



Primary School
Curriculum



Drama

Arts Education
Teacher Guidelines



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Section 1

Drama in the primary curriculum

Drama in the primary curriculum

What is drama?

The essence of drama is the making of story through enactment. The answer to the question 'what's the story?' will always lead to the making of a plot (a series of actions and events) with a theme (a focus for reflection). Successful drama will reflect life in a realistic or metaphorical way and will clarify elements of real life and point up the patterns beneath it. The content of drama is, therefore, real life in all its manifestations, and the method by which it is examined is story. The making of this story is done through the enactment of selected significant moments or scenes; and the selection, enactment and linking of these scenes and reflection upon them comprises the text of the drama class.

In the context of the primary school, educational drama is not to be confused with what may be termed 'performance drama'. This activity, familiar to many teachers, usually involves choosing a script and cast, rehearsing, designing and building a set, organising lighting, sound and other technical features, and mounting a performance for an audience.

Being involved in such an experience can, if undertaken with a knowledge of the principles and practices outlined in this curriculum, benefit children in fostering self-confidence, in giving them the opportunity to appear on stage and in allowing them to express themselves publicly. However, in undertaking such a project the teacher should bear in mind that circumstances often tend to cause the overvaluing of product and the undervaluing of process.

Educational drama, as it is envisaged in the curriculum, is a creative process that allows children to explore the full potential of drama as a learning experience. It is improvisational in nature and has as its aim a quest for knowledge that involves every aspect of the child's personality: spiritual, moral, emotional, intellectual and physical. In making this drama the child enters an imagined context (the drama world), through enacting a fiction about characters in certain circumstances, at some particular time and in some particular situation, and so can explore in a unique way conflicts, issues, consequences, attitudes, emotions, concerns and preoccupations that are important to the understanding of real life.

The developmental and learning power of drama lies in the particular nature of the dramatic experience. In

- surrendering to the fiction
- projecting himself/herself imaginatively into a situation
- 'knowing and living' the circumstances, dilemmas, choices and actions of a fictitious character, and their consequences
- refracting all this through his/her own personality

the child can come to new perceptions. Drama provides a unique gateway to learning and affords a dimension of knowledge that is otherwise inaccessible.

The contribution of drama to the child's development

Drama can make a unique contribution to the development of the child. Its purposes, and the particular character of its activity, provide the means by which the child can achieve an enhanced awareness of self and can experience a unique mode of learning. It can

- give each child the opportunity to approach new knowledge through the dimension of imaginative activity and experience
- give each child the opportunity to approach knowledge in the ways that are most suitable to him/her



The teacher observing simultaneous dramatic action

- create the motivation and interest that can spur the child to research, and thus foster an attitude that views knowledge as essential in adapting his/her perception of the world
- provide the means by which the child can relate knowledge, in a special way, to previous learning and experience
- help the child to see pattern and unity in seemingly disparate pieces of knowledge encountered in different subjects
- make distant what is close and make close what is distant at both a cognitive and an affective level, so that aspects of life can be explored closely enough to afford effective examination but distant enough to provide safety for the child
- give the child a rich oral language experience and afford the opportunity to experiment with different registers of language
- give the child experience of drama as an art form
- help the child to assimilate and accommodate the experience of other cultures
- help the child to assimilate a changing environment through anticipating psychological development and through allowing him/her to transcend immediate experience by trying out other worlds through drama

- facilitate the child's imaginative, intellectual, emotional and physical development in a contemporaneous and holistic way
- foster the child's creativity, invention, insight, discovery and problem-solving through exploring actively the intuitive and the spontaneous
- allow the child, through the dramatic fiction, to experience, understand and practise the life skills needed in reality
- promote empathy with the ideas, attitudes and feelings of others.

The content of educational drama is life. It encompasses the entire range of a child's experience and every facet of his/her personality; and because it constitutes a unique way of learning it should be an indispensable part of the child's experience in school.

The content of the drama curriculum

The content of the drama curriculum

Basic structure and layout of the curriculum

Levels

The content of the drama curriculum is set out in four levels: infant classes, first and second classes, third and fourth classes, and fifth and sixth classes.

Content strand

The content is presented in one strand at each level:

Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding.

The title of the strand defines the nature of drama. The learning experience encompasses both the cognitive and the affective abilities of the child and involves an exploration that will lead to a greater understanding of himself/herself and of the world.

Strand units

Within the strand the detailed elements of content are presented in three strand units which describe aspects of drama exploration, experience and activity. The strand units are:

- Exploring and making drama
- Reflecting on drama
- Co-operating and communicating in making drama.

Exemplars are given with each content objective which indicate the kind of explorations, experiences and activities that are envisaged in it.

These are neither prescriptive nor comprehensive. They are merely suggestions that may help the teacher in planning a programme of effective learning through drama.

The elements of drama

Drama is characterised by certain features that give it its unique power. These may be called the elements of drama. They are:

- belief
- role and character
- action
- place
- time
- tension
- significance
- genre.

These elements will be treated in detail in Section 5, 'Approaches and methodologies', pp. 35–101.

The prerequisites for making drama

The approach to drama in the curriculum may be termed process drama. It involves children in a process of improvisation and exploration that leads to definable drama outcomes and learning outcomes. In order to make the process effective three prerequisites are necessary:

- content
- the fictional lens
- a safe environment.

Content will supply the subject matter of the drama. This will be based on some aspect of life, on the child's experience or on the content of some other curriculum area.

By using the fictional lens the teacher can look at the content through the medium of a story and frame it as a dramatic fiction. He/she can then suggest that the children improvise an enactment in which they engage with characters who find themselves in the particular dilemma, location or situation suggested by the action.

In order to increase children's confidence, allay their fears and dissipate their inhibitions they must be allowed to make the drama in a safe environment, where what they do is valued and validated by other children and by the teacher.

These three prerequisites for making drama will be treated in greater detail in Section 5, 'Approaches and methodologies'.

The strand units

There is a close correlation between the content objectives of the curriculum and the elements of drama. Through the objectives the children will become familiar with the elements and how they provide the structure for drama, and they will learn to use them to explore the possibilities of drama activity.

In keeping with the gradual development of the child, progression can be seen in the content objectives from level to level. For example, in infant classes the child will merely explore and develop what is still a strong instinct for make-believe play, whereas in first and second classes he/she will use the ability to play at make-believe in order to enter fully into participation in drama. Similarly, in infant classes children will explore and develop the ability to play in role, but in third and fourth classes they will begin to understand the relationship between role and character. Other content objectives, such as those dealing with using script as one of the pre-texts for drama or distinguishing between genres, such as the comic and the absurd, are not approached until the senior classes. The following is a brief description of each of the content objectives as they appear in the strand units of the curriculum.

Taking a role

pretending to be someone or something other than oneself

Characterisation

an attempt to assume the characteristics, desires, thought processes and physical attributes of another person

Exploring and making drama

The continuum of make-believe play and drama

Make-believe play is the basis of all educational drama. The impulse to make-believe is spontaneous in the young child, and when this begins to wane it is important that the teacher fosters and encourages its essential characteristics in drama activity.

Role and character

It is through 'entering into' the different characters in the drama and playing the characters in various roles in the context of the drama that the children experience the drama process. Taking a role can be described as pretending to be someone or something else while character refers to the entire intellectual, emotional and physical make-up of a real or fictional person. The nature and function of both of these and their relationship to each other will be explained in more detail in Section 5, 'Approaches and methodologies'.

Using space and objects to deepen the drama context and add to its reality

The space in which the drama takes place will, as the story or drama text is created, come to represent the location of the drama. It is important that children are encouraged to develop the imaginative flexibility to exploit the drama space and the objects it contains in order to extend and deepen the reality of the drama.

Exploring how the fictional past and the desired future influence the dramatic action

This content objective deals with the element of time. Drama always takes place in the present moment but the present moment contains residues of the past and the seeds of the future. In entering into the character the child should be encouraged to imagine the character's past and what may have happened before the drama. This will impinge on the course of the dramatic action. Similarly, in striving towards a particular future the character will influence the action.

Maintaining focus in the dramatic action

In fostering the impulse to make-believe, the teacher can encourage children to enter as fully as possible into the fiction they are creating and accept the fictional consequences of their actions in the drama situation. In doing this they will learn to contribute to maintaining the focus of the story as it develops in the drama.

The function and effect of tension in the drama

In drama, as in life, it is the element of choice that constitutes the dynamic of change and development. It arises from the conflicting demands of two (or more) desires, ideas or needs and engenders the need for decision. This is the source of tension in drama, and its roots are twofold: the impetus to come to a decision and the conflict inherent in choice.

Using script as one of the pre-texts of the drama

The pre-text is the springboard that launches the drama and it can take a number of forms. In the senior classes these can be extended to include the use of a written script. This will not entail a performance of the script: it will usefully consist of giving the children the opportunity to adopt the characters and the situation of the script and reinterpret their development through their own imaginative dramatic action. In situations in which a short script is made into a drama text for performance to the rest of the class, the children themselves should act as 'directors', using their knowledge of making the drama text.

Distinguishing between various genres such as comic, tragic, fantastic, poetic, absurd

Drama has many genres and each offers a particular perception and clarification of aspects of the human condition. In the junior and middle classes children will be limited in their understanding and appreciation of genre and therefore, though using various genres to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, may not consciously distinguish between them. However, by the senior classes, with a consistent experience of drama, children will begin to appreciate the possibilities of some of the principal genres: the comic, the tragic, the fantastic, the poetic, the absurd.

Reflecting on drama

The content of the second strand unit is an integral part of the drama process. It is concerned with reflecting on the drama, making connections between plots and themes and establishing relationships between drama and life experience.

Reflecting on a particular dramatic action in order to create possible alternative courses for the action

As the drama activity is taking place the child will be helping to create a story and will be reflecting continuously on how it is developing: what has happened, where the situation is leading, how his/her own character and other characters are developing, and many other questions. In this reflective response the child will make choices and create alternative courses of action and so contribute to the development of the drama.

The relationship between story, theme and life experience

The creation of a story or fiction is at the heart of the drama process. The themes that the story explores will be drawn from the child's general experience, from concepts, knowledge and experiences encountered in the various curriculum areas and from other contexts. In exploring these the child can come to new perceptions, insights and knowledge about life. In this way drama is a learning experience that is valuable and relevant.

Using insights arising out of dramatic action to draw conclusions about life and people

Reflection can also take place after a particular drama activity. Children may discuss not only what has happened but the ideas and feelings encountered and the new knowledge gained. Above all, they can examine and explore the ways in which the drama has given them new insights into human attitudes and concerns and a greater understanding of people and life.

Co-operating and communicating in making drama

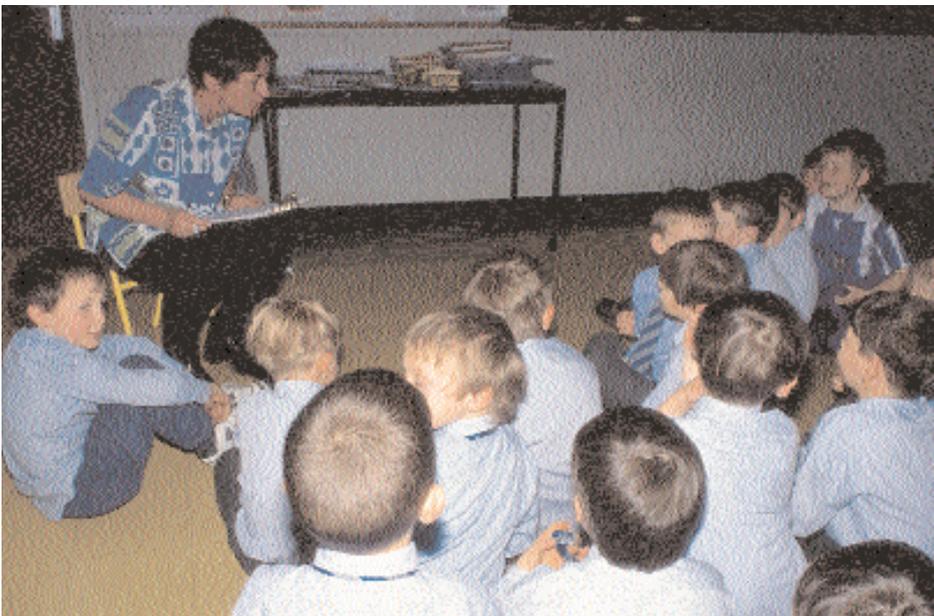
Co-operating and communicating with others, out of role, in order to shape the drama

One of the important learning benefits in drama is the experience it gives

children in working together and with the teacher. Opportunities for co-operation arise all the time in deciding on content, in choosing the fictional lens (particularly as they mature and gain experience in making drama), in using place and space, and in choosing different directions for the drama. This will also involve them in discussion and negotiation with each other and with the teacher and so lead to the development of communication skills. In this way the children take the principal role in shaping the drama and so enhance their sense of ownership of it.

Co-operating and communicating, in role, in order to shape the drama

Children also shape the drama when they are in role in the enactment. The extent to which they enter into the role or character, progressively developing in it more depth and believability, will have a crucial influence on the directions the enactment will take. Through reacting in character in co-operation with each other they are continually making decisions that lead to the further development of characters and of the drama. The ability to communicate the character's thoughts and emotions is a facility that will grow and will provide them with the experience of living in and through the character. This allows them to express and clarify intuitions, to experience new perspectives and to communicate them effectively.



Co-operating in the shaping of the drama

Developing fictional relationships through interacting with the other characters as the drama text is being made

A great part of the development of character can come through interaction with other fictional characters in the drama. The extent to which this happens will, in the first place, be a factor of the measure of belief each child brings to the drama. Through believing in the drama and accepting the fictional consequences of the enactment, he/she will deal seriously with the attitudes, opinions and feelings of the other characters. The different registers of language in which these are expressed and the dimension the sub-text adds to it through gesture, facial expression and



The agreement to suspend disbelief is central to the drama.

unspoken attitude and feeling will also influence the quality of the interaction and so enhance the effectiveness of the drama.

Enacting for others a scene that has been made in small-group work

The value of drama in the classroom both as a learning and a developmental experience resides in the actual making of the drama and in reflecting on it. This of its nature is an improvisational process. The children explore the content through the fictional lens by adopting characters and allowing them to develop through the enactment. The direction this will take is wholly dependent on spontaneous interaction among the characters as the drama is made. It can be useful, however, to ask a group to re-enact a scene that has already been done in small-group work, for other members of the class. This can lead to reflection on particular aspects of content and the way it has been refracted through the drama, thus adding to the children's learning experience. This will always be done in the class as part of the drama process and need not lead to any emphasis on 'performance' or 'presentation'.

School planning for drama

School planning for drama

The true importance of drama lies in the nature of the learning experience it affords the child.

To ensure that the aims of the drama curriculum are realised it is important that the principal and staff draw up a coherent plan for the teaching of drama in the school. This collaborative process will involve parents and the board of management, where appropriate. This section of the guidelines will examine

- curriculum planning for drama
- organisational planning for drama.

Curriculum planning

Drama, as outlined in Section 1, has a particular contribution to make to the child's development. However, if this contribution is to be effective it is important that the principal and staff plan carefully for the implementation of the drama curriculum. In doing this they will need to take account of a number of considerations:

- ensuring that the importance of drama as a part of the curriculum is recognised and that the staff is committed to this
- recognising the importance of the integrity of the drama as part of the learning experience
- guaranteeing the continuity of drama in the child's school experience
- providing for the integration of drama with other areas of the curriculum
- allocating time for drama.

The importance of drama in the curriculum

The true importance of drama lies in the nature of the learning experience it affords the child. Through the imaginative engagement of the child's intellectual, emotional and physical capacities he/she can be brought to new perceptions and new understanding. This is done through the experience of creating a drama text. It is in this act of creating the story that the educationally liberating power of the drama resides. The endless possibilities of fiction allow for the exploration of the unbounded range of human experience. Furthermore, the improvisational nature of the exploration can give a spontaneous release to the child's intuitions and a context that enables him/her to clarify and to express them. Through the enactment and the reflection on it—through adopting a character and empathising with it, and through interaction with other characters in the drama—the child finds a gateway to new experience, knowledge and understanding that no other learning experience provides.

The better the drama the greater the quality of the learning.

The importance of the integrity of the drama in the child's learning experience

Although the child learns through drama in a different way than through any other subject, that unique learning experience depends entirely on how successful the drama is. It is the quality of the drama that will determine the sort of learning that will take place. This applies whether the drama is done for its own sake or as an integrated element of another subject. In planning, the principal and staff should always think of the nature of the learning experience that drama can provide. To consider drama merely as a methodology is to risk diminishing both the drama process and the learning experience it can uniquely afford. It is important that, whatever the circumstances in which it takes place, the integrity of the drama is preserved. For example, drama as part of a history lesson or an SPHE lesson will only yield up its full learning benefits to the child if, whatever the content, the drama experience is as successful as it can be. The better the drama the greater the quality of the learning.

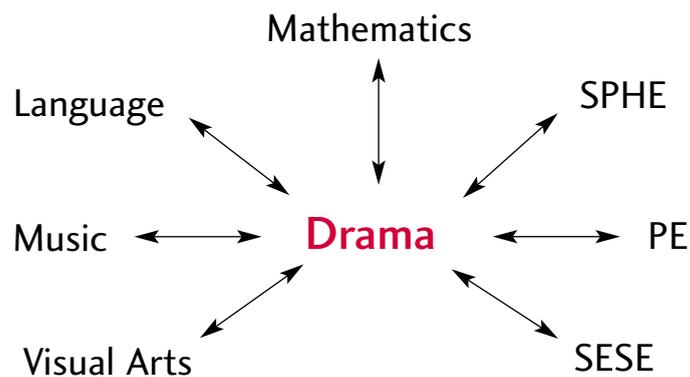
A continuous and consistent experience of drama is central to the successful implementation of the drama curriculum.

The continuity of drama in the child's school experience

A continuous and consistent experience of drama is central to the successful implementation of the drama curriculum and should be a major consideration in the planning process at school level. The backbone of a successful approach

to process drama in school is the fostering of continuity from make-believe play to drama. At infant level much classroom drama will be indistinguishable from make-believe play. It will be easy for the teacher, at this stage, to use this impulse to begin to lead the children towards drama. As the impulse to make believe wanes with the children's growing maturity it is crucial that they have an experience of drama that will enable them to use the essential characteristics of make-believe play in a way that is natural and relevant to them. This will only be fully achieved if children have a consistent experience of drama from year to year throughout their school lives.

In this way drama can become an accepted and normal part of their school experience with which they can engage without any self-consciousness. They will come to appreciate the importance of drama rather than see it as something silly or irrelevant or, indeed, as merely a break from lessons. Furthermore, it is only through a continuous experience of drama that children will develop drama skills and achieve a facility with them. The quality of the drama experience and, of course, the learning that results will be greatly dependent on the extent to which the drama skills have been mastered and the 'drama rules' learned.



Integrating drama with other areas of the curriculum

The content of drama is life experience itself. This may come from children's own general experience or from the content of one of the other curriculum areas. Drama provides the child with a unique and potent means of learning, whatever the content. The effectiveness of the learning experience, however, will depend on how good the drama experience is. This means that even when content from another curriculum area becomes the content of drama it should be regarded as a basic principle that the resultant activity will retain the integrity of the drama itself.

Drama should not be used as a more attractive way of presenting some piece of knowledge but as a means by which that knowledge (or a particular facet of it) becomes accessible to the child in a way that is not possible in any other learning context. In this way drama

can become an essential learning experience in any curriculum area, and at the same time the quality of that experience will be a factor in the success of the drama itself.

Drama can also be integrated with other parts of the curriculum by using drama itself as the starting point. An approach to learning about the Great Famine, for example, might begin with a drama about a family in famine times. Through it the child could not only 'live through' and come to know what it was like to live then but, as a series of drama activities develops, he/she would be led to research factual material and internalise it by incorporating it into the drama world and refracting it through the drama experience. Whatever the starting point the child will not only benefit from the unique learning mode that drama affords in the particular curriculum area but will gain in his/her general development as well.

