



ATG

Creative Learning

Drama



Teaching Resource

Primary Schools

# Introduction

Teaching drama in school is an excellent way to introduce creativity to the classroom, whilst developing literacy skills, such as speaking, listening and extended vocabulary. Drama encourages children to think creatively and can assist with critical thinking and problem solving skills. In order to inhabit characters, students also need to think about the mind-set of others, which helps to promote a deeper understanding of empathy and emotional awareness.

This resource is a taster of just some of the ways we can support primary school teachers to deliver high-quality drama with confidence in the classroom.



# Ten Tips for Delivering Drama

## 1 Keep it simple...but creative

Don't try and teach large chunks of script or ask the children to create full scenes. Children will feel the rewards of mastering simple scenes with only a few lines or a short poem, and feel more confident to add their own creative flair.

## 2 Create a drama playlist

Come prepared with some music that offers different moods or atmospheres, which can be used as background music for activities. It's a really good idea to have music which evokes certain emotions and use that to help guide the scenes or poems you are working on.

## 3 Keep the volume low

Whilst children are working creatively with a partner, they will need to focus and communicate their ideas to each other, so try not to play the music too loud.

## 4 Have clear guidelines

Drama classes have a reputation of being a bit chaotic, but they don't need to be. Let the students know what your expectations are (everybody listens, everybody participates, everybody does their best) and if students start going off task, remind them straight away of your expectations, just like you would in an ordinary class.

## 5 Don't join in all the time

Find a balance between demonstrating and standing back to observe. This will allow the children to build confidence and independence in their creative explorations.

## 6 Teamwork

Vary the group sizes that children work in, anything from 2-4 works well. It will also encourage a greater variety of responses and support the less confident child.

## 7 Warm-up & cool-down

Incorporate a simple warm-up and cool-down into all your lessons to ensure safe practice but also as a way to add structure to the session.

## 8 Time to reflect

Drama lessons can be filled with lots of laughter and noise, so it's important to come back to the initial focus and reflect on what has been learned or achieved at the end of the session.

## 9 Leadership opportunities

If children take drama classes outside of school, you could use this as an opportunity to develop leadership skills. Can they help you deliver a warm-up or game? Or even help direct a scene?

## 10 Don't be afraid to ask for help

Speak to your local Creative Learning and Community Partnerships team about further support including resources, workshops and CPD opportunities.



# Outcomes and Skill Development

By participating in these activities, children should:

- Develop speech and language skills, including extended vocabulary
- Explore creativity and working as part of a team
- Develop concentration and listening skills
- Develop creative thinking and problem-solving skills
- Advance their memory skills
- Expand their cultural awareness, knowledge and understanding.



# Curriculum Links

- **SPOKEN LANGUAGE:** Development of spoken vocabulary
- **READING:** Encourages reading, comprehension and discovery of literature
- **SCIENCE:** Using drama to explore animals and the human body.
- **SCIENCE:** Exploring the five senses through drama
- **SCIENCE:** Looking at pitch and volume in terms of the voice
- **GEOGRAPHY:** Using drama to explore different cultures and geographical influences
- **HISTORY:** Using drama to explore stories from the past to understand the complexity of people's lives, the process of change, the diversity of societies and relationships between different groups
- **HISTORY:** Exploring events from living memory and beyond living memory
- **PHSE:** Respecting others and working collaboratively with each other
- **PHSE:** Working towards shared goals and expressing their feelings
- **PHSE:** Recognising and naming different feelings and emotions, problem-solving strategies for dealing with emotions, challenges and change
- **PHSE:** Exploring friendship, communication and ways to prevent bullying.



# Activity Guide

# Warm-Up Ideas

## Top Tips for Wonderful Warm-Ups

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- A good warm-up is a great way to get the class energised and engaged, ready to take on the lesson objectives.
- It also helps to ensure participants are able to move freely and reduces the risk of injury during physical activities.
- The warm-up can be used to link directly into the main activities of the lesson, encouraging the class to start considering the vocabulary or terms, physicality and practices used in drama from the very beginning.
- The warm-up should get the heart rate up but shouldn't be too strenuous as to tire the class out before the main activity.

## Warm-Up 1



Ask the children to walk around the room at a steady pace. Encourage them not to walk in a circle, but to weave through each other, trying not to bump into anyone.

Once this is established, call out a command such as: stop, start, jump or clap. Repeat, changing the commands.

As the group start to focus and get better at following your commands, ask them all to freeze. Explain that you are now going to play opposites, so stop means start, start means stop, jump means clap and clap means jump.

Encourage the group not to fall about laughing if they get it wrong, but to really focus on the task in hand.

