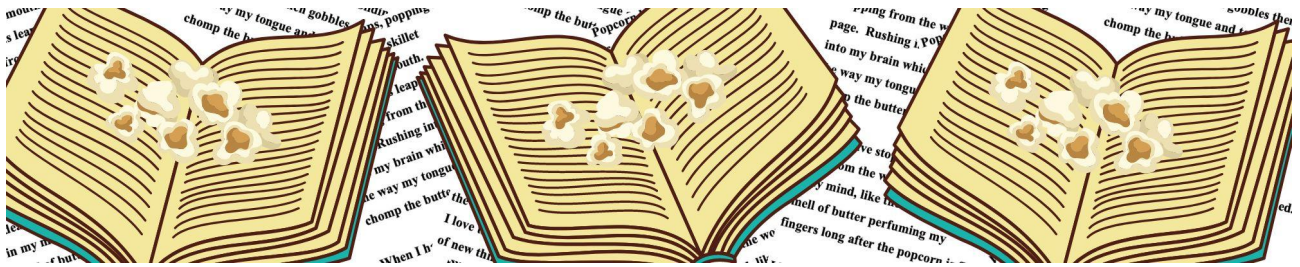




artsNOW

Integrated learning solutions

MAYA'S POPPING WORDS Grade Band: 4-5 Content Focus: Theatre & ELA



LEARNING DESCRIPTION

Using Maya Angelou's poem, "I Love the Look of Words," students will create gestural and full-body enactments of the poem and explore new and high-powered words.

LEARNING TARGETS

Essential Questions	"I Can" Statements
How and why do we expand our vocabulary with new words?	I can think about words metaphorically and identify new and unfamiliar words.



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GEORGIA STANDARDS

Curriculum Standards	Arts Standards
<p>Grade 4: ELAGSE4RL4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology (e.g., Herculean).</p> <p>Grade 5: ELAGSE5RL4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.</p>	<p>Grade 4: TA4.PR.1 Act by communicating and sustaining roles in formal and informal environments.</p> <p>Grade 5: TA5.PR.1 Act by communicating and sustaining roles in formal and informal environments.</p>

SOUTH CAROLINA STANDARDS

Curriculum Standards	Arts Standards
<p>Grade 4: ELA.4.AOR.8.1 Determine an author’s use of words and phrases in grade-level literary, informational, and multimedia texts: a. distinguish between literal and nonliteral meanings of words and phrases (e.g., take steps); b. explain the meaning of commonly occurring similes, metaphors, and idioms.</p> <p>Grade 5: ELA.5.AOR.8.1 Determine an author’s use of figurative and technical language in literary, informational, and multimedia texts: a. recognize and explain the meaning of figurative language, including similes and metaphors, in context.</p>	<p>Anchor Standard 3: I can act in improvised scenes and written scripts.</p>

KEY VOCABULARY

Content Vocabulary	Arts Vocabulary
<p><u>Metaphor</u> - An implied comparison of unlike objects.</p> <p><u>Simile</u> - A comparison of unlike objects that uses ‘like’ or ‘as.’</p>	<p><u>Voice</u> - An actor’s tool, which we shape and change to portray the way a character speaks or sounds.</p>



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<p><u>Literal</u> - Having a meaning that is exactly what the word or words say; the original meaning.</p> <p><u>Figurative</u> - Having a meaning that is not exactly what the word or words say, but that applies their original meaning in a different way.</p> <p><u>Poem</u> - A piece of writing in which the words are chosen for their beauty and sound and are carefully arranged, often in short lines that rhyme.</p>	<p><u>Body</u> – An actor’s tool, which we shape and change to portray the way a character looks, walks, or moves.</p> <p><u>Gesture</u> - A specific physical movement, especially of the hands or arms, intended to convey meaning.</p> <p><u>Act</u> - To pretend to be or do something imaginary; bringing an idea or character to life.</p> <p><u>Facial Expressions</u> - Conveying thoughts and feelings through the face and eyes.</p>
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MATERIALS

- Copies of “I Love the Look of Words,” by Maya Angelou
- Copies of popcorn box template (available below)
- Background information about Maya Angelou, from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/maya-angelou>

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

<p>Opening/Activating Strategy</p>
<p>WARM-UP</p> <p>Have students stand up and alternate between intervals of random sound and movement and intervals of stillness and silence: 5, 10, 15, 20 seconds (i.e., 5 seconds of random sound and movement, then 5 seconds of absolute stillness and silence, etc.). Have students sit down to reflect on the feelings evoked by each. “How does it feel to speak and move? How does it feel to be silent for an extended period? When in your life do you have to maintain silence? Why?” (Reflection can be with a partner, in a small group, or in the full group.)</p>
<p>Work Session</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect the stillness and silence of the Warm-Up to the story of Maya Angelou, told selectively from information gleaned from the Poetry Foundation page (according to teacher comfort). Suggested script: <p><i>“Maya Angelou was a famous poet. She was an African-American woman born in 1928 in St. Louis, Missouri. She would grow up to become the Poet Laureate, or the official poet, of the United States, and to earn many awards and honors. She is also the first African-American woman to be pictured on a quarter. But when she was 8 years old she stopped talking. She had been mistreated by someone in her family, and she spoke up. But she felt that speaking up had caused more trouble, including violence, and so she stopped speaking. She remained mute for five years. During that time, she read a lot, and developed a passion for reading and a love of words. Many people tried to get her to speak, but none were successful until a teacher named Mrs. Flowers, when Maya was 12 ½, convinced her of the importance of the spoken word, and Maya began to speak again. Maya Angelou died in 2014 at the age of 86.”</i></p>



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(Note: Teacher should become familiar with the story of Angelou's childhood. There are some details that are not appropriate for sharing in the classroom; teacher should be prepared to answer any questions that may arise.)

