

Jabberwocky

Poetry and Performance

Mr. Guidry · Drama at Ravenswood · Chicago Public Schools

How do we make meaning together?

SPAN	MONDAY, AUGUST 24 - THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2026 (MODULE 1)
Class days	23 attendance days, 50 minutes, 5 days per week
Space	Black box theatre, roughly 30 x 25 ft. flipFORM risers both long walls. No desks, no student chairs. All writing on clipboards, at the shelving wall, or on the floor.
Central text	Jabberwocky by Lewis Carroll (1871), public domain
Essential question	How do we make meaning together?
Enduring understanding	Meaning is built by a company, not handed to it.
Standards	Illinois Arts Learning Standards, Theatre. Grade 4 indicators only.
Summative task	A full company performance of all seven stanzas, with student-chosen lighting and sound, performed for a peer audience.

Rights. Jabberwocky was published in 1871 in Through the Looking-Glass and is public domain in the United States. You can perform it, print it, cut it, and post it with no licensing question. If you use recorded music for the sound cues, that is a separate rights question for a public showcase, and student-made sound avoids it entirely.

The arc at a glance

WEEK	DAYS	DATES	FOCUS
Week 1	Days 1-5	Aug 24-28	Company and collaboration. Students build three original tongue twisters and adopt them as the permanent warm-up.
Week 2	Days 6-10	Aug 31-Sep 4	Tableau craft: levels, frozen action, emotion. First contact with the poem, sound before text. The Nonsense Word Summit.
Week 3	Days 11-15	Sep 8-14	Stanza crews form. Voice work, three tableaux per stanza, named transitions.
Week 4	Days 16-20	Sep 15-21	Peer feedback. Lighting and sound design. The whole-company bookend stanzas. First full stitch.
Week 5	Days 21-23	Sep 22-24	Tech rehearsal, dress rehearsal, performance, reflection.

The 50-minute shape, every day

Same shape all 23 days. Students should be able to predict the period without being told. That predictability is what lets you change the content underneath it.

TIME	SEGMENT	WHAT HAPPENS
0-3 min	Enter and settle	Students enter, find a riser spot, read the projected agenda. No talking from you. The slide does the work.
3-12 min	Warm-up	THE THREE once the class has written them, plus one game that carries today's objective.
12-20 min	Direct teach or clinic	One skill, named, demonstrated, tried once as a whole group. Never longer than eight minutes.
20-42 min	Crew work	The real work of the day. You circulate. Dramaturgs hold clipboards.
42-48 min	Share and respond	One or two crews show. Class responds using I noticed and I wondered.
48-50 min	Exit ticket and out	Oral most days, written on the days marked written. Exit ticket happens at the door, not seated.

Eight things added to the unit

Each one is cheap, fits the room, and does instructional work.

1. The Nonsense Word Wall

The shelving wall becomes a living lexicon. Each invented word gets a card: the word, the crew's agreed definition, and a drawn symbol or gesture icon. Cards go up on Day 8, get argued over on Day 9, and get retired on Day 23 when the class decides which definitions the performance actually proved. It costs you ten half-sheets and a roll of tape.

2. Sound before text

On Day 8 the poem is heard twice with eyes closed and no projected text. Students answer with their bodies first. Only then do they see the spelling. The order matters: it forces them to trust prosody, which is the exact skill the performance runs on, and it removes decoding as a barrier on first contact.

3. The dramaturg rotation

One student per crew per day holds the clipboard, records the crew's decisions, and reads them back before dismissal. Real word, real job. It gives a high-status non-performing role to students who do not want to be watched, it produces your participation record without you writing anything, and it means a crew that changes its mind on Thursday can be shown what it decided on Tuesday.

4. Gibberish Translation

One partner performs the stanza in Carroll's words while the other translates into plain speech simultaneously. It reveals comprehension faster than any question you could ask, and students who code-switch between languages daily are the strongest in the room at it. Worth naming that out loud.

5. The Color-Mood Auction

Before crews choose their lighting, you throw one Par64 color on the empty space and students physically walk to the stanza they think it belongs to, then defend it. Ninety seconds per color. By the time crews decide, they are choosing color as meaning rather than color as favorite.

6. The Cue Book

One clipboard holds the whole show's cue sheet: stanza, cue number, light, sound, who calls it. A student scribe maintains it and reads it aloud at tech. It makes standby and GO real vocabulary, and it gives you three more genuine production jobs on performance day.

7. The Jabberwock is never seen

A design constraint: the monster may only be built from ensemble bodies, light, and sound. No costume, no puppet, no purchase. It forces invention, it costs nothing, and it is a defensible artistic choice rather than a budget excuse.

8. The repeated stanza as the lesson

Stanzas 1 and 7 are word-for-word identical, and Day 19 exists entirely to make students notice that. The words did not change. The monster is dead. Everything that is different at the end is a choice the company made. That is interpretation, and this poem hands it to you for free.

