

Drama as a tool in literature classes

- Fostering interpretation through role play of scenes/related situations
- Adopting characters' languages and perspectives
- Exploring related conflicts/issues by role play of similar situations
 - Create peer-conflict scene related to a peer conflict in a story or novel



Value of drama

- Bolstering students' confidence in alternative language use through assuming different roles
 - Students break out of familiar “school” or “classroom” roles constructed by peers
- Adopting different styles/registers
- Expressing emotions through language
- Learning to “think on your feet”



Different types of drama tools

- Nonverbal tableaux/statues
 - Body sculptures
 - Group tableaux of a scene from a text
- Pantomime/Charades
- Improvisation
- Oral interpretation/poetry slams/readers' theater
- Role play
- Scripted skits
- Play production



Engaging all students in drama

- Move away from drama as an elite activity for just the “drama kids”
- Engage all students through large-group improv/small-group role-play
- Importance of a context of trust and safety
 - Students feel comfortable experimenting with different roles/language use



Drama in performances in everyday life

- (1) **Everyday life**
- (2) **In the arts**
- (3) **Sports/entertainment**
- (4) **Business**
- (5) **Technology**
- (6) **Ritual and sacred**
- (7) **Play**



Functions of Performance (Schechner, 2002)

- (1) **Entertain**
- (2) **Make something that is beautiful**
- (3) **Mark or change identity**
- (4) **Make or foster community**
- (5) **To heal**
- (6) **To teach, persuade, or convince**
- (7) **Deal with sacred**



Play vs. games

- Play:

- Takes place anywhere/anytime
- Any number of players
- May or may not abide by rules

- Games

- Takes place in defined, designated places
- Players are clearly marked (by uniforms)
- Rule-bound



7 Ways to Approach Play Acts (Schechner, 2002)

- Structure: relationships between events
- Process: how developed over time
 - How does strategy change during game
- Experience: players' feelings/moods
- Function: what are purposes for play acts
- Individual development of play/creativity
- Ideology: reflects values
- Frame: how do know when/how play beings/ends



Types of Playing

- Competition: winners/losers: skill/strength
 - Races, chess
- Chance: fate, luck
 - Dice, roulette
- Simulation: imaginary, make-believe
 - Theater, children's games
- Dizziness: disorienting, state of mind
 - Roller-coaster/getting drunk



Performing as students and teachers: “Deep acting”

- “Deep acting” involves expression of certain genuine emotions:
- When you deep act, in other words, you work, through acts of will and imagination, to open yourself to the possibility that you might *persuade yourself* that the emotions you are presenting are real. You risk *becoming* the thing you are performing. Deep acting is, paradoxically, the process of exerting control in order to relinquish control. (Lindquist, 2004, p. 197).



“Surface acting”

- “surface acting” controlling one’s emotions in a manner that gives the impression that one is experiencing those emotions.
- Frank Abnegale, the imposter/confidence man in the autobiographical book and film, *Catch Me if You Can*. Abnegale learned how to engage in “surface acting” to give the impression that he was a an airline pilot, a pediatrician, a lawyer, and a sociology professor by carefully attending to the genres and practices operating in specific social contexts.



Teachers: “surface acting”

- I suggest that teachers can listen to students to know not only how, but who to be with them. They can strategically perform the role of learners, just as, perhaps, the ethnographer *puts on* an attitude of naïveté...In order for teachers to enable students’ affective work, they must *begin* by staging their empathy, knowing all the while that the price of successfully persuading students of their (the teachers’) emotional commitments may very well be that they succeed in persuading *themselves* of these commitments as well. (p. 202).



Teacher: Foster affective responses

- I worked to communicate empathy for their positions *as affective responses*. In the end, these students gave me permission to complicate their understandings, to help them get to the kind of knowledge they now identified as necessary for greater understanding of the issues. These gains were, I believe, purchased by my own emotional labor as I struggled to mediate my own affective responses.



Interactive drama and video games

- Participation in games
 - constructing oneself as a certain kind of virtual identity (Gee, 2003)
 - Real-world identity
 - Virtual identity
 - Projective identity
- Project one's values/aspirations onto projective identity



Video games/role play

- Assuming alternative roles
- Engaging in problem-solving specific to challenges and contexts
- Ability to use language consistent with roles
- Draw on narrative conventions
- Share strategies with other players



Designing drama activities

- Begin with warm-up activities
 - Importance of comfort/confidence
 - Being physically loose
- Move to focus just on nonverbal
 - Charades/tableaux activities
 - Body sculptures
 - Emphasize nonverbal communication



Adding the verbal

- Employ situations in which students vary language/speech-act performance
 - Differences in intent, power, register, formality, emotion, audience
 - Saying “hi” to evoke different meanings
- Reflect on ways of performing language to construct alternative meanings



Oral interpretation/poetry slams/readers' theater

- Select short texts suitable to performance or memorization
- Reflect on the meaning to be conveyed
- Mark up the text in terms of emphases and pauses to convey certain meanings
- Practice performing the text
- Perform the text for the class



Creating role-play/improvisations

- Select a scene from a text or a related situation
- Define the conflicts/tensions in the scene or situation
- Define the social situation/context, roles, role attributes/agendas, desired goals
- Provide information to students for small-group role plays



Large-group role plays

- Select a topic lending itself to a large-group role play
 - an issue facing students in the school that must be resolved by the school board
 - a censorship case, trial, election, etc.
- Students in class adopt different roles
- Students send written/online messages
 - Students persuade others/build alliances
- A final decision is made by a board/jury



During role-play/improvisation

- Students need to step into and maintain roles in a consistent manner.
- Conflicts/tensions serves to sustain role play over time.
- When one student stops, another should jump in to keep role play going.
- Students need to be invention to create facts, information, or events
- Students end the role play when some resolution has been achieved.



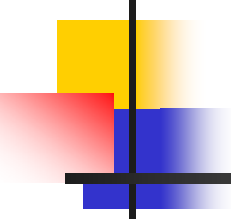
After role-play/improvisation

- Student step out of their roles and reflect on the:
 - Feelings about assuming certain roles
 - Feelings about the situation or dilemma
 - Language used to construct roles
 - Conflicts/tensions addressed
 - Conflicting perspectives/attitudes adopted
 - Resolutions of the conflict/dilemma
 - Relationship of role play to text and/or related lived-world contexts



Creating skits: Students:

- select challenge/experiences in their own lives or portrayed in texts
 - Conflicts with peers or parents
 - Challenges in school/workplace/families
- write dialogue for one-acts
- rehearse and revise dialogue
- perform one-acts for the class



Performing one-act plays in the classroom: Students:

- select roles/parts/director
 - Small groups may each do different plays
- discuss interpretations and how to convey those interpretations
- rehearse performances
- perform for the class
- share reactions to the plays