

DRAMA TECHNIQUES

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WHY USE DRAMA GAMES OR THEATRE GAMES IN YOUR TEACHING?

They are simple, cost-effective way of accomplishing a wide variety of educational goals, not just in theatre class. The games combine elements of creative drama, improvisation, pantomime, creative movement, and storytelling. They develop foundational skills needed in theatre arts that also have tremendous positive effects on literacy development, academic success, and social interaction. The games are easy to integrate with content from other school subjects or content areas. The drama game or theatre game is a versatile teaching tool that reaches multiple learning styles, content areas, age groups, and levels of language and experience.

Drama education is a powerful teaching and learning tool with profound positive effects on a student's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. The benefits of regular theatre arts instruction spill over into all school subjects and everyday life. Creative drama is sound pedagogy that reaches students of multiple intelligences and different learning styles. It is a multi-sensory mode of learning that engages mind, body, senses, and emotions to create personal connections to the material that improve comprehension and retention.

Drama games and theatre games are an ideal strategy for differentiated instruction. Students with language difficulties, learning disabilities, or physical or mental disabilities can shine in drama, whereas they often struggle in traditional schooling. Gifted, talented, and highly motivated students who need to be challenged can demonstrate their abilities and synthesize learning in drama. From the shy to the confident, from the ELD/LEP to the linguistically gifted, and from the inexperienced to the advanced student, drama games include all levels of differentiated abilities in a positive successful creative experience.

In order to present materials to other in class or for a full-scale production, the participants must not only understand the material but also find a way to communicate it creatively and effectively to the audience. Therefore, knowledge is not enough; imagination, creativity, and communication are required to make effective theatre.

Drama games and theatre games transform the traditional teacher-student relationship from one of authority-recipient to one of shared experience of discovery and creative exploration. It is easy to use drama as a teaching tool in any school subject. It provides a practical, effective, and empowering approach to teaching that transforms the learning environment.

- Observation and imitation are primary mechanisms for learning throughout infancy and childhood.
- People enact a number of different roles during their lifetimes, or even during the course of a day.
- Preparing, rehearsing, and performing for important life events (e.g., a job interview, college application, or wedding) is a natural part of the human experience in any culture.
- Emotion, gestures, and imitation are universal forms of communication understood in all cultures.
- History demonstrates the importance of imagination to human progress. The scientists, artists, activists, and politicians who dared to think differently are the people who have made the most lasting impact on the course of human history.
- Imagination is at the core of innovation, invention, problem solving, science and the arts.
- Imagination develops students' writing, speaking, and creative self-expression.
- Drama teaches students to imagine, explore, create, and share in front of others.
- Drama teaches interpretation, personal creativity, and new ways of looking at the same information (e.g., how to act out a familiar role or story such as *Hamlet* or *The Tortoise and the Hare*).
- Students learn to trust and develop their creative imaginations by playing engaging drama games.

Drama is hands-on, experiential learning and engages mind, body, voice, and emotions to interpret and convey to others information and ideas.

- Each sense that is engaged provides an opportunity to remember the information and the experience. Memory can be triggered from what the students saw, smelled, heard, touched, or tasted during the game even if it was pretend or simulated. Each sensory input provides another opportunity to learn and retain the information.
- Research has demonstrated that the emotional involvement in drama activities promotes a deepening of understanding and improved retention of the information.
- Comprehension and retention greatly increase by using drama. For example, a student acts out the vocabulary word “slippery” in front of the class. She now has a much improved chance of remembering the word and what it means than if she had to memorize it for a written test. Rote memorization generally diminishes within a few weeks. Most people have first hand experience with this process. How many times have we studied intensely to learn and memorize a large amount of information for a test, only to forget most of it within a short time afterwards.
- Bodies are alive and moving, energy is created and released, and muscles are exercised during drama games. All of these factors increase the students' motivation and attention for learning.
- Drama provides a rich experience that engages body, emotions, and senses in dynamic learning.
- By acting out the material, students who have difficulty with reading and writing can avoid struggling with pen and paper, and may expose a previously unnoticed intelligence or ability. The following groups typically struggle academically, but often shine and

demonstrate their knowledge and creativity in drama. They can gain much needed self-esteem and improve literacy skills by playing drama games.

