

Skits/Dramas

<input type="checkbox"/> Time Required	About 15–20 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/> Primary Skills	Vocalization (speaking)
<input type="checkbox"/> Format	(Ex.) 4–6-person groups
<input type="checkbox"/> Overview and Goals	
<p>When we hear the words <i>plays</i> or <i>drama</i>, we tend to imagine stage performances that require extensive rehearsals and practice in the pursuit of a perfect production. However, this exercise is intended to introduce some simple techniques widely used in English classes in elementary, junior, and high schools in English-speaking countries and drama workshops for adults.</p> <p>Some may wonder, how could plays and dramatic skits help people understand the books they have read? The physical expression of a situation in a story or the portrayal of one of its characters (even a simple pose) allows one to vicariously experience what that character was going through and what they might have been feeling or thinking. From the perspective of English vocalization and enunciation, too, one's speech tends to become more natural when accompanied by physical movements than when simply reading the text aloud. By doing so, it is possible to gain a physical understanding of the work with its accompanying emotions in a way impossible by reading the text on its own. <i>Drama in Education</i> emphasizes this process of learning through such awareness and experience. It is an approach that promotes <i>proactive</i>, <i>interactive</i>, and <i>deep learning</i>, which are the kinds of educational experience that have been sought after in the educational arena in recent years.</p> <p>Through this activity, students who are quiet and reserved often display glimpses of less typical aspects of their personalities, such as persuasively expressing their views. This type of activity has been observed to contribute in this way to understanding others and oneself over time. While creating a drama, the group members may need to coordinate their opinions and collaborate with each other. Thus, as a <i>by-product</i> of this process, students will be able to cultivate social skills by finding the role in the group that best suits them.</p> <p>As with any other interactive activity, students who are not comfortable acting out should not be forced to participate but encouraged to join the audience. They can also work as advisors.</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/> To Prepare in Advance (required teaching materials, equipment, etc.)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scripts • Props (Not required. Use what is available immediately around the classroom if desired.) 	
<input type="checkbox"/> Procedure	
<p>This is an activity to do after reading the book <i>Come Away from the Water, Shirley</i>.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Form small groups and have each choose a different scene from the story. 2. All members will create a still image from the scene they chose. The still image technique is 	

designed for students to express a certain situation or concept by holding still for a few seconds to create an effect akin to a video freeze-frame using their bodies. For example, in a scene from the story, “Shirley, the main character, stands facing the sea,” one of the members would be Shirley. Others would be the boat, the sea, the seagull, or the dog on the beach. It is not necessary to recreate the scene exactly as presented in the picture book; the freeze-frame only needs to somehow represent the gist of the scene. The group can discuss how to create the freeze-frame. About five minutes of preparation time is appropriate. Setting a short preparation time will encourage the students to concentrate on their work.

3. Each group will show their freeze-frame image in the order of the story. The teacher will then count down, “five, four, three, two, one, freeze,” and ask the students to act out a still image for a few seconds. The teacher will also ask each person in the freeze-frame one or two questions. For example, the teacher may ask the student being Shirley the following questions: “What are you looking at, Shirley?” “Why are you standing alone? Don’t you want to play with the children over there?” “Is that your dog?” “What are you thinking about now?” and so on. Note that a student can take the teacher’s role.
4. Lastly, have the students reflect on this activity either orally or by writing on a comment card.

Application/Explanation

After the above exercise, a variety of other activities could be pursued. For example,

- After the students’ freeze-frame scene in the above exercise, they can resume their motion to carry the scene forward. You may have the students act out a short scene by adding some dialogue along with additional movements.
- The students may write an entry in a diary as the characters they portrayed.

(Text: Yuka Kusanagi)