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## Developing creativity through drama

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# **Developing creativity through drama**

**Teresa Cremin and Roger Macdonald**

## **Introduction**

Drama fosters children's creative engagement and enriches their imaginative development. Open ended and the focus of collaborative exploration, it is also inherently uncertain, ambiguous and frequently full of dramatic tension. In make-believe worlds of their own creation, teachers and children find and solve problems, think laterally, evaluate courses of action, and create new meanings. In reflecting upon this imagined experience and the difficulties encountered, they make creative connections to their own world and learn through reflective engagement.

In this chapter we show that teachers can employ drama, the art form of social encounters, both to teach creatively and to teach for creativity. Furthermore, children learn creatively in and through drama. Initially, we explore the different ways drama is made manifest in primary schools, highlighting in particular the value of improvisational classroom drama in which drama and creativity are indivisibly linked. Then we move to consider some common classroom drama practices in the curriculum, focusing not only on role play areas and text exploration in English, but also on drama as a tool for learning right across the curriculum. We then offer two vignettes from across the curriculum, the former focuses on drama in the context of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and the latter on the theme of sustainability and the environment. We close by arguing that drama is a potent tool for fostering creativity; an indispensable tool in a creative practitioner's repertoire.

## **Fostering creativity through drama**

A wealth of activities exist under the banner of drama within and beyond the boundaries of the primary curriculum, these range from the more formal to the more informal end of a practice continuum (see Figure 1); from the practiced, prepared and shared with an audience type to the more casual, playful and spontaneous kind. Theatre trips, school productions and assemblies all cluster around the arguably more formal end of the practice continuum and often involve children in watching or being watched as they perform and enact previously prepared scenarios or plays. At the other end of the continuum, children on the playground improvise small scenarios often connected to the world of popular culture and engage in socio-dramatic play in the classroom through table top role play or when experimenting with resources in art or science; such informal imaginative play is not performed for others. Staff too may be involved in performing in plays or assemblies and may also engage in a playful and dramatic manner in the staffroom and in the context of classroom drama.

However, there is no simple dichotomy implied by the more and less watched varieties of drama and many of these activities, including poetry performances or puppet plays for example, may commence as improvised group work and conclude with a practiced performance, enabling new ideas and interpretations to be generated

as part of the process and the product. Additionally, theatre in education groups and opportunities to engage in English Heritage events for example, can involve both improvisation and performance on the part of those involved. All such activities are likely to trigger children’s imaginative involvement, involve an act of pretence, and create opportunities for making, sharing and appraising work. In this way children and adults are engaged together in the core processes of generating and evaluating ideas and meanings; they are working creatively.

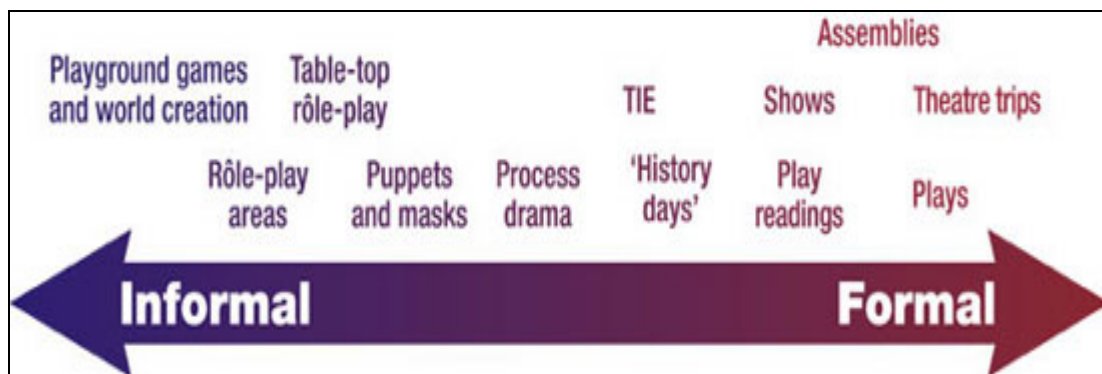


Figure 1. A practice continuum of drama

On the practice continuum of drama, with free play at one end and scripted performance at the other, process drama (Taylor and Warner, 2006) is situated centrally. Such drama, also called story drama (Booth, 2004), classroom drama (Grainger and Cremin, 2001) and structured improvisation (Greenwood, 2009), employs elements of both free flow play and theatre and involves the creation of shared fictitious worlds. It involves children in exploring issues in role and improvising alongside their Teacher in Role (TIR), building a work in the process. Language is an important part of this symbolic and dramatic play, in which, through the use of TIR and many other drama conventions, alternative ideas and perspectives are voiced. As a multimodal art form, drama draws on more than language though; children and teachers use facial expression, body language, intonation, gesture, mime, movement and space in order to make new meanings and connections.

