Role Playing Online with Aesop's Fables

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CONTEXT: SAME ACTIVITY AT TWO SCHOOLS

- Elective course for second-year students (school A) and all grades (school B)
  - Academic Learning and Professional Skills course ←
  - English and Culture through Literature
- Interested in English
- Online, synchronous using Microsoft Teams or Zoom throughout the pandemic (only 3 FtF classes)
- Study Fables (3 classes) + Role Playing (2 classes)

TASK

1. Create modern-day scenarios and deliver role plays based on Aesop's fables

2. Deliver role plays in class

3. Have the audience determine which fable was represented in the role play and vote for favorites

4. Write a report

CHALLENGES

- Online

- Time constraints

- Language limitations

- Isolation

Goal = have students engage with the fables and with each other

PROCESS

1. Learn and analyze stories in advance as a class
   1. Vocabulary, themes, lessons
2. Take quiz > review answers
3. For homework: write potential modern-day scenarios for 2 fables
4. Get into Breakout Rooms > get random fable and start writing in Word Document
5. Finish outside class via group Teams chat
6. Practice and perform during class
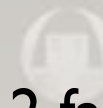
ORIGINAL FABLES

- The Hare and the Tortoise

- The Fox and the Grapes

- The Wolf and the Lamb

- The Lion and the Mouse

- The Lion in Love

MODERN-DAY SITUATIONS

- A high school girls' basketball club

- A new international student

- Final test scores are returned

- A sister and her angry brother

- A popular woman and a man who sells everything for her

DOCUMENT TEMPLATE

Team Members:

Setting:
- example: Shibuya Scramble during Golden Week, 2022

Characters and actors:
- example: Ryota, the high school genius (Student Name)

Plot Summary (1 sentence):

Dialogue (Script):

ONE GROUP'S EXAMPLE

Title is Girls High school basketball club.

Team 1 Member Names: ~~Sakura, Riko, Sayumi, Shun~~

- Narrator: ~~Sakura~~
- Student 1(Misaki): ~~Riko~~
- Student 2(Honoka): ~~Sayumi~~
- Adviser: ~~Shun~~

Settings: Girls High school basketball club.

Background (1-2 sentences): The character is New student.

Narrator:

This story is basketball team in high school on April. Misaki and Honoka joined in this team as new member.

MODERN-DAY SITUATIONS

- A high school girls' basketball club → The Hare & the Tortoise

- A new international student → The Lion & the Mouse

- Final test scores are returned → The Fox & the Grapes

- A sister and her angry brother → The Wolf & the Lamb

- A popular woman and a man who sells everything for her → The Lion in Love

STUDENT FEEDBACK

REPORT

REPORT QUESTIONS

1. Write about how you participated in creating and performing the role play.

2. What did you like about the process? What was interesting or fun about it?

3. What did you not like about the process, or what was difficult about it?

4. Do you think everyone participated evenly and fairly? (You do not have to write any names here.)

5. Who was your favorite role play scenario out of all the groups and why? (It is okay if you choose your own!)

6. Was this easy or difficult for you to understand?

1. WRITE ABOUT HOW YOU PARTICIPATED IN CREATING AND PERFORMING THE ROLE PLAY.

- We were **work together** to **create** the content. It was so lucky for us to have a good story to play. Everybody was contributed for this project. It was lucky for me to have good members. And, let R into the team was best chose I did. She was main actress, and she did it so goods. It was sorry for Y to let her say bad English words, but I don't regret about it. Everybody in my team was verry good. They did really good job. (SN)

2. WHAT DID YOU LIKE ABOUT THE PROCESS? WHAT WAS INTERESTING OR FUN ABOUT IT?

- Exactly, do this project was **interesting and fun** for me. We **discus** about good stories with each other, we have **conversation** with teammate, we practice play the story by online, all of that were so **interesting** for me. I love this class activities. But most interest was my crush play main actress and I play main actor. It was so funny when I hear my crush says words she would never say in real life. And I can't stop to laugh with Y's bad English words I let her say. (SN)

