



INJECTING DRAMA

Breaking the Routine and Having Fun Doing it

Jeff Redman

American International School Dhaka



Goals of Drama Injection!

- IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING AND MEET STANDARDS THROUGH THEATER
- INCREASE LITERACY
- BUILD TOLERANCE AND UNDERSTANDING USING DRAMA
- PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUILDING SELF-CONFIDENCE AND ENGAGEMENT
- ALLOW STUDENTS TO LEARN AND DEMONSTRATE KINESTHETICALLY
- INJECT YOUR LESSONS AND CLASSROOM WITH A BOOST OF ENERGY AND SPONTANEITY



Making the Decision To Inject Drama

1. Knowledge of the school curriculum and your discipline

2. Facilities

- a. What spaces are available to you?
- b. What limitations do you have (or think you have)? Time?
- c. What is the target audience for integration?

3. Materials

- a. What scripts and texts do you have at your disposal?
- b. What other resources can you access?

4. Skill level of students

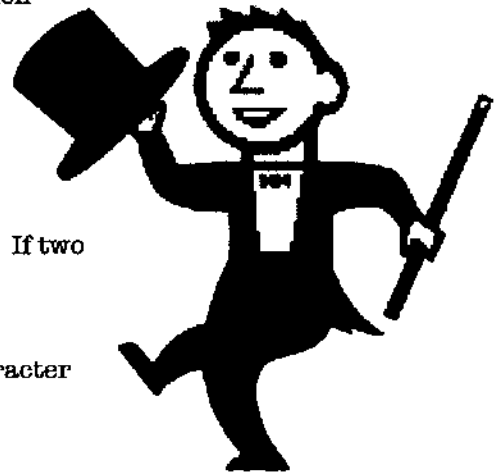
- a. Choosing the appropriate materials for your age range
- b. What is their background and experience?



Warm-ups

“Warm-ups” are quick simple exercises that help to activate the body, mind, or the voice. Students develop a willingness to “let-go”, build self-confidence, develop a sense of community and stimulate creativity. Warm-ups injected into the daily lesson or morning meeting become part of the “routine”. (Between 5-15 minutes)

- **Cat Wants Your Corner**
 - Example activity. Circle up. One in the middle. “Cat wants Your Corner”. “Go to your neighbor”. Switch places
- **Fruit Salad**
 - Example activity. Circle up. Exact # of chairs -1. Assign fruits. Call out fruit and switch. “Fruit Salad!”
- **Stretches, 8-count shake out**
 - Example activity. Each limb shakes 8 counts and then descending order.
- **List immersion**
 - Timed lists of whatever topic works. Ex: A list of everyone you have ever met. 3 min.
- **Group count**
 - Circle up. One number at a time. Anyone can say it. If two people say the #, then you start over.
 -
- **Story telling.**
 - One word storytelling. Conducted storytelling. Character storytelling.
- **Walking through**
 - Example activity. Included activity.
- **Tag team photos**
 - One person strikes a pose. Next person finishes picture. 1st person leaves and new person enters.
- **Hi-Ya!**
 - Example activity.
- **Zip-Zap-Zop/Whoosh-Whoa-Whoops/Yee Haw-Whoa-Giddyup/Zoom-Schwarz-Baffigliano**
 - A structure with endless varieties. Zip-left. Zap-right. Zop-across.



Notes

Improvisation

Improvisation exercises are exercises that call for actions (with or without words) performed on the spur of the moment. Acting without a script. Improvisation exercises build self-confidence, develop teamwork and trust, activate thinking, and train students to trust their instincts. (About 10-15 minutes)

- **What are you doing?**
 - Example activity. 2 teams. First person mimes action. 2nd person asks, "What are you doing?" 1st person can respond with anything but what they are actually doing. When they respond they go to the end of the line and the next person goes.
- **Join the activity/Picture**
 - Example activity. One person. Given a large group activity. They begin to mime one piece of the activity. When others have it figured out, they join in - silently.
- **Story cloth**
 - Circle up. Pass around a piece of silk or cloth. Leader begins a story and uses the cloth in one specific way. Each person must continue the story and use the cloth in a completely different way that fits into the story or moves the story along.
- **Prop morph/Channel flip**
 - Teams of 2 are handed out random items. They must create a 10 second commercial or scene demonstrating an out of the box explanation or use of the item. Go around the circle 3 times and then switch props.
- **The Oracle**
 - Attached lesson

INJECT THE DRAMA!

