

Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Dato' Razali Ismail

Plays and Drama for Young Learners

LGA3104 for PISMP Semester 5





Contents

Introduction	4
Objectives	4
Materials	4
Timetable	4
Topic 1: Introduction to Children’s Plays and Drama	5
Features of Children’s Drama.....	5
Scaffolding children’s learning through story and drama.....	5
Features of stories and drama	5
An integrated approach	7
Questions for Features of Children’s Drama	8
Drama in the classroom	9
Storytelling	10
Puppets	11
Reader’s Theatre	12
Creative Drama.....	15
Story Dramatization.....	17
Questions about Story Dramatization	21
Syllabus Study: Drama in the Malaysian primary School Curriculum.....	23
World of Self.....	24
World of Stories.....	24
World of Knowledge	24
Topics in the KSSR texts (year 1, 2, 3)	25
Choosing topics	26
Linking plays and drama with the different themes.....	27
Exercises for Introduction to Children’s Drama	28
Topic 2: Selection and Adaptation of Plays.....	29
What Role Does Drama Play in Education?	29
Questions for What Role Does Drama Play in Education.....	30
Selection of Plays for Children	32
Examining a play for children:	33
"THE ENORMOUS NOSE"	33



Script Writing	35
Adapting a Story or Script	36
6 Tips on Writing Plays for Kids	37
Questions about the six tips:.....	38
Exercises for Selection and Adaptation of Plays	39
Topic 3: Theatrical and Drama Techniques.....	40
Preparing your class for a stage performance	40
Blocking.....	42
Stage Acting.....	44
How to Do Children's Theatre Stage Lighting	46
How to Make Stage Scenery for Children's Plays	47
Cool Scenery Ideas for Plays for Kids.....	48
How to make backdrops for plays	49
Importance of Makeup and Costumes in Theatre.....	51
Using Gestures	52
More Delsarte Acting Theories	54
Tips for learning lines.....	55
Drama Activities	56
Exercises for Theatrical and Drama Techniques	59
Topic 4: Using Drama Techniques and Activities in the Classroom.....	60
Drama Activities in the Classroom.....	60
Questions about Drama Activities in the Classroom	63
Drama across the curriculum	65
Questions about Drama across the Curriculum	68
Exercises for Using Drama Techniques	71
Topic 5: Developing Learner's Response to Drama.....	72
Children's Stance toward Literature.....	72
Questions about Children's Stance toward Literature	74
Asking Children Questions	75
Questions: Aesthetic and Efferent.....	75
Exploring Linguistic Features.....	77
Exercise for Developing Learner's Response	78



Topic 6: Simulated Teaching and Review	79
Revision of previous Material:	79
1. Content and Learning Standards	79
2. Selecting and adapting	80
3. Planning stage set	80
4. Preparing children and rehearsal.....	81
5. Children’s aesthetic and efferent responses to material.....	82
Reflection on Simulated Teaching	85
Topic 7: Preparation for Stage Performance of a Children’s Drama	86
1. Selection and adaptation of a text.....	86
2. Audience Involvement	87
3. Prepare Feedback:	88
Topic 8: Stage Performance	89
Bibliography	91



Plays and Drama for Young Learners

Introduction

This was a new course in Semester 1, 2013, and this module has been prepared to assist lecturers in presenting the course to PISMP Semester 5 students.

This course focuses on an introduction to plays and drama, selection and adaptation of plays, theatrical and drama techniques, using drama techniques and activities in the classroom, developing learner's response to drama, simulated teaching and review, preparation for stage performance of a children's drama and a stage performance.

The module has been prepared by Mrs Ruth Wickham, who is a Brighton Education Training Fellow (part of the Malaysian Ministry of Education's Native Speaker Program) placed at IPGKDRI in 2011-2013.

Objectives

The objectives as stated in the Course Proforma are:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the features of children's drama (1.3)
- Explain the purpose and importance of using children's drama in ESL classroom. (1.2)
- Devise activities and strategies to develop children's language and aesthetic values through drama. (3.4, 3.6)
- Devise activities to develop children's multiple intelligences through children's drama performance. (2.1)
- Reflect on the use of children's drama in the language classroom (7.2)

Topic 1: Demonstrate an understanding of what to include in children's drama in the primary school.

Topic 2: Explain and describe the purpose and importance of selection and adaption of scripts for primary school learners.

Materials

Students should all have a copy of the module. They will also, of course, need computers and Internet connection to complete the assignments. It is preferable to have copies of the KSSR primary school English text books, as well as the KSSR syllables for the students to refer to.

Module is also available on the Kuala Terengganu Fellows (2013) website at:

<http://ktf2013.weebly.com/lga3104-plays-and-drama-for-young-learners.html>

Timetable

Although the course is essentially 3 hours per week, with the Semester 5 students about to embark on a 4-week practicum the classes are increased to 4 hour per week for the time that they are present at the IPG.



Topic 1: Introduction to Children's Plays and Drama

The article below by Carol Read explains clearly how using stories and drama is beneficial for both children's aesthetic appreciation and their language learning.

Features of Children's Drama

Scaffolding children's learning through story and drama

Scaffolding is a well-known metaphor widely used in education and language teaching to describe the guidance, collaboration and support provided by teachers to lead children to new learning. As the metaphor implies, scaffolding is a temporary construct which can be put up, taken down, reinforced and strengthened, or dismantled piece by piece once it is no longer needed, and as children develop language and skills which enable them to act in an increasingly competent, confident and independent way (Read, 2006).

When working with children, storytelling and drama techniques can be integrated and combined in multiple ways to provide robust and flexible scaffolding. This underpins and props up children's learning in initial stages. It also provides appropriate support as they gain in confidence, and opens the way to new learning and the internalisation of language and skills in enjoyable and creative ways.

Features of stories and drama

Stories and drama share a number of features (Read, 2007), which make it natural to integrate and combine them in scaffolding learning during language lessons with children:

1 They build on children's capacity for play.

Events that happen in both stories and drama are playful. People may meet giants, escape from hungry lions, fall in love, get lost, angry, hurt or even die, but everybody *knows* that in the story or drama this is only 'pretend', and that these things don't really happen. Even very young children quickly learn to become adept at distinguishing between the conventions and boundaries of stories and drama on the one hand, and real, everyday life on the other. As well as being fascinating and pleasurable for children, exploring the differences between stories, drama and real life develops their potential for creativity and imagination in a similar way to when they are engaged in play. Although stories, drama and play are not the same, children's innate capacity for play allows them to construct personal understandings and meaning from stories and drama in a similar way.

2 They deal with significant issues.

Stories and drama both deal with issues that touch children's own lives closely, often in highly significant ways. Some common examples from children's stories may be to do with making friends, not wanting to go to bed at bedtime, feeling scared of the dark, or fussy about particular foods. As Bruner (1996) has noted, we live our lives and shape our identities through stories. Stories and drama also help children to make sense of their own behaviour and others, and to develop aspects of emotional intelligence, such as empathy. As Bettelheim (1975) has also shown, the psychoanalytical constructs of fairy tales reach deep into issues of self, identity and the role of the



family at both subconscious and unconscious levels. In terms of scaffolding learning, stories and drama focus on fictional characters, which engage children's attention, relate to their personal experience in some way and at some level, and yet allow them to maintain a safe distance from any problems and issues, which may beset their real lives. This enables children to reflect more securely and openly on matters which are significant to them because they remain at one remove (talking about fictional characters rather than directly about themselves), and this in turn helps to create appropriate affective conditions for learning.

3 They engage Multiple Intelligences.

In a pedagogical context, stories and drama provide opportunities for children to use different combinations of their Multiple Intelligences (linguistic, visual-spatial, musical, kinaesthetic, logical-deductive, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist) (Gardner, 1983) as "entry points" to learning (Gardner, 1999). Through engaging different intelligences in storytelling and drama activities, individual children have opportunities to build on their personal strengths in order to consolidate, extend and deepen their learning. This also provides for variety and helps to broaden and maximise the appeal of activities and activity cycles within lessons, a factor which is important with any group and particularly with large classes.

4 They appeal to different learning styles.

Stories and drama provide a wide appeal to children with predominantly different learning styles, whether visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, or a combination of these. Through the use of a wide range of storytelling and drama techniques, children can also be helped to develop and discover their own individual learning styles and preferences.

5 They suspend norms of time, place and identity.

Stories and drama both involve participants in colluding in the temporary suspension of time, place and identity. A story may take only 3-5 minutes to tell in real time, but in fictional time a hundred years or more may pass. Similarly, in a drama activity where, for example, children act out being monkeys in a forest, the real place of the classroom and the identity of the children are also temporarily transposed. This fantasy element intrinsic to both stories and drama helps to make learning memorable in the short and longer term.

6 They are social and communal.

Both stories and drama are shared classroom events, which take place in real time. As such, they provide a vehicle for the teacher and children to be 'inter-subjectively engaged', that is, in a state where 'participants are jointly focused on the activity and its goals, and they draw each other's attention in a common direction' (van Lier 1996:161). This feature of stories and drama provides a framework for developing social skills such as cooperation, collaboration, listening and turn taking and helps to create appropriate affective conditions for learning to take place.

7 They have rules and conventions.

As social events, stories and drama have inherent rules and conventions to guide them. For example, in drama, rules include that participants are usually expected to be seated and watch while others perform, and to actively participate when it is their turn. There are also conventions in terms of the

narrative structure of stories and drama, for example, the initial disturbance of a state of equilibrium leading to the creation of tensions, conflict and final resolution. Children's familiarity with the rules and conventions of story and drama may initially be transferred from their first language and provide a known context for effective scaffolding to take place.

An integrated approach

In an integrated approach, which combines storytelling and drama techniques to scaffold children's learning, the aim at a global level may be that, over a series of lessons, possibly as many as eight or twelve, the children will come back to the story three or four times. During this period, their initial receptive understanding of the story will be scaffolded in order to enable them to act out and re-tell the story, to explore relevant issues it raises, and to personalise and transfer some of the language it contains to their own lives.

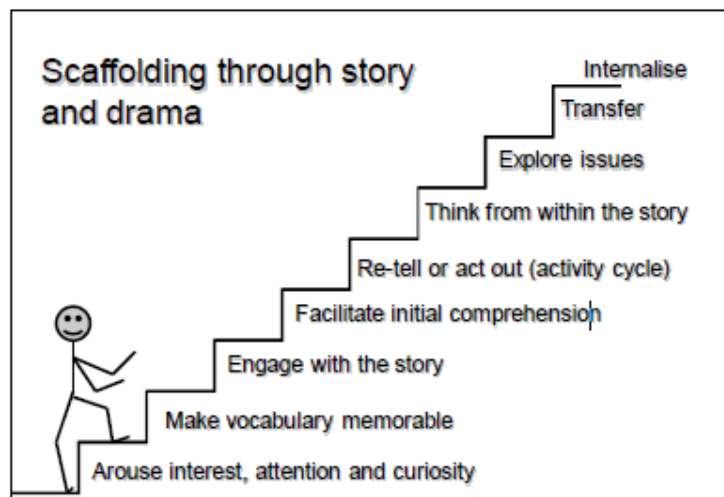


Figure 1: Scaffolding through story and drama

Figure 1 shows schematically how the process of scaffolding children's learning might work in such an approach.

(Read, 2012)



Questions for Features of Children's Drama

1. What is scaffolding? (In real life, and also metaphorically.)

.....

2. How do children play?

.....

3. Name three issues that are significant for children.

.....

4. How do stories and drama strengthen children's multiple intelligences?

.....

5. How can children discover their learning styles?

.....

6. What helps to make learning memorable in the short and long term?

.....

7. What is the social and communal effect of stories and drama?

.....

8. Name some rules and conventions of stories and drama.

.....

9. Look at the figure depicting scaffolding and with a particular story in mind give examples for at least four of the steps.

.....



This section from Carole Cox's text book Teaching Language Arts: A student-centred classroom is about using drama in the classroom. The book is not specifically about teaching English Language Learners (ELL) but much of this section is.

Drama in the classroom

Since prehistoric times, people have used drama to express the human experience: to show feelings and ideas, recount past events, and tell the stories of their lives. Long before people wrote and read about their experiences, they danced and chanted and pantomimed and sang about them to tell others. Pre-literate societies still do this. The word drama comes from a Greek word meaning "to do or live through".

In similar fashion, young children first learn to express their experiences through dramatic means such as voice, gestures, and movement. From an early age, long before they actually speak words, babies use gestures and sounds to imitate things they observe in the environment. Piaget (1962) noted evidence of this innate human tendency during the first few years of his own son's life, when he observed his newborn child cry upon hearing other babies in the hospital cry. Piaget also found that his son would cry in response to his imitation of a baby's cry but not to a whistle or other kinds of cries. Piaget concluded that language development goes through three stages:

1. Actual experience with an action or object
2. Dramatic reliving of this experience
3. Words that represent this whole schema verbally

Children are able to communicate successfully through dramatic means long before they can speak, read and write. The mental images that children draw on during play are necessary for linguistic development. These symbolic representations also form the basis for the comprehension of text during what Piaget calls the *symbolic play period*, between the ages of 2 and 7. Based on Piaget's constructivist theory, drama is a natural part of the development of human thought and language. From Vygotsky's (1968) social interaction perspective, *activity* is the major explanatory concept in the development of human thought and language. Play, then, is the primary learning activity of young children. The use of drama in the classroom reflects a social constructivist perspective of language learning – which is active, social, and centred in students' experiences – and provides an effective way to teach oral language as well as literacy (Wagner, 2003).

This section of the chapter will describe some of the many ways teachers can use drama in the classroom to teach listening and taking and to develop literacy. Storytelling, puppets, reader's theatre, creative drama, story dramatization combined with directed listening and thinking actively (DLTA) and Shakespeare for children will all be considered.



Storytelling

Even with the large number of books available for children today and the variety of stories they are exposed to on television and videos, children never seem to lose their fascination with storytelling. As one first-grade child put it, as I was about to read a picture book of a favourite folktale, "Tell it with your face!"

The tools of the storyteller are so deceptively simple and so basically human that storytelling is often neglected as a way of teaching listening and talking. It is, however, a powerful way for children to listen to and use spoken language (Ralston, 1993; Roney, 1989). It's also a wonderful way to share traditional literature and stories of the past, whether historical events or even personal life stories – perhaps yours or your students'.

Here are some suggestions for storytelling by teachers and students:

1. Finding Stories: In addition to stories about personal experiences and those heard told by others, traditional folk literature is an excellent source for storytelling. Young children enjoy timeless tales such as "The Three Billy Goats Gruff", "The Three Pigs", and other tales of three. Tales like "Jack and the Beanstalk" and "The Gingerbread Man" are sure winners, too.

2. Telling Stories: Storyteller Ramon Royal Ross advises that above all, the storyteller should know the story really well. In addition, he suggests the following approach for actually telling the story, which works well for him (Ross, 1980):

- a. Read the story aloud several times. Get a feel for its rhythm and style.
- b. Outline the major actions in the story, identifying where one ends and another starts.
- c. Picture the characters and setting in the story carefully. Describe them to yourself.
- d. Search for phrases in the story that you'd like to work into telling it.
- e. Practise gestures that add to the story.
- f. Prepare an introduction and conclusion before and after the actual telling.
- g. Practise telling the entire story – complete with intonation, colourful phrases, gestures and sequence – in a smooth and natural fashion.
- h. Make an audio- or videotape of yourself telling the story, and listen and look for areas in which you might improve. Also time yourself.

3. Props: Even though props aren't necessary, some teachers like to use them for storytelling, especially with younger children. Props might be picture cards, flannel boards, puppets, or objects like a handful of beans for telling "Jack and the Beanstalk". Mood makers like candles and incense and background music and noisemakers (e.g. rattles and tambourines) effectively enhance the telling, too.

4. Costumes: When used with props, costumes can create a dramatic impact. For instance, wearing a black cape and witch's hat adds drama to telling scary stories in autumn. Even simple costumes, like hats and shawls, can be used in many creative ways.



Give an example of a story you could tell dramatically, and then have your students retell:

.....

How could the audience join in on this storytelling?

.....

Puppets

Children are natural puppeteers. Watch any young child with a stuffed animal, toy car, or object that can become an extension of the body and voice, and you will see a born puppeteer. Rather than plan a specific, one-time puppet-making activity, teachers should make materials and books on puppets available in the classroom on a regular basis, seizing opportunities that arise in which puppet making is a perfect way for children to tell a story, respond to literature, or report on what they have learned. Folktales and picture book are great sources of stories for puppetry.