- Drama is a kinaesthetic teaching method that benefits those students who learn best by doing. Research provides ample evidence to support the importance of movement for learning. Not only does movement reach the kinaesthetic learners in the group, it refreshes and energizes all participants.
- Drama is an effective Total Physical Response method with second language learners or learning disabled students.
- Drama develops imagination and story-telling, which contribute to more detail in creative writing.
- Acting training develops the expressive use of the voice to convey emotion, inflection, attitude and other vocal elements. The regular use of drama significantly improves read-aloud skills by reducing monotone delivery and promoting loud and clear speech habits.
- Re-enacting classroom literature, even in simple improvised dramatizations, greatly improves reading comprehension, story analysis, vocabulary development, and story recall. There are numerous research studies that consistently demonstrate these same benefits.
- Research shows that young children learn primarily through play. They develop social skills, physical coordination, and cognitive understanding of their environment through play. Many educators argue for an increased allotment of time for children to play during the school day, especially in pre-school, primary, and elementary grades.
- Drama games allow for a large range of participation, from minimal to highly expressive and creative. Gifted students are given a chance to synthesize learning from various subjects. They can take the same idea several layers deeper than an average student and still demonstrate it in the same time frame as others.
- The highly verbal and quick-thinking nature of improvisation games provide excellent creative outlets for gifted students.

ACTIVITIES AND EXERCISES

ENERGISING: ICE BREAKERS

Step on toe tag

A high-energy game that is self-explanatory! A variation on this – slap back of thighs.

Budge

Five in a group – four stand on the points of a square and one in the middle – object of the game is the middle person to get onto one of the points. Point players can change places – but they must send a visual or aural message to one of the others before they move – otherwise everyone just runs to the same place making it easy for the guy in the middle! Try to do it fast! It's quite exhausting so don't let it go on too long!

Melon, melon, melon

Give every member of the group a fruit except yourself. The idea is to “catch” their fruit by saying its name (e.g. melon, melon, melon) three times before they can say it once. If you succeed, you become their fruit and they have to catch someone else out. WARNING: choose short names e.g. pear or cherry.

Fire

Sit on chairs in a circle one standing in the middle. Give all the chairs a number from 1 to whatever the number of people you got. NB the chairs have the numbers NOT the players. Call out two or more numbers – those players change places whilst the player in the centre tries to get into one of their empty chairs. ONE RULE you cannot return to a chair you have just vacated. If you call FIRE everyone has to change places.

Forward and backward numbers

123, 321, 234, 432, 345, 543 etc.

Anyone who has...

Sit on chairs in a circle one standing in the middle. The person in the centre calls out “Anyone who likes....” or “Anyone who has...” e.g. “likes

chocolate”, or “has black hair”, etc. Those people then change seats ... but you cannot return to a chair that you have just vacated.

You know Mrs Jones

An action game – like I sent my love to market and she bought... - With each student adding to the list and telling the rest the contents of the basket. Here though it is all action:

A. Do you know Mrs Jones?

B. Yes, I do

A. She’s dead

B. How did she die?

A. Like this – then show an action plus you add all the actions that have gone before.

Alphabet circle

Group stands in a circle, Leader starts off the game by pointing at a student and saying A that students points at someone else and says B that student points at someone else and says C and so on – play it as fast as you can. Alternatives: use names of cities or fruit/vegetables etc.

CONCENTRATION

Count to 10

Rules are: anyone can say the next number 1-10 but if two or more people speak at the same time the count goes back to one again

Animals (or adjectives etc.)

Standing in a circle of about six with one player in the middle. The players in the circle all choose an Animal (or a colour/ a city/ an emotion/ adjective/ adverb etc.) The player in the centre has a rolled up newspaper; when the leader calls out the name of one of the animals (or colour etc.) in the circle, the central player tries to hit that person before they can say another animal etc. in the circle – if they manage to do so before he says his animal then they change places so that the loser goes into the centre and the outgoing “hitter” takes on the loser’s animal name!

Counting 123

In pairs you keep going round and round saying one, two, three alternately as fast as you can. A development is to substitute the numbers with a sound or an action [battere le mani o schioccare le dita] – or both!

Hello, Goodbye

You pass the word Hello round the circle one way and Goodbye the other – but get Hello going well before you introduce Goodbye. Don't forget to get the students to turn to the person they are speaking to – it helps to alert their neighbour to the word coming round. If you think that all sounds too easy try adding extra Hellos in and then extra Goodbyes.

Peter Brook's Game for Actors: Maths, Life Questions and Movement

You need four players. Only one is "on". One person asks him simple Maths questions. One person asks him simple personal questions. One person does simple movements for him to copy. The player who is "on" must answer all the questions, and keep the movement going all at the same time! Don't stop, be insistent, don't be polite, keep your questions out in front, and don't wait for anybody else. The object of the game is for the "actor" to handle all the questions and the movement at the same time. The object is to be able to multi-task!

Professions/Jobs

Work out the job/profession. Put a sticker on each students back with a profession written on it. Students need to ask questions to discover "what" their profession is. e.g.

Lion-tamer	Bodyguard	Funeral director
Top model	Trapeze artist	Magician
Brain surgeon	Monk	Clown
Astronaut	Professional killer	English teacher
Film actor/actress	Tennis player	Giant
Dentist	Drug dealer	Gardener etc.

