

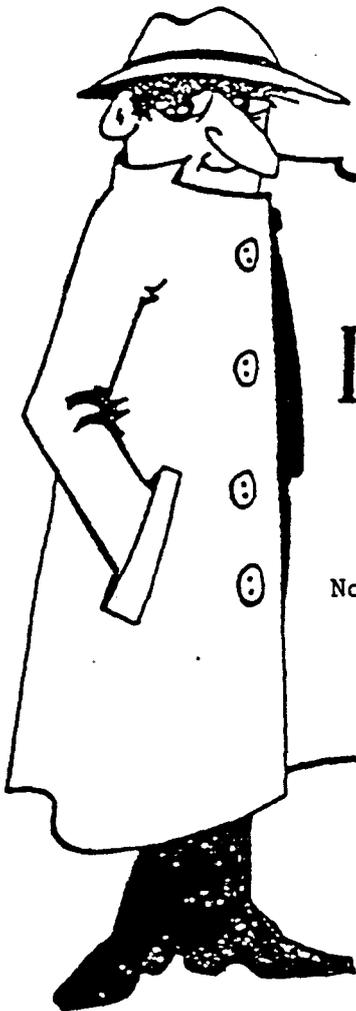
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Inside information

ON

ROLE PLAYING

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WHAT IS ROLE PLAY?

Role playing is an exercise in which one assumes a role and plays out a situation. In doing so it is possible to become aware of the demands of the role in real life and of routines involved with it.

Role play involves the participants entering into a fictitious situation and holding attitudes and opinions which are not necessarily their own. More than any other spoken activity, this type of work should arise from the teacher's perception of the needs of a particular class.

Fundamentally, role play is about human relationships expressed in language. It is involved in discovering feelings. There will be a regular need, after role playing, to talk about what we learn from our own attitudes, and what we better understand about others. This subsequent discussion should be given the same amount of time as the role playing, and is crucially important.

WHAT ARE THE VALUES OF ROLE PLAY?

- Role play allows an insight into human relationships expressed in language.
- Role play is about communication and understanding.
- Role play allows a child to assume a role, initially where he/she plays him/herself and plays out a situation, a predicament or a worry and therefore becomes aware of the demands of the role in real life and of routines involved with it.
- Role play allows children to learn from their own attitudes and understand more about others.
- Role play can help children solve problems and resolve a situation. Given that situation what would you say and do? Now work it out!
- Role play can extend into improvisation and Drama in the fuller sense when incident, movement, story construction and richer characterisation are added.
- Role play can lead to group discussion about attitudes and is just as important.

PITFALLS:

Role play is often suggested in the Reading K - 7 notes, Social Studies syllabus and Language programmes and yet so often we expect our children to just 'do it'!

Effective child participation, and learning how to be an audience, should be taught. It is often assumed that children already have these skills. Improvisation is often of poor quality and consists of

one self-assured child directing the group with:-

"you be ... and I'll come in ... and you can say ..."

The range of responses available in enacting should be shown to the children and talk situations structured at first while they practise alternate responses.

• ACCEPTANCE:

The most common response is accepting a statement and answering 'yes'.

e.g. A. "You've been a long time".
B. "Yes".

It is then very hard for A to think quickly and move the scene along.

Encourage children to qualify or modify the response.

e.g. A. "You've been a long time".
B. "Yes, I'm sorry, but I had to clean my room up first".

Give opening statements or questions and let them practise this skill in pairs.

e.g. A. "Will you help me with my homework?"
B. "Is that a new watch?"
"We'll go to the shop after we've watched T.V.".

• NEGATIVE RESPONSE:

Shy or unsure children will often give a negative response or reject the statement.

e.g. A. "Will you play ball with me?"
B. "No".

or A. "Have you come to repair the T.V.?"
B. "No, I'm an alien! (plus giggles) - This completely throws

A and everyone falls apart and the scene cannot move forward.

So practise qualifying the negative response and explain that what people say (in the scene) is true, and you must carry on that belief.

e.g. A. "Have you come to repair the T.V.?"
B. "No, I'm your new neighbour (say name)
"Would you like to borrow my other T.V.?"
A. "Well, that is kind of you ... " etc.

• CONSTRUCTIVE PARTICIPATION:

Takes place when B has understood A's cue and builds upon it, adding to and moving the improvisation on.

- e.g. A. "Mum, I can't do this homework".
 B. "Let me have a look. Have you read the question properly?"
 "You always leave things until the last minute..."

