



WHERE'S THE POWER?
Deconstructing Plot Structure and Systems of Power
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OBJECTIVES: *Students will be able to...*

- Recognize narrative plot structure and how it applies to the power systems around them.
 - Employ their understanding of conflict to generate new, politically aware plot points for well-known stories.
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COMMON CORE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT:

Reading Literature: Theme, Text Analysis, and Literary Elements

CC.1.3.A, CC.1.3.B, CC.1.3.C

Writing: Narrative, Content and Organization

CC.1.4.P

LITERARY ELEMENTS: *Conflict, Inciting Incident, Climax, Resolution*

DRAMATIC ELEMENTS: *Theatre of the Oppressed and Image Theatre*

MATERIALS:

- Chart paper
 - Marker
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DIRECTIONS:

Part 1: Partner Movement

- A series of movement activities will be used as an introduction to this discussion of power. After each portion is completed ask participants to reflect on *who* has the power and *how* did it feel
- Participants are grouped into partners. They take turns mirroring each other's' movements.
- Participants now lead their partner with their index finger rather than through mirrored movement. The index finger should indicate where and at what level (up, down) the following participant should move. Encourage partners to lead with

care, remind them that they too will have to follow.

Part 2: Buffalo/Farmer/Landowner*

- Participants will now be in groups of four. Within the group randomly assign the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4.
- Inform #1 that they are the buffalo and inform #2 that they are the farmer. The farmer leads the buffalo with their finger like in the previous movement activity. Remind farmers to be nice to their buffalo.
- Allow farmers and buffalo to explore the space in this configuration and then ask: “Who had the power? How did it feel?”
- Invite #3’s into space. Inform them that they too are a buffalo. Repeat. What changes when there are two buffalo?
- Invite #4’s into the space. Tell them that they are landowners. Congratulations. Inform them that they will be leading the farmers using their index finger. Remind landowners to be nice to their farmers. Remind farmers to be nice to their buffalo.
- After the space has been fully explored, ask the same debrief questions as above, focusing on how feelings changed with the inclusion of the landowner.

** I learned this game in Asia where Buffalo are far more common as farm animals. Feel free to change to ox, horse, whatever works for your classroom.*

Part 3: Finding the Power in Narrative

- Debrief the discoveries from the previous activity. What did it feel like to have a new layer of power? Highlight that the landowner always existed but was made visible later in the game. Can participants think of other invisible layers of power in their lives?
- Tell participants to recall what they have learned about
 - *Conflict and Initiating Incident*
 - *Climax*
 - *Resolution*
- Staying in their groups of 4, participants have 5(ish) minutes to recreate the story of *Cinderella** in 3-5 still images, keeping these plot elements in mind.
- Choose a group to share their images. Witnessing participants will answer the following questions
 - Who are the characters?
 - What is the conflict?
 - What was the solution?
- After eliciting answers to these questions, invite participants to reframe the questions in the following way.



- Who was being oppressed? (the protagonist)
- Who was the oppressor? (the antagonist)
- What was the oppression and how was it stopped? (the conflict)

**Many, many other stories could be chosen for this part of the activity, but Cinderella offers quick recall as well as highlighting the same concentric circles of power that the buffalo/farmer/landowner activity highlights. Feel free to switch out with a story most relevant and helpful for your curriculum!*

Part 4: Rewriting the Narrative

- Based on participants' responses, guide conversation to how the oppressed/protagonist could have solved their problem differently.
 - Was the solution to the oppression/conflict initiated by the oppressed themselves?
 - Did the solution to the oppression/conflict involve other oppressors or did it involve allies?
- Participants return to their groups and create a new set of 3-5 images to depict a new version of the story in which the protagonist
 - Initiates the solution
 - Involves allies and not oppressors
- Participants share their rewritten images.

Possible Extensions

- Invite participants to repeat the process with a different story.
- Introduce the "Hot Seat" activity in which one character from each image gets interviewed by witnessing participants. How does this expand on what is visually represented?
- Introduce the "Naming the painting" activity in which witnessing participants choose titles for each silent tableau.