MED THEATRE:

DRAMA GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

MED Theatre
Inspired by Dartmoor

For educators in and out of

school settings

INTRODUCTION

MED Theatre has been running courses and workshops for young people in and out of schools for over twenty years. Our 'Playwriting and Performance' course (see page 15) is the most popular offer for schools, giving students the opportunity to explore a curriculum subject in a creative, collaborative way. In addition to our drama workshops, we also offer short film making courses, audio drama and podcast creation, and work in specialist provision schools and departments with neurodiverse, SEN, and SEMH students.

'Developing Drama in Rural Devon Schools' is a Paul Hamlyn Foundation funded project aiming to help local schools to embed arts-based learning into their teaching across the curriculum, using artistic skills to make all studies more accessible and enjoyable for both teachers and pupils. We hope to enable education settings to teach the arts in conjunction with science, humanities and technology, with creativity at the centre of the learning process.

We believe that education and the arts are for everyone, and that all young people should be given the best possible chance at receiving an education in an enjoyable and accessible way.

WHO IS THIS RESOURCE PACK FOR?
- ★ Teaching staff and teams mainstream, independent and special provision settings
- ★ Home Education parents and groups
- ★ Artists working in education settings or with young people and children
- ★ Anybody looking to foster an arts-based learning habit and/or environment

WHAT'S INSIDE?
- Warm up games, for building confidence and breaking the ice
- Adaptable creative activities for exploring curriculum subjects and themes
- Drama tools and exercises for encouraging and practising oracy and language skills
- Lots of ways to embed arts-based learning into your classroom or playground

Game/exercise:
Buzzy Bees (young/mid/teen)

Instruction:
1. Everyone starts spread out around the space, then all make soft 'bzzzzzz' noises and fly around the space (facilitator to remind people to be careful of one another and to move into the spaces)
2. Facilitator then says "Buzzy Bees, please become something …" and then either "...beginning with the letter…" e.g. ...the letter A (e.g apple, adder…) Or it could be a category e.g. a type of food etc (e.g. hot dog, cake…). And everyone has to use their body to become a frozen image of something in the category/letter
3. Then the facilitator asks people to guess what people are/asks them to say what they each are
4. Then the facilitator thanks them and starts again with something different
5. Can also ask people to make things in groups of 2, 3, 4…
6. Can make it more difficult by having 2 letters, e.g. CD – cold dog, GP - gooseberry pie
7. Can also level up to get people out/eliminated if they are the same thing as someone else or couldn't think of something

What you will need: (space/equipment)
☐ A space/room - can be done anywhere but easier if there is room to move around easily

What it's good for:
★ Get people up and moving
★ Using the imagination and thinking outside the box
★ Team work (if working in groups)
★ Quick decisions
★ Can be linked to the curriculum, with students making the shapes of relevant people/items

Things to consider:
- Age and literacy levels - younger pupils might need assistance
- May need to be lenient with similar sounding words or letters, e.g. K and Cat

Game/exercise:
Empty bottle / Magic object (young/mid/teen)

Instruction:
1. Place an empty bottle/random object in the middle of the circle (or can just pass it around the circle)
2. Invite individuals to step forward and 'use' the object, as though it was something else
3. Everyone must guess what the object they are imagining is. The only rule is that it cannot be what the actual object is (i.e. if you're using an empty bottle as the object, you cannot 'pretend' it is a bottle)
4. Development: Same as above, but this time offer it to the next person who has to 'accept' the object. I.e. if it's a hairbrush the next person has to continue to use it as a hairbrush first. They then change it into something else, e.g a trumpet, which the next person then picks up and uses again, and so on
5. **For use with a curriculum subject:** Invite the students to use the object as something relevant for your topic, for example if you are studying WWII, they might use it as a rations card, weaponry, or helmet.

What you will need: (space/equipment)
☐ 1+ object. It can be anything and you can make it more difficult depending on the objects you use. It is easiest to use objects that have lots of possible angles and ways of being held.

What it's good for:
★ Imagination
★ Thinking outside the box
★ Focus

Things to consider:
- With some groups or age ranges you might need to set some rules/parameters, i.e. to keep it 'clean', objects cannot be put in mouth, etc.

