
14 Drama

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Introduction

This chapter begins by defining primary drama and explaining the extent to which teachers are required by the National Curriculum to teach drama. The value of drama as a pedagogical approach is explored through an examination of the different processes it can offer to children's learning. It then goes on to describe the different ways in which this drama can be delivered, including teaching drama through English, through other subject areas, as part of an Arts curriculum, and through cross-curricular themes. Guidance is given on drama teaching, planning and assessment, and whole school issues are also considered.

What is Primary Drama?

Drama in the primary school encompasses a broad range of activities which are employed for different purposes. At one end of the spectrum, there are performance-based activities such as assemblies and school plays which enable children to participate in and experience a specific form of communication to an audience. This theatre-orientated type of drama is also developed through visits from outside companies and trips to professional performances where children can experience and respond to an alternative form of communicating ideas and story.

At the other end of the scale there is what has traditionally been called 'educational drama' which involves children in the active creation and exploration of situations based on fact or fiction which are purely for the benefit of the participants—in other words, which are not for an audience. Such drama is not training children to be actors, but is enabling them to learn in a way which is active, experiential and memorable. As such, it is regarded by many teachers as a learning method rather than a subject area because it can be employed to deliver many aspects of the curriculum very effectively.

Along this continuum, there are many variations of these two extremes. For instance, a class may explore the human dimensions of a biblical story through improvisation in order to gain a deeper insight into the meaning, but they also present their ideas to the rest of the class or even develop the work further into an assembly performance. The latter would serve a very different purpose to the first example in terms of the pupils' experiences.

Different schools adopt different approaches to drama. Some schools feel that there is no longer time for performance drama and the inevitable rehearsal time this takes; others create such performances with the children, making it a useful and relevant part of their work. Some schools have a firm commitment to educational drama as an effective teaching method, seeing it as an additional means of delivering some parts of the curriculum, including English, and others see drama as a subject in its own right, sometimes employing it as a tool for delivering personal and social education. However, it is important for you to acknowledge that drama now has an explicit place within the National Curriculum in addition to offering a pedagogical approach to certain aspects of primary education, and as such it should have a recognized place in all primary school curricula.

Drama and the National Curriculum

The National Curriculum has undergone many changes before reaching its present form and drama has appeared in various places during those developments. In addition to the requirements within English, the original Non-Statutory Guidance for history, geography and science all referred to drama as a useful mode of learning, giving examples of how it might be used within those subject areas.

Today's National Curriculum is heavily content based, and subject areas appear to be much more independent of each other. (Those who are new to the profession may be interested to note that many teachers still find the original Non-Statutory Guidance a very useful source of reference to good practice, particularly the provision of constructive examples of integration between the subject areas.) As a result, drama does not appear in any curriculum area other than English. Indeed, the references to drama in English now have a much higher profile in response to considerable feedback from teachers during the consultation process leading to the most recent changes (see DFE, 1995).

Drama is discretely embedded in the Programmes of Study at Key Stages 1 and 2, where there are explicit requirements for a variety of drama activities within the Programme of Study for Speaking and Listening. These include opportunities for pupils to respond to drama they have watched, in addition to active participation in different drama activities. Drama is also implicit in the Reading Programme of Study; here, the wide range of texts requires consideration, response, discussion, acting out, performance and so on—all skills which can be usefully developed through drama.

If children are to develop sophisticated and creative responses to texts they need opportunities to explore these processes through practical, interactive activities. Drama can allow this to happen. (Clipson-Boyles, 1996, p. 85)

It is thus apparent that drama is not only a clear requirement of the National Curriculum, but also has a core place within primary education. As such, it is

creating renewed interest in the vast potential it can offer to language, humanities, and cross-curricular work, in addition to the Arts curriculum. This upsurge of interest in the value of drama is resulting in a ‘new wave’ of drama taking place in primary schools. Many teachers and other educationalists are welcoming the growth of this ‘new wave drama’, and the inclusion and quality of drama is now under close scrutiny by OFSTED during inspections of primary schools and teacher training institutions.

