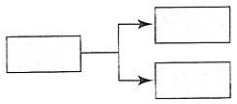


T-Chart Comparison

Venn Diagram



Flowchart

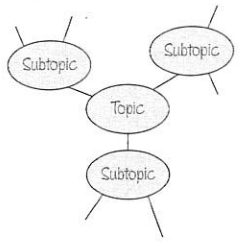


Directed Listening Thinking Activity (DLTA)

The purpose of a DLTA is to focus attention on stories read aloud. And because similar kinds of reasoning take place in both listening and reading comprehension, DLTA is an important strategy for teaching reading as well. In this activity, questions are used first to activate students' prior knowledge and encourage their predictions and then to focus their attention on the story to verify those predictions, helping students construct meaning from the text (Stauffeur, 1980). Research has shown that DLTA increases children's listening comprehension of a story (Morrow, 2009).

The teaching sequence outlined here presents sample questions using the book *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963); however, it can be used with any read-aloud story.

Expanded Cluster

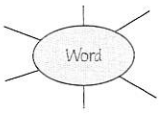


DLTA: Step-by-Step

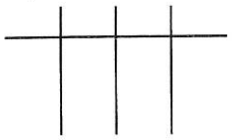
Before Reading

- Introduce the book and tell something about it: "This is a book about a little boy and an adventure he had."
- Encourage students to examine the cover and illustrations.
- Discuss any experiences or concepts that come up.
- Invite students to respond to the story while it's being read aloud with enthusiasm: "As I read, you can ask questions or share your ideas."

Semantic Map



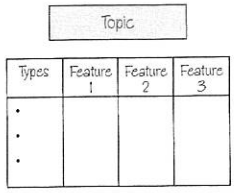
Expanded T-Chart



During Reading

- Ask the children to make predictions about what will happen: "What do you think might happen to Max?"
- As you read, stop and give students opportunities to verify their predictions.
- Continue to ask the children to make predictions and explain the reasons behind them: "What do you think will happen next? Why?"
- Encourage students to respond openly to events, characters, and ideas in the book: "What do you think of Max, the Wild Things, or sailing away from home?"

Feature Chart



Differentiating Instruction

Group Discussions, Cooperative Learning, and Graphic Organizers for Full Inclusion of Students with Disabilities

Group discussions, cooperative learning strategies, and graphic organizers support inclusion of all students in a classroom community and are wonderful strategies for differentiating instruction. Differences among students—such as cognitive and learning styles, social class, race and ethnicity, language, and disabilities—are viewed as resources. Inclusion is rooted in frequent student-to-student interaction, in which students learn about each other as individuals, respect each other, and see each other as contributing members of the group. Students with disabilities may experience success in these ways:

- By filling a group role suited to their strengths
- By listening to material read aloud for information that others read for them
- By gaining independence through their contribution to group work

To accommodate individual differences, a teacher may assign different roles to students in various groups based on their needs and strengths. Types of roles may include any or all of the following:

- ***Active listener:*** Repeats or paraphrases what has been said
- ***Checker:*** Makes sure everyone understands the work of the group
- ***Discussion leader:*** Directs the group to the main questions or important ideas
- ***Encourager:*** Acts as a cheerleader for group members; keeps enthusiasm up
- ***Illustrator:*** Captures ideas by drawing a picture or creating a graphic organizer
- ***Materials manager:*** Collects and organizes necessary supplies
- ***Questioner:*** Seeks ideas from everyone in the group
- ***Reader:*** Reads materials aloud to the group
- ***Scout:*** Gathers additional information from other groups
- ***Summarizer:*** Pulls together and presents the main ideas and/or group's conclusions
- ***Timekeeper:*** Monitors the time and keeps the group on task

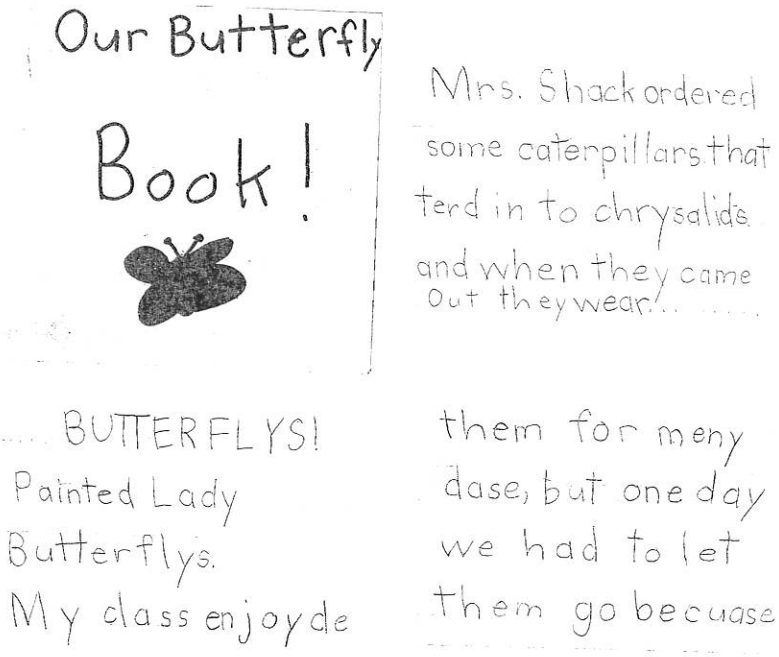
After Reading

- Talk about the book: "What did you think of the book?"
- Ask for personal responses to the story: "Did you like the book? Why or why not? What was your favorite part?"
- Talk about interesting concepts or words that come up: "How would you describe a *Wild Thing?* What's a *rumpus?*"

Project Presentations

Students learn to present knowledge and ideas through speaking and listening as well as through media and technology, which can combine words, graphics, images, hyperlinks, and embedded video and audio using various type of project presentations. These projects can be the result of an inquiry and research associated with a whole-class study of a theme, small-group work on a topic of interest, or an individual student's project. They can be focused in the language arts, in the content areas, or integrated teaching with literature across the curriculum. You have seen many examples of these in the text, with the different types of presentations described here.