In process drama, children are involved in working imaginatively to improvise and sustain the different roles that they choose to adopt, offering ideas to develop and shape the unfolding drama and contributing to the problem solving agenda. In working together, they do not re-enact the known but, working alongside their teacher as a fellow artist (TIR), take risks and explore the unknown. Process drama challenges children to imaginatively make, share and respond to each other’s ideas, collaboratively co- authoring new narratives together. These are often linked to known tales, texts of life experience and will draw on knowledge of the area being examined. For example, in a drama based on the Lady of Shallot, the young learners will draw upon their knowledge of the narrative, and in examining the plight of impoverished children in Victorian times, they will draw upon their prior knowledge of the era. In both of these dramas, through role adoption, the creation of contrasts or metaphoric analogies and the development of empathy, they will be prompted to make personal and emotional connections to the issues and themes being examined.

Whilst process drama makes use of a range of structures and drama conventions, such as freeze frames, hot seating, ritual, overheard conversations and conscience corridor for example, it also encompasses considerable spontaneity and playfulness. Thus such drama relies heavily upon the imagination and offers rich opportunities for creative development through the exploration of different possibilities and the adoption of different role perspectives. During such drama pupils oscillate between engagement and reflection and develop their ability to evaluate the drama, both its content and processes, as well as make connections and find parallels with real world situations.

Many of the key features of creativity are evident in process drama: imaginative play and exploration, curiosity and agency, collaborative engagement and reflection, and innovation and risk taking. In such drama there is often evidence of children 'possibility thinking' their ways forwards, considering 'what if' questions as they engage in the 'as if world' of their own creation. Possibility thinking, Craft (2000) asserts is at the heart of creativity and involves finding ways to cope with problems, trying out possibilities and identifying questions for investigation. It is, research evidence suggests, nurtured by creative pedagogic practice characterised by features such as teachers 'standing back', profiling learner agency and offering time and space for full immersion in imaginatively engaging contexts (Cremin et al., 2006; Craft et al., 2012). These characteristics are all employed in the context of process drama and in addition, the teacher is also creatively involved. McWilliam (2007) suggests that teachers who foster creativity are neither the 'sage on the stage' nor the 'guide on the side', but are more actively involved as co-constructors of meaning and are 'meddlers in the middle'. This certainly describes the teacher's role in drama; all practitioners need to be prepared to respond flexibly and seize opportunities through TIR to foster and challenge children's creative learning.

### **Enriching the curriculum through drama**

There are multiple opportunities to employ process drama in the curriculum: in literacy, maths and science, in the humanities and in thematic work. It is a powerful motivating tool, indeed Ofsted (2002) argue it is *the* most motivating tool in the curriculum. Providing space and time for children to engage in improvisational drama can help engage children's interest, enrich curriculum provision and foster their creative learning. There are three areas in particular which offer rich scope for drama: role play areas, literacy sessions and cross curricular work.

#### ***Role play areas***

Role play areas are potentially inspiring contexts for creative learning for children from the Early Years Foundation Stage right through to the end of Key Stage Two, though the nature of them and children's attitude towards them will differ across this time. They constitute a place to imagine, play and pretend, using a variety of skills in the process, including reading and writing for different purposes and audiences. Too often however such areas are confined to real world places, such as doctors' surgeries police stations, or supermarkets, but fictional or book based areas, more open ended fantasy places and imaginative cross curricular contexts also need to be offered; each makes different demands upon the creativity of the young. For example, Miss Wobble the Waitress's café, Clarice Bean's home, Mr Wonka's Chocolate factory, Fern's family's farm, Hagrid's cottage or the White Witch's palace could be created. Ideas for more generic fantasy areas include undersea kingdoms,

castles, rockets, cottages, woods and caves. Creating areas which connect to the rest of the curriculum can also be useful, examples include an Anderson shelter from World War II, an Egyptian tomb /catacombs, a homeless shelter, the offices of the Red Cross/Oxfam, a museum, and a corner of the Rainforest. In such areas, children can make use of their prior knowledge as well as stories they know which are set in such contexts, and draw upon different known and imagined characters to create new narratives and events.

