

# Drama techniques to aid writing

These are activities you can do as a part of a lesson or as stand-alone lessons to aid the writing process. They do not just have to be used for English purposes.

\*Which ones would be best for the types of writing you're doing are in red.

<p><b>Teacher in role (TiR)</b></p>	<p>This brings a character to life, enables verbal and non-verbal interaction with the character and can generate dialogue that could then be scripted. TiR helps children to get to know aspects of a character first hand and with the teacher deciding what to say or hold back. A TiR can help drive a narrative forward or focus the attention of the children where it is required for the drama (and maybe for subsequent writing). A TiR can also use the role to feed in or gather information, build tension or add complications into the drama plot (as a writer does in a story or novel).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher pretends to be a different person</li> <li>• Pupils are also in role-above their age (not animals or young children).</li> <li>• Make it clear when you are in role – clear signals e.g. ‘When I wear this scarf I am going to be in role’ or ‘When I sit on the director’s chair I will the director’.</li> <li>• Move in and out of role.</li> <li>• Vary your status. Children gain a lot if you are a low status and need their help – they are the super helpers!</li> <li>• Be clear what the function of TIR is. It may be to give information, to invite rhyming words, to tell story or to invite the children into the story they are about to read.</li> <li>• Give the function of your role, ensure that you know exactly what is expected of the children.</li> <li>• Always be sure that there is a reason for children to speak to your role, and that there is enough from you for them to work on.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conscience Alley</b></p>	<p>This enables children to see a character’s dilemma from polarized viewpoints. They listen and contribute in turn, to reasoned argument, which can help prepare them for persuasive writing.</p> <p>A conscience alley is <b>a technique for student debate that draws all learners into the collaborative development and presentation of an argument.</b> ... In a conscience alley, teams present their arguments at the same time to a neutral adjudicator, who hears both sides then selects the most compelling argument.</p> <p>Writing type: Moral dilemma/ narrative          Persuasive          essay</p>

<b>Eye Witness</b>	<p>A group or class scene is prepared or improvised and shown. The audience become eye witnesses to the scenes. This can become the pretext for writing eye witness accounts. It is possible for the whole class to be in role and then come out of role and write as eye witnesses to the scene they were actually involved in.</p> <p>Writing type: News report/paper</p>
<b>Thought-tracking</b>	<p>Listening to the inner thoughts of characters can offer the material for writing a soliloquy.</p> <p>Writing type: Monologue</p>
<b>Mapping and drawing in role.</b>	<p>If children map the place where the drama takes place then this can provide a shared visual reference point for creating and describing settings visually (adding to the map), orally (talking in role about the map) and then through writing the setting later. Maps can also have written labels and keys. When children are asked to draw in role as a character, it can reveal much about a character. It can also help children to organize their thoughts visually before writing with their drawing available for reference.</p>
<b>Devising and performing</b>	<p>This is self-explanatory. The children create a short original piece of drama together (maybe just a short scene) with the intention of performing it to others (usually this is a group work and the rest of the class is the audience). The process results in a product that can provide the content for various types of writing, for example, a critical and evaluative review of the performance, scripting the performance.</p>
<b>Overheard conversations/ rumours</b>	<p>The group listens to the conversations of people in role to gain information or to examine different points of view.</p>
<b>Still image/freeze frame</b>	<p>A still image is planned and devised by the participants. In order to plan for maximum impact they need to synthesize what they are trying to depict visually and communicate it clearly. These thinking processes are also central to the writing process.</p>
<b>Image theatre</b>	<p>This usually involves devising contrasting images, depicting the reality and the ideal of a situation in the eyes of a character. To create both images authentically and collaboratively the children need to come to a shared understanding of the current situation and how it could ideally look in the future, as well as what a character is trying to achieve. Once there are still images they can be brought alive and become the source of action and dialogue that can then become script or prose, for example.</p> <p>Writing type: Script /play write Dialogue</p>
<b>Hot seating</b>	<p>This involves asking a character questions that they answer in role. It often gives opportunity for note-taking leading to reporting. It can provide factual information to the children that will help them better understand a character that may feature in subsequent writing of various types. Or, if they are asked to write as that character they will be better able to do so.</p>

