



**A Series of Initial  
Classroom Drama Lessons  
For 5 – 9 year olds**

# Classroom Drama Lessons

Week 1

**Title:** Introductory drama games

**Objectives:** Checking drama activity prerequisites – routine class control and sufficient class cohesion.  
Pupils getting to know teacher and visa versa.

**Games played:**

1. Name game – part1. The pupils call out a name and cross the circle with the cross arm sign of being called.
2. Up down freeze – sheet #1 (*following below*)
3. The spy game – sheet #2 (*following below*)
4. Wink murder – sheet #3. (*following below*)

**Evaluation:**

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Week 2

**Title:** Drama games 2

**Objectives:** Developing routine class control and class cohesion.  
Initializing drama conventions through games.

**Games played:**

1. Name game – part2. The pupils call out a name and cross the circle with the cross arm sign of being called. Then the whole process is reversed. Concentration needs to be high.
2. Move to the beat – sheet #4 (*following below*) - with four toned bells to show gradual movement up and down.
3. The Bear and the Woodcutters – sheet #5. (*following below*)
4. Musical Statues – sheet #6 (*following below*) - with various music on C.D.

**Evaluation:**

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**Week 3**

**Title:** Initial Image Work

**Objectives:** Building cohesion in working together in pairs, groups and whole class.  
Developing a feeling of safety with the class working with a drama facilitator / teacher.

**Drama focus:** Mirror image work in pairs – one hand, then two hands as the partners face each other. The lead switches between A and B.  
This is repeated once but with B behind A.  
Then two pairs are joined together to form a diamond shape where one player becomes the lead with three imitating him. Each group turn 90° on call out from the teacher there by giving another player the lead. Music is added – “An air on a G string”- as background and focus to the movement.

**Extra:** Refer to Extract page from Augusto Boal p. 130 (*following below*) for detail on how and what to look for while doing the mirror work.

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**Title:** Images tell stories

**Objectives:** Building upon the cohesion already established and now stretching it a little further the children will work in groups of 5/6 to develop initial “Freeze Frame” work so that simple stories evolve and are told by the images. Engaging the children in a simple drama activity.

**Drama focus:** A quick game of Fruit Bowl (PG #110 p.36, *following below*) to focus and mix the group.

1. Images of the crowd at the soccer match Ireland v Switzerland match. General crowd. Before 1, as the penalty is just been taken 2 and after 3.
2. Images of children playing out in the school yard. General play. Before, during and after a big van comes across the play and interrupts.

Thought tracking in this sequence if time allows.

**Evaluation:**

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**Title:** Persuasion and dialogue

**Objectives:** Safely letting the children take on a role through evolving paired activities. Developing the notion of role for the children as a point of view or a stance to be taken on. Helping the children expand their acceptance that there are different points of view.

**Drama focus:** Based on their social skills knowledge of the rules on how to have a conversation the children will be asked to take part in paired, A and B, persuasion activities in the following sequence.

1. Think of your favourite T.V. programme or film and try and persuade the other why your choice is better.
2. Taking on an opinion not your own – A prefers Summer (or Spring) and B prefers Winter (or Autumn). Give reasons why.

3. Give reasons why – A likes to live in a hot country and B likes to live in Ireland.
4. Dialogue scene with minimum A and B script. The children will be asked to decide between them the place where this conversation is taking place. It is read a number of times by the whole class together before they practise it.

A: You.

B: Yes.

A: What are you doing here?

B: I came to see you.

**Evaluation:**

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Week 6

**Title:** The bonfire

**Objectives:** Developing group co-operation through expanding the basic drama depiction skills in movement detail together with a soundscape of words, voice sounds and instrument playing.

**Drama focus:** Introductory activity: movement about the room – sideways, in circles, slowly, near to the floor and on tips of toes – with double drum beat to freeze.

