

FORUM THEATRE

A truly dramatic technique for exploring all kinds of interactions and events - fictional or factual - past, present or future.

HOW?

1. Ideally sit the group in a circle or horseshoe around a 'working space'.
2. Introduce the situation to be portrayed. It should involve a small number of players (e.g. *how a family handles the son being sacked: mum, dad, son and older sister*). The situation will need some kind of **tension** (e.g. *the sacking is for lateness and the father is very proud of his own punctuality*).
3. Decide **where** the action is taking place (*around the family tea table*), **when** (*the present*) and **what** the opening line is to be (e.g. *Dad to son: "What are you looking so miserable about?"*).
4. Invite students to volunteer to take on the roles. The volunteers organise the furniture (*in this case a desk as the tea table and a few chairs*) and play the scene spontaneously for three or four minutes.
5. Once the scene is well underway, members of the audience are free to **Stop the Action** by raising a hand. They do this in order to suggest modifications. For example, someone might ask the dad to be tougher, or the son to cry or the mother to use this as an opportunity to say how she has always hated being hurried along by her husband. Specific lines can be suggested. In addition, audience members can ask to take over one of the roles, or to join the original player to form a 'composite character'. Likewise, players can *Stop the Action* and ask for advice from the audience, or can ask for someone to take over if they've had enough.
6. All this enables the drama to be moulded. It allows the group to understand the effect of different attitudes, languages and behaviours.

APPLICATIONS

- **History:** to examine the human issues in various moments of history e.g. a cropper comes home having just lost his job because of new machines.
- **Science:** Louis Pasteur persuading sceptical colleagues about his latest discovery or a doctor is being pressed to buy a new drug about which he has reservations.
- **English:** to develop scenes suggested by poems, novels, newspapers, or to develop alternative scenes in established plays.
- **Business Studies:** a manager has to handle a health and safety issue in the workplace - explore different styles.
- Forum Theatre could be conducted in a **Modern Foreign Language** at A Level.
- **Personal and Social Education:** as a way of handling the human issues around abortion, drugs, marriage, friendship, environment, health, employment.... Through

This resource by Paul Ginnis was found free at <http://www.english-teaching.co.uk>

Providing copyright is acknowledged, the resource may copied for use in the classroom. Any other use is strictly forbidden. Copyright © 2001 Paul Ginnis. All rights reserved.



Forum Theatre it is easy to raise awareness of choice and responsibility because cause and effect can be explored in the safety of a fiction.

- **Religious Education:** encounters between people of different beliefs, a fictional conversation between Jesus and a worried disciple, a Sikh family dispute over a teenage son and daughter who are taking a non-traditional stance on marriage.

WHY DO IT?

- Dramatic action brings ideas and information to life. It works on the level of feelings as well as thoughts and usually creates a lasting, impression.
- This particular technique allows students to experiment with their own ideas so it is, in a sense, automatically student-centred.
- For some students whose preferred learning styles are experiential and creative and whose dominant intelligences are visual, kinaesthetic and interpersonal (the kind of kids who are often hard to handle!), drama can give easier access to many aspects of the curriculum.

VARIATIONS

1. Each character in the 'play' can have a group of students to which she is attached. They are her advisers. At intervals during the drama, the action is stopped and each player goes to her own group to take advice on what the character should say and do next.