Daily plans

WEEK 1

DAY 1 MONDAY, AUGUST 24

What kind of company do we want to be?

OBJECTIVE I can help build our company agreements and show respect for everyone's job in this room.

STANDARD TH:Cr2.1.4.b

Agenda

- Enter, find your spot on the risers
- Room tour: playing space, risers, shelving wall
- Name Cross
- Game: Upsies Downsies
- Build our company agreements
- Statue

EXIT TICKET • ORAL

Whip-around: one word for how our company should feel.

TEACHER NOTE Agreements get built, not posted. Ask what they need from each other to take a risk in front of people, then write their words on chart paper and hang it on the shelving wall for the whole module. Keep it to four or five. Come back to it every time something goes sideways.

ACCESS Run Upsies Downsies with a Spanish script alongside the English one. Name Cross gives non-speakers a gesture-only entry: cross the space and give your gesture, name optional on day one.

DAY 2 TUESDAY, AUGUST 25

How does a group make a decision fast?

OBJECTIVE I can offer an idea, accept somebody else's idea, and help my group decide in under a minute.

STANDARD TH:Cr2.1.4.a

Agenda

- Warm-up: Boom Slap Grab
- Game: Splat
- Collaboration lab: Yes-And, Yes-But, and Yes-Instead
- Group challenge: pick a letter in 30 seconds
- Statue

EXIT TICKET • ORAL

Turn to a partner: name one idea you gave up today, and why that was fine.

TEACHER NOTE The 30-second letter challenge is the real lesson. Groups that argue past the timer lose the letter and get assigned one. Do it twice so the second round is faster. Name the skill out loud: theatre companies decide fast and revise later.

ACCESS Chunk the collaboration lab into three separate 90-second rounds instead of one long explanation. Post the three sentence frames on the shelving wall: 'Yes, and we could...' / 'Yes, but what if...' / 'Yes, instead let's...'

DAY 3 WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26

Why do actors warm up their mouths?

OBJECTIVE I can use my articulators to say hard sounds clearly, and build a tongue twister with my group.

STANDARD TH:Cr3.1.4.b

Agenda

- Warm-up: articulation ladder for lips, teeth, tongue, jaw
- Game: Bippity Bippity Bop
- Tongue Twister Build 1: choose a letter, list words, make a sentence
- Test it out loud, three times fast
- Statue

EXIT TICKET • WRITTEN

Index card: write your group's tongue twister. Circle the hardest word.

TEACHER NOTE Teach the word articulators and mean it. Lips, teeth, tongue, jaw, soft palate. The twister must be a sentence that tells you something, not a word list. That constraint is what makes it drama and not a drill.

ACCESS Clipboards for the card. One scribe per group, but every member has to say the twister aloud before the group turns the card in. Non-writers can draw the hardest word.

DAY 4 THURSDAY, AUGUST 27

What makes a tongue twister actually hard?

OBJECTIVE I can revise my group's tongue twister to make it harder to say and still make sense.

STANDARD TH:Cr3.1.4.a

Agenda

- Warm-up: yesterday's twisters, three times each
- Game: Zombie Tag
- Tongue Twister Build 2
- Revise Build 1: swap one word to make it harder
- Cross-test: trade twisters with another group
- Statue

EXIT TICKET • ORAL

Which was harder to say, yours or the one you traded for? Why?

TEACHER NOTE Cross-testing is the assessment. If another group can say it easily on the first try, it isn't hard enough yet. Introduce revise and refine as job words, not corrections.

ACCESS Zombie Tag can be walked instead of run. Offer the walking version out loud to everyone, not to specific students. Sensory opt-out: the shelving wall is the quiet zone, and students there still call the freeze.

DAY 5 FRIDAY, AUGUST 28

How do we pick the best three?

OBJECTIVE I can help my class name what makes a good warm-up twister, then use those rules to choose our three.

STANDARD TH:Re9.1.4.a

Agenda

- Warm-up: The West Wind Blows
- Tongue Twister Build 3
- Class criteria: what makes a warm-up twister good?
- Audition every twister
- Vote and adopt THE THREE
- Give each one a gesture

EXIT TICKET • PHYSICAL + ORAL

Stand next to the twister you are proudest of. Say why in one sentence.

TEACHER NOTE This is the day the class writes its own rubric, which is why the standard is Re9. Take their criteria verbatim, three or four of them, and hold the audition against those criteria out loud. THE THREE become the permanent warm-up for the rest of the module and you never have to plan a warm-up again.

ACCESS The gesture is the accommodation. Once each twister has a movement, a student who cannot get the words out can still be fully inside the warm-up.

WEEK 2

DAY 6 MONDAY, AUGUST 31

How can a frozen body tell a story?

OBJECTIVE I can build a tableau that uses levels, frozen action, and one clear emotion.

