

Freeze Frame

The freeze frame or tableau is an activity where you will make meaning of the text.

You will be assigned an act, choose one or two sequential scenes to create a frozen picture (one scene) or slide show (more than one scene). Decide who will play each character and how you will be positioned in each frozen frame. You must think like actors and directors who read plays not just to understand events, but to make artistic choices about how to stage the action so that an audience understands what happens. Because you must show rather than tell, you need to examine the script closely and think like actors who consider character motivations--the reasons characters behave as they do.

Decide whether your group wants a director.

Remember to keep your audience's perspective in mind when you choose your positions.

Refer to the play for useful details.

Props and costumes are not necessary.

Freeze frames are performed in silence.

Blocking

When staging a scene, directors and actors consider the characters involved, where they will be positioned on stage, how they will appear (sitting, standing, kneeling, crouching) and when and where they will move. Some blocking is provided by the playwright in stage directions, and some is developed by actors and director through a chosen reading of the lines.

Audience Participation

You must be silent during the freeze frame. Refrain from calling out any comments or laughing too raucously during the performance. After the freeze frame is over, I will ask for praise --thing you liked about the performance. Then ask for suggestions--ideas that might enhance the performance.

Assessment Criteria for Freeze Frames

The actors

- Remained frozen during the presentation of each frame
- Remained silent during the presentation of each frame
- Performed the events in the correct order
- Chose appropriate facial expressions
- Posed with energy
- Were focused and maintained concentration
- Worked together as a team
- Changed positions quickly, quietly, and efficiently
- Altered their poses from one frame to the next
- Positioned themselves with the audience's perspective in mind
- Created the appropriate mood

Macbeth Freeze Frame Example

Consider the beginning of Act 3, Scene 4 of Macbeth:

1. Lady Macbeth, Ross, Lennox, lords, and attendants sit at a banquet table. The First Murderer informs Macbeth of Banquo's death and Fleance's escape.
2. The First Murderer leaves. Lady Macbeth bids Macbeth to welcome his guests.
3. Banquo's Ghost, seen only by Macbeth takes Macbeth's seat at the table. Macbeth is unnerved and reacts strangely. Lady Macbeth tries to cover for him and calm the guests.
4. Lady Macbeth scolds Macbeth for his fearful behavior.
5. Macbeth regains his composure and proposes a toast to Banquo and his guests.

Questions to consider when making decisions about your freeze frame.

On which side of the stage will Macbeth stand? Is his back to the other characters, or is he watching them as the First Murderer delivers his news? How does Lady Macbeth look and gesture when she scolds Macbeth for his fearful behavior? Where are they in relation to the other characters/? Do any of the lords notice that Macbeth is talking with the First Murderer? How do they react when Macbeth behaves so strongly? Are they sitting, standing, or whispering to one another

Character's Motivations

Why did Macbeth have Banquo murdered? Is he purely ambitious and self-serving? Is Lady Macbeth in love with her husband, or is it the power of the crown that she desires? Do Ross and Lennox suspect that Macbeth is anything other than honorable?

TEACHER NOTES FOR FREEZE FRAME

The freeze frame or tableau is an activity where students will make meaning of the text. Students will arrange themselves in one or more frozen scene(s), capturing a significant moment in a text, the relationship of one character to another, subtle nuances of gesture and expression; all are employed to present a picture that gives silent expression to the meaning of the scene, much as classical painters attempt to do. Students are assigned or find a scene or scenes in the play and then work collaboratively to decide on how they will present the scene as a tableau, and in the process they will explore interpretations of the scene and characters. They meet behind a scene or curtain to get into position. When the curtain is dropped, they are frozen in that scene. Then it is the audience discusses their interpretation. The frozen students remain still as others speculate aloud about their interpretation of the scene.

Planning, rehearsing, and presenting a freeze frame require students to examine a portion of the script for plot (What happened? To whom? In what order?) and setting (When did this action occur and how can we use our bodies and the classroom space and furniture to suggest this location?) and to make decisions about blocking.

Variations to the freeze frame

1. The teacher may move characters, change a gesture, etc and then ask the class how that change affects their interpretation of the scene.
2. The teacher asks the class whose character's mind they would like to be able to read in order to better understand the freeze frame. The teacher touches that character on the shoulder, and the character, remaining motionless, speaks in role, revealing his or her inner thoughts until he or she is finished or the teacher taps his or her shoulder.
3. This time the group must plan an entrance and maybe a cross. This is a walking freeze frame. The actors or members of the group enter and as he or she is getting into place, they say one quote or one bit of dialogue. When they are all in position, they freeze the frame until the signal to unfreeze.
4. The students are frozen first this time, and then become unfrozen as each one says his or her lines of dialogue. The dialogue and action in this variation can be improvised based on the text.
5. This one is like a dance routine. There must be 3 frozen frames, 3 quotes, and a transition movement between each scene. This is more like a dance.
6. Unfreeze. As each character unfreezes he moves away from the scene in a significant manner and says a quote.

Don't forget to ask the audience for their evaluation after the presentation.

“What was effective about the performance this group created?”

"If these actors were to perform their freeze slide show again, what suggestions do you have for them?"