Figure 8.5 Our Butterfly Book, First-Grade



Oral Presentations

- ***Sharing.*** Students can give oral presentations of knowledge and ideas they have researched in a formal presentation format, such as at the front of the class, or a more informal setting, such as with a small group at a table.
- ***Speaking from notes.*** Students can also do an oral presentation speaking from notes. They can take notes with the main ideas of what they want to say on index cards, or do an outline of main "talking points" on paper.
- ***Student-authored illustrated book.*** Students can do research on a topic, and then write, edit, and publish a book about it and read it aloud to the class. They can introduce the topic to the class and tell what problem they wanted to solve with their research project, read the book aloud and show the illustrations, plan and ask questions of the students listening, and allow time for a question-and-answer period at the end. This is appropriate for even young children who are learning to write, and can contextualize their writing with a focus on an inquiry project in a content area. For example, see Figure 8.5, a book written by a first-grade student doing a project on butterflies.
- ***Media interviews and oral histories.*** Students see and hear media interviews daily, on the radio, television, and online. They can use this model to interview people such as family members and people in the community. Interviews can be in person and audio or videotaped. Skype can be used to interview someone in another location, then the interview can be saved and presented in several formats such as a podcast.
- ***Oral histories.*** To conduct oral histories (Ritchie, 1995), students can identify, interview, and audio- or videotape members of their families or communities who have memories of special events in the past. In addition, students can research and collect artifacts, photographs, newspaper articles, and documents relating to the people they interview, and these can be assembled together and presented as a Glog.

Common Core State Standards

Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Figure 8.6 Poster on Ancient Egypt, Sixth-Grade

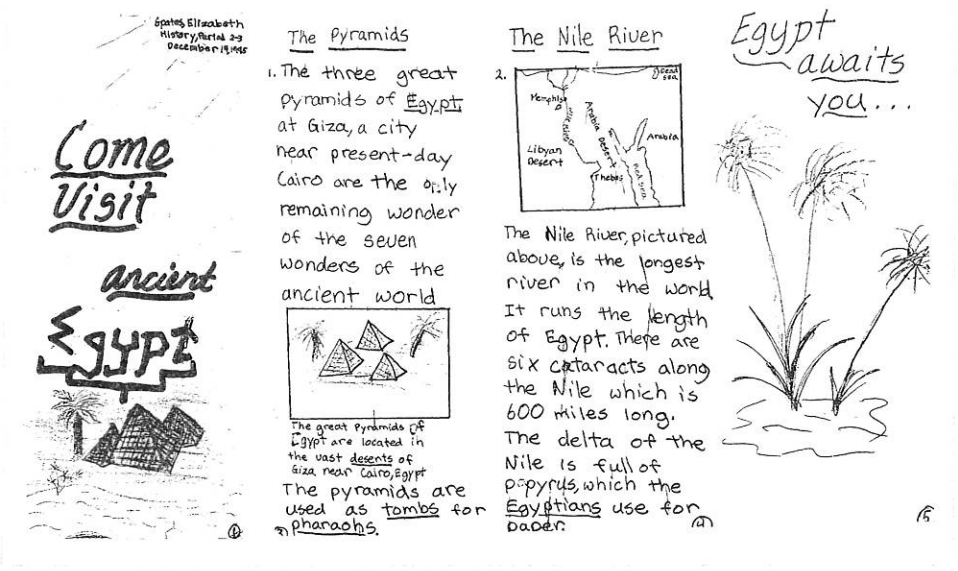
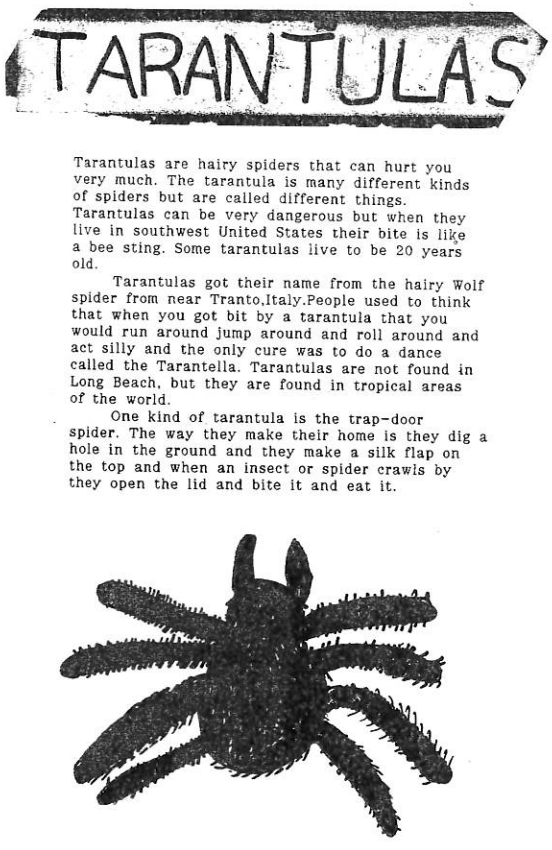


Figure 8.7 Poster on Tarantulas for a Gallery Tour on Spiders, First-Grade



Visual Presentations

- ***Poster displays.*** Students can make and use posters (like the one seen in Figure 8.6) to visually display the knowledge and ideas they have learned from an inquiry project while the student is speaking. Posters can be made of posterboard, on butcher paper, or on a foam-backed presentation board with drawings and text attached to it. These posters can include drawings and illustrations with labels, charts showing the relationship between data, flowcharts showing a sequence of ideas, timelines showing a historical sequence, or maps of different types to show location, topography, or the location of resources. All of the types of graphic organizers you have read about could be enlarged and used for a poster display. See the Media and Technology box for how to create a virtual poster, or Glog.
- ***Gallery tour.*** Students in small groups can make posters that are all focused on the same topic or question. These can be informal and made on chart paper with marking pens in one session as a result of a small-group discussion; or they may be more formal and made after several sessions of the group working to answer a question or solve a problem (e.g., What can our class do to improve the environment?) After a period of reading and online research, each group plans a solution to present. When the posters are ready (see Figure 8.7), they can be mounted around the classroom as in a gallery. After all students walked through the "gallery" and viewed all the posters, each small group could then do an oral presentation as the rest of the groups listened and watched. Other classes and parents could also be invited to a special gallery tour for the public.

