

I AM AN ACTOR

Text Synopsis

I Am an Actor is a nonfiction book about Simon, a young actor who has a role as a lion in a play called *The Lion's Paw*. Simon uses a variety of techniques to prepare for his role. He thinks about how a lion moves and tries to copy these movements. He thinks about what a lion does and tries to do the same things. He also uses his body, face, and voice to show how a lion thinks and feels. The book helps children to see that imagination is one of an actor's most important tools. At the end of the book, Simon puts on his costume and takes the stage — he has “become” a lion.

LITERACY ELEMENTS

“I...” language pattern
short, assertive sentences

CONNECTIONS

MUSIC
creating rhythmic patterns

VISUAL ARTS
producing works of art
that communicate
thoughts and feelings

WORDS TO DISCOVER

actor
lion
move/moves
face
body
voice
sound

ESL CONSIDERATIONS

Students will enjoy and benefit from additional opportunities to learn about what lions look like, how they move, what they sound like, and how they behave, from such sources as photographs, videos, and Web sites.

Overall Learning Opportunities



Students will:

- demonstrate an understanding of some basic elements of drama
- interpret the meaning of stories, using some basic drama techniques



Students will:

- read independently, using reading strategies appropriate for this grade level
- express clear responses to written materials, relating the ideas in them (thoughts, feelings, experiences) to their own knowledge and experience
- speak and listen to explore, extend, clarify, and reflect on their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences

ACTIVITY MENU

Exploration: Warm-Ups for Acting, page 20

Guided Reading, pages 21–22

As a Group, pages 23–24



• *I Can Be a...:* pretending to be an animal

• *Freeze!:* creating tableaux based on a book



• *Picture It!:* choosing an animal and developing a role-play

• *What Am I?:* creating clues for an animal guessing-game

Independent Work, pages 25–27



• *BLM 10:* reflecting on role-playing



• *BLM 11:* cutting and gluing words to complete sentences

• *BLM 12:* drawing a lion's face



Warm-Ups for Acting

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Students will:

- identify ways in which the voice and body can be used to convey thoughts and feelings
- identify and correctly use drama vocabulary
- identify ways in which role-playing and movement are part of their daily experience

YOU WILL NEED

- space for movement
- chart paper
- pencil

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

Does the student:

- use his or her body and voice while participating in acting warm-ups?
- demonstrate an understanding of drama vocabulary?



You can spread this Exploration over several sessions. Use the students' interest to guide you in how many of the warm-ups to do at one time. You can repeat individual warm-ups at the beginning of other drama activities.

Reading the Text

After reading the text with the children, explain that actors, like other workers, have “tools” they use to do their job. Use pages 11–13 to show the children three of the actor’s tools: body, face, and voice. Use questions to elicit the information, for example:

- What is Simon using on this page?

Turn to pages 6–7. Ask:

- What is Simon doing on these pages?

Help the children to see that Simon is picturing a lion in his imagination, and that an actor’s imagination is another important acting tool. List all the tools on the chalkboard or on chart paper.

Working on the Drama

Ask the children if they know what athletes do before they practise or compete. Discuss why athletes do warm-ups before engaging in strenuous physical activities.

Explain that actors use warm-ups, too. They warm up their bodies, faces, voices, and even their imaginations. Ask the children for ideas about warm-ups an actor could use.

Invite the children to try some warm-ups themselves. Have them sit in a large circle, with enough space for movement.

Physical Warm-Up Have the children stand up. They will do warm-ups in the following order: head, shoulders, arms, waist, legs, ankles, feet. For each body part, choose one of these methods for their warm-up: a circular motion, back and forth, up and down, or side to side. Afterwards, ask the children which warm-ups they liked best.

Facial Warm-Up Ask the children to close their eyes. Say:

- Open your mouth as wide as you can.
- Scrunch up your face as much as possible.

- Stretch a smile as wide as you can.

Have the children open their eyes. Call out a variety of emotions, and ask them to show you the appropriate facial expression for each.