EXAMPLES:

- **THE MOST AMAZING VOCAB GAME INJECTED WITH DRAMA!**
 - MUTTERING
 - DEFIANT
 - POUTING
 - INDISPUTABLE
 - OLFACTORY
 - REVELATION
- **THE MOST AMAZING SCIENCE REVIEW GAME INJECTED WITH DRAMA!**
 - PERIODIC TABLE OF ELEMENTS
- **THE MOST AMAZING PROBLEM SOLVING DIALOGUE GAME INJECTED WITH DRAMA!**
 - CHOOSE A CONFLICT!

RESOURCES!

Books

Drama Games For Classrooms And Workshops; by Jessica Swale; Nick Hern Books; 2009

Drama Games For Those Who Like To Say “No”; by Chris Johnston; Nick Hern Books; 2010

Games For Actors And Non-Actors; by Augutso Boal; Routledge; 1992

Theater Games For The Classroom; by Viola Spolin; Northwestern University Press; 1986

Kids Take The Stage; by Lenka Peterson and Dan O’Conner; Backstage Books; 2006

Middle Mania! Imaginative Theater Projects for Middle School Actors; by Maureen Brady Johnson; Smith and Krause, Inc; 2001

Thirty Short Comedy Plays for Teens; by Laurie Allen; Meriwether Publishing, Ltd; 2007

Note: There are thousands of books available at every grade level. Of course, I can’t list them all here, but if you are looking for something specific, please email me!

Websites

Educational Theater Association:

- <http://schooltheatre.org/>

Drama Notebook:

- <http://www.dramanotebook.com/>

Improv Encuclopedia

- <http://improvcyclopedia.org/>

Reader’s Theater Resource

- <http://www.aaronsherp.com/rt/RTE.html>

Periodicals

- *Dramatic Magazine*; A publication of the Educational Theater Association - issues available online
- *Teaching Theater*; A publication of the Educational Theater Association - issues available online
- *Scene*; A publication of the International Schools Theater Association

The Great Oracle

Actors must work together. Three people come before the rest of the room as the Great Oracle. When asked a question, they must assume an exaggerated pose before they answer. Then, they must answer the question -- each person taking turns to add one word at a time to the sentence.

After giving an example, let the audience ask questions of the Great Oracle. Sample questions could be:

Oh, Great Oracle, who is the man/woman of my dreams?

Oh, Great Oracle, what must I do to find the fountains of youth?

Oh, Great Oracle, what is the meaning of life?

Side coaching: Answers do not have to make complete sense, but the goal is to try and make some sense. You cannot control what others say -- so don't try to "guide" the answer. Speak loudly so everyone may hear you.

Variations: Ask questions that demonstrate understanding of the material. Example: "Oh, Great Oracle, what is Photosynthesis?"

Photo Album

In this activity it is important for the students to communicate non-verbally. In groups of five, the students need to form a photograph of a scene. One by one they assume the position needed to frame the photo.

Caller calls out each photograph, allowing the performers 5-7 seconds to pose (and then allow for laughter or analysis)

Situations could include a wedding, birthday party, first day of kindergarten, WW II, graduation, the dentist's office, an alien invasion, or an MTV video.

Side coaching: Actors may interact with each other to create a complete picture. No speaking. Stay frozen (photographs don't move). Make a quick and bold choice -- take a risk.

Advanced: Coach asks, "What happens if?" And then allows someone from the audience (or coach) to re-arrange the image (for example take one of the actors running away from the volcano and re-position them so they are running towards the volcano) -- How does the focus change?

Variation: Have them re-create unit concepts such as "Columbus landing" or "Mitosis"

Tag Team Photograph

Two people are required. The first person strikes a pose (perhaps pointing a gun or some other recognizable and well defined pose) and then the second person strikes a pose to complete the photograph (like raising hands in the air).

After the pose is completed, the first person sits down but the second person remains. Then, a third person comes in to complete the new photograph.

This is performed silently.

Side coaching: the new actor should have an equally recognizable and well defined pose.