Teachers can collect puppet-making materials themselves or ask students and parents to do so. Many of the materials needed are everyday object that would be discarded anyway. A box containing the following supplies should be made available to students and added to, as needed:

- *Tools:* scissors, tape, glue, paint, stapler
- *Bodies:* fingers, hands, feet
- *Paper:* construction, plates, bags, crepe, cups, envelopes, toilet paper rolls
- *Cloth:* scraps, yarn, socks, gloves, mittens, hats
- *Sticks:* tongue depressors, ice cream sticks, twigs, dowels, old wooden spoons
- *Fancy things:* buttons, feather, beads, sequins, ribbons, old costume jewellery
- *Odds and ends:* boxes, milk cartons, Styrofoam, cotton balls, ping pong balls, fruits and vegetables, gourds, leaves, moss, pine cones, egg cartons, plastic bottles

Making puppets should be kept simple and left up to the students. They should use their imaginations in creating puppets; their ideas are so much better than those of adults. For instance, children don't need patters to trace around, which produce puppets that all look alike. Rather, they should draw directly on materials like tongue depressors and ice cream sticks, creating fingers, and hands, and feet.

Try these methods of making simple puppets:

- *Stick puppets:* Attack a paper plate, cut-out, or Styrofoam cup to a stick and decorate.
- *Paper bag puppets:* Draw directly on the bag and decorate.
- *Hand puppets:* Decorate a glove, mitten, sock, box, piece of fabric or handkerchief wrapped with rubber bands, or simply an envelope over the hand.
- *Shadow puppets:* Two-dimensional puppets can be made from heavy paper and attached to a straw, and moved on an overhead projector, which will show the silhouette, or a shadow, on a screen.



A puppet stage is nice but not necessary to fulfil the real purpose of puppetry: to encourage children's thinking, listening, talking and imagination as they create oral texts to share with others. You can, however, create a simple stage in one of these ways:

- Turn a table on its side and drape it with a dramatic-looking cloth.
- Have two reliable students hold a sheet or drape over a broomstick balanced on two chairs.
- Put a cardboard box on a table and seat the puppeteers behind it on low chairs.

Think of a story that you could use puppets for.

What style of puppets would you use?

What characters would you make puppets of?

Reader's Theatre

In reader's theatre, participants read and interpret literature aloud from scripts adapted especially for this setting. The scripts can come from many types of literature: texts of picture books for younger children and novels for older children; folk- and fairytales and other types of traditional literature (e.g. fables, myths, and legends); poetry and songs; stories and poems from anthologies and basal readers; and even nonfiction, too. In presenting a reader's theatre, children hold the scripts, which may be read or glanced at by the performing readers. No special costumes, sets, props, lighting, or music are required, so once the scripts have been developed, reader's theatre can be practised and performed almost instantly in the classroom.

Selecting Stories for Reader's Theatre

Teachers should look for these qualities in selecting stories:

- Dialogue and clear prose
- Lively, high-interest, humorous stories, with children or personified animals as main characters
- A good balance of parts nearly the same size
- Short stories, especially the first time

Steps for Adapting a Story or Text for a Reader's Theatre Script

1. Add narrator parts for the following: identification of time, place, scene, and characters. One narrator can be added for the whole story, or separate narrators can be added for different characters.
2. Delete lines that aren't critical to plot development, that are peripheral to the main action of the story, that represent complex imagery or figurative language difficult to express through



gestures, that state characters are speaking (e.g. "He said ..."), or whose meaning can be conveyed through characters' facial expression or gestures, simple sound effects, or mime.

3. Change lines that are descriptive but could be spoken by characters or would move the story along more easily, if changed.

Steps for Putting Reader's Theatre into Practice

This procedure may be used with a whole class or a small group:

1. *Introduce the story:* Read or tell the story aloud to young children, or let older children take turns reading the story aloud. Encourage an extended response period to the story through discussion involving all children.

2. *Explain Reader's Theatre:* If this is the first time students have done reader's theatre, explain how it works: the physical arrangement and movements (turning in and out of the scene when not involved), the roles of the narrators and characters, the uses of mime and expression, and the nature and use of scripts.

3. *Cast the story:* First, distribute prepared scripts: those the teacher has done alone or with the children. An LCD projector is useful in displaying the story and working through the adaptation with students. Revise it according to their suggestions as they watch on the screen. Scripts can also be easily adapted by a few children or an individual using the computer.

Next, take volunteers for all parts. In initial sessions, let many different children play each part. They should all become familiar with all the parts, as in improvised drama.

4. *Block, stage, and practise playing the script:* The teacher may plan the physical staging ahead with the group but should be ready to revise it according to how the script actually plays with the group. Suggestions for modifications should be accepted from the students. Other guidelines are as follows:

- Narrators often stand, perhaps using a prop like a music stand for holding the script.
- Characters are usually seated on chairs, stools, or even tables.
- Floor plans should be decided ahead of time and changed as the play proceeds,
- There should be a minimum of movement around the floor in reader's theatre.

5. *Sharing reader's theatre:* By the time children have prepared and participated in reader's theatre, they are so enthusiastic that they want to share it with others. TO make this comfortable for them avoid actual stages; instead use a stage-in-the-round or multi-purpose room or library. Also, it's best to share with others in the classroom first, followed by classes of younger children and then classes of the same age. Work gradually toward sharing with adults, such as parents.



Think of a well-known traditional story (e.g. Goldilocks) and write lines for one short conversation (e.g. when the bears find their porridge has been tasted / eaten).

.....

.....

Here is an example of a simple Reader's Theatre script:

Reader's Theatre Script Prepared for Children

This script adapts a traditional rhyme for young children about a mother chicken and her five baby chicks. It lends itself to reader's theatre because it includes lines of dialogue. Subtle movements can be added for each chick to correspond to the dialogue: squirming, shrugging, squealing, sighing, moaning and scratching. This script also works well for reader's theatre because it allows twelve children to participate: Each of the five chicks and the mother speak a line, and each can be assigned his or her own narrator, as well. If you add an announcer to read the title, thirteen children can participate.

Cast and Setting

- Five chicks and the other chicken (each standing in front of his or her narrator backs to the audience)
- Six narrators: one for each chick and the other chicken (each standing behind his or her chick or mother, facing the audience)
- Announcer (standing in the centre, in front of everyone)

Entire cast should form a semicircle

Announcer: Five Little Chickens (moves off to the side)

First Chick Narrator: Said the first little chicken, with a queer little squirm,

First Chick: (turning in) I wish I could find a fat little worm.

Second Chick Narrator: Said the second little chicken, with an odd little shrug.

Second Chick: (turning in) I wish I could find a fat, little slug.

Third Chick Narrator: Said the third little chicken, with a sharp, little squeal.

Third Chick: (turning in) I wish I could find some nice, yellow meal.

Fourth Chick Narrator: Said the fourth little chicken, with a small sigh of grief.

Fourth Chick: (turning in) I wish I could find a little, green leaf.

Fifth Chick Narrator: Said the fifth little chicken, with a faint, little moan.

Fifth Chick: (turning in) I wish I could find a wee, gravel stone.

Mother Chicken: (turning in) Now, see here.

Mother Narrator: Said the mother from the green garden patch.

Mother Chicken: If you want your breakfast, just come here and scratch.

What makes this script particularly good for young children is its simplicity. No one has to say more than a single line of dialogue; the five chick parts are especially easy. Moreover, the rhyming nature of each chick/nature pair of lines, the corresponding movements, and the repetitive nature of the entire script help readers understand and remember their parts. For the same reasons, a script like this could also work well with English Language Learners.



Creative Drama

The Children's Theatre Association (Davis & Behm, 1978) explains the purpose of *creative drama* as follows: "Creative drama may be used to teach the art of drama and/or motivate and extend learning in other content areas. Participation in creative drama has the potential to develop language and communication" (p10). Creative drama is a synthesis of sense training and pantomime and improvisation.

Sense Training

Sense-training activities help individuals become aware of their senses and encourage creativity and self-confidence through expressing that awareness. The key is the concentration ability children develop as they communicate through non-verbal means – facial expression, gestures, and movements – and then add oral language.

Here are some ideas for activities that involve using the four senses:

1. *Touch*: The teacher should have children sit on the floor, each individual doing his or her own activity. Dimming the lights may help create a secure atmosphere. The teacher should give the following directions (one activity at a time):

- "There is a balloon on the floor in front of you. Pick it up. Blow it up. Tie a knot in the end of it and attach a string. Let it float in the air as you watch. Describe what you see."
- "There is a tiny creature crouched behind you. It is frightened. Pick it up. Pet it and comfort it. What would you say to it?"
- "There is a blob of sticky, gooey clay in front of you. Pick it up. Make something from it. Tell a buddy what you made."

Think of another example:

2. *Taste*: For these activities, children should work in pairs, facing each other. The teacher should ask one partner to guess exactly what the other is pretending to eat and then tell the class what he or she saw:

- "Make your favourite sandwich and eat it"
- "Eat your favourite food."
- "Eat something you don't like."

Think of another example:



3. *Sight*: children should gather in small groups and sit in circles, everyone facing each other. The teacher should tell them that there is a collection of something in the middle of the circle; then going around the circle, each individual should take out an item and pantomime what he or she has selected. After everyone has finished, they should all guess what one another did. Here are some ideas:

- “There is a trunk full of clothes in the middle of the circle. Take something out of it, and try it on. There is only one of each thing in the trunk.”
- “There is a pile of presents wrapped in boxes in the middle of the circle. Choose one, open it, and take out and use what’s inside.”
- “Your favourite toy or game is in the middle of the circle. Pick it up and show how you play with it.”

Think of another example:

4. *Sound*: For these activities, children should stand in small groups (again, forming small circles). In response to the teacher’s directions, each person should portray how a particular sound makes him or her feel. After everyone has finished, the students should try to tell what the others did. Here are some ideas:

- “I will make a sound. (Hit the table with a rhythmic beat.) Act out what it makes you think of.”
- Give the same directions, but rub hands together to make a slithery sound.
- Give the same direction, but make a scraping sound with an object against the blackboard.

Think of another example:

Pantomime and Improvisation

Pantomime and improvisation are natural extensions of sense training and may also follow from teachers’ observations of children’s spontaneous play. *Pantomime* uses facial expressions, body movements, and gestures to communicate instead of sounds and words, *improvisation* adds speech to spontaneous movements and actions.

Here are some topics to focus on for pantomime and improvisation movements and actions:

- *Animals*: Movements, interactions between children and pets, interactions among animals, and so on.



- *Play*: Sports, games, toys, and fun places to visit
- *Children's literature*: Nursery rhymes, poems, picture books, folktales, and stories
- *Cross-curricular*: Social studies, science, math, or fine art

Teachers may also use costumes and other props to motivate children's pantomime and improvisation (e.g. hats, capes, canes, buckets, baskets). Likewise music provides a good source of motivation.

If your topic was 'animals', how could you ask the children to use pantomime and improvisation?

.....

If your theme was World of Stories, what Nursery Rhyme, story, or poem could you use?

.....

Story Dramatization

When children respond to a story through drama – portraying the actions as they play the characters – they are creating a *story dramatization*. This kind of drama is spontaneous and based on improvisation, but because it's based on an actual story, it follows a plot.

A two-step approach to story dramatization is shown on the following pages in two Teaching Ideas: first, by conducting a directed listening teaching activity (DLTA) of the classic children's picture book *Where the Wild Things Are*, by Maurice Sendak, and second, by bringing the story to life with mask making, mime, dance, and finally, the complete story dramatization, which teaches the literary elements of setting, characters, and sequence of events/plot and creating a story map.

Teaching Idea

Directed Listening Thinking Activity (DLTA)

The purpose of a DLTA is to focus attention on stories read aloud. And since similar kinds of reasoning take place in both listening and reading comprehension, DLTA is an important strategy for teaching reading, as well. In this activity, questions are used first to activate students' prior knowledge and encourage their predictions and then to focus their attention on the story to verify those predictions, helping students construct meaning from the text.

The teaching sequence outlined here presents sample questions using the book *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963); however, it can be used with any read-aloud story.

Before Reading

1. Introduce the book and tell something about it: "This is a book about a little boy and an adventure he had."
2. Encourage students to examine the cover and illustrations.



3. Discuss any experiences or concepts that come up.
4. Invite students to respond to the story while it's being read aloud with enthusiasm: "As I read, you can ask questions or share your ideas."

During Reading

1. Ask the children to make predictions about what will happen: "What do you think might happen to Max?"
2. Read but stop and give students opportunities to verify their predictions.
3. Continue to ask the children to make predictions and explain the reasons behind them: "What do you think will happen next? Why?"
4. Encourage students to respond openly to events, characters and ideas in the book: "What do you think of Max, the Wild Things, or sailing away from home?"

After Reading

1. Talk about the book: "What did you think of the book?"
2. Ask for personal responses to the story: "Did you like the book? Why or why not? What was your favourite part?"
3. Talk about interesting concepts or words that come up: "How would you describe a *Wild Thing*? What's a *Rumpus*?"

Extending the Reading

1. Read related books such as *In the Night Kitchen* (Sendak, 1970) and *There's a Nightmare in my Closet* (Mayer, 1969).
2. Encourage further response-centred activities: drawing pictures, writing stories, making monster masks, dramatizing the story, and so on.

Teaching Idea

Bringing the "Wild Things" to Life

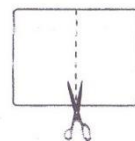
Here's an example of how all the elements of drama can be integrated progressively in experiences in bringing Maurice Sendak's (1963) *Where the Wild Things Are* to life.

- **Monster Masks:** Making simple monster masks (See Directions below) will set the mood and help children establish distance between their real selves and monster selves. Making a mask will also help each student develop his or her own characterisation for either Max or a "Wild Thing".

How to Make a Mask

Materials: Manila folder, scissors, stapler, glue, decorations

1. Cut the manila folder in half.



2. In one half, cut out an oval for the face to show through.



3. In the other half, cut two strips on the diagonal.



4. Attach one strip to the back of the mask to fit around the head from side to side. Attach the other strip from the top centre of the mask to the other strap.



5. Decorate with scraps of manila folder, construction paper, feathers, scraps of cloth, pipe cleaners, yarn, ribbons and the like.



- **Monster Mime:** With masks in place, students can do sense-training, pantomime, and improvisational activities. After reading and discussing the book, the teacher should lead them through “A Day in the Life of a Monster”, asking:

“Show me how you sleep, Monster, and how you wake up.”

“How do you get ready for a new day, Monster? Do you brush your teeth (or tooth)? comb your hair (scales, fur, or tentacles)? wear clothes?”

“How do you move around when you are ready for a new day, Monster? Do you creep, crawl, slither, lumber, galumph, stagger, stumble, or fall down frequently?”

- **Monster Dance:** Using movements developed through mime the “monsters” can dance. The teacher may suggest a series of movements for different types of monsters: walking, marching, jumping, crouching and pouncing, and so on. The teachers should experiment with a variety of music but let children choose their own preferred monster music.
- **Story Dramatization:** Maurice Sendak has said that the aesthetic problem he was attempting to solve when creating *Where the Wild Things Are* was that of capturing movement and dance on the pages of a picture book. He does this beautifully in the wordless sequence that starts when the young protagonist, Max – who has just been made “King of All Wild Things” by the “Wild Things” themselves – imperiously orders, “Let the wild rumpus start!”

This is a natural point of connection between the developmental sequence of drama activities focussed around the theme of monsters and the dramatization of the story by the children. After they have heard the story, discussed and reacted to it, and crept inside the character of a monster (through masks, mime, movement, and dance), they need to take just a small step to try on the



character of Max or a “Wild Thing”. And after that, it’s easy for children to jump inside the magical book and live it through story dramatization.

Steps for Creating a Story Dramatization

To create a story dramatization (for this or any other story), follow this sequence of steps:

1. *Reread and discuss the book*: Ask children to note the setting, characters, and sequence of events or plot. Also note the most exciting parts, the climax, and the way the story ended (i.e. the resolution). Discuss mood and theme. After several readings, discuss these points and chart the story with the class for dramatization purposes on the board or chart-paper:

Setting

Home, Max’s Room, Ocean, Where the Wild Things Are

Characters

Narrator, Mother, Max, dog, Wild Things, Other Inanimate Objects: Trees, Boats, Ocean

Sequence of Events/Plot

- (1) Max makes mischief. Mother sends him to bed.
- (2) A forest grows. A boat comes by.
- (3) Max sails away to where the Wild Things are.
- (4) Max tames the Wild Things. Max becomes King.
- (5) The wild rumpus (dance).
- (6) Max is lonely. He leaves the Wild Things.
- (7) He sails home. His supper is still hot.