- *Using objects.* Students can use objects along with oral presentations of a project to communicate knowledge acquired. They can use objects such as props, artifacts, or models to clarify information, help students listening visualize concepts, and make the presentation interesting. For example, if a class were learning about the instruments of the orchestra, and small groups were each researching a different instrument, showing and even using a real instrument would be useful. Other examples of using objects could be using different types of rocks studied in a science unit on geology; historical artifacts such as clothing, tools, or utensils for a study of family heritage; or a model of the solar system for a project on space.

Media and Technology

Digital Tools for Oral and Visual Presentation

Students today must be capable of designing and sharing digital information. Teachers can integrate digital tools such as glogs and podcasts into classroom activities to facilitate interactive oral and visual information sharing in collaborative digital environments.

Glogs

Glogster is a Web 2.0 tool that allows users to create virtual posters, or Glogs. Glog, short for "graphics blog," is an interactive multimedia image combining linked or embedded text, audio, video, images, music, and hyperlinks. Glogster can be used as an alternative to traditional poster presentations. Students can make an interactive poster on any topic to present information that can be shared electronically with others.

Using Glogster's educational site, Glogster EDU, teachers can establish class lists and monitor student activity while protecting privacy and anonymity. Because Glogster is a social networking site, teachers should check with their district's technology policies regarding its use. Features of the Glogster site include a video introduction for teachers, a tutorial for students, examples of Glogs made by students, and sample rubrics for Glogs. To begin using Glogster go to edu.glogster.com.

Podcasts

Podcasts are audio recordings that are composed, produced, and published online. They are a digital version of oral storytelling. Podcasts can be used to teach students to use spoken language for effective communication for different purposes and audiences. Podcasting allows students to share stories or dramatic scripts they have written, comment on news or a recent event, report information on a topic they have researched, or present an argument to persuade listeners to take an action.

After reviewing a district's appropriate use policies for technology, teachers can choose a podcasting site such as iTunes or Blogger, which allows you to upload audio files. To begin podcasting, students will need an email account, and audio recording equipment—a digital audio recorder with a microphone, a computer with audio recording software and a microphone, or a cell phone that can record audio files. Transfer the recorded files to a computer where students can edit them using software like GarageBand or Audacity and post them online.

Podcasts can be used in many ways across the curriculum:

- ***Writing:*** Audio journals, autobiographies, family stories, fictional stories, biographies, reader's theater scripts, argumentative and persuasive essays

- ***Reading:*** Responses to books, book chats in literature circles among students, dramatizations of a text they have read, creation of a dialogue between characters in a book
- ***Social studies:*** Report on a historical or other topic in history/social studies, a dramatized news report of an historical event from the past, commentary on current news and political events, oral history interviews
- ***Science:*** Report research, explanation of the results of an experiment, step-by-step description how to do an experiment, interview of a scientist
- ***Mathematics:*** Description of the process for solving a problem in mathematics, explanation of concepts
- ***Arts:*** Reviews of films, television shows, live performances, or music; description and presentation of original music or songs; recording of an original play, including sound effects and music

Demonstrations

- *How-to.* Students can do a demonstration of how to do something that was the focus of an inquiry project, and show—not just tell—the class how they did it. For example, in Chapter 1 you read about two students who wanted to build an aquarium for guppies. They researched and did this project and then gave an oral presentation for the class. They used the aquarium they built to demonstrate, along with a poster that showed the steps in the process.
- *Experiment.* Science experiments are a natural way to present knowledge learning in a science project. These can be an "on-the-spot" experiment, or they could show the effects of an experiment over time—for example, demonstrating that plants need water, sun, and soil by showing four plant samples and what happened to them over time (1) without water, (2) without sun, (3) without soil, (4) with water, sun, and soil. Students could also use labels as they present their findings.
- *Audience participation.* Students can do an oral presentation involving the student audience. For example, demonstrate how to do origami step by step and have each member of the class follow along as they fold a paper crane. Or teach something, such as the positions in ballet or steps to a dance.
- *Enactments.* Students can enact a person they have done a project on after reading biographies. They can get "in character"—dressing, talking, and behaving as the person might—and do an oral presentation in the first person. Groups of students could also enact a historical event with multiple characters, writing dialogue that would include the knowledge and ideas they want to communicate to the rest of the class. For example, students in a fifth-grade class doing a social studies unit on immigration enacted the role of a young immigrant coming to America. One student dressed as her grandmother would have coming from Germany in 1881 as the class enacted what happened to the immigrants who came to Ellis Island.

Students can do peer assessment of each other's projects and presentations of knowledge ideas using the Peer Evaluation of Speaking and Listening Form shown in Assessment Toolbox 8.1.

Assessment Toolbox 8.1

Peer Evaluation of Speaking and Listening

This simple form will guide students in evaluating one another's performance in listening and talking events.

Your name: _____

Name of listener/speaker: _____

Listening/speaking event: _____

How did the person show he or she is a good listener/speaker? (Give an example.)

_____

_____

How could the person improve next time?

_____

_____

Performance Reading and Reader's Theater

Performance reading and reader's theater are both recommended as ways to support oral language development, reading fluency, engagement in reading, and enjoyment of reading, as well as reading comprehension (NICHD, 2000; Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003).