New Wave Drama

Drama in primary schools enjoyed recognized educational status from the late 1960s into the early 1980s. However, as educational foci moved from pedagogy to curriculum matters during the late 1980s, teachers became increasingly occupied with content. This trend was reinforced from 1989 as the National Curriculum requirement documents started to appear. Understandably, teachers prioritized content delivery above all else and the consequential return to more formal teaching methods meant that drama virtually disappeared from many schools. HMI (1990) noted this demise with concern:

Only a minority of primary schools have a well-developed policy and guideline for their work in drama. Consequently drama rarely receives consistent attention either as a means of enriching work in other subjects or as an activity in its own right. (p. 7)

Nevertheless, the evidence of good practice cited in the above mentioned HMI report supported the belief that drama was an important part of primary education as it ‘often contributes powerfully to good standards’ (p. 7).

However, six years on, the tide is turning once again, and drama is beginning to return to an increasing number of primary schools. As teachers feel more familiar and confident with the National Curriculum they are able to return to pedagogical issues. For while it is vitally important that there are clear goals for children’s developing curriculum knowledge and skills, it is equally important that teachers understand the most effective ways in which that knowledge and those skills can be acquired. In other words, it is as important for teachers to understand **how** children learn as it is to know **what** children need to learn. Drama represents ways of learning which are known to be effective and appropriate within primary education.

Enquiry Task

Imagine that, as part of a topic on ‘Food’ with Year 2 pupils, you have set up a café rôle play corner.

List six ways in which you think the children’s learning and understanding in the following four areas might be enhanced by playing there:

- i) oracy;
- ii) reading;
- iii) writing;
- iv) science.

Alongside each item on your list, note down how you might promote such learning by the way you structure the activity; for example, providing ice and jugs of warm water during the play.

Try to arrange a visit to a classroom with a role play corner. Observe the children at play, making notes on one of the four aspects listed above.

Introduce an additional stimulus resource and continue to make observation notes. What changes do you notice?

Another contributing factor to ‘new wave drama’ is the recognition of pupils’ entitlement to a high quality Arts curriculum. In addition to the benefits which drama has to offer language work and humanities subjects, drama also has an important part to play in the primary arts.

While drama is recognised in the National Curriculum as an invaluable teaching method, it is first and foremost an art form in its own right. (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1993, p. i)

Whilst the ‘first and foremost’ might be more relevant to secondary education where drama is taught discretely by specialist teachers, it is appropriate for primary teachers to recognize that drama is **also** an art form in its own right. Drama which is performed for an audience—for example, in assemblies, plays and concerts—is much more aligned to theatre studies than the experiential and exploratory educational drama which may not actually be performed at all.

The Processes of Drama

The true nature of educational drama lies in the exploration and communication of ideas, issues, subject content, themes, stories and feelings through participatory action and imagination. This is very different from the notion of ‘acting’, although presenting drama can sometimes, but certainly not always, be an appropriate part of the work. Drama in the primary school is about offering pupils opportunities to develop understanding from within through active experience. It also provides strong and meaningful contexts for evaluation and reflection.

When engaged in drama, children become involved in educational processes which can make a valuable contribution to their learning. These processes encompass knowledge, skills and concepts, some of which relate directly to specific aspects of curriculum and some of which are transferable.

Drama can provide many different contexts for language. Not only do the pupils talk in rôle for a variety of purposes, they also engage in a considerable

amount of talk during the planning and sharing of ideas. Communication is an important function of drama, and there are many excellent ways in which an integrated language approach can be achieved through drama. A topic on television, for example, might include planning, writing and reading news scripts, with interviews and features.

Children can be helped in their thinking by concrete experiences. Experiential active learning experiences offered by drama give children opportunities to explore, challenge, question, control and change. For instance, it is very common for children who are struggling with writing to create wonderful stories in drama—a skill they can rarely develop when bound by the limitations of their literary ability. Good teachers can often utilize this extension of their imaginative thinking by using drama as a stimulus for writing. In drama, pupils are required to discuss their thoughts, and sometimes change their thinking. They also have to organize their ideas in order to communicate them to a larger audience.

Drama enables pupils to see issues from a variety of perspectives, and sometimes puts them into situations where they have to represent a view which is not necessarily their own. For example, a whole class improvisation of a planning meeting about the building of a new motorway across farming land would enable the pupils to prepare arguments and ‘represent’ different groups (government, local villagers, farmers, builders, environmentalists, etc.). Not only would they experience their own participation, they would also be immersed in the debate as they hear other views and engage in heated argument! Reflection takes place on different levels. Sometimes pupils may reflect on the issues or problems with which they are working, sometimes they may reflect on the responses of others, and perhaps the biggest challenge for a teacher is to help them reflect upon their own learning. Evaluation is also a valuable part of drama, and this is arguably at its most powerful when children are giving feedback to each other and then acting upon that in order to make further changes.

