

Active Citizenship Using Drama

Introduction



Using Drama to Promote Active Citizenship

These lessons accompany the short film and script of 'A Stone's Throw' by Maire Campbell and use Drama and active teaching and learning strategies to support and develop the teaching of Active Citizenship at Key Stage 3. All pupils are expected to have watched the film and read the script before starting the lessons.

Each lesson addresses a theme from 'A Stone's Throw' as follows:

Lesson 1: Family Relationships and Conflict

Lesson 2: Peer Pressure

Lesson 3: Consequences

Lesson 4: Jack's Mental Health

Lesson 5: Jack's Journey

Through active participation in these lessons, pupils will have opportunities to:

- explore and understand the basic characteristics of democracy and how the criminal justice system works for young people;
- investigate why laws are needed, how they are enforced and how breaches of the law affect the community; and
- investigate issues from different viewpoints and suggest action that might be taken or how to resolve a difficult situation.

By using Drama in the lessons, pupils will be able to openly share ideas, work in a practical way and actively participate in role-play situations in a safe environment.

The lessons will give teachers the opportunity to develop their teaching of citizenship for all Year 10 pupils and use Drama as a teaching tool. Teachers do not have to be Drama teachers or have had any training in Drama to adopt and develop these lessons, but they should act as facilitators to help the pupils in their learning.

The lessons will use Drama strategies and these will be detailed for teachers. It is also expected that, as these lessons are part of active learning,

the pupils should have space to work, which might mean clearing desks and chairs in the room.

As part of the Arts Area of Learning, Drama is a discrete and statutory subject in all schools in Northern Ireland, so pupils should already have experience of using the key Drama strategies that are part of the statutory requirement. They should also have experience of working in a practical way in the classroom. The guidance will also include possible warm-up activities that will prepare the pupils in readiness for the practical work.

It is important to understand that Drama is being used as a more practical approach to learning in these lessons and therefore it is about *process* and not *product*. Props, costumes and using theatre equipment, specialist language or accents are not required. It should be a learner-centred classroom rather than teacher-centred. Teachers will also include Thinking Skills in their teaching and Drama allows many opportunities to use these skills in their work.

The role of the teacher

All lessons should begin with the pupils and the teacher sitting or standing in a circle so that everyone can be seen when the group is discussing the topic. For the debrief/evaluation at the end of the lesson, pupils and the teacher should return to the circle.

The teacher's role will be as a 'flexible facilitator'. The main objectives for the teacher will be to introduce the topic, encourage pupils to move the situation further, make suggestions and help to develop an outcome. Performance is not required in lessons and performance skills are not the focus of the lesson. However, in order to evaluate the learning, pupils will often need to 'show' their work. Evaluation will often be by practical engagement and sharing presentations that the pupils have created and devised.

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Drama strategies used in the Active Citizenship 'A Stone's Throw' lessons

One of the main forms used in Drama is **improvisation**.

Improvisation is the enactment, or re-enactment, of real or fictional situations, usually without a script, although the stimulus for an improvisation may be text-based. In improvisation, pupils take on roles within a group and engage in a variety of situations,

addressing a series of problems from an adopted point of view. Improvisations may be spontaneous or prepared, during which pupils develop a response and employ the skills necessary to gain insight into and deal with the problem presented.

Using improvisations in these lessons may include some of the following activities.

Activities

Flashbacks and Flash Forwards

These are improvisations, which are created by the pupils when they are asked to improvise scenes that take place minutes, days or years before or after a dramatic moment. The method can be used to add background, a new dimension or depth to a scene so that the pupils can understand or be more objective about a situation or issue.

Waxworks

Pupils create a still image of a character by asking a pupil to stand in a specific way to create a character. Pupils can then ask the pupil to change stance, expression, gesture, movement and eventually voice to make the character as realistic as possible.

Interview

Pupils work in pairs and may alternate the role of interviewer and interviewee. In formulating questions, pupils need to reflect upon the likely progress and possible direction of the drama. This may be a police/legal/domestic situation and pupils sometimes need to research the background to the topic.

Documentary

This requires close co-operation amongst a number of small groups of pupils within the class, developing improvisations on various aspects of a topic. It calls for research and careful reflection on all the improvisations in order to develop a presentation on a topic such as 'The Justice System' or 'Young Offenders'.

Camera Blog

Pupils speak about themselves or about their character directly to the camera. Once the blog is recorded, pupils can view their presentation and improve the content, vocal or quality of recording by re-recording.

Verbal Dynamics

Pupils change the pitch, pace, tone and inflection of their voice to create dynamic effects in choral work. They can also add sound effects, repetition of words, movement and invented sounds to enhance the overall performance.

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Other Drama strategies will include:

Strategies

Tableau

The pupils create and present a still image that represents, in symbolic form, the essential nature of the situation, relationship or incident; it may also be a comment or reflection on it. Pupils could show a tableau of anger, conflict or devise a specific domestic image. A tableau is like a painting as the pupils create it from a blank canvas.

