Body Biography

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD
BY TOM STOPPARD
GROVE PRESS, 1968 EDITION
BODY BIOGRAPHY

CONTEXT:

This activity should be used closer to the end of the play, probably after students have finished Act II or are in the middle of reading Act III. At this point in the play, students should have a firm grasp on the characters; who they are, and the traits of each. The ESL or ELL students in your class may have a more difficult time understanding the characters through the text because much of the dialogue uses vocabulary they may not be familiar with and the subject often quickly changes making it hard to follow. This activity will help the students pick apart the play to better understand the characters.

PURPOSE:

This activity will allow the students to show their understanding of the characters in the play. It gives them an opportunity to become better acquainted with at least one by focusing on that character and looking through the text for moments their true character stands out.

RATIONALE:

In order to do more analytical assignments with the students later in the play, the students need to understand each character; the way they think, act and their major roles they play. This activity will show the students’ understanding. The visual aspect of this activity will be helpful for the ESL/ELL students; it will help them organize their thoughts about a character visually which can be easier than using words of a language they are not completely familiar with.

DIRECTIONS:

MATERIALS NEEDED: Body Biography instructions, blank pieces of paper, markers, crayons, or any other coloring tools you prefer the students to use.
TIME: 30 minutes

STEP ONE:

THINK ABOUT THE CHARACTERS
Ask the students to think of all the different characters they have encountered so far in the play. Have them raise their hands to answer and write each character on the board. Once you have the characters on the board ask the students what they know about each character, and by raise of hand have them tell you traits to write down under the names; you can write the traits or the students can come up to the board and write the ones they think of to get them up and get their blood flowing for the lesson.

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STEP TWO:

INTRODUCE THE BODY BIOGRAPHY
Once you have the list of characters and their traits on the board, explain to the students that they will be doing a Body Biography of a character of their choice and hand out the instruction sheets. Have a sample body biography from a previous year, or perhaps one you have done yourself in preparation for this lesson to show the students and hang it on the board as a model. Make sure you tell your students that this is just an example of one way a body biography can look and to not just copy yours exactly; tell them to think creatively.

STEP THREE:

DRAWING AND MONITORING
Ask the students to work individually, meaning no talking, for the next thirty minutes, drawing their characters and looking for passages in the text to incorporate into their biography. Make sure you tell the students if they get stuck or need help finding a place in the text where the character’s traits are defined, you can help head them in the right direction. This is important for those ESL/ELL students who may be reluctant to ask for help. Walk around the room to make sure the students are staying on task. If a student looks disengaged, offer help rather than scolding them for not working. If you have the model biography on the board for inspiration, have the students raise their hands to ask for permission to get up and look at it one at a time so as to not have everyone out of their seats at once, disrupting the other students working.

STEP FOUR:

GROUP SHARING
Once the students have completed their body biographies, have them get into groups of three or four to share their creations with each other. Ask the students to accomplish these two objectives in the groups: Give a review of the novel that involves the character of their choice and Explain their character and the specific traits they have chosen which make that character unique. Tell the groups to each choose one body biography from the group to share with the whole class.

STEP FIVE:

CLASS SHARING
Have the students come up and present the body biographies chosen from within their groups.

ASSESSMENT:
This activity has given the students to develop their ideas about a certain character in the story. It has also given them a chance to go back into the text to find important moments which tell things about the characters’ personalities. It has also given them time to interact with their classmates, to share their ideas and present in front of the class.