

FROM SCREEN TO STAGE

Subject: English Language Arts, Theater

Goal: to introduce students to the process of adapting source material for the stage

Objectives: Students will...

- Explore storytelling conventions of animation and live theater.
- Work as a class and in pairs.
- Analyze text and think creatively to adapt a scene from the animated feature film *Frozen* for the stage.

Introduction

Frozen began as an animated feature film before it was adapted into a Broadway musical. The creators of the Broadway musical had to determine how the story could best be told on stage. By trying their own hand at the process of adaptation, students will learn to think theatrically and appreciate the creative team's work.

Warm Up: Ice Powers

With students seated at desks or in a circle, ask the class to move their hands as if they had the power to create snow from their fingertips. Next, ask them to imagine forming a snowball between their palms. Then, challenge the class to simultaneously toss their snowballs into the air to burst into a full-room snowfall. Encourage them to imagine feeling the flurries land on their face and arms. Facilitate a brief discussion about the images that came to mind during the activity. Brainstorm how those images could be animated in a feature film. Expand the conversation to gather your students' thoughts on all the possibilities of animation to convey a story about ice powers.

Main Activity: Adapting a Scene

In the process of adapting *Frozen* for the stage, the creative team had the opportunity to theatricalize Elsa's ice powers to be performed live. Brainstorm a list of artistic tools in the theatre (i.e. body, voice, costumes, props, scenery, lighting). Discuss how each of these tools might be used to create ice powers live onstage. Encourage creative solutions that feel plausible, even if improbable.

Distribute the "Ice Strike" excerpt from the *Frozen* film screenplay and choose three students to read aloud. Note: keep your students safe! This animated scene should simply be read and not performed due to its active nature. One student should read the action, which are in parenthesis. Lead a discussion about how animators realized this moment in the story. What are the strengths of using animation for such a scene? What are the limitations? Ask the students to discuss the strengths and limitations of live theater to realize this moment in the story.

Working in pairs, challenge students to write a version of the scene for the stage. Would the students re-write this moment to convey the plot in a way more appropriate for the stage? Encourage the inclusion of artistic tools and creative solutions that were brainstormed earlier in the lesson. If time allows, share the adapted scenes with the class.

Reflection

Facilitate a discussion using the following prompts:

- How did the scene change in your adaptation?
- What was challenging about the writing process?
- What differences do you notice about storytelling in animation and live performance?
- If you could talk with the creators of the musical *Frozen*, what would you want to ask them about their adaptation process?

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(CTD.)



Variations

OLDER: If you are working with older students, create groups in role as a creative team (i.e. author, director, designers) and challenge them to collaborate on a design concept. How would the idea be presented to a producer?

YOUNGER: If you are working with younger students, consider narrowing the artistic tools to only props and scenery. Use clay to convey one of the creative solutions brainstormed for ice powers. Have students write a sentence about their adaptation of ice powers for the stage, utilizing the vocabulary brainstormed as a class.

HOMESCHOOL: If you are working with a homeschooled student, reference video excerpts from the animated feature and focus on the role of the author. Choose an action sequence and challenge your student to write active stage directions to convey the plot point in live performance.

“ICE STRIKE” EXCERPT

“ICE STRIKE” Excerpt: Screenplay p. 4

(Anna fearlessly jumps off a snow peak into mid air.)

YOUNG ANNA

Catch me!

(Elsa makes another peak to catch Anna.)

YOUNG ELSA

Gotcha!

(Anna keeps jumping. Elsa keeps casting magic.)

YOUNG ANNA *(jumping faster)*

Again! Again!

YOUNG ELSA *(struggling to keep up)*

Slow down!

(Elsa suddenly slips. Her magic accidentally STRIKES Anna in the head. Anna tumbles down a snowbank and lands, unconscious.)

YOUNG ELSA *(CONT'D)*

ANNA!

(Elsa runs to Anna and takes her in her arms. A streak of Anna’s hair, where struck, turns white.)

YOUNG ELSA *(CONT'D)*

MAMA! PAPA!

(The room around them fills with frightening ice spikes.)