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Special Effects tutorial: From A to Zombie!

Teacher Disclaimer: Only use this incredibly cool stuff if you want a rapt classroom.

If you are planning to use special effects make-up in your classroom, the following TEKS can be used in your lesson plans: 3C- safely apply technical knowledge and skills to create make-up 3F-concentrate in one area of theatre production, (make-up), demonstrating responsibility, artistic discipline, creative problem solving If you decide to extend special effects make-up into a longer lesson, and go into more detail about what a make-up designer does, you can add: 5D- select career and vocational opportunities needed to pursue them.

Onwards to the cool stuff!

For me, the quickest and easiest gore applications are bruises, cuts, burns and rashes. Bruises can be placed anywhere and can be several colors and you can add a cut to them. All these can be done in one class period. If you want to make this a two-day project, build latex pieces on the first day, then use them on the second day. They are easy and fun to make and use! To extend this into a full week or two week project, you can try several things: Read a play where special effects are needed, like *Dracula*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Hamlet*, ect. Have the students decide how they would take what you have shown them and use them in the shows. They can illustrate what they would do on a make-up map and if you have time and resources, you might want them to execute their ideas. Break the students into small groups. Have them write a fictitious scenario where 3 or more injuries occurred. Have them illustrate this on a make-up map, practice the make-up on a person in the group, and then execute it for a grade. Consider requiring them to build a latex piece, as it increases the difficulty a little.

Here is a list of things that I like to have on hand for blood and guts in my school make-up cabinet: Latex, preferably the small bottle with the brush applicator. Tissue or toilet paper, coffee grounds, stipples or make-up sponges cut up with scissors, stage blood, a bruise wheel, any size, red, black and white wheel. Have white and black/brown on hand for highlight and shadow. Scar wax, cold cream, soap, baby wipes, spirit gum, rubbing alcohol, and plastic wrap or wax paper. The make-up items can be purchased online at www.battavl.com, and please use the discount code "Victoria"! Save money!

If you want to try making homemade stage blood there are a lot of recipes online. The easiest one that I've made is by using Karo light corn syrup, chocolate syrup and food coloring (red and blue or red and green), or dark Karo Syrup and food coloring. Remember: Alfred Hitchcock used Hershey's Syrup in Psycho!

How to apply a rash/burn: LATEX TEST ON THE INSIDE OF THE WRIST FIRST! Stipple red, white and brown/black to area. Remember to start with the red and pink first; then add the dark and light as highlight. Apply a thin layer of latex over the stippled area. Latex dries clear; so do not panic when it is first brushed on! After the latex dries, you have a burn. If you want to make it look like a sunburn, use more pink than red and peel up a few areas. To make a nasty rash, pull holes in the latex once it is dried. Add white highlight to the edges of the skin and more red and brown to "exposed" skin. To make it extra gory, add blood to the "exposed" areas.

How to apply a bruise: Apply makeup to knuckles. Use knuckles to gently mark the point of impact on your victim. The darkest spot is the point of impact is where the darkest part of the bruise will be. The age of the bruise affects the color. If it is 1 day, it will be red and a little purple. For 2 or 3 days old, try the maroon, blue, and purple. If it is fading, use the green and yellow, although I like to add green to the 2 to 3 day bruise too. Surround the dark point(s) with the lighter shades. REMEMBER: the key to a realistic bruise is blending. Start with a little make-up and blend, blend, blend. It is easier to add, harder to take off! To break up the surface and add dimension, lightly stipple a contrasting color on the bruise. I like to stipple red on top. How to apply a broken nose: Apply crooked highlight to nose. Apply shadow to sides of nose. Apply bruises to tear duct area of the eyes. See above for what color to use. Remember to blend really well! Wad a little Kleenex up into a ball. Dip it in a little blood and place it in one nostril, or both nostrils.

How to apply a cut: Roll scar wax into the shape of the cut. If the wax is too sticky, powder it down a little, like you would flour dough. Apply wax to the skin and smooth the edges down. Make the "incision" into the wax. I like to use a bobby pin. Cover the wax with base to make the wax the color of the skin. Paint the inside of the incision either black or brown. Paint the inside of the cut red (on top of the brown/black). Highlight the edges of the cut with a tiny bit of white. Add blood. I like the liquid, not thick, blood for this. These are just a few basics. You can take a bruise on the cheek or lip and add a small cut; you can use the rash technique to make a zombie, ect.

Latex Pieces are awesome. They are cheap and easy to make and are re-usable! Great for shows! Lay out a piece of plastic wrap or wax paper. Brush several layers of latex onto the plastic, then press small pieces of Kleenex or tissue onto the latex. Brush more latex on top of it then let it dry. Add things to the latex for fun: I add crackers to make a scab and coffee for what my students call "zombie rot." The pieces, when dry, can be cut smaller. Just peel them off the plastic and use scissors! Apply with either spirit gum or more latex. If you are putting latex on someone, always do a latex test first!!! Don't forget to powder your latex pieces when you pull them away from the plastic wrap. Do not clean them with oil based cleansers.