

Learning through Drama

in the Primary Years



David Farmer

Learning Through Drama in the Primary Years

Learning Through Drama contains drama strategies and lesson plans for use with primary school children both within subject areas and as extended learning opportunities in whole class drama sessions.

This practical handbook explores how to use the greatest resource that teachers have available to them – children’s imagination. Play is a natural part of children’s lives before they start school, helping them to make sense of their place in the world. Such creativity can be harnessed through drama to enable active and interactive learning experiences throughout the primary years and across the curriculum.

This book will help you if:

- ★ You have never taught drama before but are considering using it in a subject area such as science or history.
- ★ You are familiar with common drama techniques such as hot seating but would like to try out new approaches.
- ★ You would like to teach thematic drama units linked to several areas of the curriculum.
- ★ You would like to find out how drama can be used to inspire speaking, listening and writing.

Includes 36 drama strategies and over 250 cross-curricular activities.

David Farmer is a freelance drama consultant, storyteller, theatre director and author of the best-selling 101 Drama Games and Activities.

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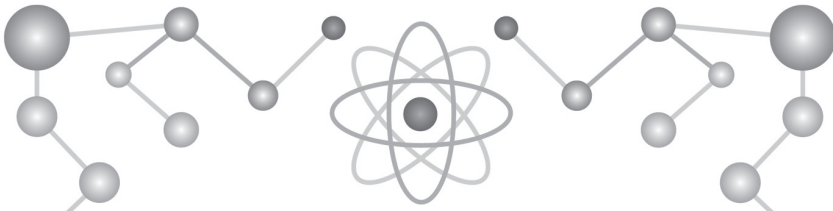
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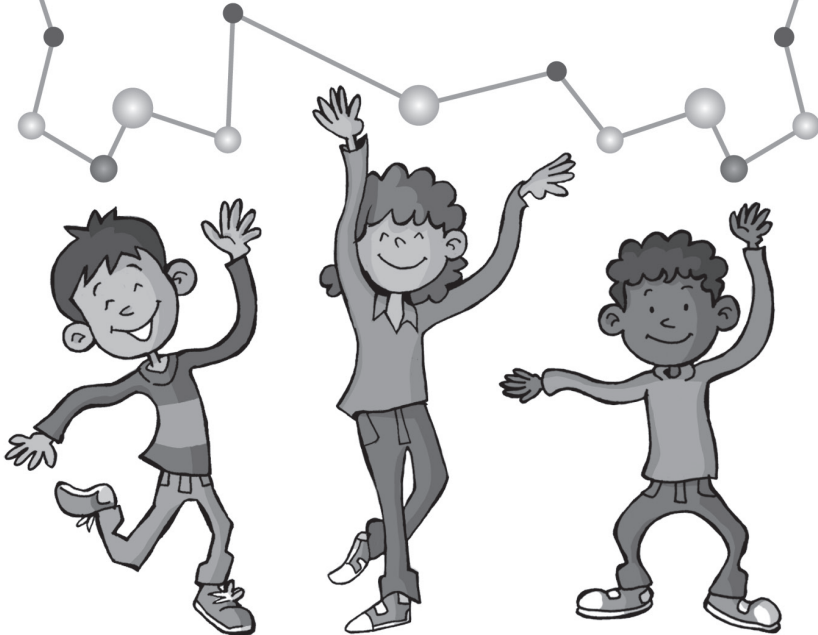
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*Science learning can be extended through activities such as dance, mime, movement and **ten second objects** to explore physical forces such as gravity, friction or magnetism, or to represent the action of molecules, planets, volcanoes and electrical circuits.*

Drama helps children to understand the human dimension of science.