Through co-creating such areas and bringing resources to enrich them, children develop their commitment and interest, key preconditions for creativity; they also need to consider collectively the kinds of characters and problems that might surface in these contexts. Critical to the success of such areas, particularly with regard to creativity is the extent of dramatic tension and problems which arise within them; simply pretending to be people in a café, however well-resourced it is, will not in itself prompt creative problem solving or possibility thinking. The three core elements of any dramatic scenario – people, place, predicament- (Cremin and Grainger, 2001) , need to be planned for explicitly, as without a predicament or a problem to solve at the seaside, the YMCA, or Cape Canaveral the children's play may remain at the level of imitation, and will not move towards co-creation and innovation.

The teacher's role is important here. TIR is needed in role play areas since although adults sometimes circumvent or direct children's play (in a desire for an identifiable outcome for example), the TIR can enhance play through creating challenges and introducing tensions and difficulties to which the children feel the need to respond. Though teachers do need to sensitively observe the children's self-initiated play before intervening; 'standing back' in order to consider their play and the direction they are exploring, before seeking to build on this. Through observation and TIR, and listening and talking to children in and out of role, teachers can evaluate and extend the learners' creative engagement. The TIR might for example enter the café as a confused customer who has lost her dog or the chef's mother coming to report that he is ill and unable to prepare for the impending children's party, alternatively, the TIR might arrive as an inspector of some kind seeking to arrange a time for the inspection. In taking such roles teachers seed and trigger problems to solve, but do not seek to direct the way in which the young learners respond. Additionally significant is ensuring that children are given the space to share their adventures in the role play area with the rest of the class, as later, the problems they solved and the characters they met/created will be adopted and adapted by other learners.

Some teachers also seek to enrich children's imaginative engagement by introducing toys as characters with which the children can communicate; this may be a stuffed bear, doll, robot or mannequin for example, found hiding in the corner of the room, perhaps bearing a message to the class. Alternatively, mysterious evidence of the visitor may be noticed and collected over time (e.g lettuce leaves and pieces of carrot, prior to a toy rabbit's arrival) until they are revealed and a new friend created. Such characters often become honorary members of the class, may be read to, attend outings, get invited to parties, and enjoy sleepovers and so on. Children may also write to them with the teacher writing back in role as the character. This involves considerable commitment, but is highly engaging and creates rich opportunities for purposeful reading and writing- postcards from trips abroad, birthday cards, get well

cards and letters from relatives can all be created. Some such characters have their own diary which they take when invited to stay with members of the class, who care for them and can be invited to report back on their adventures.

### *Drama in literacy sessions*

Creative teachers often use drama in literacy time as part of shared reading or as preparation for shared and independent writing. Through employing one of a range of drama conventions, teachers can enrich children's comprehension as they explore character motivation or behaviour via interior monologues or the unfolding plot or theme in a text via freeze frames or group sculptures. Such activities can help children employ their inference and deduction skills and prompt close interrogation of texts.

In addition, drama provides meaningful contexts for writing, both individually and collaboratively. Through orally rehearsing and refining ideas for writing and through listening to those of others, children often find that writing in drama is less challenging. Teachers can use drama in literacy sessions to focus on a form of writing and, during more extended process drama sessions, can 'seize the moment' to write at a tense and dramatic point. Research evidence suggests that both links have potential, but that the flexibility and intuitive nature of 'seizing the moment to write' tends to foster more voice and verve - more creative edge in children's writing (Cremin et al., 2006). This is perhaps because, caught up in the emotional moment and engaged in sustained in-role work, the imagined experience resonates through their writing. If drama is used to enrich a particular genre, then careful bridges need to be built between the drama conventions used and the form of writing desired. Whilst several conventions may be used to generate ideas and involve the learners, the final convention needs to link to the chosen genre. In this way the last improvised scenario acts a kind of dress rehearsal for their writing. For example, thought tracking a character's views and concerns is well aligned to creating thought bubbles or diary writing.