An Ghaeilge agus drámaíocht

The language of communication in drama will be determined largely by the particular medium of instruction in the school and teachers will refer to the appropriate language version of the documents. It will be noted that some content objectives in Irish are included in the English version. Where English is the normal medium of instruction it is important to consider the relationship between drama and the teaching and learning of Gaeilge.

The greatest benefit of drama in Irish is that it can bring fluency in the language to the speed of life. Drama activity in Irish should not, therefore, be inhibited by continued interruption from the teacher to ensure accuracy. Any common mistakes can be referred to later and corrected. More than anything else, a lack of vocabulary can inhibit the success of the drama. To counteract this the child should be encouraged to use whatever language is most effective and appropriate in order to retain the spontaneity of the drama. For example, the creation of gibberish is often used by drama teachers and actor-trainers to create the necessity for the actor-pupil to express thought physically, thereby extending the range of physical language. Similarly, the child's lack of the appropriate word can be used to force him/her to express a thought physically. As before, the word can be supplied later, or a 'What was she trying to say?' game could be devised for the purpose.

In an English drama it is easy to introduce a character who speaks only Irish, thus encouraging its use. For example, *the boatman speaks only Irish and they can't go to the island without making known the reason why they have to go*. Similarly, in a situation where language differences emerge, as for example between an alien and an earthman, either English or Irish can be used to signal a lack of communication. The teacher can also go into role in the drama in order to prompt and extend the use of Irish. This can happen spontaneously in an Irish class or as part of a drama class. With practice, both approaches can become useful elements in the teacher's strategies.

The content of drama in Irish sometimes needs to be simpler than that used in English drama and is often slightly restricted to allow the child to create freely within a language range with which he/she is reasonably comfortable. A pleasant drama game is to ask the children to create playlets around groups of words supplied by the teacher. This can form the *tréimhse réamh-chumarsáide* (pre-communicative phase) and lead to the teaching of the vocabulary.

Using different short improvisations in Irish to build up a day in the life of a certain character is another useful strategy. The pre-text for this activity can be four six-line scripts supplied by either the pupils or the teacher.

Drama borrows time from other subjects in order to enhance the child's learning experience in those areas.

The integration of Irish and drama in ways like these will assist the child's drama education and at the same time help him/her to achieve greater fluency and expressiveness in Irish.

Allocating time for drama

The contribution that drama has to make to the child's development and learning in school underlines the importance of planning for it when allocating time to the different curriculum areas and to the subjects within them. The allocation of time to drama will have two sources:

- in the time allocation given to Arts education
- in its integration with other subjects and curriculum areas.



Children making a drama while others look on

As was discussed in a previous section, 'Integrating drama with other areas of the curriculum', these two sources are interrelated. They will be complementary to each other and will often overlap.

Children with special needs

Because of its nature and the unique learning experience it has to offer, drama is particularly relevant to children with special needs. It can be of enormous benefit both in terms of affective and cognitive development. General guidelines for teachers, however, can only give a broad indication of the contribution that drama can make in this area.

The drama experience in general and the activities in the strand unit 'Co-operating and communicating in making drama' provide learning opportunities that are crucial to children with special needs. It can, in particular, contribute to the child's language development in extending vocabulary and expressive ability. The physical dimension of drama will also assist non-verbal expression. In developing the child's concepts of drama, elements such as place and time, spatial awareness and more accurate perceptions of time relationships are cultivated. Furthermore, the story base of process drama will help to develop the child's ability to understand and express the sequential nature of events, and the importance of focusing on different aspects of a drama activity will foster powers of concentration.

Because drama is a co-operative activity, it provides a valuable experience in turn-taking and in working with others in order to achieve particular goals. One of the essential learning benefits of drama is that it provides the opportunity to deal with questions of choice and conflict by distancing them in the fictional context, thus helping to provide a safe environment in which to explore them. Above all, because it gives such scope for self-expression and self-realisation, the contribution drama can make to the child's self-esteem is incalculable.

Organisational planning

Having considered the needs of the school with regard to the drama curriculum, it is important to consider the features of school organisation that will best facilitate their fulfilment. In practice these will often be considered together and will entail a collaborative and consultative process involving the principal, the teachers and, where appropriate, parents and the board of management.

Planning for drama should contribute to the overall school plan, which will be reviewed by the board of management. Within the resources available to it the board will, as with other subjects, provide support for the implementation of drama.

Drama is a unique mode of learning, not an add-on activity.

Arising out of and in conjunction with curriculum planning, a number of organisational issues will need to be considered by the principal and staff in order to facilitate the successful implementation of the curriculum. Among them are:

- developing among the members of the staff a commitment to drama in the school
- co-ordinating the allocation of time to drama
- planning for the various sound levels that drama entails
- organising parent-teacher contact in relation to drama.

Developing staff involvement in drama

As discussed under 'Curriculum planning', the principal and staff should regard drama as an important feature of the curriculum and as a unique mode of learning. With regard to school planning this will involve seeing it not as a peripheral or 'add-on' activity but as central to the child's learning experience.

Members of the staff should be encouraged to consult each other regarding the integration of drama in the curriculum and in the organisation of co-operative drama activities. It is important too that teachers avail themselves of in-service education in order to enhance their skills in teaching drama. This will help to ensure the successful implementation of the curriculum. Whole-school in-career development is most effective and relevant in facilitating maximum staff involvement in both the planning and the operation of the school's drama programme.

It is important too that if a member of the staff evinces a special interest or expertise in drama in the school, this should be encouraged by the principal and the board of management, and such teachers should be facilitated in obtaining whatever further training they might need.

In the process of curriculum planning and development a co-ordinator in drama could be of great benefit to the school's drama programme. He/she could facilitate the curriculum in ways such as

- taking responsibility for the organisation of drama in the school
- organising school-based in-service education in drama
- encouraging and supporting other members of the staff in the teaching of drama.

The co-ordination of time allocation to drama

Decisions made in the curriculum planning process will have implications for the organisation of drama in the school. Most frequently these will concern the use of the different facilities the school has at its disposal. The most obvious locations for drama are the classroom and the school hall or general-purposes room, although there is no reason why, in good weather, effective drama activities cannot be pursued out of doors.



Children looking at a character study on the wall of the classroom

Noise may at times be an essential ingredient of the drama lesson.

Parents have a valuable role to play in children's reflection on drama.

Teachers can do drama very successfully in the classroom, but the varied nature of drama activity will also require the facility of the greater space that the school hall or general-purposes room can provide. The allocation of time for the use of this facility can become an important element of the organisational planning of drama in the school.

Although every class should have a weekly time allocation for drama in the school hall or the general-purposes room, the nature of drama and the variety of drama activity will require flexibility from all members of the staff. For example, when the type of drama activity in which a class is engaged during a particular week does not demand the use of the larger space, it could be allocated to another class on a quid pro quo basis. This would require both co-operation and regular

consultation among staff members. The availability of a teacher who organises drama in the school would be of great assistance in this regard.

Sound levels

It is important that drama allows children as much freedom and choice of expression as is consistent with the content, characters, action and situation of the particular drama activity in which they are engaged. This may, on occasion, result in sound levels that are quite high.

However, all members of the staff should recognise that what may seem an inordinate level of noise in a classroom is not necessarily caused by indiscipline. On the contrary, noise may at times be an essential ingredient of a successful drama lesson.

Involving parents

It is important that, in the context of regular parent-school contact, parents are made aware of the contribution that drama has to make to the child's learning and development. In the approach to drama in the school parents should be involved in planning to support the implementation of the drama curriculum. They can also, on occasion when it is appropriate, contribute to the organisation of drama activity. Most importantly, parents should be encouraged to discuss children's drama experiences with them. This can give them a valuable role in facilitating the children's reflection on drama.



Fictional relationships

*Using space to deepen
the drama context*

Section 4

Classroom planning for drama

Classroom planning for drama

In his/her approach to planning drama in the classroom the teacher needs to take account of a number of considerations:

- the general planning context for drama in the classroom
- the short-term and long-term content of drama
- the integration of drama with other curriculum areas
- teaching drama to multi-class groups.

The general planning context for drama in the classroom

Drama in the classroom provides children with an experience that will

- develop their drama skills
- develop their ability to use drama to enhance their learning experience in other curriculum areas
- contribute to their overall development.

This will entail long-term and short-term planning that will incorporate regular engagement with all the content objectives of the drama curriculum and ensure a consistent and imaginative use of the three prerequisites of process drama:

- content
- the fictional lens
- creating a safe environment.

In order to ensure continuity it is important for the teacher to take account of children's previous drama experience. This will entail consultation with previous teachers and a consideration of any assessment of children's progress and experience in drama to ascertain their level of ability and their experience of using drama for learning.



Integrating visual arts and drama—children create their fictional village

Thereafter, the teacher should plan

- to give children as wide and as rich an experience of drama as possible, consistent with their stage of development
- to set this in the various contexts of the year's work, of periods that may comprise a number of weeks, and of each week's work
- to achieve a balance between activity based on the children's general experience, concerns and preoccupations, and drama arising from and integrated with other curriculum areas.

The content of the drama

Long-term planning

It is important to identify an overall body of content for drama for the year. This will have a number of sources, which will include

- drama drawn from children's everyday experience
- particular issues, such as responsibility, that the teacher may wish to explore through drama
- aspects of life from the past, the present or a possible future that will arouse children's curiosity
- the needs, concerns and preoccupations of the children
- content and issues from other curriculum areas.

It will be useful for the teacher to identify a list of these and to draw up

a plan that will take account of their integration with the overall curriculum plan for the year's work. This must, of course, allow for a considerable amount of flexibility, since the teacher will modify the drama content as the year progresses to accommodate factors such as

- the extent to which the class progresses in the different curriculum areas
- the progress of individual children in the class
- the extent to which current events will impinge on school experience
- the need to accommodate the issues, concerns and preoccupations of the class and of individual children.

In this context it is important that the teacher makes full use of the elements of drama, the prerequisites for making drama and the content of the curriculum in the different drama activities. This will ensure the essential characteristics of flexibility and add to the richness of the children's drama experience. It will greatly facilitate both the coherence and breadth of the teacher's long-term plan if he/she can identify a list of drama experiences that can be initiated from different starting points—content, enactment, reflection, etc. (See 'Descriptions of successful drama activities', p. 64–91.)

Short-term planning

Planning a week's work in drama can involve

- drama arising out of the previous week's work
- activity that is part of a more extended drama activity
- a new drama exploration.

Whatever the case, it is important that the teacher decides beforehand on a definite, fresh focus for the week's drama and on which starting points will be most appropriate and effective in initiating the chosen content.

The question of integrating drama with other curriculum areas will also need to be decided. At times, when the particular learning benefit cannot be predicted at the outset and when it may depend on which direction the children take in the drama, such planning may not be possible. In any case it is important that careful thought be given to

- the extent of the integration
- the length and frequency of integrated activity
- the identification of the particular contribution that drama can make to the learning experience.

It is essential that wherever there is integration of drama with another curriculum area, whether the activity has its source in the drama per se or in the content of another subject, the quality of the drama is the first consideration.

As is already emphasised in Section 3, 'School planning for drama', the better the drama the higher the quality of the learning.

The teacher should prepare for any drama activity by identifying clearly

- the drama objectives of the activity
- the learning objectives of the activity.

The work will be successful only if both of these are achieved.

At a very practical level the teacher should decide on a number of scenes that will form the basis of the week's work. They should be chosen in the context of the planning considerations already discussed, but the selection should not be rigid. Developments in the drama work itself or in the other curriculum areas may make it more appropriate to use scenes other than those planned for.

The integration of drama with other curriculum areas

As was indicated in the previous section, 'The content of drama', it is important, both in the long term and the short term, to plan carefully the integration of drama with other curriculum areas. Whether a projected integration should be undertaken depends entirely on the extent to which the drama is going to enhance the learning experience in the area with which it is integrated. A number of factors will affect this decision:

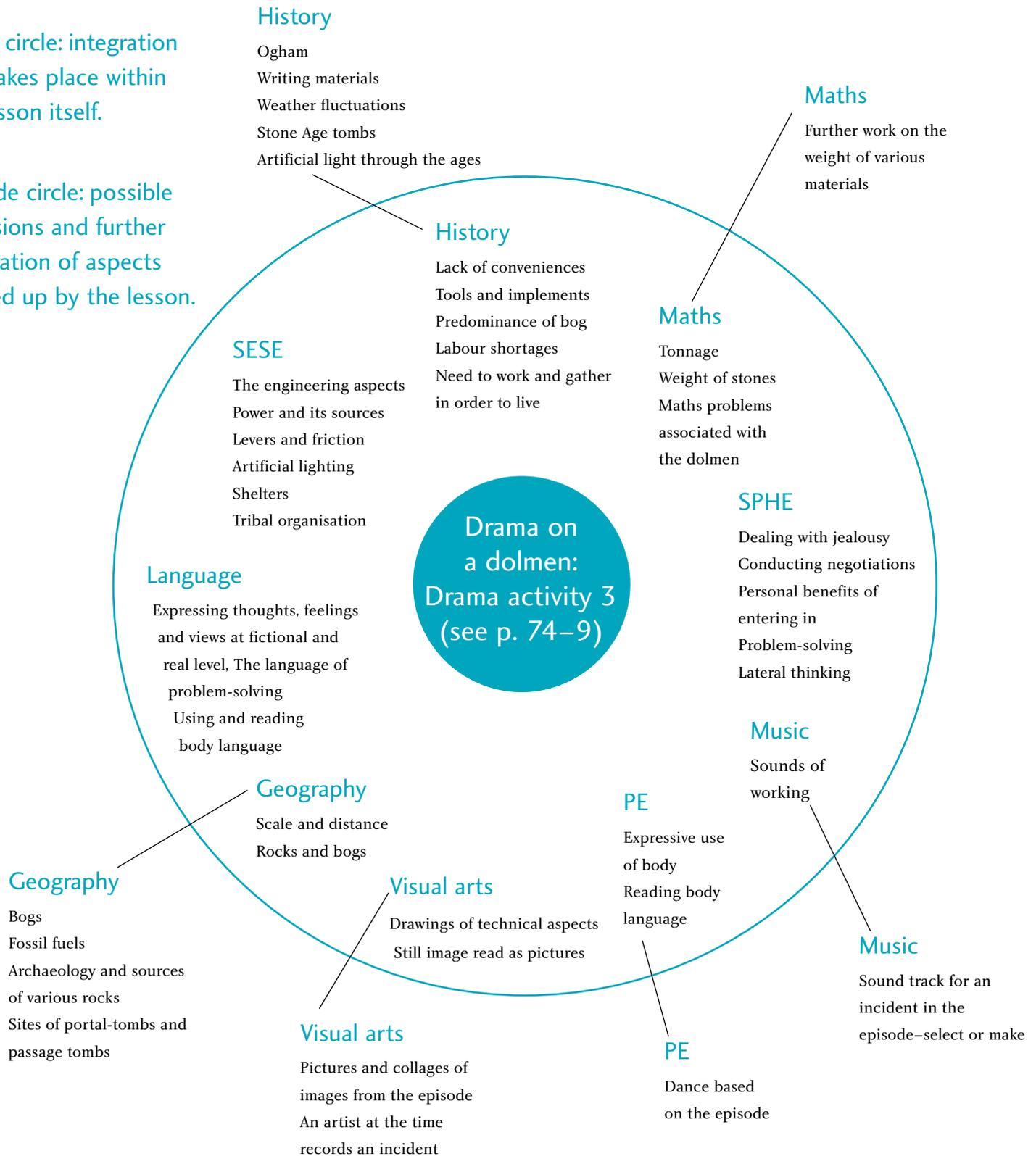
- the nature of the content
- how the children's drama experience can be matched with the complexity of what is to be learned
- the appropriateness of the drama in dealing with a larger body of knowledge in another curriculum area, for example the development of transport
- the teacher's sensitivity to the unexpected and spontaneous learning experience that drama can provide in the week's classroom activity
- the extent to which drama can overcome particular learning or conceptual difficulties that the class, a group or individual children may have.

The planning grid on page 30 gives an indication of how a drama activity can be integrated with other subjects. This is based on Drama Activity 3 which is described in detail on pages 74–79.

How drama activity can integrate with other subject areas

Inside circle: integration that takes place within the lesson itself.

Outside circle: possible extensions and further exploration of aspects opened up by the lesson.



Teaching drama to multi-class groups

In approaching drama with a multi-class group the teacher has to overcome circumstances and obstacles that are not experienced by his/her colleague who teaches a single-class group. The most obvious of these are: the wider differences in the ages and maturity of the children, the different curricula that the children are dealing with, the greater complication in integrating drama with other curriculum areas, and the accommodation of all of these in effective drama activity.

While this can create difficulties for the multi-class teacher, such groups provide opportunities of their own for learning experiences. Chief among these are the following:

- The different ages and levels of maturity can provide a rich experience in communicating and co-operating through the drama.
- Younger children can be exposed, through drama, to a range of experience beyond the curriculum limits of their class group.
- Older children get the opportunity to encourage and support the younger children.
- Older children can learn to be more flexible and open in their approach to co-operation through working with younger children.

To exploit these advantages and to obviate the difficulties, the teacher can employ a number of strategies. Structured play may be arranged for the smaller children while the older ones are doing drama. Alternatively, it is easy, if first and second classes are doing a piece of drama, to find roles in it for the younger children and to give them tasks within the drama that they are capable of doing. This model of working can be extended, with careful planning, to involve the use of drama as a central activity through which children can learn according to their competence and abilities. The same approach can be used in multi-class teaching in the middle and senior classes.

Such a system of work will depend on the teacher structuring his/her day differently from the single-class teacher. This will involve selecting drama projects through which specific content, that is both suitable and challenging to all the ages involved, can be explored and in which suitable tasks can be set for each age group. In Drama activity 3, for example (p. 74), it can be seen that some of the mathematical problems to be solved are suitable for older children, while others are appropriate to a younger age group. Similarly, in the drama activity about fishing up the moon (p. 80), children could, at their own level, draw pictures of the wonderful things in the new world or write letters home to tell their people they have finally caught the moon and to expect them to come home in triumph.

Following the same approach, quick lessons on appropriate grammatical structures or on how to use line and colour could be incorporated at different levels during this activity. It entails, while learning through drama, working outwards to encompass the different developmental activities that flow from the drama.

The success of this exciting mode of working will depend on very thorough planning, both for the long and the short term. The teacher's long-term planning should incorporate such considerations as

- the drama skills and concepts that have to be taught
- the topics to be dealt with
- how and to what extent drama is to be integrated with other curriculum areas.

Short-term planning will enable him/her to integrate drama into all these areas at levels appropriate to the various individuals in the class group. The teacher's planning, however, should always be flexible enough to take account of the spontaneous learning opportunities that present themselves in drama activity.

In this situation, 'mantle of the expert' techniques can be readily used. An example of this might begin with the teacher saying, 'Does anyone know anything about NASA? I have a letter from them—oh, yes, it says it here: National Aeronautics and Space

Administration. They want to know if we could advise them on the feasibility of building a landing-site on our bog. I'll read it to you. 'This would initiate an integrated project in which all can participate.