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Game/exercise:
Go/stop/clap/jump (young/mid/teen)

Instruction:
1. All start by moving about the space (facilitator to remind people to be careful of one another and to move into the spaces)
2. The facilitator says Go (all go), Stop (all stop), Jump (all jump once), Clap (all clap once). Can add more: Floor (all touch floor), Wall (all touch a wall)
3. Say the commands at random and speed it up as needed
4. Can also add Freeze, '2'= get into pairs, '3' = 3's etc. Touch 'X' wall (give each wall a name or N,E,S,W)
5. Can make it more difficult by doing opposites
6. Extension: Sometimes when in groups/pairs give them a task (with time limit): e.g. make an apple, octopus. Huddle (or something that's all close) = all get very close. Lots of different tasks linked to a particular topic etc…
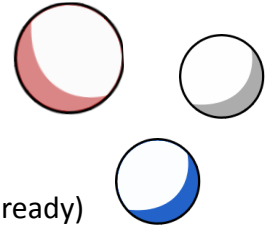
What you will need: (space/equipment)
☐ A space/room - can be done anywhere but easier if there is room to move around easily

What it's good for:
★ Focus
★ Warming up and using our bodies
★ Listening skills

Game/exercise:
Chaos (young/mid/teen)

Instruction:
1. All stand in a circle and say someone's name who then says someone else's name (this has to be someone who has not had their name said already) until it gets back to the facilitator. Repeat this (in the same order) a couple of times.
2. Then do the same but instead of saying someone's name you must walk to someone and take their spot in the circle (a different person to whose name you said). Continue until everybody has been walked to, and only the facilitator remains for the final person to move towards. Repeat until the sequence is familiar.
3. Then run both the name and walking sequences at the same time (start name first, then start moving).
4. A third level to add is throwing a ball to someone else in the circle, and creating a third sequence with the ball throws. Practise this new sequence on its own first before running it at the same time as the other two.

What you will need: (space/equipment)
☐ Enough space to stand in a circle so you can see everyone (with nothing inside the circle)
☐ 1+ ball/object (if struggling to catch a ball use an alternative e.g. socks, which can be easier)

What it's good for:
★ Focus
★ Working as a team
★ Dexterity

Things to consider:
-   Encourage everyone to make eye contact before throwing the ball etc to the next person to make sure they are ready to catch it. Also good to remind people to speak clearly before they throw anything so people are ready to catch.
-   Some people can find eye contact difficult and so it is important to recognise if this is the case and adapt as needed. E.g. could say that instead of eye contact they could look towards the person and just be clear they are about to throw something to them.

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Game/exercise:
Paint a Picture (young/mid/teen)

Instruction:
1. Facilitator asks everyone to sit as an audience and set the 'stage' as having a big, empty picture frame with a title above (choose a topic/scene). Explain that the canvas is currently empty and together they will build/paint this picture with their bodies, by creating a frozen image.
2. One by one invite participants to become something in the scene (e.g. on a beach: sand, fish, icecream, sunbather). Encourage non-human characters/objects.
3. Allow some members of the group to remain as the audience to observe and guess what their peers have become. The facilitator then walks through the image, inviting those within it to tell everyone what they are
4. Additions: The facilitator can instead ask them to speak a sentence as their character (what do they think or feel), or can make the scene come alive for 5 or 10 seconds before freezing again

What you will need: (space/equipment)
☐ A space/room - can be done anywhere but easier if there is room to make a big 'picture frame' where an audience can sit/stand in front of to look at it

What it's good for:
★ Imagination
★ Using your bodies to become something else, specifically non-human
★ A first step at building a story and bringing things to life (particularly useful for younger ones to start getting into improvisation as it is easier to start with a still image than go straight into movement/speech etc)
★ This can be used to explore curriculum subjects such as areas of geography (the picture's title might be "a rainforest), or history (the title perhaps being "a Viking longship")

Things to consider:
- It can be hard to think about 'what your character may think/feel' if it is an inanimate object so it can be helpful to give an example: e.g. a rock may think "I hope I don't fall down this hill!". Also worth reassuring them that they could just think "I'm a rock".

Game/exercise:
Communication Chain (young/mid/teen)

Instruction:
1. Facilitator asks everyone to make a line all facing away from them except the first person in the line (person A) (can be done in multiple lines to add a competitive element, or just as one whole group)
2. The facilitator whispers to the first person/people A an emotion/character/action. Person A then, when told "go", get person B to turn around and then has to mime it to person B, when B thinks they know what they are being shown, they get C to turn around and person B mimes what they think it was to person C (and so on)
3. The last person in the line has to run to the facilitator with their guess of what the mime is of. If it's correct they win (if a race), if not, it goes back to the person A who has to try again from the beginning
4. STORY VERSION: Person A in each team is given a story to mime out, such as a fairytale, or brief scene from a book or play. Person B acts it out to person C, and so on. The final person has to tell the audience the story they believe they have just been shown.