STANDARD TH:Cr1.1.4.a

Agenda

- Warm-up: THE THREE with gestures
- Game: Statue
- Tableau clinic: levels, frozen action, emotion
- 10 Second Tableaux with given circumstances
- Gallery walk: name what you see

EXIT TICKET • ORAL

Which of the three was hardest for your group today: levels, frozen action, or emotion?

TEACHER NOTE Three criteria, all module long, same three words every time. Levels means high, middle, low bodies. Frozen action means the picture is caught mid-motion, not posed. Emotion means face and posture agree. Say given circumstances every time you give them a scenario.

ACCESS Levels are a built-in choice of intensity. Low level can mean seated or lying down, which keeps a student who cannot stand for long fully in the picture at full status.

DAY 7 TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

How many pictures does a story need?

OBJECTIVE I can work with my group to build three tableaux that show a beginning, a middle, and an end.

STANDARD TH:Cr1.1.4.c

Agenda

- Warm-up: THE THREE
- Game: Impossible Sculptures
- Three-Picture Story from your own tongue twister
- Add transitions: how do you get from picture to picture?
- Share three groups

EXIT TICKET • ORAL

In your group's story, who or what changed the most from picture 1 to picture 3?

TEACHER NOTE Using their own twisters here matters. They already own the content, so all the cognitive load goes to the tableau craft. The exit question is quietly teaching character arc.

ACCESS Sentence frame on the wall: 'In picture 1 the ____ was _____. By picture 3 the ____ was _____.'

DAY 8 WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

Can a word mean something before you know what it means?

OBJECTIVE I can listen to unfamiliar words and describe what they sound like they mean.

STANDARD TH:Re8.1.4.c

Agenda

- Warm-up: THE THREE
- Game: Clap Pass, and learn the word CUE
- Eyes closed, no text: I read stanza 1 twice
- Body first: show me slithy
- Now look at the words
- Start the Sound Detective chart

EXIT TICKET · WRITTEN

Word Wall card: pick one word. Draw or write what it sounds like it means.

TEACHER NOTE Sound before text, and do not skip this order. The whole unit depends on students trusting their ear before their eye. No projected poem for the first ten minutes. Their bodies answer first, then they see the spelling.

ACCESS This is the day to name out loud that every student in the room is a beginner with these words. For your multilingual learners this text is genuinely level ground, and saying so is worth doing. Cards can be drawn instead of written.

Who gets to decide what a word means?

OBJECTIVE I can argue for a definition, listen to a different one, and help my group agree on one.

STANDARD TH:Cr2.1.4.a

Agenda

- Warm-up: THE THREE
- Game: Kitty in the Corner
- The Nonsense Word Summit
- Each group takes two words, argues, posts to the Word Wall
- Carroll's Reveal: what Humpty Dumpty claims

EXIT TICKET • ORAL

Name one word where the class definition beat the one you brought in.

TEACHER NOTE Groups must commit to a definition in writing before you show Carroll's version. Reveal after commitment, never before. Then the real question: does the author get the last word? Let them keep their definition if they can defend it. That is dramaturgy.

ACCESS Give each group a card with their two words already printed, plus a picture-or-words choice for the definition. Spanish glossing works well on the real words in the poem (jaws, claws, sword, foe, tree, thought) rather than on the invented ones.

How does my body change a word's meaning?

OBJECTIVE I can change my voice and my body to show two different meanings for the same nonsense word.

STANDARD TH:Pr4.1.4.b

Agenda

- Warm-up: THE THREE
- Game: Hitchhiker
- Word physicalization: same word, two opposite ways
- Gibberish Translation partners
- First full read-through, all seven stanzas

EXIT TICKET • PHYSICAL

Show me outgrabe with your body only. Freeze. Hold for three seconds.

TEACHER NOTE Same word, two opposite ways, is the core exercise of the unit. Make frumious tender, then make it vicious. Once they feel that the word did not change but the meaning did, they understand what a performer actually does.

ACCESS Gibberish Translation is built for this room. One partner performs the stanza in Carroll's words, the other translates into plain speech at the same time. Students who code-switch daily are the strongest in the room at this, and it is worth letting that show.

WEEK 3

DAY 11 TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

What actually happens in my stanza?

OBJECTIVE I can read my crew's stanza aloud and say what happens in it in my own words.

STANDARD TH:Re8.1.4.c

Agenda

- Warm-up: THE THREE
- Game: Bunny Bunny
- Stanza casting: five stanzas, five crews
- Read it three ways: whisper, shout, slow
- Dramaturg's job: mark the words you do not own yet
- Plain-English retell to the class

EXIT TICKET • ORAL

One per crew: your stanza in one sentence, no nonsense words allowed.

TEACHER NOTE No school Monday, September 7, Labor Day. Crews get stanzas 2 through 6. Stanzas 1 and 7 belong to the whole company. Start the dramaturg rotation today: one student per crew per day holds the clipboard, records the crew's decisions, and reads them back before you dismiss. Real title, real job, and it solves your record keeping.

ACCESS Assign crews rather than letting them self-select, and balance for the two homerooms' needs. Read three ways gives every student three chances at the same text at three different risk levels.