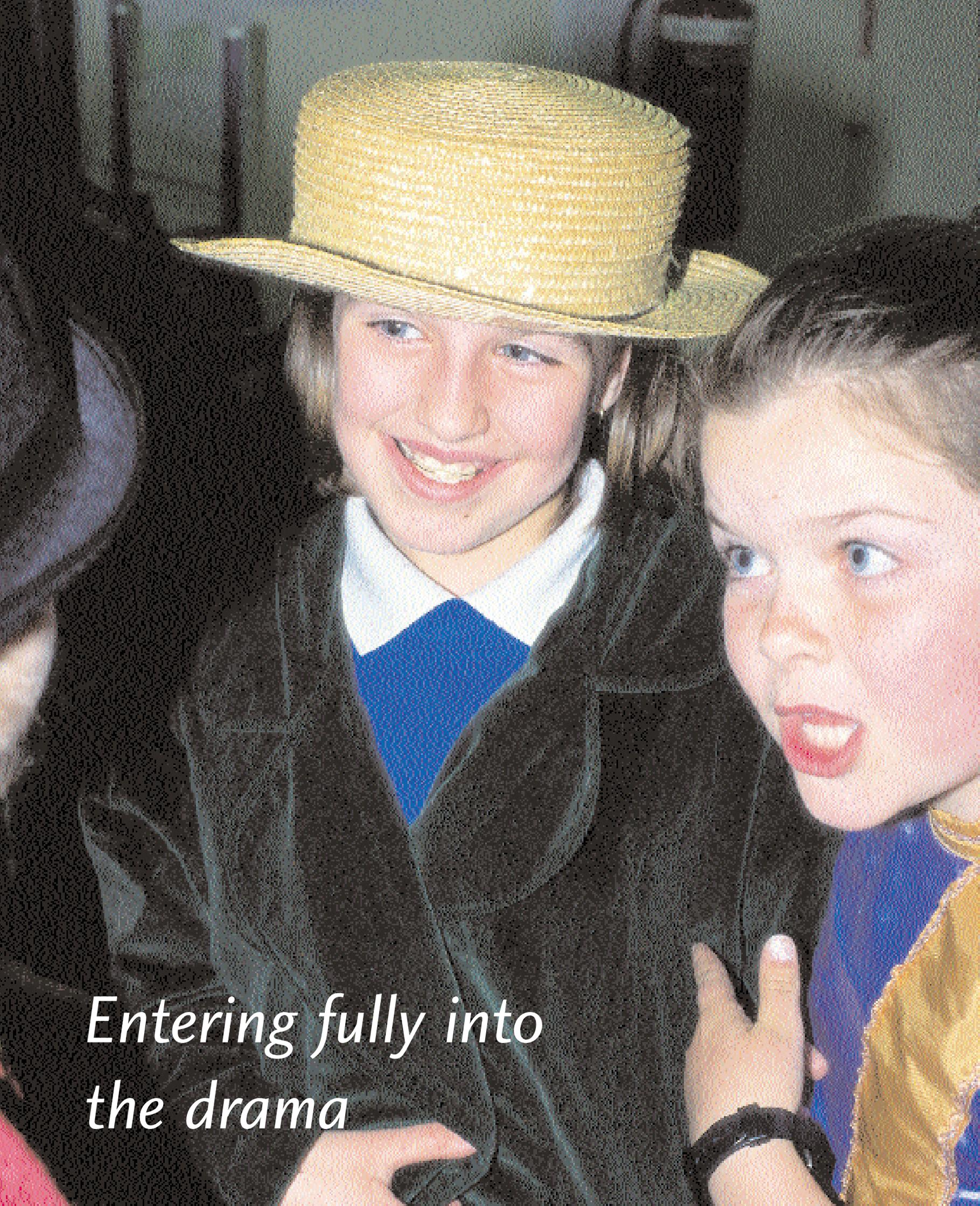
In all this work the teacher will, while mixing and changing the groups frequently, assign activities to them in a way that will cater for the varying abilities of the pupils. For some activities he/she will group children of similar abilities together, while for others mixed-ability groups will be chosen. The deliberate mixing of children of different ages and abilities can benefit children's learning and development in a number of ways. It can

- help older children to take responsibility for and assist in younger children's learning
- give older children the opportunity to experience the kind of caring that can form the basis of good parenting in the future
- give older and younger children a perspective on the concerns and preoccupations of another age-group.

The imaginative teacher will see many more opportunities for stimulating and exciting learning resulting from the inclusion of drama in the curriculum.



Children laying out the space for the drama



*Entering fully into
the drama*

Approaches and methodologies

Approaches and methodologies

The aim of this section of the guidelines is to furnish teachers with a practical approach to the teaching of drama in the classroom. It will involve a consideration of the essential components of process drama and of the means by which these can be incorporated in practical drama activities.

The section starts with an outline of the principle that should inform all process drama activity in the school: the fostering of the child's spontaneous impulse for make-believe play and its preservation in a fulfilled experience of drama activity throughout the primary school.

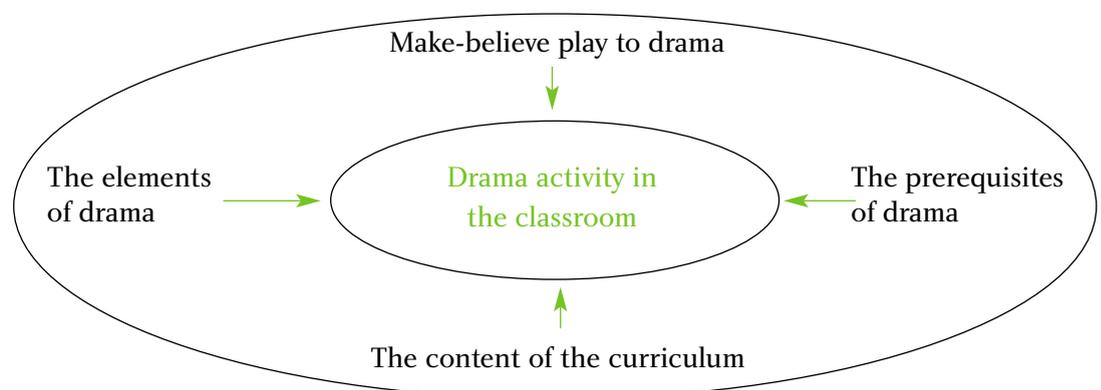
The essential components of process drama are then considered. These are:

- the strand units of the curriculum (already outlined in Section 2, pp. 9–13)
- the three prerequisites for making process drama
- the eight elements of drama.

How each of these contributes to both the structure and the dynamic of practical drama is discussed in detail and then exemplified in

- a basic practical approach to drama in the classroom
- descriptions of five drama activities that were successful with different groups of children.

Teachers should find these descriptions of drama activities particularly useful. They are not only described in detail, with a commentary on their structure, learning goals and teaching methods, but are analysed for their relevance to the content objectives of the curriculum. This entire section of teacher guidelines, therefore, takes the structure indicated below:



Make-believe play to process drama

The simplest drama text is seen in the child's make-believe play, and its relationship with education can be seen in the following example.

Two children are playing house. Together they have transformed the environment into a symbolic area: the environment has become something that stands for something else. It provides them with a symbolic context for trying out symbolic actions and reaching conclusions about reality and its meaning. Reality—the real context, its real people and their real actions—they can understand only partially and cannot control, so they create a make-believe world whose circumstances, people and events are manageable. In this way, through the symbolic world they can explore and try to understand the real world. This is the pre-school child's way of understanding and making sense of experience, the environment and the world.

This drama text is not 'presented' to any external audience, nor does the learning gained from it depend on its being presented. The children's own response to what is happening in the drama, even as it proceeds, is in itself the learning activity and forms a step to other learning outcomes.

The most obvious characteristics of make-believe play are:

- a willingness to believe that the symbol is 'real'
- sincerity in adopting roles and playing the characters
- an acceptance of the fictional consequences of the play
- an impulse to explore.

Young children will, of course, play without any consciousness of these factors, but they constitute some of the essential features of learning through drama.

The ability to play in this way is strongest in the pre-school child and may begin to fade gradually at about five years of age, although the impulse can be readily observed in older children in the playground and on the street when, for example, they 'play out' fictions based on film and television characters. Educational drama is a more conscious and sophisticated form of make-believe play. Its essential characteristics are the same as those mentioned above. 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 and in preserving the characteristics and learning benefits of make-believe play in the child's experience of educational drama throughout the primary school.

Because the natural impulse for make-believe play does begin to wane it is crucial that a consistent approach to drama in the curriculum affords children the opportunity to use its essential characteristics in order to avail of the educational benefits it can bring. In its simplest form this might consist of the teacher suggesting a situation and certain characters to the children and encouraging them to explore, by playing the characters, what might happen. The teacher might say, 'The princess is being held in the castle and you want to save her. Try out different ways you might persuade the sentry to let you pass.' The essence of the activity would consist in the children accepting the fiction and in following the consequences of whatever direction the drama might take. This concept of accepting the

consequences of the fiction and of the actions and reactions of the characters is very important, as will be seen later. The key features of the activity are, therefore,

- a situation in which particular characters are placed
- creating a drama, through language and action, in which children explore possible solutions and outcomes that are inherent in the situation.

This constitutes the basic unit, the building block of drama experience, and its efficacy depends on the interest and the commitment of the children. If the children accept the fiction and are willing to follow its consequences in the actions and reactions of the characters, then not only can it be enjoyable but it can prove a valuable learning experience. Its potential for learning, however, is only fully realised if the teacher knows how to build scene on scene so as to achieve desirable learning outcomes. In order to do this, the teacher must be continually aware that all drama, from classroom to theatre, is based on exploring life (what would happen if ...?). As in all creative activity, the choice of which explorations to conduct is dictated by curiosity, intuition or logic, and the truth or the appropriateness of the conclusions is often felt to be aesthetically correct, even before it can be logically assimilated.



Physical activity is also a dimension of the drama.

The prerequisites for making drama

- content
- the fictional lens
- a safe environment

Throughout the entire spectrum of drama, texts can range in scale and complexity of content from a simple classroom improvisation to a Shakespeare play, and the entertainment value of a text is an important element in provoking and shaping the response. In the process of classroom drama the making of 'a play' is done for the benefit of the participants, and the entertainment element comes from the pleasure of participating—the same pleasure that the child gets from his/her make-believe play.

The prerequisites for making drama

The above description of the basic unit, the building block, of drama experience incorporates the three prerequisites for making process drama in the classroom. These are:

- content
- the fictional lens
- the creation of a safe classroom environment.

The first two, content and the fictional lens, provide the approach, the gateway, into a drama activity in the classroom. The third, a safe environment, is absolutely essential if the drama is to be successful.

Content

The content of drama is always some aspect of life. Its source is a combination of

- material experienced, imagined or read about
- aspects of life from the past, present or possible future that will arouse the pupils' curiosity
- the needs, concerns and preoccupations of the children
- issues such as relationships that the teacher may wish to explore through drama
- curriculum material, whose codes drama can crack and the human aspects of which may need to be explored actively.

The teacher will direct the pupils to the content, which will lead to issues, themes and knowledge considered important for the pupils at their particular stage of development. This content should, initially, help young children to come to terms with and understand their fears, worries and excitements in a big, dangerous and wonderful new world. It will involve helping the child to cope with the immediate world of home and school and to develop relationships within it. The content should also help to extend the child's knowledge into an understanding of the wider community and the bigger world and to develop the skills he/she will need in order to assimilate and accommodate that world.

As the child grows, the teacher will be aware of his/her particular developing personal and social needs. Drama themes, activities and issues to be explored should reflect this and assist the child in dealing, at a distance, with any personal and social difficulties before they become habitual. The content of drama will also be used to accommodate and to motivate the learning of appropriate curriculum material.

As the child matures he/she develops some concept of the difference time has made to the world. The content of drama can then help him/her to see history as a continuum of lived-through human activity and to see present events as thrusting towards a future that may still be influenced. The child can also become aware of the human dimension in all knowledge, and drama can be used to connect the child's experience with this new knowledge, thus encouraging research into relevant areas of knowledge. Personal and social problems, such as bullying and passivity, that are beginning to manifest themselves, can also be dealt with.

By the time the child reaches the senior classes drama can be used to memorise facts and, through the use of script, to establish simulations of actual events. Script, however, should be used sparingly and only in conjunction with good drama practice. Drama can also be a powerful influence in extending the child's vocabulary and in teaching specific language skills. However, it should be borne in mind that, whether

it deals with content from other areas of the curriculum or with content that is especially relevant to a particular group of children, drama should always lead to understanding and to the revelation of pattern and meaning.

The selection of content

In the selection of content the teacher should be guided by a number of considerations, all of them related to the particular quality of the learning experience that drama can provide. The content of drama should help to

- make children curious about knowledge
- assist with and motivate research skills and actively show the place of personal enquiry in the acquisition of knowledge
- show the child the relationship between wanting to know something and the ability to acquire that knowledge
- make the child aware of the human dimension inherent in all knowledge
- increase the child's understanding of life topics and themes
- give the child an insight into aspects of life that are vital to his/her development
- relate knowledge to experience
- assist the child, through the involvement of all the senses and through a total body experience, to develop the memory, and particularly the long-term memory of facts and data.

The fictional lens

When the content is chosen it is examined through the medium of the fictional lens. This is the means by which content is translated into story. The question 'What's the story?' has the double meaning, 'What is the real situation?' and 'What is the fiction?' The making of plot (a series of incidents) and theme (a focus of reflection on essence and pattern) has, from myth to fairy-tale to Shakespeare to soap opera, always been regarded as a valid way of understanding reality. For example, the issue of bullying might be examined through making a fiction about a boy and his dog, his friends, his parents, their kindness and their cruelties. Such story-making will allow the child who has a tendency to bully, as well as those children who have experienced bullying, to identify with the fictional boy who is bullied and to examine the issues involved without having to put up the personal defences that a direct approach to the subject would invite. The lens of fiction distances the issue enough to make it safe for the participants to handle while at the same time presenting it in such a way that the essential elements become clear. If this were merely a story that was read, someone who had bullied might and could opt out of the discussion and, consequently, out of active consideration of the issues. The active, playful, affirming way in which drama makes stories is the lure that invites everybody to participate.

In infant and junior classes the stories and fictional incidents that constitute the fictional lens and through which the content is mediated will be stories of animals, toys, fathers, mothers, simple journeys, bus stops, and all the other fictional transformations that allow the child to try out, in safety, situations encountered in the real world. Later, when the child is no longer afraid of fantasy and fairy-tale, these can be added to the fictions used. From the middle classes onwards factual stories from history or current news (which will have been used from the beginning) may be used more and more. At this stage it is important that the particular framing of the dramatic incident allows the child to enter the drama without being restricted to mere representation of fact.

By the time they reach sixth class, children should have begun to understand the essential relationship that drama has with life, and the basis should be laid for an enlightened choice of significant action. Children should also have a sense of how different genres (the tragic, the comic, the absurd) can act as distinctive lenses on reality. This can lead them towards an authentic appreciation of dramatic literature as a blueprint for dramatic action. In the senior classes especially, existing fictions such as stories, poems, play scripts or videos can be used as pre-texts, providing content that has already been mediated through a fictional lens by the writer or director.

It should be emphasised, however, that the drama process involves story making, not merely the acting out of existing stories. While existing stories, plays etc. may help the teacher to find the fictional lens appropriate for his/her class, existing material should always be re-invented in order to match the needs of a particular group of children and the educational objectives of the teacher. The children will take the characters into new situations, discover new dilemmas, test other solutions, and give them new words and worlds as they pursue the characters' relevance to their own childhood needs and concerns.

The experience of approaching drama through a wide variety of fictional lenses can help develop children's perceptions of the relationship drama has, in all its forms, with life. In choosing the appropriate fictional lens the teacher should be concerned that it enables the children to

- understand, through active participation, the essential nature of fiction and the relationship between plot and theme
- understand the particular relationship that drama has to life and thus form the basis for an enlightened, critical viewpoint in the study of all dramatic texts on the drama floor, in the theatre, in the cinema or on television
- understand the nature of dramatic literature and the way in which it invites the participant to create dramatic texts that illuminate the time the drama was written and at the same time relate to the universal concerns that can apply to the present time
- understand the place of myth, fairytale and drama in the moral, cultural, aesthetic and spiritual development of people
- understand the place of symbol and sign in the examination of reality.

Creating a safe environment

The making of drama involves entering the drama world with as much honesty, authenticity and spontaneity as possible. The degree of spontaneity will be in direct proportion to the emotional and physical safety that the child feels. Insecurity may be caused by the child's temperament, his/her family background,



The level of spontaneity will be in proportion to the emotional and physical safety that the child feels.

the social relationships in the class, or how emotionally safe he/she feels with the teacher. The teacher, in the drama class, can address these problems directly by creating fictions that explore such issues as gender equity, self-esteem, the valuing of difference, the acceptance of responsibility, or the development of positive attitudes towards problem-solving. However, he/she will get truly spontaneous work and innovative thinking from the class only if positive attitudes in these areas are continually nurtured at a practical level in the drama class.

Since children have different emotional and physical needs, this process will have different emphases in different classes and with different groups of children. While young children are usually very physical and free in their play, many of the social skills needed for small-group work are relatively undeveloped. The child may therefore feel threatened by the social situations involved in small-group drama. Furthermore, since the child at this stage still has some difficulty in distinguishing between make-believe and reality, and since drama by its nature crosses this boundary, the teacher may sometimes be required to help the child with this distinction.

Developing social skills will, in time, allow the child to participate comfortably in small groups working simultaneously. However, children should be made to understand that, in the real social context, no child may hurt another physically, emotionally or intellectually.

The strong natural desire for make-believe will wane as the child progresses through the infant and junior classes. It is important that the teacher creates vibrant and motivating drama contexts that will keep the impulse towards make-believe alive during this period of the child's development. Otherwise, he/she may reach the stage of thinking that make-believe and drama are just silly, and this may lead to the fear of

'making a fool of myself' or of 'making myself ridiculous' through becoming involved in the drama. The teacher can greatly assist in dispelling this attitude by entering into the drama through the teacher-in-role.

At this stage, too, children can begin to confuse drama skill with display. This may discourage the more introverted children as well as steering the extroverts away from both a sincere participation in the drama and any useful reflection on it. At this stage children also begin to seek safety in comedy. This should not be discouraged. On the contrary, it should alert the teacher to the need for even greater safety if feelings are to be explored with the truth they merit and in the depth the children need. It should also make the teacher aware that the comic genre can be used effectively to explore important topics and content.

As children mature, small-group work can be used effectively to accustom boys and girls to co-operating and to sharing ideas and suggestions. This exchange is crucial in the development towards adolescence. Peer pressure and bullying may also be a part of children's experience at this stage. The observant teacher will see these tendencies manifested in the drama class and can deal with them in a non-judgemental way. This should lead to a healthy atmosphere in which the child can experience open relationships with more than a selected few in the class, and this in itself will improve the quality of the drama.



Planning what to do next

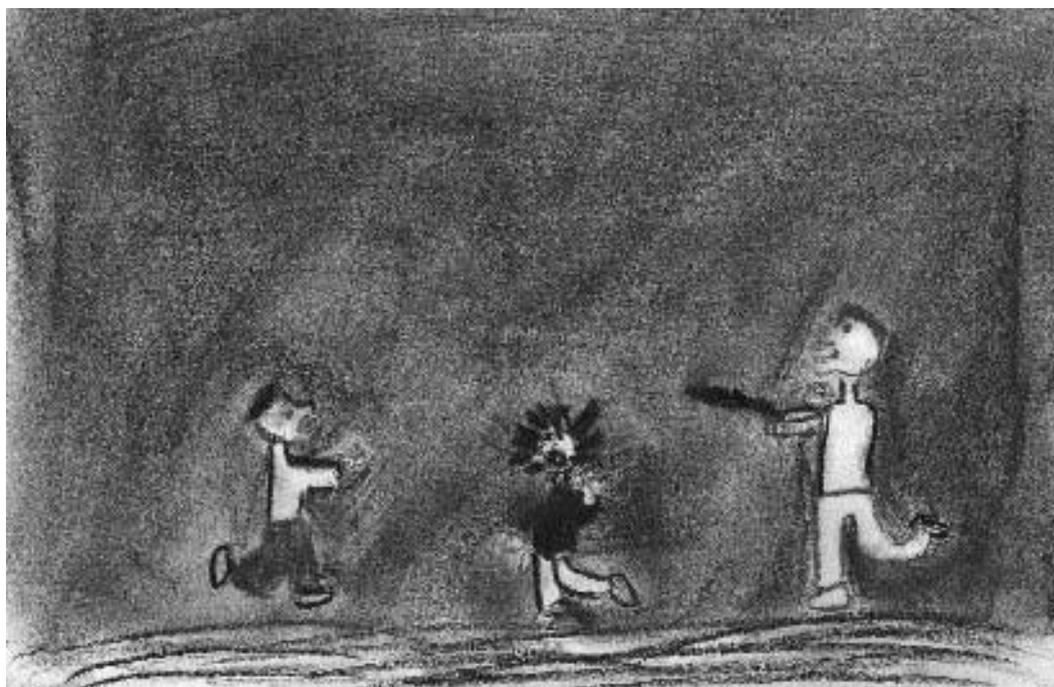
The creation of a safe drama environment is concerned particularly with the child's intrapersonal and interpersonal development, and it is worthwhile identifying what drama has to contribute in each of these areas.

