

Greek Theatre Styles

AIM: To Introduce an extra curricular extension scheme for the most able year seven pupils, an introduction to Greek Theatre styles.

OBJECTIVES: Contextualising Greek Theatre historically and theatrically, examining the nature of chorus and mask. Reinforcing the use of frozen pictures and separate narrative techniques in group improvisation, and undermining over-emphasis on realism.

ACTIVITY: Group discussion covering the following, dates of the Greek “classical age”; level of sophistication in social terms i.e. education, politics, agriculture, design and architecture and social dynamics; purpose and practice of theatre. (use photographic stimulus of amphitheatres, masks and shoes).

ACTIVITY: Teacher in role with volunteer student, in slow motion teacher delivers pretend slap, student responds appropriately and freezes his facial expression into a “mask”, group analyse the expression. This is repeated with a similar action i.e. a punch and subtle differences are identified.

ACTIVITY: Pair work. In pairs students repeat the above exercises adding custard pies, invented joke punch-lines, shock news i. e. lottery wins etc. Ensure that students swap and examine each others' “masks”.

DISCUSSION: Is a frozen expression theatrical or dramatic, as a human mask what are the problems in terms of performance, what do we gain from using made masks. Gear the discussion toward the liberation of physicality and the Greek approach to “types”. How are types useful in a chorus and Greek players situation.

ACTIVITY: In groups of about six, three students form a chorus and three play the participants of a hockey or football match which takes place near a row of glass greenhouses. A= show off striker/shooter B= very nervous goalie C= poor loser. Encourage class to devise the scene with the chorus “forewarning” of the dangers and disapproving of the collective ego’s. Attempt to have the chorus speak separately or if in unison they should say the same lines. The chorus should use frozen masks at least once.

EVALUATION: Present some work and congratulate students on their success at having established the fundamental components of Greek Theatre in theory and practice. Discuss the effects of the chorus, compare it to a sports commentary on television.

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