



Soapbox

Lesson 1

Mime Time

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Equipment

- Gaffer tape
- 1 pen per child
- 1 exercise book per child

Commands

- Go
- Countdown
- Freeze
- Hands Up! Rule

Introduction / Warm-Up

- Your participants will be excited and interested. Use this to your advantage by beginning with the rules which at this stage will seem unusual and fun rather than controlling.
 - A physical and mental warm up is always advisable when beginning a drama session, as the children will be working in a completely different way from how they would in the classroom. It also gives you a chance to try out your rules and calm your nerves!
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1.1 Say My Name! (5 Minutes)

- Bring the group into a standing circle using the Countdown command and Go command.
 - Although you may know the participants' names this exercise is an incredibly simple way of using a common denominator to increase confidence in speaking out loud.
 - Beginning with yourself, and working in a clockwise direction around the circle, one by one ask the participants to say their name clearly and confidently. This should be done once through and the participants should be complemented throughout the exercise. This should be done a second time but the participants should increase the volume.
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1.2 Name & Action (5 Minutes)

- Again beginning with you and working in a clockwise direction each participant should say their name again but this time to an 'action' (an action is a movement of some kind using the whole body). This will need lots of encouragement.
 - Suggestions may also be needed for the 'action' such as playing football or a computer game. This should be done once through and the participants should be complemented throughout the exercise.
 - The exercise should then be repeated, but the participants should increase the volume.
 - After the warm up section you can begin your session proper with some confidence and concentration exercises. All exercises are given names as it helps if you want to repeat the exercise at a later date and it can often describe the meaning behind the exercise in a way a child will understand.
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1.3 Eye Eye! (10 Minutes)

- Remaining in a standing circle, bring the group to silence using the Freeze command.
- You should begin this exercise by making eye contact with someone across the circle, walking up to them, and saying your name as you do so. This will generate much amusement but generally not from the person you're making eye contact with. Once you reach the person you've chosen, stop, and explain to the rest of the group that the person 'receiving' the eye contact is the next person to make eye contact with someone else across the circle. Move back to your original position in the circle and pick someone to go first. You should ensure the whole group has a turn. Keep reinforcing that eye contact is a great way to communicate with people and demonstrates confidence.
- The success of this exercise is reliant on your enthusiasm and lack of inhibition. If you go for it, so will they!

1.4 Pairing (2 Minutes)

There are many ways to 'pair up' a group successfully. I've found the following the best way to avoid arguments about who should be with whom.

- Keeping the group in a standing circle, allocate alternate participants with the letter A or B. Once done, bring all the A's into a line behind one another and all the B's into a line behind one another leaving a space down the middle of the two lines. On the Go command get the group of A's to turn to face the group of B's. Then walk down the middle of the two lines, pairing people up by tapping the A's and B's facing each other on the head.

1.5 Thieves & Hinder! (10 Minutes)

This exercise again reiterates the important skill of eye contact as a form of communication, as well as the importance of trust and teamwork.

- As are told they are now Thieves and asked to form a standing circle on the Go command and Countdown command. Once done, the B's are told they are Hinders and asked to form an outer circle around the Thieves on the Go command and
- Countdown command each ensuring that they are stood behind their respective partner.
- The Hinder's aim is to 'hinder' the escape of the Thieves who can attempt to flee only when another thief makes eye contact across the circle and winks at him or her. The Hinder can attempt to stop them only by gently touching the elbows of the Thieves. There must be no pulling or grabbing at any time.

1.6 Stage Magnets (5 Minutes)

Having established some of the themes of Soapbox, and the way in which the sessions will run, it is now time to introduce some more theatre-based exercises and terminology. Again, this section presumes that you, the user, have little or no experience of teaching drama.