Intrapersonal development

Drama can help the child

- to understand and moderate his/her behaviour
- to become more spontaneous, confident and self-assured in dealing with others
- to foster, in a practical way, the sense of his/her own uniqueness and in turn develop a positive assertiveness as the basis of handling conflict and solving problems

- to value his/her own abilities and aptitudes
- to understand and come to terms with, at a very practical level, any disadvantage accruing from the child's environment
- to recognise the positive and negative aspects of emotions and their importance in his/her life
- to come to terms with appropriate aspects of his/her growth and development.



A child's drawing of conflict, arising from drama

Interpersonal and social development

Drama can help the child

- to trust, respect and support others in the group so that a basis is laid for co-operation in the creation of drama
- to experience openness with others and to practise, without fear, self-revelation and self-expression
- to respect and cherish the differences in people
- to be comfortable with and expressive in verbal and non-verbal language
- to experience and create an atmosphere in which ideas, thoughts and feelings can be expressed, conflict handled positively, and life situations openly and honestly explored
- to help the child to experience open, healthy relationships with all the members of the class and not just with a selected or exclusive few.

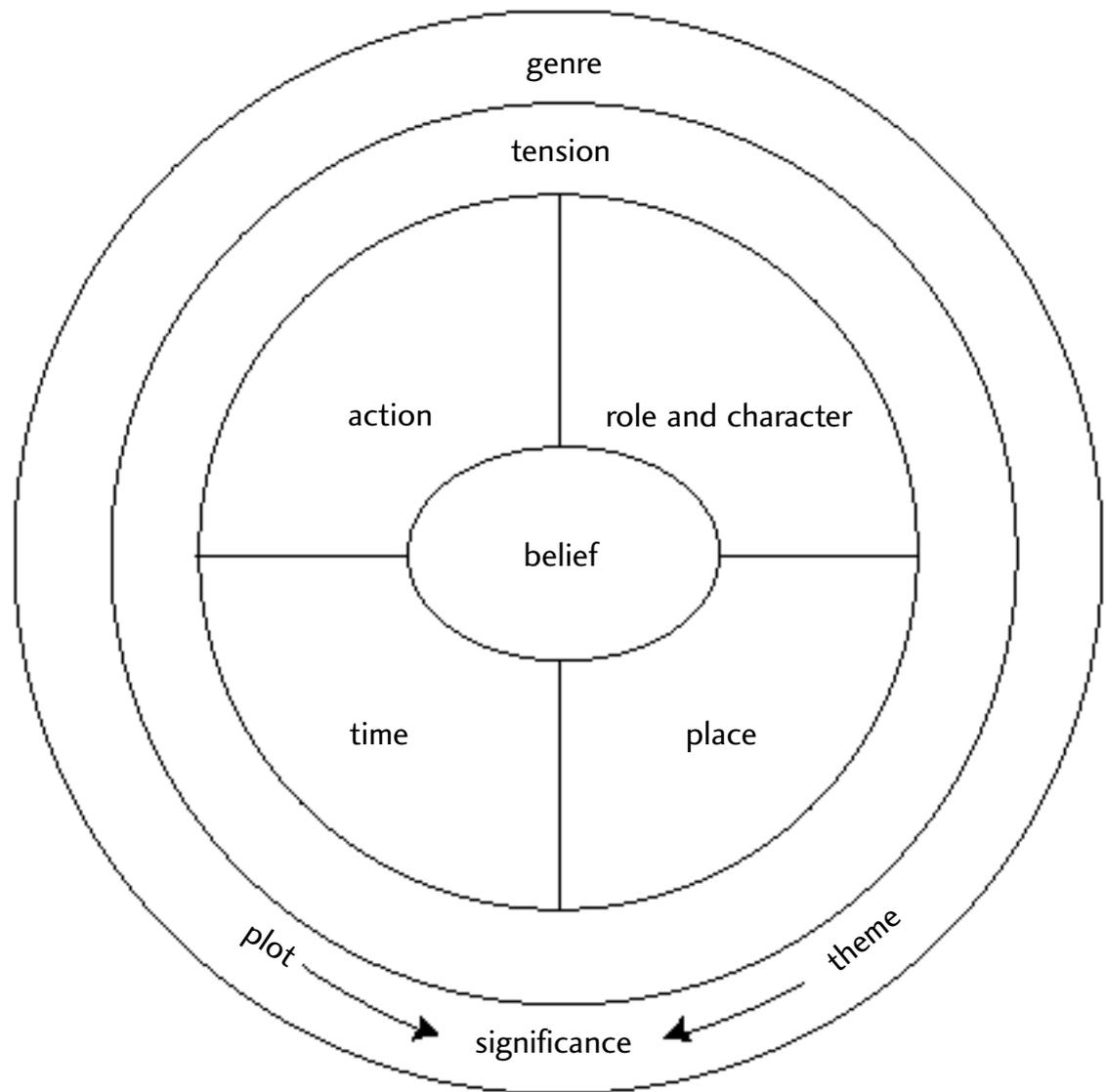
The elements of drama

Drama has a number of defining characteristics. These are the elements of drama. They dictate the structure of dramatic form and give the drama its characteristic mode of expression. They are as relevant to process drama in the classroom as they are to the corpus of world theatre. The elements of drama are:

- belief
- role and character
- action
- time
- place
- tension
- significance
- genre.

Their importance in the curriculum is underlined by the fact that they are closely reflected in the individual content objectives of the strand unit 'Exploring and making drama'. The first two prerequisites for making process drama, content and the fictional lens, also have an intimate relationship with the elements, while the creation of a safe environment is an essential ingredient of all drama in the classroom.

The relationship between the elements of drama



The elements of drama

- belief
- role and character
- action
- time
- place
- tension
- significance (plot and theme)
- genre

Belief

The element of belief in drama, as in all literature, is rooted in imaginative truth. The world of the imagination allows for the myriad of human possibilities that lie beyond the reach of everyday experience, even beyond the experience of a lifetime. Through it we can explore these possibilities, speculate about them and extend our view of the world. This depends, of course, on our acceptance of the validity of the truth that imagination offers, in the trust we have in its capacity to enrich human experience.

The essence of drama is story, the creation of a fictional world in which certain characters live out the consequences of a particular situation. In the theatre the characters and the situation are developed, typically, in a play script, which actors and the director 'bring to life' on the stage in a performance for an audience. The text of the play is a fiction created by the author, and the element of belief resides, in the first place, in the author's conviction that it is a dramatic construct that, either realistically or metaphorically, represents or comments on or gives meaning to some aspect of human existence. Belief is also essential when the director and the actors accept the author's version of the fictional world and attempt to bring it to life on the stage. In the course of the performance the audience, in acceding to the conditions and logic of the play, agrees to the fiction and completes the circle of

belief. The centrality of the element of belief in the drama is as relevant to a soap opera as it is to Greek tragedy.

With regard to drama in school, belief is most evident in the child's trust in and ease with make-believe play. It is the quality of this belief that the drama curriculum seeks to foster and preserve throughout the child's life in school. The degree to which he/she can enter into the imaginative world by accepting the fiction of the drama will, to a great extent, determine both the success of his/her drama experience and the learning experiences that will result from it.

In conventional theatre it is customary for people to enter the process of making performance texts with the object of fulfilling one of the three following functions:

- the actor: mimicking life-behaviour until he/she can surrender to the fiction and behave as if living in the existential fictional moment
- the director: ensuring that the representation of life is accurate and creates visual and auditory meaning
- the author: probing for meaning and initiating drama moments that may lead to potentially significant understanding.

In process drama, however, all three functions are undertaken jointly so that the teacher may be in role while the children may interpret what may emerge from a still picture or a score, or suggest where the drama might go next. Belief

in the drama world is built up through this fluid engagement and the drama takes on its own life, from which we may hypothesise about life in the real world.

Role and Character

In the early stages of taking the part of a character in the drama the child will do no more than assume a role. In Drama activity 2 (p. 70), the child takes the role of a shepherd without having any knowledge of how the individual shepherd acts. In taking the role, he/she is saying, in effect, 'If I were a shepherd this is how I would behave in this situation'. This is enough to enable the



Children develop understanding and empathy as they move from taking a role to characterisation.

child to participate in the drama. As it progresses, however, he/she will come to know about how the shepherd thinks, about his past, about his ambitions, about his view of life. As the child proceeds to generate and accumulate information about the shepherd, he/she is engaging in characterisation, which is the process of taking on himself/herself the physical, emotional and intellectual make-up of a fictional character. The benefit of characterisation is that the child learns to view the drama world from the point of view of someone different from himself/herself. This promotes understanding and empathy, and this empathy will in turn enhance the child's ability to understand characters increasingly distant from his/her own personality.

It is important to distinguish between taking a role and what is often called role-playing. Role-playing is the acting out of a limited activity for the purpose of forming or representing habits and attitudes, for example road safety drill, or to give practice for a forthcoming event, such as a mock interview. It could also be used to consolidate the memorisation of facts already acquired. Role-playing Diarmaid Mac Murchú's conversation with Strongbow might be used for this purpose. Taking a role in drama, on the other hand, involves entering into a fictional world and helping to determine what happens in that world in order to understand the patterns of human behaviour that underlie a particular event.

This may, of course, involve characterisation—an attempt to assume the characteristics, desires, thought processes or physical attributes of another person.

In make-believe play, children create characters quite spontaneously and without reflection. As they mature, however, a more acute sense of individuality develops, along with a heightened sense of the otherness of people. More conscious characterisation becomes possible at this stage. This can assist greatly in exploring relationships, in developing the ability to use different registers of language and in using non-verbal means to communicate meaning.

Through a consistent engagement with a wide variety of roles and characterisation in a range of stimulating and challenging situations, children can develop

- the ability to enter physically, mentally and emotionally into the fictional context and to co-operate with others in ‘playing at’ the fictional situation in order to discover the particular possibilities that it offers
- the empathy with and understanding of others needed to assume a role or a character
- a willingness to accept responsibility.

This can foster the personal adaptability, spontaneity, verbal and non-verbal skills, co-operation skills, initiative, imagination and creative abilities that are necessary to ensure that the drama text is a fresh and valid representation of life.

Action

Action springs from the interaction between character and situation. In the drama, characters and situations are chosen so that certain unresolved conflicts, tensions, questions or choices result. The action of the drama lies in the resolution or attempted resolution of these. The characters act and interact with each other in the desire to resolve the situation in which they find themselves. Through the action the initial fictional situation changes and develops, and this in turn will be reflected in the development of the different characters. The essence of drama, then, is the



Action springs from character and situation.

modification that occurs in the circumstances and attitudes of a group of characters in a particular situation, and it is through the action of the drama that this modification comes.

However, in entering into the action it is essential that children accept its dramatic consequences, otherwise the validity and potency of the drama will be lost. This may conflict with what they might wish would happen; but they must be encouraged to 'stay with' the character and to affirm the dramatic logic in order to ensure the integrity of the drama. When this happens, when they are truly involved with character and action in the drama, children can come to new insights, gain new knowledge and reach new understanding. Action in the drama has an integral relationship with the concept of text. The definition of text, hitherto confined to the written word, has expanded considerably in modern times and is now used to describe a performed play, a film or a video, whether these are fictional or documentary. The use of the word 'text' in the drama curriculum is related to this meaning. It does not mean script but the performed fiction that takes place on the drama floor. To make the drama text, pupils create and enter a drama world and create a fictional action in that world. The coherence of the action is not achieved through linear narrative but through the enactment of selected significant moments (scenes), which together illuminate the content of the drama.

Text is the performed fiction that takes place on the drama floor.

The teacher can begin the drama process by introducing a pre-text—an object, a poem, an anecdote, a piece of script etc.—that is a starting point from which to launch the dramatic world in such a way that the participants can identify their roles and responsibilities and begin to build a dramatic context together as quickly as possible. The pre-text therefore provides both a springboard and the context for the drama. The role of the pupils will not, however, be confined to acting out what the teacher suggests; they will also take part, side by side with the teacher, as shapers, contributors, creators, selectors and evaluators in the drama process.



The teacher, in role, has found mysterious objects.

The nature of the child's engagement with the drama will vary with his/her stage of development. However, through planning and careful consideration of the other elements—belief, character, action, place, time, tension, significance and genre—the teacher can maximise the child's involvement in the enactment (in the creation of the dramatic text) at any age or stage of his/her development.

Time

All dramatic action, like all human existence, takes place in a dimension of time. The content objective of the curriculum, 'Experience how the fictional past and the desired fictional future influence the present dramatic action', reflects the element of time.

A stage drama begins with particular characters in a certain situation and involves a modification of those characters and the situation they are in. Time is an element, first of all, in that each of the characters starts with a history and can realise a future development through the drama action. What has happened before the action is preserved in the fictional memory of the characters.

This fictional memory contains

- what the characters may have done
- what the characters may have thought and felt
- previous relationships they may have had
- where the characters may have been
- what may have happened to a particular character
- what may have happened to the other characters in the drama.

The fictional memory contains the seed of characterisation, the basis on which the actor can develop the character in order to give it a full fictional life. If what has happened in the fictional past shapes what the character is now, the fictional past also shapes the future that the character projects and desires for himself/herself. It also influences the way in which the character seeks to mould his/her own future. Thus, knowing the character's past enables the actor to divine how that character pursues his/her future in the present moment.

Although this is as true in process drama as it is in the theatre, there are two crucial differences:

- the child finds it easier to enter in by imagining a future for the person whose role he/she assumes
- it is not easy for a child to adopt a character's past experience without having experienced it himself/herself.

In view of this, it is usual in process drama to help the child into a role through the desire for a future outcome and allow him/her to pick up experience of the character's life as the drama proceeds. How this works in practice can be seen in the 'Descriptions of successful drama activities' (p. 64–91). In Drama activity 2 (p 70), for example, the characters are initially asked to make a choice for their immediate future: to go to Bethlehem or not. Incidents are built up on the journey and a past is created so that, eventually, when they come to the moment when they have to make a decision about helping Mary and Joseph, they make it as the characters who have a certain past, and not as themselves.

Time also helps to frame the action and can (often crucially) constrain the action. This will be the case if the nature of the action depends on a time factor:

- How can we get across the river before the enemy arrives?
- How long will we have to wait before help comes?
- If we don't reach the castle in time, will the princess have been taken away?

In this context, of course, time also contributes to the element of tension.

Whereas it can sometimes be difficult for children to sustain an isolated improvisation, they can be enabled, through using a series of enactments, to construct a longer drama experience encompassing a greater time span. The gradual building up of the scenes helps to give vividness and to build a commitment to and a belief in the drama. This is shown in Drama activity 3 (p. 74), about building a dolmen. Here a number of short, concentrated, related enactments accumulate to create a drama text that happens over an extended period. Initially the scenes may be short or long, but as they grow from one another, an extended story is created, making the overall experience vivid and relevant. This also helps the child to an appreciation of other features of time:

- People change over time.
- Circumstances and needs change over time.
- What may be desirable at one time may prove not to be so later on.
- Change is an inevitable component of life and history.
- It is necessary sometimes to allow time to elapse in order to effect change.
- In the drama the element of time contains the unknown, and the experience of the drama is a journey in time, through the drama, into the unknown.

Place

Character, action and time constitute the who, what and when of drama. The element of place encompasses the where. Just as drama takes place in a dimension of time, it also has a location: it happens somewhere. This element of place has two defining characteristics in the drama:

- the place where the fictional action happens
- the use of real place, or the space available, to represent this.

The coexistence and interrelationship of real and fictional place is both complex and flexible.

In the sense that character doesn't exist in a vacuum, that characters have a past and a present, their fictional existence presupposes a spatial reference. Where did the character live? Where is the character now? What are the details and the conditions of the place in which the character existed and exists?

In a play script this will be indicated by the author through stage directions, which the cast and the director will create in the staged setting of the play. This staged representation of place will not be available to the actors in rehearsal. They may have only an empty space available to them, which they imagine as the place where the action happens.



One means of reflecting on the drama

It is here that we find the analogy between theatre and the element of place in process drama in the classroom. Likewise, when the teacher suggests the fictional lens of the action, he/she may indicate where the action will take place, and the children will make use of what space is available to imagine the spatial details of the action. On the other hand, a fictional lens can be presented with no overt indication of place, and it will have to be inferred from the situation in which the characters find themselves.

Just as children should be encouraged to build up a knowledge of the past of the characters as they engage with them in the action, they should also be encouraged to imagine the dimension of place that the characters inhabit and have inhabited: where and how the characters live and have lived. This will help them to give depth and fictional belief to both character and action. They should be encouraged to use what features are available to them in the space that is being used for the drama as imaginatively as possible:



Defining the drama space

- How much of the space should be used?
- How can particular features be used to represent spatial details of the fiction?
- How can furniture or other props be used to represent details of the fictional place?
- How can sound be used to add to the atmosphere and ambience of the fictional place?

Thus, for example, when the teacher suggests 'We have to cross this river before the king's soldiers arrive,' he/she might also ask

- How wide is the river?
- How deep is it?
- How high are the banks?
- Are there materials available from which to make a raft?
- How well and how long can we stay hidden?

In this way the element of place will not only influence the enactment but will stimulate children to give it a greater vividness and immediacy.

Tension

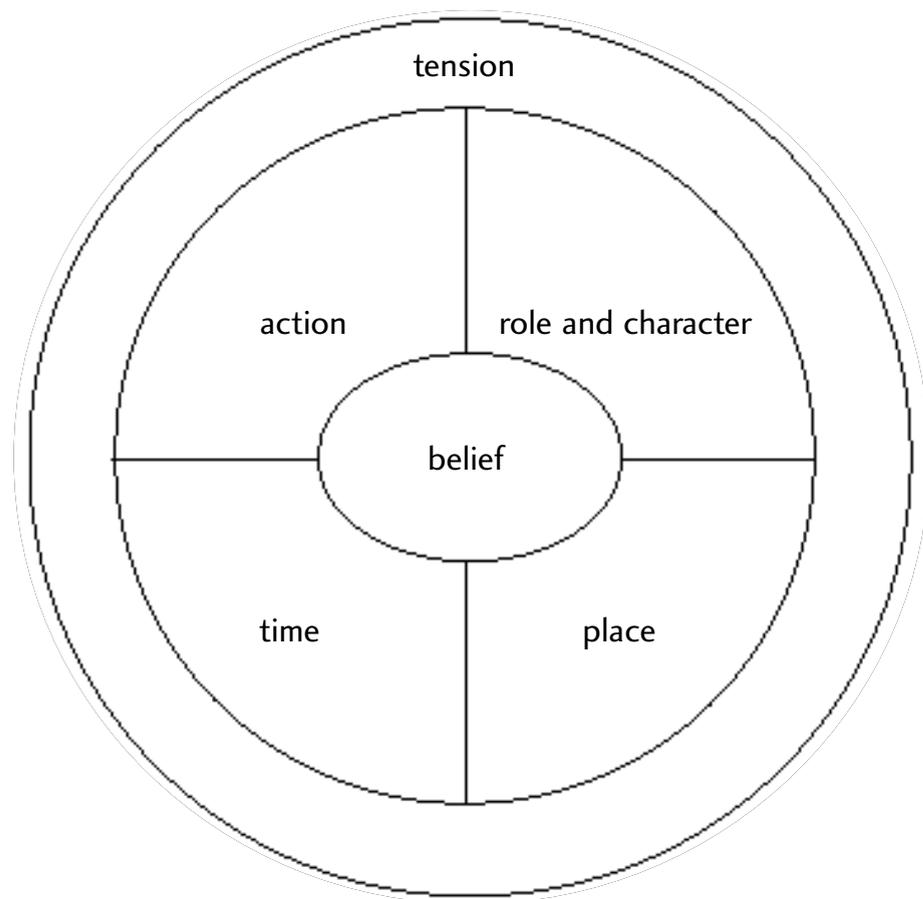
Tension is essential to the drama because it is tension that drives forward the action of the drama. It arises when characters in the drama are faced with conflicting needs, choices and desires, and this leads to uncertainty. The source of the tension will be inherent in the situation of the drama and in the reaction of the characters to it. Because of the conflict of needs, choices or desires, one or more of the characters in the action wishes, or is constrained to wish, to resolve the dilemma, to escape the constraints of the present fictional uncertainty. This will impel the action forward and develop the characters towards the fictional future.