DAY 12 WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

How does voice carry meaning?

OBJECTIVE I can use pace, pitch, and volume on purpose so my line means something specific.

STANDARD TH:Pr4.1.4.b

Agenda

- Warm-up: THE THREE
- Game: Splat
- Voice lab: pace, pitch, volume, punch
- Assign lines inside your crew
- Run your stanza with one deliberate vocal choice per line

EXIT TICKET • ORAL

Name your vocal choice with a real word: pace, pitch, volume, or punch.

TEACHER NOTE Four words, and require them. A student who says ‘I said it scary’ gets asked which of the four made it scary. That is the whole lesson. Lines can be solo, paired, or choral, and choral is a legitimate choice rather than a fallback.

ACCESS Choral delivery is the participation-mode choice here. A student can be fully assessed on Pr4.1.4.b inside a choral line, because the vocal choice is still theirs to name.

DAY 13 THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

What is the most important picture in my stanza?

OBJECTIVE I can build my crew’s first tableau so an audience can read the action and the mood.

STANDARD TH:Cr1.1.4.a

Agenda

- Warm-up: THE THREE
- Game: Tableau Telephone
- Build Tableau 1
- Crew check: levels? frozen action? emotion?
- Two crews share, class names what it sees

EXIT TICKET • WRITTEN

Crew card: name your Tableau 1 in exactly three words. Dramaturg writes it.

TEACHER NOTE Tableau Telephone doubles as your formative check. Crew A holds a picture, Crew B looks for five seconds, then rebuilds it. What survives the copy is what was actually readable. Point that out.

ACCESS Three words is a hard cap, which helps rather than limits. Emerging writers can say the three words while the dramaturg writes.

DAY 14 FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

How do three pictures make a story?

OBJECTIVE I can work with my crew to build tableaux 2 and 3 so our stanza has a beginning, middle, and end.

STANDARD TH:Cr3.1.4.a

Agenda

- Warm-up: THE THREE
- Game: Slow Motion Race
- Build Tableaux 2 and 3
- Order test: can another crew guess the order?
- Crew notes with your dramaturg

EXIT TICKET • ORAL

Which tableau does your crew need more time on, and why?

TEACHER NOTE The order test is the point. If an outside crew cannot put your three pictures in order, the story is not in the bodies yet. Send them back in with one specific fix rather than a general note.

ACCESS Slow Motion Race is a regulation tool disguised as a game. Use it on any day the room comes in hot.

DAY 15 MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

What happens between the pictures?

OBJECTIVE I can move from one tableau to the next on a cue, in a way the audience can follow.

STANDARD TH:Cr3.1.4.a

Agenda

- Warm-up: THE THREE
- Game: Clap Pass, cue edition
- Transition lab: melt, snap, ripple, travel
- Choose your crew's three transitions
- Full stanza run: voice, tableaux, transitions

EXIT TICKET • PHYSICAL + ORAL

Say the name of your transition style, then show it in one move.

TEACHER NOTE Four named transitions give them vocabulary instead of guesswork. Melt is slow and continuous, snap is instant, ripple passes body to body, travel means feet move. A crew that can name its transition can repeat it, and repeatable is the whole game in rehearsal.

ACCESS Transitions are where a low-intensity role becomes visible and valuable. A student who holds still while four others ripple is doing real work, and the audience will see it.

WEEK 4

DAY 16 TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

What did you actually see?

OBJECTIVE I can watch another crew and name one specific artistic choice they made.

STANDARD TH:Re7.1.4.a

Agenda

- Warm-up: THE THREE
- Game: Wink Murder
- Rough share: all five crews, no stopping
- Feedback protocol: I noticed / I wondered
- Crew huddle: pick one note to act on tomorrow

EXIT TICKET · WRITTEN

Index card: one thing you noticed in another crew's stanza that you want to steal.

TEACHER NOTE Hold the line on I noticed and I wondered. No good job, no I liked it. The standard says identify artistic choices, so the sentence has to contain a choice: a level, a transition, a vocal move. Tell them stealing a good idea and saying where you got it is what theatre companies do.

ACCESS Sentence frames posted: 'I noticed that Crew ____ ...' and 'I wondered what would happen if ...' Cards can be one line.

What color is your stanza?

OBJECTIVE I can choose a light color that supports my crew's stanza and explain why it fits.

STANDARD TH:Cr1.1.4.b TH:Pr5.1.4.b

Agenda

- Warm-up: THE THREE
- Color-Mood Auction: body vote on each Par64 color
- Board demo: the DMX controller, with real words
- Crew color choice, plus a reason
- Log it in the Cue Book

EXIT TICKET • ORAL

One sentence: we chose ____ because our stanza feels ____.

TEACHER NOTE Run the auction before the crews choose. Throw one color on the empty space, students walk to the stanza they think it belongs to, and defend it. Ninety seconds per color, five colors. By the time crews decide they are fluent in color as meaning instead of color as favorite.