Drama also contributes towards the generation of oral ideas and possibilities, children's spoken confidence and the naturally creative use of gesture, facial expression, movement and voice (Kempe and Holyrod, 2004). Children think on their feet and negotiate their way forwards in drama, in conversation with one another, asking and answering questions, retelling events and creating new ones. In literacy sessions fiction and non-fiction texts can be brought to life and examined through hot seating or forum theatre for example, requiring pupils to find a spoken register and content appropriate to their role and the situation.

In literacy sessions, teachers often seek to use drama to bring a book to life and select moments from the text to expand through drama conventions. Such moments need to focus on conflict, ambiguity, challenge or misunderstanding, as these will help trigger more focused and generative improvisations. Teachers may want to consider:

- What possible 'offstage' scenarios might be occurring that could be fruitfully investigated through drama?
- What possible roles or conventions could be employed at this moment and with what purpose?

- How much needs to be read aloud immediately before the drama to contextualise the action?

Tensions may also be found through examining gaps in the text, for example, unmentioned conversations, nightmares, premonitions, a character's conflicting thoughts on an issue, and earlier problematic events that hint at the challenge to come. Through drama, these 'omissions' can be co-constructed, investigated and packed with meaning before the class return to the text itself.

### ***Integrating drama across the curriculum***

Teachers can seize opportunities to integrate drama into subject specific studies and in thematic work, for example in their examinations of World War Two and the Egyptians, as well as in more generic explorations of the social issues, financial consequences and environmental concerns which orbit around the Rainforest or pollution for example. Alternatively, teachers may work to teach maths more creatively, leaning on drama prompted through literature perhaps to explore issues of size, weight and volume for example (see Pound and Lee, 2011). They may also engage in creative explorations of both secular and faith tales in order to support spiritual development through inhabiting the lives of others. The opportunity to engage in open exploration and reflection through being as well as doing, and experience feelings of wonder and transcendence can foster children's spirituality (Grainger and Kendall-Seatter, 2003).

Additionally, process drama allows children to develop personally, socially and morally in secure imaginative contexts and enables them to develop qualities such as empathy, self-control, respect for others' views and the ability to work constructively with their peers. Imaginative situations often put children in a position of confronting ethical principles, examining their personal values and moral codes and can also help them learn to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty (Grainger, 2003). Heathcote's 'mantle of the expert' approach to the whole curriculum is also a valuable way to build bridges between subjects and demonstrates the potential of drama as a teaching and learning medium across the curriculum (Heathcote and Bolton, 1995). In this kind of process drama work children adopt roles with expertise, authority, knowledge and specialists' skills. Such expertise may be acquired from classroom research or be bestowed imaginatively by the TIR. Either way, their positioning prompts them to use and widen their skills, knowledge and understanding in a particular area.

As drama opens up a wealth of imagined experiences in a variety of curriculum contexts it can deepen children's knowledge of the subjects or themes being taught. This occurs, in part, due to the intellectually demanding nature of drama (Cremin, 2009), and in part because it encourages children to experiment with images in their minds, making them visible and voiced as they stretch towards new understandings in different contexts (Airs et al., 2004). New learning also takes place as a result of the choices and decisions made in the drama as they search for new solutions in order to settle an emotional dichotomy or respond to conflict. Whether teaching a subject specific curriculum or a themed approach, teachers can harness this power in a number of ways, as the following examples indicate.

### **Developing drama through PSHE: an example**

Tackling issues of racism, prejudice and bullying forms part of the PSHE and the SEAL curriculum for primary schools. These are emotive issues about which some children will have direct experience, others will have read about this or seen examples in the news and on TV. Many schools also take part in the national anti-bullying campaign so such drama work could be integrated within that focus.

The following case study describes how drama can be used, together with a powerful literary text, to explore attitudes and feelings, it also seeks to demonstrate the creative learning opportunities which emerged when children, imagining with each other and with their TIR, meet new challenges. The ten year olds involved in the session had experience of working with emotive texts in drama and were engaged in a wider unit of work on difference, diversity and prejudice. In this particular session, drama was used to help them immerse themselves in the text in order to examine the issues, it culminated in a piece of writing which also enabled them to examine these issues through the voice of one of the characters.