Creative skills can flourish and grow within a sound, developmental drama curriculum. Pupils are given full permission to use their imagination—a skill which should be natural to children in their play, but which increasingly seems usurped by the visual impact of television and video. Children are often brimming with creative ideas and yet the school environment may be unable to provide space for growth. Drama provides that space and enables children to develop and shape their ideas into forms that will communicate to others. Likewise, children’s organizational skills can be helped enormously by drama as they move through the processes of brain-storming ideas, shaping ideas into an order, representing information symbolically, arranging furniture, and finding props, for example.

The development of social skills can be assisted greatly by drama in two ways. Firstly, the discipline of working in groups with shared tasks, planning and targets can help children to learn to cooperate and communicate. It is more often than not the case that children enjoy drama so much that they soon overcome their reluctance to work with particular individuals. Secondly, the subject matter of social skills can actually be introduced into the drama for exploration in itself; for

example, bullying, loneliness, consideration and so on. This provides opportunities for empathy, looking from other perspectives, discussion and questions. The cloak of disguise drama provides means that children can explore the social skills of others in a way that is safe because it is distanced from reality, and can therefore be discussed objectively once the drama experience is over.

It is appropriate to mention at this point the importance of ‘de-rôling’ the children at the end of a drama session. Apart from the fact that other teachers and pupils might be disturbed by marauding Vikings hurtling back to their classroom, the drama needs to be put into its proper perspective, particularly if you have been dealing with difficult emotional issues. A 5-minute calming down discussion about the drama out-of-rôle, and preparation for the next (non-drama) activity before moving back to the classroom are ways of disconnecting from the experience so that it does not cause confusion, distraction or distress.

Enquiry Task

Plan a drama activity which is helping to explore areas of your current geography teaching. After the activity ask for four volunteers to discuss the session with you during a time when you are not teaching the whole class. Plan carefully beforehand what you want to find out. For instance, what was their response to this way of working? How much did they learn? What did they like or not like about the lesson?

Try to record on tape the discussions if possible, and afterwards, when playing the tape back, note down the main points of interest. You may like to consider the following questions as you reflect on the findings:

- How did the children’s learning measure against my planned outcomes for the activity?
- How do the children perceive drama as a means of learning?
- What differences were there in the children’s responses?
- How effective was my role in the activity?
- What advantages/disadvantages were there in this way of working on this particular occasion?
- What can I learn from that for the future?

The Multi-faceted Nature of Drama

There are many different ways that drama can happen in primary classrooms. Sometimes, it might be a whole class activity in the hall for half an hour. On other occasions it might be working in pairs in the classroom for 10 minutes. The following framework comprises a list of variables which are possible when planning drama activities. The framework is by no means definitive. The aim is to demonstrate that there is no such thing as the stereotypical drama lesson. Instead there is a rich range of choices and opportunities for you to use for different purposes.

In addition to these variables, there are also many different modes of working. [Figure 14.2](#) lists the main modes which are commonly used in primary school drama.

Figure 14.1: Framework of working variables for drama

Category	Variable	Example
Purpose	stimulus for other work	air-raid simulation in shelters — followed by diary writing
	discrete work follow-up to other work	nativity play for Christmas assembly presentation of topic work
Context	specific oracy work	pretend interviews in police station (question/answer)
	vehicle for reading	searching newspaper for story to dramatize
	vehicle for writing	writing astronaut's checklist for Moon journey
	integrated language work	improvise, plan, write plays — exchange and read scripts
	specific curriculum area exploration of cross-curricular themes drama as an art form integrated arts work	Viking funeral rituals gender roles in the workplace reworking Shakespeare's plays responses to a visit to Imperial War Museum
Content	revisiting prior knowledge	re-enacting a poem or story chapter
	extending prior knowledge	shaping of historical facts into a context
	exploring/researching new knowledge imaginative development	geography problem-solving story-making
Organization	pair work	job interviews
	pairs plus observer (trios)	parent/child improvised argument — discuss with observer
	groups whole class	six pupils developing a storyline Pied Piper simulation
Location	classroom — at tables — tables cleared — in carpet area	improvised 'meeting' creating tableau pictures turn-taking mimes of foods
	hall	exploring another planet
	playground	stylized 'bully' sequences
	theatres	stimulus or follow-up
	places of interest (during school visits)	Victorian school room (e.g., Black Country Museum)
Teacher role	directing	creating a performance for assembly
	instructing	setting a group task
	questioning	preparation or follow-up to children's ideas
	listening observing	to check the need for intervention
	participating in role	Mayor of Hamelin leading the decision making about the rats
Time	participating out of role	questioning a character in the 'hot seat' (see 'MODES')
	providing stimuli	'Three Bears' artefacts in home corner
	short focused 'one off'	miming and guessing occupations before topic work
	whole session 'one off'	exploration of a fairy story
	developmental series	aspects of the way of life in Ancient Greece
	large project	performance about World War II based on children's work