What you will need: (space/equipment)
☐ A list/envelope of characters, emotions, questions etc. if helpful, otherwise you can make them up on the spot
☐ Space for the lines to be formed

What it's good for:
★ Team work
★ Non-verbal communication
★ Language development (i.e. if using synonyms of an emotion as the word you're miming)

Things to consider:
- This can be tricky for people who find understanding body language difficult (e.g. people with a label of autism); it might be helpful to offer more support or time where required, for example by taking away the race element to ease the pressure

Game/exercise:

Translate an Alien (young/mid/teen)

Instruction:

1. Two people come to the front/face the rest of the group
2. The facilitator introduces one of them as an alien, and the other as the translator
3. The group interviews the alien who only speaks gobbledygook. The second person is a translator who translates aliens' gobbledygook and will tell the group what the alien said after they respond.
4. This can also be used to introduce each other around a circle etc
5. It could also be done by splitting into small groups without as much of an audience

What you will need: (space/equipment)

☐ Can be nice to have a space where you are all able to sit/stand in a semi-circle facing the alien/translator but really it can be done anywhere

What it's good for:

★ Helps to get people out of their shell as they are speaking for someone else
★ Non-verbal communication
★ Showing and interpreting emotion through body language
★ A good ice-breaker for a new group

Things to consider:

- It can feel a bit exposing speaking in gobbledygook and so reassurance (and examples) are very helpful

Game/exercise:
Gobbledygook conversation (mid/teen)

Instruction:
1. Standing in pairs, have a gobbledygook conversation, but first decide if it's a positive interaction or not, and what it is about (e.g. I like/don't like your new haircut)
2. Facilitator to encourage the use of facial expression, tone of voice, and gestures/body language
3. It is helpful for the facilitator to do a demonstration
4. Can show this back to each other and others have to try and work out what's happening in the scene

What you will need: (space/equipment)
☐ Good to have a space where the pairs can spread out while they experiment with ideas

What it's good for:
★ Helps to get people out of their shell as they are speaking for someone else
★ Non-verbal communication
★ Showing and interpreting emotion through body language
★ Imagination
★ Scene creation

Things to consider:
- It can feel a bit exposing speaking in gobbledygook and so reassurance (and examples) are very helpful
- If they struggle to use the gobbledygook, they could do it in silence (mouthing words or gobbledygook words)

Game/exercise:
Count to… (mid/teen)

Instruction:

1. The aim is to count to the highest number possible with only one person saying any one number at a time
2. The facilitator starts by saying 1, then someone else has to randomly say 2, then someone else 3, and so on
3. If more than one person says the same number, then you have to start again from 1
4. Alternative: can do with the alphabet, or with multiplications, prime numbers etc. for maths

What you will need: (space/equipment)

☐ Can be nice to have a space where you are all able to sit/stand in a circle facing each other but can also be done in the classroom

What it's good for:

★ Focus
★ Thinking as a group, not focusing on themselves as the main person
★ Calming
★ Learning in a fun way

Things to consider:

- If they find numeracy difficult it may be easier to use the A, B, C
- If verbal language is difficult/they are non-verbal, can count to 10 using fingers instead

Game/exercise:
World's Leading Expert (mid/teen)

Instruction:
1. Facilitator prepares a series of random 'topics' for example
   'Why squirrels like nuts' 'sea cucumbers' 'snail farms' and either:
   - Places them around the room upside down as 'stopping places',
     then plays music. When the music plays the participants move around and then
     when it stops they must find a topic to stand by. The facilitator then chooses
     someone at random to turn their topic sheet over and look at what their topic is.
   - Or writes them on small cards and plays 21 with the group (around the circle
     counting to 21 by saying either one, two or three numbers) and the person who has
     to say 21 then chooses a card at random.
2. The facilitator introduces the participant as the WORLD'S LEADING EXPERT on the topic
   they have randomly chosen. They must then talk for a designated amount of time (1
   minute, or longer if a small group) about that subject. If the participant doesn't know
   anything about the topic they must make it up and must continue speaking with
   confidence on the subject for the entirety of their time.
3. Then the facilitator or the expert can open it up to the rest of the group to ask them
   questions on their topic, if time

What you will need: (space/equipment)
- ☐ Can be nice to have a space where you are all able to sit/stand in a circle facing each
  other but really it can be done anywhere
- ☐ List of random topics (either written down or spoken out)

What it's good for:
- ★ Verbal communication - encouraging people to use their voice, listen, and ask questions
- ★ Thinking creatively and outside the box - Improvisation skills
- ★ Developing confidence - whatever they say becomes the truth so there is no wrong thing
  to say as the expert

Things to consider:
- Consider making the time limit shorter/longer depending on their confidence in talking
  about the topic in an unstructured way (could be more question based if needed)

Game/exercise:
'What are you doing?' (young/mid/teen)

Instruction:
1. Standing in a circle, the facilitator moves into the middle and begins miming an 'action'. They then invite the next person in the circle to step in and ask them "What are you doing?"
2. The facilitator, without thinking, must say the first action that comes into their head - this is NOT the action they are currently miming but something else. For example, if they are miming swimming, they might respond to "What are you doing?" with "baking a cake!"
3. The person who asked the question must then act out what the facilitator responded with, in our example baking a cake. They do this until the next person steps into the circle and, again, asks "What are you doing?"
4. The game continues, with each student stepping into the circle and then acting out whatever is said by the person before them they were 'doing'
5. The aim of the game is to say the first action that comes into your mind, without too much hesitation, and to perform/mime the action given to you clearly

What you will need: (space/equipment)
☐ Space enough for standing in a circle

What it's good for:
★ Verbal communication
★ Thinking creatively and outside the box
★ Improvisation skills

Things to consider:
- Some ages and groups might need some parameters or rules around how they respond to "What are you doing?" with - for example to keep it clean, and not make it too complicated

Game/exercise:
TV Game Show! (young/mid/teen)

? ? ?