IMPROVISATION / STORYTELLING

Park bench

The first player sits silently on a “bench” displaying as much about his character as he can without verbalising it. The next player joins him and makes a strong complimenting character choice. (A complimenting character may be contrasting or supporting.) The player coming on should make strong character choices as soon as he is off his seat. This means the character should be embodied in his walk, voice and intent. The two characters interact for about thirty seconds and the player that was on the bench first finds a reason to leave. This leaves the second player on the bench alone for a while. The next player creates a character and joins the player that is on the bench. This continues until all in the workshop have done one or more characters.

Drawing Magic Pictures

Sit in pairs with a large imaginary piece of paper between you. The idea is to draw “everything” you say as you tell a story. Swop over on a signal [given by the teacher]. The game helps to stop the imagination being “blocked” by thinking what you will say next – there is not time for thinking just draw!

True or False

Each member of the group tells a partner two true facts about themselves – and one false fact – the partner has to decide which is the false fact! Then vice-versa.

Terry Parker – Simulation exercise

A good exercise for problem solving – it allows your students to discuss issues that they might not otherwise bring out into the open. It could be much simpler than the exercise we used – write one to suit your own circumstances. Cast the interviewers and the characters.

STORY: Terry is 15 and lives at Beechwood Children’s Home and attends Crossways School. He has lived at Beechwood for a year now and is approaching his 16th birthday. He was placed in care because his mother, a divorcee, could no longer control him. He mixes with an undesirable group of young people who are constantly in trouble with the police. He misses school regularly. And his reports from there mainly take the form of complaints about his attitude, behaviour and attendance.

You have to make a decision about his future.

- a) Should he be allowed to leave the home and his school and become independent – leaving him open to the risk of becoming a criminal

- b) Should he be encouraged to return to his mother, build a relationship with her and perhaps supporting her.
- c) Should he be encouraged to stay on at school, gain qualifications for a job say in design.

A committee of Wardens & Governors of Beechwood are to meet and interview people who know Terry to make a decision about Terry's future. They will produce a short report to pass on to the juvenile court who may:

- a) Return Terry to his mother
- b) Impose a supervision order lasting until he's 18 with a probation officer appointed to oversee and manage him.
- c) Impose a care order – which is what Terry is under now- to be reviewed every six months.

Characters:

Will Adams – a probation officer

Sandra Parker – Terry's mother

Alan Davidson – Terry's teacher

Mr Edward Connolly – Head teacher Crossways School

Julie Ellis – Terry's girlfriend

Role descriptions:

1. William Adams – Probation Officer

Terry has been on probation for 6 months, after being involved with a group of boys who took and drove away a car. He has also been under a Care Order of the local Council, as being out of the control of his mother. He is a quiet and pleasant boy by himself, and has kept out of trouble since, and you feel he is easily led by other people. He does seem to have a chip on his shoulder about being “hard done by”.

2. Sandra Parker – Terry's mother

You have never had much control over Terry – he has lacked a father's firm hand and always gone his own way, even when he was at junior school. Your husband left home when Terry was five, and neither of you have seen him since. Terry cannot remember him, although sometimes he talks as if he does. When he comes home from Beechwood at weekends he seems pleased to see you at first, but by Sunday he is off the rails again, shouting, swearing and smoking.

3. Alan Davidson – Terry's teacher

You teach design at Crossways School. You have found Terry talented in this subject. He enjoys drawing and sketching particularly, and if he were to take it seriously, could probably get into art college (although making a career in it is a different matter!). Although he has a bad reputation round the school, you have always got on well, and have never had discipline problems with him.

4. Mr Edward Connolly – Headmaster

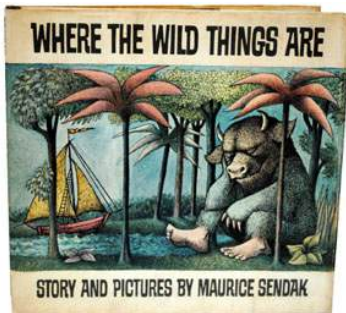
Crossways has an unfortunate reputation for bullying, and this is due to boys like Terry Parker. You are known as a fairly lenient man, but you have great difficulty in sympathising with Parker. He is lazy, dirty and insolent. He frequently skives lessons, and vandalises the toilets and walls of the school. In fact, he is one of a small minority

that ruins the school for all the other pupils. The next time he is brought to you, you will seriously consider suspension as the only answer.