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Figure 14.2: Modes most commonly used in primary school drama

Mode

<i>Guided imagery</i>	where the children listen to commentary and instruction from the teacher to explore an imaginary situation. <i>Example:</i> imagining that they are only six centimetres tall and exploring a kitchen.
<i>Mime</i>	where the children explore and present stories or situations through movement and facial expression. <i>Example:</i> miming emotions for children to guess as a preliminary to discussion on feelings.
<i>Tableaux</i>	where the children make statue pictures (sometimes called 'freeze frames'). <i>Example:</i> in groups of six making tableaux to represent the seasons.
<i>Tableaux sequence</i>	where tableaux are linked into a series to tell a story — sometimes linked by movement, narration, music, poetry, etc. <i>Example:</i> evacuees leaving home, arriving in the country, living in the country, returning home.
<i>Role play</i>	pretending to be another character, real or imaginary. <i>Example:</i> in rôle play corner set up as a hairdresser's salon.
<i>Spontaneous improvisation</i>	developing a situation whilst in role without any prior planning, and without an anticipated ending. <i>Example:</i> characters meeting on a train journey.
<i>Reconstructed improvisation</i>	revisiting an improvisation in order to shape it into story form by using, changing and developing the original spontaneous ideas. <i>Example:</i> using the characters which emerged on the train journey to weave into a story.
<i>Interviews</i>	where the children work in pairs, either both in role or with just the interviewee in role. <i>Example:</i> reporter interviewing Red Riding Hood for her story.
<i>Hot seating</i>	where the whole class or a group of children ask a 'character' (played by a pupil, teacher or even an outside visitor) questions. <i>Example:</i> group of four children researches Tudor food. They then present themselves as Tudor cooks for questioning by the rest of the class.
<i>Simulated experience</i>	where the teacher plans and creates an 'experience' for the children to explore. The teacher is usually also in role. <i>Example:</i> preparing and loading a ship ready for a voyage with Francis Drake.
<i>Story shaping</i>	where the children create a story together but present it 'live' rather than writing it down. (Follow-up work might include writing at a later stage.) <i>Example:</i> an adventure which takes place through a time tunnel.
<i>Script reading</i>	where children read scripts (either their own, their peers', or published texts) in groups. Interpreting and playing out stage directions provides an excellent reading-for-meaning exercise.
<i>Script writing</i>	where the children follow up their activities with planning, shaping and writing.
<i>Staging</i>	where the children are included in every stage of the process involved in presenting to an audience — those stages might include planning, script writing, musical composition, costume/scenery making, box office, programme writing, etc. <i>Example:</i> reworking of <i>Oliver Twist</i> by Charles Dickens.

The choice of drama mode needs to be well informed by a good understanding of drama methodology, and there are many good books available on this subject, some of which are listed at the end of this chapter to help you get started.

The following example demonstrates how the framework described in Figures 14.1 and 14.2 might be used.