Performance reading is when students join in a repeated reading of a book or other type of text with memorable phrases, sound effects, or added gestures, or when older students plan how to read passages of a book with expression for an audience. For younger readers, you can choose a read-aloud book with memorable repeated language or refrains that they can repeat and act out with gestures, sound effects, props, and voices. Model doing this as you read the book aloud and as students begin to participate in the performance reading as well. See the marginal note on p. 376 for great books for performance reading for younger students.

Older students can plan to do performance readings of texts in small groups. They can choose drama, poetry, literature, or informational texts, which can also be integrated with the content areas. Individual students can do monologues; pairs can do dialogues, speeches, or songs; and small groups can choose any text that can be voiced by students. Students in groups can also discuss the text and how to perform it, making decisions about how to use their voices, facial expressions, gestures, movements, props, sets, or costume pieces. See the marginal note for great books for performance reading for older students.

Great Books for Children

Performance Reading: Grades K–2

Burleigh, R. (2009). *Clang! Clang! Beep! Beep! Listen to the city.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Carle, E. (2002). *"Slowly, slowly, slowly," said the sloth.* New York, NY: Philomel.

Fleming, D. (1991). *In the tall tall grass.* New York, NY: Holt.

Moss, L. (1995). *Zin! Zin! Zin! A violin.* New York, NY: Scholastic.

Rosen, M. (1989). *We're going on a bear hunt.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Performance Reading: Grades 3–5

Odanaka, B. (2009). *A crazy day at the Critter Café.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Olaleye, I. (1995). *The distant talking drum.* Honesdale, PA: Wordsong.

Palantini, B. (2009). *Lousy rotten stinkin' grapes.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Schlitz, L. A. (2007). *Good masters! Sweet ladies! Voices from a medieval village.* Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

*Thayer, E. L. (2000). *Casey at the bat: A ballad of the republic sung in 1888.* New York, NY: Handprint.

*A *Common Core State Standard* text exemplar.

In *reader's theater,* participants read and interpret literature aloud from scripts adapted especially for this setting. The scripts can come from many types of literature: texts of picture books for younger children and novels for older children; folk- and fairytales and other types of traditional literature (e.g., fables, myths, and legends); poetry and songs; stories and poems from anthologies and basal readers; and even nonfiction (Flynn, 2007). In presenting reader's theater, children hold the scripts, which may be read or glanced at by the performing readers. No special costumes, sets, props, lighting, or music are required, so once the scripts have been developed, reader's theater can be practiced and performed almost instantly in the classroom.

Reader's Theater: Step-by-Step

1. ***Select a story.*** Teachers should look for these qualities in selecting stories:
   - Dialogue and clear prose
   - Lively, high-interest, humorous stories, with children or personified animals as main characters
   - A good balance of parts of nearly the same size
   - Short stories, especially the first time

   See the marginal note on p. 277 for examples of stories that work well for reader's theater.

2. ***Adapt a story or text for a reader's theater script***
   - Add narrator parts for the following: identification of time, place, scene, and characters. One narrator can be added for the whole story, or separate narrators can be added for different characters.
   - Delete lines that aren't critical to plot development, that are peripheral to the main action of the story, that represent complex imagery or figurative language difficult to express through gestures, that state characters are speaking (e.g., "He said . . ."), or whose meaning can be conveyed through characters' facial expressions or gestures, simple sound effects, or mime.
   - Change lines that are descriptive but could be spoken by characters or would move the story along more easily if changed.

3. ***Put reader's theater into practice.*** This procedure may be used with a whole class or by a small group:
   - ***Introduce the story.*** Read or tell the story aloud to young children, or let older children take turns reading the story aloud. Encourage an extended response period to the story through discussion involving all children.
   - ***Explain reader's theater.*** If this is the first time students have done reader's theater, explain how it works: the physical arrangement and movements (turning in and out of the scene when not involved), the roles of narrators and characters, the uses of mime and expression, and the nature and use of scripts.
   - ***Cast the story.*** First, distribute prepared scripts (those the teacher has done alone or with children). An overhead projector is useful in displaying transparencies of the story and working through the adaptation with students. Revise it according to their suggestions as they watch on the overhead. Scripts can also be easily adapted by a few children or an individual using a word-processing program on the computer. Next, take volunteers for all parts. In initial sessions, let many different children play each part. They should all become familiar with all the parts, as in improvised drama.

- ***Block, stage, and practice playing the script.*** The teacher may plan the physical staging ahead of time, but should be ready to revise it according to how the script actually plays with the group. Suggestions for modifications should be accepted from students. Other guidelines are as follows:
  - Narrators often stand, perhaps using a prop like a music stand for holding the script.
  - Characters are usually seated on chairs, stools, or even tables.
  - Floor plans should be decided ahead of time and changed as the play proceeds.
  - There should be a minimum of movement around the floor in reader's theater.
- ***Sharing reader's theater.*** By the time children have prepared and participated in reader's theater, they are so enthusiastic that they want to share it with others. To make this comfortable for them, avoid actual stages; instead, use a stage-in-the-round in the classroom or multipurpose room or library. Also, it's best to share with others in the classroom first, followed by classes of younger children and then classes of the same age. Work gradually toward sharing with adults, such as parents.