5. Julie Ellis – Terry’s girlfriend

You have been going out with Terry for about 3 months now. Although he tries to appear tough, especially with his friends, he is really very kind and sensitive. He has never tried “to take advantage of you” and you respect him for this. You know he likes drawing, and gets on with Mr Davidson, his design teacher. Apart from this he appears to have few interests and no close friends. He talks a lot about missing his father, and has very little time for his mother. Your own parents don’t like Terry at all, and think him dirty, long-haired and a layabout. You have to keep your friendship with him secret from them. He has been spending much less time with his friends recently, and you hope that, whatever decision Beechwood comes to, it will not encourage Terry to go back to that crowd.

Where the Wild Things Are



Read the story to your students - and if you have the book maybe show them the pictures.

STORY:

The night Max wore his wolf suit
and made mischief of one kind and another
his mother called him “WILD THING!”
and Max said “I’LL EAT YOU UP!”
so he was sent to bed without eating anything.

That very night in Max’s room a forest grew and grew- and grew
until his ceiling hung with vines
and the walls became the world all round
and an ocean tumbled by with a private boat for Max
and he sailed off through night and day
and in and out of weeks and almost over a year
to where the wild things are...

And when he came to the place where the wild things are
they roared their terrible roars
and gnashed their terrible teeth
and rolled their terrible eyes
and showed their terrible claws

until Max said “BE STILL!”
and tamed with the magic trick
of staring into all their yellow eyes without blinking once
and they were frightened
and called him the most wild thing of all
and made him king of all wild things.

“And now,” cried Max, “let the wild rumpus start!”

“Now stop!” Max said and sent the wild things off to bed without their supper.
And Max the king of all wild things was lonely
and wanted to be where someone loved him best of all.

Then all around from far away across the world
he smelled good things to eat
so he gave up being king of where the wild things are.

But the wild things cried, “Oh please don’t go-
we’ll eat you up-we love you so!”
And Max said, “No!”

The wild things roared their terrible roars
and gnashed their terrible teeth
and rolled their terrible eyes
and showed their terrible claws
but Max stepped into his private boat and waved good-bye
and sailed back over a year
and in and out of weeks and through a day

and into the night of his very own room
where he found his supper waiting for him
and it was still hot.

Explain that you are going to put the story into action and students are going to act out everything: the trees in the forest, the boat, the sea etc. etc. Ask your students to make the different locations etc. first – then do some short improvisation e.g. (in two’s) improvise an argument between Max and his mother – where Max gets sent to bed without any tea/supper.

Create Bedroom and the Forest: build the pictures student by student

First the bedroom – make all the furniture with their bodies – then slowly transform from Max’s room to a forest of trees. Start as high or low positions like things in a bedroom, then grow and freeze like a forest (divide class in half and take turns watching) Ask a student to walk through the forest as Max... Next create the ocean and a boat that sails across the ocean with Max in it with their bodies. The students may make ocean sounds when the boat passes by them and they must be silent in their movement.

Create the wild things – What they look like? Find a space in the room and starting still and low slowly “grow” into a Wild Thing – then walk round the room as your character –

The Wild Rumpus. Everyone frozen in a beginning rumpus shape. Max yells “let the wild rumpus begin!! And the music and rumpus begins. When Max yells “stop”! the rumpus ends, music stops and all freeze. And maybe the “monsters” should roll their eyes, gnash their terrible teeth, growl, and maybe say something to Max. Max is made King. The students create a frozen picture of Max as king of the wild things.

Role-playing: Max sends the wild things off to bed. All wild thing go off to bed following his command. Max smells good things and decides he misses home. But the wild things try to make him stay but he says “no!”. Max now sails back home where his dinner is waiting and still hot. Now Re-read the poem and get the students to act out the story.

Presents

In pairs. This is an improvisation exercise, designed not to be threatening. A. mimes giving a present to B. It can be as large or as small as they like. B must tell A what the present is – this seems the wrong way round but it’s not! The game is the more interesting if the present isn’t straight forward. Maybe B. doesn’t want it, or accuses A. of having stolen it, or maybe thinks A. has a personal grudge against them or whatever. What the game usually proves is that you don’t have to think about what to say – the dialogue writes itself. Don’t forget to change the players over.

The Good News and the Bad News

Another story telling exercise. Each person in the circle contributes one line of a story – but alternately each starts person should start with either – “The Good News is...” or “The Bad News is...” - The idea is not to cancel out what the person before you has just said – but rather to continue the story a little – not always easy as it sounds.

60 seconds fairy tales

Obviously the students act out the fairy story in 60 seconds – or though you can give them longer if you wish! Cast should be 4 or 5 actors [one could be the narrator]. Try to create interesting funny characters, and establish setting etc., nothing moves the tale along quicker than shouting out 20 seconds left!

STORIES: *Snow White; Hansel & Gretel; Sleeping Beauty; Little Red Riding Hood; Jack & the Beanstalk* etc., etc.