The Human Machine

One by one the participants form part of a machine. Each person assumes a function and a sound. It is good if not all parts of the machine are standing but they need to assume poses that they can sustain over a period of time. Otherwise, it will be a painful experience.

After the machine is fully assembled, try it in gear two, three, four, possibly ten, and then end the activity with a breakdown.

Side coaching: Actors joining the machine may either take a place next in the line or they can add on to the beginning of the machine: Choose a sound and a movement that they can sustain.

Accepting Circle

Get everyone in a big circle. One player starts by making a little gesture, perhaps with a little sound. His or her neighbor then tries to copy and does exactly the same. This is passed around the circle. Although we expect the gesture/sound not to change, it will.

Side coaching: Actors should not deliberately change the sequence. Watch for movements that suddenly change left/right arm or leg. This is not really supposed to happen, but it will. Once happened, the next player should accept it. Also watch/listen for little moans or sighs that players might make before or after their turn - these should also be taken over by the next player.

Opening Lines

Two actors onstage. Determine a actor A and actor B. Coach gives actor A the opening line and A delivers to actor B. After opening line, the conversation progresses until an appropriate moment (either the conversation has wrapped up, the actors are stuck, or it is veering way off track). Coach calls "scene" or "beat".

"Stay Here, I am going to call an ambulance."

"How could you say that?"

"Where did you get that?"

"I told you to leave."

"I am telling Mom!"

"I have a date with John on Saturday night."

Side coaching: *Don't forget your opening line! Make sure to define (what did he/she say? Where did they get what?). Remember to accept.*

Variation: Use class concepts as a starting point - "Columbus was a criminal!"

Collaborative Writing Using Natural Dialogue Rhythms

This is based on a game from the Philadelphia Young Playwrights program

Conflict or Disagreement _____

Character A _____ Written By _____

Character B _____ Written By _____

A: (two to four words) _____

B: (two to four words) _____

A: (two to four words) _____

B: (two to four words) _____

A: (two to four words) _____

B: (one to two words) _____

A: (one to two words) _____

B: (one to two words) _____

A: (one to two words) _____

B: (one word) _____

A: (one word) _____

B: (one word) _____

A: (twenty or more words) _____

B: (twenty or more words) _____

A: (four to six words) _____

B: (four to six words) _____

A: (four to six words) _____

B: (one to two words) _____

A: (one to two words) _____

B: (one to two words) _____

BUS STOP

Four seats (or more) set up on the bus and the bus driver. Passengers are constantly rotating on and off. Make a logical pattern of seat rotation so that the passengers eventually have to rotate through the drivers seat. Have the first passenger sit closest to the door, then move to the seat behind then across the aisle and eventually in the drivers seat. Keep the action moving, but allow enough time for the character to be clearly established. Keep actors on task and advise them to keep their character not to watch the door for the new person.

Side coaching: *You don't have to be exactly like them, but adopt their personality/character, keep the character up until you get a new one, keep your focus inside the bus not on the new character coming in, make a bold choice!!*

GROUP COUNT

All students stand in a circle shoulder to shoulder and look down at the ground. On the signal the group is to take turns counting to 20, with each actor only saying one number. If two actors say a number at the same time, the group must go back to number 1 and try again.

Variations: Coach says "1" every time to indicate that they must start over. Vary the numbers you must count to (if 20 is too hard try 10). If they struggle – have them close their eyes, then try turning back to back, then try moving them far away from each other.

Side coaching: Relax. Take your time. Feel the focus of the group. Be patient. Work together.

Variations: Use any "list" that ties into your curriculum. Example: Kingdom-phylum-order -OR- Red-Orange-Yellow-Green, etc, etc.

Color Your Nursery Rhyme

The group leader writes a short nursery rhyme (e.g., "Little Jack Horner," "Little Miss Muffet") on the board. The leader then reads the rhyme in a variety of ways, and the group repeats and imitates each time, in chorus.

Sample ways of reading include:

- suspensefully
- angrily
- sadly
- incredulously
- suspiciously
- nervously
- in a depressed manner
- happily
- like a TV newscaster
- like an advertisement
- as a rock song
- in an operatic voice
- very softly
- very loudly

Walking Through

Performance: Divide the actors into groups of four to five members. Give each group a situation, preferably written on an index card, where people are "walking through" a particular setting. Each group has a few minutes to plan the action. The group members can announce the situation with a title beforehand, or the audience can guess *after* the actors have completed their scene. Don't forget to collect the cards!

