

Discovering the Arts

Careers On Stage and On Air

Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 6–8

Curriculum Focus: Performing Arts

Lesson Duration: Three class periods

Program Description

What does it take to succeed in the performing arts? Meet artists who have built careers that include a cabaret singer, circus performer, and director of a theater for deaf.

Lesson Summary

Students will discuss careers involved in putting on a theatrical production and choose a scene from a fairy tale to perform. They will write and rehearse the scene, create simple sets and costumes, and perform for the class. They'll conclude by discussing related careers.

Onscreen Questions

- How might performing on stage help you build self-confidence?
 - What skills would help you become a successful radio personality?
 - Why would a theater production hire a fight director?
 - What skills might be necessary to perform with a circus?
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Identify careers in the theater and understand their primary responsibilities.
- Describe tasks and challenges involved in a career by performing that role in a classroom play.

Materials

- *Careers On Stage and On Air* video
- Computer with Internet access

Procedures

1. Ask students if they've ever been part of a play or theatrical production. What role did they have? Talk about how, although the actors are the most visible participants in a play, many people behind the scenes are involved. These roles are also careers for people who love the theater. In fact, actors may choose a related career later on. Discuss the following roles, noting that these are just a few of the many people involved in putting on a production:
 - Director: Interprets the script and sets the vision of the play. Directs actors as to how to perform their roles, providing instructions regarding their movement and body language, tone, and expressions to clearly convey the work to the audience.
 - Playwright: Writes the script for the play, including stage directions and dialogue.
 - Actor: Performs a role in a play using the words of the playwright, as well as specific movements, tones, and expressions.
 - Set designer: Designs the scenery of the production, such as props and backdrops, to convey a setting and mood for the play.
 - Costume designer: Designs costumes worn by the actors that will help convey their role, as well as the time and place of the play.
 - Stage manager: Supervises all backstage activities, making sure actors and others work together and know their cues; makes sure that the set and props are on stage at the correct time.
 - Sound technician: In charge of the audio, including the voices of the actors, live sound effects, and prerecorded sound effects or musical recordings.
 - Lighting technician: Designs and carries out the lighting for the play; uses light to define the setting and mood of the play.
2. Tell students that they'll take on some of these roles. Their assignment will be to work in groups to produce and perform a simple play: a single scene from a well-known fairy tale. Within each group, students will select one role. For the rest of this period, they will select a scene, choose roles, and write the scene. During the next period, they'll rehearse and develop a simple set and costumes. During the third period, they'll perform their scene for the other group.
3. Have each group choose a fairy tale and a scene. To save time, you may want to make suggestions:
 - *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*: When the three bears come home and Goldilocks sleeping in baby bear's bed.
 - *Three Little Pigs*: When the wolf tries to blow down the third pig's house, which is made of bricks.
 - *Little Red Riding Hood*: When the little girl reaches her grandmother's house and finds the wolf dressed up like her grandmother.

- *Cinderella*: When the prince goes to Cinderella's house looking for the girl whose foot will fit inside the glass slipper.
 - *The Tortoise and the Hare*: When the hare crosses the finish line first.
 - *Hansel and Gretel*: When the witch tries to lure Gretel into the oven, but the little girl tricks the witch into getting into the oven herself.
4. Once students have selected a scene, have them select the tasks each one will perform in the production. (Depending on the size of the group, some students may need to take on more than one role, or more than one student can take on a single role, such as playwright or set designer.) Encourage students to help each other, no matter their roles. (For example, the playwright has responsibility for the script and the final dialogue, so he or she should work closely with the group. Have them review what happens in the scene to help the playwright create a general outline of stage directions and dialogue. As the group is discussing the play, remind students to note what kinds of props, costumes, set design, lighting, and sounds will be needed.)
 5. Give each group a box of simple materials for the set, props, costumes, lighting, and sound. Encourage them to think about how they might use these materials and anything else they might need to bring in the next day. Remind them to keep it simple. Here are a few suggestions for materials you could provide:
 - Set and props: posterboard, markers, paint, old sheet, streamers, empty paper towel rolls
 - Costumes: paper bag, markers, a few pieces of fabric, ribbons
 - Lighting: flashlight and several pieces of color cellophane or tissue paper
 - Sound: coffee can, sand paper, "play" megaphone, balloons
 6. During the next period, have the group rehearse the play. At the same time, the set designer and costume designer should be working on their tasks. Have the groups come together for a quick dress rehearsal at the end of the period.
 7. During the final period, have the groups perform their scenes. Then ask them to talk about the importance of each role. What would the play have been like without a set designer, playwright, or director? What did students enjoy most about their roles? What did they find most challenging?
 8. Conclude by discussing other theater careers: producers, makeup artists, hairdressers, understudies, producers, fight directors, choreographers, casting directors, dialect coaches, musicians, and theatrical carpenters. In addition, many careers related to the theater may not be in the productions, such as theater critics, theater historians, publicity teams, publication editors, agents, acting coaches, theater managers, and box office managers.
 9. The following sites provide more information about careers in the theater:
 - Career Options for Theater Arts Majors (brief descriptions)
<http://www.uwp.edu/departments/theatre.arts/careeroptions.cfm?page=career>

- Careers in the Theater
<http://www.wcvn.org/trips/horsecave/careers.htm>
- Typical Careers In Film, Theatre and Television
<http://ec2.wits.ac.za/servlet/app/careercategory/FILM-THEATRE-TELEVISION/template/EnterCareer.wm>

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

3 points: Students identified several careers in the theater; showed a strong understanding of the primary responsibilities of each career; worked well within their groups to carry out one role in a classroom production.

