

Punctuation Dances

Objective: Create awareness of punctuation and its uses through movement

Materials: A body of text written out large OR on a shared screen virtually

Vocabulary: Comma, Exclamation Point, Parentheses, Period, Question Mark, etc.

Most Appreciated By: K-6

Time Estimate: 15-30 minutes

Procedure

1. Select a body of text to work with and place it up so the entire class can see it. It might be a poem or a passage from a book you are working on in class.
 - Talk with students about why punctuation exists for our eyes as readers and our ears as listeners. You can even read the entire passage out loud and ignore the punctuation so they can hear what it would sound like without.
2. Ask students what types of punctuation they see in the text and, with each answer, create a key (also written large) that pairs a type of movement with that specific kind of punctuation. Students can also help you select what kind of movement to use.
 - When making your key, you will also want to use a different colored marker if possible for each type of punctuation.
 - As you create the key, have students test out each movement choice to make them all feel more familiar.
 - An example of a key is below:

! Exclamation Point	=	one big jump
, Comma	=	reach both arms up
? Question Mark	=	wiggle like a noodle
. Period	=	rub hands together
() Parentheses	=	kick one leg high

3. After the key has been created, go through the text and circle or underline moments of punctuation with the corresponding color to make sure students can spot them. You can also do this ahead of time by writing the text in black and writing the punctuation in pre-determined colors. Start by reading the key out loud and every time you reach a punctuation mark, pause for emphasis and do the connected motion.
 - Try it with you reading the poem/text out loud. Repeat and divide the sentences among student readers.

Moving Forward

If students are ready for it, you can have them each take a different poem or text and create individual punctuation dances with their own special keys. You can also have them create their own and swap with a partner. In this version, they need to show *and* teach their movement key before letting their partner work through the traded text. You can also challenge students to write their own stories before applying a punctuation dance to them. If working on confident reading,

have students read their story to the class and ask the other students to dance the punctuation while listening. In this way, you've got bodies moving while listening and your student reader will work on reading out loud with moments of pause and expression as they respond to the class.

Notes & Modifications

You can take this activity a step further when it comes to reading character voices. Just as you created a key for punctuation, you can also create a key that codes emotion. Select a series of emotions with the class with a corresponding color for each. Go through a section of text and underline character speech with whatever emotion color best matches it. As you read out loud, students can strike frozen poses (think back to Shapes in Space) that match the character's emotion.

Ingredient Lists

Objective: Use list-making as a tool for movement and concept exploration

Materials: Paper and writing utensils

Vocabulary: Noun, Adjective, Verb

Most Appreciated By: K-6

Time Estimate: 15-30 minutes

Procedure

1. Start by writing out three columns: Nouns, Adjectives, Verbs. Explain to your students that you are going to create some ingredient lists like you might when you go grocery shopping.
 - Brainstorm different words to go under each list. These words should not be connected in any way. No more than ten each to start. Encourage them to think creatively with their lists. Examples below:

<i>Noun</i>	<i>Adjective</i>	<i>Verb</i>
toothbrush	squishy	jump
potato	loud	melt
thunderstorm	crunchy	push
living room	sleepy	scoop
fairy	fizzy	stomp

2. Begin by working as a group
 - Ask students to help you pick three to five of the ingredients on the board, preferably ones from different categories. Write those ingredients out like a shopping list, one item below the next. This will become your dance.
 - As a group (each finding their own space) have the students try out each ingredient in that order. Have them say the word with you each time you switch to the next ingredient.
 - Repeat as many times as you'd like with new lists. When they are ready, you can start to combine ingredients in your list. In the first style of list you may have tried "melt" and "cat", but in this new list you might try moving like a "melting cat".
3. Transition to individual student work
 - After this you can progress to students writing out their own individual lists based on the ingredients the group came up with. Encourage them to dance through their lists and even start to memorize some choices they are making that they like. You can spotlight students to share or split the group in half and have them share their lists in large groups with the other side observing.

Moving Forward

Like Punctuation Dances, you can experiment with partners for this activity. Have students write out their lists and then swap them with a partner. Each student should then create a dance for the new list they've been given. You can also take any list that has been made and add any of the following layers: reverse it, slow motion, super speed, down low only, etc.

Curricular Connections

This can go beyond exploring nouns, adjectives, and verbs quite easily. If there is a book you are working on in class, transform your brainstorm columns into: Characters, Settings, Adjectives. In this way they will detail out the characters in the story, the locations throughout, and adjectives for describing both. Have them create mismatched ingredient lists and explore those. How can you move like a certain character? How can your body show that you are in a certain location? What is it like to move like these characters? Similarly, you can use this to explore a biome or ecosystem. For example, if you are studying the forest floor you might make your columns: Producers, Consumers, Decomposers (to explore the habits of specific creatures) or Smell, Feel, Look (to describe and explore the terrain).