• DESTRUCTIVE PARTICIPATION:

Happens when children adopt a cliched, stereotype role. So every policeman is an insensitive brutal moron and every home scene ends up as a family brawl or in a yes/no dialogue.

- e.g. "Did you break that vase?"
 "No I didn't".
 "Yes you did".
 "No..." etc.

Explain the importance of low-key passive participation. A sad nod of the head can be most constructive.

- e.g. A. "Come here you. Have you just stolen that jumper?"
 B. Nods head sadly.
- A. "Why did you do it?"
 B. "I've no money and it's my gran's birthday. She feels the cold so much".
- A. "Well now, let's see if we can sort something out".
- e.g. A. "Will you give me my hair dryer back?"
 (could develop into a no/yes/no/yes situation, so encourage them to always qualify).
 B. "No, you promised to lend it to me until tonight".
 A. "Yes, but John has just invited me out and I need to wash my hair now".
 B. "Oh, lucky you, here you are then, but can I have it afterwards?"
 A. "Yes of course, I'll only be twenty minutes".

Practise in responding to given situations and "starter" sentences can improve the children's understanding of the types of possibilities in improvisation, and help them to make a much richer and successful contribution to enactment.

Starter sentences:-

- "Where were you last night?"
 "Lend me some money!"
 "You'll never win".
 "What colour would you choose?"
 "It will cost too much".

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS WORKSHOP:

- a) Name Game: Aim: introductions, memory. In a circle one starts off saying name doing small action. All repeat next person says name etc.
- b) True Story: Aims: Self-disclosure, trust building listening skills. With a partner. A tells B of a true incident that happened to him/her. Allow about 30 seconds, then say "stop". B repeats that story trying to keep the same inflections and emphasis. (Variation - take in a different role to tell story e.g. absent-minded old woman).
- c) The Rule of the Game: Aims: group interaction, imagination, intellectual exercise, awareness. In a circle, one person goes out. Others make up a rule. Person who comes back must ask questions and find out the rule. Rules could include, answer as if you were the person on your right, girls tell the truth, boys tell lies. Visual - scratch head before answering, structural - each answer begins with the next letter of the alphabet.
- d) Predicaments: Aims: group interaction, quick thinking. In a circle, one person goes out. The others decide upon a predicament (a problem, a worry or a tricky situation). Person that comes back has to ask each person "What would you do first?" and aim to name the predicament in as short a time as possible.

TYPES OF ROLE PLAYING ACTIVITIES:

The skills of role playing take time to develop. Time needs to be taken to develop confidence and trust in this form of communication and confidence building.

The following pattern of development could be used:-

- 1) child to child
- 2) child to parent
- 3) simulations
- 4) problem solving
- 5) decision making

Let's consider some examples of each to illustrate:-

1) Child to Child:

- * A helps B with a job.
- * A loses something B helps find it.
- * A disturbs B's quiet activity.

2) Child to Parent:

- * Child coming home late, parent worried.
- * Child asking for a pet.
- * Child has broken something, apologies

3) Simulations:

- a) • Aircraft scene - hijack attempt.
- b) • Convict ship - sailors mutiny.
- c) • Count of law - shoplifting charge.

4) Problem solving: *Feelings:*

- Sadness:
- a) A decide why you are feeling sad.
B, you have to find out why A is sad and try to help and cheer them up.
 - b) A child is sad because no-one will play with him/her. A parent (or teacher) tries to suggest ways the child can make friends or join in.

Happiness:

- a) Something terrific has happened to A and A can't wait to tell B all about it.
- b) Parent praises child for something good, clever or kind he/she has done.

Love:

- a) A and B are sisters/brothers. A is upset and crying because a bigger child had hit him/her. B comforts, hugs and listens to the problem.
- b) A child always wanted a dog and takes the neighbour's dog for walks. The neighbour says that they have to move somewhere where pets aren't allowed and as the child loves the dog, he/she may have him.

Loneliness:

- a) A has a problem to think about and decides to go to a quiet spot in the park to think about it. B wants to go to the park with A. A explains the need to be alone sometimes.
- b) The child feels he/she is not wanted and can't do anything right, so decides to run away. A neighbour meets A walking down the street with a small case and asks where A is going.