2 points: Students identified a few careers in the theater; showed a satisfactory understanding of the primary responsibilities of each career; worked well within their groups to carry out one role in a classroom production.

1 point: Students identified few or no careers in the theater; showed a weak understanding of the primary responsibilities of each career; had difficulty working in their groups to carry out one role in a classroom production.

Vocabulary

fight director

Definition: Someone who choreographs the movement of actors to portray a fight or struggle in a performance; coaches actors performing those movement.

Context: Fight directors assist performers with everything from a slap in the face to an all-out brawl.

hearing-impaired

Definition: With a limited ability to hear

Context: Michelle was deeply moved by Helen Keller's story, and she decided to help hearing-impaired children learn to communicate.

radio personality

Definition: Someone who hosts a radio show

Context: Radio personalities impress us with their voices and their ability to speak.

technical director

Definition: Someone who coordinates activities such as taping, editing, and engineering to produce radio program

Context: Stephanie works with a technical director who operates the recording and editing equipment.



voice coach

Definition: Someone who helps performers improve the volume, tone, expression, and quality of their singing or speaking voices

Context: To keep his voice in shape, Jose takes lessons with a voice coach.

Academic Standards

Consortium of National Arts Education Associations

The Consortium of National Arts Education Associations has developed national guidelines for what students should know and be able to do in the arts. To view the standards online, go to artsedge.kennedy-center.org/teach/standards.cfm.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Theater: Script writing by the creation of improvisations and scripted scenes based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history
 - Theater: Acting by developing basic acting skills to portray characters who interact in improvised and scripted scenes
 - Theater: Designing by developing environments for improvised and scripted scenes
 - Theater: Directing by organizing rehearsals for improvised and scripted scenes
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DVD Content

This program is available in an interactive DVD format. The following information and activities are specific to the DVD version.

How To Use the DVD

The DVD starting screen has the following options:

Play Video – This plays the video from start to finish. There are no programmed stops, except by using a remote control. With a computer, depending on the particular software player, a pause button is included with the other video controls.

Video Index – Here the video is divided into sections indicated by video thumbnail icons; brief descriptions are noted for each one. Watching all parts in sequence is similar to watching the video from start to finish. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the remote for TV playback; on a computer, click once to highlight a thumbnail and read the accompanying text description and click again to start the video.

Curriculum Units – These are specially edited video segments pulled from different sections of the video (see below). These nonlinear segments align with key ideas in the unit of instruction. They include onscreen pre- and post-viewing questions, reproduced below in this Teacher's Guide. Total

running times for these segments are noted. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the TV remote or click once on the Curriculum Unit title on a computer.

Standards Link—Selecting this option displays a single screen that lists the national academic standards the video addresses.

Teacher Resources—This screen gives the technical support number and Web site address.

Video Index

I. Take the Stage (11 min.)

Learn how a teacher encourages hearing-impaired students to perform for live audiences.

II. The Lights on Broadway (8 min.)

Explore the talents of a rising Broadway star and get the inside scoop on what life is really like for a stage actor.

III. On the Air in Five (9 min.)

Get up close and personal with a comedian-TV host-radio personality and learn what she loves most about her work.

IV. Swords, Slaps, and Silliness (8 min.)

Meet a fight director and discover how he choreographs on-stage fights to make them look authentic and keep the actors safe.

V. Inside the Big Top (10 min.)

Watch a circus acrobat practice and perform and explore the challenges and rewards of life under the big top.

Curriculum Units

1. The Gift of Theater

Pre-viewing question

Q: What challenges might a hearing-impaired person face?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: Why is it important that Michelle Christie's students perform for a live audience?

A: Michelle feels that performing will help deaf children learn to express themselves without fear.

2. Opening Night

Pre-viewing question

Q: What skills and attributes are necessary to perform for a live audience?



A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: How has the No Limits Theater Group helped its participants?

A: According to Michelle, the speech of many children has greatly improved, and some who originally had trouble reciting one line can perform monologues on stage.

3. The Life of a Stage Actor

Pre-viewing question

Q: What does it take to be a professional stage actor?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What challenges does a stage actor face?

A: Answers will vary.

4. A Comedian's Daily Routine

Pre-viewing question

Q: What makes something funny?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What work is involved in Stephanie Miller's television show?

A: As the host of *Show Me the Funny*, Stephanie introduces videos with jokes, funny stories, or other items related to the videos. She arrives at the studio 7 a.m. every day and get her hair and make-up done and spends the rest of the day – from about 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. – filming the introductions.

5. On-Air Humor

Pre-viewing question

Q: What makes a radio personality popular?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What does Stephanie like about working in radio?

A: She says that radio is the most unrestricted creative form for her. She loves that she is allowed to be herself and finds radio an easy forum because nobody can see her.

6. Theatrical Fights

Pre-viewing question

Q: What might be some challenges in choreographing a fight scene?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What is the job of a fight director?



A: A fight director makes sure that actors' fights look and feel authentic and that the actors perform safely.

7. Inside the Circus Ring

Pre-viewing question

Q: Why might performers choose to work in a circus?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What challenges do Michelle Ayala and other circus performers face?

A: Answers may include that circus performers face pain or injury from dangerous acts; they must remain in top physical shape; they travel a lot; they perform difficult tricks; and it's the only way of life they know.