*The Green Children* by Kevin Crossley-Holland (Oxford, 1997) was chosen to support this work; a thought provoking picture book, it is about two children who find themselves in a different world to their own where the sky, the buildings, and the people are not green as they are in their own world. The class began by examining the front cover and the title and creating a class freeze frame of the cover visual in which the Green Children are seen by a group of other children, arguably from the past, but also from the 'real world' known to the children. The young learners positioned as the Green Children reflected a sense of panic on their faces and anxiety in their postures, the others gathered around cautiously, peering at them, pointing to them, and showing expressions of curiosity, questioning, confusion and interest, as well as a degree of wary uncertainty on the part of some. To develop the freeze frame further and to discover what the characters were thinking, the children, when prompted with a touch on the shoulder by the teacher, voiced their thoughts. These included:

*'Ahhh look they are all green, they're strange'.*

*What are they?'*

*Where do they come from?'*

*'Look at them, how weird they are'*

*'Don't go near them'.*

*'Let's get out of here'*

*'Be careful – they might be dangerous'.*

*'Where are we? Who are they? What do they want?'*

*'How can we get back to our own world?'*

*'Hold on to me, I don't like it here'*

*'Please don't hurt us'.*

Almost immediately and without detailed discussion, the young people positioned themselves in the fictional context and were able to voice the projected thoughts of both sets of characters. A degree of tension, fear and distrust could be heard in the tenor of their words. Many expressed their suspicions and none voiced concern for the other party or a willingness to help the Green Children, despite the obvious consternation and fear which they physically conveyed. It could be argued that the



first encounter was more concerned with self-protection and preservation than empathy and concern for the plight of those who presented as 'different'.

In order to help the class imagine what the world might be like for the Green Children, the teacher read on and when the inquisitive green boy finds a pale marble stone in the forest, the class were invited to imagine that they were there, a Green Child encountering a new multi-coloured world. The teacher suggested that they might find something on the ground, on the branch of a tree or in the air. Various ideas were shared in pairs and the imagined objects drawn. In such a context there were no 'right answers' and all the children pictured and drew possibilities, sharing and developing ideas in interaction with one another. The diverse suggestions included a feathers, a ladybird, the blackened remains of a bonfire, a shiny sixpence, twigs, a sheep's skull, leaves and a dead black raven. One child who drew a green caterpillar jotted down: *This could be our dinner, I must take it home- It's making my hands tingle – take it quickly- It's the same colour as us. It's copied us.* Another drew a dried autumnal leaf and jotted down: *What is it? How does it work? Why isn't it green? Why can't it talk?* Their ideas reflected lateral thinking and a degree of repositioning as they made the familiar strange through role adoption and imaginative engagement.

Later in the narrative, after 'supper', the green siblings try to find their way back home but are unable to do so, night after night they remain in the new world, but the boy desperate to return home, grows gradually weaker and eventually he dies in his sister's arms; 'the song went out of him'. The green girl loses her only connection to her world. This created a new and tangible emotional problem for the class and needed sensitivity and the professional judgement of the teacher to help them consider her situation. One group formed a circle around a chair which depicted the dead boy and in role as the green girl, members of the circle stepped forward to touch the chair and voice their feelings, these encompassed: personal hopes for the future and for the boy's soul, concerns and worries about their parents' loss and regrets and self-recrimination for having brought her brother into this new world. Another group decided to make use of the convention 'role on the wall' and each wrote a last message to their brother on a sticky pad which they then ceremoniously placed on an outline of him drawn on a large sheet of lining paper. Yet another group examined the thoughts and feelings of the villagers, which varied from empathy to concerns about disease.

In the narrative as the green girl's relationship with her new family grows, she seems to be accepted and, although she misses her home country, she begins to learn the words and customs of her hosts. She is invited by a young man, Guy, to attend the fair which he explains is like a market – a carnival. Arriving there however, she finds that people stop and stare at her, pointing, teasing and mocking her because she is different. This pivotal moment was recreated in the classroom. Children took on various roles such as market sellers, entertainers and customers and soon the classroom buzzed with laughter and movement. However, when the classroom door opened, silence fell and all activity ceased as the children focused their attention on the green girl, the TIR. In role the teacher walked around the market; some remained silent, others voiced their thoughts, mumbling and muttering to one another about this 'strange creature'. The TIR responded naturally, sought to offer a personal view, and tried to share and show a common sense of humanity. At various points the action

was frozen to enable the class to stop and observe the scene and focus together on how the girl looked and felt and how the crowd was reacting. Then at a signal, the class in a highly ritualised manner drew closer and encircled the TIR as the girl. The teacher narrated that she ran away into the forest and the class then formed a decision alley as if the spirits of the forest were offering her advice. One child in role as the green girl, walked down the 'alley' between two lines of children as she tried to decide whether to return to face the crowd or run away and never return. She too at times voiced her thoughts and inner conflict, sometimes responding to the voices in the trees. The voices included:

*Run as fast as you can, you need to find your true home'*

*'Hide in the forest, they'll never find you'*

*'Stay here with us, we'll protect you'*

*'Don't listen to them, listen to yourself'*

*'They are fools, they don't know you'*

*'Go to Guy. He is your friend and can help you'*

*'Ask Guy, he'll know what to do'*

*'Who can I trust? Did Guy know this would happen?'*

*'There is nowhere to hide'*

*'I will always be alone'*

*'This isn't fair'*

Many 'advisors' suggested she should go to Guy, back to his family and so the teacher narrated the children's narrative forwards and described how the green girl ran back to find an empty house, she sat down confused and uncertain and wrote a note. Was she going to stay? This was left open, hanging in the atmosphere which was highly charged. The children, scattered across the room settled quickly to write. Some wrote from Guy's point of view, others from the girls, one wrote as the mother of the host family.

*Dear Guy,*

*I am sorry for running away from the fair. I couldn't take the pressure from the people pointing and laughing at me. Thank you for trying to be a friend to me but it didn't work. Please tell the rest of the family thank you for looking after me and my brother. I cannot believe what people said to me – what have I done to them? They just don't know me for who I am and never will.*

*Dear Guy,*

*I feel left out. I can't carry on. Thank you for all you've done. Thank you for sticking up for me. I need to know what's going to happen to my brother. I need to go back – I need to tell my family. Their voices haunt me, I am not really so different. I feel like I'm shattered inside, everywhere.*

Having shared extracts from their writing, the teacher read to the end of the tale and invited the class to create group sculptures to sum up the message of their work. These were rich and varied, some made their physically shaped sculptures reflect the angst and pain of difference, suggesting their shapes were made of barbed wire or twisted ivy, whilst others depicted more hopeful abstract sculptures with hands of stone to suggest permanence which joined together or reached out. The various titles

given to these sculptures were listed on the flipchart and the teacher seized the opportunity to discuss connections and parallels in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain. Some of the children also talked about gender differences and the difficulties they encountered with siblings who wanted something else or who as one child noted 'come from another planet'. In this session the children had exchanged ideas, experimented with alternative perspectives and interpretations and raised questions and issues, they had not found comfortable closure or easy answers to the challenging personal and moral dilemmas which surfaced. In their final sculptures this was particularly noticeable. In the weeks that followed they were engaged in a series of drama sessions based upon *The Island* (2007) by Armin Greder, which, in a harder and more graphic manner than *The Green Children* addresses prejudice. This sustained period of time offered scope for immersion and exploration of the issues.

There are numerous other picture books which explore other PSHE topics, some of which are set within particular periods in history and thus afford the opportunity of combining an exploration of the period and the feelings, motivations and challenges experienced by people at that time. Amongst the many suitable for process drama, recommendations include:

*A Bad Case of Stripes* (1998) David Shannon, Scholastic.

*The Colour of Home* (2002) Mary Hoffman, Frances Lincoln.

*The Bird Man* (2000) Melvin Burgess, Andersen.

*Rose Blanche* (2004) Roberto Innocenti and Ian McEwan, Red Fox.

*Erika's Story* (2004) Ruth Vander Zee and Roberto Innocenti, Random House.

*The Savage* (2008) David Almond, Walker.

*The Heart in the Bottle* (2007) Oliver Jeffers, Harper.

*The Two Frogs* (2003) Chris Wormell, Jonathon Cape.

*I am the Mummy Herb Nefert* (2000) Eve Bunting

*Luba, the Angel of Bergen Belsen* (2003) Michelle McCann, Luba Tryszynska-Frederick and Ann Marshall, Adams.

### **Developing drama around sustainability: an example**

Schools that use a 'creative' or theme based curriculum can also integrate drama. In this next example, drama contributed to a sustainability theme entitled 'It's Rubbish'. The title evoked discussions with the 8-9 year olds about who rubbish belongs to and who is responsible for it and the class explored the amount / types of rubbish being thrown out in their own homes and in school before turning to look at the country as a whole. As part of the work they were introduced to *The Paperbag Prince* (1992) by Colin Thompson, which proved to be an excellent starting point.