### **Music Suggestion**

Something upbeat and fun but with no lyrics. Quiet enough that your commands can be heard easily by the children

**Gets their heart rate up and starts to focus their attention on the lesson.**



## Warm-Up 2



Gather the children in a circle – you can start this exercise sitting on the floor or standing. This is a simple call and response game. Explain that you're going to be the leader first, but other people can have a turn later too.

Start by getting out an imaginary tennis racket and tell the group you are going to bat a sound into the middle of the circle. They then have to bat it back to you and copy whatever sound you make. Start with fricative sounds such as 'vvv', 'zzz', 'shh', 'sss' and 'fff', then build up to consonants with vowels like 'ga ga ga', 'hee hee hee', 'caw caw caw'. You can then experiment with animal noises or sirens. Be really playful and try lots of silly voices.

Once you think they've got the idea, either choose a new leader or ask for a volunteer to have a go.



**Gets their voices working and warming up and starts to focus their attention on the lesson. Also develops confidence and leadership skills.**

## Warm-Up 3



Gather the children in a circle, standing up. This warm-up doesn't need a big explanation, so you can start straight away, but say that you expect the group to participate in silence and not to chat between every statement.

Deliver a variety of statements to the group:

- Swap places if you walked to school today
- Swap places if you got the bus to school today
- Swap places if you've had a great morning
- Swap places if you've had a difficult morning
- Swap places if you're excited to do some drama

You can be as creative as you like with your statements and can change them to fit your group. It can help you gauge who might need coaxing out of their shell and who is excited to be creative. Or it can be used as a 'getting to know each other' game.

An extension exercise could be to use chairs and have one less chair than students. Whoever doesn't get to another chair, is left in the middle and they have to deliver the next statement

### Music Suggestion

Something upbeat and fun but with no lyrics. Quiet enough that your commands can be heard easily by the children.



**Gets the group focused and depending on the statements can get the group thinking about their feelings/the feelings of others/the experiences of others.**

# Creative Task 1

## Fairy-tale Freeze Frames

### Main Activity

 **15 mins**

Children will need to work in groups of 2 or 3.

Explain to them that you are going to read out a fairy-tale, such as Little Red Riding Hood and they will need to listen very carefully, as when you clap your hands, they will have to make a freeze frame of the part of the story you have just told them.

Explain that a freeze frame is like a photograph, so you must stand very still and think about how you can show what the character is doing by using your body and face.

Clap your hands to get them to create the following scenes as freeze frames:

- Little Red Riding Hood saying bye to her mother
- Little Red Riding Hood being followed by the wolf in the woods
- The wolf locking Granny in the cupboard
- Red Riding Hood talking to the wolf in Granny's bed
- The wolf jumping up to eat Little Red Riding Hood
- Little Red Riding Hood, beating the wolf and saving Granny

### Extension

Ask each individual group to show you their favourite freeze frame and then give them a couple of minutes to see how they would bring that scene to life. How could they move? What dialogue could they add? Restrict them to two or three lines each to prevent it becoming too wordy.

### Performance

 **10 mins**

Give each group the opportunity to share their freeze frames and/or scenes. Whilst one group perform, the others watch closely so they can give a star and a wish as feedback.

You could offer suggestions such as: I loved the way your body language suggested that you were running; next time could you use facial expressions to show you are scared?

If you have time, they can perform again, taking on the feedback of their peers.



# Creative Task 2

## Exploring Emotions

### Main Activity



Explain to the children that we can express our feelings using our bodies, our facial expressions and our voices. In this exercise, we are going to focus on our bodies and facial expressions, so we aren't going to make a sound.

Start off by asking the group to feel excited. Ask if they can think of examples before you give yours? Tell them that you have just woken up and discovered a giant present at the end of the bed. Ask them how that would make them feel. You can encourage them to use different vocabulary, that isn't just 'happy'. Once you've established that they would feel excited, play some appropriate upbeat music and ask the room to move around the group in an excited way.

Continue and tell the group that you've just realised that the big present isn't for them, it has a different name on the tag. How do they feel now? You may want to alter your tone of voice to give them clues. Again, you can use this opportunity to ask them to use more sophisticated vocabulary. Now ask them to move around the room, like they are incredibly sad and disappointed, using some melancholy music to help them.

You can then explore lots of different emotions this way. Some examples would be angry, confused, frightened, shy, confident.

