



Elementary | Tableau Study Guide



Walton Arts Center



Tableau

Tableau is a drama technique that supports comprehension in core subjects including reading, writing and social studies. Active and collaborative, tableau requires students to truly engage with the content while becoming an effective partner in learning.

Ideas for Curriculum Connections

CCSS: R.2.1,6, 7,9,10; R.3.1,7,9,10

W.2.3 and 8; W.3.3 and 8

SL.2.1,2,3 and 4; SL.3.1,2,3, 4, 5 and 6

LH/SS.3.1,2,3 and 7.



Connections to the learning in the Classroom

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www.ArtsIntegrationConsulting.com

Tricycle Theatre for Youth

Photo Credits: Lauren Perkins and David Embree

Adapted from Sean Layne and his Living Pictures instruction, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.. Video available at: www.kennedy-center.org/pdot

About tableau



Strong tableaus feature varying positions from high, medium to low with gestures, facial expression and focus.

Tableau in Art

Tableau (tab-BLO) is short for the French, tableau vivant (tab-BLO vi-VAHNT) which means “living picture.” A tableau is a representation of a dramatic scene by a person or group, posing silently without moving. In art, tableaus can be seen in the theater when a stage picture shows silent, still, costumed actors in poses. In dance concerts, dancers remain motionless for a moment to create a still picture in contrast to movement. In films or community performances, a group of actors might imitate a famous painting, biblical or historical scene.

Tableau in the Classroom

The disciplined, active and creative drama technique of tableau can be used successfully and imaginatively in the classroom. It is a low-risk strategy that requires a team of students to use their bodies to represent an event or situation as if frozen in time. Tableau supports students’ application, expansion and expression of their knowledge by asking them to take on the role of people or objects to create a living picture of characters in a story or people and objects in a historical event.

The benefits of tableau in the classroom are many. Tableau allows teachers to engage students with multiple learning styles. It can serve as a quick assessment tool of student learning when students “show what they know” as a frozen picture. Tableau can support student achievement in literacy when used to prepare and motivate students to comprehend text and analyze literary elements such as character, plot, theme, conflict and resolution.

Tableau works best in and supports a cooperative learning environment. While working in tableau, students practice cooperation and compromise as they share ideas to create and express one powerful idea.



Setting the stage for tableau

“Cooperation is like a muscle that does not grow strong if it is not exercised constantly.”

Sean Layne, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts workshop presenter

Actor’s Tool Box

Before students can work effectively in learning teams they need practice using the actor’s tools of body, voice, imagination and the skills of concentration and cooperation. Successful teachers provide opportunities for students to practice the self-control they’ll need to collaborate well.

- > Explore ways to help students develop more control of their bodies and voices.
- > Give students direct instruction to develop concentration skills.
- > Ask students to focus on a focal point for short periods of time.
- > Test students’ skill of holding their focus by providing deliberate distractions including unexpected sounds and movements.



Students remain neutral, balanced and focused while problem solving in cooperative groups.

Group Challenges Build Student Cooperation

Cooperation skills are essential for students to be successful with tableau. *Group Challenges* develop team building and problem solving skills, and require students to use visual/spatial, interpersonal and kinesthetic intelligences. Working as a group, students learn that each can be a valuable member of the learning team and that working cooperatively is essential to complete the challenge. Simple challenges like the ones that follow lay the groundwork for the more complex challenge of building a tableau.

Challenge Ideas Script

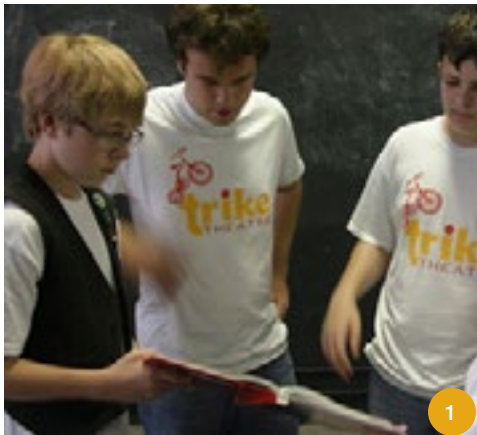
Without talking, without touching, by the time I count to ten:

- > The class has made a single line
- > The class has made a circle
- > Everyone has divided into groups of three (or five, or eight . . .)