This in itself, of course, engenders further tension, since the outcome of the attempted resolution and its possible consequences are unknown, or at least not fully foreseen. The effect of tension in the drama can be seen in the following example.

As the children are rowing in their holed boat towards the island the teacher narrates as follows:

'Can you feel the silence in the boat. We are waiting because any minute now the splash of an oar or too loud a whisper may signal our presence to whoever is on the shore. Row silently, think silently, breathe as silently as you can. What's that! What is it! Where did that arrow come from?'

It is from a combination of the elements of action, role and character, time and place that tension derives



The teacher has used the action to create this suspenseful situation. The natural reaction, in drama or life, would be for all of them to panic and shout, but they are constrained by the fact that they do not want to betray their presence. This constraint and their fear for the fictional future derives from a manipulation of the fictional place. To add to the tension there is also the element of time. They cannot delay, because their boat has a hole in it and the presence of the arrow is also a manipulation of time, because it brings their possible future into the present. The arrow is also a manipulation of

space, in that it makes real to the children the fact that they are close to the island and that some spatial adjustment must be made if they are to escape the attentions of those on shore. Tension also comes from the element of character, since different characters in the drama will want to take different courses of action or evasion. It is from a combination of the elements of action, role and character, time and place that tension derives and this drives the action forward. The nature of the children's involvement in this process will determine the extent to which belief is built in to the context.

Significance

Significance could be described as the underlying relevance that a piece of drama has to some facet of life. Drama, as with all artistic endeavour, seeks to clarify, to illuminate, to explain or to redefine human experience. The extent and the success of this can vary enormously and will depend, among other things, on the purpose of the particular dramatic expression. However, whether the drama is tragic, the lightest comedy or a process drama activity in the classroom, its relevance, great or small, to human experience will still be discerned.

This significance, or deeper meaning, of the drama will be a factor of the total dramatic experience but can be related most directly to the theme of the drama and the plot through which it is refracted. The theme might be described as an abstract summary of what the drama is about, but the drama can only attain significance when that theme is given a concrete dramatic expression through character, action, time, place and the other elements of drama—when, in other words, it ‘comes alive’ in a specific dramatic fiction.

Shakespeare’s plays *Macbeth* and *Richard III* could be said, in general terms, to deal with the theme of ambition and the evils that can result from it. However, each casts a very different light on the origins, the power and the effects of ambition. On the one hand *Macbeth*, an essentially good man,

succumbs to the temptation of ambition through the intervention of the supernatural and the influence of another strong personality but comes to realise its ultimate futility and destructiveness. In the other case *Richard*, a man who is nakedly ambitious from the outset, perpetrates equivalent evils and causes similar human misery but has, at the end of the drama, learned nothing. *Macbeth*’s despairing words

*Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing*

contrasts with *Richard*’s pathetic cry of defiance and frustration:

A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!

The significance in each case could be said to lie in how shallow and how deep human nature can be and how different people in different circumstances accommodate experience and, ultimately, learn from it. That of course represents only a partial reading of the plays, but it may serve to illustrate the function of the element of significance in the drama.

The relationship between plot, theme and significance is just as important in process drama in the classroom. In most cases the theme will be chosen by the teacher, for a variety of reasons. He/she may wish:

- to examine some important facet of life experience
- to explore some relevant issue
- to enhance learning experience in some other curriculum area.

The teacher in choosing the content and the fictional lens or in providing the pre-text will launch the action, and it is through this that the plot will develop. As the children are involved in the enactment, in the making of the drama text, they will be engaged in continuing reflection on the drama as it happens, and this will in itself influence the course of its development. Later, when the drama is finished, the children can be led, through further reflection, to consider the drama they have made, what the plot turned out to be, how this reflected a theme, and what significance was to be drawn from that particular expression of the theme.

Such extensive post-drama reflection is not always appropriate and can even be self-defeating. It is also worth noting that the significance of a piece of drama is not always readily amenable to paraphrase. Often the significance may only be experienced by the children, not expressed. Experience is the most valuable part of process drama for

children, as it is of every other artistic activity.

In the drama about the dolmen in Drama activity 3 (p. 74) the plot is manifestly about a tribe that wants to build a monument to a dead chief that will outdo the monuments of rival tribes. This springs from the theme of honouring the dead and particularly of honouring great people when they die. This quite extensive drama exercise led children to discover that at least part of its significance is not just the importance of honouring the dead but whether this is appropriate at all and if so what form the commemoration should take.

Genre

Naturalistic drama is the genre that imitates most accurately the details of life. It is the genre that will come most easily to children. This is very evident in the propensity that young children have for make-believe play. In make-believe play they create a symbolic reality through which they can explore the real world and come to terms with its strangeness, while remaining in the safety of their own fictional world.

In fostering and preserving, through consistent drama activity, the instinct for make-believe play after the spontaneous impulse for it has waned, the naturalistic genre affords children a similar opportunity to explore the newness of experience and the issues it raises.

It is important, however, that the full potential of drama is made available to the child, and this should involve a gradual widening of his/her drama experience to include genres other than the naturalistic. The genre most readily akin to it is tragedy. This will grow out of the naturalistic as more serious themes are accepted as content and as the element of tragedy is accommodated within the fictional lens. The depth and nature of tragic characters, plots and themes should be of such an order that the child's emotional and intellectual maturity can encompass them. In other words, the fictional consequences of the tragic should impinge in a significant way on the child's thought and emotions but in a context in which he/she can engage with them in safety. It is, indeed, one of the strengths of drama that it allows the child to come close enough to content to examine it seriously while at the same time distancing it safely through fiction.

The world of fantasy is also accessible to the children, at first through fairy-tale and myth and later through their experience of films and television. This, too, provides them with a way of experiencing some of man's primal fears and obsessions through a world at a remove from their own. The rejection by the stepmother, the threat of the animal world, the mirror images of beauty and ugliness, the healing power of love are all available to children in the genre of fantasy. The safety of the world of the fantastic, suspending as it does many

of the constraints of the real world, allows them to look through the glass of wonder at some of the extremes of human experience. Although care should be taken to preserve the joy that children can extract from fantasy and from an experience of the genre of fantasy in the drama, it is important too that a judiciously pitched element of reflection gives them some insight into its deeper springs.

By the middle classes children tend to use comedy as a safety device, and there is often a leaning towards absurd situations and characters. This may serve children in trying out a wished-for world where, for example, teachers are browbeaten, parents are stupid and children are wise. Such drama should not be invalidated as being 'not true to life'. On the contrary, it should be used by the teacher to begin to develop the distinction between the genres of comedy, absurd drama and naturalism.

Approaching a drama activity

This section has so far discussed

- the continuum from make-believe play to drama. This is central in developing the child's facility and ease with drama and is the focus of the first content objective at each level
- the three prerequisites for making process drama. These will, as their name suggests, be a feature of every drama activity
- the functions of the eight elements of drama. The elements will give a structure and an enlivening power to drama activity
- the close relationship that exists between the elements and the content objectives of the curriculum. The content is presented in a way that ensures the centrality of the elements in the drama process.

It might be useful to consider how all of these might be reflected in a drama activity in the classroom.

A drama activity can have many starting points, as is made clear in the five descriptions of drama activities that follow (pp. 66–91), and it is important to stress that the teacher should regularly use different starting points for drama activities. However, the approach might be best explained through showing a fairly obvious route a drama activity might take, starting with content.

The suggestion that follows is based on one of the exemplars given in the curriculum for first and second classes. It should be emphasised, however, that it could be used with equal effectiveness at either of the higher levels.

The exemplar reads:

play out the scene where a dealer convinces Jack that he should sell the cow he loves for a bag of beans, exploring what kind of person the dealer is and what kind of person Jack is.

Here the content with which the teacher has started is the possibility of insights into relationships between parents and children, shady dealings, and power relationships inherent in the story. The fact that this content has already been mediated through the fictional lens of the story allows both the children and the teacher to follow the structure of the existing story until such time as they want to depart from it and change it to accommodate what is happening.

Laying down clear social rules for the drama, respecting the contributions and ideas of the children, and affording them many opportunities to engage in the drama unwatched, will ensure a *safe environment* for the work.

At the point of departure from the original, a pupil might suggest that Jack loves this cow and might run away with her. In response, the teacher might suggest that the children divide into threes and set up the following scene:

Jack is on his way to the fair to sell the cow but he is so fond of the cow that he has decided to run away rather than sell her. He is now sitting at the side of the road (*place*) and he is telling her what he has decided to do and why. As this is going on, a neighbour comes along and asks him what he is doing and why he is so lonely. This neighbour will try to persuade him not to run away.

This process of setting up the drama scene is called *framing* the action. The teacher frames the action in such a way as to be close enough for the child to relate successfully with it, yet distant enough for him/her to engage safely in it.

From this new fictional lens the *action* can develop. This could consist of the neighbour telling Jack's mother about him trying to run away and her setting out to look for him. To connect directly with the theme of honesty and dishonesty Jack, in running away, may go through the market-place (again a development of the element of *place*) in which all the dealers and tricksters are offering various 'special offers' to the sellers. In these enactments the children should be encouraged to enter imaginatively into the *characters*.

It is also possible to extend the drama by introducing another character. Without telling the children playing Jack or the dealer, the teacher could take some pairs from the market place and brief them as follows: 'You know what the dealer is up to. He has done this sort of thing before but he doesn't know that you know this. Stop and listen to them and see if you can stop Jack being foolish.' This would be an example of *giving a brief*.

If the teacher wanted to bring the drama back closer to the original story, he/she could, for example, 'stand on a wall' and announce that there were some people selling extraordinary beans with special powers and that there were others selling ordinary beans and pretending they had extraordinary powers. This would be an example of *the teacher in role*.

The element of *time* could be used to add further tension through the teacher giving Jack the prompt 'That neighbour has told your mother about your plan to run away and she's coming to look for you. Better sell as quickly as you can.'

The *significance* of the drama for the children would come from what they learn of human motivation and attitudes through the experience of playing out the drama. Where appropriate, this could be explored further in post-drama reflection through discussion in groups or whole-class situations.

Although the drama in this case is based on a well-known fairy-tale the *genre* of the enactment can be unambiguously naturalistic. The effectiveness of the drama will, indeed, be a factor of how real the children can make the characters and the action.

Descriptions of successful drama activities

Five descriptions of successful drama activities follow.

These are intended to give the teacher a detailed description of what is possible in drama lessons. It should be pointed out, however, that they do not seek to prescribe what a teacher should do in a drama lesson, where the children influence choices and directions through their suggestions and through the need to take account of their particular needs and abilities. They describe as closely as possible five drama activities that did actually take place. The parallel notes provide a commentary in each case on the structure, the development, the teaching strategies and the teaching goals.

It should be emphasised too that these are not exemplar lessons the teacher should try to imitate. They merely furnish examples of successful drama activities that particular teachers experienced, interacting with particular groups of children in particular situations. This is not to say that another teacher could not take any one of the starting points and allow the children to develop it into an equally effective but quite different drama activity. Its success would, however, be dependent on the teacher's personality and expertise, combined with the children's knowledge, level of maturity and drama experience.



Planning the drama journey

Along with the guidelines on approaching a drama activity (p. 62–64), these descriptions of drama activities exemplify salient features of process drama and the teacher’s approach to it in the classroom.



Children wearing different articles of clothing as signifiers of character

The essential components of drama—the elements that inform and structure drama, the prerequisites for making drama and the strand and strand units—and the relationship between them can be seen at work in each of the five drama activities. Furthermore, in order to illustrate the adaptability that is characteristic of the approach to drama each of the activities begins from a different starting point. In order, these are:

- the content (bullying and habitats)
- the enactment (the teacher in role beginning straight away to make a drama text with the children)
- the search for a fictional lens, which results in looking at the making of dolmens through the fictional lens of a story about a tribe
- a reflection (on a poem)
- a need for the children to cooperate with each other in order to transform the pre-text of a script into a drama text.

The missing component in this list, the concern for a safe environment, might just as easily have been the starting point for the first activity. Furthermore, the activities are appropriate to different levels. Because they describe drama activities that actually took place the teacher is referred to as *he* or *she* as is appropriate.

Drama activity 1

Starting with content

infant classes

- Life content:** Cognitive: Habitats, animal languages.
Affective: Dealing with bullies and people who do not negotiate; problem-solving.
- Drama content:** Entering into another world and making its problems ours
Rudimentary characterisation as rabbits.
- Place:** The school hall or general-purposes room.

The level of belief and concentration in this game should, if possible, be evident in all drama work, and the transfer from this game to the next activity demonstrates the relationship between play, make-believe and drama.

Play a game of 'little packets'. Groups of three children stand in lines radiating from and equidistant from the centre of the drama space. Two children who are not in the lines are the hunter and the quarry. The hunter chases the quarry who may run anywhere in the drama space to avoid capture, provided he/she does not touch anyone standing in the lines. When the quarry is in danger of being caught he/she may join any line either at the front or the back in order to claim sanctuary. If he/she stands at the front of the line the last person in the line becomes the quarry and is chased by the hunter. Likewise, if he/she goes to the back of the line the front person becomes the quarry and must escape. If the hunter catches the quarry, they swap roles immediately and play on.

The teacher says, 'Let's play the same game, this time imagining that we are rabbits. How do rabbits communicate and talk? How do they move?'

The teacher here is working for two things: first, she is creating for the children a representation of the habitat and giving them experience of it. This works also as a constraint through which the teacher can control the class while giving them maximum freedom to explore the imagined world. The questioning at the end is for the purposes of language development, which will always be part of drama work.

The children play on all fours and teacher accepts whatever level of 'rabbit characterisation' the children give. 'Performances' should not be emphasised.

The teacher delineates the imagined space, dividing the hall in half. One half has short grass, which is delicious to eat. The other half, the area behind and on top of the 'burrows', has tangled briars that reach up five times as high as a rabbit. It also has thorny bushes, and the grass is very long. 'What other plants might be growing there? Because there are so many plants and briars, how will the rabbits have to move through it?' (Give the word 'wriggle'). The teacher suggests various tasks for them in this area (for example, 'Find something you lost. Go looking for a rabbit friend') till they get a good idea of the kind of restricted movement that is appropriate. The teacher may help them by reminding them, as they go along, of the possibilities of thorns in their noses, getting their fur entangled in the bushes, etc. At the end of this ask the children questions about the experience: 'Did you get jagged? With what?' etc.

In reply to the last question the children will probably agree that the open space would be best.

This familiarises them with the drama world.

Here the teacher is moving into taking the role of the fox. It is important to stress that the teacher need not go on all fours, though she may. Whichever way, she should avoid giving a display of 'acting', which will turn the pupils into an audience rather than participants. She can use her own voice quite comfortably.

The pupils are put in a situation in which they have to judge someone's trustworthiness.

Note the teacher changing role. She can be quite herself in both roles as long as there is clear signalling about which role she is in. She is placing herself so as to draw out the children in preparation for a confrontation with the fox.

By now the 'rabbits' have lived through an experience out of which they can argue their case.

Finally the teacher asks: 'Where do you think the rabbits would play their games?'

The rabbits play a few rounds of 'little packets' in the clear half of the area.

Teacher says: 'The rabbits might be playing this to make sure they are alert if a real hunter comes. Who might that real hunter be? And where would they go if the fox came?' The teacher and the children then agree that when she rushes into the area wearing a particular scarf, hat or garment and banging the tambourine, she is the fox. Anyone she touches is dead and will have to stay dead. The rabbits will have to stay in their burrows until the fox leaves, which is signalled by using a slower drumbeat. They play a game or two with the fox coming, being held back from following them by the shrubbery and leaving slowly again.

The teacher makes the 'dead' stay in a corner. This will prevent them seeking to be caught for the fun of it and help them see 'death' as undesirable. Then the fox comes and, instead of leaving, sits down and waits. This is a surprise for the children, who will now experience some frustration at having their lives and play disrupted by the fox. Then, when the children are beginning to get restless, the teacher, as fox, says, 'Hello, rabbits. I'm really a friendly fox. Come out of those shrubs. I want to talk to you.'

The children will have to make up their minds whether to trust her or not. As fox, she tries to coax them out while giving clues that she might not be trustworthy. 'Maybe you don't trust me, and people call me sly, but do I look as if I'd kill you?' When, eventually, some of them do venture out she lures them to her and then treacherously 'kills' them. Then she lies down as if going to sleep.

Now that she's established the stalemate, the teacher takes off the fox-scarf and tells the children that she's teacher again. She leaves the scarf on the floor to indicate that the fox is still there. She now says she'd like to become a rabbit, puts on an article of clothing representing the rabbit, and, crawling warily into the thicket, whispers, 'Ah, here's a place where we can sit up fairly straight but where the fox can't get us. Gather around here but don't trample too much or it won't be long till the fox is able to get through these briars.' The 'dead' come back. When they are all together she whispers, 'Don't talk loudly or he'll hear us, but what are we going to do about this fox?'

If the children try to talk in squeaks the teacher says, 'Let's pretend for the moment that these rabbits can talk.' If they talk in squeaky voices or retain some of the rabbit-voice qualities look on this as a plus as long as it is used as a means of communicating and is not just a 'funny voice'. Whichever it is, don't comment on it; listen to what is being said, whatever the voice. This is good characterisation in embryo.

The teacher, as fox, can be aware that, even as she is negotiating, she can, by phrasing etc., help draw out the children to defend the logic and the rightness of their position.

She should also, however, challenge them and try to involve them emotionally. This is to develop emotional intelligence.

This is to give the pupils variety and to encourage them to work in groups. They are not good at co-operating at this age and need opportunities to develop this skill. This is the beginning of a sense of responsibility in small-group work. This will underline, for all, the difference between verbalisation and communication, between discourse and drama.

The teacher, as one of them, helps the rabbits to verbalise their frustration and anger and to formulate choices for action. Eventually the choices have to be to try to negotiate (dangerous), kill the fox (how? big problem), or find some way of dealing with him. Since killing him won't be an option (probably) they may decide to negotiate with him first. 'What will we say to him?' asks the teacher, allowing them to practise their argument. Then, 'And we won't give in to him easily,' she tells them. Finally she says, 'Will we waken him and ask him to leave us alone? All right, but be sure that, no matter what he says, you don't leave the bushes. Don't shout at him: waken him gently or he'll be in bad humour.'

Now the teacher goes back to being the fox, who wakens as the children call. They try to negotiate with him. The fox is trying to be reasonable and wishes the rabbits would be reasonable and let him chase and eat some of them. After a fruitless attempt to negotiate, the fox leaves and says he'll wait till they are playing some time and then he'll get them.

