

# Classroom Drama

## A Practical Guide

BY UNA MCCABE



***Classroom Drama –  
A Practical Guide***

Una McCabe



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First published by **PrimaryABC** (2007)

This edition (2008) published by  
**CJ Fallon Ltd.,**  
**Ground Floor, Block B,**  
**Liffey Valley Office Campus, Dublin 22, Ireland.**

**Tel:** +353 1 616 6400  
**Email:** sales@cjfallon.ie  
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Primary ABC is an imprint of CJ Fallon Ltd.

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ISBN-13: 978-0-9545837-6-7

*Layout:* CRM Design and Print, Dublin

*Printed by:* Betaprint, Dublin

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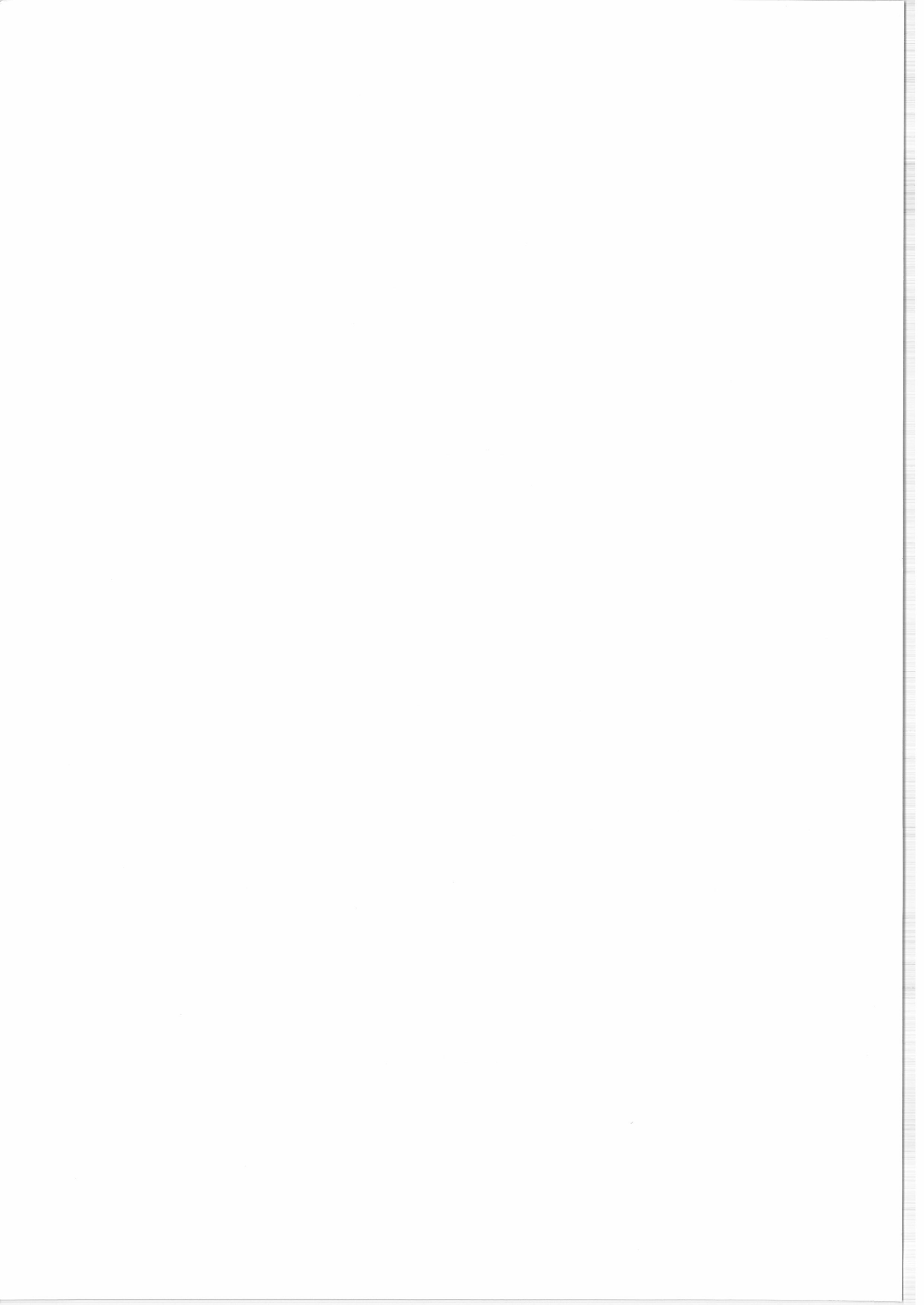
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## INTRODUCTION

This book is written for those primary school teachers who would really like to give classroom drama a try. There is an increasing number of teachers with drama experience who are very capable of using classroom drama very effectively. But I know there is also a large number who believe in its importance for children's learning, who acknowledge that Drama needs to be taught as part of the curriculum, but who are slightly panicked by the thought of teaching it! This book is intended as a support for the latter group and I hope it provides the tools to enable more confidence and more proficiency in using drama in the classroom.

Drama presents a challenge for a teacher who had minimal or no Drama training at college or who finds drama too vague, too 'fluffy' or not structured enough. Despite the in service training that is currently being carried out, there is lot of fear and apprehension about the successful application of drama in the primary school classroom. In the past, it may have been seen as a bit of a 'frill' or an 'add on' activity, only undertaken by certain teachers who had a natural flair for drama, story and creativity.

The fact is that it's now part of our curriculum and we must all become more aware of drama teaching strategies; this book aims to provide that. It expands on the teaching strategies suggested in the Drama Curriculum and offers practical advice about how to use them. It contains lots of lesson plans which specify exactly how this is done, with reference to strands and strand units in other subjects.

It is a practical book which is intended to give teachers a resource to refer to again and again, and it relates to most contexts. The book also recognises the importance of drama in the early years and devotes an entire chapter to practical advice for the inclusion of drama when teaching those aged up to seven, in an integrated way.

There is great pressure on Irish teachers to cover all aspects of the curriculum; an understanding of Drama and the use of Drama in Education will highlight the natural cross-over with other subjects. Rather than adding to an already busy day or week, the inclusion of drama can actually improve children's learning ability and their comprehension of complex material. Most teachers understand this in theory, but may not have developed the skill or confidence to put it into practice.

Drama in Education is now a highly developed area of teaching and study internationally and there is a wealth of supporting literature and resources, for example from the UK and Australia. It is vital that Irish teachers are given the confidence to embrace the opportunity presented by the Drama Curriculum; confidence comes through training, but also through experience. There is a strong history in Ireland of theatre and story, both professionally and non-professionally. Drama has been further strengthened by the huge growth of youth theatres and youth drama since 1980, promoted by the National Association of Youth Drama. NAYD's



belief in the value of drama and theatre to a young person's development had a great influence on many drama practitioners, teachers and young people. It has moved many Irish schools well beyond 'the Christmas play' in terms of Drama provision. Many of our Universities and Colleges now offer degrees in Drama. The Drama Curriculum is the latest chapter in our Drama history and we must recognise and respond to the progress it marks.

Anxiety may exist, even post training, about where to begin and what to expect - this is completely natural and so the book offers advice for starting off, with practical ideas for introducing drama to your class. The book draws on years of teaching children in Irish schools. I know everything may not go as planned and may be far from perfect but my advice is given to help overcome some basic 'beginner mistakes'. The book also draws on the experiences of approximately two thousand Irish students of teacher education who have been giving me written and verbal feedback on teaching practices, twice a year, for eight years! This has given me a keen insight into the highs and lows of introducing drama, particularly when the teacher or class is new to the subject.

The most common feedback after first trying drama lessons is surprise and pleasure at how much children love drama! Sometimes we can worry ourselves so much about how to teach something that we forget what the child's reaction might be. Children's enjoyment of drama is what makes it such a positive experience for them, and armed with some tips from this book you will soon find it enjoyable too. This book is intended to help you start bringing imagination into your classroom, both your imagination and more importantly, that of the children in your class. Enjoy it!

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**


I would like to thank all the children with whom I have done drama, who have always reminded me of the joy and importance of a fresh perspective. I am grateful to all my past and current students who are the pioneering teachers of the 1999 Primary School Drama Curriculum; their courage in trying out drama in the classroom and the feedback they give me is an invaluable resource. Gratitude is due to Dr. David Carey for believing in and understanding the use of Drama in the classroom and telling me to write this book; to Natasha Lohan for reading the drafts and giving intelligent criticism and support and to Claire Corcoran for being the first teacher to show me what Drama in Education really meant. Thanks too to my publisher Brian Gilsean of PrimaryABC, for his guidance, help and encouragement in publishing this book. Special thanks are due to my father, Fergal, for doing the drawings and to both him and my mother, Bríd, for giving me my love of stories and drama.

## How To USE THIS BOOK

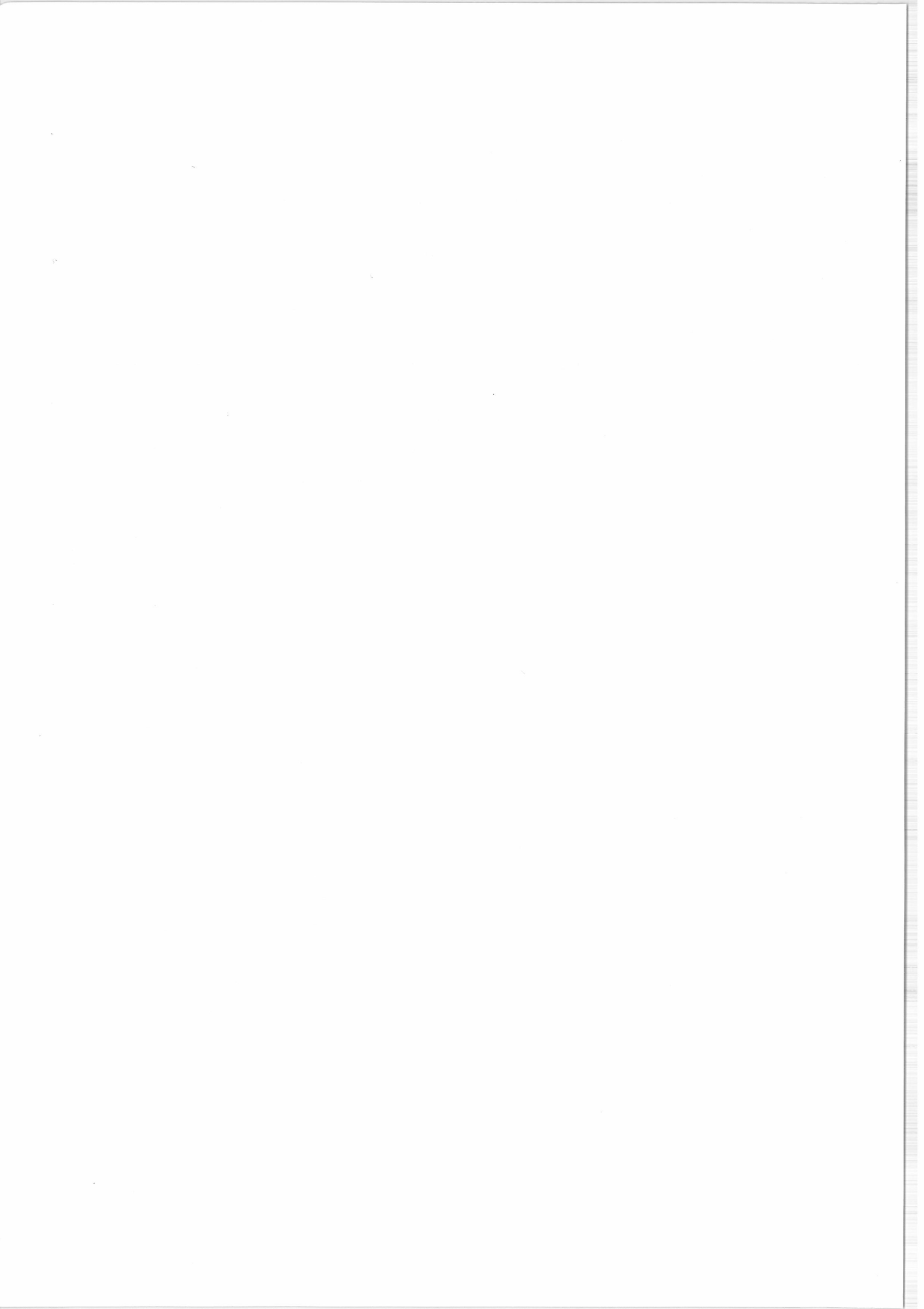
This book is intended to provide both theory and resources. If resources are your immediate need, you should go to the exemplars (from page 48). There are four, one for each age group of the Primary School Curriculum. Every lesson specifies the Drama Education objective and the strand of other curriculum subjects it helps to cover. Each class group is different and in drama, children naturally adapt content to their own level so there is flexibility with each of the plans regarding age group – you know your class best. Most drama exercises adapt easily so if you see something you would like to try in any of the lessons you should do so. A series of Irish language activities can be found on page 38.

If you are a nervous beginner, read the section about the age profile of your class from page 24; it shows you what to expect, some management advice start-up tips and plenty of workshop ideas for you to try. If you are searching for co-operative games you will find one at the start of each lesson plan; its purpose and how to play it will be described. If you have an older class (e.g. fifth and sixth) who have never done drama before, I recommend using lesson plans for a younger age group initially (such as the Aladdin lessons, page 74).

Three out of four of the exemplars provide photo-copiable resources to extend the lessons. Each lesson offers ideas for integration with other subjects and also provides 'reflective' questions. There is a section preceding the lesson plans which gives detailed information about how to approach drama for the first time and how to use the lessons. It includes a list of activities which might be used to gain confidence with teaching drama, before trying the lesson plans. It also includes advice about making rules and the management of drama. The section following the lesson plans gives more details about the strategies used in the lesson plans and also suggests other ways that the strategies can be used across the curriculum. Junior Infant to Second Class teachers will find extra resources in the 'Early Years Chapter' about how to use dramatic play in the classroom.

The Chapter on experiences of teachers working in primary schools in Ireland shows that the Drama curriculum is achievable and gives different perspectives on how that can be done. The content of the drama curriculum is briefly explained in Chapter Two and throughout the book, reference is made to what children learn through their engagement in drama. Where possible, practical examples are given and in doing so, they provide further ideas for drama exercises that might be tried in the classroom. These practical examples are indicated with the  logo.





## Why use Drama in Education? A note for teachers

This book is about how to incorporate the Drama Curriculum into your teaching. It also shows you how well drama can be used to teach other curricular content. You probably already use a lot of drama, often, without realising or acknowledging it. Do you encourage children to act out rhymes, stories or situations? Do you take on a role to encourage young children to play in the home corner? Do you encourage children to imagine themselves as the characters in the stories you read? If you do, then you are already using Drama to teach children. If you don't, this book will show you that it's easier than you think and a great addition to your box of teaching tools.

Young children naturally engage in pretend play (play in which children take on a role: parent, shopkeeper, doctor etc.). Children of all ages also like to move and be active, so making drama, dancing and making music are all natural behaviours for them. Instead of struggling to find extra time to fit drama and the arts into the curriculum, why not use their natural disposition towards these activities to teach existing curriculum goals. In that way you will develop children's skills in the arts and, might I suggest, end up covering even more of your curriculum!

## Overcoming fears about teaching Drama and other Arts subjects

As teachers we may have a fear of the arts because we don't feel confident in our own skills in the arts. Research shows however that it is not your skill in the arts that is important, but your enthusiasm. Children, especially young children, are motivated to participate in the arts when they see you participating. When you take on a role, make art, dance or make music they see that you value the lesson. They see you modelling participation and this teaches them that even if they don't feel confident at first, it's fun to take part and to express their ideas.

Research also shows that children's engagement with one art form increases their ability in other art forms because they become more used to creative, open-ended learning. There are an increasing number of programmes that can assist you in developing your skills in the arts and benefit the children in your class; the Abbey Theatre Education Programme and Team Educational Theatre Company are two of the better-known projects. There are many more throughout the country – you can get information through your County Arts Officer or from the Arts Council. These programmes seek to show you best practice through active engagement with you and the children in your class. You can also learn from the specialist teachers that visit schools to teach one or more of the arts subjects. These teachers have particular skills and you should use the opportunity to integrate these teachers into your classroom. See if you can plan together; work with this teacher to learn from her. If this teacher

works behind closed doors you are losing a valuable opportunity to see the children in your class express themselves through the process of the arts. You are also adding to your workload as you could be sharing curriculum goals.

### **Defining goals: teach drama or teach through drama?**

For a long time there have been differing opinions about whether it is preferable to teach in or through the art form. Some believe that you should concentrate on teaching the skills directly associated with the art form (such as 'acting' in Drama); others believe that the arts are a method of learning (such as teaching the maths concept of shape through dance).

Gavin Bolton, an influential drama educator, has discussed this issue quite succinctly and finds the argument for one or the other absurd. Bolton says that as a drama educator, when he works in the classroom, "his intention is to work in the art form, using elements of theatre, and of other enactive, visual, aural, kinaesthetic and verbal modes, and combine it with an understanding of the theme or content the group aims to explore."<sup>1</sup> He finds that if your only aim in arts education is to teach skills and concepts associated with arts disciplines, then you are overlooking what is meant by the arts.

He endorses facilitating the understanding of ideas, feelings, insights and experience through the practice of the arts. If you take this approach, then you will be educating both in and through drama. If this is still confusing, think about good acting performances you have seen, and how human experience has been at the root of them.

### **Transferring skills to other arts areas**

If you have a particular skill in one arts area then that should be used to benefit all the children in the school as well as those in your classroom. If it's not already happening then try to put in place a structure in which you act as the co-ordinator of that subject in your school. This shouldn't mean that you simply teach all the Music/Dance/Drama/Visual Art however; perhaps you and another teacher could join your classes so that you could 'team teach' and she could learn from you. You could also transfer your skills by helping others with ideas when you meet as a staff to plan long term.

The most important point here is to play to your strengths. There is no doubt that each art form has particular skills associated with it. If you are confident and/or skilled in one art form you probably have a better understanding than you realise of the other art forms. If, for example, your expertise or comfort area is in music then you are familiar with pitch and expression through sound and voice. Opera is a great example of storytelling. All of these

<sup>1</sup>Bolton, Gavin. 1990. "Although" - A response to the NCC's Arts In Schools Project 'The Arts 5 - 16'. National Association for the Teaching of Drama Conference Paper 'The Next Step' (20th October)



skills relate to Drama and you can concentrate on these elements of Drama, if that is your strength. Dance is closely related to drama as it involves the physical expression of ideas, feelings and stories. Familiarity with expression through non verbal and creative styles is very helpful in the teaching of drama and the co-operative, creative approach used in teaching the arts transfers easily across the art forms.

## **What does drama offer to the primary classroom?**

Sometimes, with the pressure of covering the curriculum plus all the other responsibilities attached to being a teacher, we can lose sight of why we do things. What you need to realise is how much Drama (and other arts subjects) develop the very skills you are striving to teach in the traditional 'core' areas. The natural enthusiasm children have for drama and the arts can be harnessed as a method of learning and teaching across the curriculum. Drama should not be viewed as playtime; rather as a way of learning. Children can learn key skills and concepts through drama when it is structured and supported by teachers.

Drama is based on theatre and incorporates visual, aural and kinaesthetic modes which enable human beings to be more expressive. Have you ever seen a group of people (usually women) describing clothes that they have bought or were worn by a friend? The person describing will almost invariably and instinctively show the shape and length of the clothing with their hands as they speak. Even if you don't take in the words, the hand gestures convey the message. Through the practice of drama children are better enabled to understand and express ideas through non-verbal and verbal modes and thereby develop a number of related skills.

### **Drama develops the ability to communicate**

Children need to become effective communicators. It can often be the case that a group who have little or no experience in drama have difficulty at first thinking of what to say. This is because they are unused to externalising their thoughts and to using their imagination to find words and ideas. Like any skill, the more it is practised the more natural it becomes.

In a drama programme teachers need to model drama skills by taking roles in the drama. For example, you might speak 'in role' as an expedition leader, guiding them through an imaginary journey, or as a wizard casting a spell. You also explain exactly who each child is and what is happening, so they know the context in which they will engage verbally.

Let's say each child is to act as a hairdresser, speaking to a client whose hair has accidentally turned out purple. You might prepare the children by asking them to stand behind the chair in which 'the client' is seated. They might then be encouraged to imagine what they see in the mirror in front of them, and then close their eyes to think about what they will say.

Try This!

You might also encourage them with questions about whether they will admit to the accident or try to convince them that purple is 'their colour'!

By reflecting on the children's improvisations of this hairdresser/client scene, it's possible to draw out learning for children about communication skills. For example, children might discuss who they felt dealt well with the situation, and why. A response might be that Shona dealt with it well because she spoke calmly, offered to redo the hair but also convinced the client it was a modern style. The focus might alternatively be on the client and the class might reflect on what the tone and the body language of the client communicated to the hairdresser. All the pairs might then practice the hairdresser scene again and try to incorporate some successful strategies identified in the reflection. By doing this sort of work children can see and experience how different tones of voice suit different situations and get to practice spontaneous speech.

### **Drama develops language**

Drama is a powerful tool in the promotion of language skills. When you put a child into a dramatic or role play situation, they are more motivated to practice language. Physically entering into a situation involves people more wholly and this is what increases motivation. When dramatising a familiar situation (such as a shop scene, or a discussion with a parent) they will use language they have heard others use in this situation.

To really extend vocabulary however, it is important to practice language that might be unfamiliar. Drama is ideal for this as it offers the power to transport children and adults to imaginary worlds. Through setting the scene of the drama and helping children to physically and mentally enter into their roles, children can practice language associated with a range of different situations, a lot of which may be new to them.

### **Drama develops physical creativity and discipline**

Drama is a physical as well as a verbal art form - in using drama, you will be developing physical skills too. These skills are developed in lots of ways. Drama games develop co-ordination skills. When children take roles in drama they have to find ways to physically, as well as verbally, represent the role.

In classroom drama, when children present ideas, the physical techniques of performance are often used. For example, children are sometimes asked to freeze stages of the drama. This is physically demanding. If they freeze 'a moment of triumph' in a group there are many physical possibilities to be examined: they must think about how to hold their head to look proud, whether to punch a hand in victory or to place a hand around the shoulder of a group member and so on. They must figure out how to depict the relationship between the group,

using space or touch. They must also develop the skill to really hold still. Engaging in this kind of learning on a regular basis really helps children to be able to become more creative when they need to use their bodies to express ideas.

### **Drama develops the ability to understand and communicate the emotional lives of self and others**

Throughout drama, children and teachers take different roles as they enact the story of the drama. Plot is essential to the making of the story but, just like life, what really shapes the story is the characters' reactions to events. In a simple drama like Little Red Riding Hood, children might dramatise how happy Little Red Riding Hood feels as she skips through the wood and in contrast, dramatise how scared Granny is when she sees the wolf in her cottage. They might also dramatise the way the wolf disguises his voice and appearance, to conceal his real desire to eat everyone up! Through this simple drama, children experience and see how people communicate (or even disguise) what they feel.

Working at a more experienced level, children might do drama based around the wolf's experience and show his relationship to other characters in the woods. Maybe he is just doing the job of a wolf, and cannot understand why he doesn't get along with anyone; perhaps the children can show how other characters keep their distance and how sad he feels about this. Children might then explain to the wolf what he needs to do in order to get along better with people.

Alternatively, children could dramatise Little Red Riding Hood being more assertive with the wolf to see if that changes the outcome of the story. All of this kind of learning helps children to know how to communicate their feelings and to be able to interpret the signs that others give about their feelings. It also integrates other subjects like English, SPHE and could of course be done through Irish as well.

### **Drama develops imagination:**

Drama is a creative art. It involves thinking on our feet. It permits children to have their own ideas about what should happen; it allows them to be spontaneous in what they say and do and it enables them to act on what is in their imagination. Drama means trying to find connections with what other people are thinking and doing and it also celebrates original actions and ideas. Drama is about both the world we live in and the world we don't live in. There is no right and wrong in Drama. All these characteristics of drama develop children's creativity and imagination, which will help their thinking and expressive skills both across the curriculum and in their everyday lives.

**Drama develops the ability to interpret sign  
(i.e. costumes or props that signify place or people)**

Drama helps children to read the world. When costume or props are used in drama children learn that certain clothing or objects are associated with people and their role and status. By doing a drama about Jack and the Beanstalk, they can see that a policeman's hat doesn't really work when it is worn by the giant. They can see that a school bag could represent Jack and that if the giant sees a school bag, even if he doesn't see Jack, he knows there might well be a schoolboy nearby. This kind of learning extends children's visual literacy and helps them to decode the real world as well as understanding the visual imagery we are exposed to through film, television and computer games etc.

**They develop an understanding of Drama as an art form**

Children have a right to be exposed to drama. It's a really beneficial form of learning and it also makes them more drama-literate. They will have a better understanding of drama and are more likely to be interested in seeing drama performed and making drama a hobby. There is an increasing amount of theatre written and performed specifically for young audiences (see appendix 133). Experiencing and seeing drama from a young age means those children are more likely to retain an interest in drama when they are older.

**Drama makes learning more active, tangible and enjoyable:**

Drama is another language. We know that in every group of people, there are different learning styles. So when we teach we try and get our message across in a variety of ways, so we have more chance of being understood. Drama is another string to our bow of teaching tools. It's a particularly valuable one because children enjoy the active nature of drama so much.

Drama helps to make ideas clearer because children see and experience, instead of just hearing. As an example, let's say the children are learning past tense verbs in Irish. You could just recite them but a simple drama would make the learning focus more real. Perhaps the class, prompted by visual cue cards, might dramatise a number of verbs like *ag siopadóireacht* and *ag damhsa*. Then, using a calendar to show that it is now a day later, you (or a child) could enter with a magnifying glass/policeman's hat as a detective. You could then question the other children about their actions yesterday in order to solve a mystery. In this way the learning of verbs is more effective and more fun; the important past tense and question formats are still very much the focus but they are enjoying the learning process a little more.

Try  
This!



## Drama in Education

Drama should be a formal component of the Primary School Curriculum and not be dependent on the personal interest of the classroom teacher, who had no obligation to provide drama education. A child's experience of drama should equally not be confined to an annual school play.

A Drama Curriculum is concerned with Educational Drama and therefore seeks to emphasise the importance of the creative process of making drama, and the learning outcomes that result from engagement in this process. (Educational Drama may also be referred to as Drama in Education, Process Drama or Classroom Drama.)

It is really important to bear in mind that **"the essence of drama is the making of the story through enactment."** So in other words, when you are doing drama instead of reading or writing a story, the children are becoming people in the story.

Notice the word 'making'. If you were getting children to do a creative writing exercise in English you would not be happy if they copied out a story from a book. Drama is a creative art, so you want children to make (not copy) drama, from their own ideas as much as possible. Your job as teacher is to guide the children through the making of the story. The teacher is like a director, who has an overall idea of the story and the possible scenes; you should be guided by ideas from the children in terms of how they represent the characters and the direction of the story.

Let's take an example where you set yourself up as the director of a soap opera in which two characters are expected to marry. You present the wedding as a feature of the unfolding story of the soap opera. The children, as participants in the enactment of the story, have the power to decide what scenario is most likely, based on the characters involved, when the day of the wedding arrives. They may feel that a joyous celebratory wedding suits the two characters. Or they may identify signs of weakness in one character shown in previous drama sessions and decide a jilting is in order. Or maybe a new character arrives on the day of the wedding. Together the director and cast (teacher and children) enact, watch and discuss the various options and decide which will be used in the story. The fun aspects are the unknown and having the power to decide what will happen.

## The strand of the drama curriculum

It can seem surprising that there is just one strand in the Drama curriculum and that it remains the same all the way through the curriculum. It is *'Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding'*. This should be viewed as a positive because,

<sup>1</sup>1999, NCCA, Drama Teacher Guidelines.

as I see it, the idea is that the Drama curriculum is not intended to add an extra workload onto teachers' plates. It could be argued that the real strands are those found in other curriculum subjects and that drama is used to teach the content of those other subjects. Remember that drama, in the context of the Primary School Curriculum, is foremost a way of learning rather than a subject area.

