

# Forum Theatre

"An approach to creating drama works that enables a group to consider a range of options or possible outcomes for a dramatic conflict or complication. A small subgroup uses improvisation to explore a dramatic situation while the rest of the group observes. All members of the full group participate in creating the scene – through discussion, by stopping the scene to make suggestions, or by taking over a role. The objective is to shape an authentic scene that fits the dramatic context and is satisfying to the whole group. This approach is central to Augusto Boal's theatre of the oppressed."

-Ontario Secondary Curriculum, The Arts

**Big Idea:** To improvise a scene based on the play *Meet Cute*. To use the technique of Forum Theatre, in which audience members stop the action and take over roles in order to suggest new ways for characters to solve their problems.

By the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- Identify conflict situations and discover possible solutions
- Use role play to explore personal and social issues
- Analyze and use the conventions of Forum Theatre

**Materials:** *Meet Cute* script excerpt

## Curriculum Connections

### Drama

A2. Elements and Conventions: use the elements and conventions of drama effectively in creating individual and ensemble drama works, including works based on a variety of sources

A3. Presentation Techniques and Technologies: use a variety of presentation techniques and technological tools to enhance the impact of drama works and communicate for specific audiences and purposes

A2.2 use a variety of conventions to develop character and shape the action in ensemble drama presentations

A3.1 use a variety of techniques to increase interaction with or participation by the audience

B1.2 interpret short drama works and identify and explain their personal response to the works

B2.2 explain how dramatic exploration can contribute to personal growth and self-understanding

B3.2 identify specific social skills and personal characteristics they have acquired or strengthened through drama work that can help them succeed in other areas of life

C1.1 identify the drama forms, elements, conventions, and techniques used in their own and others' drama works, and explain how the various components are used or can be used to achieve specific purposes or effects

B3.1 explain how the strategies for conflict resolution and team building used in drama can be applied in the workplace

### Health and Physical Education

C1.3 demonstrate an understanding of how relationships develop through various stages, and describe the skills and strategies needed to maintain a satisfactory relationship as the relationship evolves (*e.g., communication and interpersonal skills, adaptive and coping skills, conflict resolution strategies*)

C2.2 demonstrate an understanding of the skills and strategies needed to build healthy social relationships (*e.g., peer, school, family, work*) and intimate relationships

C2.5 describe factors that influence sexual decision making, and demonstrate an understanding of how to use decision-making and communication skills effectively to support choices related to responsible and healthy sexuality

C3.3 describe skills and strategies (*e.g., communication, social, refusal, adaptive, and coping skills, conflict resolution strategies*) that can be used to prevent or respond to situations of verbal, physical, and social bullying and sexual harassment

## Minds On

Students will be improvising a scene from *Meet Cute* based on John's and Jane's experience waiting for the school bus.

Read aloud the above definition of what Forum Theatre is for your class. If they need a further explanation or a visual example, play the following clips:

- Tedx on Forum Theatre at 3:40min: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcLcXeXJVDU&t=252s>
- Theatre of The Oppressed NYC at 1.22min: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vi1HfSiMxCU&t=50s>

## Action

1. Divide students into pairs to rehearse the scenes. When they feel ready, students will perform the scene for the class without interruption.
2. They will perform the scene a second time through, but this time any student may yell "stop" at any given time. If a student takes over a role, they must change the dialogue or action in order to improve John or Jane's situation. (Examples for changes: using different language, reacting differently, or being silent instead of speaking/speaking instead of being silent.)
3. Run the scene and wait for someone to stop the action. If students seem hesitant to do so, you should stop the action at an appropriate time and ask for a volunteer to take over a role.
4. Each time the scene is stopped, ask the class to suggest the most logical outcome of the change in action or dialogue.
5. Continue to work through the scene a few times. It often requires repetition for Forum Theatre to develop workable solutions.

## Extension

Assign students to groups of three or four. They may explore the conventions of Forum Theatre for extra practice.

## Connect/Consolidate/Discuss

At the end of the exercise, ask:

- How did you feel about playing your character in the improvised scene?
- Did the Forum Theatre activity offer any suggestions for behavior in real life?
- Which strategies do you think could have provided the most help to John? Why?
- Which strategies do you think could have provided the most help to Jane? Why?
- How do we apply these strategies and tactics to our real lives and our interaction with people we talk to everyday?

