

Exploration of Drama and Creative Writing based on the work of John Godber

Instructions for teachers

This lesson element supports OCR GCSE Expressive Arts.

The Activity:

This activity is in three parts, establishing the characters, add written narrative about the characters and thirdly integrate both of these parts into a final performance.



This activity offers an opportunity for English skills development.

Learning outcomes

- Students will be able to develop their Drama and Creative Writing Skills
- To learn specific 'non naturalistic skills' (Drama and Area of Study – Structure)
- To work in the 'Comedy' genre (Area of Study - Genre)
- To learn the 'Godber' style of drama (Area of Study – Genre & Narrative)
- To work in a non naturalistic style but still keep 'naturalistic' characters (Drama)
- To experiment with creative writing and produce a short speech in the style of Godber 'direct address' style (Creative Writing).

Starter

Get students to stand in their own personal space. Don't give them too much help on this, but just get them to create a still image of a 'Teacher'. Using body language and facial expressions they are to 'strike a pose' of the 'teacher'. Count down from 5 to give them time to think and then get them to 'pose'.

Walk around and look at the still images. Tell the class that you will tap some of them on the shoulder to 'bring them to life' When this happens they are to bring the character to life, act in role for 5 seconds and improvise. Literally just bringing that 'moment' to life, then freeze again.

Watch several back.

Repeat this whole process again but ask the students to create a still image of a 'pupil'.

Development

Get the students back into a circle. Resource: Page 1 – 3 of Teachers.

- Read first unit of action, including the stage directions – up until...“It's called Teechers.”
- Discuss the characters through a teacher led discussion. Pose questions such as - who are they? How old? Interests? Do a 'Fact/Guess' exercise. Get pupils to find facts about the characters **from the script** and get some to guess about the characters **based on the script**.

Now start to talk to the class about the script itself – the style. Ask the class to see if any part of the script stands out as different.

Introduce the playwright at this point '**JOHN GODBER**'. Give a brief background to the class and then start to talk about his style e.g. stereotypes, quick changes, multirole

Activity 1: Multi role – Drama

Briefly discuss the importance of multi role-playing at this level and that using it will help to make your Drama work unique and different. Again reinforce the 'non naturalistic' technique here and the idea of STYLISED drama rather than long, naturalistic plays with one character per person. Expressive Arts work is much more successful when it's unique and original in style and content.

Teacher to call out the following characters, in the same way as the **Starter** activity.

Mr Hard – Deputy Head, typical child hater, strict and a nasty piece of work

Miss Goody – Young, good looking PE Mistress

Miss Whimsical – A hopeless teacher, desperate to leave.

Dick (Richard) – The miserable caretaker, he hates kids and he hates Drama!

Piggy Peterson – Teachers Pet, A boy who is always telling on others.

Belch – The School Bully, A big, well built boy, looks older than he actually is.

Really have fun with this exercise, encourage the varied use of body language, gesture and facial expressions.

Once complete, get the students into groups of 3 – just like the TEECHERS script.

Students are now to devise 3 'student' characters each and to choose a character each that they will MULTIROLE into. They should practice in their groups being the 3 students and then changing into the other characters. Focus on Facial Expressions; Body Language, Gestures and Exaggeration will help develop the work more. At this stage there is no focus on making a scene, they should just be exploring getting 'into role' of those characters and 'representing them.

Activity 2: Direct address – Creative writing

Introduce the technique: Direct Address. Talk briefly about why it is a non-naturalistic technique and why we use it! Direct Address is really another word – but posher for Narration. Actors directly address the audience and develop the narrative. It is normally more stylised than simple narration, which tends to be more conversational.

Keeping the students in their 3's they are to create a short piece of script (creative writing) for that specific character. If they want to make up NEW characters and NEW names – even better!

They are to write: **NAME, AGE, JOB/ROLE** and a short sentence to sum up

Key point: Students must not write ‘Hi, My name is....and I’m.....’ They must keep it stylised.

So, an example would be *“Belch, 16, School Bully, I’ll find you, I’ll track you down and when I do, you in for it!”*

Allow students some creative writing time. They should really enjoy being creative here as they have so much experience to base it on.

Activity 3: Integrating the two pathways

Now they must integrate the two into a short performance (Drama and Creative Writing). They must start devising their first scene as students, learn their creative writing for the multirole scene and then also link the two with a stylised transition.

How will they do this? Will they all start in a classroom position with chairs and then after a short acting scene as students all get up and turn to the back and pick up a prop and simply turn to the audience to ‘become’ their new multirole character? Whatever they devise, the students must then **SPEAK** their creative writing from Activity 2 and really bring their new character to life, exaggeration here is the key to this style and genre. So the order would be this:

- Devised/improvised scene – 3 students in a classroom (short acting scene)
- Transition to get into new characters
- Ted, 15, School Bully, I’ll find you, I’ll track you down and when I do, you in for it! Miss Kelly Age unknown, PE Teacher, I’m a netball specialist and I love to show off my legs (giggle) Dick, 58, Caretaker, You want something doing? Not now – I’m on my break!
- Transition back to classroom – students all laugh.

Really push the students to experiment – this is what Expressive Arts is all about. It’s all about the process, and trialling out of ideas, not necessarily the end product. So the more ways they try out their multirole scene or the style of their transition the better!

Performance time

Show back and talk about them, evaluating which ones worked better and why. Did the comedy come out more? Talk about the direct address technique – we used it as a ‘starting device’ but it can be used anywhere within a piece of drama, not just at the beginning. How successful were the transitions? How could you develop with other art forms? Music for example? Could you add in some short bursts of music to aid the transition? Would you add in a bell sound effect in-between each ‘multirole’ character?



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