The rabbits now have to decide whether to go back out again. Is it too dangerous? If they decide to go out again then let this happen, and this time let the rabbits in groups decide on some game to play as rabbits. They play these games in the short-grass area, in the burrows or in the briars, depending on suitability. The teacher encourages them to preserve the reality of each area and, once the game is established, to communicate, as far as possible, in rabbit squeak and gesture. Then, when they have just settled into their game, the fox comes noisily again, and again he prowls around, trying to wriggle into the hedges and then slowly leaves.

By now the children have taken on the problems and the lives of the rabbits as their own and are living through the experience. Learning is taking place at the level of reality and at the fictional level.

Whatever solutions are offered should be taken and evaluated. At the end try out the solutions with teacher-as-fox.

This is to emphasise the children's feeling of accomplishment and also to begin the process of physicalisation and vocal flexibility that is important in drama.

Note that the drama hasn't been used to give this information but to create the experience that will enable the child to understand the essential issues in the material and create the experiential hooks on which to hang the new information.

Now the rabbits are helped to realise, by teacher-as-rabbit again, that they have to devise some kind of early warning system that will

- not draw attention to themselves—therefore they must be reasonably silent
- give an idea of how near the danger is
- allow them to play and eat freely till the danger is imminent
- not endanger any look-outs
- work well in this particular habitat
- take account of the fact that rabbits can't really talk.

Having tried the solutions in action, the children evaluate them again to see if they can be improved. The rabbits now celebrate by singing some songs in rabbit voices and dancing to them as they think rabbits would.

Allow an opportunity to reflect on and talk about what happened and how the children felt at various times. Then the teacher tells them about real rabbit habitats and real rabbits' warning systems, and wonders how rabbits were so clever as to work out these things.

Drama activity 2

Beginning with enactment or drama text

first and second classes

This technique of keeping back aspects of the story that might be known to the children is a technique that teachers can follow with other existing stories. Thus teachers who might not think themselves creative enough to make up drama can rely on the structure of existing stories to support their work.

This is not the same as 'acting out a story', which would not be regarded as very effective drama practice.

The children increase the reality of the drama while solving some mathematical problems.

The drama should not be weighed down by mathematical problems, but a great deal can be done on maths problems in the context of the drama.

Through making these decisions they gradually come to own the drama world.

The teacher tells the children he is going into role and asks them to respond to developments. He goes into role as a Roman soldier and says 'All right, now all of you belong to the house of David. Before we go on, is there anyone here who doesn't belong to the house of David?' If someone says he/she doesn't, the soldier looks up his list and says, 'Of course you do. Let me see—black hair, blue eyes: yes, you're on my list all right.' He tells them they have to go to a town two hundred miles away. The Emperor Augustus wants them to, because he wants to know how many of them there are and who they are, because he wants no rebellions. He shows a map of the journey, if possible on parchment-type paper, and tells them they have to go there and sign their names. 'Any questions?'

A child asks if a bus will come for them. Teacher says, 'Bus? Bus? I never heard that word, but if it's some sort of animal there's no camels or donkeys coming for you. If you have donkeys of your own you can take them; if not you can walk.' One child asks how far it is.

The teacher, still in role, conducts a discussion on how far they could walk in a day before they became worn out and their feet blistered. Then he asks them if they could do that up and down the mountains, sometimes where there were no roads. When eventually they decide they could walk about twenty miles a day they work out how long it will take them to cover two hundred miles to Bethlehem.

'Now,' says the soldier, 'what are you going to do for food?' When one of the children says, 'Buy it in the shops,' the soldier says, 'That's why I brought it up. Those merchants you meet trying to sell you food, they'd rob you, especially with so many people travelling to Bethlehem and needing food. So you'd better see what food you're going to need and bring as much as you can.'

The teacher comes out of role to tell them quickly that this is happening a long time ago and that there were no corn flakes, no shops. Then, changing role, he becomes one of them and says, 'We'd better work out how much we need, because we don't want to be carrying any more than we have to.' They work out how much of the things they will need, and the teacher writes them down and the approximate weight of each. Then he makes up a 'pack' of the same weight, to give the children an idea of how heavy that might be. Could they carry that for that distance? They discover that it is very heavy. Do they do with less food, risk buying it at very high prices along the way ('I know some of those merchants too. They're very dear,' says the teacher), or take donkeys to carry it? 'But if we all take donkeys there won't be enough grass for them all along the way, and we'd have to bring hay or something.' The teacher helps clarify the choices and the children make the decisions.

'Next problem: where do we stay? The inns are fairly expensive.' Tents etc. are suggested but are found to be too cold at night. The children, with the issues clarified by the teacher in role, decide between walking thirty miles a day, even if their feet blister, so that they will be fewer days and nights on the road and so have less to pay, and taking the easier pace of twenty miles a day and having to pay the inn for more nights. Using repeated subtraction as division, they work out that it will take them seven days there and seven days back.

This release will be welcome as a relief from the heavier problems. The problem of the sheep will, however, be no less real. It still is all make-believe.

Next a fun scene in which the children become sheep, which have to be penned before the shepherds can leave. The pen is given four 'doors', and there are only four shepherds to drive the sheep in. Naturally they escape. Each four have a chance to be shepherds, so that they all have the same experience of the fiction on which to draw later.

The children, led by the teacher, pack their imaginary bags with the foods they agreed. When they are ready to leave, a stranger comes (teacher with another hat or something that is so distinctive that he will be remembered as the same character when he comes back later) and asks if they heard anything about a king coming. He says he has just had a kind of dream that a king came, and he wants to know if they heard anything about it. When he finds out that they haven't he leaves, saying he must enquire from others but he is strangely certain, he feels it in his bones.

An unthreatening chance to show a scene to others. If, when showing, the scenes are entered into as fully as when done simultaneously then the children are beginning to understand showing as re-entering the drama.

Now, in threes, with one acting as the donkey, two people try to help the donkey up a slippery slope where the donkey, and people, keep slipping back.

This gives an opportunity to develop the concepts and vocabulary through which the negotiations in the next scene take place.

Show a random few of these. They may be entertaining.

This is an attempt to give the children an experience of what the journey might be like without having to 'Pretend they are tired and exhausted.'

In two groups, farmers discuss the tactics they should use to get as much money as possible for the hay and food they sell to travellers, while shepherds discuss the tactics they should use to get food for themselves and their donkeys as cheaply as possible. Teacher helps both groups.

In pairs, a farmer and a shepherd negotiate the sale of hay and food.

After a while children in each pair exchange roles.

The teacher describes some of the hardships of the journey: steep slopes, dangerous narrow passes where there is a danger of falling, low rocks to try to get under, etc. The teacher then sets the children the problem of laying out a kind of obstacle course, using PE equipment etc., which might help them experience this kind of hardship. Having made up the obstacle course, they go over it, carrying their weights and bringing their donkeys along, as the teacher narrates the journey, ending with 'They were cold, tired and exhausted when they reached Bethlehem. They tried seventeen inns but they were all full, and they were hardly able to go any further when finally they came to an inn where there were some beds, but the innkeeper wasn't very nice.'

This is helping to reinforce the fact that space is at a premium as well as to create a later dilemma for the children.

Here we are reminding the children of the stranger, keeping in their mind that something may happen in the future.

The teacher as innkeeper says he has some beds, but they have to answer some questions. First, is any of them a king in disguise? Because there was a man here who said there was a king coming. 'Oh, you met him too?' They tell the innkeeper of the encounter. The innkeeper thinks it strange but is reassured to learn that none of them is a king in disguise. He then treats them as the shepherds they are, charging what he admits are high prices, but, he says, others will come, and there are no beds in any inns. He counts them. He can only accommodate them if they sleep three to a bed. They agree to this, so exhausted are they. But, he says, let nobody complain about somebody kicking you or about hard beds or about not getting a good night's sleep. He leads them to the room, a corner of the hall, and tells them finally that if anyone else comes they are not on any account to let them in. Otherwise he'll throw them all out and give the beds to someone else. He leaves them to settle in and arrange where to put their luggage etc.

It is worth noting here that the children have, by now, a fictional experience on which to base their choice rather than feeling some obligation to make the 'right' decision that the teacher might want.

If the children had decided not to let Mary and Joseph in then the drama would have been different and the teacher would have had to change to accommodate that decision.

They are just settling in when the teacher, as Joseph, comes along. He doesn't give his name but asks to be let in. When they explain the situation he shows them a bag that he has carried for two hundred miles. He lets them feel the weight of it. He has travelled with his wife, who is going to have a baby, so she is carrying the same weight as that bag in her tummy and she is very tired. The shepherds must choose whether they will let them in or not. In this case they choose to let them in. Joseph goes out and comes back with his arm held as if around someone else's shoulder and he introduces his wife (the children accept the invisible wife readily). They give her a place to lie down. Joseph leaves to look after the donkey.

The teacher's decision to find Mary is to avoid the children feeling guilty about betraying her. Another teacher might allow them to betray her and somehow deal with the consequences, an exciting possibility for a different direction to the drama.

The teacher increases the tension.

If the children had known the story before now they would not be engaged in the drama as a lived-through experience.

The innkeeper (teacher again) comes and says he suspects they let someone in. He accuses them of telling lies and puts them in a dilemma: tell lies or betray the woman. When the teacher senses they are about to betray her, the innkeeper discovers her and throws her out. He tells them not to dare let anyone else in or they'll be out on their ears. He tries to make them promise him they won't—another choice for the children to make. They don't promise. He leaves.

The teacher now comes back in role as Joseph and asks the children to try to decide among themselves if they could help him and his wife in any way. His wife is very sleepy and weary and sore. She could have the baby any time. He leaves them to talk about it among themselves.

When they have done this for a while, the shepherd who had the dream about the king comes back. He says he knows the king is here in this town, Bethlehem, tonight. The children by now recognise the story they have been living through, and they tell him that Joseph has been here. He asks them about what happened and they tell him the story. Yes, he says, even hearing the story, he knows that the baby will be born tonight and that that baby will be king of the world.

The teacher narrates the story of the birth, and at the point where the shepherds come, the teacher, as Joseph, comes and asks the shepherds to sit in a circle and shows them the baby (a blanket). He asks each of them to think of something short they would like to whisper to the baby. He says that even the stars are singing because this baby is born and he plays, on the tape-recorder, a Hosanna, as the baby is passed around the circle and each one whispers his/her own few words to him.

It is to be hoped that this drama will teach the child, however indirectly, that the divine grows out of the everyday.

Note: A useful exercise would be to list what topics and subjects could be integrated with this lesson. It will be found that every curriculum area can be touched using this lesson as the central experience.

Drama activity 3

The search for a fictional lens

third and fourth classes

The following is a description of a drama activity that begins with a search for a fiction and ends as a full-scale integrated project. Because of the inexperience of the group and because the emphasis is on learning, the pupils do not enter very physically into the fiction but they do become quite engaged at an intellectual level. While the techniques used cannot, strictly speaking, be called 'mantle of the expert', the teacher does throughout use some techniques akin to that method. The drama activity is suitable for boys, girls or mixed groups.

Here we have an example of drama initiating content. The teacher, in order to give such a wide choice to the pupils, must have a good grasp of how to frame and structure scenes.

The teacher is concerned that, when he goes into role, he will not have to be continually coming out of role again in order to say, 'No, they had no toasters in those days,' and the like.

It is important to stress that the teacher is not 'acting' or giving a display of his acting prowess. Otherwise the children become the audience rather than participants.

During this activity the pupils are gradually entering the world of the drama and creating experiences of it for themselves.

The teacher initiates a discussion on what they should make a drama about. Various suggestions are offered. Unusually, one of the topics offered is that of dolmens. This is because there is a large dolmen in the area and possibly because of some misunderstanding of what drama is about. (The children have never done drama before.)

The idea seems to find favour among the group, and the teacher decides to go along with it. Firstly, to avoid glaring anachronisms, he tells the children that, at the time the dolmens were built, there was no television, and no motor-cars, machines or guns, and that people used stone or iron tools and fought with spears, some of which had stone heads. He tells the children that he will talk to them as if he's a different person and as if they were different people in another time and place.

The teacher says, without adopting any particular voice, 'People, I know that at this moment you are mourning the death of your great chief Odhran. We have all loved him and admired him as a great warrior and peacemaker. You know that, as a fitting tribute to him, we must build a dolmen, that is, a tomb with three standing stones capped by a huge stone called the capstone. But before we even think of that I would like us to remind ourselves of the great deeds Odhran did. I myself remember how he fought against the Dari tribe and how he made peace with them, a peace which has lasted for seventy moons. I'm sure many of you have memories of him, and if you have, I would like you to state them and let us all remember.'

The children come up with various 'memories' of him. Most concentrate on his warrior prowess, and the teacher helps steer them towards his peacemaking efforts also. Every contribution is validated by the 'leader'. It is during this that the names of other tribes are mentioned. One tribe, the Runa, seem to have been great rivals of Odhran's tribe.

Note that the teacher ignores the anachronism of tons and miles. He doesn't want to weigh the drama down with an emphasis on accuracy. These can be dealt with later.

Now the teacher, still as leader, suggests that the Runa tribe built over their chief the biggest dolmen around. The children suggest that they build a bigger one over Odhran. All agree that this should be done. They agree that, if the cap on the Runa tribe's stone is 150 tons, they should make one with a 200-ton cap. If they have the biggest dolmen around they will be looked on as superior to all the other tribes. The leader asks his tribe to divide into groups to try to think of what the biggest problems would be in doing that, especially since there are no stones of that size within seventeen miles. As they discuss in groups what the problems might be, the teacher, in role as leader, goes around prompting and probing, helping them to solve the problems.

The teacher's questioning skills are paramount here in eliciting solutions. He validates and expands on all suggestions. Gradually, by looking on the problems from the point of view of the tribe, the children are being led further into the world of the drama.

They come together to pool their knowledge and discuss the problems. They agree that getting the capstone on is a big problem, and various ways of doing it are discussed. After much probing of the problem it is agreed that, by rolling the stone on logs, moving logs to the front—not easy, because they have to be huge logs—they could slowly move the stone the seventeen miles. They also agree that to get the capstone on they will have to make an earthen ramp. This will not be easy with the tools available.

This is necessary because the pupils have no experience of drama.

Now the teacher comes out of role and asks them, in groups of seven, to make a still picture of some activity that they would be doing as part of moving that capstone.

The children are experiencing the meaning that is carried in the physical.

They come back, and each picture is 'read' by the group and the activity examined. Then the teacher suggests they make another picture of the same people half a minute later.

A quick way into enactment with inexperienced pupils

These are looked at very quickly and then the teacher suggests that they create the action that joins the two pictures.

This emphasises that drama does not involve 'showing' action to anyone.

At a signal all groups perform this action simultaneously. Since they do it in silence, the teacher suggests they add sound to the action. Again they perform the action simultaneously with sound.

They discuss the various actions and where they fit into the overall plan.

The teacher moves in and out of role simply by talking of the problem as 'ours' or 'theirs'.

Now, moving in and out of role as necessary, the teacher leads them to look at some of the mathematical and engineering problems. How do we get logs the same size? Need they be the same thickness? Will it take more people to roll it uphill than downhill? How will they deal with humps on the ground? (Assume no roads.) Can the same people who are pulling the stone forward move the logs to the front? Do people have to be moving logs forward all the time? How far do we think they'll travel in a day? (No lights at night.) How many tons can a big lorry carry? So how many lorries would be needed, even if the stone could be split up, to carry the capstone? (To give an idea of the magnitude of the problem.) How will food be brought to the workers? Will we take the three standing stones to the site at the same time as the capstone? How will we raise them up? How will we get the capstone up on the three standing stones? In groups, calculate how many people will be needed to do this. The groups come back and compare figures. It is agreed that a thousand people will be needed for the whole operation.

The extended world of the drama is being invented and entered into.

The leader confesses that they are probably right, but asks, 'What should we do, since there are only 312 in our tribe?'

Various suggestions, all in role, all looking on the problem as 'ours'. Eventually they agree that they are going to have to try to persuade some of the neighbouring tribes to help them. The leader asks what they know about the characteristics of the surrounding tribes, which tribes might help, which might be jealous and not wish them to succeed.

The paper, painting and drawing anachronisms can be dealt with later.

In groups (integration with art work) they come up with a series of paintings and drawings that would help to explain to the more backward tribes what they intend to do. They bring these together and select a sequence of pictures that will comprise the plan of how to build the dolmen.

Now that the technical aspect can be explained, the leader asks them, in groups, to decide on what arguments they will use with the other tribes to persuade them to help. They pool their ideas.

This 'play within a play' is called role-reversal and is not to be confused with exchanging roles in an isolated improvisation or playlet.

Now the class divides into groups, and one group is given the task of rehearsing the arguments of 'our tribe' while the other groups are asked to put themselves in the shoes of the various other tribes and to decide on reasons why they should not co-operate or what they should look for in return. They explore what their tribe needs, how many people they can give to the effort, whether they want the effort to succeed, and why.

This can be treated either as role-reversal in which 'our tribe' are acting their neighbours for the sake of exploring how they may react or as an enactment of the real encounter.

It would be an equally interesting drama were the teacher to move into examining the lives and jealousies of the other tribes, but time constraint forces choice.

If the teacher thinks it necessary, this section can be done by joining two still pictures, as before.

Note how the space is arranged to create another reality and to help lead in to the physical experience of the event.

Describing the action is helping concentration on their action as well as developing language.

The pupils are becoming aware of sub-text, the way in which unspoken thought can be read in the physical.

Now the teacher tells each group not to give in easily to the demands of the others. Then the others watch as the negotiating team from 'our tribe' attempt to negotiate with the delegation from other tribes. Afterwards they comment on whether one group or the other gave in too easily and what further arguments they could have used.

The teacher moves the story forward by saying that the negotiations ended and the tribes began to move the large stone. Now the teacher asks them, in groups of about seven, to make half a minute of action that will show an accident that could have happened as they pulled the stone through the countryside. They do these simultaneously and then possibly show them to each other. They discuss how likely it is that such accidents could happen.

Similarly, they create, in groups, half a minute of action in which the tribe members are enduring great hardship. They show them to each other, and the onlookers 'read' them.

The children and the teacher arrange the space on the floor as follows: The stone is static in the middle of a bog. If it doesn't move quickly it will sink into the bog. Yet the workers are exhausted. Every step they take they sink to their knees in mud. They fall from exhaustion but must get up. The teacher asks them to decide on which role they have in moving the stone, 'puller or log-mover', and they create a minute or more of this action (as long as belief and commitment last). The teacher takes the role of foreman in this so that he can coordinate the efforts of the two groups and help build the reality of the drama.

The teacher moves the action on again. They get across the bog and are hungry, thirsty, cold and wet. It is raining. Each tries to make a shelter for himself/herself, describing each action aloud as they are doing it.

The teacher divides the class in half. One half is asked to lie down for the night in the way that best expresses their thoughts and feelings. This half is silent while the teacher moves around putting his hand on the shoulder of each in turn. As he does, the pupils of the other half say what they are thinking and feeling.

The two halves change places and the exercise is repeated.

Note that the constraint placed on each leads to a tension in the scene and also makes resolution difficult, so that it cannot be over too quickly. The fact that A and B do not know each other's brief adds to the lifelike quality of the encounter and makes the text much more real for the participants.

Again, the experience is what is being sought and there is no sense of showing or display.

Note that we have confined ourselves to 'our' tribe members. If we had decided to concentrate on the jealousies of the other workers, whose status is being sacrificed for perhaps not enough reward, we could have explored the intrigue and mutiny to which jealousy will lead.

Now the class is divided into pairs, who call themselves A and B. The teacher tells them that it is a rule of the tribe that, if someone leaves, they must be replaced by a kinsman. They must never, however, ask to be replaced. Then he briefs A and B separately.