<i>Purpose</i>	stimulus for other work
<i>Context</i>	integrated language work
<i>Content</i>	making a complaint/responding to a complaint
<i>Organization</i>	pairs
<i>Location</i>	classroom
<i>Teacher's role</i>	instructing and observing
<i>Time</i>	10 minutes
<i>Mode</i>	spontaneous improvisation

In the above example, the main teaching focus is on writing letters of complaint (Year 6). A preparatory discussion with the whole class is needed, in this case about holidays and what can go wrong. The children then sit facing each other in pairs and imagine that one is a travel agent and the other an angry customer who has just returned from a disastrous holiday. The children are encouraged to ask/ answer as many questions as possible, and are told that you are going to observe their speaking and listening skills as they work. (A countdown at the start of the activity helps to build up the suspense and focus the commencement of the improvisation! Likewise, a cooking timer helps to set the challenge that they must not come out of role until the bell rings!) After the drama, you would give appropriate input on letter writing skills; the children are required to put their experiences onto paper in the form of a letter of complaint to the travel company.

Enquiry Task

Using the drama variables framework, as in the previous example, plan an activity which might be appropriate for your history plans for next term. Remember that you can 'pick and mix' the variables as much as you like to suit your children's needs!

Design an observation sheet to use during the lesson. You will need to consider who you are observing, how this observation will happen, and what evidence you will need to see in order to make an objective assessment. Reflect on how your assessments of particular children compare with other data you have collected about them in other ways.

The Importance of Clear Learning Objectives

The enjoyable and lively character of drama sometimes belies its potential for significant and relevant learning. Teachers who are already engaged in delivering

a full-to-brimming curriculum may feel that they simply do not have the time to give up to a subject which is just for fun! In reality, drama should not be seen as neither an activity without substance nor as an added extra. Rather, it should be regarded as an invaluable way of learning.

However, if time allocated to drama activities is to be fruitful, it is vital that those activities are carefully planned with clear learning objectives in mind. At any one time the objectives might relate to:

- English—e.g., giving reasons for opinions and actions
- Other subject areas—e.g., use of geographical vocabulary
- Drama skills—e.g., speaking clearly for an audience

It is also highly likely that there will often be overlap between any two or all of these three areas at any given time.

Drama and English

English is an important subject in its own right, but it also serves the whole curriculum. The centrality of English in primary education is not just about academic achievement but is also about the fundamental place of language and language development in the lives of human beings. Language is pivotal to our lives, as communication takes place continuously during our waking hours. The effectiveness of that communication depends on the experiences through which we learn. It is the responsibility of teachers to provide quality language experiences which make sense to children and which move them along a progressive developmental pathway towards ever-increasing competence.

Language is a complex set of communication modes which overlap and interweave; for instance, reading can only take place because of what someone has written. Reports can include accounts of what has been spoken; written work is often the subject of discussion. In recognition of this, good primary English teaching is characterized by an integrated approach where oracy, reading and writing are linked together in ways which enrich and inform each other.

The National Curriculum requirements for English repeatedly use the word ‘range’. For instance, it is used to refer to *purposes, audiences, texts* and *opportunities*. Drama can help you provide an interesting and stimulating range of experiences through which children can develop the required skills of oracy, reading and writing. Children tend to work at their best when the task in hand has a meaningful purpose. Resource stimuli, (e.g., actual report forms on clipboards for police interviews), can also make a tremendous difference to children’s motivation and the quality of their output as they add to the direct experience on which the work can build. If you want children to write well it is important to give them something meaningful to write about! For example, infants would far rather write a letter to the ‘monster’ they have just befriended on the moon than a practice letter in an exercise book. Drama can offer both these resources to language activities—meaningful purpose and concrete stimulus

Figure 14.3: Language activities served by drama

Drama	Oracy	Reading	Writing
Travel agent rôle play corner	Customer service	Checking brochures	Form filling
Space mission	Use of scientific language Giving instructions	Research before/ after Checking reports	Astronaut's report form Checklist of equipment
World War II evacuees	Describing home Explaining new rules	Examples of letters Old recipes	Letters Diary
Police interviews (house burglary)	Formal speech Questioning	Newspaper reports Security catalogues	Statements Security leaflets
Hamlet (story exploration)	Shakespearian language Describing feelings	Text portions Annotated versions	Ghost story Eye witness account
Three Little Pigs (tell in own words)	Re-telling Responding	Text portions Letters from wolf	List of furniture to buy Letters to the wolf

experience. Figure 14.3 illustrates the points which have been made so far with some examples of how language activities might be served by drama. There are many more examples which could be included under each heading. The chart simply illustrates points made earlier to help you start thinking about the potential language situations that drama can offer. Thoughtful and creative planning can result in interesting and meaningful activities for pupils which keep them on task and promote learning.