Yes But

When answering a question the reply must always start with “Yes But” – e.g. “Was it you I saw in the school grounds at midnight last night?” – “Yes But...” and so on

Story telling STORY CUBES

Each player rolls one of the cubes and beginning with “Once upon a time...” says a few sentences of a story that links together all the symbols.

Story telling MAGAZINE PICTURE

Place magazine pictures face down on ground each player picks up a picture and says two sentences of the story ... last but one starts the wind up.

Story Tableaux

Get a student to hold a still pose with no dialogue – ask another to add to the pose. (you could add a third student if you wanted to) Get the other students to suggest what is happening in the picture and give the picture a caption – such as “ A teenager argues with her parents”.

Photo Album Stories

Each group is given a title of a picture to make. The group then has to make a frozen picture of this title – using different levels, facial expression and position of bodies etc. Other groups have to guess what the title of your group’s picture is! e.g. *The birthday party. Gang rivalry. The ghost train. The escape.* A development is to get each member of the group to say what they are thinking at that moment.

Simple Story Spine

Get one player to start with “Once upon a time...” etc. – then change player with the next statement i.e. “And every day...” etc.

- Once upon a time...
- And every day...
- And then one day...
- And because of that...
- And because of that...
- And ever since that day...

Street accident picture

Following on from the above – get a group to make a still picture of a street accident – then ask each student in the picture to say – in one sentence – what they are thinking or feeling at the moment.

Little Red Riding Hood (Acting Out) *We used character masks but you could make your own*

We read the story of LRRH then with some students reading out the parts and the narrator and some students acting out the roles we put the story into action.

SCRIPT:

NARRATOR: There was once a little girl who lived near a big wood. Whenever she went out, she always wore a red riding cloak, so everyone called her Little Red Riding Hood. One morning her mother called Little Red Riding Hood to come and help her by visiting her grandmother who was ill in bed.

MOTHER: Listen Red, I want you to put these few things into your basket and take them to your grandma's house on the other side of the wood. Now remember, go straight to grandma's house, and promise me you won't dilly-dally on the way...and don't talk to strangers, remember these woods are dangerous.

RED Alright Mummy, I promise, I'll be careful.

NARRATOR And she kissed her mother goodbye and set off to her Grandmother's house. But on the way Little Red Riding Hood saw some pretty flowers

RED Oh how pretty these flowers are, I will pick some, they will make a lovely present for grandma

NARRATOR And she forgot all about her promise not to dilly-dally in the woods. But while she was picking the flowers Little Red Riding Hood didn't notice a dark shadow appearing behind her...and suddenly, a big bad wolf appeared and putting on as friendly a voice as he could manage he said:

WOLF Hello little girl. What are you doing here in this dangerous wood?

RED Oh! Hello Mr. Wolf, I'm picking some flowers to take to my Grandma who lives on the other side of these woods

NARRATOR Then she suddenly remembered her mother's advice

RED But I'm afraid I can't stop to talk to you; you see I'm rather late already. Goodbye

NARRATOR And she rushed off as fast as she could down the path towards her grandma's house. The wolf however knew a shortcut...and running as quickly as only a wolf can he arrived first at grandma's house. And little out of breath, he knocked on the door. Now grandma thinking her visitor was her granddaughter said

GRANDMA Oh thank goodness you are safe my dear! I was worried something might happen to you in the woods! Come in, come in.

NARRATOR So the wolf entered the cottage but before Granny could say "Jack Robinson" the wolf ate her up! He then went to Granny's wardrobe and there he found a clean night-dress to put on and her frilly sleeping cap,

then for good measure, he dabbed some of Granny's perfume behind his pointy ears and jumped into her bed.

A few minutes later, Little Red Riding Hood arrived, she knocked on the door and the wolf pulled the covers over his nose and called out in a crackly voice

WOLF Who is it?
RED It's me Granny - Little Red Riding Hood
WOLF Oh lovely! Come straight in, my dear
NARRATOR When Little Red Riding Hood entered the cottage and saw her grandma she could not believe her eyes
RED Goodness grandma is something that matter?
WOLF What do you mean my dear?
RED Your voice. It sounds very odd
WOLF No, no. It's nothing. I just have a slight cold. (*coughs*)
NARRATOR And he gave a little cough to prove his point
RED But grandma what big ears you got
WOLF All the better to hear you with, my dear.
RED And Grandma what big eyes you got
WOLF All the better to see you with, my dear.
RED But Grandma what big teeth you got
WOLF All the better to eat you with, my dear.
NARRATOR And he leapt out of the bed and began to chase the little girl around the room
RED Oh! Help! Please someone help! Oh help!
NARRATOR Now John Woodsman was chopping logs nearby and hearing Little Red Riding Hood's cries he ran towards the cottage, burst through the door and immediately began to tackle the wolf
WOODCUTTER Take that...and that...
NARRATOR And by patting him very firmly on the back he made the wolf cough up poor, frightened grandma
RED Oh grandma are you alright!
NARRATOR Sobbed Little Red Riding Hood
GRANDMA Yes my dear, I'm all right thank you. But it was lucky escape. Thank goodness you shouted loud enough for kind John Woodsman to hear you!
RED I was so scared, I shall never speak to strangers again – or dilly dally in the forest
GRANDMA Well all's well that ends well. Now John what do you think we should do with this wolf?
WOODCUTTER You leave him to me grandma, I'll take him deep into the woods and leave him there where he won't bother people anymore
GRANDMA Well that's good – and then I want you to come back here because Little Red Riding Hood and I will have prepared a special lunch for us to share.