While it is important that children learn through drama, as pointed out in the curriculum, the quality of that drama is important too - the better the drama, the better the learning. So, look at what you want to teach, and use drama as a way of teaching it. It might make more sense if we take each stage of the Drama strand in turn.

### **Drama to explore feelings**

Learning about feelings can be done through lots of different media but drama is a good way of approaching the topic because drama is about people, their stories and the feelings associated with them. You might decide you want your class to work on feelings associated with not having as much as others, or achieving great dreams, so you could base your drama around Cinderella or Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. This doesn't mean you act out the story just as it's written in the book. I recommend that you take the basic structure and allow the class to develop their version of it, allowing their personalities and views to influence it. You keep in mind the feelings that you wanted to explore and focus on relevant aspects of the story. If you have more experience in drama, you could develop the story of the drama from scratch, but this is not necessary.

### **Drama to explore knowledge and ideas**

This can refer to taking a content area and teaching it through drama. For example, you can teach about Roman History by doing drama about a key event in this period. Just as in a non-drama history lesson, the teacher needs to have knowledge about the period in question. She uses this to guide the action of the drama. The children need guidance about the nature of their characters, the setting of the action and the nature of events that occurred in Roman times (see page 100 for an activity based on an aspect of Roman History). Children won't learn a lot if the instruction is simply 'make up a drama set in Roman times'.

By integrating drama into your teaching plan for the week, you can decide on what you would like to expand on, using drama. If you're new to drama I suggest choosing something from your History or English lesson to get you going and gain confidence.

### **Leading to understanding**

This part of the strand is really important. It's the key to planning your lesson and knowing if you are on the right track with your class. Sometimes teachers get a bit side-tracked by 'planning a fun class' or 'getting them doing drama'. Children need to realise that they learn through drama. If you don't have a learning goal that you wish them to understand as a result of the drama session, they will always just see it as an entertainment session, leading to increased management difficulties for you. It's not necessary to state each time what it is you are teaching, but you need to have a clear idea in your head! (See the lesson plans for examples of objects).

So to summarise:

- Identify the feelings and / or content area you want to teach children about
- Decide how you will use drama to do this
- Reflect, with children or through your own observation, on whether understanding of the chosen topic or skill has progressed.

### **The Strands**

- *Exploring and making Drama:*
- *Co-operating and communicating in making drama:*
- *Reflecting on Drama:*

Just like the strand itself, the strand units remain the same at each class level. It is likely you will cover each strand unit every time you do a drama class, regardless of the age group you teach. This is because the strand units describe learning through drama. Let me give you examples of what might come under each strand unit in order to explain this:

### **Exploring and making Drama**

*Children's exploration of plot and character options through drama, and the enactment of these ideas, guided by the teacher.*

If the drama is set in a post office, children first explore how to represent the setting through furniture or props. They could then explore the character of the person who works in the post office, deciding how he or she moves, speaks and interacts with other people. Next they could explore possible characters that come into the post office and make drama about a scene in the post office. They then need to explore what could happen to add a dramatic twist to their story (which can be prompted or introduced by the teacher).

Try  
This!



### **Co-operating and communicating in making drama**

*Planning and exchanging ideas about what will happen in the drama, working in groups and expressing ideas through drama.*

This refers to the inherent social nature of drama:

- Planning a scene together.
- Giving and taking suggestions about what will happen.
- Taking and giving verbal and visual cues.

If your class is poor at this aspect of drama then it might be a good idea to do some games to develop these skills at the start of the year. But don't make the mistake of never starting drama because you believe the class isn't ready - very difficult groups who disrupt games will often co-operate better when engaged by a developing story.

### **Reflecting on Drama**

*Talking about what happened in the enactment of drama to draw out learning from what we have seen or experienced.*

Reflection is important in enabling children to analyse drama. In a sense they act as directors when they reflect, questioning what is happening and why. This helps them to realise that they control the shape and direction of the drama. It also helps them to develop their drama skills by discussing what aspects of their drama were effective and how they might improve. Reflection gives children the sense that they have some control in the lesson, which motivates them to be engaged. The lesson plans in this book include examples of reflective questions.

### **Performance and the Drama curriculum**

Most drama curriculums around the world usually state that the performance of a school play has value in its own right, but is something separate from the drama curriculum. This does not mean that plays should never be used in the classroom. What it does mean is that if the only drama you do is to choose a play, allocate parts, rehearse and eventually perform it for an audience, then you are not covering the drama curriculum. This is because simply practising lines is an exercise in speech and does not develop cognitive or imaginative skills in children.

If you base your drama on an existing script or story, or develop your own story through drama, children have an opportunity for ownership of the story. They can make choices in relation to character and plot and explore the issues within the story, thereby gaining a better understanding of life. While your work may well culminate in a performance, the primary lesson is the development and exploration of the story. Children are usually more engaged in



this kind of performance, as the words and ideas are their own and they have a better understanding of the story.

Many professional actors approach performance in a similar way, dramatising situations *related* to the script to get a better sense of the characters and subject matter. The point is that while some drama work is really worth performing, drama as a form of learning is a great teaching methodology to use *without* the pressure of performance. Performance can also alienate the shy child, who you may particularly wish to reach through your use of drama. Some shy children can blossom through performance, but some can remember forever the experience of a small part unconfidently executed.

**Play is important:**

Play is important because we owe it to children in the early years to provide them with the best education we can, in the way that suits the way that they learn. Young children learn through play – it is how they make sense of the world. If you want to teach young children about the colour green, you don't lecture to them about green! Young children need to feel, touch, see and experiment with green. The importance of play in young children's learning is an issue that has been highlighted by all the main organisations involved in early childhood education in Ireland in recent years. It has been acknowledged that we have some changes to make in our education system to ensure that all children are exposed to play-based learning at school.

The NCCA are currently preparing a new Irish curriculum framework for those in the three to six age bracket that supports play as a central mode of learning. The reason for a lack of play in previous years is that Irish children have traditionally entered the formal school system at four years of age whereas in other countries it is more common for children to remain in an early childhood education system until six or seven years of age. So we are used to having more formal rather than play-based teaching and learning styles in infant classes in the past.

This is not always the case, happily, as there is a large community of talented infant teachers in Ireland who have been bringing play and playfulness to infant education for many years. Many of us will remember wonderful experiences from our younger school days: perhaps the memory of a P.E. lesson where you moved as fairies or giants, or a fascination with an abacus that you used in maths.

Self-direction and activity are the positive experiences of early education. This underscores for us the importance of play, as it is, by nature, active and self-led. When play is provided in the classroom, children become more self active, self determined and creative in their thinking and learning. The development of these attributes in young children will help them to feel comfortable and confident in creative learning environments such as the educational drama context.

Children who have been exposed to classroom play environments have experience in co-operating and communicating with others, problem solving together, working in imaginative contexts and learning physically as well as cognitively. The Drama Curriculum draws on all these skills.

**Establishing drama in the infant classroom**

There are a number of ways in which drama can be established in the infant classroom because of the fact that drama (in the form of make believe and pretend) is still so much a part

of children's natural behaviour at this age. Firstly, the most important provision for drama at this age is the availability of a *dramatic play area* in the classroom. The provision of this area is standard internationally in early years education practice. Its importance is that it allows children to role play situations that are familiar to them. By doing this, they make sense of the world they live in, by trying out real situations in a safe, pretend manner.

They practice language by trying out what they have heard people say in corresponding real life situations and they respond, using language, to what other children say in their pretend roles. Basic provision for this area (see below) includes familiar items that relate to roles children have observed at home and for this reason, 'the home corner' is the common term for this play area.

At a younger age the 'home corner' is excellent for encouraging children to enact roles and practise functional language, for example in relation to meal times, telephone calls, caring for 'sick' dolls etc. Once a 'home corner' has been established in the infant classroom, the potential exists to extend this area to include other roles and so extend children's drama skills. You can do so by developing or changing the focus of the dramatic play area; through the use of hand-made signs and the provision of role play equipment it can become a shop, a doctor's surgery, a travel agent etc.

To build even more on the skills practised in this area, the dramatic play area can be linked to a story or language area being covered in your curriculum work. Developing children's dramatic play beyond familiar roles into more fictional, story related roles provides an excellent link between natural dramatic play and the skills needed to participate in drama at an older age.

## Setting up a Home Corner/Dramatic Play Area

### What is it?

This is an area in the room of an early years classroom which is dedicated to dramatic play. Sometimes it is partitioned in some simple way but don't use a 'Wendy House' type construction because they are roofed and you can't observe what is happening. This play area earns the title of "home corner" because the main play resources included here reflect the typical items that the child has encountered in their own homes.

### When do children use it?

When play is included in the classroom, there is usually a free play time, most commonly first thing in the morning. As well as dramatic play, there are usually a number

of different play centres or areas such as construction (blocks, stickle bricks, lego); sand, water, jigsaw, creative play (painting, collage, printing) and so on. Children might go to different areas on different days - this is often organised on a chart with 'velcroed' labels with children's names showing the different areas where they will go each day. About five children would be allocated to each different area, allowing children the opportunity to be involved in the self-directed learning that this type of play involves. It also means that when children arrive at different times in the morning, they can immediately be involved in purposeful learning.

Children can use play areas and / or equipment throughout the day. A home corner can be a source of comfort to a new or shy child, or a child can use this area if they have finished a task. It is important though to remember that play is a child's work and not a reward for finishing work. Even if a lot of play equipment is tidied away after a designated 'play-time' it is good to have role play equipment available. At a young age, concrete items are particularly important when children are learning new concepts e.g. role playing with a tea-set can be useful to help teach numbers from one to ten.

### **What's a home corner for?**

In the home corner, a key skill that's being developed is language. Through the provision of role play equipment, children are encouraged to act out adult roles. This is a natural part of children's play and by encouraging it, children play with others, practice language and have the opportunity to act out what is in their imagination. There is also a development of hand movements and bigger movement skills (fine and gross motor) as they put on dress-up clothes, use knobs on cookers and use their whole bodies to express the role that they are in.

The home corner is important in developing social skills; children learn about roles by observing each other in role. They also learn to negotiate with each other as to who will play what role, which is a basic but tricky life skill. By watching children play in this area, adults often gain an insight into the home life of the child as children play out the behaviour they see adults engage in at home.

### **Gender issues in the home corner**

Some parents worry unnecessarily about boys being encouraged to play in this area. Research shows that not only do boys want to play here; they also benefit from it. Dramatic play is children's way of making sense of the world in relation to the roles they see adults play. Boys need to do this just as much as girls do - they learn to *understand*



female (and male) roles rather than play female roles. For example, a common play theme for younger boys and girls is 'mother going out', because this situation can be new and difficult for young children. So, motivated by resources that reflect the home corner they play out this situation which helps them to understand it better.

Home corner play gives boys and girls the opportunity to develop caring and empathetic skills, for example when they play with dolls and use prams or buggies. Boys and girls are also interested in home corner play items in relation to how they work, as well as assuming the related roles. For example, children love to open and close oven doors and use switches on play items. Children are fascinated by the texture and feel of clothes and in the adoption of adult roles. When boys don't play in the home corner it is usually because they have picked up negative opinions from adults about entering into this play. When children are encouraged to play in the home corner, boys and girls learn to play together and learn that boys can cook, clean and be caring towards younger children in the same way as girls. These are all life skills that will be important as boys and girls grow older.

### What's in a home corner?

These are basic items that would be found in this area:

- **Cooker:** children are encouraged to role play cooking and baking food. Children can cook different meals and they can cook for pretend parties. They can develop sequencing skills by working through steps of preparing and cooking food. The buttons on the cooker offer counting opportunities. Time concepts can be developed through 'waiting for the dish to be cooked' and early science ideas can be reinforced through talking about how the cooker needs to be hot to cook the food. Safety concepts can also be related to heat.
- **Pots and pans:** pots and pans encourage cooking role play and a variety of utensils gets children thinking about and acting out different sorts of cooking e.g. shaking and flipping pans or stirring pots. Maths skills are developed through counting pots and sorting them according to shape and size.
- **Sink:** a sink helps children to practice hygiene and clean up skills. It also offers maths and science opportunities in relation to volume and capacity.
- **Tea set:** tea sets promote role play, as children love to have pretend meals and parties with other adults, children, dolls and teddies. It involves lots of turn taking, sharing and relationship skills as children invite others, lay tables, 'pour' tea, offer food and chat to each other. The tea set also provides lots of sorting opportunities according to colour, shape and size. Tea can also be too hot to drink or too sweet

or bitter, thus developing early science concepts. It is important to represent the food implements of all the cultures in your class.

- **Baking set:** this further extends kitchen/cooking role play and makes children more knowledgeable about different items involved in food preparation. By hearing the different baking items named, children's vocabulary is extended. Having baking items also means that children can learn about the baking process and develop knowledge about mixing and measuring ingredients, food stuffs that mix, melt or separate etc. which all develop maths and science skills. It also develops more scope for language as they work through different recipes as they pretend to bake
- **Cleaning equipment:** (brush and dust pan, Hoover, dusters etc.). Unlike most adults, children usually love cleaning equipment! It's great for getting them interested in clean up routines, provides lots of physical development and science concepts can be developed (work on electricity in connection to the Hoover).
- **Kettle:** kettles are a familiar item to most Irish children and it is the familiar items which are key in promoting role play. Children can also learn about hot and cold and capacity with this item
- **Play food** (play groceries, vegetables, fruit etc.). Children may not need play food as at a young age they are still happy to use simple items to represent the food or to simply use their imaginations to pretend! The advantage of having play food is to extend language by naming the range of play food available and incorporating this vocabulary into the play. Some play food can also be cut which is really useful for developing an early sense of division, fractions etc.
- **Telephones:** children love to play using telephones, particularly as telephones are so often used by adults these days. They very easily promote language as children copy speech they have heard adults use on the phone. It's easy to enter into the play as an adult 'on the line' and extend the language being used through the play situation
- **Dress up clothes:** (dresses, waist coats, feather boas, aprons, coats, jewellery, hand bags, material for cloaks, capes, hats etc.): what children want in dress up clothes is to feel like an adult - that feeling is what promotes dramatic play. So where possible the clothes should be adult items. Lots of shops sell child-size costumes. In my opinion there should be a limited amount of these, as they are too 'real' and don't develop imagination very much because children learn to expect perfect, realistic dress-up clothes. They are also limiting because they correspond to only one role, whereas a cloak or a handbag can be worn in a variety of roles. The best idea is to provide whatever items you or your friends are throwing out from your

wardrobes, or to buy cheap material. In selecting items, go for costumes or material with interesting textures as the feel or movement of clothing often fascinates children. Where hats are a hygiene issue in the classroom, badges can be made or bought which denote occupations like police, doctors etc.

- **Buggies/Prams:** young children are often fascinated by buggies as they see their parents or carers pushing younger siblings, or remember being in buggies or prams themselves (these need to be toy items so they are the right size for the child). Children love the power of pushing the buggy or pram themselves and they are interested in the fact that it has wheels and can move. An item like this also contributes to children's doll play as they can 'take the baby for a walk' which makes them feel adult and motivates them to feel responsible and caring.

### **The role of the teacher in the Home Corner**

Primarily, the teacher's role is to provide the equipment and this will create a setting which encourages children to play. Like all areas of play, it is important that the teacher doesn't interfere too much in their play process - let the children use their own ideas to play, using whatever is there to develop role play situations. Children will be motivated by the play items and by the other children in the home corner area.

The teacher observes the children's play (not constantly as she rotates her attention between the different play areas) and learns about the children's conception of adult roles. Sometimes she will enter into the play to extend it, although never in the most powerful role, as this is left to the children. For example, if children seem to keep using the cooker just to open and shut the door and turn some of the knobs, she might do the following:

Teacher: *Jamie, can I play with you in the Home Corner?*

Jamie: *I'm cooking.*

Teacher: *Yes, I see that you are cooking. Do you think that you could cook something for me?*

Jamie: *OK.*

Teacher: *I would like a cake so I think first we have to bake it. Oh we nearly forgot! We should put the oven on first so it will be hot when the cake is ready to go in. It needs to be very hot so can you turn it to 200 degrees. 50..100..150..there..200! Very good Jamie. I know a recipe....[Talks him through mixing ingredients to make a cake, making sure that he does the action and encourages him to repeat the language she uses.]...Now it goes in the oven. So put the cake in carefully. Oh*

*mind the door, it's really hot now. Jamie how long do you think it will take for the cake to bake?*

The teacher talks a lot in this intervention in the play. By modelling language however, she is extending the child's vocabulary in relation to the play so she can then allow him to play independently, drawing on the language he has heard within this play situation. At the start, she models social skills by asking if she can play with him, and then asking if he would cook for her. She draws his attention to how cookers work and gets him to practice counting skills when she asks him to turn on the cooker's heat. She models language for him to use in cooking and gets him to use it actively.

She develops his role playing abilities by entering into the play thoroughly, telling him to be careful of the hot oven door, focusing on safety awareness as well. She encourages him to think within the situation, by questioning him about how long it will take it to cook. She also makes sure to praise him to show that the play he is engaged in is important - she appreciates when he understands the language she uses as well as when he uses his own words. She can then leave him to play this situation again (play is frequently repetitive) or to play with other children with his new increased vocabulary. He has copied her, just as all children do to learn language, but now he can practice these new words and actions independently. The teacher realised she needed to extend his role play and now his play situation will be richer than before.

### **Extending the home corner**

To extend the opportunities for dramatic play, resources linked to areas other than the home can be provided in this area of the classroom. These other resources relate to places children are familiar with or are of interest to them, such as visits to supermarkets, hospital, banks, travel agents etc. Sometimes these resources exist alongside the 'home' items; otherwise these resources are used to set up an area related to just one play situation, such as a shop, the doctors etc. By extending dramatic play resources into these other areas, a wider range of language is practised through both speaking and reading. These other role-play situations also provide a lot of language related development in the form of writing and mathematical concepts.

### **SHOPPING**

- o Play food (from home corner equipment)
- o Cash register
- o Play money
- o Shopping basket/trolley

- o Sign for the shop, indicating open and closing times
- o Clock

### **Early writing and maths opportunities in Shopping Play**

- o Writing shopping lists
- o Calculating bill totals
- o Writing bills and receipts
- o Time in relation to opening and closing
- o Making display signs for the shop

### **Role teacher can take to support Shopping Play**

- o Customer, questioning about items for sale, cost of items, bill totals, opening and closing hours etc.

### **HOSPITAL/DOCTOR'S SURGERY**

- o Doctor's Kit (available from toy shops and euro shops)
- o Dolls and Teddies (as patients)
- o Magazines
- o Appointment Book
- o Signs
- o Clock

### **Early writing and maths opportunities in Hospital play**

- o Time
- o Writing appointments
- o Making signs
- o Writing prescriptions

### **Role teacher can take to support Hospital Play**

Patient, asking for help, modelling language about what is wrong, asking for a description of what the doctor or nurse is doing, asking for a prescription, asking what to say to the person at the pharmacy etc.

### **POST OFFICE**

- o Stamps
- o Scales
- o Post Box (can be bought or made)
- o Paper and Envelopes
- o Post Cards



- o Rubber Stamp
- o Forms
- o Cash register
- o Real or fake money
- o Paper to wrap packages
- o Items to package

**Early writing and maths opportunities in Post Office Play**

- o Writing letters and post cards
- o Filling in forms
- o Weighing packages
- o Using money
- o Calculating with cash register

**Role teacher can take to support Post Office play**

Post office customer, asking for stamps for different countries, asking for cost of postage, asking for parcels to be weighed, asking or modelling how to address post.

**TRAVEL AGENTS**

- o Cash register
- o Travel Brochures
- o Labelled pictures of foreign destinations
- o Tickets
- o Atlas or map

**Early writing and maths opportunities in Travel Agent play**

- o Writing tickets
- o Making brochures
- o Making signs (re. Special offers, new destinations etc.)
- o Using money
- o Calculating with cash register

**Role teacher can take to support travel agent play**

Customer visiting shop or phoning inquiry about destinations, accommodation, local features and amenities, modelling polite or difficult interactions (discussed afterwards), asking for tickets and departure and check in times.

## RESTAURANT

- o Table and chairs
- o Napkins
- o Cutlery
- o Menus
- o Specials Board
- o Cooking Implements
- o Order Book
- o Cash register

### Early maths and writing opportunities in restaurant play

- o Taking orders
- o Writing menus and recipes
- o Making signs for the restaurant
- o Calculating bills
- o Using cash register

### Role teacher can take to support restaurant play

Customer asking about and requesting menu items, asking about special dishes, asking for bill, querying bill or Head Chef, directing kitchen team in creating and cooking food.

### Some more suggestions are:

- A Bank,
- A Space Ship,
- A Dentist's surgery,
- A Beauty Parlour,
- A Garage/Petrol Station,
- A Television Studio.

The key is to supply resources that correspond to the work of adults.

### **Linking the dramatic play area to story**

Developing the home corner/dramatic play area into an area that encourages story-based role play is a natural step. At a younger age the home corner is important but as children progress through infant education it's important to broaden the use of dramatic play and link it more directly to the curriculum. When children are younger they are more interested in playing out situations they have seen. As they mature they are more able to imagine fictional situations and enact those.

It's therefore important that children are helped to differentiate between real and fictional stories. For young children the line between reality and fantasy can be blurred and it helps if the difference is pointed out. For example you can say "in our 'story', or in our 'drama' we will cast a magic spell to make a change, but you will not use magic spells during hospital play".

### **Goldilocks and the Three Bears**

Goldilocks is a typical example of a story that might be used in the early years classroom. The reading of the story acts as a stimulus to the imagination, which is then supported by resources in the dramatic play area, as described below. When the resources are connected to a story that forms the current classroom topic, children are motivated to practice language they have heard and explore the roles of characters in the story. The context is also very clear if the teacher chooses to enter the play to support and develop language.

### **What you need**

- A dress (and perhaps a hair band with gold wool attached) for being Goldilocks. More than one child can take this role...maybe Goldilocks had a friend with her that day!
- Bowls and chairs of different sizes. To provide three different beds is obviously difficult but you could provide quilts/blankets of three different sizes.
- Empty porridge packets.
- A toy oven for cooking the porridge.
- Bear ears or bear puppets (this can be done by attaching ears made of felt to a hair band).

- A mirror so children can see themselves in simple costume.
- Signs for 'THE BEARS' HOUSE', 'THE WOODS' and 'GOLDILOCKS'S HOUSE'.
- You could draw around children's feet (or ideally have children do it themselves) and stick them on the floor to denote the path to Goldilocks' house.
- A map of the area in which the story takes place, showing the house, the woods and other geographical features.
- Make invitations from Goldilocks, inviting the Bears to her house for porridge as a way of saying sorry.
- You can also promote language and dramatic play by providing simple puppets relating to the characters in Goldilocks and the Three Bears or providing toys that correspond to the items in the story. (Bowls, Chairs, Beds, Bears etc.)
- Make a PE trail that marks out the stages of the story: skip through the woods; eat porridge in the kitchen; lie down in the bedroom; sit down in the sitting room; run back to the woods when you hear the bears coming.
- Encourage dramatic play by taking one of the following roles:
  - o One of the bears who is upset about what Goldilocks has done.
  - o Goldilocks arriving at the house and wanting to explain to the bears why she did what she did.
  - o Organise a Teddy Bear's Picnic.

*Remember, there are many ways to use props, pictures and puppets to help to link a dramatic play area to a story being read in English.*

## **Junior and Senior Infants**

As outlined above, it is essential (and easy!) to provide for dramatic play in the infant classroom. Drama is a curriculum subject for this age group, so it should be used throughout the school week anyway. A lot of infant teaching strategies draw on drama, because the infant teacher naturally uses action, rhymes, stories and song to teach. The lesson plan section (see page 36) will give you ideas about how to make drama a part of the infant classroom, perhaps identifying that you are already using drama in your classroom and showing you how other curriculum subjects can be covered through using drama.

The key to using drama in the infant age group is to provide an outlet for the imagination and impulse for action that is usually quite strong in the infant years, while having a clear structure and simple goals. If the structure isn't clear, it will be like large group-play and difficult to manage. So, children are provided with the opportunity to act on what is in their imagination, but the teacher constantly guides them so she remains in control. This is one of the reasons that story is such a good basis for drama at this age, because it provides a ready-made structure. Good stories also provide dramatic tension, problems and interesting characters and these are the key features of good drama. By actively exploring such stories through dramatisation, children are developing oral language skills, developing the ability to understand and participate in drama and learning in a way that suits them.

By using action with songs, rhymes and poetry, the words make a lot more sense to children when they can see and experience corresponding physical gestures. The Drama Curriculum advocates process drama where children are directly involved in creating their own work and this might imply that acting out rhymes is not part of the drama curriculum. Action rhymes and poems are an important part of infant education however, and they do use dramatic skill. So in my opinion, they are a way of promoting drama in the classroom because children learn to use their bodies and facial expressions to give life to words.

Most children's rhymes also have a beginning, middle and end, different characters and some kind of 'twist' (like Jack falling down and breaking his crown) so they are like mini stories. In fact lots of nursery rhymes began as chronicles of events for people who couldn't read. If children are familiar and confident in using actions and verbal expression to animate rhymes and poems, they will have skills that are easily transferable to more creative drama where they use their own words.

Dramatising journeys can be a useful exercise at any age group but it has particular usefulness at the younger age. This is because it permits the movement so enjoyed by young children, but in a structured manner. It also introduces the dramatic skill of using imagination and action to 'be' in different places. If a teacher, through guidance, encourages children to have an image of a real or imaginary place outside the classroom in their mind, they will



become more able to imagine situations and environments beyond those that they are in, without the help of the teacher. The teacher can also develop literacy skills through using imaginary journeys as vocabulary can be introduced or reinforced.

Another great motivator for classroom drama is the teacher taking a role in the drama and it's very useful as a teaching tool in the early years. It's not necessary to be 'an actor' to do this - elaborate costume and performance is in fact discouraged when using this strategy. Teacher in role involves modelling how to be in role in a simple way, just by using perhaps one prop and piece of costume to signify who you are. As an adult, the teacher has powerful verbal skill in comparison to the young learner and it is this verbal skill that is drawn on rather than acting skill. By using the vehicle of character and drama, the situation is made more interesting for children, so they are more motivated to engage and respond verbally than in some other class situations.

Music, for any age group, is a great stimulus for drama. It's particularly good for the younger age group because they are naturally very responsive to music. Just as in theatre, film or television, music can be used to create a mood or an atmosphere and this enables children to feel more involved in the drama. The use of music also helps management of the drama class as it can serve as a very clear stop/start signal. Also, as music acts as the sound element of any dramatisation, children could work without using sound - this is good for their physical and dramatic skill development.

Puppetry is a vital component of the early years classroom. Puppetry stimulates children to practice language and create new language. Puppetry seems to have almost magical powers when used with young children and can be the trigger that finally motivates a very shy or disengaged child to speak. Puppetry embodies the nature of drama in the sense that the person can become someone else through the vehicle of the puppet. It's documented that many well known actors have been shy in 'real' life but articulate and expressive when given the opportunity to take on the role of another, aided by the artifice of costume and make up. Even with the simplest of puppets, children seem to enjoy talking 'through' the puppet. Puppets are useful in any language context and make a great inclusion in a Gaelge or second language class.

## First and Second Class

It's important for the cognitive, social and imaginative development of children of all ages that drama is practised at school and the inclusion of drama in the curriculum for six and seven year olds is particularly vital. This is because developmentally they are moving towards a stage where imagination can be seen as 'shrinking'. It is not, in my view, the case that the imagination is shrinking; rather it is becoming more internalised and possibly 'rusty' because

the socialisation process teaches that it's not always acceptable to communicate imaginative ideas. In other words, children at this age are becoming slightly more aware of how others view them and of how their skills compare to others. Additionally, adults sometimes unwittingly discourage imaginative expression in a way they wouldn't with an infant child. This can be counteracted through the use of drama as it gives a crucial outlet to the imagination of this age group, through physical and verbal expression.