Use a circle to help children understand the structure of the story in relationship to the sequence of events. Explain that this is a circle story: The setting and plot begin and end in the same place. Do this with the whole class on a “word wall”, or let small groups or individuals do story maps (see below).

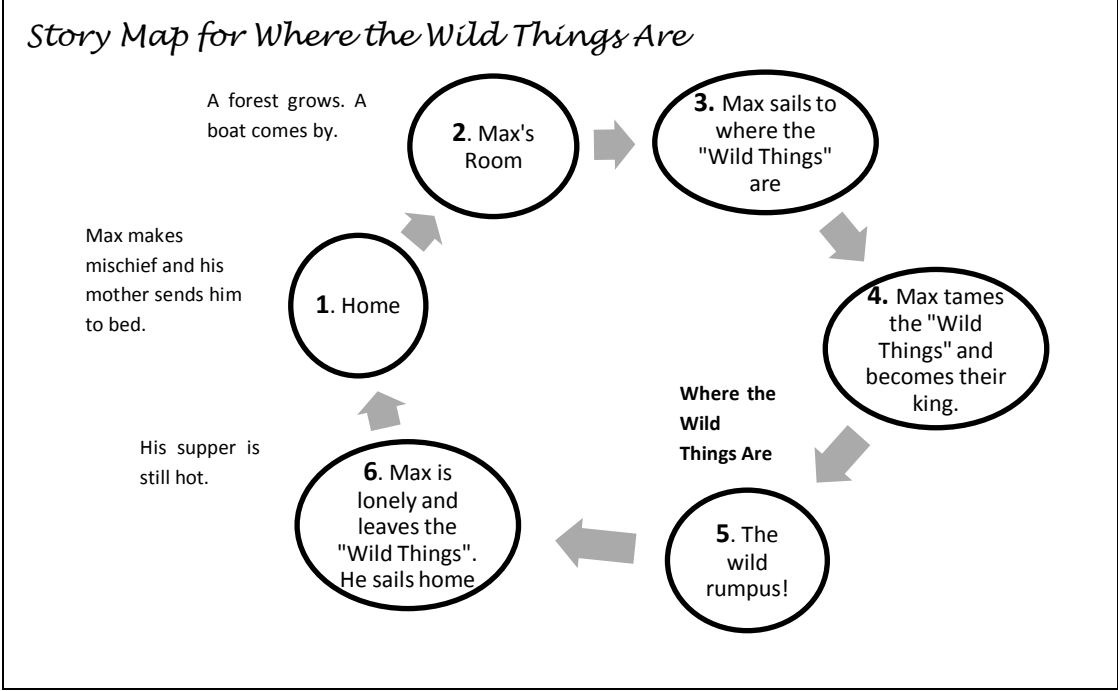
2. *Take volunteers for the cast*: Delegate direction and leadership roles in the play to one child at a time. For example, begin with the narrator, and rotate to other children.

3. *Have the cast plan how they will pay the scene – who will do what action and where*: There are enough parts for trees, an ocean, a boat, and “Wild Things” to involve the entire class. Or half the students can play and the other half can watch; then reverse.

4. *Have the children play the scene*: Allow the narrator to provide direction for the story initially. Later, as the children play the scene several more times, this role will become less important.

5. *Discuss and evaluate after each playing with the children*: Everyone should become involved in

this stage. Emphasize the possibility by asking questions like these:
 What did you see that you liked?
 Who did something really interesting (or exciting, realistic, fantastic, etc.)?
 What can we do next time to make the play even better?



Questions about Story Dramatization

1. Because story dramatization is based on an actual story, it has a

What are the implications of this (as compared to other types of drama, maybe)?

.....

2. What is the purpose of a 'DLTA'?

.....

3. What are questions used for in this activity (DLTA)?

Firstly

and

And then

helping students to



4. What steps can be taken before reading?

-
-
-
-

5. What might you stop for during reading?

.....

6. What aesthetic questions could you ask after reading?

.....

7. What efferent questions could you ask after reading?

.....

8. What target language could be practised when the children are wearing the masks?

.....

.....

9. Do you think (all/some of) this lesson plan could work in your classroom? (Why/why not?)

.....

Discuss with your group.



Syllabus Study: Drama in the Malaysian primary School Curriculum

Modules, Topics, and Themes: The KSSR is arranged in *modules* – Listening and Speaking, Reading, Writing, Grammar (from yr. 3), and Language Arts – and it is expected that the teacher will move through them in sequence. Each series of modules is related under one particular *topic*. And each topic fits into one of the three *themes*.

The KSSR curriculum states:

In order to make learning more meaningful and purposeful, language input is presented under themes and topics which are appropriate for pupils. Three broad themes have been identified in the curriculum.

- World of Self, Family and Friends;
- World of Stories; and
- World of Knowledge.

(Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2010)

This can be confusing for some teachers. It is important to notice that stories (from which we create plays and enact dramas) are not only part of the 'World of Stories', and they can (and should) appear in any and all topics. *For example:*

In the Year 2 Text Book, Unit 5:

- Theme: World of Knowledge
- Topic: I am special
- This unit includes a read aloud story *Burt and his Horse*. It also includes a read together story *Little Red Riding Hood*, and a Language Arts activity for the same story.

The 'knowledge' in this unit is about the five senses which the children explore in relation to fruits during the Listening and Speaking module.

While we are teaching English language to the pupils, we are also imparting knowledge, and helping them to grow and develop as they discover more about themselves and their surroundings.

It says in the Year One KSSR guidebook:

When planning lessons, topics for teaching are initially based on the immediate learning environment of the child. Later on, these are expanded to town, country and more distant foreign locations.

Let's consider the three themes, especially in relation to the stories we tell and the plays we create.

World of Self

As children grow they become more aware of the world further away from themselves and their mother, then father, and brothers and sisters. The home is the centre of their world, and then they discover the yard, and the car. When they start school they discover a whole new realm with school, and friends, and so on.

Stories for young children centre on the family and home.

Can you think of any stories or plays or role plays that would fit into this category?

.....

What genre / type would this story fit?

What genre(s) of stories would you expect to find in this theme?

.....

World of Stories

In a way, *all* stories could fit into the 'World of Stories' theme, but there are a great many that can *only* fit here.

Which genres / types of stories would you expect to find in this theme?

.....

Name some stories which would fit this theme.

.....

World of Knowledge

Sometimes we tell stories to share knowledge. This would be a factual story, like a biography, or it could be a fictional story where someone discovers knowledge in the process of their journey.

Can you think of an example of a story where children can learn some knowledge along the way?

.....



Topics in the KSSR texts (year 1, 2, 3)

Consider these topics which are in the text books (Sekolah Kebangsaan) for the first 3 years.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Unit 1: Sounds around us	Unit 1: Hooray! We are back	Unit 1: Things I do
Unit 2: All about me	Unit 2: Do the right thing	Unit 2: Being healthy
Unit 3: Let's be friends	Unit 3: Where am I?	Unit 3: My cousins, my neighbour
Unit 4: Listen to me	Unit 4: Read me a story	Unit 4: People around me
Unit 5: May I?	Unit 5: I am special	Unit 5: Having fun
Unit 6: Dilly Duck's Doughnut	Unit 6: Delicious food	Unit 6: Pet's world
Unit 7: Look at me	Unit 7: Hobbies	Unit 7: From the sea
Unit 8: Stay clean, be happy	Unit 8: Growing plants	Unit 8: It's story time!
Unit 9: Meet my family	Unit 9: When I grow up	Unit 9: The holidays
Unit 10: How many?	Unit 10: Caring and Sharing	Unit 10: A ride in the safari park
Unit 11: My happy days	Unit 11: Looking good	Unit 11: In school ...
Unit 12: When is your birthday?	Unit 12: On the farm	Unit 12: Fresh fruits
Unit 13: I see colours	Unit 13: Good deeds	Unit 13: I see numbers!
Unit 14: Say it nicely	Unit 14: Precious drops	Unit 14: Technology at home
Unit 15: My favourite toys	Unit 15: Save the sea creatures	Unit 15: Four friends
Unit 16: What is in my classroom?	Unit 16: Reuse, recycle	Unit 16: It's concert day!
Unit 17: Show me the way	Unit 17: Myths	
Unit 18: Let's eat	Unit 18: Feeling happy, feeling sad	
Unit 19: I wear ...		
Unit 20: My pet		
Unit 21: Fun with shapes		
Unit 22: In the garden		
Unit 23: Chad the milkman		
Unit 24: Let's go shopping		
Unit 25: How do you get around?		
Unit 26: the tiny thimble		
Unit 27: So hairy and scary		
Unit 28: Earth Detective		
Unit 29: Happy Holidays		
Unit 30: Goodbye, goodbye		



Choosing topics

Choose a topic in each of the three years, and then find a story/poem/song which could be used for drama activities (of any kind) for one topic in each of these. *(Additional to what might be in the text book)*

Year 1 Topic:

.....

Story/Song/Poem

.....

Type(s) of Drama Activitie(s)

.....

Year 2 Topic:

.....

Story/Song/Poem

.....

Type(s) of Drama Activitie(s)

.....

Year 3 Topic:

.....

Story/Song/Poem

.....

Type(s) of Drama Activitie(s)

.....



Consider the three main themes in the KSSR and link them to possible drama ideas.

Linking plays and drama with the different themes

Look at the drama ideas below, and decide which theme(s) they could be linked with.

a. The children create puppets of their family members and act out a drama leaving for school and work in the morning.

World of Knowledge World of Stories World of Self

b. The teacher tells the children: There is a furry animal in front of you in the total darkness. Feel the animal and work out what it is and whether you should run away.

World of Knowledge World of Stories World of Self

c. The children read a Reader's Theatre play about a fisherman and his family in China. Then they have to provide an ending for the story.

World of Knowledge World of Stories World of Self

d. The children act out the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears.

World of Knowledge World of Stories World of Self

e. The children role-play being shopkeepers and customers.

World of Knowledge World of Stories World of Self



Exercises for Introduction to Children's Drama

These exercises can be selected by the lecturer and/or students:

Individual:

1. Choose a story that could be used for drama – a traditional tale, or a children's story book. Consider the 7 'Features of stories and drama' (page 5) and work out how each of these would (or would not?) apply to this particular story.
2. Choose a traditional tale and create a Readers Theatre script similar to the one on page 14 about the Little Chicks – include simple movements as well as simple words.

With a Partner:

1. Choose a suitable story for drama. Create puppets for the characters – try making at least two different types of puppets (see page 11). Explain how you would help the children to make the puppets, and prepare for a performance. Would you do it as a class or in groups? Etc.
2. Design a sense training activity related to a particular topic. (See page 15) Plan an activity and take the rest of the class through it. Ask for comments and reactions.

Group:

1. Choose a topic from the year 1, 2, or 3 text books. (See the list on page 25.) Design some drama activities for that topic. The lesson could include part(s) of a Speaking and Listening lesson, and/or a Reading class (e.g. Reader's Theatre), and/or a Writing class (a response to the drama or story), and/or a Language Arts lesson. Present the lesson for the class to participate in and comment on.



Topic 2: Selection and Adaptation of Plays

When we as teachers choose stories or ready-made plays, we need to be aware of why we are using them at all. We need to know what the educational purpose is that we are endeavouring to fulfil. Like most good things, there is not one simple answer. The article below looks at drama in education from several different perspectives.

What Role Does Drama Play in Education?

By:Carolynn Rogers

Watch young children. What are they very often doing when left to their own devices? That's right - play-acting. It seems that drama play comes naturally. Kids "play house", pretending to be mummy or daddy; dash around acting like a superhero, or raise their arms in victory when emulating a favourite sports star. Most children come into formal educational situations having gone through their imitative stage of drama play and having experienced some imaginative, creative, self-directed play.

Tapping into this natural interest in drama play can give educators a way of providing students of any age with an enjoyable learning experience through which they not only gain knowledge but develop many life skills.

For example, drama play provides the opportunity to hone the skill of co-operation. Learning to cope with the inevitable differences in opinions and working styles (not to mention everyone's emotional foibles) is of utmost importance if a project is to be successful.

As the Play Write or Story Teller:

Synthesizing the ideas, facts, attitudes, personalities and events takes organized thinking and planning. This can happen even with the very young child who is simply retelling the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. With practice they learn to consider the sequencing of events, (Bears leave, Goldilocks comes, tries and eats porridge, tries and breaks chair, tries and sleeps in bed, Bears return, Goldilocks runs away) as well as the characters involved. In their retelling, Poppa Bear's voice and attitude are rarely the same as Mamma's or Baby Bear's. As students mature and develop their own story lines for drama play scripts, they hone their ability to visualize events, characters and settings which takes creative thinking and problem solving.

As the Director:

Even when no one person is given the responsibility of being the "director" of a group drama play, inevitably someone will emerge as the leader of the production. This person often has firm ideas about how the task should be done and imprints his or her interpretation on the presentation. This is a skill to be encouraged, but sometimes it is necessary to officially assign this role to someone who may not be bold enough to speak up and take the opportunity for leadership. In this role, the skills of interpretation, decision-making and communication come to the fore. (Not to mention standing firm in the face of mutiny!)



As the Actor:

Putting oneself "in the other person's shoes helps to develop empathy. Acting out a different set of life circumstances can lead to an understanding that there is another point of view that may have validity.

For many of us, learning to be comfortable speaking or performing in front of an audience is a trial! Starting early with informal drama play in the classroom setting can help to ease children into oral presentation. As students become accustomed to performing, they can be encouraged to memorize scripts or ad lib, express a range of emotions through voice, facial expressions, and body language and even develop their own characters.

As the Backstage Support:

Whether a tiny classroom drama play or a large staged musical, there are always items that need to be made or found for props, costumes or scenery. Students working to prepare these items, contribute their time and creativity, but also learn to be responsible to the group. One of the best lessons taught by drama is that everyone is necessary for the success of the venture. Those responsible for the "behind the scenes" jobs are just as important as the actors "up front".

Anywhere along the continuum from informal role-playing to formal staged and costumed musical drama learning opportunities abound. Drama play should be an integral part of every student's education.

If you are looking to spice up your program with a little drama play <http://www.play-script-and-song.com/>, check out the ideas and materials at Scruffy Plume's site for play scripts and songs for teaching.

(Rogers, 2012)

Questions for What Role Does Drama Play in Education

1. What do children do when they are left to their own devices?
2. By the time children enter formal education, what have they already gone through, and experienced?
.....
3. What does the play write or story teller need organised thinking and planning for?
.....
4. What can the very young storyteller retelling a story learn to do with practice?
.....



5. As students mature and develop their own story lines for drama play scripts, what abilities can they develop and hone?

.....

6. How does the emergent director of a group drama or play affect the presentation?

.....

7. What skills come to the fore when a child is in the position of director?

.....

8. How can we help children develop empathy?

.....

9. What can students be encouraged to do as they become accustomed to performing?

.....

10. What do students learn when they work backstage?

.....

.....



Selection of Plays for Children

Look at the chart (below), and mark the options that are mentioned according to their suitability as reasons for choosing a particular story/play, and add some of your own suggestions.

Which of these are worthwhile criteria for selecting suitable plays?

<i>Reason:</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Doesn't matter</i>	<i>Must not!</i>
Story about animals acting like people				
Written especially for ESL classrooms.				
Short				
Part for Narrator				
Repetitive				
Pictures to look at				
Parts to include a whole group				
Lots of new words				
Fun				
Movie of the play to watch first				
Lots of movement as part of play				
Language usage carefully planned				
Real life contexts.				
Story about Malaysia				
Translation in BM is available				
Mostly familiar vocabulary				
Written by someone famous				
Available for free				
Good moral values				
Play about children				



Examining a play for children:

CONSIDER: Is this play suitable? Why? Does it need further adaptation?

"THE ENORMOUS NOSE"

(by Mark, 8th grader)

CHARACTERS, in Order of Appearance:

Narrator	Prince
King	Princess Rosebud
Enchantress	Goldsmith
Servant	Baker

ACT ONE

[A forest]

NARRATOR: One day, a King was walking through the forest when an Enchantress appeared.

[The KING points at the ENCHANTRESS, laughing]

KING: Your nose is so huge that I can't see your face!

ENCHANTRESS: Is that so? Well, I'm going to curse your first child with a nose so big, you'll look back to this day and regret making this mistake.

