

DRAMA METHODS AND HOW TO USE THEM

The drama methods, or conventions, in this drama pack form the core of any drama work. They can be used in isolation for a specific purpose, for example, to investigate one aspect of a character, or combined to develop a more in-depth approach to a story, poem, script, historical character, issue, etc.

This pack doesn't contain every single drama method that exists but the majority are here – and these are the methods that you will be likely to use most often.

Many drama methods can be used in the classroom and across the curriculum, in conjunction with other teaching methods but don't feel that you have to use every method in every lesson! Most drama lessons will involve just two or three methods, and you can pick out individual methods to suit your needs in other areas of the curriculum. I have given examples of how to use each method and hope that these will help you to employ them in your own work.

Please note, I have used the term 'children' in reference to the participants but these methods can also be used with older students – and even adults!

A DAY IN THE LIFE

A technique which explores stages or moments in a character's life, leading to a specific point in the drama. It can operate 'in reverse' – looking at how a particular moment was arrived at – or simply by the creation of a number of scenes which re-create the stages in a character's day. The aim is to analyse and reflect on specific points in the drama and allow moments of change, or dramatic tension, to be explored.

HOW 1: Children explore and re-create a typical day in the life of *Goldilocks* when 'away from the story', devising scenes which show her existence at home prior to the story's start.

HOW 2: In a drama based on the poem *Timothy Winters*, children explore and re-create a typical day in the life of Timothy, devising short scenes to examine events, external influences, and his relationships.

HOW 3: In a drama based on the poem *The Identification*, children re-create events on the day of Stephen's death.

COLLECTIVE DRAWING

A small group, or the whole class, create an environment or a situation by drawing a picture. This can be as simple or as complex as the teacher decides. The drawing can take the form of abstract or realistic images, and can include words or sentences that reinforce the context of the drama.

HOW 1: Children draw a picture of what they think the woods were like in the story of *Little Red Riding Hood*.

HOW 2: Using a long sheet of paper, children create draw a picture of how they visualise the imaginary planet of 'Blob', as an introduction to a drama.

HOW 3: Children draw a collective picture of work in a Victorian cotton mill, showing their interpretation of what the conditions were like and why accidents happened.

NARRATION

An oral or written account of events. It might provide narrative links in a drama, can move a drama forward, can create dramatic atmosphere, can be used to focus on specific aspects, events, themes or issues, and the children or teacher may use narration either to tell a story or provide structural links.

HOW 1: Children act out the story of *Hansel and Gretel* while the teacher reads the narrative. The children take on the roles of the two characters and act out parts of the journey.

HOW 2: In a drama about a volcanic eruption, the teacher provides a narrative to link scenes, for example, 'And as the molten lava flowed down from the volcano the people gathered their belongings and ran as fast as they could from their homes.'

HOW 3: In a drama about bullying, the child who is being bullied narrates his or her version of the situation, the bully narrates his or her view and a child acting as the teacher gives his or her view. These narrations can be accompanied by a series of still images that illustrate the situation.

PREPARED IMPROVISATION

Prepared Improvisation is being given the time to plan and discuss ideas before presenting or performing a piece of drama. Children work – usually – in pairs or small groups to plan, prepare and present improvisations as a means of expressing understanding of a situation, idea or experience.

HOW 1: Working in small groups, children devise short scenes that show *Little Red Riding Hood* at school and at home prior to the story's start.

HOW 2: In a drama based on the poem *Timothy Winters*, children work in small groups to prepare short improvisations that bring each verse of the poem to life.

HOW 3: In a drama about bullying, children work in pairs to prepare a short scene in which the victim is questioned by a teacher about an incident.

PROXEMICS

Proxemics means the position of people in relation to each other onstage. Also defined as 'use of space', Proxemics can make a big difference to how the audience interpret a scene. Body language, distance, gestures and levels are part of proxemics and influence how characters are presented and portrayed. This technique can also be applied to freezes and still images.

HOW 1: In a drama about *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, children work in pairs to create freezes that show, through body language and distance from each other, how Baby Bear feels about Goldilocks.

HOW 2: In a drama about bullying, a small group of children create a freeze depicting the bullying incident. Observers then discuss the positioning of every character involved in the freeze and how the way they are standing, and their place in the picture, indicates how they feel about the incident and those involved.

HOW 3: In a drama about *Macbeth*, the whole class creates a still image that portrays each character and their relationship with other characters in the play. Feelings that characters have for each other should be indicated by distance and body language. Status should be indicated by use of small rostra, or by characters kneeling or sitting.

WHOLE GROUP ROLE PLAY / IMPROVISATION

All of the group are in role at the same time, as required by a particular dramatic context, such as travellers on an aeroplane or inhabitants of a lost city. The teacher must drive and control the focus, and ensure that every participant is fully engaged throughout. The drama can be paused and any difficulties briefly discussed before re-engaging participants.

HOW 1: Children assume roles of space explorers, climbing out of their spaceships to explore an imaginary, strange new planet. The teacher provides a narrative for the children to follow, describing the journey to the planet, their arrival, how the planet feels and what it looks like. Children respond with mimed actions and appropriate dialogue.

HOW 2: In a drama based on the story of *The Iron Man*, participants become people of the town reacting to his appearance as they go about their daily life, and then discussing what to do about the metal giant.

HOW 3: The children, in role as townspeople, explore the problem of the council's intention to build a huge housing estate on the last remaining piece of open land in the town.