



Grade 8

Strand

Drama

Curriculum

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## Grade 8: Getting in Character with Professional Theatre Artist Greg Ochitwa

**Aim:** This session will give students the opportunity to participate in a live broadcast by professional theatre artist Greg Ochitwa.

Students will learn how professional playwrights 'workshop' a play and how actors work from a script to interpret characters.

This workshop will show teachers and students one approach to writing a scene and the stages of interpreting a script.

**Creative/Productive:** Students will create their own short scene and then interpret another classmate's work.

**Critical/Responsive:** Students will have the opportunity to ask theatre artist Greg Ochitwa questions about his life as a professional actor and playwright.

**Cultural/Historical:** Students will learn about the work of Canadian playwrights and the nature of Canadian theatre.

### About the Artist

Greg is an actor/writer/rapper, born and raised in Saskatchewan. He was a member of the 2010 Globe Theatre Actor Conservatory, and holds a BFA in Theatre Acting from the U of R. Favourite theatre credits include *Metamorphoses* (Globe Theatre), *Over the River and Through the Woods* and *The Drawer Boy* (Mae Wilson Theatre), and television credits include *Corner Gas*, *The Lost Angel*, [renegadeexpress.com](http://renegadeexpress.com), and three seasons on *Incredible Story Studio*.

Greg is a founding member of the hip-hop group TopWise. Greg has spent a large portion of the past three years developing a hip-hop musical, *Cope*. A portion of it was showcased at the Recovery LabCab at Factory Theatre in Toronto, it was presented by the Globe Theatre in Regina as part of the 2010-2011 Sandbox Reading Series, and it is one of five shows that were selected to be part of the 2011-2012 Sandbox Series Season.

He also absolutely loves his work as an acting teacher at The Globe Theatre School.

## Program Structure

**PART 1: 1 hour.** LIVE broadcast introductory session with a professional artist.

### Video Bio

### Personal Intro

### Warm Up

Stretches      Focus Exercises      Balance Exercises      Focus Games

### Where Does Inspiration Come From? Brainstorming Activity

- Our community   Our province
- Something you like about the province/something you'd like to change about the province
- What's the best our province could be?   What's the worst?
- What makes our province unique?- Do you have a crazy Saskatchewan story?

### Artist Interprets Story

- Taking one or more of the students ideas, and figuring out how they could be presented dramatically
- Talking about the 5 Points of story development

1. Establish Character    2. Establish Location    3. Problem Arises    4. Problem Gets Worse    5. Solution

### Building a Story

- Students get in groups of two or three, and start to build their craziest Saskatchewan story into a short dramatic scene

### First Share/Character Development

- Students can share the scene's they've developed, and the artist will guide the class in how to look at the scene dramatically, discussing ways in which it really worked, or ways that maybe it could have been more clear
- It's a chance for the student to play with the character for the first time, the artist will guide them in ways that they can explore it further.

### Dramaturg the Scene

- Students return to their groups to develop the script a bit further.   Flesh out the characters

### Share a Saskatchewan Story "What a Crazy Story"

**PART 2: 60 min.** Teacher-guided hands-on workshop activities with online support from artist through Adobe Connect. Teachers and students can ask questions and consult artist via Adobe Connect during this segment at <http://connect.edonline.sk.ca/liveartsed/>.

Resources are available for use in the classroom at the LIVE Arts Education website [www.liveartsaskatchewan.com](http://www.liveartsaskatchewan.com)

Students may need additional classroom time beyond the 60 minutes to complete the approximately 1-hour hands-on project.

## Materials and Resources

Students will need paper and pencils/pens for a writing exercise during the broadcast. Students will also be working with a partner during this writing activity, you may wish to assign partners prior to broadcast. We recommend that you do your follow-up activity in an open space, such as a gym or resource room.

## Curriculum Outcomes

**Creative/Productive** Outcome: CR8.1 Respond to professional dance, drama, music, and visual art works through the creation of own arts expressions.

**Critical/Responsive** Outcome: CR8.2 Investigate and identify ways that today's arts expressions often reflect concern for social issues.

**Cultural/Historical** Outcome: CH8.4 Examine and respond to the work of artists who incorporate more than one art form in their work (e.g., combining poetry and music).