Making up a scenario from a Picture or a famous painting. See Fotosearch web-site

The class are all given the same picture – ours was of a group of children on a bus – they imagine they are someone in the picture and are asked to take on that persons’ emotions and feelings reflecting what they can see from the bus window – we then arranged the chairs into the shape of the bus and placed the “actors” so that they could say a short speech to us as that person – explaining their thoughts.

Instant dialogues

In pairs facing each other across the room – after being given the “opening line” (see below) you walked towards each other and acted out the scene

- Can you please help me?
- What are you doing in here?
- Now what are we going to do?
- Ssssh ... This is the dangerous bit!
- I’m sorry you’ve got not choice!
- We are closed

Speed writing

Give yourself one minute to write a list of as many words as you can based on an image you have been given – ours was “The dark lake “ – Don’t edit as you write. Just keep going, and try to resist the temptation to edit spelling mistakes. Stop after one minute and the use the words on your list to create a piece of creative writing or a piece of poetry. Remember the number one thing that slows down your creative writing is stopping to think. If you just keep writing, ideas will flow from your brain naturally.

Role play “Improvisation” with Objectives

Friday evening at the family supper table, each player has their own objective: each character in the “impro” has his/her own objective that must not be lost sight of.

Action and conflict will then rise out of these objectives. Be spontaneous – the rest of the group should try to work out the objective of each player. Discuss what “tactics” you thought the characters were using in order to get their way.

Dad: You’ve had a long hard day and all you want is to put your feet up

Mum: You are worried and need to check out the teenage one is keeping. Who is she seeing at the moment.

Sandra: You want to see that gorgeous boy you met last weekend though you know your family won't approve of him, you desperately need to get lift into town.

Role play “The suitcase” cast: Mother and Teenage daughter

Mother and daughter have not be getting on very well recently. It is about 9 o' clock one evening when the mother goes to her daughter's bedroom and finds her daughter putting things into a suitcase.

The mother can't see exactly what her daughter is doing because the girl quickly closes the suitcase and pushes it under the bed. The girl then quickly stands up and is clearly embarrassed.

Read your separate instructions but do not discuss them.

Mother: Your daughter has been very secretive lately and you are worried about this. You are concerned the fact that she has been coming in late in the evenings. You want to talk to her about all this. When you open the door your first impression is that she has secretly decided to leave home.

Daughter: You are feeling hemmed in at home. Your mother is always nagging you and prying into your private life. On the other hand you have been feeling irritable and tired lately – so maybe it is partly your fault. You have decided to try to make things up and so you have bought your mother a present. You have hidden it in a suitcase, which you have stuck under your bed. You were just getting the present out to wrap it up – when your mother came into your room- snooping again?

Starting Point: The girl is kneeling on the floor by a suitcase with her back to the door. The Mother opens the door and walks in.

Did the mother ever find out what the girl was really doing? If she did, how did she feel?

Did the two of them get down to discussing their real problems? Did they reach any conclusion?

How to make a Silent Movie (Melodrama)

First create the characters – i.e. stereotypes

HERO

John Forsyth

Our brave hero dashing, handsome, brave, sincere.

HEROINE

Gwendolyn

A maiden in distress, sweet, innocent

A GOOD OLD PERSON

Lady Derby

Gwendolyn's aunt, elderly, dignified slightly eccentric

THE VILLAN

Sir Jasper

A cruel landowner, unscrupulous, big moustache

THE SERVANT/HORSE

Fangs

Jas's servant evil, loathsome, deformed in body & mind

Make individual statues of each character in a larger than life attitude, make them clear-cut, stereotypical – carry these poses into walking around the room keep the body language consistent. In two's make still pictures of scenes from the play:

Fangs spies on Gwendolyn as she's washing her "smalls" in the river.

Gwendolyn meets and falls in love with the handsome John Forsyth.

BUT – he is to go to sea to seek his fortune. And so says farewell to Gwendolyn.

Fangs informs Sir Jasper that the beautiful Gwendolyn is staying with her aunt nearby.