- It was **fun** to be able to role play with everyone with **emotion** in the lines according to the scenario. I think it was easy for everyone to imagine because I thought about the lines after having everyone see the actual scenario. It was great that everyone was having **fun** too.   (SM)

- I liked thinking of the lines with team members. Other member had **different ideas** I didn't think of and the ideas were very **interesting**. Because of this, we made good script. (SH)

- My best process was **discussion**. I liked to listen other's **opinion**. It was **interesting** to listen to different opinion. For example, I could learn how to say **narrator's voice** from Y. I could **get along with my teammates** through discussion. (N)

2. WHAT DID YOU LIKE ABOUT THE PROCESS? WHAT WAS INTERESTING OR FUN ABOUT IT?

- When we were presenting the scenarios we had created for each other, I found it interesting to **discover different ways of thinking** from my own. Adding to the scenario. (M)

- It was interesting that I shared the roles among the team members and advised each other that it would be better to do during the rehearsal. (R)

- I liked the process of role-playing in my group. It was **fun** for me to and **act on my character** because I felt it looked like **playing drama** and being an actor. (Y)

- We had a lot of **discussions** even in a short time. It didn't end within class time, but we were able to talk over the **phone**. It was my first time to make a original story myself, so I found it **interesting**… In our group were able to have an **active discussion**. And it was **fun** because we talked with team members while **laughing**. (A)

- I was **fun** this project because I **communicated** with group member. Now, we take online classes alone. But this class is **not alone** so I'm **happy**. (S)

3. WHAT DID YOU NOT LIKE ABOUT THE PROCESS, OR WHAT WAS DIFFICULT ABOUT IT?

- The point I didn't like during this project was **online**. We were compelled to do all at online. It was not good to have communication with members and do the work. And it was little difficult to explain the story line for members. Next time, I hope we can work in offline. (SN)

- It was difficult to think about **story**. I think our group has become too similar to the original fable. (H)

- But I was difficult to use **English** in the discussion. That's why we ended up using Japanese. In addition, my team had problem at performance. When the problem happened, I was panicked. (SH)

- I didn't like **presentation** because I was **afraid** to **mistake**. I was worried about mistaking to read role's dialogues. I tried to do the best. I want to improve my presentation skills. I think presentation skill is very important when I work, so I should have it. (N)

- It was difficult to put **emotions** when playing a role and reading a scenario. (R)

- It was difficult to **say the lines** because I forget say with **intonation** when I pay attention to **pronunciation**. (A）

- I did not like the process of **making the situation** because it needed **creativity** and **imagination**. It was difficult for me to create something from nothing. (Y – same who enjoyed role playing)

5. WHICH WAS YOUR FAVORITE OF ALL ROLE PLAY SCENARIOS AND WHY?

- My own group:
  - I'm **attached to our story**. And, I like happy ending so, I think our story is the best. (H)
  - It is because the role play is not a difficult situation and using words, so it **is easy to understand** what the story means. (Y)

- Another group:
  - My favorite role play scenario is Group 5. Because it was an experience that made me better. I often interact with my young sister like this. **I understand the feeling of both of the characters**. This scenario was easy for me to understand because **it's my daily life**, and it was a very **simple** and **concise** scenario (A)
  - My favorite scenario was "The Hare and the Tortoise" it because, I originally liked this stories and that team **presentation is so long and deep the contents** I thought the story was so great and **inspired** me! I thought I would **try harder**. (C)

6. WAS THIS EASY OR DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO UNDERSTAND?

- Mixed answers, but…

- "a satisfying project"

- "felt a sense of accomplishment"

- "improve[d] creative skills," "enjoyed making story"

SUMMARY: STUDENTS GAINED…

- Autonomy and agency
  - Freedom to play with language and get into character
- Sense of community in an isolating time
- Inspiration listening to other groups' ideas
- A sense of satisfaction, reward
- A deeper understanding of the original fable after hearing various modern-day scenarios

Thank you!

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