

Characteristic Costume Design by Alison Sundwall

Objective: The students will demonstrate their ability to communicate certain traits of a character through the design of a costume by designing a costume for a Shakespearean character.

Class Level: Intermediate

Main Concepts: costume design, characterization, script analysis, presentations

1994 National Standards:

Content Standard: 3: Designing and producing by conceptualizing and realizing artistic interpretations for informal or formal productions

Content Standard: 5: Researching by evaluating and synthesizing cultural and historical information to support artistic choices

Content Standard: 7: Analyzing, critiquing, and constructing meanings from informal and formal theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions

Content Standard: 8: Understanding context by analyzing the role of theatre, film, television, and electronic media in the past and the present

Unit Description:

Students will learn basic costume design techniques such as color, texture and pattern and will use that knowledge to show character in the design of a Shakespearean character's costume.

Lesson Plans

Lesson 1: Understanding what costuming can communicate

The students will demonstrate an understanding of clothing communicating character by participating in a discussion and using clothes to create a character.

Lesson 2: Understanding HOW costuming communicates

Students The students will demonstrate their understanding of how to communicate with clothing (using color, texture and shape) by creating a design rendering for a specific character.

Lesson 3: Picking a play/characters and doing an analysis

Students will demonstrate their understanding of costuming characters by coming up with a costume rendering for a Shakespearean character of their choosing.

Lesson 4: Time to Share

The students will demonstrate knowledge of conceptualizing characters through costumes by presenting the designs that they created to the class.

Lesson 1: Understanding what costuming can communicate

Objective

The students will demonstrate an understanding of clothing communicating character by participating in a discussion and using clothes to create a character.

Materials Needed

- Powerpoint with costume/character images.
- Distinct costume for student at beginning
- Access to the costume closet- stock pieces your department has. Or at least enough different costume pieces that each group can pick three. (If limiting their selection make sure the options they have to pick from are vibrant and unique)

Lesson Directions

Anticipatory Set/Hook

When the first student arrives, tell them you have a special project for them. Give them some ridiculous things to wear, that are different from the everyday (gangster, royalty, homeless etc.) Instruct them to just go sit down like they normally would and to not comment on their outfit if anyone asks. Have it be large enough that the other students will notice it as they enter. Don't acknowledge the student in the costume but allow the other students to notice on their own.

Instruction

Step 1: Discussion- Use the first student's outfit to springboard into a discussion about how what we wear says something about who we are. Why did they notice the costume the student was wearing? Was it saying something different about them than what their normal clothes do? Key Points to hit: What about the outfit communicates to you? The cut, the color? What can we learn about someone just by how they are dressed? Economic status, personal image, occupation, personality?

Step 2: Looking at images: Bring up the powerpoint presentation that has different costume/character images. With each image have the students shout out what the costume is saying. When an interesting/insightful comment is made- probe the student further to make them really analyze. Have the focus be on the clothing in the pictures and not on the background world the person is in. Ask them to look at the person as if they were seeing them in a vacuum and their clothes were the only clues they had.

Step 3: Activity: Playing with costumes in the costume closet-creating a personality out of the clothes. After going through all the pictures and the students have nothing left to say about them. Divide the students into groups- their choice or yours depending on the class. Ideal group size would be about 4 students. Instruct each group to pick three pieces (to assemble an outfit) from the costume closet that they feel communicate something about the person who would wear them. After everyone has selected their pieces instruct them that based on the costume pieces they selected they need to come up with a character who would wear these things.

Each group needs to write out the following: What is this character's name? How old is this Character? Gender? Occupation (if relevant)? Why is this person wearing this outfit? What is their socio-economic status? Anything else we should know about this person?

Each group will get a chance to share their created outfit and introduce the character to the rest of the class. If time allows have the class discuss other possible interpretations and arrangements of the costume pieces selected.

Closure: As they go about their day, have them notice the different ‘costumes’ people are wearing, and what their clothing is communicating. They can even look at TV shows or movies they watch for examples. Tell them to be prepared to share three specific examples with the class when they come back.

Assessment

The students get points for the written character analysis they did from the costuming activity- this can also be counted as participation points.

Lesson 2: Understanding HOW costuming communicates

Objective

Students The students will demonstrate their understanding of how to communicate with clothing (using color, texture and shape) by creating a design rendering for a specific character.

Materials Needed

- Color Theory Powerpoint
- Drawing Materials for all the students (colored pencils etc.)
- Copies of body forms for students to draw on if they want. Have a variety of figures (male, female, young etc.) They are available on:
<http://www.designersnexus.com/design/free-fashion-croquis-templates/>

Lesson Directions

Anticipatory Set/Hook

Have the class share their examples of costumes that they saw. Use some particularly outstanding examples to transition into the powerpoint. Ask the students very specific questions about their examples pertaining to the color, texture and lines. Ask them how the costume would have been different if it were a different color.

Instruction

Step 1: The Powerpoint Discussion. Use the presentation to discuss artistically what different colors and lines can say about a person. Being aware of how these changes affect the audience's perception. As each different color slide comes up talk about what the student's think it could communicate and a character that they could see dressing in that color. Also bring up combining different colors in a piece, i.e. how would it be different to combine red with blue versus red with black? Use the last slide to combine the use of color, texture and lines and what those things together can say about a character's world. Have them come up with different combinations and talk about characters that those combinations would fit.

Step 2: Activity; drawing a rendering for any character they come up with in their head. Provide the students with the body form outlines if they want them. Instruct them to think of a character- they can create the character or if they need to they can base it off a well-known fairy tale (but no movies/TV shows). They are to create a list of things they want to communicate about the character and using the things discussed in class draw a costume for that character. Give the students time to create their sketches.