Enquiry Task

Talk to teachers you meet about the use of drama as a stimulus for language work.

- What techniques work best?
- How often do they use drama?
- How do the pupils respond?
- Why do some teachers prefer not to teach drama?

Try to gauge the levels of awareness about how much drama can offer to language work. Extrapolate examples of good practice for your own information and development. Identify any doubts about drama and what you believe to be the root causes of these doubts. Consider how teacher's views on drama are affected by their own value systems. Reflect on your own value system in relation to the employment of drama both as an Arts subject and as a teaching method across the curriculum.

Curriculum-based Drama

Drama can be used to provide contexts for language skills development through other curriculum areas, but it can also be used to help children to develop subject

specific skills, concepts and knowledge. Ken Byron (1993) describes how a class of 5–7-year-olds learned about rocks and underground exploration during a one-week project using a drama approach. The work involved, amongst other things, discussion, rôle play and improvisation, researching using books and samples of rocks, recording, problem solving, and reporting. It is not hard to see that those children are likely to have a far better understanding of the rôle of a geologist than if they had just been told. It is also more likely that they would remember for much longer because of the experiences they had undergone.

History, geography, science, technology and RE all encompass bodies of knowledge which children need to understand and remember. But it is not enough for children to merely hear the facts—for you to impart chunks of knowledge in a similar way to distributing pencils and paper! You need to assist and support the children in developing an understanding of those facts, so that they may integrate them into their conceptual frameworks. Drama can help you to provide appropriate learning experiences which will assist your pupils in acquiring and practising skills, building concepts, and integrating and remembering knowledge.

The value of drama here lies in its potential to set facts, skills and concepts into situations where they are meaningful. Where children cannot only make sense of them but also apply and use them. However, if this is to be done effectively, the skills, concepts and knowledge need to be clearly identified when the drama is being planned. The following examples are designed to demonstrate how this might be applied.

Example 1: Geography at Key Stage 1

<i>Key knowledge</i>	Purpose of maps/physical features of countryside
<i>Key concepts</i>	Differences between town and country
<i>Key skills</i>	Making maps/using symbols/discussing locations
<i>Drama activity</i>	Visiting the ‘site’ of the ‘Three Little Pigs’ story. Re-enacting, with the introduction of physical features (e.g., hill, river, wood, field). Planning locations in the hall (or playground). Making maps in pairs for the ‘Story Tourists’ Information Centre’.

Example 2: History at Key Stage 2

<i>Key knowledge</i>	Law and punishment in Tudor times
<i>Key concepts</i>	Capital and corporal punishment/reasons for change
<i>Key skills</i>	Describing events/change/research and communicate knowledge
<i>Drama activity</i>	After initial research and discussion about crime and punishment, the teacher would lead a guided imagery through a Tudor town—describing streets, buildings, smells, characters, etc. Assign characters and bring the streets alive. Create a story about the theft of bread and the placing of the culprit in the stocks. Work this into a repeatable sequence, building in new responses each time. Discuss pros and cons of abusing people in the stocks. A second lesson could require the pupils to work in groups of eight on a story where the punishment is hanging.

They would construct a story sequence based on their research, this time without the leadership of the teacher. A further development might include a debate on hanging.

As teachers, we must always remember that our perceptions of the subjects we teach are different from those of our pupils. We have a wealth of experience behind us! We cannot rely on transmitting that experience purely by telling—we need to create situations in which children can experience for themselves, and in doing so their learning will be enjoyable, meaningful and effective.

Exploring Cross-curricular Themes through Drama

Cross-curricular themes such as gender issues, equal opportunities, bullying, and economic and industrial understanding need real contexts if they are to be truly understood by children. Helen Vick (1990) describes how she used drama with 9- and 10-year-olds to challenge their assumptions about gender roles. Using improvisation techniques where the children followed an instruction card to play out a family situation, they then discussed how the roles were distributed. The improvisation then ran again with the roles reversed.

If children are going to discuss and consider challenging issues, they need to be given something to talk about. Drama helps to simulate situations through which children can empathize. But perhaps more importantly, it also enables a ‘distancing’ effect. For instance, whilst children might find it difficult to openly discuss a bullying incident during the lunch hour, they are more likely to find it easier to discuss an incident created by the drama where they can be more objective.