Anger:

- a) A has just completed some difficult homework and gone to the kitchen for a drink. Little brother/sister comes in and scribbles all over the work. A gets very angry at little brother/sister. Parent discusses what can be done. Little brother/sister is too small to understand about important homework.
- b) A doesn't like B and is always teasing him and pulling his hair. B gets very angry and is about to hit back. A teacher comes up and tries to find out why A doesn't like B and what can be done about it.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS:

- 1) A and B are watching T.V. A says he's not allowed to watch that programme. B says that he is and it's his house and T.V. What decision would A make?
- 2) A and B find a \$50 on the ground. A wants to use it to buy a game their teacher wants for the class. B thinks they should take it to the police station. What decision would they make?
- 3) The child asks his mum/dad for money for a trip. The parent says he can't afford it at the moment so he can't go. What solution to the problem could they find?
- 4) A uses his brother/sister's skateboard without asking as he/she thought it would be O.K. B says it is not O.K. and is really angry. What should A do next?
- 5) A child is happy because her best friend has invited her over to make popcorn. When she gets home the mother/father reminds the child he/she promised to visit granny after school. What happens next?
- 6) A and B are playing a game. A accuses B of cheating. A says he/she will get big brothers after B. What will B say?
- 7) A knows tomorrow is Mum's birthday but if he/she buys her a present there won't be any money left to go to the footy. B calls for A to go to the footy. What will A do?
- 8) Mum and Dad asks the child to put the cake back in the fridge. The child forgets and later on sees the dog has eaten most of it and made a mess. Mum or Dad comes in and is very cross. What should the child do?
- 9) A and B live next door. They decide to build a cubby in A's yard because it is bigger and B's father gives them all the wood and helps them. When B has to move house he/she wants to take the cubby but A thinks it should stay in the yard. What decision might they make?
- 10) A and B are best friends and have always been in the same class. B is very clever and is going into a different class next year. Will they be as close next year? What might they say to each other?

DECISION MAKING:

- 1) One For All:

There are six people in a balloon. There is a hole in it and it is slowly losing altitude. If all the people stay on board, the balloon will land in shark infested waters and all will be eaten. If one person jumps overboard, the balloon will reach the island.

2) Crossing The River:

Five explorers, each with a horse, pack of food, water bottle, rifle, long rope, axe, knife, spade and compass arrive at a flooded river (5m wide). They need to cross the river to continue north on their exploration of this area and are making a map as they go. They are 5 days travel from the coast where the ship left them.

In groups of 5, discuss the situation and decide on a realistic answer to the problem. Could improvise the decided action at this stage. Each group could nominate someone to report back on the group's decision, then the class vote on which idea would work. Or each "explorer" could write up his/her diary entry for that day, giving brief details of what happened.

3) The Isolated Tribe:

Divide class into two groups. One group is an isolated tribe. You have never met anyone outside your tribe. You are unaware of the rest of mankind and the world. Decide what kind of life you live? What things will you need to think about? (Brainstorm a list for later use e.g. homes, family life, hunting, cooking, chiefs, gods etc.). Everyone in this group allocates himself a role and build up your tribal activities.

The second group are explorers who have just discovered the isolated tribe but have not approached them yet. Your job is to research the tribe. How will you go about it? How will you approach the tribe? What will you want to find out about? The teacher could role play an international arbitrator bringing the two groups together to find out what they have learned about each other.

Class decision on whether to allow media in, missionaries, medical aid etc., or should tribe be left in peace?

4. The New Road:

A new road is to go straight through this area to link up with the Freeway and quicker travel to Perth. Discuss types of people who live around here and choose a role for yourself e.g. a pensioner, a new immigrant, a teacher, a fisherman, a shop keeper etc.

Teacher takes the role of a councillor come to inform the residents about the new road and the benefits it will bring - but certain homes will have to go but compensation will be paid. Discuss, let residents have their say, then decide whether you are for or against the new road.

5. The Shelter:

The Third World War was started. You are the only one whose family has built a bomb shelter in the neighbourhood. There are ten children but your parents say there is room for only six. You may choose six from this group:

- a pretty twelve year old, clever, good at music.
- a six year old aboriginal boy, no shoes, has a gun.
- a nine year old with rich parents, can pay a lot.
- a eight year old girl who cries a lot, bad tempered.
- a mentally retarded eleven year old girl, she can't speak or walk, but is no trouble.
- a twelve year old boy, athletics champion.
- a ten year old Portuguese boy, not much English, but very funny.
- a thin pale girl of ten, looks afraid.
- a four year old girl, sister of the athletics champion.
- a big Italian boy, still at Primary School, threatens you.

Role play some talks between shelter owner boy and some of the above children. Decide on which six you should take in.

6. The Shipwreck:

You have been ship wrecked on a desert island and have a secret supply of food. You decide to share it but don't know how far it will go. Put "1" by the first person you'd share with, a "2" next to the second person you'd give it to and so on.