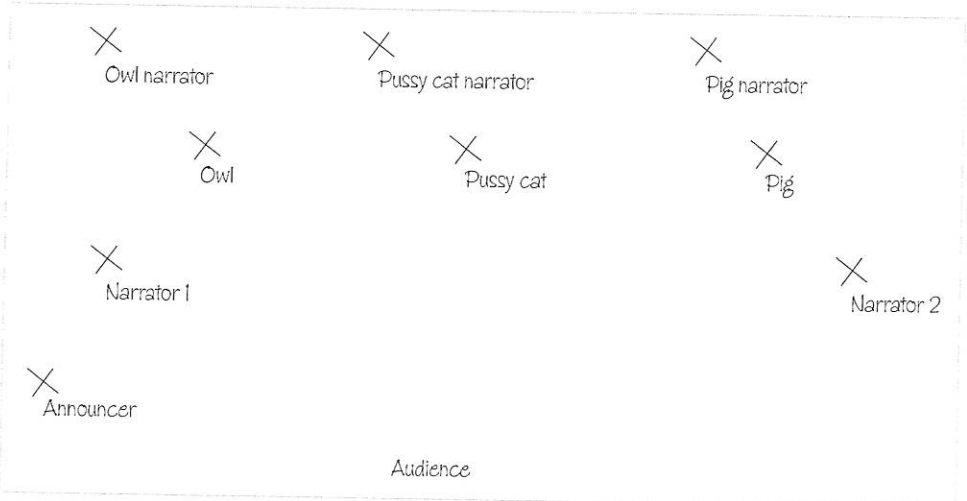
Reader's Theater Script Prepared for Children This script adapts the wonderful humorous nonsense poem "The Owl and the Pussy-Cat" by Edward Lear for reader's theater. It lends itself to reader's theater because it includes lines of dialogue. The script as adapted will work for eight children, but it could also be adapted for a smaller or larger group by adding or decreasing the number of narrators. The dialogue is spoken by the Owl, the Pussy-Cat, and the Piggy-Wig; each of them has a narrator; and two other narrators speak the other lines of poetry.

Cast and Setting

Owl, Pussy-Cat, and Piggy-Wig stand in a row, with space between them for their narrators.

Owl Narrator, Pussy-Cat Narrator, and Piggy-Wig Narrator stand next to the Owl, Pussy-Cat, and Piggy-Wig.

Narrators 1 and 2 stand to the far left and right of the others.



Great Books for Children

Reader's Theater

Folk Literature: For Younger Children

"Chicken Little"
"The Gingerbread Man"
"The Little Red Hen"
"The Three Billy Goats Gruff"

Folk Literature: For Older Children

"Cinderella"
"East of the Sun, West of the Moon"
"Rumpelstiltskin"
"Snow White"

Poetry

Silverstein, S. (1974). *Where the sidewalk ends.* New York, NY: Harper & Row.
Silverstein, S. (1981). *A light in the attic.* New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Fiction: For Younger Children

Kraus, R. (1971). *Leo the late bloomer.* New York, NY: Windmill Books.
Lionni, L. (1970). *Fish is fish.* New York, NY: Pantheon.
Parish, P. (1963). *Amelia Bedelia.* New York, NY: Harper.
Seuss, Dr. (1940). *Horton hatches the egg.* New York, NY: Random House.
Seuss, Dr. (1957). *How the Grinch stole Christmas.* New York, NY: Random House.

Fiction: For Older Children

Blume, J. (1972). *Tales of a fourth-grade nothing.* New York, NY: Dutton.
Lewis, C. S. (1950). *The lion, the witch and the wardrobe.* New York, NY: Macmillan.
Silverstein, S. (1974). *Where the sidewalk ends.* New York, NY: Harper & Row.
Silverstein, S. (1981). *A light in the attic.* New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Common Core State Standards

"The Owl and the Pussycat" by Edward Lear is a text exemplar in the *Common Core State Standards.*

Entire cast forms a semicircle. When they speak lines, they step forward; they step back to their original position when they finish.

Announcer: "The Owl and the Pussy-Cat" by Edward Lear.
Narrator 1: The Owl and the Pussy-Cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea-green boat,
They took some honey, and plenty of money,
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.
Owl Narrator: The Owl looked up to the stars above,
And sang to a small guitar, [simulates playing a guitar, or use guitar as a prop]
Owl: "O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love, [in a singing voice]
What a beautiful Pussy you are,
You are,
You are!
What a beautiful Pussy you are!"
Pussy Narrator: Pussy said to the Owl,
Pussy: "You elegant fowl!
How charmingly sweet you sing!
O let us be married! Too long we have tarried:
But what shall we do for a ring?"
Narrator 2: They sailed away, for a year and a day,
To the land where the Bong-tree grows
And there in the wood a Piggy-Wig stood
With a ring at the end of his nose, [all point to their noses]
All: His nose,
His nose,
With a ring at the end of his nose.
Owl & Pussy-Cat: Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?
Pig Narrator: Said the Piggy,
Piggy: "I will."
Narrator 1: So they took it away, and were married next day
By the turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
Narrator 2: And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand, [Owl and Pussy-Cat join hands and dance]
They danced by the light of the moon,
All: The moon,
The moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.

I chose this poem to adapt for a reader's theater script not only because it is great for reader's theater and one of the text exemplars in the *Common Core State Standards,* but because I love it. My father was a great Edward Lear fan and so we acted it out when I was a child. When I was an elementary teacher, I did it with my students. And my own three children put on many performances of it with their friends when they were growing up. In

fact, they are all adults now and will still burst into an impromptu performance of "The Owl and the Pussy-Cat." It's a winner.

Creative Drama

Since prehistoric times, people have used drama to express the human experience: to show feelings and ideas, recount past events, and tell the stories of their lives. Long before people wrote and read about their experiences, they danced and chanted and pantomimed and sang about them to tell others. Preliterate societies still do this. The word *drama* comes from a Greek word meaning "to do or live through."

In similar fashion, young children first learn to express their experiences through dramatic means such as voice, gesture, and movement. From an early age, long before they actually speak words, babies use gestures and sounds to imitate things they observe in the environment. Piaget (1962) noted evidence of this innate human tendency during the first few days of his own son's life, when he observed his newborn child cry when hearing other babies in the hospital cry. Piaget also found that his son would cry in response to his imitation of a baby's cry but not to a whistle or other kinds of cries. Piaget concluded that language development goes through three stages. First, a child has an actual experience with an object or activity. Second, the child repeats the experience through a dramatic reliving of it. Third, the child acquires the words that represent the experience.