Whilst not wanting to undermine the importance of considering cross-curricular themes within primary education, teachers may be helped through their concerns over shortage of time by remembering that such themes can provide excellent material for language work.

Dramatic Form

Drama has a significant part to play in the primary arts curriculum although it has never been given a discrete place as an arts subject during the development of the National Curriculum.

The practice of the arts, in whatever form, involves the creation of objects or events that express and represent ideas and perceptions. The arts emerge from the fundamental human capacity for making sense of experience by representing it in symbolic form. (NCC, 1989, p. 5)

Drama can help children to express their ideas through an alternative form. The main difference between discussing drama as an arts subject and regarding

it as a teaching method is in the emphasis on skills. The *raison d'être* of drama as an art form is to create something in order to communicate it to others. If this is to happen effectively, children need to learn the skills of such communication and develop an awareness of the power and effect of different forms of presentation. Form, likewise, is an area where specific knowledge is going to influence the style of communication. Media studies can help enormously here, particularly analysis, discussion and appraisal of television and film.

Responses to, and appreciation of, the work of others is also a major component of drama. This should include opportunities to reflect on the work of peers and also live theatre performances both in and out of school.

The place of performances in schools has notably declined since the pressure of delivering government requirements has meant that some teachers are now regarding school plays as 'luxury items' which time can ill-afford. One positive consequence of this is that many school performances are now much more closely integrated with the children's other work. The best practice allows children to be involved in every stage of the production from start to finish. Such involvement might include such processes as:

- planning;
- improvising;
- script writing;
- rehearsing and learning;
- costume and scenery design;
- costume and scenery making;
- box office maths;
- backstage organization;
- sound effects production;
- musical composition and accompaniment;
- programme writing and illustrating.

Enquiry Task

Design a questionnaire for parents to find out their views on assembly presentations, school plays and concerts. Areas of interest to consider might include:

- how much parents value these as an audience;
- how parents perceive themselves to be of value to their children's learning;
- how the children talk about such activities at home;
- what memories parents have of their own school days.

Reflect upon how parental views and understanding compares with your own. Consider whether you need to provide parents with further information about the place of drama in the primary curriculum. How might you go about communicating this?

Assessment and Reflection

When regarding drama totally as an arts subject it has been suggested (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1993) that it is assessed in a similar two-part framework as music (performing/composing and listening/appraising) and art (investigating/making and knowledge/understanding). Readman and Lamont (1994) recommend a three part assessment framework requiring the ability to:

- create drama;
- engage in drama;
- reflect on drama.

Each of these ‘abilities’ can be broken down into skill components. These might include:

- planning in a group;
- listening to the ideas of others;
- researching for a purpose;
- organizing ideas into a shape;
- sustained concentration and involvement;
- sharing of individual responses;
- ability to empathize;
- application of imagination;
- communication of ideas through movement;
- communication of ideas through speaking;
- retrospective discussion of feelings and experiences;
- suggestions for continued development of the drama;
- reflection on own part in the drama;
- critical analysis of form.

To ensure that progression is taking place and that staff are building on previous learning, it can be a worthwhile exercise for whole school teams to decide upon a developmental scheme of skills applicable throughout the primary years. If children are provided with a drama curriculum which is underpinned by such a developmental framework, they are more likely to develop a confident approach which might also benefit their work right across the curriculum. This ‘confidence’ is not merely about performing but, perhaps more importantly, can be applied to their ideas and their ability to discuss, reflect upon and further develop their own work.

It is important to assess children’s drama skills if we wish them to achieve maximum benefit from a drama curriculum. Again, this works best where schools have a whole-school policy and it is up to teachers, guided by relevant professional information, to decide what is most useful and relevant to their particular situation.

It is also possible to assess children in other areas of the curriculum during a

drama activity; for example, speaking and listening in English, or the use of geographical language during a 'journey'. It is up to the individual teacher to decide what is to be assessed and why. The appropriate use of geographical vocabulary could be observed during a drama session, where it is not appropriate to assess the use of such words in writing because the children concerned do not yet have the writing skills to record them. Drama can give those pupils the opportunity to demonstrate that they understand and can apply those words correctly or incorrectly, as the case may be.

