

DRAMA FOR LEARNING

Pocketbook

A wardrobe of
drama ideas and
techniques for
active, imaginative
and collaborative
learning

Brian Radcliffe



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Introduction

On my first day teaching at my present school I was introduced at staff briefing as 'the new drama supply teacher'. The response to this announcement was a loud and prolonged burst of applause, accompanied by cries of 'What a relief!' and 'Thank God!' I felt like the US Cavalry appearing over the hilltop to relieve the besieged wagon train. I wondered if I should renegotiate my terms of settlement immediately.

The reason for the enthusiastic welcome was that my arrival signalled the end of drama cover. In the absence of a dynamic and creative Head of Drama through illness, Physics, French, Technology and RE teachers had been sharing the load of covering the lessons. For some it had proved all too much:

'It always ends in a fight'

'I can't get them to hear me with all the noise'

'I like to keep them behind desks so I know where they are'

Drama has that effect on some teachers.

Introduction

So why should I suggest that those same teachers should not merely overcome initial trepidation, but be open to exploring the possibility that drama might actually enhance the quality of learning?

Primarily, it's because of what I believe as a teacher:

- The **quality of learning** is more important than the style of teaching (although one may have an effect on the other)
- Students come to their learning with a great deal to contribute, and we as teachers are **collaborators** with them in enhancing their learning
- The **direction** of learning should, where possible, be in the hands of the student
- While schemes of work and exam syllabuses might give destinations for that learning, the road we travel can be **flexible**
- Drama offers a series of techniques that **stimulate learning, promote collaborative endeavour** and give a **map** to follow for at least the next few miles

Introduction

Whether you teach in a primary or secondary school, and whether you come to this book as confident or hesitant, enthusiastic or nervous it will:

- Show you how drama techniques address current understandings of how students learn
- Provide seven banks of drama techniques and explain the aspects of learning that they each enhance
- Offer more than 150 creative ideas for using these techniques in both a cross-curricular and single subject context
- Tackle issues of classroom management with clear, practical advice

Then you'll be ready to step into the spotlight.

Beginners, please.





**Drama as
Active Learning**



Games



Narrative



Character



Stylisation



Analogies



**Dilemmas and
Options**



**Teacher in
Role and
Using Props**



D r a m a a s A c t i v e L e a r n i n g

Flexing the muscles



There's a difference between the sports fan who experiences the thrill of the game from the comfort of an armchair and the one who participates: a different level of engagement, a different quality of involvement and a lasting benefit for the one who participates. It's the same for learning.

Drama encourages **participation in learning** since it is:

- Engaging and varied
- Brain-friendly
- Challenging
- Student-centred
- Collaborative
- Rewarding



Engaging and varied



A drama-based activity encourages involvement right from the start:

- Usually there's the opportunity to **get up and move**. Oxygenated blood pumps around the body and stimulates the brain.
- Everyone becomes a **performer**. However, as there's no audience, the extrovert has no need to demand attention and the introvert has less fear of observation
- **Perspectives** constantly **change** as the activity progresses
- The disaffected student is drawn in by **curiosity**
- The most gifted student is stimulated by the **infinite opportunity**

Brain-friendly



There are learning opportunities for a range of intelligences:

Linguistic – the writers
and speakers ▶

Logical-mathematical – the
sequencers and classifiers ▶

Visual-spatial – the
picture creators ▶

Musical – the rhythm
and melody makers ▶

Intrapersonal – the
reflectors ▶



◀ **Interpersonal** – the group-
makers

◀ **Bodily-kinaesthetic** – the
mime and model makers

◀ **Spiritual** – the dreamers
and seers

◀ **Naturalist** – the
environmentalists

When drama is used, it's **inclusive** of each student's personal mix of intelligences and the blend of intelligences in each group of students.

Brain-friendly



Neurologists have identified a variety of processing centres in the brain, often referred to in lateral terms for simplicity. Drama can bring all these into action:

Right
The big picture
Imagination
Music
Rhythm
Colour
Ideas



Left
Problem-solving
Sequencing
Detail
Logic
Analysis

Because it's both **cognitive** (uses logical understanding) and **affective** (uses emotion and feeling), **drama is creative**.