KING: Who are you kidding? You can't do magic. You're just an old ugly lady.

ENCHANTRESS: You'll see what I can do. Bye....he-he-he-he-he*[exits, laughing]*

ACT II

[The royal nursery]

NARRATOR: As the years past, the king had his first child.

KING: He is so beautiful, but what a big lump on his face!

SERVANT: Umm..... Sir, that is his nose.

[The king sits down, looking depressed]

SERVANT: Don't worry. People with big noses grow up to be gorgeous.

KING: I'll take your word for it.

ACT II

[A town scene]

NARRATOR: The servant taught the young child that having a big nose was a fashion statement of beauty. The child believed the servant and carried on with his spoiled life. On his twentieth birthday, it was time for him to get married. He searched the land looking for the right lady. He found a beautiful princess that lived near the woods in a castle. Her name was Princess Rosebud.



[Enter PRINCE from one side of the front of the stage. He has an enormous nose. PRINCESS ROSEBUD enters from the other. They hold hands.]

NARRATOR: The prince walked into the woods and past the town with his new beauty, Princess Rosebud. As they walked pass the stores they got a lot of rude remarks.

GOLDSMITH: Look at that goofy looking guy.

[The BAKER appears outside his bakery, chuckling at the PRINCE after hearing the GOLDSMITH'S remark.]

BAKER: I can only see half of his face, with that huge nose sticking out. You have enough money, why don't you get surgery?

[The PRINCE does not reply and exits with his hood over his face. PRINCESS ROSEBUD follows.]

PRINCESS ROSEBUD: Don't mind those people; they are just jealous that you look better than them.

PRINCE: I hate myself! Everywhere I go, people make fun of me.

[The PRINCE sits down, and the PRINCESS puts her arm around him.]

PRINCESS: The only thing that matters is that I love you, and I think you are beautiful the way you are.

PRINCE: You're so nice and sweet. I wish I could be with you more often.

PRINCESS: I want to get to know you better.

PRINCE: Maybe we can spend time with each other in the future.

PRINCESS: OK, but first let's start off with dinner.

PRINCE: Sounds good to me.

[They exit, arms around each other's waists.]

(Lindy, 2000)

Discuss your response with your group.

Script Writing

Very occasionally teachers come across a play, already written, which is just perfect for their class. *Most* of the time a play needs to be adapted to suit the needs of a particular group, or the teacher has a particular story in mind which needs to be adapted into a usable play.

Below is an article by Chuck Sambuchino (Sambuchino, 2012) with 6 tips on writing plays for kids. Before reading the article consider the following questions:

1. What is the difference between a story and a play-script?

.....

2. What makes a good play-script?

.....

3. What makes a bad play-script?

.....

4. Should there be a "Narrator"? Why / why not?

.....

5. How would you apply the instruction "Show, don't tell"?

.....

Discuss with your group.

SPECIAL NOTES:

A play-script is about action and dialogue. It is *not* about long-winded descriptions and explanations.

An ideal play-script will have a suitable number of characters for the class – to include the whole class, or for groups – with easy-to-follow instructions for actions, and authentic-sounding dialogue in manageable chunks (no long monologues!) But most of all it needs to be a good story, one that will hold their interest. If the teacher cannot be passionate about the story, neither will the students.

AN unsuitable play-script may be simply inappropriate for this particular class – not a manageable number of parts, language that is too complex, unsuitable theme etc. – or maybe it is genuinely a weak story that no one can relate to. On the other hand the story may be a good story that needs to be better adapted.



The common instruction to writers “Show, don’t tell” tries to get away from wordy explanations and descriptions, and is especially applicable to play-scripts. The over-use of a Narrator in what are commonly thought to be children’s play-scripts often “tells” what could easily be “shown” in a much more interesting way. For example, rather than the narrator explaining that Tom and Fred decide to go fishing, Tom and Fred could discuss with each other that fishing might be fun. Even the setting can be shown in the words and actions of the characters rather than a long-winded narration.

The real purpose of the Narrator is to take the movement and action out of the play-script and turn it into a Reader’s Theatre script so that a class of students can sit still in their seats and read through it without too much disruption. Quite often if there is a lot for the Narrator to say compared to other characters, the Narrator’s part can be split into several to be shared between several readers.

Adapting a Story or Script

Ask students to create a play-script from one of the following sources.

- Create a play version of a well-known traditional tale. (Examples of possible stories – Goldilocks and the 3 Bears, Sleeping Beauty, The Gingerbread Man, Little Red Riding Hood.)
- Choose a children’s story book with a story that you like. Change the story into a play-script. This will probably involve creating new dialogue and finding ways to “Show, don’t tell”.
- Create a play-script to describe an event in your life, perhaps something from your childhood. Of course, poetic licence allows you to embellish on the story as needed.
- Create a play-script about an episode (already seen or newly invented) from a favourite TV series.

Allow for 6-10 main characters with speaking parts as well as chorus parts for the rest of the class as a group. Include simple instructions about the mood of the characters and their movements and actions.

There are a lot of examples of plays for children: “2-Page Plays” at <http://www.2pageplays.com/plays.html> (Cooney, 2012)

Are they good for acting out as a full theatrical play, or only for a Readers’ Theatre version?



This article by Chuck Samuchino makes some worthwhile points for would-be writers of plays for children.

6 Tips on Writing Plays for Kids

by *Chuck Sambuchino*

If you write for children, don't limit yourself to traditional fiction. Use your story-telling skills to create plays kids will love. Here are a few suggestions about how to do it:

1) Be realistic.

Your script probably won't be performed on Broadway or turned into a blockbuster movie. Avoid special effects, amazing stunts, or anything else that can't be accomplished by ordinary kids. Keep costumes, sets, and props to a minimum. Writing in the Readers' Theatre format is one of the best ways to create a play that's simple to stage but exciting in content.

2) Use an adjustable cast.

Of course, you want to follow publishers' guidelines about size of cast and number of female/male roles. But you can make your play adaptable to various situations by building in some casting flexibility. When possible, include group characters like "Other Students" or "Rest of Student Council." Use some unisex names for characters or double up on titles, such as "Aunt/Uncle" or "Mr/Ms" Adding a narrator provides a large and handy gender neutral part.

3) Spread the glory around.

Not only is it difficult for one kid to carry most of a play, it's just no fun. All the actors want to have their moment – and their parents expect to see it. Instead of letting your main character do all the talking, distribute lines among a number of roles. If you use group characters (see #2), give them lines that allow for adlibs so everyone gets to say something. For example:

Other Students: What? Are you kidding? I don't believe it! (etc.)

And most importantly, give secondary characters interesting personalities and some problems of their own – that makes them fun to play and entertaining to watch.

4) Make sure your dialogue rings true.

Some characters need to sound pompous, old-fashioned, affected, formal, or otherwise theatrical. Those parts are usually easy to write! Creating realistic dialogue for contemporary young characters can be much more challenging. Real kids don't speak lyrically, reciting over-their-heads vocabulary with perfect grammar. They use contractions and slang, start new sentences without finishing old ones, and interrupt each other. Listen to kids talk to get an idea of how to recreate their conversations, read your dialogue out loud with a critical ear, and polish, polish, polish. Nothing is more essential to a good play than well-written dialogue!



5) Step outside the box.

Today's kids are used to media that breaks boundaries. They've experienced actors who speak directly to the camera, characters who "know" they're in a television program, and games that allow almost-real interaction. So don't be afraid to experiment a little with your play! Let the narrator express personal opinions about what's happening onstage. Allow your main character to argue with the narrator. Place a heckler in the audience or bring an audience member on stage. This kind of creativity works especially well in humorous scripts, but it can also add emotional impact to serious plays.

6) Tell a story.

Despite its different format, a play is still a story – and you want to make it a good one! Create a relatable main character, give him/her a problem worth caring about, go through a complete story arc, end up with a good lesson that's not too heavy-handed, etc., etc., just as you would when writing a kids' story or book. This doesn't just apply to serious drama – funny plays need to be well-written, too! Skits constructed of nothing but jokes, gags, and one-liners can be fun, but they're not really satisfying to audiences, young performers, or the adults who work with kids. Make your script meaningful, as well as entertaining. That's the kind of play that gets published and performed!

(Sambuchino, 2012)

Questions about the six tips:

1. Be realistic – about what?

.....

2. Use an adjustable cast – how?

.....

3. Spread the glory around – how?

.....

4. Make sure your dialogue rings true – how do kids really speak?

.....

5. Step outside the box – in what ways?

.....

6. Tell a story – isn't this drama?

.....



Exercises for Selection and Adaptation of Plays

A: Selecting a Play Script

1. Find 3 different play scripts. You can search on the Internet, or simply go to one of these websites:

Teaching English Games: <http://www.teachingenglishgames.com/eslplays.htm>

Kidsinco: <http://www.kidsinco.com/about/>

Anthology: <http://anthology.page.tl/Plays-for-ESL-kids.htm>

Repeat After Us: <http://www.repeatafterus.com/>

ESL site:

http://eslsite.com/resources/pages/Resources_and_Teaching_Ideas/Drama_and_Role_Plays/index.html

Education World: http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/reading/index.shtml#theater (Reader's Theatre Scripts etc. further down the page)

English Banana: <http://www.englishbanana.com/drama.html>

BYU: <http://education.byu.edu/arts/lessonplans/drama.html>

ESL Printables: http://www.eslprintables.com/speaking_worksheets/play_scripts/ (you have to contribute something of your own to be able to download)

2. Examine each script and consider whether it would be suitable to use for a Malaysian year 1, 2, or 3 class. Which theme and/or topic would you use it for – if at all?

3. Explain how you could/would adapt it to make it suitable.

B: Creating a Play Script

Refer to the 6 Tips for writing plays for kids. (See page 37).

Write a short play for a year 1, 2, or 3 class. (One act only, 1-2 pages).



Topic 3: Theatrical and Drama Techniques

For most children in Malaysia (and indeed elsewhere), their main and/or only experience of watching theatre/drama is on TV. It is important to realise that drama methodology for TV filming are very different from drama in a conventional theatre. Being part of a performance on a stage in a real theatre needs a very specific set of strategies so that the play can be enjoyed by everyone in the audience.

Most adults in Malaysia (and elsewhere) rarely or never go to a theatre and watch a play either. Through the magic of modern technology, stories come alive on various screens for us to enjoy. From the actors' point of view, performing for a camera uses a very different skillset from performing on a stage before a live audience.

Nevertheless, theatre training has remained part of the school experience, and this is not likely to change any time soon. And children need to practise performing on a stage in front of audiences of classmates and/or parents and other adults.

Preparing your class for a stage performance

by Ruth Wickham

The Stage

We are all familiar with the kind of stage that is often built at the front of a large hall. The stage is high, more than a metre above the floor, with steps up either side and sometimes at the front as well. The front of the stage is level with the front wall of the hall, or maybe it juts out a little. The rest of the stage stretches back a few metres, like a large box-shaped room, and there are doors on either side for players to enter the stage from the back-stage area.

Whether from shyness or a sense of staying away from the danger of falling off the front of the stage – or maybe just because we have all that space and we want to use it – children tend to drift to the back of the stage, and/or teachers tend to place them there. They feel much safer, and are barely even aware of the audience. Their voices get swallowed up in the curtains and dark recess of backstage, and small children disappear from the point of view of the people seated in the front rows.

Where to stand

The children need to stand as close to the front of the stage as possible. If they are part of a choir or group, then some of them will be in rows behind – but all of them need to be as far forward as they can without risking falling off the edge.

Speak/Sing out to the Audience

When acting for the cameras for TV or movies, the players can face in any direction – the cameras and microphones will hone in on the sight and sound. However, on the stage the players need to speak out to the audience in the hall. If they turn their backs to speak to each other no one will hear



them. When acting in a play, children need to learn to half face the player they are 'talking' to, but face and speak out to the audience with their chins up and clear diction.

The use of individual microphones could solve some of the problems – although players still need to look out towards the audience to display their expressions and emotions – but very few schools can afford such a luxury. Some schools try placing several microphones on stands around the stage, but these are generally 'directional' mikes and only pick up the voice of any child speaking directly into the mike, and the stands and trailing cords cause all sorts of problems. So we need to assist children to practice their stance and their diction.

Costumes and Masks

It is a popular practice to not only dress children in costumes for a play or performance, but to provide them with masks to wear. Masks are popular because

1. People think stories about talking animals are the most suitable for children.
2. Shy children can hide behind them.

However, the masks can potentially cause two problems for young players. Firstly, they often cannot see really well and get disoriented on the stage (not being sure whether they are facing the right way and where the other players are) and, worse, they risk injury (maybe by falling off the stage). Secondly, the children's voices become muffled behind the mask and it is difficult for them to speak/sing out clearly for the audience to hear.

If the teacher would still like to use masks they need to make sure the eye-holes are big enough and correctly placed to allow children to see clearly, and also make sure the children's mouths are not obscured by the mask.

The other possibility is to use face paint or make-up to give the children animal faces or whatever characters they are portraying.

Stage Management

Considering all of the above, the teacher needs to manage the stage well for the safety of the children as well as to create a worthwhile performance by the children.

Firstly the stage manager / teacher needs to make plans with regard to the play script. There are certain conventions for describing stage placement and movements. With older students these instructions can be directly followed by the students. With younger children, the teacher can use them for his or her own notes in preparation for the 'show'.

The system for planning and preparing is traditionally referred to as 'blocking'. This article by Elisabeth Crowe (Crowe, 2009) explains 'Blocking'. Following that are two tables/diagrams that demonstrate the different portions of the stage, and symbols used by the director when planning movements during a production.



Other Types of Stage

Of course it's always possible that you will have a different kind of stage, or maybe theatre-in-the-round. The principles still apply, consider the needs of the audience to be able to hear and see the players.

Blocking

September 12, 2009, by Elizabeth Crowe

Blocking relates to where the actors are positioned.

Blocking relates to where the actors will be positioned on the stage during particular moments of the show. For example, Actor needs to kiss Actress but they are standing at opposite sides of the stage from one another. How do they become physically close to one another? That is the blocking question.

If the director tells Actor to walk to centre stage, pretend to read a book, and then walk over to her and stand in front of her, he has made two blocking choices. One, to walk to centre stage; and two, to walk over to Actress.

Oftentimes, the director will tell Actor or Actress to block themselves in order to see what feels comfortable to their characters. Depending upon the skill of the actors, too little blocking can sometimes lead to a stage mess; too much blocking can often cause the story to appear rigid and unnatural.

Important in blocking is that: 1) it must continue the story; 2) it must be done in a way that looks natural; and 3) the director must make certain that the blocking does not conflict with what he or she wants the audience to see by way of the actor's profile.

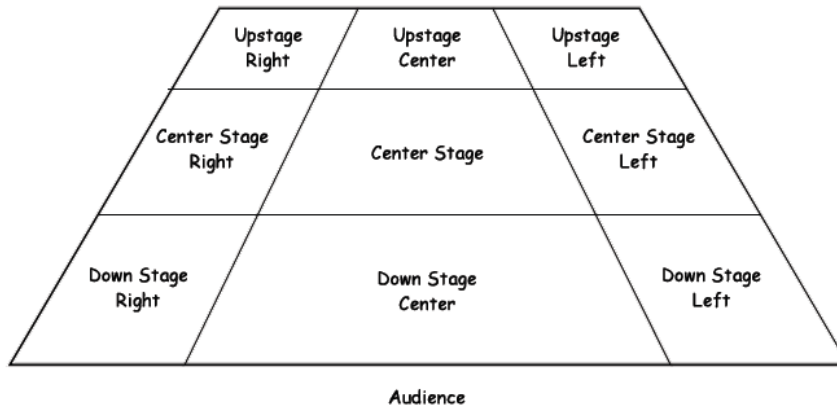
Occasionally, a director will unwisely block an actor in such a way so that the only way the actor can look out towards the audience is to either turn his back to it or to walk backwards. Unless it is done to make a particular point, this usually looks silly.

As stated on Wikipedia, the term "blocking" comes "from the practice of 19th Century directors ... who worked out the staging of a scene on a miniature stage using blocks to represent each of the actors."

(Crowe, 2009)



Positions on the Stage

Why do we use the terms “upstage” and “downstage”? In the nineteenth century and earlier, theaters had raked (sloped) stages. That means that upstage was actually higher than downstage, and the stage slanted down as it got closer to the audience. This made it easier for the audience to see everyone on stage.



(Sources: *The Director's Vision*, by Louis E. Catron, Mayfield Publishing Company, ISBN 0-87484-760-5); and *On Stage Theater Games and Activities for Kids*, by Lisa Bany-Winters, Chicago Review Press, ISBN1-55652-324-6).