ACCESS The body vote is the access move: a student who will not raise a hand will still walk to a spot. Board demo gets a picture card of the controller taped to the board itself.

Can sound do work that words cannot?

OBJECTIVE I can choose a sound or music cue that supports my crew's stanza and say what it adds.

STANDARD TH:Re9.1.4.b

Agenda

- Warm-up: THE THREE
- Game: Spaghetti
- Sound lab: three clips per crew, pick one
- Or build the sound yourselves, with bodies and voices
- Log every cue in the Cue Book

EXIT TICKET • PHYSICAL + ORAL

Make the sound of the Jabberwock with your voice. Then name the mood it makes.

TEACHER NOTE Offer the body-made option seriously and it will usually beat the clips. A crew that decides the Jabberwock is thirty voices burbling from the risers has made a genuine design decision. Costs nothing, and Re9.1.4.b is satisfied either way.

ACCESS Noise expectations stated before the sound lab, and a named quiet role: the Cue Book scribe works at the shelving wall away from the speakers.

How does a whole company open and close a poem?

OBJECTIVE I can perform the opening and closing stanza together with the whole company.

STANDARD TH:Cr1.1.4.c

Agenda

- Warm-up: THE THREE
- Game: Jabberwocky Chase
- Whole company stanza 1: choral voice and one shared tableau
- Same words, different ending: what changes for stanza 7?
- Run 1 and 7 back to back

EXIT TICKET • ORAL

Stanza 1 and stanza 7 are identical words. Name one thing that should feel different at the end.

TEACHER NOTE The repeated stanza is the best teaching moment in the poem, so give it a full day. Carroll wrote the identical words twice and the second time the monster is dead. Nothing changes but the company's choices. If they get this, they understand interpretation.

ACCESS Choral speaking means every student is in the opening and closing regardless of what they took on inside a crew. Nobody sits out the bookends.

How do the parts become one piece?

OBJECTIVE I can find my place in the running order and hand off to the next crew cleanly.

STANDARD TH:Cr3.1.4.c

Agenda

- Warm-up: THE THREE
- Places drill: the running order, 1 through 7
- First full stitch, no tech
- Handoff repair: fix the two roughest seams
- Run it again

EXIT TICKET • ORAL

Who do you hand off to, and what is your handoff signal?

TEACHER NOTE Teach places as a command and use it for the rest of the module. The seams between crews are where this piece will fail, so spend the time there and not on polishing a stanza that already works. Two seams, ten minutes, then run it.

ACCESS A physical running-order card taped to the shelving wall, with each crew's stanza number and a symbol. Students check it themselves instead of asking.

WEEK 5

DAY 21 TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

What does a tech rehearsal actually do?

OBJECTIVE I can hold my place through a cue-to-cue and take a note from the director.

STANDARD TH:Cr3.1.4.c

Agenda

- Warm-up: THE THREE
- Cue Book review: read the cue sheet out loud
- Cue-to-cue: lights and sound only
- Student cue caller and board operator on duty
- Notes: I give three, you repeat them back

EXIT TICKET • ORAL

Repeat one of today's three notes back to me.

TEACHER NOTE Cue-to-cue means you skip the middle of every stanza and rehearse only the transitions in and out. Tell them that is what it is called and why professionals do it. The cue caller and board operator are the highest-status jobs in the room today, and they are the right jobs for students who do not want to be seen performing.

ACCESS Board operator, cue caller, and Cue Book scribe are three real production roles available today. Name them as promotions, not alternatives.

What is left to fix?

OBJECTIVE I can run the whole piece without stopping and name one thing I will do better tomorrow.

STANDARD TH:Pr6.1.4.a

Agenda

- Warm-up: THE THREE
- Dress rehearsal: props, full tech, nobody stops
- Notes session
- Second run if there is time
- Self-assessment, part 1

EXIT TICKET • WRITTEN

Half sheet: finish the sentence. Tomorrow I will ____.

TEACHER NOTE Nobody stops is the rule and it is the lesson. Whatever breaks, they play through it, and then you talk about it. Self-assessment part 1 is their prediction of their own performance, which they will compare against part 2 tomorrow.

ACCESS Props only if you already own them. Keep the design constraint that the Jabberwock is made of bodies, light, and sound, never a costume, which means no purchase and a better piece.

What did we make?

OBJECTIVE I can perform for an audience and reflect on the choices our company made.

STANDARD TH:Pr6.1.4.a TH:Re9.1.4.c TH:Cn10.1.4.a

Agenda

- Warm-up: THE THREE, one last time
- Places
- PERFORMANCE
- Circle reflection
- Self-assessment, part 2
- Word Wall retirement: which definition stuck?

EXIT TICKET • ORAL

Full circle: one frabjous thing this company did.

TEACHER NOTE Invite a real audience. The kindergarten or 2nd grade drama class in your rotation is the right size and Pr6.1.4.a literally says with peers as an audience. Word Wall retirement is the closing ritual: read the definitions the class wrote on day 9 and ask which ones the performance proved right.