1. A wide circle is formed while a red scarf signifying the fire is placed in the centre. The children are *invited* to stretch out their hands and warm them.
2. The children are asked to think of *words* to describe the fire. One by one the words are said round the circle with repeats allowed.
3. The next round of the circle the children are invited to make the *sounds* of the fire burning. *Instruments* (bangers and shakers) are tried out by the facilitator with the children accepting or rejecting the fire sounds.
4. Demonstration by the facilitator of the *hand movements* of a flame – slowly catching, flickering, growing, shooting, licking furiously and slowly

- shrinking. Invite them to make flame movements with their hands and arms.
5. Encourage the *children to become flames* using their whole bodies, to vary level and direction.
  6. The *children work in groups of 7 or 8* – x2 using words, x2 making sounds vocal or instrumental and the rest using body movements – to depict the movement of a small bonfire rising and falling. Depictions are shown.
  7. The story of the fire of London (see extra) is narrated and/or a brief discussion to highlight the dangers of fire follows.

**Extra:**

*One night, many years ago, in 1666, a baker in Pudding Lane in London closed his shop for the night. In the back of the shop were the ovens, fuelled by wood. And someone had forgotten to close one of them. There was still a fire burning inside. A spark shot out and landed on the straw beside the oven. Soon, the straw began to smoulder.... then to spark.... then to blaze. The flames caught a table, then a chair, then the rest of the wooden shop. The burning spread from one shop to the next until, soon, all of London was ablaze - even the great Cathedral of St. Paul!*

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**Week 7**

**Title:**

**Machine Makers**

**Objectives:**

To engage the children in a simple dramatic activity that involved good co-operation at a quick pace.  
 To develop the idea of showing others through a carousel.

**Drama focus:**

1. Make one simple movement with your hands only. Now repeat it again and again. (slow>fast>slow)  
 Movement No. 1.
2. Make a different movement with a different part of your body and keep on doing it. Movement No. 2

3. Movement 1 alternating with movement 2 every five seconds.
4. Circle discussion on what machines make and what they might be like. Eg. Robots making cars.
5. Make movement 1 and add a sound with it. The same for movement 2. Five seconds switch between one and two.
6. Movement and sounds in pairs (threes) after brief discussion on possible combinations. ABAB. AABB. ABBA. BAAB.
7. Each group (x2,x3x4) practice and give their machine a title. Show Machines in carousel. – 5 secs. in /out next.

**Evaluation:**

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**Week 8**

**Title:** Image interpretation

**Objectives:** To engage the children in image drama through close pair work. To develop a sense that images can be interpreted many different ways and there is no one right answer.

**Drama focus:**

1. Show something that you do at home or in school – 5 secs. and freeze. Ask for possibilities and alternatives.
2. One is frozen another joins to complement the image into a new image. Origin now leaves and is replaced by next image maker. Half and half images.
3. Colombian hypnosis. (p.51 GA+NA)
4. Strings.
5. String statue sculpture in pairs.

**Evaluation:**

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## UP, DOWN, FREEZE

### LEARNING OUTCOMES OR BENEFITS:

- Communication skills: develops listening skills.
- Physical development: increases physical control.
- Personal and social development: builds concentration and quick responses.
- Subject knowledge and understanding: (drama) further development of the concept of 'drama freezes'.

### WHERE?

School hall.

### WHAT DO YOU NEED?

No specific equipment needed.

### PROCESS:

1. Ask the children to stand in a space.
2. Inform them of the verbal commands you will be using and how they must respond.
3. Choose any or all of the verbal commands from the following:
  - up** = they must stand still with their arms raised in the air
  - down** = they must crouch down on the ground
  - freeze** = they should stand still and silent
  - one leg** = they must stand still on one leg
  - heads** = they should put their hands on their heads
  - shoulders** = they should put their hands on their shoulders
  - turn** = they must turn and face the opposite way, but not move
  - go** = they can continue moving.
4. Ask the children to walk around the room carefully, without bumping into each other, and to keep moving by walking into empty floor space.
5. Call out one of the commands for the children to respond to.
6. Eliminate the last children to respond to the command, or those not responding properly – that is, children not silent when responding to 'freeze', children wobbling when standing on 'one leg' and so on.
7. Ask the children to move around the room again, using the command 'go' and then, after a short while, call out another command for them to respond to.
8. Use commands any number of times and in any combinations.
9. Continue playing until you have a winner or winners.