This simple exercise introduces five basic stage directions, as well as reiterating the importance of teamwork and concentration skills. The stage directions are:

- Stage left
- Stage right
- Centre stage
- Downstage
- Upstage

- Positioning yourself at one end of the room, bring the group to stillness on the Freeze command, asking them to look towards you. After complimenting the group on their concentration during Thieves and Hinder, inform them that where you are standing is now a stage. Using gaffer tape, roughly outline a square box on the floor to reiterate this. Once done you should position yourself centre stage and using the Go command and Countdown command ask the group to gather around you, asking them to imagine that they are made of metal and you are a magnet.
- Once the group is gathered, you should extract yourself, leave the stage area and face the group. From this position you should indicate where the remaining stage areas are ie; Stage left, Stage right, Centre stage, Downstage and Upstage.
- NB The stage directions should be as if stood on the stage so your left will be their right etc.
- Once the group understands where the stage areas are, start calling them out randomly and ask them to move to the relevant area of the stage as a group.
- This exercise should end with the group coming back to centre stage and sitting down.

1.7 Mime Time One (5 Minutes)

Mime is incredibly useful when introducing drama in school because it's easy to understand and most children will have seen it somewhere even if they don't realise it; be it on television, in pantomime or as a piece of street theatre.

- A mime demonstration is hugely important and will have to come from you! It can be really simple – I suggest you mime getting ready to come to school that morning eg; waking up, having a wash, cleaning your teeth etc.
- From your short 'performance' you should get feedback from the group as to what you were doing. This will be your first opportunity to ensure the Hands Up! rule is adhered to and, whilst this rule is something you probably use often, the situation is not, so it's vital you only take feedback from those with their hands up.
- Having taken feedback, you should ask the group to find a space in the room in the same pairs as they were before using the Go command and the Countdown command.
- Once settled, each pair is asked to work out their own 'getting ready' routine using only mime. You should move around the room helping each pair; offering constructive criticism and giving lots of encouragement.

1.8 Show Back One (10 minutes)

Show Back is an incredibly important part of any drama session as it gives the participants the chance to demonstrate what they've learnt. It also begins to introduce the performance element to the project.

- Bring the group to silence with the Freeze command. You should compliment them on their hard work and ask for volunteers, using the Hands Up! rule, who wish to Show Back their mime to the rest of the group. Pick three or four pairs to perform their piece whilst the rest of the group observe.

1.9 Mime Time 2 (10 Minutes)

So far your group will have worked as a large group and in pairs. The final exercise will see them working in smaller groups.

- Working on the premise that an average class is made up of 30 pupils, this will mean six groups of five. I suggest you follow the same routine as before, bringing the group to a standing circle and moving around it, allocating every five participants either A, B, C, D, or E. Once done, ask all the A's to raise their hands and, if the numbers are correct, ask them to find a space in the room and sit down as a group. This should be repeated with the remaining B – E groups.
- Each group will then be allocated one of three scenarios. I've deliberately chosen only three instead of six as it's always interesting to see how different groups create different stories using the same scenario.
 - Windy weather
 - School Sports Day
 - Watching a scary film at the cinema
- Working in their individual groups they must devise a scene, using only mime, around the scenario they've been allocated.

1.10 Show Back 2 (10–15 Minutes)

- Bring the group to silence with the Freeze command. You will have already established the Show Back element of the session with the pair work. You will have also established the stage area. Speaking from centre stage and using the
- Go command and Countdown command ask the group to form an audience in front of the stage area. Each group should then perform their short performance to the rest of the group with applause at the beginning and end.

1.11 Final Individual Feedback (15 Minutes)

This should be done straight after the session and, if possible, where the session has taken place.

- Each participant should be given a pen and exercise book and asked to find a space in the room on their own. Each participant should write their name, date and title of the session on the top of the page.
- Final Individual Feedback time is incredibly important as, so far, the class has worked in pairs, small groups and as a whole, but the final exercise should always be individual as it gives a clear indication of what participants have and haven't understood.
- This section should be led by you, with the following as suggested questions:

What does communication mean?

What did you enjoy best and why?

What didn't you enjoy and why?

What is drama?

What is a stage?

Name an area of the stage?

Why is making eye contact important when communicating with someone?

- Once the Final Individual Feedback section is complete, books should be collected and kept safely for the next lesson.

Mime Time Outcomes

- Improved teamwork
- Improved pair work
- Improved individual work
- Relationship building between you and the group
- Increase in confidence
- Understanding of basic performance techniques
- Clear understanding of how to communicate without words

