

DUENDE

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My fourth grade classes have been gifted a gold rush reenactment for three years now by Duende Drama. I have noticed that the more I prep my class before the play, the more fun my students have following along, observing and learning.

Here is how I have prepped my class in the past for "Friendly Fire".

I explain that it is one actor telling a story and entertaining us for 45 minutes straight. He only has a few props and wears the same clothes the entire time. I ask the students to brainstorm how he can hold an audience's interest for that whole time? We agree on things like:

- Eye contact with the audience
- Enthusiasm
- Facial expressions
- Props
- Voice ranges (and is not monotone)
- Gestures and body movement
- Moves around/Doesn't stay in one place on the stage
- Humor and emotion in the script
- Projection is important so everyone can hear
- Creativity

I say, "Some parts might be slow, but try to keep following the story. When you get all of the details, you completely understand the ending. So it's a good exercise to stay focused."

I ask, "Who wants to be an actor some day?" I have them take mental notes of what Mr. Maguire does to make him a good actor.

I give a little background and challenge them as an audience;

"The story takes place in California during the gold rush. You'll experience the excitement of it all, and you'll be exposed to one of the horrors of the intrusion of all of the 49ers on California land. A lot will be familiar to you

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since we've been learning about the gold rush. Some things will be new. So even though this is fun to have someone act out a piece of California history, I want for you to really stay focused. Take this in as a serious learning experience. Observe Mr. Maguire's acting skills, and see what he can teach you about the gold rush."

I like to arrange for a full hour with Mr. Maguire so that the students have time to ask him questions. If they don't ask any I ask about his acting career, his education, the positives and negatives of acting, etc. and soon enough the kids take over with their own questions.

Afterwards, if we have time, I have the students gather into small groups and on a piece of paper, write down all of the techniques Mr. Maguire used to hold his audience's attention. On the other side I have them write all of the things that people could have experienced in the gold rush (whether it was new knowledge or not).

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