### TEACHER GUIDANCE:

- Use those children eliminated in the game to help you to spot others.
- Use as many or as few of the commands as meet the ability levels of the children in your class or group.



## THE SPY GAME

### LEARNING OUTCOMES OR BENEFITS:

- Personal and social education: requires control and concentration; asks children to complete two tasks simultaneously.
- Physical development: develops confidence in movement and spatial awareness.
- Creative skills: creates an imaginative whole-class response.

### WHAT DO YOU NEED?

No specific equipment needed.

### PROCESS:

1. Ask the children to stand on their own in a space.
2. Instruct them to mentally select someone in the group they would like to follow.
3. Ask the children to move around the room, following their chosen person, without letting the person know.
4. Each child should now be surreptitiously following someone, while also trying to work out who is following them.
5. After a suitable time, stop the game to allow each child to disclose which person they have been following.
6. Discuss with the children how difficult it was to remain inconspicuous when following their chosen person, while also trying to discover who was following them.

### TEACHER GUIDANCE:

- Insist on silence when the game is underway.
- Encourage the children to go and tell each other who they have been following.
- Play the game through two or three times and encourage the children to keep changing the person they are following.
- Be aware that some children may not be chosen to be followed and prepare for this occurring.

## WINK MURDER

### LEARNING OUTCOMES OR BENEFITS:

- Communication skills: provides an introduction to non-verbal communication.
- Personal and social development: builds whole-group approach; creates tension and focus.
- Creative skills/subject knowledge and understanding: (drama) introduces a sense of role and character response.

### WHERE?

Large circle area

### WHAT DO YOU NEED?

No specific equipment needed.

### PROCESS:

1. Ask the children to sit in a circle, on chairs or on the floor.
2. Choose one child to be the 'detective' and either ask him or her to leave the room, or to turn around.
3. Instruct the remaining children to close their eyes and bow their heads, so as not to see.
4. Walk around the outside of the circle and tap one of the children on the back; this child has now become the 'murderer'. The murderer must not be revealed to the other players.
5. Explain that the murderer is going to 'murder' children sitting in the circle by winking silently at them.
6. Reintroduce the detective, asking him or her to stand in the centre of the circle and to watch the children carefully.
7. Instruct the murderer to go ahead and advise those children who are 'wink murdered' to die horribly and dramatically!
8. Tell the detective to try and guess who the murderer is. Allow him or her three guesses.
9. Advise all of the children to try not to reveal who the murderer is.
10. If the detective doesn't guess correctly in three goes, reveal the murderer then by asking him or her to stand up.
11. Choose a new detective and murderer and begin the game again.

### TEACHER GUIDANCE:

- Those children who cannot wink can blink both eyes instead.
- Try to ensure that you balance the sexes of the children chosen.
- Insist on total silence – only broken by ear-piercing screams!
- Please be advised that children will happily play this game for an inordinately long period of time!

### VARIATIONS OR DEVELOPMENTS:

Choose two murderers to make the game more interesting! Use the game as an introduction to role-playing detectives, devising murder mysteries or creative writing.

## MOVE TO THE BEAT

### LEARNING OUTCOMES OR BENEFITS:

- Physical development controlled movement.
- Creative skills: using imaginative responses.
- Subject knowledge and understanding: (music) can be used as an introduction to counting musical beats.

### WHAT DO YOU NEED?

Recorded music or instruments (optional).

### PROCESS:

1. Ask the children to find a space and to curl up in a tight ball, as small as they possibly can, on the floor.
2. Instruct them to gradually uncurl, get up and stretch until their arms, hands and fingertips are completely extended upwards and they are standing on tiptoes.
3. Reverse the process, asking the children to move slowly from this extended position into a tight ball again.
4. Repeat both movement sequences.
5. Finally, ask the children to relax their bodies by lying flat out on the floor.