NUMBER HERE	
	myself. a thin old man, trembling with cold. your best friend. a young pregnant woman. a strong young man with injured leg. a twenty year old man who threatened you with a knife. a screaming three year old girl who has lost her mother. the captain who is bossy but actually does little.

Discussion of reasons for choosing certain people.

INTEGRATION INTO THE CURRICULUM:Social Development and Self Esteem:

- Role play unfamiliar social situations that would be relevant to your children. e.g. Choosing from a menu in a restaurant.
Being cross-examined by a policeman.
Explaining a maths question to a younger child.

Literature:

- Develop situations from the literature being studied.
- As a preparatory activity before reading a novel, introduce similar situations based on the experiences of the class.
e.g. Before reading F.H. Burnett's *The Secret Garden*,
Role play being alone at night,
Being a newcomer at school,
Lost in a shopping centre.

In this way the child is prepared for the predicament of Mary in the opening chapter.

- As a follow-up activity, recalling by role play the characters and their attitudes.
e.g. After reading chapters of L. Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*,
Role play - Alice and White Rabbit
- Mad Hatter and March Hare
- Alice and the Caterpillar.
- Bring a narrative poem to life by role playing the characters -
e.g. R. Browning's "Pied Piper of Hamelin" or C.J. Dennis' "The Circus".

Social Studies:

- Add an extra dimension to learning by "being" and "doing".
- Be explorers setting up camp. (Precede with discussion and decisions on likely things explorers would take with them).
- Be space creatures discussing the strange planet Earth.
- Be a space captain trying to communicate with an alien.
- Be the family that has been told they have three hours to evacuate before the volcano lava reaches the town.
- Be the settlers whose first crop has failed.
- Be the aboriginals who take some sheep because they are used to taking and sharing all the earth has to offer.
- Be the survivors of a plane crash in the desert (harsh environment).
What would you do?
- Be a community whose houses face demolition for a new road. What would you say to a local council member?

Social Studies Cont:

- Be the inventors of a new machine to make farm life easier.
Explain what it does.
- Be a group that does not want their local lake filled in for housing development. (or be a group that does want the development!).
- Be some diggers in the goldfields with a variety of problems.

Use role play, group discussion and group decision making as a valid part of your work. State what you are doing, what you hope to achieve and a space for evaluation in your programmes.

TEACHER IN ROLE:

Many drama lessons can be made more effective if the teacher takes on a role. You are then in a better position to:-

- (a) Challenge the children's involvement and demand a deeper level of commitment from the children in their own roles;
- (b) Move the drama on if it seems likely to bog down;
- (c) Slow it down if the children are skating across the surface of a situation;
- (d) Prevent them from choosing glib and easy solutions to the problem;
- (e) Support their ideas and reinforce them in their roles;
- (f) Prevent domination by one or more members of the class and channel the energies of those who show leadership qualities;
- (g) Encourage the shy and reticent to take a more active role.

For many teachers, this means overcoming personal fears and barriers and using their authority on a different, more complex level.

The teacher can pick up on the child's cue to further an understanding of what is going on. This relies heavily on the questions asked by the teacher and how he or she phrases them. The understandings, feelings and ideas that will flow from the work hinge on the appropriateness of the questions asked.

Questions can be categorized as follows:-

* Questions that further understanding:

What would ... ?

I wonder if ... ?

I wonder how ... ?

* Questions that clarify ideas:

What if you ... ?

How can you ... ?

Why do you think ... ?

* Questions that require imaginative response:

Do you think you could ... ?

How shall we ... ?

TYPES OF ROLES FOR THE TEACHER:

The role you choose will depend on the situation and what you are trying to achieve.

Examples:

- 1) If you want to consider life on board a convict ship you might assume the role of captain.
- 2) In a tribal setting you might become a tribal priest or chief.
- 3) A scene on an aircraft might see the teacher playing the role of the pilot.

Points to Remember:

- 1) You can step in and out of your role as much as you feel the need, and discuss what is happening with the class.
- 2) It may be easier to set the children up in a scene first, then explain that you are going to enter in role and brief them on what to expect.
- 3) You do not have to be a great actor to take a role. What you are doing, rather than taking on a character role, is taking a stand or challenging their attitudes.

RESOURCE LIST:

100 + Ideas for Drama - by Scher & Verrall, Publisher, Heinemann Ed.,
Gamester's Handbook by Brandes and Phillips, Publisher, Hutchinson, \$17.70.
Roll-a-Role Game, by The Ungame Co., \$16.50.