Children are able to communicate successfully through dramatic means long before they can speak, read, and write. The mental images that children draw on during play are necessary for linguistic development. These symbolic representations also form the basis for the comprehension of text during what Piaget calls the *symbolic play period,* between the ages of 2 and 7. Based on Piaget's constructivist theory, drama is a natural part of the development of human thought and language. From Vygotsky's (1986) social interaction perspective, *activity* is the major explanatory concept in the development of human thought and language. Play, then, is the primary learning activity of young children. The use of drama in the classroom reflects a social constructivist perspective of language learning—which is active, social, and centered in students' experiences—and provides an effective way to teach oral language as well as literacy (Wagner, 2003).

The Children's Theatre Association explains the purpose of *creative drama* as follows: Creative drama may be used to teach the art of drama and/or motivate and extend learning in other content areas. Participation in creative drama has the potential to develop language and communication.

Creative drama is a synthesis of sense training and pantomime and improvisation.

Sense Training *Sense-training activities* help individuals become aware of their senses and encourage creativity and self-confidence through expressing that awareness. The key is the concentration ability children develop as they communicate through nonverbal means—facial expressions, gestures, and movements—and then add oral language.

Here are some ideas for activities that involve using the four senses:

1. ***Touch.*** The teacher should have children sit on the floor, each individual doing his or her own activity. Dimming the lights may help create a secure atmosphere. The teacher should give the following directions (one activity at a time):

- "There is a balloon on the floor in front of you. Pick it up. Blow it up. Tie a knot in the end of it and attach a string. Let it float in the air as you watch. Describe what you see."
- "There is a tiny creature crouched behind you. It is frightened. Pick it up. Pet it and comfort it. What would you say to it?"
- "There is a blob of sticky, gooey clay in front of you. Pick it up. Make something from it. Tell a buddy what you made."

2. ***Taste.*** For these activities, children should work in pairs, facing each other. The teacher should ask one partner to guess exactly what the other is pretending to eat and then tell the class what he or she saw:
   - "Make your favorite sandwich and eat it."
   - "Eat your favorite food."
   - "Eat something you don't like."
3. ***Sight.*** Children should gather in small groups and sit in circles facing each other. The teacher should tell them that there is a collection of something in the middle of the circle; then, going around the circle, each individual should take out an item and pantomime what he or she has selected. After everyone has finished, they should guess what one another chose. Here are some ideas:
   - "There is a trunk full of clothes in the middle of the circle. Take something out of it and try it on. There is only one of each thing in the trunk."
   - "There is a pile of presents wrapped in boxes in the middle of the circle. Choose one, open it, and take out and use what's inside."
   - "Your favorite toy or game is in the middle of the circle. Pick it up and show how you play with it."
4. ***Sound.*** For these activities, children should stand in small groups (again, forming small circles). In response to the teacher's directions, each person should portray how a particular sound makes him or her feel. After everyone has finished, the students should try to tell what the others did. Here are some ideas:
   - "I will make a sound. [Hit the table with a rhythmic beat.] Act out what it makes you think of."
   - Give the same directions, but rub hands together to make a slithery sound.
   - Give the same direction, but make a scraping sound with an object against the blackboard.

Pantomime and Improvisation Pantomime and improvisation are natural extensions of sense training and may also follow from teachers' observations of children's spontaneous play. *Pantomime* uses facial expressions, body movements, and gestures to communicate instead of sounds and words, and *improvisation* adds speech to spontaneous movements and actions.

Here are some topics to focus on for pantomime and improvisation activities:

- Animals: Movements, interactions between children and pets, interactions among animals, and so on
- Play: Sports, games, toys, and fun places to visit
- Children's literature: Nursery rhymes, poems, picture books, folktales, and stories
- Cross-curricular: Social studies, science, math, or fine arts

Teachers may also use costumes and other props to motivate children's pantomime and improvisation (e.g., hats, capes, canes, buckets, baskets). Likewise, music provides a good source of motivation.

Here is a Lesson Plan combining creative drama and writing that I model for the preservice teacher education students in my language arts methods classes. I follow this plan with my adult students to engage them in the actual experience and encourage them to try it with the elementary students in their field experiences. I especially like this lesson because it is student-centered, highly active and interactive, and requires no special materials or preparation—just an imaginative teacher and students. Many of my adult students have used it and report to me how successful it is for teaching speaking, listening, creative drama, and writing, as well as vocabulary. It is excellent for English learners because the teacher can use a dramatic voice and gestures, students tap into their prior experiences, students interact with the teacher and each other, and a visual graphic organizer can be used to make language visible and link the spoken and written word.

Great Books for Children

Hopkins, L. B. (Ed). (1985). *Creatures.* New York, NY: Harcourt.

Lesson Plan

Creative Drama and Writing: Describing Creatures

Level: Any grade

Topic: Drawing and writing using descriptive language based on creative drama

Purpose: Visualize images; use pantomime and descriptive language to orally share images; expand concepts and vocabulary through group interaction and a graphic organizer; visually represent ideas by drawing and writing

IRA/NCTE Standard 12: Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Common Core State Standards: SL.1.5 Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

Materials

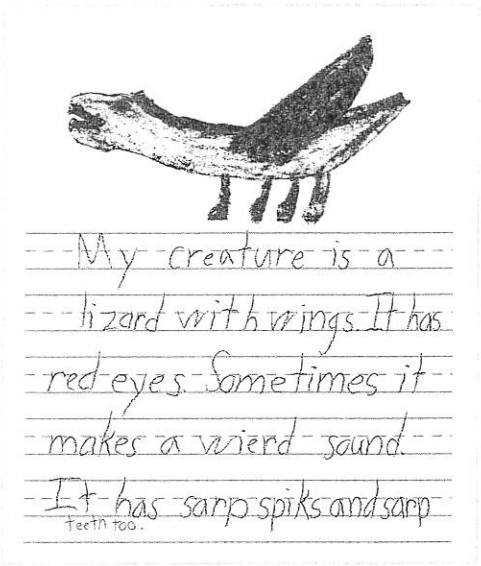
1. Paper
2. Pencils and crayons

Teaching Sequence

1. Initiate the lesson by turning the lights down and lowering your voice to a dramatic whisper, saying:

   "I noticed that while you were busy working, a lot of little creatures came into the classroom. I noticed each creature was different. I'd never seen some of them before. Each creature is hiding under each one of your desks. Don't move and scare the little creature. Picture it in your mind. It's small enough to fit under your desk. What does it look like? What color is it? How big is it? What shape is it? Now reach down very slowly so you don't frighten it, and pick up the creature. Hold it carefully and comfort it. What does it feel like? What does it smell like? What is it doing?"