ACCESS Every student has a job at performance: on stage, on the board, calling cues, or holding the Cue Book. There is no audience role for company members.

Game library

Every game carries the day's objective. Rules are how I run them. Correct them to match your room. Each entry has the four parts: what it carries, short rules, a level-up, and debrief questions.

Upsies Downsies

Carries: *Fast group decisions under pressure*

Rules. Cups scattered in the playing space. Team 1 turns cups upright, Team 2 turns them upside down. Once a team moves a cup, the other team cannot flip that same cup back. Ten seconds on go.

Level up. Cut the time to five seconds, or add a rule that no student may touch two cups in a row.

Debrief. How did your team decide who went where? Did anybody plan, or did everyone just run?

Boom Slap Grab

Carries: *Ensemble rhythm and shared attention*

Rules. Circle. Establish a three-beat rhythm the whole circle keeps together: boom (stomp), slap (thighs), grab (clap or catch). Pass a word or a name on the third beat.

Level up. Speed up every four cycles. Then reverse direction on a call.

Debrief. What happened to the rhythm when one person rushed? Who fixed it?

Splat

Carries: *Focus, reaction time, staying in the circle*

Rules. Circle, one student in the middle. The middle points at a player and says splat. That player ducks, the two beside them splat each other. Slowest is out and joins the middle. Circle tightens as players leave.

Level up. Two players in the middle at once.

Debrief. What were your eyes doing right before you got splatted?

Statue

Carries: *Freeze control, holding a shape, tableau readiness*

Rules. Students move through the space. On the freeze cue they become a statue of whatever you name. Hold until released. No wobbling, no laughing out of the shape.

Level up. Name an emotion instead of an object. Then name a level as well: low statue of pride.

Debrief. Which part of your body was hardest to hold still? What did your face do?

Name Cross

Carries: *Names, eye contact, crossing the playing space*

Rules. Company on two sides of the space. A student crosses, makes eye contact with someone on the far side, says their own name and gives a gesture. That person crosses next and returns it.

Level up. Cross while giving the previous person's name and gesture before your own.

Debrief. Whose gesture do you remember? Why that one?

Bippity Bippity Bop

Carries: *Articulation under pressure, quick thinking*

Rules. Circle, one in the middle. Middle points and says bippity bippity bop. The pointed player must say bop before the middle finishes. If the middle says only bop, the pointed player stays silent. Errors swap places.

Level up. Add a rule where the middle can also call a three-person shape that must be built in three seconds.

Debrief. Which sounds tripped your mouth? Which articulator were you using?

Zombie Tag

Carries: *Names, sustained focus, slow physical control*

Rules. One zombie moves slowly toward a player with arms out, groaning. The chosen player must call out another player's name before being tagged. That named player becomes the zombie's new target.

Level up. Two zombies. Or the saving name has to be said with a specific emotion.

Debrief. Why is it harder to remember a name when someone is walking at you?

Clap Pass

Carries: *Cue passing, ensemble timing, the word cue*

Rules. Circle. A clap is passed person to person around the circle, as clean and as fast as possible. Two players must look at each other for the clap to land. Time the lap.

Level up. Reverse on a double clap. Send two claps in opposite directions.

Debrief. What happened at the spot where the clap dropped? What is a cue?

The West Wind Blows

Carries: *Company knowledge, finding shared ground*

Rules. Everyone on a spot, one player without one in the middle. Middle says the west wind blows for anyone who, and finishes with something true about themselves. Everyone it is true for changes spots. Whoever is left without a spot goes next.

Level up. Statements must be about the work: anyone who is nervous about their stanza.

Debrief. What did you learn about somebody in here that you did not know?

Impossible Sculptures

Carries: *Group problem-solving, negotiating a shape without talking*

Rules. Groups get a challenge that cannot be solved by one body: a sculpture with only three feet on the floor, or a shape with four hands touching and no two heads at the same height. Silent build, thirty seconds.

Level up. No talking at all, and one member must have their eyes closed.

Debrief. How did your group communicate with no words? Who led, and how could you tell?

Kitty in the Corner

Carries: *Navigating the space, peripheral awareness*

Rules. Players hold spots around the edges of the space, one in the middle. On a call, everyone must change spots. The middle player tries to take a spot during the crossing.

Level up. Everyone must cross through the center, or must travel at a named level.

Debrief. How do you cross a full room without a collision?

Hitchhiker

Carries: *Physical and vocal transformation, character on demand*

Rules. Four players in an imaginary car. A hitchhiker enters with a strong physical and vocal choice. Everyone in the car takes on that same choice, then the front passenger exits and everyone shifts up.

Level up. The hitchhiker's choice must be a nonsense word from the poem instead of a character type.

Debrief. What changed in your body first when the new hitchhiker got in?

