

Reader's Theater Exercise V: Gestures to Enhance Reading Comprehension

Described below are three exercises that will help your students develop a better understanding of body language and how it can improve their ability to interpret the meaning of a story.

Part 1 – Looking for Body Language

Sometimes we learn best by watching others. As a homework assignment, students have one of two choices for observing techniques used by others to convey meaning. Ask the students to share their assignments with the class.

- a. Watch one short TV show with the **sound turned off**. Observe and record what types of facial expressions, gestures, and other body movements the actors used. Include an interpretation for the various body actions. Classic vintage shows like “I Love Lucy” are especially instructive when watching body signals, because of the exaggerated style demonstrated.
- b. Bring to class family photos or photo clippings of people from a magazine or newspaper. Add a caption to each photo that interprets the emotions shown through the people’s facial expressions, poses, and physical proximity to each other.

Part II – Interpreting Body Language

On separate slips of paper, write down the names of various animals, such as mouse, lion, monkey, horse, duck, pig, dog, bird, and cat. Fold and put the slips of paper in a container. Have the students randomly draw a slip of paper. One at a time, each student’s task is to 1) create a pose of the animal, and 2) make animal gestures and sounds. The rest of the class is to guess which animal the student is trying to convey by the posture and gestures.

Part III – Which Character Am I?

Select a Playbooks® Reader’s Theater story. Have the students read aloud the story several times. Divide the students into small groups. Randomly assign a character part to each group. Without mentioning the character’s name, the group acts the part of the character using dialogue and movement. The class attempts to guess the character.