In terms of drama provision for children at this age, the approach remains similar to the approach taken in the infant years. Dramatic play should still be provided for (through props and costumes), as a centre during play/activities time. There is no need to be concerned that this is too 'babyish' an activity or that children at this age won't be interested in dramatic play. Girls and boys alike remain enthusiastic about this play centre and they respond to the resources at their own linguistic and cognitive level. They are also extended by the actions of other children they are playing with, and by the interventions of the teacher who may model language or relate the play to a curriculum content area.

The other method of drama provision is of course the use of drama as a teaching methodology and the lesson plans in this book give an idea of how to approach this. The Drama Curriculum states that "the first content objective at each of the four levels in the curriculum is, indeed, concerned with establishing the continuum from make believe play to drama".<sup>1</sup> I believe (as is suggested in the guidelines) it is usually at this age that the continuum can be most easily created or broken and that the classroom teacher has a key role in successfully leading children across the bridge that creates the continuum.

In doing this, you need to be aware that children will be at various stages of crossing that 'bridge'; some children might be quick to point out that the drama lesson 'is not real' while others will find the fictional aspect easy to work with. So, as a teacher it's necessary to be ready to explain to this age group that the class is doing drama, which means that the class acts as if the drama is real, but they know that they can stop the drama at any time - that the purpose is to learn what it's like to be other people in other situations. If, at this age group, knowledge and acceptance is established of what it is to learn through drama, children will not lose the creativity of the younger years; rather the foundations will be solid for participation in drama as they grow older.

### **Third and Fourth Class**

There is an interesting progress in children's development at this age, which has an impact on the way they participate in drama. As they mature, the impulse to play out situations that reflect home or other familiar situations becomes less necessary, because they have become more active participants in the world. Make-believe play becomes a less natural

<sup>1</sup>1999 p. 37 NCCA Drama Teacher Guidelines.

aspect of the child's behaviour. The creative impulse of the child is still present however (if artistic and/or imaginative work has been encouraged in previous years). So typically, children at this age still relish the opportunity to engage in fictional or imagined situations...they just need a little more help from the teacher in setting up where the drama takes place, who they are, what happens etc.

They also need the teacher to push them to explore themes that suit their age group. In the younger primary years, the teacher established these aspects of the drama, but did so more by living through the story of the drama with the children. In other words, she entered the play world of the children and directed the story as a participant. Now, at third or fourth class, she needs to take a step back, clearly set up the broad structure but then let the children be the creative drivers of the direction of the story. This gives the child in the middle primary years a feeling of power, an opportunity to be individually expressive and explore their understanding of an increasingly complex world.

## Fifth and Sixth

Children in this age group welcome the opportunity to be creative and active and particularly to explore ideas in a way that allows their own personality and talents to come out. In addition, there is often a keen interest in drama as an art form at this age, and as a result, the craft of theatre and acting. This is particularly the case when drama has been an aspect of their education throughout their schooling.

It is particularly vital at this stage to maintain 'the safe context' when using drama - developmentally, some children in this age group may have insecurities about being creative in front of their peers. The practice of drama in the classroom throughout the primary school goes a long way towards alleviating this, as it develops the social health of the class, allows drama to become a natural behaviour and an accepted, enjoyable part of school.

In the case of the child who has feelings of fear or inferiority about their contribution to drama, sensitive, low profile inclusion is what is needed. One of the best things about classroom drama is that it permits the learner to participate at their own level and pace. Through participation, children will gain confidence, learn from more able peers and adults, and find opportunities for praise from the teacher.

While creative drama should still be the focus in the classroom at this age group, it is a particularly good age group with which to draw on theatrical techniques and devices to support the creative process. Masks are useful here; they can help children in fifth or sixth to enter a part more, because they conceal the face and so blushing or self consciousness will not hinder them. Children of this age can appreciate the theatrical effect of a masked 'performer', (although they can be useful with younger ones too, as long as it is checked that

no child is scared by wearing one) and, as the masked face remains fixed, it focuses them on how important movement and gesture are as means of expression. The simplest of masks can be quite powerful visually and it can be an excellent way to get children to understand the potential of the medium of drama and theatre. Theatrical genre is referred to in the curriculum and drama work using masks can integrate very well with work on the masked theatre of the Ancient Greeks or the Commedia dell' Arte style of the Italian theatre.

The Drama Curriculum recommends that script can be used as a springboard for drama. I feel this is best introduced at fifth or sixth class, as children will have reached an age where the level of reading skills might allow dramatisation to be the priority - the task of reading is now merely the means to the dramatisation. A play can be a very good motivator for children to engage in reading, but because it can be off-putting for a potentially very creative and dramatic child to have to struggle through chunks of text, it's best to opt for short sections with two or three characters that every child can try. When the script is a short piece, it allows time to really explore different ways of saying the lines, and different ways of moving as the characters in the script.

## **Children with Special Educational Needs**

Drama and the creative arts generally are an essential element of the educational provision for children with special educational needs. While the variety of needs in our classrooms is wide and varied, a common factor in the experience of children with learning difficulties is frustration with traditional learning techniques and demands for 'correct' answers. The arts permit children to participate at their own level and to succeed at their own level, thus giving them a more positive experience of learning.

The arts celebrate individual contribution and expression of self, rather than achievement of a norm. When arts approaches are used in the classroom, research commonly shows teachers are surprised by talents and facets of personality that children have not revealed before; this is usually in the case of children who have not blossomed in the more academic subjects. All children, regardless of physical or intellectual needs, can engage meaningfully in arts practice.

Children with special educational needs may have difficulty with positive communication strategies and with picking up on social cues such as vocal tone, facial expressions and body language. Drama is ideal for teaching this. Drama, with its basis in story, is also ideal for helping children to understand the emotions and reactions of people in different situations. It may be advisable to introduce the class that includes children with special needs to co-operative games first, so that the initial experience is of fun - then work towards the story plans in this book. It is of course beneficial if a special needs assistant is available to



encourage children to follow the instructions of the class teacher. Even if an assistant is not available however, every effort should be made to include all children in the class.

Children with special needs are often the ones whose participation in drama can be highlighted as a positive example to other children, as they frequently join in a more joyous, less guarded manner than their classmates. There are of course other children who will find participation difficult, dependent on personality or the nature of the learning difficulty. These children should be included in a low focus way which makes them feel that they will not be spotlighted, so that they can learn to trust the activity at their own pace. Just as in any other lesson, they will benefit from the comfort of an adult remaining nearby who encourages rather than enforces participation and helps out only when the child is genuinely stuck.

## The role of the teacher

As a teacher trying to introduce drama to your classroom, it is important to remember that it is an enjoyable, child centred learning medium. So, even if nerves are a factor because drama is new, a positive, enthusiastic approach is of great benefit. It is worthwhile to remember that while you model an enthusiastic approach, the children will do a lot of the work. **The teacher facilitates drama;** the children are the 'doers' of drama. So unlike a maths lesson, it's not necessary to know all the formulas or answers before you begin the class!

If you are new to drama, this lack of certainty about what will happen in the class can be a cause of insecurity. By using the structures and strategies suggested in this book and in many others, you do remain in control! It is important that you have a clear plan – having a structure is what enables you to allow children to be creative and reflective. You can then feel confident to guide and facilitate, while leaving most of the action to the children which is what appeals to them.

### **You should facilitate and observe the dynamics of the class.**

There are times when groups are not functioning well together, or you have a child in the class who finds the spotlight difficult. This may mean the class needs more co-operative games, or even more individual work at first. Skills may need to be taught. As the drama classroom is creative, it is preferable that an emphasis on right or wrong is absent - children may need an example or some gentle direction as to how to develop a character or scene, when they are new to an exercise. Praise and encouragement are important, just as in any other class but it must be given judiciously. Praise might be for the way a character's walk is developed, or for speaking clearly or for reflective, unusual or insightful contributions. Non specific praise can lower standards in the drama classroom as children lack a clear sense of what they are trying to achieve. It's particularly important to encourage shy or reluctant participants.

### **Draw together what has been experienced and learnt in the lesson.**

In order to achieve this it is useful to make notes as the class progresses. Documentation might include words or sentences spoken by characters, examples of good drama skills such as powerful frozen images (which could be photographed) or the ability to work in silence. When the objective of the lesson is clear, it makes it easier to spot what should be documented. It is not always necessary to verbally reflect at the end of the lesson, but it is certainly useful to be aware in each lesson of what the children have experienced and learnt.

## The role of the child

The child in the drama learning environment needs to engage in skills which are succinctly described by the three strand units of the drama curriculum:

- Co-operating and Communicating in Drama
- Exploring and Making Drama
- Reflecting on Drama.

To engage in these skills **children work with others**, show work to others and discuss with others. The co-operative aspect of drama is an essential starting point as drama is a social activity. Many children love the social nature of drama but some children or groups can find it challenging. In this case, it can be a good idea to start with some co-operative games, (see introduction section of each lesson plan, from page 52), although these should not be the only drama activities tried. Often the child who finds the social aspect difficult responds to the 'mask of character' provided by story-based drama. In a game, the child still remains his or herself and cannot always bury inhibitions in the same way as can be done in the fictional context of drama itself.

In order to communicate using the medium of drama, the child takes roles suggested by the teacher or that they create, and speaks and moves in the appropriate manner for that person, given the circumstances of that person. For example, the witch in Hansel and Gretel might say nice things to the little boy and girl but uses a cackling voice and walks slightly stooped. Children need to use their imagination to think of ideas for how to portray characters and to project themselves into the situations posed in the drama lesson.

**Children develop observation skills** as they learn more about how people communicate. Observation will help them to learn dramatic communication skills from their peers. For example, I saw a ten year old boy play the school principal by perching his glasses on the end of his nose to seem older and more authoritative. Every boy who played the character of the principal afterwards used the same dramatic device to communicate character.

When learning through drama, **children use and develop their thinking skills both spontaneously and reflectively**. They might have to discuss how to do a particular scene (exploring drama) and then as they do the scene (making drama), they need to react spontaneously to the words and actions of those they are working with. Thinking skills are key in the drama learning environment, as the child must constantly make quick decisions such as 'who will I be?', 'how will I show that?', 'what will I say?', 'what do I say now in response to what I just heard?', 'what do I think about what I have heard?' etc.

It is interesting to note that a typical feature of a group of children who are experienced in drama is their ability to think on their feet. Children new to drama may find it difficult to

give quick reactions to games, to compose a frozen image etc. whereas children with experience are accustomed to their bodies and minds working quickly together.

In assessing drama, the *Drama Curriculum Teacher Guidelines* (NCCA, 1999) recommends that you look at children's work and identify, for example "a willingness to believe that the symbol is real" and "an acceptance of the fictional consequences of the drama". The nature of drama requires that the participant works in a pretend or fictional context. Children need to understand that it is not real and to be comfortable with that.

It is the skill of the imagination that enables children and adults to **engage with the 'what if' or 'as if' situations**. Most young children are naturally comfortable with this idea; as children grow older they may become less so. Through drama, children develop the ability to operate in a medium where they accept ideas that are not concerned with the reality of their present circumstances. This allows them to **think outside the box of their immediate environment**, thus widening their learning opportunities through personal experience. It may be fictional but it is still experience and therefore a powerful teacher.

## Establishing Ground Rules

When drama is new to the group it is important to establish some rules, just as might be done for going to the hall for PE, or using materials in art or science. Rules can give children a sense of what drama is about as well as what is acceptable or unacceptable in terms of behaviour. It is important that children are free to be creative and expressive; this is supported rather than curtailed by a few practical boundaries. Patrice Baldwin<sup>1</sup> has a really excellent example of an actual contract, which is used in the first lesson.

Many of my students have found this hugely beneficial, especially as they often work with children who have never done drama. They like to 'tea stain' the contract, making it look like an official document and having made the content clear, they make a dramatic occasion of the signing of it, with hand shakes etc. It can then be displayed in the classroom. It's always easier to be very firm about a small number of rules rather than a lot, so I suggest you might focus on these key boundaries:

- Agree to listen to others.
- Agree the signal which means stop what you are doing and listen, and agree to respond to it.
- Agree not to spoil the drama for others.

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<sup>1</sup>Baldwin P, 2004. 'With Drama in Mind: Real Learning in Imagined Worlds'. Network Educational Press Ltd, Stafford.



## Establishing Signals

It is vital to think in advance how you will let your class know that you need their attention! They may be busy working on what you asked them to do but the noise level may be high. Think of a signal you would be comfortable using and let them know what it is at the outset, and that it means stop what you are doing and listen. A non verbal signal is better as it saves your voice (a hand making a stop sign / a 'cut' signal / a time out signal / a clap / one beat of a drum etc.). When children see you making this signal (or when they are finished), gesture them to sit down. In that way it's more likely that the other groups will realise that you need their attention.

## The Drama Learning Environment: What does it look like?

- Rules have been established (a contract may have been signed).
- At a minimum, there is space for the children to sit in a circle; ideally there is space for the participants to move.
- Children are aware that you do not accept 'slagging' or negativity towards others, particularly in relation to the dramatic contributions of others.
- Children are aware that all ideas and interpretations connected to the content of the drama will be considered.
- Children are aware that their willingness to participate in the drama lesson to the best of their individual ability is highly valued.
- Children are aware that dramatic skill is appreciated but don't feel that some children are constantly chosen above others for key tasks.
- There is an emphasis on children's own creativity, expressed through action and word, rather than an emphasis only on the spoken delivery of pre-existing text.
- There is an emphasis on questioning, in relation to the characters, images and actions seen, to draw out learning about the social world we live in.
- The drama lesson involves the whole child, giving opportunity for movement, verbal expression, listening, speaking and working with others.
- There is evidence of standards that are applied in the rest of the school day so that children can see that drama is not just fun but also a serious component of their education.

## Troubleshooting

### **Children seem inattentive and are inclined to 'mess':**

If you are doing all the talking and are busy maintaining and/or establishing the story, then children will get bored.

- Establish story through actions such as having them freeze key parts or words of the story. Ensure in your planning that children are frequently active
- Help yourself to feel in control by placing drama on the timetable in the morning rather than a time like a Friday afternoon, when children may be tired and giddy. Think about the space you're using. It is OK to do drama in your classroom. Taking children to the hall can make them giddy, which is fine if it's going to be an energetic class, but if you want a more reflective, intellectually focussed environment, then the classroom is fine. If you do go to the hall, establish rules first. If using the classroom, get some helpers to help you put away chairs and tables in advance. This way the class comes in with the room prepared, thus minimising giddiness and allowing you to manage them better.

### **Children don't seem to making progress in their ability to dramatise:**

Do children seem to find it difficult to improvise or maintain a role? Try using more props or giving some direction about how they might speak, walk or react. Allow some planning, where children discuss as a group what characters might say and then dramatise it with what they have created. Try going into role or improvising yourself, to model the skill.

### **When children are asked to go into role, they giggle or try and sabotage it by being humorous.**

Your attitude here is really important. First ask yourself if the instructions were clear and gave them enough to work with. Also check your own approach. Have you praised scenes where children laugh or don't take the exercise seriously, in an effort to maintain a good atmosphere? Children are good critics and if you appear to allow a poor standard, that's what you'll get. If it was someone's best effort, that's OK. If it could be improved, then help them to see how. Explain that laughing is called 'corpsing' in the theatre world and actors mustn't do it as it collapses the drama for the audience. You might have a laughing practice at the start of the class to get it out of everyone's system a bit. Then later be strict about no laughing and if necessary ask children to repeat an exercise without laughing.

### **Children get bored watching others perform and as a result de-motivate those trying to communicate through drama.**

Try to limit the amount of scene-by-scene performances. Try saying 'spotlight on', and pointing to a group or pair to just hear moments of what was said. Use pair work frequently and limit 'showing' to only three pairs each lesson. Ask for just a sentence from some of the

characters. If it's necessary to have each group show a full scene, ask children to pick a group or person to watch and be ready to comment on what they saw. Alternatively, involve them practically: one child could say "lights, camera, action" and turn on the classroom lights to begin the scene. Some children could hold cameras as if they are filming the scene. Some children could be reporters who take notes and give their opinion about the action afterwards.

**Are you overusing drama games?**

Children often really enjoy games (see the lesson plans for examples of drama games) but sometimes they are overused, leaving less time left for drama which is more challenging and therefore more engaging. Limit your use of drama games and know what the point of them is. It's not essential to begin with a game, as children don't always need warm ups in the same way adults do. Start with a skills practice of something related to the rest of the lesson if you don't want to do a warm up.

## Starting off: A workshop approach

If you were to invite a drama artist into your classroom to work with your class for some introductory drama sessions, they would probably have a number of ideas based on a particular theme to draw on. This is a good way for you to begin too; to get children accustomed to working through drama, game-based fun ideas are a good starting point.

The following Billy Goats Gruff lesson provides ideas for this approach and can be used with all age groups, even in second language learning environments. The ideas included in the Billy Goats Gruff series introduce character and place in a very simple way and emphasise working with others, while still being guided by the teacher. They are not written in lesson plan format, to give you flexibility when starting out.

It might be that using drama in Irish is a comfortable starting point, or that you might select only one or two of the activities to integrate into an English class. This is fine; it is recommended in the curriculum that drama is integrated and that will be reinforced in the lesson plan section of this book. Some of the initial exercises might be better suited to infants; older children might prefer to concentrate on the adaptation and development of script at the end of the lesson, creating characters based on the goats that are cool, sort of cool and scared.

Some groups move quite quickly through these exercises and are ready then to do similar work with other stories; other groups spend weeks working on and developing these ideas. Try them out and see how your class responds. You will certainly be getting them more drama-ready!

## Some drama workshop ideas - Billy Goats Gruff

- **'In the bank / on the river'**

Children stand in a circle or line. Use a blue cloth or strip of paper to create 'a river'. Direct the children to stand on the river part and say they are 'in the river'. Demonstrate jumping back and tell them they are now 'on the bank'. Now deliberately say 'on the river'. If they jump, gesture that this is incorrect and emphasise (maybe with a tick or a cross on the board) that 'on the bridge' and 'in the river' are correct, anyone who jumps for 'in the bridge' or 'on the river' is not. Children often enjoy the competitive element of this but it's not necessary to put them out when they get it wrong.

- **'Pass the face'**

Children stand up. They will now play a variation of 'pass the face' that introduces the character of the troll in Billy Goat's Gruff. Tell the children that the troll has the job of guarding the bridge so he must look very fierce and scary. Make the claws, body and face of the troll and ask the child next to you to copy you. This child then makes her own troll and passes it on. If the class is large and/or still find it difficult to wait for everyone to have

a go, just choose about eight children randomly and have everyone do their 'troll'. Then decide on which face, claws and body will be the 'troll'. Practice being the troll by taking three steps forward and three steps back as 'the troll'.

- **'Find the voice of the troll'**

Explain that the troll lives under a bridge and doesn't like the noise of feet; when he hears it he says "who's that trip trapping over my bridge"? Alternatively they could think of their own way to get this message across. Children practice in groups, saying it in a way that sounds cross – then the whole class puts it together. Listen to some children individually as they are developing ideas.

- **Develop the characters of the Billy Goats.**

**(Note, there's no need to do this with children on all fours!)**

Number one is big and strong and proud. Ask the children to stand as you think he might. Encourage them to look around at everyone and catch their eye with a wave. Number two stands tall but he is a little bit scared. Ask children to show you how he looks around him all the time. Number three is small and really scared. Ask them to show you how he might look. Strengthen children's sense of the different characters by playing a game where they must change rapidly according to whether you call Billy Goat 1, 2 or 3.

- **Prepare a scene**

Divide the children into groups of three, composed of a Billy Goat 1, 2 and 3. Ask them (with action, and words if desired) to show the goats approaching the bridge. Encourage them to think about whether they would approach (maybe holding hands / pulling the most scared goat along / creeping silently etc.).

- **'Watch the scene'**

Before doing so, make sure the location of the bridge is clearly denoted (marked with chairs/material or a constructed prop). Ask a child not in the scene to be the troll, crouched as if under his bridge. Just as the three 'performers' seem to be stepping onto the bridge, the rest of the class will be the voice of the troll, saying angrily "who's that trip trapping over my bridge?".

- **The class answer back**

Ask the class which goat should answer the troll back. Whichever one they choose begins: "It is I, the first/second/third Billy Goat". That goat must try and give the troll a reason why he should be allowed to cross the bridge. The troll must try and convince the goat that nobody should ever cross HIS bridge. This improvisation could be done in front of the class and stopped and started if the 'performers' need help from their 'audience' to present convincing arguments. It could also be done as paired work.



- **The class are called in to help in the situation.**

In role as engineers, they must decide what surface could be laid on the bridge to decrease the noise level. They could also be given a map of the area and be told there is money to build another bridge but they must decide where on the river that should be. Farmers should also consider how to grow better grass lower down the hillside so the goats don't have to go up the mountain to graze.

## Irish Language/Second Language Learning

Department of Education and Science guidelines recommend that Irish is taught entirely through Irish, in line with a communicative approach. Drama is ideal for instructing non-verbally as well as verbally and the following Irish language version of the activities is designed with this in mind. So why not give it a try, concentrating on key vocabulary that is highlighted and communicating as much of the instructions as you can, through gesture and mime.

In an all Irish-speaking school, the instructions can of course be spoken but it's still a good idea to use non verbal instruction to model drama skills. If requirements are different and the classroom context is second language through English language, follow the English version and take the vocabulary from the highlighted sections below.

- Cleachtadh réamhfhocail: Iarr ar na páistí seasamh i gciorcal nó i líne. Úsáid píosa éadaigh ghoirm nó stiall páipéir mar abhainn. Abair leis na páistí seasamh san abhainn agus a rá go bhfuil siad "san abhainn". Taispeáin léim siar dóibh agus abair leo go bhfuil siad anois "ar an droichead". Anois abair "ar an abhainn" leo d'aon ghnó. Má léimeann siad, tabhair le fios dóibh nach bhfuil an ceart acu, ag cur béime (b'fhéidir le tic nó cros ar an gclár dubh) go bhfuil 'ar an droichead' agus 'san abhainn' gceart, ach nach bhfuil an ceart ag éinne a léimeann nuair a chloiseann siad 'sa droichead' nó 'ar an abhainn'. Baineann páistí taitneamh as an ngné iomaíoch den chluiche ach ní gá aon pháiste a chur amach. Más feidir, cuir leis an gcluiche le ceisteanna mar 'Cá bhfuil tú?', 'Cá bhfuil sé/sí?'
- Imir 'Cuir an aghaidh' thart. Suíonn na páistí i gciorcal. Féachann an múinteoir ar an bpáiste atá ar a lámh dheis nó ar a lámh chlé agus cuma shonasach air/uirthi agus deireann sé/sí **"tá áthas orm!"**. Leantar air timpeall an chiorcal.
- Seasann na páistí suas. Anois imreoidh siad leagan éagsúil da chluiche 'Cuir an aghaidh' thart chun carachtar an 'troll' a fhorbairt. Deire an múinteoir leis na páistí **'Mise an troll'** le gníomhaíocht a ghabhann leis na focail **"go fíochmhar/go scanrúil"** agus deir sí an focal agus í ag deanamh **ingne, corp** agus **aghaidh** an troll. Déanann an páiste seo gníomhaíocht 'troll' dá chuid féin, deir sé/sí 'Mise an troll' agus cuireann se/sí ar aghaidh

é. (Más rang an-mhór é agus má bhíonn sé ró-dheacair feitheamh go dtí go mbíonn seans ag gach éinne, déan rogha d'ochtar páistí nó mar sin go randamach, agus ligtear dóibh aithris a dhéanamh ar an troll). Ansin, déan rogha cén aghaidh, ingne, corp is fearr don 'troll'. Cleachtaigh bheith mar troll le trí choiscéim a thógáil ar aghaidh agus ansin trí choiscéim siar, ag rá **'Mise an troll, tá mé fíochmhar, tugaim aire don droichead'**.

- Faigh guth an troll. Déan pictúir chun an droichead a léiriú agus bain feidhm as cathaoireacha chun droichead a dhéanamh. Má bhíonn siad ann bain feidhm as puipéidí agus/nó bréagáin le bheith mar ghabhair ag dul trasna an droichid. Cuireann an múinteoir a lámh lena chluais fé mar a bheadh sí ag éisteacht agus déanann sí aithris ar an troll ag rá **"Cé hé sin atá ag dul trup trap trasna mo dhroichid?!"** Lig do gach páiste bheith ina 'troll' agus lig dóibh triail a bhaint as na focail a rá.
- Déan carachtair na 'Billy Goats' a fhorbairt. (Ní gá do na páistí bheith ar a gceithre chrúb chun é seo a dhéanamh!) Tá gabhar 1 **mór** agus **láidir** agus **bródúil**. Taispeáin do na páistí conas a sheasfadh sé agus ansin **abair "Mise Billy Goat uimhir a haon"** (nó **"Mise an chéad Billy Goat"**). Déan aithris ar an gcaoi a sheasfadh sé agus spreag iad chun aithris a dhéanamh ar a mbealach féin. Gríosaigh iad (trí aithris) chun féachaint mórthimpeall ar gach éinne agus aird gach duine eile a tharraingt orthu trí lámh a a chroitheadh chucu. Seasann Gabhar a dó **go hard** ach tá **beagán faitís** air. Déan aithris ar conas a sheasfadh sé agus iarr orthu an chaoi a mbreathnaíonn sé timpeall a léiriú. Tá Gabhar a trí beag agus an-scanraithe. Déan aithris ar conas a sheasfadh sé **-beag** agus **scanraithe amach is amach**, agus iarr orthu an chuma atá air a léiriú. Neartaigh a dtuiscint ar na carachtair éagsúla le cluiche a imirt inar gá dóibh athrú carachtair a dhéanamh go tapaidh de réir mar a ghlaonn tú ar Gabhar 1, 2, nó 3. Gach uair a ghlaonn tú ar pháiste caithfidh sé/sí é/í fein a chur in aithne do gach éinne.
- Roinn na páistí i ngrúpaí ceathrair, Billy Goat 1, 2, 3 agus an troll in ngach grúpa. . . . Caithfidh gach gabhar an droichead (marcáilte le cailc no páipéar) a thrasnú ar bhealach a thagann le tréithe a charachtair. Cromann an troll síos ar gcúl agus nuair a chloiseann sé gabhar ag teacht, deir se **"Cé hé sin ag dul trup, trap trasna mo dhroichid?"** agus caithfidh an gabhar freagra oiriúnach a thabhairt de réir a charachtair. Is féidir an script a leathnú amach anseo i dtreo a n-iarraidh an gabhar **"Ba mhaith liom an droichead a thrasnú/An bhfuil cead agam dul trasna an droichid?"** Tugann an troll an freagra **"Tá cead agat/Níl cead agat"** agus d'fhiafródh an gabhar **cén fáth?**. D'fhéadfadh na gabhair smaoineamh ar bhealaí spéisiúla eile chun éalú trasna an droichid. Mar shampla d'fhéadfadh siad aithris a dhéanamh ar conas an droichead a thrasnú **(ag lapadáil, ag snámh, ag rith, ar leathchois, ag siúl ar na barraicíní)**. Más rud é nach bhfuil an focal acu tugann an múinteoir dóibh é, mar fhreagra don rím.

## Improvisation

### What is improvisation?

Improvisation is at the root of all of the activity in drama. Educational drama is by nature improvisational because the learning comes from children interpreting ideas through drama, based on their own experience and understanding, rather than being told exactly how to interpret them by the teacher.

