



EXERCISE: FAILED SUCCESS OR SUCCESSFUL FAILS

Subject(s): Social Studies and Theatre

Goals: Students will be able to:

- Synthesize evidence from artifacts and primary and secondary sources to obtain information about events and life in world history;
- Evaluate sources for accuracy, credibility, bias, and propaganda;
- Investigate and research to develop products orally and in writing.
- Define and describe how the Scientific Revolution led to social and technological changes that influenced the European view of the world.
- Explain the roles of resources, capital and entrepreneurship in developing an industrial economy.
- Employ voice, body, and imagination in role playing.
- Demonstrate theatrical direction, including blocking and staging a scene.

Show Connection: There are several figures from history whose voices and stories serve as inspiration to *Failureland!*. In this exercise, students will unpack the lives lived by some of the people who inspired the piece. In exploring their lives and the “mistakes that worked”-esque qualities to their work, students will better understand what these figures had to overcome, the work they did and the impact they have had on the world.

Materials:

- Failed Success / Successful Fails Figure Resources
 - [Robert Probst](#) (Cubicles)
 - [Anna Jarvis](#) (Mother's Day)
 - [Ethan Zuckerman](#) (Pop Up Ads)
 - [John Sylvan](#) (K Cups)
 - [Philo Farnsworth](#) (Television)
- Arts and Craft Supplies

Set-Up: Divide the class into five groups, each group distanced from the others to allow for focused work.

Description:

- As you will see in *Failureland!*, playwright Dani Stoller takes several historical figures and combines their stories into one wild ride, all in the aid of saving one teenage girl from self-destruction.
- In this exercise, each group will be given information on one of the figures that either appear in the story or influenced the circumstances in the story. They must theatrically stage their assigned person's life story.

- Each group must dramatically stage their assigned person's life story.
 - The presentation of the life story must engage with the audience / rest of the class.
 - The piece must be at least two minutes long in performance length. Everyone in the group is present in the piece and “performs” in some capacity.
 - Performers are allowed to, with consent, touch audience members.
 - Music or sound (amplified or self generated) must be featured in some capacity.
 - In addition to this, a piece of destructible visual art must be created and utilized in the piece as well. (This could be a prop, a costume piece, a consumable, etc.) The piece should be destroyed while the audience is interacting with the piece and ideally, by the audience in some manner.
- Movement and bodies must be active and used in space during the staging of this individual's life story. Groups should not just read through their figure's biography, but look to the biography and articles as guidelines of content to cover, and as inspiration for emotions, movements, sounds, experiences, etc, for this theatrical journey of a piece.
- Groups will present one at a time. Groups are welcome and encouraged to use the entirety of the classroom for this piece and can have the audience start wherever they would like, outside the room inside, etc.
 - Groups should keep in mind that the content of these figures' lives can and should dictate the form their piece takes. Is a straightforward linear narrative the best way to tell their tale? Is something in the style of a music video or in a series of flashbacks? What will tell *their* story best? We want to not only learn from these pieces, but we want to be entertained, and most importantly we want to better understand if, and how these people struggled with their success or lack thereof.
- The instructor should share the digital version of their groups' resources, or physical copies of the articles if preferred. (Each group should only get one of the figures to focus on. Not all five.)
 - Robert Probst (Cubicles)
 - Anna Jarvis (Mother's Day)
 - Ethan Zuckerman (Pop Up Ads)
 - John Sylvan (K Cups)
 - Philo Farnsworth (Television)
- Student groups are given sufficient time to work on their pieces.
- Present each group's work to the rest of the class, taking time after each presentation for clarifying questions on that figure's life.

Discussion:

- These failed successes / successful failures left their mark on history. What present day figures, leaders and voices do you think are making a difference and leaving an impact with their voices and actions, for better or worse?
- What qualities would you use to describe these figures? Is there one in particular you think made them better able to enact change and strive to create / leave an impact like they did? Would there be a way to leave an impact without that attribute as well?
- What do you hope to leave behind as your impact or legacy on the world? Would there be any negatives to such a legacy?