Figure 8.8 Drawing and Description of a Creature



2. While students are holding, comforting, and observing their creatures, ask them: "Who would like to describe his or her creature? Tell what you see, feel, hear, and smell."
3. Take volunteers and record students' descriptions of their creatures on a word wall cluster with "CREATURES" written in the middle of it.
4. Direct students first to draw pictures of their creatures and then to use describing words from the word wall to write about them (see Figure 8.8).

Assessment

1. Observe whether students could visualize images and express them through pantomime and descriptive language.
2. Note the levels of concepts and vocabulary development on the word wall.
3. Record each child's ability to visually represent ideas through drawing as well as writing using an anecdotal record.

Differentiated Instruction

1. Students can write stories about their creatures, perhaps working in pairs or small groups on a story about what happens when their creatures meet.
2. Students can dramatize the meeting of their creatures.
3. Students can read poetry about *Creatures,* collected by Lee Bennett Hopkins (1985).

Story Dramatization When children respond to a story through drama—portraying the actions as they play the characters—they are creating a *story dramatization.* This kind of drama is spontaneous and based on improvisation, but because it's based on an actual story, it follows a plot. Story dramatization uses literature and drama to teach speaking and listening, and the literary elements of setting, characters, and sequence of events/plot and creating a story map. The following Snapshot describes how a preservice teacher in my language arts class did a story dramatization of *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) in a second-grade class of English learners.

See the anecdotal record assessment in Assessment Toolbox 5.2 (p. 188).

Snapshot

Story Dramatization of *Where the Wild Things Are* with English Learners: Second Grade

A student in a language arts methods class I teach decided to dramatize *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) with second-grade students after I modeled this activity in our university class. She did her field experience at a school in Long Beach, California, which is about 85 percent English learners—primarily Spanish-speaking Hispanic students and Khmer-speaking Cambodian Americans. Their teacher encouraged my student

to do this activity because it is uses literature and actively engages students in the types of experiences advocated for English learners: hands-on, direct experiences and comprehensible input in a low-anxiety setting. This story dramatization activity is an excellent way to introduce academic vocabulary for literary elements for English learners: setting, characters, plot, mood, and theme.

Students do a story dramatization of Where the Wild Things Are *wearing masks they made.*

She began her lesson by reading *Where the Wild Things Are*. The students sat on the floor in a half circle as she read the story with lots of expression. She even growled like a monster. The students showed their gnawing teeth and sharp claws as they made monster faces at each other. After reading, they talked about the story. She asked them what they thought about it and their favorite part. Many said the "Wild Things" in the forest. Alexi liked when Max was crowned "King of All Wild Things."

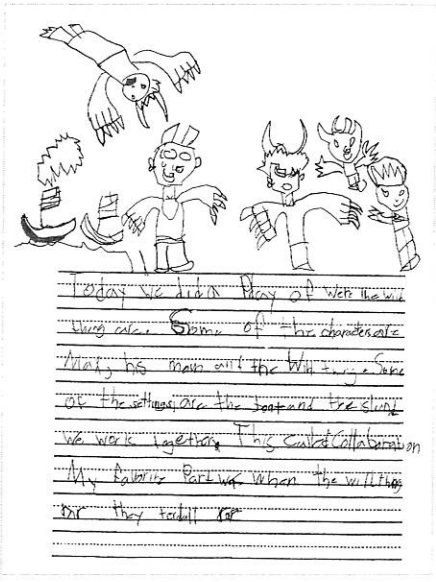
The students made file-folder masks next. They tore construction paper, glued cotton balls and feathers on, and colored them with crayons. They enjoyed wearing them and showing them to each other.

Then they were ready to begin the drama. She had made large signs with the characters' names to hang around students' necks. She began narrating the story and then put the "Max" sign around Alexi's neck. One student was the "forest growing," others were the "water" and "boat." Everyone else was a "Wild Thing." Their favorite part was the "wild rumpus"; they danced to "The Monster Mash." The students clearly had fun bringing the story to life.

The students tried new things. One girl began to do a dance from Cambodia. When she realized everyone was watching, she became shy. My student reminded her that she wasn't herself anymore but a character from a book. She said "Oh, yeah!" and began to do the dance again. Later this led to learning about Cambodia, which included having guest speakers from students' families and holding a cultural fair with dancing, music, and storytelling.

When the story dramatization was over, the students asked to do the whole thing again. Students drew and wrote about the characters, setting, plot, and their favorite part (see Figure 8.9). Chametra and Alexi wanted to wear their masks out to recess. Three girls gave my student a hug. The classroom teacher said it was a great lesson. My student told me that she *will definitely use drama in her own class!*

Figure 8.9 Writing about *Where the Wild Things Are*



Story Dramatization: Step-by-Step

To create a story dramatization (for this or any other story), follow this sequence of steps, which uses *Where the Wild Things Are* as an example.

Great Books for Children

Maurice Sendak

Sendak, M. (2011). *Bumble-ardy.* New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Sendak, M. (1989). *Outside over there.* New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Sendak, M. (1970). *In the night kitchen.* New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Sendak, M. (1962). *Nutshell library.* New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Monsters

Emberley, R., & Emberley, E. (2010). *If you're a monster and you know it.* New York, NY: Scholastic.