Brief A: B is coming from home to visit you. You are going to tell him how lonely you are, what is happening here and how much you want to get home to see your family. Ask about them all and how they are doing etc. in such a way that B can see your longing for home. What you want B to do is offer to replace you, but you can't ask him to do that, according to the rules of the tribe.

Brief B: There has been a great shortage of food in your country and, because of that, A's family have all died. You know that if A knew this he would want to die or go home. You have to tell him they're well and make up things about them. To make him happy to stay you must try to make him very proud of the work he is doing here and how the people at home think of the workers here as heroes.

These scenes begin with the As lying on the ground tired and the Bs coming in and greeting them. The scenes are done simultaneously.

Now all the pupils go back to being members of 'our' tribe, and the teacher, as a messenger, comes in tired and hungry. He says that, because so many people have been sent to work on this, and because they needed so much food, the shortage of food is very acute. He describes briefly the experiences he has had of people dying etc. He then praises them for sacrificing their own people and now, probably, their own lives (since food will be scarce from now on) for the glory of their chief Odhran. If they die at this work their deaths will be remembered. He points out that honouring the dead is such an important thing for the tribe that they should not mind the hardship. They will only have to endure two moons of hunger before the great stone will be in place. He asks that, if they have anything to say, they should say it now, and waits for people to speak.

The absence of dissent from the tribe members may have happened because the teacher over-praised the glory of building the monument.

Since they are rather silent, the teacher decides they are unsure about whether or not they should dissent from what the messenger has just said. Therefore the teacher, as messenger, says: 'All right, so I can take it that there is nobody who thinks we should leave the stone here to sink into the bog and go home and gather food and grow our crops.'

The teacher does not influence the decision here and is prepared to abide by whatever decision the tribe members make.

This provokes a different reaction, and some of the children argue passionately that they should go home. Others argue that they should stay and complete the task. The teacher, as messenger, can take either side in a neutral, chairman-like way, provoking thought and argument. Eventually it is decided to let the stone sink into the bog.

Because the pupils have had the experiences on which they are drawing, the entreaties are very real.

The teacher as leader says that, since they have decided this, he must warn them that the spirit of Odhran will not be at peace and will be very angry. He asks them to design a ritual for the last moments of the stone sinking, a ritual that will appease the spirit of Odhran.

With the help of the leader they decide on a simple telling to the spirit of all that they have done and asking him to respect the choice they have made. They perform the ritual.

The teacher could have led the pupils to explore the world to which the tribe members return but he feels that his educational objectives have been served.

Now the teacher narrates the final moments of the stone sinking, the huge mass of mud gradually coming over it, the smell of the damp turf, the sound of the oozing slime and finally the sucking sound as the stone disappears under the bog forever.

Now he asks that each one write out an account of the hardship they endured so that they can lay them around the circle where the stone sank and they too will sink into the bog. 'Decorate this account as beautifully as you can, because it is an offering to the spirit of the great chief Odhran.'

Finish with a ritual of laying these accounts in a circle around the bog.

Strategies such as this must be used sparingly. It is important to avoid giving the impression that the purpose of drama is to provide writing tasks for the pupils.

The teacher deals with the anachronisms encountered in the drama and asks the children if they could think of some more.

In the Irish class the pupils and teacher compose an account of what happened in the drama, and these, together with the other records of the drama, are pinned to the wall.

Drama activity 4

Starting with a reflection (a poem)

third and fourth classes

While starting with drama can help pupils to grasp the meaning of a poem, much as the reality of dolmens can be learned about after participating in Drama activity 3, it is also possible to lead from a poem into drama. The following drama activity illustrates this.

The pupils have just been reading a poem that begins:

*'In a bowl to sea went wise men three
On a brilliant night in June;
They carried a net and their hearts were set
On fishing up the moon.'*

It goes on to describe how they went to catch the reflection of the moon in the sea and what happened when they threw out the net,

*'And at the throw the moon below
In a thousand fragments flew.'*

They try all night and, in the end, come home puzzled and despondent after having failed.

At the end of the exploration children comment: 'They weren't really wise' and 'It's sad because they couldn't have caught it' and 'They were stupid.' The teacher uses these reflections as the beginning of a drama session.

The teacher's decision to run with three of the suggestions was, in part, motivated by the fact that it would afford three different backgrounds for the three different characters.

It can be seen that the content of this session is going to be initiated from within the drama and not from any predetermined cognitive objectives by the teacher. However, the teacher can easily anticipate in her planning the areas that this drama is liable to lead to.

We are here building up the reality of the characters and of their lives and affording a knowledge of them out of which they will make their later decisions.

The teacher says, 'Maybe they weren't wise and maybe they weren't stupid either, and maybe the ending doesn't have to be like that. Will we do a drama on it and see if we might change it?'

The children are anxious to do one. Teacher says, 'I wonder why they didn't know they couldn't catch the reflection?' Various suggestions are offered. They include:

1. They are from a comedy film.
2. They are from another planet.
3. They were never out at night before.
4. They never saw water before.

The teacher decides that if they select 1 there is a danger that they will do it in a superficial way. The children agree that, if its 2 or 4, the characters might not know how to use a bowl as a boat, or even to use a boat, and might have to learn. If 3, we would have to work out how it happened that they were not previously out at night. Eventually it is agreed that we need to probe what kind of world they come from.

The class is divided into groups of three, and three groups are each asked to create a scene from the other planet (World 2), three to create scenes that explain why they were never out at night before (World 3), and the last three to create scenes that explain why they never saw water before (World 4). These are talked about in the groups and then done simultaneously.

The teacher needs to be aware that showing each other's work can take a great deal of time, in which onlookers may be inactive.

Since it would take too long to watch all of them, each group selects half a minute that they think shows something important about their various worlds. The three groups dealing with each world go to different areas of the hall and show their half-minutes to each other.

Again the objective is to build up the past experience of the characters.

Each group of nine then draws up a list of the salient features of the world from which they came. For convenience we call the three groups spacemen, landlubbers and no-nighters.

By now the pupils should be adept at creating a bridge into the drama world.

Now simultaneously the spacemen, landlubbers and no-nighters make a scene that shows why the people of their world might want to catch the moon.

The teacher's restriction is to focus on the tension rather than have the children rush through the incident in order to get to the exciting action.

They are then asked to mark out the drama place in three separate settings and then, simultaneously, make a scene in which the hero is sent to try and catch the moon. Who sends him? Why is he sent? Is he sent alone? What kind of farewell does he get? What way is he going to travel? These are not shown to the other groups.

The reason for slow motion is to give the onlookers an opportunity to see it. This may at first be rehearsed at full speed. Safety may also be a factor in some classrooms.

We know the hero arrives on Earth. How does this happen? Is there some accident? What is it? The group, as crew, enact not the accident itself but the tense moments before it, beginning with the realisation of danger and the possibility that something may be done. The tension increases as they attempt to do whatever might save them. Whatever happens is not to be part of this scene, and the teacher emphasises that they must still be trying to save themselves when she calls the end of the scene.

This is also building belief in the strange world of the drama.

Now make a scene that shows the accident (or whatever diverts them to Earth) in slow motion. This is shown and the onlookers guess what caused the accident. The participants don't either confirm or deny the rightness of the guesses. It's not like 'twenty questions'.

The ordinary world of water and land will seem strange to these people, as their world would seem strange to us. Here the week's art work is integrated as the spacemen, landlubbers and no-nighters are asked to make a collage or tapestry depicting our strange world as these 'foreigners' would see it.

Note the children's decision dictating the direction of the drama.

The teacher says, 'Suppose the three men who go to fish up the moon are made up of one spaceman, one landlubber and one no-nighter, how and where would they meet, and what might be the circumstances of that meeting?' It is agreed that they meet on a hill overlooking the sea.

This could be done as a radio interview with the hero as he is on the point of landing.

Each group is asked to make a story that explains how their hero came and how he ended on this hill overlooking the sea.

The integration with SPHE is obvious. Here we are not talking about relationships: we are doing them.

After this the children and teacher talk about how difficult it sometimes is to make friends. All agree that we tend to be wary, tend to ask in a roundabout way where people come from, what they like, etc. The three will probably find it very hard to make friends, because, given their pasts, they will probably be especially wary in this strange land.

In groups of three each comprising a spaceman, a landlubber and a no-nighter, they simultaneously enact the scene in which they meet each other and get to know each other while being very wary and fearful. It should be made known that the objective is not to share each other's stories quickly but to experience the wariness of making friends.

Now the spacemen, landlubbers and no-nighters go back to their own groups. They collate the information gleaned by their members about the other groups to see how much they know. Now each group tells briefly what they know about the other groups and about their lives. Then they reflect on how little or how much the various members told them. Which seemed most likely to happen: telling freely or being very guarded?

A scene might be made around this.

Each group has, in its own culture, something that looks like a boat but it has a very different purpose. What might it be? Why does it look like a boat, and can they make a story about it?

Scenes done in this way provide a good diagnosis of the children's facility at entering into the drama. It is useful in helping the children to see drama as experiencing and re-experiencing.

Now, with suggestions from the group, a setting is laid out and clearly marked: the water, land, some other features of the landscape that might cause problems in some way. This time, rather than acting out the scene simultaneously, a group of three is randomly selected, and, while the others watch, they enact the scene in which the three see the second moon in the water for the first time.

Note that the teacher does not necessarily select groups whose 'performance' might be good.

This frequent changing of the groups relates to learning in SPHE. The drama should give children practice in working with all other members of the group.

Usually more happens in drama than we can plan for.

The onlookers discuss it, not in terms of 'performance' but in terms of how true their response was to the fictional experience of each character so far. The same procedure is followed with other randomly selected groups.

Then new groups of three, with the same composition but with different personnel, are formed. We assume the three know each other reasonably well by now. Each group delineates and appropriately marks its own setting in the drama space: where the water is, where the boat is and any other features of the landscape that they might find hard to negotiate. Then simultaneously they do the scene in which the three come across a boat by the shore. Given their previous experience of things that look like boats, what happens?

Discuss how the characters seem to be different, which is dominant, which is finding it hardest to adjust to this world, and so on.

The poem says:

The wise men with the current went

Nor paddle nor oar had they

But still as the grave they went on the wave

That they might not disturb their prey.

Half of the class, in the same three groups as last time, sail their boats on the current, while the remainder of the class make the sound effects that will suggest a silent approach to the moon. Then those in the boats take turns to make the sound effects for the others.

Now, integrating with music, they create a piece of music with instruments, objects, voices etc. that will suggest the strange, magic world of the drama (as depicted in their collages) and at the same time give an idea of the tension as they approach closer to the moon in the water.

What happens when they throw the net and the moon breaks up? Do they blame each other? Have they explanations based on knowledge from their own world? In new threes, act it out and see.

Some teachers might say the teacher should have allowed the children to discover the fact that they only need water to be able to capture the moon at will, but in that case the next scene would not be an experience of discovery by the children but an enactment of something already known.

Separate briefing leads to a more lifelike situation, with the children not knowing what they will encounter or deal with. It turns the drama text into a real encounter, which helps the child to understand the nature of the drama experience.

The teacher should be economical in these briefings, not telling them how they must feel, not giving too many 'And then ...' instructions, not giving the children the feeling that what she wants is for the pupils to act out a scene that she herself already has in her head.

Now a discussion takes place on how the children want the drama to end. The choices become clear: if they don't succeed in catching the moon then we go on and end the drama where they come home to their various peoples and some kind of sad mourning scene takes place. Alternatively, they catch the moon somehow and go back triumphant to their peoples. The children want the latter, and the teacher has the choice of asking them how this happens or of setting up the scene herself. She opts for the latter, since it gives her the chance to brief the children separately and thus give a more experiential dimension to it.

The brief for all the groups is as follows. At the beginning of the scene you have just come in with the boat and are exhausted. You are still arguing tiredly but you have been arguing all the way home and are tired of it and you soon go to sleep.

Now the teacher briefs each component group separately.

Spaceman's brief: When the other pair are asleep you awaken and sit up. It is then you see the moon in the bottom of the boat. You would love to steal it, and actually decide, in the end, that you will. As you are trying to pull the boat away you accidentally hit the landlubber's foot. Take it from there.

Landlubber's brief: You are asleep when something hits your foot. You awaken to discover Spaceman heading off, trying to drag the boat along. You ask him what he's doing. Take it from there.

No-nighter's brief: You are sound asleep. If anyone wakens you, take it as it comes, but you find it very hard to waken and are very annoyed at being wakened. If they do not waken you, however, waken if they begin to head off without you. Question them about what they're doing, and don't believe everything they say.

They act out the scene.

Now the teacher stops the action to brief all the landlubbers privately: 'You are in the middle of the argument. The tide has gone out and suddenly you notice that in a little pool of water there is another moon. Take it from there.' She then sends them back to resume the scene where they left off, being prepared to take things as they come.

There are situations in which the space can be invented as the scene progresses. Often, however, a scene is better facilitated by the participants having an assurance of the space in which they are working.

They now do a scene in which the hero goes back to his people. First the space is laid out. The ramp the hero comes down etc. is agreed. They decide on their roles in it: Who will be the leader or king? What role will the others have? Who will be the returning hero?

Now they are again briefed separately.

The hero: You are coming home with a container of water that you think holds the moon. They don't believe you, but you ask them to get a container (decide what would be available in your land). You tell people to pour out the water so that they can see the moon. You are going to get a hero's welcome and be treated as a god, so take it as it comes.

The people: You start by giving him a hero's welcome. (How is that done in your land?) But when you can't see the moon with him you become sceptical. However, he may convince you, so take it as it comes.

Take care, nevertheless, not to weigh drama down with too many 'accounts of what happened'. It is often better to include writing exercises as part of the building of characters and the drama world.

Now, further integrating with English (language is being developed throughout), they each write the hero's account of his journey. As well as giving an account of incidents, this should give an account of the feelings, doubts etc. at various times and should bring a reader along with the story.

See Drama activity 5.

Integrating with Irish, some short scripts can be developed for scenes not included in this activity. They should invite the children to do in Irish a simultaneous action that interests them.

The pupils can research such topics as space travel, light, etc.

Drama activity 5

An approach to script

fifth and sixth classes

This is a series of drama activities rather than a single activity. The purpose of the series is to indicate how the children can be led to see script as an invitation to create action and how that action can be used as a pre-text for a fuller drama. They also indicate how script can be used in the teaching of Irish in schools where English is the medium of instruction. (It goes without saying that in scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge and scoileanna Gaeltachta Irish is the vernacular, as English is in this curriculum.) These activities are only examples, and many other good opportunities for using script will present themselves.

It should be pointed out that the learning of script should never be done independently of the action created, and it bears repeating that the benefits from drama will be in proportion to the quality of the drama. Whether in Irish or English, the action arising from the script should be perceived as fun by the child, something to be done simultaneously in groups and never 'produced' by the teacher for communication with people outside the classroom.

The children should develop the habit of taking these scripts at their own speed and, when they are finished, beginning them again, thus allowing themselves to drift out of synchronicity with the others. This gives the children more freedom to explore the text (not script) in their own way.

The teacher should also be wary of using scripts to teach the facts of geography or history or some such topic. While this can be done in certain circumstances, it can lead to bad drama and to boredom for the children. The drama activity for third and fourth classes is an example of how drama can open the way to factual learning.

Although this approach to script is given primarily as a drama activity for fifth and sixth classes, it will be possible in a school where drama is taught earlier to begin such an approach in third and fourth classes—as soon as children are comfortable with reading.

While each of the following might be regarded as a drama activity, we label them session 1, session 2, session 3 etc. in order to avoid confusion.

Session 1

Divide the class into pairs, give them the following script, and tell them to do it simultaneously.

A: Let's run on the spot for a while.

B: Right.

A: (After a while) Faster. (They go faster) Lift those legs.

B: (After another while) Faster.

A: (After another while) I'm so tired.

B: So am I.

A: Let's sit back to back and rest against each other.

B: All right. (They do) Oh, I'm so tired. I feel like going to sleep.

A: Sssssssshhhhhh.

(They close their eyes and rest quietly against each other until they recover.)

The teacher should encourage them into the experience in every way.

Stop now and again to tell them to really run faster, to go on until they really feel tired, to experience this as happening to them. Point out that script should always suggest an action for them to try to experience.

Session 1A

Divide the class into pairs, give them the following script, and tell them to do it simultaneously.

A: You remind me of a man.

B: What man?

A: A man with a power.

B: What power?

A: The power of hoodoo.

B: Who do?

A: You do.

B: What?

A: Remind me of a man.

The cyclical aspect of the script will soon be obvious. In engaging with it the children, in pairs, will be involved in simultaneous but unsynchronised action. They should be encouraged, where appropriate, to experience and explore the feelings of frustration that may arise from the script.

There is a sense in which every script should be as intriguing as this one. It is interesting to note that character can be inferred from the language used.

Session 2

The children are given the following script.

Pat: Abie see the birds.

Abie: (Grunts)

Pat: The birds.

(Pause. Abie looks)

Abie: Them aren't birds.

Pat: They are.

Abie: Them aren't.

Pat: They are.

Abie: Okay they are.

The group is now divided into pairs and, simultaneously, the children act out the script in pairs for a few minutes.

Insist on the isolation of pairs from each other.

Now the first children are asked to imagine they see the birds, to decide what kind of birds they are and to find a reason why they should want to tell Abie about them. They perform the script a few times more.

We are beginning to make the drama world real.

The teacher says, 'Now Abie is under the desk fixing it, and he wants to stay fixing it. The birds can be seen only from a distance from the desk, so the other person has to bring Abie to this point, despite the fact that he doesn't want to go.'

Note the transformation of the space inherent in this.

Allow about five minutes working simultaneously before watching a few at random. Watchers' activity: How is the physical relationship between them coming on? Is it as it might be? Should they not be pulling Abie by the legs etc?

These are not to be criticised as 'good' or 'bad'. It is a question of reading what is coming across and reflecting it back to the participants as a measure of the possibility for further experience of the text.

Teacher says: 'Now go over it again simultaneously for a few minutes, and this time, Abie must decide for himself exactly what he's doing to the desk and concentrate on doing it, while the other person must decide for himself exactly what sort of birds he's seeing and why he is excited enough about them to want to show them to Abie.'

Allow three to five minutes before watching one or two at random. Watchers' activity: Why is he/she excited by the birds? What exactly is Abie doing? Would you know that Abie didn't want to go with him/her?

We are getting into the characters' motivations.

The teacher says: 'Now go over it again and, this time, introduce, at some point, a caring relationship between you. Don't talk about what this relationship might be at first but just do it a few times, trying out various caring relationships before deciding on one.'

Watch one or two. Watcher's activity: To spot the caring relationship. Why did they introduce it?

The ability to engage in caring relationships is as necessary to drama as it is to life. However, it cannot be rushed or forced in drama, any more than it can in life.

Now do it again, but this time the relationship is very caring all the time. See what difference it makes.

Session 3

The following script is given to the children.

A: Ná déan é sin.

B: Déanfaidh mé é.

A: Cén fáth?

B: Mar is mian liom é a dhéanamh.

The delivery of the teacher's instructions and the ensuing conversation should be in Irish as far as possible. This is the language development.

Start with the script. What does it mean? Make sure the children can say it.

Teacher can suggest these and call them out as they go, or the pupils can decide on these relationships themselves.

This can be any two people with many kinds of relationships. Try it as friends, mother and daughter, father and son. What are they doing? Does that make a difference? Try it by performing it a few times in different ways.

Now examine each line for possibilities and try them out.

Line 1: How angry is the person who says it? Try different levels, and let B respond.

Line 2: Does B find it hard to go against A? Does he/she have to think for long before deciding to? How sure is he/she?

This is the beginning of textual analysis and an indication of how carefully script must be scanned to divine the exact action it invites.

Line 3: Is A surprised? indignant? angry?

Line 4: How sure of himself is B now? Is he actually angry? Could he have changed from his first reply?