Once students are comfortable following highly specific prompts, dividing and combining into a variety of groupings, moving in space with confidence, control and focus from challenge to challenge, they are ready to work in tableau.



Building a tableau



Students choose an Arkansas history image to recreate as a tableau (1). They plan what they will show, what elements will be involved and who will portray each part (2). The tableau depicts a U.S. Forest Service firefighter dousing a fire (3). Learn more at: <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/arts-integration>

What it looks like in the classroom

Ms. G's class is studying the development of industry in Arkansas in the 1900s. She decides to use tableau to help students get mentally and physically involved with the facts they are trying to learn (1). Students read text and look at photos of the time period. They work in small groups to discuss the pertinent elements of the story. They decide what is essential to express what they learned. They negotiate which elements are important to be depicted.

Ms. G. says, "When I say "GO" your group has one minute, using every person in your group, to make a tableau of an Arkansas industry. You may talk, you may touch, but you only have one minute using everyone. Go!" She gives updates, "You have 30 seconds left..." She slowly gives the final countdown, "5 . . . 4 . . . 3 . . . 2 . . . 1."

Students choose to depict forestry in Arkansas and to show both people and objects like trees, fire and equipment (2). When time is up and they hear Ms. G. call "Freeze," they hold a frozen position (3). They recreate a historical photograph of a firefighter in the U.S. Forest Service showing: Fire, Trees, Water, Man. After a few moments of silent tableaux Ms. G. concludes the tableau by saying: "Relax your bodies" or "Curtain." Students then explain what they have created.

Students receive feedback and modify their tableau to ensure they show the ideas they want to convey and make a picture that can be viewed by an audience. They take positions they can safely hold for 15 – 30 seconds. Ms. G. gives a clear cue to "Freeze" and "Relax." The group shows their tableau to their class. Ms. G. engages the class in purposeful observation and discussion of the tableau.

What is accomplished:

- > Every student in class has a part.
- > Students collaborate and compromise honorably.
- > Every student can explain what they made.
- > Every student can observe the big idea.
- > Students can synthesize their thinking from different content areas.
- > Learning Standards are met including:

Common Core State Standards:

Reading - Range of Reading & Level of Text Complexity 10

Speaking & Listening - Comprehension & Collaboration
Standards 1, 2, 3

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas
Standards 4, 5, 6

Language - Knowledge of Language
Standard 3

Vocabulary Acquisition & Use
Standards 5, 6

Arkansas State Standards in :

Music and Theater

Arkansas History

View the tableau strategy in action with a 4th grade class. *Integrating Drama into the Language Arts and Social Studies classroom* was filmed by the Discovery Channel and can be viewed on Discovery Education's United Streaming website:

<http://www5.unitedstreaming.com/index.cfm>

Look under Teacher to Teacher: Professional Development for today's Classroom: Language Arts Volume 2.



Tableau In Action



Tricycle Theatre for Youth actors depict the inner dialogue of a person to express his individual experience, belief or perception.

Reading, Comprehension, Writing

Middle school teacher, Tina Hoisington, reflects, “In our classroom, we use tableau primarily to demonstrate comprehension of character actions, emotions and relationships. For example, students demonstrated their comprehension of shared reading by focusing on character emotions and relationships. Also, in our study of *Red Kayak* by Priscilla Cummings, students showed how characters felt in a situation and how characters felt about each other. In this novel study, the relationship between Brady (the main character) and his two best friends changes dramatically as events unfold. Using tableau, students demonstrated the way Brady and the other characters felt toward each other. Sometimes the students could show the way characters felt by using action before they were able to fully verbalize character feelings and actions. My students often correctly predict character feelings, but it’s sometimes challenging to pinpoint what textual information supports their inferences and predictions. The tableau exercise helped students develop inferencing skills. It also helped them pinpoint textual clues they were using to plan their action. After showing and discussing characters and their interactions, students could use the information in their writing.” **Tina Hoisington, Old High Middle School, Bentonville**

Teacher Reflections:

Classroom management

We use the Actor’s Tool Box to directly teach behavioral expectations. I use Tool Box vocabulary throughout the year to help students monitor their own behavior.