	<b>Writing type: Diary entry</b>	
<b>Role on the wall</b>	<p>Draw round a child on paper. On the outside of the character You can include known facts such as physical appearance, age, gender, location and occupation, as well as subjective ideas such as likes/dislikes, friends/enemies, opinions, motivations, secrets and dreams.</p> <p>The inside their feelings about a situation.</p> <p><b>Writing type: Story/narrative – character description</b></p>	
<b>Choral speaking</b>	Choral speaking	This requires all children to closely engage with the same text. It enables the director/s (which can be the children collectively) to draw out the particular emphasis and significance of certain key words and phrases through performance.
<b>Statement prompts</b>	Statement prompts	This involves everyone having the opportunity to complete sentence openings verbally that are usually focussed by the teacher. For example, the focus can be sensory, 'I can hear...' or emotional, 'I am feeling ...' or can encourage enquiry, 'I wonder ...' and so on. They can be written on sentence strips and arranged as a collective poem.
<b>Essence machine</b>	Essence machine	This involves the class in performing relevant sounds and actions repeatedly that link to a theme or a moment in the drama. This focuses their attention on significant auditory moments, actions and gestures, some of which they may give prominence to in subsequent writing that draws on the multi-sensory.
	<b>Writing type: Setting description</b>	
<b>Captions</b>	Captions	When images have been created, they can be given a one sentence caption that can be written and placed with the image (rather like a picture in an art gallery has a title that synthesizes what the picture is about).
<b>Unfinished materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Half a letter – the rest was burnt.</li> <li>• An answerphone message that is incomplete.</li> <li>• Directions on a treasure map that have been partly washed off by the sea etc.</li> </ul>	

**Flash backs and fast forwards.**

- Performers in a scene are asked to improvise scenes which take place seconds, minutes, days or years before or after a dramatic moment. This enables the exploration of characters' backgrounds, motivations and the consequences of their actions.
- The method can be used to quickly bring depth to activities freeze frames or improvised drama. Adding Flashbacks or Flash Forwards creates a context – it shows what led up to a particular moment, how it might be resolved or how it may lead onto additional challenges. The technique helps to flesh out a dramatic moment or create the beginnings of a story.
- **How to do it:**
- With a group that has created a still image, explain that when you clap your hands, you would like them to move silently in slow-motion to where their character was a few moments before. When they are frozen still in the new image, you can use [thought-tracking](#) to explore character motivation.
- Now ask them to move back to their original image - which is the present moment. Then you can use Flash Forwards - participants move in slow-motion to indicate where their characters might be a short time after this moment. In this way you have created an episode with a beginning, middle and end and can develop it in any number of ways.



# Warm up/starter ideas for any drama lesson!


It's always good to start a drama session or activity with an ice breaker in order to get the children interacting with each other.



The starter activities can be unrelated to the main task and get chr interacting/working together (this allows time to get rid of any insecurities/worries that some chr may have when they hear the word drama) or the warm up can be adapted to link more closely to the unit of writing/main activity of the lesson.



\*I've put a pink star by my favourite warm ups!