Lady Derby comforts the distraught, love sick Gwendolyn and shows her a tiara. But as she opens the safe to get the tiara Sir Jasper rushes in (on his horse!), kidnaps Gwendolyn and steals the tiara. Lady Derby has a heart attack!

Sir Jasper rides off, with Gwendolyn screaming, on his horse and with the tiara in his pocket.

John Forsyth hears Gwendolyn's screams and forces Sir Jasper and his horse to stop.

A fight ensues between John Forsyth and Sir Jasper.

John Forsyth wins leaving Sir Jasper lying on the ground.

The happy couple are reunited, they mount the horse and ride back to Lady Derby to celebrate their engagement.

Fangs finds Sir Jasper and helps him up and off!

Now working in groups of five act the whole play out (silently).

Development: make some cards to hold up to supply the key lines for each scene or write a script.

N.B. Remember to use large dramatic gestures.

GROUP AWARENESS & SENSITIVITY

Building Structures

In teams make letters, numbers, objects or buildings (e.g.: Church, Fountain, Cuckoo Clock, Motor-bike, Helicopter) – you must use everyone in the group. Don't be afraid to use different levels, lift people, stand on chairs, lie on the floor etc.

Count to twenty

The idea of this warm-up is for the group to count to twenty, one person saying one number at a time. Not as simple as it sounds! Anyone can start the count. A different person says the next number. But... if two or more people happen to speak at the same time, counting must start again from the beginning.

Trust Rocking

Divide the student group into threes [approximately the same in size and weight]. Stand two facing each other and the third standing behind the one who will now be in the middle. The two outside people place their hands on the centre students shoulders and gently rock him/her backwards and forwards. The centre student should be able to rock back and forwards like a plank using their heels and toes as a hinge.

Mirror exercises

In a circle everyone copies you. Use simple action and do them slowly. Send one person out – he/she has three guesses to see who is the leader.

Bullying

Dear Gran,

I am writing to let you know that I am alright.

I just had to get away. School has become really hard.

It's not the homework, or even the teachers. I just don't like going because the other kids pick on me.

Please tell Mum and Dad not to worry and that I am safe. Please ask Mum to feed the fish.

Love, Daniel

DISCUSSION: Use the letter to discover:

- What kind of boy is Daniel?
- Has he been bullied? Who by?
- What does Daniel do to prevent the bullying?
- What does he do in his spare time?

HOT SEAT Friends, parents, teachers, neighbours, part-time employer etc.

Who are they?

IMPROVISE a scene showing what happened to make him leave home.

OBSERVATION

Remembering

1. Everyone studies the room and the people in it. One person goes out while the rest change or adds something or someone. He/she then returns and has to “notice” what has changed.
2. Do it in pairs – study each other, then close eyes – alter something – discover the change.

Washing the elephant

5 people leave the room the rest decide on a mime sequence for them to do (washing an elephant/giraffe; changing a babies nappy; changing the wheel of a car)

A. Is called in and told what to do

B. Is then called in and watches A.’s mime

C. Is the called in and B. mimes what he saw to C.

C. then repeats the mime for D. – D. mimes it for E.

E. mimes it for the audience and he is asked to say what he thought he was doing.

The party game – be aware of status

Everyone chooses a playing card (use only the numbered cards), which they don’t look at but stick onto their forehead, so that everyone else can see it. They then are told that they are at a party to celebrate something but they don’t know anybody else there! In conversation each “character” reads the status of the other and reacts to it – at the same time trying to find out through others behaviour to them what their own status is. At the end of the exercise get the group to line up in status order – 10’s at one end and 1’s at the other – see how well they have identified their rank.

Status Scenes

Two or three players take a card (1-10) whose values they keep secret. Give the three of them a scenario to act out – their character should be played to the status number that is on their card.

We improvised a scene in a bridal shop: mum, the bride, dad and the shop keeper.

Invention

In pairs give each pair a simple object e.g. a stone or a ring etc., observe the object in detail – the first person then describes it to the rest of your group and the second person tells the group an invented history for the object.

BUILDING THEATRE/ DRAMA /DIRECTING

Thought Tracking and building a play “The supermarket shooting”

Stephen Carlile was a sixteen year old boy who until his death last month was working in the Safeways supermarket in the High street.

He used to be at College studying drama and media Studies, but had dropped out at the end of his first year because of “family problems”

Stephen lived at home with his mother Julie, her boyfriend Peter Davey, and his sister Ann-Marie. Recently there had been some friction at home over him giving up his college studies and earning money to help out with the family budget.

Stephen’s dad, John Carlile has a drink problem and was often away “on a job” for days on end – Julie is in the process of getting a divorce.

Stephen’s next door neighbours, the Jackson’s say that Stephen used to be a very helpful boy but had become moody when his dad left home.

