

When you are "Stuck for an Idea" try this IC

From the DI blog

Do you suppose there is such a thing as "thinker's block?" Sometimes I wonder. I was faced with a group of stone-faced blank looks earlier this year - burnt out from trying to figure out 5 special effects and the rest of it, they had no script, no story, nothing to tie it all together. They didn't know each other well enough to take any creative risks and be laughed at, either. I did ask as many probing questions as I could and still got grunts and shrugs. So, I made it into an IC - and it worked so well, we used it for a lot of things. Try this:

Take 5 or 6 paper bags (I used lunch bags - anything will do.) Write on the outside the name of a category. The first time, my categories were "first name" "name of a street" "toy" "fruit or vegetable" "interesting job" and... something else. I forgot, but it could be anything: "dessert" or "foreign country" "animal" or "sport". Just make up categories that are broad and don't tell them why.

Then, hand out slips of paper or notepads and pencils. Each kid must write at least one word for each of the categories and then fold it and put it in the right bag. So, "choo-choo train" goes into the "toy" bag and so on. If someone wants to put an extra idea in a bag, that's okay, extra is good.

Then, turn the bags to the wall so you cannot see the categories. Mix the order of the bags, so they no longer know which is which.

Each kid picks three slips of paper from three different bags. From those, he/she must create a character, character name and job. BUT, the words do NOT have to relate to the original category.

So, if you pulled up "choo-choo train" you could be named Choo-choo or Chewy OR you could be an engineer, or you could be Joe Choo or you could be a Trainer, or anything else that made sense. You could be a "shoe" (choo) salesman - there are no rules. But something you pulled out of the bag must be either your character name or something about your character. You can use all 3 slips or use just 1 and make up the rest.

Each child gets think time (maybe 2 minutes) to come up with their character name and job/hobby from the 3 slips of paper. Then they go around the group and each tells what slips of paper they pulled and what character they created. It's okay for other kids to piggyback ideas on the original kid - such as "Or, you could be a SNOW shoe salesman named Chewy Engineer" or whatever.

Then, give the team 3 minutes to create a skit explaining why all these people are stuck in the same place.

If they are still "stuck" on writing a story then tell them these people are all "stuck" somewhere and they must come up with a story about where they are stuck and why. Each time they do the IC they must be STUCK in a different place. If they get REALLY good, tell them they must use teamwork to create imaginary props to help the group get "unstuck" from wherever they are. Maybe they need a ladder to crawl out of the pit, or a crowbar because they are in an elevator. Maybe they are in a bubblegum factory. Whatever.

It's a good IC just for fun, but also got them thinking OUT of the box for characters - and names, and jobs, etc. (Until this point, often the only characters they could think of were a mom, a dad and bratty kids. Over and over and over...if they could think of anything at all.) We did this IC several times with different slips coming out of the bags.