- Introduce, or review, the difference between literal and figurative language, and the definitions of metaphor and simile.
- Introduce the poem, "I Love the Look of Words," by Maya Angelou. Read it at least twice: teacher reads it through once, then the class reads it through all together.
- Discuss the dominant metaphor in the poem. What two unlike things is Angelou comparing to each other? How does this metaphor convey her feelings about her subject? How do you respond to this metaphor? What other similes and metaphors are found in the poem?
- **First enactment:** Enact the poem with gestures.
 - Drama instruction: Define and discuss gestures as physical movements used to convey meaning.
 - Define and discuss facial expression as the way we convey thoughts and feelings with our faces.
 - Define and discuss enactment as the process of bringing something to life through acting.
- First model with the opening three lines, using gesture and facial expression to represent the "popcorn," "popping from the floor," the "hot black skillet," and "into my mouth." Then brainstorm gestures, facial expressions, and actions for the remainder of the poem. Have students stand and enact the gestures as the teacher does a full reading of the poem.
- **Second enactment:** Enact the poem with full body movement.
 - Brainstorm ways to use the body to become both the leaping popcorn and the leaping words.
 - Explore with the students ways to express phrases like "sliding into my brain," "the words stay stuck," "the weight of ideas," and "the tracks of new thinking."
 - Have students stand and enact the full-body interpretation of the poem as the teacher does a full reading.
- **Third enactment:** Enact the poem with "popping words."
 - Brainstorm new and interesting words with the students: these can be vocabulary words, words they have encountered through their own reading, interests or conversations, or unfamiliar words they have heard that they are curious about.
- **Final read-through:** Either the teacher reads, or the teacher assigns groups to read sections. As the poem is being read, those not reading become words popping up randomly (e.g., "Armistice!" "Melancholy!" "Obtuse!" "Thermodynamic!" etc.), leaping up and speaking the words with energy and clarity.
 - Drama instruction: thinking about Angelou's love of words, have students explore speaking their words with different feelings, altered voices, dialects, pitches, varying volume and pace, etc.



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- Reflect on the different processes. “How did we bring the poem to life? Which actions – gestures, facial expressions, full-body movements, popping words - did you feel best represented Maya Angelou’s purpose in writing the poem? How do you relate to this poem now?”
- Distribute the Popcorn Box template. Have students cut out the pieces and build the popcorn box. Have students use dictionaries or other reference materials (in hand or online) to find interesting, unfamiliar words – words that were not used in the enactment - to write on the popcorn pieces; then have them crumble the pieces and put them in the popcorn box. Use the boxes in pairs, small groups, or full class to explore new words.

Closing/Reflection

Ask students, “How did we use our voices and bodies to bring the poem to life?” “How did we creatively interpret the similes and metaphors in the poem?” “How did we convey the theme of the poem?” “How do you think Maya Angelou might have felt observing our lesson today?”

ASSESSMENTS

Formative

- Note students’ responses in discussion of silence and movement.
- Note students’ understanding of metaphors and similes through their citing of examples from the poem.
- Observe students’ use of body, voice, and facial expression in the enacted readings of the poem.

Summative

Assessment instrument – questionnaire:

Questions

1. What is a metaphor?
2. What is a simile?
3. What is the central metaphor of “I Love the Look of Words”?
4. Describe one way in which you enacted a phrase or section of the poem.
5. List three of the words you wrote on your popcorn.
6. Tell one interesting fact you learned about Maya Angelou.

Answers

1. An implied comparison of two unlike objects.
2. A comparison of unlike objects using ‘like’ or ‘as’.
3. Words = popcorn
4. Possibly, “I used my hands to be the popping popcorn,” “I leapt in the air and shouted new words,” “I chomped with my teeth,” “I pretended to smell the butter on my fingers,” “I ran like I was on a track of new thinking,” etc.
5. (student choice)
6. Possibly: She was the chief poet of the U.S., she stopped speaking as a child, a teacher got her to speak again, she won many awards, her picture is on a quarter, etc.



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DIFFERENTIATION

Acceleration:

- Assign groups to independently develop gestural or full-body enactments of sections of the poem, to present to the class.
- Instruct students to follow up with a writing exercise, creating a short piece that includes all of the new words they wrote on their pieces of popcorn. Have them read their written pieces with expression.

Remediation:

- Plan out the gestural and full-body enactments ahead of time, to be less dependent on brainstorming and student input.
- Do leaping and popping more simply, in a seated position, or with a specific gesture of the arms alone, rather than with full body.
- Brainstorm as a class a list of unfamiliar, interesting words, and write them on a board, for the students to use in the third enactment of popping words.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- <https://www.mayaangelou.com/> - Angelou's official website, featuring information, videos, merchandise, and more.
- <https://poets.org/poems-kids> - the kids' resource page of the website of the Academy of American Poets, with links to poems and information about poetry especially for young people.
- <https://www.examples.com/education/kid-friendly-metaphor.html> - a page with numerous examples of student-accessible metaphors

**This integrated lesson provides differentiated ideas and activities for educators that are aligned to a sampling of standards. Standards referenced at the time of publishing may differ based on each state's adoption of new standards.*

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