### Teacher Guide for Hands-on Workshop Segment of the Broadcast (1 hour)

#### 1. Sharing Our Stories (15min)

Refer back to the 'What a crazy story' stories shared by the students on the Live Broadcast, and remind your students the steps the artist used to analyze the scene; now have your students share their stories. Each group should do their piece once, hear what the teacher and class have to say, and do it at least once more.

#### 2. Acting Warm-up: This exercise is used to get your students thinking and moving creatively.

##### Walking Exercise

Get the students walking around the open space. Just walking.

- Start making suggestions as to ways they can walk, or things that might affect the way they walk, or the way they think about their bodies when they walk. Phrase your suggestion as a question. "How would you walk if the room was full of quick sand? How would it be if the room was full of jello? How would you walk if *you* were made of jello? What if you were 100 years old? Two hundred? A thousand?").
- Keep the students moving. Keep firing questions at them.
- At 3 mins, start asking them to move like different animals. For example: a lion, a bear, a gopher.
- At 5 mins ask the students how they would move if they were half human, half animal. Like a cartoon animal. Then guide them with more questions, reminding them to stay as their human/animal. Hint: Teachers can ask students to move in 'Slow Motion' if students start getting to excited.

More walking exercise suggestions (this movement can be inspired by anything...so have fun with it...Teachers can participate to)

- In slow motion move: backwards; sideways; tip-toes; heels; outsides of your feet; insides of your feet
- Try walking with a: sore back; sore knee; can't bend one knee, then both knees -
- How do you walk when there's: gum on the floor; the floor's really hot; the floor's made of lava, and there are stones that you have to hop on; in knee high grass; in 5 ft tall grass?
- Now try: skating; moon walking; walking on a log over a stream; walking in a small cave, a smaller cave.
- Now students could a big rock they have to push; an even bigger rock they have to push; they are a spy/secret agent, a King or Queen, a Prince or Princess.
- Students could try: Dancing; hopping on one leg; hopping on the other leg; they have super powers
- **Ask the students at some point to interact with the other human animals**

## Teacher Guide for Hands-on Workshop Segment of the Broadcast, con't...

**Slow-Motion Mirror Exercise** – Pair up your students (if you have an odd number, a group of 3 will work). Have the students stand facing each other, two arms lengths apart. Students have 3 mins to try out their human/animal with a human mirror. Moving in slow motion, students can test out their human/animals specific features (eg. How does its nose move? Eyes? Hands? Tail? Head? Neck? Mouth (including sounds)?

### 3. Character Interviews (8min)

This exercise is intended to help students further develop their character.

Have your students gather in a circle. Have each student share the answer to one or more questions such as the following: "Where does your animal live? In the Sea? On land? What is your animal's favorite food? Does your animal have brothers or sisters? How old is the animal? What's the animals biggest fear? Does the animal talk with the other animals when no humans are around? What does your animal talk about? Does your animal go to a school? What does your animal do in their spare time? Does your animal you have super powers?"

Basically, you're conducting an interview with them.

### 4. Dramaturging The Piece

This is an opportunity for students to formalize their translation of a 'Crazy Saskatchewan Story' into a working scene. Students should create a more polished written outline for their scene (a very basic script). This written outline should include the five points of story development. The outline could describe actions of the characters and loose description of dialogue.

*For example: 'Establish Character: Story starts with three kids. Establish location: sitting in a field looking up at the sky. Problem arises: suddenly all react to some sort of loud noise. Problem gets worse: One yells it's an alien spaceship, run (characters run in circles, bumping into each other. Solution: Character 1 realizes that it's just a new high tech fertilizer unit, all calm down.*

- Students should once again go off to work with their group on the scene because performing a scene more than once can be very insightful.
- This is the groups last chance to refine their performance and/or add content. Students should analyze their own script and adjust it in whatever way they chose. Students may chose to add a scene about what happens right after, or right before the first scene. Inform students that sometimes it's good to expand your scene, but sometimes it's better to stick it out, using their best judgment.

### 5. Final Presentations- Our Story

Students once again get a chance to share their scenes.

Lead a brief discussion about what they found interesting or successful about the scenes.

Drama is a collaborative process, and the more students share their work, both performing and dialoguing about it, the richer it becomes.

Celebrate successes.