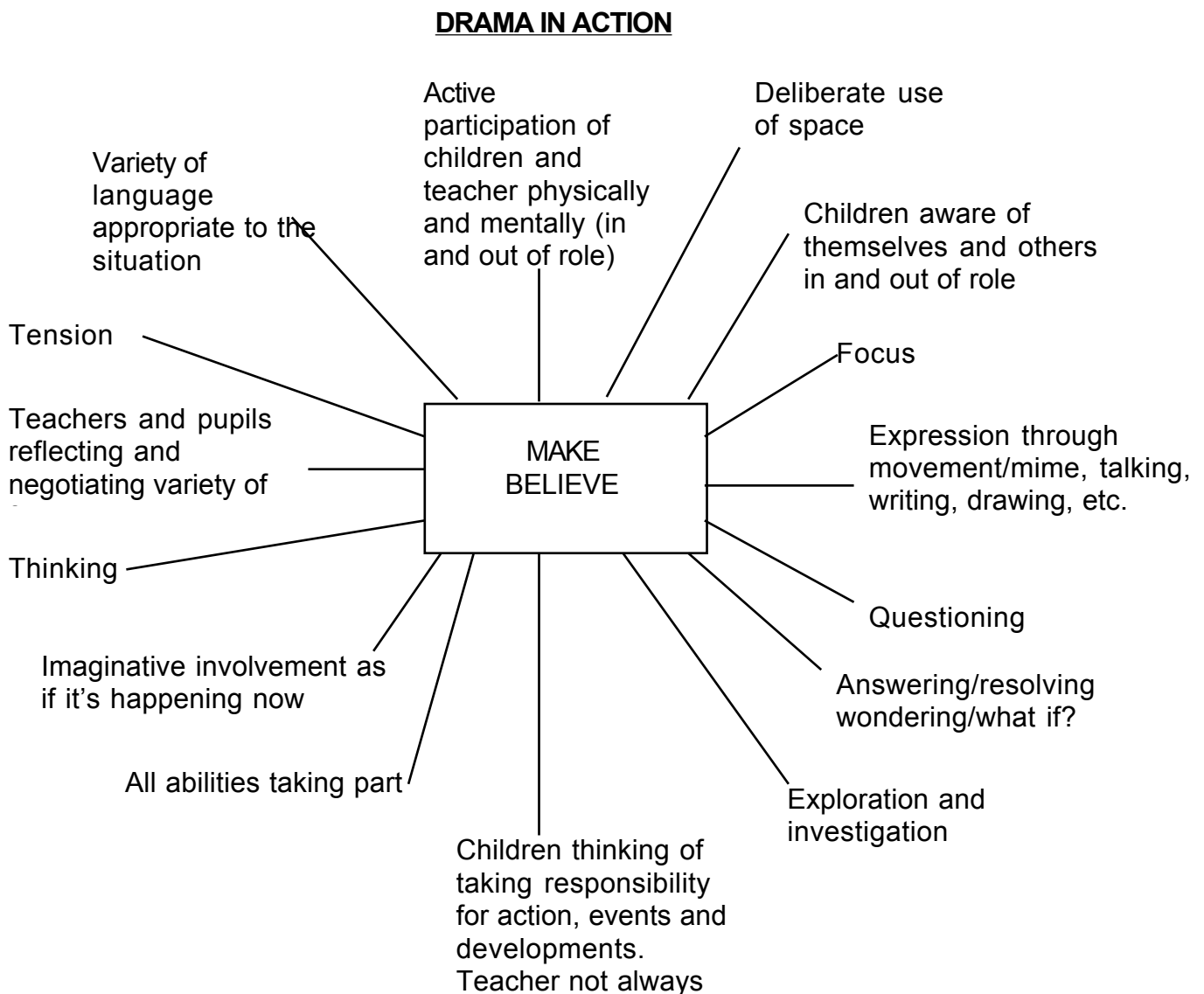


WHAT IS DRAMA IN ACTION?

1. Drama is a learning medium rooted in the child's experience of play which is exploited to create fictions within a variety of imagined contexts.
2. In drama, these fictions are experienced as though they were really happening.
3. The teacher enters these fictions to enhance the children's understanding of themselves, their relationships and their environment.
4. An appropriate form of reflection is a part of the drama and is necessary to complete the learning.