Improvisation is where children make up what happens in a given situation on the spot (the word to improvise has its root in the Latin for 'suddenly' or 'unexpectedly'). There are essentially two ways of handling improvisation as a teacher:

**1.** You explain the nature of the improvisation to the children, ensure that they understand and then at a signal, ask them to begin. This is usually the best approach when children are working in pairs and you are working primarily on a conversation or action that takes place between two characters. When there are just two characters it's easier to stop the improvisation in the knowledge that both children have had a turn at speaking. Also, a conversation about something specific is easier to make up on the spot because the situation is quite defined. An example of this kind of improvisation might be as follows: 'A' is Jack's father/mother and 'B' is Jack (from Jack and the Beanstalk). Jack brings her the gold but tries not to reveal that he stole it from the ogre. Working in pairs, all the children are either A's or B's. An alternative approach is to get one pair to come up to the front of the class and improvise in front of the class as they make up the conversation.

Try This!

**2.** Another way of using improvisation is to have the children work in groups but give them some time for preparation. This works best when there are a number of characters involved and the situation is less defined. Whilst they are still making it up on the spot, they take a little more time to figure out what happens. An example of this might be an improvisation based upon Charlie and the Chocolate Factory: 'In groups of four show Charlie and his family at breakfast when they get the news that the fourth golden ticket has been won'. For this improvisation children will need a little time to decide who will be who, what the reaction will be, how they will use furniture to set the scene etc. Having done this they are now in a position to fulfil the 'on the spot' requirement of improvisation. To use both methods of managing improvisation that I've outlined, I would recommend that having done this scene in fours, they could then all be Charlie and improvise, without preparation, Charlie's reaction when he gets the fifth golden ticket. For noise management, get the children to do this non-verbally as a whole group, then proceed to verbal improvisation where the 'Charlies' improvise one by one.

Try This!

### Summary of teaching and managing improvisation:

- Be very clear about what the situation is and who they are to be. Double check they understand what the instructions are.
- Try to have some 'tension' in the situation so children have something to get their teeth into (Charlie and his family having breakfast at home has no tension so will not provide much 'drama'; Charlie and his family having breakfast during which a newspaper arrives bearing news that the fourth golden ticket has been won does!)
- If you draw a blank on what the 'tension' might be, ask your class! They usually have great ideas and by discussing it before they improvise, you can eliminate the ideas that will result in roughness or silliness. So for example, say 'we are going to dramatise the part of Saint Patrick's life just after he has escaped from slavery. He's elated after his escape but he meets someone on his way who takes his away his good mood. Who could that be?'
- Often children's improvisations run out of steam and it's a shame because they begin well but lose confidence as the scene loses impetus. This is particularly true of third and fourth class pupils. When you watch them perform an improvisation for their class, explain in advance that you will stop it with a signal. Try to stop it *before* the scene loses its shape. Also, try and educate children towards having a beginning, middle and end to their scene. This will really strengthen their dramatic skills but do bear in mind it will take a little while for them to develop the ability to have a clear structure to their improvisations.

If you find children are having difficulty entering into role or finding words and actions for their improvisations, I highly recommend going into the improvisation yourself. Just as in acting, working in a scene with someone who's fully in role and demonstrating good dramatic skill will immediately immerse the other dramatic players more fully into the scene. Even if you don't view yourself as having acting ability, you have the vocabulary for the imagined situation that the child may lack.

Often the thing that prevents children engaging in improvised drama is that they struggle to find the words to participate, so they may need an adult to model the vocabulary. The other factor that may limit full engagement is that they don't feel like they are really in the imagined situation and so feel quite conscious about being watched. Your participation in role can make it seem more real and more acceptable. Here's a very simple example.

### Supporting improvisation

In an SPHE lesson on decision-making, two children are asked to improvise a scene where A is smoking and tries to convince B to take a cigarette.

A: *Do you want a cigarette?*

B: *No.*

*[Silence and giggles from both. The teacher asks them to say a little more.]*

A: *They're lovely, I'm tellin' ye.*

B: *No....I don't want them.*

Now the teacher realises she should go in and model some skills. She decides to go in as character A (although either character would be an option).

A: *Hiya, how's it going?*

B: *Grand thanks.*

A: *[Pretends to puff on cigarette.] Do you have a light?*

B: *Are you smoking?*

A: *Yeah. Sure everybody's smoking. I was saying, do you have a light?*

B: *No, I don't smoke.*

A: *Why not?*

B: *It's a disgusting habit, your teeth are going to rot and you'll have smelly breath.*

A: *All you do is brush your teeth and then your ma and da will never find out. Do you want one?*

B: *No, you're mad for smoking.*

A: *All the cool people are smoking. Are you sure you don't want one? You'll cough the first time but then you'll be grand.*

B: *No, I'm never going to smoke.*

In this example, the teacher has given much more for the child to react to and so she had to find many more words to respond. Also by greeting B at the start and acting as if she was smoking, it made the situation more real. By posing more developed reasons for taking up smoking, the child had to use her thinking and decision making skills more.

The children watching have seen an example of how to develop the scene and also have much more to discuss if the teacher wants to use the drama to discuss peer pressure. When I was the teacher who played A in the improvisation, I found that afterwards the children were much more eager to volunteer as A or B and had more ideas about how to play each character.

So:

- Help them to imagine it
- Set the scene
- Become the character
- Use a prop!



Remember, you don't have to watch every single improvisation that children do, even if they prepare it. Watching each group perform can be very time-consuming and make you feel that you're not getting a lot done. Children are usually very keen to show their drama so it's important to establish that this won't always be possible, even though their work is highly valued. Here are a number of ways of 'seeing' work.

- After all the children have been improvising simultaneously, ask for one word or one line from a particular character e.g. point at each pair and ask whoever was Jack (in the Jack and his mother improvisation on page 40) to repeat a line they came up with. You can then use this to discuss the character of Jack
- If you have an uneven number for your groups, have one child there as an 'observer' who will watch children improvise simultaneously and then choose two or three groups to perform to the class. The observer should be told what to watch for, such as people who use a lot of actions as they perform. Or, you can act as the 'observer' and select two or three groups.

Keep a list of who has performed for the class – if some groups don't perform one week, ensure they get a chance over the coming weeks.

#### **Some improvisation ideas to get started with:**

- A is Red Riding Hood, B is the Wolf. B must convince A to go off the path.
- A is the Stepmother, B and C are Hansel and Gretel.  
A must convince B and C to come into her house.
- A and B (Hansel and Gretel) arrive home and know they are in trouble, C is their parent who has been waiting for them.
- A drops a delicate vase on a hard floor. B reacts. They might be shocked/angry/quick to point out it was A's fault etc.
- A sees something funny on television. B reacts.  
B might also find it funny/not find it funny/try to get a better view of the TV etc.
- A finds a Maths problem very difficult. B reacts.  
B might show A their page/hide their page/show they don't understand either etc.


Try  
This!

## Other drama approaches that can be added

You may have an interest in experimenting with techniques that relate in some way to theatre or performing arts. There are a number of ways to do this within the educational drama context of the Irish Drama Curriculum.

### Exploring drama through puppetry

Story or content can be interpreted dramatically through puppetry and children of all ages are interested in using puppets. Give children puppets and observe what help is needed. The teacher's role in puppetry usually involves modelling of language and progresses like this:

- 
1. Helping children to use puppets to greet each other
  2. Helping children to introduce their puppet character
  3. Helping children to develop full sentences using their puppets
  4. Helping children to question and reason using puppets
  5. Helping children to dramatise a story using puppets
  6. Encouraging children to make up a puppet play

Occasionally, young children can initially show aggression towards puppets. In this case, they see the puppet as real rather than inanimate and this draws out feelings of frustration they have towards themselves or other people in their lives. Children should not be stopped from using puppets if this occurs; it is obviously therapeutic, and they simply need to be shown how to use puppets in a positive way.

Puppet theatres are not necessary but they are a positive addition to the classroom and can be made or bought (see appendix). In using puppet theatres in the classroom, make sure that the group of children using the puppet theatre is small enough so that all the children can use it.

Puppets can be all shapes and sizes. Bear in mind that if they are too big or complex young children will not be able to use them. They can be made easily using simple materials such as lolly-pops or socks.

It is a good idea to have a range of puppets so that they can adapt to any situation

- Puppets that relate to a specific story are great for practising the language in that story. (It should be remembered though that these puppets are usually less versatile)
- It's a good idea in the early years to have a class puppet. He or she can be used in Irish class, to help figure out Maths problems, to have a headache when the class needs to reduce the noise level etc. He or she could also be sent home with a different child each weekend to forge literacy links with parents and families

- Try using music that reflects different moods and have children move the puppets in response, to see how mood affects movement. They could then make up dramas with puppets, with the music as background.

### Exploring drama through mask work

Plain white masks (found in art shops or joke shops) are very effective, even if they are not decorated (in Greek and Japanese theatre masks were often plain). If the masks are being made in art, try to have a clear idea about what they will be used for in drama. A mask is literally 'the persona' (the Latin word for mask) and if the persona on the mask is not obvious then it will be hard to become that character.

The masks could relate to characters in a play or story, or to feelings. Characters can be easily identified through colour and this can be a good starting point (for example in Greek theatre the Gods' masks were golden). It is a good idea to work first with mime and mask, so children concentrate on using the body to express, and then add speech later. Make sure that there are adequate eye and mouth holes so children can see and breathe easily! Test the masks to see how clear the voice is when speaking through the masks; sometimes the mouth hole needs to be bigger (the open air Greek theatres had excellent acoustics but your classroom or hall might not!).

### Process or Product?

If the core aim of drama work in the classroom is performance, then the work becomes something other than the drama work advised by the curriculum and the general philosophy of drama in education. Performance is product, and often adult-driven; if the work is too product oriented the children's learning process is no longer a focus.

By including drama (and all of the arts) in the curriculum, we strive to develop creativity in children. This is a human capacity which is difficult to define but it does involve an element of 'production'. A UK report in 1999<sup>1</sup> suggested that creativity is "imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are original and of value" and interestingly many others echo the idea of production, as long as it's original. So it's good to remember that in doing drama, there is a product; it's just that in order to really learn, the product should be created by children.

The teaching situation in drama is very similar to teaching visual art; you stimulate the children by suggesting ideas, but you don't tell them to 'paint this exactly the same way I have done'. Instead, stimuli and resources are provided to help the child make (or produce) art, in his or her own way. If a child seems to be having difficulty, you suggest ways forward. And

<sup>1</sup>UK National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, 1999

you observe and make decisions about new skills that might be introduced to enable children to progress, like colour mixing or charcoal drawing. The new skill can help children refine their 'product' but the product will still be original to the child and of value.

Likewise in teaching your drama lessons; value the original expression of children through drama but at the same time do feel that it's OK to teach skills to enable their creative process – try not to start off with only a 'finished' product in sight. It is quite possible that in the relaxed environment of classroom drama that is not performance driven, children will create something that they would really like to show to another class or to parents. At that point, you as the adult can put your stamp on it as you will need to organise exits, entrances and general structures. The production will still be creative nonetheless, as it will have grown out of a creative learning process.

### **Creating a performance through educational drama work:**

Performances that result from educational drama work can range from the demonstration of drama workshop activities (good for showing parents what happens in a drama class), to full scripts that come from work children have done on a topic. Each exemplar in this book is based on a story, and effectively provides a number of scenes which compose the full story. So if you were to show the work to an audience, you would probably select all, or a number of the scenes (usually the development section of the lesson plans) which would represent the story.

Documenting (keeping a written record of words, sentences, reflections) as you go during the drama lessons is important, and invaluable if you decide to show the work as it provides notes on the 'script' created by the children as they worked. If children suggest performing, you should feel they have developed a good sense of the story and the characters in the drama already. As a class you should then decide which scenes best show the work you have done and revisit those to decide how to use them to express the story to an audience.

A little work will need to be done to ensure the work will be clear to an audience, such as making sure backs are not to the audience, nobody stands blocking anyone else etc. If a little writing is needed to structure it for performance, try to do this in collaboration with children so that the work remains their own.

7

# Lesson Plans



## EXEMPLAR ONE: A DRAMA APPROACH TO TEACHING NURSERY RHYMES

### Understanding the lesson plan format

The lesson plans in this book begin with **the objectives**, then an **introduction** followed by development and then **the conclusion**. The infant plans are based on a half hour time slot and all the other plans are based on a forty minutes time slot.

### The objectives

In each lesson there are two objectives. First, there is a **drama education objective**. In using drama in the curriculum, it is important that it is not seen only as a way of teaching other content. In order to fully teach the drama curriculum, children should be educated in drama as well as through drama. Therefore children's drama skills must be a focus of the lesson.

An examination of the drama objectives outlined in the lesson plans will give examples of some key drama skills that you can focus on. The objectives are based on developing children's understanding of some of the elements of drama outlined in the curriculum, through practical experience.

The objectives are also progressive: lesson one for infants starts with the introduction of role and non verbal expression, in subsequent lessons children go on to experience activities designed to develop ability to understand and dramatise character, sustain improvisations and represent location dramatically. In the final lesson, the objective is to create a scene, using dramatic device to create a movement piece.

The second objective is the **cross curricular objective** and this shows how drama naturally integrates with other curriculum content. In planning drama, the first issue is always to define the topic. Even if you were to teach a drama lesson purely about the dramatic skill of improvisation, children would still need something to improvise about and so cross curricular content would emerge. The lesson plans seek to choose topics which are engaging for the different primary school age groups and relate broadly to the curriculum.

Within each lesson, cross curricular strands are identified which can be taught in each different lesson. Drama is the learning medium and the cross curricular objective shows what other content is covered, ranging across PE, SPHE, Music, History, Geography and English; the relevant strands and strand units are specified.

It could be said that English is a component of the content of each of the lessons, as drama is inherently concerned with oral language development. To save repetition, the lessons just refer to English as a cross curricular objective when there is an exercise which is particularly focussed on the practice of, or response to, language.

The same could be said of SPHE and its close relationship to Drama; by doing drama children are engaged in a cooperative activity, getting to see their peers in a different light, learning more about themselves and about the world they live in. Again, SPHE has been referred to as an objective only when there is content that relates specifically to an SPHE strand or strand unit.

Each lesson starts off with a drama game. Games enable a transition into drama lesson and create a more relaxed, co-operative environment, allowing both the learner and the teacher to settle into drama. Games are very popular with children but it is essential not to fall into a pattern of only doing games; games are not drama. Drama is based on story and must contain plot and characters.

Games are a very useful way of introducing a new skill or idea; this is the way they are used in the lesson plans in this book. Every game has a function which connects to the whole lesson - it's not just a fun way to begin. For example 'Good Morning your Majesty' is used to develop the characters of the King and his men and to provide practise for speaking to the King later in the lesson.

## The development stage

The development stage acts as the main body of the lesson and is where the story should develop. In order to guide improvisational drama at this stage, the teacher must know the story elements and it is for this reason that the following three points are made clear, for each lesson;

- Who are the children and who is the teacher? (if the teacher is to be directly involved).
- What is happening?
- Where does the story take place and what implications for classroom space are there?

Instruction is then given as to how to guide children through an improvised version of the story, where they act as the characters in the story and create their own interpretations of what might happen in the given situation. Some drama strategies are used to structure their exploration and extra advice about how to employ these strategies is included in the section following the exemplars.

## The conclusion

The conclusion develops the story of the lesson further but it also helps to ensure a more focussed learning through analysis of the content of the lesson. It should provide a way of practising a skill that children have been exposed to. For example, in Lesson One they see the teacher modelling the thief trying to get Aladdin to accept money; in the conclusion they all have a chance to try it themselves. They can also refine their knowledge of a character: in the conclusion of 'Granny MacGinty', they hot seat Granny to ask questions about her experience of that situation. It is important to keep a check on time so that the conclusion is not missed out on as it is designed to reinforce learning and is a very important aspect of primary school drama.

## Reflecting

Each lesson plan gives suggestions for reflective questions. Reflecting on drama is one of the strands units and it is like the bow that ties the parcel together. It helps the children to make sense of what they are seeing and experiencing and can be the aspect that elevates the lesson to the powerful learning medium that it ought to be. Children love to be active; they learn by the 'doing' involved in making drama. The teacher needs to help the child to understand what they are doing and bring them to a more developed way of thinking.

## Assessing

In order to assess drama, the general approaches suggested by the NCCA<sup>1</sup> such as teacher observation, portfolios, curriculum profiles and class discussion can be used. The question of course is what to assess. In using this book, the lesson can be evaluated by reflecting on whether the objectives of the lesson have been achieved, both in terms of Drama Education skills and attitudes, and cross curricular objectives.

## Remaining Flexible

Naturally, every group will react differently to lessons and content. Structures, such as those offered by the lesson plans, are helpful but as in all teaching, it's important to read the class and react accordingly. The exemplars in this book are designed so that there is room for flexibility. For example, a class might work quickly and a teacher might find that the lesson content is too short for one session. In this case it would be fine to skip forward and add in the activities in lesson two. (In this case it might be a good idea to skip the introduction though, as they are designed for the beginning of a lesson). The **integration ideas** that are included on the left side of the page can also be incorporated into the lesson, to develop the content if time permits. If, on the other hand, children have difficulty with some part of the lesson, the teacher can spend a few lessons on the same idea or skill.

In teaching drama, it's a good idea to remember the old saying about 'the best laid plans' and how having a plan doesn't always ensure that's the way things go! Be prepared to listen to children's ideas about what will happen; they often have much better ideas about drama than adults and will be thrilled if their teacher takes them on board. Diverging from the plan takes confidence that an inexperienced drama teacher lacks, but it is at the very least a goal to keep in mind.

<sup>1</sup>1999, NCCA, Revised Primary School Curriculum. P 18.

## Taking a long term approach

Each exemplar approaches one story and deals with it over a number of lessons. This is a recommended approach because children have the opportunity to see how characters can be developed over time, they can see the layers in situations and become more familiar with how everything has a past, present and future.

Children's skill development in the area of drama should also be viewed long term, particularly in the context of the Irish primary school system. As Drama is new to the curriculum, children and their teachers may have no drama experience at all. It takes time to build the skills and attitudes needed in the drama classroom. If an exercise or idea goes wrong, that should not be a reason to abandon it; rather a reason to persevere because it means that children lack the skill required. Just as in any other subject, don't try to do much too soon and never give up!

The skills of drama are the skills of being alive, such as thinking, feeling, co-operating and expressing. We live in a world which increasingly does not support these skills, so it might seem difficult at first to teach them. They are hugely worthwhile however, and if teachers begin even by trying a little bit of drama each week, then children can learn a little more about being themselves and relating to others.

## **HUMPTY DUMPTY**

These lessons take a simple nursery rhyme and offer it as a stimulus for drama. Nursery rhymes offer a simple plot and characters and if you dig deep, they usually offer some sort of dilemma or issue to consider. Through these lessons children become the characters in the rhyme and develop a sense of who they were, where they lived, who else might have been involved that isn't in the rhyme and what might have been going on.

### ***Age group: Junior and Senior Infants***

#### **Lesson one**

- **Drama Education Objectives:**

- o Children will be enabled to develop the ability to use non-verbal expression and be introduced to role play.

- **Cross curricular Objectives:**

- o **PE** (Dance): Children will be enabled to explore body movements and communicate moods and feelings with simple body movements.
- o **English** (Receptiveness to oral language): Children will develop the ability to adopt appropriate verbal/ non verbal behaviour.

#### **Introductory warm up**

*Hand signals: (Function: Following instructions, Using non verbal role play)*

Call out the following: a conductor, a disco dancer, a trumpet player, a traffic policeman/woman, a writer, a postman/woman with a heavy bag, a bin man/woman with a heavy bin, a driver. Children find their own way to make appropriate hand gestures.

#### **Development Techniques: Action Rhyme (see page 116)**

- The children all act as Humpty; then change to become the king's horses and men.
- The character of Humpty sits up on a wall, falls off and then the king's horses and men go to the rescue, but are not successful.
- Use an open space, so the children can imagine a wall with a view and a field to journey across.

Lead children in the action rhyme but be ready to take suggestions from children. In saying the words of the rhyme it's important that the adult gives expression to the words, to model vocal expression to children. For example, 'fall' might be said as an echo, to give the sense of the word.



The final line could be said in a way that shows frustration or disappointment. The rhyme can be tried a few times so children become familiar with it and experiment with how to express it.

'Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall'

*Children draw themselves up tall and put hands out behind them as if levering themselves up onto a wall.*

*Children fold arms and look right and left (and cross legs if seated) to show him sitting on the wall*

'Humpty Dumpty had a great fall'

*Children put hands out as if trying to balance. Then hands go over to one side.*

*On 'fall', they say 'ow!'*

'All the kings horses'

*Children trot on the spot and make a clip clop sound*

'and all the king's men'

*Children march on the spot*

'Couldn't put humpty together again'

*Children scratch heads to show puzzlement*

**Conclusion:** Take the words of the rhyme away so children do the actions in silence. Make sure the actions are big and expressive. Occasionally, after each line, ask them to freeze and question randomly as follows: - 'who are you?' – 'where are you?', – 'what are you doing?', – 'What's wrong?'

**Resources:** Copy of action rhyme, a toy humpty dumpty or a picture of him.

**Science:** Have the Kings' men experiment with safe landings for eggs, trying out hard and soft surfaces. Experiment with balance of round objects on wide and thin surfaces.

**Reflect:** Why do you think they couldn't put Humpty together again?

# The Resource Page

Questions for children:

What do you imagine Humpty Dumpty said in picture one?

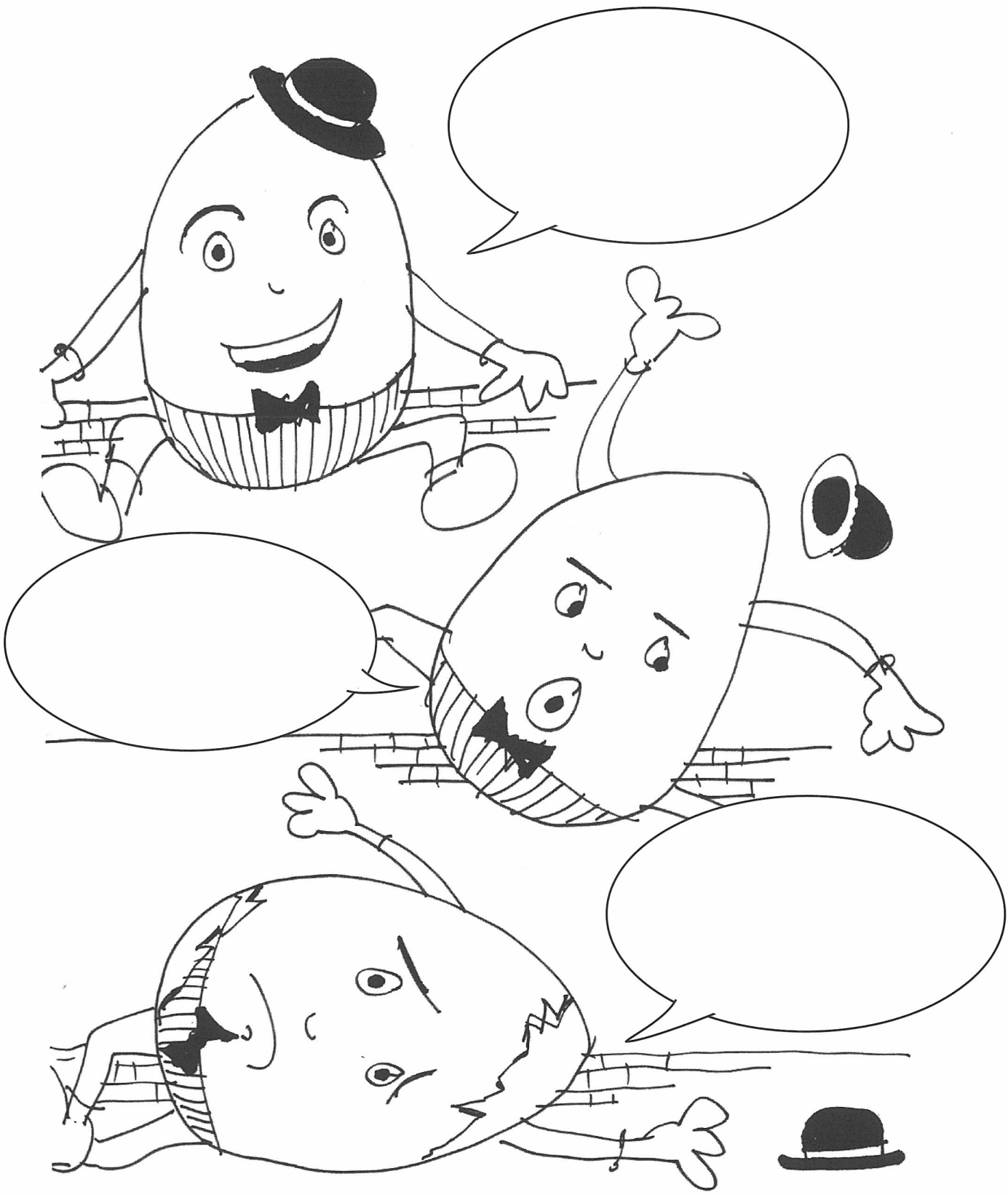
What do you imagine Humpty Dumpty said in picture two?

How do you imagine Humpty Dumpty felt in picture three?

What do you think he said when he called for help?

Now can you act this out?

*May be photocopied*



*May be photocopied*

## HUMPTY DUMPTY

### Lesson Two

#### **Drama education objectives:**

- o Children will be enabled to develop the ability to sustain a role.

#### **Cross-curricular objectives:**

- o **Music** (Listening and Responding) Children will learn to recognise different voices
- o **English** (Oral Language) Children will learn to adopt appropriate non verbal language and secure the attention of a partner.

#### **Introductory warm up:**

*Good Morning your Majesty (Function: Listening, Vocal Expression)*

One child sits on the throne their back toward the class. Children must disguise their voice (one at a time) and say 'Good Morning your Majesty'. If the King doesn't guess who is speaking, he or she surrenders the throne.

#### **Development Techniques: Improvisation (see page 40), Mime (see page 121) and Teacher in role (see page 117) as King.**

- The teacher is the King and the children are the King's men.
- It is an ordinary day at the King's palace, his men are going about their business and he is checking their progress.
- The action takes place in a castle so space (e.g. the hall) is useful. If this is not available the classroom can be used, maybe using the furniture as castle furniture.

Make/take suggestions about who the children could be in the palace and what they could be doing. When you are sure that the children have ideas about what to do, ask them to mime their activity. Explain that you will be the King (and perhaps ask one of the children to be an advisor) and signal the action at the palace to begin. The King moves among the King's men, speaking to them about what they are doing. Encourage role play by saying 'it's good to have a clean palace'; 'that horse is nicely groomed' etc. You can also order everyone to work very fast...and then very slowly, to add variety to what they are doing. Make a stop signal and ask the children to freeze the action.

Now ask the children questions about the King and his men to build up knowledge about their characters:

- What sort of a King is he?
- How do you know?
- Does he treat his people well?
- Tell me about the people working in the palace

Now recommence the action but this time the King should pretend to be on the phone, taking a call about something worrying, not revealing too much detail but saying things like 'I see.../' 'oh dear.../' 'when?.../' 'oh no...really?' etc. Stop the action and ask if they noticed or heard anything as they worked and if this would be a normal conversation the King would have and what they think it was about.

**Conclusion:** Play 'The King Says' (a version of Simon Says) using activities that the children chose to do as palace workers (e.g. cleaning the palace, cooking the dinner, polishing the throne etc.). Children should only do the action if the teacher precedes the instruction with 'The King Says'. There is no need for players to be 'out' of this game.

Ask children to show the difference between the King on the phone and the King giving orders.

**Resources:** King's Crown and material for robe, telephone, furniture and props to be part of the Palace.

**Art:** Make king's crown. Staple strips of paper and cut top to make crown shape. Decorate with paint and collage.

**English/Maths:** Make a class diary of a typical day at the palace.

**English:** Be the king and give orders on instructions for how to wash up/how to boil an egg/how to polish a crown etc.

**Reflect in role:** Tell me about what it's like working at the palace. Tell me how you knew the king was worried about something when he was on the phone. What sort of things do you think the king worries about?



## HUMPTY DUMPTY

### Lesson three

#### **Objectives:**

#### **Drama Education objectives:**

- o Children will be enabled to develop listening skills, observation skills and acceptance of a fictional context.