Slow Motion Race

Carries: *Physical control, tension, regulation*

Rules. Line up. Race across the space in the slowest possible motion. Last one across wins. Any stop, wobble, or speed-up sends you back.

Level up. Race in slow motion while delivering a line of the poem at normal speed.

Debrief. What does slowing your body down do to your breathing?

Spaghetti

Carries: *Tension and relaxation, whole-body release*

Rules. Call a state and the company embodies it head to toe: spaghetti uncooked, spaghetti cooked, spaghetti in the pot. Move through the space in each state.

Level up. Add a level and an emotion: cooked spaghetti, low level, furious.

Debrief. Which state was easier to hold? Where do you carry tension?

Wink Murder

Carries: *Observation, subtlety, small choices reading across a room*

Rules. One student is secretly the winker. Company mills through the space. A wink takes a player out with a three-second dramatic death. Anyone may accuse once. Two wrong accusations and the accusers are out.

Level up. Deaths must be silent, or must be built from a word in the poem.

Debrief. How small can a choice be and still be seen from the risers?

Bunny Bunny

Carries: *Energy passing, focus, committed nonsense*

Rules. Circle. One player is bunny, hands framing the face, chanting bunny bunny. The two neighbors chant along with side hands. Bunny passes across the circle by pointing. Drops and hesitations swap the bunny.

Level up. Speed rounds, then add a second bunny.

Debrief. Committing all the way to something silly is a skill. Where else did you need it this week?

Tableau Telephone

Carries: *Tableau readability, formative check on clarity*

Rules. Crew A builds a tableau. Crew B looks for five seconds, turns away, then rebuilds it from memory. Compare the two. Then Crew C copies Crew B's version.

Level up. Three crews deep, then compare the last version to the original.

Debrief. What survived the copy? What got lost? Why did that part survive?

10 Second Tableaux

Carries: *Fast group tableau on given circumstances*

Rules. Call a given circumstance. Groups have ten seconds to build a frozen picture with levels, frozen action, and a clear emotion. Count them down out loud.

Level up. Five seconds. Or no talking during the build.

Debrief. Which of the three criteria did you get, and which one did you drop when the clock ran out?

Jabberwocky Chase

Carries: *Whole-company energy before the choral bookends*

Rules. Half the company is the hero, half is the Jabberwock, moving as two connected masses across the space in slow motion. On a freeze cue both sides hold, and you name which side has the advantage in the picture.

Level up. Add the closing stanza spoken by the winning side.

Debrief. When the whole company moved as one thing, what did that feel like from inside it?

Game by Royal Decree

Carries: *Choice as a regulation tool*

Rules. One student, chosen by whatever fair method you like, decrees the warm-up game from the class list. The decree is final. That student explains the rules, not you.

Level up. The decreer must also name what the game is good for before the company plays it.

Debrief. Why did you pick that one for today?

Assessment

Process over product. Effort, risk-taking, collaboration, and revision outweigh polish. Students score themselves; you calibrate and confirm.

Single-point performance rubric

One column of criteria. You write evidence to the left when a student is still working toward it, and to the right when they go past it. No four-column grid.

CRITERION	STANDARD	WHAT PROFICIENT LOOKS LIKE IN THIS ROOM
Collaboration	TH:Cr2.1.4.b	Gives ideas to the crew and takes ideas from the crew. Handles a rejected idea without leaving the work.
Devising	TH:Cr2.1.4.a	Contributes original ideas about what the stanza means and what it should look like.
Revision	TH:Cr3.1.4.a	Changes a choice when the crew or the audience shows it is not reading, and can say what changed.
Vocal choice	TH:Pr4.1.4.b	Makes a deliberate choice in pace, pitch, volume, or punch, and can name which one.
Tableau	TH:Cr1.1.4.a	Builds a picture with a clear level, a frozen action, and an emotion an audience can read.
Design reasoning	TH:Cr1.1.4.b / TH:Pr5.1.4.b	Proposes a light or sound choice and gives a reason tied to the stanza's mood.
Responding	TH:Re7.1.4.a	Names a specific artistic choice in another crew's work, not a general opinion.
Performance	TH:Pr6.1.4.a	Holds focus and place from the first cue to the last, and plays through a mistake.

Tracking, under five minutes a week

The dramaturg clipboards do the recording. Each day the crew's dramaturg writes the crew's decisions and the names of who contributed what. You collect five clipboards, not thirty names. Once a week, scan the five sheets and mark only

the outliers: a student who has not appeared in any crew record, and a student who appears in every one. Everyone else is presumed on track.

- Written exit tickets on Days 3, 8, 13, 16, and 22 give you five paper artifacts across the module. That is enough.
- Self-assessment runs twice: prediction at dress rehearsal, actual after performance. The gap between the two is the reflection conversation.
- Credit is earned through channels, not lost through penalties. Performing, running the board, calling cues, and keeping the Cue Book all count equally.