Role on the Wall

6

1 2



Pairs, Groups, Whole Class

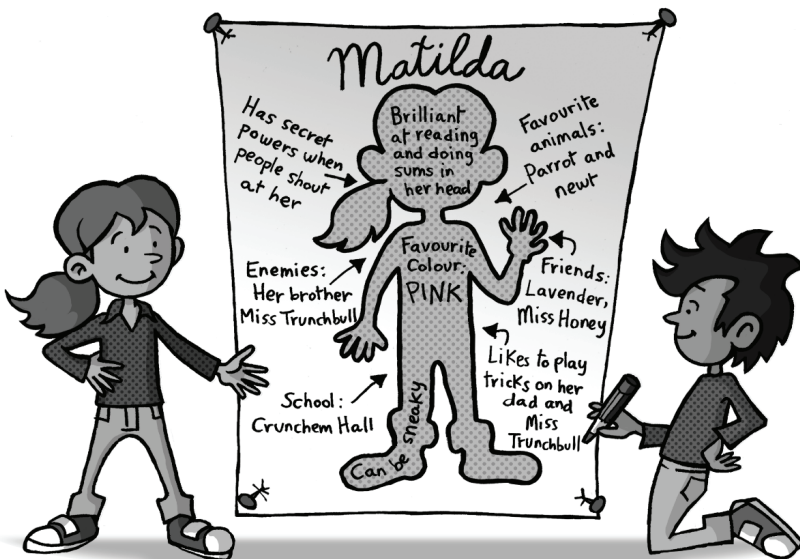


15 minutes +

A collaborative way of generating information and ideas about a character through written contributions to a drawing.

Why use it?

Role on the wall enables students to pool their ideas and develop understanding of a character, whether real or fictional.



Meetings

7

1 2



Whole Class



15 minutes +

An improvised gathering held in role to discuss views about a problem and how it can be resolved.

Why use it?

Meetings provide a way of debating big subjects and seeing issues from different viewpoints. They enable students to present, appreciate and interpret different points of view while maintaining a role over a period of time. Meetings provide a focal point for delivering information, planning a strategy, exploring ideas or discussing a problem during an extended *whole class drama* session or when using *mantle of the expert*. The strategy provides a formal structure for working as *teacher in role* and can be used as a way to bring together characters from a story or play.

How do you do it?

Everybody should be in role including the teacher, who may assume leadership. The group can be gathered in a circle or in rows, depending on the type of meeting. Children can be in *collective role* (p.18) or take on roles of individual characters. They may be divided into smaller groups to represent different factions such as workers, villagers and demonstrators. It may help to use *rituals* using sounds or objects to start the meeting, to call for attention or to indicate turn taking. The meeting could take place in a village hall or it might be a street rally, a union meeting, a staff meeting, a court trial and so forth.

Examples

Geography:

- ★ Students meet in role as parents, business-owners and car-drivers to discuss how best to make the roads safe outside the school.

- ★ A public meeting to discuss the damming of a river as part of the construction of a hydroelectric power station. Students in role as residents, power company staff and protestors.

History:

- ★ The villagers of Eyam meet to discuss the threat of the Black Death.
- ★ An infamous historical character is put on trial. The children are allocated roles including jury members, witnesses, prosecution and defence counsels and judge.
- ★ A billeting officer holds a meeting to ask villagers to house evacuee children and to discuss their concerns.

Literacy

- ★ In *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* the townspeople meet to discuss what to do about the rats.
- ★ In *Frog in Winter* (Velthuijs 1994) Frog's friends meet to discuss how they can cheer him up.
- ★ In *Farmer Duck* (Waddell 1991) the animals meet to see how they can help the over-worked duck.
- ★ In *Romeo and Juliet* the Capulets have a meeting to decide what to do about the Montagues (and vice-versa).

Science:

- ★ Insects from a compost heap meet to decide how to share out the things they like to eat.
- ★ A hive of bees meets with a swarm of butterflies to discuss what they can do about the dwindling wild flower population.
- ★ Use the format of a live TV chat show to frame a debate about a science issue such as climate change or genetic engineering. The class are the audience, you (or a student) are the presenter. Individual pupils represent contrasting views on the panel with a roving "microphone" picking up audience questions and comments.

See also: *Mantle of the Expert, Ritual, Role Play, Teacher in Role.*

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