

Teacher Pack: Introduction to drama

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CURRICULUM LINKS:
**DRAMA, PERFORMING ARTS, ENGLISH LITERATURE, ENGLISH LANGUAGE,
CULTURAL HISTORY, PSHE,**



**AWARD WINNING
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INTRODUCTION

Drama does not exist on the National Curriculum. In the primary curriculum it is referenced in one paragraph, and in the secondary curriculum, Drama exists within English.

Academies, Free and Independent schools, which make up roughly 80% of schools, do not need to follow the National Curriculum, and are free to create their own. However, a common pattern is that arts subjects are the first to be cut when budgets get tight, so fewer students get to do Drama each year.

We're on a mission to change this. As a founding member of the Drama & Theatre Education Alliance (DTEA), we are working to raise the profile of Drama on the curriculum.

For now, this free resource is for Drama and Performing Arts teachers to introduce students to Drama. It references aspects of acting, devising, storytelling, movement and physical theatre, multiple art forms which are creative, engaging and inspiring.

It explores a variety of devising techniques used by Theatre Workout, and by companies like Kneehigh, the National Theatre, Frantic Assembly, and many other companies who are dedicated to creating vibrant, original, and engaging theatre. Exercises like these can help build confidence in young people, inspire their creativity, and develop essential communication skills.

Find out more at www.theatreworkout.com.

Thank you, once again, and I hope we get to work with you and your group soon.

Regards,



Adam Milford
Founder, Theatre Workout

THE FOUNDATIONS OF CREATION

Students will often do or say what they 'think' we want to see and hear. They can often censor themselves in the process.

These first two exercises will help teach students about the foundations of the creative process, gear up their imagination, and prepare them for devising something new.

Naming

Note to teachers: be clear and concise with your instructions.

Part One: Instruct student to walk around the space. Point to things you see and in a loud, clear voice, say what you see.

Eg. Chair...table...plug socket...window...

Part Two: Walk around the space. Point to things you see and in a loud, clear voice, say the name of the thing you pointed at last.

E.g. point to a chair...point to a table and say "chair", point to a plug socket and say "table"...etc

Part Three: Walk around the space. Point to things you see and in a loud, clear voice, call it anything other than what it is.

E.g. bagpipes...helicopter...lollypop...dingbat...flip flops...etc.

Discuss the student's experience. In part three, many will get into patterns of naming foods, animals, characters, etc. Many may also have a mental block.

There are 10s of 1000s of words they can say.

Part Four: Walk around the space. Point to things you see and in a loud, clear voice, call it anything other than what it is, BUT – pick up the pace, avoid patterns, keep it random, and if you get a mental block just say "blah" and move on.

GO!

This should help them say the first word that enters their heads without restriction or self-censorship.

Picnic

In pairs, sit (for excitable groups) or stand (for hesitant groups), facing your partner. They're on a picnic and both have brought food. Take it in turns to offer something to the other.

Part One: Every offer is met with a rejection. A simple "No, I don't want..." and why.

Part Two: Every offer is met with a "yeah, no" response, such as "That looks great, but it gives me gas. I've brought..." It sounds like a yes, but it's actually a no.

Part Three: Every offer is met with a "Yes, and..." response.

"I've brought some cheese sandwiches"

"Yes, and I've got some pickle to go on top"

"Yes, and I've brought a salad"...

The lesson: "No" is deadly to theatre and the creative process. It is an impenetrable wall. It's the equivalent of saying "I've got a great idea" and everyone else saying "no" before you even say what it is.

“Yes” is positive. “Yes” can take you on a journey. It is the foundation for creativity, improvisation, and devising. Your idea may well not work out, but it will often help discover new ideas along the way which will.

Say “yes”, try it out, discover something new as you go.

IMAGE THEATRE

What we see on stage is often the most memorable. This exercise in devising starts with frozen images, developing them into gestures, and further into movement. It can help devise choreography, or simply a means for a character to express themselves.

Part One: Working independently, ask the group to create tableaux images for words you give them. Start with emotion states like Happy, Sad, Anger and Love.

Part Two: Move on to character types, such as Father, Mother, Hero, Villain, bringing each character to life.

Part Three: Combine the two. Individually, pick one character and give them an emotion. What does an angry King look like, or a Beggar in love? It doesn't matter what the image is, as long as it is the student's own creation. Several people may create different images for the same word.

Part Four: Pick an emotion state, create an image, and then develop it into a movement or gesture. Return to a neutral position between each one. Each movement should start from neutrality.

Part Five: Next, get the group into small groups of 5-7 people. Provide each group with a theme, a phrase, or subject title. Sitting in a circle, ask them to think about stories, and ask them to create a story as a group. They should do this one sentence at a time, taking it in turn by going around the circle and each person adding the next sentence. Just like with the picnic exercise, once something has been said, say “yes and...” before building on that narrative.

Hear some of their ideas, then get them to create a new story, entirely of from their own imaginations, on anything.

Part Six: In their groups, set them a challenge of creating an image together in just 10 seconds of the Number 8, a hat, box of chocolates, a toaster.

Next,, they should pick the second story they created and bring it to life through image theatre. They should start with at least three images to tell the key parts of the story, then fill in the gaps with movement, additional images to show other important moments, add sound effects, etc.

This is their opportunity to collaborate and discover a way of staging the material. This may be through the creation of characters, images, movement, speaking of text by individuals or the group.

Allow about 7-10 minutes to create some ideas, rehearse and then present these performances.

End this process with a discussion on the process, the exercises, and their discoveries regarding the technique, the end results, their emotional or intellectual response, and how these techniques can be continued to develop a fuller performance.