Step 3: Sharing. Have the students share their drawings with the class. Split them into groups of 5. Have the group members try to guess the character or the things the designer was trying to communicate. After everyone shares have the groups give the other members "I wonder if..." statements on other ways of looking at their design. (i.e. I wonder if you used brown instead of black if that would ...? Or I wonder if the skirt was softer if it would...?)

Step 4: (this can be given as homework) Revising. Have the students take the suggestions they got from their group member and get back to the drawing board. Everyone needs to create another costume for the same character and it needs to be different from the first. They can stick with their original idea and just switch things like color and texture. To change it they could also consider a different season, time of day, point in the story (if based on a fairy tale) or the character at a different age.

Closure: As everyone is drawing/sharing, gather the drawings and the classes attention back together and have each group share one member's work that they found to be especially effective and then talk about why it worked so well.

Assessment

The students get credit for their two costume sketches. They need to have a list of traits they were hoping to communicate about the character. The sketches need to reference things like color and texture and the second drawing needs to be markedly different from the first.

Lesson 3: Picking a play/characters and doing an analysis

Objective

Students will demonstrate their understanding of costuming characters by coming up with a costume rendering for a Shakespearean character of their choosing.

Materials Needed

- Drawing materials and Body form pages for all the students
- As many of Shakespeare's plays as you can get your hands on
- Copy of Assignment & Rubric for each student
- The 1960's version of "Romeo and Juliet" and the "Romeo+Juliet" version. They are available online at:
 - o <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9Vd4tGPi0&feature=related>
 - o <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UfUd03qOxE&feature=related>
- Equipment to play the movies on.

Lesson Directions

Anticipatory Set/Hook

Have the 1960s movie playing as everyone is entering class. Have it in a scene with lots of costumes, such as the masked dance. As everyone is coming in to class make sure the attention is focused on the scene, after the bell rings let the movie play for a few more minutes. Then switch movies and put in the modern version on the same scene. After letting the film play for long enough that the students get a good idea of the costumes shut it off and open the floor up to responses.

Instruction

Step 1: Discussion. They saw the same characters from Shakespeare communicated in very different ways. Talk about similarities and differences between the two. Discuss the different ways to approach the same characters. Talk about the things that were effective about both.

Key Points to hit: There is more than one way of interpreting a character and endless possibilities for how you can costume them. Same characteristics-different clothes.

Step 2: Instruction. Explain to the students that they each need to pick a character from a Shakespearean play and create one costume design for that character. They need to analyze their chosen character and justify their costuming choices. The rendering they make needs have some serious effort put into it. It needs to be completely colored and make reference to the kinds of fabrics that would be used in constructing the costume. There are no time period restrictions on the character- they can have them be whenever they want. Remind them of the movie clips and encourage them to think of a few different options before settling on the one they will commit to. They are going to be presenting their finished product to the class so they need to be prepared to answer questions about it. In their presentation they need to explain their character, the choices they made and be able to explain why they made those choices referencing areas such as color, lines etc. Pass out to each student a copy of the rubric that will be used for grading the assignment and answer any questions they may have about it. Tell them that today is the only class time they will get to work on the assignment so they should use it wisely.

Step 3: Choosing a play and getting to work. Also hint to them if they choose from a play they are already familiar with the assignment will be easier, but they can choose anyone they want. The rest of the class period will be devoted to the students choosing a character and working on their designs. During this time float around the classroom answering questions, offering help and encouraging

slackers. Encourage students to discuss with each other and get feedback on their ideas, a fresh pair of eyes is always helpful.

Closure: A few minutes before the bell rings have the students put away the drawing materials and plays. As they are getting ready to leave remind them they are sharing their designs in the next class period and need to be ready.

Assessment

The students can get participation/citizenship points for being on task and using their time wisely.

Lesson 4: Time to Share

Objective

The students will demonstrate knowledge of conceptualizing characters through costumes by presenting the designs that they created to the class.

Materials Needed

- Copy of Rubric for each student (if they don't have theirs from the previous lesson)
- The students all need their renderings.
- Whiteboard/Chalkboard and writing implement

Lesson Directions

Anticipatory Set/Hook

Warm-up Game. Play a theatre game to energize the students and get them focused. The specific game varies depending on what you have played with the class before. Choose game based on the class preferences, so they will enjoy it. The game needs to emphasize speaking loudly, using details and focusing attention. (i.e. Zip, Zap, Zop)

Instruction

Step 1: Introducing the Presentations. Refresh everyone's memory that when they present they need to identify the character they chose, describe their costume, explain specific choices made in regard to the character's personality. Have the class members sign up to present in a specific order on a volunteer basis. This could be done by listing on the white board. (Having an order that everyone knows will eliminate downtime between presentations). Instruct the class that they should respond to the presentations in an orderly fashion by first stating positive and interesting things they noticed, then asking the presenter any questions they had about their choices and then offering constructive feedback in the form of, "I wonder if..." statements.

Step 2: The Presentations with Feedback. The presentations should take place in a classroom setting with a seating arrangement where the person presenting can have everyone's focus. Have the students present in the order they signed up in, giving you their rubric before they present. After they present open the floor for the students to respond. Remind them of the format they are supposed to use for responding if they get out of hand.

Step 3: Class Reflection on Assignment. After all of the presentations are done, round the class up for a discussion to evaluate the unit. Start by just having the students say the things that stood out to them the most from the past couple lessons- what they are taking away from it. Having them talk about what worked for them and what didn't- how would they change things if they could? Allow this discussion to be fairly loose and flow depending on what the students took from the experience.

Conclusion: Give the class some general feedback on their projects as a whole, the effort they put in and progress you saw them make.

Assessment

The students get graded for the final project with the rubric provided. The number of points varies depending on the structure of the class.