As an observer of a drama lesson you might see a combination of any of the above features. All this structured and developed by teachers and students together.

WHAT FORMS OF LEARNING ARE POSSIBLE/DESIRABLE IN DRAMA?

Social	The children learn to negotiate, listen, respect others' point of view, compromise, modify and synthesise views and take on responsibility.
Conceptual	The children will make a shift to understanding and will deepen their awareness of universal concepts within the issues being explored.
Contextual	The children will learn particular factual information relating to the topic being examined.
Dramatic Form	Children will learn to use dramatic art form and increase their aesthetic awareness.

WHAT PROVISION IS NEEDED FOR EFFECTIVE DRAMA TEACHING?

- (a) Appropriate value to be placed on drama by the Headteacher and colleagues so that INSET provision can be made and adequate timetabling allowed for.
- (b) Staff development policy and programme should be introduced to enable all staff to become familiar with and where possible to acquire confidence and expertise in using drama and dramatic methods in teaching-for example-rolling role and mantle of the expert.
- (c) Provision for existing expertise in school to be made available to colleagues. Timetabling to allow teachers to work with classes alongside their teachers.
- (d) Provision of a suitable working space.
- (e) Proper capitation allowance for drama resources.
- (f) Provision of suitable reading materials for teachers to browse-books especially by leading authors in the field-Jonathan Needlands, Cecily O'Neil, Gavin Bolton, Dorothy Heathcote, Eileen Pennington, Brian Edmiston, Mike Fleming, Nora Morgan and Juliana Saxton.
- (g) Contacts with leading UK drama communities for learning-National Drama, National Association for the Teaching of Drama (NATD), Essex Advisory and Inspection services, the PSLNs that have focussed on drama and creativity, (Terling and BAT1C1, and others-please contact Sally Moorcock at County Hall for further details)
- (h) Creative Partnerships across the UK have many examples of best practice-use the web to find out more.
- (i) The university of Newcastle upon Tyne has sets DVD's designed for teacher training in dramatic methods-for example-'Unlocking the Curriculum Cage' 2006.

DRAMA ENABLES CHILDREN TO:

- structure and experience real life events and challenges as though they are 'happening now'- but with the advantage of being able to reflect outside the fiction and perhaps change the outcomes or remodel depending on their thinking;
- develop confidence and self-esteem;
- feel, think and reflect;
- experience someone else's point of view;
- negotiate with others;
- communicate through many different forms;
- encourage creativity;
- link into the world and community;

and finally:

- Take responsibility for their own actions in the fiction-that could in the hands of a knowing teacher enable learners to see the potential for their own lives.

WHAT PLACE HAS DRAMA IN THE OVERALL SCHOOL CURRICULUM?

- (a) Social developments/relationships are central to drama, and common to many Curricular areas;
- (b) Drama can provide curriculum support to many other subject areas;
- (c) Drama builds a certain confidence in children which spills over into other areas of school life;
- (d) Drama can provide not only an awareness of present day issues but also understanding of the historical circumstances which gave rise to them.

DRAMA STRATEGIES

Narrative	to set the scene; to move the action on; to build belief etc, e.g. "Once there was a group of Cave People".
Questioning	to find out and keep a focus within the drama or to challenge presumptions, e.g. 'If we take every one on board the space ship-how do we know there's enough room for us to sleep?'
Ritual	the unity of everyone doing the same thing; to build belief in the context, e.g. a group of infants come together to cast a spell.
Structured Play	the opportunity for children to create a context and build commitment to the make believe setting, e.g. as 'problem solvers' children create the offices where they work by finding all the things they need-hard hats etc.....from the play corner.
Pair Work	to share knowledge, report back etc, e.g. reporters interview astronauts before their flight.
Small Group Work	to find shape and language for their ideas, e.g. the children in groups as Normans show some difficulties that invaders face with the local population.
Frozen Pictures	to get in a controlled way to the heart of the learning, e.g. a group of factory workers are asked to show the class a frozen moment of an accident which is indicative of the kind of problems they have to face during their working day.
Teacher in Role	to shape, focus, challenge, support from within the drama, e.g. teacher in role with the class as a 'farmer' who has a major challenge with all those caterpillars!
Using Mantle Of the Expert	To set up an enquiry using steps into a fictional company or enterprise. This system if used well can teach the majority of 'subjects' in the current NC in a social way.