### TEACHER GUIDANCE:

- The emphasis should be on controlling movements, not on seeing who can move the fastest.
- Insist that the exercise be performed in silence, to create a calm focus.

### VARIATIONS OR DEVELOPMENTS:

Use slow, soothing music to encourage fluidity of movement. Or use a drum or tambourine and instruct the children to time each individual move, as they uncurl and curl, to each beat. Limit the number of beats (and moves) so that in, for example, 20 beats they must have moved from the curled-up position to the extended position. Then reduce or extend the number of beats (and moves).

## THE BEAR AND THE WOODCUTTERS

### LEARNING OUTCOMES OR BENEFITS:

- Personal and social development: creates a dynamic of tension and anticipation; it is a game that everyone can play – there is no sense of failure.
- Subject knowledge and understanding: (drama) promotes a sense of 'role' as the children try not to respond to the 'bear'.

### WHAT DO YOU NEED?

No specific equipment needed.

### PROCESS:

1. Choose one child to be the 'bear'.
2. Tell the bear to stand with his or her back to the rest of the class.
3. Explain that the rest of the class are 'woodcutters' and that they should creep up on the bear as his or her back is turned.
4. Advise the bear that, after a short while, he or she should turn around and roar loudly at the woodcutters.
5. When the bear turns and roars at the woodcutters, they should quickly drop to the floor and lie still.
6. The bear should then move among the woodcutters and, without using physical contact, try to make them move or laugh.
7. Tell the woodcutters that they must try to keep very still and silent as the bear moves among them.
8. If any of the woodcutters laugh then they become another bear.
9. Continue playing the game until only a small group of woodcutters remain.

### TEACHER GUIDANCE:

- In a large hall, restrict the area to enable the game to have a sense of closeness.
- Carefully select the first child to play the bear.
- Stay in close contact with the game, as it may be necessary to arbitrate.
- The game can be played as part of a weekly session. It is an excellent warm-up.

### VARIATIONS OR DEVELOPMENTS:

Roles could be changed to suit a specific story, for example the 'bear' could become the 'wolf' and the 'woodcutters' changed to 'Little Red Riding Hood' or 'The Three Little Pigs'.

## MUSICAL STATUES

### LEARNING OUTCOMES OR BENEFITS:

- Physical development: a fun exercise which releases pent-up energy.
- Subject knowledge and understanding: (drama) an introduction to the concept of drama freezes.

### WHAT DO YOU NEED?

Recorded music and a player.

### PROCESS:

1. Ask the children to stand in a space.
2. Explain to them that you will play some music which they must move to, but that when you pause or stop the music, they must stand very still and in complete silence.
3. Play the music and instruct the children to dance or move around the room to it. After a short while, pause or stop the music.
4. Eliminate anyone moving or making a sound when the music stops. Ask them to sit at the side.
5. Continue playing and pausing the music until you have a winner or winners.

### TEACHER GUIDANCE:

- Advise the children to move carefully around the room – not only will this prevent injury, but it will be easier for them to stand absolutely still if they are not moving quickly!

### VARIATIONS OR DEVELOPMENTS:

Use music with a 'theme' – animals, modes of transport and so on – and instruct the children to move accordingly. Ask all of the children to move together in a particular style – as elephants, as aeroplanes, as ballet dancers and so on.

## Extract from Games for Actors and Non-Actors by Augusto Boal p.130 Note paragraph two below.

GAMES FOR ACTORS AND NON-ACTORS

### 1 The plain mirror

Two lines of participants, each person looking directly into the eyes of the person facing them. Those in line A are the 'subjects', the people; those in line B, are the 'images'. The exercise begins. Each subject undertakes a series of movements and changes of expression, which his 'image' must copy, right down to the smallest detail.