Blocking Abbreviations and Symbols.

Area / Object Identification	Movement	Line Readings
C, CS: Center, Center Stage	Ent: Enter	/: slight pause
D, DS: Down, Downstage	Ent UR: Enter Up Right	//: longer pause
DC: Down Center	Ex: Exit	//5: pause for about 5 seconds
DLC: Down Left Center	Ex DL: Exit Down Left	--- : break speech, interrupt
DL: Downstage Left	Kn: Kneel	↗: build (crescendo)
DR: Downstage Right	Lie: Lie Down	↘: decrease (diminuendo)
L, LS: Left, Left Stage	R: Rise	_____: stress underline (emphasize word, phrase, sentence)
LC: Left Center	S: sit	B: take breath here
R, RS: Right, Right Stage	X: Cross	T: top (building on top of previous line)
RC: Right Center	XDR: Cross Down Right	T++: increase tempo (faster)
U, US: Up, Upstage	XL3: Cross to the Left 3 steps	T--: decrease tempo (slower)
UC: Up Center	XUL: Cross Up Left	U: undercut (lowering below previous line)
UL: Upstage Left	Ent UC X DR, Kn: Enter Up Center, Cross to Down Right, then Kneel	
UR: Upstage Right	^: Rising	
URC: Up Right Center	V: sitting down	
 : table	O: Reclining	
 : window	O	
	O : Actor Standing	
O : door	O	
	O : seated	



Moving Around on the Stage

As mentioned above, if a stage performance is planned, the players need to understand the stage and how to move around within the stage area. We have already mentioned the importance of placing children as close to the front of the stage as possible, and trying to get them to face out to the audience. Here are some notes from an article about acting:

Stage Acting

Finding Your Light

Much like finding your mark in film, finding your light on stage is a tricky technique. Unlike film, where a mark is set up specifically for an actor, lighting in a stage production is set up more generally – to light the scene. It's up to you to find your light. The easiest way to do this is by feeling the light on your face and in your eyes. Stage lights are set from above, so when you step into your spot, per your blocking, feel where the light shines on you. Ideally, you should feel the heat of the light on your face and if you were to look up, you'd see the light angled at around your forehead. Be careful of standing directly under a hot light, however, as you will get "washed out" by the light's glare.

Have a Voice

A thespian's voice is one of the most precious possessions s/he has. Here are a few ways to keep it safe and warmed up:

Only drink water that is room temperature or warm. Cold water will constrict your vocal cords.

Before a performance and between scenes, sip hot water with lemon.

Slippery elm lozenges are a great quick-fix for scratchy throats.

Support your voice by using your diaphragm, not your throat, to control your breath and vocal cords.

In between shows, keep your jaw loose. Bette Davis used to walk around her apartment with a wine cork held loosely between her upper and lower front teeth. Try it, it works!

Learn Your Directions

Acting on stage requires the knowledge of a new kind of navigation. When you are on stage, directions are oriented to you as the actor. (Conversely, House Left (HL) and House Right (HR) refer to directions oriented to the audience.) In a script, you'll see blocking that may read any of the following: SL, SR, DSL, DSR, USL, USD. Here's what they mean:

SL: Stage Left – Your left when you are standing on stage.

SR: Stage Right – Your right on stage.

DSL: Downstage Left – Moving toward the audience, to your left.

DSR: Downstage Right – Moving toward audience to your right.

USL: Upstage Left – Moving to the back of the stage, left.



USR: Upstage Right – Moving to the back of the stage, right.

Downstage and Upstage refer to the old days of theatre -- think Shakespeare -- when stages were "raked," or sloped. When you moved toward the audience you were literally moving in a downward direction and upward when you moved to the back of the stage.

Stage Acting Term: Blocking

Blocking is the term used to describe where and how an actor moves on the stage during a play. Most playwrights incorporate basic blocking into their scripts. Since stages come in different sizes and may have different special needs, the director will draft out his/her own blocking before rehearsals begin. Blocking includes elements such as where an actor takes his place at the beginning of a scene, "crossing," when an actor moves across the length of the stage to another actor or part of the set, and any action that asks an actor to employ the use of a prop.

In musical theatre, blocking becomes especially important, particularly when choreography is introduced. It's imperative that every actor is in the right spot on stage before and after a musical number. Oftentimes, this positioning becomes a cue for the orchestra or for other actors' entrances.

Stage Combat

Stage combat, quite simply, is fighting on stage. Of course it is more complex than that. In order to stage a fight, actors must look convincingly as though they are fighting – whether hand-to-hand or with swords (generally rapiers or broadswords). Fight directors are hired to actually choreograph moves for any fight you see on stage or on screen. It's a serious business; no one wants injuries! Once the actors learn their fight "dance," it is up to them to bring the final element to the scene: the acting. It's one thing to see an exciting wrestling match, punchfest, or duel, but the scene is raised to a higher level when the actors deliver the emotion of the moment with each blow.

Staying Open

Oftentimes, novice actors make the mistake of "closing" themselves off to the audience. In physical terms, this means you have positioned your body on a slight diagonal so that the side facing the audience is blocking the rest of your body. This is also calling "upstaging yourself," as you have essentially shoved half of your body upstage, toward the back of the stage. Many young actors do this unconsciously, as a way to protect themselves from the very vulnerable position of being in front of an audience.

It's important to remain open, both physically and emotionally when you are on stage. In terms of your body positioning, always angle your body out toward the audience if you're not facing them outright. Any movements that require you to turn, always turn in the downstage direction. If you need to cross furniture, cross in front of it whenever possible. And as every actor knows, never leave your back turned to the audience. As many directors say, "They're paying to see your face, not your behind."

(NYCDA, 2008)



Many a children's stage production has been ruined by poor lighting, but as most of us are not qualified in this area, we need a little help. Here is an article from eHow to get you started.

How to Do Children's Theatre Stage Lighting

By John Reinhart, eHow Contributor

Lighting a stage for children's theatre is just a little bit different than regular stage lighting. Usually the budget doesn't call for a lighting setup as elaborate as that of a professional theatre. While adult theatrical productions make use of mood lighting to underscore certain scenes, the goal in a children's production is to make sure every kid is illuminated. Here is a simple plan for lighting a stage for a children's production.

Instructions

1. Use overhead lights to bathe the entire stage. Place as many light fixtures, called instruments, above the stage as you can. Try to space the lights so they cover every corner of the stage.
2. Place spotlights or similar instruments at the kids' eye level on either side of the stage to act as fill lights. These lights can be behind the curtains on stage or you can hang them from light standards in the theatre itself. Fill lights will help eliminate shadows and give the production a more natural look.
3. Put at least one movable light in the house to act as a spotlight to support solos, if needed.
4. Position the children so they receive maximum coverage from the lights you've set up.
5. Use red and yellow gels, transparent colour sheets that you place in front of the instruments, if you want to highlight the mood of your production. These colours will make the children look healthier and happier than blue and green gels will.
6. Create a light panel that will be easy for your lighting technician to use. Assign each set of lights (overhead, fill, spot and houselights) to a switch you can easily reach in the dark.

Tips & Warnings

- Try to have at least two technical rehearsals of the show with the full lighting design in place. The first rehearsal will work out the bugs. The second rehearsal will help your actors get used to the lighted environment.
- Firmly secure each of the lights you use and keep it out of the children's reach. Most instruments generate a lot of heat and can cause serious burns if touched.
- Be careful how many instruments you plug into the same circuit if your theatre space is not wired for lights. You could blow a fuse.

(Reinhart, 2013)



So you have decided (or been told) to put on a performance. You have chosen the play or material for the performance, and the children have started practising. Now you need a background set for your stage.

Here are some ideas:

How to Make Stage Scenery for Children's Plays

Written by Lisa Fritscher

Although "black box" theatre, in which the actors perform with no props or sets at all, is common among the avant-garde, most children's plays look best when performed on a set. Stage scenery need not be expensive or elaborate. Representational scenery is inexpensive and easy to create.

Things you need

- Sketch pad
- Pencils
- Muslin
- Plywood
- Hammer and nails
- Table saw
- Chop saw
- Latex paint
- White or silver acrylic paint
- Paint brushes

Instructions

1. Focus on one set. Most children's plays can be performed on a single set, using costume and lighting changes to denote changes in location. Using one set throughout the play minimises the time needed between scenes and creates a safer environment for child actors, who would otherwise need to stay out of the way of moving set pieces.
2. Draw a picture. When you read the script, what setting do you envision? Does the story take place in a child's playroom? Is the location a wooded glen? Choose the location and then fill in the details. Are there tall trees? Is there a lake? Draw a quick sketch of the scene as you see it in your imagination.
3. Use a backdrop. If the theatre has fly rails, you can raise and lower even a heavy backdrop. Otherwise, stretch a piece of muslin on a wooden frame. The backdrop should be nearly as wide as the stage and secured to the floor, ceiling or back wall for safety. Paint the backdrop to represent your chosen location.
4. Borrow scenery items. Cast members can often provide couches, chairs, tables, inexpensive artwork and similar items. Borrowing as many pieces as possible minimises both time and expense. Never borrow valuable or irreplaceable items.



5. Build set pieces from inexpensive materials. If properly dressed, plywood boxes can serve as beds, chairs and other furniture items. A folded paper towel makes a convincing wallet. Think outside the box, and remember that the audience will sit several feet from the stage, so props and set pieces need only look convincing from a distance.
6. Paint everything that will not be covered in fabric. Choose thick latex paint that provides excellent coverage in one coat. Apply a heavy, even coat and allow to dry overnight. Spatter painting keeps painted items from washing out in theatrical lighting. Dip a paint brush in white or silver acrylic paint and flick the brush toward the item. Repeat the process until the piece is evenly covered in specks of paint.

Tips and warnings

- Choose representational set pieces rather than trying to exactly recreate heavy, expensive items. A few plywood trees onstage, and a few painted trees on the backdrop, are sufficient to create a forest. A few books painted on the backdrop can suggest a library. Keep your stage dressing simple and let the audience's imaginations fill in the details.

(Fritscher, 2013)

Cool Scenery Ideas for Plays for Kids

Written by Martha Mendenhall

Creating unique scenery for a specific play performance is a relatively modern development. In the traditional Greek and Elizabethan theatres, the playing space, or stage, would offer places for the actors to enter and exit and openings through which special effects might appear. But these stages were built for function and did not provide special "sets" for each play performed. Today, we utilise everything from backdrops, to painted flats, to projected images, to lighting effects to create the scenic atmosphere of a play.

The Great Outdoors

An easy and cool way to create scenery is not to create it all! Take your play outdoors and use the beautiful scenic effects created by Mother Nature for your performance. If your play is about fairies of the forest, such as Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," or is a beachside production of "Treasure Island," plan to stage different scenes within a walkable area and lead your audience from location to location. This scenery idea works best in areas that you will have access to for sufficient rehearsal time in the natural setting.

Lights as Scenery

If you're presenting a Christmas pageant, consider creating a scenic background completely of lights. You could have a decorative criss-cross of strings of lights cover the entire background of your stage. Alternately, have lights strung and connected so that different ones alight at different points in the play. You could, for example, create the skyline of Bethlehem that will light up in one scene and lights forming the shape of a star to light up in another. Musicals that portray the "bright lights of Broadway" or futuristic plays about space would also work well with a light-only scenic design.



A Wall of Doors

Plays with lots of coming and going, confusion or mistaken identity could be staged against a backdrop of a variety of doors of different sizes, shapes and styles. Storybook plays like "Alice in Wonderland," fairy tales or tales from "The Arabian Nights" might benefit from the ability for characters to "magically" appear from a variety of doors. Alternately, consider a backdrop of windows with characters appearing and reappearing in the various openings, but not actually entering onto the stage. This backdrop would work well if your playing space is very shallow.

Do-It-Yourself Scenery

For kids planning a puppet play, create a special puppet stage from an old refrigerator or sofa box salvaged from the appliance or furniture store. Lay the box on the floor on its side and cut openings in the backside for kids to slide under to operate as puppeteers. You'll need an opening in the top for the puppets to appear through as well. Have the kids decorate the box to suit the puppet play that they'll be presenting--jungle animals and plants for "The Jungle Book"; pumpkins, mice, castles and fairy dust for "Cinderella"; or ghosts, money and falling snow for "A Christmas Carol." If you have the materials and the time create a matching backdrop to hang behind your puppet stage, masking the rest of the space and allowing the audience to easily focus on the performance.

(Mendenhall, 2013)

How to make backdrops for plays

Written by Samantha Hanly

The key to building any type of stage scenery is to keep it lightweight. This applies to backdrops, flats and individual pieces of scenery (such as a tree placed downstage). Some theatres have the technology in place to hang more than one backdrop upstage and to raise and lower them from the side with pulleys. Productions in smaller theatres can simply have backdrops hung upstage, but if you are creating scenery for a travelling theatre production, use flats for your backdrops.

Things you need

- Graph paper
- Muslin
- Weights to hold down muslin
- Needle and thread
- Oil paints
- Brushes of various widths
- Rope

Instructions for Backdrops

1. Plan your design ahead of time. Create sketches of your ideas, and experiment with using different colours on your sketches. When you have a definite plan, continue to the next steps.



2. Transfer your plan to graph paper. Figure out how much larger you must make the painting to fit on the muslin. For example, if the sketch is on 8-by-8-inch (20-by-20cm) paper, and the muslin is 8 by 8 feet, then every inch of drawing must be enlarged to 1 foot.
3. Obtain a piece of thick muslin large enough to cover the entire visible area of the back wall of the theatre. (Make sure you have extra material at the top.) Work in a large enough space that you can spread out the muslin. Stretch and smooth the material before painting. Place weights on the corners and sides of the muslin to hold it in place.
4. Fold back the extra material at the top; a couple of inches (5cm) will work. Sew the very top edge to the back of the muslin. Use strong thread, such as plastic coated or double thick. You now have a loop through which you can thread rope later.
5. Use oil paints on the muslin. Oil-based paints will last longer than water-based paints and will give a vibrant, visible finish in any colour.
6. Thread a rope through the loop at the top when the muslin is dry. Whether you are in a small theatre or a barn, find a way to hang the backdrop against the far wall. This can be from hooks screwed into the wall, or if your play needs only one backdrop, perhaps you want to simply staple gun the muslin to the back wall. (This makes the rope unnecessary.)

(Hanly, 2013)



Importance of Makeup and Costumes in Theatre

While the bare-bones basic components of theatre are nothing more than actors and a script, most theatre productions are incomplete without the addition of costumes and makeup. Costumes and makeup play an important role in the drama, character creation, visual aesthetic and even practical elements in a production.

Visual Effect

Beyond setting and character, costumes and makeup play an important role in visibility and aesthetic. Makeup is necessary for ensuring that the features of an actor's face are easy to see and don't get "washed out" by the bright stage lights. Costumes perform a similar function, since a skilled costume designer will avoid colours and designs that are too pale or intricate to be distinguished by the audience.

Character

Good costumes and makeup will give the audience key information about a character at first sight. For example, if a character is in a depressive state, the costuming and makeup may reflect this in the form of unkempt, dirty and wrinkled clothing, a five-o'clock beard shadow, and mussed hair. This enhances the storytelling and realism of the play.

Setting

Costumes are a chief indicator of the time and place of a play, whether the actors are wearing Renaissance period garb or styles of the 1960s. Makeup and hairstyles should also be coordinated to match the setting of the play, though some concession is made in makeup styles for the sake of avoiding wash-out.

Style

The director and costume designer will often work together in creating a visual aesthetic for a show that goes beyond the practical concerns. For example, if a director wishes to dress up a Victorian era play with some steampunk aesthetic elements, the costumer should work with this aesthetic and add clockwork and metallic ornaments to the actors' garb. This type of planning not only enhances the vision for the drama and storytelling, it helps create a theatrical experience that is richly enjoyable from a visual standpoint as well as a dramatic one.

