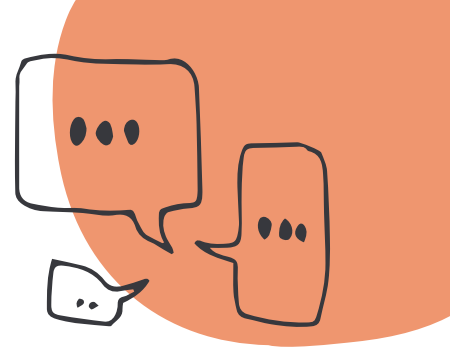


UNIT PLAN BRAINSTORMS



Traveling Circus (Theater, History)

The traveling circus is in town, and the next stop is... all over the world! With your class, explore the history of circus across various cultures and regions. Start by sourcing what your students know about circus and if they've ever seen one before. As they share, you may want to pull up imagery and videos of traditional circus elements (a big top or acrobatics) to give the class a reference point for what circus is. Then, break your students up into six different groups—one for each continent. Explain that each breakout group will research the history of circus in that region and what it looks like today. This may be discovering an ancient clowning tradition or watching a video of a contemporary circus company. Some international circus companies to look into are Phare Circus from Cambodia, Circus Abyssinia from Ethiopia or Circolombia from Colombia. Afterwards, prompt each group to learn one move or trick from their research and prepare to perform it in front of the class. To culminate, each group will share their learnings, complete with their very own circus trick. Afterwards, compare and contrast the many forms that circus takes across the world and what you enjoyed about each of them.

Slapstick Study (Theater, History)

Your class will be rolling on the floor laughing, literally, as you discover the joys of slapstick comedy! First, define what slapstick comedy is with your class and discover where it came from, investigating the Italian Harlequin character from commedia dell'arte. Next, get inspired by the Tom and Jerry cartoon Johann Mouse or A Bird in the Head starring The Three Stooges to show your students how slapstick has permeated pop culture and how the art form has evolved since its inception. Once your class has an understanding of what slapstick is, challenge your students to find slapstick in their daily life. This may be a funny video they see on social media, an SNL sketch or a silent film. Once everyone has their slapstick clip, ask them to bring it in and play it for the class in your own mini-festival of comedy. Now, you'll really make 'em laugh!

Circus Couture (Theater, History, Visual Art)

Circus is all about presentation, and what better way to make a showy entrance than in a fabulous costume? Research circus costumes through history, noting how they have evolved over time. A great place to start is looking at archival circus costumes from the "Circus Fashion" exhibit at Cornell University. You also may want to take a look at a contemporary circus company like Cirque du Soleil to notice what they wear and how it enhances their performance. Ask your students: *How does a performer's act inform what they wear? What materials do they wear?* and *How does a circus costume differ from a costume in a play or movie?* Next, prompt each student to choose a circus act, such as juggling, trapeze or archery, and design a costume to accompany it. Students can begin by drawing their idea on paper and then bringing it to life using found objects or items they have in their own closet. To culminate, walk the runway and put on a circus fashion show for another class. These costumes will really make the audience flip out!