


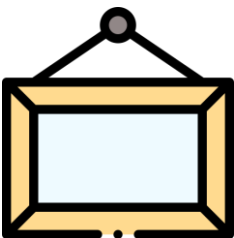
Top Drama Techniques to use in Talk for Writing and Talk for Reading




by Maria Richards, Talk for Writing Primary Expert




There's nothing quite like using drama to allow children to deepen their understanding of a text, whether you're studying it as a reader or studying it as a writer. Drama can transport children in and out of texts and allows them to experience emotions and key moments, that lead to them comprehending deeply and interacting with the text in a more meaningful way. It can provide a purpose and audience for writing and can feed the writing through developed, imaginative experiences.



Below are some tried and tested drama activities that allow children to get below the surface of a text and interact with it at a deeper level. All you need is some space to move and some time to allow the children to explore. Enjoy inhabiting the world of a text through drama!

	<p>Mime</p> <p>This activity allows children to engage with the text individually and mime particular aspects of it. Children take a certain action of a character or a certain part of a scene and think carefully about what they are miming and how they will mime it, in order to recreate the action.</p>
	<p>Freeze frames</p> <p>A quick and easy drama technique where children recreate scenes, actions or consequences in a story. They freeze in position (no moving about), creating a still image of what they are trying to portray. You could sequence freeze frames to represent the flow of a story or significant events that unfold. Freeze frames can be made by individuals, small groups or the whole class.</p>

	<p>Thought Tracking</p> <p>With this strategy, you can consider characters at various points of your text and then pause to voice or explore their thoughts. You could consider: <i>What are they thinking at this point of the story? What would they be thinking after this event?</i> and so on. An interactive way to do this is to have a child freeze frame a character's reaction to part of the story and then have other children take turns to stand behind the child and voice their thoughts. They keep going until they exhaust all ideas.</p> <p>You could also try Passing Thoughts where children pass by a character and speak their thoughts about the character.</p>
	<p>Teacher in Role</p> <p>Here, the teacher enters the drama as a character in the text or a possible character that could arrive in the story. They interact with the children in the role and can enhance the drama, support the children's ideas and extend thinking.</p>
	<p>Hot seating into Role on the Wall</p> <p>Hot seating is where a character or characters from a text can be interviewed by the class. The character can be played by the teacher or by the children. Before interviewing, it's good to discuss what the class want to ask the character and help them to reframe questions if necessary, so they are clear and workable. It is also good to model asking and answering questions beforehand.</p> <p>Once you have gained a better insight into your character, you can summarise what you now know and what you think you know about them, using Role on the Wall. Here, you draw an outline of the character onto a large piece of paper. Around the outside of the character, you can write words and phrases to show what you have actually found out and know about the character. Inside, you can write</p>

	<p>ideas about what you think you know (what you have inferred) about the character. You can also use it to collect words to describe the character's appearance on the outside and then list their thoughts and feelings on the inside.</p>
	<p>Playground rumours</p> <p>In role and in pairs or threes, the children make up rumours about the character/s and what they have done or experienced. You can walk around the group and, as you approach the children, they can whisper their rumour to you. The group can then come together and share their rumours and responses to the rumours. This can be followed by What the Teachers Say about the character, done in the same way but from this new point of view.</p>
	<p>Back-to-back mobile phone</p> <p>In pairs, the children sit back-to-back and enact a scenario where they are on the phone to each other. They can be talking about and discussing what they have seen or what the character has experienced or gossiping about the character and what they have been doing.</p>
	<p>Flashback and Flashforward</p> <p>These techniques allow children to focus on the consequences of events in a story. We can get them to consider what has happened before, or what might happen later, as a result of an action or decision. For example, we could consider what would happen if the woodcutter had let the wolf go in <i>Little Red Riding Hood</i>. Flashforward a week and what could be the consequences of the wolf still being around? Let's flashback to the moment where Skellig decided to hide in Michael's garage. What had happened leading up to this? You can use freeze frames to create flashbacks or flashforwards from the perspective of different characters in the story also.</p>



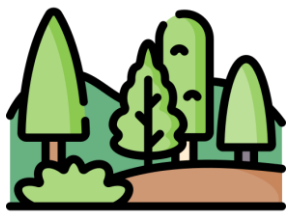
Eye witness report

An eye witness can watch a scene without other characters being aware of them. They can report back afterwards on what they have witnessed and they can also answer questions put to them by the other children, in or out of role. This could also be played out as part of a **TV news report** where children report on an event that has occurred, incorporating eye witness statements or interviews.