When children are highly involved in creating their own drama it can be relatively easy for you to stand back, observe and assess. (Of course, when you are in role with the children this is not feasible!) Likewise when the children are watching each other, you can be watching them! However, if assessment is to be useful, it is important to be clear about what is being assessed. Self-assessment and peer assessment are also elements of learning and reflection which are complementary to the drama mode. Indeed if it is only ever the role of the teacher to comment on the activity then the emphasis on 'performance' is arguably reinforced by the notion that the *raison d'être* of the drama is to be 'watched'. Although this is inevitably a facet of all assessment, the opportunities offered by drama for children to reflect on their own experiences, learning, feelings, opinions and input are very valuable indeed. Likewise, drama enables children to give feedback to each other, and to engage in useful discussion of a reflective nature.

Summary

Thus, drama has been presented to you here with all the rich opportunities it has to offer. Not only can it be an exciting inclusion in its own right, it also provides a pedagogical approach to many aspects of the primary curriculum, and, as such, it can actually support and enhance children's learning. It should not be seen as yet another requirement to be squeezed into an already crowded curriculum, but rather as a valuable tool for you to employ as part of your regular practice.

References

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- BYRON, K. (1993) 'Caving Expedition', *Projects for Science and Technology with Drama, Questions*, London, Watts.
- CLIPSON-BOYLES, S. (1996) 'Teaching reading through drama', in REID, D. and BENTLEY, D. *Reading On! Developing Reading at Key Stage 2*, Leamington Spa, Scholastic.
- DFE (1995) *Key Stages 1 and 2 of the National Curriculum England*, London, HMSO.
- HMI (1990) *The Teaching and Learning of Drama*, London, HMSO.
- NCC (1989) *The Arts 5-16: Practice and Innovation*, Harlow, Oliver & Boyd.
- READMAN, G. and LAMONT, G. (1994) *Drama: A Handbook for Primary Teachers*, London, BBC.
- VICK, H. (1990) 'The use of drama in an anti-sexist classroom', in TUTCHELL, E. (ed.) *Dolls and Duncarrees*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

Annotated List of Suggested Reading

- HEALD, C. (1993) *Role Play and Drama*, Leamington Spa, Scholastic.
(A useful resource book for early years teachers, giving ideas on a range of types of activity including how to promote play in role play corners, drama through fairy tales, rhymes and puppets, and recreating places of interest.)
- KAY, M. and COTTERILL, A. (1989) *Learning Through Action*, Wisbech, Learning Development Aids.
(An inspiring book which offers guidance on the management of experiential drama to help children's learning, particularly in geography and history. The book includes detailed lesson plans with tight frameworks for teachers' support.)
- NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR TEACHERS OF ENGLISH (1993) *Move Back the Desks*, Sheffield, NATE.
(A useful practical A4 size book of drama ideas for the 9–14 age range. It is divided into two parts: techniques and case studies.)
- RANKIN, I. (1995) *Drama 5–14*, London, Hodder & Stoughton.
(A practical approach to classroom drama with detailed lesson plans for a range of topics at each Key Stage. The teacher's role and children's activity are carefully explained along with details of National Curriculum Levels, learning outcomes, resources and assessment guidelines.)
- RAWLINS, G. and RICH, J. (1992) *Look, Listen and Trust: A Framework for Learning Through Drama*, Walton-on-Thames, Nelson.
(A skills-based resource book which addresses the issue of progression as well as offering many suggestions for practical activity.)
- READMAN, G. and LAMONT, G. (1994) *Drama: A Handbook for Primary Teachers*, London, BBC.
(An excellent resource book for drama with children from pre-school through to Key Stage 3. The book provides a framework for planning and assessment along with useful Key Stage statements. A sound methodological base, with some inspiring practical ideas.)
- SOMERS, J. (1994) *Drama in the Curriculum*, London, Cassell.
(A useful book which covers drama methodology, including the role of the teacher, underpinned by a sound theoretical base. The practical examples are designed to support teachers' own planning.)
- TAMBLING, P. (1990) *Performing Arts in the Primary School*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell Ltd.
(This book is specifically about drama within the arts curriculum and it provides teachers with useful guidance on working towards creative quality and performing skills which are relevant and educationally appropriate.)
- WOOLLAND, B. (1993) *The Teaching of Drama in the Primary School*, Harlow, Longman.
(A readable balance of theory and practice, this book offers excellent details on using drama to deliver the National Curriculum and also includes performance elements and ideas for working with very young children at Key Stage 1.)