### Music Suggestion

Various tracks to help children tap into a variety of emotions

### Extension

Children can split into pairs and stand facing each other. One student picks an emotion and acts it out for their partner without telling them what it is. The partner copies the emotion and has to see if they can guess what it was. Go back and forth with this a few times, asking children to explore a wider variety of different emotions

In these same pairs, students can then add their voice into the emotions. Ask them to think of a sentence to match their feelings. For example, if they choose excited, they might say, 'It's only 2 days until my birthday!' What could the other student say in response that mirrors the same emotion? For example, 'Oh, I can't wait for your party!' Can they create a scene?

### Performance



Give each group the opportunity to share their scene. Whilst one group perform, the others watch closely so they can give a star and a wish as feedback.

If you have time, they can perform again, taking on the feedback of their peers.

# Creative Task 3

## Exploring Characters

### Main Activity

 **15**  
mins

Start by asking the children to tell you some of their favourite characters from stories. Explain that you're going to pick some characters that they will know well and you're going to explore how they can become them. Go through each of the characters in the list below and teach the group actions and body language to go with them. Demonstrate each character one at a time and after each demonstration, ask the children to practice.

For more advanced groups you can ask them to give you their ideas for actions and characterisation:

- Cinderella** - Hop on one foot and look for your shoe
- Wicked Witch** - High pitched cackle and stir a cauldron
- Prince Charming** - Gallop confidently on an imaginary horse
- Fairy Godmother** - Wave wand and walk softly
- Giant** - Make yourself as big as possible and stomp
- Queen Elsa** - Walk confidently and shoot ice out of hands
- Captain Hook** - Pretend to sword fight like a pirate
- Peter Pan** - Hop and skip around in a sprightly fashion.

Once the group have learned all the characters, play some upbeat music and ask them to walk around the room. Encourage them to weave in and out of each other rather than going in circles. At random, say the name of one of the characters and ask them to do the appropriate actions. You can start going through each character slowly and as they get more confident, speed it up, so they must change their characterisations quickly.

 **Music Suggestion**  
Upbeat instrumental track

### Extension

Ask the children to think about their favourite character from a story and invite a keen volunteer to the front of the class. Ask them to whisper their character choice to you. The rest of the group must ask closed questions to the volunteer, who needs to answer in character.

E.g. The volunteer has decided to be Moana  
Question: 'Are you human?'  
Volunteer: 'Yes'  
Question: 'Do you live in a forest?'  
Volunteer: 'No'

Try to encourage the children to ask at least five questions before they guess the character.

You can also have fun by playing some chat show music as you bring the volunteer to the front of the class, like you are hosting a show on TV. Swap volunteers as many times as you want, whilst the group are still invested.

### Performance

 **10**  
mins

Give each individual the opportunity to share their favourite character movement. You may want them to stand up and move around as their character in small groups. Whilst one group perform, the others watch closely so they can give a star and a wish as feedback.

If you have time, they can perform again, taking on the feedback of their peers.

# Drama Vocabulary

<b>Act</b>	Plays are often divided into two or more acts
<b>Scene</b>	Each act is then divided into scenes
<b>Dialogue</b>	When two or more characters talk to each other
<b>Script</b>	The written words of a drama
<b>Monologue</b>	Lines spoken by a single person
<b>Stage Direction</b>	Information in a script that gives direction to performers, crew and directors, such as how to deliver a line or where to go on stage
<b>Tableaux/Freeze Frame</b>	A still image, like someone has pressed pause
<b>Mime</b>	Using movement, expression and gesture to convey an action, character or emotion
<b>Body Language</b>	Messages given by the positioning or movement of the body
<b>Facial Expression</b>	The look and position of the face that conveys emotion or intention
<b>Proscenium</b>	The frame that surrounds the opening of a stage
<b>In the round</b>	A performance space with audience on all sides
<b>Thrust</b>	A performance space with audience on 3 sides
<b>Upstage</b>	The area at the back of the stage
<b>Downstage</b>	The area at the front of the stage
<b>Wings</b>	The areas concealed from the audience view at the side of the stage
<b>Improvisation</b>	Exploration or generation of movements, action, dialogue and story without planning
<b>Exit</b>	The act of exiting the stage or performance space
<b>Enter/Entrance</b>	The act of entering the stage or performance space
<b>Backstage/Back of House</b>	The areas not seen by the audience including dressing rooms and offices
<b>Front of House</b>	The areas used by the audience in a theatre
<b>Director</b>	The person or people who instruct the actors on what to do and who piece together the performance
<b>Treads</b>	Steps that lead up to a stage
<b>Tab</b>	The curtains that are hung around a stage/performance space
<b>Iron</b>	The iron safety curtain that covers a stage opening in an emergency



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# Get In Touch

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Creative Learning & Community Partnerships teams are delivering local creative projects with all ages across the UK. For further info on local programmes please contact:

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