Student assessment

A tableau shows me immediately which students understand the story and which students do not. Because of the nature of tableau, students must talk with one another. Their conversations with each other reveal much about their understanding of the story.

Leading and facilitation

To achieve maximum benefit, tableau must be a well-structured act—but you must be willing and flexible to diverge with the students. What students show you in a tableau exercise may illustrate a need for a different direction in the day’s lessons. Using tableau means having a different kind of control of the classroom. You have to be more of a facilitator and less of a direct leader. I’m bossy by nature, so tableau has challenged me to give up some of that control.

-Tina Hoisington,
Bentonville Public Schools



Teacher Voices



Teachers practice tableau with with one another in professional development at Walton Arts Center, to learn how to lead students.

“Tableau is a wonderful review process and helps students to internalize facts as they concentrate on acting out their solution, e.g. show inside structure of a beaver’s lodge, show three main parts of the human brain.” “Students are able to come up with wonderful creativity (the unexpected) in their solutions.” - **Shirley Gorman, Butterfield Elementary, Fayetteville**

“Tableaus have given my teaching a spark. If it were up to my Social Studies class, we would do tableaus everyday! This is what I learned that first year. The students followed me without question, first viewing this as “fun.” What the students began to discover was they begin to have better recall of the facts, and they were able to put into long-term memory what was needed to be successful on assessments. The average test score rose 10 points when tableaus were used as a form of review before the test. The students looked forward to tableaus. History was for many coming alive for the first time.” **Regena Shelby, Spring Hill Middle School, Bentonville**

“What other teachers need to know about tableau is that the students love working together in this way. And I love watching the students have fun creating things and becoming a team when they are working on tableau. It is an excellent way to build teamwork throughout the school year. Finally, we as human beings need interaction and connection with other people. Our students long for that at school. Tableaus are a perfect way to incorporate these concepts.” **Michelle Confer, Music Specialist, Harp Elementary, Springdale**

“Prairie Grove Elementary teachers used tableau in a Civil War program honoring the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Prairie Grove Battlefield Park. A tableau was presented in conjunction with Civil War re-enactments. Students studied the lyrics to the song, *The Battle of Prairie Grove*, written by a Union soldier after the battle in 1862. As part of the program, Prairie Grove 4th grade students used tableau to illustrate each verse of the ballad. The “living pictures” were presented with instrumental music and narration. The performance brought tears to the audience.” **Sherri DeSoto, Prairie Grove Elementary, Prairie Grove.**

Teachers use tableau:

> to engage visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners

> to build vocabulary and critical thinking skills

> to require students to reconsider, challenge and revise

> to challenge students to explain their thinking

> to expose “gaps” in the thinking

> to teach that there can be many paths to the same answer

> to build cooperation skills

> to improve students’ ability to focus

> to teach an art form and develop creative thinking





Learn more at:

><http://www5.unitedstreaming.com/index.cfm>

Under Teacher to Teacher: Professional Development for Today's Classroom: Language Arts Volume 2.

View this strategy in action in a 4th grade class. Integrating Drama into the Language Arts and Social Studies classroom was filmed by the Discovery Channel and can be viewed on Discovery Education's United Streaming website.

> Join the Facebook group Learning and Engagement at Walton Arts Center. Blog with teachers who have attended Arts With Education Institute to learn how to use tableau across the curriculum.

Using tableau as a reflective practice strategy:

After working in tableau ask students to reflect on their experience with questions like:

1. What did you notice about being in a tableau?
2. What did you learn about the person or thing you portrayed?
3. What was interesting in the tableau?
4. Was there something you didn't understand in the tableau?
5. What did you learn about the story or historical event?
6. How can your group's tableau be improved?

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Colgate Classroom Series performances help students meet Common Core Standards.

Learn more at:
www.waltonartscenter.org

**Walton Arts Center
 Learning & Engagement**

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