

A MIDSUMMER LITERACY + ARTS EXTRAVAGANZA



EMBODYING A STORY WITH AN IMAGINATIVE WALKABOUT

Overview:

To the extent that we live our lives fully, we do so through access to our feelings and our bodies. Similarly, to the extent that we can involve our hearts and our bodies in a story, we can “live” the story more fully and connect to it on a deep and very real level. This activity can help young people do just that. It’s a simple, scaffolded way to review crucial settings and events from any story and to experience them from the inside out through physical movement—walking around as if one were experiencing them.

Activity:

1. Begin by choosing a somewhat open space in which participants can walk around.
2. Then select a familiar story to focus on (maybe one that a participant just read), and brainstorm together any striking settings or scenes in it—e.g. the deck of a boat; a stormy night; escaping from a villain; discovering a secret passageway...
3. Now start your walk-about by simply having participants walk around the room, in any direction. Just let everyone know that they should avoid bumping into any people or objects, and that throughout the activity they should stay on their feet (e.g. no dropping to the ground or anything like that).
4. After 15-20 seconds, give a noticeable cue (e.g. a whistle blow, a clap, flashing the lights, etc.) that lets everyone know to freeze in whatever position they’re in.
5. Have everyone walk around again, but this time they should do so at a fast pace, without any running, until you give the cue to freeze.
6. This time, everyone walks in sloooooowwww..... moooootion... until the cue.
7. Now, begin going through the list of settings and scenes you created together in #2. Choose one and have participants walk around as though they are in that scene. E.g. walk around as if you’re on the deck of a boat; as if you’re escaping from a villain; etc.
8. Continue having participants freeze and “walk around in” different scenes and settings for as long as everyone wants. You can also change up the story for a new set of scenes and settings to explore.
9. Unpack the experience together afterwards, exploring how it felt to be acting as if participants were actually *in* the stories. Now, as they think about the story, does it appear or feel any different in their minds?