PLANNING FOR DRAMA

Like any good lesson or set of lessons, a drama session needs organising. Using this planning sequence in the first stages of teaching can ensure you plan a learning structure which will be 'drama' based. For more information and plans that have worked-go to:

www.e-gfl.org/drama:

- (a) Choose a THEME that could be an area you are working on already or in the future: **'What is the main area we need to investigate or enquire into?'**- E.g. Vikings, co-operation, measuring, islands etc.
- (b) Choose your imaginary CONTEXT: that is **"the fictional circumstances under which the learning can happen"**, e.g. in a museum, on a building site, inside a clothes shop, outside a space ship, in the environs of a park.
- (c) Choose the children's ROLES: that is **"who are the children going to be in the fictional setting?"** As children become more practised in drama they can take a variety of roles within the context. **To begin with -the 'group role' can help learners build the dramatic world so that other roles can be explored as they are needed. E.g. park Keepers who are checking the fences come across a vagrant sleeping rough.....**in this case another adult was the vagrant. Of course-the class could then explore the world of vagrants and their lives by stepping into role as vagrants themselves-perhaps at a shelter for such people in London on a cold and bitter night ready to sign in and tell their stories of how their day passed by.
- (d) Choose YOUR ROLE: that is **"who am I going to be?"** It is possible to remain as teacher throughout the drama and guide the action from the outside. This keeps the power in the hands of the teacher. However- you can be **in the drama**, e.g. chief curator, the site manager, a giant or better still-a role that is an admin type that cannot be ignored! For example-the park keepers admin agent who has to answer all the mail and order what's needed in the park.
- (e) Choose your FRAME: that is **"the viewpoint from which the role enters the drama."** **This will create tension**, e.g. a farmer who has had all her crops eaten by caterpillars, or a space technical person who has discovered a small hole in one of the boxes from a newly discovered planet.....
- (f) Choose your TENSION & FOCUS: that is **"what is the drama about?"** The problem to be solved, e.g. how can we make an exhibit about Viking life so that the visitors don't get bored? What do we say to persuade the bricklayers to help? How do we make the giant some clothes that will fit?
- (g) Choose your ACTION: that is **"what are the children going to do?"** This can be action in the physical sense of moving, e.g. pacing out the size of the 'Viking Room', hammering and sawing, cutting and sewing, but can also be activities such as writing, drawing, discussing, demonstrating, e.g. designing a talking waxworks Viking museum, practising persuading language, writing a letter to the giant. These actions do not constitute all the action of a drama. As you become more experienced, you will draw much from the children; however, **make sure you always have some tasks planned.**

- (h) Choose your HOOK: that is **“what can I use to attract the children’s attention in the first place?”** You always have yourself to engage the children’s interest, but other ‘hooks’ could be a letter, an article of clothing, an object, a picture, a tape recorded message, another person in role, etc. Your hook is the vital ingredient. If chosen well it will start the children building an investment in the drama - wanting to make it on their own, e.g. a Viking shield, a letter from the boss, a jacket with bust seams.

Some do’s:

- Many other ways will emerge from your own experiments. Try to use the planning scheme for a while-then become bolder!
- Try to listen to the class as the events unfold and use as many ideas from the class as is possible. This will pull in many learners who might be in the reluctant category.
- If you feel uncomfortable at any point you can always STOP it and discuss what was up!
- Go to as many INSET events as you can to keep up the skills.
- Get a name for yourself in school as the teacher who is enthusiastic about drama for learning.
- Go to the website as often as you can and look up schools experimenting-like Bealings CP in Suffolk, Terling CP in Essex and Tuckswood in Norwich, Norfolk. The eastern region is getting famous for its steps into drama and many schools like those above will be only too glad to share their work. Also Essex PSLNs are becoming well known for their research into effective practice in creative approaches.
- Realise that drama is a social art form in the main-so be social-encourage children to tell their carers and parents what they are up to-also tell your colleagues what you are trying with your classes and see what the reaction will be!
- Very often other teachers get to hear and try as well-so be prepared to share what ever you know-many great teaching partnerships are built on such beginnings.
- Net work-net work-net work!

Some don’ts:

- Never con children by avoiding the convention that drama happens in a make believe.
- **Don’t ever give up trying.**
- **Remember the best teachers using drama have had many lessons that needed remodelling!**

Luke Abbott

(Based on a model by Shama with thanks.)