Whilst at College Stephen was a member of the football team and of a boys band – but because of his lack of regular attendance he was dropped from both the team and the band.

Recently Stephen got a job at the local supermarket – Safeways – where he was very popular with both staff and customers. He had become very friendly with one of the checkout girls – Sarah – and it was in defence of her that he lost his life.

They were both on a “lates” when a man walked into the store with a sawn off shot gun and held Sarah up on the checkout demanding money. She

called out to the manager Mr Brian Wilkinson but it was Stephen who answered her call – he ran towards the man who turned and fired the gun directly at Stephen. He died in the ambulance. The man made his getaway through the car park and police are still making enquires as to his identity. Customers and staff of Safeways have expressed their condolences and have set up a memorial fund for Stephen.

Possible characters: (you can invent more) Stephen Carlile, James (Stephen's best mate), Julie Carlile (Stephen's mother), John Carlile (Stephen's father), Ann-Marie (Stephen's sister), Melanie (Julie's best friend), Dave (John's mate), band/football team friends, College lecturers, the neighbours Mr & Mrs Jackson, Brian Wilkinson and staff from Safeways, customers, etc.

Looking at TEXT: the 5 W's – who, why, what, where, when

When we attempt to interpret a piece of text we should ask questions before we start.

1. What information is available in the script that helps us play the scene – (Stanislavski's The Given Circumstances)
2. These circumstances will help create character – because we are all products of our own circumstances: age, place, time, relationships, attitude, so you will need to work out WHO you are and what your relationship is with the other characters, you will need to establish WHAT the situation is, WHY you are behaving in such a way. WHERE the scene takes place and WHEN (i.e. what time or period) it is happening.
3. Now ask yourself what the character wants (his objective) because this will influence how we play the part. It is worth remembering that in life you want to win. Nothing is different on the stage! Your characters need will create his action, playing his tactics, will give you the “why” of playing is character.

Working with Sub Text

Of course in daily life we use all sorts of techniques to get what we want or to inform someone of our feelings even if we don't say them out loud – this is called SUBTEXT

Explore this idea

Say “Aaaah” in a circle by putting as many different emotions on it as possible.

See how many different ways we can interpret the following by stressing different words, pausing in different places, changing pace, etc.:

Improvisation in pairs using Subtext: Try saying these lines using different inflections in the voice:

1. I won't see you again
2. How could you do that?
3. I've never done it before!
4. Is there anyone here who understand?
5. Thank you. I know you'd help me out.
6. The next thing I knew, there it was.
7. Come back, I'm sure it will be alright.
8. Good morning, Miss.
9. Why don't you go and get it then
10. How thrilling

WORK OUT HIS/HER STORY

Compound stimulus from the objects in DOUG's bag: work out his back story

Newspaper Advert “Join the Army and see the World”

A soft porn magazine

A “Year book” picture of his “class with graffiti drawn on some people in the picture e.g. a “target” drawn on one and “horns” drawn on the teacher, etc.

A un-posted “Valentines” card addressed to a girl

A letter from school to his parents complaining about his lack of work etc.

A slimming advert with the coupon filled in

Empty (eaten) chocolate wrappers

A family picture with himself torn off

A newspaper article showing his brother receiving his degree

A tube of skin “clear-up” cream for spots

Compound stimulus from the objects in BEN's bag: work out his back story

Dirty football kit

Birthday card signed “from Dad and Marilyn – see you on Sunday”

School letter dated three weeks ago, saying Ben is not working hard enough

Packet of cigarettes

Advert for a trainee salesman's job at Sainsbury's

A picture showing him in the centre of a "Ten Tors" group of Dartmoor ("Ten Tors" is a survival and fitness test for young people – both male and female – it involves tramping across Dartmoor visiting Ten of the Tors and sleeping under canvas, it takes place in Feb/March every year)

A front door key on a "football" key ring

Picture of him on a continental beach with a Turkish girl

Picture of him with an older man and woman sitting in a garden

An identity card

Compound stimulus from the objects in DPAUL's bag: work out his back story

A blackberry

BMW Car keys

Photo of himself with a boy and a girl

An American Express card

A small silver box containing some white powder

Rolled-up £20 note

Small bottle of baby oil

A pocket spray of mouth wash

A men's body building magazine

A psycho-analyst's card

A torn up letter

A Gym membership card

An identity badge saying "Paul Worcester" manager

Compound stimulus: find objects to put in JULIE's bag that will inform on her

Currently disqualified from driving because of a "drunk driving incident"

She's had a row with her current boyfriend, James – he's 20

She has been seeing another guy called Tom

She likes partying

Her best friend's called Sarah

She works for an insurance company but hates her job

She has trained as a Scuba Diving instructor

She wants to travel

Her parents are divorced

She lives at home (with Mum) but is looking for a flat to share with Sarah