#### **Cross curricular objectives:**

- o **SPHE** - (Decision making): Children will be enabled to develop decision making skills

#### **Introductory warm up:**

*'Pass the Bag' (Function: Listening skills, Working in silence)*

Sit in a circle. Children pass a plastic bag/bell/object that makes a bit of noise behind their backs as quietly as possible. One child sits in the middle with eyes closed. When teacher says 'hands behind your backs!', the child in the middle tries to guess who has the object. Emphasise the importance of quiet and listening (to prepare for meeting).

#### **Development Techniques: Improvisation of a meeting, Teacher in Role (see page 117)**

- The teacher is the King and the children are the King's Men.
- The King calls a meeting to discuss important news.
- This can easily be done in the classroom as all the participants are seated. If using the hall, make sure all can hear and be heard.

When the children have gone into role as the king's men, the teacher or a child as royal advisor, makes an announcement, sounding very important: 'Will all the King's men please report to the palace immediately. He wishes to discuss an urgent matter.' Give the children a minute or two to discuss what the King might want. Encourage the children to enter the meeting area in a way that shows how they feel about the king. If they are scared they creep, if they are happy with the King they march in smiling. They should say 'good morning your Majesty' in a way that shows how they feel.

The children then sit in the 'meeting area' and the teacher (or child) sits regally in front of the children. Give each child the letter (on page 60) and ask them to read it/imagine what it might say. The King begins 'Welcome. I have called you to the palace because I need your help. You have always been able to help me before. Our friend and one of our most loyal subjects, Humpty Dumpty, has had a very bad fall.' Then ask the children to show, on the count of three, how they feel. If there are any comical reactions here, ask children to explain

their reaction as if they are in character as the king's men rather than themselves; explain that the King gets very cross with people who don't care about other people in the kingdom.

You might have to demonstrate here how to look shocked/sad etc. or ask a child who made a clear expression to show it to the rest of the class. Explain that it is serious because, if you remember, Humpty is very, very delicate and falls hurt him more than us. Question children about what could be done to help him.

**Conclusion:** Children stand in a circle. One by one they mime how Humpty Dumpty could be helped (gluing him, bandaging him, cuddling him, performing an operation, lifting him back onto the wall etc.) and the other children mirror the action (see page 118).

**Resources:** (Letter from King on next page).

**Science:** Experiment with sound. Be the royal announcer and use tubes/cones to see how voice is amplified.

**Maths:** The King can make a mark showing the height of the wall. Have children measure the wall. Decide on Humpty's height; focus on 'bigger than', 'smaller than'.

**Reflect:** Why do you think Humpty sat on the wall?

What do you think happened to him?

How do you think the Kings' men can help?

# The Resource Page

*Dear Royal subjects,*

*The King wishes to see you about an urgent matter. Please come to the throne room at two o'clock for a meeting. It is important not to be late. Please be ready to put on your thinking caps.*

*From the King's secretary*

May be photocopied

## HUMPTY DUMPTY

### Lesson Four

#### Objectives:

##### Drama Education objectives:

- o Children will be enabled to develop the ability to make-believe in relation to dramatic location.

##### Cross-curricular purpose:

- o **Geography** (A sense of place and space): Children will be enabled to reinforce/learn new vocabulary connected to human/natural features and to use maps.

#### Introductory warm up:

*Making shapes (Function: Following instructions, gross motor development).*

Children move and, at a signal, stop and make a shape e.g. stretched, curved, twisted, on a tightrope, crossing a broken bridge, high as a kite, crawling through a dirty tunnel and so on.

#### Development Techniques: Dramatising a journey (see page 119), Group narration (see page 124)

- The teacher is the King and leader of the expedition. The children are the King's men.
- The King's men set off across the fields, determined to find Humpty and help him.
- This Lesson needs space for the children to move through the stages of the journey.

Prepare the children for the imaginary journey by encouraging them to collect all the things they will need and saying:

'What will you bring?' (Pretend to pack the items in the bag.)

'What must you be careful about?' (Have children predict what might happen)

'How will you get there?' (Give out map on page 64 and have the children talk through the route.)

'Are you ready men, for *'mission rescue Humpty?!'* The children decide on what they will say as a group as they set off, for example: *'We are the Kings' men. We will travel through the swamp, over the hill and across the river to find our friend Humpty who is in trouble because he fell. We have food and water and bandages. Wish us luck!'*

Encourage enactment of the journey by narration, based on the map: Teacher begins by narrating: 'They left the palace to go and help Humpty Dumpty. They brought with them all the things they thought they would need.'

Use the map to talk the children through the different stages of the journey, encouraging different action for each stage. (If there is no room, walk on the spot).

**Conclusion:** Play music (for examples, see resources below) and have children act out being on the journey. Afterwards, at a signal, children act out their favourite part of the journey and then freeze the most difficult part. If the teacher points at them, they should say where they are.

**Resources:** Map of the journey on page 64, CD: 'Primary School Dance Music Reception', Val Sabin Publications. Track 4 & 5 - Marching and Skipping, Creeping and Galloping).

**SPHE:** Make a list of all the food the King's men brought and see which are healthy.

**Geography:** Discuss high walls in the local area that might be dangerous for Humpty and explain how the king's men would get there if they had to go and help.

**Reflect:** What do you remember about the journey? Do you think the King's men were safe as they travelled and why?

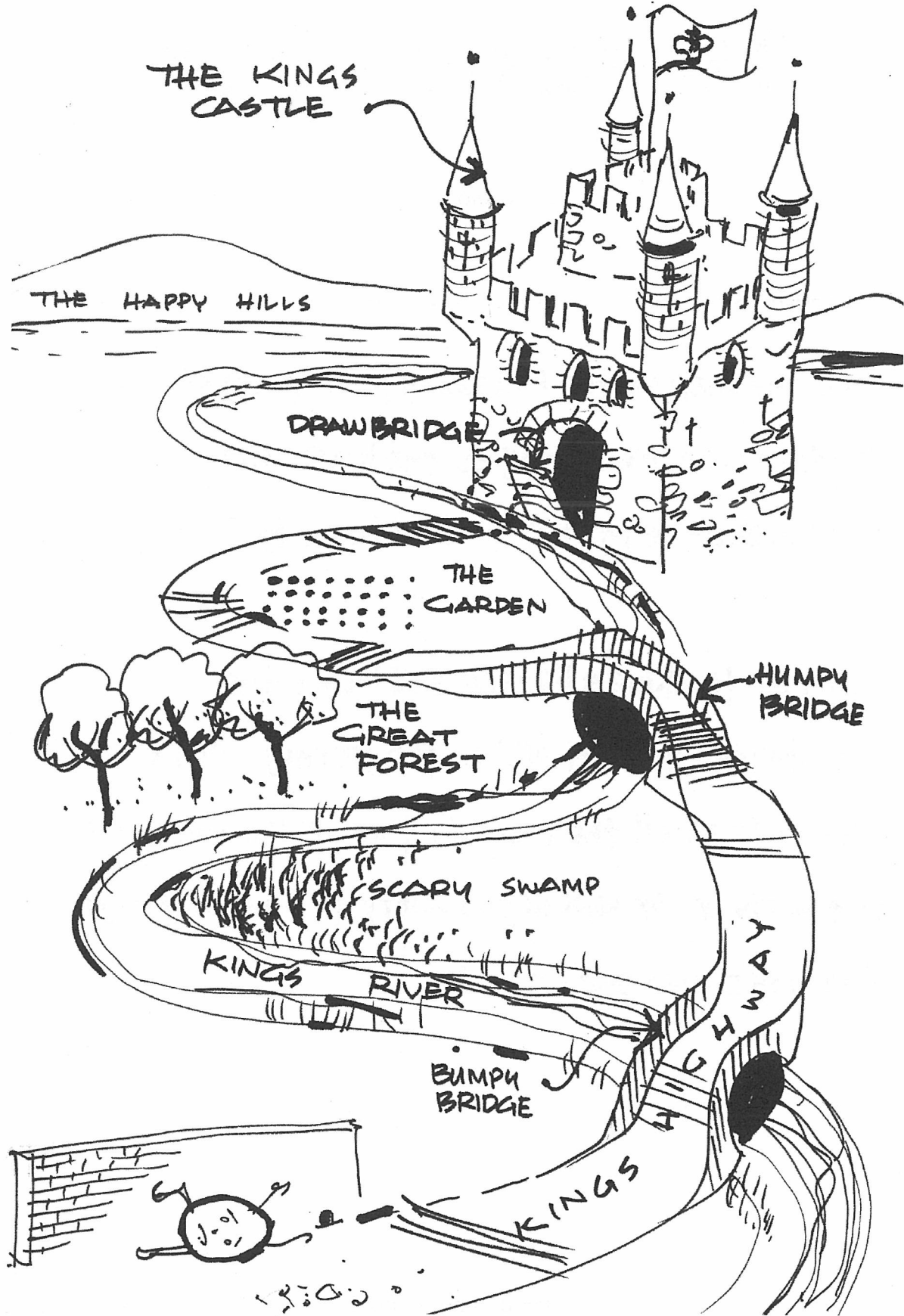


# The Resource Page

Give the map on the following page to all of the children who are acting as the king's men and use it to make the journey to find Humpty Dumpty.

Begin at the King's Palace and lower the drawbridge and set off on the journey. Don't forget to smell the roses in the garden and paddle in the river, or should you hurry to find Humpty? The King's men shall decide .

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## HUMPTY DUMPTY

### Lesson Five

#### Objectives:

##### Drama Education objectives:

- o Children will be enabled to develop the ability to make freeze frames and to imagine and role play co-operatively.

##### Cross-curricular objectives:

- o **SPHE** (Taking care of my body, Personal Safety): Children will be enabled to learn how to give information for emergency calls and how to help others.

#### Introductory warm up:

*Journey statues (Function: Freeze Frame skills, Movement skills)*

Recap the last lesson by asking the children to freeze each stage of the journey on the spot. The map could be used again as a memory tickler.

#### Development Techniques: Teacher in role (see page 117).

- Teacher is the king, the leader of the expedition and the children are the king's men. A child takes the role of Humpty.
- The King and the king's men arrive, with their horses, at the place where Humpty fell. They try to find out if they can help him.
- The action takes place at the wall where Humpty lies.

The children find a space and imagine they are at the end of their journey. Their bags are heavy, their feet sore etc. and some or all are leading horses. Instruct them to take a few steps forward, as if out of breath and then say together "*Where is Humpty? We are here to help him!*"

Teacher then narrates "*When the King's men arrived at the wall, they saw Humpty Dumpty lying still, with his eyes closed, looking very white. They bent down to try and speak to him.*"

The presence of Humpty can also be created using a toy humpty (like a puppet), or by marking a space where Humpty lies.

Speak directly to the children, in role as the king: "*Oh no men, he seems hurt. Let's try and see if he can hear us. Quietly though, we don't want to give him a fright.*" Teacher encourages sympathy towards Humpty Dumpty. Children can pose questions (which could be prepared

earlier) like: 'Are you all right Humpty?'; 'Can you hear me Humpty?'; 'How can we help you Humpty?'...

Encourage role play by reminding children to check on their horses and encourage suggestions about what to do to help Humpty. You then seat the children for a discussion (in role as King and king's men) about possible action. Show children a 'photo' of Humpty (see page 55) and ask them to say what he might be thinking. Children could be reminded about the suggestions they made at the palace etc. Gently challenge all the suggestions, saying they could be tried but pointing out possible problems. Make a list of the suggestions that are useful such as cleaning, bandaging, not moving him etc. These actions could be taught to children at this point.

If no child suggests it, say: "*do you think we should call emergency services? Should I call for an ambulance or the fire brigade? Does anyone know the number? What did you say? 999? Ok. Now what do you think I should say?*"

**Conclusion:** The phone call can then be role played with you as the operator and a child as caller. Children can then gather around Humpty, carefully 'lifting him' onto a stretcher. When he is on the stretcher they can speak to him.

**Resources:** Chalk (to mark where Humpty lies), toy Humpty, bandages, paper and pen to make list, telephone.

**English:** Write to/tell the queen to explain what has happened since you left the palace. Hot seat Humpty Dumpty and hear about his experience.

**SPHE:** Make get well cards for Humpty Dumpty. Plan a welcome home party for Humpty Dumpty. Give Humpty Dumpty advice about sitting on walls.

**Reflect in role:** What did you think when you saw Humpty Dumpty lying there?

What did you say/want to say to him?

What do we now know that is good to remember if people want to help us or if we want to help them?

## EXEMPLAR TWO: A DRAMA APPROACH TO A STORY BY AN IRISH AUTHOR

These lessons are based on a lovely book by the popular Irish author Marita Conlon McKenna called 'Granny MacGinty' ("Granny MacGinty", Marita Conlon McKenna, The O' Brien Press Ltd.). In the story Granny MacGinty's family worry about her living on her own and they decide to buy her a pet for company. But finding her the right pet isn't as easy as it seems at first. These lessons were written for a teacher who wanted to use drama to work on the area of caring for older people and awareness of other people's needs and wishes. The teacher was very new to drama so liked the idea of working from a story as it provided her with the ideas for characters and a way to structure the lessons, while still allowing children to make the story their own. The book is also very well illustrated (by Leonie Shearing) and generally a good basis for creating drama as it's fun, has a variety of characters and it deals with an issue in a way that is not heavy handed, allowing children to make their own sense of it. Ideally you would use a copy of the book when teaching the lessons so you have a sense of the characters and the story context, although the aim is not to act out the contents of the story exactly.

### ***Age Group: First and Second Class***

#### **Lesson one**

#### **Drama Education objectives:**

- o Children will be enabled to develop the ability to represent character.

#### **Cross Curricular Objectives:**

- o **SPHE:** (Myself and my family): Children will be enabled to reflect on the positive/negative situations of extended family members living alone
- o **English:** (Responding to text): Children will be enabled to respond to story through drama.

#### **Introductory warm up:**

*Magic Material (Function: Developing improvisation skills and use of costume)*

Children sit or stand in a circle. Each child in turn takes the material provided (any piece of material which is easily manipulated, netting is good). Each child should try to use the material in a different way, as a piece of costume. Children new to drama may need suggestions: a ball to kick, a hat, a cloak, a veil, a coat, a baby, a skirt, a magic carpet, a scarf etc.). Children who are waiting, or who have taken a turn can become restless; if so, have them copy the action as if they have the material.



**Development Techniques: Mime (see page 121) and Role on the Wall (see page 122)**

- The teacher guides and narrates. The children are all Granny MacGinty and later, members of her family.
- Granny MacGinty is at home where she lives alone. Her family, in their house, voice their worries that she is lonely.
- The action takes place in Granny MacGinty's home and her family's home. Chairs are useful, as in the story the characters are seated. If possible, set a kitchen scene.

Explain that the class is going to do a drama about a family called the MacGintys. Show the class the inside cover of the book, (the photographs of the family) and ask them to talk about who they see. Establish the setting by reading the opening pages: "*Granny MacGinty had lived all on her own, for ever so long. Every morning she watched the sun come up and every evening she watched the sun go down again, day in and day out, alone in her neat little home..*".

Now help the children to take the role of Granny / Grandad MacGinty: Show them how to mime a day in the life of Granny MacGinty. For example, ask the children to: 'take your saucer, now take your cup of tea and show me how you drink your tea. And that was such a lovely cup of tea we'll sit back, nice and relaxed. Maybe we need a little chocolate? Let's pick one out of the box. And pop it in your mouth. Mmm. Did you get nut? Or strawberry? The window's that way. Do you see the sun? Watch it as it slowly sets'. Ask the children how they think Granny MacGinty feels as she drinks her tea and sits back in her chair? On the board or on a large sheet of paper start taking words or statements that describe Granny MacGinty (this is 'role on the wall', see page 122).

**Conclusion**

Having established the children's view of the character through 'role on the wall', read the family's view: "*Her family, the MacGintys, couldn't help but worry about her, an old lady like that living on her own.*" Remind the children that in her family's house there were lots of people, but not at Granny MacGinty's. Tell the children that they must now act as one of the people in the family house with lots of people (Mum/Dad/Baby/Daughter/Son) and think of one thing they might say during breakfast. At a signal, children speak as the character they have chosen – you use your hand to signal soft / loud / stop. Ask children to describe the MacGinty family house in terms of bad and good aspects.

At the 'stop' signal, ask children to think for a moment about Granny MacGinty who is alone. Passing around a speaking object (e.g. shell or stone which gives only the holder the

right to speak) ask the children to say what (if anything) she might not like about living alone. Add the statements to the 'Role on the Wall'.

Using the piece of material from the introductory game, have the class decide on a way to use it as costume for each character in the family: Dad, Mum, Manus etc. Divide the children into groups who represent each character (e.g. Five Dads, five Mums etc.) They should decide what this character would suggest as a way of helping Granny. Then one or more representatives from each group should use the material as costume and speak in character as the Dad etc. and make their suggestion. Make notes of these suggestions.

**Resources:** Piece of material, Granny MacGinty story book, large sheet of paper, pen

**English:** Make 'role on the wall' charts about other characters in fact or fiction. Make a 'who am I?' quiz in relation to one of the characters in the story, composing facts about yourself that give clues about your identity.

**Reflect:** Can you add anything to the 'role on the wall' about Granny MacGinty or her personality?

## GRANNY MACGINTY

### Lesson two

#### **Drama Education objectives:**

- o Children will be enabled to develop sense of belief (in the fiction of the drama) and the ability to represent place dramatically.

#### **Cross curricular objectives:**

- o **English** (Oral language): Children will be enabled to develop competence and confidence in using language
- o **SPHE** (Safety and protection): Children will be enabled to reflect on the responsibility of pet ownership.

#### **Introductory warm up**

*Pass the present. (Function: Develops improvisation skills)*

Children stand or sit in a circle. One child starts the game by offering a pretend present to the child to the right or left (the child uses his/her hands to mime the shape of the parcel). This child should say, "I got you a present!" The receiver of the 'gift' takes the gift, examines it and responds (verbally) in whatever way he or she chooses and then 'gives a gift' to the next player.

#### **Development Techniques: Teacher in Role (see page 122)**

- Teacher guides and acts as one of the family in the pet shop. The children are pet sellers and later Granny MacGinty.
- The MacGinty family have an idea to buy a dog to keep Granny company. However, the dog is a bit too much for Granny to handle!
- The action takes place in a pet shop so children need space to stand and move around a little.

Using the documentation from the last session, remind children about the character of Granny MacGinty and how her family had ideas to help. Then explain that in the story, Manus had an idea and he said: "I think that Granny needs a pet!" Ask the children their opinion of Manus's idea. Tell the children that they will go to the pet shop to get one. Ask everyone to stand up and explain that everyone in this room now has a dog that is for sale. Ask children to think what sort of a dog they have at the end of the lead they are holding.

The MacGinty family (teacher plus three children) come round and speak to the owners about their dogs, ensuring that they pet and interact as if a dog were really at the end of the

lead. The children must sell their dog to the best of their ability. The family eventually makes a decision about which dog they will buy and why.

Note: This section can be repeated with different types of pets, chosen by the children.

### **Conclusion**

Teacher takes the role/asks one of the children to take the role of Granny MacGinty and asks the rest of the class to tell her about the present they have bought her. Focus here on adjectives to describe the dog, referring to the adjectives in the story if necessary (the dog itself does not need to feature yet).

Ask all children to be Granny MacGinty and show her reaction to the pet (maybe the dog jumps up and bites, or licks her all the time...). Explain that she had some difficulty with the pet and get them to show what the problem was: 'Now everyone will take the dog for a walk. Find a space. Put out your hand with the lead in it. Go for a walk with this difficult dog'.

Ask all children to freeze with the difficult dog and then say, 'Oh my, my! That dog will have to go.'

**Resources:** Granny MacGinty story book, 'role on the wall' sheet and pen.

**English:** Write a script of a phone call to the pet shop to explain the problem.

**Art/English:** Make a poster about the dog that is now for sale.

**Reflect:** What was Granny's reaction to the dog? How did you know she was unhappy? Can you add anything to the 'role on the wall'?

## GRANNY MACGINTY

### Lesson three

#### **Drama Education objectives:**

- o Children will be enabled to develop their understanding of the character of Granny MacGinty and as a result, draw conclusions about elderly people living alone.

#### **Cross-curricular objectives:**

- o **SPHE** (Myself and my family): Children will be enabled to discuss and reflect on ways of genuinely helping people
- o **PE** (Movement): Children will be enabled to use movement expressively.

#### **Introductory warm up:**

*Play 'Animal Friends' (Function: Co-operation, Imagination).*

Give each child a card with the name/symbol of an animal. At a signal, each child should move and sound like the animal on the card. At the next signal, children should try to find other children who are the same animal and move together (make sure the signals, including stop, are clear in advance as this can get noisy!)

Now point a 'wand' at the children; when the wand is pointed, children become parrots, who talk as much as possible. If they have difficulty being verbose, ask them to describe for example, what is outside the window. Then ask them to be rabbits who eat everything in sight, then snails who move as fast as possible (model, if necessary, wing flapping, holding paws out and chewing like a rabbit, putting a house onto your back and slithering etc.). The wand 'magics' them back to themselves again.

#### **Development Techniques: Improvising, Freeze Frame**

- Children are either Granny MacGinty or one of her family.
- The MacGintys try presenting a variety of pets to Granny to keep her company.
- Granny might be seated when her visitors arrive, so ideally each pair would have space to stand and be seated.

Children work in pairs. The A's are Granny MacGinty and the B's are one of her family. B's must describe the pet they have just bought her as a present and try to convince her it is a good idea to keep it. Granny MacGinty must try to give reasons why she doesn't want it. At a signal, the B's move to another A (Granny MacGinty) and try again to convince her that the pet is a good idea.

Each pair makes a freeze frame (see page 123) showing A (Granny) receiving the present and B (as family member) giving it. Ask children to say one thing their character might say at that moment.

Ask the children to try the following script:

A's (as Granny): "Oh my my! That (children pick a pet) will have to go!

He's TOO .....(children think of a description)

B's (as family member): "But I don't understand why he should go! He's so .....(children think of a description). Children can add to the script if they wish.

### Conclusion

#### Hot Seat Granny. (see page 124)

Child or teacher takes the hot seat to be asked about her experiences of all the pets she has had in her house: The following are examples of questions children might ask.

- Why did you send all the pets back?
- Which did you like the best?
- Are you lonely?
- What present would you really like to get?
- Is there any animal you would like to have?
- Why do you live on your own?
- What do you do all day?

They could act out Granny receiving a present that she *would* like.

**Resources:** Cards with animal names for the game, questions for Hot Seat.

**Art:** Use feathers to make a print drawing of the parrot. Use paper strips to design the cage he is in. Use silver paint on rubbers to make the snail track. Take photographs of children wearing costume as the MacGinty family.

**English:** Make up short scripts based on the story book. Write what the parrot might say, what the rabbit might eat, where the snail might hide.

**Reflect:** What do you think would be a really useful present for Granny MacGinty. Do you know any elderly people living alone and do you think you could help them? What's nice about not having lots of noise in the house? What's nice about a noisy house?



## EXEMPLAR THREE: A DRAMA APPROACH TO A LEGEND FROM FAR AWAY

### ALADDIN

An international approach to educational content is becoming increasingly important in our classrooms and one way to do this is to include drama based on stories from other cultures. Aladdin is one of the 'Arabian Nights' stories, which all come from India, Persia or Arabia and developed from the oral tradition of stories shared between fellow travellers. They reflect the highly civilised and geographically wide Islamic world of the time. (It has been said that the story of Aladdin is in fact originally Chinese but since it is an Arabian Night Story, the lesson is set in an Arabian context.)

The story of Aladdin offers strong characters, far away worlds to imagine and interesting ethical dilemmas to consider.

### ***Age group: Third and Fourth Class***

#### **Lesson one**

#### **Drama Education objectives:**

- o Children will be enabled to develop their ability to improvise drama.

#### **Cross curricular objectives:**

- o **History** (Myths and Legends): Children will be enabled to become more familiar with characters from Arabia.
- o **SPHE** (Personal safety): Children will become more aware of safety issues when speaking to strangers.

#### **Introductory warm up**

*Set the scene (Function: Develops Improvisation skills)*

In groups of two to four, use props (real or junk objects) and costumes (any bits of material to create colour) to set up a scene of an ancient market place. Each group can decide what they sell; teacher can go round the stalls as a buyer. Show what it looks like and sounds like. When the groups are ready, each one is watched for a minute, then they freeze, then relax and so on. (Optional: All the groups show together, with background of appropriate music.)

#### **Development Techniques: Mime, Teacher in Role, Improvisation**

- The children are all Aladdin and the teacher is the stranger.
- The stranger arrives and convinces Aladdin that he knows his family.
- A hall or space in the classroom is desirable so children can feel like they are in the outdoor environment of the market place.

Begin by narrating: "Long long ago in a town in Arabia (a map could be used here to show the children where Arabia is) there lived a poor woman and her son Aladdin. The little boy Aladdin liked to play in the streets." Tell the children that they are going to pretend that they are Aladdin and play games that he might play, like hop scotch, throwing a ball, skipping or looking at things in the market. You might suggest here that children pretend to play 'Pul Bell', an ancient and popular Chinese yo-yo game operated with two sticks, that Aladdin might have played.

Explain that after a minute or two, you will also be someone in the story, (see teacher in role: page 117). Explain that when you come in, everyone should freeze in the middle of the game they are playing. Do a practice of this if you think it is necessary and say 'then we'll hear what this person has to say. If this person talks to you, you can unfreeze'.

Use a colourful piece of material to wrap around you and have toy / fake money in your pocket. Walk amongst the children and call "freeze Aladdin's game". Randomly choose a child and say "excuse me, you are Aladdin, is that right? I've come all the way from Africa to see your mother. I have some money here that I would like to give to you and your mother."

Children answer in role, and can choose what to say in response. If they are having difficulty being in role (and say, 'no I'm Sean' etc,) just encourage them more by saying "that's strange, I asked at the market and I was told that Aladdin was here, playing .....(what the child in question is playing) and that he looked just like you. Try to convince the child to take the money from you.

## Conclusion

Children work in pairs and one is Aladdin and the other is the stranger. Each pair makes up their own dialogue where the stranger tries hard to convince Aladdin that he knows his family. Two or three of these should be watched.

**Maths:** Examine Arabian currencies and compare to the euro.

**History:** Look at traditional Arabian games.

**Resources:** Material for costume of stranger, money, objects and materials for the market place.

**Reflect:** Was the stranger convincing? Why?/Why not?  
Why do you think he wants to give Aladdin money?  
What other questions could Aladdin have asked to find out more about him?  
Which Aladdin that we watched had the best approach to the stranger? Why?

# The Resource Page

Can you introduce yourself as Aladdin?

What do you think he might say?

Can you tell the other people:

- Who you are
- Where you live
- About your family
- About the person you met today  
when you were playing

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## ALADDIN

### Lesson Two

#### **Drama Education objectives:**

- o Children will be enabled to develop their ability to create tension through dramatic action and expression.

#### **Cross-curricular objectives:**

- o **English** (Oral language development): Children will be enabled to respond to story through drama and use language confidently.

#### **Introductory warm up:**

*Follow the Hand (Function: Movement skills)*

Children work in pairs. Child A holds out his/her hand, palm facing outwards and child B must position themselves so their face is a few inches away from their partner. Child A moves his hand back/around/forward/up/down and B must move too, so that his/her face remains the same distance from the hand. It is important to swap over and move slowly, as this game is about power and leading, which is the link to the influence of the stranger on Aladdin.

#### **Development Techniques: (Journeys, Group Narrator).**

- The children are all Aladdin and the teacher is the storyteller.
- They walk together to the mountain where the stranger casts a spell that opens the entrance to a deep cave.
- Either a hall or space in a classroom is needed so children can imagine the outdoor environment, the cave entrance and can 'move' through the journey.