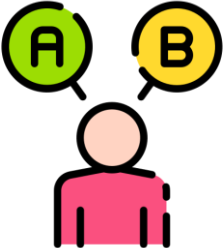
Talking Objects



This is where objects within a story can speak in role. They can talk about what they have seen or experienced. They can talk to each other, they can talk to themselves and also, they can be questioned by the children directly or by the children as other characters in role. What would the trees say in *The Gruffalo*? What would the objects on the shelf in the opening pictures of *The Arrival* (by Shaun Tan) say about the situation that's unfolding? Objects can also talk directly to characters in a scene and even talk about them between themselves. They can also be interviewed as eyewitnesses to whatever unfolded in the story. For example, the objects in granny's bedroom could report back on how the wolf was defeated by the woodcutter in *Little Red Riding Hood*.



Talking Scene

A great way to explore the setting of a story or the make-up of a scene. Children sit around a large circle or rectangle. They can recreate a setting from a story by building it up bit by bit. In turn, they step into the circle and voice who they are and give details. They can choose how they present themselves and on what level. Some may stand tall; others crouch or sit. They can describe themselves in any way but should start by saying what they are. For example, in a forest scene you might say "*I am the mighty oak tree that grows on the edge of the forest. My leaves unfurl when the sun shines.*" The children can be features of a landscape or objects within a setting. "*I am the cauldron that the Big Bad Wolf fell into. The pigs hung*

	<i>me over a roaring fire.”</i>
	<p>Captioning</p> <p>A scene or paragraph of a story is given one sentence that summarises it. This could be presented orally or written on a mini whiteboard and displayed as part of a freeze frame.</p>
	<p>Paragraph Performance</p> <p>Similar to captioning. Divide the class into groups and give each one a paragraph to study. The group must decide on a movement and one word that represents something key in the paragraph. When everyone is ready, the groups crouch down and are directed to stand, one by one. As they stand, they show their movement, say the word, freeze and then crouch down again. The performance should flow as the children dramatise each paragraph in turn.</p>
	<p>Wait until you get home ...</p> <p>This is simply where we improvise what happens when a main character gets home after a particular event in a story. Who's there? What did their parents/other family members say or do? Were they punished or rewarded? The possibilities are endless!</p>
	<p>Conscience alley</p> <p>Here we can explore the inner thoughts and decisions a character may have to make or investigate the dilemma they are facing. The class stand in two lines facing each other. One child takes on the role as the main character and when they walk down the 'alley' between the lines, the other children voice the character's thoughts, both for and against a particular decision or action that the character is facing. This gives the impression of the character's conscience, mulling over the pros and cons. The child in role listens to their conscience before making a final decision about the dilemma in hand.</p>

	<p>Whoosh!</p> <p>This activity is a combination of drama and storytelling. The class sits in a large circle as the teacher tells a story. As the story unfolds, the teacher signals to individuals, pairs or groups of children at different points, to get up, enter the circle and represent that part of the story. This can include becoming objects and scenery as well as characters. When the circle becomes overcrowded, the teacher can shout “Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!” which is the signal for everyone to clear the acting space and go back to the circle. The story can continue and further children can be called to enact the scenes. This is very similar to the ‘Helicopter Stories’ ideas used with young children.</p>
	<p>Writing in role</p> <p>Quite simply, in role, the children write something that connects with the drama. This could be a diary entry from the main character or a letter to other characters, or even letters between characters. For example, the wolf writes a sorry letter to grandma. The main character could write their memories or plans to solve an issue. The children can think about key events and respond to them. Imagine there was a list inside the suitcase in <i>The Arrival</i> – what did it have on it. Imagine the main character left a letter for his wife – what did it say?</p> <p>Children can even respond to this writing as part of the drama. For example, they could respond as a character who has read the secret diary entry, or telephone the character as a response to their letter.</p>

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Maria Richards is available to deliver training throughout the UK & internationally. Please visit the training page on the Talk for Writing website for more details.



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