

Session Report 21

6th February 2003

Drama: Schemes of Work and Lesson Trial - Cirencester Deer Park School

Lesson Plans/Schemes of Work

The session began with a discussion of lessons observed and lesson plans. From the range of examples brought along by class members one idea was chosen to be given a trial run with a drama volunteer group later in the session.

Examples of ideas and lesson plans for future reference include:

- Meeting one's double and the questions which would need to be addressed.
Joining up with friends to find the same thing had happened
- Session beginning with Beatles *Leaving Home* – an investigation as to why with improvisation of leaving home – deeper reasons addressed in subsequent lesson/s
- Theme of bullying over 3/4 lessons investigating different characteristics and subtleties employed, juxtaposed with animal characteristics
- Pioneers leaving a favourite place – using TV images of Indians, cowboys getting ready to leave – addressing who, what, why, when, how etc. – reenact image with mini conversation, leading to official debate of plans to move on
- In Macbeth scheme, having read play and watched film, concentrate on section of scene e.g. Lady Macbeth persuading husband to murder – improvising through persuasion of a friend to steal
- Topical issues relating to war and conflict addressed using music, e.g. Holst's *Mars* with thought tracking how music makes group feel and composing three frieze frames to represent the music and issues discussed - to be presented whilst music playing – discussion of techniques, effect etc. in follow up – improvisation of three characters – politician, anti-war protester, soldier – perhaps mime to demonstrate who is who in group through body language
- Arrival of a letter or message which causes panic in a family or work group. In groups of four as family or work colleagues improvise repercussions of the message – could be an eviction notice or dismissal from work – contrasting atmospheres. Actually a mistake has been made but during the repercussions something has been said/revealed which preclude things returning to normal
- Peer Pressure – initially thought tracking to imagine a shirt/top individuals would like to buy – pairs back to back with friend trying to persuade the caller the choice of top is a bad idea – from twos to threes with two people persuading one that

their choice of CD is wrong – threes to sixes to enact classroom scenario with teacher, disruptive pupil and four other pupils trying to apply peer pressure to persuade the disruptive pupil to behave. Reflect on notion of positive peer pressure.

- Enacting rehearsals for production of *Twelfth Night* where director explains how a group has prepared – followed with improvisations of characters to ease into roles.
- Citizenship theme geared to consideration of conflict between rights of the individual versus the rights of the many with particular emphasis on impact of war. Beginning in circle pupils share with person on right and left what they value most in the world. In (a) and (b) pairs: (a) has something (b) wants to take – by persuading it is for the good of everyone. Two freeze frames – the first to show something taken without understanding why followed by spoken thought; the second to show terror of something and hurt for something they haven't done. (a)-(d) groups with (a) determined to find (d) but object (b) and (c) in the middle – reflect. Next same task but (b) and (c) are human being standing in the way, how does this change the challenge? Discuss scenarios.

It was unanimously agreed that the peer pressure lesson plan would be interesting to trial with the volunteer drama group.

Online quizzes – www.prestoncoll.ac.uk/flexweb/english2/htm
Also literary progress units with ideas for starters etc.

Addressing how different schools approach schemes of work for drama – whether some have schemes which all teachers follow or others may stipulate skills and attitude development without specifying topics. The group considered four schemes of work for year groups 7, 8 and 9 to devise lesson plans to fit into the scheme. All considered the Haunted Attic Scheme for year 7 and one other to feedback ideas and questions etc.

Year 7	Haunted Attic
Year 7	Poisoned Planet
Year 8	Hamlet
Year 9	Run-Away

Feedback included the following ideas and comments.

Year 7 -Haunted Attic

There is no linear pattern to this scheme, rather landing in a place where anything can happen offering opportunity to include a variety of ideas – particularly in the lead up to Christmas. Ideas for lessons in the scheme included:

1) A New Development Resources – clipboard

Surveyors and architect drawing up plans for new development on site of old residential home encounter ghost in attic as they are discussing plans – ghost has to communicate without words that he build this house which has always been a loved and happy place – group to resolve how to satisfy ghost and demands of developers.

2) Loss

Attic as a space to investigate theme of loss – group given pieces of text to say without overlapping – each holding separate conversation as they are not responding to each other.

Role play – two different situations in house where another character trying to attract their attention and failing – person dead and trapped in between places. Secondly responding to creation of atmosphere by introduction of noises to respond to and develop. It was felt this theme would work well with older pupils.

3) Haunting Pictures

Lights down to start with haunting music playing – eyes closed, listen, thought tracking re music and project image of painting with faceless image – improvisation resulting in freeze frame.

Some discussion as to whether introduction of scream and torch at bottom of picture may require scene to be played silently using slow movement and mime to effect ‘controlled terror’!

Year 7 – Poisoned Planet

This was felt to be particularly effective in the way everyday thoughtlessness such as dropping litter can be linked to global issues whereby industrial and corporate ‘litter’ have devastating consequences. In lessons 3 and 4 the Alien wordlessly shows the technology his planet has created and his visitors show him some of the world’s natural beauty spots in a series of tableaux which the Alien visits. As the Alien visits each tableau it comes to life with the noises associated with the location. Using the same tableau the Alien takes the teenager to the Poison Planet however as the teenager moves from tableau to tableau they are shown to be dying. Having been offered the chance to look from the outside through the Alien’s eyes the twist in the tail reveals our own planet as the one being poisoned through irresponsible practices. However, the film style happy ending works well with years 7 and 8.