Instruction:

1. This one is perfect for testing the knowledge of students on a particular subject, either ahead of teaching the course or at the end of it. It takes a bit of preparation, in the form of sourcing or creating a short, multiple-choice quiz about the subject
2. The facilitator firstly puts the class into groups, or allows them to choose groups, and then invites them to come up with a 'team name' and a 'buzzer sound'
3. Introduce the idea that they are now all contestants in a game show, and that if they know the answer to a question, they must use their 'team buzzer' before giving their answer
4. Work your way through the questions, awarding points to the groups that are correct or otherwise not awarding points where you think it might cause some tensions
5. It might be a nice framework to do the same quiz at both the start and end of a course, in order to show the students what they have learnt. When doing this, you could consider removing the multiple-choice answers the second time around to make it more difficult

What you will need: (space/equipment)
☐ A prepared or sourced quiz, with multiple-choice answers
☐ Space to gather in groups, but can be around tables in the classroom

What it's good for:
★ Verbal communication
★ Teamwork
★ Knowledge building
★ Exploring a curriculum subject

Things to consider:
- Some young people will know the answers faster than their peers, and it can be helpful to be aware of this when selecting whose buzzer you 'heard first' in order to keep morale high across the board
- It can also be good to set a rule that they must ensure the rest of their team are happy with the answer before they buzz in

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Game/exercise:
Fact Charades (young/mid/teen)

Instruction:
1. Another one perfect for testing the knowledge of students on a particular subject, but that requires some preparation
2. In pairs or as individuals, give the students a fact about the subject matter you are exploring written on slips of paper. Give them a few minutes to work out how they might mime (or 'charade') the fact to the rest of the class
3. Taking it in turns, invite each group/person to mime the fact, allowing them to show it once without any guesses. Then, if anybody thinks they know what it is, ask for guesses.
4. The charade can be repeated several times, if needed, and hints or tips can be given with the help of the teacher/facilitator

What you will need: (space/equipment)
☐ Prepared facts on slips of paper
☐ Space to stand and mime the fact to the rest of the class

What it's good for:
★ Verbal communication
★ Teamwork
★ Knowledge building
★ Exploring a curriculum subject

Things to consider:
- Depending on age, and how familiar the students are with the topic, you might need to keep the facts short and simple, or you could make them more detailed

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ALL OF THESE GAMES AND EXERCISES:
- Language skills and whether any of your pupils/participants speak English as a second language
- Hearing impairments, or working with D/deaf and disabled children
- The space you have available
- Dexterity and it being okay to 'fail', i.e dropping the ball - giving everything a try is important in drama and the arts
- Ensuring that the activity is beneficial to the learning process

If you are wondering how a game or exercise could be adapted for your classroom, or to suit a particular subject area, MED Theatre's team of artists would be glad to help you with any queries or requests for support. Drop us an email at education@medtheatre.co.uk anytime and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

WANTING MORE?

Playwriting and Performance courses

Over several sessions, a MED Theatre artist could work with your class/pupils to explore a curriculum topic, devise and write a short play which they will then rehearse and perform for the school or their parents. This course lends itself particularly well to the humanities and English studies, but can be delivered for any subject.

Media and Filmmaking courses

MED Theatre also regularly delivers short filmmaking, audio play, or podcast courses for young people, inviting them to learn the technical and production skills required to create their own piece of media about a curriculum, PSHE, or local topic.

Scripts and Performances

MED Theatre also offer professional performances, such as our two-hander show 'Devon's War Girls', which follows the lives of the women and children who remained on Dartmoor during WWII.

We also have an archive of past play scripts and historical stories that we can offer to schools as a resource for learning.

YOU CAN FIND A SELECTION OF THESE HERE (if reading a paper copy of this resource, please get in touch with us for this link).

Other helpful links and resources:

https://www.mantleoftheexpert.com/what-is-moe/introduction-to-moe/
An explanation and training in how to use Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert methodology

https://www.hooplaimpro.com/improv-encyclopedia.html
A list of games and exercises used regularly by London based improvisation company, Hoopla

https://www.medtheatre.co.uk/projects/
Information about, and documentation of, past MED Theatre plays and projects