Actors

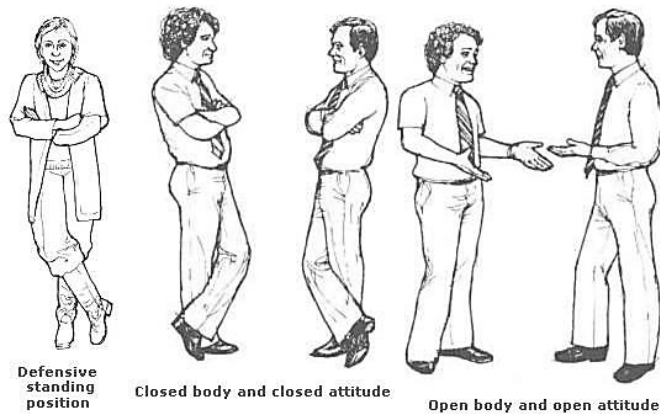
Costumes and makeup serve an important purpose for actors, too. Though the primary work that actors do in creating their characters is done during the weeks of rehearsal and individual practice leading up to a show, seeing themselves transformed visually into a character is often a powerful source of inspiration.

(Vork, 2013)

Using Gestures

We are all familiar with the expression: “Body Language”. We can express ourselves with our bodies, our hands, faces, position, and movements of our hands, often more “loudly” than our words.

Here are a few examples of meaningful gestures:



<http://www.indiabix.com/body-language/leg-barriers-gestures/>

Think about what message is presented in each of the body language examples below:



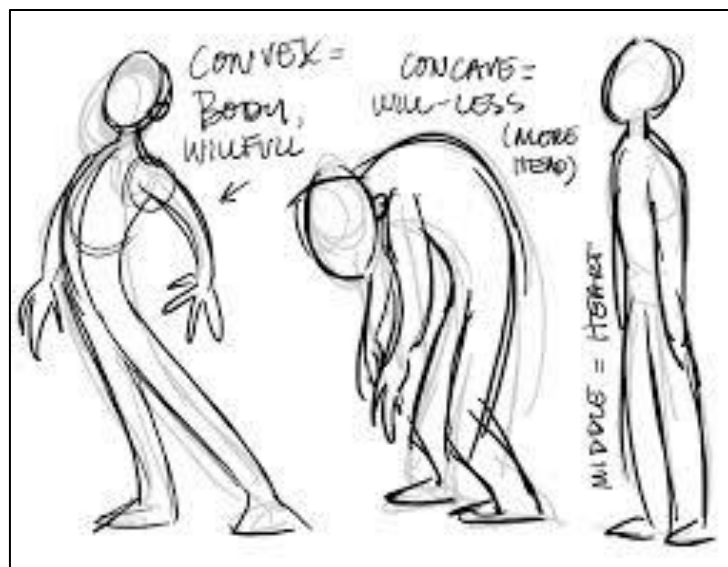
This is from: <http://e-cozum.net/hayata-dair/beden-dilini-ogrenin-resimli>

(Note: this site is not in English – nor in BM!)



Sometimes the facial expressions seem to be in conflict with the words that are spoken. (above)

This is from: <http://withfriendship.com/user/mithunss/facial-expression.php>



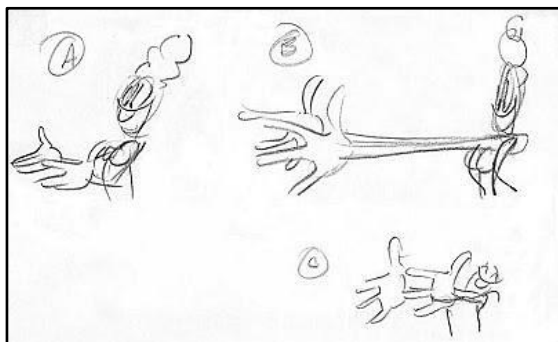
This is from a blog post about exploring the Delsarte theory of gestures in acting.

<http://story-monster.blogspot.com/2011/09/more-gesture-funs-delsarte-prt-2.html>

If you find this fascinating, just go to Google Images and search for gestures. There are some theories about using gestures in acting, specifically the theories by Delsarte.

Here is a blog article about the theories of using gestures in acting.

More Delsarte Acting Theories



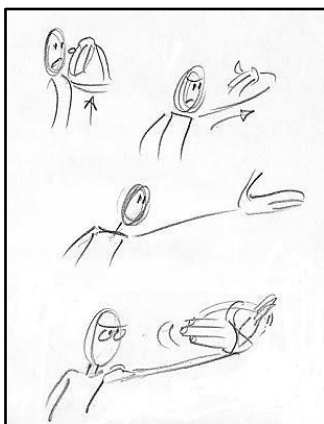
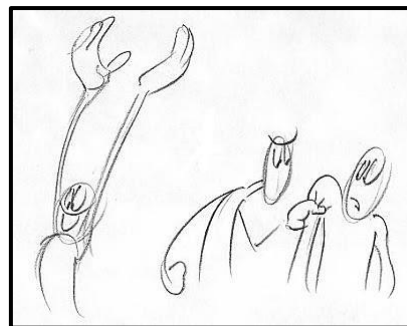
I'm going to try to explain Delsarte acting theories, using my own words and my own sketches.

Delsarte believed that certain movements are highly symbolic and powerful. When you're happy you want to throw your arms up in the air. When you're sad you want to put your head down and slump forward. Probably everybody in the world recognizes and uses these gestures ... everybody except actors.

Delsarte believed that actors avoid these obvious gestures because they seem too over-the-top, too caricatured. He thought that was a pity because no other gestures convey so much power. He created a system for using gestures like these without looking ridiculous.

In the sketches above, drawing A is a watered down version of the gesture that's full strength in drawing B. The second has a lot more power, especially when seen from the side, but it might be too strong for some scenes. Delsarte says, use the broad gesture anyway, but do it at an angle that would flatten it a bit from the audience's point of view, as in drawing C. Interesting, huh?

Delsarte wanted to bring broad gestures like the one on the left above, back to acting. Of course extended arm poses aren't the only type of broad action he was interested in. The guy on the right doesn't simply talk to his friend to get his attention, he grabs his arm before speaking. That conveys to the audience that what the speaker's saying is important. The arm grab's a powerful symbol and Delsarte wonders why we don't use it.



Sometimes a gesture combines two powerful symbols. Here's (left) a gesture indicating strong emotion that ends with a strong but unexpected "come hither" gesture.

(Fitzgerald, 2007)



One important consideration for producing a play on stage with your class is whether the words and language are manageable by the children. Children vary greatly in their ability to memorise lines. If a play is well written the lines will almost come naturally, but for children who are learning a language this is rarely the case.

One way to help practise is to read the play repeatedly as Reader's Theatre. It could otherwise be treated as a role-play and let the children create the lines themselves within the context.

Here are some practical ideas to help children learn their lines:

Tips for learning lines

Posted on November 22, 2012

Learning lines can be challenging for young actors. Over the years I have developed different techniques which assist me with the challenge.

Below are a few examples of ways to learn lines.

To start with, it is important that you understand the text. If you are unsure of what you are saying the lines won't stick in your brain. So to start understand the scene, ask questions and develop your character.

Saying lines out aloud with exaggerated mouth movements is useful. This uses your muscle memory, similar to a dance routine, and is a great way to help your mouth remember what's next.

In addition to the dance routine, students can learn their lines by reciting them over and over until you no longer need to look at the page. This encourages memory and muscle movement.

For example, the line might read "I went to the park to play volleyball". The student starts by reading the first half of the line, "I went to the park" over and over and over again until they no longer need to look at the page. Once the student knows the first half they cover it with their hand or piece of paper. The student then recites the first half using their memory and reads the second half, "to play volleyball," until they no longer need to look at the page at all. Students then repeat this continuously with all their lines.

Whenever actors are trying to learn lines from a scene it helps to have someone read the other part. Students should listen very carefully to the lines of the other character so they can remember their cues.

There are many techniques for learning lines and there is no right way. Everyone has different learning styles and it is important students find or develop a technique that suits them.

(React the Space Studio, n.d)



Line Delivery

Having learnt the lines, the young players then need to learn how to deliver the lines in the context of the stage. Firstly, refer back to the section above 'Preparing your class for a stage performance' for ideas about getting students to speak clearly from the stage. Secondly, look at the drama techniques described in the article below about 'Drama activities in the classroom' (page 60) and also 'Drama across the curriculum' (page 65) for ideas of games and activities to prepare for a drama performance.

Drama Activities

At tertiary and high school level, students can be handed a play script and told to go ahead and turn it into a performance. However at the 'young learners' level there are so many other skills to learn along the way. Therefore we need to involve the children in activities that break the process down into smaller steps to practise and prepare. For example:

Puppetry:

When children act with puppets, the task is reduced to hand movements and speech. There is no need to learn how to move about on the stage and be aware of other players. The puppeteers need only deliver the lines at the appropriate time while moving the puppet around in relation to the other puppets.

Furthermore, the act of making the puppets is very beneficial. The children learn/improve their fine motor skills, and creative ability, and are learning socialisation as they work on their puppets in a cooperative group. And in terms of understanding the story characters better, as they create their puppet they are thinking about the attributes of their character.

Masks:

A young child wearing a mask is more likely to be able to feel the part of the character they are portraying. As they look through the eye-holes of the mask at their friends and fellow-players they also see them as the characters they are portraying. Now they only need to move around the stage and deliver their lines, but they do not necessarily have to 'get into character'.

Role-Play:

All drama and acting is role play. Even when children play with their toys, they are playing the roles and making their toys fill a role. When they are involved in a drama or play with other children they are acting a particular role, pretending to be someone other than themselves.

Sometimes for the purposes of psychological therapy, people are asked to assume each other's role to help them better understand the underlying causes of a conflict in order to solve it. For example, a teenager might be asked to play the role of their parents with whom they have a disagreement while their parents or a therapist assumes the teenager's role. This is another type of role play, but it is still people pretending to be someone other than themselves.



Language learners often participate in role play for the purpose of practising language to use in a particular social situation. For example students might practise how to ask a shopkeeper for a particular item and pay for it. In a classroom situation some teachers like to practise target language with a '**line-up role-play**' where some children (for example) are assigned as shopkeepers and the rest have a shopping task with language to practise.

In these cases (psychological therapy, and language practice role-play) there is not necessarily a plot or a script, and players are simply speaking as playing a role.

Hot seating:

In the 'hot seating' activity, players get to practise thinking about a particular character, without having to deliver lines or portray them on the stage.

A character is questioned by the group about his or her background, behaviour and motivation. The method may be used for developing a role in the drama lesson or rehearsals, or analysing a play post-performance. Even done without preparation, it is an excellent way of fleshing out a character. Characters may be hot-seated individually, in pairs or small groups. The technique is additionally useful for developing questioning skills with the rest of the group.

How to do it

The traditional approach is for the pupil playing the character to sit on a chair in front of the group (arranged in a semi-circle), although characters may be hot-seated in pairs or groups. It is helpful if the teacher takes on the role of facilitator to guide the questioning in constructive directions. To help students begin you can try hot-seating children in pairs (e.g. a pair of street urchins) or in groups (e.g. environmental protesters, refugees).

If the background of the character is familiar to the pupils, then it may not be necessary for those playing the characters to do much preparation. Although some roles obviously require research you may be surprised at how much detail students can add from their own imaginations. It is important that the rest of the group are primed to ask pertinent questions. Don't get bogged down in facts during hot seating, but concentrate on personal feelings and observations instead.

Examples

Characters to hot seat include famous people such as Florence Nightingale, President Kennedy or Tutankhamen as well as ordinary people like a chimney sweep, a Roman soldier or a Saxon farmer. Students can be asked to research historical characters with opposing points of view and then be hot-seated by the class as part of a debate. (Farmer, 2013)



Dance Drama:

There is not a lot written about dance drama, and it is more part of drama teaching than language teaching. In the presentation of some plays with a strong cultural background and setting, getting the players to present a culturally relevant dance scene may be useful to their understanding of the play as well as being enjoyable for the audience.

Teaching dance in a way that is comfortable and worthwhile for the students (and the teacher) takes special skill and a passion for this specific art form. If taught well, students can benefit from improved understanding of the emotions involved and even sometimes vocabulary items. For teachers who have a particular interest in this area, the use of dance drama is very worthwhile, but other teachers should not feel badly about not participating in this area.

Reader's Theatre:

There is a great deal written about this in this module in Topic 4 (page 65) (under *Drama across the Curriculum*,) and also in Topic 1 (page 12) with extensive examples (under *Drama in the Classroom*). In these activities the players don't need to worry about remembering their lines, or movements and actions. The task is reduced to reading lines with acceptable expression.



Exercises for Theatrical and Drama Techniques

Group activity:

Choose a play script.

Imagine you are going to present this play with your Year 2 class of 35 students in a hall with a standard stage.

- Design your stage set (scenery and props).
- What lighting would you use?
- Plan your costumes, masks, makeup etc. for your class. How would you get these costumes?
- Take the script and add blocking instructions (See page 43).

Partner activity:

Consider gestures, read about the Delsarte acting theories (See page 54).

- Plan a dialogue, adding strong gestures.
- Try using gestures and a single repeated word or sound with intonation to replace the conversation.
- Try the dialogue with gestures only, without words.

Present to the class and see if they can understand what is going on.



Topic 4: Using Drama Techniques and Activities in the Classroom

In this extract from 500 Activities for the Primary Classroom, Carol Read tells us how to incorporate story-based lessons and drama activities into the English-language classroom.

Drama Activities in the Classroom

Storytelling and drama share a number of features which make it natural to integrate them during lessons. Both build on children's innate capacity for fantasy and imaginative play, and even very young children can differentiate between the conventions of a story or drama and real life. Through stories and drama, children develop understanding of themselves and the world around them. The distance afforded by characters and events which are not real also helps children to explore significant issues which are relevant to their daily lives, in a way that is safe and enjoyable.

In storytelling and drama, the usual norms of time, place and identity are temporarily suspended as, for example, in a story which spans a hundred years yet takes three minutes to tell, or a drama activity which transforms the classroom into a 'jungle' and all the children in it to 'hungry lions'. Storytelling and drama are above all shared, communal classroom events which engage children's interest, attention and imagination and develop their language skills in a holistic way. They also appeal to children with different intelligences and learning styles and provide a framework for fostering social skills and attitudes, such as active listening, collaborating, turn taking and respect for others, in a positive way.

Learning through stories

Most children start school familiar with stories and narrative conventions in their own language and quickly transfer this familiarity into a willingness to listen to and participate in stories in English. Stories provide a natural, relevant and enjoyable context for exposure to language and an opportunity to familiarize children with the sounds, rhythm and intonation of English. The discovery and construction of meaning is supported through things such as visuals, mime, gesture, voice and characterization, and children also develop learning strategies and thinking skills, such as predicting, hypothesizing, guessing and inferring meaning. Stories help young children to develop concentration skills and also aspects of emotional intelligence, such as empathy and relating to other people. Stories also provide a springboard for a wide range of activities which develop language, thinking skills, positive attitudes and citizenship, as well as appreciation of other cultures, or understanding of content from other areas of the curriculum. As children increasingly develop their ability to understand, retell, act out and/or create their own stories in English, this also has a positive effect on their motivation, confidence and self-esteem.

There are various possible approaches to using stories in class. These range from occasional use of stories to supplement a topic or structure-based course book, to using a story-based course book, and possibly supplementing this with additional stories as well, to basing the whole language programme and syllabus on a selection of stories which the children study over a period of time, e.g. two or three stories per term.



Choosing stories

Stories can be selected from a range of sources, including graded readers, story websites on the internet or picture books originally written for children whose first language is English. Whatever the source, the most important thing is that the story you choose is suitable for the children it is intended for. You need to check that the content is relevant, interesting, appealing and memorable and, if the story is illustrated, that the visuals are clear and attractive and will support children's understanding. The language level of the story also needs to be appropriate and to fit in at least partially with your syllabus. Other features, such as whether the discourse pattern of the story is repetitive, cumulative or includes a rhythmic refrain (and therefore promotes participation, aids memory and practises a particular language pattern) will also influence your choice. Over time, it is important to vary the kinds of stories you use, including, for example, traditional stories or, with older children, spoof or modern versions of these, fables or stories with a moral, myths, legends, funny stories, rhyming stories, stories with flaps or pop-ups, biographical stories, stories which help children understand their own feelings, stories from other cultures and stories which are linked to content from other areas of the curriculum.

Telling stories

Before telling a story to children for the first time, it is usually advisable to practise how you are going to do this, including for example, mime or actions you plan to use to convey meaning, the way you are going to use your voice, e.g. for different characters or to create surprise or suspense, and the places you are going to pause or ask questions to encourage the children to show their understanding or predict what's going to happen next. When you tell the story, you need to make sure that everyone can see and hear you and, if you are using a picture book, hold this up and show each illustration slowly round the group. With younger children it is usually best if they can sit on the floor in a semi-circle near you and you may also like to introduce the story with a rhyme to settle the children before you begin (see 6.1). As you tell the story, it is a good idea to maintain frequent eye-contact with the children, in order to help them stay focused and attentive. You also need to give them time to think, look, comment, ask or respond to questions and, if appropriate, encourage them to join in with you as you tell the story. At the end, it is important to invite a personal response, e.g. by asking children if they like the story, or have had similar experiences or feelings to the characters in the story, and be ready to recast or extend their contributions in English as necessary. Above all, it is important to show and share your own enjoyment of the story – it's catching!