Note that these questions relate to character, relationships and emotions, rather than to 'different ways of expressing' or 'saying it a whole lot of different ways.'

Simultaneously, in pairs, the children enact it as various situations and people. Look at and read meaning coming from a random few.

Again in pairs: do the situation again, this time adding in whatever extra lines, movements, incidents etc. are needed.

Look at a random few.

Very interesting situations develop, which give ideas for further work. Children will begin asking, 'What's the Irish for ...?'

Accept English words as long as the drama is good. The words can be given later.

Take one of them and, as a whole class, describe, in Irish, what happened in it. Describe the emotions, characters and movements, and the meanings made.

Write down the description.

Session 4

Adopt the same kind of approach with the following script, which suggests action in the physical world of the riverbank. Create the whole world and characters.

A: Féach. Tá greim agam.

B: Fan. Ná tarraing an líne go fóill.

A: Ach éalóidh sé!

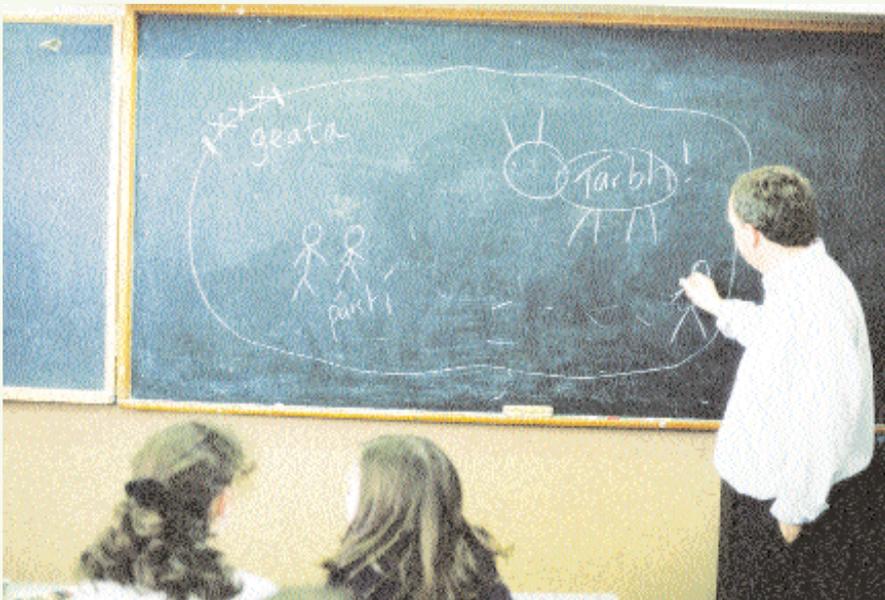
B: Ní éalóidh. Fan go fóill!

Session 5

Now apply these ideas to a playlet for four people:

- A: Féach air sin.
B: Sílim go bhfuil sé ag féachaint orainn.
C: Níl. (Sos) An tarbh é?
A: Sílim gur bó í.
D: An rachaimid thar an ngeata? Nílím cinnte.
B: Rachaimid.
C: Cé a rachaidh ar dtús?

The same principles apply to longer scripts, which should be broken up into manageable sections like this and experienced as action by the participants. These work best if less than a page long, if they have punch, and if they invite the children to play in an imagined world that they find funny or stimulating in some way. If the script is dull the lesson will be dull and the children will not give it their full energy.



Ag leagan amach an áitiú

Examples of how content objectives in the strand units manifest themselves in the descriptions of successful drama activities

Some of the exemplars under the content objectives in the curriculum for the various classes are drawn from the description of successful drama activities. Many more, however, suggest other approaches to drama activities. The way in which the content objectives of the curriculum manifest themselves in the five descriptions of drama activities at the different levels is outlined below. Because the content objectives show a progression from level to level and because content objectives that are, for example, appropriate to senior classes do not appear earlier, the fourteen headings that follow represent a summary of all the content objectives throughout the four levels of the curriculum.

Explore and develop the instinct for make-believe play into drama so as to achieve spontaneity and freedom

Drama activity 1: The children moved from the game of 'little packets' into being rabbits playing the same game and thence into a drama about the fox.

Drama activity 2: The children enact the problems of the journey with the same energy and commitment as they act sheep being chased.

Drama activity 3: A group rather inexperienced in drama achieved a degree of spontaneity through engaging in the unwatched simultaneous enactment of half-minute scenes.

Drama activity 4: For the wise men, the world they enter in search of the moon must have the same reality as the world the child enters in make-believe play.

Activity from script: A sense of play and playfulness pervades all these lessons.

Understand, at a practical level, role and character and develop the ability to hold on to either for as long as the dramatic activity requires

Drama activity 1: The children are effectively taking on the roles of the rabbits.

Drama activity 2: While the children may begin in the role of shepherds, they will, as they proceed through the drama, accumulate the personal experience that is at the basis of characterisation.

Drama activity 3: The children take on the roles of tribe members and, in the scene in pairs, accept briefs for elementary characterisations.

Drama activity 4: The process of getting to know the three 'men' is the process of exploring their characters.

Activity from script: Here the roles and characters are divined from the script. As the character of Abie is created, we recognise that we all know an Abie.

Explore and discover how the use of space and objects can act as signs in context-building and in the exploration of dramatic themes

Drama activity 1: The children lay out their briar-patch and feeding areas.

Drama activity 2: The sleeping quarters at the inn are laid out in the space.

Drama activity 3: The capstone and the logs are created through the use of space in an agreed way.

Drama activity 4: The participants decide where the water and boat are going to be and mark them on the floor.

Activity from script: In Abie's case, the placing of the birds, the desk and the window add to the experience of the drama.

Explore how the fictional past and the desired fictional future influence the present dramatic action

Drama activity 1: The rabbits' previous experience of the fox and their desire for a safer future force them to seek solutions to the present dilemma.

Drama activity 2: Because the shepherds have been warned about innkeepers and because they want cheap lodgings they treat the innkeeper with suspicion and caution.

Drama activity 3: The past relationship with the Dari tribe is coming in the way of achieving the goal of building the dolmen. That must be rectified in the present.

Drama activity 4: Having never previously seen the moon in water, yet wanting to get it, they cast their net to capture it.

Activity from script: Past knowledge of Abie's inertia may lead his friend to drag him to see the birds.

Become aware of the rules that help maintain focus in the drama in large- or small-group work

Drama activity 1: The children experience focus mainly through the teacher-in-role maintaining it. There is a strong focus in the games the rabbits play.

Drama activity 2: In the small-group work in threes, each group focuses on getting the donkey up the slope.

Drama activity 3: The children focus on what they need their friend to do in the scene that is acted out in pairs between the worker and the visitor from home.

Drama activity 4: The characters focus on not telling each other about their mission while trying to elicit help.

Activity from script: The 'fishermen' must focus on the bite they are getting if the scene is to work.

Experience and become aware of tension and suspense in drama and how it ensures the interest of the participants

Drama activity 1: There is tension when the fox won't leave. Nobody knows what to do.

Drama activity 2: The man asking if a king has been born is creating a kind of tension that will only be released at the end.

Drama activity 3: There is tension between the messenger who is praising the work and the tribe members who feel they should go home.

Drama activity 4: There is a tension created by the need to catch the moon and their inability to do so.

Activity from script: There is tension between Abie's objectives and that of his friend. There is tension when the children are face to face with the bull.

Use script as pre-text

Drama activity 1: Doesn't apply.

Drama activity 2: Doesn't apply.

Drama activity 3: There is no example in the particular activity. Script could, however, have been used as pre-text for the scene in which they push the donkey up the slope.

Drama activity 4: There is no example in the lesson, but a few lines of script could be used as pre-text for many of the scenes if so desired.

Activity from script: This happens in all these activities.

Use reflection and evaluation of a particular dramatic action to create possible alternative courses for the action

Drama activity 1: As a result of what the fox has done, the children have to decide whether to kill him or negotiate with him.

Drama activity 2: The shepherds may decide whether to let Joseph and Mary in or not. Their decision will result from reflecting on the likelihood, based on their experience of the innkeeper, that they may be thrown out and also reflecting on the need to be kind where possible.

Drama activity 3: It is as a result of their experiences of the bog that the tribe members decide that the hardship is too much.

Drama activity 4: It is from reflecting on the reason the characters are sent that the children know how to relate to each other as characters.

Activity from script: As a result of reflecting on the action they have created, the children decide what the relationships between the characters are.

Explore and learn about the relationship between story, theme and life

Drama activity 1: The feeling that the fox has to be resisted comes from experience of bullies in life, and some of the strategies for doing this come from what the child has gleaned from experience.

Drama activity 2: The children accept that if, as shepherds, they don't allow Mary and Joseph in, the basis for their decision is derived from values held by people in real life.

Drama activity 3: The children are drawing on their experience and knowledge of jealousy in deciding how to negotiate with rival tribes. They are drawing on experience when they decide that ramps will have to be built to raise the capstone.

Drama activity 4: If the people of the various worlds want the moon and the 'hero' doesn't want to go for it, the decision on what to do has to relate to what they might do in a similar real situation.

Activity from script: To create the riverbank we need to know about riverbanks. The children draw on their knowledge of danger to create the imaginary bull in the field.

Use the sharing of insights arising out of dramatic action in order to develop the ability to draw conclusions and to hypothesise about people and life

Drama activity 1: The children wonder how real rabbits were so clever as to know what kind of habitats to make.

Drama activity 2: The experience has, in this lesson, been reflective enough and it need not be weighed down with further reflection.

Drama activity 3: The children are made to wonder about how we pay homage to our dead and whether this can, in some cases, stultify our lives.

Drama activity 4: The hero's written account of his journey at the end is the children's reflection of the experience.

Activity from script: The children may wonder why so many people are fascinated by bulls and things that terrify them.

Develop, out of role, the ability to co-operate and communicate with others in helping to shape the drama

Drama activity 1: The children contribute ideas on where, in the space, they should place each burrow in the warren, where the green area should be, and where we should have paths through the briars.

Drama activity 2: The children work with each other in different groups for the small-group activities of the session.

Drama activity 3: The children must co-operate with each other in making the still pictures of the tribe members moving the stone.

Drama activity 4: The children must co-operate with each other in making scenes that show the life that each one of the three men left.

Activity from script: Having acted the first four lines of an Irish script, the pupils have to co-operate with each other in making a follow-on from those lines.

Develop, in role, the ability to co-operate and communicate with others in helping to shape the drama

Drama activity 1: The children, as rabbits, decide on early warning systems and test out their effectiveness.

Drama activity 2: The children decide whether or not they should go to Bethlehem and whether they have much choice in the matter.

Drama activity 3: The tribesmen decide that a dolmen should be built for the chief, Odhran.

Drama activity 4: The children co-operate with each other in making a piece of music to go with the drama.

Activity from script: Every move a participant makes is, in some small way, defining the course and meaning of the drama.

Develop fictional relationships through interaction with the other fictional characters in small-group or whole-class scenes as the drama text is being made

Drama activity 1: The children, as rabbits, play with each other and develop rabbit relationships.

Drama activity 2: The children, as shepherds, argue over where each should sleep.

Drama activity 3: The children, as tribe members, develop relationships with each other as they rehearse their arguments to convince the Dari tribe.

Drama activity 4: The three wise men in the drama develop relationships and interactions as they learn to share a common world.

Activity from script: Éiríonn gaolta pearsanta idir na páistí agus iad ag féachaint ar an tarbh agus ag iarraidh a shocrú cad a dhéanfaidh siad.

Enact spontaneously for others in the group a scene from the drama, or share with the rest of the class a scene that has already been made in simultaneous small-group work

Drama activity 1: There are no examples in the drama activity at this level. However, it could happen that, for example, some rabbits might demonstrate games to others.

Drama activity 2: Some show the scenes where they help the donkey up the slope.

Drama activity 3: The tribe members demonstrate for each other some of the techniques they should use on the Dari tribe to negotiate with them.

Drama activity 4: A random group of three enacts, without rehearsal, the scene in which they see the moon in the water for the first time.

Activity from script: In some of the small-group work, for example, on an Irish script, the teacher and pupils look at a random group to see how far the process of making the drama text has progressed.

Drama strategies and conventions

Many strategies can be used in the drama. Some of the more familiar ones are listed below, with comments on their usefulness to the teacher.

Drama games

Many drama games are useful in helping to establish trust, confidence and a sense of playfulness, and some are used to help the children experience some aspect of the drama (for example blind man's buff, to equate with searching for a friend in a big city).

Games can promote the social integration of the class, but if used indiscriminately they can become a substitute for drama.

Still image and montage

Groups compose a still picture to illustrate an idea or capture a moment. In montage such an image is set against a contrasting image or a contrasting soundscape so as to question the content of the still picture (for example, a still picture of emigrants with a sound-track of sounds from home).

This strategy can help greatly in reflection and in slowing down the drama but if overused can lead to talk about drama rather than action.

Hot-seating

A character sits in the centre while the others ask questions about his/her life and he/she answers as the character. As a variation the others can also sometimes ask the questions as their own characters.

Hot-seating can help to clarify aspects of character for all concerned, but it has limited usefulness in primary school drama.

Thought-tracking

Some of the class do actions silently or make still images while the others speak their thoughts aloud about them, either simultaneously or individually.

This can be useful for reflection on the meaning of particular significant moments but should not be used as a substitute for entering into the drama.

Sound-tracking

Some of the class do actions silently or make stills while the others make the sound-track to go along with them. This can be seen in Drama activity 4 (p. 83) when half the class make the sound-track for the other half.

This strategy is useful in situations where the teacher is working towards a loosening of control but unsure about how far to go. It is also a useful substitute for 'showing' a particular section of small-group work. However, if overused it can lead to intellectual rather than physical drama, to staying outside the drama rather than entering playfully into it.

Voices in the head

At a moment of choice for a particular character others in the group articulate the conflicting voices the character can hear in his/her head.

This can lead to reflecting on the meaning of a moment for a character. It should not be used as a substitute for putting the characters in situations where such considerations are articulated spontaneously as part of the action.

There are many more strategies and conventions that are used in the drama. Their common advantage is that they allow creativity within a controlled situation. However, they should be used with selectivity and discrimination. By overusing them the teacher can keep for himself/herself too much control of the children's creative impulses, and process drama is thereby reduced to a series of drama strategies rather than the lifelike ebb and flow of productive dramatic action.

Looking closely at children's work

Assessment in drama, as in every other area of the curriculum, is an essential element of the learning and teaching process. It is through continuous monitoring of the children's engagement with drama that the teacher can plan the drama experiences that will develop their drama skills and concepts most effectively and maximise their learning through drama.

The continuum from make-believe play to process drama is central to the drama curriculum. The extent to which the child can preserve the characteristics of make-believe play in drama activity will indicate to an important degree the success or otherwise of his/her drama experience. The most important of these are

- a willingness to believe that the symbol is real
- sincerity in playing their characters
- an acceptance of the fictional consequences of the drama
- an impulse to explore.

In summary, a successful drama experience will have at its core the child's ability to enter fully into the drama, engaging with as much depth and belief as possible in the characters and accepting the dramatic logic of their situation in the drama.

The content objectives of the curriculum indicate clearly the drama skills that the child needs to acquire and they also incorporate the concepts based on the elements of drama that he/she will develop. In taking part, therefore, in the various drama activities the child's progress in mastering these skills and concepts can be monitored.

The importance of drama lies in the unique contribution it can make to the child's wider learning experience and development. The choice of content for the drama curriculum will be drawn from

- the child's everyday experience
- particular issues, such as responsibility, that the teacher may wish to explore through drama
- aspects of life from the past, the present or a possible future that will arouse the child's curiosity
- the needs, concerns and preoccupations of the child
- content and issues from other curriculum areas.

The extent to which the child's learning is furthered by engaging, through drama, with particular features of content drawn from these sources will form the second major focus of monitoring children's work.

Since the learning benefits of drama derive principally from the drama process itself only a limited number of assessment tools are appropriate to it. These are

- teacher observation
- teacher-designed tasks and tests
- work samples, portfolios and projects
- curriculum profiles.

Teacher observation

This is the form of assessment most consistently used by teachers and most useful in monitoring children's progress in drama. In observing closely on a day-to-day basis the children's involvement in the various drama activities, the extent to which they are developing the ability to use drama skills and concepts to maximise their learning experiences can be monitored. Such observation will enable the teacher to

- identify the drama experiences most appropriate to the children's learning and drama needs
- identify the particular content that is most successfully mediated through drama.

Because the content of drama comes from a variety of sources, including other areas of the curriculum, part of the teacher's assessment of the child's progress will be complemented by assessment in other curriculum areas.

A child's language development and language use will, for example, be influenced by drama experience and, consequently, the monitoring of his/her progress in this area will be a factor of the teacher's assessment in both language and drama.

Teacher-designed tasks and tests

These arise continually in the course of drama activity as, for example, when a pair of children are asked to play two characters in order to explore a particular issue, or a group of children is asked to work together to solve some problem or to arrive at a decision about what course the drama should take. The assessment of children's ability to perform particular tasks like these will involve teacher observation in a way that is focused on a particular aspect of children's involvement with drama.

Work samples, portfolios and projects

In drama these would be made up of writing, art work and other examples of children's response to, reflection on and extension of their drama experience. Decisions about what can be included will be made variously by the teacher, the child, and the teacher and child in consultation with each other. In this way a valuable dimension of self-assessment will be given to the assessment of the child's progress in drama and learning through drama. Work samples, portfolios and projects can also contribute to a longer-term summative picture of the child's learning through drama.

Curriculum profiles in drama

These entail short descriptive statements of pupils' achievements, behaviour and attitudes in relation to drama and to learning through drama. They may be standardised for different levels of competence and used to check children's individual ability in relation to each of the statements. In the case of drama they would reflect the child's progress in relation to elements of the three strands units, enable the teacher to construct a learning profile of each individual child, and create a reference record of his/her progress.

Spontaneity

Section 6

Appendix

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*Particularly useful reference works for the teacher

Glossary

action	the interaction between character and situation in the drama, involving the resolution or attempted resolution of conflict and tension
brief	a suggestion or instruction given to one character or group of characters, of which the other characters may be unaware, which has the purpose of giving a new direction to the drama
character	the entire intellectual, emotional and physical make-up of a real or fictional person
content	the subject of a drama based on the child's general experience and needs, or drawn from the content of some other curriculum area
enactment	the action in which the text of the drama is created
fictional lens	the choice of fictional characters and the situation in which they are placed that creates the dramatic context for the enactment
framing	the process through which a fiction is transformed into directions and suggestions for an enactment. (It is through this process that the drama text is distanced sufficiently from the children to be safe but remains close enough to be explored effectively.)
genre	the form of dramatic expression—naturalistic, comic, absurd, etc.
improvisation	the spontaneous dramatic enactment of a fiction
in role	doing or saying something from the standpoint of role or character

mantle of the expert	the process by which the teacher implies that the children are 'experts' in some particular topic so as to encourage them to research that topic within the drama
out of role	talking about issues, choices and possible directions in the drama when outside the enactment
plot	the coherent series of incidents that, together with theme, make up the drama
pre-text	an effective starting point that will launch the dramatic world in such a way that the participants can identify their roles and responsibilities and begin to build a dramatic world together
process drama	the process by which drama texts are made
role	pretending to be someone or something other than oneself
scene	a short play, an improvised text or a section of a longer drama text
significance	that which signals something important about plot, theme or life
sub-text	the non-verbal signals by which thoughts, feelings and attitudes are transmitted
teacher in role	the teacher taking a role in the drama and moulding it from within
tension	the expression, in drama, of the conflict inherent in the needs and desires of the different characters in the drama, that drives the action forward

text

a class text is the selection, enactment and linking of scenes in the drama, and all the class activities related to this

a drama text is an enacted drama fiction, watched or unwatched, whether it takes place in the class or in a theatre-like situation

a written text is a script that describes a dramatic action

theme

the underlying patterns by which the plot of the drama is connected to life

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