10 second objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a very popular drama game and a useful technique which can be developed easily towards improvisation or physical theatre. It's also highly accessible and great fun!</li> <li>Divide everyone into small groups (4-6). Call out the name of an object and all the groups have to make the shape of that object out of their own bodies, joining together in different ways while you count down slowly from ten to zero. Usually every group will find a different way of forming the object. Examples could be: a car, a fried breakfast, a clock, a washing machine, a fire.</li> </ul>
 You're telling me	<p><b>15. You're telling me</b></p> <p><b>Aims - to develop speaking and listening skills, group co-operation</b></p> <p>Partner <b>A</b> starts telling <b>B</b> what he or she did at the weekend. On a command from the leader. <b>A</b> tries to continue in a whisper, then in mime, then storytelling again, then in gibberish, shouting, singing etc.</p>
Follow the hand	<p><b>16. Follow the hand</b></p> <p><b>Aims - to develop trust, concentration, co-operation, physical control</b></p> <p>In pairs, "<b>A</b>" holds her hand palm outwards a few inches away from her partner's face. Now she moves her hand slowly and "<b>B</b>" tries to keep his face the same distance away, moving his body wherever needed. As a variation, try both leading the other, or in 3s, each leading another whilst being led themselves!</p>
 I've forgotten what happens next	<p><b>18. I've forgotten what happens next - story telling</b></p> <p>In pairs A tells the story B listens. A is telling a specific genre of story (eg ghost story) they use an appropriate voice to try and create an atmosphere and give key details, B can make notes or this could be recorded. When A is ready to hand over to their partner they say 'and I've forgotten what happens next...' which is the cue for B to continue the same story (showing that they have listened previously). B continues until they want their partner to continue when they say 'and I've forgotten what happens next' and so on. This game could be adapted where it is the teacher who signals (with a sound or simply saying Swap!) when it is time to swap. It could also be extended to a small group task around a circle.</p>

Mirrors	<p><b>6. Mirrors</b></p> <p><b><i>Aims - to develop co-operation, observation, control</i></b></p> <p>In pairs, <b>A</b> reflects <b>B</b>'s movements as exactly as possible. Make sure movements are not too fast. On a given signal, the leader swaps over. Try to keep the flow of movement each time there is a change-over.</p>
Three movements	<p><b>7. Three moments</b></p> <p>Another useful rehearsal game. Choose three different moments in the play for your character (or characters if you play more than one). Now move into a space and take up a position for your character in that moment. Choose another space and make you second shape there. Do the same for your third moment. Now practise moving between the shapes from 1 –2 –3 –1 until it becomes smooth. If the leader wishes, each actor can choose a sound (not a word) to go with each shape. Finally half the group sits out and watches as the others go through their shape and sounds. They then swap so that everyone has a chance to watch. The game can teach a lot about the physicality of characters.</p>
<p>Carbon copies</p> 	<p><b>8. Carbon copies</b></p> <p><b><i>Aims - to develop group work, physical control leading to still image work, also links to leadership/directing skills</i></b></p> <p>Without talking, the group sculpts one person into a given position, e.g. "Surprise". When everybody has finished, each member copies the shape with their own body, as exactly as possible. The "sculpture" now unfreezes and looks at the other participants. Now somebody else is sculpted with a different emotion or idea. – e.g. "Fear". When everybody has had a turn, the group use the shapes they have been given to make a group picture.</p>
Noses	<p><b>9. Noses</b></p> <p><b><i>Aims - a fun warm up, concentration, observation, physical control, thinking skills</i></b></p> <p>Walk around the space. Without letting anyone know, choose two other people in the room. Now, keep your nose exactly halfway between theirs and keep moving for as long as you can!</p>
	<p>Bubblegum</p> <p><i>Works best with: Bigger group</i></p> <p>A drama warm-up game in a similar vein to the Popcorn activity. Children mime chewing a ball of bubblegum. Imagine the gum is gradually getting bigger, expanding as you move it from side-to-side in your mouth. Encourage children to really exaggerate</p>

	<p>their actions to show how creative you can be with simple facial expressions. It's a fun and simple activity to begin your lessons with.</p>
<p>Wrong Words</p>	<p>Wrong Words</p> <p><i>Works best with: Groups</i></p> <p>The aim of this drama game is simple. All you have to do is point at an object and say any word other than that object. A child may point at a chair and say, "Ice cream", for example. It frees up imagination and produces random and funny connections. It's a great drama warm-up game for any age as it encourages children to be spontaneous.</p>
<p>Tongue Twisters</p>	<p>Tongue Twisters</p> <p><i>Works best with: Groups</i></p> <p>Everyone loves a tongue twister. Get warmed up by getting your pupils to practise saying some of these slippery sentences:</p> <p>Red lorry, yellow lorry          Unique New York          She sells seashells on the seashore          A proper copper coffee pot          If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, how many pickled peppers would Peter Piper pick</p>
<p>Count Shake</p> 	<p><i>Works best with: Bigger group</i></p> <p>This is an easy way to warm up for your lessons. Everyone stands in a circle and starts shaking their left hands, counting down from 8. Once the countdown is completed, move onto your right hand, then left foot, then right foot. Now, repeat the sequence but counting down from 7, then 6, and so on. Once you've gone all the way down to 1, complete the exercise by jumping in the air and shouting, "Shake down!".</p> <p>You can shape this part to fit the theme of your lessons. For example, for a Christmas lesson, you could shout, "Christmas!". It'll generate energy and enthusiasm for the rest of your lesson.</p>
<p>Environments</p> 	<p>Environments</p> <p><i>Works best with: Bigger group</i></p> <p>Get all the children to stand up around the room and give them a setting or environment. For example, a concert. The children then have to mime being in this setting. For a concert, they might sing and dance.</p>

