

GCSE (9–1)
Transition Guide

DRAMA

J316
For first teaching in 2016

KS3–KS4
Devising
Version 1



GCSE (9–1) **DRAMA**

This transition guide has been created to be a flexible tool for teachers and students.

It can be used as a series of activities making a scheme of work in Year 9 to assess whether students would be able to cope with the demands of a GCSE (9-1) in Drama

The activities suggested can also be used and adapted to make a taster lesson to see if students would like to study the subject at a higher level.

The check point tasks baseline assessment criteria can also be used by teachers to create their own tasks using their own resources, scripts and stimuli available in their centre.

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Key Stage 3 Content

KS3 classes may have experience of exploring a variety of themes or texts. Lessons may have introduced a variety of conventions and rehearsal techniques. Students will have developed skills in devising their own responses to given stimuli as well as being introduced to and having to interpret texts from a variety of genres. It is inherent and implicit in GCSE Drama that these skills and competencies are now taken to a much higher level.



Key Stage 4 Content

In GCSE (9-1) Drama students are required to do the following:

- Study of a minimum of two performance texts, one explored in full and key extracts explored from a second contrasting text.
- Practical participation in a minimum of two performances, one devised and one text based.
- Demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of Drama including: genre, structure, character, form and style, dialogue and stage directions.
- Use subject specific terminology accurately.
- Be aware of design challenges inherent in a variety of performance spaces. This can cover the design of costume, set and props, as well as the technical world of lighting, sound and projection.
- Understand key differences between the roles of performer, designer and director.
- Use research, collaboration and refining work through rehearsal to create their own original performances.

Comment

Some students will have participated in Key Stage 3 Drama in discrete lessons or as part of their English Curriculum. It must also be recognised that for some pupils, due to a more introverted nature or a lack of self-confidence, taking an active part in a Drama class can be a daunting experience. It is important that, as the time approaches for pupils to make their examination subject choices, they are given a clear idea of just how much more demanding the examination course is likely to be. The shy might find this difficult. It is also useful to make clear to those who are likely to want to 'show off' that a degree of academic rigour is required.

This transition guide outlines checkpoint tasks for Key Stage 3 students to allow them to explore the skills which they will develop during the GCSE course. The exemplar task has been selected as an illustration of the checkpoint task. Teachers can choose to use this directly with their students as one off lessons, or to incorporate it into schemes of work.

The devising based example is designed to make all pupils confront the pressures of having to be alone in front of an audience of their peers. This will give students a clear idea of the challenges they will face at GCSE. Thinking over their experience of the tasks and the challenges they encountered will aid them in making an informed decision as to whether GCSE Drama is a course they wish to pursue.

At the start of the GCSE students should be able to:

- Take risks in attempting practical work in front of others.
- Attempt new ideas, offering more than a repetitive limited response.
- Work independently and collaboratively in response to set stimulus materials.
- Take on board theoretical teaching and apply taught skills to given stimulus.
- Accurately express well-reasoned opinion over what works and what doesn't work.
- Take criticism easily, and to have fun!

Checkpoint task success criteria – Devising Exemplar**Students should be able to:**

- Demonstrate they can accept challenge and risk and that they are willing to take on new ideas rather than simply relying on the familiar.
- Demonstrate they can work both independently and collaboratively with any other class member to solve challenges encountered.
- Demonstrate they have both a knowledge of, and can apply a wide range of performance styles to meet any demand posed by working with a set stimulus.
- Demonstrate they can apply pertinent and accurate analysis to set challenges, which in turn demonstrates they have acquired a sound base of theoretical knowledge from which to base their opinions.
- Demonstrate the ability to take on board criticism of their own work and can use any given critical comment to positively enhance their outcomes.

Introduction to activities

A devising-based example: WW2 Story-telling.

It is important that pupils know whether or not they are comfortable with the challenge of creating and developing a performance before they enrol on the examination course. This example is designed to enable pupils to decide whether or not performance work is for them. Although the teacher will no doubt be encouraging and supportive, if pupils are to get a true taste of what participating in a GCSE class might be like, then they can be challenged to give a solo performance in front of their peers. Being required to do something as an individual will remove any possibility of hiding behind other people's work and it will inevitably make them better informed for future course choices.

The solo task is simple and echoes what is already required in the English curriculum. To sit in front of the class and simply tell a story from the point of view of a character connected to it. Not to read it out loud, or even write it down, just to be able to tell it. The story is to be of their own creation and can be as short as a minute. This is quite a challenge and the class will need help and support from both the teacher and each other in preparing for their turn.

The example given is influenced by the potential link to pupils studying the Second World War in History lessons. There are also potential links with English Curriculum including speaking and listening tasks.

The teacher should select a range of photographic and poster images from the Second World War. At least 10 selected should be chosen to enable a range of responses. They should show a variety of aspects of life on the home front as well as images from combat zones. Examples may include: building an Anderson Shelter, civilians looking through bomb damaged property, fire service officers in action, recruitment posters such as the famed image encouraging women to join the land army, a bulldozer pushing typhus-infected bodies into mass graves at Bergen-Belsen. The range of chosen images needs to provoke stories both of comedy and hope as well as horror and grief; otherwise the activity and performances will become very repetitive.

