

Acting Out (Grades K-5 Lesson Plan)

Overview:

Ruth Dorcas Gates loved the theater and all of its stories. Her scrapbook tells its own story about her time at Simmons. This exercise allows students to let out their creative side by acting out the world that students see in her pictures.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will learn the importance of primary sources
- Students will see how artifacts can tell stories
- Students will learn to express themselves creatively with a foundation in historical research
- Students will learn about differences in interpretation

Resources:

- Ruth D. Gates Digital Scrapbook
- Printed or digital copies of photos to give to individual students
- Props and costumes as desired
- Pencils and paper

Procedure:

1. Start by showing materials in the scrapbook, and talking about Ruth and her time. Give general background about what is going on in some of the photos. (20 min)
2. Divide the class up into small groups (whatever makes sense for the class size). (5 min)
3. Assign each group a photo from the scrapbook. (5 min)
4. Have each group come up with a story about what they think is happening in the photo. They should make informed decisions from the background given in the class, and they should feel free to look at the site to glean more background or to ask questions. (30 min)
5. Have the students write out their scripts and practice together. Their plays should be between 5-10 minutes long. (45 min)
6. Perform the plays in class, preferably following the order of the scrapbook. Students can get fancy and make use of props that they might have on hand, but they should be as true as possible to their understanding of the time. (Will vary based on class size)
7. Speak with the class and talk again about what the scrapbook says about Ruth and the 1920s. What did students learn from their interpretation of the photos? Did seeing their classmates performances make them look at the story differently? What did they feel they learned about information interpretation? (20 min)