

Acting the Change: Theatre of the Oppressed in the Classroom

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Theatre of the Oppressed

- A game in which participants act out the social problem until they figure out a solution that is accepted by the group.
- Created by Augusto Boal, Brazilian playwright and social activist



Why use theatre?

- Many students do not think critically about the political and cultural messages they receive every day.
- Students often feel disconnected from the various theories and explanations they hear in their classes.

Theatre of the oppressed:

- increases participant awareness about structural forces of domination (Boal 2002; Freire 2000)
- increases their knowledge of the social problem.
- Increases personal skills to take more agency for social change.

Warm-up activity:

The Great Game of Power

- An introductory activity that explores the relationship of objects and people within the performance space.
- Invite one person to enter the space, arranging the objects to make a naturalistic or abstract scene in which one chair appears to be the most powerful object.
- Another participant can enter the space and shift the power dynamics by making another object or person more powerful.

Image theater

- What is an image that expresses a major theme of violence or oppression in the world? Create this image as part of a group.
- How would the image be in an ideal world? Create a second image and make an argument about how we can achieve that goal.

Debrief

- Which solutions to oppression and violence are most effective? Why?