

Supporting Students with...

# Tableaux

Using our bodies to make a 'living picture'.

## What is it?

Tableau is a tool that gets students exploring topics, stories, characters, themes, and more with their bodies and voices before delving into the content. You can use tableaux in the classroom as both an artistic exploration and a bridge to academic content. The word 'tableau' comes from the French term 'tableau vivant' which means living picture.



In a tableau, actors pose their bodies silently to represent a moment from a scene or a story.

## Goal of Tableau

- Actors' bodies are frozen.
- The position of the actors' bodies tells a story (who they are, what they are doing or where they are)

## Elements of Tableau

Engage all of these elements together to tell a story:

- Shape
- Spacing
- Levels
- Environment/**Setting**
- Physical Expression / Gesture
- Facial Expression

Characters/**objects** & relationships

Collaboration with members of the group is essential.



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## Basic Tableau Steps

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### Step 1:

Show the students pictures and ask them to tell you what they see/notice.

Start with something simple & accessible: A Forest, A Beach, A Classroom

Try showing several images of the same thing – so students understand there isn't one specific way to make a 'forest'.

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### Step 2:

Have a small group of students to recreate that image with their bodies in front of rest of the class. They can add on one at a time.

- Encourage them to consider: levels, shape, spacing, characters/objects, expressions
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### Step 3:

Ask the audience:

- What do you see and what does that make you think? *"I see Jenny has their hands way up into the air – one is curled and one is straight. That makes me think they are a tree"*
  - Is the story and setting is clear?
  - What could be adjusted to make it clearer?
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### Step 4:

Give the small groups of students something to make a tableau of (*ex: setting, replicating a picture, scenario*)

Remind students of the elements of a tableau. Have the students practice making their own tableau in small groups.

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### Step 5:

Each group shares out.

The audience describes what they see: I notice... I see \_\_\_\_\_ which makes me think...

Optional: The students in the audience guess what's being shown.

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## Going Deeper with Tableau

Focus on Creating a Story

- Have students make 3 tableaux that show the beginning, middle and end of a story (this could be generated or re-telling)
- This also allows you to introduce the idea of a conflict (problem) that presents itself in a story.

Use an Image or Art Work as a jumping off point

- Use Art as Text strategy to look deeply at the image (Tip: choose an image from a connected curriculum)

## Add Speech

- Use the Speech Bubble strategy to add speech or sounds to the tableau
  - Tell the students to think about what their character is thinking/feeling.
  - Give them some time to generate ideas - check in to make sure students have a plan (if needed before they are in the tableau have them brainstorm ideas together.)
  - While students are in the tableau, tap each one on the shoulder so they can say their line.
  - Alternatively get ideas from the audience.
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## Why Tableaux work?

- Engages embodied cognition.
  - It is a concrete way to talk about creating a stage picture that tells a story.
  - It is a collaborative experience, students to work together so one student is not put on the spot. Any student can do it! Even one who is nervous about speaking English.
  - It's fun and gets reluctant students on their feet and participating right away.
  - It can be used as a bridge to scene work, academic learning, and language acquisition.
  - Arts learning is in the Engagement Zone – both supported and rigorous.
  - Playful approach lowers the affective filter.
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