## Meet Cute Script Excerpt (for Forum Theatre activity)

*He wants to go back to his sketching, but he can feel her looking at him. She's making quite a show of wanting someone to ask, so...*

JOHN (obliging her)  
Bad day?

JANE  
(jumping at the opening)  
You have NO idea.

*John resigns himself to no more sketching. Maybe she just needs a friendly ear, and then she'll back off.*

JOHN  
We've all had them. Sounds like you need a drink?

JANE  
I don't drink.

JOHN  
Neither do I!

JANE  
But we could go get that latte. Then I'll have only been felt up by a new friend instead of a complete stranger.

*John laughs - this has to be a joke. Jane takes it as affirmation.*

JANE (CONT'D)  
Already my day is getting better. I'm Jane.

JOHN  
John.

*They shake hands. John tries to release, but Jane keeps holding his hand.*

JANE  
Hey, weren't you at Kevin DeRusso's party over March Break?

JOHN  
Yeah!

JANE  
Kevin's my friend Syed's boyfriend!

JOHN  
His sister's dating my buddy, Ty.

JANE  
(realizing they're still holding hands) Oh

*Jane finally releases his hand, and without him noticing, smells her hand.*

JANE  
So, how about it? Can I buy you a coffee?

*John hesitates, checks the time.*

JANE (CONT'D)  
Maybe?

*John looks down the block for the bus, and decides the easiest thing to do is put her off.*

JOHN  
We're heading in the same direction anyway, let's just keep talking until the bus comes.

JANE  
Sure. Besides, there aren't really any good coffee shops nearby...I mean...we could go to the Coffee Time.

*John looks less than thrilled at the idea of Coffee Time.*

JANE (CONT'D) (recovering)

Yeah, no, there are always at least three sketchy people there. I never go there unless....

JOHN (surprised)  
Wait - you LIKE their coffee?

JANE

Sometimes I get cravings for the eclairs. They're way too sugary, and always a little stale, but every so often, I just need to have one, you know? Sometimes when my mind gets locked on something, I can get a little obsessive until I get it. And now you've got me wanting one. Great. At least now you know what to bring me instead of flowers on our first date.

*John is taken aback.*

JOHN

Who said we were going to have a date?

JANE

Aren't we? Aren't we kind of right now?

JOHN

Are we?

JANE

Yeah, I think we are.

JOHN

Jane.

JANE

John. I'm really glad we met today.

*John is now genuinely concerned and Jane is getting closer and closer to him on the bench.*

JOHN

Yeah -

JANE (cutting him off)

I...um...I probably shouldn't tell you this, but I've kind of been wanting to talk to you for a while.

JOHN

What?

JANE

Okay, so, I noticed you for the first time at that party. Everyone was packed into the living room, dancing. I was standing behind beside you. I couldn't see your face, but I could hear you singing along.

JOHN  
Really?

JANE  
It was endearing. You have a nice voice. And your hair smelled good. Oh man, that sounded so creepy....anyway, someone bumped into me I fell into you.

JOHN  
Yes.

JANE  
You smelled like discount body spray. I apologized, but you didn't look at me.

JOHN  
I'm sorry.

JANE  
When school started up again, I was surprised to see we were on the same bus, and then I started to notice we almost always were. Two weeks ago, you wore the same jacket from the night we met, and I knew I had to talk to you. I tried to get up the courage, but I couldn't. So, I found your Instagram feed, through a friend of a friend...oh my god and I accidentally double tapped that pic of you at your birthday party. I freaked out. I almost DM'd you, but I didn't think you'd know who I was.

JOHN  
(quietly freaking out)  
I'd seen you on the bus, too. You were always so into whatever game you were playing on your phone or music you were listening to.

*Jane is overjoyed! He's noticed her too!*

JANE  
You were always sketching, but you would keep looking up from it to steal a look at me. So how come our eyes never met? Maybe they weren't supposed to until now. I just think you're so beautiful. I've been hoping we'd get a chance to be alone together.

JOHN  
I can't believe this is happening.

JANE  
Neither can I. May I? *Jane reaches out to John and takes his hand. He freezes.*