Planning story-based lessons

As with other listening and reading activities, it can be helpful to plan story-based lessons following the three stages of before, while and after. If you decide to use a story in an extended way over several lessons, then this is likely to be a cyclical process which starts by creating interest, motivation and attention in the story and predicting what it is about, followed by an initial telling of the story, related activities and follow-up. The cycle can then be extended through a combination of retelling(s) of the story in a variety of ways, interspersed with a series of appropriately selected activities that lead children from an initial, global understanding of the story to using more and more of the language it contains. In some cases, the storytelling cycle may lead to children producing their own versions of the story or dramatizing some aspect of it in a role play.



With older children, as part of their understanding of storytelling, it is also important to develop their awareness of how stories are constructed and to give them opportunities to create stories themselves.

As part of activities in the storytelling cycle, and in order to enrich and enhance children's learning, it is often appropriate to integrate storytelling with drama.

Learning through drama

Drama provides opportunities for multi-sensory, kinaesthetic responses to stories and engages children in 'learning by doing' at a number of different levels. At a basic level, through listening and responding to storytelling and doing short, introductory drama activities, children use mime, sounds, gestures and imitation to show their understanding and to make connections between language and corporal expression. This helps young children associate actions, words, and meanings and memorize key language in a natural and enjoyable way. As children become familiar with the story, more extended drama activities provide opportunities for recycling the language it contains through retelling or acting out, either by the children themselves or by the children using puppets. In these activities, the use of drama provides a focus and support for children to use (some) language from the story in an independent way and also contributes to building up their confidence and self-esteem. At a more sophisticated level, the use of drama techniques such as hot seating, role play or thought tunnel provides opportunities for children to go beyond the story and explore the issues, problems or moral dilemmas that it contains. This not only provides opportunities for children to use language they know beyond the story script within a clearly defined framework but also encourages them to develop critical and creative thinking skills and to work with others in a collaborative way.

In addition to classroom drama, it may sometimes be suitable to use a story the children have specially enjoyed as the basis of a class play. The preparation of a class production for an audience of parents and others is different from other classroom drama activities in this section, which put the emphasis on using drama as part of a process of personalized learning. However, preparing and performing a class play can also have enormous benefits for children's language development, confidence and self-esteem and prove extremely worthwhile and rewarding.

Managing drama activities

Drama activities with children can be 'risky' in terms of classroom management and need to be handled carefully and sensitively. It is usually advisable to introduce drama gradually, in activities which are short and where you use techniques such as 'freeze' or shaking maracas to control the action. In addition to general points about classroom management, it is vital to show yourself willing to participate in classroom drama and to model the kinds of responses you expect from the children. Although it is important to give children encouraging feedback after doing a drama activity, it is best not to look at them (too) directly during the activity, as this may unwittingly convey an impression that you are judging them. This can be off-putting to some children, who will be drawn in naturally as long as they do not feel under pressure. If you regularly use story-related drama activities with your classes, over time you may be surprised at the increasingly confident and mature way in which children respond.



Reflection time

As you use the storytelling and drama activities in this section with your classes, you may like to think about the following questions and use your responses to evaluate how things went and plan possible improvements for next time:

1. Interest: Did the story engage the children’s curiosity, interest and attention? Why? / Why not? If so, how was this sustained?
2. Participation: Did the children participate actively? What factors encouraged – or discouraged – this?
3. Creative thinking: How did the children respond to activities which invited a creative or imaginative response? Did this affect the way they used language? If so, how?
4. Kinaesthetic learning: How did the children respond to activities involving mime and movement? In what ways did such activities seem to help or detract from the children’s learning? What were the reasons for this, do you think?
5. Collaboration: Did the children collaborate and work well together? What factors influenced this?
6. Enjoyment: Did the children enjoy the story and related activities? Why? / Why not? What effect did this have on their motivation, confidence and self-esteem?

(Read, 2012)

Questions about Drama Activities in the Classroom

Learning Through Drama:

1. Drama provides opportunities for which two kinds of responses to stories?

.....

2. What does drama engage children in at a number of different levels?

.....

3. At a basic level, what do children use to show their understanding and make connections?

-
-
-
-

4. As children become familiar with the story, how do more extended drama activities provide opportunities for recycling the language it contains?

.....



5. How does the use of drama contribute to building up the children's confidence and self-esteem?

.....

6. At a more sophisticated level, what opportunities do the use of drama techniques such as hot seating, role play or thought tunnel provide?

.....

Managing Drama activities:

1. How could drama activities with children be 'risky'?

.....

2. How can you control the action in short drama activities?

.....

3. What should you model for the children?

4. What could be off-putting for some children?

.....

5. How can you see increasing confidence in the children's responses?

.....



This article from the Brainbox website explains some useful strategies for **using drama to teach**. Notice that unlike many of the other articles, it is specifically about using drama rather than simply teaching drama.

Drama across the curriculum

In their quest to introduce more kinaesthetic techniques into their classrooms, many teachers toy with the idea of using "some kind of drama". Unfortunately, many of them rarely go any further than that because they lack awareness of the various dramatic techniques available. Listed below is a brief synopsis of a number of such techniques that can be used across the curriculum. This guide is not intended to be exhaustive - and it certainly will not turn you magically into a "drama teacher". However, it may give you sufficient confidence to introduce into your teaching a number of new approaches. If these add interest to lessons, foster pupil engagement and encourage children to think, then they will have served their purpose.

"You will not be teaching drama - but using drama to teach"

Improvisation

Quite simply, this is "making it up as you go along". It works best when there is some kind of simple framework (e.g. pupils are told the "beginning of the story" and take it from there). It may also be appropriate to set a few simple guidelines (e.g. "characters must not fight" may help to curb the natural tendency of exuberant young boys). *Improvisation* has the advantage over *role play* because children can "be themselves". *Improvisation* can be used in literacy lessons to develop storylines; in geography lessons to simulate living in different social conditions; or in history lessons to consider "how it might have been" or to generate "alternative endings" to historical scenarios.

Costume

While there is no need to use any *costume* at all, it can help remind pupils that they are "in character". There is no need to use anything complicated: a simple hat, cloak or scarf is often sufficient. You could use simple name-badges to remind children who's who.

Role Play

As in *improvisation*, children act out a scene - with the added factor that each is allocated a specific role or character. It is a good idea to allow children a few minutes to think about their character (or to discuss it with a friend) before the activity commences. Even so, the emphasis should be on play. *Role play* can be used in literacy or citizenship lessons to explore different points of view; in foreign language lessons to practice use of language; in science lessons to consider implications of using particular scientific inventions.



Props

Although there is no need to use *props*, it sometimes helps to have a few simple "bits and pieces" to hand. These can provide something for children to do with their hands. *Props* can also be used to indicate who the characters are (a crown for a king; a sword for a soldier; a Bible for a priest; etc.). It is often useful to have a few pieces of furniture available (a couple of chairs will do) that can form the "set".

Freeze Frame (also called 'Still Pictures')

This is a device to be used in conjunction with *improvisation* or *role play*. Upon a given signal from the teacher (clap, bell, etc.), children "freeze" in position. This enables exploration of what characters may be thinking, which can inform the continuing action. Children could discuss how many frames are needed to tell a story, which could inform a subsequent piece of writing. If children are asked to add a single phrase to the *freeze frame*, this encourages them into being selective about dialogue.

Slow Motion (an extension of freeze frame)

Children try to encapsulate a story or incident in as few frames as possible (perhaps *before*, *during* and *after* a dramatic moment). This can be used to provide the structure of a subsequent piece of writing. It also slows down the incident, encouraging attention to detail and enabling more detailed analysis (especially of the feelings of the characters involved).

Puppets

Using *puppets* often means that children are less self-conscious - because it is the *puppet* who speaks (not the child), thus allowing the child to act in a way that they may not usually find easy. Thus, hitherto shy children may become more assertive (or even aggressive). Such behaviours can then be discussed openly because they belong to the *puppet* rather than the child.

Using a *puppet* who is only capable of "squeaking" can be a useful "half-way house" towards encouraging a child to speak on their own behalf as they "interpret" for the *puppet*.

Using a "squeaking-only" *puppet* can also be a useful way of developing children's questioning skills. In order to find out what the *puppet* is "thinking", children must frame questions to which the *puppet* can respond with "one squeak for yes - two squeaks for no".

Although *puppets* are most useful with younger children, they can also be used with older children, who could be encouraged to write or rehearse a play to be shown to younger children.

Thought Tracking

This can be used in conjunction with *freeze frame* and focuses specifically on what the characters in the frame are feeling and thinking.

Sound Tracking

Similar to *thought tracking*, except that children focus on what sounds the scene may contain (including voices). At a given signal from the teacher, children make their noise, which can then be discussed in more detail. This is a useful preparation for creative writing.



Paired Conversation

This is a conversational rather than a dramatic device. Children work in pairs, seated and without props, to hold a *conversation*. Children can be allocated roles or speak from opposing viewpoints. The activity can be useful in preparing ideas to be used in persuasive writing tasks.

Magic Carpet

A *magic carpet* can be a useful device to indicate to a class or group that they are being transported (in their imagination) to somewhere special. It is especially useful in geography lessons, but could equally transport children "through time" in history lessons. You may wish to use an actual *carpet* or similar piece of heavy material.

Mirroring

A simple activity to encourage observation, concentration and physical expression. Working in pairs, face to face, one child takes the lead (by agreement) and performs a series of simple movements which their partner replicates - as if in a *mirror*. Alternatively, the whole class *mirrors* the movements of the teacher. The teacher starts with a simple sequence of movements which is then repeated - with additional movements added. Gradually a lengthy sequence can be built up, thus helping to develop children's memory skills. (The Body-pegs memory technique relies on just such an activity.)

Miming

Simple *mime* games can serve several purposes. They can help children focus on how we show our emotions - which can lead to more descriptive writing. They can help children recognise similarities in patterns of movement - thus developing their use of simile and metaphor. They can also help children to develop simple physical mnemonics that can aid retention of information - and also facilitate understanding.

Hot Seating

One child takes the role of a character from a story (or an historical figure, or the inhabitant of a foreign country, etc.) and sits in the *hot seat* to face questions from the rest of the group. It may be appropriate to allow the *hot-seater* to prepare in advance - or the teacher may take on that role. If the person in the *hot seat* is a "baddy", it is a good idea for them to wear a simple piece of costume - to indicate that they are answering in role.

Modelling

Working in small groups, one member of the group (the "sculptor") arranges the other members to form a tableau. This may be freeform or with a specific objective in mind (perhaps suggested by the teacher). This can then lead to discussion of the role of each tableau member - and thence on to *thought tracking*, etc.

Alternatively, the teacher may manipulate a number of children into a tableau, which the rest of the class discusses (or guesses), making suggestions for appropriate alterations etc.



Role on the Wall

Although not strictly a dramatic technique, this activity can be used as a follow-up from *role play* or *thought tracking*. A large outline drawing of a character is pinned on the wall (if you are "artistically challenged" you could draw around a child). Children write words around the outline to show how the character is perceived by others. Children also write words inside the outline to show the character's inner feelings. This can lead to useful discussion of real and fictitious characters.

Conscience Alley

Children stand facing each other in two lines that form an *alley*. As the character walks between the lines, each child that they pass speaks to their *conscience* - providing arguments for and against a possible course of action. It is not essential for every child to say something - and some children may wish to repeat a previous contribution.

If there are several options for the main character to consider, the activity could be adapted into a "*conscience triangle*" or a "*conscience square*".

Performance

Although it is not necessary for every piece of "dramatic" work to result in a *performance*, the opportunity to present work to an audience does show that the work has been valued and helps to develop children's confidence. Whereas a proper *performance* may require more rehearsal time than you are prepared to allocate, a compromise solution is for children to present a makeshift *performance* in a "good work assembly" or similar occasion. Although this may require polishing up, children are usually more than happy to do this during lunchtime or a "wet playtime".

(Fewings, 2013)

Questions about Drama across the Curriculum

1. What does "improv" (improvisation) mean?
-
2. What do pupils need to make improv work best?
3. What is the advantage of improv over role play?
4. How can improv be used in literacy lessons?
5. How can costume help pupils?
6. How does role play add to improv?
7. What do children need a few minutes for in role play?
8. How can props help children when they are acting?



9. How do props help the audience?
10. What is 'Freeze Frame' used in conjunction with?
11. What can children explore during freeze frame?
12. How can you encourage attention to detail?
13. How does using puppets help children?
-
14. Name 2 ways using a puppet which can only squeak could be useful?
-
15. How is thought tracking used?
-
16. How is sound tracking used?
-
17. How can paired conversations be useful?
-
18. What could you do with a magic carpet?
-
19. What 3 things can be encouraged by 'mirroring'?
-
20. What is an alternative way to play mirroring, instead of children copying each other?
.....
21. How can you develop the children's memory skills through mirroring?
-
22. Name 3 purposes that can be served through mime games.
-
 -
 -



23. How does hot seating work?

.....

24. In modelling, who creates the tableau?

25. What can the role on the wall activity lead to?

.....

26. Do you think conscience alley is a suitable activity for young ESL learners? (Why?)

.....

27. Why is it good for children to have an opportunity to present their work to an audience?

.....

Here are some links to video examples of some of the strategies and techniques just mentioned:

Mirror improv game video at http://www.ehow.com/video_2387874_playing-mirror-improv-game.html

Distorted mirror: http://www.ehow.com/video_2387885_playing-distorting-mirror-improv-game.html?wa_vlsrc=continuous&cp=1&pid=1&wa_vrid=88d40420-9a1c-4656-9c76-30cb75e2d0e7

Mime basics: <http://curkovicartunits.pbworks.com/w/page/44358247/Gr7%20Drama%20Unit%201-Mime>



Exercises for Using Drama Techniques

Group work:

Choose a play script – one you have used in previous weeks, or select a new one.

- Identify a learning outcome based on a language focus theme appropriate to the given script
- Describe how you would use three of the activities describes in *Drama across the Curriculum* (page 65) – or you can add one/some of your own that you have thought of or see described elsewhere.

Partner Activity:

Choose a KSSR theme, topic, and section in a text book (year 1, 2, 3, or 4).

- Choose a suitable play script for Role Play or Reader's Theatre.
- Describe 2 activities you would use in the build-up to the children presenting the drama.



Topic 5: Developing Learner's Response to Drama

Some of the notes below are from the 'Stories for Young Learners' (LGA3103) module, but also apply here and are good for you to revise:

Aesthetic and Efferent Responses

When we use stories in the ESL classroom, we are teaching more than just language. Besides the sense of fun and enjoyment of activities that provide the vital motivation that children need to keep them focussed, a growing appreciation of beauty and art is important for their personal development.

In the past, teachers sometimes thought that if students were having too much fun, then their teaching methods were not serious enough and true learning was not happening. Even enjoyable topics from literature were weighed down with questions demanding an efferent response.

Educators are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of children's valid aesthetic response to literature and art.

In her textbook *Teaching Language Arts: A student-centred classroom*, in the chapter on the reader's response to literature, Carole Cox talks about some research she did about the two types of questioning a teacher can use and the children's responses.

Children's Stance toward Literature

A key to teaching literature is knowing about how children respond. This knowledge should provide the basis for asking questions and planning further teaching with literature. I have done research in this area: a nine-year longitudinal study of children's responses and the stances they take from a reader-response perspective (Cox C. , 1997, 2002). I have read to the same group of children as they moved from kindergarten through fifth grade. Here's what I have found:

1. Children took a predominantly aesthetic (71.6 per cent), rather than efferent (28.4 per cent), stance in their responses. Table 3.1 shows types of responses when they took a more aesthetic or more efferent stance and examples of what they said. Here is a list of the types in order from most to least with percentages (A = aesthetic and E = efferent):

Stance	Type of Response	Percentage of Responses
A	Questioning	19.0
A	Text part	17.4
A	Associating	15.0
A	Hypothesizing	13.6
E	Explanations	10.2
E	Print and language	8.0
E	Content	7.0
A	Performance	6.8
E	Analysis	4.1



2. There was a dynamic interplay between the two types of stances, but more efferent responses, such as understanding print and expanding a story, were always part of a broader aesthetic response.