Freeze Frame

A freeze frame is a still picture, like a photograph, which is suddenly obtained by stopping the action of the drama. The teacher may ask for reflection from the pupils in role as to the significance of the particular moment in the script. The pupils could also decide on a significant moment to stop the drama.

Hot Seating

A character is asked questions by other members of the class to which replies are made in role. The pupil continues to pretend that he/she is the fictional character. Those asking questions may or may not be in role. The character may be real, such as a character from the script, or it may be an imaginary/invented character.

Thought Tracking

Pupils, in role, are asked to say what they are thinking or feeling at a given moment in the drama; other pupils may be asked to add what the character is thinking or feeling at that moment.

Good/Bad Angel

When a character is faced with making a decision, thoughts can be developed and extended by using two pupils who stand on either side of the character and speak aloud positive and negative thoughts to help the decision being made.

Conscience Alley

This is a form of thought tracking where pupils form two straight lines facing each other. A character, such as Jack, moves down the alley at a given moment and each pupils in turn voices a thought or feeling as the character. Lines should be no more than 12 (6 pupils on each side) and may be divided into positive and negative responses. Other members of the class may be reporters or observers.

Forum Theatre

This is a form of interactive drama that explores solutions of real-life dilemmas in a safe environment to stimulate action, discussion and debate. The pupils take the place of the characters and can stop or change the action. It is a technique used as part of the Theatre of the Oppressed created by Brazilian theatre director Augusto Boal to empower the audience individuals to determine social justice and social change.

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Warm-Up Exercises

Using voice, movement, gesture and facial expression are vital in developing learning through Drama and it is important that the pupils and the teacher are relaxed and comfortable in working in a more practical format. In order to bring the pupils to a readiness for working in a more active and practical way, lessons should begin with some warm-up exercises such as:

Breathing Exercises

Teachers can begin with simple breathing exercises. Breathing in through the nose for a count of 4, holding breath for 4 and breathing out through the mouth for 12 and increasing exhalation and asking them to hum, whisper or speak the numbers etc.

Voice Exercises

Articulation exercises are also very useful. Asking the pupils to say B, D, F, H, G, M, N, P, T, W in different tones and attitudes, for example angry, shy, sad, worried, cool etc.

Movement Exercises

Movement sequences are also useful and enjoyable for Key Stage 3 pupils. They can be led by the teacher or the pupils and can be developed and extended with each lesson. Begin with stretches, circling wrists, shoulders etc. and then steps in sequence to left and right and add stamps, claps etc. Music and beat should be used for movement work.

Teachers can also select an appropriate warm-up game to introduce the lesson, such as:

Status Line

Pupils make a diagonal line across the room using their first name alphabetically, their birthday from January to December, the number of their house etc.

Shapes

Pupils move around the room and are asked to form two circles. Turn their circles to squares, rectangles, right-angled triangles etc.

All Change

Pupils sit in a circle with one pupil standing in the middle who has to try to get a seat by asking for all pupils with black shoes, blue eyes, a ring etc. to change. Pupils should not move to the seat nearest to them.

Grouping

Pupils walk around the space and then have to get into groups of 5, 3, 6, 4 etc. Those left out have to do the maths by saying the remainder.

Memory

Pupils greet each pupil with a firm handshake, eye contact and information in the form of, 'I like ...' Pupils have to try and remember what each pupil likes.

Even or Odd

Pupils take either an odd or even number of marbles, sweets etc. in their hand and pupils meet each other to guess the number. If they get it wrong, they sit down. The last pupil left is the winner.

Machine

One pupil creates a shape in the middle of the room and includes a rhythmic movement as part of a machine. One pupil at a time connects to the machine to build up a complete unit. Pupils may also add appropriate sound effects.

O'Grady Says

One pupil calls out instructions for the rest of the group. Pupils only respond if they are asked by O'Grady. 'O'Grady says put your hands on your head.' Pupils have to sit out if they respond incorrectly.

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Buzz Blink

Pupils count aloud in sequence but decide, for example, that every 3 and multiple of 3 is called **Buzz** and every 10 and multiple is **Blink**. Any pupil who gets it wrong sits out until there is a winner.

Sequence

Pupils sit in a circle and one begins with, 'In my granda's trunk I found a ...' and add an object such as a medal, saxophone or football. Pupils must remember all the objects that are added in sequence and they are out of the game if they have a long pause, are incorrect or hesitate.

Story Build

Pupils sit in a circle and begin a story by saying one word at a time. 'One, Day, I, Went, To', etc. When it comes to a full stop, the pupil says 'full stop' and then begins the next sentence with a new word. Pupils have to listen carefully and make sense. Stories can continue by suggesting which words they cannot use, such as 'and', 'dog' or 'I'.

Teachers should also refer to the Northern Ireland Curriculum CCEA document [Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3](#) for further ideas.