Emberley, R., & Emberley, E. (2009). *There was an old monster!* New York, NY: Scholastic.

Mayer, M. (2005). *There are monsters everywhere.* New York, NY: Dial.

Willems, M. (2005). *Leonardo, the terrible monster.* New York, NY: Hyperion.

1. ***Reread and discuss the book.*** Ask children to note the setting, characters, and sequence of events or plot. Also note the most exciting parts, the climax, and the resolution. Discuss mood and theme. After several readings, discuss these points and chart the story with the class for dramatization purposes on the board or chart paper:

Setting

Home, Max's Room, Ocean, Where the Wild Things Are

Characters

Narrator, Mother, Max, Dog, Wild Things, Other Inanimates (Trees, Boats, Ocean)

Sequence of Events/Plot

1. Max makes mischief. Mother sends him to bed.
2. A forest grows. A boat comes by.
3. Max sails away to where the Wild Things are.
4. Max tames the Wild Things. Max becomes King.
5. The wild rumpus (dance).
6. Max is lonely. He leaves the Wild Things.
7. He sails home. His supper is still hot.

Use a circle to help children understand the structure of the story in relationship to the sequence of events. Explain that this is a *circle story:* The setting and plot begin and end in the same place. Do this with the whole class on a "word wall," or let small groups or individuals do story maps (see Figure 8.10).

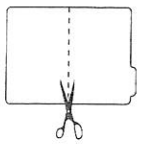
2. ***Make masks and get in character.*** Making simple monster masks (see Figure 8.11) will set the mood and help children establish distance between their real selves and monster selves. Making a mask will also help each student develop his or her own characterization for either Max or a "Wild Thing."

Figure 8.10 Story Map for *Where the Wild Things Are*

Figure 8.11 How to Make a Mask

Materials: Manila folder, scissors, stapler, glue, decorations

1. Cut the manila folder in half.



2. In one half, cut out an oval for the face to show through.

3. In the other half, cut out two strips on the diagonal.

4. Attach one strip to the back of the mask to fit around the head from side to side. Attach the other strip from the top center of the mask to the other strip.

5. Decorate with scraps of manila folder, construction paper, feathers, scraps of cloth, pipe cleaners, yarn, ribbons, and the like.

With masks in place, students can do sense training, pantomime, and improvisational activities. After reading and discussing the book, the teacher should lead them through "A Day in the Life of a Monster" to get in character, asking:

"Show me how you sleep, Monster, and how you wake up."
"How do you get ready for a new day, Monster? Do you brush your teeth (or tooth)? Comb your hair (scales, fur, or tentacles)? Wear clothes?"
"How do you move around when you are ready for a new day, Monster? Do you creep, crawl, slither, lumber, galumph, stagger, stumble, or fall down frequently?"

Using movements developed through mime, the "monsters" can dance to "monster music" such as the old rock and roll song "The Monster Mash."* The teacher may suggest a series of movements for different types of monsters: walking, marching, jumping, crouching and pouncing, and so on. The teacher should experiment with a variety of music but let children choose their own preferred monster music.

3. ***Take volunteers for the cast.*** Delegate direction and leadership roles in the play to one child at a time. For example, begin with the narrator and rotate to other children.

4. ***Have the cast plan how they will play the scene—who will do what action and where.*** There are enough parts for trees, an ocean, a boat, and "Wild Things" to involve the entire class. Or half the students can play and the other half can watch; then reverse.

5. ***Have the children play the scene.*** Allow the narrator to provide direction for the story initially. Later, as the children play the scene several more times, this role will become less important.

6. ***Discuss and evaluate after each playing with the children.*** Everyone should become involved in this stage. Emphasize the positive by asking questions like these:

   What did you see that you liked?
   Who did something really interesting (or exciting, realistic, fantastic, etc.)?
   What can we do next time to make the play even better?

*In addition to the rock-and-roll classics "Wild Thing," by The Troggs, and "Monster Mash," by Bobby "Boris" Pickett, try these classical pieces of "monster music":

"Abduction of the Bride" and "In the Hall of the Mountain King" from *Peer Gynt*, by Edvard Grieg
"Danse Macabre," by Camille Saint-Saëns
"March of the Dwarves from Huldigungmarsch," by Edvard Grieg
"Night on Bald Mountain" and "Songs and Dances of Death," by Modest Mussorgsky
"The Sorcerer's Apprentice," by Paul Dukas

Shakespeare in the Classroom

Children can also perform adapted versions of the works of Shakespeare. And for speaking and listening in English, it doesn't get much better than the Bard of Avon. However, some people question whether Shakespeare belongs in the language arts curriculum.

"Doesn't He Know Who Shakespeare Is?" A surprised principal once hastily posed the question "Does Shakespeare really belong in the language arts curriculum?" while leading a group of college students to observe language arts in my third-grade class. They arrived in the middle of our production of *Julius Caesar,* just as an active Roman mob came pouring out of the classroom, screaming "Burn, burn!" and "Kill, kill!" They had been fired up by Carolyn's impassioned delivery of Mark Antony's famous speech, "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears," delivered over the dead body of Caesar (played by Bart).

Engaging English Learners

Creative Drama and English Learners

1. English learners can rely on actions, sound effects, and gestures to both understand and participate in drama—for example, showing how they would pet or comfort a small, imaginary creature.
2. All students must tap into prior experience, knowledge, and cultural experiences during drama, which is an especially important strategy to use for English learners. For example, students can pantomime playing with a favorite toy.
3. ELs can interact with more proficient English speakers during dramatic activities, as in a sense-training activity in which children act out how to fix something to eat for one another.
4. Teachers can use visual representations of ideas during drama, such as a graphic organizer to record children's ideas for a story dramatization.
5. Making props and costumes (such as masks) and using music and dance provide opportunities for English learners to fully participate.