3. Children most often asked questions about the text when they were puzzled or wondered about something they wanted to know about.

In their student-centred classrooms, teachers focus on students' responses, rather than their own predetermined ideas or those found in a teacher's guide to using literature. Children are encouraged to respond openly, drawing on their own experiences and funds of knowledge. In transactional teaching with literature, teachers begin by asking open questions – "So what did you think of it?" – and directing children to take an aesthetic stance toward literature.

(Cox, 2008, pp. 65-7)

Here are examples of both aesthetic and efferent questions and prompts:

Aesthetic (more open)

Efferent (more closed)

What do you think about the story?

What was the main idea of the story?

Tell anything you want about the story.

What did the author mean by -- ?

What was your favourite part? Tell about it

Retell your favourite part.
Tell the order of the story events.

Has anything like this every happened to you?
Tell about it.

Describe the main characters.
Explain the characters' actions.

Does the story remind you of anything? Tell about it.

What other stories are like this one?
Compare and contrast the stories.

What did you wonder about? Tell about it.

What was the problem in the story?
How did the author solve the problem?

What would you change in the story?

How did the author make the story believable?

What else do you think might happen in the story?

Is it fact or fiction?

What would you say or do if you were a character in the story?

How do you think the characters felt?

(Cox C. , 2008, p. 151)

Questions about Children's Stance toward Literature

1. What provides "the basis for asking questions and planning further teaching with literature"?

.....

2. Look at this statement:

"There was a dynamic interplay between the two types of stances, but more efferent responses, such as understanding print and expanding a story, were always part of a broader aesthetic response."

This is stating that even when children gave an 'efferent' response (to do with facts and information), it was still part of.....

3. When did children ask questions about the text?

.....

4. In student-centred classrooms, what do teachers focus on?

rather than

5. What are children encouraged to do?

6. In transactional teaching with literature, how do teachers ask questions?

.....

Look carefully at the chart of efferent and aesthetic questions. Mark your favourites with a highlighter pen – you may need to refer back to this page when you do your assignment.

Read the notes below, which are also from Carole Cox, about the different types of questioning.



Asking Children Questions

As discussed earlier, we tend to think of questions as seeking information, and teachers ask questions to receive a 'correct' answer. With an aesthetic response there is no one right answer and children are encouraged to express their own responses to a poem, story, song, play or other piece of literature. Cox (2008, pp. 74-5) has this to say about Questioning:

Questions: Aesthetic and Efferent

The types of questions teachers ask direct children to take aesthetic or efferent stances toward any text. Ideally, teachers should first direct students to take aesthetic stances toward literature. Think about the analysis of children's response types described earlier. Their preferred types were aesthetic. They questioned, talked about favourite parts, hypothesized, and made associations. Out of these broad, rich, aesthetic responses (which were focussed on the development of personal meaning), more efferent concerns will emerge, such as developing explanations or attending to print and language, content, and analysis.

Focus first on aesthetic questions and prompts. Begin with an open question or prompt that has many possible responses:

1. Questioning

- What did you think of the story?
- Tell me anything you want about the story.

Many times, children will state a preference, such as "I liked it," "I didn't like it," or "It was okay." Follow up on this response by asking the children to tell why they did or didn't like the story. Next, ask questions or prompts that are based on the children's comments or that invite them to respond first aesthetically and then more efferently. The following questions and prompts are based on characteristic responses of children described in the earlier section on aesthetic and efferent stances.

2. Focussing on a part

- What was your favourite part of the story? Tell about it.

3. Making associations

- Has anything like this happened to you? Tell about it.
- Have you ever had feelings like a character in the story? Tell about them.
- Does this story remind you of other stories? Tell about them.

4. Hypothesizing

- Was there anything in the story you wondered about? Tell about it.
- Did something puzzle you? Tell about it.
- What else do you think might happen?
- Is there anything you would change in the story? What? How?



5. Explaining

- Explain a character's actions
- What did the author mean by _____?

6. Considering print and language

- What does this word or letter say? What does it mean? How is it used in the story?
- Tell about how the author used language: words, sentences, rhyming patterns, and so on.

7. Considering content

- What happened in the story? Tell the order of the story's events.
- What happened in the beginning, the middle, and the end?
- What was the main idea of the story?

8. Performing

- If you were a character in the story, what would you say? Show how you would act.
- If you could talk to a character in the story, what would you say?
- What sounds would you like to hear in the story?

9. Analysing

- Is the story true (factual) or made up (fictional)?
- Compare and contrast this story to other stories.
- What did you think of how the story was written or illustrated?

(Cox, 2008)

Questioning Exercise:

Did you notice how the questions (above) moved from aesthetic to efferent? The '*Considering Print and Language*' and '*Considering Content*' ones in the middle are clearly efferent. But the final question is once again aesthetic.

Take two different highlighter pens and try to mark which is which. Compare with your partner/group.



Exploring Linguistic Features

The article above contains some aesthetic and some efferent questions. Obviously, in this case, 'efferent' refers generally to linguistic questions.

Brown (2004) lists possible activities to use in connection with a story telling/reading. These can also be a preparation step before dramatizing the story.

Using your highlighter pens, identify which activities reinforce linguistic learning.

Types of Activities

- Listen to the story on tape/as read by the teacher without looking at the text.
- Listen to the story and read along.
- Listen to the story and put illustrations depicting parts of the story in order.
- Read the book silently.
- Read the book to a partner, then switch.
- Write your favourite words/new words/words starting with A from the story in your notebook.
- Write a portion of the story in the workbook.
- Answer (or practice asking) simple who, what, when, where, and why questions about the story.
- Play "Pictionary". Divide students into teams. One member of the team draws a picture on the board while team members try to guess what it is within a limited time period.
- Speed reading game. Call out a word from the text, then let students race to find it. The first one to find it reads the sentence aloud. A word of caution: this game is rather hard on books.
- Have students display the flashcards they made, let them be the teacher and ask the class, "What is this?"
- Make up a dance or do actions to the words of the story. A good example of this kind of story is *The Foot Book*. The text repeats, "Left Foot/Left Foot/Right Foot/Right." Students can get out of their chairs and jump from left to right as suggested by the text.
- Do the opposite of dancing. Have students "freeze" a moment of the text by acting out exactly what is described in the text at some specific moment, and holding perfectly still. You could photograph these moments if you have a digital camera.
- Do a verbal fill-in-the-blank exercise. As you read, stop at random and have students shout out what word comes next.
- Check comprehension of key concepts by asking students to draw pictures. For example, students could demonstrate understanding of the difference between "I like *kimchi*."/"I don't like *kimchi*." by drawing two different pictures.
- A note about memorization. A lot of students really do enjoy memorizing the books. Allow them to recite what they've memorized in teams. Many students love to show off their English, and feel very proud of being able to produce a minute or so of non-stop English.

(Brown, 2004)



Exercise for Developing Learner's Response

Partner work:

Choose a story of play script.

Describe how you would present it to the class.

Describe

- pre- reading/telling,
- during reading/telling
- after reading/telling activities
- the questions you could ask
- types of responses (speaking, writing, moving, art-work)

Make sure there are some aesthetic and some efferent responses required, and mark which is which.



Topic 6: Simulated Teaching and Review

Good teaching requires good planning – and especially with a language arts subject like ‘Plays and Drama’! Sometimes teachers need to have a ‘Plan A’ and also a ‘Plan B’ for when things don’t work out the way you expected them to – such as an activity takes much longer / much less time than expected, or it’s just too difficult or maybe the kids obviously hate what you are trying to get them to do.

For this Simulated Teaching you need to revise what you have learnt and apply it to a lesson plan, and then demonstrate it.

Revision of previous Material:

1. Content and Learning Standards

Make sure you know the theme, topic, and learning standards for your lesson:

Subject	
Class/Year	
Date/Day	
Time	
Theme	
Topic	
Focussed Skill	
Content Standards	
Learning Standards	
Objectives	



2. Selecting and adapting

Story/Song/Poem to be used:

- This is a ready-made play; I will use it just like it is.
- This is a ready-made play, but I need to change it a bit.
- I have written my own play for this story/song/poem/topic.
- (Other).....

Why was this story chosen?

.....

What problems / difficulties does it present for your particular class/situation?

.....

How have you solved this, if at all?

.....

3. Planning stage set

Think about what you need physically if you are going to present your play on the stage.

How many students need to be in the cast?			
How many 'extras' (chorus etc.)?			
How many non-acting assistants (back-stage)?			
Do you need costumes?	yes	maybe	no
Do you need masks? Make-up?	yes	maybe	no
Do you need a stage set?	yes	maybe	no
Do you need furniture on stage?	yes	maybe	no
Do you need lighting?	yes	maybe	no
Do you need adult assistants?	yes	maybe	no
(Other)	yes	maybe	no
	yes	maybe	no

Take a copy of your script and think about blocking. Look back at the symbols for blocking (page 43) and mark them onto your script.



4. Preparing children and rehearsal

Now think about the skills that will be needed by the players for this particular performance, and fun ways to practise and prepare. Which of these might you use, and why?

	Definitely yes	Maybe	Definitely no	Reasons
Improvisation				
Role Play				
Freeze Frames				
Slow Motion				
Puppets				
Thought Tracking				
Sound Tracking				
Paired Conversations				
Magic Carpet				
Mirroring				
Miming				
Hot seating				
Role on the wall				
Conscience Alley				
(Others)				



5. Children’s aesthetic and efferent responses to material.

Remember the comment made in ‘*Drama across the Curriculum*’ (Topic 4, page 65):

“You will not be teaching drama - but using drama to teach”

The overall purpose is to teach English Language to young learners. As primary school teachers we also have an impact on the children’s social, psychological and emotional development.

Consider the presentation of the story/poem/song/play from the beginning, and the responses that you will require from the students:

Pre-reading/listening/viewing (movie/clip):

<p>Questions requiring aesthetic response</p>	
<p>Questions requiring efferent response</p>	
<p>Target language/vocabulary</p>	
<p>(Other)</p>	



During reading/listening/viewing:

What will you pause for the students to participate in?

Predictions	
Chant / Song	
Actions	
Characters	
Puppets	
Mask	
(Other)	

After reading/listening/viewing:

Now that the children are familiar with the story, have responded to it in a couple of different ways, we want to reinforce that learning/response with some fun activities – maybe an art activity, like drawing or play dough – and then they might be ready for some drama.

What extra activities would you like to do?

.....

Do you think the children are now ready for drama?

What will you do next to prepare for your performance, and how long will it take?

Timing	Activity/preparation



Reflection on Simulated Teaching

Self-reflection

Mark yourself on how well you think your simulated drama teaching went:

		Mark out of	I give myself	Comment
Content and Learning Standards	Appropriate	5		
	Achievable	5		
Selecting and adapting play	Relevant	5		
	Age appropriate	5		
	Language level appropriate	5		
	Suitable length	5		
	Suitable for class numbers	5		
Plans for stage set	Visually appealing	5		
	Relevant to play	5		
	Practical set	5		
	Costumes suitable	5		
	Blocking well planned	5		
Activities for preparing children	Prep for actions	5		
	Prep for speaking	5		
	Prep for character devt	5		
Children's responses	'Pre-' activities relevant	5		
	'During' activities engaging	5		
	'After' activities relevant	5		
	Aesthetic AND efferent	5		
	Good preparation for drama	5		
(other?)		(bonus!)		
Total		100%		

Peer feedback

Give constructive feedback to your group members, as well as to other groups that you observed.

Tutor feedback

Your tutor will also give feedback about your simulated teaching.



Topic 7: Preparation for Stage Performance of a Children's Drama

Because you are not in a position (just yet!) to teach a drama lesson to a class, this is an opportunity for you to practise some of the drama techniques you have learnt about as you prepare and present a performance for children to enjoy as an audience. Working with your group, make the following preparations:

1. Selection and adaptation of a text.

Refer back to Topic 2 (page 29), and in particular the exercises you completed during that topic. Select a suitable story/playscript, and – if necessary – adapt it for performance by your group to children. Consider these, and add some of your own:

Story/Drama elements		Is this drama suitable?
Setting	<i>Relevant or at least understandable</i>	
Character - protagonist	<i>Children can relate to, like, engage with</i>	
Character(s) - antagonist	<i>Children can relate to</i>	
Conflict / plot / story line	<i>Easy to follow, something they can relate to</i>	
Theme, topic	<i>Suitable for age-group Interesting/amusing/engaging</i>	
Language elements		
Vocabulary	<i>Not too many new words</i>	
Sentence structure	<i>Not too complex</i>	
Practicality		
Number of characters		
Length of lines to learn	<i>No long monologues,</i>	
Acts and scenes	<i>Not too many changes needed</i>	
Scenery and props	<i>Simple to present</i>	



Adapt and edit your play script to make it suitable for this situation.

Select/choose a director for your group, and others to be responsible for various tasks such as scenery and props.

Keep notes – during the excitement and busy-ness of the performance, it's easy to lose sight of what you did and why. Make sure you have recorded reflections all along the way, especially if you changed your mind about something. You will be expected to be able to give reasons for everything you did.

2. Audience Involvement

When presenting your play to the children, just as when you tell a story to children, you need to find ways to keep them engaged. Children have a very limited attention span and will quickly become restless if there is a problem on stage that they do not find amusing.

In your group consider these (and how to solve them):

1. Before the play starts properly, while you are still setting up, the children need to be looked after and occupied.
2. If you have scene changes that take more than a split second, the children will want to start moving around.
3. If there is not enough action on stage – too much talking – during a scene, the children quickly get bored.
4. If the story line is too hard to follow, and/or if there is too much difficult or unclear (or inaudible) language, the children will lose interest.
5. If the seats are uncomfortable, and/or if the whole show goes too long they will want to go and explore the rest rooms or anything else that looks interesting.
6. At the end of your play, and before the next group starts the children will start wanting to jump about.

Consider using some of these:

Before the play, while you are getting set up:

- Teach the children a song or chant and/or actions, which are related to the play and that they will later be able to join in with during the play. (Invite one or two children to come to the front and practise with one of the group.)
- Ask for them to watch for something specifically during the play. (When you see the man with the red trousers put your hand up.)
- Show some pictures and talk about vocabulary related to the play.
- Don't shout, and don't encourage the children to shout back – you want them to be feeling relaxed and not over-excited.



- Ask a question that you want them to give a response to (efferent) at the end of the play.

During the play:

- (Don't start unless you have the children quiet and looking at the stage.)
- If you are going to introduce the characters, make it quick and clear – don't use it as a ways to put off starting just because you are all a bit nervous! Each character could have a little signature move/action/sound for the children to enjoy (and maybe copy) that they will use throughout the play.
- All characters: speak clearly, loudly, but don't shout. By all means use "voices", but only if you can do so clearly.
- Use gestures. Be dramatic.
- Several times during your story/play have something for them to join in with.
- If something is funny, do it several times.
- Ask the children to copy something – words or movement.
- Maybe pause, make everyone very quiet and still (freeze) and let a child predict what they think will happen next. Like you would if you were telling a story.
- Invite one or two children to come to the stage and be involved – be a prop (like a tree, a door, a pet ...)
- Make sure they respond as requested when they see the certain something; reward them by noticing that they noticed.
- Make scene changes (if any) smooth and quick – otherwise have a group member talk to the audience, sing a little song or something, and keep them calm and engaged.

At the end:

- Make sure it's obvious that it *is* the end.
- Have something to round off like singing the song again – the group could be quickly tidying away and getting ready for the next group while you are doing this.
- It may (or may not) be suitable to ask some children to give a response (aesthetic) to the play – or they could all respond non-verbally.
- If you asked a question before the play, ask for an answer now.

3. Prepare Feedback:

- Observe and reflect on the feedback that is obvious through the children's response to your performance.
- Within your group, give each other feedback – especially think of positive and constructive points to make.
- Observe the other groups and be prepared to give them feedback on what you have observed from them and from the children.
- Make notes to share with your group and other groups.

Topic 8: Stage Performance

After the stage performance, it is very tempting to just walk away and relax. But while everything is fresh in your mind, you need to reflect on what went right or wrong, and what could be done better.

1. What is your first reaction to "How did it go?"



2. How do you think the children felt about your performance?



3. How did the rest of your group feel about it?



4. What were the things that went particularly well, that you would definitely want to do again?

	This was planned.	This surprised me



5. Was there anything that turned out to be a bad idea, or just went wrong?		
	I really expected this to work.	I did not know this could happen!



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