

Ag47 -- Sunday, April 7, 2020

Workshop planned and facilitated by Bex Ehrmann

Workshop description: This workshop invites mentees and mentors to explore and challenge power dynamics in familiar stories. Through creative drama and visual art-making, the collective will unpack fairytales and search for alternative endings.

Materials:

- Large sheet of butcher paper
- Markers/pens
- Collage materials (magazines, construction paper, glue, etc.)
- Music and speakers (specific songs detailed throughout lesson plan)
- Story adaptations (printed out)

Visual art pieces for showcase:

- "Mural" created during opening activity
- Character Triptychs (poem & two collages)

2:00-2:10: Communal journaling

Directions: A large sheet of butcher paper, with the outline of a person, will be pre-set on the floor. The words "I want..." will be written inside the body. The words "Other people want me to..." will be written along the border of the paper. As music plays, mentors and mentees will answer the prompts by writing or drawing directly on the butcher paper. After ten minutes, I will guide the collective to read out phrases that particularly resonate with them.

Individual exposure: Low

Emotional content: Medium

Amount of physical activity: Low

Music: Joni Mitchell mix - "All I Want," "The Circle Game," "Both Sides Now"

Objectives: *Juxtaposing desires and oppressions through writing, reflecting on commonalities amongst participants.*

2:10-2:15: Introductions

Part one: I will welcome everyone and provide a brief overview of the workshop.

Part two: We will go around the circle and answer the prompt, "My happily-ever-after is..." (Some examples: traveling the world, adopting multiple large and slobbery dogs, publishing a book, etc.)

2:15-2:30: Shape making with word prompts

Directions: I will read out a single word related to themes of *The Little Mermaid*. To respond, one person will enter the circle and create a dynamic pose inspired by the word. Two people will join them to build a collective shape. The rest of the group will briefly reflect on what they *see*, and what meaning they *infer*.

Select from the following words: Girlhood, boyhood, love, romance, power, voice, survival, magic, belonging, difference, sacrifice.

Individual exposure: Medium

Emotional content: Medium

Amount of physical activity: Medium

Objectives: *Bringing participants into a physically expressive and collaborative space, embodying abstract ideas, and introducing common fairytale themes.*

2:30-2:50: Discussion

Directions: I will ask questions, and mentees/mentors will answer “popcorn-style.”

- What happens in *The Little Mermaid*?
- What do you associate with *The Little Mermaid*? (Cultural attitudes, songs, movies - anything is fair game.)
- Who is the little mermaid? What does she want? What does she do in the story?
- Who is the prince? What does he want? What does he do in the story?
- Who is the seawitch? What does she want? What does she do in the story?
- Who has power in this story? When do they act on their power?

Next, volunteers will read (abridged) versions of *Little Mermaid* retellings (“The Daughter Cells” by Daniel Mallory Ortberg and “The Tale of the Voice” by Emma Donoghue). For each story, we will reflect these questions:

- How did the writer change the story?
- Who is the main character in this version? What does she want?
- Who has power in this story? What kind of power is it? When do the characters act on their power?

Individual exposure: Medium

Emotional content: Low

Amount of physical activity: Low

Objectives: *Sharing knowledge and preconceived ideas surrounding the story, interpreting and describing character based on the events of the story.*

2:50-3:10: SNACK

3:10-3:25: Colombian Hypnosis

Directions: In pairs, participants lead each other through the space. One participant holds her palm out, about a foot away from the other participant’s face. The second participant must keep their face the same distance away from the leader’s hand as the leader forces them to move up, down, side-to-side, forwards, backwards, and in circles. The leader must be careful to move at a rate that the follower can match. After about three minutes, the leader will switch roles with the follower. For the final four minutes, everyone will lead and follow at the same time.

Individual exposure: Low

Emotional content: Low

Amount of physical activity: High

Music: “I Put a Spell on You” (Annie Lennox version), “Funnel of Love” (SQURL version), “Veins” by Charlotte Martin

Objectives: *Embodying power, manipulating the body, communicating without words.*

3:25-3:30: Power Dialogue

Directions: I will lead a short discussion with these questions:

- How did it feel to lead?
- How did it feel to follow?
- When you were both leader and follower, did you feel like power was shared equally? How did you give power? How did you take power?
- When do you feel powerful in your life? When do you feel like others have power over you?

Individual exposure: Medium

Emotional content: Medium

Amount of physical activity: Low

Objectives: *Reflecting on power and powerlessness, considering how power is given and taken.*

3:30-3:40: Scene Creation

Directions: In small groups, participants will plan their own fairytale adaptations. They will:

- Agree on a classic fairytale to adapt (i.e. Beauty and the Beast, Hansel and Gretel, Little Red Riding Hood, etc.). Questions to consider:
 - Who has the most power in this story?
 - What happens if you give power to a different character?
 - Do your characters want the same things as the characters in the original story?
 - If their objectives are unchanged, do they have different motivations?
- Plan three scenes from their adapted story to dramatize through improv. These scenes do not have to be funny!
- Decide how they will transition between scenes, and give their story a title.

Individual exposure: Medium

Emotional content: Medium

Amount of physical activity: Low

Objectives: *Participants will work together to dissect classic stories and alter their trajectory.*

3:40-4:00: Scene Sharing and Reflection

Directions: Each group will share their scene. After each performance, the audience will respond to the following questions:

- How did this adaptation affect your understanding of the original story?
- Which moments impacted you?

Individual exposure: High

Emotional content: Medium

Amount of physical activity: Medium-High

Objectives: *Participants will realize their ideas through improvised scenes and give thoughtful feedback to each other.*

4:00-4:45: Collage-making and poetry writing

Directions: As a group, we will read “The Mermaid Sets the Record Straight” by Debra Cash. Next, each group will write a poem in which the protagonist of *their* story sets the record straight. They will also create two collages to go with their poem.

- The first collage will be based on the prompt, “Other people think that I am...”
- The second collage will be based on the prompt, “But I am really...”

Individual exposure: Low

Emotional content: Low

Amount of physical activity: Low

Objectives: *Members of the collective will work together to create a triptych that reflects their unique interpretation of the fairytale they chose.*

4:45-5:00: Celebrations