The 'subject' should not be the enemy of his 'image' – the exercise is not a competition, nor is the idea to make sharp movements which are impossible to follow; on the contrary, the idea is to seek a perfect synchronisation of movement, so that the 'image' may reproduce the 'subject's' gestures as exactly as possible. The degree of accuracy and synchronisation should be such that an outside observer would not be able to tell who was leading and who was following. All movements should be slow (so the 'image' may be able to reproduce and even anticipate them) and each movement should follow on naturally from the last. It is equally important that the participants be attentive to the smallest detail, whether of bodily or facial expression.

### 2 Subject and image swap roles

After a few minutes, the Joker announces that the two lines are going to swap roles. He gives the signal, and at that precise moment the 'subjects' become the 'images' and vice versa. This changeover should be carried out without affecting the continuity or the precision. Ideally the movement which was happening at the moment of changeover should be continued and completed, without any sense of breakdown or hiccup. Here again, the outside observer should not be able to perceive the change of roles, and this invisibility of changeover can be achieved if the synchronisation and imitation of actions are perfect.

### 3 Subject–image, image–subject

A few minutes later, the Joker announces that when he gives the signal, the participants in both lines are to be simultaneously 'image' and 'subject'. From that point on, each partner has the right to do any movement he wants, together with the duty to reproduce movements made by his partner. And this must be done without either partner tyrannising the other. It is absolutely vital that each feels completely *free* in his movements, but at the same time *in*

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# 110 Fruit Bowl

	X	X	X	FOCUS	LOW/PASSING HIGH
X				SHAPE	CIRCLE
X		X		TIME	-3—5 MINUTES
X				ENERGY	HIGH
X				SHOW	-NO
	X	X	X	EXTRAS	-CHAIRS (if available)

1. Form a circle sitting on chairs or standing.
2. The session leader gives each player the name of a fruit: apple, orange or banana.
3. One player, A, stands in the middle of the circle.
4. There is no chair/space for A in the circle.
5. A calls out the name of one type of fruit.
6. All the players who have been given the name of that fruit must change places with each other. No player may return to the seat vacated in that turn.
7. A tries to occupy one of the vacated chairs/spaces.
8. This leaves another player in the centre who becomes the next caller.
9. If the caller shouts ~Fruit Bowl' all players must change places.

**“Playing the game” by Christine Poulter**

## ***Drama Conventions Used***

### **FREEZES**

An image of a role, moment or an idea is represented. Children use their bodies to create a likeness. This drama convention can also be known as a 'frozen moment', 'still picture', 'freeze-frame' or 'still image'. This is a very easy convention to use. It encourages children to express their ideas and opinions simply or to show a particular scene from a story or drama they have explored.

### **TIR (Teacher in Role)**

Assuming a role, major or minor, the teacher takes part in a drama so as to lead, build belief or tension, control, ask questions or extend ideas from '*inside*' the drama. The participation can be high, medium or low status. The children are also often in role in this convention and, for primary aged children, a teacher working alongside them in role can often help them to remain in role themselves.

The teacher may use a representative prop or item of clothing to signify being in or out of role, but this isn't always essential.

### **THOUGHT-TRACKING**

Individual children, in role, speak their inner thoughts. The teacher freezes the drama and taps a chosen character on the shoulder to indicate that they should speak their thoughts or feelings within the drama. Thought-tracking slows the action down by allowing it to pause, enabling the children to reflect on events and establishes what the characters are thinking or feeling at a *specific* moment in the drama - which may or may not reflect what they have been saying out loud. This can be quite a difficult convention to do with younger children.

### **WHOLE-GROUP ROLE-PLAY**

All of the class are in role at the same time, as required by a particular dramatic context, such as travellers on an aeroplane or inhabitants of a lost city. This convention can be the most demanding of all the conventions. If the focus is lost, the teacher must pause the developing drama and briefly discuss any difficulties before re-engaging participants.



## **mime**

The use of only physical movement, gesture and actions to express an idea, role or a dramatized scene. Mime may be accompanied by percussion, sound, nonsense vocabulary or music.

## **Sound collage**

Various sounds created by the children, either vocally or with instruments, performed to create the atmosphere of the place or environment where the drama is happening. The sounds can be voices, spoken words or singing put together, performed live or pre-recorded.