Teacher narrates the journey (see page 119) to the top of the hill: "Aladdin was so happy about the money he got from the stranger that he decided he was his friend and together they walked up into the mountain". Lead children in walking on the spot upwards. As they walk, say: "oh, I'm getting very out of breath are you? There's a good view from here isn't there? We're so high up now." (so they understand they are going up high). Then say "oh finally, we're at the top. Let's all sit down."

Children are seated in a circle. Teacher narrates that 'the stranger told Aladdin he would show him something amazing'. Say that we have to gather up dry sticks and place them in the middle to make a fire; (lead them in miming this action), then put out your hands as if the fire is blazing and encourage them to do the same. Tell them that 'next, the stranger made amazing magic'.

The whole class should then decide on the words of the magic spell. They should then say the spell together (for example, 'Alacazam, Alalacazoo, make my spell come true!'). Focus on making it loud and clear and important-sounding. Try it a few times if necessary. Then teacher narrates 'when the magic words were said, the rocks opened and Aladdin saw a deep dark cave that went down and down and down'.

### Conclusion

Children stand up and turn away from the inside of the circle. They will all say the spell together, then turn around and see the deep cave for the first time. You might show them an example of how they might react when they see the cave, - there are four stages and they might need to be talked through them:

1. Children turn away
2. Children say the spell
3. Children turn forward
4. Children mime Aladdin's shocked reaction as he looks down.

Children can be selected randomly to describe what they see (this will give you an idea of whether they are developing an image of the story).

**Resources:** Space is the only necessary resource for this class.

**Science:** What heat would the fire need to be for Aladdin and the magician to be warm?

English: Write acrostic poems about caves; make lists of adjectives about caves.

**Geography:** Research what geographical features Aladdin might see when he enters the cave.

**Reflect:** What was it like to lead/follow in the warm up game? How do you think Aladdin feels about having become friends with the stranger?



## ALADDIN

### Lesson three

#### **Drama Education objectives:**

- o Children will be enabled to develop the story using their own creative input.

#### **Cross curricular objectives:**

- o **Music** (Listening and Responding): Children will be enabled to develop a sense of the dynamics of sound (loud /soft)
- o **English** (Oral language): Children will be enabled to develop emotional and imaginative response through drama.

#### **Introductory warm up**

*'Be the magician' (Function: Developing improvisation skills)*

Children are given a few minutes to prepare a way to act as a magician and say the words "Now you see that I am a magician!" Suggest that they use material/pretend to have a wand/use big actions/look at their audience. Watch a couple of children and then have them all act as magicians and say the words together.

*'Be Aladdin'*

Children will now act as Aladdin, who is so scared that he is shivering. Give them a few minutes to decide what Aladdin might say in response to the magician and how he would act and sound - then they show to the class.

#### **Development Techniques: Teacher in role, Mime**

- Teacher (or child) is the magician. Children are all Aladdin
- The stranger/magician convinces Aladdin to go into the cave, which is full of treasure, to get him the lamp
- The action takes place at the entrance of and inside the cave (a circle of chairs could define the inside of the cave).

Use the coloured cloth to signify you are the stranger (teacher in role: see page 117) and say "hello....is something wrong, you're shivering?" and encourage a response. Brush off any fears and say "I want you to go down to the bottom of the cave for me. Now it's a bit dark but it'll be fine. There's a lamp down there and I need you to get it for me. Will you do that?" The children, as Aladdin, respond as they want. When they are reluctant or refuse (or even if not!), offer them the ring, 'which will keep them safe'.

Narrate that "Aladdin agreed to go down the steps into the cave, shivering with fear as he went". Have children mime going down the steps on the spot, getting lower and lower and use a drum to tap lightly each time they take a step. Narrate that "at the very bottom, there was a garden planted with beautiful, glittering trees. And on the trees were jewels!" Ask children to show how they feel when they see all the wonderful jewels. Encourage them to imagine a tree in the classroom with precious jewels on it and to mime picking jewels from it. Say "quick, pick as many as you can! Put them in your pockets! Look, red ones, gold ones, oh, you get that one there, it's so sparkly!" Children should find ways to act as if they are gathering and carrying as many treasures as possible.

### Conclusion

Children sit/stand in a circle and in turn describe and/or mime what they found in the cave.

You might say (if a lamp has not been mentioned): "I think you might have forgotten what you went down to the cave for. Does anyone remember?" Show them the lamp and ask one of the children to look after it. Ask the children to decide if they should give the lamp back to the magician.

**Resources:** Coloured cloth as costume, coloured paper/cubes/marbles as treasure, drum, lamp.

**Maths:** Look at cave depth measurements. Estimate how many steps Aladdin will have to go down. Estimate how many jewels Aladdin could carry.

**Art:** Use junk and glitter to make treasure boxes and crowns and jewels.

**Reflect:** Why do you think the magician didn't go down to the cave himself?

How do you think the treasure got there?

Is Aladdin right to take all the jewels?

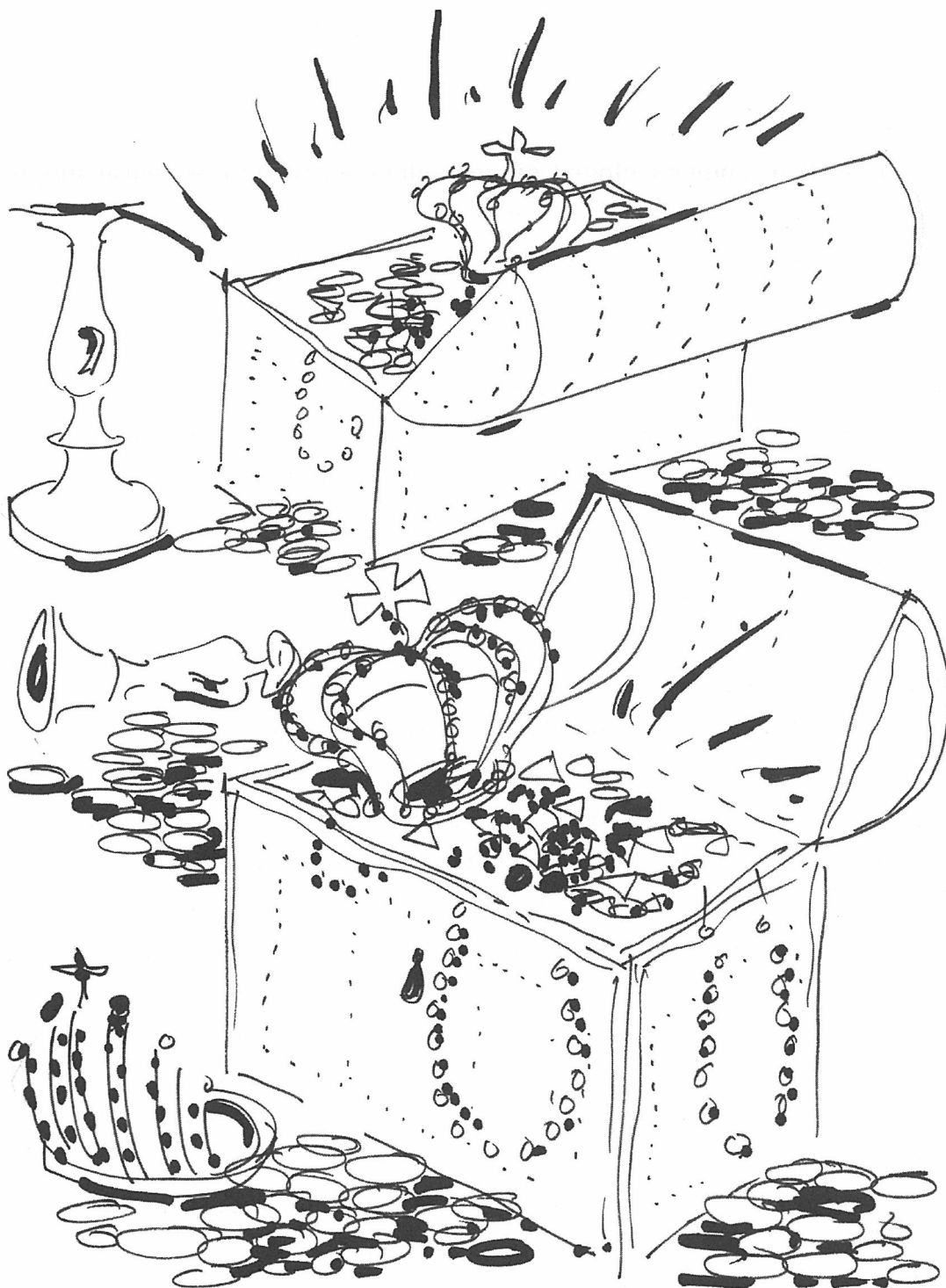
Should Aladdin give the lamp back to the magician?

# The Resource Page

Imagine this is a photo in a newspaper of the cave full of treasure. Work in pairs where A is a reporter and B is Aladdin. The reporter should interview Aladdin about his experience in the cave to write the story that goes with the photo. The reporter could ask questions like "what did you think when you saw the jewels?", "how did it feel to be in the cave?" "did you take any of the treasure?". The reporter can make up other questions and should listen carefully and note down Aladdin's answers.

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# “LONG LOST TREASURE DISCOVERED”



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## ALADDIN

### Lesson four

#### **Drama Education objectives:**

- o Children will be enabled to animate script with a sense of character and expression.

#### **Cross-curricular objectives:**

- o **SPHE** (Communicating): Children will be enabled to recognise and explore clear communication strategies.
- o **Music** (Composing): Children will be enabled to compose chants.

#### **Introductory warm up**

*Feelings charades: (Function: Improvisation skills)*

Children are divided into groups. Each group is given a feelings word which they must mime OR make up a scene about (which doesn't mention the word). The other players must guess what the word is. Examples of words are: 'happy'; 'angry'; 'stubborn'; 'sad'; 'bored'; 'nervous'. (Alternatively, children work individually and make statues when the words are called out).

#### **Development Technique: Script**

- The children are either Aladdin or the Magician. Teacher demonstrates and narrates.
- The magician becomes angry as he waits for Aladdin to return and when Aladdin refuses to give him the lamp, he shuts him into the cave.
- The action takes place with Aladdin in the cave and the magician at the entrance. Sufficient space for all the children to stand is needed.

Model for the children how the magician might be feeling, now that Aladdin has been in the cave for a long time (taps foot, looks at watch and shows an angry expression etc.). Then ask the children to discuss what the character is feeling. Note: one of the children could do the acting instead of the teacher.

Advise the children to think about facial expression, body language, possible hand gestures etc. and that the magician is nervous and angry. Then the children should work in pairs to find their own way to perform the following script:

Magician: "Give me the lamp!"

Aladdin: "No. Help me up first! I know you will shut me in when you have the lamp!"

Magician: "Give me the lamp and I'll help you up."

Aladdin "No! Not until I'm out."

(Children can add on to the script if they wish and can improvise their own way to ask for the magician's help)

The teacher narrates: "Aladdin tried so hard to ask for help but the magician was too angry. Far down in the cave, Aladdin heard the magician say these words [softly]: "Alacazam. Alacazoo. Make my spell come true". And with that, a loud sound was heard [bang once on drum or table] as the cave closed shut." Have the children make the sound effect

The children now all go into character as Aladdin. If teacher points at a child, he or she can say what Aladdin might say at this moment.

### Conclusion

Teacher reminds the children that the ring will help them to get out of the cave. The children can either invent their own genie chant or use the following: "Genie, genie, we need you now; Genie, genie don't let us down". The children should work in groups or together, to give it rhythm and make it sound like they really need his help.

Take one of the children out to be the genie and give her or him a coloured cloth as costume. Hold another cloth in front of the genie. Ask the children to close their eyes and wish for the genie to appear. Ask the child with the ring to rub it and wish hard. Tell the children that the ring is working but it just needs a little help, for luck. Have them perform the chant extra loud; rub their hands and then clap. Then pull the cloth away. Have the genie 'introduce himself'!

**Resources:** A ring, 2 colourful pieces of material, colourful tea pot or lamp.

**Music:** Use body percussion (clapping on cheeks/thighs/chest etc. to add sound effect to spells.

**SPHE:** Discuss and dramatise situations where people use body language to show thoughts and feelings (football match, cinema, school, fun park).

**Reflect:** How do you know when people are happy/sad/afraid/worried?  
Why do you think the magician wants the lamp?  
Should the magician help Aladdin out of the cave?  
What did we learn from Aladdin's body language in the scenes we watched?  
How did we make the chant convincing?

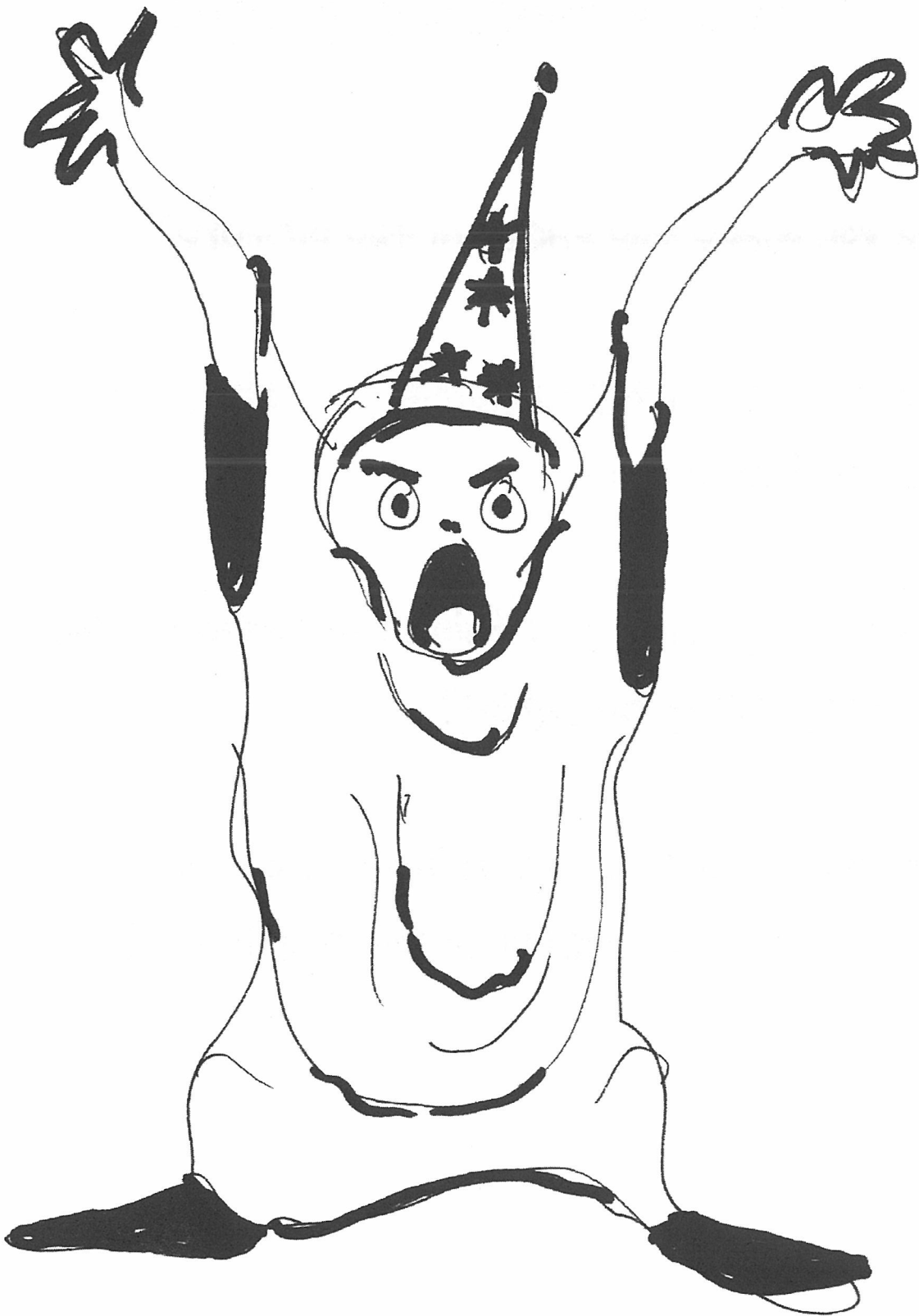


# The Resource Page

Can you see how the face and arms  
show how angry the magician is?

Can you make your own statue, using  
your hands and face to show how the  
magician feels?

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# The Resource Page

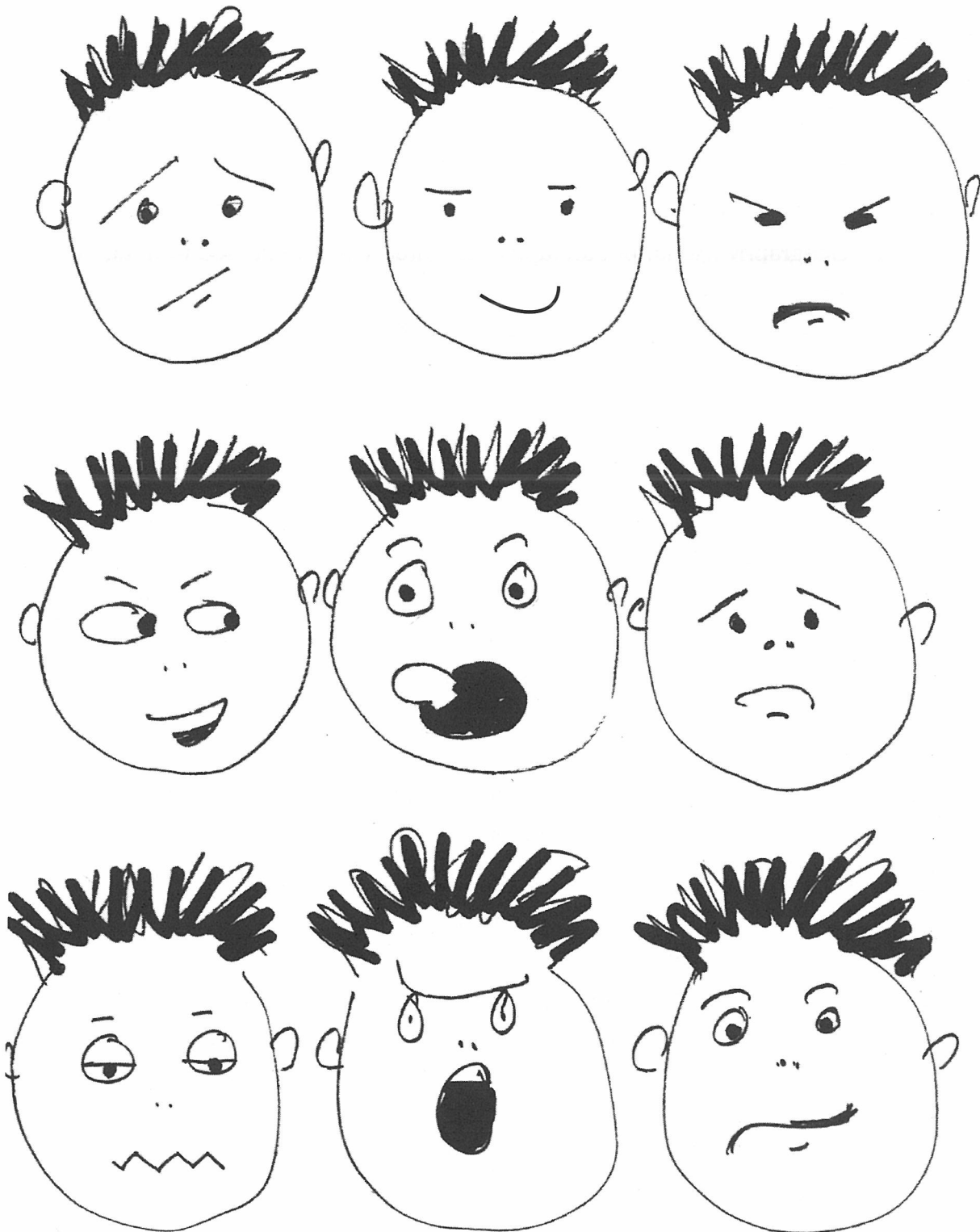
Can you make the faces in the picture?

Can you make body language to match the face in the picture?

Can you say what you think the people in the pictures might be saying?

Can you make up a scene in pairs based on the faces in the pictures and act it out?

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## ALADDIN

### Lesson five

#### **Drama Education objectives:**

- o Children will be enabled to use space and objects to create dramatic context and to develop the characters of Aladdin, his mother and the genies.

#### **Cross-curricular objectives:**

- o **Geography** (Aerial photographs): Children will be enabled to imagine aerial perspective.
- o **English** (Oral language): Children will be enabled to practice common social language (in graciously granting wishes).

#### **Introductory warm up:**

*Magic genie game: (Function: Improvisation skills)*

One child plays the genie and stands and bows with his or her arms folded, saying "I am the slave of all who wear the ring. What is your wish?" Tell the children that they will have a minute to think of what Aladdin would wish for. The child playing the genie will then walk around the circle and listen as the children say "I wish ...etc." The genie and the wisher act out the wish being granted. (The acting out part should only be done with a few children if the class is large).

#### **Development Techniques: Magic Carpet Journey and Hot Seat**

- First the children are all Aladdin, except the child playing the genie.
- Aladdin's wish to leave the cave and go home is granted by the genie of the ring and he is flown home on a magic carpet. When he arrives home his mother wants to know where he has been.
- The action takes place in the skies over an Arabian city so enough space is needed for each child to sit on 'their magic carpet'. Later, the action is in Aladdin's home and classroom space is sufficient, as children can be seated to question Aladdin.
- In the hot seat exercise, either the teacher or a child is Aladdin and the rest of the children are all his mother.

The child playing the genie tells the children "your wish to return to your home is granted" and bows. The children should find a space, lay out the (imagined) carpet they have been given and sit down cross-legged and close their eyes. Make sure the children with the ring

and the lamp are still holding them. Using music in the background, teacher narrates "the magic carpet lifts, light as a feather and Aladdin feels the carpet floating up, up towards the light." (Leave time here to play music and allow children to imagine what they see as they look down). "Beneath him, he sees the tree but it is getting smaller and smaller. Now he's flying high above his town, he looks down and sees the roads and the houses, the pointed roofs and the shops. Now hold on tight because you're going down fast and you can see your house, see the colour of the door getting closer now and now you're nearly there. Open your eyes!"

The children then prepare questions that Aladdin's mother might ask him about where he has been. Either the teacher or a child is hot seated (see page 124) as Aladdin. All the other children act as his mother who can question him one by one about where he has been.

### Conclusion

Teacher explains that as Aladdin's mother listened to the story, she rubbed the lamp and a genie appeared; this genie is much more powerful than the genie of the ring.

Children find a way to freeze (freeze frame: see page 123) as the powerful lamp genie, to walk as the lamp genie, to talk as the lamp genie etc. In pairs, children make a statue showing the ring genie and the lamp genie.

**Resources:** A ring, a delicate tea pot or small lamp, music, coloured cloth for costumes.

**Geography:** Do an aerial view of where you live.

Art: Use a large sheet of paper and decorate your own magic carpet.

**English:** Write what your three wishes would be if you were Aladdin.

**Reflect:** If you had to describe flying on a magic carpet, what would you say?

What did we learn about Aladdin/Aladdin's mother?

Make a freeze frame in pairs of the two genies, showing the difference in their power and status.



# The Resource Page

Work in pairs. A is Aladdin and B is the Genie. Seat yourselves on your carpet as shown in the picture.

Take it in turns to describe to each other what you see as you fly home.

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## ALADDIN

### Lesson six

#### **Drama Education objectives:**

- o Children will develop the ability to express dramatic action physically.

#### **Cross-curricular objectives:**

- o PE (Dance, Movement): Children will be enabled to create a movement piece.

#### **Introductory warm up:**

*Slave and Master game: (Function: Improvisation skills)*

Children work in pairs; A is the genie and B is the master. The master must demand that his wishes are granted and the genies must present their master with every desire, as quickly as possible. If children have difficulty thinking of wishes, you can suggest some: 'bring me fine food'; 'bring me the finest jewels and money'; 'present me with my own palace to live in'. Then get the children to choose a small piece from what they have done and repeat it *without words and in slow motion*.

#### **Development Techniques: Improvisation, action with music.**

- In each exercise, children are all the same characters (Aladdin, the Magician and Palace Advisors)
- Aladdin has had wishes for food and a palace granted by the genie of the lamp but then a palace worker sells the lamp to the magician, for a new lamp. The action takes place in the palace and then the market place, so space for children to move around is necessary, especially since movement is a focus in the lesson.

Encourage children to think about how Aladdin feels now that he has his own palace (make a connection with MTV 'Cribs' if necessary!) Children could imagine the fine clothes he wears and improvise how he looks as he walks around, exploring some of the rooms of his new palace. Music can then be played (see page 134) and children should exaggerate their movement as they walk around.

Now focus children on the character of the magician and ask them to show how he might look when he hears about Aladdin's palace (children can try hunching their shoulders and narrowing their eyes to look 'angry'). Explain that the magician has a secret plan, and show how he moves as he comes near to the town where Aladdin lives, (perhaps tip-toeing, looking around him all the time). When children have developed this, they should add the words: 'old lamps for new?' and try to add on more words if they can. Include music with this activity.

Children are then divided into two groups, one of magicians and one of Aladdins. When the music for one character is playing, that group moves and the other group stays frozen. The music can be alternated a number of times.

### Conclusion

Divide the children into groups of three. 1 is a palace worker, 2 is the magician and 3 is Aladdin. 1 freezes giving the old lamp to 2, 2 freezes his joy at getting the lamp, 3 freezes his reaction as he sees the lamp being given away. Children then put their sequence together, moving through steps 1, 2, and 3 in slow motion to create a movement piece. Children then narrate "The palace worker did not know the magic of the lamp. He was happy to give the magician the old lamp and the magician used the genie of the lamp to take away Aladdin's fine food and his palace and fly the princess he married far away". They then repeat their movement piece. Each group should freeze at the end of their piece and stay like this until every group has finished.

**Resources:** Music (eg. Nelly/ Beyonce/Arabian music (see page 134) and lamp.

**History:** What old things are worth money? What do you think will be worth money in the future?

**Maths:** Find items that would be fair exchange.

**English:** Write in role as the magician or Aladdin after the lamps have been exchanged.

**Music:** Use music as a soundtrack to a silent movie acted by your group based on Aladdin's story.

**Reflect:** Is Aladdin's life better now than before?

Why?