Vocal Warm-Up Stand in a circle with the children. Use your voice to create a sound with a rhythm, such as *ah ah ahhhh*, and ask the children to echo it back. Repeat with *ee ee eeee* and *oh oh ohhhh*. During these vocalizations, experiment with different sound qualities: loud, soft, rough, sweet, and so on.

Imagination Warm-Up Have the children sit in a circle. Hold up a pencil and mime swinging it like a baseball bat. Ask the children to guess what you are pretending to do and what the pencil is. Pass the pencil to a volunteer, and invite her or him to pretend it’s a different object and to mime an action. Continue the warm-up until everyone has had a turn.

Sharing

Invite the children to take turns leading one of the warm-ups.

Extension

Begin a story with a single sentence, for example:

- The other day I was walking down the street when, just ahead, I saw a lion snuffling around the bushes.

Continue the story by saying:

- Fortunately...

Invite a child to continue the story by finishing the sentence. Next, have a child complete a sentence beginning with *unfortunately*. Continue creating sentences with *fortunately* followed by *unfortunately* until everyone has contributed.

This Exploration works well with Stand-Alone Activity 3: “Movement Zoo” on page 123.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Students will:

- respond to familiar or predictable language patterns by joining in or using choral response
- use, with support, various cueing systems and strategies to construct meaning
- reread all or parts of a written piece to clarify their understanding of its meaning
- express their thoughts and feelings about a story

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

During independent reading, observe and make note of specific reading behaviours.

Does the student:

- show an interest in reading the book independently?
- subvocalize during silent reading?
- appear to read at a pace that “works”?

Setting the Scene

With the children, discuss that the word *actor* means “someone who pretends to be someone or something else.” Talk about how movies and plays have actors in them.

Invite the children to talk about favourite movies. Focus their attention on a character in the movie. Discuss how an actor “became” that character for the movie.

Then, ask the children to think of a time they might have seen a play. Where did the play happen?

Next, show the cover of the book to the children as you read and point to the words in the title. Say:

- This book is about Simon and his work as an actor.

To introduce the children to the thought bubbles that they will see throughout the book, say:

- Simon is thinking about the part he’s going to have in the play. What’s he going to be? That’s right, he’s going to play the part of a lion. And he’s holding a script in his hand. The play is called *The Lion’s Paw*. Let’s find out how Simon gets ready for his part in the play.

Reading the Text

Picture Walk

Throughout the Picture Walk, encourage the students to extend beyond the answers to your questions by also commenting on the illustrative materials (drawings and photographs).

Say to the children:

- Open your book and look at the picture on page 2.

Ask:

- Who do you think this person is? That’s right, it’s Simon.

- Who remembers what Simon’s work is? That’s right, Simon is an actor.

Say:

- Look at the picture on page 3. Simon says, “I work here.”

Ask:

- Where does Simon work? That’s right, he works in a theatre. Simon isn’t an actor in a movie. He’s an actor in a play on the stage.

Turn to page 4. Say:

- Look at the picture on the booklet Simon’s holding. Do you know what part Simon has in this play? That’s right, he’s a lion in this play.

Say:

- The play is called *The Lion’s Paw*, and for Simon to be able to play the part of a lion in this play, he has to be able to act like a lion.

Turn to page 6. Say:

- Look at the photograph. What is the lion doing?
- Look at Simon on page 7. Simon has to try to move the same way.

Turn to page 8. Say:

- Look at this photograph. Simon has to think about what a lion does.

Ask:

- What are the lions doing?

Say:

- Look at the photo on page 9. What is Simon trying to do? That’s right, he’s trying to do what a lion does.

Turn to page 10. Say:

- Look at the photograph. Simon has to show how a lion thinks and feels. Look at the lions’ eyes; look at the lions’ mouths.

Ask:



tip Remind students of any school plays they have watched, and find out whether any students have seen a play on stage. Talking about these experiences will help to connect Simon and his work to the students’ understanding.

- What are the lions doing in the bottom photograph? What are they thinking about? How are they feeling?

Look at the picture on page 11. Say:

- To show how a lion thinks and feels, Simon can use his body. How is Simon trying to look?

Turn to page 12. Say:

- Simon can use his body. What else can he use? That's right, he can use his face.

Ask:

- How is he trying to look?

