

What's all the drama?

'Drama' is a word that can mean many things. Children often define it as 'acting', but then find it difficult to say what acting actually is. Drama can be comedy, pantomime or a TV-soap; yet a newspaper headline can read 'Crash drama leaves 14 dead'. Drama is the exploration of the human condition. It is the perfect learning medium for almost any aspect of human life, be it taking four-year-olds under the sea or dealing with sensitive PHSE issues at Key Stage 2 or above.

Drama is also a word which, sadly, can strike fear into some teachers' hearts. This is usually due to a misconception about: a) what a drama lesson is, and b) what skills the teacher needs to teach drama. The following lists aim to dispel common myths about drama in schools and show the huge advantages it offers.

Drama myths

- **We don't have time for a drama lesson.** Drama need not be viewed as a lesson or a topic; it is also a learning medium. Use it to teach history, geography, science, PHSE and literacy.
- **I need to be a good actor to teach drama.** No, you need to be a good teacher. There is no need to change your voice, manner or appearance in drama lessons. Stage skills need not be a part of them – although it can be argued that all teachers actually perform in front of an audience all day long.
- **I need the hall for drama lessons.** Drama can be carried out anywhere as it need not involve movement.
- **I need costumes.** For a play, perhaps. For lessons, the imagination can create any costumes you wish. Costumes alter the outside of the body – drama lessons should be concerned with what goes on within the mind.
- **I need props.** Again, these are an outer accessory, and can easily be imagined or mimed.
- **The children have to dress as if for PE.** Drama is about thinking. Trainers and shorts are not necessary, unless the drama you are planning is particularly physical or boisterous.
- **Drama means the Christmas play.** A play is only one aspect of drama, and a limited one, where lines and moves are learned. Drama lessons have none of these restrictions.

Why teach through drama?

- It has been proven that children retain knowledge learned through drama for far longer than through other teaching methods, because they are learning by experience.
- Drama has enormous emotional power. It can quite literally change the way children see things.
- It promotes teamwork. Solving a problem through drama can forge a tremendous bond between teacher and class, and between the children in that class.
- Children who find difficulty with academic work can often excel in drama. It allows them freedom of expression. This also often applies to children with special needs, particularly those with Downs Syndrome.
- Drama can be used to confront difficult issues that would be too sensitive to face out of role.
- In an age where children are fed everything through technology, drama uses and stretches their imaginations to the full, requiring no other tools.