Year 9 -The Run-Away

Ways of presenting a physical representation were discussed e.g Big Ben, Tower of London, Hotel etc as if sending postcards – 5 or 6 pupils forming the physical representation with another pupil visiting and listening to soundscapes of the city. Using

crosscutting to show the run-away sleeping rough, the family in London to effect contrasts.

Teacher in role or a volunteer cutting across time zones to drop in on the story.

It was observed that these techniques work well with a disparate group encouraging team work but with each group doing something different.

Year 8 – Hamlet

Discussed methods of building a sound collage, akin to the seemingly random appearance of the different textures incorporated into an art collage. Building of sound pictures maybe using some percussion to represent the chaos in Hamlet's head showing his ideas by altering pace, volume, use of different sound e.g. whispers, shouts and tone. Good to plan in a circle and put in visual shape afterwards. Also point made that although showing a film version in English is useful to help pupils visualize setting etc, showing the film too early in a drama project can inhibit pupils' own ideas. Alternatively the idea of showing parts of different versions whilst composing their own was mooted.

For Kempe and Nicholson it is important for student-teachers to develop an informed rationale to apply to the planning process, 'effective learning is only really achieved when the relationship between the principles of planning and the practice of the classroom is fully recognized.'¹ To contextualize learning in Drama in order to avoid superficiality, they suggest applying the five models of English teaching identified in the 1989 Cox report to drama according to context:²

- personal growth – focus on development of child's imaginations – emphasizes the relationship between language and learning
- cross-curricula – English as both subject and medium of instruction – without which learning in other curriculum areas impeded
- adult needs – need to emphasise vocational and logistic aspects of spoken and written language to prepare pupils for adult life
- cultural heritage – cultivate appreciation of work that has shaped thought and belief
- cultural analysis –develop critical understanding of world in which pupils live and the ways language carries values.

Kempe and Nicholson whilst emphasising adherence to clear learning objectives within a clearly defined curriculum framework also stress 'reflection-in-action' to enable response to pupils' ideas ensuring they have a voice in the shape or direction of the work. For Heathcote 'Just as important as planning what you will do is knowing clearly which bits

¹ Kempe Andy & Nicholson Helen *Learning to Teach Drama 11-18* (London: Continuum, 2001) p64

² *ibid* p58

of the drama you dare not plan if you expect to harness the drive of the class.³ She advocates defining the moment and attitude by using evocative and non-directive signals, using the teaching strategies most appropriate to a specific class to allow their ideas to effect the outcome.

Jonathan Neeland acknowledges that some teachers will ‘need a ‘map’ of possible sequences of ideas in order to feel secure.’⁴ He stresses the importance of progression as deeper involvement and exploration rather than a linear development of plot. He recommends a child-centred approach to theme planning before mapping learning potential through attainment targets in order to avoid sequencing and fragmentation dangers inherent in cross curricular themes when combining different perspectives, centring on:⁵

- a reliance on story as the principle means of storing and interrogating meanings and experiences
- first hand practical experience – theme in an authentic context
- let children invent problems and their solutions
- importance of purposeful talk, collaboration, social interaction
- connection of teaching ideas and skills to real human activity
- the need for the teacher to contextualize skills, attitudes, concepts and knowledge within recognizable human situations in which people need particular skills

Kempe and Nicholson stress the contribution drama can make to moral and cultural education to foster an appreciation from a range of reference points in and for citizenship of a pluralist society. They point to drama’s strong history of promoting emancipatory values and aspirations for personal and social development. Confronting issues where conflicting interests need to be explored through drama gives pupils the opportunity to question the paradoxes and ambiguities of different interests whether collective, private, related to gender, culture etc.

These last two drama sessions have offered many ideas and practical discussion of various dramatic techniques. From personal observations of drama lessons with a disparate group of Year 10s, using the crosscutting technique has helped towards whole class participation whilst avoiding any formal notion of cooperation which is met with sustained resistance.

In my parent school I have had the opportunity to experiment with the peer pressure theme over a series of lessons leading to an investigation of vandalism and its consequences which has led to discussions centring on personal responsibility and explorations as to definitions of vandalism. Following on from peer pressure improvisations the class is working on facing up to cliques and gangs. Following a spate of break-ins and criminal damage to the school, pupils’ explorations are centring on the

³ Wagner Betty Jane Dorothy Heathcote: *Drama as a Learning Medium* (USA: Heinemann, revised edn 1999) p110

⁴ Neelands Jonathan *Learning through Imagined Experience* (Oxon: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992) p65

⁵ *ibid* pp39-40

effects of vandalism on the school, the pupils, the staff and the local community – is the damage being caused by members of the community or by ‘outsiders’ – why? How can such damage be prevented in the future? Dependent on progress, this could be extended to global themes such as the need for cooperation in the sharing and preserving of resources both natural and structural.

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