Look at the picture on page 13. Say:

- Simon can also use his voice.

Turn to page 14. Say:

- Look at Simon's body; look at his face; look at his costume. What is Simon doing to try to look like a lion?

Look at page 15. Say:

- Simon can use his voice to sound like a lion and he can use his body to move like a lion.

Turn to page 16. Ask:

- Is this Simon or is this a lion? Are you sure? How do you know?

Say:

- Simon says, "I am Simon. I am a lion." What does he mean?

Independent Reading

Invite the children to read the book on their own with as little assistance as possible.

After Reading

Ask the children:

- Would any of you like to be an actor when you get older?

As children raise their hands, ask them what they think they'd like best about being an actor.

Revisit the Text

Use open-ended prompts to engage the children in conversation about the book.

Ask:

- Which photograph of the lions did you like best? Why?
- Do you think Simon would be a good lion in a play? Why?

Invite the children to think about specific information from the book. Ask:

- Where is the page that shows us where Simon works? That's right, it's page 3.
- On which page does Simon tell us he's an actor? Yes, that's right. It's page 2.
- Look at the picture on page 9. Who remembers what Simon is trying to do? That's right, he's trying to be like the lions on page 8.

Have the children focus on the way the story is told through language. Say:

- I'll start the sentence; you end it.

Say:

- My name is _____.
- I am a lion in this _____.
- I have to act like a _____.
- I have to show how a lion thinks and _____.
- I can use my body, I can use my face, I can use my _____.
- I am Simon, I am an _____.

Reinforce the Text

Invite the children to take turns reading the book aloud. To help reinforce their understanding, have the children complete **BLM 11**.





As a Group

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Students will:

- demonstrate control of their bodies when moving
- use the vocabulary and body movements of a particular character when role-playing

YOU WILL NEED

- space for movement
- chart paper and marker

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

Does the student:

- demonstrate control of his or her body during role-playing?

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Students will:

- identify ways in which the voice and body can be used to convey thoughts and feelings when role-playing
- demonstrate an understanding of different points of view

YOU WILL NEED

- a storybook that children are familiar with
- space for movement

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

Does the student:

- convey thoughts and feelings when role-playing?

Activity: I Can Be a...

After reading *I Am an Actor*, ask the children to think of another animal they could pretend to be. Together, choose one animal and brainstorm different ways that it can move. Say:

- Think about how an [elephant] moves its head.

Invite a volunteer to mime the movement and then ask the other children to copy it.

Use the same process to explore how the animal moves its body, feet, and so on.

Have the children brainstorm what the animal does. Ask:

- What would an [elephant] do every day? How does it eat?

Ask another volunteer to mime one of the movements and have the other children copy her or him.

Continue this pattern of brainstorming and demonstrating in order to explore the animal's facial expressions and sounds.

Locate an instrumental piece of music that could reflect the movement or behaviour of the animal you have chosen (elephant, see Grade 1 Audio CD Track 18). Have students mime to this music. Discuss some ways in which the sound of the music matches the animal's actions.

Extension

With the children, create a story about the animal. Print the story on chart paper. In small groups, have the children act out the story.

This Extension works well with Stand-Alone Activity 1: "Mood Walk" on page 121.

Activity: Freeze!

From your classroom library, choose a story that the children are already familiar with and read it aloud. Then ask them to help you divide the story into sections, and use chart paper to record their answers. Ask:

- What are the main things that happened in the story?
- How do you think the characters felt at these points in the story?

Separate the class into small groups. Re-read a section of the story that interested the children. Invite each group to freeze into a shape showing what is happening in that section. Then have the groups freeze into shapes showing what will happen next. Repeat the procedure for other sections of the book.

Extension

Invite each group to create a role-play for one section of the book. Have their role-play begin with the first shape and end with the second shape. Children will make up the other events that happen between the main events demonstrated by their two shapes.

Encourage children to reflect on their role-playing by using the following prompts:

- Did I use my voice the way the character would?
- Did I use my face and body?
- Did I become the character?

Give copies of **BLM 10** to the children. Have them list ways that they role-play. In the box, children can draw a character (person or animal) they would like to pretend to be.