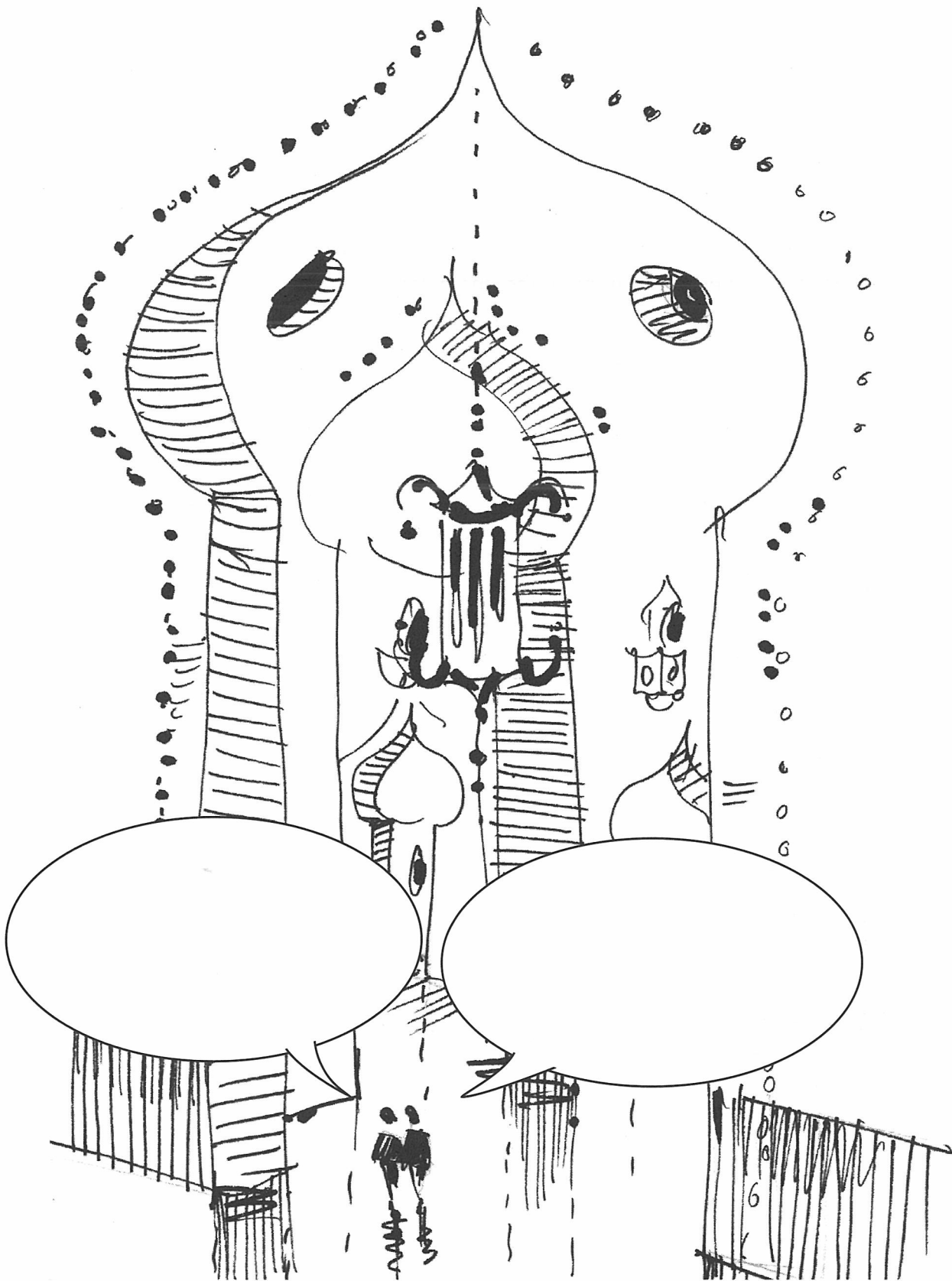
How do you think Aladdin will get his lamp back?

# The Resource Page

Can you imagine yourself  
entering a great palace like this?

Act as Aladdin, showing a friend  
into the palace you live in now  
that you are rich. Use your  
hands and words to show the  
height, the fine materials of  
the furniture and the other  
things you own.

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## ALADDIN

### Lesson seven

#### **Drama Education objectives:**

- o Children will be enabled to reflect on dramatic action and make decisions about what will happen in their drama, based on their reflections.

#### **Cross-curricular objectives:**

- o **SPHE** (Resolving conflict): Children will be enabled to discuss the fairest end to the story, given the actions of the characters.

#### **Introductory warm up:**

*Keeper of the keys (Function: Working in silence, Movement skills)*

One child stands at one end of the room with back turned and acts as the keeper of Aladdin's lamp (the magician who has stolen it.) The other children must either crawl or creep toward the magician from the opposite end of the room. The 'magician' can turn around at any time; any 'thief' caught moving must go back to the start line. Emphasise stealth and allow the magician to be strict!

#### **Development Techniques: Improvisation**

- Children work in pairs, one is Aladdin and the other is the magician.
- Aladdin, having found the magician and the princess, has managed to take the lamp back while the magician slept.
- The action takes place in a palace far away. Children need room to stand.

Divide the children into groups of three. 'A' is Aladdin and must try and explain why he should get the lamp back. 'B' is the magician who must try and explain why the lamp should stay with him. 'C' must try and get them to reach a compromise. No one is allowed to use magic at this point.

Now ask 'C' to be the genie of the lamp and have this genie explain which one they would prefer as their master, from the pair they were working with, and why.

## Conclusion

In groups of four, make up a scene that shows what the future will be like for Aladdin, his mother, the magician and one of the genies, in ten years time. Perhaps Aladdin has lost his riches, the magician has forgotten how to do magic spells, his mother spends all her time polishing lamps and the genie is tired out from granting wishes. This is just a suggestion; children are free to conclude this drama in their own way!

**SPHE:** Write a list of ideas for resolving arguments that the characters could use in the future.

**Reflect:** What things did characters say or do that made it difficult to resolve arguments?

What did the person in the middle do that helped the situation?

Looking back at the drama, what have we learnt about each character involved?

## EXEMPLAR FOUR: A DRAMA APPROACH TO HISTORY

The first three exemplars are based on rhyme or fiction. This exemplar shows a drama-based approach to a history lesson (the destruction of Pompeii when Vesuvius erupted) which is based on factual information. Because the aim here is to learn about a historical event through drama, the core facts should therefore remain intact. In the lessons, there is license for children to create their own understanding of how a natural disaster affects human lives but the major detail cannot be changed. This could be done in a non-history oriented lesson but not here. The lessons are designed to enhance understanding of an aspect of Roman History, to show how many aspects of history can be taught through drama.

The eruption of Vesuvius is approached here through the experience of Pliny the Younger, (or Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus as he was known to his Roman friends) and is based on actual first and second hand accounts of the letters from him and his family. The lessons focus on the commander of the Roman fleet (Pliny the Elder) who, in AD. 79, was stationed with his fleet across the bay of Naples at Misenum. When the volcano first erupted he sailed towards it for closer observation and to attempt a rescue (although his nephew Pliny the Younger stayed behind). Rescue proved impossible, and Pliny himself died at Stabaie which was as close as he had been able to get.

### ROMAN HISTORY

*Age group: Fifth and Sixth Class*

#### Lesson one

##### **Drama Education objectives:**

- o Children will be enabled to develop their ability to create drama in groups; perform for others and to discuss a historical event in role.

##### **Cross-curricular objectives:**

- o **History** (Romans): Children will be enabled to dramatise the lifestyle and pastimes of Roman people and to reflect on how rumours can distort the truth.

##### **Introductory warm up:**

*Mime sequences: (Function: Working in silence, Improvisation)*

Children work in pairs, standing opposite each other. Both decide on a non-verbal greeting as if they are at a formal ball (a bow/curtsey/ a flourish of a fan etc.). Both perform the greeting simultaneously. It should be repeated a few times and slow, stylised movement in total silence should be encouraged. Then, more greetings are added, such as those of

cowboys in a western movie, or soccer players etc. The pair then repeats each greeting, one after the other, until a slow dance-like sequence is achieved. Emphasise that no physical contact is allowed.

Now, standing side by side in pairs, children use the same exercise as if they were the townspeople of Misenum, near Pompeii. Focus on daily activities (being careful about accuracy in relation to the era):

- Two people shopping.
- Two people at the theatre or gladiators fight.
- Two people at a banquet.

### **Development Techniques: Improvisation, teacher in role**

- The children act as townspeople, with one per group being taken out to act as messenger for the town fathers.
- The action takes place in the town (maybe the baths or the market place).
- Space for children to either lie/sit in the baths is necessary, or to walk around the market place.

Children are divided into groups of four or five. One person is picked from each group as the messengers for the town fathers and will be despatched with the artists' impression (see page 103) of a strange sighting in the sky "like a large cloud which rises to a great height, then splits off into branches". Children are told that they are now at the market/or at the public baths, and given a few minutes to improvise the conversations. The messengers must then approach the group with the picture of the cloud to see if the people have any opinions as to what this may be. The messengers are called back when the conversation seems to be running out.

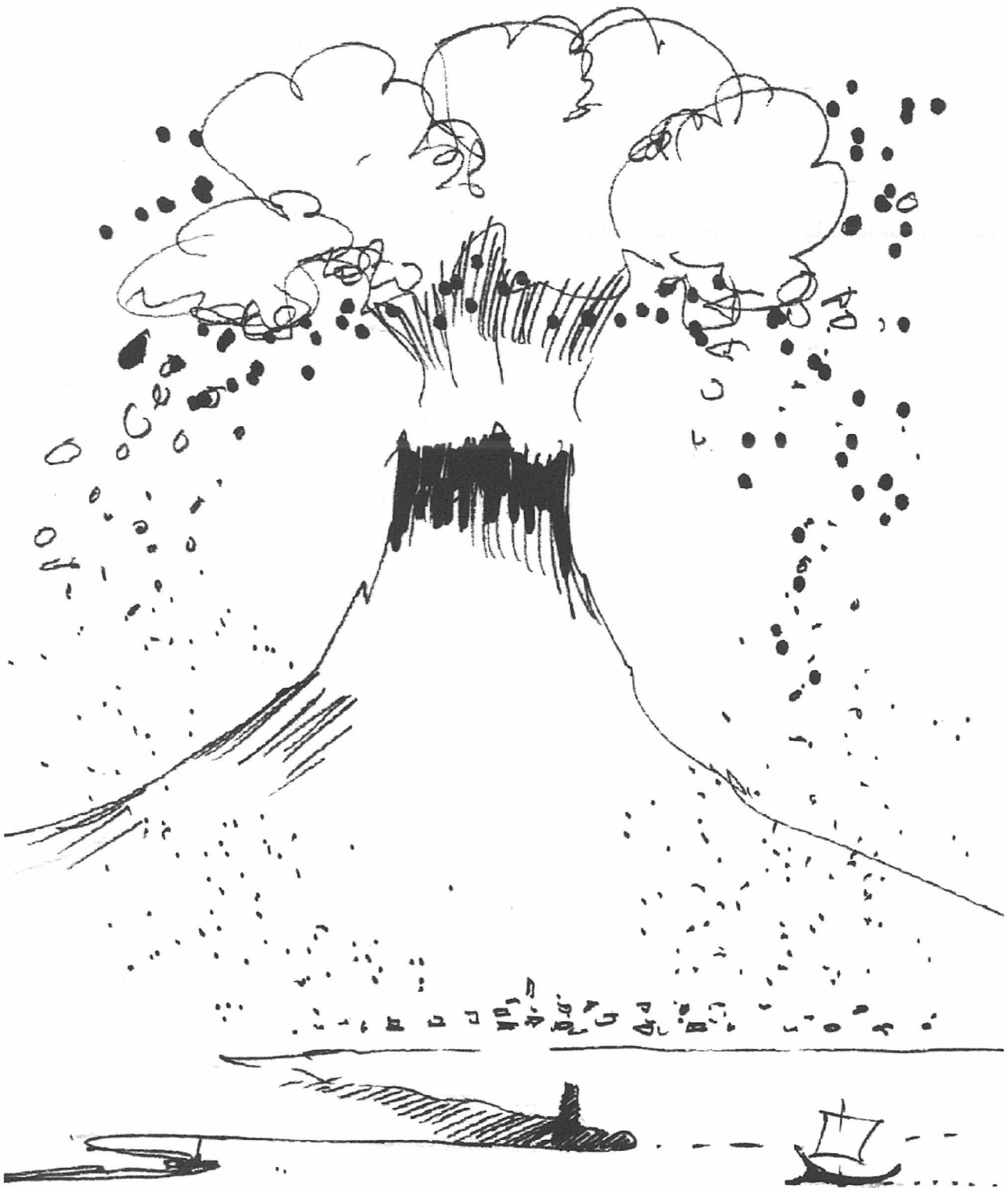
The townsfolk are now asked to come out of role, back to themselves and will be the audience of what happens next. Remind them that this means that they can't speak or intervene but that they will have a chance to give opinions after the scene.

Teacher takes the role (see page 117) of Pliny, with two children acting as town fathers. Messengers approach from far corners of the room as if they have come through the town. One by one they are asked about what the townspeople have said. Teacher in role uses formal language and judges what is heard. If the possibility of a volcanic eruption is mentioned, the reaction is that this is not possible, as Vesuvius has been dormant for years.

# The Resource Page

The messengers take this artist's impression of the cloud across the bay, show it to the townspeople and ask what it might be. (If they suggest it is a volcano, say it cannot be as Vesuvius has not erupted in years.)

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### Conclusion

Children are divided into pairs A's and B's. When a signal is sounded, they improvise a conversation of gossips talking about what the 'shape in the sky' is and what it might mean. When the signal is sounded again, all the A's move to new partners and continue the gossip. Repeat two or three times and ask for some examples of what the townspeople have heard.

**Resources:** *The Usbourne Time Traveller Book of Rome and Romans* by Amery, Heather and Vanags, Patricia. EDC Publishing, 1998

*The Roman News* by Langley, Andrey and De Souza, Philip. Walker Books, 1996.

**History:** Look at typical pastimes of the Romans.

Look at maps of towns in Roman history to see where people congregated and where official buildings were.

**Reflect:** What do you think about what the people said the cloud could be?

Describe the body language and verbal language of Pliny and the messengers.

What did you hear about the strange cloud?

Why do people gossip and what is the effect?

## ROMAN HISTORY

### Lesson two

#### **Drama Education objectives:**

- o Children will be enabled to direct the content and direction of the dramatic action of the meeting with Pliny.

#### **Cross-curricular objectives:**

- o **Geography** (Mapping): Children will be enabled to chart a sea journey using a map.
- o **English** (Oral language): Children will be enabled to develop skills of questioning and persuading.

#### **Introductory warm up:**

##### *Statue sculptures (Function: Working in silence)*

Working in pairs, A must use B like modelling clay and non verbally mould B (or verbally direct, if physical contact might be difficult for the class) into a statue of Pliny, with the picture of the cloud in his hands. Sculptors should pay attention to details such as the head (bowed/looking into the distance to see the cloud?), the facial expression (worried/determined?); how the picture is held (out to show others/close to see detail?). The sculptors could title their picture and the statues could speak their thoughts aloud.

#### **Development Techniques: Teacher in role, improvisation**

- Teacher (or child) is Pliny and the children are the fleet, who have been called by him to a meeting.
- Pliny has decided that he must gather a crew to sail as near as possible to the cloud to investigate it further.
- The action takes place in a public meeting place such as the town square or an official building so the classroom can be used, with children seated.

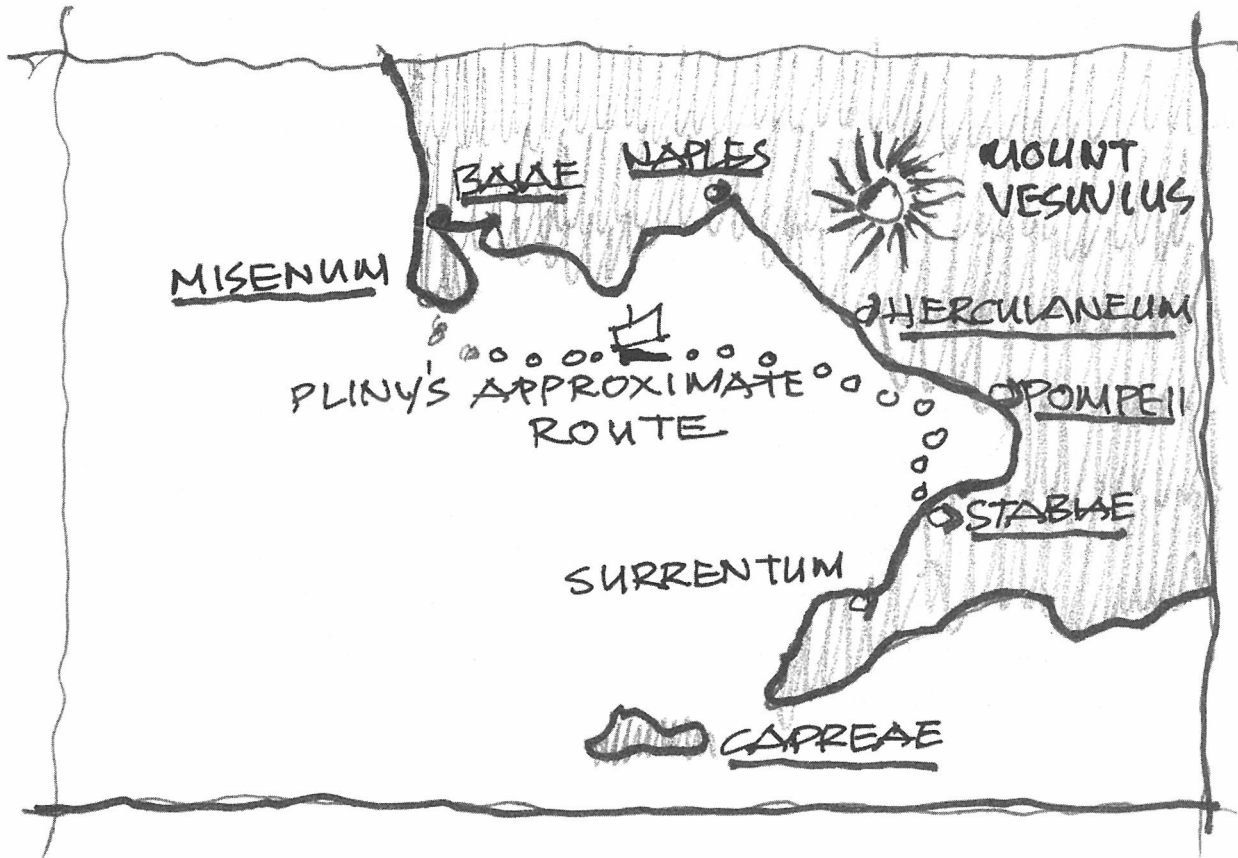
Pliny, (for teacher in role see page 117) enters (perhaps with assistants) and explains to the people that he requires a fleet to go with him to sail across the bay and investigate the strange cloud. The person/people in role must use all their powers of persuasion to get people to come with him, perhaps offering freedom from slavery or other rewards.

# The Resource Page

Act as Plinius, make sure you get a large crew to sail your ship.

Use the map to show the fleet the intended journey.

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## Conclusion

A letter arrives from the wife of a friend of Pliny who lives in Pompeii. She describes what is happening and begs for help (each child can write, in role, the letter from the woman, or groups can compose a letter, or the teacher has the letter prepared).

Children work in pairs with A as Pliny and B as a slave. Using the letters composed in the last exercise as script, children make up a scene where a slave brings the letter to Pliny. They can try the following different ways of doing the scene:

- i) Pliny is unconcerned by the letter.
- ii) Pliny sees some, but not extreme, urgency in the letter.
- iii) Pliny realises that this is an emergency.

**Art:** Construct ships from junk and make a scene of the bay of Misenum with the Italian coast moulded from clay/playdough.

**English:** Write letters from Pompeii from the inhabitants as they realise something bad is happening.

**Reflect:** How did Pliny convince people to join the fleet/why did they resist?

Describe the different way of speaking for each of the three situations above.

## ROMAN HISTORY

### Lesson three

#### **Drama Education objectives:**

- o Children will be enabled to create expressive freeze frame and to improvise.

#### **Cross-curricular objectives:**

- o **English / History:** Children will be enabled to appreciate development of character and to respond, through improvisational drama, to historical content.

#### **Introductory warm up:**

*Drama Tennis: (Function: Movement skills, Working in silence)*

Children stand in a circle and pretend they are holding a tennis racket. One child is picked to begin the game by pretending to use a racket to hit a ball to another player. There is no order, so all children must be ready to hit the ball. The child hitting makes it clear who they are hitting to by making obvious eye contact with the child they have chosen. As well as the importance of eye contact, speed and big movements should be emphasised.

#### **Development Techniques: Mime**

- Half the children are members of Pliny's fleet, the other half are people who have decided to leave the town of Pompeii.
- Pliny and his fleet are leaving Misenum to journey towards the strange cloud over Pompeii. At Pompeii, some of the inhabitants are deciding to flee their homes for fear of what is about to happen.
- The action takes place both on a ship in the harbour of Misenum and on streets and in homes in Pompeii, so space is needed for all children to stand.

Divide the children into two groups; one is the fleet and the other the people who are about to flee Pompeii.

Each child finds a space. Teacher pre-suggests some of the things they might mime as they prepare to leave: the fleet might be testing oars, hoisting sails, seating themselves on the boat, shouting to others, keeping lookout. The townspeople might be packing a bag, grabbing possessions, closing the door, taking a last look around.

At a signal, all the children should freeze the mime. Then, you can point or tap a selection of them on the shoulder and they must say the first thing they can think of, in character, at that moment of departure.

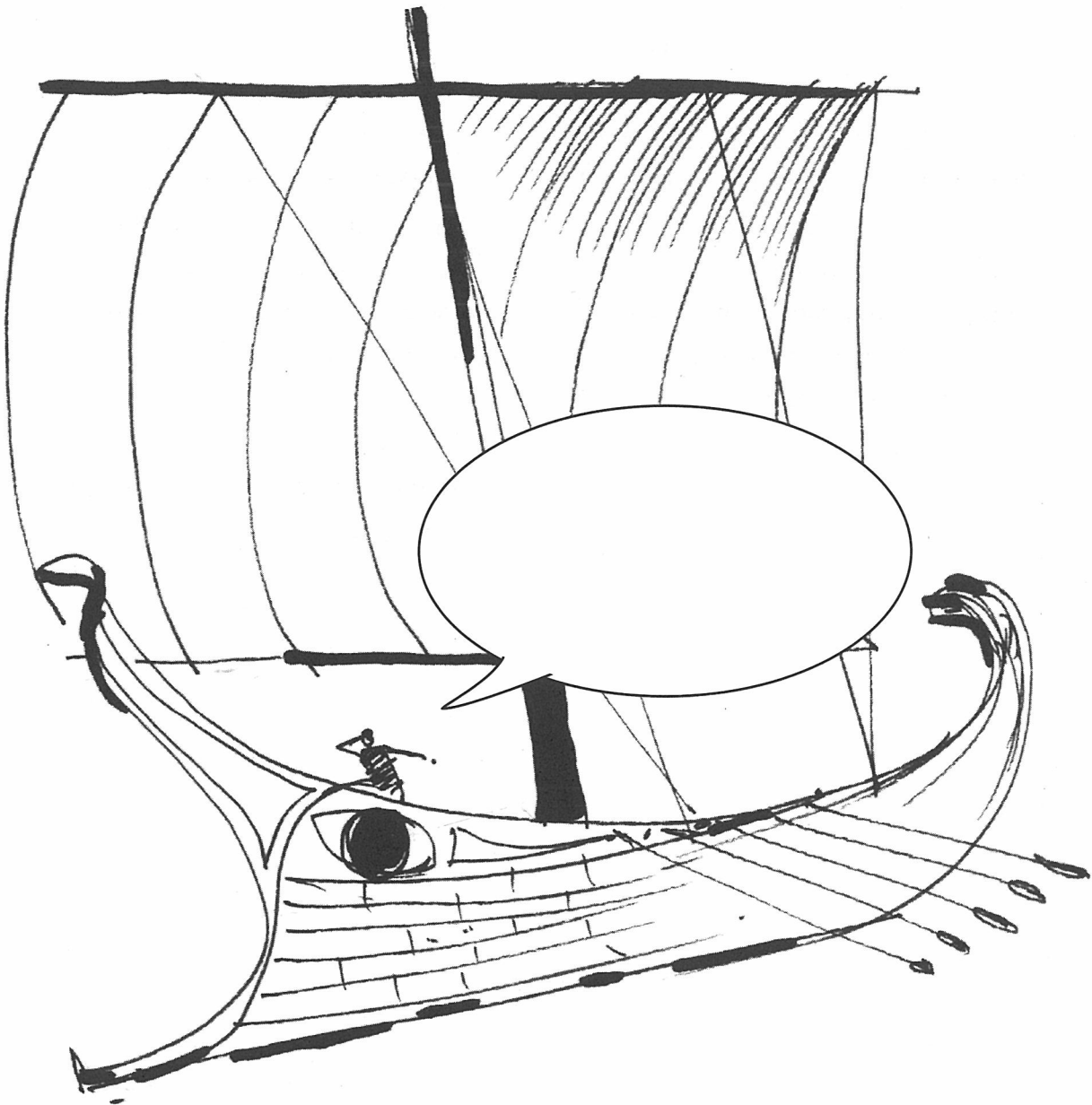


# The Resource Page

Can you remember what the fleet did in the drama you made as they prepared to set sail for Misenum?

Act as Pliny and say what he thinks as the ship sails towards the cloud?

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## Conclusion

Now ask the children to compose two freeze frames, one as the sailors and one as the townspeople arriving at their destination. The sailors reach the shore at Stabaie after being unable to land at Pompeii due to pumice and blackened stones. The townspeople of Misenum journey to an unknown area with only a few of their belongings. When children are ready, they perform each freeze frame to each other.

**History:** Research ancient seacraft to see the kind of boat Pliny would have sailed on.

**Geography:** Examine maps to see where people might have gone when they fled Pompeii.

**Reflect:** What word/sentence sticks in your mind from when the characters spoke. Why?

What do you think is the hardest thing about leaving your home?

Can you think of a word to describe each of the two images?

## ROMAN HISTORY

### Lesson Four

#### **Drama Education objectives:**

- o Children will be enabled to create a drama piece that incorporates the elements of word, thought, music, movement and tension based on a historical topic.

#### **Cross-curricular objectives:**

- o **History** (The Romans): Children will be enabled to learn more about people's experience of the eruption of Vesuvius.
- o **Music** (Responding to Music): Children will be enabled to use music as a soundtrack to a movement piece.
- o **PE** (Movement, Dance): Children will be enabled to create a movement piece based on a historical event.

#### **Introductory warm up:**

*Interruptitis: (Function: Improvisation skills)*

Groups of four are formed with two sailors and two escapees from Pompeii. Improvise the conversation where the fleet tries to find out what is going on and the escapees try to describe the danger. Each pair must try and hog the conversation. Points are gained for full sentences; points are lost for raising the voice above speaking level.

#### **Development Techniques: Improvisation**

- Children represent the thoughts of Pliny.
- Pliny tries to decide if he should turn his fleet and ship back from a potential volcano or not.
- The action takes place on the shore of Stabaie, one seat is needed for Pliny and the rest of the children stand around him (so the classroom is sufficient).

Ask one child to represent Pliny and sit in a chair in a way that shows, through body language, his worry. Tell the children that Pliny has a lot to consider and they will represent his thoughts. He must decide whether he should turn back if it is it a volcano, or carry on, if it's his only chance to see such an event. The children voice his thoughts; if they have a positive thought they go to the right side of the chair and say it, if it is negative they go to the left and say it.

Next, the children (as the fleet) find a way to show that they are asleep and unaware that danger is imminent. Tell them that you (or a child) will announce the morning. At this point they

should pretend to wake up but realise that there is no daylight and that there are fumes in the air and pumice hailing down. Tell them that when everyone is awake, each person must call out one word, perhaps calling for a friend/for help/a word about how they feel (trying not to speak at the same time as anyone else). Repeat this a few times if necessary to achieve dramatic effect.

### **Conclusion**

Tell the children that the fallout from the eruption has increased in ferocity and all must escape. Tell them that although people tried, most did not escape. Divide the children into groups of five. Ask them to listen to music (see resources, page 134) and devise a scene using only movement (no speech,) with the music as a soundtrack. The children must represent trying to get away from danger (perhaps bringing one possession with them) and as the music fades (done by the teacher) they lose energy and freeze as the music comes to a stop. (This works best in slow motion).

Now put each stage of this class together as a performance piece:

- Each group of four performs a section of the scene with people from Pompeii warning sailors of imminent danger.
- One child takes the part of Pliny, listening to his conscience and the voices of other children trying to decide whether to turn back or to go closer to the cloud.
- Movement piece of the people fleeing Pompeii.
- Optional extra: Pliny and his fleet explain to the townspeople what has happened in Pompeii.

### **Resources:**

- CD: O Fortuna from Carmina Burana-Orff  
(Can be found on 'Simply the Best Classical Anthems').  
[www.cet.edu/ete/modules/volcanoes/vmtvesuvius.html](http://www.cet.edu/ete/modules/volcanoes/vmtvesuvius.html)

**Art:** Draw around shapes of people (on wallpaper/large sheets of paper) in the frozen images. Photograph class members using related facial expression, blow them up on photocopier and paste them onto the images, put costumes on the images with collage from magazine pieces.