	<p>Every so often, shout out a different setting so children will mime a variety of different activities. It'll get them thinking about what actions fit a given context - an important skill in drama.</p>
<p>Firing Line</p> 	<p>Firing Line</p> <p><i>Works best with: Groups of 4 - 6</i></p> <p>Firing Line is one of our favourite drama games for KS2 kids. Children stand side-by-side in a line with one child, who we'll call The Goalie, facing the person at the top. The people in the Firing Line are going to take turns to fire words at the Goalie. It's The Goalie's job to reply with an associated word or phrase and then move down the line to the next person until everyone in the group has contributed a word.</p> <p>Here's an example. Let's say the first person in the Firing Line says "Sunset". The Goalie then replies with an associated word, for example, "Pretty". The Goalie then moves to face the next person in the Firing Line and the process continues. If The Goalie hesitates or says an unrelated word then the Firing Line has scored a goal and another person can have a go. The main aim of the game is to get children thinking quickly and creatively, however, so you don't have to penalise 'wrong' answers.</p>
<p>The Expert</p>	<p>The Expert</p> <p><i>Works best with: Groups of 4 - 6</i></p> <p>The Expert is a great Drama game for KS2 kids. Give each child in the group a number and call out the number of the child who will be The Expert first. Then set a topic for the expert to specialise in. Let's pick jungle animals. Next, set a timer - 30 seconds or a minute is fine. The Expert will have to talk with confidence about the given topic until the time us up. Continue the exercise until everyone has had a go at being The Expert.</p> <p>This is a great activity for KS2 pupils. Encourage kids not to worry if they don't know much about the topic or if they get stuck. What's most important is acting with authority and spontaneity, so coming up with false facts convincingly will add another fun dimension to the game!</p>
<p>Five Things</p> 	<p>Five Things</p> <p><i>Works best with: Groups of 4 - 8</i></p> <p>This game involves quick thinking as each child attempts to name five things that belong to a particular category. Once children are stood in a circle, one child initiates the game by saying, for example, "Five foods", and pointing at a classmate. This classmate then has to name five foods before pointing at a different classmate and choosing a different category, like "Five items of clothing". If your pupils are finding it difficult to come up with five then you can always lower it to three or even one. It'll still get children thinking quickly.</p>



	"I Went to the Shop and Bought a..."
Magic Chairs	<p>Magic Chairs</p> <p><i>Works best with: Bigger group</i></p> <p>Everyone leaves their chair and stands at the side of the room. Point at a chair and assign it a context, for example, 'dentist's chair', 'restaurant chair', 'throne'. When the child's chair is pointed to, ask them to go back to it and mime something relevant to that given context. They'll have to keep up the mime until everyone is seated.</p>

#### Useful weblinks

- <http://dramaresource.com/>
- [http://oer.educ.cam.ac.uk/wiki/Interactive teaching in literacy and language/2. Talk for writing](http://oer.educ.cam.ac.uk/wiki/Interactive_teaching_in_literacy_and_language/2._Talk_for_writing)
- <http://www.dramatoolkit.co.uk/drama-games/a-to-z>
- <http://www.free-teaching-resources.co.uk/lesson-ideas/drama/index.html>
- <http://www.talk4writing.co.uk/>
- <http://www.piecorbett.org.uk/>