Page 25

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Students will:
- follow basic instructions and directions
 - apply some of the basic rules of working with others

YOU WILL NEED

- chart paper and marker
- paper and crayons

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

- Does the student:
- participate eagerly in the experience?
 - combine movement, voice, and facial expression to “become” the animal of choice?

Activity: Picture It!

Ask the children to think of another animal that Simon could be in a play, or else an animal they would like to be in a play. Say:

- Close your eyes and think about how the animal looks.
- Now think about how it moves.
- Make a mind picture of you dressed up in a costume pretending to be the animal.

Have the children use crayons to draw a picture of themselves in the costume of the animal each has chosen.

With assistance from a volunteer or older student, have the children cut out their depictions so they can be used in a bulletin board “I Am an Actor” display.

Using a marker and a strip of paper, each child can print his or her name and the phrase “I am a(n) _____.” for placement below the art piece.

Extension

As a class, make a list of the different features of a lion’s face — eyes, nose, mouth, ears, perhaps a mane, and so on. Print each word on the chalkboard or chart paper. To reinforce their understanding, have the children complete **BLM 12**, in which they draw the features of a lion’s face.



Page 27

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Students will:
- present ideas in speech in a coherent sequence
 - begin to ask and respond to questions
 - allow others to speak, and wait their turn

YOU WILL NEED

- markers
- blank word cards

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

- Can the student:
- articulate three clues about the animal of choice?
 - follow the “Clue #1/2/3” pattern?

Activity: What Am I?

Invite each child to think of an animal (other than a lion) and to be ready to share three clues about it. The rest of the class will use these clues to guess its identity.

Consider helping the children by choosing an animal and providing three clues as an example. Say:

- Clue #1: I have four legs.
- Clue #2: I look like a horse.
- Clue #3: I have black and white stripes.

Extension

As a child gives clues and the other children guess the animal, record each animal’s name on a word card.

Place the word cards face down on the floor in the centre of the group. Invite the children, in turn, to choose a card, turn it over, show it to the group, and read the name of the animal aloud.

Afterwards, discuss how the children felt about role-playing. Ask:

- What was the best thing about role-playing?
- What was hardest about role-playing?

I Am an Actor

My name is _____

When I role-play a character, these are some things

I do: _____

Draw a character you would like to role-play.



I Am an Actor

BLM 11

My name is _____.

Cut out and glue the words to make sentences.

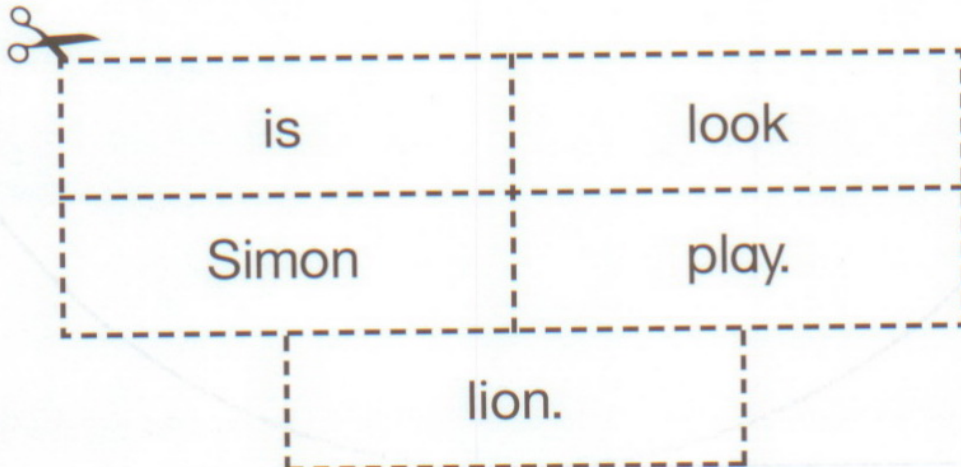
1. _____ is an actor.

2. Simon is a lion in the _____.

3. Simon has to act like a _____.

4. Simon can _____ like a lion.

5. Simon _____ a lion.



My name is _____ .

Draw a lion's face.