The pupils will be given a 'free' choice of which one to respond to. Although it is seemingly an individual task, pupils will be encouraged to work collaboratively and supportively with each other.

Possible challenge and extension tasks

The set stimulus for the devised telling of tales can be left entirely to the teacher's discretion and available resources. The following variations and extensions may be more possible and/or desirable:

- The restriction to the performer of simply sitting on a chair to tell a tale can be lifted for the more able and/or ambitious pupil. A fuller performance can be encouraged to achieve an enhanced end result.
- A thoughtful setting out of the performing space to create different setting for different scenes can enhance the end result. Similarly the crafted selection of important props will also provide an enhanced end result.
- A performer can play more than one role to illustrate the tale. The techniques available to a performer to switch between roles can be found in several theatrical traditions.
- The use of other technology (sound / video) can enable a performer to pre-record themselves playing complimentary roles to interact with.

KS3 to KS4 Transition: Devising activities

Overall aims

1. To ensure all pupils have a clear understanding of whether or not they feel able to perform.
2. To understand that devising a successful performance involves a set of skills and crafts which are to be learned and practised. It is not something that happens by improvised accident.
3. To introduce pupils to simple Drama character development techniques.

Activity 1: Introduction and starting the exploration

1. Display the chosen visual stimuli. Explain that the task will be to simply sit alone in front of the class and tell a short story. Underline that it will be told from memory and not read out from written notes. The story will be told from the point of view of someone connected to one of the images. Their character could be the person depicted in the image, a friend or relative of this person, the photographer or artist.
2. In groups of four examine the images closely and create initial ideas for potential characters. Decide which image each group member will work with and which character in the image they will start with. It is not a problem if more than one person chooses the same one, it will diversify later in the process.
3. Demonstrate "hot seating." Use hot seating, in pairs or small groups, to establish a background for a character associated with the stimulus. Create a selection of characters in their group which they could use for their performance.

Students can make notes on their questions and answers or create a role on the wall to record their ideas.

Activity 2: To understand the difference between 'Story' and 'Plot'

1. Decide which character will tell the story. What is their point of view? How do they feel in the scene?
2. What time frame will the story be told in? Is it re-telling a story of something that happened a long time ago? Or is it happening here and now? Discuss in groups what could happen in their story.
3. Explain to students that 'story' is everything that happens in the right order. 'Plot' is how the performer decides the events should be told.

Example: The supposedly true tale of the 'Spinach Capitol of the State in Australia' goes as follows.

A small rural farming town has elected a new mayor and he wants to make his mark on the town. He has the idea of giving the town an extra title to the name of the town. New sign-posts are to be commissioned which will proudly proclaim that the town is now officially known as being "The Spinach Capitol Of The State."

The mayor instructs the council's publicity department that he wants the state broadcasting networks to film him making the announcement and unveiling the new signs.

However, the television company however will not make the journey to film such an event unless it is more spectacular. Consequently the publicity office arranges for the local technical college to produce a giant cake, made to look like a tin of spinach. To add to the spectacle they hire a local stunt performer, to bring a crane and to do a giant bungee jump whilst dressed as Popeye, bouncing up and down above the spinach cake.

This seems to be enough-the television network agrees to attend.

When the big day comes, everything is ready except the bungee jumper. He arrived late and is frantically trying to calculate the drop between the crane and the cake, but the television cameras begin to roll and he just gives up and makes a guess.

The mayor makes his announcement. The drums roll. Popeye jumps.

Unfortunately he has miscalculated the length of his bungee and instead of bouncing up and down above the cake he smashes into it, demolishing it, but bouncing up again quite safely without hitting the ground. The crowd cries out in surprise. They aren't as surprised as the town beauty queen who had been patiently waiting for her cue to leap out of the cake, when Popeye burst into her world and disappeared again! She was taken to hospital with crushed vertebrae and a concussion.

In the example, the information about the hiding beauty queen could have been included at the same time as the information about the cake and the bungee jumper, but instead, for dramatic effect in the telling it was withheld and only brought into the narrative at the most effective time. This is a good example to highlight that not all stories have to be told in a linear fashion and that the teller needs to consider carefully how the tale will be best told for the greatest effect.

4. Try telling their story with different plots. Will it start at the beginning and go through as a simple narrative or will information about events affecting the plot be brought back from the past as some sort of surprise? Which sounds better or clearer to the listener.

Activity 3: Rehearse and prepare performances

1. Hand out any notes made in preparation. Students can work in pairs or groups to rehearse with other performers whilst learning their story.
2. Within the class decide which students will go first (choose three to four to start with or one from each group). It is very unlikely that the shy members of the class will volunteer to go first. Groups then will rehearse the first group member by giving them a trial run and feedback.
3. Assemble the class into a horse shoe shape, all facing an empty chair. It looks more terrifying if the chair is spot lit, but actually it makes it easier for the performer as they can't catch the eye of any audience member. However, this is optional.
4. The first students perform their story. There is no need to analyse each one. The student will know if they did well or not and if they feel this is something they could do again. At the end of each performance ask the performers' simple questions like:
 - Are you still alive?
 - Did you survive?
 - Was it as bad as you had feared?
 - Do you like performing?
5. The remaining students perform their stories. Some will be strong and others not so strong. It does not matter. All class members will now have a strong feeling about whether or not taking a GCSE in Drama is for them.



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