Formative checkpoints built into the games

DAY	CHECKPOINT	WHAT IT TELLS YOU
Day 4	Cross-testing tongue twisters	If another group says it easily on the first try, it is not hard enough. Revision target, not a grade.
Day 13	Tableau Telephone	What survives being copied is what was actually readable. Tells you which crews need clarity work.
Day 14	Order test	If an outside crew cannot put your three pictures in order, the story is not in the bodies yet.
Day 16	Rough share	Full run of all five stanzas with no stopping. This is the honest midpoint picture.
Day 20	First stitch	Where the seams fail is where the remaining three days go.

Standards coverage map

Every code below is a grade 4 Illinois indicator, quoted in full.

CODE	DAYS	ILLINOIS INDICATOR
TH:Cr1.1.4.a	6, 13	Articulate the visual details of imagined worlds and improvised stories that support the given circumstances in a drama/theatre work.
TH:Cr1.1.4.b	17	Propose design ideas that support the story and given circumstances in a drama/theatre work.
TH:Cr1.1.4.c	7, 19	Collaborate to determine how characters interrelate to support the overall story and given circumstances in a drama/theatre work.
TH:Cr2.1.4.a	2, 9	Collaborate to devise original ideas for a drama/theatre work by asking questions about characters and plots.
TH:Cr2.1.4.b	1	Demonstrate mutual respect for self and others and their roles in preparing or devising a drama/theatre work.
TH:Cr3.1.4.a	4, 14, 15	Collaborate with peers to revise, refine, and adapt ideas to fit the given parameters of a drama/theatre work.
TH:Cr3.1.4.b	3	Develop physical and vocal exercise techniques for an improvised or scripted drama/theatre work.
TH:Cr3.1.4.c	20, 21	Collaborate on solutions to design and technical problems that arise in rehearsal for a drama/theatre work.
TH:Pr4.1.4.b	10, 12	Alter voice and body to expand and articulate nuances of a character in a scene.
TH:Pr5.1.4.b	17	Propose the use of technical elements in a drama/theatre work.
TH:Pr6.1.4.a	22, 23	Communicate for a specific purpose through a drama/theatre work with peers as an audience.
TH:Re7.1.4.a	16	Identify artistic choices made in a drama/theatre work through participation and observation.

CODE	DAYS	ILLINOIS INDICATOR
TH:Re8.1.4.c	8, 11	Investigate the text and make connections to personal feelings in a drama/theatre work.
TH:Re9.1.4.a	5	Propose criteria as a class or group to evaluate drama/theatre work.
TH:Re9.1.4.b	18	Investigate how technical elements may support a theme or idea in a drama/theatre work.
TH:Re9.1.4.c	23	Observe how a character's choices impact an audience's perspective in a drama/theatre work.
TH:Cn10.1.4.a	23	Identify the ways drama/theatre work reflects the perspectives of a community or culture.

Grade 4 indicators this unit does not reach. TH:Re8.1.4.b (cultural elements), TH:Cn11.1.4.a (community and social issues), and TH:Cn11.2.4.a and b (cross-cultural storytelling, historical sources) are not covered here. Carroll is squarely the white Western canon, which is a real limit of this unit. A unit built out of your own students' stories is the better home for those four, and it covers Cn11 honestly rather than by assertion.

One place you could reach further. TH:Cn11.2.4.b asks students to identify historical sources that explain drama terminology and design conventions. Day 9's Carroll Reveal is close: Humpty Dumpty's explanation of the invented words in *Through the Looking-Glass* is a historical source explaining terminology. If you want that code, verify the passage against the public-domain text first and print the relevant lines rather than paraphrasing.

Materials and prep

Everything below is either already in the room, already in the budget, or free.

Buy nothing

- Par64 LED RGB lights and a DMX controller, if you have them
- Sound system and projector
- Costumes and props from what you already own, one piece per crew maximum
- flipFORM risers as the set. Levels are the design.
- Bodies, voices, and light as the Jabberwock

Print or cut once, use all module

- Ten Nonsense Word Wall cards, half-sheet size, one per invented word
- Five stanza cards, one per crew, large print, laminated if you have the time
- One running-order card for the shelving wall, stanzas 1 through 7 with a symbol per crew
- Five clipboards, one per crew, for the dramaturg rotation
- One Cue Book: a clipboard plus a printed cue sheet grid
- Index cards for the five written exit tickets, roughly 150 for two homerooms

Prep time, honestly

Front-load about 90 minutes before Day 1: print the word cards, stanza cards, running-order card, and cue sheet, and cut the index cards. After that the module runs on roughly 15 minutes a week, because the warm-up is student-written and the recording is student-held. There is nothing in this plan that requires building a multi-part setup on short notice.

A defensible ask, if you want one

The one purchase that would change this unit is a set of five inexpensive clip-on work lights or LED pucks the crews could aim themselves, so lighting design becomes a crew decision rather than a whole-room one. That is a small, specific, planned ask tied to a named standard, TH:Pr5.1.4.b, which is the kind of request discretionary funds exist for.