

# ARTS • BASED SKILLS & STRATEGIES

• pre-k • • middle school •  
• elementary • • high school •

title **Tableau**

skill



dance



theatre

about the strategy

A tableau is a human photograph, a moment frozen in time. Students hold a pose to describe a thought, emotion, or specific scene. This strategy can be used to help students clarify thinking, or as a way of presenting knowledge. Note: the spelling of the plural of tableau is tableaux.

**v i s u a l**

Physical representation of a thought, emotion, or scene

**a u d i t o r y**

Speaking in role

**k i n e s t h e t i c**

Using the body to represent an idea or character

instructional steps

objective **Students create tableaux to represent a scene and to describe emotions.**

materials **Five chairs**

procedure

## 1. Modeling

- Arrange chairs in a semi-circle at the front of the room.
- Ask for five volunteers, and explain that they will be freezing into a pose of a family at the dinner table.
- Count backwards from five to “freeze!” and have volunteers freeze into their pose.
- Ask students to take a look at the resulting “picture” and describe what each person is doing.
- Critique the pose as though it were a picture hanging in an art gallery. Is it interesting enough to make you stop and look? Why or why not?

## Tableau

instructional steps

procedure

- Determine what makes the tableau visually appealing. Students should note that an effective tableau will incorporate:
  - Variety of action
  - A point of focus
  - Use of different levels
  - Facial expressions
- Repeat the countdown and ask volunteers to improve the tableau by changing the way they use levels, variety, point of focus, and facial expression.
- Critique again. Has the tableau become more effective?

### 2. Speaking in Role

- Ask volunteers to be ready to speak one sentence in role as their tableau character. They should be able to say exactly what is going through the mind of their character “in the moment” represented by the tableau.
- Speak when tapped on the shoulder.

### 3. Applying

- List five strong emotions on the board (solicit from students).
  - Love
  - Hate
  - Anger
  - Fear
  - Embarrassment
- Divide the class into groups of 4 or 5. Each group chooses one emotion to portray in a tableau. Remind them of the criteria for an effective tableau. Allow 10 minutes for group work.
- Perform tableaux and critique. Was the emotion portrayed easy to identify? What made each tableau effective? How could each tableau be improved?

## ARTS • BASED SKILLS & STRATEGIES

### Tableau

strategy for curricular connections



social studies

- Create a tableau of a significant moment in American history (e.g., signing of the Declaration of Independence). Prepare the tableau work by writing about the characters. Show a variety of responses to the event.



science

- Use tableaux to describe any scientific process, structure, or life cycle.



language arts

- Tableau is easily used for vocabulary development. Create vocabulary cards from the weekly vocabulary list, distribute to groups of 4 - 5 and have them create a tableau to represent their word.
- Create a tableau of the most important part of a story. Create two additional tableaux showing what happened five minutes before and after this moment.
- Read a story to the students and stop it at a crisis in the narrative. Students work in groups to invent an ending for a story and show it in tableau.



music

- Create a tableau for each verse of a song.



visual arts

- Sketch tableaux created in class. Use as the basis for a class mural.

## ARTS • BASED SKILLS & STRATEGIES

### Tableau

multiple intelligences target



verbal • linguistic



interpersonal



musical



visual • spatial



bodily • kinesthetic



intrapersonal

adaptations

to simplify

- Improvise tableaux instantly (on the count of five) rather than breaking into groups to plan.

to challenge

- Create a series of three linked tableaux. Practice smooth transitions between the images.
- Photograph the tableaux. Use as inspiration for student poetry or story writing.

special needs

- This activity is accessible for most learners.