**Geography/Science:** Look at the effects of volcanos past and present, to understand what victims of Pompeii would have experienced.

**Reflect:** Which of the thoughts of Pliny sticks in your mind? Why?

What decision should he make?

Why do you think some people stayed in Pompeii, even though many had already fled?



In this section the techniques used in the lesson plans are described. They are the ways of working which are typically used to structure drama-based lessons. They are different from drama games in that they allow learners to experience varied approaches to the content of the lesson and to focus on key aspects of the story in detail. Lots of these drama strategies have their basis in theatre work, so children learn more about performance technique when they are used. The techniques allow the teacher to retain control and structure in the lesson while still allowing children to be creative.

### Nursery/Action rhymes:

- In Humpty Dumpty, Lesson one

This is a good way to introduce drama in the infant classes. Select a rhyme that's popular, that you like, or that connects to a theme or topic you're working on; then add action and expression to it.

### Tips for doing action rhymes:

- At first, think of it like a dance routine from a cheesy band! Use clear, simple actions with just enough moves to ensure that children won't get confused and can move slickly through them.
- Do the rhyme a few times so children can get familiar with the words, actions and expressions.
- Say it loud, say it soft, say it quickly, say it in a whisper, say it like it's important.
- Take suggestions from the children about what the actions can be, what the characters might say (and how), and what might happen next, to start working towards them having a creative input.
- Try to make the words sound more conversational rather than using a repetitive laa-la-laa-la rhythm, so children gain a sense of what they are saying.

### Skills developed

Nursery Rhymes are a fun, active way of reinforcing learning in a whole range of subject areas and strands:

**English:** People in Fairytales - *There was a Princess, In a cottage in a wood*

**Maths:** Time - *Hickory Dickory Dock,*

**Counting** - *Three Little Monkeys*

**Money** - *Five Mince Pies, Five Cherry Cakes*

**Geography:** Weather - *I hear Thunder, Incy Wincy Spider*

**History:** People - *Down by the station, Grandmother's Glasses*

**Special Occasions:** *Christmas is coming, Pancakes, Five Little Candles*

## Teacher in Role

The teacher acts as someone in the story and develops and strengthens the story through his/her own role play. It is used in:

- Humpty Dumpty – Lesson Two and Three,
- Granny MacGinty – Lesson Two,
- Aladdin – Lesson One and Two
- Roman History – Lesson One and Two

### Managing Teacher in Role

- Don't hog the floor! Check that it's not you doing all the talking in the lesson. The purpose of teacher in role is to develop the drama and model drama skills so that children can participate in drama.
- Explain to children who you are going to be. Explain that when, for example, you put the material around you, you will be Red Riding Hood and when you take it off, you will be teacher again.
- If, at first, it doesn't go as planned, feel free to stop, go out of role and give more direction about how children could respond to this character.
- If necessary, discipline from within the role. For example, a character could say "as you know, I've had problems with my hearing so could you just let me hear what's being said over here?" Or a figure like the leader of a group, or royalty, can summon the people to hear a message. This keeps the drama going and can be an effective discipline technique because children are less likely to react negatively.
- When using teacher in role, be clear who you are, who the children are, where you all are and what you want to talk to them about, in role.
- If nerves are an issue in using teacher in role for the first time, take a low-key role that involves reading a letter or a note that comes from another character. For example, Red Riding Hood's mother says, "I know you are all my daughter's friends. I have a note from her here which says 'at Granny's house. Need help'. I don't know what she would need help for and I'm very busy. Is she playing a joke?" And then you encourage children to try and recount what has happened so far, feigning disbelief in order to encourage as much interaction as possible.

### Skills developed:

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| o Literacy    | o Recall   |
| o Negotiation | o Problem solving  |
| o Questioning | o Ability to maintain role and co-operate with others in role. |

## **Mirrored Action**

- Humpty Dumpty - Lesson Three

One person leads and another child, or another group of children follow. At infant level it's generally a good idea to lead and let the whole group follow, for the purpose of class management! The followers ideally achieve a synchronicity with the leader so it's as if they really are a reflection in the mirror.

### **Managing mirroring**

- Start off by checking that the class understand what it is to mirror. Do this by having all the class stand so they can see you, either staggered in rows or in a semi-circle. Then raise one of your hands and ask them to do what you are doing. Walk around to each child and ensure that if you hold out your raised hand it will meet their raised hand (an easy mistake at any age is to hold up the opposite hand rather than the hand that mirrors).
- Begin by doing simple, slow movements such as the following routine. Place one hand on your head. Extend the other arm out to the side. Now bring the hand of that arm up to your head also. Bring both arms down to your sides. Extend the right foot forward. Extend the left foot forward. Bow forwards. Place your hands on your hips.
- Really encourage slow movement, and in silence. Don't feel discouraged if this doesn't happen straight away; this is a skill that develops over time.
- When you think children have the ability to mirror abstract movements, add movements that are related to narrative.
- Try to include as much movement as possible that uses legs, torso and arms, so that children understand that drama involves whole body expression.
- Music can aid this exercise as it helps children to understand the need to work in silence (sometimes children find total silence very challenging, but can work non-verbally when music is used). It is important to choose music that is slow enough.
- Teacher leading a whole group mirroring is a good beginning in terms of skill development and class management. But if you think one of the children would enjoy and/or benefit from leading, or that the class could work in pairs, go for it!

### Skills developed:

- Ability to work in silence and slow down movements
- Observation
- Concentration
- Co-ordination
- Co-operation
- Ability to express non-verbally.

### Journeys

- Humpty Dumpty – Lesson Four
- Aladdin – Lesson Two

The class are guided through an imaginary terrain and move according to what they encounter on the journey.

### Here's a Quick lesson idea!

- Dramatise the story of Going on a Bear Hunt.
- Introduce Creative Drama by introducing characters that children meet along the way, played by you.

### Managing journeys:

- The important thing in dramatising journeys is the belief of the teacher, as he or she is the leader of the expedition! Young children need the teacher's guidance to move through the stages of the journey and to feel it's real. So preparation, such as putting on imaginary back packs or deciding on supplies helps, and talking them through what they are 'seeing' and describing the terrain as you go is very helpful.
- Try out some simple journeys taken from existing stories (most young children's stories have a small number of locations or geographical features that can be 'visited'). This will bring the confidence needed to start creating journeys and to use them as part of a drama class, where the characters in the drama take a journey.
- Space is needed, so it's important that the hall can be used or time is available to move chairs and tables back in the classroom.
- Keep a structure to the movement of the journey by walking in a line, or round in a circle, or with a small group keeping close together.
- It can be a good idea to pre-teach some skills, like having all the children move as if they are walking through snow, squelching through mud, walking on a tightrope, across stepping stones etc.

- Use your role as 'leader' to manage the class, emphasising the need to keep up, be careful, check everyone's ready to move ahead etc.
- When you've gained some confidence about dramatising journeys, develop what happens. Perhaps the children meet someone on the journey, maybe someone who wants them to keep off his or her land, or someone who needs their help (Daisy Duck's mother who has lost her duckling).
- If movement is not possible due to space, try magic carpet guided journeys.

**Skills developed:**

- o Sequencing
- o Early mapping skills
- o Environment vocabulary
- o Imagination

**Action accompanied by music**

- Humpty Dumpty - Lesson Four
- Aladdin – Lesson Six
- Pompeii – Lesson Four

Music is used as a stimulus for children to create their own actions that animate the story of the drama.

**Managing action with music:**

- Music can accompany particular movement, like how a character in the story tiptoes, marches, skips happily or stamps angrily. It can also play a significant part in the story, emphasising a dramatic moment like a crowning of a queen or a walk through a jungle or a forest.
- It's usually best to use music without lyrics. Singing along should only be the goal if the lyrics of the music really suit the characters being played by the children.
- Choose music, where possible, that children won't recognise. It's easier to create an atmosphere connected to the drama if they don't have pre-existing associations with the music.
- Give enough time for them to relax into a dramatic response to the music. For example if you use music for climbing the beanstalk, they might need to respond a few times to really hear how their feet and hands on the beanstalk can correspond to the music.
- See the appendix (page 134) for recommended CD's.

**Skills developed:**

- o Co-ordination
- o Physical expression
- o Response to music
- o Imagination

**Mime:**

- Humpty Dumpty – Lesson Two
- Granny MacGinty – Lesson One
- Roman History – Lesson Three

Children use their hands, eyes and bodies, but not words, to show an idea (a worker pretending to sweep the floor of the palace) or the presence of something (holding the precious crown belonging to the king).

**Managing mime:**

- Encourage belief and participation by commenting on the children's actions as if what is being mimed is real: 'Oh, that's a lovely crown, I can see how careful you are with it, look at the beautiful diamonds'.
- If children aren't clear when they mime, do a demonstration to give them a better idea. Or ask them to pick up a real object like a cup, point out how they hold it in their hands, and then get them to do it without the cup.
- Some classes might find working in silence difficult at first; developing the skill is important, in particular with those who find it tough. So insist on it and persevere!

**Skills developed:**

- o Imagination
- o Spatial awareness
- o Estimation
- o Weight
- o Working in silence.

## Group Narration

- Humpty Dumpty – Lesson Four
- Aladdin – Lesson Two and Three

Children are given a few lines of the drama to say as a whole group. These words might be taken from a story or created by you and/or the children. It is helpful to include some whole group narration from time to time with the younger children because it makes it easier for them to know who they are and what is happening in the drama.

## Tips for group narration

- Use this technique sparingly; otherwise the content of the class will become too concentrated on whole group delivery.
- There's no rule, but good times to use group narration are at the beginning of class (to state who children are, where they are and what their dilemma is), to repeat a rhyme or chant (that can have an effect in the story, like casting a spell etc.), to express a key feeling (e.g. we are the soldiers of the palace; we are sad because Humpty is sad. We do not know what to do) and to narrate a change of place, progression in time or events.
- Where possible, add hand gestures or action to the words that are being said.
- If the children do the group narration in a way that is lacklustre, unclear or doesn't include everyone, have them try it again. It's easy to keep the flow of the story going by saying something like "hmm, I don't think that's going to convince the wolf to let Granny go, can we try that again so that we let the wolf know we really are cross?"

## Skills developed:

- o Co-operation
- o Literacy
- o Sequencing.

## Role on the wall

- Granny MacGinty Lesson One and Three

Children gather words and statements which describe a character in the drama, ideally on a large piece of paper with an outline of a head or figure which denotes the person. As the drama work progresses, the list of words and statements should grow, as the children learn more about the character.



### **Tips for managing role on the wall**

- Make sure you begin the role on the wall as soon as the character is introduced, so that children can see how knowledge about a character increases during drama work.
- Where possible, ask children to write the words or statements themselves, as it helps to make them feel more involved. (Writing the statements can be a good way of drawing in a shy child.)
- Use role on the wall for peripheral as well as key protagonists in the story. It's a good way of showing that all characters affect the outcomes of stories.
- Remember that for role to be a dramatic activity, it has to be based on drama work. If it's done as a result of reading a story, it's an English activity.

### **Skills developed:**

- o Character analysis
- o Descriptive words

### **Freeze Frame**

- Humpty Dumpty – Lesson One, Four, Five
- Granny MacGinty – Lesson Three
- Aladdin – Lesson One, Five
- Roman History – Lesson Two

Children, individually or in groups, express a thought or situation by holding still (sometimes called still image or still pictures). No speech is used.

### **Tips for managing Freeze Frame:**

- Develop skills for freeze frame by doing a move-freeze-move exercise such as musical statues
- Encourage clear expression by asking children to 'times ten' their freeze frames, in other words exaggerate their expression.
- Explain to children that they follow these instructions: '1, 2, 3, freeze! Hold 2, 3, Freeze! Relax'.
- With older children, use pictures and photographs and have them recreate the image, focussing on body shape and expression.

### **Skill development**

- o Studying visual images
- o Movement.

### **Hot Seat**

- Granny MacGinty - Lesson Three
- Aladdin - Lesson Five.

Children take on the role of a character in a story; the hot seat process enables them to look at the situation from the characters perspective and analyse their experience, thoughts and motivations.

### **Managing hot seat:**

- Some questions should be prepared in advance so the exercise doesn't fall flat.
- Open-ended questions should be emphasised so the person in the hot seat isn't simply saying 'yes' or 'no'.
- The person going into the hot seat must be helped to take on the attributes of the character first, otherwise the exercise is not dramatic.
- Develop children's drama skills by emphasising the importance of staying in character during the exercise.
- Have the rest of the class help the person in the hot seat to prepare a way of sitting, speaking, holding head and hands etc.
- Have those asking questions take on a role also, as reporters/paparazzi/people who know the character in some way.

### **Skills developed:**

- o Questioning Skills
- o Character work.

There is now a wealth of expertise in this country from people who are bringing good arts teaching to schools. We can learn so much from those currently pioneering the Drama Curriculum in Irish schools. Kevin Murphy is one of those people; here he gives an insight into his understanding of Drama in Education, his experience of teaching Drama in our primary schools and what is working for him. He concentrates on the physical expression of Drama work.

**Kevin Murphy: Dancer, Choreographer, Dance and Drama teacher**

**Q. Your work is a combination of dance and drama. How do these areas overlap in your view?**

**A.** Very obviously I think. In both art forms, when you perform, you need to be physically and mentally aware of place and space.

*The 'place and space' that Kevin talks about here are crucial to the performing arts. If you focused on just these two concepts in your work with children, you would teach them a lot. You can do this by asking children to articulate, before they show work, where the characters are. For example, if they approach a castle on the top of a hill in their scene, perhaps they are out of breath after the walk and as they see the castle they look up as it looms above them. They might move in a line because the path to the castle has become overgrown, or look down in trepidation as they cross the drawbridge over the moat. By having to articulate where they are, children are encouraged to show place and space. If they don't show it clearly, you can give examples about how to do so (walking on a tightrope, being in a lift, walking through a forest) and then allow children to return to their own ideas about the story of the drama with increased awareness.*

**Q. What's your approach to managing groups of children in dance/drama sessions?**

**A.** First and foremost, I try to maintain a good sense of listening, to make sure that everyone understands the information being given. It's crucial to check and check again that everyone in the class knows what the task involves and that it's ok to say that you don't understand. I also have the rule that if anyone speaks when I'm speaking, I stop. That seems to have the effect that they maintain the listening themselves and they'll shush each other if I stop because someone's talking.

*One of the things that teachers particularly admire about Kevin's work is his capability in managing children. It's not effective to try and copy someone's approach if your personality is different, but you can pick up some tips. Kevin's extensive experience allows him to know what skills children need. I remember him working for three months with some junior classes only in stop, start and listening exercises. He knew that with this foundation they would be more rewarded when they began more creative dance work. You too should feel confident to start slowly; expecting too much too soon only frustrates you and the class. Remember too, skills need practice.)*

**Q. What structures/planning help schools to develop good arts teaching within the school?**

**A.** The best work happens when teachers are involved in, or at least enthusiastic about the session. It doesn't have to be full participation but lack of interest on the part of teachers is detrimental. It's very important to remember the extent to which kids read the teacher. They have a huge desire to say "look what I did!" to their teachers and when the teachers aren't watching or are just going through the motions of the session, the children don't try half as much.

*What Kevin is stating is one of the most important things that all successful arts teachers learn at some point, and was highlighted by a teacher in one of his sessions who said: "You realize you might never be as skilled as a professional artist but you realize that you can do so much through your own enthusiasm."*

**Q. What do you feel children learn by doing this work? Can you give an example of how this occurs?**

**A.** Well, I feel that I'm educating through physical awareness. That's what I focus on as the outcome of the work that I do. I'll give you an example of a class I began working with recently: for most of them hitting each other is not an issue, it's something they do. For them it's how they interact with each other, it's a form of touch and contact and a way of getting attention. They don't view it as negative but I've been working on giving them other forms of contact. So I've taught them an exercise where, when you touch soft body parts such as the nose, you have to be gentle. And now they've started to extend that gentle touch (without me telling them to) to touching elbows, heads, etc. as well. So that helps them to make physical contact with each other less aggressively.

*I'm sure some teachers will be familiar with classes who they feel will (or already do) find the co-operative aspect of drama difficult because they lack physical discipline or are more comfortable with aggressive physical interactions. It can be a good idea to take time developing more positive physical skills through movement based work at the start of a drama programme.*

**Q. Do you have advice for people working with children with special needs in dance/drama?**

**A.** I have experience working in this area, in special schools and in integrated classes, and I've found that children with special needs respond brilliantly to this kind of work. I do think though that there should be more briefing for visiting artists and teachers in this area, regarding the children's backgrounds and their needs. I've found the Special Needs Assistant to be crucial in transferring the information, when they're there you don't have to reduce the speed or content of the session. I think what children with special needs respond to most about this work is that there's no right or wrong. I think teachers have an instinct to point out what's right. They don't feel that need in my sessions, because there aren't rules about how it is or isn't done. Whatever moves or shapes the child comes up with, you can work with. I do an exercise where, as children move around the room, different children dictate how the group moves. The other children have to take their cue from that move and so they make a positive of the style and pace of the movement, no matter what it is.

*This echoes what teachers notice so often when they use the arts in their classroom. Children respond to the fact that there is no right or wrong. I heard one teacher say on the MUS-E programme (International Arts Education Project 2001-4) that she noticed "during the arts sessions, children never say I can't" and she was sure it was due to the open ended nature of the arts. It's important to provide all children, but especially those with special needs, the opportunities to work in ways and media that make them feel they have a real chance of being successful.*

*Remember however, that sometimes when a child is used to working in a way where correct or incorrect has been a focus, they can feel insecure about moving away from this. With a little time, they will find the security to be freer in their approach to work, once they understand there is value in their individual expressions.*

**Q. What advice would you give teachers who are new to this kind of work?**

A. I would say read the books, try it out; you'll know what works and what doesn't work with your class. I would also advise buying a little book where you keep a note of what works - you'll soon have a notebook full of ideas! That's when you get the confidence to start putting in your own ideas along with the ideas you've learnt along the way.

*In the planning section of this book, you are encouraged to work with your own ideas (and the children's) as much as possible, in order to find the creative aspect that makes the arts work. It is true to say however, that at the beginning of trying out this kind of work, people inevitably look for books and attend workshops for inspiration. As Kevin says, you will know what works for your class and your own teaching style. And this will build your confidence.*

**Q. Increasingly teachers hear that process is more important than product so therefore performance is seen as less important. What's your view on that?**

A. I think there is a problem with performance if it's too adult-oriented. It's someone else's work in that case. It's different if the class have learned something or worked on something that they're proud of and they want to show it. But performance can be a pressure that's off putting and it has to be the case that to say "I don't want to" is okay. And sometimes children sit out and look on and then say "I should have done that" and that's a learning process in itself.

*The performance issue has been previously discussed but it's useful to have it reiterated. Kevin is saying that performance is fine if it reflects the work of the individuals involved and their desire to show the work.*

**Q. Is there a difference between teaching in and through dance/drama?**

A. I don't see myself as teaching one or the other. I'm educating through physical awareness and I borrow from a number of art forms in order to do that. Sometimes if children are doing something that lacks physical awareness I ask them if they're tired. They always say no! Then I explain that I read them as being tired. I might ask them to watch as I walk into the room and slam the door. I ask how they read me and they say angry. So then I ask them to do the piece again but do it so they show they're not tired.

*This is a great example of how to teach skills in this area through positive example. Kevin is not saying, "that's not good, you need to do it again and better". He is showing them the*



*importance of body language and how to interpret it. He does not ask them to copy him in order to learn. He gives them an example and then asks them to transfer the skill to their own work.*

### **Example from an Irish classroom teacher: Adrian Morrissey**

Adrian is a recent graduate of training college and teaches First Class in a boys' school in Dublin. He uses drama a lot in his teaching and I visited his class to see them in action. Over a few weeks they had developed a drama about a Super City where they lived as Super Heroes. It was a great example of what boys of this age want from drama and of how they can learn from it. Adrian realised that, as is typical with six or seven year old boys, they had a fascination with super heroes.

So he took the focus of their play and interest and used it to develop structured drama. He posed key questions for them such as what the place they live in is like, what kind of super heroes they were, and what happens in the life of a super hero. By responding to these questions, the boys were working on crucial elements of drama such as place, character and significance. The structure that the boys' teacher gave them also took the focus off the potentially aggressive story theme as he encouraged them to think about how the superheroes used their powers for the good of the city they lived in.

The story evolved over three weeks and what was notable was that a lot of it was covered through work in subject areas other than drama. At the time mapping was being studied in SESE, so together a map of Super City was drawn and hung on the wall. In art, large posters were painted showing the shops, restaurants, and streetscape of Super City. These were tacked onto tables which were put on their side to act as sets for the action of the drama. Adrian found that having this 'set' really helped the boys to get in role as they could more easily imagine the fictional setting. It also helped the boys to have a good sense of drama space as they had to be clear about which scenes took place in the street, which scenes in the prison etc. The boys also used art to make ID badges showing their superhero names and powers (a sense of individual identity is a key curriculum area of SPHE). 3-D shape was being studied in maths at the time so this was used in the script they developed to describe the land where they lived. Lots of work was done in English to develop and refine the characters' words. So by the time I visited I saw quite a developed drama, which had not taken a lot of time as most curricular areas had contributed to it.

After all the work they had done, the boys were eager to 'perform' their drama. It was clear that they were proud of it because they had created it and it was their story. The process of creating it grew into a product, but the original purpose had been to create rather than



perform. Each child had developed their own role and their own superhero identity and this had created ownership of the work. One boy spent three hours at home decorating a t-shirt for a costume in the drama. An underlying theme of the drama also was the importance of working together, which helped create a collective pride in the work.

This was the opening of the story, which the boys worded and added actions to, helped by their teacher:

"Hello. We are all super heroes. Our job is saving lives and fighting crime. We live in the wonderful world of Super City. At the back of our city you can see the mountain, it is called Fudge Mountain. We have two restaurants called 'Eddie Rockets' and 'Captain America's' because we love those places. They give us strength to fight crime. Super City is different than any other place, the people travel around in hover ships. The houses are all sorts of 3 D shapes, like pyramids, diamonds, cuboids, cubes, spheres and cylinders. We do our shopping at super shops, they have everything there. When we are all together, we are invincible. Let's go and save our city!"

This was done as a group narration. Adrian noted that doing this, particularly as the drama began, gave them a sense of unity (underscoring the curriculum aims of SPHE) and a sense of importance about what they were doing. He found that creating actions to animate the words was crucial as some children find it much easier to speak when they have an action to associate with the word. And if they get muddled about a word, they're not lost as they can still join in with the action. Later in the drama each character introduced himself, clearly announcing his powers and demonstrating them. (The characters had lots of positive or magical powers, rather than just aggressive ones; examples were Adam Flaming Spook, Robert Invisible Man and Callum Mighty Muscles). The boys enacted scenes of superheroes fighting criminals. They were very enthusiastic about these scenes, but they did not (as might be imagined!) prove chaotic. Firstly, during the scene, the majority of superheroes were situated in the 'meeting room' watching as the criminals entered super city. Then, the superheroes involved in the scene announced to their 'audience' how they intended to use their powers to combat crime. Adrian feels the device of having children articulate step by step what is about to happen in the scene is essential; he finds it clarifies for children watching and also reminds the 'performers' (particularly younger ones) of what they need to do. And crucially, in any scene of a combative nature, slow motion and no physical contact was stressed. Adrian did comment that for scenes like this, it was important that he had already done drama with them for several months so they were used to working in slow motion and freezing. He pointed out too, that practice of scenes like that was very important so that children could learn the skill of how to dramatise such a scene.

A final tip from Adrian was one that is not only encouraging but also, I believe, absolutely

true. He said that in developing dramas, the children in his class come up with the best ideas and that the best tool for drama was the mind of a seven year old!

And to reiterate that point, as I left the classroom, they were discussing whether having captured the criminals they would take over the world (and what would happen then) or whether the families of the criminals would be happy they stopped their wrong doing and come and live with them in super city. So already they have ideas about what happens in the next lesson!

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### Useful addresses

ADEI (Association for Drama in Education in Ireland)  
Colm Hefferon  
Membership Secretary  
Saint Patrick's College  
Drumcondra  
Dublin 9  
01 8842076

OR

Michael Finneran  
Vice Chairman ADEI  
Mary Immaculate College  
University of Limerick  
South Circular Road  
Limerick  
Phone: 061 204976

[www.ict.mic.ul/.ie/adei/](http://www.ict.mic.ul/.ie/adei/)

Expanding Dance (Kevin Murphy): 087 234 8941

Graffiti Theatre Company  
Graffiti Theatre  
Assumption Road  
Blackpool  
Cork  
[www.graffiti.ie](http://www.graffiti.ie)

National Association for Youth Drama  
34 Upper Gardiner Street  
Dublin 1  
Phone: 01 8781301  
[info@nayd.ie](mailto:info@nayd.ie)

Team Educational Theatre Company  
4, Marlborough Place  
Dublin 1  
Phone: 01 8786108  
[info@teamtheatre.ie](mailto:info@teamtheatre.ie)

**Addresses for buying puppets:**

[www.puppetuniverse.com](http://www.puppetuniverse.com)

[www.puppetsbypost.com](http://www.puppetsbypost.com)

[www.shopireland.ie](http://www.shopireland.ie)

**Addresses for Early Years Role Play Equipment Suppliers**

[www.cleverkids.ie](http://www.cleverkids.ie)

[www.hope-education.co.uk/](http://www.hope-education.co.uk/)

**Addresses for sites with nursery rhymes:**

[www.kididdles.com](http://www.kididdles.com)

[www.NIEHSKid's](http://www.NIEHSKid's)

**Recommended cds**

**Humpty Dumpty:**

Primary School Dance Music:

Val Sabin Publications, 125 Harlestone Road, Northampton, NN5 6AA

[www.valsabinpublications.com](http://www.valsabinpublications.com)

**Roman History:**

Simply the Best of Classical Anthems

**Aladdin:**

Dance Arabian Nights

Café Arabia Volume 2: Arabian Music Stars from the Golden Era

**General use:**

World, Classical and Hits Collections (Your own selection)

**Items to begin a prop box:**

Telephones

Miscellaneous material and costume

Hats

Bags

Newspapers

Walking sticks

Binoculars

Vases

Cups and saucers

Old watches

Wands and Crowns

Feather Boas

Steering wheels

Cash registers

## NOTES



A unique and very useful guide for primary school teachers who want to increase the amount of drama work in the classroom – full of valuable insights, lesson plans and practical advice to help teachers to successfully include the educational benefits of drama into their teaching and learning strategies, to the benefit of all pupils.

*“This is a practical guide to teaching drama in the primary classroom. It offers step-by-step guidance to help teachers grow in confidence in their use of drama across the curriculum. A great book for beginners!”*

Carmel O’Sullivan, Lecturer, School of Education, Trinity College Dublin and  
Chairperson of ADEI (The Association of Drama in Education in Ireland)

### KEY TOPICS IN THE BOOK INCLUDE:

- Many examples of practical drama teaching strategies
- Advice on how best to use these teaching strategies
- A variety of lesson plans with photo-copiable resources
- References to strands and strand units from the other subjects
- Specific tips for those involved in early years education
- Examples of how drama can be employed in any subject to help childrens’ comprehension of complex material
- Useful resources and websites



### About the Author

Una McCabe lectures in Education (Drama) at Saint Patrick's College, Dublin. She has a wide experience of Drama in Education through her work with children of all ages, student teachers and practicing teachers. She has also worked with actors, as a trainer and consultant. Una is a regular contributor to journals and conferences in Ireland and abroad on the importance of the Creative Arts in Education.

**Contains Lesson Plans with photo-copiable resources**

*“There are many teachers who believe in the importance of drama for children’s learning, who acknowledge that Drama needs to be taught as part of the curriculum, but who are slightly panicked by the thought of teaching it! This book is intended as a support for the latter group and I hope it provides the tools to feel more confident and more proficient in using drama in the classroom.”*

Una McCabe