The cover was shown on the interactive whiteboard and created considerable discussion. Then using a combination of the text and oral storytelling, the teacher established that the local residents were becoming tired of lorries rumbling through their village, tired of the grime caused by the diesel fumes that clung to their doors and seeped through their windows. The class created freeze frames showing the villagers variously peering out of their curtains, standing at their doors, in a café and out for a walk, some voiced their thoughts, for example '*My Grandchildren won't come and see me anymore because of the horrible smell*'. Another child commented '*When I was young I would play outside all day – I only allow my children out for 20 minutes*'.

Reading on the class heard that at the dump, a collection of rusty metal drums were oozing poison into the environment. Again the teacher, using his own imaginative additions, explained that the villagers knew that the local councillors were meeting at the town hall. Pausing in the telling, the class discussed what might happen and decided the villagers would prepare banners to express their views. These were quickly created in groups, some instinctively used rhyme to increase the impact of their objections. These read:

*We all have the hump – get rid of this dump!  
Don't be a fool – stay away from the poison pool!  
Give us our village back!  
Pollution is killing us. Show us you care – clean our air!  
This is countryside, not a dump!*

The drama continued with the villagers, who had been told the council meeting was about to end, waiting for the clock on the interactive whiteboard to reach midday. At this point the classroom transformed into a demonstration with groups desperately pleading for the dump to close. The TIR as a councillor, demanded quiet and after some extended and robust discussion agreed to provide the opportunity for villagers to meet members of the council. Almost immediately, small groups of children set about preparing their representations whilst others who were to take the role of councillors met to discuss their position. Desks were arranged to resemble a number of mini meetings and the councillors took their places, checking through their papers. The villagers thought carefully about how to enter the meetings; some chose to be angry and demanding, whilst others were more diplomatic, this was partly determined by the imagined nature of their group, families, friends, young, old and so on. These decisions influenced how the meetings progressed, but all provided a safe context in which the children could explore their views about the dump and wider issues of pollution. However, most remained dissatisfied with the councillor's responses and decided to write to their local MP. Two examples included:

*Dear Mr Peters,  
I am writing to let you know how disgusted I am that this monstrous dump has been allowed to wreck our lives for so long. Each day I cannot even open my windows because of the smell. People don't want to visit me and I have not seen my grandchildren for over a year! Please find it in your heart to reconsider the location of the dump so we can go back to living in a beautifully valley.*

*Dear Councillor Matthews,  
The dump has to go! I know you did not listen to our demonstration but we will be back. I used to enjoy living in this village but now I just want to move. The lorries wake me up every week when they pass and the fumes are horrible. This used to be a lovely place to live. Please help us get enjoy life again.*

Using drama as part of the 'It's Rubbish' topic helped these 8-9 year olds engage with the issues, collaborate and take risks and use their developing knowledge in an imaginative context. This was built upon by borrowing narrative elements and issues offered in the books *Dear Greenpeace* by Simon James and *One World* by Michael Foreman. Other curriculum themes can also be investigated via layered polysemic

texts that offer a narrative context for drama. Literature, combined with TIR is a potent framing device for developing improvisational process drama and fostering learner creativity.

## **Conclusion**

Drama involves creation, speculation and reflection and prompts questions to be asked and connections to be made. In contrast to more traditional pedagogic practices, it provides considerable scope to explore language, interpretation and meaning and fosters children's creativity. Creativity and imagination are not additional elements in drama, but are central to the symbolic and communicative nature of the activity, encouraging empathy and insight. They also contribute to the uncertainty and ambiguity that characterise classroom drama. In order to develop children's creativity through drama, it is suggested that teachers:

- Develop role play areas based on the 'three Ps of drama' - people, place, predicament
- Make use of drama conventions in literacy sessions to inhabit texts and foster a creative response
- Collect rich literature which raises questions and explores issues of significance related to the curriculum and to life
- Map out process drama lessons using these texts and plan to expand the scope by storytelling additional elements
- Consider the potential of TIR and take the risk to become 'the meddlers in the middle' (McWilliam, 2007) challenging and extending children's creative learning.

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