***Advance preparation:** Put the situations on index cards.

Suggested situations: Pretend you're walking . . .

- through tall underbrush.
- through a dark, dangerous alley.
- across a wide street on a rainy, windy night.
- in the burning desert, looking for water.
- through a forest of man-eating plants.
- in outer space, weightless.
- down a road of sticky asphalt and tar.
- across a log over a ravine full of crocodiles.
- across a street of broken glass.
- through a huge bowl of whipped cream.
- from the cold outdoors into a warm room.
- through a snowstorm.
- through a swamp.
- down a cold mountain stream.
- through a bowl of chewed-up bubble gum.
- across a room of bouncy springs.
- in a bowl of feathers.
- underwater.



Greeting by Number

Actors arrange themselves in two lines of equal number, with those in one line facing — from across the room — those in the other line. One side of the room is called *side A*; the other, *side B*. At a signal from the group leader, pairs opposite each other advance toward each other and meet in the middle, greet each other, and cross to the other side.

However, instead of using words of greeting, the actors use numbers. The persons who have come from *side A* always say, "1, 2, 3, 4;" and those from *side B* always say, "5, 6, 7, 8." The persons from *side A* say their numbers as if they were saying, "Hi, how are you?" The persons from *side B* say their numbers as if they were saying, "Fine, thank you very much."

At this point, all group members will profess great confusion; it's time for a demonstration, with you taking the part of *side A* and a volunteer that of *side B*. Begin from opposite sides. Greet each other, using numbers only, and cross to the other side. Have everyone practice twice to nail down the procedure.

Now the fun begins — the actors move across the room, and greet each other in different ways:

- like old enemies
- like snobs

ELEMENTAL PARTY QUIRKS

Objectives

Develop improv skills. Listening. Creative physicalities.

Lesson progression and procedures

1. Choose a host of the party. For particle exercise it should be "oxygen". The host is responsible for greeting everyone who comes to the party, then through interactions, guess who the individual guests are.
2. Choose 3 guests (different elements). For particle exercise, they should all know who the other guests are so they know how to "react" (chemical reaction) to them.
3. Each guest then takes turns entering the party. It starts with the doorbell and offering the host a party favor (food, drink, etc.). The host engages them in some conversation (hosts should not directly ask who the guest is, but rather find out through "party conversation"), as they try to figure out who the guest is. The guest, in turn, gives clues without being too obvious. This continues until the next guest rings the doorbell, then the whole process starts again.
4. This continues until all the guests are in the party interacting with each other and the host. Focus must stay on the host.
5. When the host knows who the guest is, the host will speak the name out loud and that guest is out. This continues until all guests are out or the host gives up. This could also be timed.

Variation:

Outside of the particle exercise, the host is more neutral (not "oxygen"). The guests can be anything from a celebrity (Britney Spears) to an inanimate object (a jackhammer).

Note:

Focus should be on the interaction of the guests and host, and not necessarily on how quickly the host can guess. The guests should also be giving clues through their physicality as well as what they're saying.

Be-an-Animal Group Pantomime

Performance: A group of six to nine actors pantomimes a single animal that moves across the stage. Sound effects are encouraged.

Example: Seven performers act out an elephant. Three form the head, with one actor for each ear and one for the trunk. The other four represent the legs and tail. The elephant lumbers heavily around the stage, picking up peanuts with its trunk and trumpeting loudly.

Preparation time: 20 to 25 minutes

Performance time: two to three minutes

Stage materials: chairs

Suggestions for conducting the activity: As with the "Be-a-Vehicle" and "Be-a-Household-Appliance" exercises, group brainstorming and some coaching help overcome the occasional reactions of "We can't do this!" Larger groups work best for this activity. Each group should try to get its animal to do as much as possible — sit down, eat, settle down to sleep, make noises. Inevitably, some group will want to represent *all* bodily functions; a few words about tastefulness on stage might be necessary.

An excellent way to end this session is with the entire class of performers forming one huge mythical beast — a winged dragon, for example.
